

# RECENT RELIGIOUS THOUGHT IN ISRAEL

A great deal of lively and profound theological and religious discussion is taking place in Israel that is largely unknown to thinking American Jews, both because of the relative unavailability of the publications which carry them and the fact that they are written in Hebrew. In order to bring these issues, and their treatment in Israel, to the attention of English-speaking Jewry, we have invited Rabbi Zev Gotthold, Director of the Department for Contact with the Diaspora of the Ministry of Religions, to write a regular column of report and summary, centering his material about a different subject for each issue of TRADITION. Rabbi Gotthold was ordained by Yeshiva Univesity.

*Zev Gotthold*

## PRAYER

Recent American discussions on the forms of prayer, prayerbooks and their translations, books on prayer interpretations, and study-circles for the understanding of our prayers, have prompted the choice of the topic of prayer in a report on trends in religious thinking in Israel.

The common tradition of prayer and forms of worship has been among the strongest unifying factors in the survival of Jewish communities. The unifying language of our prayers has, by itself, often helped to make for intelligible contact between Jews of entirely different background and mother

tongue. Our liturgy has not only been a way of Jewish expression, but has also to a large extent impressed upon us common theological and national ideas that have made for a feeling of solidarity and belongingness amongst Jews who otherwise might have been strangers to each other. One of these prayers, the nostalgic petition for our return to Zion, had no mean influence on the national resurgence during this century and on the religiously inspired efforts towards its realization in anticipation of the messianic era. Similarly, the deletion of such references among certain groups can be related

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to their over-all attitude towards the Jewish people and its traditional ideals, one which finds expression even nowadays by the aloofness and alienation of such groups from the currents of national life.

### PRAYING IN HEBREW

The miraculous revival of our Holy Tongue as the spoken language of restored Israel is probably the most dramatic chapter in the phenomenon of the "Ingathering the Exiles." Even the most colloquial usage of modern Hebrew imbues the speaker and reader with thought patterns and images of didactic force. The classical idiom of our prayers (not the *piyutim*), their simplicity and pithiness, their directness and beauty, evoke sublime emotions and edifying thoughts. How much is lost for those who have to temporize with translations! Here in Israel we can happily dispense with such problems and concentrate on the devotional, social (We-Thou), psychological, didactic, historical, and literary aspects of *tefillah*.

### YOUTH'S INITIATIVE

One of the more notable recent developments is the spread of youth synagogues, which are different from "junior congregations" in the States in that they are in most cases unaffiliated with adult congregations. They consist of three types: school synagogues, yeshivoth and other closed institutions maintaining their own synagogues along with dormitories, and those of religious youth movements. Their style of prayer is much influenced by the "creative religious workshops," the

experiments in Kibbutz and military synagogues. Their development is blocked in many cases by the difficulty of obtaining a *Sefer Torah*, which they hope to receive from surplus stock in the Diaspora. (American Jews can be most helpful to them!) These youth synagogues unite youngsters of many rites and traditions. Between the Yemenite, Oriental (Sefardi), Hassidic (Sefarad), the Vilna Gaon's version, and Ashkenaz, the most acceptable or feasible common denominator has been found to be the Hassidic Sefarad version. This is the Siddur with the highest sales rate in Israel, and the one most commonly found in schools.

### ADUMBRATING THE FUTURE

The synagogues of the coming generation already reflect all kinds of fusions and the results of interchange and acculturation. This applies not only to praying "style" within groups that are more or less free from adult control, but even in many yeshivoth, particularly those of youth movements (Bnei Akiva and Ezra) in which Hassidic influences often prevail. Only a few of them imitate adult congregations, like the Bilu synagogue in Tel Aviv which somehow resembles an American Junior Congregation.

### ISRAELI PECULIARITIES

Whereas in America the synagogues have proven a most important factor in consolidating the Jewish community, in modern Israel the synagogues tend to manifest the divisive forces of those features in our common tradition which make for unfamiliarity with each other.

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In spite of the emphasis on social integration in this phase of ingathering the exiles, the informed student of the Israeli scene will readily understand this development. In contradistinction to the function of the American synagogue as Community Center, the synagogue in Israel serves almost exclusively as a house of public worship. The other functions of the quasi-autonomous Jewish congregation, its community service in the largest sense, as has been the covenantal tradition in America since Peter Stuyvesant, have been taken over in modern Israel by the various agencies of the State, on national, municipal, or local level (see: Aryeh Newman, "The Israeli Synagogue," in *Jewish Life* [Tishre 5721] p. 68.) The exclusively devotional purpose of the Israeli synagogue tends to accentuate the respective prayer-traditions of the various immigrant groups, making their very differences the attraction for those who seek the type of service to which their family has long been accustomed.

### THE SOCIAL FACTOR

The strong pressures which the government agencies are exerting on the immigrant generation (over three quarters of the present population) in conditioning the new Israelis for acculturation, make the synagogue a place of spiritual and psychological refuge where those of the older generation may find relaxation, contact with time-honored roots, self-respect, and emotional gratification. Members of the younger generation, insofar as they are synagogue-minded, often

feel torn between filial piety and embarrassing strangeness in these surroundings. School and military training have effected a stronger bond with Jews of other communities and their traditions and rites. They are ready to yield and assimilate to the prevalent image of the (non-existent) "typical" Israeli; they want to conform.

Israel has not yet evolved a clear and popularly supported policy for the general process of acculturation and integration. It seems that the "Melting Pot" merger (Zangwill) is being attempted in wide areas. Sometimes, though, there are endeavors to preserve cultural values that have survived with some communities for millenia and which are now threatened with extinction. Therefore, the "Orchestra Policy" (Brandeis) is recommended, where each instrument plays its part to the best of its ability, yet merging with the overall harmony. This vision of a cultural pluralism is being maintained by members of the established in-group. The out-groups tend to throw their own cultural baggage overboard to become "accepted" whither their ideal image leads them. As an illustration we may take the experience of the Israel Institute for Sacred Music. The I.I.S.M. maintains in its cantoral training seminary two departments: oriental and occidental. Almost all of the oriental applicants desire to study European-style *chazzanut* and Hassidic melodies. Only a few of the more intellectually inclined occidentals register for courses in oriental cantillations. This may possibly lead to a mutual appreciation; however, the psychological forces

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and motivations behind the swapping of natural positions belie such hopes.

### CONFERENCE ON UNIFORM PRAYER

The need for expedient uniformity in the Israeli "Pressure Cooker" has also reached the gates of the prayer house. When intergroup tension made it imperative for the government to devise a means of speedier acculturation, the Prime Minister appointed Prof. N. André Chouraqui as coordinator for social and cultural integration. In cooperation with the Executive Secretary of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate, Rabbi I. E. Ittamar (Wohl-gelernter), a meeting was called at Hekhal Shelomoh on Teveth 16 (Jan. 4, 1961), to discuss the function of the synagogue in the process of communal integration. It is pertinent to examine some of the opinions expressed.

Rabbi Ittamar pointed to the schools and military service as the most purposeful institutions for acculturation. The teachers of religious subjects, counsellors at religious school services, and chaplains of our armed forces are challenged daily by all the problems we face in the synagogue world of the civilians and adults, and have proved equal to the call with inspiring leadership. In comparison to them, the rabbinical leadership is wanting. The isolationist attitude of many synagogues, even to the point of divisiveness, must be overcome by decisive, resolute, and courageous spiritual leadership. There is no room for debate on the desirability of national cultural unity. The common objective and the novel

historical situation have to be taken into account creatively when dealing with the halakhic aspects of the problems: text of prayers, pronunciation, structure of synagogue, accommodation of various traditions, and modes of expression. The state of the nation brooks no delay of planned solutions lest the people improvise and muddle through, leaving their leaders behind.

Rabbi Dr. David de Sola Pool (Shearith Israel, New York) reported on the consolidation of the American Jewish community, particularly of his own congregation, the oldest in the U.S.A. He told of the acculturation stages that the immigrant generation, their children, and grandchildren have to pass through in order to become adjusted to a newly emerging pattern. Today one may hear even Ashkenazic tunes in his strictly traditional Sephardic synagogue. Dr. Pool related his own experiences with the uniform CANRA Jewish prayerbook, which even during the Second World War could not be made entirely uniform, and had to start from both ends of the Siddur (Ashkenazic traditional and Reform).

Dr. Chouraqui voiced the demand that people who live together and work together must also worship together, praying to the God of our common ancestors in the same sacred tongue. Religion must not remain the last vestige of our differences, but must rather serve as the inspiring unifier.

Rabbi Dr. A. M. Fingerhut (formerly Chief Rabbi of Algiers, now president of the Rabbinical Court at Paris) gave a historic sur-

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vey of the adjustment of immigrant groups to North African Jewry. Even those newcomers who brought with them a highly developed religious culture, such as the exiles of the Spanish expulsion, were not allowed to effect any changes in the ritual of the community. This was in accord with the decisions of great local rabbis such as *Rivash* (Jacob bar Shesheth) and *Tashbetz* (Shimeon Duran). However, today we face a different situation in Israel and, for that matter, even in present-day France. He appealed to Israeli religious leaders to emphasize the common features of the ritual and gradually to decrease the areas of difference.

The most penetrating analysis of the situation and the most comprehensive contribution was that offered by Rabbi Elimelekh Bar-Shaul (Chief Rabbi of Rehovoth and outstanding disciple of the late Chief Rabbi Rabbi A. I. Kook). He mentioned the moral justification for demanding cultural and religious integration, but, even from the purely cultural point of view, utterly rejected the concept of melting-pot fusion. In his analysis, he distinguished between the religious traditions of the respective communities and synagogue rituals.

Rabbi Bar-Shaul objected to the inroads made by social engineering into the realm of religious worship, which is the most intimate and sacred province of the individual in relation to his Maker. It is predicated on personal disposition and temperament, and is an expression of the individual and his experiences, his emotional associations, and his cumulative cultural herit-

age. Why not grant the same freedom of expression to religious worship that is granted to art and literature, where the Government has made no attempt to act as leveller and homogenizer? The synagogue has remained for many the last resort for satisfying their imponderable emotional needs, which are not only matters of text and intonation, but also of social patterns, deep-rooted familiarity with gestures, order and length of service, and the peculiar atmosphere characteristic of their synagogue. Molding culture and fostering integration in a long-range policy is not a matter of *raison d'état*, of vote and legislation. Even planned community housing has proven to be ineffective in "fusing the population." How much less can be gained with respect to spiritual matters.

In Rabbi Bar-Shaul's opinion, there is no indication of popular demand for synagogue streamlining and unification. We ought to be concerned more with attracting people to the synagogue than with interfering with established forms of worship. Common cultural experiences and emotional associations among the younger generation will, in the course of their education, make for a profound, natural, and lasting rapprochement, as exemplified in our Yeshivoth. Here the intellectual guidance and halakhic training, coupled with the appealing social and emotional experience, evolve an attitude to prayer which stresses the common image and ideal, without depriving the individual of his personal expression. The particular contribution of Yeshivah education in this

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direction was elaborated by Rabbi Z. Y. Melzer (Rosh Yeshivah of Hadarom, Rehovoth).

Strongest opposition to directive action by any agency on behalf of the Government was voiced by the Dean of Students at the Hebrew University, Rabbi B. Caspar. In wholehearted agreement with the goal to effect an integrated Jewish nation in the restored State of Israel, he nevertheless voiced his grave doubts whether any pressure, formalization, or instructions to the synagogues can effectively contribute towards this objective. He warned of the danger of losing far more than could possibly be gained by meddling with traditions. Spiritual affairs, he said, cannot be legislated. Our first concern should be to fill the synagogues and to make the services attractive, meaningful, and inspiring to our youth.

Professor A. Mirsky, who teaches Prayer at the Hebrew University, also maintained that it was more important to create a spiritual climate for prayer and concord with synagogue tradition than to invent a neutral common denominator in uniform worship. Uniformity in religious expression must be a natural outcome of the acculturation process rather than an artificial creation. He pointed to the development of modern Israeli Hebrew, particularly its pronunciation, which is neither Ashkenazi nor Sephardi, and yet is accepted by all. Students of language may have their misgivings about it, yet it is here to stay as a natural development, although there are still marked individual differences. The pattern, however, is clear. It came

about by popular demand, led by idealistic pioneers, but not enforced by government decree. The same should apply to prayer traditions. Let us have pioneers, not pressure. Education ought to emphasize the aspects of Jewish prayer common to all traditions, with respect and understanding for the differences. Attorney M. Levanon recommended an organized consolidation of Israeli synagogues, representative of all traditions, which would be more likely to deal successfully with their own problems than submit to any dictates from above.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs was represented by Rabbi H. M. Rahamani, Director of the Synagogue Department, who is in the best position to know the possibilities for implementing fusion and unification. Out of his vast, first-hand experience he appealed to the assembled not to underestimate the sensitivity of worshippers to any regimentation and reform. Any such attempt, he warned, will provoke hostile opposition, and result in disintegration. He stressed the importance of school and youth synagogues. He reported that Israel had 800 synagogues in 1948, whereas in 1960 there were 4000. The government in 1959-1960 helped in the erection of 340 new synagogues, of which 50% were Sefardi, 20% Yemenite, and 20% Ashkenazi.

Many other community representatives participated in the discussions. The excerpts presented here are typical of the tendencies expressed.

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### PUBLIC TRIAL ON PRAYER

Another type of discussion took place in Tel Aviv (Jan. 28, 1961), where Cong. Ihud Shivath Zion held a public trial on prayer. Rabbi Y. Ansbacher, High School Inspector Dr. D. Ochs, and Rabbi P. Biberfeld (editor of the Yeshivah monthly *Ha-Ne'eman*) were the judges. For the prosecution: Jacob Barth; for the defense: District Attorney Jacob Bar-Or (Breuer). Ihud Shivath Zion is the largest congregation following the German Orthodox tradition. The indictment charged that the standard prayer has lost its appeal as a means of personal communication in worship, although its language is intelligible to the Hebrew speaking community; that lack of decorum and sacred tension during prayer deprive the worshipper of inspiration; that the cantorial renditions are disturbing rather than conducive to *kavvanah*; that public prayer is no longer the united, concerted appearance of *Kenesset Yisrael* before God, but rather some kind of public framework in which individuals pray alongside each other, not in unison, but in competition with one another and with the cantor; that sermons are a tedious interruption of the service; that the synagogue service does not satisfy the religious and emotional needs of the congregant; that the synagogue is closed except for public prayer.

Stating the case for the defense, Mr. Bar-Or pointed to the essential character of prayer as the service of the heart. The heart has to be attuned to prayer, has to be educated to understand not merely the

words, but the underlying purpose. Congregational singing may be helpful as long as it enhances the intention of prayer. If the purpose and words of the prayer become secondary to the tune, it no longer constitutes a religious but an aesthetic expression or experience. Prayer is not merely a synagogue activity. It must be cultivated in home and school, and at an early age. Whereas the old prayers and *piyutim* have not lost their appeal, and serve as meaningful expressions for all our moods and occasions, the prayers and *piyutim* composed in the State of Israel have failed to do so. There is nothing wrong with synagogue and prayer; it is our own lack of spiritual appreciation and religious awareness that needs repair. Intelligent, active participation in the traditional service, in an atmosphere of dedication and open-heartedness, will restore to us the inspiring mode of worship we seek.

Of interest was the "testimony" of J. Rosenthal about the strong appeal of the Sefardic synagogue. He described the warm, yet utterly simple chant and wording, the prayerful and cooperative atmosphere, the organic flow of the service, and the reverent rapport between congregation and *Hazzan*. The quiet dignity and unhurried discipline is most conducive to meditative, personal prayer. The judges summarized the proceedings with critical appreciation of the problems presented.

The daily press, which usually presents discussions of prayer in the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur editions, not only reported

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this "Public Trial" as a news item, but gave serious consideration to the issues involved.

### ACADEMIC FORUM ON PRAYER

The Symposium on Prayer among the academic youth was occasioned by the first anniversary of the experimental synagogue at the Hillel Foundation in Jerusalem. The contributions have been summarized in *Deiot* (publication of the religious academic youth in Israel, Nos. 11 and 12). The radical views of Prof. Yehaiahu Leibowitz were stated in his customary clear and distinct manner. He discussed the paradoxical nature of prayer as both personal, autonomous expression and heteronomously prescribed religious duty. The one may serve to satisfy man's individual demands and motivations, the other to satisfy demands made upon man to serve God — the essence of any religious act. His discourse was most thought-provoking. Amihud Ben-Porath who dealt with problems of "praying techniques" and their philosophical implications, took exception to Prof. Leibowitz's views on theocentric and anthropocentric prayer.

Dr. Jacob Rothschild demanded education for a truly congregational prayer, the classic concept of praying communicants, worshipping in one body as the *Kenesset Yisrael*. His down-to-earth remarks and erudite treatment of tradition and practice could well apply to any synagogue outside of Israel. It is quite illuminating that here again the Sefardi tradition was held up for emulation not because of its

balanced prayer text, but for its preservation of basic Jewish attitudes, modes, and atmosphere of synagogue service, which make for sharp contrast with the Ashkenazi mode.

Rabbi Joseph Heinemann broached the subject of prayer texts in the light of the restored State of Israel and modern civilization.

Prof. David Flusser attempted to find the specific Jewish qualities in our traditional prayer, pointing out the assimilatory, watering-down tendency of the Enlightenment reformers and present-day chauvinistic Israelis. He offered feasible suggestions for enhancing the services with classical values and forms which would make them more meaningful and attractive.

### HISTORICAL TRACING

Three of the participants in this symposium have enriched our appreciation of the prayers with a number of worthwhile articles, the result of their scholarly preoccupation with the subject. Dr. Flusser, teaching history and literature of the Second Commonwealth has contributed many clarifications in the history of ideas which have a bearing on our understanding of the liturgy. The Dead Sea Scrolls have a great impact on the studies of this era. Dr. Shmaryahu Talmon has attempted to reconstruct the cycle of prayers prevalent in the Qumran Community, and to trace their relationship to our traditional prayers (*Tarbitz*, Tishre 5720). Basic concepts like "accepting the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven" and eschatological formulas have been traced by Flusser to



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pre-Hasmonean days. Special interest has been evinced in the function of the Divine Name and its sanctification. In a review of Prof. Gershon Scholem's treatise on the Hekhalot prayers, Dr. Flusser has traced their antecedents in early Hellenist literature. In this connection, the doctoral dissertation on the *Kaddish* by Rabbi Dr. David de Sola Pool, a fifty-year old classic, is much in vogue again.

As an example of this trend we make take the idea of *malkhuyot* in the High Holiday prayers. The Mishnah in *Rosh Hashanah* 4:5 lists the order of the blessings in the *Amidah*. The discussion between Rabbi Yohanan ben Nuri and Rabbi Akiva reveals more than a controversy on the place of *malkhuyot* within the framework of the *Amidah*. The Jerusalem Talmud indicates that the former represents the Galilean (*ten pachdekha*) and the latter the Judean (*melokh*) tradition, the place of the sounding of the Shofar bearing on the deeper meaning of the concept of *malkhuyot*. A literary analysis of the tirely different structures of the two traditions, of which the Judean is obviously the later one. Upon examination, one can detect the more nationalist tendency in the Galilean, and the more universal in the Judean tradition. The former can be traced back through the Dead Sea Scrolls (ed. A. M. Haberman, p. 157) and Ben Sira (ed. M. Z. Segal, pp. 220 and 225) not only to antecedents in their basic ideas, but also in their formulation. It is interesting to note that although there may have been a decision in this controversy, both alternative

versions have survived side by side in our Machzor.

### ALTERNATING ALTERNATIVE VERSIONS

This raises an important point of halakhic policy relative to alternative versions in the liturgy. Recent studies have concerned themselves with the textual development of the prayer versions, especially in the light of material found in Hellenistic literature, Dead Sea Scrolls, Genizah fragments, Midrash and Talmud manuscripts, etc. Literary and structural analysis helps us to appreciate their meaning; their history and survival in the respective rites of Jewish communities in Israel today demonstrate the time-honored pattern of a policy which may guide us in the fusion of traditions in our contemporary situation.

Against a strict either-or decision, we can detect a tendency of compromise, accomodating both alternatives. We employ two types of "notes" when sounding the Shofar, *teruah* and *shevarim*, according to the enactment of Rabbi Abahu at Caesaria (*Rosh Hashanah* 34a). The Midrash reports this motive: "It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this, yea, also from that withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall abide by all of them [i.e. do his duty by all]" (Koheleth 7:18; *Midrash Rabbah* thereon; see *Torah Temimah*, *ibid.*: *Temim De'im* No. 119). Respect for the value of different traditions has prompted him to accommodate both. (See also, on the Torah blessings, *Berakhot* 11b and 59b; Jacob Mann, *Geniza Fragments*, in

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*HUCA* II [1925]; S. Assaf, *Dinaburg Volume*, p. 121). Such pluralistic coexistence was demanded to avoid schism and sectarianism. Many alternative traditions became alternating traditions: *emet ve'yatziv* and *emet ve'emunah*; *sim shalom* and *shalom rav*; *oseh ha-shalom* and *ha-mevarekh*; *ahavah rabbah* and *ahavat olam*; *attah kidashta* and *attah echad*; *attah kadosh* and *kadosh attah*; *nekadesh* and *naaritzakh*; *ha-machazir* and *lekha levadekha naavod*, etc. The traditions of Babylon and of the Land of Israel, regional differences — all these are being collected, classified, analyzed, and explained out of the wealth of comparative material, contributing mightily to the world of prayer.

### THE JEWISH PHYSICIAN'S PRAYER

Historical research also of texts which are not standard prayers is bound to clarify erroneous traditions. A case in point is the so-called prayer-oath of a physician which is sometimes attributed to Maimonides. *Commentary* of May 1960 reported (p. 387) that at the graduation exercises of Yeshiva's Einstein Medical College, the new doctors were inducted by the recitation of "Maimonides' Prayer," an allegation of authorship which has been found unwarranted. The editor of Maimonides' medical writings, the Jerusalem physician Prof. Sussman Muntner, has traced the history of this prayer (*Sinai*, vol. VI, p. 120), and has conclusively proved that it is the Hebrew translation from the German by I. Eichel, a *Maskil* and contributor

to *Ha-Measef* (vol. VI, p. 42), on the basis of a physician's prayer composed in German by Dr. Markus Hertz, a friend of Kant. Hertz probably culled his ideas from the prayer of Rabbi Jacob Zahalon (in *Margaliot Tovot* [Venice, 1665] p. 5) which has been published in English by Harry A. Savitz in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, vol. 213 (1935), p. 167. In Israel, new doctors and nurses accept the ancient Jewish covenant of physicians by Asaf ha-Rofeh, a contemporary of the last Amoraim in Eretz Israel (also published by Prof. Muntner). This prayer, aside from its historical dimensions, is truly Hebraic in letter and spirit, reflecting throughout the lofty Jewish tradition.

### CHAPLAINCY'S PRAYER LITERATURE

Aside from the historio-textual approach, Dr. Flusser has also applied historical insight to the ideological attitude with regard to prayer. "Prayer as a Religious Act" (*Machanayim* 40, Rosh Hashanah 5720) is a study of such attitudes in the Hellenistic period and in the modern era. Flusser attempts to demonstrate how far the "modern" Jew has strayed from the traditional Jewish attitude. He also takes issue with the previously mentioned views of Prof. Leibowitz. This issue of *Machanayim*, published by the Chaplaincy, is devoted to our general topic. The number of articles and their high quality as well as readability are a tribute to this army journal's excellence. As always, this issue is profusely illustrated with appropriate pictures from Jewish

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art. Other recent issues of *Machanayim* also feature many studies pertaining to our topic, especially: *Machanayim* 44, 46, 49 and 51.

### THE LITERARY APPROACH

The consolidation of our prayer-texts has been traced by Rabbi Joseph Heinemann in an article in *Deiot* 12 (Winter, 5720). In the course of preparing a comprehensive doctoral thesis on Jewish Prayer, he recently published a number of interesting studies. The Torah Culture Department of the Ministry of Education and Culture has published his booklet on *Prayer as Reflected in Talmud and Midrash*. It contains an analytical introduction consisting of four chapters: I — Characteristics and Types of Prayers. II — Fixed and Spontaneous Prayer. III — How to Pray. IV — Group and Individual Prayer. The discourse is based on the appended 128 items of annotated source material. Heinemann's clear and penetrating contribution has been prefaced by a mystical study on "The Essence of Prayer" by Prof. A. J. Heschel (reprinted from *Bitzaron* [346], 5701), a contrast which may illustrate the Israeli trend towards contact with our classical roots, cultural moorings, and aspirations for clarity, over against the penchant for beautiful but vague phrases. Rabbi Heinemann published three chapters of his forthcoming thesis which illustrate his critical approach: *The Pronoun "You" in Prayer* (Tarbitz, Tishre 5720), *Prayers of Bet Ha-Midrash Origin* (*Journal of Semitic Studies*, [Manchester: July, 1960]), and on the *Literary Pat-*

*tern of the Hoshanot* (Tarbitz, Tammuz 5721).

### PRAYER AT THE UNIVERSITY

These studies indicate the significance attached to the literary aspects of our prayers in our academic institutions (Hebrew University and Bar Ilan). The original prayer texts have come into their own as subject matter which attracts more students from year to year. Professors Shirman and Mirsky have also published student exercises and selected texts which reveal the *formengeschichtliche* treatment. Prayers are also subjects of study in the courses on folklore, offered by Dr. D. Noy (e.g. his paper in *Machanayim* 51).

Not all recent research follows these organismic trends. The "classical philologist" approach of rational fragmentation, so much in vogue with the oldtimers since Wolf's Homeric Dissections, is displayed by Dr. E. D. Goldschmidt in *The Passover Haggadah: Its Sources and History* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1960). The *Birkhat Ha-Shir* (*nishmat kol chai*) is typical (pp. 65-68 and 107-108). Life on our ancestral soil inspires us with a novel appreciation for the provenance of our autochthonous traditions and their primary concrete concern. The hymn *nishmat* is, according to the Talmud (*Berakhot* 59b and *Taanit* 6b), appended to *Hallel Ha-Gadol* (Ps. 136 and probably 147-150) to be recited at the Thanksgiving Service for rain. Analysis of the Psalm yields a thought pattern of cosmological, historical, and providential elements, in that order. The

Thanksgiving Hymn is patterned along the same line. Whereas the Psalm is responsive, the hymn is antiphonal. Higher Criticism applied to the Psalm along the lines of documentary hypothesis is also applied to prayers. However, this method has been surpassed in view of ancient literature recently discovered. We may leave atom-smashing to the physicists; in the cultural realm we have learned to prefer organismic analysis to atomization. Prayer texts represent a living tradition; they were not stuck together by editors or copyists, but grew organically, within a definite frame of reference. No one asserts that the "original hymn" is the version in his Siddur, but it seems equally improbable that it is a composite of nine different alternative versions of *birkhat ha-Shir*, preserved because of a pious refusal to reject any accepted version.

Aside from the historical and literary approach, variant versions can also be understood against the background of halakhic principles operating upon them and explaining their origin, as the reviewer has demonstrated with the versions of *birkhat ha-shanim* (*Machanayim* 51, p. 20).

#### TEACHER PRAYER AND PRAYING

Prayer is becoming more prominent in the curriculum, although there is still much left to be done, particularly in secondary education. A good indication of trends in this area is the model lesson on "Spontaneous and Statutory Prayer" by Dr. Jacob Rothschild in the English publication *Maayanoth II* (Jerusalem: Jewish Agency, 5720) pp.

21-31. A number of perennial prayer problems are discussed in the light of classical quotations. The problems require a modern approach on an adult level. The above-mentioned view of Prof. Leibowitz and the chapter on prayer in *Mitzvah va-Lev* by Rabbi E. Bar-Shaul are the only such essays. The publication of Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik's *Avodah She'ba-lev* is anxiously awaited to fill this need. Dr. Rothschild has also been responsible for the very helpful Holiday Series, published by the Ministry of Education, where many prayers and synagogue traditions are elucidated and presented for purposes of teaching. Another important and helpful publication by the Ministry of Education is Rabbi Mordecai Hachohen's booklet *Tefillah*, a source-book for teachers and youth-leaders. Its eleven chapters features quotations from our classical literature systematically arranged, with directives and suggestions for teachers.

The past two years have also yielded a rich harvest of prayer presentation material in the monthly of the religious Teachers Association *Bi'sedai Chemed*, dealing with many aspects of the topic, text analysis for different grades, and reviews of pertinent publications. The tenor and content of these articles contrast sharply with the scanty material published by the non-religious school system in the wake of the "Jewish Consciousness Program." This program demands some familiarity with the traditional prayer and its significance.

One example is the recent book-

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let by Dr. Joseph Schechter: *Mavo le'Siddur* (Introduction to the Prayer Book). It is a strenuous attempt to make the topic palatable and plausible even to non-religious teachers. In the introduction, "Traditional Values in the Education of our Generation," this outstanding veteran educator appeals to his younger colleagues to cultivate Jewish consciousness by an appreciation of prayer. However, his treatment of prayers and holidays is questionable. He himself seems to be unfamiliar with the background material, rationalizing and apologetic in Kaplanesque fashion, apparently more at home with Augustine than with our *Rishonim*. On Ps. 145 he recommends reading only selected verses (although he affirms that *Ashray* has folkloristic significance), because it is merely an alphabetical acrostic, although we are here dealing with a basic question of Hebrew poetry, i.e. whether the order has been determined only by this external factor. Recent studies have amply shown that there is more than just an alphabetical collection, as Prof. M. Weiss has demonstrated in the *Minchat Shai Agnon* Volume, and Prof. F. Melzer in his Hekhal Shelomoh lecture, both on Ps. 145. Dr. Schechter further explains the *birkhat ha-minim* as referring to sects in Israel who did not join in the fight against Rome (party traitors?); the didactic element in *gevurot* inculcates the idea of resurrection "which was found necessary for survival during the Second Commonwealth"; the late tradition of reciting Ps. 95-99 upon welcoming the Sabbath he finds

more fitting for Rosh Hashanah, whereas Ps. 90 should not be read in High School classes because it is too depressing!

### REFERENCE BOOKS

Standard text books on prayer enjoying great demand are Eliezer Levi's *Yesodot Ha-Tefillah*, which is now in its fifth edition (10,000 copies) and Prof. E. Z. Melamed's *Pirkei Minhag ve-Halakhah*, which was issued in its second revised and enlarged edition. The latter is written by an expert on traditions of all communities, well annotated, and includes his suggested prayers for modern Israel. A good running commentary on the entire prayer book is being prepared by Rabbi B. S. Jacobson (author of *Meditations on the Torah*), which will fill a lamentable gap. His method of *sugyot* (topical discourses) based on the fundamental ideas of our classical commentators, which has proved so successful in his books on the weekly biblical and prophetic portions, is also being applied to the Siddur. Another two projects dealing with various aspects of prayer are in preparation. One is being undertaken by the Torah Culture Department of the Ministry of Education and Culture, to be published in the *Amanah* series, the other will be the eighth volume of the *Maayanot* (Hebrew) series, published by the Department of Torah Education and Culture in the Diaspora of the World Zionist Organization.

A welcome addition to the tracts which present, in modern Hebrew, the thoughts of great authors who wrote in other languages, is the

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booklet on *Prayer and Sacrifice* by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch. It is characteristic of Hirsch's approach. In an erudite yet lucid analysis, Hirsch traces the symbolic meaning of the daily sacrifice according to its several parts, and relates them to the benedictions of the *Amidah*.

It is deplorable that the classical commentary on prayer by Rabbenu David Abudraham was published last year in such a sloppy and arbitrary edition. Since this edition has flooded the market, it is questionable whether a better one can be expected soon. In the light of the outstanding edition of the late Rabbi Ch. L. Ehrenreich (Klausenburg, 5687), such retrogression is a disgrace. Rabbi Ehrenreich published less than one fifth of the entire work; the entire manuscript is said to have been saved and brought to Israel.

A word about an important book which has *not* been published. In contrast to America, schools cannot find a Siddur for their students which is clearly printed on good paper, without indicating in heavy type what the *printer* thinks is an important prayer, unwarranted paragraphing, bound well enough to last through one school year, and priced within popular reach.

### HALAKHIC LITERATURE

The new edition of R. Menahem Ha-meiri's *Bet ha-Bechirah* on *Berakhot* is highly commendable. Rabbi S. Dickman's edition is part of the gigantic project of producing a complete critical edition of the Talmud and its relevant commentaries. Although the sudden death

of Prof. Y. Bioblotsky of Bar Ilan has again delayed the appearance of the volume *Berakhot*, many valuable by-products have been issued by the *Kiriat Emet* project. On our subject there has appeared in addition to *Bet Ha-Bechirah*, the *Sefer Ha-Ner* on *Berakhot*, containing some interesting old versions and lost passages of ibn Ghayath. It is important to note the inclusion of *Enayim La-Mishpat* in the newest Jerusalem edition of the Talmud. It is a halakhic reference roster on *Berakhot* by Rabbi I. Arieli, a disciple of the late Chief Rabbi Kook, who was inspired by his great master to teach Halakhah alongside discursive Talmud study, discussing all available halakhic views on each topic. This trend is widespread in Israel today, particularly with the excellent assistance offered by Rabbi Arieli's reference works. Another important recent contribution is last year's new edition of the *Turim*, including, among other valuable additions, discourses by the late Chief Rabbi H. P. Frank dealing with many particular Israeli prayer problems. The past two years have also seen two reprints of the *Avodat Yisrael* Siddur by Beer, originally published in 1868.

The halakhic journals devote a rather large proportion of novellae to subjects connected with prayers, benedictions, and laws concerning synagogue tradition. Two American *Kolelim* (Rabbi Rafael Reichman's *Ateret Shelomoh*, and Rabbi Mordecai Elefant's *Tiferet Avraham*) have conducted an intensive study of *Berakhot*. The former has published *Zer Torah* containing a num-

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ber of interesting contributions on prayer, while the latter is currently preparing such a volume for publication. The bibliographical journal *Ha-Sefer*, published by Dr. Harkavy of the Central Torah Library at Hekhal Shelomoh, has been featuring in its past several issues a list of commentaries on *Berakhot*.

### TEACHING PRAYER ON ADULT LEVEL

On the level of adult education, there have been many sessions devoted to prayer organized by the Torah Culture Department in the Ministry of Education and Culture, mostly in conjunction with various municipalities or rural district administrations. The lecture by Dr. Nehamah Leibowitz before the High Holy Days, and on the Passover Haggadah, enjoy particular popularity, and attract an audience from all circles. On the radio the daily Bible commentators on the *Perek Yomi* often broadcast on topics connected with prayers. Some find inspiration in the weekly request-only program of cantorial music.

### NEO-HASSIDIC SABRAS

The publication *Reshafim* deserves particular attention. It represents a group, mostly sabras, who are groping for spiritual and religious mooring and have chosen a kind of neo-hassidic approach, highly intellectualized. This group of *baalei teshuvah* is interesting in itself; however, we are concerned here only with their views on prayer. So far, nine issues of *Reshafim* have appeared, in almost all of which the topic of prayer has been

touched. The most recent issue contains a philosophical discussion of talmudical homilies on prayer, demonstrating their deep insight and meaningful message for moderns. This sample may be taken as revealing religious trends among the indigenous intelligentsia. It is also indicative that the paperback edition (A Galaxy Book) of Friedrich Heiler's classic, *Prayer: a Study in the History and Psychology of Religion*, has been a bestseller in Israel in lieu of any competent Jewish book on the subject.

### THE SOUND OF PRAYER

An altogether different contribution has been made to the world of prayer by the Israel Institute for Sacred Music, at Hekhal Shelomoh. During the past two years, it has increased its archives by adding hundreds of prayers, Bible readings, and religious chants recorded in Israel and in countries where these genuine traditions of old Jewish communities are doomed to liquidation or extinction (Turkey, Persia, Greece, Bulgaria, Italy, Provence, Sefardim of Amsterdam, Bordeaux, Bayonne, and the Isle of Gerba). The rapid acculturation process in the Israeli "pressure cooker" makes this cultural preservation project imperative, lest these traditions of millenia be irretrievably lost in our generation. The recordings are catalogued, master indexed, registered in scientific and popular notation, and (so far in a few selections) edited and printed in *Renanot*. The collection contains invaluable comparative material, and makes it possible for the first time to arrive at the com-

mon ground of Jewish religious music. We have been fascinated, in our research on the history of *taam elyon* and *taam tachton* in their relationship to *Akdamut* and the special *targum* for Shavuot and the seventh day of Passover (*Machzor Vitri* pp. 305-344), to discover musical kinship between pentatonic cantillations for the Decalogue, Sea Song, and the Ashkenazic *Akdamut*, as sung in North Africa, Syria, and Central Europe. We are not nearly so far apart as we are inclined to think. These living traditions are of great help in prayer research and assist us in preparing religious music for our pluralistic school population. For the latter there are also important modern compositions of high standard in the fourteen booklets of the *Zimrat* series, published by the Religious Kibbutz Movement, under the editorship of the veteran music pioneer Michael Perlman.

The three international conventions of the I. I. S. M. have brought together a versatile group of musicians, musicologists, educators, rabbinical scholars, and sundry experts for fruitful discussions such as: "Ingathering of the Exiles as Reflected in Religious Music," "Religious Music in Education," and "The Varieties of Religious Music According to Communities." Many pertinent discussions have been published in the I.I.S.M. annual *Dukhan*, illustrating recent trends in the musical aspects of prayer. They deal with cantorial training and styles, congregational singing and choirs, junior congregations and their educational problems, secular composers and synagogue

music, prayers in the classroom, hassidic tunes and textual primacy, halakhic standards and popular traditions.

Some lectures printed in *Dukhan* II (Hannukah 5621) are of special interest. The Director of the Religious Public School System in Israel, Mr. Joseph Goldschmidt, discusses the aesthetic experiencing of religious music with regard to prayer, applying Gestalt psychology and Jewish erudition in a very original analysis of his subject matter. Another fascinating experiment is reported by Dr. M. Katz and Dr. Nehamah Leibowitz in comparing biblical prayer texts in the light of our classical exegesis and classical musical interpretations by composers such as Bach, Haydn, Schubert (the music is appended to the article). Dayan Joseph Kapah describes and explains the musical renditions of prayers in the tradition of his own Yemenite community. Rabbi Yaakov Melamed Cohen lectures on the prayer of his congregation according to the Persian tradition. I. L. Neman demonstrates his methods of teaching prayer and synagogue service in non-religious settlements with ample musical illustrations. M. S. Geshuri proposes a plan of introducing students to pray in the Hassidic style and tune.

The I. I. S. M. endeavors seriously to promote musical standards in prayer, preserve the respective traditions of *nusach*, and stem the tide of vulgarization threatening the synagogues by the popular appeal of Hassidic banality, oriental melismatic crooning, and the like. The Institute plans to issue



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records on model services, according to the respective community traditions, and of contemporary compositions.

We have touched briefly on many, but not all, aspects of the world of prayer as reflected in recent symposia and articles in Israel. All publications mentioned are

available in Israel and also in America. It is important that Jews in the Diaspora maintain contact with the teeming and creative religious life in Israel by availing themselves of the opportunity of receiving these publications regularly and of sharing in our spiritual renaissance.