Siddur Avodat HaLev: A New Siddur and Insights on the Old

By: ATON HOLZER and ARIE FOLGER

A Siddur is many things at once. Primarily a devotional device, the Siddur orients our consciousness toward God, facilitating Divine service in the ideal manner. Its blessings attach to the gamut of human experiences, emotions and wonder. Mindfulness and interruptions to rote routine are portals to religious awareness. Praise of God, found in *Berakhot*, is expressed through such diverse experiences as the flavor of an apple, the startle of thunder, the genius of a scholar, the elation of a marriage ceremony, and even the searing pain of loss. In the sanctity of the commanded life, with all of its imperatives, the Siddur traces these channels back to their Source, and thus unites Man with his.

At the same time, the Siddur is also a teaching tool. Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik writes, "Prayer tells the individual, as well as the community, what his, or its, genuine needs are, what he should or should not petition God about… In a word, man finds his need-awareness, himself, in prayer."[1] For Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, "Scholars of Judaism, noting that it contains little systematic theology, have sometimes concluded that

[1] Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "Redemption, Prayer, and Talmud Torah," *Tradition* 17:2, New York: Spring 1978, p. 62.

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it is a religion of deeds not creeds, acts not beliefs. They were wrong because they were searching in the wrong place. They were looking for a library of works like Moses Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*. They should have looked instead at the prayer book. The home of Jewish belief is the siddur."[2]

Indeed, the Siddur educates in several ways. The content of its petitions teaches us what we ought to want while the implied polemics and occasional catechism poems teach us what we ought to believe. But more than that, as Professor Joseph Tabory has noted,[3] the Siddur is an anthology par excellence—its materials span the full expanse of Jewish history, and three millennia of intellectual currents course through its passages. Every genre is represented, from Biblical battle songs to Mishnaic legal treatises to Kaliric aggadic tapestries to hasidic ecstatic paeans to *Shabbat*; only in the Siddur can a catalogue of Maimonidean principles share a binding with Zoharic mystical declarations, and Aramaic halakhic formulae with contemporary poetry reviewed by Shai Agnon.[4] The Siddur tells a story, our story. The mingling of Eretz Yisraeli *piyutim* and occasional prayer formulae within the otherwise Babylonian-dominated common *Nusaḥ*[5] may offer clues to the manner of development of Ash-

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2 Jonathan Sacks, *The Koren Sacks Siddur* (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 2009) p. xxxv.

3 Joseph Tabory, "The Prayerbook (Siddur) as an Anthology of Judaism." *Prooftexts* 17: 2, Bloomington: May 1997, pp. 115-132.

4 After years of speculation, evidence has been discovered that conclusively shows that the Prayer for the Welfare of the State of Israel was authored by Chief Rabbi Isaac Halevi Herzog, and not by Shai Agnon. Herzog had merely sent it to Agnon for review, and the latter made only the most minor edits (reportedly just five words). See Joel Rappel, *Between Prayer and Politics (Heb.)*. Hevel Modiin: Kinneret, Zmora-Bitan, Dvir, 2018.

5 The prayer versions of Ashkenaz, Edot ha-Mizrach, Spanish-Portuguese, Romaniote and earlier, defunct variants from the High Middle Ages like Tzarfat and Provence all are rooted in the *Nusaḥ* of early medieval Bavel; Ashkenaz retains the greatest degree of influences from the *Nusaḥ* of early medieval Eretz Israel, which has been reconstructed from documents recovered from the genizah of the Ben Ezra Synagogue of Fustat, among the last outposts of *Nusaḥ Eretz Yisrael* until the tradition was extinguished in the thirteenth century. See Mordekhai Akiva Friedman, "New Evidence of the Abolition of the Eretz-Israel Prayers and Prayer Rituals in Egypt in Abraham Maimonides' Times" (Heb.) in Uri Ehrlich, ed., *Jewish Prayer: New Perspectives* (Heb.). Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 2016, pp. 315-325; for the reconstructions of the prayer version(s) see Uri Ehrlich, *The Weekday Amidah in Cairo Genizah Prayerbooks: Roots and Transmissions*. (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 2013). Ironically, many of these traces, such as alternate endings to *Amidah* blessings of

kenaz/Germany as a major center of medieval Jewish life,[6] an abiding mystery of Jewish history. Its polemics cover our struggles with enemies inside and out, from Sadducees to early Christians and Gnostics to Karaites, and its texts bear the scars of despots as varied as the Assyrian Sennacherib, the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar, the Sassanid Persian Yazdegerd II, the Byzantine Heraclius and Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa. Events such as the First Crusade, the Spanish Expulsion and the Khmelnytsky massacres (and in the RCA Siddur, the Shoah and, happily, the founding of the Jewish State) all have left their mark on the Siddur.

And so the Siddur takes us on a grand tour of the history of our people and its ideas; it situates ourselves in relation to the generations that precede us and contextualizes us within the eternal covenantal community—if we are paying attention.

The new RCA Siddur *Avodat HaLev: Nusaḥ Ashkenaz*, under the exceptional stewardship of Rabbi Basil Herring, is intended to potentiate both aspects. The Siddur leads with a newly translated essay by Rav Soloveitchik that is perhaps his clearest, yet most beautiful, expression of the principle of *ein od milvado* which animates the prayer context. The Siddur's commentary is studded with inspirational notes that are meant to uplift and direct the heart to the Source of Blessing, and its backmatter essays treating the meaning of prayer and *kavanah* range from the practical to the poetic. One reviewer objects: "While the siddur does a fine job in examining the nature of *kavanah*, it sheepishly avoids dealing with most perplexing questions of our age: What is the nature of a personal relationship with God? Is God 'responsive' to our prayers? Does prayer truly have or evoke healing power?"[7] but he seems to have been distracted by the "*sha'ar ha-kavanah*" section header; the issues he mentions are precisely the questions addressed in essays by Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, Rav Yehuda Amital, Rabbanit Rookie Billet and Rabbi Dr. David Mescheloff. It is gratifying to know that the Siddur indeed ad-

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Retzeh and *Sim Shalom*, as well as the *Krovot* of Rabbi Eliezer Ha-Kalir for *Tal* and *Geshem* and four *Parshiyot*, have been entirely eradicated under the influence of the Vilna Gaon from the Nusaḥ Ashkenaz used in most contemporary Israeli Ashkenazi synagogues; in the Diaspora, these remain in use in most Ashkenazi communities, including but not limited to the various *Yekke* rites.

6 Haym Soloveitchik, *Collected Essays II* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2014) pp. 141-143.

7 Rabbi Michael Leo Samuels at https://www.sdjewishworld.com/2018/12/22/book-review-siddur-avodat-halev/, accessed May 15, 2019.

dresses the most perplexing questions of our age. To this we can add other burning questions like the employment of fixed texts for what is meant to be heartfelt devotion, and the place of *korbanot* vis-a-vis modern sensibilities—ably addressed by the *Seridei Eish* and Rabbi Shalom Carmy, respectively.

The essays also contextualize specific prayers that have their own distinct properties. Rabbi Heshie Billet aims to understand the *Amidah* via a philological analysis of the word *tefillah*. We reprint Rabbi Pinhas Peli's classic exposition on *berakhot*. Rabbi Basil Herring presents an examination of *Shema* and *kabbalat ol malkhut shamayim*—very different from prayer—through the lens of Rav Soloveitchik, and we compiled an essay on the special rhythm of *tefillot* of *Shabbat*. The theology of *Shabbat* is not treated by the Rav frontally in any other known composition; this is a particularly obvious lacuna for a thinker who put so much emphasis on *kiyum she-ba-lev* in *mitzvot*.[8] The manner in which he does so in the compiled work solves a longstanding mystery in his theology of *kedushah*[9]—namely, why can *Shabbat* be an exception to Rav Soloveitchik's insistence in numerous places[10] that *kedushah* is man-made? (Spoiler alert: The holiness of *Shabbat* is ontologically prior to, and represents the very telos of, man-made sanctity.)

Rabbi Saul Berman authored a marvelous preface for the previous RCA Siddur, which unfortunately could not be retained after the previous publishing house terminated its contract with the RCA. After the

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8 See Jeffrey Saks, "The Rav Between Halakhic Men and Lachrymose Lubavitchers," *Kol HaMevaser* X:1, New York: 2016, pp. 22-23.

9 Raised, for example, by Rabbi Gil Student in http://hirhurim.blogspot.com/2008/03/rav-soloveitchiks-confrontation-with.html, accessed May 15, 2019; and Avraham Wein, "Of Perspective and Paradox: Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's Analysis of Holiness," *Kol Hamevaser* IX:3, New York: 2016, p. 25. See also Sherlow, Yuval. *Ve-hayu le-aḥadim be-einekha: Medialektikah le-harmoniah be-mishnato shel Ha-rav Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik* (Alon Shevut: Tevunot, 2000) p. 7; Yoel Finkelman, "Theology With Fissures: Contradictions in Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's Theological Writings," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies,* 13(3) (Abingdon-on-Thames: 2014) pp. 399-421.

10 E.g. in his *Halakhic Man*, trans. Lawrence Kaplan (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1984) p. 47; *And From There You Shall Seek*, trans. Naomi Goldblum (NJ: Ktav, 2008) p. 115; *Family Redeemed.* (NJ: Ktav, 2000) p. 64; *The Emergence of Ethical Man* (NJ: Ktav 2005), p. 150; also see Aharon Lichtenstein, "Joseph Soloveitchik," in Simon Noveck, ed., *Great Jewish Thinkers of the Twentieth Century* (Washington, DC: Bnai B'rith Adult Jewish Education, 1963, pp. 293-4. Rav Lichtenstein himself takes an altogether different approach to *kedushah* in his recent (posthumously published) *Kedushat Aviv*.

new Siddur was announced, Rabbi Berman voiced skepticism that a Siddur would be able to close the "God gap"—the distance that Western civilization and technological advances have placed between man and God.[11] In the new Siddur, we picked up that gauntlet and curated material that is at once uplifting and at the same time conceptually rigorous, and (hopefully) presented it in a manner that is accessible.

Like many contemporary Siddurim, there are boxout halakhic guides to inform the worshipper. But unlike any other, there is a guide to *halakhot bein adam le-ḥaveiro* in prayer, so critical to creating the proper atmosphere in prayer, yet so overlooked.

At the same time as it works to focus devotion, the RCA Siddur spares no effort to unpack the Siddur's messages and contextualize its many treasures.

First, all of the text was carefully reviewed, and its final version reflects conscious choices, rather than overlooked defaults. Some (not all!) examples from the first fifty pages alone:

- We ought to present the morning prayers in the actual order that they are to be said, instead of the thematic grouping which is found in other Siddurim. (Rav Hershel Schachter ratified this approach.)
- Do we restore the lost passages of *adon olam*? (No, it will be confusing.)
- What is the original *Nusaḥ* of the fifth line of *yigdal*? (*V'chol notzar yoreh*; confirmed by Professor Marc Shapiro. This version also fits best with the fifth Maimonidean principle.)[12]
- In *birkhot ha-shaḥar*, the feminine variants of *goyah* (or *nokhrit*) and *shifkhah* were considered as women's alternatives, and both Rav J. David Bleich and Rav Aharon Lichtenstein were consulted (the latter, via Rabbi Dov Karoll); Rav Bleich opined that it was

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11 Rabbi Saul Berman at https://forward.com/culture/112469/even-a-new-siddur-can-t-close-god-gap/, accessed May 15, 2019.

12 We were also cognizant of the recent scholarship questioning the degree to which the thirteen Maimonidean principles were seen as binding in subsequent generations; see e.g. Marc B. Shapiro, *The Limits of Orthodox Theology* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004); and more generally, Kellner, Menachem. *Must a Jew Believe Anything* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1999); but see also J. David Bleich, *The Philosophical Quest: Of Philosophy, Ethics, Law and Halakhah* (Jerusalem: Maggid Press, 2013) especially pp. 9-32. As such, we solicited an essay by Professor David Shatz to contextualize the *Ikkarim* for the contemporary *mispallel*.

appropriate to use the grammatical construct that best fit the speaker, while Rav Lichtenstein argued that the blessing is about the status or type of person that we are thankful not to be, which is gender neutral (and thus the male default); we do not intend to peg our blessing on a particular person. In the end, in a *maḥloket* between those two giants, we opted for the most common *Nusaḥ* regarding the *berakhot*, but in *Modeh Ani* and similar formulae we incorporated the grammatically correct alternative *Modah Ani* for a female worshiper.

- Professor Richard Steiner was consulted as to whether *(uv')/[u've]shokhbekha* takes a *shva na* or *naḥ*,[13] as was Rav Hershel Schachter.
- A decision was taken regarding the correct *ḥasimah* for the blessing that follows, which ends the *l-olam yehei adam* passage (*tarum* and *shimkha* are better attested in Ashkenaz manuscripts, confirmed by Rabbi Schlomo Hofmeister, than *tarim* and *shemo*),[14] with the assistance of Rabbi Dr. David Berger. Emendations made to the Siddur text were identified, some based on halakhic *sevara* (e.g., rendering the *v-yehi ratzon* following *ha-ma'avir sheinah* in plural rather than the original singular) and some (e.g., *hameikhin* versus *asher heikhin*) by well-meaning Siddur grammarians, based on grammatical assumptions that have been rendered outdated by advances in diachronic linguistics. Generally, we left these in place unless the original had already been popularized in a widely used contemporary Siddur, so as to avoid confusion.
- Some detective work went into understanding why many Siddurim (such as the prior RCA Siddur) have one difference between the *ketoret* passage before daily *Shaḥarit* and after *Mussaf* on *Shabbat* (*b-mikdash* versus *ba-azarah*, because some popular Siddurim copy-pasted only the post-prayer passage from its daily recitation in *Nusaḥ Sepharad*); and
- We relied on the best manuscripts of Siddur and *Sifra* to resolve the proper situation of the words *eḥad* versus *aḥer* in the *Rabbi Yishmael Omer* passage (and raised the question, do we translit-

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13 See discussion at https://www.ou.org/blog/oupress/saying_shema_better/, accessed May 15, 2019.

14 We were also assisted by Rabbi Binyamin Shlomo Hamburger with regard to textual issues. See his "*Hagahat Siddur Ha-Tefillah Lefi Siddurim Kedumim*," *Yerushateinu* 6. Bnei Brak: Machon Moreshet Ashkenaz, 2012, pp. 262-296.

erate *Rabbi* or the original *Ribbi*? The world is accustomed to the former, and replacement would be *tamu'ah la-rabim*).

And this is before we even got to *Barukh She-Amar!*

The new RCA Siddur has been criticized by some reviewers[15] for preserving texts which seem to offend modern sensibilities. In preparing the text of the Siddur, we saw ourselves as custodians whose mandate is to preserve, transmit and sometimes restore the words recited by the generations that preceded us, not to critique them; instead we endeavored to make them understood to the contemporary *mispallel*. While our thinking was certainly informed by a resistance to what C.S. Lewis called chronological snobbery,[16] this sensibility typically did not need to be invoked. Our experience in editing the Siddur convinced us that the proper approach to our liturgists is akin to the principle of charity or principle of rational accommodation articulated by Donald Davidson[17] and Willard Van Orman Quine,[18] widely employed in the historiography of philosophy by those who wish to productively engage the ideas of earlier thinkers. By this principle, we avoid attributing irrationality, logical fallacies or falsehoods to the others' statements when a coherent, rational interpretation of the statements is available,[19] or as Quine said, "your interlocutor's silliness is less likely than your bad interpretation."[20] The profundity, complexity and range displayed by the (mostly) anonymous rabbinic authors of our liturgy convinced us that they deserved the benefit of rational accommodation, and the words themselves typically lent themselves to an understanding that was entirely compatible with contemporary ideas of justice and human dignity.

And it turned out that on closer scrutiny, the most plausible understandings of ostensibly problematic prayers sidestep the contemporary objections. For example, the series of three blessings beginning with "*she-lo asani ishah*" seems nothing less than a clear response to the sub-

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15 E.g., Rabbi Dan Margulies, at https://morethodoxy.org/2018/12/18/the-new-rca-siddur-the-ravs-legacy-and-feminist-innovation/, accessed May 15, 2019, and Rabbi Michael Leo Samuels, note 4 above.

16 C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1955) p. 207.

17 Donald Davidson, "Truth and Meaning," *Synthese*, 17, 1967, pp. 304-323.

18 Willard Van Orman Quine, *Word and Object* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1960).

19 Pithy summary from https://onlinephilosophyclub.com/the-principle-of-charity.php, accessed June 1, 2019.

20 Davidson op. cit., p. 59.

stance of an anti-Judaism polemic which appears in the Christian Bible, in Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." In context, Paul's epistle polemicizes against Judaism's focus on works of the Law that, with the advent of Jesus, have been replaced by faith, which harbors no distinctions.[21] This is the most famous verse in an epistle that is a sweeping rejection of the Torah, the key document which decisively removes early Christianity from Judaism. Scholars further suggest that the verse itself is a fragment of early Christian baptismal liturgy;[22] these items would have been familiar to first-century Jewish leadership struggling against this movement, which had made significant inroads in the Jewish community. It is thus plausibly suggested that the three *she-lo asani* blessings—which preserve these same distinctions, in their precise order—are a polemical response against that Christian doctrine, providing the added benefit that a closet missionary serving as a *shaliaḥ tzibbur* could be uncovered right at the beginning of *Shaḥarit,* long before he refuses to recite *Ve-lamalshinim*.[23] This dovetails nicely

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21 Indeed, the phrase bears affinity to a pre-Christian Hellenistic thanksgiving formula, described in Greek as follows: "There were three blessings for which he was grateful to fortune: First, that I was born a human being and not one of the brutes; next, that I was born a man and not a woman, and thirdly, a Greek and not a barbarian." This is explored by Yoel Kahn, *The Three Blessings: Boundaries, Censorship and Identity in Jewish Liturgy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). However, the relatively late date at which these blessings were formulated, and the evidence of contemporaneous anti-Christian polemic (e.g., *Elokai Neshamah*, probably *birkat ha-minim*, swaths of the Haggadah, etc.), make it seem far likelier to these authors that *Ḥazal* in this instance were responding to the Gospels rather than directly borrowing from Socrates or Plato.

22 See discussion and sources cited in Ronald Y.K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988) p. 176.

23 A few *berakhot* and associated liturgy trace their formulations to the first and second centuries of the Common Era, when early Christianity and Gnosticism were the chief ideological and political competitors of the Jewish community in the Holy Land, and polemics against these ideologies are discernable in numerous blessing formulae. A "neighbor" of *she-lo asani ishah*, the blessing *Elokai Neshamah* is seen by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Kaufmann Kohler, Rabbi Dr. J.H. Hertz and others as polemicizing against the Christian doctrine of original sin ("the soul… it is pure"), even as the text continues with a description of bodily resurrection, which runs counter to Gnostic doctrine. The most obviously polemical formulae have been subject to censorship over time. See, e.g., Ruth Langer, *Cursing the Christians? A History of Birkat HaMinim.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); see also Israel J. Yuval, "Easter and Passover as Early Jewish-Christian Dialogue," in Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A.

with the explanation provided by sources contemporaneous with the *berakhah's* authorship, the *Tosefta Berakhot* 6:18 and *Yerushalmi Berakhot* 9:1 (that *she-lo asani ishah* was thus formulated to reflect that women are not obligated in [all] *mitzvot*). This seemed to us more likely the correct explanation than that the classical Rabbis aped a Greek axiology of persons; indeed, scholars have noted that misogyny, while a defining feature of Hellenistic thought and early Zoroastrianism, is not representative of Jewish scripture and the dominant stream in rabbinic tradition.[24]

One of the aforementioned reviewers supposed that "the [RCA] Siddur is deeply influenced by the critiques that the Orthodox feminist movement has raised over the years," since the RCA Siddur "endorses women's participation in *tefillah*" and encourages or at least validates daughters saying *Kaddish*, women reciting *zimun*, and the matriarchs are included in some *Mi She-berakh* headers.

Feminism, when defined as the advocacy of women's rights on the grounds of equality of the sexes, has undoubtedly influenced all modern societies in a profoundly salutary manner. The very existence of a female laity across the Orthodox spectrum that is well-educated, that functions at the highest levels of academic and professional life, and is ambitious in *avodat Hashem*—across the Orthodox spectrum—is a testament to the success of the global movement for women's human rights, and coupled with the advances of technology, it has revolutionized the way that we live.[25] The inclusion of women's variants in a Shul Siddur follows naturally from the presence of a religiously literate, sophisticated, and above all, participatory, *ezrat nashim*. The inclusion of women as commentators and essayists likewise reflects the extraordinary efflorescence of first-rate

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Hoffman, eds., *Passover and Easter: Origin and History to Modern Times* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000) pp. 98-124. After his survey of what he sees as thoroughgoing polemic in the Haggadah, Yuval goes so far as to say "…in its deepest meaning, the Oral Law should be seen as the Jewish response to the Christian New Testament." The purist *Tefillat Yeshurun* Siddur reinstated the uncensored version of the *birkat ha-minim*.

24 See Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1992). See also Yaakov Elman, "'He in His Cloak and She in Her Cloak:' Conflicting Images of Sexuality in Sasanian Mesopotamia," in Rivka Ulmer, ed. *Discussing Cultural Influences: Text, Context and Non-Text in Rabbinic Judaism*. Lanham, MA: University Press of America, 2007, pp. 129-164.

25 Rav Soloveitchik often expresses himself in his writings in a manner that is compatible with, and even anticipates, some concepts in feminist ethical and political theory. See Shira Wolosky, "The Lonely Woman of Faith," *Judaism* 52:1-2 (New York: American Jewish Congress, 2004) pp. 3-18.

female Torah scholars and thinkers in recent years. The relatively modest amount of material we were able to gather—from the meager amount of prayer-relevant published material, and new contributions solicited from overburdened and overextended *yeḥidot segulah* circa 2009—already seems incongruous given the remarkable advances in the decade since, and women's intellectual share in the Siddur will surely reach equilibrium with that of their male counterparts in future editions.

The Orthodox feminist movement has had a more checkered reception from Orthodox rabbinic leadership. The movement is heterogeneous, and some in the movement consider radical egalitarianism in ritual and other halakhically circumscribed matters as a desideratum, or at least seem willing to disregard halakhic and hashkafic stances hallowed by centuries or millennia of jurisprudential interpretative continuity.[26] To that end, some have sought to admit women to observances that *halakhah* classically proscribes for women—or at least considers significant only when performed by men, in the presence of a *minyan*—including all *devarim she-bi-k'dushah*. In the 1970's, the question of the halakhic permissibility of women's prayer groups crystallized the positions of many leading *poskim* of the times regarding the movement. The Frimer brothers catalog these views, including that of Rav Soloveitchik:

> The Rav was uncertain as to what precisely the women participating in these services were seeking: greater spirituality resulting from increased *kiyyum ha-mitzvot* (fulfillment of the commandments), or—consciously or not—something else, perhaps public peer ap-

[26] We term "jurisprudential interpretative continuity" as such interpretations of *halakhah* and halakhically relevant sources that occur within jurisprudential contexts and—due to continuity of interpretation—do not allow for re-evaluation of that interpretation in the halakhic context. An extreme example regards the prohibition against homosexual intercourse. Some authors claiming to belong to the Orthodox community have tried to suggest interpretations of the severe prohibition on homosexual intercourse in a manner that would allow condoning homosexual relations. Such interpretations invariably are at odds with all interpretations considered by *halakhah* since the earliest iterations of the Oral Law, and there is not a single traditional source that is accorded any halakhic import that supports those reinterpretations. With regard to other issues, in which those seeking reinterpretations of *halakhah* can muster some obscure sources, those sources had never been part of the ongoing halakhic discourse. That is what we term *jurisprudential interpretive continuity*: the existence of an interpretive tradition that was adopted within legal discourse, which displays sufficient continuity so as to render certain other, incompatible readings inadmissible.

> probation, conspicuous religious performance, or a sense of equality with men. If the real motivating factor was any of the latter, it was likely that a women's *tefillah* group would not truly satisfy their religious needs; on the contrary, the women's services would merely foster increasingly unfulfillable expectations, resulting in a greater frustration and perhaps even a break with halakha.[27]

Since the two of us were the ones who did the preliminary research—one of us (AF) discussed the matter with our *poskim*, and we wrote the commentary to those pieces—we wish to set the record straight. The only one of those inclusions that may be said to have been influenced by the encouragement of the Orthodox feminist movement is the endorsement of women saying *Kaddish*, a *davar she-bi-k'dushah*, and that was only done because no less than Rav Ahron Soloveitchik felt that this was something that we ought to permit. It is his teachings that made us consider and finally decide in favor of this inclusion, while noting that "customs vary regarding whether she should recite it in an undertone or out loud and whether or not she may recite it if she is the only mourner present" (p. 52).

Neither the inclusion of women's *zimun*, nor of the *imahot* in the *Mi She-berakh* for the sick, nor of a *Zeved ha-Bat* ceremony (which was not noted in the review) was motivated by critiques posed by the Orthodox feminist movement. Women's *zimun* is an explicit *halakhah* in *Shulḥan Arukh* (*OḤ* 199:7), anchored in the Talmud, and though the *Shulḥan Arukh* rules that it is *reshut*, the *Gra* is rather insistent that it is an actual obligation. We included women's *zimun* after I (AF) consulted with Rav Hershel Schachter, who cited a number of contemporary *gedolim* who had endorsed the practice (with certain limitations, the most obvious of which is in the Talmudic proviso that we do not do a mixed *zimun*). Among those Rav Schachter cited as endorsing women's *zimun* was Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (and indeed, such is cited as his view in *Ve-alehu Lo Yibol*), provided the men present are all family.

The inclusion of the *imahot* in the *Mi She-berakh* for the sick is nothing more or less than an ancient *Nusaḥ* still used in many communities.

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[27] Aryeh A. Frimer and Dov I. Frimer, "Women's Prayer Services—Theory and Practice," *Tradition* 32:2 (New York: Winter 1998) p. 41. For research that seems to bear out the latter concern, see Michelle Shain, "Whence Orthodox Jewish Feminism? Cognitive Dissonance and Religious Change in the United States," *Religions* 9, Basel: MDPI, 2018, article 332.

As the resident *Yekke*, I (AF)[28] continuously brought older *Nusahot,* and especially those that remained in use among *Yekkes*, to the attention of the team. That is also why in *E-l Malei Raḥamim*, we use the words *taḥat kanfei ha-Shekhinah* as the leading *Nusaḥ*, offering *al kanfei ha-Shekhinah* merely as an alternate *Nusaḥ*. *Al* is an emendation by the Shelah, based on a teaching that it is converts that are gathered *under* the wings of the *Shekhinah*, while born Jews are *over* the wings of the *Shekhinah*. *Taḥat kanfei ha-Shekhinah* is undisputedly the original *Nusaḥ*; the emendation of the Shelah only makes sense if we'll actually care to distinguish in the *Nusaḥ* between prayers for deceased converts and deceased born Jews. Since that isn't done anywhere, it makes sense to keep the original *Nusaḥ*, as still practiced in many communities, including but not limited to *Yekkish* communities. This reversion to the original *Nusaḥ* was accepted by our *poskim*.

The *Zeved ha-Bat* ceremony (p. 1076) was indeed considered because more and more people desire to celebrate more formally the birth of a girl, but only included because it is many hundreds of years old, a common celebration among Sepharadim, and duly attested by the *Ya'avetz,* whose text we utilized. However, we grant that we cannot refute a theory that would posit that we were more sensitive to including this ceremony on account of being the happy fathers of mostly girls.

Returning to prayers that were marked for omission by some reviewers, *Kapparot* likewise has quite a bit more to the story than meets the eye, as we report in the text, which a different reviewer noted approvingly.[29] We likewise don't flinch from including the *ribbono shel olam* text at bedtime that references reincarnation, nor the incantational verses at bedtime, *Havdalah* or *Kiddush Levanah* (indeed, the reversed "*k'even yidmu*" verse is likely not the result of a misreading of Soferim[30] but is found in magical works from the genizah, as Professor Shai Secunda enlightened us); we provide a basis to rationalize their use per the Arizal in the bedtime context. Professor Secunda also provides a historical insight that serves as a robust defense for the continued recitation of

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28 A zealous convert, I should term myself, as I grew up in *Nusaḥ Sepharad* and "converted" upon becoming the *rov* of the *Yekke* community of Basel, Switzerland, since it is a place with a real *minhag ha-makom.* (AF)

29 R. Israel Drazin, "The New Rabbinical Council of America Siddur," https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/the-new-rabbinical-council-of-america-siddur/, accessed May 31, 2019.

30 David S. Farkas, "Backward and Forward: An Unusual Feature of Kiddush Levanah," *Hakirah* vol. 7. New York: 2009, pp. 229-242.

Yekum Purkan, the passage which wrongly became early Reform's symbol for Orthodox liturgical ossification.[31]

In light of the principle of charity, a similarly satisfactory understanding can be found for the *Mi She-berakh* before *Mussaf* that excludes women from "*Ha-kahal ha-kadosh ha-zeh*"; one that immediately comes to mind is that "*hazeh*" is always understood in rabbinic literature as a deictic pronoun, evidenced in various aggadic and halakhic sources;[32] on the men's side of the *mehitzah*, and for those families in which mothers are home with small children and unable to attend Shul at all, there are no women to "point" to; perhaps it was felt best for the blessing to be bestowed on those immediately adjacent[33] and proceed through them to women and children associated with them, since formal blessings are bestowed upon people (in *birkat kohanim*) or items (in *birkhot ha-nehenin*) that are immediately proximate and visible to the *mevarekh*. *V-ein kan makom le-ha'arikh*.

Whereas some reviewers suspected innovation, in point of fact we took great pains to make sure that any adaptation would first and foremost be solidly anchored in ancient *Nusah*, traditional *hashkafah*, unassailable *halakhah,* and also be vetted by our *poskim*. Thus, we considered not only the need to have a Shoah remembrance ceremony, but were cognizant of (some on the team even adamant about) the critique of *Yom ha-Shoah*, which was instituted by the Knesset, as a result of a tug of war between right and left wing parties in which the concerns of the secular left ended up gaining the upper hand. The broad consensus of the religious public was to follow the lead of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and enshrine the 9th of *Av* for mourning and the 10th of *Tevet* as *Yom ha-Kaddish ha-Klali*, thus ensuring that the martyrs would be mourned in a most traditional manner. The secular, left wing parties, however, wanted to remember first and foremost the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, and appended the memory of other victims of the Holocaust to that act of de-

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31 See Jacob J. Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe: The Liturgy of European Liberal and Reform Judaism* (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1968) especially pp. 116, 122. See also the joke cited here, http://onthemainline.blogspot.com/2010/01/minhag-jokes-and-their-historical.html (item 2).

32 See *Menahot* 29b; *Yerushalmi, Shekalim* 1:4, Rambam, *Hilkhot Hametz U-Matzah* 8:4, et al.

33 The necessity of visual contact between the one who blesses and the recipient is noted in several places in the Torah commentary of Rabbi Ovadiah Seforno, most prominently in his comment on *Bereshit* 48:10. See discussion in Elhanan Samet, *Studies in the Weekly Parasha* (Series 3) vol. 1 (Heb.) p. 245.

fiance as almost an afterthought.[34] As a result, though all Jewish communities do commemorate the victims of the Shoah, not all celebrate *Yom ha-Shoah*. Even among those that do, many desire a more traditional mode to commemorate the victims.

Therefore, we have crafted a service centered around the study of *Mishnayot*, which serves to bring about an *iluy neshamah* in the manner that classical sources recommend. Because it centers around the study of Torah, it may be used on any day of the year—except for Tisha be-Av—and may thus also be used in *Nissan*. Upon considering the *Nusaḥ* of the *E-l Malei Raḥamim* to use for the martyrs of the Holocaust and of Israel's wars, we have taken into consideration Rav Soloveitchik's insistence to not ever use the phrase "*ba'avur she-anu mispallelim ba'avuram*," as that would be an unseemly attempt to condition our prayers on a particular result, a practice frowned upon as a form of *iyun tefillah* (cf. *Berakhot* 55a).[35]

In recent years, a new Shoah Remembrance Day has come about: *Yom ha-Shiḥrur ve-ha-Hatzalah*. This remembrance day was the result of a partnership between Russian Jews, who are much more secular, the Conference of European Rabbis, which includes rabbis from the full spectrum of Orthodoxy but leans more ḥareidi, the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, and Jewish organizations all over the communal spectrum. This day has been established with the blessings of many ḥareidi *gedolim,* with the result that ḥareidim eagerly take part in these commemorations. Even though hareidim do still participate in official *Yom ha-Shoah* ceremonies too, it is with much more reluctance. In 2018, the Knesset enshrined in law *Yom ha-Shiḥrur ve-ha-Hatzalah* through the *Ḥok Yom ha-Shiḥrur ve-ha-Hatzalah mi-Germaniah ha-Natzit*. Though it is too early to tell, the rising rates of participation across the religious spectrum raises the real possibility that this will become a fixed part of the Jewish calendar. Our liturgy for Shoah remembrance fits every bit as well for this remembrance day as for *Yom ha-Shoah*.

For the prayers of *Yom ha-Atzma'ut*, we consulted with Rav Aharon Lichtenstein. One of us (AF) made the phone calls and had repeated conversations with him on this and other topics relating to the Siddur. Rav Aharon Lichtenstein was negatively disposed toward the official Rabbanut-sponsored *Yom ha-Atzma'ut* liturgy; for him, we ought to say

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[34] See Roni Stauber, הויכוח בשנות החמישים בין הציונות הדתית לבין השמאל הציוני : מדינה בדרך החברה הישראלית בעשורים הראשונים, in עלמועד יום הזיכרון לשואה, (Zalman Shazar Center for the History of the Jewish People, 2001).

[35] See, e.g., *Nefesh Ha-Rav*, p. 143.

Hallel, each one according to his *poskim*, either with or without a *berakhah*, or thank God in a different way, but he didn't appreciate the special liturgy. However, he nonetheless instructed us to include that liturgy in the Siddur, out of respect for the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. Even so, he expressed a stronger disapproval of the inclusion of the few lines from *Lekhah Dodi*. In line with his recommendation, we included the full *Yom ha-Atzma'ut* liturgy in the Siddur, while noting that actual practices may differ.

Regarding *Yom ha-Atzma'ut*, we also consulted with Rav Hershel Schachter who reported that the Rav, who was an ardent supporter of Zionism and outlined in one of his most famous essays (*Kol Dodi Dofek*) how he understood the modern State of Israel religiously, was not fond of reciting *Hallel* on *Yom ha-Atzma'ut*. When the MTA high school turned to him with a request to find a way to integrate *Hallel* into *Shaḥarit* of *Yom ha-Atzma'ut*, he responded that they should recite it without a *berakhah* after *Kaddish Titkabel*. During a lengthy conversation that spanned many aspects of *Yom ha-Atzma'ut*, other modern observances, and other aspects of the Siddur, Rav Schachter expressed his approval for reciting *Hallel* (without a *berakhah*), but in the process also made an intriguing theoretical suggestion: shouldn't we consider the possibility of saying both *Hallel* and *Taḥanun*? He suggested that because (a) the Tur records a minority view of saying *Taḥanun* on Purim, and (b) we owe tremendous gratitude to God for having been given the opportunity to live through the establishment and continuing development of the State of Israel; yet on *Yom Ha-Atzma'ut* the state was proclaimed and war also broke out, and it is thus both a very happy day and a day on which great sacrifices were demanded of the People of Israel. He did not make that suggestion in the expectation that it would be adopted practically, but the suggestion is nonetheless very thought-provoking. In that, he—possibly unwittingly—echoed the Rav, who, in a private conversation told Rabbi David Holzer, "For my part you could say *Tahanun*. But *Tahanun* and *Hallel* are not mutually exclusive."[36] It should also be clear that there is no inkling of a doubt that we owe God tremendous gratitude for this incredible miracle that is the return to Zion and the establishment of the independent, sovereign State of Israel.

Both the Shoah Remembrance and *Yom ha-Atzma'ut*/*Yom Yerushalayim* services are bolstered by essays by leading thinkers with ex-

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[36] David Holzer, "*The Rav: Thinking Aloud, Transcripts of Personal Conversations with Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik,*" 2009, p. 210. See fn. 28 ibid. which limits the Rav's statement to a voluntary (*reshut*) *Hallel*.

pertise in Jewish history, Rabbi Jacob J. Schacter and Rabbi Dr. David Berger, to ensure that the *mispallel* understands not merely the content of the additional services, but also why the *gedolim* of our community considered it important that we specially mark these recent events.

As we stressed at the beginning of the present essay, the Siddur is filled with kabbalistic texts (all the *Lesheim Yiḥud* formulas, for starters) and texts whose meanings have been enriched by kabbalistic understandings. As a result, we sought the counsel of a great *talmid ḥakham* who is a notable kabbalist, Rav Yaakov Hillel. One of the issues we discussed with him was the *Seder Tu bi-Shvat*; his advice can also be seen as a general framework in these matters. The "official" *Seder Tu bi-Shvat* comes from a controversial *sefer* called *Ḥemdat Yamim*. Though the work is anonymous, some scholars believe that they have identified the author.[37] The *sefer* includes a poem by Nathan of Gaza, who was the "prophet" of Shabbetai Tzvi. The inclusion of such a poem obviously makes the whole *sefer* suspect. The question of the status of *Ḥemdat Yamim* has implications not just for *Seder Tu bi-Shvat*, since it is from there that the *Ḥayei Adam* had copied *Tefillah Zakah* (which one reviewer had suggested we include) and made it popular.[38] (Indeed, since making this discovery, I [AF] have switched to reciting on *erev* Yom Kippur the *Vidui* of Rabbenu Nissim, instead, and add a *Nusaḥ* that represents one of the passages that the *poskim* found particularly important in *Tefillah Zakah*, namely where the penitent proclaims that he forgives all those who wronged him for any wrong for which he doesn't plan to seek redress in *beit din*).

We asked Rav Yaakov Hillel what he thought of *Seder Tu bi-Shvat*. His response was that (a) it is quite popular, especially among Moroccan Sepharadim; (b) nonetheless, "הצנועים מושכים את ידיהם כי אומרים שמחברו היה מאותו הכת", those who are scrupulous abstain from using that text, since it is suspected that the author was a Sabbatean; (c) he was, howev-

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37 See Alan Brill, "Tu bShvat Seder—with Text," 2010, accessed May 30 2019 at https://kavvanah.wordpress.com/2010/01/25/tu-bshevat-seder-with-text/.

38 See "Tefillah Zakah: History of a Controversial Prayer," 2007. Accessed May 30th, 2019 at https://seforimblog.com/2007/09/teffilah-zakah-history-of-controversia/. One could argue that the inclusion of *L-David Hashem Ori* (Psalm 27) from *Rosh Ḥodesh Elul* until Simhat Torah should be struck from the Siddur on similar grounds. However, this practice has gained widespread acceptance in Ashkenazi communities. Also, it seems that the practice predates *Ḥemdat Yamim* by several years, as it appears in *Sefer Shem Tov Katan* (1706), *Sefer Zekhirah* (1709) and *Sefer HaMussar* (1724), which predate *Hemdat Yamim* (1731). See discussion in *Pardes Eliezer*, Rosh Hashanah, pp. 104-107.

er, supportive of the notion of a *Seder Tu bi-Shvat*, which fits right in to the whole genre of *tikkunim* (of which only the *Tikkun Leil Shavuot* and to a lesser extent the *Tikkun* of Hoshanah Rabbah and for the evening before a *brit* enjoy any significant enduring popularity). Therefore, he suggested crafting our own text based primarily on the Ramḥal's *Ma'amar Eitz ha-Sadeh*. The conclusion is obvious: the idea is good, but when a text is problematic, exchange it for a text with a better pedigree, for instance a text by Ramḥal. Such a text was to have appeared on the Siddur's supplemental website and may instead feature in an upcoming companion volume.

Texts that have "fallen out" of the Siddur are restored. Where recent Siddurim have purged the text of "extra" personal supplications to streamline the prayer experience, we return them so as to facilitate personal investment in prayer. *Gott fun Avrohom,* the most famous of all Yiddish *Teḥinot*—recited ubiquitously by our grandmothers in Eastern Europe but absent from other Koren Siddurim—is reinstated; and a section of *Teḥinot* for women is provided in translation to Hebrew, fittingly restoring to contemporary women a genre of self-expression in prayer that was innovated for them and by them centuries ago. While we were at it, we provided a Siddur in which women could find themselves as much at home as men, by supplying in-text female variants when appropriate, accounting for realities such as female heads of household, and providing for such halakhic options as women's *zimun* and *birkat hagomel*, all with the encouragement and assent of our *poskim*.

In the commentary and essays, we turned to Rav Soloveitchik more than any other contemporary figure not merely because of the Siddur's RCA pedigree—indeed, he was intimately involved behind the scenes in every aspect of that organization's endeavors,[39] and was the *rebbi* or grand-*rebbi* of the lion's share of its members—but because, as Lawrence Kaplan writes:

> Soloveitchik's writings on the nature of halakhah and the personality of halakhic man are endowed with a special, almost unique, authority, not shared by any other of the works in the modern era on these subjects. For Soloveitchik, alone among the leading Jewish thinkers in the modern era to have written on the philosophy of halakhah, was both a rabbinic figure of the first rank… and a creative theologian and philosopher who mastered the Western tradition of philosophical and scientific thought and was thus able to

[39] See Louis Bernstein, "Challenge *and Mission: The Emergence of the English-Speaking Orthodox Rabbinate,"* (New York: Shengold Publishers, 1982).

write about the halakhah in universal philosophical and phenomenological categories.[40]

Since the target audience of this Siddur is one that is intellectually sophisticated and versed in the Western tradition of philosophical and scientific thought, and Rav Soloveitchik has left a significant corpus, and had a particular interest in, and devoted several major works to, *tefillah*, it was natural that his thought be overrepresented in our Siddur. Arguably, there are others who wore both hats of rabbinic leadership and mastery of the Western tradition whose oeuvre has grown quite a bit since the Siddur commentary was completed circa 2010, and future Siddurim would likely incorporate more thinkers such as Rav Aharon Lichtenstein and Rav Shimon Gershon Rosenberg (Shagar). As for halakhic instructions, some of the practices of Rav Soloveitchik have taken root in Yeshiva University and a plurality of Modern and Centrist Orthodox congregations, and it was felt appropriate to validate the diversity of practice in our target congregations.

On the theme of diversity, aside from Rav Soloveitchik, Rav Kook, Rav Lichtenstein, *ybl"ḥ* Rav Nachum Rabinovitch, and other luminaries of the centrist Orthodox/religious Zionist community, the commentary provides space for *gedolim* of the modern period who are typically assigned to other religious communities and are not often in the consciousness of the Siddur's target audience—Rav Chaim Kanievsky *ybl"ḥ*, as well as Rabbi Shmuel HaLevi Wosner, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, Rabbi Ḥayim David HaLevi, and the Lubavitcher Rebbe. This is a marked departure from the prior edition of the RCA Siddur, which in the main presented insights from greats associated with the religious community of its editors.

Apart from inspiration, the commentary finds meaning that is often overlooked. Knowledge of Tanakh alerts us to prayer passages that incorporate snippets of *pesukim* as shorthand for profound ideas. In the very first passage, the presence of *rabbah emunatekha* in *Modeh Ani* calls attention to its source in *Eikhah*, the turning point at which the lamenting *gever* recognizes that despite the horrors he has endured, God's mercies are still in place—because Jews continue to wake up in the morning. We were fortunate to have access to the foremost minds in what may be

40 Lawrence Kaplan, "Joseph Soloveitchik and Halakhic Man," in Michael L Morgan, and Peter Eli Gordon, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Jewish Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) p. 210.

termed the Literary School of Orthodox Jewish Tanakh study[41] as well as a direct line to religiously committed academic scholars with expertise in Jewish history, grammar and philosophy. The historical backdrops for various prayers and the concealed polemical messages are brought into full relief. Texts outside the canon like Ben Sira and archaeological findings that shed light on or appear to challenge our texts are discussed—Ancient Near East literature is mustered to help understand words like *totefes*, *ahavah* and *emunah*, and the special significance of the *brit* meal; the makeup of *ketoret* and *tekheilet* is helped by archaeology, and conversely, the mystery of the Dead Sea scroll "nun" verse for *Ashrei* is explained, and the most likely explanation reasonably vindicates our *Mesorah*. Scientific matters and identification of flora and fauna were assisted by Rabbi Dr. Natan Slifkin, who has special expertise in, and curates a museum for, Biblical Natural History. At the very same time, the broad tent of the RCA afforded us access to ḥasidic scholars and even *mekubalim* who helped us fully explicate kabbalistic prayers and avoid any obscurantism in our commentaries. The motto of the commentary was *karov Hashem lekhol kor'av, l-khol asher yikra'uhu b-emet.*

The astute reader would do well to compare the new Siddur's commentary with that of the previous RCA Siddur. Since much of the commentary was initially prepared when the Siddur was set to appear under its previous publisher, many of the "*diburei ha-maskhil*" (*sub verbis*) were retained, but the understandings are sometimes completely at variance, based on new (or newly considered) evidence. Matters of concordance had been retained in the first iteration of the new Siddur's commentary, and after change of publisher, were removed and replaced for copyright purposes.

Aside from restored prayers, the Siddur serves as a *mekitz nirdamim* in another aspect—the basis of the (heavily updated) translation is the elegant masterpiece by David de Sola Pool, perhaps the leading twentieth-century Sepharadic Rav in the United States, a true *gavra rabbah* described in the following terms by his successor: "If ever the American Jewish community could boast of an extraordinary rabbi who combined the talents of a congregational rabbi, the social activism of a genuine idealist, the eloquent advocacy of a Zionist partisan and the calm, deep writings of a fine scholar—that rabbi was David de Sola Pool. That this rabbi was Or-

41 See Yaakov Beasley, "Review Essay: Return of the Pashtanim," *Tradition* 42:1. (New York: Spring 2009) pp. 67-83.

phardic made him absolutely unique for his time and place."[42] Unfortunately, delays in publication meant that his work was superseded by Philip Birnbaum's, and the Siddur never saw the success it deserved.[43] Along with de Sola Pool's prose were brilliant poetic "free-form" translations of hymns by himself and his great-grandfather David Aaron de Sola and Rabbi Yosef Marcus, along with those of literary luminaries such as Israel Zangwill, Nina Salaman and Elsie Davis, which had previously appeared a few decades prior (in a series of British translated Maḥzorim co-edited by Chief Rabbi Hermann Adler's nephew).

Our greatest frustration in the Siddur's publication has been the hundreds of pages of quality material—essays, commentary, *yotzerot*—that had to be cut so that the Siddur could remain one portable volume. With the gracious consent of *Hakirah*, we present two essays that we wish could have been included—one on the kabbalistic schema of prayer which informs many passages in the Siddur, subject matter which is treated in a more general (and lyrical) manner in Rabbi Lamm's essay on ḥasidic perspectives on prayer; and one on *Nusaḥ ha-Tefilah*, in collaboration with an expert ḥazzan, which needed to be removed when one of our community's foremost *gedolim* asked to address the same topic, albeit, again, in a more general (and halakhically rigorous) way. We present them here for the readership of *Ḥakirah*.

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42 Rabbi Marc Angel at https://www.jewishideas.org/article/rabbi-dr-david-de-sola-pool-sephardic-visionary-and-activist, accessed May 15, 2019.

43 The Siddur's erstwhile competitor's review unfairly accusing Rabbi de Sola Pool of Christological influence did not help much, either. See Paltiel Birnbaum, "Siddur Ḥadash Ba La-Medinah," *Hadoar*, 2 Kislev, 5721, p. 85 and rebuttal by Chaim Dov Chavel, "Teshuvat Histadrut Ha-Rabanim De'Amerika," *Hadoar,* 2 Kislev, 5721, pp. 87–89. See the comprehensive treatment in Jonathan Krasner, "American Jews in Text and Context: Jacob Behrman and the Rise of a Publishing Dynasty," *Images* 7 (Leiden: 2015) especially pp. 74-77.

Appendix A

Nusah ha-Tefilah as Commentary: The Ashkenazic Liturgical music-Tradition as a Key to Unlocking Meaning in the Siddur

By: ATON M. HOLZER, ARIE FOLGER and BERNARD BEER

> Our Rabbis taught: When a man prays, he should direct his heart to heaven. Abba Shaul says: This is hinted in the verse (Psalms 10:17), "You will direct their heart, You will cause Your ear to attend." (*Berakhot* 31a)

Based on this Talmudic dictum, *halakhah* codifies the requirement to pray with *kavanah*, intent for and awareness of prayer. Rabbi Ḥayyim Soloveitchik of Brisk identifies several strata regarding the *kavanah* desideratum; the worshiper should understand the words of prayer, but the worshiper also has a more basic obligation—to be aware, in prayer, that he or she is standing before God (*Novellae on Maimonides' Mishneh Torah*, 4:1).

Nusaḥ ha-Tefilah, the liturgical music-tradition, masterfully uses melody to conjure up both sorts of *kavanah* in at least three ways.

First, its musical "modes" augment the content of the prayer. The modes evoke the diverse manners in which the Divine is encountered in different parts of prayer.

Second, its special melodies evoke a mood congruent with the particular day which is observed, evincing past experiences of standing before God on these special days.

Third, *Nusaḥ* highlights parallel content and themes between different prayers—drawing attention and imparting meaning to the words recited—by importing musical cues and moods to other contexts.

Musical Modes

The first goal is accomplished by use of modes[44]—musical scales in which the particular prayer is rendered. Some of these derive from already familiar contexts. For example:

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[44] For a survey of the history of, and literature on, the modes, or *shtaygers*, see Max Wohlberg, "The History of the Musical Modes of the Ashkenazic Synagogue and Their Usage," *Journal of Synagogue Music* 4 (1972) 1-2, 46-61.

- The *Shabbat* and Festival *Pesukei De-Zimrah*. This service includes the regular, weekday *Pesukei De-Zimrah*, supplemented with additional texts, to exalt God in song and praise on these days of heightened spiritual perception. This longer *Pesukei De-Zimrah* is rendered in a mode derived very closely from the traditional cantillation of the *Song of the Sea*—the Biblical epitome of a song of triumphant exaltation.
- *Minḥah* on *Shabbat* afternoon—whose *Amidah* text, *Atah Eḥad*, evokes the Messianic era, the ultimate fulfillment of Divine prophecies—appropriately uses a melody crafted from the traditional chant of the *Haftarah*, selections from the Prophets in which the descriptions of this glorious future appear.
- The traditional chant used for Jewish Torah study—recognizable to any contemporary visitor to a *Beit Midrash*—is applied to the familiar parent-child question-answer "study session" on Seder night, namely *Mah Nishtanah*, and also to the daily morning blessings, which contain the blessings over Torah study and Torah passages, and the *Korbanot* section that follows, as well. This melody emphasizes the "Torah study" theme, under whose rubric all of these practices are subsumed.

Other prayers are rendered in one of six original modes, chosen to reflect the tenor of their content. Some examples:

- *Kabalat Shabbat*, the "welcoming" of *Shabbat*, and the Friday evening *Kiddush* both celebrate the manifestation of Divine Sovereignty. They are therefore sung according to a majestic mode, borrowed from the coronation-like ceremony declaring God's majesty (*"Adoshem Malakh"*) at the removal of the Torahs from the ark.
- The *Ahavah Rabah* blessing, which includes a plea that God enlighten us in His Torah and also return us to our land, is appropriately rendered in a deeply emotive mode that is shared with the *Avinu Malkenu* supplications of the High Holidays.
- In the *Lekhah Dodi* hymn, there is no set melody,[45] but the chosen tune is tightly bound to content. As such, it is actually altered in the middle of the poem—from a more plaintive melody

[45] Indeed, foremost Jewish musicologist Abraham Zvi Idelsohn estimated, in 1929 (!), that *two thousand* melodies have been composed for the *Lekha Dodi* text. See Abraham Z. Idelsohn, "Jewish *Music in Its Historical* Development" (New York: Schocken, 1929), p. 116.

reflecting the text's description of yearning from the depths of exile, to a joyous melody celebrating the arrival of redemption, as described in the stanzas that begin with *Lo Tevoshi* and continue through the end of the passage.[46]

Melodic Moods

The second goal of *Nusaḥ*—to use special melodies to coax the worshiper into a mood appropriate for the particular setting—is accomplished by the use of fixed melodies for particular times of year. The High Holidays, the three Festivals, *Shabbat* and weekdays each have unique musical signatures immediately recognizable to the regular synagogue visitor. These tunes evoke past spiritual experiences for the worshiper, and serve the purpose of the second form of *kavanah* mentioned above—the awareness of standing before God, in the particular manner in which He manifests to us in different times of year.

- The tone is set by *Barekhu*, the formal call to prayer, which is rendered in a different melody for each prayer service and time of year. Both in *Shaḥarit* and *Ma'ariv*, the tune of *Barekhu* defines the "flavor" of the coming passage.
- Similarly, there are no less than fourteen different widely used settings for the *Kaddish*, and each is used for a different occasion—to provide a moment for the worshiper to meditate prior to the coming section in a manner congruent with the mood of the moment.

Among these melodies, there are some which are invariant among most Ashkenazi communities. These melodies are known as "*Skarbove"* (Polish for "treasure") or "*Mi-sinai"*[47] *Nigunim*, which embody a corpus

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46 The practice described appears to be of ḥasidic origin. Ḥazzan Bernard Beer suggests that the choice of *Lo Tevoshi* for this transition derives from the verse *ve-nivneta ir al tila*, "and the city will be built upon its mound," the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the anticipated climax of the (non-mystical read of) the poem. The Frankfurt Am-Main community and its descendants change the tune at the prior stanza of *Hit'oreri*, the numerical and thematic pivot of the poem, and would return to the prior tune for the final stanza of *Bo'i be-Shalom*. There is considerable mystery surrounding the origins of these practices.
See a discussion by Rabbi Ari Enkin at
http://hirhurim.blogspot.com/2010/01/lecha-dodichanging-tune.html, accessed March 26, 2019.

47 This term has its origins in the context of Biblical cantillation, in Rabbi Judah He-Ḥasid's *Sefer Ḥasidim*, ch. 302.

of "holy tunes" that set specific atmosphere and solemnity of the holiday or occasion. Rabbi Jacob Mölin, a key figure in the preservation of Ashkenazic rites in the 15th century, argued that these tunes have particular halakhic significance and they must not be changed.[48] Most of these are among the universally familiar High Holiday melodies, but they also encompass a few others.

Meaningful Motifs

These two musical features create a musical landscape of Jewish prayer: the modes define the terrain while fixed melodies comprise its unique features. This scenery lays the groundwork for the third aspect of *Nusah*: subtle "cross-references" within the fabric of prayer. Motifs, "musical quotes," are borrowed from one context, sometimes in mid-prayer, to beautifully evoke the emotion within a particular phrase.

Sometimes **melodies** are borrowed. For example: the plaintive cry in the Festival *Musaf Amidah* that God restore the Temple, *Bnei Veitkha ke-vateḥila*, is rendered in the tune of *Eli Tziyon*, a major elegy of Tisha be-Av, the day of great mourning for the destroyed Temple. The borrowed tune stirs up a nostalgic longing even in the midst of the Festival celebration.

Other times, entire **themes** are transposed. The prayers for dew on Pesaḥ and rain on Sukkot evoke Divine judgment in the midst of Festivals; will water be plentiful in the coming agricultural season? Hence, these prayers are rendered in a melody derived closely from that of the High Holidays, which are the Days of Judgment.

Shared melodies and modes also draw our attention to parallel prayer sections: the weekday *Amidah* and the blessings after the *Haftarah*, for example, whose blessings resemble each other. The opening three blessings in the *Amidah* and the first blessing following the *Haftarah* embody fundamental belief in God. The fourteenth and fifteenth blessings in the *Amidah*, like the second and third blessings of the *Haftarah*, speak of God as Builder of Jerusalem, Who will restore Zion and the House of David (*Bone Yerushalayim* and *Matzmiaḥ Keren Yeshu'av*). The eighteenth blessing (*Modim Anakhnu Lakh*), and traditionally (*Berakhot* 34a), the latter three benedictions of the *Amidah*, like the last of the *Haftarah* blessings, are organized around the theme of thanksgiving.

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48 *Sefer Maharil, Hilkhot Yom Kipur*, paragraph s.v. *yotzer*.

At times, the melodies may point to a forgotten aspect regarding the origin of a particular prayer, such as the hint of the Festival theme at the end of the Friday night *Va-yekhulu* service (cf. *Tosafot Pesaḥim* 106a).

Borrowed melodies also provide cues to the worshiper. For example, the end of *Kaddish* before *Musaf* on *Rosh Ḥodesh* or *Ḥol ha-Mo'ed* is rendered in the melody of the *Rosh Ḥodesh* and Festival *Musaf Amidah* prayer, to cue the worshiper regarding the upcoming prayer text.

The Place of Congregational Singing

While the musical *Nusaḥ* tradition dictates the use of certain tunes and puts constraints on what kind of other tunes may or may not be used in the synagogue services, it does not prohibit all innovation. Indeed, where appropriate, many new tunes have been incorporated within the corpus of this musical tradition. The Young Israel movement in particular has been noted for its introduction of congregational melodies, nineteenth-century European compositions by Louis Lewandowsky, Solomon Sulzer and others that are usually derivatives of motifs of the original *Nusaḥ*, or that fits prayers that did not previously have a set *Nusaḥ*. More recently, *Nusaḥ*-congruent *Nigunim* of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach have become a fixture in American synagogues. The litmus test on whether new melodies are fit for the synagogue is whether or not they fulfill the above objectives—the goals of the musical *Nusaḥ* tradition.

Appendix B

Basic Notions in Kabbalah Which Undergird Aspects of the Siddur[49]

By: ARIE FOLGER and ATON HOLZER

Prayer is, by its very nature, a mysterious practice. How else can one explain how the infinite God has given us permission to address Him and to be heard by Him? In prayer, we break out of our finite, limited material existence; we rise above our bodily limitations to reach for the Infinite, to be touched by the Eternal. As such, the Siddur is filled with mystical secrets of generations of our sages.

Despite the Siddur's inherently mystical core, it has always been intended for a broad audience, for the entire people of Israel. Therefore, its mystical allusions are for the most part hidden, to be uncovered only by the most dedicated student. This is however—exceptionally—not true of the prayers authored by the kabbalists of 16th-century Safed, particularly *Arizal* (Rabbi Isaac Luria Ashkenazi, 1534-1572) and their successors. As a group, they have left their mark on the Siddur not merely through the incorporation of kabbalistic prayers,[50] but also by coloring the way in which other prayers, and indeed, the act of prayer as a whole, is understood. Through their teachings, ideas that had previously been restricted to Torah scholars immersing themselves in the study of *Zohar* and other esoteric teachings suddenly became broadly known, systematically explained, and disseminated throughout the Jewish world.

To fully understand and appreciate these prayers, as well as the many kabbalistically-oriented commentaries on the Siddur, it is necessary to be acquainted with certain major concepts promulgated by the *Arizal* regarding prayer.

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49 We are indebted to Rabbi Yaakov Leib Altein and the scholars of *Ḥassidut Mevueret* for the Hebrew commentary piece upon which this essay is based. We thank Rabbi Ephraim Goldstein for reviewing several drafts of this essay, and Rabbi Yaakov Hillel for his input regarding some of the topics covered here.

50 Most notably *Lesheim Yiḥud*, *Berikh Shemei* and *Ana Be-Khoaḥ*. It should be noted that despite their inclusion in most siddurim, the recitation of such prayers is not without controversy. Indeed, some communities, particularly those with origins in Western Europe, continue to abstain from the recitation of most of these texts. Of all kabbalistic prayers, only *Lekha Dodi* was accepted for popular use by virtually all communities.

In lieu of a comprehensive presentation of the subject, we present mainly a view of the kabbalistic understanding of *tefillah* through the lens of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812), the founder of the Habad hasidic dynasty. He was also an important influence on the kabbalistic thought of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook and Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik. What follows is based upon the recently published, outstanding multi-volume *Ḥassidut Mevueret* commentary on selections from Rabbi Schneur Zalman's hasidic discourses on the Torah portion, primarily *Torah Or* and *Likutei Torah*.[51] The explorations of the *Lekhah Dodi* hymn, however, draw upon additional sources, as indicated, though those explorations do fit within the kabbalistic understanding of Rabbi Schneur Zalman who writes:

> Prayer may be conceptualized as a ladder—more specifically, the ladder visualized in Jacob's dream (cf. Genesis 28:12), which was set on the ground, but reached into the heavens. Just like an ordinary ladder, this ladder, too, serves both to ascend and descend upon it (*Zohar I Vayetse*). Prayer serves the same purpose; through prayer, the soul ascends step by step from the ground to the highest heights... The notion of descending a ladder, too, manifests itself in prayer. After the soul has ascended the pinnacle, the most elevated levels, and reached what may be called the Divine Will, the soul will then be clothed in this Divine Will and thereby bring down blessing. This is the meaning of "And behold, the angels of the Almighty ascend and descend on Jacob's ladder," for on the ladder one both ascends and descends.[52]

I. Four Worlds

Rabbi Shneur Zalman's description of the ascent and descent of the soul is based upon *Arizal*'s understanding of the prayer service. Jacob's ladder is said to have had four rungs, which, in the *Zohar*, corresponds to four overlapping and interlocking spiritual realms to which the human soul can ascend. These are:

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[51] Our treatment of the subject matter is based on an unpublished essay made privately available by the team of *Ḥassidut Mevueret* to the present authors, which was mostly culled from throughout their work, in particular volume 3 (*Shabbat*), (Boro Park: Heichel Menachem, 2006) pp. 186-188, and volume 1 (*Mo'adim* vol. 1), pp. 399-402. A separate volume also exists on prayer (vol. 4).

[52] *Torah Or*, *Va-yaqhel*, s.v. *Va-yaqhel Moshe*, p. 88.

- *asiyah* ("completion"), the spiritual within the ordinary physical world we inhabit and the lowest realm of Divine emanation;
- *yetzirah* ("formation"), the angelic realm;
- *beriyah* ("creation"), the realm of the souls and the Divine throne;
- and finally, *atzilut* ("emanation"), the realm where Divine Unity becomes apparent. Elsewhere, we can only sense traces of God's presence, but *atzilut* is the realm of encounter between God and man.[53]

The four realms are reflected in the following typology of the human soul: (1) The *nefesh* is the lowest element of the soul and is symbolized by the digestive organs. It exists in both man and beast and controls instinctive behavior. (2) The *ruaḥ*, or "spirit," is symbolized by the heart and lungs, and is the seat of our emotions. (3) The *neshamah*, or "breath," is symbolized by the brain, and it is the source of our intellectual and spiritual activity. Finally, (4) the *ḥayah*, or "life-force," represents our potential, what our soul can become. Likewise, when we reach for the realm of *atzilut* in prayer, we tap into limitless potentiality.

To ascend this ladder, we must sanctify ourselves. More specifically, we must sanctify our speech and our actions by engaging in both prayer and holy deeds. *Arizal* (*P'ri Etz Ḥayyim, Sha'ar Ha-Tefillah,* ch. 1) identifies certain prayers that should elevate our speech, and corresponding sacred actions that should sanctify our deeds. Thus, when we awaken there are four actions (relieving oneself/washing one's hands, putting on *tzitzit*—both small and the large *tallit,* wearing the arm-*tefillin,* and wearing the head-*tefillin*)[54] that respectively correspond to four rungs of the ladder. Likewise, the *Shaḥarit* service itself consists of four ascending sections (*Korbanot*, *Pesukei De-Zimrah*, the *Shema* with its blessings, and the *Amidah*) followed by descending sections that bring one back down to the world of *asiyah* at the end of the service. Through this system,

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53 In Lurianic Kabbalah, an infinite number of further realms are said to exist, which lie (mostly) beyond human comprehension. The realm that is most immediately above *atzilut* is known as *adam qadmon*, "primordial homunculus." This fifth realm corresponds to the fifth aspect of the human soul, the *yeḥidah*, or "singularity," the unitive spirit of existence that lies beyond the reaches of our potential. The *mezuzah* is said to adorn the *yeḥidah*. Realms below *asiyah* also exist, known as *qelipot*, to which we should take care not to descend.

54 Or, among those who have the custom of donning the two types of *tefillin*, "*Rashi*" and "*Rabbenu Tam*" *tefillin*, the third and fourth actions are donning the *Rashi* and the *Rabbenu Tam* pair, respectively.

kabbalists made sense out of the prayer service as it has crystallized over the ages.

In addition, a number of prayers and practices were especially incorporated in the Siddur as an aid for meditatively transitioning between these realms. Examples include:

- *Ana Be-Khoaḥ* initiates the transition out of the lowest spiritual realm of *asiyah*, during the morning service.
- There is a custom to hold on to fringes of the *tallit* or *tzitzit* while reciting *Barukh She-Amar*, as we enter the second realm, of *beriyah*, which is also symbolized by the *tzitzit*.
- The kabbalists see most *kaddeishim* as special prayers for completing the transition between realms, such as, for example, a *Kaddish* recited between *korbanot* and the *Pesukei De-Zimrah*. However, in the Sepharadic tradition, as well as in the hasidic *Nusaḥ Sepharad*, *Hodu* is recited before *Barukh She-Amar*, and seen as a continuation of *korbanot*. As there is no *Kaddish* after *Hodu*, for them, Psalm 30 assumes the role of transition prayer. In the Ashkenazic rite, on the other hand, Psalm 30 does not need to fill this role.

Prayer enables man to cleave to God; its purpose is to allow man to "ascend" to God. Through the four stages of prayer, which are the rungs on the "ladder of prayer," the worshiper ascends from one spiritual level to the next. By the time the worshiper has progressed in his prayer to the recitation of the *Amidah*, he or she should feel that he is standing before his or her Master (*Shabbat* 10a). Indeed, the particular laws as to how one should present oneself during the *Amidah* follow from the expectation that the worshiper experiences the sense of standing before the Supreme King (*Shulḥan Arukh OḤ* 95, 98, 104).

II. Ten *Sefirot*

The early kabbalistic notion of ten *Sefirot*[55] represents the faculties through which God acts and thus reveals Himself in the world. Divine blessing comes about and is transmitted by way of the *Sefirot*. The ten *Sefirot* divide into three upper *Sefirot*—*Keter* ("crown," the Divine will),

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55 The word *Sefirot* is commonly either translated as spheres or as enumerations. The latter is championed, for example, by the Gaon of Vilna. See *Orot ha-Gra*, (Benei Beraq 5746) p. 208. In its origin in *Sefer Yetzirah*, the term refers to the digits in the base-ten (decimal) system (see *Sefer Yetzirah* ch. 1).

Ḥokhmah ("wisdom") and *Binah* ("insight")—and seven lower *Sefirot*, which are attributes of action, respectively.

The individual *Sefirot* are rarely mentioned explicitly in the Siddur. They figure most prominently in the kabbalistic *Ribono Shel Olam* prayer printed at the conclusion of the Counting of the *Omer*, and in the kabbalistic *Ushpizin* prayer recited when entering the *Sukkah*. They are also quite clearly alluded to in the *Lekhah Dodi* and *Arizal*'s *zemirot* for each of the *Shabbat* meals: *Askinu Seudata* in its four versions for the three *Shabbat* meals plus *Melava de-Malka*, as well as *Azamer Bi-Shvaḥin*, *Asader Li-Se'udata* and *Benei Heikhalah*. In the latter, they appear in the context of five or six *Partsufim* ("faces")—overlapping arrays of Sefirotic configurations that roughly correspond to the Worlds—which figure prominently in the *Zohar*.

Most often, the *Sefirot* are mentioned in prayers through the lens of *dekhar ve-nukvah*, the masculine and feminine metaphor.

III. Masculine and Feminine

Spiritual awakening in the service of God results from human initiative on the one hand, and from Divine inspiration on the other. The human initiative to draw oneself toward God, particularly in prayer, is termed by *Arizal* as *the raising up of the female waters* (*ha'alat mayin nuqvin*), while the corresponding awakening initiated by Divine inspiration is called *the drawing down of the male waters* (*hamshakhat mayin dukhrin*). In this context, "male" and "female" are metaphors for the Giver of Divine bounty and its recipient, respectively. The metaphor employed draws, specifically, on the biology of the male and female roles in human reproduction. While some might prefer to avoid such gender associations, kabbalistic prayers cannot be understood without exploring this ancient paradigm.

Every "male" Divine initiative is commensurate with the human "female" awakening: while God desires to fill us with His blessing, we can only receive it to the extent that we have made ourselves into receptacles for Divine bounty. We become such receptacles by overcoming our ego and self-centeredness, to the point where we desire nothing but the fulfillment of God's will. This is the meditative backdrop of the prayer service.

While generally the "male" represents God and the "female" the Congregation of Israel or the individual Jew, the same imagery is used to describe the various stations of Divine bounty as it is "handled" by the *Sefirot* (see above) and as it traverses the four spiritual worlds. This "male" and "female" imagery may represent any two consecutive *Sefirot,* any two-way stations in the spiritual worlds or relate to several such rela-

tionships at once. The use of bride and groom imagery in *Lekhah Dodi* is to be understood in the same way: bride and groom, or male and female, represent multiple relationships by which Israel benefits from God's blessing.[56]

Lekhah Dodi also distinguishes itself through other remarkable features. It is almost entirely composed of scriptural, Midrashic, and Talmudic phrases. At first sight, those phrases seem to convey a simple, literal meaning. Upon investigation, however, the stanzas, which are each formed by several such phrases, are difficult to read literally.[57] Furthermore, they have often been significantly altered from their original forms, beyond that which is needed to fit the rhyme scheme. In reality, the stanzas only make sense—and the author's intent only becomes apparent—upon uncovering the multiple kabbalistic teachings he packed into the brief stanzas. The literal understanding of those phrases merely forms a thin non-mystical veneer, whereas the author only intended the song to be understood in its manifold kabbalistic dimensions.[58]

For instance, in its second stanza, the words *shamor ve-zakhor be-dibbur eḥad—"safeguard and remember"*—in a single utterance is a paraphrase of a rabbinic commentary in the Talmud (*Shavu'ot* 20b), but with a twist. There are two accounts of the Ten Commandments in the Torah (Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5), with slight differences between them. For example, in Exodus, we are enjoined to *remember the Sabbath day* (*zakhor*), while in Deuteronomy, we are to *safeguard it* (*shamor*). The Sages explain that both versions are correct, for God caused Israel to simultaneously hear the two complementary aspects of the *Shabbat* commandment, which the Talmud captures in the brief phrase, *Remember and safeguard were said in a single utterance*. In the present stanza, however, the order of the terms is reversed, with *safeguard* ahead of *remember*. Rabbi Shlomo Alkavetz, the author of *Lekhah Dodi*, did so not only to spell his name with the acrostic formed by the first eight stanzas, but primarily in order to allude to the following kabbalistic teaching.

The onset of *Shabbat* distinguishes itself from other times during the week, for usually, we must first reach up (*ha'alat mayin nuqvin*), before triggering a commensurate awakening of the Divine bounty. On Friday evening, however, God initiates the spiritual "love" relationship and

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56 For more on this, see Rabbi Norman Lamm, "The Unity Theme and Its Implication for Moderns," *Tradition* vol. 4:1, Fall 1961, especially pp. 51-54.

57 For an extensive analysis of *Lekha Dodi*, particularly its mystical nature, see Reuven Kimmelman's monograph, *Lekha Dodi ve-Kabbalat Shabbat, Ha-Mashma'ut Ha-Mistit,* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2003).

58 Ibid. p. 33.

spontaneously bestows His blessing upon the earth (*hamshakhat mayin dukhrin*). This initial passivity on our part is conveyed by the verb *shamor*, *safeguard*, which connotes passive attention. On *Shabbat* morning, it is our duty to actively re-initiate this relationship, which is conveyed by the verb *remember*, which conveys a more active role. Hence, the stanza puts *safeguard*, the service of Friday evening, ahead of *remember*, the service of *Shabbat* morning (*Maor va-Shamesh,* Deuteronomy 5:12).[59]

A second example, which also perfectly demonstrates the presence of multiple mystical teachings packed into a single brief phrase, occurs in the middle of *Lekhah Dodi*, in the fifth stanza: *livshi bigdei tifarteikh, ami—Put on your splendid clothes, My people*. On the surface, the *splendid clothes* refer to the priestly garments, and indeed, the conjunction of *clothes* with *splendor* occurs in Exodus 28:2. The nation of Israel, *My people*, is called upon to dress in priestly garments. However, *Tiferet* ("Splendor") is also the name of one of the lower *Sefirot,* the "middle" *Sefirah* which often is used to represent the six intermediate *Sefirot*. Instead of referring only to the nation of Israel, *ami*, *My people,* also, and primarily, refers to another *Sefirah*: the ultimate *Sefirah*, *Malkhut* ("Majesty"), also known as the *Shekhinah*. *Tiferet* is the paradigmatic "male," benefactor *Sefirah*, while *Malkhut* is the paradigmatic "female," recipient *Sefirah*. Their union, called *yiḥud* or *zivug* (see below), represents the bridging of the final waystation as God bestows His bountiful blessing on earth, and symbolizes the palpable Divine presence in the world. Thus, in this stanza, the *Shekhinah* is urged to cloak itself with "garments of splendor," i.e., to unite with *Tiferet*, which has reached out to her on *Shabbat*. Likewise, the worshipers, who are dressed in their *Shabbat* finery, are drawn toward God as He bestows His blessing upon them. *My people* thus refers both to the Divine Presence and to the Congregation of Israel, at once.[60]

Alternatively, it is not *My people* that is being exhorted to dress in fineries. Rather, as in the original verse in Isaiah 52:1, so, too in its paraphrase in the present stanza, the exhortation addresses Jerusalem and the Temple, the subjects of the previous stanza.[61] In this understanding, *My people* is not the subject of dressing, but rather its object, for the People of Israel and the splendid clothes are one and the same; as the people return to Jerusalem, she "cloaks" herself in them. Likewise, in *Lek-*

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59 Ibid. pp. 36-42.

60 Ibid. ch. 5.

61 *Siddur Otzar ha-Tefillot, Iyun Tefillah* ad loc. See also Rabbi Marc B. Shapiro's blog post, *Taliban Women and More*, accessible at http://seforim.blogspot.com/2012/06/taliban-women-and-more.html, where he cites additional sources that make the same point.

hah Dodi, Jerusalem, as the seat of Divine sovereignty on earth, symbolizes the *Sefirah* of *Malkhut*, which cloaks herself at once in *Tiferet*, which it draws down, and in the physical People of Israel, which it animates spiritually. Again, in this interpretation, too, we see how the author of *Lekhah Dodi* packed multiple mystical teachings within single brief phrases.

Lekhah Dodi incorporates kabbalistic symbolism not only through its words, but also through its structure, down to its number of stanzas, words and letters. Thus, it is made up of ten stanzas, three related directly to *Shabbat*—corresponding to the ten *Sefirot*, and the three upper *Sefirot* among them, respectively. The chorus contains seven words, corresponding to the seven lower *Sefirot*. The word count of the stanzas is structured around the number 65, the numerical equivalent of the Name א-ד-נ-י, which corresponds to the receptive, "feminine" Divine faculty, as above. The letter count of the chorus is 26, the numerical equivalent of the Tetragrammaton, the Name י-ה-ו-ה, which corresponds to the "masculine" Divine faculty, of paradigmatic giving, as above. In this manner, *yiḥud* or *zivug*—the union of the upper and lower *Sefirot*, of the Divine Giver and Presence, and God and the Congregation of Israel—is subtly reflected in the very structure of the prayer itself.[62]

When applied to the *Sefirot*, the "masculine" and "feminine" roles in conveying Divine bounty are also known as *Ḥasadim* (kindnesses) and *Gevurot* (strengths), or *Kudsha berikh Hu* (the Holy One, Blessed be He) and *Shekhinah* (Presence), respectively. These terms are commonly found in kabbalistic prayers, such as in the *Lesheim Yiḥud* texts.[63] These texts are commonly recited (by some) right before fulfilling a number of *mitzvot*, such as wearing the *tallit* and the *tefillin*, counting the *Omer* and shaking the *lulav*.

IV. *Yiḥud*

Ultimately, approaching God's presence requires transcending the boundaries of material existence. Only great, undying, overwhelming love of God can bring one to the point of removing from oneself all

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62 Yaakov Bazak, "Lekha Dodi—Rabbi Shelomo Alkavets," *Sinai* vol. 102, 5748, pp. 183-175, ch. 3.

63 In some *Le-sheim Yiḥud* texts, *Kudsha berikh Hu* and *Shekhinah* are called upon to unite with *Dehilu* and *Reḥimu*, the feminine and masculine monikers for the immediately preceding two *Partzufim* or worlds—and thus all four accessible Divine worlds are being called into union.

material desires, to be left with the overwhelming desire to unite with the Infinite (*deveikut*, or *unio mystica*), to place as one's own desire to do only the will of God. The goal of our service, in prayer and otherwise, is *bittul ha-yesh*, negation of "substance"—purifying oneself of the desires and ego that prevent us from seeing ourselves as *eivarim de-Shekhinta*, "limbs of the Presence," or extensions of the Divine Will. The resulting unification of lower with upper realms, whether in the contexts of "worlds," the *Sefirot*, or male/female imagery, is known as *yiḥud*, unification.

During the first three blessings of the *Amidah*, the worshiper engages in increasing *bittul ha-yesh*. Having made him- or herself into a receptacle for Divine blessing, life-force fills the worshiper's soul, connecting him or her with his or her Divine Source across all spiritual realms, as he or she recites the petitionary middle blessings of the *Amidah*. After thus having ascended to the spiritual plane of the Divine Will, the worshiper draws that blessing down to our material world when reciting the final three blessings.