

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Kedushah

IN RABBI N. DANIEL KOROBKIN'S article "Kedushah, Shema, and the Difference between Israel and the Angels" *Hakirah* 16, p. 23, he notes, "It is well documented that in Palestine the custom was to recite Kedushah only on Sabbath and festivals."

It is thus logical to conclude that in Palestine the Kedushah was not recited during the repetition of the *Amidah* and neither was the *Trisagion* included in the weekday morning pre-*Shema* blessing of *Yotzer ha-Meorot*.

What did this blessing look like? Fortunately, at least a dozen versions of this shortened blessing survived in the Cairo Genizah. Their texts are similar to the following:

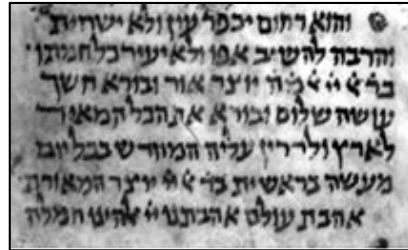
ברוך אתה יי א' מלך העולם יוצר אור
ובורא חשך עושה שלום ובורא את הכל
המאיר לארץ ולדרים עליה המחזק בכל
יום מעשה בראשית ברוך אתה יי יוצר
המאורות.¹

It is also noteworthy that when this version appears it is often preceded by:

והוא רחום יכפר עון ולא ישחית והרבה
להשיב אפו ולא יעיר כל חמתו.²

¹ Cambridge: CUL: T-S H18.7; 6H2.1; 6H2.8; 8H9.16; K27.33a; NS 157.127; AS 103.244; AS 103.33; as 108.61; London British Library: OR 5557A.6; New York, JTS: ENA 1232.9; 2168.28; NS

An image of this (Cambridge CUL T-S 6H2.1) appears below:



Heshey Zelcer
Hakirah

Rabbi Korobkin deserves our thanks for his insightful article on the relationship of the trisagion (the verse *kadosh*, *kadosh*, *kadosh*, etc.) to the *Shema* and the differences between the Palestinian and Babylonian *nusḥa'ot* of *kedushah*. I write to add to those insights, and suggest alternative responses to some of R. Korobkin's questions, by addressing two questions that logically precede the ones he discusses. Those two questions are: (1) Why are the trisagion and *Shema* linked in *birkhot kri'at Shema* of *Shaharit* and *Musaf Kedushah*? (2) Why is the trisagion inserted in the middle of the first of the blessings of *kri'at Shema*?

74.11.

² CUL: T-S H18.7; 6H2.1; 8H9.16; NS 157.127 London British Library: OR 5557A.6; New York, JTS: ENA NS 74.11.

To elaborate: On the first question, R. Korobkin's point of departure is that the trisagion and the opening of *Shema* are linked because both are coronations of God. In fact, though, *Shema's* opening verse does not refer to God as "King" and several *tanna'im* in Rosh Hashanah 32b (in a discussion concerning the coronation verses for *malkhuyot* in the Rosh Hashanah *Musaf Amidah*) assert that the opening of *Shema* is not a coronation verse, apparently for precisely this reason. (Although the trisagion does not refer to God as King, the context of that verse in Isaiah 6 makes it clear that that is the "role" He has in that chapter.) To elaborate on the second question—why is the trisagion inserted into the middle of *Yotzer Or*—the theme of the first blessing of *kri'at Shema* in *shaharit* and *arvit* is "God the Creator"; the trisagion and the section of *Yotzer Or* that are the prologue and epilogue to that verse seem like an interruption of that theme and of the sections of *Yotzer Or* that surround it, rather than a continuation of, or complement to them.

As is often true, answering these two liturgical questions requires understanding the history of the liturgy and the influences that created it. As many scholars have pointed out, the theme of God as our King became far more pronounced in Jewish theology in the early centuries of the Common Era than had previously been the case. This marked the culmination of a significant change in emphasis in characterizing our relationship with our

Creator; as the Talmud in Rosh Hashanah 32b notes, the idea of God as our King is very rarely found in the Torah. Why this change came about is the subject of much discussion that we don't have room for here (see, for example, Reuven Kimelman, "Blessing Formulae and Divine Sovereignty in Rabbinic Liturgy" in *Liturgy in the Life of the Synagogue: Studies in the History of Jewish Prayer*, Ruth Langer & Steven Fine, eds., (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2005)), but it critically shaped our prayers. It is responsible for the central blessing formulation "*Elokeinu Melekh ha-Olam*" (a formulation that is found neither in Tanakh nor in post-Biblical literature before the early centuries of the CE) and for the fact that Divine sovereignty is perhaps the most pervasive theme in our liturgy.

The newly central idea of God as King also naturally led to a desire to reframe the one Biblically-required, twice-daily central statement of our faith—the *Shema*—so that it would be understood as (among other things) a proclamation of God as our King. Three obvious elements of this reframing were the insertion of "*barukh shem kevod malkhuto*" etc. immediately after the first verse of *Shema*, of "*kel melekh ne'eman*" immediately before it, and the "*pores al Shema*" ceremony—the antiphonal reading of *Shema* that was a key part of *tefila be-tzibbur*. As Reuven Kimelman observes, "the ancient [antiphonal] synagogal recitation of the *Shema* verse serves as a reenactment of Israel's acceptance at Sinai of God as sovereign."

Logically, the insertion of the trisagion coronation verse prior to the *Shema* was a fourth element in this reframing. That is, Hāzal have us recite the angels' coronation of God and their acceptance of *al malkhut Shamayim* to set up a parallel: between the coronation of God by the heavenly court through the trisagion, and (what was being re-framed as) the coronation of God by His representatives on earth through the *Shema*. Put differently, it is precisely because *al derech ha-pesbat* the opening of *Shema* is not a coronation verse that Hāzal went out of their way to link the (coronation verse of the) trisagion and the *Shema*.

The importance Hāzal placed on linking the angels' and Israel's acts of Divine coronation is evidenced by the phrase-for-phrase, verse-for-verse parallels between *birkhot kri'at Shema* (from the prologue of the coronation verses in *Yotzer Or* through the end of *Emet ve-Yatziv*) and the *kedushah* of *Musaf*, as is seen in the chart below.

	<i>Birkhot Kri'at Shema</i>	<i>Musaf Kedushah</i>
1. Introduction to coronation	<p>וְכָלֵם פּוֹתְחִים אֵת פִּיָּהֶם בְּקִדְשָׁהּ וּבְטָהֳרָה. בְּשִׁירָה וּבְזִמְרָה. וּמְבָרְכִים וּמְשַׁבְּחִים וּמְפָאֲרִים וּמְעֲרִיצִים וּמְקַדְּשִׁים וּמְמַלְכִים</p>	<p>כְּתֹר יִתְּנוּ לָךְ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלֹאכִים הַמּוֹנִי מֵעֵלָה. עִם עֲמָךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל קְבוּצֵי מִטָּה:</p>
2. Coronation verses	<p>קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ ה' צְבָקוֹת. מָלֵא כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ: כְּבוֹדוֹ מָלֵא</p>	<p>וְהַאֲפִינִים</p>

	<p>וְחִיּוֹת הַקִּדְשׁ בְּרַעַשׁ גְּדוּל מִתְנַשְּׂאִים לְעֲמַת שְׂרָפִים. לְעֲמֻתָם מִשְׂבָּחִים וְאוֹמְרִים:</p>	<p>עוֹלָם. מִשְׂרָתֵינוּ שׁוֹאֲלִים זֶה לְזֶה אֵיךְ מְקוֹם כְּבוֹדוֹ לְהַעֲרִיצוֹ. לְעֲמֻתָם מִשְׂבָּחִים וְאוֹמְרִים:</p>
	כְּרוּךְ כְּבוֹד ה' מִמְּקוֹמוֹ:	
3. Intro-duction to <i>Shema</i>	<p>אֱהַבְּהָ רַבְּהָ אֱהַבְּתֵנוּ, ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ. תְּמִלָּה גְּדוּלָה וַיִּתְּרָה תְּמִלְתָּ עֲלֵינוּ: .. פֶּן תִּתְּנֵנוּ וּתְלַמְּדֵנוּ: אֲבִינוּ הָאֵב תְּרַחֲמֵנוּ. הַמְרַחֵם. רַחֵם עֲלֵינוּ. . . כְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', הַבּוֹחֵר בְּעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאַהֲבָה:</p>	<p>מִמְּקוֹמוֹ הוּא יִפֶּן בְּרַחֲמָיו לְעַמּוֹ. וַיִּחַוּ עִם הַמִּיחַדִּים שְׁמוֹ עָרַב וְבוֹקֵר כָּל יוֹם תְּמִיד. פְּעֻמִּים בְּאַהֲבָה שְׁמַע אוֹמְרִים:</p>
4. <i>Shema</i>	שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד. . . אֵנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם	
5. Connect- ing God as our King to God as our Redeemer	<p>אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֵלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ. מְלַכְנוּ מֶלֶךְ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ. גּוֹאֲלֵנוּ גּוֹאֵל אֲבוֹתֵינוּ. יוֹצְרֵנוּ צוֹר יְשׁוּעֵנוּ פּוֹדֵנוּ וּמַצִּילֵנוּ מֵעוֹלָם שְׁמָךְ</p>	<p>הוּא אֱלֹהֵינוּ הוּא אֲבִינוּ. הוּא מְלַכְנוּ הוּא מוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ. וְהוּא יְשׁוּעֵנוּ וְיִגְאֹלֵנוּ שְׁנִית וַיִּשְׁמִיעֵנוּ בְּרַחֲמָיו שְׁנִית לְעֵינֵי כָּל חַי</p>
4. Closing Kingship verse	<p>ה' יְמִלְךָ לְעוֹלָם וָעַד</p>	<p>יְמִלְךָ ה' לְעוֹלָם. אֱלֹהֵינוּ צִיּוֹן לְדֹר וָדֹר. הַלְלוּיָהּ</p>

This brings us to the second question: why is the trisagion inserted in the middle of the first of the blessings of *kri'at Shema*. The

answer to our first question in part also answers the second one: the need to insert the angelic coronation just prior to the *Shema* in order to create the angel/Israel coronation parallelism left Hazal with no choice but to find a ‘home’ for the trisagion at a point in *birkhot kri’at Shema* that preceded the *Shema* itself. The combination of the trisagion and *Yotzer Or* is, though, not merely a marriage of necessity; there is a very organic connection between the two. As modern scholars of liturgy have pointed out, the angelic coronation ceremony described in *Yotzer Or* is the culmination of a metaphysical journey through the cosmos, as our universe was understood by the authors of *beikhalot* literature. The journey, which is woven into almost every phrase of *Yotzer Or*, starts on earth (“*mal’ah ha-aretz kinyanekha*”), continues through the six heavens that house the physical and metaphysical astral bodies (*beikhin u-foal zoharei hama, me-erot notan sevivot ush*) and ends in the seventh heaven, where (as understood in *beikhalot* literature) the angels live endlessly in the light of God’s chariot, praising God by saying the trisagion (see, for example, Lawrence Hoffman, *Traditional Prayers, Modern Commentaries* (Jewish Lights Publishing, Vermont), pp. 50-51). (And, yes, that is where the expression “seventh heaven” comes from.)

The above discussion helps us answer a number of the questions posed by R. Korobkin. It explains, for example, why the trisagion precedes the *Shema*, notwithstanding

the midrashic statement that the angels’ coronation of God must await “permission” from Israel’s recitation of its (*Shema*) coronation: both the reframing of the *Shema* as a coronation verse through the prior recitation of the angelic coronation and the fact that the trisagion is an organic part of the cosmogony assumed by the *Yotzer Or* blessing necessitated that the trisagion precede the *Shema*. It explains why in *kedushah* Israel says the angelic coronation verse—the trisagion—but angels are never found to be emulating the human formula of *Shema*: as understood by *beikhalot* literature and as finds expression in *Yotzer Or*, we aspire to (metaphysically) reach the seventh heaven where the angels and God reside; having recited *Yotzer Or* and coronated God with our recitation of the *Shema*, we express our (hoped for) arrival at that destination through the recitation in *Musaf kedushah*, together with the angels, of the trisagion.

While there is much more that has, and can, be said on these subjects, it is hoped that the above notes on the relationship of developments in Jewish theology, *beikhalot* literature and liturgy can, when added to R. Korobkin’s wonderful insights, help us better comprehend key elements of our daily prayers.

Allen Friedman
Teaneck, NJ

Rabbi N. Daniel Korobkin responds:

I thank Allen Friedman for his response to my article and for his representing Reuven Kimelman's very interesting historical evolution of the *Shema* prayer, as a part of helping us better understand the relationship between *Shema* and *Kedushah*. If one were just reading Mr. Friedman's letter without reading the original article, however, one might not appreciate that the objective of my article, first and foremost, was to attempt to underscore the differences between the Palestinian and Babylonian *nusḥa'ot* of *Kedusha* (which would eventually evolve into *nusḥa'ot Ashkenaz* and *Sfard*, respectively). After identifying some of those differences, I had suggested, based on various source texts, that the difference in *nusah* is related to differing attitudes toward the angels in general, either as being objects of emulation, as in the Babylonian version of *Kedushah*, or as being reminders of the stark contrasts between inferior man and a more perfect being, as in the Palestinian version. While Mr. Friedman's points are very well taken, and they do help answer some of the questions raised in my article from a historical perspective, the central theme of the article still stands.

Omnipotence

I RECENTLY HAD THE PLEASURE of discovering *Hakirah*, having been directed to the article "On Divine Omnipotence and its Limitations"

published in Volume 2.

As its title suggests, its premise is predicated upon an assumption that one can in some way rationalize "limitations" to G-d's omnipotence, and it explores what the author describes as "a simplistic understanding of G-d's omnipotence" that "in this sense is a substantial oversimplification."

The proofs he cites would appear to support his thesis; however, I feel that the author has, in fact, got the wrong end of the proverbial stick. This is quite an important observation, since a minor error in a field so fraught with misconceptions and outright heresy can result in some quite unexpected outcomes that were never the originator's intention.

Arguing that there are any limitations on G-d's abilities or knowledge has a fundamental problem in that it requires us to be able to delineate the possible and impossible, the knowable and the unknowable; essentially the arguments for the function have to be parameterized in some fashion. This raises a fundamental issue: to what degree are we able to define the possible and impossible?

One of the examples cited is the impossibility of G-d creating a triangle such that the sum of its angles are not 180 degrees, which is not quite as implausible as it first appears to be. This can be approached from two directions: either that G-d actually can achieve this seemingly impossible feat by revealing a hitherto unknown mathematical fact, or that He can change reality to accommodate this new concept.

The former approach—revelation—is again not an inherently improbable reality. Mathematics, like all areas of intellectual pursuit, will have new theories proposed and concepts discovered on a regular basis. It is perfectly plausible if improbable that with ever more powerful computers and their skilled usage, empirical evidence will be discovered to support such a concept. In this instance, too, the impossible has not been achieved in that a hitherto undiscovered fact has been revealed.

The latter approach—altering reality—is not a case of G-d doing the impossible. Since G-d re-creates reality on a moment-by-moment basis,³ altering this reality to suit a new outcome is hardly achieving the impossible for Him. Given what we know of G-d's previous actions via His Torah, this sort of occurrence is improbable, but still remains within the realms of possibility. Were G-d to actually do so, then He will not have achieved the impossible, because in the new reality the impossible becomes the possible. Alternatively this could be regarded as simply a re-definition of a mathematical concept.

Essentially, however, it is my opinion that the *Rishonim* quoted are not attempting to limit G-d in some way, but their goal is to highlight the limitations that we inherently possess to be able to describe an impossibility. If we are somehow to attempt to define G-d's limits, we would require absolute and infinite

knowledge in order to do so, and on that basis be able to create an impossible situation by which we might somehow predicate an argument regarding limitations on G-d's abilities. Without that, every argument raised might have a logical or empirical solution, albeit currently unknown.

Believing that G-d has absolutely no limitations is far from naïve; it simply acknowledges that with our limited knowledge, attempting to define an impossibility is simply illogical, hence attempting to argue that G-d cannot somehow make the length of a given side of a square greater than its diagonal simply betrays our finite knowledge of G-d and His capabilities.

At best these examples simply express a logical definition that is inherently inviolate. That is to say that creating a square whose diagonal is shorter than any of its sides has now created an entirely new definition as opposed to altering the reality of the previous. This is the nature of logic, as opposed to an inherent limitation on G-d's abilities.

Lastly, it is worth noting that Man did not invent mathematics, nor did he invent logic. Arguing that the Creator of both is somehow incapable of altering either is in itself a logical conundrum.

Dani Epstein
Manchester, UK

³ As recited in the morning service:
הַמַּאִיר לְאֶרֶץ וְלְדָרִים עָלֶיהָ בְּרַחֲמִים וּבְטוֹבוֹ

מִתְחַדֵּשׁ בְּכָל יוֹם תְּמִיד מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרָאשִׁית.

Yitzhak Grossman responds:

Thank you for bringing your position to my attention.

The thrust of your disagreement with my article seems predicated on the interpretation that the article's core is an innovative idea or 'premise' of my own, a 'thesis' for which I advance 'proofs.' I did not conceive of it thus; I merely meant to explicate and analyze ideas that I considered to have been quite explicitly stated by several great medieval Jewish thinkers (and gone entirely unchallenged and uncontested, at least throughout the medieval period). The bulk of your critique, therefore, appears directed against the ideas of those thinkers, rather than against any of my own. Indeed, a major portion of my article consisted of a reappraisal of whether various of the asserted inviolable impossibilities were really so from our modern mathematical and scientific perspectives. Taking, for example, the specific case of mathematical truth, I noted that we would certainly not today consider

Euclidean geometrical truth, at least in the context of our physical universe, inviolable (albeit for reasons somewhat different than those you propose).

I do not really understand how you can interpret those medieval authorities to not be expressing the positions I have attributed to them; the only attempt at reinterpretation in your remarks is the suggestion that they "are not attempting to limit G-d in some way, but their goal is to highlight the limitations that we inherently possess to be able to describe an impossibility." While it is true that their formulations include expressions to the effect that "G-d cannot be described as capable" of contravening certain impossibilities, it is nevertheless quite clear from the totality of their remarks that they mean that these impossibilities are actually inviolable, and are not merely conceding some sort of limitation of our expressive powers.

