

Jewish Spirituality and Divine Law

EDITED BY

Adam Mintz and Lawrence Schiffman

Robert S. Hirt, Series Editor

The Orthodox Forum Series
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THE ORTHODOX FORUM

The Orthodox Forum, convened by Dr. Norman Lamm, Chancellor of Yeshiva University, meets each year to consider major issues of concern to the Jewish community. Forum participants from throughout the world, including academicians in both Jewish and secular fields, rabbis, *rashei yeshiva*, Jewish educators, and Jewish communal professionals, gather in conference as a think tank to discuss and critique each other's original papers, examining different aspects of a central theme. The purpose of the Forum is to create and disseminate a new and vibrant Torah literature addressing the critical issues facing Jewry today.

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Series Editor's Preface

We are delighted to introduce the 10th volume in The Orthodox Forum Series, *Divine Law and Human Spirituality*, edited by Dr. Lawrence Schiffman and Rabbi Adam Mintz. The editors of the volume have skillfully guided the formulation and exploration of the spirituality theme across a wide range of disciplines.

The Orthodox Forum Series has become a significant resource for scholars, advanced students and serious laymen seeking clarification of major intellectual and theological questions facing the Jewish people in the modern world.

At a time when Jewish identity and commitment are being challenged by apathy and ignorance of primary sources, it is critical that clear exposition of our classical values be widely disseminated by knowledgeable leaders in a thoughtful and engaging manner.

We are confident that the community will warmly welcome this timely volume.

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(editor's introduction 10-8-03)

Robert S. Hirt

Introduction

Adam Mintz

In 1989, the Orthodox Forum was established by Dr. Norman Lamm, then President of Yeshiva University, to consider major issues of concern to the Jewish community. Academicians, rabbis, *rashei yeshiva*, Jewish educators and communal professionals have been invited each year to come together for an in-depth analysis of one such topic. This group has constituted an Orthodox think tank and has produced a serious and extensive body of literature.

In the spirit of its initial mandate, the Forum has chosen topics that have challenged Jews and Judaism throughout history. One of the themes addressed in this series is the numerous confrontations that have existed, both in past eras and in the present time, between the central principles of Orthodox belief and practice, on the one hand, and the widely-accepted values of the contemporary secular society. In the 1992 Orthodox Forum, which examined the tension between rabbinic authority and personal autonomy, Dr. Moshe Sokol pointed out that this tension between authority and personal autonomy which is a central problem for Western religions gener-

ally “can be a particularly sharp problem for Jews who maintain a commitment to the observance of *halakhah*.”¹

Similarly, spirituality, the topic of the conference held in the year 2000, presents, on first consideration, an apparent clash between spirituality and law and breaches the divide between the subjectivity inherent in the one and the objective requirements of practice and belief essential to *halakhah*. In addition, the seeming New-Age faddishness of spirituality stands starkly against the deep historical roots of the Jewish tradition. In a passage quoted by several of the volume’s contributors, Dr. Lamm formulated the delicate balance between law and spirituality:

The contrast between the two – spirituality and law – is almost self-evident. Spirituality is subjective; the very fact of its inwardness implies a certain degree of anarchy; it is unfettered and self-directed, impulsive and spontaneous. In contrast, law is objective; it requires discipline, structure, obedience, order. Yet both are necessary. Spirituality alone begets antinomianism and chaos; law alone is artificial and insensitive. Without the body of the law, spirituality is a ghost. Without the sweep of the soaring soul, the corpus of the law tends to become a corpse. But how can two such opposites coexist within one personality without producing unwelcome schizoid consequences?²

The risks of producing the “ghost” and the “corpse” and the need for coexistence and integration are issues that have confronted Jews for centuries.

The primary purpose of the conference and this resulting volume has been to demonstrate through a spectrum of diverse views, that spirituality and Orthodox Judaism are actually not hostile to one another, but, to the contrary, complement and enrich one another.

¹ Moshe Sokol, “Preface”, in *Rabbinic Authority and Personal Autonomy*, edited by Moshe Sokol (Northvale, NJ, 1992), p. xii

² Norman Lamm, *The Shema: Spirituality and Law in Judaism* (Philadelphia, 2000), p. 6.

other. The issue is first approached from a historical perspective, in essays dealing with ancient Judaism, the medieval period and the contemporary period. The following essays then consider the interplay between spirituality and traditional Judaism in synagogue art and in prayer. Essays by Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein and Dr. Chaim Waxman frame the discussion and present an overview of the wide-ranging philosophical and sociological implications of the topic.

In an attempt to guarantee that our society's current search for spirituality is not overlooked, a colloquium was added to the conference to address the role of spirituality within our synagogues and *yeshivot*. Rabbi Daniel Cohen, Cantor Sherwood Goffin, Rabbi Nathaniel Helfgot, Dr. David Pelcovitz and Prof. Suzanne Last Stone explored the possibilities for spirituality in our institutions focusing on the "Carlebach phenomenon" and the perceived need for enhanced spirituality in Orthodox institutions. While the intention was not to produce a written record of the colloquium, it served to enhance the conference and helped to maintain the delicate balance required between the theoretical and the practical.

In the first essay of this volume, Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein defines both the values and the risks of spirituality and law. He utilizes Maimonides' distinction between law, which relates to the public sphere, and spirituality, which is highly personal, as the basis for his understanding of the terms. According to Rabbi Lichtenstein, while we must abandon neither, we also must achieve the proper balance between the two. Spirituality provides expression for the *halakhah* while *halakhah* prescribes necessary forms and constraints to our spiritual impulses. We have to prevent our commitment to the minutiae of law from robbing our actions of meaning and feeling just as we must be careful not to allow our desire for spirituality to cause us to ignore those laws considered non-spiritual.

Rabbi Lichtenstein concludes his paper with an analysis of the contemporary Jewish scene. He sees the risks inherent in the move toward excess spirituality both in the realm of prayer and Torah study. He writes, "I'm afraid, however, that votaries of current spirituality often tend to erode the status of *yirah* (awe); and, together with it, the status of the very essence of *yahadut*: *kabbalat*

ol malkhut shamayim (acceptance of the yoke of heaven) and *kabbalat ol mitzvot* (acceptance of the yoke of commandments).” Is this fear reasonable or is this critique of contemporary spirituality too harsh? The remaining articles in the volume provide the necessary background to consider this question.

Professors Lawrence Schiffman and Yaakov Elman explore the uses of spirituality in the ancient period, concentrating on the eras of the Bible and second temple and of the Talmudic period. Professor Schiffman focuses on the approach to religion, which centered on the Temple and its service and how this religious expression evolved as people began to move away from the Temple. Professor Elman examines human spirituality as it was construed in the rabbinic era through a study of specific incidences and testimonies of key Talmudic figures.

Professors Brill and Lasker examine spirituality in medieval literature. Professor Brill argues that the study of Kabbalah is crucial in order to add meaning to *mitzvot* and Torah. He takes issue with those who exclude Kabbalah from the canon of Judaism or advocate for finding certain aspects of Kabbalah outside the normative framework of Judaism. Professor Lasker begins his paper by stating that, “Medieval Jewish philosophers did not have a specific concept of human spirituality in its modern usage.” He goes on to present two models of medieval philosophy’s understanding of the soul and its place in establishing a relationship between man and God. The ability to frame spirituality in the world of medieval terminology and thought allows us to begin to formulate a definition of spirituality that is relevant in different historical and cultural settings.

Professors Fine and Mann further expand the scope of the discussion with an exploration of spirituality and the arts. Professor Fine examines the mosaics found within synagogues of the fourth through sixth centuries CE. While the use of mosaics was common in public places during this period, the presence of these mosaics in synagogues and the later opposition to this artistic representation in the synagogue points to a spiritual aesthetic that was both communally and culturally driven. Professor Mann traces the rabbinic attitude towards Jewish ceremonial art. While rabbinic opposition

points to the potential distractions caused by these works of art, certain rabbis were also sensitive to the spiritual value of decorative ceremonial objects especially within the synagogue setting. These surveys broaden our appreciation for the role of spirituality beyond the intellectual world.

Having presented a picture of the historical, intellectual and cultural images of spirituality, the challenge remains how to understand these images and how to transmit them to others. Rabbi Moshe Sokolow and Erica Brown explore the experience of teaching spirituality. Rabbi Sokolow presents a model for the introduction of spirituality in Jewish day schools and yeshiva high schools. Spirituality must play a role in the formulation of the school's vision as well as in its curriculum and teacher's training programs. Ms. Brown looks at the field of adult education and points out a unique educational problem – namely that adults tend to be interested in acquiring new information and are not especially interested in seeking the spiritual value of this information. She shares with us her experiences in the field and her strategies for overcoming this obstacle and transmitting this spiritual essence to a class of adults.

The challenge of transmitting spirituality is particularly relevant in the arena of prayer. Professor Hyman explores the Maimonidean position on prayer and concludes that according to Maimonides, spirituality is part of the process of prayer but that ultimately it plays only a minor role in the complex halakhic and philosophic definition of prayer. Professors Bleich and Lowenthal trace the evolution of spirituality and prayer in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Professor Bleich looks at the Reform innovations to the synagogue service and the response of the Orthodox who attempt to maintain the tradition while incorporating the needs of the spiritual. Professor Lowenthal examines the innovations of the Hasidic community in the realm of spirituality as a response to the potential encroachment of the modern world into the Jewish community. His emphasis on the value of spirituality for the youth, especially the girls in the early days of the Bais Yaakov movement and in the Chabad community, provides an important perspective on the relevance and importance of spirituality in pre-war Eastern Europe. Professor Carmy concludes

the discussion on prayer and spirituality by posing the question, “Can thinking about prayer improve the quality of our prayer?” He goes on to examine prayer in the context of the religious and halakhic philosophies of both Rav Kook and Rav Soloveitchik.

The final essay in the volume by Professor Waxman is entitled “Religion, Spirituality and the Future of American Judaism” and explores the sociology of spirituality in America today. He claims that spirituality is a manifestation of the privatization of religious practice today in which people are moving away from institutions and looking for personal expressions of religious observance. This phenomenon has served to weaken the traditional institutions of Judaism. Waxman argues that what is needed is for our institutions to provide avenues for spirituality thereby enabling the quest for spirituality to be realized within traditional Judaism and not outside of it.

Professor Waxman’s paper provides an appropriate segue from our discussion of the past to the necessity of developing a plan for the future. Contemporary Jewish society has much to gain from an appreciation of this subject as seen through the variety of vantage points presented in this volume. Yet, at the same time, modern culture introduces its own challenges and unique personality that must be addressed by the committed Jew. Rabbi Lichtenstein articulates this challenge at the conclusion of his paper:

This brings us, finally, back to our primary problem: How to attain optimal fusion of divine law and human spirituality, committed to both while eschewing neither. We live by the serene faith that it can be done. We refuse to believe that we are doomed to choose between arid formalism and unbridled sensibility... The apocryphal remark attributed to an anonymous *hasid*, גישט – נישט דאווען – חסידים דאווען – איך צייט; חסידים דאווען – נישט – איך צייט (Misnagdim daven not, but on time; H~~ä~~asidim daven, but not on time) is both facile and tendacious. It is also false. It is our mission to assure that legalists and spiritualists both pray – on time.

The volume has been compiled with the hope that it will contribute to the realization of that mission.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge those people who have been instrumental in the completion of this volume. The project has been spearheaded by Dr. Norman Lamm, Chancellor of Yeshiva University and convener of the Orthodox Forum. My own spiritual development is a product of his many years of leadership and I am honored to participate in this project. Rabbi Robert Hirt, Senior Advisor to the President, Yeshiva University, is deeply committed to the mission of the Forum and the dissemination of its material. Rabbi Hirt has provided guidance and direction for me since my first day at Yeshiva College and his invitation to participate in the Orthodox Forum and to co-edit this volume is just one of the many things for which I am grateful. Mrs. Marcia Schwartz's gracious assistance has made this job significantly easier and I am thankful to the members of the steering committee for their involvement in developing and formalizing this challenging topic. Miriam and Yonatan Kaganoff served as editorial assistants and were instrumental in the preparation of the manuscripts for publication. Finally, it was a pleasure to co-edit this volume with Professor Lawrence Schiffman; his passion, expertise and experience made this process an enjoyable and enlightening one for me.

11

Liturgical Innovation
and Spirituality:
Trends and Trendiness

Judith Bleich

For I know that Thou wilt not be appeased by a plethora of words nor wilt Thou be found by the breath of the lips, but only by a broken spirit, trembling soul and softened heart.... Deliver me from the troubles, distresses and evils of this world..., both those that are known to me and those that are hidden from me, which separate me from Thee and drive me away from Thy service.

R. BAḤYA BEN JOSEPH IBN PAKUDA, "BAKASHAH,"
APPENDED TO ḤOVOT HA-LEVAVOT

I. INTRODUCTION

Prayer – involving, as it does, the paradoxical attempt of a finite being to approach the *Ein-Sof* and to enter into communication with a transcendent God – is fraught with theological tension. The

difficulties facing the worshiper have been recognized from time immemorial. Small wonder, then, that the Psalmist's plea, "Oh Lord open my lips that my mouth may declare Your praise" (Psalms 51:17), acknowledging the need for assistance in facilitating prayer, was incorporated by the Sages as a prefatory petition¹ to be recited before approaching God in the *Amidah* prayer.² The Deity to whom prayer is addressed must be beseeched not only to answer prayer but even to enable prayer itself to become a possibility. The Talmud relates that *ḥasidim ha-rishonim*, the pious men of ancient times, were wont to spend an hour in preparation before engaging in prayer and another hour in meditation thereafter.³

Foremost medieval Jewish philosophers and theologians stressed the perils and dangers of careless prayer. Explicit and emphatic are the oft-cited admonitions of Maimonides⁴ and Ibn Ezra⁵ in their respective explications of the verse in Ecclesiastes 5:1, "Be not rash with your mouth, and let not your heart be hasty to utter one thing before God: for God is in heaven and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few." Closer to our own era, within the devotional movements of more modern times, ḥasidic teachers⁶ and exponents of *Mussar*⁷ alike dwelt upon the obstacles that must be overcome in finding suitable modes of prayer.

If a significant period of time elapses during which one is un-

¹ BT *Berakhot* 4b and 9b.

² The *Amidah* or *Shemoneh Esreih* (Eighteen Benedictions) is referred to in the Talmud as *Tefillah* because it is the quintessential prayer.

³ BT *Berakhot* 32b.

⁴ *Guide of the Perplexed*, I.59.

⁵ Commentary on Eccles. 5:1.

⁶ See, for example, sources cited in Norman Lamm, "Worship, Service of God," in *The Religious Thought of Ḥasidism: Text and Commentary* (Hoboken, NJ: Yeshiva University Press, 1999), chap. 6, pp. 175–218, especially pp. 197–8, the translation of a passage of R. Levi Yizḥak of Berdichev, *Kedushat Levi, Va-ethanan*, s.v. *o yevu'ar*, that concludes, "Hence there are two aspects to prayer: the prayer itself, and a prayer for the ability to pray [properly]."

⁷ See the earlier text, much beloved of devotees of the *Mussar* movement, R. Moshe Ḥayyim Luzzatto, *Mesillat Yesharim*, chap. 17, on preparation for prayer, concentration and avoidance of distraction. See also R. Israel Salanter, *Or Yisra'el*, no. 28 and R. Yizḥak Blaser, *Netivot Or* published with *Or Yisra'el* (London: 1951), p. 121;

able to pray in a meaningful manner, “there accumulate in one’s heart numerous stumbling blocks that produce an inner heaviness of the spirit” writes Rav Kook. Only when the gift of prayer is restored do the barriers disappear, but they do not disappear “all at once; it is a gradual process.”⁸ The difficulties encountered in expressing oneself in prayer, the obstructions – psychological and religious, personal and social – that virtually everyone experiences at one time or another, need not be belabored. A popular Habad ḥasidic melody set to Yiddish lyrics gives voice to this commonly experienced frustration: “*Essen esst zikh un trinken trinkt zikh; der khisoren iz nor vos es davenit zikh nit.*” Essentially untranslatable, a paraphrase would be: “Eat, it’s easy for us to eat; and drink, it’s easy for us to drink; the problem is that it’s just not at all easy for us to *daven.*”⁹

Yet when a contemporary writer states that “Religious worship is a particularly acute problem for the modern individual”¹⁰ the statement does not reflect the hubris of a modern writer who is convinced that present-day man faces novel predicaments and who is unaware that in seeking meaningful modalities of prayer moderns are engaged in reinventing the wheel. Commencing with the period of the Enlightenment, traditional religion has been confronted with unprecedented challenges. Contemporary Western culture, predominantly secular in nature, has created an environment in which religious worship does indeed pose a “particularly acute problem.” If in earlier ages the worshiper was frustrated by the daunting task of summoning emotional fortitude and of finding the appropriate words to address an awesome God, the modernist is all too often paralyzed by the notion of addressing prayer to a

Dov Katz, *Tenu'at ha-Mussar*, second ed. (Tel Aviv: A. Zioni, 1944), II, 302; and R. Simchah Zisel Ziff, *Hokhmah u-Mussar* (New York: 1958), pp. 65, 215–16.

⁸ *Olat Re'iyah*, (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1963), I:11.

⁹ See *Sefer ha-Niggunim*, ed. Samuel Zalmanov (Brooklyn: Hevrat Nihoah, 1949), pp. 57 and 97. R. Shalom Ber Butman relates that the late *Lubavitcher Rebbe*, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who inveighed against wasting time in sleep, was wont to sing this stanza with a slight variation, “*Essen esst zikh un shlofen shloft zikh* (Eat, it’s easy for us to eat; and sleep, it’s easy for us to sleep”).

¹⁰ Chava Weissler, “Making *Davening* Meaningful,” *YIVO Annual* 19 (1990): 255.

Deity with regard to whose existence, power or concern he or she is deeply conflicted.

Presently, at the dawn of a new millennium, increasingly large numbers of people, feeling themselves alienated and desolate in an atomized, technological universe, are endeavoring to find meaningfulness and purpose in their lives. In a secular culture devoid of a religious infrastructure this quest often expresses itself in a vague and inchoate affirmation of spiritual values. Those who find conventional religious belief difficult to accept are attracted to a form of “secular spiritualism”¹¹ akin to the teachings promoted by the Dalai Lama who purports to find some benefit in religion yet also asserts, “But even without a religious belief we can also manage. In some cases we manage even better.”¹²

Within the Jewish community as well, the hunger of the soul that underlies the search for spirituality has motivated many who heretofore were distant from Judaism to engage in a renewed encounter with their tradition. Unfortunately, far too often, those seekers find themselves in a New Age type of environment in which their encounter is with an amorphous syncretistic Judaism. Thus, a recent news item reports that a participant in a “Jewish Renewal” retreat described as “Living Waters... a spiritual health spa program grounded in ancient kabbalistic teachings” avowed that the recital of the *Ave Maria* at the retreat’s Sabbath services was “one of the most moving experiences of the week.”¹³

The early minor liturgical innovations and the subsequent trajectory of the nineteenth-century Reform movement as well as the return swing of the pendulum in the latter part of the twentieth century are well known. What is sometimes overlooked or forgotten is the rhetoric that urged implementation of those reforms in the name of spirituality and enhancement of religion. An analysis of

¹¹ Richard Bernstein, “Critic’s Notebook,” *New York Times*, 7 Oct. 1999, p. A2.

¹² Tenzin Gyatso, the Dalai Lama, and Howard C. Cutler, *The Art of Happiness: A Handbook for Living* (New York: Riverhead, 1998), p. 306. See also *idem*, *Ethics for the New Millennium* (New York: Riverhead, 1999).

¹³ *The Jerusalem Report*, 2 Aug. 1999, p. 38. Cf. Gary Rosenblatt, “Spirituality (Whatever That Means) Is on the Rise,” *The Jewish Week*, 14 Jan. 2000, p. 7.

those phenomena is particularly valuable for the light it casts on the ambiguous and amorphous meanings that attach themselves to the concept of “spirituality” and on the extent to which such meanings are influenced by, and reflective of, regnant cultural trends in society at large.

II. MOTIVATIONS

The earliest stirrings of Reform centered on improvement of the worship service. The changes advocated involved matters extrinsic to the liturgy, i.e., matters of aesthetics and comportment (the three D’s: design, dignity and decorum), as well as the language and content of the prayers themselves. From the outset, complex motivations, both assimilationist and religious in nature, were expressed candidly. Thus it was easy for opponents to point an accusatory finger. Yet the total picture is much more subtle; a skein of contradictory considerations must be unraveled.

Ostensibly, the failings and flaws of then existing synagogal practices were the impetus for innovation. But a closer look at even the very earliest formulations of the concerns of the innovators reveals a mixture of motivations, viz., a desire – quite possibly sincere – for enhanced spirituality and devotion combined with an equally strong desire – quite obviously sincere – for the acceptance and regard of non-Jewish neighbors.

Perception of the teachings and religious observances of Judaism as outmoded and primitive was rooted in the currents of anti-semitism that permeated intellectual circles of the era. During the eighteenth century, the “century of Voltaire,” France developed an intelligentsia that unabashedly expressed pronounced anti-Jewish sentiments. By the end of the century their influence had spread throughout Europe. In Germany, Immanuel Kant’s hostility to Judaism and his characterizations of the Jewish religion as obsolete and lacking in morality was representative of the thinking of his time. The only possibility for social rehabilitation of the Jews, according to Kant, lay in their rejection of unedifying rites and acceptance of “purified” religious concepts. Nor was Kant’s younger friend and sometime student, Johann Gottfried von Herder, commonly

regarded as a liberal and philosemite, incapable of expressing anti-Jewish comments. Herder disparaged what he termed “pharasaism” and disdained halakhic distinctions as ponderous hairsplitting.¹⁴ Deprecatory attitudes such as these were internalized by acculturated Jewish intellectuals in their desperate quest for acceptance in a society that had always rejected them as alien.

The imperative for change in divine worship was vigorously articulated by the forerunners and pioneers of the Reform movement, Israel Jacobson and David Friedlander. Jacobson, whose status as the father of Reform Judaism was acknowledged in the dedication of the *Hamburg Temple Prayerbook* (1819), was the president of the Westphalian Consistory. In 1810 Jacobson founded a synagogue in Seesen that he named the Temple of Jacob. The edifice was adorned with a belfry, the *bimah* was removed from its central position, and prayer was accompanied by the music of an organ. In an address delivered at the Temple’s inaugural ceremony, Jacobson declaimed with a rhetorical flourish:

What I had in mind when I first thought about building this temple was *your* religious education, my Israelite brothers, *your* customs, *your* worship, etc. Be it far from me that I should have any secret intention to undermine the pillars of your faith.... You know my faithful adherence to the faith of my fathers.... [But] Who would dare to deny that our service is sickly because of many useless things, that in part it has degenerated into a thoughtless recitation of prayers and formulae, that it kills devotion more than encourages it.... On

¹⁴ The ambiguities and ambivalences surrounding Emancipation in France are depicted in Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (New York and London: Columbia University Press and Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1968). An excellent portrayal of the German climate of thought is found in Paul Lawrence Rose, *German Question/Jewish Question: Revolutionary Antisemitism from Kant to Wagner* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); see especially, pp. 90–132.

all sides, enlightenment opens up new areas for development. Why should we alone remain behind?¹⁵

But, after stressing the importance of restoring spiritually degenerated services to religious purity, Jacobson did not hesitate to mention a further consideration and admitted:

Let us be honest, my brothers. Our ritual is still weighted down with religious customs which must be rightfully offensive to reason as well as to our Christian friends.¹⁶

In 1786 David Friedlander published his *Gebete der Juden auf das ganze Jahr*, a translation of the liturgy into German but printed in Hebrew characters because German Jews had not yet acquired facility in the reading of German. Dedicated by Friedlander to his mother and mother-in-law, the work was intended for the edification of Jewish women whose ignorance of Hebrew was taken for granted.¹⁷ The text of this prayerbook and its brief preface extolling the merits of prayer reflect no intimation of dissatisfaction with the liturgy. But not long thereafter, in his infamous proposal to Probst Teller for a conditional merging of Judaism and Christianity, Friedlander's muddled mixture of spiritual concern and denigration of the traditional liturgy is evident in his description of the *siddur*:

From century to century these prayers became more numerous and worse and worse, the conceptions more mystical,

¹⁵ W. Gunther Plaut, *The Rise of Reform Judaism: A Sourcebook of its European Origins* (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1963), p. 29.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹⁷ Early Reform writings are striking in their commendable attentiveness to the religious needs of women. A cursory glance at the history of the nineteenth-century German Jewish community reveals the presence of a cadre of educated and sophisticated women, the Salon Jewesses, who played a prominent role in German society, but were only marginally involved in the Jewish community and many of whom intermarried. A lacuna in the education and religious experience of Jewish women is unmistakable.

muddled with the principles of Kabbalah which were in direct contradiction to the genuine spirit of Judaism.... The larger portion of our nation understands nothing of these prayers and that is a happy circumstance, because in this way these prayers will have neither good nor bad effect on the sentiment of the worshipers.¹⁸

In these remarks Friedlander did not limit himself to a veiled critique of the content of the liturgy; his comments include a series of unsubstantiated slurs. The formulas of the prayers composed in Hebrew, Friedlander claimed, reveal “the weakness of an aging language.” The prayers, even those of thanksgiving for divine beneficence and including the benedictions recited under the wedding canopy, he characterized as “without exception” resounding with “the plaintive cry of slaves who pine for redemption.” In a sweeping statement filled with innuendo, he expressed the canard that, “finally, the language in which these prayers are expressed offends not only the ear, but also mocks at all logic and grammar.”¹⁹

A marginally more temperate tone pervades Friedlander’s detailed 1812 proposals for the “reformation” of Jewish worship services and educational institutions. The focus of this document is on “devotion and elevation of the soul to God.” Hebrew prayers in their traditional form, he avers, are a barrier to sincere worship. To pray in a language one does not comprehend is off-putting. But for one who does understand the language the problem is even graver because the prayers, as constituted, stand “in sharpest contrast to his convictions, his aspirations and his hopes.”²⁰ Friedlander further bemoans the substitution of quantity for quality, the dissonance be-

¹⁸ *Sendschreiben an seine Hochwürdigem, Herrn Oberconsistorialrat und Probst Teller zu Berlin, von einigen Hausvätern jüdischer Religion* (Berlin: 1799), pp. 34–5. This tract has been republished in an offset edition and with a Hebrew translation (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1975).

¹⁹ *Loc. cit.*

²⁰ Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe: The Liturgy of European Liberal and Reform Judaism* (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1968), p. 132.

tween the content of the prayers and the reality of the needs of the times as well as the absence of musical accompaniment as a result of which circumstances “the knowledgeable man of religion” who seeks edification must perforce abandon the synagogue.²¹

Although it was never explicitly stated, imitation of Protestant worship was an implicit objective. A telling anecdote illustrates this fact. Josef Johlson²² compiled one of the earliest books of hymns in the vernacular for use in a synagogue. That work, entitled *Gesangbuch für Israeliten* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1816), attained a measure of popularity. The vast majority of these songs were taken verbatim from Protestant hymnals save that Johlson substituted the words “Lord” or “my Refuge” for each mention of the name “Jesus.” Only after the book was printed was it discovered that, inadvertently, in one such occurrence the substitution had not been made. As a result, it was necessary for an entire signature of the book to be removed and replaced. This publishing mishap piquantly underscores the Christological orientation of the innovators.²³

The few rabbinic figures who responded affirmatively to the early innovations were also influenced by a variety of factors and considerations ranging from opportunism, accommodationism, naivete and desire for containment to genuine conviction and empathy. The somewhat quixotic approach of Aaron Chorin in his early writ-

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

²² A teacher of religion at the Frankfurt Philanthropin school, Johlson, under the *nom de plume* Bar Amithai, later published a pamphlet, *Über die Beschneidung in historischer und dogmatischer Hinsicht* (Frankfurt am-Main: 1843), in which he recommended abolition of circumcision and substitution of another ceremony. Johlson prepared a rubric for such a ceremony prospectively termed “The Sanctification of the Eighth Day” and designed as an egalitarian ritual suitable for both male and female infants. See Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 123 and 423, n. 86.

²³ See Heinrich Zirndorf, *Isaak Markus Jost und seine Freunde: Ein Beitrag zur Kulturgeschichte der Gegenwart* (Cincinnati: Block Publishing Co., 1886), pp. 161–2. Zirndorf adds that the historian Jost remarked, perhaps in jest, that an unemended copy of the Christological version should have been kept intact because, as a collector’s item, it would one day command a handsome price.

ings in support of liturgical reform²⁴ reveals a complexity of intent. Deep concern for the esteem of non-Jewish fellow citizens is demonstrated in his *Davar be-Ito*²⁵ both in the extensive discussions of the status of non-Jews in the first portion of each section of that work²⁶ and in his pointed remarks regarding disruptive and indecorous services that he regarded as a disgrace in the eyes of the nations.²⁷ But it is an entirely different motif that is pervasive throughout this brief work. Chorin argues that a conciliatory and moderate approach is essential in order to stem the loss of vast numbers of Jews who have become entirely disenchanted with Judaism. Contemporary Jews find existing religious services outmoded and alien. Aesthetically attractive public worship is the most effective way to arouse the alienated to renewed reverence of God and even “to observe the commandments.”²⁸ Castigating the negativity of rabbis serving the established community, Chorin contrasts their forbidding stance with the midrashic portrayal of the spiritual leadership of Moses and David, both of whom are depicted as loving shepherds who nurtured their flocks with compassion and concern for the distinctiveness of

²⁴ Chorin's views evolved over the years from an initial moderate support of innovation to a marked break with accepted halakhic practice. For biographical data on Chorin see Leopold Löw, “Aron Chorin: Eine biographische Skizze,” in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Immanuel Löw (Szegedin: 1890), vol. II, pp. 251–420 and Moshe Pelli, “The Ideological and Legal Struggle of Rabbi Aaron Chorin for Religious Reform in Judaism,” (Hebrew), *Hebrew Union College Annual* 39 (1968): Hebrew Section 63–79.

²⁵ Chorin's first defense of synagogue reform was his responsum included in *Nogah ha-Zedek* (Dessau: 1818) sanctioning the practices of the Berlin Beer Temple. In response to the attacks on him in *Eileh Divrei ha-Berit* (Altona: 1819), he published *Davar be-Ito* (Vienna: 1820). This slim book is presented in a curious format. It is comprised of three sections: A Hebrew section; a similar but not identical German section in Gothic characters entitled *Ein Wort zu seiner Zeit: Über die Nächstenliebe und den Gottesdienst*; and the identical German section in Hebrew characters. The German-language section is sharper and more condemnatory in tone than the Hebrew one. Citation in this paper will be either to the Hebrew or to the German sections as identified by their respective titles.

²⁶ “Nächstenliebe, *Ein Wort*, pp. 5–27 and “Shaar Torah,” *Davar be-Ito*, pp. 5–22.

²⁷ *Davar be-Ito*, p. 43.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 26–7.

each and every one of their charges. The Midrash portrays David as taking pains to give sheep of different ages food appropriate to their needs and describes how Moses followed a small kid that strayed from its flock in search of water, picked it up and carried it in his arms.²⁹ Those models should illustrate for us, Chorin contends, that one must exercise wisdom and understanding in guiding each individual Jew in accordance with his needs and talents and must lovingly mentor the weak and frail who flee the flock “bearing them on one’s shoulder to green pastures – to the paths of faith, that they not be utterly cast aside from the paths of life.”³⁰

Chorin’s later writings, however, emphasize not so much the need to attract the disaffected as the quest to enhance devotion. During the last weeks of his life he wrote to a conference of Hungarian rabbis in Paks:

I need not tell you that of all the external institutions the public service demands our immediate and undivided attention. He who is faithful to his God, and is earnestly concerned for the welfare of his religion, must exert himself to rescue our service from the ruin into which it has fallen and to give it once again that inspiring form which is worthy of a pious and devout worship of the one true God. For it is not only the excrescences of dark ages which cover it with disgrace, but thoughtlessness, lack of taste, absence of devotion, and caprice have disfigured its noble outlines.”³¹

Reform reconceptualization of Judaism, it has been quite correctly noted,³² was an attempt to recast Judaism in the cultural

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 47–8, citing *Midrash Rabbah, Shemot 2*.

³⁰ *Davar be-Ito*, p. 48.

³¹ Cited in David Philipson, *The Reform Movement in Judaism*, revised ed. (New York: Ktav, 1967), p. 442, n. 112.

³² See Meyer, *Reponse*, pp. 17–18. In stating that, like early Lutheranism, Judaism paid little attention to the subjective religious state of the individual and regarded observance of the commandments “as an end in itself, not the means to any other,” Meyer, in common with Reform thinkers of the nineteenth century, overlooks classical Jewish sources.

and theological mold of the host country. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the center of gravity in Protestantism moved from a God-centered faith to a focus on the individual's subjective religious conscience. The concepts of *Glückseligkeit* (spiritual contentment) and *Erbauung* (edification) became much vaunted religious goals. Following those Christian trends, Reform innovators favored retention of customs and rituals that they perceived to be spiritually uplifting and proposed innovations that they thought would enhance religious experience.

In doing so they remained blissfully unaware of classic sources of Jewish teaching and failed to seek guidance in the vast corpus of Jewish ethical literature. The classic early-day work *Sefer ha-Ḥinnukh* unambiguously finds moral edification to be the primary goal of particular *mizvot*. According to *Sefer ha-Ḥinnukh*, the multiplicity of commandments is intended as a form of behavior modification designed to habituate man to the path of virtue. *Sefer ha-Ḥinnukh's* philosophy of *mizvot* is exemplified in a number of emblematic statements that serve as a motto for the entire work:

Know that a man is influenced in accordance with his actions. His heart and all his thoughts are always [drawn] after his deeds in which he is occupied, whether [they are] good or bad.... For after one's acts is the heart drawn....

The omnipresent God wished to make Israel meritorious; therefore He gave them...a multitude of *mizvot*...that all our preoccupation should be with them.... For by good actions we are acted upon to become good....³³

...For the physical self becomes cleansed through [its] actions. As good actions are multiplied and as they are continued with great perseverance, the thoughts of the heart become purified, cleansed and refined.³⁴

³³ *Sefer ha-Ḥinnukh* ascribed to R. Aaron ha-Levi of Barcelona, trans. Charles Wengrov (Jerusalem and New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1991) vol. 1, no. 16, pp. 119–21.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, no. 95, pp. 359.

Centuries later, R. Moshe Ḥayyim Luzzatto expressed similar concepts in nomenclature paralleling the language of *Erbauung* and *Glückseligkeit*. Central to his thought is his description of man's goal in life as attainment of perfection through attachment to God by means of the *mizvot*.³⁵

The term *Glückseligkeit*, or spiritual contentment, lends itself to a wide variety of interpretations, some worldly, others somewhat otherworldly. Nevertheless, as used in theological writings, the term clearly connotes a state of spiritual well-being. The distinction between worldly success (*haẓlahah*) and serenity of spirit (*osher*) is emphasized in the much later comments of R. Meir Leibush Malbim in his explication of the spiritual contentment the Psalmist ascribes to the righteous.³⁶

A major contribution of R. Samson Raphael Hirsch in *Ḥoreb* was precisely his analysis of *mizvot* in a manner that stressed their ethical moment. He made use of the vocabulary and conceptual framework of the day in demonstrating the manner in which *mizvot* further the goals regarded by Reform thinkers as paramount. The *mizvot* that Reform regarded as superfluous R. Hirsch found to be invaluable in promoting the selfsame spirituality that the innovators found so significant. He faulted Reform ideologues for failing to appreciate the richness of their heritage and for not mining its treasures. It is this fundamental assessment that underlies R. Hirsch's sharp critique of the Reform movement.

Although many rabbinic authorities indiscriminately branded all innovators as rebels and sinners whose goal was simply to ease the burden of religious observance, some realized that the picture was not monochromatic. R. Samson Raphael Hirsch disarmingly chose to seize upon the positive motivations of the innovators even while deploring their actions. Regarding those who proposed innovations for the sake of promoting spiritual improvement he counseled, "Re-

³⁵ *Derekh ha-Shem*, (Amsterdam: 1896), chaps. 3–4.

³⁶ Psalms 1:1. Cf. R. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Nineteen Letters*, trans. Karin Paritzky (Jerusalem and New York: Feldheim, 1995), second letter, pp. 14–5, for R. Hirsch's rejection of happiness in the conventional sense as the ultimate goal of mankind.

spect all of them, for they sense a shortcoming; they desire the good as they conceive it.”³⁷ It was a tragedy, he maintained, that their good intentions had led to deleterious results. That occurred, he asserted, because exponents of Reform responded to the spiritual challenge of the time in a shallow and superficial manner. These individuals were satisfied, claimed R. Hirsch, with an “uncomprehended Judaism and merely to revise the outward forms of one misunderstood part of it, the Divine service and [to] remodel it according to the sentimentalities of the age”³⁸ rather than seeking to intensify efforts to invigorate a Judaism “intellectually comprehended and vigorously implemented.”³⁹

In turning our attention to specific liturgical innovations with regard to language, music, aesthetics, decorum, duration of services, recitation of *piyyut* (liturgical poetry) and fundamentals of belief, it is instructive to take cognizance of rabbinic discussions of those issues in order to appreciate the extent to which traditionalists did or did not relate to the concerns expressed by Reform writers.

III. LANGUAGE

The second⁴⁰ formal prayerbook incorporating liturgical reforms, *Die deutsche Synagoge*, edited by Eduard Kley and C.S. Günsburg, clearly articulated the ardor with which the constituency to whom it was addressed embraced the German language. While the editors acknowledge a lingering fealty to Hebrew (“Holy is the language in which God once gave the Law to our fathers”) based on a reverence for past history (“...a memorial...a sweet echo...and venerable it will remain for everyone who still reveres the past”), they were unabashed in their passionate expression of sentiment for the German language, proclaiming:

³⁷ *Ibid.*, seventeenth letter, p. 243.

³⁸ *Loc. cit.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

⁴⁰ *Gebete am Sabbath Morgens und an den beiden Neujahrs-Tagen*, the earliest Reform prayerbook published anonymously, probably in 1815, without indication of city or year of publication, consists of a number of sections that originally appeared separately and were subsequently bound together. As early as 1815, Jacobson

But seven times more holy unto us is the language which belongs to the present and to the soil whence we have sprung forth...the language in which a mother greets her new-born child...the language which unites us with our fellow men... the language, finally, in which our philanthropic and just king speaks to us, in which he proclaims his law to us....⁴¹

The ensuing controversy over the language of prayer can be properly appreciated only in light of extravagant rhetoric such as this and the ideology it betrays. At issue were not the bare bones of halakhic rulings regarding the legitimacy of prayer in the vernacular but the much more profound questions of motivation and of fundamental loyalty to, and appreciation of, the sancta of Judaism.

Promotion of prayer in the vernacular was a primary issue in the agenda of worship reform. While yet in Westphalia, Israel Jacobson solicited halakhic opinions in an endeavor to validate the contemplated change. The responses of R. Samuel Eiger of Brunswick, a cousin of the famed R. Akiva Eiger, deploring the proposal⁴² and of the Westphalian Consistory's own R. Menahem Mendel Steinhardt endorsing hymns in the vernacular and alluding to the permissibility of vernacular prayer in general,⁴³ were but the first salvos in what was to become a pitched battle.

sent copies of those prayers and of German hymns from a songbook issued in Cassel (1810 and revised in 1816) to a government minister. See Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 49 and p. 406, n. 145.

⁴¹ From the preface to *Die deutsche Synagoge*, vol. 1 (Berlin: 1817), cited in Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, p. 135. The same year that this prayerbook was published, the first French Jewish periodical, *L'Israélite Français*, advocated the introduction of French language prayers. However, in France, unlike in Germany, substitution of the vernacular for Hebrew, as espoused by radicals, did not gain popular acceptance. See Phyllis Cohen Albert, "Nonorthodox Attitudes in French Judaism," in *Essays in Modern Jewish History*, ed. Frances Malino and Phyllis Cohen Albert (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1982), pp. 123–4 and 132.

⁴² R. Samuel Eiger's letter to Jacobson is published in B.H. Auerbach, *Geschichte der Israelitischen Gemeinde Halberstadt* (Halberstadt: 1866), pp. 219–221.

⁴³ *Divrei Igeret* (Rödelheim: 1812), p. 10a.

Turning the question on its head, Aaron Chorin noted that the proper question to be posed is not whether one may pray in the vernacular but whether one may pray in Hebrew, a language understood by “barely three out of ten.” Chorin suggested the existence of an absolute requirement that prayer services be conducted in the vernacular in order to be understood by all.⁴⁴ Conceding that Hebrew, no less so than any other language, is subsumed in the dispensation “A person may pray in any language in which he desires” and that, in addition, Hebrew carries with it the distinction of history and tradition as well as the encomium “holy tongue,” Chorin concludes that, nevertheless, it is preferable that a person pray in the language he understands as recommended by *Magen Avraham, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 104:4. Since *Magen Avraham’s* ruling applies to an individual rather than to the community, Chorin commends as sagacious the decision of the innovators who reached a compromise in maintaining Hebrew as the language used by the cantor in chanting major obligatory prayers while introducing German in other parts of the liturgy.⁴⁵

Chorin’s final comment on the language of prayer illustrates the manner in which people who viewed themselves as the cultural vanguard and in tune with the *Zeitgeist* were yet limited and constrained by the very notions that they deemed to be enlightened and liberal. Chorin concludes his call for enhanced, aesthetically pleasing worship services with the observation that women must not be excluded from the benefits of communal prayer for gone are the barbaric ages in which women were viewed as an inferior species. “But,” he asks, “in which language are such services to be conducted? Surely not solely in Hebrew, of which women do not have the vaguest notion and which has no appeal whatsoever to their spirit (*die ihr Gemüth in gar keiner Beziehung anspricht*).”⁴⁶ *Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in eis!*

Chorin’s initial moderate stance was soon abandoned. As is well known, extensive discussions regarding the use of Hebrew in reli-

⁴⁴ *Ein Wort*, p. 38.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 39–40.

⁴⁶ *Ein Wort*, p. 47.

gious services took place at the second Reform rabbinical conference in Frankfurt in 1845. The delegates determined that Jewish law did not require use of Hebrew as the language of prayer. A subsequent vote of 15 to 13, affirming that retention of Hebrew in public services was not necessary on other grounds, led Zecharias Frankel to leave the conference and part company with the Reform movement. Insistence on preservation of Hebrew as the language of liturgy was a defining feature of Frankel's positive historical Judaism, an ideology that was later to be institutionalized in this country as Conservative Judaism. Frankel contended that the Hebrew language was integral to the essence of Judaism and still vibrantly alive in the emotions of Jews even if their knowledge of the language was deficient.⁴⁷

At the Frankfurt conference, Abraham Adler, Joseph Kahn, Abraham Geiger and David Einhorn made unequivocal statements endorsing prayer in the vernacular. Adler urged his colleagues to avoid sentimentality in the search for truth, to recognize that no language is sacred and instead to acknowledge that it is the content of language rather than the words that convey sanctity. Prayer in Hebrew, he contended, offered by those who do not understand the language, encourages lip service and hypocrisy. Moreover, he argued, the Hebrew language is meager and inadequate as a medium for prayer since it is lacking in vocabulary and nuances of expression and "In any case, it is dead because it does not live within the people."⁴⁸ Kahn similarly claimed that there is "no pure religious impulse" inherent in a language. Although he conceded that some Hebrew must be retained provisionally, Kahn asserted that under ideal circumstances services should be conducted entirely in German.⁴⁹ Geiger confessed that, as far as he personally was concerned, prayer in German aroused him to deeper devotion than did Hebrew prayer for it is in German that "All our deepest feelings and sentiments, all

⁴⁷ See Meyer, *Response*, pp. 88 and 137, and Philipson, *Reform Movement*, pp. 165–6 and 189–93.

⁴⁸ *Protokolle und Aktenstücke der zweiten Rabbiner-Versammlung* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1845), p. 45.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

our highest thoughts, receive their expression.”⁵⁰ Hebrew must be viewed as a dead language, argued David Einhorn, and, assuredly, smiting the rock of a dead language will not produce living waters with which to quench people’s thirst.⁵¹ Accordingly, for Einhorn, there is no doubt that Hebrew

is not the organ with which to express the feelings of the people. Aforetimes, prayer was only a cry of pain; a scarcely intelligible expression sufficed for this; but now people need a prayer that shall express thoughts, feelings and sentiments; this is possible only through the mother tongue.⁵²

It is evident from these comments that Reform abandonment of Hebrew was not motivated purely by concern for enhancement of devotion in prayer but was motivated equally by an announced desire to deemphasize nationalistic aspirations. Joseph Maier did indeed acknowledge the “nationalistic” value inherent in the phenomenon of Jews in different lands sharing a common language of prayer but asserted that any such benefit could be achieved by restricting use of Hebrew to a few brief prayers such as the *Shema* and *Kedushah* and to some Torah readings. “Anything else,” he added “I consider detrimental.”⁵³ Jacob Auerbach more candidly asserted that the fundamental question to be addressed was “the relationship of the national to the religious element.” The question, he declared, is no longer what is desirable but what is necessary “to accomplish our mission.” In that respect, “History has decided; centuries lie between the national and the religious elements.... The purely religious element is the flower of Judaism.”⁵⁴ Nevertheless, Auerbach

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 32–3. Cf. the contention of J. Jolowicz, *ibid.*, p. 38, *contra* Z. Frankel, that “*vox populi*” and “*salus publica*” militate for German and against Hebrew since the vast majority of the populace “think and feel in German” and have therefore turned their backs on synagogues that employ Hebrew as the language of prayer.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

contended, Jewish history mandates continued study of Hebrew as the language of Scripture and of the sources upon which the liturgy is based. However, he asserted, the language of devotional prayer at its core must be the vernacular.⁵⁵

One of the few congregations to give concrete expression to this extreme viewpoint was the Berlin *Genossenschaft für Reform im Judenthum* (Association for the Reform of Judaism) whose published prayerbook eliminated almost all vestiges of Hebrew. Their prayerbook reflected the firm conviction of members of the Association that liturgy must employ only a living language whose mode of thought and expression was familiar to the worshiper.⁵⁶ Similarly, a radical group, Friends of Reform, located in Worms stated forthrightly: “We must no longer pray in a dead language when word and sound of our German mother tongue are to us both understandable and attractive. These alone, therefore, are suited to lift us up to our Creator.”⁵⁷

Remarkable is the fact that proponents of Reform in Germany differed from their counterparts in other countries in the nature of their espousal of vernacular prayer. Thus, for example, in the United States, the members of the Charleston congregation who joined Isaac Harby in 1824 in petitioning for worship innovation and prayer in the vernacular⁵⁸ and, at a later date, Isaac M. Wise, in advocating the rendition of selected prayers in English,⁵⁹ presented a straightforward case based on the need to understand the content

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 47. One of the dissenting votes at the Conference was that of Leopold Schott of Randegg who underscored the significance of educating youth in the Hebrew language by citing Maimonides, *Commentary on the Mishnah, Avot 2:1*. Maimonides categorizes the study of Hebrew language as an example of an “easy *mizvah*.” In response, Gotthold Salomon countered that Maimonides “is not an unimpeachable authority (*keine unumstössliche Autorität*).” See *ibid.*, pp. 49–50.

⁵⁶ Plaut, *Rise*, p. 59.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁵⁸ See the memorandum submitted to the Adjunta of Congregation Beth Elohim, in Charleston published in *A Documentary History of the Jews of the U.S. 1654–1875*, ed. Morris U. Schappes, third ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), pp. 172–3.

⁵⁹ James G. Heller, *I.M. Wise: His Life, Work and Thought* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1965), pp. 393, 395, and 566.

of the liturgy. In contrast, the German writers exhibited an exaggerated veneration of German and gave voice to an often mean-spirited denigration of the Hebrew language.⁶⁰

From the outset, rabbinical scholars were keenly aware of the implications of decisions regarding the language of prayer both for the individual and for the community *qua* community. It was precisely the *spiritual* aspect of this question rather than its halakhic parameters that was emphasized by authoritative rabbinic spokesmen.

With regard to some areas of dispute it may be the case that nuances of the Reform proposals were not fully appreciated by rabbinic figures because of the culture gap that existed between those rabbis and their more worldly coreligionists. However, rabbinic leaders demonstrated in their responses that, with regard to the question of use of Hebrew as the language of prayer, they were not at all unaware of issues that went far beyond technicalities of *halakhah*. They realized that preservation of the Hebrew language was intimately linked to the unity of the Jewish people and the preservation of the Torah.

⁶⁰ It is noteworthy that in the opinion of the radical exponent of Reform, David Einhorn, the triumph of Reform ideology was contingent upon preservation of the German language. Accordingly, he advocated that American-born youngsters be taught German so that they might become familiar with the German philosophical background of the Reform movement. See Kaufmann Kohler, "David Einhorn, the Uncompromising Champion of Reform Judaism," *Central Conference of American Rabbis Yearbook* 19 (1909): 255. In light of his attitude toward Hebrew it is instructive to note Einhorn's assertion: "If you sever from Reform the German spirit – or what amounts to the same thing – the German language, you will have torn it from its native soil and the lovely flower will wilt." See *Dr. David Einhorn's Ausgewählte Predigten und Reden*, ed. Kaufmann Kohler (New York: Steiger, 1880), p. 90.

Passionate espousal of the German language remained a characteristic feature of German Jews well into the twentieth century. There is an excellent literary portrayal of this phenomenon in Nathan Shaham's masterful novel, *The Rosendorf Quartet*, translated from Hebrew into English by Dalya Bilu (New York: Grove Press, 1991). Shaham's fictional protagonist, the German writer Egon Lowenthal, who finds himself in misery as an expatriate in Palestine of the 1930s ("I am a German writer who thinks in German, writes in German, and loves and hates in German" [p. 270]; "I am full of longing for Germany. Lines of German poetry buzz in my head, and in my heart

Although R. Samuel Eiger's responsum dwelt on the pivotal role of Hebrew as a spiritual bond for Jews the world over⁶¹ and R. Akiva Eiger's pronouncement was predicated upon halakhic minutiae, R. Akiva Eiger was aware, no less so than his cousin, of the assimilatory motives of the innovators, of their desire to curry favor in the eyes of the nations⁶² and of their "shaming our pure and beautiful language."⁶³

The several contributions of R. Moses Sofer, *Hatam Sofer*, to the anti-Reform tract *Eileh Divrei ha-Berit* were the subject of much satiric comment on the part of early partisans of Reform who asserted that his rulings on vernacular prayer were contrary to talmudic law and the general tenor of his comments was abstruse and mystical, naïve and superstitious.⁶⁴ There is, however, no naiveté at all evident in *Hatam Sofer's* response to the suggestion of Aaron Chorin that the *Pesukei de-Zimra* (Verses of Song) be recited in the vernacular and Hebrew preserved only for recitation of the *Shema* and the *Amidah*. *Hatam Sofer* concedes that, with regard to recitation of the *Pesukei de-Zimra* in the vernacular, "I, too, would say that it is not such a terrible thing." However, he pointedly questions Chorin's ultimate agenda. If most congregants are able to master some Hebrew there is no need to make specious distinctions and therefore, he queries,

is only a deep pain" [p. 278]; "there is no music sweeter to my ear than the sound of the German language" [p. 325]), expresses a view of Hebrew fully consistent with that of members of the early Reform movement when he derides his Zionist friends as "People who are content with a vocabulary of three hundred words" (p. 270) and who "speak an artificial language" (p. 281) and describes Hebrew as "a dead language which all of the flogging in the world will not revive" (p. 318).

⁶¹ Auerbach, *Geschichte*, pp. 219–21.

⁶² This responsum is published in L. Wreschner, "Rabbi Akiba Eiger's Leben und Wirken," in *Jahrbuch der Jüdisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft*, vol. 3 (1905), pp. 75–7 and in *Likkut Teshuvot ve-Hiddushim mi-Rabbi Akiva Eiger* (Bnei Brak: 1968), pp. 11–3.

⁶³ *Eileh Divrei ha-Berit*, pp. 27–8.

⁶⁴ See, for example, Meyer Israel Bresselau, *Herev Nokemet Nekom Berit* (Hamburg: 1819), p. 15; Chorin, *Davar be-Ito*, pp. 46–7 and *Ein Wort*, pp. 43–4; and David Caro, *Berit Emet* (Dessan: 1820), p. 52.

why does Chorin “not direct them to study the holy tongue? After all, they do study the languages of the nations.”⁶⁵

An unwillingness to veer from the traditional use of Hebrew in statutory prayer does not necessarily imply that rabbinic authorities were insensitive to the advantages of self-expression in a language in which an individual is fully conversant. One of the most intransigent halakhic discussions regarding acceptability of prayer in the vernacular is that of R. Abraham Lowenstamm of Emden.⁶⁶ Yet even R. Lowenstamm explicitly adds that, following recitation of the statutory prayers, every individual should feel free to address personal prayer, thanksgiving or supplication as moved by one’s spirit in any form one chooses. In offering such private prayer one should take pains that one’s language be both pure and clear as befits supplication addressed to a monarch and “Of course, a prayer or thanksgiving such as this must necessarily be said in the language one understands and not in a language one does not understand, even if it is in the holy tongue.”⁶⁷

The importance of fluency and understanding in prayer was particularly well appreciated by the ḥasidic teacher, R. Naḥman of Bratslav. Although he cannot be described as a representative of mainstream rabbinic or even ḥasidic thought, R. Naḥman’s teachings are much revered in Orthodox circles. R. Naḥman urged his followers to address supplications to the Almighty daily in the language in which they were accustomed to speak. Especially when the “channels of prayer” are clogged or blocked, asserted R. Naḥman, there is a need to use one’s native language in order to burst the dam. R. Naḥman extolled the virtue of solitude and recommended

⁶⁵ *Eleh Divrei ha-Berit*, p. 38. Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Understanding Jewish Prayer* (New York: Ktav, 1952), p. 52, concedes that the hidden agenda of Reform exponents is evidenced by the fact that they did not make any attempt to encourage adult study of Hebrew; their obvious intent was to propagate an ideology that would divorce Judaism from its nationalistic foundations.

⁶⁶ *Zeror ha-Ḥayyim* (Amsterdam: 1820), “*Lashon Esh*,” pp. 28a–35b and “*Safah Nokhriyah*,” pp. 42a–53b. The second edition of *Zeror ha-Ḥayyim* (Ujhely: 1868), with different pagination, has been reproduced in an offset edition (Brooklyn: 1992).

⁶⁷ *Zeror ha-Ḥayyim*, p. 52b.

seclusion in a room or a field for a designated period of time for the purpose of engaging in solitary communion the more readily to attain singleminded devotion in service of God. R. Naḥman explicitly advised:

This prayer and conversation should be in the vernacular, Yiddish,⁶⁸ since you may find it difficult to express yourself fully in the Holy Tongue (Hebrew). Furthermore, since we do not customarily speak Hebrew, your words would not come from the heart. But Yiddish, our spoken language and the one in which we converse, more readily engages the emotions, for the heart is more attracted to Yiddish. In Yiddish we are able to talk freely and open our hearts and tell God everything, whether remorse and repentance for the past, or supplications for the privilege of coming closer to Him freely from now on, or the like, each of us according to his own level. Try carefully to make this a habit, and set aside a special time for this purpose every day....

...Even if you occasionally fumble for words and can barely open your mouth to talk to Him, that in itself is [still] very good, because at least you have prepared yourself and are standing before Him, desiring and yearning to speak even if you cannot. Moreover, the very fact that you are unable to do so should become a subject of your discussion and prayer. This in itself should lead you to cry and plead before God that you are so far removed from Him that you cannot even talk to Him, and then to seek favor by appealing to His compassion and mercy to enable you to open your mouth so that you can speak freely before Him.

Know that many great and famous *zaddikim* relate that they reached their [high] state only by virtue of this

⁶⁸ The Hebrew text reads “*bi-leshon ashkenaz (be-medinatenu)*,” i.e., in the German language (in our country). The reference is obviously to Yiddish. See “*Or Zoreah*,” p. 4, published as an addendum to *Ḥayyei Moharan* (Brooklyn: Moriah Offset, 1974), where, in discussing R. Naḥman’s advocacy of personal prayer in the vernacular, the term “*prost Yiddish*,” i.e., simple Yiddish, is employed.

practice. The wise will understand from this how important such practice is and how it rises to the very highest levels. It is something that everyone, great or small, can benefit from, for everyone is able to do this and reach great heights through it.⁶⁹

Doubtless as a result of their distrust of the motives of protagonists of Reform, rabbinic respondents who addressed the issue of prayer in the vernacular tended, at times, to overstate their opposition. A prime example is the *Zeror ha-Ḥayyim* of R. Abraham Lowenstamm of Emden. R. Lowenstamm's monograph stands out as the most systematic discussion of the halakhic questions raised by the innovations of the Hamburg Temple. However, although his halakhic analyses are comprehensive and his principal theses are cogent, his analogies and justifications are, at times, weak. Thus, in emphatic rulings confirming the necessity of retaining Hebrew as the language of prayer, R. Lowenstamm declares that accurate translation into Western European languages is not at all feasible with the result that it is entirely impossible to fulfill one's obligation with regard to prayer by reciting the *Amidah* in the vernacular.⁷⁰ Other authorities are careful to note that one who cannot read Hebrew but prays in the language he understands fulfills his duty.⁷¹

Addressing the question of alteration of the text of statutory

⁶⁹ *Likkutei Moharan, Tinyana*, no. 25 (New York: 1958), p. 301. The translation is taken from Lamm, *Hasidism*, pp. 198–199. See also *Ḥayyei Moharan*, vol. II, “*Shivḥei Moharan, maalat ha-hitboddedut*,” nos. 3–4, p. 45, in which it is reported that R. Nahman saw merit in utter simplicity in personal supplication, in the manner of a child turning to a parent or a person approaching a friend, and that he asserted that if one is but able to utter the words “*Ribbono shel Olam*” as a plea, that alone is beneficial. Cf. R. Yonatan Eibeschutz, *Yaarot Devash* (Lemberg: 1863), pt. 2, p. 4a, who recommends recitation of a private confession or *viduy* in the vernacular.

⁷⁰ *Zeror ha-Ḥayyim*, pp. 49a–b.

⁷¹ See, for example, R. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Ḥoreb: A Philosophy of Jewish Laws and Observances*, trans. Isidor Grunfeld, fourth ed. (New York, London, & Jerusalem: Soncino Press, 1981), no. 688, pp. 544 and 547, who carefully stipulates that a person may pray in the vernacular only “as long as he faithfully mentions all the essential parts of prescribed forms of prayer.” See his comments on the *Shema* and the Torah reading. *Ḥoreb* is noteworthy for the precision and meticulousness with

blessings and prayers, R. Lowenstamm focuses particularly on the contention of the innovators that their motive for change was the desire to increase devotion and spirituality and on their claim that if the wording of prayers and blessings were to be in closer consonance with the usage of the time, prayer would become more meaningful to contemporary worshipers and the atmosphere of the services would be enhanced. R. Lowenstamm stresses that the precise wording of prayer was meticulously chosen by inspired sages whose intent was to find the vocabulary most perfectly attuned to spiritual requests. Those saintly teachers plumbed the wondrous secrets and mysteries of the metaphysical world, knew exactly how to relate them to human concerns, and understood how best to find intelligible language to describe an unknowable God. Later generations, lacking comparable wisdom, must rely on, and be guided by, those saintly and inspired sages.⁷²

R. Lowenstamm then offers a much more dubious argument in suggesting that the matter may be understood by analogies to two separate situations. A physician prescribes various medicines and serums for a patient. Bystanders lacking medical sophistication, who neither know the properties of the medicaments nor appreciate the nature of the disease, should hesitate to tamper with the physician's prescriptions even if, for whatever reason, those prescriptions are not to their liking. Or, to take a different example, a commoner finding himself a stranger at the royal court would do well to follow the protocol and instructions of the king's trusted courtiers. Aware of the obvious counterarguments, R. Lowenstamm seeks to deflect them. He admits that the selfsame examples may be employed to demonstrate the very opposite conclusion. Medicine has changed over the centuries and remedies that were once deemed beneficial are no longer in vogue. Changes have occurred in royal courts as well; in modern times rulers eschew pomp and ceremony and have adopted a far less formal mode of conduct in interaction with their subjects. In a rather feeble rebuttal, R. Lowenstamm avers that physi-

which halakhic rulings are formulated. Cf. R. Zevi Hirsch Chajes, *Minḥat Kena'ot* in *Kol Sifrei Maharaz Hayes*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Divrei Hakhamim, 1958), pp. 983–4.

⁷² *Zeror ha-Ḥayyim*, “*Siftei Yeshenim*,” p. 20b.

cal illnesses rather than medications have changed, whereas with regard to maladies of the soul such change has not occurred. With regard to the second analogy, he declares that one cannot possibly compare temporal kings who, as human beings, are prone to change, to the King of Kings before whom our conduct must always reflect an unchanging standard of reverence and awe.⁷³ Of course, in offering that final debater's point, R. Lowenstamm vitiates his own analogy. If there can be no comparison between human monarchs and the Deity in terms of present-day conduct, the analogy may be equally flawed with regard to comportment of a bygone era.

R. Zevi Hirsch Chajes, known as *Maharaz Ḥayes*, presents a detailed discussion of various technical halakhic questions with regard to prayer in the vernacular and adds the comment that, by eschewing Hebrew, Reform leaders sinned greatly in sundering the firm bond that exists among Jews dispersed to all corners of the world

who are yet united and intertwined with one another through the medium of the Hebrew language that is understood by them since they pray in it. This alone remains to us as a portion from all the precious things that we had in days of yore. And now these villains come to rob us of even this ornament so that there will not remain with us anything at all that can testify to the magnitude of the holiness of our people. The danger threatens that with this conduct the entire Torah will also be forgotten even from those few who yet occupy themselves with it.⁷⁴

Maharaz Ḥayes points to an important historical precedent in the conduct of Jews at the time of Ezra. The exiles who returned from Babylon had become habituated to the language of their host country and in a relatively brief period of time had forgotten Torah and *miṣvot* to the point that they were no longer familiar even with

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 20b–21a.

⁷⁴ *Minḥat Kena'ot*, p. 984, note.

the manner of celebrating the festivals and the sanctity of the Day of Atonement. Ezra sought to restore the Torah to its glory and it was precisely for that reason that Ezra introduced the weekday public reading of the Torah and, together with the Men of the Great Assembly, established a uniform liturgy. It was in this manner that Ezra assured the continuity of the Torah:

This is the principal cause that has sustained our ancestors and us so that the Torah is yet our portion in all its details. Those...who call themselves Reformers wish to uproot everything. From this alone [the abandonment of Hebrew] it is evident that their entire aim is to erase from us anything that has a connection to our holy Torah in order that we may join and make common cause with the nations in whose midst we dwell. If their spirit were loyal to the people of Israel and its God, as they constantly dare to claim in their deception...they would not dream of a ruinous matter such as this.⁷⁵

R. Chajes emphasizes that the preservation of Torah is inextricably bound with preservation of the holy tongue. Citing the talmudic comment, BT *Megillah* 10b, “‘and I will cut off from Babylon the name and remnant’ (Isaiah 14:22) – This is the writing and the language,” *Maharaz Hayes* concludes, “If the populace will become accustomed to pray in the language of the country in which they live, then in a short time there will be forgotten from us the writing and the language in which the Torah is written. And the Torah, what will become of it?”⁷⁶

In one of the most inspiring passages of *Horeb*,⁷⁷ R. Samson Raphael Hirsch, advancing beyond the technical halakhic issues posed by the question of prayer in the vernacular, addresses the broader dimensions of the problem and its fundamental significance for the

⁷⁵ *Loc. cit.*

⁷⁶ *Loc. cit.*

⁷⁷ *Horeb*, no. 688, pp. 544–7.

“spirituality” of the Jewish people. R. Hirsch’s trenchant remarks reflect three fundamental points:

1. Familiarity with Hebrew is a primary educational goal. It is the first and earliest duty of a father to assure that his child become familiar with the Hebrew language of prayer. For the community, this is a *sine qua non* for preservation of its heritage.
2. Many authorities had pointed out that translation, by its very nature, must be inexact and that nuances of expression cannot be preserved. Therefore prayer in the vernacular leads to a loss of the benefit of the mysteries and the “*tikkunim*” (mystical effects) incorporated by the Sages in their prayers. R. Hirsch incisively points out that even more is at stake. The Hebrew liturgy constitutes the repository of Israel’s collective religious-national thought. There is no adequate translation that is able to capture all the nuances of this world of thought and aspiration. Supplantation of Hebrew by any other language, he argues, may lead to introduction of concepts alien to Judaism into divine worship with the result that foreign ideology may gain credence and even acquire an undeserved aura of sanctity.
3. Individuals have obligations to the community. Prayer in the vernacular thwarts the educational goals of the Sages and removes a principal bulwark against assimilation. In contrast, prayer in Hebrew on the part of each individual leads to the fulfillment of communal educational goals and to spiritual elevation of the community. Abandonment of Hebrew by the community, writes Hirsch, would “tend to drag down to our own level that which should raise us.”⁷⁸

In encouraging the community to be steadfast in their loyalty to the Hebrew language in prayer, R. Hirsch stresses the role of a community *qua* community and affirms his faith in the future:

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 546.

A community is not in truth as a single individual. The individual may and should consider his specific circumstances; he may and should use the means which are to hand as a help in his weakness. A community, however, has to consider the future generations in everything that it does, for a community is eternal and can always be rejuvenated. A community as a community is never incapable of fulfilling its task. When the older ones cannot do it, then the younger generation enters into the ranks of the community, and in twenty years or so the general body can be rejuvenated and strengthened, the younger generation achieving that which the older one did not attain. The community carries all the sanctities of Israel for the future generations. It must therefore beware of undermining what is by no means the least important pillar of the community – namely, *Avodah*, which is communal prayer in the holy tongue.⁷⁹

In a complete *volte face*, at the present time, virtually all Reform spokesmen repudiate the negative attitude of classical Reform vis-à-vis Hebrew. Poignant is the fact the arguments they now proffer echo precisely those of Orthodox rabbis of a century and a half ago.⁸⁰

The trend toward reversal was already clearly evident in the 1970s in the writings of the historian of Reform liturgy, Jakob Petuchowski. Petuchowski writes appreciatively of the genius of the Hebrew language in conveying a wide variety of meaning in a few words with the result that, for the Hebraist, prayer provides a rich spiritual and intellectual experience. Petuchowski adds that even

⁷⁹ *Loc. cit.*

⁸⁰ Before reintroduction of Hebrew had gained popularity in Reform circles, Solomon B. Freehof authored an elementary text, *In the House of the Lord: Our Worship and our Prayer Book* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1951), for use in supplementary religious schools. In moving words (pp. 140–143), Freehof presents precisely the argument of R. Samuel Eiger for retention of Hebrew as the bond joining Jews into a common fraternity. However, Freehof takes it for granted that English will also be used extensively during the services.

for those who do not understand the language, prayer in Hebrew affords a glimpse of what they readily perceive to be a holy language, a language that conveys an intimation of transcendence.⁸¹ Writing from a post-Auschwitz perspective, Petuchowski endorses prayer in the vernacular only as a transient arrangement dictated by necessity while cautioning that vernacular prayer “must never become an ideology.”⁸²

More recently, an outspoken critic of Mordecai Kaplan’s prayer-book revisions, Alan W. Miller of Manhattan’s Society for the Advancement of Judaism, asserts bluntly, “The entire effort by Jews to reshape the classical Jewish liturgy since the nineteenth century has been, in my considered judgment, a huge mistake.”⁸³ Recognizing that a radical change in our understanding of language has taken place, Miller observes:

For the Jew to pray in English – as opposed to study or to teach in English – is to incorporate automatically the value system of that language into his worship. If we have learned anything from modern linguistics it is that no language is transparent. All language is ideological...as Marshall McLuhan would say: “The medium is the message....”⁸⁴

... We must go back, in all humility...to the sources....
To pray as a Jew is to talk as a Jew. Without a thorough grounding in that language [Hebrew], prayer may evoke or edify, but it will bear no relationship to the past, present or future of a viable ongoing Jewish people.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Petuchowski, *Understanding Jewish Prayer*, pp. 47–8.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 53–4.

⁸³ Alan W. Miller, “The Limits of Change in Judaism: Reshaping Prayer,” *Conservative Judaism* 41:2 (Winter, 1988–89): 27.

⁸⁴ *Loc. cit.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28. The most recent call for revitalization of Reform worship services was issued by Eric H. Yoffie, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) at the sixty-fifth General Assembly of UAHC, in his presidential sermon, “Realizing God’s Promise: Reform Judaism in the 21st Century” (New York: UAHC, Dec. 18, 1999). Yoffie advocates “a new Reform revolution” (p. 2) that emphasizes the primacy of Hebrew and the promotion of a vigorous program of adult Hebrew

IV. MUSIC

The power of music in arousing the religious spirit has always been acknowledged in Judaism. Prayer was frequently accompanied by song (“to hearken unto the song and the prayer,” I Kings 8:28) and the Temple service incorporated elaborate musical components. Speaking of the prophet Elisha, Scripture tells us that music was a catalyst for the prophetic spirit: “*Ve-hayah ke-nagen ha-menagen va-tehi alav yad Hashem* – And it came to pass when the minstrel played, the hand of the Lord came upon him” (II Kings 3:15). In the striking ḥasidic interpretation of R. Dov Ber of Mezritch this passage is rendered: “When the music and the minstrel became a unitary whole [i.e., when the music, *ke-nagen*, became the minstrel, *ha-menagen*], then the hand of the Lord came upon him.” When musician and music fuse, inspiration is present.⁸⁶

Nonetheless, there are forms of music that are inherently inappropriate in a synagogue. In Germany the dispute over the use of the organ in the synagogue became the defining issue dividing traditionalists and the Reform elements. Introduction of the organ at services in Seesen and later in Berlin, Hamburg and Budapest was one of the earliest Reform innovations and was followed in subsequent decades in many cities in Germany, Hungary, Austria, England and the United States. Eventually, the growth and spread of Reform could be marked by the rising number of “organ synagogues,” of which there were more than thirty in the United States by 1868⁸⁷ and one hundred and thirty in Germany by the early twentieth century.⁸⁸

literacy. Yoffie states that Hebrew, as the sacred language of Jews, is “part of the fabric and texture of Judaism, vibrating with the ideas and values of our people” and that “absence of Hebrew knowledge is an obstacle to heartfelt prayer” (p. 4). Missing from this positive statement is acknowledgment of the steadfastness of the Orthodox community that preserved Hebrew prayer so that, in R. Hirsch’s words, “the general body can be rejuvenated and strengthened.”

⁸⁶ See Aaron Marcus, *He-Ḥasidut*, translated into Hebrew from German by M. Schonfeld (Tel Aviv: Neẓah, 1954), p. 84.

⁸⁷ Meyer, *Response*, p. 251.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

The halakhic question is threefold: is instrumental music permissible at worship services; if yes, is it permissible to make use of the instrument on the Sabbath; and, finally, may the instrument be played by a Jew on the Sabbath? With regard to use of the organ an additional question arises, namely, since this instrument is characteristically used in church services, is its use in the synagogue proscribed as a distinctively gentile practice prohibited by Leviticus 18:3? A host of halakhic authorities ruled against use of the organ at any time and against use of any musical instrument on the Sabbath, even when played by a non-Jew.⁸⁹

Initially, Reform sympathizers permitted the use of the organ on Sabbath but only if played by a non-Jew.⁹⁰ In his *Davar be-Ito*, Chorin expounds on the effect of music in enhancing worship and promoting spirituality. Reiterating his previously expressed decision⁹¹ permitting use of the organ, Chorin disdainfully dismisses R. Mordechai Benet's assertion that instrumental music accompanying prayer does not constitute fulfillment of a *mizvah*.⁹² Even someone

⁸⁹ The earliest discussions are found in *Eileh Divrei ha-Berit*, pp. 1, 5, 18, 23, 25, 28–31, 50, 61, 76, 81 and 85; *She'elot u-Teshuvot Hatam Sofer*, vol. 6, nos. 84, 86 and 89; and *Zeror ha-Hayyim*, "Kol ha-Shir," pp. 1A–6B. R. Chajes, in a subsequent discussion, *Minhat Kena'ot*, pp. 988–990, is unequivocal in ruling that it is forbidden to utilize the services of a non-Jew to play the instrument on Sabbath. R. Chajes deemed employment of a non-Jew for that purpose not only to be halakhically prohibited but also unseemly in that "it is not befitting for a non-Jew to take part in a service that is not in accordance with his belief." Cf. R. Abraham Sutro, "Be-Mah she-Hidshu ha-Mithadshim be-Inyanei Beit ha-Knesset," *Shomer Ziyon ha-Ne'eman*, 144 (5 Shevat, 5613): 287 and 217 (4 Shevat, 5616): 433. A later treatment of this issue is included in R. David Zevi Hoffman, *Melamed le-Ho'il*, part 1, no. 16; see also R. Yehiel Yaakov Weinberg, *Seridei Eish* (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1962), vol. 2, no. 154. Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1962), vol. 2, no. 154; and R. Abraham Isaac ha-Kohen Kook, *Orah Mishpat* (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1985), pp. 49–50. The discussion of Akiva Zimmermann, *Sha'arei Ron: Ha-Ḥazzanut be-Sifrut Ha-She'elot u-Teshuvot ve-ha-Halakhah* (Tel Aviv: Bronyahad, 1992), pp. 21–46, focuses on the dispute over use of organs in Hungarian synagogues. See also Abraham Berliner, *Ketavim Nivḥarim* (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1963), I: 173–187.

⁹⁰ *Nogah ha-Zedek*, pp. 3–28.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁹² *Eileh Divrei ha-Berit*, p. 15.

“who understands but a little of the wisdom of the ways of the soul,” writes Chorin, “must admit that the sound of an instrument has the power and force to dominate the powers of the soul, whether for joy or sadness, or whether also to give thanks, to pray and sing the kindnesses and praises of God.”⁹³ Not only is instrumental music as an accompaniment to prayer absolutely permissible, Chorin avers, but it will serve as a means of enticing many of those who have abandoned the synagogue to return. In the German section of this work, Chorin makes the sweeping statement that whatever enhances the religious spirit is not halakhically forbidden and music obviously arouses religious consciousness. Moreover, he declares, the assertion that a Christian religious practice may be proscribed on the basis of Leviticus 18:3 is not to be countenanced since that prohibition applies only to pagan ceremonies. In acid tones Chorin disparages the rabbinic establishment that disputes those views, is not open to rational argument, and, by means of ban, bell, book, and candle, exercises unchallenged tyranny over the community.⁹⁴

Delegates to the Second Reform Rabbinical Conference in Frankfurt unanimously affirmed that the organ “may and should be played by a Jew on the Sabbath.”⁹⁵ During the discussion concerning the organ that took place at the Frankfurt Conference, Samuel Holdheim expressed the conviction that the contemporary synagogue with its devotional inwardness is of a loftier character than the sacrificial services it replaces. If the sacrificial service involved no desecration of the Sabbath, then certainly, argued Holdheim, instrumental music accompanying present-day services involves no desecration of the Sabbath.⁹⁶

⁹³ *Davar be-Ito*, p. 47.

⁹⁴ *Ein Wort*, pp. 42–4.

⁹⁵ *Protokolle*, p. 151.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 150. Declaring that the organ “may and should” be played on Sabbath by a Jew, Holdheim stated: “Activity that serves for such enhancement of divine worship cannot at all be biblically proscribed. We have virtually unanimously removed from our prayers the plea for return to Jerusalem and the reinstating of the sacrificial cult and have thereby clearly stated that our houses of worship are equal to the Temple in Jerusalem... that our divine worship, with its inwardness, is higher than the sacrificial cult, replaces it and renders it superfluous for all future time.”

Proponents of the organ argued heatedly – if not very convincingly – that this instrument alone has the potential to transform the quality of worship services. Delivering a lengthy report on the question of the organ to the Frankfurt Conference on behalf of the commission on liturgy, Leopold Stein ascribed well-nigh wondrous attributes to the instrument. It might be inadvisable, he averred, to introduce the organ into the not-yet-reconstituted worship services. Yet,

introduction of the organ in the synagogue, even though it is not advisable [at present], is still *necessary*. For no service needs elevation as much as ours, during which somnolence and nonchalance are predominant. There is no more exalting means of encouraging devotion than the music which issues from that...grand instrument.⁹⁷

That emphasis on the putative role of the organ bordered on the absurd may be seen from the detailed record of the Conference proceedings. At the conclusion of the extensive report of the commission on liturgy, Joseph Maier stated categorically that “without an organ an impressive and dignified divine service is impossible” and, consequently, “the commission has deemed [use of] of the organ in the synagogue not only permissible but *dringend nothwendig* (urgently necessary).”⁹⁸

In the United States Isaac Mayer Wise introduced an organ in his temple in Cincinnati in 1855. Admitting that several years earlier such a step would have been considered “heretical,” Wise

Holdheim’s statement, uttered with perfect aplomb, did not meet with any protest on the part of his colleagues at the Conference. Although present-day Reform leaders express an attachment to the Land of Israel, these sentiments have never been accompanied by affirmation of the role of the Temple. Consequently, there is a painful incongruity in current vociferous Reform demands for unimpeded access to worship at the *Kotel* for formal Reform services.

⁹⁷ *Protokolle*, p. 328.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

championed the organ as a “Jewish instrument” commonly used in synagogues in Germany.⁹⁹ Contending that it was particularly suited for the expression of religious emotion, Wise termed the pipe-organ “the sublimest instrument of the world. . . . It is not so much a single instrument as a multitude of them, dwelling together – a cathedral of sounds within a cathedral of service.”¹⁰⁰

These encomia notwithstanding, use of the organ continued to engender heated controversy even in Reform circles.¹⁰¹ Many individuals continued to express discomfort with an obvious emulation of church practice.¹⁰² Among protagonists of Reform, the more conservative admitted openly that the organ’s Christian associations were undeniable. Isaak Noa Mannheimer stated forthrightly:

⁹⁹ *The American Israelite* 1:45 (18 May 1855): 356.

¹⁰⁰ *The American Israelite* 5:49 (10 June 1859): 389. For a report on opposition to introduction of the organ in the United States see I. Harold Sharfman, *The First Rabbi: Origins of Conflict Between Orthodox and Reform* (n.p.: Joseph Simon, Pangloss Press, 1988), pp. 379–388. Sharfman, p. 383, cites (without source) the retort of Julius Eckman, spiritual leader of Temple Emanuel of San Francisco, when asked whether a Jew may play the organ on the Sabbath: “Fifty years hence our successors will wonder more at the question than at the reply.” Ironically, Eckman’s prophecy has been fulfilled but hardly in the manner that he anticipated.

¹⁰¹ See the bibliographic references in Philipson, *Reform Movement*, p. 436, n. 95. See also Phyllis Cohen Albert, *The Modernization of French Jewry: Consistory and Community in the Nineteenth Century* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1977), pp. 264 and 290, for brief references to the situation in France where introduction of the organ continued to arouse opposition although it was endorsed by many delegates to the 1856 Paris rabbinical conference convened by Grand Rabbi Salomon Ullmann. In the United States controversy over introduction of the organ led to a court battle in Charleston in 1844. That incident involved a struggle over even more fundamental changes; the organ was simply emblematic of the underlying friction. See Allan Tarshish, “The Charleston Organ Case,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 54:4 (June, 1965): 411–49.

¹⁰² Use of a guitar as an instrumental accompaniment has become the practice in a number of present-day Reform congregations. Restrictions pertaining to use of a musical instrument on the Sabbath apply to the guitar no less so than to other instruments. However, as a religiously neutral artifact of popular culture not identified with church services, the halakhic odium associated with use of the organ does not extend to the guitar.

I would never figure on an organ, even if all outward objections against it were to cease. I admit that the sound of the organ, like the sound of bells, has become too much a characteristic of the Christian church, and it is, therefore, offensive to the Jew. Honestly, in the five years since I have become unaccustomed to the sound of the organ, it would no longer quite suit my own feelings.¹⁰³

In a moving reflection on prayer, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik notes that overemphasis on an external aesthetic is alien to the mood of the synagogue and that organ music is not only halakhically objectionable but that it conjures a spirit foreign to the traditional “worship of the heart”:

From a musical viewpoint the forms developed by the generations lack perfect structure. The Jewish melodic formula is often marked by the absence of strict form, and by sudden leaps and bounds. One who seeks harmonies and euphonies in the tunes of Jewish prayer is destined to disappointment. What can be found is stychic eruption of feeling. . . . Unlike the Church, Jewish Synagogues never developed architecture or decorative means with which to enchant man, to anesthetize him into a supernatural mood. They never created the illusion of standing before God when the heart seeks Him not, when the heart is, in fact, hard as stone, cruel and cynical. Our Synagogues were never in the dominion of half-darkness; the clear light of the sun was never hidden by narrow stained-glass windows. There never echoed the rich, polyphonic strains of the organ, and the song of the mixed choir, hidden from the eyes of worshippers, in order to create a mysterious, unworldly, mood. They never tried to extract the Jew from reality, to introduce him to spirits. To the contrary: they always demanded that prayer be continuous to life and that in

¹⁰³ Cited in Plaut, *Rise*, p. 44.

it man confess the truth. For this reason the Catholic-style dramatization of prayer is so utterly alien to our religious sense, therefore the great opposition of Halakhah to so-called modernization of prayer services which erases the uniquely original in “worship of the heart.”¹⁰⁴

Once welcomed as the hallmark of Reform innovation, the organ has lost its popular appeal. In Great Britain, the West London Synagogue and Manchester’s Park Place Synagogue both installed organs in 1858.¹⁰⁵ In recent years, however, an increasing number of Britain’s Reform synagogues have abandoned the instrument. In a brief journalistic survey of attitudes in the British Reform movement, Simon Rucker cites reactions such as “...we prefer congregational singing. Our performances may be less polished but they are more *heimeshe*,” “[with an organ] the congregation was quite passive.... [Without an organ], there is now more participation and people feel less inhibited.” Respondents admitted quite candidly “...I have always associated organs with churches.... I’d much rather hear the beautiful voices than an electric whine;” “I suppose it (the organ) has an association with the Church of England;” and “I would say that the congregation is split fifty–fifty in favor and against. The young don’t want it. They feel it is anachronistic, untraditional, and doesn’t reflect anything Jewish.”

Ironically, several British Reform temples have discarded the organ during most services, but retain it for the High Holy Days. A number of clergymen point out that young people, and particularly those who have attended services in Israel without an organ, have a strong preference against use of the instrument. Rodney Mariner, minister of the Belsize Square Reform Synagogue in North-West London, comments on a tension in the congregation over whether or not the instrument enhances services and reports that a growing

¹⁰⁴ “Jews at Prayer,” in *Shiurei ha-Rav: A Conspectus of the Public Lectures of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, ed. Joseph Epstein (New York: Hamevaser, 1974), pp. 27–8.

¹⁰⁵ Anne J. Kershner and Jonathan A. Romain, *Tradition and Change: A History of Reform Jews in Britain, 1840–1995* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1995), p. 66; and Meyer, *Response*, p. 177.

number of congregants are in favor of its abandonment. However, adds Mariner (without a trace of irony), “their voice is not loud enough to wipe away 150 years of tradition, but it is loud enough to be listened to seriously.”¹⁰⁶ Although he was not prepared to take so radical a step as to forego the organ entirely, Mariner deemed the organ too intrusive for use during the Yom Kippur services in their entirety. He therefore reserved the instrument for the end of the day, thereby “creating a climax to a day of prayer.”

A report of the experiences of the Bournemouth Reform Synagogue is instructive. While they have not phased out use of the instrument altogether, the congregation now offers a once a month “organless” Sabbath morning service. That innovation is the result of a series of events that, Rocker writes, “you might say was an act of God.” One winter, on a number of occasions, the organist was homebound because of the snow and unable to participate in the services. After their initial panic, the members of the choir found that the organ-less service was to their liking. The synagogue’s minister, David Soetendorp, anticipates dispensing with the organ in the course of time but states that, for the moment, “I wouldn’t want to force a revolt. I’m a believer in evolution.”¹⁰⁷

Evolution is apparent in attitudes toward music in the Reform movement in the United States as well. In a groundbreaking address in which he urged Reform Judaism to proclaim a new revolution and reclaim synagogue worship as the movement’s foremost concern, Eric Yoffie, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, singled out the role of music as the key to ritual transformation. But, bemoaning the fact that Reform congregants “have lost our voices” and that Reform worship has become “a spectator sport,” the music Yoffie seeks to enhance is primarily vocal, not instrumental. He anticipates a spiritual renewal that may be engendered by means

¹⁰⁶ The musical tradition of that Reform temple encompasses many of the works of the nineteenth-century German composer Louis Lewandowski set for organ music.

¹⁰⁷ Simon Rocker, “Instrumental Break,” *The Jewish Chronicle* (London), 3 October 1997, p. 29.

of music that is “vibrant, spiritual and community-building” if “the congregation finds its voice.”¹⁰⁸

Apart from the controversy over instrumental music, as early as the mid-eighteenth century, there was considerable discussion in rabbinic writings of the role, whether positive or negative, of song and the precentor.¹⁰⁹ R. Yaakov Emden is censorious in the extreme of cantors of his day whose comportment detracted from public worship.¹¹⁰ At a later date *Maharaz Hayes* wrote approvingly of some of the improvements in decorum and the conduct of services in the *Chorshulen*, but inveighed against those locales where innovators instituted halakhically proscribed mixed choirs.¹¹¹

Melody and the role of the prayer leader as a spiritual force are the subjects of a luminous discourse by R. Naḥman of Bratslav. R. Naḥman emphasizes the need to judge one’s fellow compassionately and to perceive the good qualities that are present even in the apparently wicked, (and in oneself as well, if for no other reason than that it serves to keep depression at bay!). That concept he finds reflected in the simple meaning of the Psalmist’s words “For yet [*od*] a little while and the wicked shall not be; you shall diligently consider his place and it shall not be” (Psalms 37:10): “For yet a little while” – if one spends but a little time ferreting out good qualities in others, “the wicked shall not be” – it will turn out that the wicked

¹⁰⁸ Yoffie, “Realizing,” p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ While a certain musical *nusah* (melody or mode) is traditional, there is latitude in *halakhah* for musical innovation. See Lippmann Bodoff, “Innovation in Synagogue Music,” *Tradition* 23:4 (Summer, 1988): 90–101. Apart from questions of *halakhah*, the type of music that is welcomed in the synagogue, or the extent to which it is shunned, deemed inspiring or deemed inappropriate, is often influenced by external cultural trends. Thus some forms of music may be inherently inappropriate because they are overly distracting or are associated with profane matters or with other religions. Cf. *Horeb*, no. 689, p. 549. On changing cantorial styles see also R. Baruch ha-Levi Epstein, *Mekor Barukh*, pt. 2, chap. 2, sec. 5 (New York: M.P. Press, 1954), vol. II, pp. 1047–9 and 1048, note.

¹¹⁰ *Siddur Amudei Shamayim* (Altona: 1745), p. 27a; *She’ilat Yaavez*, I, no. 61; and *Mor u-Kezi’ah* 53. Cf. The centuries-earlier criticism of R. Asher b. Yehiel, *She’ilot u-Teshuvot ha-Rosh*, *kelal reviv’i*, no. 22.

¹¹¹ *Minḥat Kena’ot*, pp. 990–993. The *Chorshulen* were Orthodox synagogues that featured male choirs and promoted decorous and aesthetically pleasing services.

are not really wicked after all. A prayer leader is the *shaliah zibur*, the messenger and agent of the congregation. As such, R. Naḥman points out, the prayer leader should be a person who is capable of representing the entire community and of discerning the positive qualities, i.e., the “good notes,” of every worshiper. The prayer leader is charged with taking the “good notes” of each and every person and combining them into a melody¹¹² and only “one who has this noble talent... who judges everyone charitably, who finds their noble qualities and forms melodies from them... is fit to be the cantor and *shaliah zibur* to stand in prayer before the lection.”¹¹³

Noteworthy in the context of the ongoing Orthodox-Reform debate over music in the synagogue is a remark found in the commentary to the prayerbook *Iyun Tefillah* of R. Jacob Zevi Mecklenburg, an articulate antagonist of Reform. The book of Psalms closes with a song calling upon an orchestra of musical instruments to join in a crescendo of praise. In the final verse the Psalmist calls out, “Let all souls [*kol ha-neshamah*] praise God, Hallelujah” (Psalms 150:6). *Iyun Tefillah* renders the verse: “Above all should the soul praise God, Hallelujah.” Interpreting the word “*kol*” as connoting completeness and perfection, *Iyun Tefillah* explains the psalm as follows: after enumerating the various musical instruments with which praise is offered to God, the Psalmist employs the expression “*kol ha-neshamah*” to indicate that “superior in perfection” to instrumental music is the praise offered by the human soul.¹¹⁴

¹¹² In a play on words, R. Naḥman adds, in typical ḥasidic homiletic fashion, that in the Psalmist’s exclamation, “While I exist [*be-odi*] will I praise the Lord” (Ps. 146:2), the word “*be-odi*” may be rendered as “with ‘*od*,” i.e., “I will praise the Lord in prayer with the concept of ‘*od*’ which occurs in ‘yet but [*od*] a little while and the wicked shall not be,” meaning that prayer shall be offered with an eye to the good qualities that negate the wickedness of those on whose behalf prayer is offered.

¹¹³ *Likutei Moharan*, I, no. 282. Regarding cantors and melody see also *ibid.*, nos. 3 and 54.

¹¹⁴ *Iyun Tefillah, Siddur Derekh Ḥayyim im Iyun Tefillah* (Tel Aviv: Sinai, 1954), p. 80. *Iyun Tefillah* observes that the vocalization of the consonant with a *ḥolam* rather than with a *kamaṣ* supports this interpretation. Cf. Redak, Psalms, *ad loc.*, who comments on the phrase *kol ha-neshamah* [rendering the phrase as if it read *al ha-kol, ha-neshamah*]: “Above all the praises is the praise of the soul and that is

V. DECORUM

Mirabile dictu, there was one matter pertaining to the synagogue regarding which Orthodox and Reform partisans were in agreement: that worship services ought not be marred by unseemly conduct was undisputed; that the synagogue was deficient in this respect was undeniable. The foibles of human nature are such that lapses in decorum at prayer services have been a persistent problem over the ages.¹¹⁵ But the period immediately prior to the emergence of the Reform movement was a time during which the problem was particularly acute.

From the latter part of the seventeenth through the eighteenth centuries a general deterioration in religious sensibility took place. That deterioration was reflected in patterns of worship. In some of the smaller towns laxity in attendance at weekday prayer services became commonplace and communal attempts to remedy the situation by means of coercive regulations or by imposition of fines were unsuccessful.¹¹⁶ Rabbinic writings of that period are replete with reports of chatter and gossip that profaned the solemnity of Sabbath

contemplation and knowledge of the works of the Lord, may He be blessed, as far as is in the power of the soul while it is yet in the body.”

¹¹⁵ On the ubiquitous nature of the problem see Moshe Halamish, “*Siḥat Ḥullin be-Vet ha-Knesset: Mezi’ut u-Maavak*,” in *Mil’et*, vol. 11 (Tel Aviv: 1984), pp. 225–51. The problem is common and ongoing and has been the subject of many essays and stories. See, for example, Chava Willig Levy, “Why There Was No Gabbai at the Regency Theater,” *Jewish Action* 55:1 (Fall, 1994): 88 and Wallace Greene, “In the King’s Presence: Teaching for *Tefillah*: A Communal Responsibility,” *Ten Daat* 12 (Summer, 1999): 60–70. A characteristic anecdote relates of the wealthy mogul who left instructions with a clerk that he not be disturbed in the synagogue on the Day of Atonement unless a certain stock, in which he had a considerable investment, reached the figure of twenty-five. Summoned to the vestibule to receive the news, he responded, “You are late. Inside they quoted twenty-seven a half hour ago.”

¹¹⁶ Azriel Shohat, *Im Ḥilufeī Tekufot: Reshit ha-Haskalah be-Yahadut Germaniyah* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1960), pp. 144–5. Shohat, *loc. cit.*, cites the wry witticism of R. Aryeh Leib Epstein of Königsburg who remarked that the synagogue is desolate, visited only occasionally as if it were a sick person. It has become the custom to visit the synagogue (*le-vaker heikhalo*) in a manner similar to that which the *Shulḥan Arukh* prescribes for visiting the sick (*le-vaker ha-ḥoli*). Close relatives and friends visit the patient immediately and the more distant visit only

and festival services and of how the synagogue had become an arena for rowdy fights and altercations.¹¹⁷ R. Yaakov Emden testified that “all the news and vain pursuits of the world are known and heard in the synagogue. There is even frivolity and levity, as if it were a gathering place for idlers.”¹¹⁸ If Reform writers were ashamed of the impression such services made on their non-Jewish neighbors, R. Emden was no less forthright in noting that in comparison to the worship service of their Christian compatriots Jewish performance was disgracefully deficient.¹¹⁹

Almost a decade before the founding of the Hamburg Temple, Moses Mendelssohn of Hamburg (not to be confused with Moses Mendelssohn of Berlin),¹²⁰ a moderate Enlightenment figure and author of *Pnei Tevel* (Amsterdam, 1872), wrote scathingly of the utter disorder prevalent in the traditional synagogue, of the fracas and rowdiness commonly found there, and of the boisterous conversation typical of a fish market.¹²¹ It was this sorry state of affairs that later prompted him to praise the aesthetic improvements in the worship service introduced by the founders of the Hamburg Temple.

after three days; those close to God, i.e., the scholars and the pious, enter immediately while those more distant attend only after three days have elapsed, i.e., on Mondays and Thursdays.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 146 and *Halamish*, “*Siḥat Ḥullin*,” pp. 229–30.

¹¹⁸ *Siddur Amudei Shamayim*, p. 27a.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 26b. A much earlier work, the late twelfth-century figure, R. Judah he-Ḥasid, *Sefer Ḥasidim*, ed. Judah Wistinezky (Berlin: Mekizei Nirdamim, 1891), no. 1589, p. 389, bemoans the fact that Jews suffer by comparison to non-Jews in terms of comportment at religious services and *ibid.*, no. 224, p. 78, warns that synagogues in which Jews behave frivolously are fated to fall into gentile hands.

¹²⁰ “Moses Mendelssohn of Hamburg” is the name chosen for himself by Moses (1781–1867) son of Mendel Frankfurter (1742–1823), R. Samson Raphael Hirsch’s paternal grandfather. Although Moses Frankfurter’s writings include a biting, satirical denunciation of obscurantists and fanatical opponents of Enlightenment, he was clearly opposed to any actions that would undermine allegiance to rabbinic Judaism.

¹²¹ See Noah Rosenbloom, “*Ha-Yahadut ha-Mesoratit ve-ha-Reformah kefi she-hen Mishtakefot be-‘Pnei Tevel’ le-Mendelson*,” *Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: 1977), vol. 3, pp. 454–5. *Halamish*, “*Siḥat Ḥullin*,” p. 242, no. 101, errs (possibly confusing Mendelssohn of Hamburg with Mendelssohn of Berlin) in assuming this to be a portrayal of a Reform worship service.

In the course of time he was, however, disappointed by the orientation of the Temple leadership and their substantive changes in the liturgy. Ultimately, he concluded that those efforts had not produced the desired result of enhancing religious devotion. Although the Hamburg Temple did not formally abrogate weekday prayer, it was not open during the week; certainly the Hamburg Temple was not seen as encouraging weekday prayer. To the author of *Pnei Tevel*, it appeared that the Sabbath worshippers at the Temple gradually decreased in number and that only on the High Holy Days did the Temple membership turn out in full force. Despite this disappointment, he harbored the hope that the example set by the Hamburg Temple would serve as a spur to the communal leadership and prompt them to institute long overdue improvements in synagogue services.¹²²

In this respect the Reform critique was indeed salutary. Traditionalists were prompted to ask themselves: If so many of their coreligionists were attracted to the new-style services, was it simply because they presented a less demanding form of ritual; was it solely because of the prevalent assimilatory trend; or was it because these services were satisfying a deeply-felt need? A recognition that the desire for liturgical change was to be attributed to deficiencies in the services of the traditional synagogue was intimated by R. Eliezer of Triesch in the aftermath of the establishment of the Hamburg Temple.

¹²² Rosenbloom, “*Ha-Yahadut ha-Mesoratit*,” pp. 459–60. Others concurred in the assessment that the Hamburg Temple proved to be uninspiring. Of the Temple’s spiritual leaders Moses Moser remarked in a letter to Immanuel Wolf-Wohlwill that one could learn more from a stuffed rabbi in a zoological museum than from a live Temple preacher. See Adolf Strodtmann, *H. Heine’s Leben und Werke*, third ed. (Hamburg: Hoffmann and Campe, 1884), vol. 1, 326. Cf. Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*, translated from German into English by Raymond P. Scheindlin (Philadelphia and Jerusalem: Jewish Publication Society, 1993), p. 306, who errs in attributing this comment to Leopold Zunz. A selection of the engaging Moser correspondence liberally cited in Strodtmann’s work has since been published by Albert H. Friedlander, “The Wohlwill-Moser Correspondence,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 11 (1966): 262–299. For the comment regarding the Temple preachers, see p. 271 and p. 297 for the original German. I thank Professor Michael A. Meyer for this latter reference.

In his second contribution to *Eileh Divrei ha-Berit* he urged his colleagues in Hamburg to examine the nature of their own services and to strive to make synagogue worship more edifying. He found poetic justice and even punishment “measure for measure” in the fact that the inroads and successes of Reform were precisely in the areas in which the Orthodox were remiss:

It is well known that the punishments of the Creator, blessed be He, are measure for measure. Since our many sins have brought it upon us that this breach occurs in matters of the synagogue and prayer we must presume that, heaven forbid, you have not appropriately honored the holy synagogue that is in your noble community. Therefore this trouble has come upon you that they seek to desanctify and profane it entirely, heaven forbid. Indeed, because of our manifold sins, it has become accepted as permissible in several congregations (and, in particular, in provinces of Germany, according to reports) to engage in idle conversation in the synagogue. Great is this stumbling block and at times people even come to shouting and quarreling and that constitutes a grievous sin.¹²³

Not content to limit himself to negative self-criticism, R. Eliezer of Triesch exhorted the rabbis and spiritual leaders of the generation to adopt a positive agenda, to institute seminars and lectures devoted to strengthening interpersonal relationships and ethical conduct and to reach out with patience and gentleness, with “a soft expression and intelligent ethical reproof,” even to those with whom they had religious disagreements.¹²⁴

Even more explicit was the *mea culpa* in R. Chajes’ *Minḥat Kena’ot*. R. Chajes blamed a passive and apathetic Orthodox rabinate for the spiritual malaise of their congregations. By contrast, he noted, synagogues that had introduced reforms were gaining in numbers because the innovators were concentrating their energies

¹²³ *Eileh Divrei ha-Berit*, pp. 94–5.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 95–6.

on attracting a following. Their clergy were talented speakers who understood the temper of the times and, above all, were to be commended for expending time on a great deal of “activity and work for the congregation.”¹²⁵ Writers such as R. Eliezer of Triesch and R. Chajes demonstrate a growing recognition among the Orthodox that the success of Reform institutions was related to lacunae in the existing traditionalist establishment and that efforts must be made to transform the atmosphere of the synagogue, albeit in an halakhic manner, to effect the desired results.

The decision of a number of Orthodox rabbis to officiate in clerical robes was an emulation of a Reform practice perceived by the laity as enhancing the dignity of services. Although disdained by many decisors as a practice that bordered on or actually infringed upon the prohibition of Leviticus 18:3, this innovation was nonetheless adopted by highly respected authorities. Among the prominent rabbinic figures who wore clerical robes were Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch¹²⁶ and the venerable halakhic scholar Rabbi Seligmann Baer Bamberger. Reportedly, Rabbi Bamberger defended this innovation as a reluctant concession to the liberal sectors of the Wurzburg community made in the hope of preventing more serious infractions of Jewish law.¹²⁷

A much more pervasive manifestation of Reform influence

¹²⁵ p. 1019.

¹²⁶ Isaac Heinemann, “Samson Raphael Hirsch: The Formative Years of the Leader of Modern Orthodoxy,” *Historia Judaica* 13 (1951): 46-47.

¹²⁷ Shnayer Z. Leiman, “Rabbi Joseph Carlebach–Wuerzburg and Jerusalem: A Conversation between Rabbi Seligmann Baer Bamberger and Rabbi Shmuel Salant,” *Tradition* 28:2 (Winter, 1994): 60. Regarding clerical robes see also Shnayer Z. Leiman, “Rabbinic Openness to General Culture in the Early Modern Period in Western and Central Europe,” *Judaism’s Encounter with Other Cultures: Rejection or Integration?* ed. Jacob J. Schacter (Northvale, NJ and Jerusalem: Jason Aronson, 1997), p. 170, n. 56 as well as this writer’s forthcoming “Orthodox Innovations Prompted by Reform Influence.” In the course of time, clerical robes became normative in some Orthodox circles. In present-day England the by-laws of the (Orthodox) United Synagogue stipulate that canonicals are obligatory attire for clergy when officiating at services but the regulation is more honored in the breach than the observance. Currently, imposition of this dress code upon guest rabbis officiating at weddings in synagogues still adhering to the practice has become a

upon the traditional synagogue was the introduction of sermons in the vernacular. Ḥakham Isaac Bernays¹²⁸ and Rabbi Jacob Ettlinger¹²⁹ were the earliest Orthodox rabbis of note to preach in German. At first this development was vigorously opposed, particularly by Hungarian rabbinic authorities,¹³⁰ but, gradually, in most countries the vernacular sermon became an accepted feature of Orthodox services.¹³¹

The positive influence of Reform innovations on decorum in Orthodox synagogues is reflected in the formal synagogue statutes and regulations of the day. In 1810, the Westphalian Consistory over which Israel Jacobson presided, published a *Synagogenordnung* (Synagogue Order), an official pronouncement, roughly equivalent to contemporary by-laws, designed to promote order and decorum.¹³² In the ensuing decades similar regulations were adopted by many communities in Germany. Those statutes, which frequently were accompanied by a government imprimatur, were binding upon all synagogues within the community, including the Orthodox. When, as was usually the case, those regulations provided for liturgical

source of contention. See Ruth Rothenberg, "New Rabbis' Distress Over Need to Dress to Impress," *The Jewish Chronicle* (London), 20 November 1998, p. 19.

¹²⁸ See Eduard Duckesz, "Zur Biographie des Chacham Isaak Bernays," *Jahrbuch der Jüdisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft*, vol. 5 (1907), pp. 298–307.

¹²⁹ Rabbi Ettlinger's sermons in German date from the very beginning of his rabbinic career. See, for example, *Rede gehalten zur Feier des höchsten Namensfestes Seiner königlichen Hoheit des Grossherzogs Ludwig von Baden* (Carlsruhe: 1824) and Jacob Aron Ettlinger, Elias Willstätter and Benjamin Dispecker, *Predigten, gehalten in den Synagogen zu Karlsruhe und Bühl von den Rabbinats-Kandidaten* (Carlsruhe: 1824).

¹³⁰ See R. Moses Sofer, *Teshuvot Ḥatam Sofer, Ḥoshen Mishpat*, no. 197; R. Akiva Joseph Schlesinger, *Lev ha-Ivri* (Jerusalem: 1904), part 1, pp. 19a–21b; R. Hillel Lichtenstein, *Teshuvot Bet Hillel* (Satmar: 1908), nos. 34, 35 and 39; "Die Beschlüsse der Rabbiner-Versammlung zu Mihalowitz," *Israelit* 7:32 (August 8, 1866), p. 521; and R. Moses Schick, *Teshuvot Maharam Shik, Oraḥ Ḥayyim*, nos. 70 and 311.

¹³¹ By the mid-twentieth century Rabbi Yehiel Yaakov Weinberg, *Seridei Eish*, vol. 2, no. 149, p. 364, was unequivocal in ruling that, in his day, when the masses were fluent only in the vernacular, there could no longer be any legitimate halakhic objection to delivery of sermons in the language of the country.

¹³² The document was published independently (Kassel: 1810) and also in *Sulamith* 3:1 (1810): 366–80.

reforms as well and were governmentally enforced they became a further source of communal factionalism. However, improvement of decorum in itself was viewed as a *desideratum* by traditionalists.

Most interesting is the fact that R. Hirsch's separatist *Israelitische Religionsgesellschaft* in Frankfurt-am-Main promulgated a *Synagogenordnung* upon the dedication of its own building in 1853 and a revised version in 1874, both of which were patterned upon prototypes enacted by Reform communities.¹³³ In formulating the detailed and strict rules of conduct enshrined in this code, R. Hirsch was responding to the concern for decorous and dignified behavior in the synagogue but, at the same time, he was meticulous with regard to halakhic practices. Accordingly, the *Synagogenordnung* stipulated a head covering and *tallit* for men and abstention from wearing leather shoes on the ninth of Av and *Yom Kippur*. However, removal of shoes by *kohanim* prior to recitation of the priestly blessing was permitted only in a designated room. Reacting to similar efforts to enact rules and statutes to enhance decorum, R. Chajes writes it is "clear as the sun" that promulgation of ordinances for that purpose is permissible provided that such ordinances do not encroach upon laws prescribed by the *Shulḥan Arukh*.¹³⁴

Notice should be taken of the Copernican revolution that has taken place with regard to what is considered appropriate synagogue behavior. In the early days of the movement for synagogue reform, Aaron Chorin wrote disparagingly of the "unbecoming swaying and reeling back and forth" and of prayer uttered in a loud, shrill voice and urged that services be purged of such disruptiveness.¹³⁵

¹³³ See Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, pp. 123–124 and Robert Liberles, *Religious Conflict in Social Context: The Resurgence of Orthodox Judaism in Frankfurt-am-Main 1838–1877* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), pp. 140–142. For similar regulations enacted by the consistories in France cf. Albert Cohen, *Modernization of French Jewry*, pp. 190–1.

¹³⁴ *Minḥat Kena'ot*, p. 993, note.

¹³⁵ Ein Wort, p. 34. Cf. Karla Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery: Finding a Place for Women in American Judaism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), who notes nineteenth-century American Jews' discomfort with "the embarrassing disorder of traditional Jewish worship" characterized by "chaotic behavior and swaying movements" (p. 81). For sources describing the positive effects

Subsequently adopted synagogue regulations uniformly required the worshiper to behave in a seemly manner and to refrain from unnecessary bodily motion. Even in calling individuals to the reading of the Torah there was an attempt to eliminate the coming and going of synagogue officials and to reduce the number of individuals required to leave their pews. In contrast, contemporary Reform writers celebrate the value of movement and dance in conjunction with worship.¹³⁶ Admiration for staid churchly decorum has been replaced by appreciation of ḥasidic warmth and exuberance.

VI. AESTHETICS

In keeping with the desire to present an appealing religious service, new emphasis was also placed upon beautifying the synagogue building. The considerations that prompted aesthetic enhancement were purportedly spiritual. However, two innovations in synagogue design introduced by Israel Jacobson in the Seesen Temple in 1810, namely, removal of the *bimah* (also known as *almemor* or *teivah*), the raised platform from which the Torah is read, from the center of the synagogue to the front of the synagogue in proximity to the Ark creating a visual effect similar to that of the church nave leading to the altar and, in more obvious emulation of church edifices, erection of a belfry were changes that bespoke a desire to imitate man rather than to draw close to God.

In an intriguing analysis of differing cultural modes of expressing the quest for the numinous in prayer, Professor Lawrence Hoffman suggests that classical Reform's emphasis on imposing ar-

of swaying in prayer see Bernard M. Casper, *Talks on Jewish Prayer* (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization Department for Torah Education and Culture in the Diaspora, 1958), pp. 27–8 and Abraham Kon, *Prayer* (London, Jerusalem, and New York: The Soncino Press, 1971), pp. 38–9. Cf. the satiric comments of Norman Lebrecht, “The Reason Why All Our Shuls Are Swaying,” *The Jewish Chronicle* (London), July 13, 2001, p. 27.

¹³⁶ See, for example, Michael Swartz, “Models for New Prayer,” *Response* 13:1–2 (Fall, Winter, 1982): 35 and Arthur Waskow, “Theater, Midrash, and Prayer,” *ibid.*: 133 and 136–7; and, more recently, Joseph A. Levine, *Rise and Be Seated: The Ups and Downs of Worship* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 2000), pp. 64–5 and 167–8.

chitecture, dignified and decorous services and use of the sonorous organ reflect an approach to the holy in which the transcendent Deity is perceived as awesome, lofty, and distant. This rationalistic approach, Professor Hoffman suggests, was shared by European Protestants and early partisans of Reform.¹³⁷ The suggestion that the imposing cathedrals, organs, and dignified services of Protestants mirrored this theological perspective of man's relationship to God is cogent. It is, however, questionable whether the motivation of Reform innovators was the product of a similar theological perspective or simply a desire to emulate Christian neighbors.

In defense of the early exponents of Reform it must be stated that the two matters may have been interrelated. A form of self-denigration born of what was perceived as "orientalism"¹³⁸ or primitivism in Judaism was clearly operative. They further presumed that what they perceived as a more advanced Western Protestant cultural aesthetic was worthy of emulation as a means of achieving a higher spirituality as well. In stark contrast is the view of R. Yaakov Emden that the key to prayer is an individual's appropriate appreciation and understanding of his own self-worth both as a human being and as a Jew. In forceful and unambivalent language Rabbi Emden encourages and exhorts the worshiper to develop feelings of self-confidence and self-assurance. Since prayer can be not only a source of personal benefit but also a matter of cosmic significance, R. Emden emphasizes the import of the worshiper's awareness of the awesome power, and hence the concomitant responsibility, he has as a praying individual: "Let it not be light in his eyes that he is created in the [divine] image and form and that the root of his soul is connected with the supernal world.... If he utters a holy and

¹³⁷ Lawrence A. Hoffman, *Beyond the Text: A Holistic Approach to Liturgy* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indian University Press, 1987), pp. 151–62.

¹³⁸ See Kaufmann Kohler, *Jewish Theology: Systematically and Historically Considered*, augmented ed. (New York: Ktav, 1968), pp. 470–3. See also Kohler on the Bar Mitzvah ceremony and the head covering as "a survival of orientalism," cited in W. Gunther Plaut, *The Growth of Reform Judaism* (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1965), p. 312.

pure utterance there is inherent in it the power to create effects in the loftiest heavens.”¹³⁹ Confidence in the power of human prayer, writes Rabbi Emden, should be coupled with particular pride and assurance in one’s status as a Jew for “Should we not take pride in this, a great, wondrous, pride of which there is none greater?”¹⁴⁰

Rabbinic authorities had no problem with the general desire to enhance the beauty of synagogue buildings. However, the bell tower and location of the *bimah* did pose halakhic questions. Summoning worshipers to prayer by means of a bell was considered to be a Christological practice forbidden by Leviticus 18:3.¹⁴¹ The belfry was so obviously borrowed from Christianity that it never became popular.¹⁴² The more equivocal issue was the location of the *bimah*. Removal of the *bimah* from its central position was advocated by leading Reform spokesmen, including Aub, Geiger, Hess, Herxheimer, Samuel Hirsch, Holdheim, Hamburger, Kahn, Mannheimer, Maier, Philippson, Schwab, and L. Stein.¹⁴³

Although in Germany introduction of the organ was the defining issue in Reform-Orthodox controversies, in Hungary location of the *bimah* became elevated to a question of ideology that became symbolic of the entire struggle for and against Reform. It was in connection with his unequivocal ruling on the impermissibility of shifting the *bimah* from its central position that *Ḥatam Sofer* applied his oft-quoted aphorism “*ḥadash asur min ha-Torah* – innovation,¹⁴⁴ i.e.,

¹³⁹ *Siddur Amudei Shamayim*, p. 5a.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18b.

¹⁴¹ *Minḥat Kena'ot*, p. 991, note.

¹⁴² The only other German synagogue to feature a bell tower was that in Buchau built in 1839. See Meyer, *Response*, p. 404, n. 115. Cf. also Michael A. Meyer, “Christian Influence on Early German Reform Judaism,” *Studies in Jewish Bibliography, History and Literature in Honor of I. Edward Kiev* (New York: Ktav, 1971), ed. Charles Berlin, pp. 292–3.

¹⁴³ Kaufmann Kohler, “Almemar or Almemor” and A.W. Brunner, “Almemar or Almemor, Architecturally Considered,” *Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: 1906), vol. 1, p. 431 and Leopold Löw, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Szegeden: 1899), IV, pp. 93–107.

¹⁴⁴ Use of the term “*ḥadash*” (new) is a pun based upon the term’s denotation of “new” grain that is forbidden as food until an offering from the newly harvested produce is brought on the second day of Passover as prescribed by Leviticus 23:14.

departure from accepted practice, is forbidden by the Torah¹⁴⁵ – a remark that became a slogan of the traditionalists.

In actuality, this halakhic ruling is the subject of considerable dispute. The halakhic basis for placing the *bimah* in the center of the synagogue is to be found in three rulings of Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*: *Hilkhot Tefillah* 11:3; *Hilkhot Hagigah* 3:4; and *Hilkhot Lulav* 7:23. While R. Moses Isserles (Rema), *Orah Hayyim* 150:5, maintains that the *bimah* should be placed in a central position, R. Joseph Karo rules otherwise in his commentary on Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, *Kesef Mishnah*, *Hilkhot Tefillah* 11:3. He notes that in some places the *bimah* was erected at the western side of the synagogue, "...for its location in the center is not mandatory; everything depends on the place and the time." Accordingly, many authorities viewed placement of the *bimah* in the center of the synagogue as recommendatory rather than mandatory while others ruled that the *bimah* must be centrally located and considered displacement of the *bimah* to be the thin end of the wedge of Reform.¹⁴⁶

The attitude, generally adopted by Orthodoxy today, is best reflected in two responsa authored by R. Moses Feinstein.¹⁴⁷ R. Feinstein rules that, in building a synagogue structure, the *bimah* should be placed in the center but that failure to position the *bimah* in the center does not invalidate a synagogue as a place of prayer. In a comment placing the issue in historical perspective, Rabbi Feinstein adds that the stringent attitude ascribed to certain Hungarian rabbinic authorities who forbade prayer in a synagogue in which the *bimah* was not located in the center was based on a "*horaat shaah*," an *ad*

¹⁴⁵ *She'ilot u-Teshuvot Hatam Sofer*, *Orah Hayyim*, no. 28. Cf. R. Jacob Ettlinger, *Abhandlungen und Reden* (Schildberg: 1899), pp. 7–10, on the symbolism of the central *bimah*.

¹⁴⁶ See Immanuel Jakobovits, *Jewish Law Faces Modern Problems* (New York: 1965), pp. 43–46. See also *Minhat Kena'ot*, p. 992, note. Among the prominent halakhists who prohibit removal of the *bimah* from its central position are R. Abraham Samuel Benjamin Schreiber, *She'ilot u-Teshuvot Ketav Sofer*, *Orah Hayyim*, no. 19; R. Yehudah Asad, *She'ilot u-Teshuvot Mahari Asad*, *Orah Hayyim*, no. 50; and R. Naftali Zevi Yehudah Berlin, *She'ilot u-Teshuvot Meshiv Davar*, vol. I, no. 15.

¹⁴⁷ *Iggerot Mosheh*, *Orah Hayyim*, vol. II (New York: 1963), nos. 41 and 42.

hoc temporary ruling, as a means of stemming the tide of Reform.¹⁴⁸ The *bimah* controversy is an instance in which a comparatively minor halakhic matter assumed exaggerated significance and, as a focal point of ideological controversy, became the banner around which the opposing forces arrayed themselves.

A far more grave halakhic infraction is involved in removal of the *meḥizah* or barrier separating the men's and women's sections of the synagogue. If, as noted, use of the organ was the defining issue in Germany and location of the *bimah* the central point of dispute in Hungary, it was in the United States that the question of *meḥizah* became the *cause célèbre*. The reason for this is not that the gravity of the matter was insufficiently recognized in European countries but that the vast majority of European synagogues, including the Reform and Liberal, did maintain some form of separation of the sexes until well into the twentieth-century. It was in the United States that family pews were first introduced by Isaac Mayer Wise in Albany in 1851 and it was in the United States that mixed seating took root. Wise had long favored elimination of the separate seating of women in a balcony but the actual institution of mixed pews came about fortuitously when Wise's Reform congregation Anshe Emeth purchased a church building that already had family pews and Wise retained them.¹⁴⁹ A contemporary commentator observed that introduction of family pews in Germany would have been "a gross anomaly." Following the model of German churches in which separate seating was the norm, German Reform synagogues continued to maintain separate seating even when the *meḥizah* was abandoned.¹⁵⁰ In the United States, with the spread of mixed seating

¹⁴⁸ Cf. an illuminating comment on this issue in Naphtali Carlebach, *Joseph Carlebach and His Generation* (New York: The Joseph Carlebach Memorial Foundation, 1959), pp. 225–230. For further elaboration see also Leiman, "Rabbi Joseph Carlebach–Wuerzburg and Jerusalem: A Conversation between Rabbi Seligmann Baer Bamberger and Rabbi Shmuel Salant," pp. 58–63.

¹⁴⁹ Heller, *Isaac M. Wise*, pp. 160 and 213–4.

¹⁵⁰ See Meyer, *Response*, p. 426, note 107. Jonathan D. Sarna, "The Debate Over Mixed Seating in the American Synagogue," in *The American Synagogue*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press and University Press of New England, 1987), p. 364, reports that as late as the early twentieth century

to Conservative synagogues as well, the *mehizah* became the visible demarcation between Orthodoxy and other denominations.¹⁵¹ In terms of synagogue design, removal of the *mehizah* is the single most significant Reform departure from Jewish law. That change acquires greater significance when it is realized that it was introduced primarily for ideological, rather than aesthetic, reasons.

With regard to questions of synagogue structure and aesthetics in general, R. Chajes' comments on communal priorities are instructive. R. Chajes deems the expenditure of vast sums of money on an imposing edifice rather than on education or care of the needy to be misguided. Indeed, on one occasion he advised a small congregation to pawn the synagogue lamps in order to raise funds to enable individuals to avoid army service. The physical and spiritual welfare of the community, including support of hospitals, the freeing of captives, assistance to the poor, and establishing institutions for religious education as well as for professional training, he emphasizes, all take precedence over synagogue beautification.¹⁵²

Thus, issues of synagogue design and structure also reflect a system of values. That even aesthetic perception is influenced by one's ideological perspective is evident from a brief passage in Howard Morley Sachar's *The Course of Modern Jewish History*. In discussing synagogues established in the New World, Sachar notes:

The variety of functions performed by the synagogue was not always apparent to the outsider. Thus, a Christian traveler who visited Newport's synagogue once commented with sublime misunderstanding: "It will be extremely elegant when completed, but the outside is totally spoiled by a school

the Hamburg Temple, bastion of German Reform, refused a one million mark donation because the gift was conditioned upon introduction of mixed seating of men and women.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 380 and 386. For a discussion of the halakhic issues, including responsa in Hebrew and in English translation, see *The Sanctity of the Synagogue*, ed. Baruch Litvin (New York: Spero Foundation, 1959).

¹⁵² *Minḥat Kena'ot*, p. 991.

which the Jews [would] have annexed to it for the education of their children.”¹⁵³

That comment eloquently illustrates the influence of ideology upon the aesthetic perception of both the author and the individual he cites.

It is noteworthy that some twentieth-century writers have found the nineteenth-century Reform aesthetic a deterrent to religious spirituality. One of the criticisms of the overall tenor of Reform services centers upon a perception of the temple as a place of worship set apart and unconnected to a vital, living Judaism. One keen twentieth-century critic, Professor Eliezer Berkovits, has pointed to the nomenclature associated with temple worship. Words such as sanctuary, chapel, chants, altar, and holy ark are seen as illustrative of religious services that require consecrated props and take place in an artificial, synthetic atmosphere. In contrast to the functionality of the old-fashioned *shul* with its *tashmishei kedushah*, *shulhan*, central *bimah*, and *aron ha-kodesh*, the temple artifacts, claims Berkovits, its clericalism and its overly solemn dignity reflect an emphasis on an external aesthetic that may hide a religious vacuum. Berkovits remarks that, ironically, the temple architecture, although new and expensive, has rarely resulted in inspired artistry, whereas old synagogues, often simple in design, have become more venerable with increasing age. The ritualism and clericalism of classical Reform worship may be an appropriate style, comments Berkovits, for individuals whose renewed interest in the synagogue is motivated by a desire for conformity or by other sociological and psychological considerations but has little to do with genuine religiosity; rather, it is worship directed to a god shaped in man's own image.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1963, p. 164.

¹⁵⁴ See Eliezer Berkovits, “From the Temple to Synagogue and Back,” *Judaism* 8:4 (Fall, 1959): 303–311; reprinted in Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Understanding Jewish Prayer* (New York: Ktav, 1972), pp. 138–51. It is, of course, the constant use to which the old synagogue testifies that is the source of the veneration it evokes. Cf. the comments of Leon Wieseltier, *Kaddish* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), p. 5: “There are stains in the velvet. In places it is threadbare. This is an exquisite erosion. It is not

VII. DURATION OF SERVICES

As early as 1796, when the Amsterdam break-away congregation Adath Jeschurun introduced a number of moderate reforms, a major objective of the young intellectuals at its helm was removal of what were viewed as distracting and unnecessary additions to the prayer ritual.¹⁵⁵ Virtually all early Reform spokesmen who focused on liturgical issues advocated streamlining services. Enhancement of worship would be achieved, they believed, if the length of prayer services were to be shortened in order to command the unflinching attention of congregants.¹⁵⁶

The negative effects of unnecessarily prolonged services are acknowledged by all. In a famous passage included in the introduction to his *siddur*, R. Yaakov Emden cites in the name of “early scholars” the adage “Prayer without *kavvanah* (concentration and intentionality) is as a body without a soul.”¹⁵⁷ Proceeding to delineate the obstacles to devotion and singlemindedness in prayer, R. Emden points to the stultifying effect of habit and the deadening quality of ritual (which he terms elsewhere as “*seremoniyah be-laaz*”)¹⁵⁸ performed in a mechanical manner (*mizvot anashim mi-lumadah*).¹⁵⁹ If it transpires that “the formula of prayer becomes almost a matter of habit in the constant use of one formula, the *kavvanah* evaporates in its habituation.” The net effect of repetition is to heap rote upon

neglect that thins these instruments. Quite the contrary. The more threadbare, the better. The thinner, the thicker.”

¹⁵⁵ Meyer, *Response*, p. 26; Jaap Meijer, *Moeder in Israel: Een Geschiedenis van het Amsterdamse Asjkenazische Jodendom* (Haarlem: 1964), pp. 56–57; and Isaac Maarsen, “*Maamar Or ha-Emet*,” *Ozar ha-Ḥayyim*, vol. 9 (1933), pp. 110–20.

¹⁵⁶ See, for example, Plaut, *Rise*, pp. 49, 155 and 181. See also Albert Cohen, “Non-orthodox Attitudes in French Judaism,” pp. 131 and 133. Cf. Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 35 and Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England 1714–1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1979), p. 162.

¹⁵⁷ *Siddur Amudei Shamayim*, p. 4b. The saying is found in Abarbanel, *Naḥalat Avot* 2:17 and *idem*, *Mashmi’a Yeshuah* 12:1.

¹⁵⁸ *Siddur Amudei Shamayim*, p. 411a.

¹⁵⁹ Isaiah 29:13, lit.: “taught by the precept of men,” idiomatically connotes performance of a precept in a mechanical manner.

rote and for the prayer to become so familiar “that the soul is not excited by it.”¹⁶⁰

R. Emden also recognized length of prayer services as a factor influencing devotion. Bemoaning the distressing “scandalous” proliferation of novel petitionary prayers and *tehinot*, R. Emden notes that were an individual to recite all of those prayers he would have no remaining time for study or gainful employment. He adds that, if with regard to prayer in general there is a cautionary recommendation “Better a little with *kavvanah*,”¹⁶¹ all the more so does this admonition apply to the verbose additions instituted in latter days whose drawbacks far outweigh their positive effects, whose harm is greater than their benefit, and with respect to which silence is preferable. Prudent communal policy with regard to such petitions, R. Emden advises, is selectivity and brevity.¹⁶² His contemporary, R. Yonatan Eybeschuz, similarly remarks of those who continually mumble an overabundance of supplicatory prayers that, “Without *kavvanah*, any addition is a diminution.”¹⁶³

The concept of *tirḥa de-zibura* or burdening the congregation¹⁶⁴ has definite halakhic implications. Obviously, however, from the halakhic standpoint, there are set parameters and limits to what may legitimately be abridged. In Reform congregations that do not feel bound by *halakhah* and the requirements of basic statutory prayer and Torah reading, the question of what constitutes a reasonable shortening of the service remains open. Reform clergy tended to differ in their opinion of what constituted an adequate service. Of more than passing interest is a resolution adopted by the Touro Synagogue of New Orleans in June 1889 requiring that the Sabbath morning ritual be abbreviated to last no longer than one hour, including the sermon.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ *Siddur Amudei Shamayim*, p. 5a.

¹⁶¹ *Tur Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 1 and *Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 1:4.

¹⁶² *Siddur Amudei Shamayim*, pp. 2b–3a.

¹⁶³ *Ye'arot Devash*, pt. 1, p. 8a.

¹⁶⁴ See “*Tirḥa de-Zibura*,” *Encyclopedia Talmudit*, vol. 20, pp. 662–78.

¹⁶⁵ Leo A. Bergman, *A History of the Touro Synagogue, New Orleans* (Private pub., n.d.), p. 5.

In this context, it may be apposite to take note of a differing perspective based on an individual idiosyncratic reaction but offering a penetrating observation regarding the atmosphere and environment that foster spiritual responses. Milton Himmelfarb, in a personal memoir describing his own experiences during the time when he attended synagogue on a regular basis to recite *Kaddish* in memory of his father, describes the difficulty he experienced in keeping repeated obligatory prayer from becoming routine and perfunctory. He comments:

But to make the service short will not help us much. I have felt most untouched and unmoved in short services, Reform or near-Reform Conservative or Reconstructionist; and my neighbors have seemed to me equally untouched and unmoved. In fact, lengths have certain advantages. In a way a long service is like a long poem. You do not want unrelieved concentration and tightness in a long poem; they would be intolerable. Length requires *longueurs*. A good long poem is an alternation of high moments and moments less high, of concentration and relaxation. In our synagogue, the heights may not be very high, but the long service does provide some ascent and descent. The short service tends to be of a piece, dull and tepid.¹⁶⁶

VIII. *PIYYUTIM*

As noted, the desire to improve decorum and even to shorten the duration of services was heartily endorsed by traditionalists as well. Nor were the innovators on halakhic quicksand in their efforts to eliminate the *piyyutim* or liturgical poetry. However, once the theological battle had been joined on other fronts, any suggestion the innovators made was viewed with suspicion and trepidation.

The debate over recitation of *piyyut*, and particularly over its inclusion in the statutory blessings of the *Shema* and *Amidah*, dates

¹⁶⁶ "Going to Shul," *Commentary* 41:4 (April, 1966): 68–69; reprinted in Petuchowski, *Understanding Jewish Prayer*, p. 159.

as far back as geonic times.¹⁶⁷ R. Abraham Ibn Ezra's caustic critique of the *piyyutim* of R. Eleazar ha-Kalir¹⁶⁸ and the negative view of Maimonides¹⁶⁹ are well known and widely cited. Over the ensuing centuries recitation of *piyyut* had notable champions as well as fierce detractors. Among latter-day scholars, R. Elijah of Vilna eliminated most inserted *piyyut*¹⁷⁰ whereas R. Eleazar Fleckles was a staunch proponent of retention of all traditional *piyyutim*.¹⁷¹ R. Fleckles' championship of *piyyut* is not yet tinged by the first glimmerings of the acrimonious battles over prayerbook revision.

Those intent on trimming the services focused on accretions to statutory prayer and consequently, quite naturally, on the *piyyutim*. Their suggestions were usually sweeping in nature. Chorin, who urged "cleansing" the liturgy and removal of *piyyut*, writes:

Only a few words concerning the second category of prayers (*yozerot*, *kerovez* and *piyyutim*). In the whole Talmud there is not one relevant passage concerning the nonsense of these prayers (if they deserve that appellation at all). They were generally written much later, at the time of the darkest per-

¹⁶⁷ See the exhaustive and meticulous discussion in Ruth Langer, *To Worship God Properly: Tensions Between Liturgical Custom and Halakhah in Judaism* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1998), pp. 110–87.

¹⁶⁸ Commentary on the Bible, Eccles. 5:1.

¹⁶⁹ *Teshuvot ha-Rambam*, vol. II, ed. Joshua Blau (Jerusalem: Mekizei Nirdamim, 1960), nos. 180, 207 and 254. See also Langer, *Worship*, p. 153, notes 167 and 168. Cf. also Maimonides, *Guide*, I.59.

¹⁷⁰ Exceptions allowed by R. Elijah of Vilna during the *Amidah* include the *piyyutim* of the High Holy Days and the prayers for rain and dew. He also recited the *piyyutim* of festivals and the four special pre-Passover Sabbaths but only after completion of the *Amidah*. See *Maaseh Rav*, secs. 127, 163 and 205. *Maaseh Rav* was compiled by R. Yissakhar Ber of Vilna and first published in Zolkiew, 1808. The edition of *Maaseh Rav* published in Jerusalem, 1987 by Merkaz Ha-Sefer incorporates anthologized comments and suggests a halakhic rationale for the practice adopted by the Gaon of Vilna; see pp. 191–2.

¹⁷¹ *Teshuvah me-Ahavah*, I, nos. 1 and 90. The arguments of R. Eleazar Fleckles are based to a significant extent upon the earlier responsum of R. Ya'ir Ḥayyim Bachrach (d. 1702), *Teshuvot Ḥavot Ya'ir* (Lemberg: 1896), no. 238.

secutions. They bear the mark of the extreme suppression of the human spirit.¹⁷²

It is in light of such remarks that one must read the pronouncements of authoritative rabbinic figures of the time. For example, in R. Akiva Eiger's defense of the *piyyutim* of Kalir, he takes strong exception to Ibn Ezra's criticisms and endorses absolute faithfulness to the time-hallowed Ashkenazi tradition. His forceful remarks are, however, made in the context of a broader denunciation of liturgical innovations and a plea for steadfast following "in the footsteps of our fathers."¹⁷³

Even those halakhists who did not favor retention of *piyyut* were now wary of deletion that might be misinterpreted. R. Zevi Hirsch Chajes favored eliminating *piyyutim* and noted approvingly that many congregations in Poland and Russia had done so. Yet he counseled that matters be allowed to take their natural course, that rabbis should issue no rulings on the subject and should avoid any publicity lest the untutored become confused and fail to distinguish between mere folkways and usages of no halakhic significance and those customs and practices that have the force of law.¹⁷⁴

A completely different assessment is found in the writings of Rabbis Abraham Lowenstamm and Samson Raphael Hirsch who

¹⁷² *Ein Wort*, p. 36. Cf. the remarks of Joseph Maier in the preface to his 1861 Stuttgart Prayerbook in which he advocated "total removal" of *piyyutim*: "Science has given the verdict on those additions. They have in part, artistic and, in part, scientific or historical value, but none as far as devotion and edification are concerned...they were to a certain extent a substitute for the sermon. But, since to the joy and refreshment of every truly pious spirit, the sermon has returned to the House of God, the *piyyutim* have completely lost any value. Lest they continue to interfere with the dignified recitation of the prayers, and disturb devotion, their total removal has become a holy duty." Cited in Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, p. 161.

¹⁷³ *Iggerot Soferim*, ed. Salomon Schreiber (Vienna and Budapest: Joseph Schlesinger, 1933), pt. 1, no. 35, pp. 48–9.

¹⁷⁴ Chajes, *Minḥat Kena'ot*, p. 992 and *idem*, *Darkei Hora'ah*, chaps. 6 and 7, in *Kol Sifrei*, 1, 238–242. Cf. the quite different response of R. Yosef Stern, *Sefer Zekher Yehosef, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 19:3–4, who concluded that *piyyut* must be retained lest its abolition be the thin wedge leading to further, unacceptable innovation.

both sought to portray *piyyut* as a positive element in the liturgy. R. Lowenstamm points to the then recently published felicitous translation and commentary of Heidenheim¹⁷⁵ that render even abstruse and verbally complex poems more readily understandable. Aware of current sensibilities and that the *piyyutim* are “not desirable in our eyes in accordance with the changed responses of this era with regard to aesthetics,”¹⁷⁶ R. Lowenstamm argued that nonetheless the *piyyutim* continue to arouse intense religious emotion even among those who deem them to possess neither stylistic elegance nor linguistic beauty. R. Lowenstamm decries the vagaries of popular taste and notes that fashion trends soon become outdated while classics are timeless. Of attractive new literary creations that sway the masses he writes, “At the first instance of their novelty they delight those who see them; yet after they have been recited two or three times, the ear becomes attuned to them and very quickly does their glory fade. But a moment and they are forgotten.”¹⁷⁷ In contradistinction, he avers, the *piyyutim*, composed in antiquity, despite their linguistic failings and the absence of a grace of idiom or felicity of language, are yet dear to the populace and stir the spirit, “drawing us closer to our Father in Heaven, whether because of the holiness embedded in them or because of the greatness and nobility of their composers...time does not affect them.”¹⁷⁸

A more impassioned defense of *piyyutim* is offered by R. Samson Raphael Hirsch. Responding to the charge that in an era of enlightenment and emancipation it was no longer edifying to recite

¹⁷⁵ Wolf Heidenheim (1757–1832), an exegete and grammarian, established a press at Rödelheim where he published critical editions of the *siddur* and *maḥzor* that are justly acclaimed for their meticulously corrected texts, scholarly commentaries, and accurate translations.

¹⁷⁶ *Zeror ha-Ḥayyim*, “Bi-Yeshishim Ḥokhmah,” p. 37b.

¹⁷⁷ *Loc. cit.* A similar argument (“Their worship will quickly become habitual and insipid.”) is presented by Solomon Jehuda Leib Rappoport, *Tokhahat Megulah* (Frankfurt-am-Main: 1845), a pamphlet written in response to the Frankfurt Rabbinical Conference, cited in Paul R. Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 172.

¹⁷⁸ *Zeror ha-Ḥayyim*, “Bi-Yeshishim Ḥokhmah,” p. 37b.

poetry that spoke of oppression and persecution, R. Hirsch turns the tables and tauntingly poses the question: Is Judaism more secure now or does it face more even pernicious dangers than previously? In the period of the Crusades when many of the *piyyutim* were composed, Jews were threatened physically, but at that time were there ritual slaughterers who themselves violated the dietary code, butchers who profaned the Sabbath or Jewish schools that fostered abrogation of Jewish law? If the *piyyut* recited between *Pesaḥ* and *Shavu'ot* recalls the physical massacres of our ancestors then, suggests R. Hirsch, it may be appropriate to find in it a resonant plaint regarding spiritual degeneration in an era “in which rabbis among us publicly conferred about how – in a respectable manner – Torah and mitzvot could be buried.”¹⁷⁹ R. Hirsch’s more trenchant question – one that cannot fail to elicit a shiver in any post-Holocaust reader who recalls that Germany is the venue of this discussion – is “Has such an era of brightness come to Israel everywhere among the nations that these prayers of lament no longer have a place in the synagogue?”¹⁸⁰

Spirituality is enhanced, R. Hirsch contends, by arousing intimate empathetic feelings joining Jews into a community of destiny spanning the generations. The crucial mistake, he argues, is to assume that less is always better. It is the error of “Jewish ‘Reform’ enthroned in robe and hat... declaring war on *piyyutim* and *yozerot*” to assume “The prescription for creating devotion? Delete prayers!”¹⁸¹ Rather, asserts R. Hirsch, acknowledging struggles and sorrows of

¹⁷⁹ *The Collected Writings*, English translation, I (New York and Jerusalem: Philipp Feldheim, Inc., 1984), p. 138.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 132. Cf. Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform.*, p. 30, who comments on *piyyut* as an expression of *kavvanah* and cites the remarks of Gustav Gottheil, a lone Reform champion of *piyyut*, delivered at the 1869 Israelite Synod in Leipzig: “I fully recognize the rights of the present to change the prayer, but I believe that the religious consciousness of other times also has the right to find expression in our prayers. I do not believe that our time, with its cold rational direction, is especially suitable to create warm, heart-stirring prayers. And for these I would rather go back to the warmer religious sentiment of antiquity, and let it supply us with such prayers. Therefore, I must speak out against the generally condemnatory judgment against *piyyutim*.”

the past, remembering the sweat and blood, sacrifice and exertions endured to preserve Torah in centuries of “outer and inner *galut*” will create bonds of solidarity and bring to life models of faith.¹⁸²

It would be an error to conclude that the contention of Rabbis Lowenstamm and Hirsch that *piyyutim* evoke strong emotional responses merely reflects the apologetics of anti-Reform writing of the nineteenth century. In a lecture on the sanctity of the Day of Atonement, the prominent twentieth-century rabbinic figure, R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, acknowledged, “I must admit that my philosophy of *Yahadus* is the product, not of my talmudic studies or of my philosophical training, but of my childhood *Yom Kippur* memories and reminiscences.”¹⁸³ He then proceeded to relate:

It is quite strange that the *Piyutim* recited on *Yom Kippur* played a significant role in the formation of my religious personality. My father and grandfather taught me the beauty and grandeur of *Yom Kippur*. For them the *Maḥzor* was not just a prayer book. It was more than that. It was a book of knowledge. I do not know whether modern linguists would subscribe to the philological excursions made by my father and me in the *Maḥzor*. They might consider them obsolete. Regardless of the philology, however, the essence of the liturgy, with its lofty *Aggadic* and *Halachic* aspects, became suddenly inspirational and experiential. All of the *Halachic* and *Aggadic* teachings which I absorbed as a young child have remained with me until this day.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² *Collected Writings*, 1, 138. R. Hirsch denigrated the pedantic academic study of Jewish history and literature then in vogue that he saw as breeding religious sterility. He was particularly unimpressed by scholarly interest in *piyyut*. “The true heirs” of Jewish prophets and poets who will they be, R. Hirsch asked rhetorically, “those who repeated their prayers but forgot their names, or those who forget their prayers and remember their names?” See *ibid.*, p. 343.

¹⁸³ Transcript of an Elul, 1974 lecture, published in *Sefer Nora'ot ha-Rav*, ed. B. David Schreiber, vol. 13 (New York: 2000), p. 96.

¹⁸⁴ *Loc. cit.*

IX. SPIRITUALITY: CLAIMS AND ASSESSMENT

Grandiose claims were made for the spiritual and religious impact of the liturgical innovations. The editors of the second edition of the Hamburg Prayerbook (1842) praised their prayerbook for restoring “simplicity” and “dignity” to synagogue services and asserted that, as a result, “the religious sense has been revived” among many individuals for whom religion had lost its sanctity.¹⁸⁵ That very same year the West London Synagogue published the first edition of the *Forms of Prayer Used in the West London Synagogue of British Jews*. The editors of that prayerbook similarly claimed that they had rendered the service more dignified and intelligible by expunging sections of the liturgy that “are deficient in devotional tendency” and linguistic expressions that are “the offspring of feelings produced by oppression, and which are universally admitted to be foreign in the heart of every true Israelite of our day.”¹⁸⁶ So, too, laymen in Metz, eager to emulate the Hamburg model in order to “restore dignity” and avoid “oblivion, apathy, and indifference” prevalent at worship services, introduced modifications in synagogue practice and sought to abolish “superannuated ceremonies, practices which choke the sublimity of our teaching and are entirely at odds with today’s customs and habits.”¹⁸⁷ Others called for renunciation of “antiquated customs” in order “to give our religion a worthier form” and for the removal of practices that have “degraded and dishonored it in the eyes of thinking men.”¹⁸⁸

Few of the liturgical innovators would have concurred entirely with the radical statement of the Frankfurt Friends of Reform declaring that the “practical commands, the observance of which constitutes the bulk of present-day Judaism, ... [these] external form[s] are for the most part without significance – yes, even unworthy of pure religion.”¹⁸⁹ Be that as it may, there is more than a whiff of smugness and sanctimoniousness in these writers’ conviction that their “nec-

¹⁸⁵ Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, p. 138.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

¹⁸⁷ Plaut, *Rise*, p. 45.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹⁸⁹ *Loc. cit.*

essary” changes in synagogue practice are all salutary and edifying and in the frequently recurring phrases “the genuine spirit of Jewish religiosity,”¹⁹⁰ “true religiosity,”¹⁹¹ or “pure divine worship service”¹⁹² that dot the writings of protagonists of the new prayerbooks.

To many of those individuals the “genuine Jewish spirit” and “the spirit of true religiosity”¹⁹³ were congruent with what were the dominant cultural and philosophical perspectives of the time. Unabashedly, they proclaimed that it is “the religious spirit of the present to which Judaism owes its reawakening and revitalization”¹⁹⁴ and naively they placed their faith in “the trumpet sound of our time.”¹⁹⁵ Only through discarding the “husk” of antiquated ritual did they believe they would gain access to “the treasure of the kernel” and bring Judaism into harmony with what they perceived as “the genius of the modern era.”¹⁹⁶

The *Zeitgeist* beckoned and many were caught up in its allure. Little wonder then that the ritual and religious practices of Judaism seemed “encrusted with moldering medieval ceremonies.” Above all, they feared being considered backward or culturally inferior by their Western confreres and declared candidly: “Is this possible at a time when everything blossoms and decks itself with the fresh apparel of the new age; is our faith alone to declare itself absolutely incompatible with the new age? No! No! say we.”¹⁹⁷

The desire to be *au courant* by accepting current modes of thought as well as a longing to be considered worthy citizens led to modifications in the content of the prayers, particularly with regard to expressions of chosenness, prayer for ingathering of exiles and references to a personal messiah. Particularistic prayers were deemed to be narrow and selfishly ethnocentric; universalist prayers were

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 39 and 60.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 59–60.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

regarded as emblematic of a higher spiritual sensibility. The editors of the Berlin Reform Prayerbook (1848) articulated the new philosophy quite clearly:

For a noble, truthful pious soul, the thought of the Father of all mankind is more stirring than that of a God of Israel. The image of God, imprinted upon every human being as a covenant-sign of divine love, has more poetry than the chosenness of Israel. The general love of a neighbor and brother, deeply imbedded in every man, has more attraction than a particular ceremonial law.¹⁹⁸

Similarly, the *Reform-Freunde* in Worms declared in all honesty that they could no longer pay lip service to prayers for a return to Palestine “while at the same time our strongest bonds tie our souls to the German Fatherland whose fate is inextricably interwoven with ours – for what is dear and precious to us is embraced by her.” They could no longer mourn the destruction of the Temple “for another fatherland had been ours for many years, one that has become most precious to all of us.” To remember the historic fate of the destruction of the Temple does serve a purpose, “but why should we pretend a sorrow which no longer touches our hearts?” Rather, they conceded their inability to lament a historical event “in which we see the loving hand of God.” In a spirit of enthusiasm and ardor, they sought to banish “untruth” from their service, to jettison “dead ballast” and to build a new temple in which a “fresh and free wind blows to animate our ambitious youth.”¹⁹⁹

Other writers accentuated the changing “religious needs of the times” that prompted a liturgical revision designed for “promotion of edification.”²⁰⁰ Taking note of the frequent references to the concept of “edification” (*Erbauung*) as the goal and purpose of religious services, contemporary scholars have observed that the term was used in association with religious worship by German Protestant

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 61–2.

²⁰⁰ Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, pp. 143–4.

Pietists.²⁰¹ Thus, both German patriotism and Protestant theology exerted considerable influence on the ideological stance that early exponents of Reform equated with “the spirit of true religiosity.”

The lofty rhetoric of the ideologues did not always appeal to the rank and file. There was a deep-seated traditionalism in many a simple German Jew, even those no longer punctilious in observance of *mizvot*, that restrained them from embracing extreme innovation in synagogue services.

Abraham Geiger has been described as the most influential Reform Jewish liturgist of the nineteenth century. Adaptations of his *Israelitisches Gebetbuch* (1854) constitute the foundation of the more traditional prayerbook of Manuel Joel (1872) and the more radical text of Vogelstein (1894) and traces of his work are to be found in the *Einheitsgebetbuch* of German Liberal Jews (1929), edited by Seligmann, Elbogen, and Vogelstein, as well as in the United States in the second edition of Szold's *Avodath Yisrael* (1871) prayerbook as revised by Jastrow and Hochheimer.²⁰² The popularity of his liturgy may be attributed to the fact that, in practice, Geiger diverged sharply from his own very radical liturgical theory.

Geiger argued that Hebrew is no longer a live language, that Israel lives only as a community of faith, not as a people, that Amalek has become an irrelevancy and that no hope is to be associated with Jerusalem. Yet, in practice, when he published his own *siddur* in Breslau, he retained a basically Hebrew service and did not consistently revise the prayerbook to conform to his own radical theories. He had been scornful of the editors of the second edition of the Hamburg prayerbook because of their timidity but, in his own enterprise, he did not incorporate the changes (e.g., removal of *tal*

²⁰¹ See Alexander Altmann, “The New Style of Jewish Preaching,” in *Studies in Nineteenth-Century Jewish Intellectual History*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 87 ff. See also *supra*, note 32 and accompanying text.

²⁰² Jakob J. Petuchowski, “Abraham Geiger, the Reform Jewish Liturgist,” in *New Perspectives on Abraham Geiger*, ed. Jakob J. Petuchowski (New York: HUC Press, 1975), pp. 42–4.

and *geshem* prayers) that he had criticized the Hamburg editors for failing to implement.²⁰³

Whether, as his admirers have argued, the gap between Geiger's *Weltanschauung* and his practice is to be understood in a positive light, i.e., as an expression of his sincere desire to work within the framework of a total community rather than from a limited denominational platform,²⁰⁴ or whether this divergence between theory and practice should be seen as a reflection of opportunism and an absence of integrity is debatable. What is apparent is that Geiger's decision that it was desirable to opt for "accommodation of the religious needs of a large segment of the present generation"²⁰⁵ lies behind the secret of his popularity as a Reform liturgist. It is the instinctive reactions of *amkha*, the common folk, who retain a Jewish spark, that oft times preserve us from the follies of misguided leaders and prophets.

When innovations were introduced, to what extent did they

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 47–8.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 48–52. See also Geiger's own comments on the distinction between theorists and practitioners and the constraints upon a rabbi functioning within a communal framework in *Abraham Geiger and Liberal Judaism: The Challenge of the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Max Wiener, trans. Ernst J. Schlochauer (Cincinnati: HUC Press, 1981), pp. 275–82.

Noting Petuchowski's discussion of the discrepancy between Geiger's theory and practice, Ken Koltun-Fromm, "Historical Memory in Abraham Geiger's Account of Modern Jewish Identity," *Jewish Social Studies*, The New Series, vol. 7, no. 1 (Fall, 2000), p. 116, suggests that "it is better to jettison talk of a theory/practice distinction and instead focus on how Geiger integrated significant theoretical claims about identity into practical discussions about Jewish liturgy." Koltun-Fromm's own analysis, in the opinion of this writer, is hardly compelling. He does, however, demonstrate that Geiger "blurred the historical memory" (p. 123) and that "For Geiger, *Wissenschaft* was neither a scientific nor an objective study of a past. It was a motivated retrieval of that past conditioned by modern concerns about identity" (p. 110). That Geiger's historical and liturgical writings did not always present a "scientific" and "objective study" of the past but rather "a constructed collection of meaningful memories that fashion a usable past for decidedly modern concerns" (p. 110) is an important acknowledgement. That foremost practitioners of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* were not necessarily scientific or academic in their approach to liturgy has not been sufficiently recognized.

²⁰⁵ *Protokolle*, p. 70.

lead to fulfillment of the lofty aspirations of the liturgists, i.e., to “edification” and to “true religiosity”? In order to answer this query a brief survey of reactions of Reform writers themselves is in order. Several of those discussions were offered decades later and bring a historical perspective to an analysis of the issues.

In the preface to the 1855 Mannheim prayerbook, M. Präger, the editor, conceded that while cities such as Mannheim required compilation of a text suited to their heterogeneity, liturgical innovation in general had splintered the greater community. Reform prayer modalities were so diverse and numerous that one might “indignantly proclaim with the Prophet, ‘*ki mispar arekha hayu elohekha*’ (Jer. 11:13)²⁰⁶ – as many prayerbooks as there are cities!”²⁰⁷ The issue of liturgical uniformity dominated the agenda of three regional Reform rabbinical conferences held in Southern Germany in the 1850s. Conference delegates were caught on the horns of a dilemma, since the quest for creativity conflicted with the quest for unity and, in addition, local communities jealously sought to preserve their autonomy.²⁰⁸ Because of those impediments, German Reform did not succeed in publishing a commonly accepted uniform prayerbook until the publication of the *Einheitsgebetbuch* in 1929.²⁰⁹

In the United States, a common Reform liturgy was adopted somewhat earlier. The earliest edition of the *Union Prayer Book (UPB)* was published in 1892, was revised by a committee and published as a prayerbook for the High Holy Days in 1894 and for Sabbaths, festivals and weekdays in 1895.²¹⁰ However, Reform clergy acknowledged that, even after successive further revisions, the *UPB* never became

²⁰⁶ Lit.: “For according to the number of your cities are your gods.”

²⁰⁷ Cited in Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, pp. 152–3.

²⁰⁸ Robert Liberles, “The Rabbinical Conferences of the 1850’s and the Quest for Liturgical Unity,” *Modern Judaism* 3:1 (October, 1983): 312 and 315.

²⁰⁹ *Gebetbuch für das ganze Jahr*, ed. Ceasar Seligmann, Ismar Elbogen, and Hermann Vogelstein. 2 vols. (Frankfurt-am-Main: 1924).

²¹⁰ Meyer, *Response*, p. 279. On Isaac Mayer Wise’s persistent efforts for the adoption of a uniform Reform liturgy and the conflict between proponents of the respective prayerbooks of Wise and Einhorn see *ibid.*, pp. 258–9 and James G. Heller, *Isaac M. Wise: His Life, Work and Thought* (New York: UAHC, 1965), pp. 302–6 and 476.

a charmed medium capable of wafting souls heavenward. In 1928, Samuel S. Cohon, in a blistering critique of the infelicity of many English passages, of the “prosy homilies and stereotyped phrases,”²¹¹ objected more fundamentally that the *UPB* did not faithfully or consistently reflect Reform theology.²¹² Petitionary prayers to the Deity were replaced by vague meditations on ethical themes that conveyed the impression that they were “especially written for a people composed of retired philanthropists and amateur social workers.”²¹³ In addition, Cohon bemoaned the manner in which congregations utilized the prayerbook, i.e., he regarded absence of congregational participation as a reflection of a loss of a desire to pray.²¹⁴

Although Israel Bettan, writing a year later, disputed Cohon’s suggested emendations because he feared a further denuding of the prayers of their poetry and emotional resonance in favor of a dry literalism, he fully concurred in the negative evaluation of the text of the *UPB*, particularly of passages that read like sociological discourses and of those that cast a negative light on longings for a return to Zion or depicted the dispersion as a sign of blessed privilege. Far from arousing fervor, “the cure effected by early Reform gave rise to a new malady,” Bettan charged, turning worshipers into passive participants, mere “weary auditors” and “languid spectators” and in consequence “our services have been immeasurably weakened.”²¹⁵

When growing frustration with the *UPB* led a number of Reform congregations to experiment with alternative texts, the results were no more inspiring. Reporting on a detailed analysis and study of thirty-three congregations’ Rosh Hashanah evening services,

²¹¹ “The Theology of the Union Prayer Book,” in *Reform Judaism: A Historical Perspective*, ed. Joseph L. Blau (New York: Ktav, 1973), p. 281.

²¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 265–81.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 262, note 5.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 283.

²¹⁵ Israel Bettan, “The Function of the Prayer Book,” in *Reform Judaism*, ed. Blau, pp. 289 and 295–6. See the much later article of Lawrence A. Hoffman, “The Language of Survival in American Reform Liturgy,” *CCAR Journal* 24:3 (Summer, 1977): 87–106, for a critique of the *UPB*’s failure to express an effective message of Jewish particularism.

Daniel Jeremy Silver portrays the *UPB* liturgy as inadequate to their needs, decrying its propensity for “the vague and the high-flown,” its failure to provide a “richness of ideas” and the fact that the meditations are usually devoid of specific Jewish elements. However, he admits that the substitute liturgies prepared by some congregations offered similarly “overblown language” and he confesses, “I am afraid that high-flown vagueness has a fatal fascination for our movement.” Noting that 90% of the Hebrew portion of the service is recited or chanted by the rabbi, cantor, or choir, he observes that this enables “the worshiper, like an opera goer, to enjoy the mood without thinking about the libretto.”²¹⁶ Discussing substitutions introduced into the High Holy Day liturgy, Silver characterizes one rewritten service as “an enthusiastic, if sometimes incoherent, blend of Buber’s *Tales of Rabbi Nahman* and classical Reform’s social gospel.”²¹⁷ Silver notes that, in general, the new prayers were vague and the “combination of fuzzy piety and fuzzy language sometimes boggled the imagination.”²¹⁸

More recent assessments of Reform liturgy have noted the contradictory tendencies of recovery and reconstruction evident in several new prayerbooks. On the one hand, these prayerbooks reflect an attempt to recover traditional texts and to incorporate more Hebrew and, on the other hand, they exhibit a significant degree of self-censorship and radical innovation, particularly as a response to feminist agitation for a liturgy that is entirely gender free.²¹⁹ The

²¹⁶ “Do We Say What We Mean? Do We Mean What We Say?” *CCAR Journal* 24:3 (Summer, 1977): 133–4.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 126. Of even felicitous creative prayers Eugene Borowitz, *Liberal Judaism* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1984), p. 439, writes: “Seeking to reuse a creative service which once moved us greatly, we are regularly disappointed. Few things we write retain their ability to inspire us. Fewer still can bear a community’s repetition week after week after week.” On the use of non-halakhic forms in prayers composed in post-talmudic times and on the limited success of innovative and creative prayers in Orthodox circles as well, cf. the brief comments of Joseph Tabory, “The Conflict of *Halakhah* and Prayer,” *Tradition* 25:1 (Fall, 1989): 22–3.

²¹⁹ Arnold Jacob Wolf, “The New Liturgies,” *Judaism* 46:2 (Spring, 1997): 235.

desperate attempt to be simultaneously more traditional and more modern has produced prayerbooks that one reviewer describes as “not very rigorous theologically” and “not very inspiring.”²²⁰

Continuing dissatisfaction within the Reform rabbinate with the *UPB* led to the adoption of a new prayerbook, *Shaarei Tefillah – Gates of Prayer*, in 1975. This prayerbook offers several alternative liturgies, as many as ten separately themed Sabbath eve services and six different Sabbath morning services, ranging from the traditional to the radical. One of the proffered services omits any reference to God. The editors aimed for richness and diversity but many readers found the series of alternative options bewildering.²²¹ In response, the Reform movement is now preparing a new prayerbook to be issued by 2005 and to be published on CD-ROM as well as in the usual format so that users can create their own services. The two female co-editors, Judith Abrams and Elyse Frishman, hope to please traditionalist elements and to develop a more unified approach to synagogue worship but have not yet determined how to respond to the feminist critique of traditional prayer language. As the editors themselves indicate, their concern is that “we don’t want to have a book that will feel dated in five years.”²²²

The return to the traditional Hebrew texts demonstrates a significant phenomenon. Creative texts fail to be as spiritually elevating as anticipated while, in the final analysis, the spare wording of the Sages, is recognized as meaningful and moving. Rabbinic authorities emphasized that the words of the *Amidah* composed by the Men of the Great Assembly are ideal for prayer because each letter and syllable contains profound *kavvanot*. In the words of R. Yonatan

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

²²² *JTA Daily News Bulletin*, 23 December 1999, p. 4. A concern for datedness is certainly not misplaced. Milton Himmelfarb, *The Jews of Modernity* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 357, remarks: “Well, if you make revisions every twenty or thirty years, you run the risk of being irrelevant much of the time...[T]here is nothing so dead as the newspaper from the day before yesterday. The twentieth Psalm speaks of chariots and horses, which no army has used for some time now. Would it be more relevant if it spoke of tanks and planes? Chariots and horses make the point quite well.”

Eybeschütz: “Every jot and tittle has within it mysteries of the Torah, secrets of the holy *Merkavah* [Chariot], and combinations of Names from the supernal worlds, that open up the gates and are efficacious and rise up higher than the highest to the Guardian.”²²³ But, quite apart from their mystical properties, the words of the ancient prayers are endowed with an unusual literary quality. The *Zohar* states: “Woe unto that person who says that the Torah has come to teach us mere stories or the words of an ordinary person for, if so, we could compose in our time a Torah from the words of an ordinary person even more beautiful than all these.... Rather, all words of the Torah are transcendent words and transcendent mysteries.”²²⁴ Yet who would deny that the Torah is indeed “the greatest story ever told” and that the stories alone are matchless? In like manner, the prayers of the Sages, immutably preserved on account of their transcendent sanctity, are, at the same time, incomparable in their pure literary power.

A glance at an entirely different, alternative type of liturgical innovation further highlights the drawbacks of classical Reform worship while at the same time it focuses our attention on what may well be the most vexing aspect of the entire Reform liturgical enterprise.

As noted, early liturgical innovators were influenced heavily by the style and manner of worship of nineteenth-century Protestantism. Quite different intellectual currents may be discerned in the *Havurah* movement of the 1960s. Critical of the establishment and steeped in the counterculture, the founders of the *havurot* distanced themselves from the formality of mainstream institutions they looked upon as “sterile, hierarchical, divorced from Jewish tradition, and *lacking in spirituality*.”²²⁵ The emphasis in *Havurah* movement services is on intimacy, warmth, egalitarianism and participatoriness.

²²³ *Ya'erot Devash*, pt. 1, p. 8a.

²²⁴ *Zohar, Behaalotkha*, 152a, cited by R. Yitzchak Arama, *Akeidat Yizhak*, introduction to the Book of Ruth. *Akeidat Yizhak* cites this comment of the *Zohar* precisely because the Book of Ruth is acknowledged to be an exceptional literary masterpiece.

²²⁵ Weissler, “Making Davening Meaningful,” p. 257, emphasis added.

Typically, *Havurah* worship takes place in a small room, the seating arrangement is circular, dress is highly informal and services are led by various members. Although many of the prayers are recited in Hebrew with traditional *nusah*, there is much room for creative interpretations and interpolations. In an analysis of one particular *havurah*, Chava Weissler quite accurately focuses on the crucial importance of the social and interpersonal element in those services whose success is gauged to a large extent by the interaction of leader and followers and by participants' responses to one another. Another characteristic element of *Havurah* services is the reframing or reinterpretation of the prayers as a strategy for coping with what is perceived to be a "problematic liturgy."²²⁶ Weissler points out that each week the role of the leader is to present a current and novel interpretation. The message conveyed is that meaning is fleeting and interpretation must continually be constructed anew.

This practice underscores the difficulty members experience in affirming the words of the liturgy. The *havurah* thus reflects the members' "attraction to tradition and the ambivalence regarding it"²²⁷ and makes "doubt and ambivalence as axiomatic a part of worship as faith once was."²²⁸ Reflecting upon the specific circular seating arrangements and the manner in which sacredness is experienced by *havurah* members through "sacralization of the interpersonal," Weissler concludes her remarks with the statement: "God is approached through human relationships; God is perhaps what happens across the circle."²²⁹

Weissler's comments lead us to the central, fundamental issue liturgical innovation forces us to confront, an issue beside which all other issues pale into insignificance: the question of the core beliefs and doctrines of Judaism.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

²²⁹ *Loc. cit.*

X. FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS

Probably no single work has had a greater impact on the average Jew over the course of millennia than the prayerbook. Jews to whom philosophical works were closed tomes, for whom the Talmud and *Shulḥan Arukh* were far too difficult, were thoroughly familiar with the words of the *siddur*. From these prayers simple Jews gleaned an awareness of, and an appreciation for, the fundamentals of faith. Belief in the messiah, in bodily resurrection, in the veracity of the prophets, and a yearning for Zion were thrice daily reinforced in the course of prayer; *meḥayah ha-meitim, et zemaḥ David avdekha bi-m'heirah tazmiaḥ, shuvekha le-Ziyyon* were familiar and tangible beliefs. The Jew who cleaved to his *siddur* was a Jew whose conceptual framework was rooted in the thought-world of the Sages that the liturgy mirrored. In describing the role of the synagogue in molding a religious personality, R. Hirsch points to the common usage of the term “*shul*” for synagogue and remarks, “We call our houses of worship ‘*Schulen*’ [the German word for schools] and that is what they are meant to be: schools for adults, for those who have entered the mainstream of life.”²³⁰

Let there be no mistake. The paramount concern of the nineteenth-century rabbinic authorities who were adamant opponents of liturgical innovation was the correctly perceived challenge to faith. The pages of *Eileh Divrei ha-Berit* contain many an argument regarding halakhic minutiae but the constant refrain is a fear and trembling in the face of erosion of “*ikkarei ha-dat*” or fundamentals of faith.²³¹ Similarly, two months after publication of the second edition of the Hamburg Temple Prayerbook, on October 16, 1841, when Ḥakham Isaac Bernays responded with a “*Modaah*,” a public notice, declaring the prayerbook unfit for use in fulfillment of one’s religious obligations, it was the ideological issue that was paramount. Three words appear in large, bold characters: Redemption, Messiah,

²³⁰ R. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Neunzehn Briefe über Judentum* (Berlin: Welt-Verlag, 1919), fourteenth letter, pp. 79–80; cf. *idem, The Collected Writings*, 1, 193.

²³¹ See pp. iv, ix, 6, 12–3, 17, 22, 24, 27–8, 54–7, 67, and 90–1.

Resurrection.²³² The theological concern underlying Ḥakham Bernays' response to the Hamburg Temple *siddur* was clearly aroused by the renewed assault on those cardinal doctrines reflected in its liturgical emendations.

R. Chajes, sorely conflicted over an appropriate response to the Reform movement, writes that its blatant rejection of fundamental beliefs ultimately precluded compromise. As long as minor modification of synagogue custom was at issue and innovators paid at least lip service to the teachings of the Sages, there had existed a possibility for containment and the hope of finding a *modus vivendi* through the art of gentle persuasion. Even at the outset, he admits, rabbinic authorities "recognized that they [Reform leaders] had acted with deceit and intended to uproot everything," but with Reform renunciation of the basic doctrines of Judaism there was no longer even a possibility of accommodation.²³³

Earlier, Chorin argued that the rabbis' exaggerated prohibitions extending even to permissible matters would in the long run lead to a blurring of boundaries and transgression of the forbidden. Rather than multiplying prohibitions as a hedge against sin, he argued, the rabbis should have ruled in accordance with "the need of the time, the place and the generation."²³⁴ Had they adopted a conciliatory posture, Chorin maintained, and, at the same time, in a non-strident manner correctly objected to the initial changes in the Hamburg Prayerbook with regard to ingathering of the exiles, their influence would have been salutary.²³⁵

A similar hypothesis was advanced a century later by Ismar Elbogen. Elbogen's history of the liturgy culminates in a survey of the liturgical controversies of the modern period in which he states that, rather than adopting a hostile position, had the rabbis "taken charge

²³² *Theologische Gutachten über das Gebetbuch nach dem gebrauche des Neuen Israelitischen Tempelvereins in Hamburg* (Hamburg: 1842), p. 14.

²³³ *Minḥat Kena'ot*, p. 1007.

²³⁴ *Davar be-Ito*, pp. 57–8.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 49–50.

of the new movement... who knows what the eventual development of German Jewry would have been?"²³⁶

An opposing view was espoused by R. Chajes who does not otherwise hesitate, when he deems it justified to do so, to take the rabbinic establishment to task. Addressing the contention that rabbis should be lenient in order to keep within the fold those whom either the blandishments or the pressures of modern life were distancing from religious observance, R. Chajes differentiates between a permissible temporary leniency (*horaat shaah*) and an impermissible permanent abrogation of the law. The matter is moot, he notes, because the innovators followed a different path entirely. It was not necessary for them to tamper with references to basic beliefs such as resurrection or the messiah in order to ease the burden of ritual observance. Nor had such beliefs stood in the way of attainment of civil rights. Indeed, in an aside, R. Chajes points out that, contrary to what might have been anticipated, in Germany, the seat of greatest Reform agitation, there was renewed prejudice and anti-Semitism whereas in France, Holland, and Belgium, where innovation was not widespread, Jews enjoyed equal rights and privileges.²³⁷

Foresight or hindsight? Would different tactics have altered the cataclysmic process? Could Niagara Falls be reversed by gentle persuasion? Whether or not their tactics were the wisest, whether or not their rhetoric was more harmful than helpful, one thing is clear: the foremost rabbinic authorities, the *gedolei horaah*, were not naïve. On the contrary, it was individuals such as the Italian rabbis who were initially sympathetic to the innovators and, in *Or Nogah* and *Nogah ha-Zedek*, lent their imprimatur to changes that appeared innocuous, who failed to recognize the dimensions of the hazard.

At the very heart of the endeavors of those engaged in the earliest experiments in worship reform was an attempt to alter the wording of the prayers to conform to the mindset and belief system of the majority of their enlightened coreligionists. To those individuals, the most troubling references in the prayerbook were the

²³⁶ *Jewish Liturgy*, p. 304.

²³⁷ *Minhat Kena'ot*, pp. 1021 and 1027.

petitions for rebuilding the Temple²³⁸ and reinstatement of the sacrificial order. Later, other fundamental beliefs were also assailed. The concept of a personal messiah and the Davidic monarchy, prayers for return to Jerusalem and the ingathering of the exiles, mention of bodily resurrection, blessings that acknowledged a distinction between Jews and non-Jews²³⁹ and between men and women as well as particularistic prayers that emphasized the chosenness of Israel aroused unease among many of their constituents. Leaders of the Reform movement argued that to give expression in prayer to doctrines that were contrary to their convictions was hypocritical and damaging to the spirituality to which divine service should aspire. The imagery and wording of some prayers was also viewed as problematic. References to angels were attacked by some as archaic and anachronistic and defended by others as merely poetic and fanciful embellishments.²⁴⁰

Conservative liturgists' alterations of the *siddur* were not as numerous or as blatant as those of Reform editors, but they too introduced changes that touched on matters of belief. Comfortable with

²³⁸ Many temples prominently display a large seven-branched menorah. It has been conjectured that Reform congregations consciously introduced the seven-branched menorah into their sanctuaries because this artifact is identified with the Temple that stood in Jerusalem. The subliminal message of a seven-branched menorah in a modern-day temple is that there is no longer a desire to rebuild the Temple in messianic times; the Temple has been supplanted by sanctuaries in the diaspora. See Joseph Gutmann, "A Note on the Temple Menorah," in *No Graven Images: Studies in Art and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Joseph Gutmann (New York: Ktav, 1971), p. 38.

²³⁹ John D. Rayner, "Ideologically Motivated Emendations in Anglo-Jewish Liturgy," *Noblesse Oblige: Essays in Honor of David Kessler OBE*, ed. Alan D. Crown (London and Portland, OR: Valentine Mitchell, 1998), pp. 117–21, suggests that Reform practice influenced British Orthodox liturgists with regard to references to non-Jews. The examples Rayner cites, taken from (British) United Synagogue prayerbooks, are an emendation of the first stanza of the *Ma'oz Zur* hymn and changes in the Prayer for the Royal Family. Far from supporting Rayner's thesis, these examples actually demonstrate the opposite. Both changes are minor in nature and occur in non-statutory prayers. If indeed they reflect Reform influence, the influence was quite trivial.

²⁴⁰ See, for example, Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, p. 326; Cohon, "Theology," pp. 267–9; and Bettan, "Function," pp. 285–7 and 294–5.

references to sacrifices in times gone by but maintaining that reinstitution of the sacrificial order “cannot be made to serve our modern outlook;”²⁴¹ the editors of the Conservative 1946 *Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book* modified the *Tikkanta Shabbat* and *Mipnei Hata’einu* prayers by altering the tense of the verbs employed. Their approach to the fundamental doctrine of resurrection was more oblique. In a manner similar to that of editors of the Hamburg Temple Prayerbook who retained the Hebrew word “*go’el*” (redeemer) but translated it into German as “*Erlösung*” (redemption)²⁴² in order to avoid reference to a personal messiah in the vernacular, the Conservative editors retained the Hebrew “*meḥayeh ha-meitim*” (who revives the dead) but rendered it in English as “who calls the dead to everlasting life.” That ambiguous translation, they explicitly suggested, would be satisfactory to both liberals and traditionalists.²⁴³ Moving from prevarication to a more definitive but still not quite honest formulation, the 1972 Conservative Prayer Book retains “*meḥayei ha-meitim*” but translates the phrase as “Master of life and death.”²⁴⁴

Ironically, in the latter part of the twentieth century, even as the Reform movement has veered back toward reintroduction of more traditional prayers, to an appreciation of the Hebrew language and even (in muted form) to an acknowledgement of Zion and Jerusalem in prayer, deviation in the area of doctrine has become, if anything, more marked.

Prayer in essence is a petition, plea, meditation or praise that presupposes the presence of a Supreme Being; it constitutes a dialogue, an address or appeal to God. Even those commentators who emphasize the meditative aspects of prayer in interpreting the term *le-hitpalel* as a reflexive verb connoting self-judgment,

²⁴¹ *Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book* (n.p.: Rabbinical Assembly of America and United Synagogue of America, 1946), p. ix.

²⁴² *Ordnung der öffentlichen Andacht für die Sabbath-und Festtage des ganzen Jahres. Nach dem Gebrauche des Neuen-Tempel-Vereins in Hamburg* (Hamburg: 1819), p. 44.

²⁴³ *Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book* (1946), p. viii.

²⁴⁴ *Maḥzor for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur: A Prayer Book for the Days of Awe*, ed. Jules Harlow (New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 1972), p. 31.

recognize that the enterprise of prayer involves a perception of the individual standing before God at the moment of meditation.

Although the nineteenth-century innovators discarded the particularistic and nationalistic elements of the prayerbook, they were comfortable with conventional monotheistic beliefs and experienced no embarrassment in directing prayer to a Supreme Being. Prayers and meditations composed by classical Reform writers are unambiguously addressed to “Our father in heaven” and “merciful God.” But it is precisely a belief in God, and especially in an all-powerful Almighty God whose providential guardianship is manifest and who is “nigh unto all them that call upon Him” (Psalms 145:18) that, today, is troubling to many of the laity and clergy of the Reform movement. In their denial of a personal God and the election of Israel,²⁴⁵ Reconstructionists parallel the radical exponents of Reform, while devotees of Jewish Humanism opt for a genre of humanistic, nontheistic prayer.

²⁴⁵ In the United States one of the most highly dramatized encounters involving changes in synagogue liturgy occurred at the time of the publication of Mordecai Kaplan’s *Sabbath Prayer Book* (New York: Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation, 1945) in which the blessing “who has chosen us from among all the peoples” was changed to “who has drawn us (nigh) to His service” (pp. 10 and 160). This innovation aroused vociferous protest from many sectors of the community with one Orthodox rabbinical group excommunicating Kaplan and a public burning of the prayerbook. See Mel Scult, *Judaism Faces the Twentieth Century: A Biography of Mordecai M. Kaplan* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), pp. 341, 344 and 360–1 as well as Jeffrey S. Gurock and Jacob J. Schacter, *A Modern Heretic and a Traditional Community: Mordecai M. Kaplan, Orthodoxy, and American Judaism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 140–1 and p. 206, note 14. It is noteworthy that a number of Kaplan’s prominent colleagues on the faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Louis Ginzberg, Saul Lieberman and Alexander Marx, distanced themselves from Kaplan’s prayerbook. See “*Giluy Daat*,” in *Ha-Do’ar* 24:39 (Oct. 5, 1945), pp. 904–905. In 1945 an emendation rejecting chosenness could hardly be characterized as having been made in response to a cultural trend; Kaplan was making a forthright statement entirely consistent with his theology. David Novak, “Mordecai Kaplan’s Rejection of Election,” *Modern Judaism* 15:1 (February, 1995): 1–19, cogently points out that Kaplan’s rejection of the election of Israel flows directly from his radical theology. To continue to pay lip service to the doctrine would have been dishonest and “whatever faults Kaplan may have had, hypocrisy was not one of them” (*ibid.*, p. 2).

In non-religious Israeli circles there is a new interest in study of the sources of Jewish thought and law but, for the moment, the turn toward study of the sources is far removed from traditional Jewish belief. There, too, a number of individuals have articulated a desire for a new *siddur* that expresses the sentiments of secular Jews²⁴⁶ and for development of festival rituals “from which the Lord has been erased.”²⁴⁷

Moreover, quite apart from issues involving belief in God and the efficacy of approaching God in prayer, a new and grave problem with regard to the wording of the liturgy has emerged in recent decades. The desire of many in the Reform movement to develop a prayer service that is completely gender neutral has led to a thorough revision of the basic elements of the blessings and prayers. These sweeping changes cannot be viewed as mere technical adaptations or semantic alterations.²⁴⁸ A work such as Marcia Falk’s *The Book of Blessings: New Jewish Prayers for Daily Life, the Sabbath, and the New Moon Festival* illustrates the extent to which much current feminist

²⁴⁶ See Yael Tamir, “*Mahapekha u-Masoret*,” *Anu ha-Yehudim ha-Hilonim*, ed. Dedi Zucker (Tel Aviv: Yedi’ot Aharonot, 1999), pp. 182–3.

²⁴⁷ Dedi Zucker, “*Ha-Zabar Hayyav la-Lekhet*,” *ibid.*, p. 189.

²⁴⁸ See, for example, a critique of the *siddur*’s “unrelievedly masculine language,” stereotyping the role of women and reflecting a male perspective in Annette Daum, “Language and Liturgy,” in *Daughters of the King: Women and the Synagogue*, ed. Susan Grossman and Rivka Haut (Philadelphia, New York, and Jerusalem: Jewish Publication Society, 1992), pp. 183–202. Daum surveys Conservative and Reform liturgies designed to include feminist imagery and women’s experiences and use of language to describe God utilizing both masculine and feminine terminology. See *ibid.*, pp. 197–8, for how (in what one may characterize as the spirit of the Yiddish translator who presented Shakespeare “*vertaytsht un verbessert* – translated and improved”) efforts to incorporate gender-neutral language encompass biblical verses as well so that, for example, Lev. 19:17 is translated “You shall not hate your brother or sister in your heart.” Daum describes the process of revision as “slow and inconsistent,” but “irreversible” (*ibid.*, p. 199). See also Ellen Umansky, “(Re)Imaging the Divine,” *Response* 13:1–2 (Fall-Winter, 1982): 110–19, who states that she is not suggesting rewriting the Bible and Talmud to make their ideas more consonant with contemporary ones but maintains that the *siddur* must be adjusted to reflect present notions lest “increasing numbers of men and women may find themselves forced to choose between membership in the Jewish community and communion with God” (*ibid.*, p. 119).

liturgy celebrates a radical theology in which God is viewed, not as a transcendent Other, but as immanent in creation and inseparable from human empowerment.²⁴⁹ Falk expresses fealty to Hebrew as “the heart of the heart of my work”²⁵⁰ and there is moving poetry in her writing. But her newly-coined liturgical formulas, “*Nevarekh et eyn ha-ḥayyim*” which she renders as “Let us bless the source of life” and “*Nevarekh et maayan ḥayyeinu*” which she renders as “Let us bless the flow of life,” are not simply innovative prayer texts; they constitute a theological statement.²⁵¹

Thus we find ourselves at the cusp of the twenty-first century, almost two hundred years after the advent of the movement for liturgical change, confronting a Reform liturgy that has turned almost 180 degrees with regard to some respects but that, in another respect, is further removed from the classical prayer service of Judaism than at any previous time.

The appeal of familiar ritual has long been recognized.²⁵² Current eagerness on the part of segments of the liberal constituency to embrace a greater amount of religious ceremonial has been attributed to several factors: an increased identification with the Jewish people and concomitant waning of embarrassment with distinctive rites; a quest for spirituality in Judaism rather than mere ethnicity; and a holistic approach to life that prompts adoption of practices that appeal to emotion rather than to rational cognition alone. There

²⁴⁹ Boston: Beacon Press, 1999. See especially the discussion pp. 417–23. See also Marcia Falk, “What About God?” *Moment* 10: 3 (March, 1985): 32–6.

²⁵⁰ *The Book of Blessings*, p. xviii.

²⁵¹ For these blessing formulas see, for example, *ibid.*, pp. 18–19 and pp. 368–9. Noteworthy and characteristic are Falk’s *Aleinu*, pp. 288–9, in praise of the beauty of the world and human power to heal and repair and her blessing for the New Moon, pp. 344–5, that is converted from a prayer that God renew the lunar cycle to a paean to the new moon that renews itself. Even a laudatory reviewer of Falk’s work, Eric L. Friedland, “A Women’s Prayer Book for All?” *CCAR Journal*, 49:1 (Winter 2002), comments critically on the “vaguely pantheistic” tone in which “more often than not, no God is addressed at all” (111).

²⁵² See, for example, Petuchowski, *Understanding Jewish Prayer*, pp. 37–9; Borowitz, *Liberal Judaism*, pp. 410–40; and the interesting personal remarks of Morris Raphael Cohen, “Religion,” in *The Faith of Secular Jews*, ed. Saul L. Goodman (New York: Ktav, 1976), p. 163.

is also a newly-found recognition of the value of regulation and discipline and the sense, as Eugene Borowitz puts it colloquially, that “God deserves and our community requires rules.”²⁵³ The openness to Jewish ritual in general²⁵⁴ finds particular expression in synagogue life and liturgical practice because of a renewed interest in observance of Sabbath and festivals including their distinctive prayers.

This welcome development should not, however, obscure the philosophical chasm that continues to divide liberal worship from that of halakhic Judaism. Borowitz, in his admittedly warm and appreciative endorsement of *mizvah* observance, hastens to reassure his readers that the words “who has sanctified us by divine commandments and commanded us to...” need not be taken in so literal a sense that they must fear being obligated by “the entire repertoire of Jewish ceremonial.”²⁵⁵ The essence of the liberal approach inheres in the commitment to personal autonomy and to the freedom to choose to accept or to desist from accepting specific observances.²⁵⁶

²⁵³ *Liberal Judaism*, p. 431.

²⁵⁴ I am indebted to Dr. Joel Wolowelsky for a telling example of the changing attitude toward ritual in the Reform movement. *The Union Haggadah: Home Service for the Passover* (n.p.: CCAR, 1923), p. 141, refers to “the quaint ceremony of ‘bdikas hometz – searching for leaven,’ still observed by orthodox Jews.” Fifty years later, *A Passover Haggadah* (n.p.: CCAR, 1974), p. 14, describes the search for leaven in a different manner entirely, portrays the ritual as “a dramatic and even compelling experience, particularly for children” and includes the Hebrew text of the blessing for disposal of *ḥamez*.

²⁵⁵ *Liberal Judaism*, p. 410.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 411. Cf. the news report of reactions to the new worship initiative announced at the 1999 biennial UAHC convention. According to the *JTA Daily News Bulletin*, 21 December 1999, p. 2, the response was positive as long as individuals felt that the new ideas were “encouraged, and not required.” As one conventioneer phrased it, the changes “don’t bother me, as long as there is a choice.” Cf. Frederic A. Doppelt and David Polish, *A Guide for Reform Jews*, rev. and augmented ed. (New York: Ktav, 1973), p. 9: “For what determines whether a custom, ceremony or symbol is either Orthodox or Reform is not its observance or non-observance; it is rather the right to change it when necessary, to drop it when no longer meaningful, and to innovate when desirable.” On the conflict between exercise of autonomy and attempts to establish standards of conduct see Dana E. Kaplan, “Reform Jewish Theology and the Sociology of Liberal Religion in America: The Platforms as Response to the Perception of Socioreligious Crisis,” *Modern Judaism* 20:1 (February,

In his autobiography, Irving Howe describes how he watched, “at first with hostility and then with bemusement,” his intellectual acquaintances seeking a way back to religion. A lifelong skeptic and professed non-believer, he writes that he himself found the temples to be inauthentic and uninspiring and their formless spirituality non-compelling. To him, the American Jewish community appeared to contain “little genuine faith, little serious observance, little searching toward belief. The temples grew in size and there was much busywork and eloquence, but God seldom figured as a dominant presence.” But surely for religious belief, asserts Howe, there must be “more than fragile epiphanies;” there must be “a persuasion of strength.”²⁵⁷ In this Howe is, of course, correct. It is with R. Judah ben Tema’s charge to be “strong as a lion” in divine service²⁵⁸ that both *Tur* and *Shulḥan Arukh* introduce the laws of *Orah Ḥayyim*.

Judaism is a demanding faith, a praxis and, *pace* Mendelssohn, a universe of belief. Judaism is not a religion without peoplehood, nor a peoplehood without religion, and certainly not a religion without God. Far from a fuzziness, the path to spirituality in Judaism is structured and limned with prescriptive detail. The table of contents and the orderly progression of Rabbenu Bahya’s classic *Ḥovot ha-Levavot* and R. Moshe Ḥayyim Luzzatto’s *Mesilat Yesharim* illustrate the regimen and discipline these authorities posit as essential in the quest for spiritual attainment.

There are no simplistic answers to the struggles of faith. To some, belief comes easier than to others. R. Hirsch’s perceptive comment that the *shul* is our school for adults points to the truism that, to the extent that belief can be taught, the liturgy and the synagogue are designed to instruct and to inculcate fundamentals of belief. Ideally, the *shul* becomes a crucible of faith.

Of the making of creative prayerbooks there may be no end. But

2000): 71–2. Cf. Simon Rocker, “Growing Through the Open Door,” *The Jewish Chronicle* (London), May 24, 2002, p. 26.

²⁵⁷ *A Margin of Hope: An Intellectual Autobiography* (San Diego, New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), pp. 278–9.

²⁵⁸ *Avot* 5:23.

whether these hundreds of works have engendered more profound or genuine prayer is open to question. Ultimately, the experience of spirituality in prayer is contingent upon faith. A trenchant folk explication of a difficult stanza in the “*Ve-Khol Maaminim*” prayer of the High Holy Day liturgy conveys this concept. According to that interpretation, the phrase “*Ha-vadai shemo ken tehilato*”²⁵⁹ should be understood as meaning: “To the extent that one is certain of His name, to that extent can one praise Him.” Such an understanding expresses the notion that, when the reality of God is taken as a certainty, man’s prayers flow; when certainty of God is absent, prayer comes haltingly at best.²⁶⁰

Over the centuries, Jews consistently manifested an unwavering, bedrock faith and welcomed prayer as a haven, a comfort and a fountain of inspiration. As Jews we have a propensity for faith; we have a legacy if we but claim it. For *maamanim benei maamanim*, prayer, even if difficult, is always possible and spirituality in prayer, even if at times elusive, is attainable.

XI. ADDENDUM

OF WOMEN AND PRAYER: A PERSONAL REFLECTION²⁶¹

As the vehicle for communication between man and God, prayer is at one and the same time both the medium of supplication for human needs (“A prayer of the afflicted when he is overwhelmed, and pours out his complaint before the Lord,” Ps. 102:1) and the expression of human yearning for knowledge of, and the experience of closeness to (*deveikut*), the divine (“As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, oh God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” Ps. 42:

²⁵⁹ Lit.: “Whose name is certainty, so is His praise.” The four-letter name of God transcends time and connotes necessity or “certainty” of existence.

²⁶⁰ For this interpretation I am indebted to Louis I. Rabinowiz, *Sabbath Light* (Johannesburg: Fieldhill Pub. Co., 1958), p. 3.

²⁶¹ In keeping with the theme of the Conference, the Orthodox Forum Steering Committee has encouraged presenters to include personal reflections in their papers.

2–3). It is those dual aspects of prayer that are incorporated in the structure of the quintessential *tefillah*, i.e., the *Shemoneh Esreih*, in the supplications that are preceded and followed by blessings of praise and thanksgiving respectively.

If there are aspects of human life that lose luster or vigor with the passage of years, there are counterbalancing areas in which appreciation and sensitivity become more keen. I doubt whether youngsters are as aware of the healing balm of *Shabbat* as are people of mature years. Surely, *Shabbat* is a spiritual treasure whose “light and joy” is appreciated increasingly as one grows older. So, too, with prayer. It is only with the unfolding of time that one comes to perceive more fully its focal role in our lives.

As the body ages, as one becomes more sharply aware and keenly conscious of physical frailty and of one’s utter, total dependence on the *Ribbon Olamim*, one’s prayers assume a more urgent and pressing form. With the passage of time, for many, there also come the blessings – and the worries – of an expanding personal and familial universe. Prayers for parents and spouse are augmented by prayers for children and, as the circle of dear ones expands, for children’s children, for friends and their children and grandchildren. Of the well known Yiddish jokester Hershele Ostropoler it was related that he prayed with utmost brevity. “What do I have to pray for?” said he. “I have but a wife and a goat, so my prayer is over very quickly: Wife, goat; goat, wife. What more need I say?” With the fullness of years and the blessings of families, our prayers expand.

But, with the passage of years, the overpowering urge to reach beyond the confines of the mundane grows as well. One experiences much more intensely the need to find meaningfulness in one’s existence, the need to cleave to the Ineffable, the need to find an expression for the longings of the soul. And so it is that *tefillah* in both its manifestations assumes an even greater importance.

But how approach an awesome, majestic God? We Jews have always felt an intimacy with God even in our reverence.

My sainted grandfather, of blessed memory, in his frail old age, was wont to eat his evening meal at a late hour and to fall into a doze during the Grace after Meals. Inexplicably, he would almost

invariably break off his loud recitation of the Grace immediately prior to “*Raḥem na*” (have mercy) and, after several moments of slumber, he would arouse himself and continue at the exact point at which the recitation was interrupted. He would then add his one interpolation in Yiddish: “*Raḥem na, heiliger Bashefer, darbarmdiger Gott!*” (Have mercy, Holy Creator, merciful God).

We approach the *Ribbono shel Olam* in prayer as the all-merciful God upon whose infinite loving kindness and boundless compassion we are dependent and to whose graciousness we appeal. In praying for the recovery of a person suffering from sickness it is customary to identify the person in prayer by means of that individual’s matronym (in contrast to prayers for the repose of the soul of the deceased and other liturgical use of a person’s name in which the patronym is employed). Several reasons for this practice have been advanced, some quite cogent, some arcane.²⁶² Perhaps yet another reason may be suggested for this age-old custom.

Prayer is offered for the very life of a person afflicted with illness. In almost every situation, there is an individual whose emotional involvement with the patient is particularly intense, namely, the patient’s mother, whose heart and soul is concentrated on the well-being of her child. The Psalmist tells us, “*Lev nishbar ve-nidkeh Elokim lo tivzeh* – A broken and contrite heart, O Lord, Thou wilt not disdain” (51:19). As the *Kotzker* long ago is said to have remarked:

²⁶² A primary source for the practice is a comment of the *Zohar*. The *Zohar* points to the phrase in Psalms uttered by King David, “*ve-hoshia’ le-ven amatekha* – and grant salvation to the son of your maidservant” (Psalms 86:16), as a paradigm for prayer and notes that the Psalmist invokes the maternal-filial relationship in his appeal. A petition for heavenly largesse, the *Zohar* adds, must be punctiliously accurate. When the mother’s name is employed there can be no doubt that the individual has been correctly identified whereas paternal identity is not beyond question. See *Zohar* 84a, *Lekh Lekha*, s.v. *va-yelekh le-masa’av*. See also R. Yehudah Leib Zirelson, *She’elot u-Teshuvot Gevul Yehudah* (Pietrkow: 1906), *Orah Hayyim*, no. 2 and R. Ovadiah Yosef, *Yabia Omer*, II (Jerusalem, 1955), no. 11. Other authorities advance more abstruse reasons for the practice. See reasons and sources cited by Josef Lewy, *Minhag Yisra’el Torah*, vol. 1, rev. ed. (Brooklyn: Fink Graphics, 1990), no. 139, p. 185.

There is nothing as whole as a broken heart.²⁶³ Little wonder then that prayers directed to the Throne of Mercy on behalf of a sick person are offered in nomenclature that by allusion invokes the supplications of two “whole” broken hearts, of both child and mother.

The prayer that serves as the core of the liturgy, the *Amidah*, is modeled on the prayer of Hannah. Basic characteristics of the *Amidah* are ascribed to actions of Hannah. While Hannah was “*medabberet al libbah* (speaking in her heart), only her lips moved but her voice was not heard” (1 Sam. 1:13) as she “poured out her soul before the Lord” (1 Sam. 1:18). The words of Hannah, uttered in “great anguish and distress” (1 Sam. 1:15), constitute the paradigm for prayer. The Talmud derives many attributes of prayer from her heartfelt petition: to pray with concentration, with lips moving, in a low voice, and not in a state of inebriation. The Sages further teach that the power of sincere petition may be learned from the Almighty’s answer to Hannah’s plea, that the appellation “Lord of Hosts” was first addressed to God by Hannah²⁶⁴ and that the nine blessings recited in the Rosh Hashanah liturgy correspond to the nine times she invoked the name of God in her prayer (1 Sam. 2:1–10).²⁶⁵

One may wonder why the Sages modeled the most fundamental of all prayers on that of Hannah. The most obvious reason is that the prayer of Hannah represents an instance of prayer that is demonstrably genuine, one that all would concede without cavil to be a prayer of sincerity, of intensity and of truth.

In the introduction to his commentary on the *siddur*, R. Yaakov Emden discusses the characteristics of genuine prayer. One aspect of genuine prayer, he maintains, is the element of *hiddush*, of novelty, rather than rote mouthing of words. Another hallmark of genuine

²⁶³ See R. Yizḥak Mirsky, *Hegyonei Halakhah be-Inyenei Shabbat u-Mo’adim* (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1989), p. 152.

²⁶⁴ BT *Berakhot* 31a-b; BT *Yoma* 73a; and JT *Berakhot* 4:1 and 9:1.

²⁶⁵ BT *Berakhot* 29a. Cf. the discussion of Leila L. Bronner, “Hannah’s Prayer: Rabbinic Ambivalence,” *Shofar* 17:2 (Winter 1999): 36–48. Unfortunately, the writer’s polemic against rabbinic law prompts her to view the matter through a distorted prism, erroneously to find a willful rabbinic suppression of women and to discover ambivalence where there is none.

prayer is prayer that contains a petition for something greatly desired and requested of the Almighty in full recognition that the Deity has the power to respond to that request.²⁶⁶ Moreover, the prayer of the afflicted arouses God's mercy²⁶⁷ and prayer that is accompanied by tears assuredly evidences proper devotion. Thus, claims R. Yaakov Emden, "prayer with a tearful eye is desirable and well received for it emanates from the depths of the heart and therefore unto the uppermost heavens does it reach."²⁶⁸ The prayer of Hannah quite obviously fulfills those criteria.

It is self-evident that models such as Hannah's prayer or Rachel's tears ("A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children...refusing to be comforted," Jer. 31:14) are emblematic of a woman's deep longing for children and of a woman's depth of care and concern for children in this life – and even thereafter.²⁶⁹ Such heartfelt prayer may be uttered by any person. Yet, all but the most doctrinaire advocate of absolute gender neutrality would concede that this type of openly emotional prayer is more often characteristic of women.

Dr. Haym Soloveitchik concludes his frequently cited, intriguing article, "Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy,"²⁷⁰ with a reflection concerning contemporary Orthodox society that he bases upon "personal experience."²⁷¹ He suggests that religious Jews who find that they have lost the ability to feel the intimacy of the divine presence now seek this presence

²⁶⁶ *Siddur Amudei Shamayim*, p. 5a. Cf. R. Judah Loeb b. Bezalal, Maharal of Prague, *Netivot Olam, Netiv ha-Avodah*, chap. 3, who maintains that prayer is the ultimate form of adoration of the Deity because it presupposes recognition of God's absolute mastery over the universe and man's complete dependence upon, and inability to survive without, God.

²⁶⁷ *Siddur Amudei Shamayim*, p. 411a.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5a. Cf. BT *Berakhot* 32b, "R. Eleazar also said: From the day on which the Temple was destroyed the gates of prayer have been closed...but though the gates of prayer are closed the gates of weeping are not closed."

²⁶⁹ *Bereshit Rabbah* 82:11 and *Eichah Rabbah, petiḥah*, 24. Cf. Rashi, Genesis 48:7 and Redak, Jeremiah 31:14.

²⁷⁰ *Tradition* 28:4 (Summer, 1994): 64–130.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 98ff.

in fulfilling the exacting demands of divine commandments. Dr. Soloveitchik describes his own experiences at High Holy Day services in a variety of different venues in both *hareidi* and non-*hareidi* communities over a period of thirty-five years and how he has found those services wanting by comparison to those he attended years ago in the company of ordinary lay people in Boston. What he has found missing has been a sense of fear, the presence of courtroom tears and an intimation of immediacy of judgment.

May I humbly offer a somewhat different conclusion based upon a somewhat different “personal experience.” Apart from hypocrites and pietistic show-offs (of whom every society has its quota), I doubt if those who seek exactness in observance of *mizvot* do so unless they experience the immediacy of *yirat shamayim* and *yirat ha-din*. The youngsters who are assiduous in *mizvah* observance, who seek out every stringency based upon *halakhah*, who worry about the precise size of a *ke-zayit*, who use the largest *kiddush* cup, who investigate the pedigree of an *etrog*, who will not stray from a stricture of *Mishnah Berurah*, may or may not at times be misguided. But, excluding those engaged in holier-than-thou grandstanding, they *are* motivated by fear of Heaven and the awareness of the reality of the divine presence that hovers over their lives. It is the fear of invoking divine displeasure and the joy of fulfilling the divine will, both prompted by “the touch of His presence,”²⁷² that fuel their zeal.

I teach in a building located on Lexington Avenue and 30th Street. When I arrive early in the morning, I walk past groups of young women heading up Lexington Avenue toward 35th Street and the Stern College campus. Invariably, one or another of those young ladies has her face so deeply buried in a small *siddur* that I am concerned for her physical safety as she dashes to school while concentrating on the *shaharit* prayer. My classmates in Stern College for Women’s pioneering class were fine women all, but I do not recall this type of *davening*. When I enter the Touro College Women’s Division some minutes later there are always young women in a

²⁷² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

corner of the library or in the student lounge busily completing the *shaharit* prayer. Again, I do not recall similar devoutness from my earliest years of teaching.

For the past thirty-five years I have spent the High Holy Days among ordinary lay people at services probably not so very different from the Boston congregation of Dr. Soloveitchik's youth. The level of observance and knowledgeability of those congregants varies greatly. But they bring an earnestness and sincerity to prayer, keep small talk to a commendable minimum, follow the *sheliaḥ zibur* to the best of their ability, and become, on those Days of Awe, welded into a community of prayer of which it is an honor to be a part. Moreover, during this period, I have been privileged to travel quite extensively throughout the United States, Canada, Israel and to many cities in Europe, and to have attended worship services in a variety of different venues in *hareidi* and non-*hareidi* communities.

From Lakewood to Bobov, from Yeshivat Rabbenu Yitzchak Elchanan to Mir, including the *beit midrash* on the Bar Ilan campus, I have observed serious and devout *davening* and a distinct sense of awe in every yeshiva *beit midrash*. For the most part, with the notable exception of synagogues in Moscow and Berlin,²⁷³ I have found worship services in synagogues as well to be both edifying and moving. To be sure, the loud crying and sighing I associate with European, Yiddish-speaking worshipers of my childhood is no longer common. But that manner of expression involved an edge of theatricality and/or hysteria that was part of the European mode whereas our own age has adopted a cooler demeanor. What has impressed me most of all is the fact that during this period the quality of *davening* at the synagogues I have attended has improved noticeably and consistently. Yes, there are still congregations in which there is more conversation during *tefillah* than there should be. Yet, if anything, I have found that, over the years, there has been

²⁷³ Services in Moscow in the 1970s and 1980s were noisy social occasions. The synagogue served as a social and political meeting place and religious services were but incidental in nature and a distraction. The synagogue in Berlin suffers from the transplantation there of individuals who come with the Moscow-type experience and mentality.

a decided change for the better in halakhic observance in many of these synagogues.²⁷⁴ The sense of immediacy and intimacy in prayer is quite palpable and those who come to pray do so with concentration and genuine devotion.

If I have found Dr. Soloveitchik's observation to be so different from my own, I do have a plausible explanation for the discrepancy. Perhaps it is different on the other side of the *meḥizah*. On the women's side, there is so much prayer with a tearful eye that "emanates from the depths of the heart and therefore unto the uppermost heavens does it reach."

But, there is a vast abyss between personal petition, serious and intense as it may be, and *hishtapkhut ha-nefesh*, the outpouring of the soul, of which Rav Kook writes, "Prayer actualizes and brings into light and perfect life that which is concealed in the deepest recesses of the soul."²⁷⁵ And there is a vast abyss between personal petition, serious and intense as it may be, and the awareness of a responsibility for, and the interdependence of, fellow Jews that translates into the essence of communal prayer, an entreaty and beseeching for mercy on behalf of the pain and the anguish, the loss and the severedness, of each and every person in *klal Yisra'el*. How far we are from such prayer! There goes out to all of us, men and women alike, the imperative to bestir ourselves from the trivialities and the superficialities, the partisan and the divisive, and to heed the call of the ship-master, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God – *Mah lekha nirdam? Kum kera el Elokekha!*"²⁷⁶

²⁷⁴ Years ago I would be somewhat nervous whenever my husband was accorded an *aliyah* at a synagogue away from home. More often than was comfortable, he would find a flaw in the script of sufficient gravity to disqualify the *Sefer Torah* and necessitate the removal of a second scroll from the Ark. In those days, synagogues were negligent in maintenance of Torah scrolls and the run-of-the-mill Torah reader was neither sufficiently learned nor sufficiently attentive to identify an error. The situation has changed dramatically. Younger rabbis tend to be more knowledgeable and conscientious, younger Torah readers are more meticulous, and synagogue officials have learned to be more sensitive to the need to assure the *kashrut* of Torah scrolls.

²⁷⁵ *Olat Re'iyah*, I, 12.

²⁷⁶ Jonah 1:6.