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Jewish Prayers for the United States Government: A Study in the Liturgy of Politics and the Politics of Liturgy

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In an Orthodox synagogue in Cambridge in 1979, a student whose unhappiness with the Carter administration was well known led the traditional Sabbath morning liturgy. Piously, he intoned the Jewish prayer for the government, which he recited in Hebrew. "May the President, the Vice President and all the constituted officers of the government be blessed, guarded, protected, helped, exalted, magnified and raised . . . upward," he shouted, his arms pointing heavenward. The congregation exploded in laughter.¹ The student's mischievous supplication highlights an issue of enduring moral significance in the relationship of religion and state: the tension between patriotic loyalty and prophetic judgment. How people pray for their government reveals much about what they think of their government. Changes in these prayers over time shed light on religion and politics alike.

Prayer, while unquestionably a part of the American experience, is not a phenomenon that most American historians study.² Yet liturgical texts—as well as other aspects of prayer—may be subjected to historical analysis. In what follows, I focus upon Jewish prayers for the government—fascinating

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1. I was present at this service. On substituting for the traditional blessing of the government a malediction that it be "speedily uprooted and crushed," see Ya'akov Navon, "Tefilah LeShlom HaMedinah BeMeziut Yamenu . . .," *Iture Kohanim* 124 (1995) 6–15 [Heb.]; cf. *The Jerusalem Report*, August 10, 1995, p. 16.

2. James F. White, "Liturgy and Worship," in *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience* (ed. Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams; New York: Scribner's, 1988) 1269–83, surveys the "little scholarly research" that exists (p. 1269).

texts, richly inlaid with multiple meanings, that necessarily underwent significant transformation as they accompanied American Jews through centuries of political, social, and religious change.³ Close examination of these prayers, as we shall see, sheds light on the Americanization of Judaism and on the changing relationship between American Jews and the state.

* * *

Throughout their long history in the Diaspora, Jews have recited special prayers “for the welfare of the government.”⁴ The biblical prophet Jeremiah, writing from Jerusalem to the Jewish community exiled in Babylonia, explained one rationale behind this practice: “Seek the welfare of the city to which I have exiled you and pray to the Lord in its behalf; for in its prosperity you shall prosper.”⁵ Jewish political philosophy as articulated later in *Pirquei Avot* and then throughout rabbinic literature assumed that a government, even an oppressive government, is superior to anarchy.⁶

The practice of praying for the welfare of the sovereign was common not only in Antiquity but also in medieval Christendom and Islam. Jewish prayers nevertheless stand out as expressions of minority group insecurity. In one case, for example, Jews added to their prayers a special plea for “all of the Muslims who live in our country.” Another Jewish prayer book contains a special blessing for the welfare of the Pope.⁷ The uniquely plaintive quality of

3. Barry L. Schwartz, *The Jewish Prayer for the Government* (Ordination thesis, Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion, 1985) is the only full-length study; published articles by Schwartz are cited below. See also Macy Nulman, *Concepts of Jewish Music and Prayer* (New York: Cantorial Council of America, 1985) 100–106; idem, *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Prayer* (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1993) 155; Israel Abrahams, *A Companion to the Authorised Daily Prayerbook* (New York: Hermon, 1966 [1922]) 160–61; J. D. Eisenstein, *Ozar Dinim uMinhagim* (Tel Aviv: Shiloh, 1975 [1917]) 62 [IHeb.]; and Jacob Kabakoff, “Hebrew Prayers in Behalf of the Government and Its Leaders,” *Seekers and Stalwarts: Essays and Studies on American Hebrew Literature and Culture* (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1978) 263–68 [IHeb.] and sources cited in n. 9.

4. Stefan C. Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer: New Perspectives on Jewish Liturgical History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 218, observes that the evidence for regular, formal prayers for the government dates back no earlier than the Middle Ages. Occasional prayers and regular sacrifices for the welfare of the ruler, however, are attested much earlier; see, for example, *The Letter of Aristeas* 185 (in James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* [New York: Doubleday, 1985] 25); Josephus, *The Jewish War* (trans. G. A. Williamson; Baltimore: Penguin, 1959) 129; and Philo, *Legatio ad Caium* (ed. E. M. Smallwood; London, 1961) 142.

5. Jer 29:7; cf. Gen 47:7; and Ezra 6:10.

6. *Avot* 3:2; *b. Avodah Zarah* 4a; Joseph H. Hertz, *The Authorized Daily Prayer Book* (New York: Bloch, 1948) 502–7; Martin Sicker, “A Political Metaphor in Biblical and Rabbinic Literature,” *Judaism* 40/2 (Spring 1991) 208–14.

7. Yosef Yanun (Fenton), “*Tefillah Be’ad Hareshut Ureshut Be’ad Hatefillah*,” *East and Maghreb* 4 (1983) 7–21 [IHeb.]; Abraham Ya’ari, “*Tefilot Mi Sheberakh* Prayers,” *Kirjath Sepher* 33 (1957–58) 247 [IHeb.]; S. D. Goitein, “Prayers from the Geniza for Fatimid Caliphs, the Head of the Jerusalem Yeshiva, the Jewish Community, and the Local

many of these prayers, beseeching God to incline the heart of the sovereign to treat Jews benevolently, bespeaks the distinctive political realities of Diaspora Jewish life. "Throughout medieval Christian Europe," Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi observes, "the Jews inevitably, yet willingly, allied themselves to the Crown as the best, and, ultimately, the only guarantor of stability and security." From the thirteenth century onward, Jews in many of these countries also held the status of *servi camerae* (serfs of the chamber); the monarch was their direct legal protector. The result, in Yerushalmi's words, was a "royal alliance," born of necessity and confirmed by history, that "flowered beyond its obvious mundane realities into a guiding myth."⁸ This myth, characteristic of Jews throughout the medieval world, inspired Jews not only to cast their lot with the sovereign authority but fervently to pray for its welfare.

By the mid-seventeenth century, a cleverly written prayer known in Hebrew as *Hanoten Teshu'ah*, and beginning with the phrase (as traditionally translated) "He who giveth salvation unto kings and dominion unto princes" had become a fixed part of the liturgy in most of the Jewish world. Now believed to have been composed in the sixteenth century, the prayer likely emerged in the Sephardic Diaspora, among Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal, and it then traveled "along the extensive network of Sephardic trade routes" and was adopted, with minor modifications, by Ashkenazic Jews, who carried it through Central and Eastern Europe. In 1655, the Dutch scholar and rabbi, Menasseh ben Israel, published a translation of the prayer into English as part of his apologetic effort to prove Jewish loyalty in order to secure the readmission of the Jews into England. He described the prayer (quite anachronistically) as part of "the continuall and never broken custome of the Jews, wheresoever they are, on the Sabbath Day, or other solemn Feast" to have the "Minister of the Synagogue" bless "the Prince of the country under whom they live, that all the Jews may hear it, and say, Amen."⁹

The manifest language of *Hanoten Teshu'ah* bespeaks Jewish loyalty and faithful allegiance. It calls upon God to "bless, guard, protect, help, exalt, magnify and highly aggrandize" [literally, "raise upward"] the king and the

Congregation," *Studies in Judaica, Karaitica, and Islamica Presented to Leon Nemoy on His Eightieth Birthday* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1982) 47-57; idem, *A Mediterranean Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971) 2.164; Armand Lunel, "Prière des Juifs de Carpentras pour le Pape," *Evidences* 1 (1949) 4-5.

8. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *The Lisbon Massacre of 1506 and the Royal Image in the Shebet Yehudah* (Hebrew Union College Annual Supplements 1; Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion, 1976) 35-66, esp. pp. 37, 39.

9. Barry Schwartz, "Hanoten Teshua': The Origin of the Traditional Jewish Prayer for the Government," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 57 (1986) 113-20; Lewis N. Dembitz, *Jewish Services in Synagogue and Home* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1898) 217-18; Simeon Singer, "The Earliest Jewish Prayer for the Sovereign," *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 4 (1903) 102-9, reprinted in I. Abrahams (ed.), *The Literary Remains of the Rev. Simeon Singer: Lectures and Addresses* (London: Routledge, 1908) 76-87.

royal family, to grant them a long and prosperous rule, and to inspire them with benevolence “toward us and all Israel our brethren.” At the same time, the prayer’s esoteric meaning, presumably recognized only by an elite corps of well-educated worshipers, reveals much about the mentality of Diaspora Jews subjected to countless acts of discrimination under the dominion of foreign kings. The biblical verses quoted in the prayer conceal hints of spiritual resistance, a cultural strategy well-known among those determined to maintain their self-respect in the face of religious persecution. Thus, for example, the prayer begins with a verse modified from Ps 144:10: “You who give victory to kings, who rescue His servant David from the deadly sword.” The next line of that psalm, not included in the prayer but revealing in terms of its hidden meaning reads, “Rescue me, save me from the hands of foreigners, whose mouths speak lies, and whose oaths are false.” Barry Schwartz points out several more esoteric readings in the prayer, including Isa 43:16, which forms part of a chapter predicting the fall of Babylon; Jer 23:6, cited in the prayer’s conclusion, that preaches the ingathering of the exiles and the restoration of the Davidic dynasty; and Isa 59:20 (“He shall come as redeemer to Zion”), which is preceded two verses earlier by a call for vengeance, a sentiment not found in our prayer but likely on the minds of some Jews who recited it.¹⁰ Simultaneously, then, Jews prayed aloud for the welfare of the sovereign upon whom their security depended and read between the lines a more subversive message, a call for rescue, redemption, and revenge.¹¹ Based on past Diaspora experience, both messages were fully appropriate.

The *Hanoten Teshu’ah* prayer accompanied Jews to the American colonies. Indeed, it is found in the very earliest published American Jewish liturgical composition, a “Form of Prayer” from Congregation Shearith Israel in New York, obviously geared for external consumption, marking the day (October 23, 1760) “Appointed by Proclamation for a General Thanksgiving to Almighty God, for the Reducing of Canada to His Majesty’s Dominions.” The published liturgy contains a complete translation of this prayer, mentioning by name not only “our Sovereign Lord King GEORGE the Second, His Royal Highness, George Prince of *Wales*, the Princess Dowager of *Wales*, the Duke, the Princesses, and all the Royal Family,” but also “the Honourable President, and the Council of this Province; likewise the Magistrates of *New York*, and the Province.”¹² Many of these same worthies are named in the translations of the prayer published in the only two Jewish prayer books

10. Schwartz, “*Hanoten Teshua’*,” 119.

11. In the Ashkenazic tradition, the prayer is shortly followed by the prayer “*Av HaRahamim*,” usually dated to the time of the Crusades, which calls upon God for “retribution for the blood of thy servants which hath been shed.” See J. H. Hertz, *Authorized Daily Prayer Book*, 510–15.

12. *The Form of Prayer Which Was Performed at the Jews’ Synagogue in the City of New York on Thursday October 23, 1760 . . . Composed by D. R. Joseph Yesurun Pinto . . .* (New York, 1760) 5–7, reprinted in *Studia Rosenthaliana* 13 (January 1979), following p. 24.

from the colonial period, both of them English renderings of the traditional Hebrew text according to the Spanish and Portuguese rite.¹³ These translations were not read aloud at New York's Congregation Shearith Israel. Instead, *Hanoten Teshu'ah* continued to be recited, as per tradition, in Hebrew. Following the custom in Amsterdam and London, the section of the prayer containing the names of the "high and mighty" officials being blessed was read in Portuguese—a language that few members of the congregation actually understood.¹⁴

Within a few years, however, this longtime practice had become a problem for American Jews. It was not just that their loyalties had changed—this, after all, was common to many Americans of the day and had in any case been a feature of Jewish life for centuries (causing no end of problems when prayer books extolling a previous sovereign in the text of *Hanoten Teshu'ah* had hastily to be withdrawn.)¹⁵ The more vexing problem Jews faced in the wake of the American Revolution was whether the prayer familiar to them from regular use and fixed in their liturgy was appropriate at all in a country where leaders were elected and sovereignty rested with the people.

The need for at least some change was apparent within a week of independence when, on July 11, 1776, the New York Convention to the Continental Congress circulated a letter suggesting that prayers for the Royal Family be eliminated in all American congregations. No minutes from this period in the history of New York's only Jewish synagogue survive, since most Jews (along with their minister, Gershom Seixas) fled the city in the summer of 1776 in advance of British troops.¹⁶ Nor do records seem to be extant from America's other four Jewish congregations. Three changes, however, took place during the Revolutionary era that demonstrate that Jews were duly sensitive to the problem. First, when next we encounter *Hanoten Teshu'ah*, in a prayer recited at the dedication of Congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia (1782), the royal family has been replaced in the traditional blessing by "His Excellency the President, and Hon'ble Delegates of the United States of America in Congress Assembled, His Excellency George Washington,

13. *Evening Service of Roshashanah, and Kippur . . .* (New York, 1761) 21; and with minor differences, *Prayers for Shabbath, Rosh Hashanah, and Kippur . . . According to the Order of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews* (trans. Isaac Pinto; New York, 1765–66) 20–21. Recitation of the prayer for the government as part of the evening (Kol Nidre) service on Yom Kippur conforms to Sephardic custom and may have been an attempt to allay fears that the Kol Nidre prayer was unpatriotic.

14. *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* (= PAJHS) 27 (1920) 392–93; H. P. Salomon, "Joseph Jesurun Pinto (1729–1782): A Dutch Hazan in Colonial New York," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 13 (January 1979) 26 n. 38; Samuel Pepys' diary (October 13, 1663) records that this was similarly the practice in England; see Singer, "Earliest Jewish Prayers for the English Sovereign," 81.

15. Eisenstein, *Ozar Dinim uMinhagim*, 62.

16. PAJHS 27 (1920) 392; 21 (1913) 140; Jacob R. Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970) 1272–73.

Captain General and Commander in Chief of the Federal Army of these States," the General Assembly of Pennsylvania, and "all kings and potentates in alliance with North America." Except for the mention of Washington, the prayer was noticeably depersonalized; forever after, in America, Jews would usually bless officeholders ("the President") rather than named individuals, in marked contrast to the personality cult that previously surrounded the king.¹⁷ Second, Congregation Shearith Israel, once its membership returned, abandoned the practice of reading the names of government officials in Portuguese; henceforward, the names were read in English.¹⁸ Finally, and most remarkable, the congregants of Shearith Israel ceased to rise for *Hanoten Teshu'ah*. According to an oral tradition preserved by H. P. Salomon, "the custom of sitting during this prayer was introduced to symbolize the American Revolution's abolition of subservience."¹⁹

Yet the prayer *Hanoten Teshu'ah* itself, notwithstanding the obvious inappropriateness of some of its sentiments (including such lines as "May the Supreme King of kings exalt and highly aggrandize them, and grant them long and prosperously to rule") and notwithstanding the prayer's inevitable association in the public's mind with the prayer for the English monarch, underwent no other changes of any kind. A prayer book preserved in the papers of Gershom Seixas makes clear that, into the nineteenth century, Shearith Israel's minister recited the identical Hebrew text that he had used before, and the same one that was read in the Sephardic congregation of Amsterdam. The only textual difference, written out in longhand on a piece of paper pasted into the prayer book, was the list of American notables (in English). When Congress was in session, the list included "The President and Vice President of the Union, the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled; the Governor and the Lieutenant Governor and the People of this state represented in Senate and assembly and the Magistrates of this City." When Congress was in recess, as if to underscore that its members were fellow-citizens rather than noble aristocrats, the Senate and House of Representatives were summarily dropped from the list of those to be exalted.²⁰

Shearith Israel's ardent attachment to its traditional prayer for the government stands in marked contrast to the rushing currents of Americanization and democratization that swept across the landscape of American religion

17. Sabato Morais, "Mickve Israel Congregation in Philadelphia," *PAJHS* 1 (1892) 17; Edwin Wolf and Maxwell Whiteman, *The History of the Jews of Philadelphia from Colonial Times to the Age of Jackson* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1975 [1956] 121; cf. *PAJHS* 27 (1920) 126.

18. *PAJHS* 27 (1920) 392; David and Tamar De Sola Pool, *An Old Faith in the New World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955) 87; Salomon, "Joseph Jesurun Pinto," 26 n. 38.

19. *Ibid.*

20. Seixas's Amsterdam prayerbook, with the slip of paper pasted between pp. 69 and 70, is preserved in the Seixas Family Papers, American Jewish Historical Society, New York.

during the post-Revolutionary era. The Episcopal Church, to take an obvious example, published a totally new prayer "for the President of the United States and all in Civil Authority," appropriate to a democratic state, and modified other elements of its Book of Common Prayer as well. Jews in France, following their emancipation, likewise altered their traditional patriotic liturgy.²¹ Why were American Jews, in their prayers, so reluctant to follow suit? Certainly it was not due to any lack of patriotism on their part. The bulk of Shearith Israel's members and particularly its minister had been conspicuous supporters of the Revolution, and all major synagogues in the United States had Americanized their constitutions and democratized their procedures.²² Nor is there any evidence that the prayer's esoteric meaning attracted notice; that had long since been forgotten. Most likely, the tenacious hold of *Hanoten Teshu'ah* was due to the fact that the prayer had become a fixed piece of the ritual at Shearith Israel, part of the established Sephardic rite (*minhag*) that the congregation faithfully perpetuated and preserved.²³ Moreover, it was written in Hebrew, the "holy tongue" that American Jews respected even if they understood it no better than they did Portuguese. Rather than tamper with such sacred elements, the congregation prudently focused on the prayer's less-sacred, vernacular section and on the rituals that accompanied the prayer's recitation. These, as we have seen, were suitably Americanized, even though the rest of the prayer was left untouched. The result was a liturgical compromise that effectively reinforced three central messages that American synagogues of the day sought to inculcate: that Jews should maintain ancestral custom, distinguish between sacred and profane, and exercise extraordinary discernment in all matters connected with the outside world.

Prayers recited on special occasions, and thus not part of the fixed liturgy, offered America's foremost Jewish congregation far greater latitude for originality in prayer. At such services, particularly when the prayers were delivered in English and written with the knowledge that non-Jews would hear them, leaders of Shearith Israel often dispensed with the traditional prayer for the government and substituted revealing new compositions appropriate to the concerns of the day. A prayer composed in 1784 (in this case in Hebrew) by the otherwise unknown Rabbi (Cantor?) Hendla Jochanan van Oettingen, for example, thanked God, who "in His goodness prospered our war-

21. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Marion J. Hatchett, *Commentary on the American Prayer Book* (New York: Seabury, 1980) 158–59, 338–39, 554; *The Book of Common Prayer according to the Use of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States* (Philadelphia, 1822) 22, 27; V. Staley, "State Prayers," *The Prayer Book Dictionary* (1925) 9.760–70; Abrahams, *A Companion to the Authorised Daily Prayerbook*, 161; Ronald B. Schechter, *Becoming French: Patriotic Liturgy and the Transformation of Jewish Identity in France, 1706–1815* (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1993).

22. Jonathan D. Sarna, "The Impact of the American Revolution on American Jews," *Modern Judaism* 1 (1981) 149–60.

23. Pool, *An Old Faith in the New World*, 81–101.

fare." Mentioning by name both Governor De Witt Clinton and General George Washington, the rabbi prayed for peace and offered a restorationist Jewish twist on the popular idea of America as "redeemer nation": "As Thou hast granted to these thirteen states of America everlasting freedom," he declared, "so mayst Thou bring us forth once again from bondage into freedom and mayst Thou sound the great horn for our freedom."²⁴ Later, a 1799 day of Thanksgiving proclaimed by the clergy of New York allowed Gershom Seixas the chance to pray for the government in staunchly republican terms: "Impart thy divine wisdom to the Rulers & Administrators of Government . . . and graciously extend thy protection & direction, to the good people of this State, and to the United States of America in general, with their representatives in the Legislature." Seixas also used the occasion to pray for an end to political infighting and unseemliness among the politicians of his day: "let peace and harmony reside perpetually among them," he declaimed, "that they may act in such manner as to command the approbation of their Constituents."²⁵

A particularly remarkable prayer, delivered by Gershom Seixas at a special Jewish service on yet another day of "public Thanksgiving and Prayer," December 20, 1805, demonstrates that he had by then worked out a political theology appropriate to a democratic state, and, as Barry Schwartz observes, felt "secure in his role as a participant in a system of representational democracy."²⁶ Instead of asking God to "exalt and highly aggrandize" the nation's leaders, as he did regularly every Sabbath and holiday, he now pleaded for these leaders to be granted "an emanation of thy divine wisdom," an expression far more consonant with the democratic ethos. Moreover, akin to his Christian counterparts, he used his prayer for the government to shed light, from a religious perspective, on contemporary events, as seen from his own Jeffersonian perspective:

[L]et no party schisms in state affairs prevail, so as to destroy the principles of the Constitution, which is for the security of person & property, & sworn to be observed by the administrators of Government. May the Congress assembled, act in unison with each other to promote the welfare of all—and may they be able to deliberate and decide on all laws proposed for the advantage of their Constituents. May agriculture flourish & Commerce be prosperous, may the

24. PAJHS 27 (1920) 34–37. Raphael Mahler, "The Historical Background of Pre-Zionism in America and Its Continuity," in *A Bicentennial Festschrift for Jacob Rader Marcus* (ed. B. W. Korn; New York: Ktav, 1976) 347–48; and Jacob R. Marcus, *United States Jewry, 1776–1985* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995) 1.288 offer contrasting interpretations of this prayer; for Christian parallels, see Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968) 26–51; and Ruth Bloch, *Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756–1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985) esp. pp. 94–115.

25. PAJHS 27 (1920) 134.

26. Barry Schwartz, "The Jewish Prayer for the Government in America," *American Jewish History* 76/3 (1987) 335.

seminaries of education be continued under the direction of able Teachers & Professors—that the succeeding generations may gain the knowledge of freedom without licentiousness, & the usefulness of power without tyranny. May the people be convinced of the fidelity of their representatives, and may no cause of jealousy subsist among the different States of the Union—may the blessing of Peace attend their Councils. . . .²⁷

The Shearith Israel compromise—retaining the original Hebrew of *Hanoten Teshu'ah* on a regular basis, Americanizing its vernacular section, and permitting new prayers for the government on special occasions—was reflected in the first new Jewish prayer book to be published in the United States, Solomon Henry Jackson's *Form of Daily Prayers, According to the Custom of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews* (1826). In a prefatory note, Jackson wrote revealingly that “it was thought best to adapt the prayer *Hanoten Teshu'ah* to our republican institutions.” In fact, however, not one word of the original Hebrew was changed; Jackson merely printed the new vernacular section that Shearith Israel had introduced, complete with its different forms “During the Sitting of Congress” and “During the Recess.” More interesting is the addition at the end of the prayer book of a long new “Prayer for Peace,” which according to the volume was “said during the war” (presumably the War of 1812). This new composition included a revised prayer for the government that borrowed language from *Hanoten Teshu'ah*, but with the undemocratic hope for leaders “long and prosperously to rule,” and the cowering plea for “benevolence towards us, and all Israel” conspicuously missing. The new prayer never caught on and is not found in later prayer books. It nevertheless adumbrates what would shortly become a widespread effort, not just to adapt *Hanoten Teshu'ah*, but to replace it altogether.²⁸

The first American prayer book to make this more radical change, replacing *Hanoten Teshu'ah* with a completely new prayer, was *The Sabbath Service and Miscellaneous Prayers Adopted by the Reformed Society of Israelites*, the published 1830 prayer book of the Charleston Reform Movement. The young leaders of this incipient movement for Jewish religious reform in the United States advocated a radically abbreviated liturgy appropriate to the times and appreciative of “this happy land” that they called home.²⁹ Their prayer for the government, written by David Nunes Carvalho, a London-born merchant (whose brother had served as the ministering cantor of the city's

27. *PAJHS* 27 (1920) 137–39.

28. *The Form of Daily Prayers, According to the Custom of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews* . . . (New York, 1826) ii, 133, 232–34. On Jackson, see Marcus, *United States Jewry*, 1:193–94.

29. Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York: Oxford, 1988) 228–35; James William Hagy, *This Happy Land: The Jews of Colonial and Antebellum Charleston* (Tuscaloosa, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1993) 128–60; and Gary Phillip Zola, *Isaac Harby of Charleston, 1788–1828: Jewish Reformer and Intellectual* (Tuscaloosa, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1994) 112–49.

Sephardic congregation), gave expression to—and sacralized—their central reformist values.³⁰ The prayer also reflected their sense of security, for like their Christian neighbors they now depicted a God who influenced America for good, a far cry from the God of the traditional Jewish prayer, who exalted monarchs and inclined their hearts to treat Jews mercifully. Written entirely in English, the new prayer had none of the regal language of its traditional counterpart. Rather than “exalting” the President and other federal and state officials, for example, it simply asked God to “bless,” “preserve,” and (a reflection of their highest ideal) “enlighten” them. Then, in an expression of patriotic piety not previously encountered in an American Jewish prayer book, it thanked God for having “numbered us with the inhabitants of this thy much favoured land . . . where the noble and virtuous mind is the only crown of distinction, and equality of rights the only fountain of power,” for having removed from the republic “the intolerance of bigotry,” and for freeing its people “from the yoke of political and religious bondage.” Finally, it sought divine blessings upon “the people of these United States,” called for charity, friendship, and unity among them and prayed that “the lights of science and civilization . . . defend them on every side from the subtle hypocrite and open adversary.” The hope for Jewish redemption that closed the traditional prayer for the government went unmentioned.³¹

Here, more than in any previous text encountered, we see Jews reshaping their prayer for the government in response to changing conditions and shifting ideological currents. Concerned for the “future welfare and respectability” of the Jewish people,³² Charleston’s reformers abandoned what they saw as an outmoded text and replaced it with one that invoked God’s blessing on the national ideals that these young, enlightened Jews valued most highly. Unlike *Hanoten Teshu’ah*, that could be recited everywhere in the Diaspora simply by substituting one set of “high and mighties” for another, the new prayer glorified America alone, implying that it might serve as a model for “all the nations of the earth.” It also promoted universalism by including all “the people of these United States” and “all mankind” (but not “all Israel our brethren”) among those whom it called upon God to bless. In much of this, the prayer echoed central themes of Enlightenment-era American Protestantism and anticipated what would later become known as American civil

30. Zola, *Isaac Harby*, appendix D; Charles Reznikoff and Uriah Z. Engelman, *The Jews of Charleston* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1950) 109.

31. *The Sabbath Service and Miscellaneous Prayers Adopted by the Reformed Society of Israelites, Founded in Charleston, South Carolina, November 21, 1825* [Charleston: 1830], reprinted with an introduction by Barnett A. Elzas (New York: Bloch, 1916) 25–26; *The Isaac Harby Prayerbook* (Charleston: K. K. Beth Elohim, 1974) 22–23.

32. Joseph H. Blau and Salo W. Baron, *The Jews of the United States, 1790–1840: A Documentary History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963) 554.

religion, both of which sacralized the land and nation of the United States in parallel terms.³³

Charleston's Reform Jews notwithstanding, *Hanoten Teshu'ah* was by no means forgotten. It continued to be recited at Shearith Israel and, although documentation is lacking, it almost certainly formed part of the liturgy in most other American synagogues in the first decades of the nineteenth century as well. Moreover, Isaac Leeser, the German-born minister of Congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia and the foremost traditionalist American Jewish religious leader of his day, published *Hanoten Teshu'ah* in his path-breaking six-volume Sephardic Hebrew-English prayer book (1837), the most ambitious and impressive Jewish liturgical publication to that time in the United States.³⁴ Leeser actually printed two versions of the prayer for each service, one designated "A Prayer for a Royal Government" (he hoped to market his prayer book throughout the English-speaking world) and the other "A Prayer for a Republican Government." The former was the traditional text of the prayer, complete with the hope that God would "bless, preserve, guard, assist, exalt, and raise unto a high eminence, our Lord the king." The latter deleted this phrase, asking only that God "bless, preserve, guard and assist the constituted officers of the government"—not even the President was separately mentioned. This shift from the long list of officials found in earlier American prayers to the formulaic "constituted officers" anticipated a later trend and underscored a critical difference between autocratic monarchies and democratic republics.³⁵ Even more important, however, was the symbolic importance of offering two alternative prayers in the liturgy. By distinguishing monarchies and republics as he did, Leeser (perhaps unconsciously) divided the Diaspora into two kinds of polities, implying that they stood differently before God. Everywhere that Leeser's prayer book reached (or its successor, edited by Abraham de Sola, which followed essentially the same practice), this dramatic distinction was underscored, reminding Jews

33. Catherine Albanese, *Sons of the Fathers: The Civil Religion of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976) esp. p. 15; Lou H. Silberman, "American Impact: Judaism in the United States in the Early Nineteenth Century," in *Tradition and Change in Jewish Experience* (ed. A. Leland Jamison; Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1977) 89–105; Barry L. Schwartz, "Expressions of Civil Religion in Jewish Prayer for the Government," *Journal of Reform Judaism* 37 (Spring 1990) 5–11.

34. See Lance J. Sussman, *Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995) 93–94.

35. Practical considerations may also have been involved, since political titles differed from state to state, and officeholders changed frequently. I have found only two presidents, both highly popular among Jews, whose names were actually printed in the text of a regular prayer for the government: Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin D. Roosevelt. See *Magil's Complete Linear Prayer Book* (Philadelphia: Joseph Magil, 1905) 153 [later editions drop the name]; and the frontispiece to *A Naye Shas Tehinah* (Brooklyn, ca. 1943).

who still lived under kings and queens that an alternative form of government existed.³⁶

In 1848, in response to “the many communities of the German denomination lately sprung up in this country,” Leaser published a prayer book “according to the custom of the German and Polish Jews,” hoping that it would capture the growing market for prayer books opened up by the burgeoning Jewish immigration from Central Europe. For the most part, he relied on the Ashkenazic Hebrew text prepared in Germany by Rabbi Wolf Heidenheim. When it came to the prayer for the government, however, he published a revision of his own “Prayer for a Republican Government.” The Heidenheim text included the line, not found in Sephardic versions of the prayer,³⁷ “may he [the sovereign] subdue nations under his feet, and make his enemies fall before him, and in whatsoever he undertaketh may he prosper.” Apparently finding these militant sentiments unpalatable in an American setting, Leaser quietly dropped them.³⁸

Other texts prepared for German Jews, however, went much further in their changes. In 1846, just a few months after he arrived from Germany, the young Rabbi Max Lilienthal, serving as chief rabbi of a union of New York’s three leading German-Jewish Orthodox congregations, abolished *Hanoten Teshu’ah* altogether and replaced it with a new Hebrew prayer of his own composition beginning with the words “Master of the Universe” (*Ribon Kol Ha’Olamim*).³⁹ The surviving minutes of this short-lived synagogue union do not preserve Lilienthal’s reasons (although, given his negative experiences with the governments of Germany and Russia and his ardent political liberalism, they are not hard to fathom), nor do they preserve more than the first three words of the new prayer’s text. But a New York prayer book published for German Jews in 1848 includes a prayer for the government beginning with these same words, and it seems safe to conclude that the new prayer—

36. *The Form of Prayers According to the Custom of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews* (ed. Isaac Leaser; Philadelphia, 1837) 1.114–15. In the revised edition by Abraham de Sola (1878; 1925), “A Prayer for a Royal Government” was retitled “Prayer for the Queen and Royal Family,” and the appropriate members were listed by name, probably an attempt to increase sales within the British Empire.

37. Dembitz, *Jewish Services in Synagogue and Home*, 218, claims otherwise, but without substantiation.

38. *The Book of Daily Prayers for Every Day in the Year According to the Custom of the German and Polish Jews* (ed. Isaac Leaser; Philadelphia, 1848) preface and pp. 108–9. Near the end of his life, Leaser published a revised translation of a French meditation to be recited during the prayer for the government. His translation radically toned down the fawningly patriotic French original, Americanized the blessing for the ruler, and added a line calling for restoration to Zion. Compare *Prières d’un Cœur Israélite—Imre Lev* (reprint ed., Montreal, 1945; orig. ed., 1848) 98–99 with *Imre Lev: Meditations and Prayers for Every Situation and Occasion in Life* (Philadelphia, 1866) 29–30.

39. Hyman B. Grinstein, “The Minute Book of Lilienthal’s Union of German Synagogues in New York,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 18 (1944) 324, 338, 341. On Lilienthal, see my “Max Lilienthal,” *American National Biography* (Oxford, 1999) 13.653–54.

reprinted in Orthodox prayer books into the twentieth century—is, in fact, Lilienthal's formulation.⁴⁰ This is no small irony since, within a decade, Lilienthal had cast his lot with Reform Judaism and moved to Cincinnati.

Lilienthal's flowery Hebrew prayer is an extraordinary liturgical evocation of the theme of Zion in America. Abandoning both the groveling tone and the sense of dependency reflected in *Hanoten Teshu'ah*, it radiates optimism and self-confidence. Where *Hanoten Teshu'ah* drew its metaphors from the experience of the exile, the new prayer looks hopefully toward redemption, appropriating idyllic biblical depictions of the land of Israel and applying them to the United States:

Look down from Your holy dwelling and bless this land, the United States of America, whereon we dwell. Let not violence be heard in their land, wasting and destruction within their boundaries [Isa 60:18]. . . . May you grant them rains in due season; may the earth yield her produce and the tree of the field yield its fruit [Lev 26:4].⁴¹

The prayer goes on to seek God's blessing on the President and the Vice President, as well as state and local officials, and prays for them to be divinely guided. It makes no mention, however, of their being exalted or preserved in office. It also includes a special blessing for the city of New York and its inhabitants—an appropriate blessing for Lilienthal to have written for his local congregants but very strange in a prayer book distributed across the country. Inevitably, if not intentionally, the prayer reinforced the mistaken belief that New York was a microcosm of American Jewry as a whole. Finally, the prayer evoked God's blessing on the whole House of Israel, praying for safety, material wealth and growing strength, "until a redeemer shall come forth to Zion."

Lilienthal's prayer reflected some of the fondest hopes of Central European Jews who immigrated to America's shores. Its publication in place of *Hanoten Teshu'ah* in a widely circulated Orthodox prayer book did much to signify to them that America was different—if not actually Zion, then the closest thing to it. The prayer also heralded a period of intense Jewish liturgical creativity in the United States as the size of the community grew, its religious life became more variegated and diverse, and the hegemony of traditionalist Sephardic congregations was broken. Over the next 150 years, hundreds of new American Jewish prayers and prayer books appeared, covering a wide

40. [*Tefilot Yisra'el*]. *Prayers of Israel, with an English Translation* (5th ed.; New York: Henry Frank, 1856) 198–99; see my "Forgotten 19th Century Prayer for the U.S. Government: Its Meaning, Significance and Surprising Author," in *Hesed Ve-Emet: Studies in Honor of Ernest S. Frerichs* (eds. J. Magness and S. Gitin; Athens, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1998) 431–40.

41. *Tefilot Yisra'el*, 198, translation mine. For parallel applications of the Zion theme to America, see Conrad Cherry (ed.), *God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1971).

spectrum from orthodoxy to radical reform.⁴² Most contained a prayer for the government: sometimes the traditional *Hanoten Teshu'ah*; sometimes a variant of that prayer; sometimes a totally new prayer in Hebrew, English, or both; and sometimes just an indication that, following the reading of the Torah, such a prayer was commonly said. Prayers for the government were likewise published in Jewish newspapers and in handbooks for rabbis; countless more were probably never recorded.⁴³ While several prayers won wide circulation, no single prayer ever again predominated, as *Hanoten Teshu'ah* had done from the seventeenth century on. Instead, a wide variety of liturgies for the government would henceforward coexist, a reflection, on the one hand, of the fragmentation of American Judaism and, on the other, of that same spirit of freedom and democracy that the prayers themselves so enthusiastically celebrated.

Three features found in a great many of the new Jewish prayers for the government and already anticipated by the Charleston reformers and by Lillienthal immediately set these prayers apart from *Hanoten Teshu'ah*. First, they were identifiably American prayers, exhibiting a conscious effort to distinguish Judaism in America from its counterpart in Europe. Second, the prayers now included (and often began with) blessings for the country, as if to underscore that America, rather than any particular president, guaranteed Jewish liberty. Third, the exaggerated deference to leaders, characteristic of *Hanoten Teshu'ah* (even as its subtext hinted that the "King of Kings" was greater) was replaced by an emphatic statement of the leaders' own subservience to God. Where *Hanoten Teshu'ah* played to the vanity of the sovereign and underscored Jewish powerlessness, the new prayers, much more akin to parallel Protestant prayers, emphasized the vulnerability of political leaders and their consequent need for divine guidance.

The 1850 prayer for the government composed by Rev. Henry A. Henry for Cincinnati's Bene Yeshurun congregation effectively illustrates all three points. Composed at the request of the congregation's board of trustees, it was specifically written to be "a prayer for the welfare of the Government and people of the United States," and a replacement for *Hanoten Teshu'ah*, "formerly used . . . in accordance with the custom and practice of the European congregations." The prayer's first three paragraphs invoked God's blessing, first, upon our "happy country, the Land of Freedom"; second, upon the states, "that Virtue, Truth, Charity and Mercy may flourish"; and third, upon

42. Sharona R. Wachs, *American Jewish Liturgies: A Bibliography of American Jewish Liturgy from the Establishment of the Press in the Colonies through 1925* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1997); Eric L. Friedland, *The Historical and Theological Development of the Non-Orthodox Prayerbooks in the United States* (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1967).

43. Surprisingly, the prayerbook prepared by Isaac Mayer Wise, *Minhag Amerika* (1st ed., 1857), contains no prayer for the government. His congregation had commissioned a new prayer in 1850 (see n. 44, following), and it likely remained in use.

“the inhabitants of this Land . . . that they may all live as brethren.” Only in the last two paragraphs did the prayer turn its attention to federal, state, and local officials, and then it called upon God to “banish all errors from their minds,” “teach them,” and “instruct them”—a far cry indeed from the obsequious message of *Hanoten Teshu'ah*.⁴⁴

The *Union Prayer Book*, first published in 1895 and rapidly accepted by the vast majority of Reform Jewish congregations in the United States, followed this same pattern. “Fervently we invoke Thy benediction for this our country and our nation,” its untitled “prayer” began, the cumulative emphasis on “our” underscoring native Jews’ quest to belong and seem loyal.⁴⁵ America’s leaders entered the prayer only in the middle, as subjects of its call on God, to “enlighten and sustain with Thy power those whom the people have set in authority.” In accordance with Reform Judaism’s ethos, the prayer concluded on a universalistic note, calling for “peace and good will” among “all the citizens of our land” and for “religion to exalt our nation in righteousness.” This is among the most widely known of all Jewish prayers for the government in the United States. With only slight changes in wording, it remained in the Reform Jewish prayer book for 80 years. It was also reprinted in the prayer book prepared for Jewish soldiers in World War I. Astonishingly, it was even reprinted at the back of one Orthodox prayer book—but without attribution!⁴⁶

In calling for “peace and good will” among Americans, the *Union Prayer Book* echoed what was already a recurrent theme among the new Jewish prayers for the government. While Gershom Seixas in the decades following the Revolution was principally concerned with infighting among politicians,

44. [New York] *Asmonean* 2/9 (June 21, 1850) 70; Jay Henry Moses, “Henry A. Henry: The Life and Work of an American Rabbi, 1849–1869” (Ordination thesis, Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion, 1997) 32–33. In 1850, Henry’s son, the folk-artist Moses Henry, still incorporated the traditional prayer for the government in a piece of liturgical art; see Alice M. Greenwald, “The Masonic Mizrah and Lamp: Jewish Ritual Art as a Reflection of Cultural Assimilation,” *Journal of Jewish Art* 10 (1984) 100.

45. In keeping with the precedent set in David Einhorn’s prayer book, *Olat Tamid: Gebetbuch fuer Israelitische Reform Gemeinden* (New York, 1858) 22, this prayer was embedded within a broader one for the congregation, printed under the simple heading “Prayer.” The *Union Prayer Book* prayer, however, was an entirely different (and later) composition. For the relationship between the two prayer books, see Lou H. Silberman, “The Union Prayer Book: A Study in Liturgical Development,” in *Retrospect and Prospect* (ed. Bertram W. Korn; New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1964) 46–80.

46. *The Union Prayer Book for Jewish Worship* (Cincinnati: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1895) 1.99; stylistically revised in *The Union Prayerbook for Jewish Worship* (Cincinnati: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1947) 1.148. See also *Abridged Prayer Book for Jews in the Army and Navy of the United States* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1917) 81; and the Orthodox, *Form of Prayers for the Feast of New Year* (New York: Hebrew Publishing, n.d.) 478; cf. p. 192. Preliminary versions of the *Union Prayer Book*, prepared by I. S. Moses, lack this prayer. It may have been written by Gustav Gottheil, rabbi of Temple Emanu-El of New York; see Richard Gottheil, *The Life of Gustav Gottheil: Memoir of a Priest in Israel* (Williamsport, Pa.: Bayard, 1936) 163.

Jews arriving in America later on viewed tensions among people of different regions, races, ethnicities, and creeds with far more concern. Their own security, many Jews believed, was inextricably bound up with domestic tranquility. Rabbi David Einhorn, who arrived in America in 1855 and became a fierce opponent of slavery, already wrote into his brief prayer for the government (1858) a specific line calling for “love” between America’s “various tribes and denominations.” Rabbi Morris J. Raphall, who disagreed with Einhorn concerning slavery, likewise prayed for unity. In his 1860 prayer delivered before Congress (the first Jewish prayer ever delivered before that body), he called on lawmakers to adopt “the way of moderation and equity . . . so that, from the North and from the South, from the East and from the West, one feeling of satisfaction may attend their labors; while the whole people of the land joyfully repeat the words of thy Psalmist: ‘How good and how pleasant it is when brethren dwell together in unity.’”⁴⁷

East European Jews, immigrating a generation after the Civil War, stressed this same theme in their new prayers for the government. The twentieth-century Conservative rabbi Elias L. Solomon, for example, called upon God to cause all Americans “to dwell in harmony and in peace with one another, and to seek one another’s wellbeing, and the good of their common land.”⁴⁸ The great rabbinic scholar Louis Ginzberg, in a prayer first published both in Hebrew and in English translation in the *Festival Prayer Book* of the Conservative Movement (1927) and subsequently reprinted in standard Conservative Jewish prayer books and in the prayer books of the Reconstructionist Movement as well, made this theme central to his message. “Plant among the peoples of different nationalities and faiths who dwell here, love and brotherhood, peace and friendship,” he wrote in his original Hebrew. “Uproot from their hearts all hatred and enmity, all jealousy and vying for supremacy.” While the English paraphrase toned these sentiments down (the recent prayer book of the Reconstructionist Movement, *Kol Haneshama*, has restored them), the core of the message was preserved: “May citizens of all races and creeds forge a common bond in true harmony to banish all hatred and bigotry.” Ginzberg’s prayer, which also contained all the other elements that had by now become standard for prayers of this kind, including a universalistic peroration, became one of the most frequently invoked twentieth-century Jewish substitutes for *Hanoten Teshu’ah*. Long after other prayers for the government were forgotten, his remained timely.⁴⁹

47. *Olat Tamid*, 22; Bertram W. Korn, *Eventful Years and Experiences* (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1954) 100; Bertram W. Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War* (2nd ed.; New York: Atheneum, 1970) 15–31; David B. Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984) 82–84.

48. Jacob Bosniak (ed.), *Pulpit and Public Prayers* (New York, 1927) 81.

49. *Festival Prayer Book* (New York: United Synagogue of America, 1927) 201; *Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book* (New York: Rabbinical Assembly and United Synagogues, 1946) 130; *Siddur Sim Shalom* (ed. Jules Harlow; New York: Rabbinical Assembly and United

Even the prayers that proved evanescent, however, disclose much about the concerns of American Jews at particular moments. Like other occasional prayers that we have seen, they aimed to bring God into central questions of the day—often in tacit support of a particular point of view. During the Civil War, for example, Sabato Morais, the minister (*hazzan*) of Congregation Mikveh Israel, was requested by his patriotic lay board (*adjunta*) to include in the prayer for the government the words “May our Union be preserved and its defenders be shielded from danger.”⁵⁰ Later, during the long debate over immigration restriction, several rabbis included in their prayers the hope that America would remain, as Rabbi Aaron Wise put it in his 1891 prayer book, “the haven of rest and of refuge to the persecuted of all nations.”⁵¹ Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf of Philadelphia, long concerned about issues of social justice and urban reform, used his prayer in 1892 to remind congregants that, “Despite abundance, want lodges in our midst; and, despite peace, the voice of discontent is not yet hushed in our land.” He called upon God to “enable the people’s representatives, wherever assembled, to wrestle with this harassing foe, and to conquer him.”⁵² Rabbis writing in the twentieth century went further, using prayers for the government to invoke God on behalf of such causes as pacifism, anti-imperialism, freedom of conscience, and equal opportunity. One rabbi prayed that America be prevented “from losing its own soul.”⁵³ The contrast between these prayers and the traditional *Hanoten Teshu’ah* could not be more glaring and underscores the aforementioned tension between patriotic loyalty and prophetic judgment. While the

Synagogues, 1985) 415; David Golinkin (ed.), *The Responsa of Professor Louis Ginzberg* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1996) 54–55. All major Conservative Jewish prayer books contain essentially the same text of Ginzberg’s prayer in Hebrew, along with English paraphrases that differ somewhat more. See also *Sabbath Prayer Book* (New York: Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation, 1946) 164–67. Rabbi Jacob Kohn took credit for the first sentences of the English paraphrase; see Bosniak, *Pulpit and Public Prayers*, 76. The new Reconstructionist prayer book, *Kol Haneshamah* (Wyncote, Pa.: Reconstructionist, 1994) 418–19, revises Ginzberg’s original Hebrew but translates it literally. For an alternate text used in some Conservative congregations, see the revision of *Hanoten Teshu’ah* in Max D. Klein, *Seder Avodah* (Philadelphia, 1951) 278–79.

50. Congregation Mikveh Israel Minute Book, September 20, 1862, as cited in Ruth Alpers, “Traditionalism, Americanization and Assimilation: The Struggles of Sabato Morais, 1851–1897” (Ordination thesis, Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion, 1994) 46.

51. *Shalhevet Yah: The Temple Service Arranged for the Congregation Rodeph Sholom of New York by Dr. Aaron Wise* (New York, 1891) 19. Aaron Wise was the father of the famous Reform rabbi, Stephen S. Wise.

52. Joseph Krauskopf, *The Service Manual* (Philadelphia, 1892) 32.

53. Julius Silberfeld, *The Sabbath Service* (New York: Bloch, 1923) 187; Bosniak, *Pulpit and Public Prayers*, 76–82; quotation is from p. 80; Morris Silverman, *The Junior Prayer Book* (New York: United Synagogue of America, 1933) 38; idem, *Sabbath and Festival Services* (Hartford, Conn.: Prayer Book, 1936) 214; see also the supplementary prayer “That America Fulfill the Promise of Its Founding,” in the Reconstructionist *Sabbath Prayer Book*, 546–47.

traditional prayer assumed Jewish dependency and curried favor from the ruling authorities, these new prayers exude self-confidence and offer direction to the ruling authorities on how to do their jobs better.

Some Orthodox Jews resisted this trend toward writing new prayers for the government. Committed to maintaining Jewish tradition in the face of social pressure to acculturate, they refused to tamper with any part of the prayer book, *Hanoten Teshu'ah* included. Liturgical custom, they believed, was not something to be violated with impunity. Besides, America as they understood it was not much different from any other Diaspora land; it was still exile, and its Jews still depended on the benevolence of a non-Jewish government. For these “resisters,” maintaining *Hanoten Teshu'ah*, even if only by reflex, made a powerful statement. It was another symbol of their proud stance against assimilation and all that it threatened.⁵⁴

By contrast, Orthodox Jews who took a more positive view of America, believing that tradition and Americanization could be reconciled, did modify *Hanoten Teshu'ah*. Some, as we have seen, even went further, rejecting the prayer altogether in favor of the Lilienthal prayer or some other new version. More frequently, however, especially in the twentieth century, the modifications they introduced were small—a few words added here or subtracted there—leaving the bulk of the prayer intact. One early text, for example, sought to universalize *Hanoten Teshu'ah* by seeking the government’s mercy not only upon Israel but upon all of America’s ethnic groups. Another replaced the call for mercy with one for “wisdom and understanding.” Still another, the very popular Orthodox prayer book edited by Philip Birnbaum, deleted both the plea for mercy and the call, that Isaac Leeser had earlier found offensive, to “subdue nations.” But it kept the rest of *Hanoten Teshu'ah* intact.⁵⁵ No less than the strategy of resistance, these various accommodationist strategies likewise made a powerful statement of cultural ideology. Both strategies demonstrated that the question of how to pray for the government raised issues that reached far beyond government, extending to Judaism’s relationship toward American culture as a whole.

54. Jeffrey S. Gurock, “Resisters and Accommodators: Varieties of Orthodox Rabbis in America, 1886–1983,” *American Jewish Archives* 35 (November 1983) 100–187. Prayer books that print the traditional text of *Hanoten Teshu'ah*, sometimes with minor modifications, include *Form of Prayers and Blessing of Israel* (New York: Hebrew Publishing, 1901) 254; *Sephath Emeth* (New York: Hebrew Publishing, 1919) 196; M. Stern, *Daily Prayers* (New York: Hebrew Publishing, 1928) 199; S. Singer, *The Standard Prayer Book* (New York: Bloch, 1947) 219.

55. *Mahzor Kol Bo . . . Yom Kippur* (New York: Hebrew Publishing, n.d. [1912?]) 189 (the first American edition of this prayer book [1909?], found in the American Jewish Historical Society, accidentally retained the prayer for the Tsar!); *Magil's Complete Linear Prayer Book*, 153–54; Philip Birnbaum, *Daily Prayer Book* (New York: Hebrew Publishing, 1949) 379. *Sabbath Prayers: A Complete Ritual* (New York: Bloch, 1925) 113, published the traditional Hebrew text and an unrelated Americanized prayer in English.

The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 compounded the problem of how to pray for the government. As Jews across the spectrum of American Jewish life gradually added prayers for the State of Israel to their liturgy, they were forced to consider the appropriate relationship between prayers for the new Jewish homeland and prayers for the land that American Jews still called home. One of the first to deal with this problem was the Orthodox Jewish liturgist, Birnbaum. In his prayer books, published soon after the establishment of the Jewish State, he appended a "Prayer for the Welfare of the State of Israel," by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, to follow the traditional prayer for the government.⁵⁶ This pattern, praying for America ("our country") first and for the welfare of the State of Israel second, quickly became standard, establishing as it were a hierarchy of priorities. Thereafter, some prayer books, notably most Orthodox ones and the Reconstructionist *Kol Haneshamah*, sought to establish a careful symmetry, printing prayers of approximately equal length for America and for Israel, with one immediately following the other.⁵⁷ Other prayer books, particularly those composed in the 1970s and 1980s by the Conservative and Reform movements, devoted more than twice as much space to the prayer for "our country" than to the prayer for the State of Israel, an accurate if not necessarily conscious reflection of both movements' central focus.⁵⁸ As so often before, so too here, liturgy sheds light on an issue of central importance to American Judaism: the immensely sensitive political and moral question of how to balance national loyalty with devotion to Zion.

The general practice of praying aloud for the welfare of the country declined during the Vietnam and post-Vietnam years. With many American Jews openly critical of their nation's foreign and domestic policies, chauvinistic prayers left over from an earlier era rang hollow. Declining patriotism and widespread public disillusionment with government—by no means unique to American Jews—spawned liturgical change. The new Reform Jewish prayer book, *Gates of Prayer* (1975), for example, abandoned the fervent supplication that was for so long a staple of Reform Jewish worship, replacing it with an occasional prayer, divorced from the regular liturgy, that covered the nation, its inhabitants, and its leaders in four short lines. A popular new Orthodox prayer book known as the *ArtScroll Siddur* (1984) included no prayer for the government whatsoever, only a note that "in many congregations, a prayer for the

56. Birnbaum, *Daily Prayer Book*, 379, 789; *High Holyday Prayer Book*, 421–23.

57. David De Sola Pool, *The Traditional Prayer Book for Sabbath and Festivals* (New York: Behrman, 1960) 259; *Kol Haneshamah*, 418–21.

58. Jules Harlow (ed.), *Mahzor for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur* (New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 1972) 506; Harlow, *Siddur Sim Shalom*, 414–17; *Gates of Prayer: The New Union Prayerbook* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1975) 452; *Gates of Repentance: The New Union Prayerbook for the Days of Awe* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1978) 354–55.

welfare of the State is recited.”⁵⁹ Impressionistic evidence suggests that, even with prayer books that did include a regular prayer for the government, congregations recited it less frequently during these years. And where the prayer was recited, as in the Orthodox synagogue in Cambridge with which we began, vigorous expressions of dissent could not be ruled out.

The prayer for the government thus serves as a revealing historical barometer of the relationship between American Jews and the state. The changes we have seen in these prayers—the growing minority-group confidence that they display, the critical issues to which they point, and the complex moral tensions that they engender—speak to themes central to the American Jewish experience as a whole. They shed light not only on the faith of American Jews but on their politics, acculturation, and community conscience as well.⁶⁰

59. *Gates of Prayer*, 452; *The Complete ArtScroll Siddur* (ed. Nosson Scherman; New York: Mesorah, 1984) 450. *Service of the Heart* (London, 1967), upon which *Gates of Prayer* was based, is full of prayers for the [English] government; see pp. 137, 156, 174, 194, and 211. The special Rabbinical Council of America edition of *The Complete ArtScroll Siddur* restored both the traditional prayer for the government and the prayer for the State of Israel.

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