

Inclusion of the *Imahot* in the First Blessing of the Amidah

Camp Ramah in New England
Summer 2001

Compiled by Abe Friedman with the
help of Rabbi Gordon Tucker

ברכת אבות עם איזכור האמהות

• ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו ואמותינו, אלהי אברהם, אלהי יצחק, ואלהי יעקב, אלהי שרה, אלהי רבקה, אלהי רחל ואלהי לאה, האל הגדול הגבור והנורא, אל עליון, גומל חסדים טובים, וקונה הכל, וזוכר חסדי אבות ואמהות, ומביא גאולה לעמו ישראל למען שמו באהבה.

• ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, ואלהי אברהם, אלהי יצחק, ואלהי יעקב, יהאל הגדול הגבור והנורא, אל עליון, גומל חסדים טובים, וקונה הכל, וזוכר חסדי אבות, ומביא גאולה לבני בניהם למען שמו באהבה.

"IMAHOT"
FROM
VA'AVI
TEHLATI
(LEFT
COLUMN)

בעשרת ימי תשובה: זכרנו לחיים, מלך חפץ בחיים, וכתבנו בספר החיים, למענה אלהים חיים.

מלך עוזר ומושיע ומגן.
• ברוך אתה יי, מגן אברהם ושרה.

מלך עוזר ומושיע ומגן.
• ברוך אתה יי, מגן אברהם.

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, אלהי אברהם, אלהי יצחק ואלהי יעקב, אלהי שרה אלהי רבקה, אלהי רחל ואלהי לאה, האל הגדול הגבור והנורא, אל עליון, גומל חסדים טובים וקונה הכל, וזוכר חסדי אבות ומביא גאולה לבני בניהם למען שמו באהבה.

יום: כבוד and ראש השנה

זכרנו לחיים, מלך חפץ בחיים, וכתבנו בספר החיים, למענה אלהים חיים. מלך עוזר ופוקד ומושיע ומגן. ברוך אתה יהוה מגן אברהם ופוקד שרה.

"IMAHOT"
FROM
SIA
SHALOM

ה' י"ג' /

התפילה בתקופת התנאים והאמוראים

P.24, n. 15

כיוון שנתפרסמו גוסי הגניזה בעיקר בכתיבת וספרים לועזיים (מלבד הקטעים שפרסם ש' אסף בספר דינבור ירושלים תש"ט), שאין הקורא העברי מצוי אצלם, הריני מביא כאן אחד מגוסי הי"ח מן הגניזה (על-פי QR סדרה ישנה, כרך 10 [1898], עמ' 656-657):

- א. ברוך אתה יי אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו ואלהי אברהם אלהי יצחק ואלהי יעקב האל הגדול הגבור והנורא א עליון קונה שמים וארץ מגנינו ומגן אבותינו מבסחינו בכל דור ודור ברוך אתה יי מגן אברהם.
- ב. אתה גבור משפיל גאים חזק ומדין עריצים חי עולמים מקים מתים משיב הרוח ומוריד הטל מכלכל חיים מחי המתים כהרף עין ישועה לנו תצמיח ברוך אתה יי מחיה המתים.
- ג. קדוש אתה ונורא שמך ואין אלוה מבלעדיך ברוך אתה יי האל הקדוש.
- ד. חנינו אבינו דיעה מאתך ובינה והשכל מתורתך ברוך אתה יי חונן הדעת.
- ה. השיבנו יי אליך ונשובה חדש ימינו כקדם ברוך אתה יי הרוצה בתשובה.
- ו. סלח לנו אבינו כי חטאנו לך מתה והעבר פשעינו מנגד עיניך כי רבים רחמין ברוך אתה יי המרבה לסלוח.
- ז. ראה בענינו וריבה ריבנו וגאלנו למען שמך ברוך אתה יי גואל ישראל.
- ח. רפאינו יי אלהינו ממכאוב לבנו ויגון ואנחה העבר ממנו והעלה רפואה למכותינו ברוך אתה [יי] רופא חוי עמו ישראל.
- ט. ברך עלינו יי אלהינו את השנה הזאת לטובה בכל מיני תבואתה וקרב מהרה שנת קץ גאולתינו ותן סל ומס על פני האדמה ושבע עולם מאוצרות טובך ותן ברכה במעשה ידיו ברוך אתה יי מברך השנים.
- י. תקע בשופר גדול לחירותינו ושא נס לקבץ גאליותינו ברוך אתה יי מקבץ נדחי עמו ישראל.
- יא. השיבה שופטינו כבראשונה ויועצינו כבתחילה ומלוך עלינו אתה לבדך ברוך אתה יי אוהב המשפט.
- יב. למשומדים אל תהי תקוה ומלכות זרון מהרה תעקר בימינו והנצרים והמינים כרגע יאבדו ימתו מספר החיי ועם צדיקים אל יכתבו ברוך אתה יי מכניע זדים.
- יג. על גירי הצדק יהמו רחמין ותן לנו שכר טוב עם עושי רצונך ברוך אתה יי מבטח לצדיקים.
- יד. רחם יי אלהינו ברחמין הרבים על ישראל עמך ועל ירושלם עירך ועל ציון משכן כבודך ועל היכלך וע על מעונך ועל מלכות בית דויד משיח צדקך ברוך אתה יי אלהי דויד בונה ירושלים.
- טו. שמע יי אלהינו בקול תפלתנו ורחם עלינו כי אל חנון ורחום אתה ברוך אתה יי שומע תפלה.
- טז. רצה יי אלהינו ושכון בציון ויעבדוך עבדיך בירושלם ברוך אתה יי שאותך ביראה נעבוד.
- יז. מודים אנחנו לך אחה הוא יי אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו על כל הטובות החסד והרחמים שגמלתנו ושעשיתנו עמו ועם אבותינו מלפנינו ואם אמרנו כסה רגלינו חסוך יי יסעדינו ברוך אתה יי הטוב לך להודות.
- יח. שים שלומך על ישראל עמך ועל עירך ועל נחלתך וברכנו כולנו כאחד ברוך אתה יי עושה השלום.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם
אשר נתן לשכוי בינה להבחין בין יום ובין לילה.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם
שלא עשני גוי.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם
שלא עשני עבד.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם
לאנשים שלא עשני אשה. / לנשים שעשני כרצונו.

Traditional Birchot HaShachar

*ברכות expressing our awareness that each day
is a new gift from God*

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר נתן לשכוי בינה
להבחין בין יום ובין לילה.

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם, שעשני בצלמו.

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם, שעשני ישראל.

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם, שעשני בן / בת-חורין.

65 PRELIMINARY PRAYERS

We are grateful for the daily renewal of our lives.

Praised are You Adonai our God, who rules the universe,
enabling us to distinguish day from night.

Praised are You Adonai our God, who rules the universe,
making me in the divine image.

Praised are You Adonai our God, who rules the universe,
making me a Jew.

Praised are You Adonai our God, who rules the universe,
making me free.

Birchot Hashachar from Sim Shalom

מי שברך לעולה לתורה:

מי שברך אבותינו אברהם יצחק ויעקב
הוא יברך את נפילי בן פיליני. בעבור שעלה לכבוד המקום ולכבוד התורה ולכבוד
השבת.
בשכר זה הקדוש ברוך הוא ישמרהו ויצילהו מכל צרה וצוקה ומכל נגע ומחלה.
וישלח ברכה והצלחה בכל מעשה ידיו עם כל ישראל אחיו. ונאמר אמן.

Mi Sheberach (Traditional)

סדר קריאת התורה 143

מי שברך

For those called to the תורה

A male:

מי שברך אבותינו, אברהם יצחק ויעקב, שרה רבקה רחל ולאה,
הוא יברך את _____ בן _____ שעלה היום לכבוד המקום
ולכבוד התורה (ולכבוד השבת / ולכבוד הרגל). הקדוש ברוך הוא
ישמר אותו ואת-כל-משפחתו, וישלח ברכה והצלחה בכל-מעשה
ידיו (ויזכה לעלות לרגל) עם כל-ישראל אחיו, ונאמר אמן.

143 TORAH SERVICE

MI SHE-BERAKH

For those called to the Torah

A male:

May God who blessed our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, bless _____ who has been called to the Torah with reverence for God, the Torah, and Shabbat/*and the Festival*. May the Holy One watch over him and the members of his family, bringing blessing and success to all his worthy endeavors, (*with the privilege of going up to Jerusalem for the Festival*.) together with our fellow Jews everywhere. And let us say: Amen.

Mi Sheberach (Sim Shalom)

יהי רצון מלפניך, יי אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו
 שתעלנו בשמחה לארצנו ותשענו בגבולנו
ושם נעשה לפניך את קרבנות חובותינו
 תמידים בסדרם ומוספיים בהלכתם.

ואת מוסף יום השבת הזה
 נעשה ונקריב לפניך באהבה כמצות רצונך
 כמו שכתבת עלינו בתורתך
 על ידי משה עבדך מפי כבודך
 באמור

תפנת שבת רצית קרבנותיה
 צוית פרושיה עם סדורי נסכיה
 מענגיה לעולם כבוד ינחלו
 טועמיה חיים זכו
 וגם האוהבים דבריה גדלה בחרו.
 אז מסיני נצטוו עליה
 ותצונו יי אלהינו להקריב בה קרבן מוסף שבת כראוי.

"Korbanot" from Shabbat Musaf (Traditional)

*For an alternative that omits mention of the sacrifices,
 continue at the bottom of the page.*

תפנת שבת רצית קרבנותיה, צוית פרושיה עם סדורי
 נסכיה. מענגיה לעולם כבוד ינחלו, טועמיה חיים זכו,
 וגם האוהבים דבריה גדלה בחרו. אז מסיני נצטוו עליה
 ותצונו יהוה אלהינו להקריב בה קרבן מוסף שבת
 כראוי.

יהי רצון מלפניך יהוה אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, המשיב
 בנים לגבולם, שתעלנו בשמחה לארצנו ותשענו
 בגבולנו, ששם עשו אבותינו לפניך את-קרבנותיהם,
 תמידים בסדרם ומוספיים בהלכתם, ואת-מוסף יום
 השבת הזה עשו והקריבו לפניך באהבה כמצות רצונך
 כפתוב בתורתך, על ידי משה עבדך מפי כבודך באמור:

*For an alternative that omits mention of sacrifices,
 continue at the bottom of the page.*

You have established Shabbat, Adonai our God, prescribing by
 Your will its special offerings and sacrifices. Those who de-
 light in Shabbat will inherit enduring glory. Those who savor
 Shabbat will share the bliss of eternal life; those who love its
 teachings have chosen greatness. At Sinai our ancestors
 received the mitzvah of Shabbat, and You, Adonai,
 commanded that they offer an additional sacrifice on Shabbat.

May it be Your will, Adonai our God and God of our ancestors
 who returns Your children to their land, to lead us in joy
 to our land and to settle us within our borders. There our
 ancestors offered to You their daily and special sacrifices.
 And the special sacrifice for Shabbat they offered lovingly,
 according to Your will, as written in Your Torah through
 Moses, Your servant:

"Korbanot" from Shabbat Musaf (Sim Shalom)

[ה] ונוסח כל הברכות עזרא ובית דינו תקנום טז). ואין ראוי לשנותן, ולא להוסיף על אחת מהן, ולא לגרוע ממנה. וכל המשנה ממתבע שטבעו חכמים בברכות אינו אלא טועה יז). וכל ברכה שאין בה הזכרת שם ומלכות אינה ברכה אלא אם כן היתה סמוכה לחברתה יח).

5. The formulae for the berakhot were established by Ezra and his court. It is not proper to change them, nor to add to them, nor to subtract from them. Whoever departs from the form of the berakhot coined by the Sages simply errs; and any berakhah that does not contain mention of God's name and sovereignty is no berakhah, unless it is immediately juxtaposed to another berakhah.

Rambam, Hilchot Brachot 1:5

הלכות ברכות פ"א:ה

[ו] וכל הברכות כולן נאמרין בכל לשון, והוא שיאמר כענין ט). שתקנו חכמים. ואם שנה את המתבע הואיל והזכיר אזכרה ומלכות וענין הברכה אפלו בלשון חול יצא כ).

6. All berakhot may be recited in any language, provided that it is still similar to the Sages' coinage. And should one depart from that coinage, if he still mentioned God's name and sovereignty, and kept the subject matter of the berakhah, he has fulfilled his obligation, even in a non-sacred language.

Rambam, Hilchot Brachot 1:6

הלכות ברכות פ"א:ו

[ז] ברכה ראשונה

שלפניה בין ביום בין בלילה פותח בה בברוך וחותרם בה בברוך. ושאר ברכותיה חותרם בכל אחת מהן בברוך ואין להם פתיחה יט). [ח] ברכות אלו עם שאר כל הברכות הערוכות בפי כל ישראל עזרא ובית דינו תקנום. ואין אדם רשאי לפחות מהן, ולא להוסיף עליהן. מקום שהתקינו לחתום בברוך אינו רשאי שלא לחתום. ומקום שהתקינו שלא לחתום אינו רשאי לחתום. מקום שהתקינו שלא לפתוח בברוך אינו רשאי לפתוח. ומקום שהתקינו לפתוח בברוך אינו רשאי שלא לפתוח כ).

7.these berakhot (the ones before and after the Shema), as well as all berakhot that are customarily recited by all Israel, were established by Ezra the Scribe and his court, and no one has the authority to subtract from them nor add to them. Where it was established that it would end with "Barukh", one may not omit that ending. Where it was established that it would not end with "Barukh", one may not add that ending. Where it was established that it would not begin with "Barukh", one may not so begin. Where it was established that it would begin with "Barukh", one may not fail to so begin. The general principle is: whoever departs from the Sages' coinage in berakhot has erred and must repeat the berakhot according to the proper coinage.....

Rambam, Hilchot Kriyat Shema 1:7-8

הלכות קריאת שמע פ"א:ז-ח

9. With respect to these prayers (i.e. the three Amidot each day, the four on Shabbat and holidays, and the five on Yom Kippur): one may not subtract from them, but one may add to them. If one wanted to pray all day long, he may do so. But all such additional Amidot are like bringing voluntary sacrifices, and thus he should (ideally) be innovating something in each of the "middle" berakhot, according to the subject matter of each berakhah. Nevertheless, it is sufficient to innovate in a single berakhah and thereby indicate that this is a voluntary and not an obligatory prayer. But in the first three and last three berakhot, one may not add or subtract anything, nor change anything.

Rambam, Hilchot Tefillah 1:9

הלכות תפילה פ"א:ט

[ג] כיצד, היה לו חולה מבקש עליו
 רחמים בברכת חולים כפי צחות לשונו. היה צריך לפרנסה מוסיף תחנה ובקשה
 בברכת השנים. ועל דרך זו בכל אחת מהן. ואם רצה לשאול כל צרכיו בשומע
 תפלה שואל. אבל לא ישאל לא בשלש ראשונות ולא בשלש אחרונות.

3. If one knew of a sick person, he should ask for mercy for him in the berakhah on healing, in the best language he is capable of. Were he to be in need of sustenance, he should ask for it in the berakhah on the "blessing of the agricultural year". Similarly with each of the middle berakhot. In "Shome'a Tefillah", he may ask for all of his needs. But he should not insert a petition in the first three or last three berakhot.

Rambam, Hilchot Tefillah 6:3

הלכות תפילה פ"ו:ג

Hagahot Maimoniyot (Meir Hakoen of Rothenburg, 13th Century) on the above paragraph:

"Rabbenu Tam, the Halakhot Gedolot, Rabbenu Hananel, and Rav Hai Gaon all explained that this applies solely to individual needs, but communal needs may be inserted there, such as additional praise (of God) and the honor of the day (e.g. Ya'aleh Ve'yavo), which are all of communal concern"

Notes on selections from Cairo Geniza, *Siddur Sim Shalom*, *Siddur Va'ani Tefilati*, and *Siddur Koren L'Shabbat (Ashkenaz)*

Abe Friedman's notes, partially based upon a conversation with Rabbi Gordon Tucker, 24 June 2001

All relevant passages are underlined in the text

Amidah from Siddur Va'ani Tefilati (top; traditional liturgy on right and with addition of *imahot* on left) and Siddur Sim Shalom (bottom):

- in both versions of *imahot*, order of *imahot* is Sarah, Rivka, Rachel, Leah – Rachel and Leah swapped from chronological order, most likely because of rhyme and meter
- Va'ani Tefilati separates columns on one page; Sim Shalom uses two consecutive pages (**a** and **b**)
- Formulation used in SS approved by Committee on Jewish Law and Standards 11 years ago (See Rabbi Joel Rembaum) but only two years ago published in SS
- VT reads "*avoteinu*" = "our fathers" and thus emends text to "*avoteinu v'imoteinu*" (in two places); SS reads "*avoteinu*" = "our ancestors" and therefore makes no emendation of that line
- VT reads "*goel*" = "[male] redeemer" and emends text to "*mevi geulah*"; SS does not. RGT dislikes "*mevi geulah*" because it depersonalizes the redemption
- VT bracha ends "*magen avraham v'sarah*" while SS ends "*magen avraham ufoked sarah*" from the verse (*bereshit*) "*v'hashem fakad et sarah*"

Amidah from Cairo Geniza:

- Text of *Amidah* from Cairo Genizah; note only 18 *brachot*, not the standard 19
- Read closely *brachot* 1 (at issue here) and 14 (one *bracha* in place of two in our *amidah*, thus the "missing" *bracha*)

Other selections:

- Traditional *birchot hashachar* use negative formulations: "...for not making me a non-Jew" "...for not making me a slave" "...for not making me a woman" (women say the alternative "...for making me according to G-d's will")
- SS *birchot hashachar* use affirmative formulations (see text for translation)
- SS *mi sheberach* includes *imahot* but does not change "*avoteinu*" to "*avoteinu v'imoteinu*" (VT text not available). Traditional text includes only the *avot*.
- Change in verb tense in "*korbanot*" from future (traditional) to past (SS) in three places

Translation of Simha Roth's introduction to "Va'ani Tefilati" (BILL PLEVAN, TRANS.)

This prayer book is designed for the Hebrew speaking Israeli public in general, and for those who pray in congregations of the Conservative Movement in particular. This public is diverse in its views, and so too the prayer book is thus characterized. The prayer book "Va-ani Tefilati" is Conservative, Zionist-Israeli, pluralistic and innovative.

a) Conservative

The prayer text brought in this prayer book is the text that we have inherited from long ago, and anyone who wants to stick to that text will do so easily in all the centrally important prayers. Having said this, I have not hesitated to change the prayer text or to add to it as the need arose, according to the viewpoint of the Conservative Movement, as you will see in a few examples that I cite below. A mistaken belief prevalent among some of the worshippers in our congregations is that the prayer text is like a "sacred object" whose words cannot be changed – like a Torah scroll. The halakhic situation is far from that. In the "Laws of Reading the *Shema*," 1:7, Maimonides rules: "these blessings are like all the other blessings set in the mouths of all Israel...no one is permitted to subtract from them nor to add on to them. In a place where they established to close with '*barukh*' one is not permitted not to close {with '*barukh*'}; in a place where they established not to close {with '*barukh*'}, one is not permitted to close {with '*barukh*'} ... The general rule: anyone who changes the form {*matbe'a*} of the blessings that the sages established {*tav'u*} is erring and should go back and recite the blessing according to its form." We should note that here Maimonides forbids deviation from the **form** of prayer that the sages established, not from a specific prayer **text**. The form of the prayer, as becomes clear, specifies the **structure** of the prayer – that in the service of reading *shema* in the evening there are two blessings before and two after it, and that the subject of the first blessing has to be "who causes evening to fall," and so on. I have been meticulous in following this rule (of not deviating from the form of the prayer) in this prayer book, and there is not one change in the form of the prayer – that is from the order and number of the blessings and prayers.

However, despite Maimonides' desire also to forbid deviations from the **literal content** of prayer, he did not succeed: the prayer text that Maimonides himself brings in his great code, "The Mishneh Torah," at the end of the "Book of Adoration," is very different from the prayer text with which we are familiar today (and is very similar to the text accepted among Yemenite Jews). If so, it appears that the limit on the prohibition of deviating from the fixed structure of prayer does not fall on the literal content of prayer. This is the Rashba's words (commenting on the Babylonian Talmud Brakhot 11a): "When they said one is not permitted to lengthen or shorten, the intent is not to adding or subtracting words (of the prayer), for {if this had been their intent} (the sages) should have established a text for each blessing with designated words (to fix for us in the Talmud the exact words of prayer), and we do not see this anywhere...in all the rest of the texts of the blessings the sages did not give a measurement that (the worshipper) should say such and such words, no more and no less."

Roth (1)

It is even known that the great ones of Israel composed liturgical poems for addition in the middle of the blessings, even while changing the prayer text, and this is not prohibited, in the accepted *halakha*, according to most of the authorities. Were it forbidden to deviate from a never-changing prayer text that was initially fixed, all of these liturgical poems would be forbidden (as in fact Maimonides and a few great authorities thought – but this opinion of theirs is a minority opinion and has not won out as to be the accepted halakhic ruling in the decisive majority of Jewish congregations).

In his collection of responsa, “Yabia Omer,” (Section 6, O.H. par. 10) Rabbi Ovadia Yosef writes that each and every tribe of Israel has its own uniqueness in its prayer text, and he quotes from the words of Isaac Luria: “There are twelve windows in the sky parallel to the twelve tribes of Israel, and each and every tribe raises their prayer through their own special gate.” On this Rabbi Yosef comments, “So thus there is no doubt that were the prayers of all the tribes the same, there would not be a need for twelve windows and gates, and every gate has its own path, rather it is certainly necessary that because their prayers are different a special gate is needed for each tribe, because the order of the prayer of each tribe needs to be according to the root and source of that tribe’s souls...” The root and source of the of the Conservative Jewish soul is “Conservative, Zionist-Israeli, pluralistic and innovative” – and certainly it has “a special window in heaven to accept its prayers.”

c) Pluralistic

The prayer book “Va’ani Tefilati” has pluralistic characteristics out of principle and out of realistic necessity. Tolerance for diversity of opinion on the spiritual plane is a basic characteristic of the movement and without it, {the movement} cannot exist. It would also not be possible to publish a prayer book for the movement in general without this principle. In many instances in the prayer book I gave expression to certain opinions, but in a way that one who does not agree can avoid this approach or another or to find an alternative in the prayer book. This phenomenon is characterized primarily by the indication of sentences and clauses which some are accustomed to omit or to add. In most places I did not explain the reasons for the addition or omission and I left the matter for the consideration of the worshipper and up to his or her personal decision. Only in a few instances, when the reason for addition or omission rests in a halakhic matter or custom, did I allude to the reason for the phenomenon. Perhaps the clearest expression of the pluralistic approach is the section of “these and these {are the words of the living God}” in which I collected prayer passages for which congregations in the movement customarily say different texts. In my opinion it would have been more fitting to integrate these passages each in its proper place in the body of the prayer book, but this was not successful – principally because of the form of the pagination that had already been selected.

An additional aspect of the pluralistic approach of the prayer book is expressed in relation to the status of women. I am convinced that the expression “our patriarchs” {*avoteinu*} in the Hebrew language also includes our matriachs, but I recognize that a great many prefer to give a clear expression to this viewpoint. In nearly every place that the patriarchs are mentioned I have added (in brackets) the matriarchs: one whose custom it is to add may

do so; one whose custom it is not to add may skip it. With respect the blessing of the patriarchs in the Amidah, I have brought two versions, with the approval of the Halakha Committee of the Rabbinical Assembly of Israel. The approval is given despite the disagreements on the Committee with respect to the halakhic validity of the version including the matriarchs. Let me emphasize that in this matter, not all the members of the Committee were of the opinion that it is permitted for the worshipper to use this version because of the suggested change in the **eulogy** {*hatimah*} **of the blessing**. Whoever prefers to use this text, in general will base their decision on the opinion of the members of the Committee who permit it, or can choose the alternative text without changing the text of the eulogy. The status of women is also expressed in changes that I instituted in the prayer book, such as the "Gift of a Daughter Ceremony" and the Prayer for Rain.

Roth

(3)

Study questions for Rabbi Joel Rembaum's responsum

What three arguments does RJR make in favor of including the *imahot*?

Which of these arguments convince you? Why?

Do you think that, overall, RJR proves his position?

9-6-4 3/21/90

FEB 1990

Regarding the Inclusion of
the Names of the Matriarchs in the First Blessing
of the Amidah

Rabbi Joel E. Rembaum, Los Angeles, California

The Library Minyan of Temple Beth Am, a participatory and egalitarian congregation of observant Jews affiliated with the synagogue I serve, Temple Beth Am, has been studying and discussing the possibility of including the names of the Matriarchs in the Avot blessing of the Amidah. As Marah D'Atrah of the synagogue, I was asked to render an opinion. I have investigated a number of halakhic sources (noted below) and have come to the conclusion that such a change is warranted. This change would include adding to the blessing the words, elohei sarah, elohei rivkah, elohei rakhel, ve'elohei le'ah and altering the hatimah of the Avot blessing to magen avraham u-foged sarah. I consider these changes to be valid within the context of Conservative halakhic interpretation and theology. It is my feeling, however, that since this issue deals with the text of the central prayer of our liturgy, a prayer that is transpersonal and transcongregational, the opinion of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards should be sought.

1 Rembaum

While remaining within a framework established in Talmudic times, Jewish liturgy has retained a flexibility that has allowed it to be adjusted and adapted to the spiritual needs of different generations of Jews. A survey of various versions of the Amidah reveals that in the early post-Talmudic period the wording of a number of the blessings of the Amidah was considerably different from the language that eventually became standardized in the later Geonic period. The reader is referred to appendix 1, a fragment from the Cairo Geniza. Especially striking is the language of the thirteenth blessing, with its emphasis on the righteous converts and the absence of references to the other categories of righteous individuals found in the later texts. And, an examination of the fourteenth blessing indicates that the tradition of the Palestinian Talmud is retained, and the split of blessing into boneh yerushalayim and matzmiah keren yeshuah, reflecting the Bavli version, is ignored or not known. Compared to this sample of post-Talmudic/early medieval liturgy, the subsequent versions of the Amidah reflect considerable change, change which corresponded to the theological needs of later generations.

While it could be argued that this early text represents a transitional version that is too ancient to be considered in a discussion of late 20th-century liturgical change, I hasten to add that we commonly refer to Talmudic precedents which are even older than these traditions. Furthermore, the Conservative Movement's addition of the term ba-olam to the Sim Shalom prayer harks back to the Amidah of R. Sa'adia's Siddur, itself an early text which often differs from the later "standard" versions. . (See appendix 2, A-B.)

A good example of the impact on liturgy of a significant theological development is R. Sa'adia's reaction to the reference to the light that shines on Zion (or hadash al tzion ta'ir) in the conclusion to the Yotzer prayer. R. Sa'adia argued that since the prayer refers to the light of creation and not the light of the Messianic Age, such an allusion is unacceptable. R. Sherira, in his response to R. Sa'adia's comment, noted that the reference has always been accepted in the academies and is appropriate for the prayer. (See appendix 3, A.) It appears as if the people's hopes for redemption overruled R. Sa'adia's plea for ideological consistency. R. Sa'adia's opinion did carry the day, however, in certain Sephardic communities where the phrase beginning, or hadash al tzion ta'ir, is still absent from the standard morning

liturgy. (See appendix 3, B.) This indicates that Jewish liturgical tradition can, indeed, tolerate variations in the basic structure of communal prayer.

Regarding the matter of deviating from the authorized wording of blessings, the reader is referred to Rambam's Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Berakhot 1:6 (see appendix 4, B), where Rambam indicates that should the worshiper deviate from the fixed language of a blessing (hamatbe'a) the religious obligation associated with the blessing has been fulfilled as long as the blessing includes reference to God's ineffable name and his kingship (shem u-malkhut) and its wording remains consistent with the established theme (inyan) of the prayer. This principle is set forth in the same paragraph in which Rambam allows for the recitation of blessings in all languages. Traditions from BT Berakhot 40B and Sotah 32A-33A serve as the foundation for Rambam's legislation in these cases.

Admittedly, Rambam is ambiguous with regard to the matter of changing the established liturgy. Although in Hilkhot Berakhot 1:6 he allows for the possibility of modifying the language of the prayers, in the preceding paragraph (1:5; see appendix 4, A) he

states that one should not deviate from the versions of the blessings established by Ezra and his court, nor should one add to them or delete anything from them. One who changes the established version (matbe'a) is in error. He expresses an even stronger negative opinion in Hilkhot Ori'at Shema 1:7 (see appendix 4, C), where he concludes that one who deviates from the matbe'a must repeat the prayer. The Keseph Mishneh on Hilkhot Berakhot 1:5-6 (see appendix 5) offers the following resolution of these inconsistencies in Rambam's thinking.

The Keseph Mishneh (henceforth KM) distinguishes among four kinds of deviations to which Rambam alludes: 1) The clause in 1:5 beginning ve'ein ra'ui... refers to a change which fulfills the religious obligation associated with the prayer but which is not recommended because it still is an unwarranted change. KM designates two kinds of changes which fall into this category: A) One recites a blessing according to the version established by the sages but adds to it or deletes something from it; B) one recites a blessing that conveys the essential concept or intent (me'ein) of the established blessing but does so in words different from those of the authorized version. 2) When one changes a blessing to the degree that a specific reference to a divine act (e.g. Birkat Ha-motzi) is re-

placed by a general reference to God's creation and no references to shem u-malkhut are included in the blessing, the religious obligation has not been fulfilled. 3) When a general reference has replaced a specific reference, but shem u-malkhut are included, though this can be considered an error (ta'ut), the religious obligation is, nevertheless, fulfilled. 4) The statement in Hilkhot Ori'at Shema 1:7, refers to a case where one deviated from the established rules regarding when a petihah or a hatimah is used with a given blessing. In such a case, the religious obligation has not been fulfilled, and the blessing must be repeated. KM concludes his comment on Hilkhot Berakhot 1:6 by emphasizing that the permissive statement of the Rambam in that paragraph is in a case where one has changed the wording of the blessing while retaining the basic theme and not altering its petihah or hatimah structure. (The Haqahot Maymoniot, ad loc, also allows for the possibility of changing the wording of blessings. This opinion is based on the discussion in the Yerushalmi, Berakhot 6:2.)

From this survey, one can conclude that the notion of liturgical variation is not rejected by Talmudic tradition. The Rambam and his commentators are tolerant of liturgical change as long as it takes

place within certain normative parameters. The change that is being recommended in this paper falls within these parameters. The inclusion of references to the Matriarchs in the Avot blessing of the Amidah in no way changes the inyan of the prayer (see below). Other than these additions the language of the blessing, including references to shem u-malkhut, remains unchanged, and the petikhah-hatimah structure of the blessing, required by virtue of its being the first in a sequence of blessings, remain intact.

The Rabbinical Assembly has, itself, instituted changes in the liturgy that are more radical than the additions to the Avot prayer suggested above. Rabbi Morris Silverman's removal of the term ve-ishei visrael from the Avodah blessing of the Amidah in his Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book and the parallel shift in that Siddur from the future tense to the past tense in the language of Musaf Amidah references to sacrifices represent significant textual and ideological changes in the expression of Judaism's hopes for the messianic future. (See appendix 6, A-B.) These are far more extreme than the addition of references to the Matriarchs to the Amidah, since the latter do not negate the intent of the prayer, but rather reinforce it. (This will be discussed in greater detail below.) It should be noted that the Silverman Siddur anticipates the issue under

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discussion in this paper with its change in the Morning Blessings to she-asani bi-tzalmo. (See appendix 6, C.) Given these changes, it would be hard to imagine how the modifications suggested in this paper could be considered objectionable.

Siddur Sim Shalom has continued in the Conservative Movement's tradition of evolutionary liturgical change. The additions to the Tikanta paragraph of the Sabbath Musaf Amidah, for example, reinforce Judaism's historical Zionist yearnings and, at the same time, recognize the legitimacy of the worship of God wherever Jews may find themselves. (See appendix 7, A.) Indeed, Siddur Sim Shalom begins to address the issue under discussion in this paper by including references to the Matriarchs in an English alternative to the weekday Amidah and in the Mi She-beirakh prayers recited while the Torah is read and with the inclusion of the term bat horin in the Morning Blessings. (See appendix 7, B-D.)

The inclusion of the names of the Matriarchs in the Avot blessing is consistent with the traditions of the Bible, normative Jewish theology and the theme of the first paragraph of the Amidah. In the Genesis accounts the Matriarchs function as significant factors in

the unfolding of the covenant between God and the Israelite nation. The Avot blessing functions as an affirmation of the covenantal bond between God and his people, and, given the Matriarchs' role in the development of that relationship, allusion to them in this blessing is most appropriate. Jewish tradition already has recognized within the liturgy the significance of this Matriarchal role in the selection of the account of God's remembering Sarah (Genesis 21) as the Torah reading for the first day of Rosh Ha-shanah. Continuing in this vein, the addition of the term u-foged sarah to the conclusion of the Avot blessing is an important reinforcement to a prayer that highlights this unique covenantal bond. (Such an addition would also be consistent with the Hebrew style of the Avot blessing. The term magen avraham is a derivative of the use of the root mgn found in Genesis 14 and 15. Similarly, the term u-foged is a derivative of the root pqd found in Genesis 21.)

Because the Siddur, perhaps more than any other compilation of Jewish religious expression, has embodied the ideas that have both shaped and reflected the deepest beliefs and concerns of our people, significant ideological and communal developments and trends have always been represented in our prayers. In a generation when women are assuming a more significant role in the religious life of the

Conservative Jewish community, it is appropriate that the prayer that expressed the unity, commitment and lofty aspirations of the Jewish people, the Amidah, be modified so that it can speak to all members of our congregations, male and female alike. This paper suggests a way that this important goal can be attained.

Study questions for Rabbi David Golinkin's responsum

What objections does RDG raise to RJR's three main arguments?

In addition to refuting RJR's arguments, what arguments does RDG provide against including the *imahot*?

Has RDG made you reconsider RJR's responsum? How? With whom do you agree?

A RESPONSUM CONCERNING
THE ADDITION OF THE MATRIARCHS INTO THE AMIDAH

Rabbi David Golinkin

19 Tevet 5761 – January 14, 2001

QUESTION: For some five years now, the practice at the Schechter Institute has been that in the “official” minyanim on Monday mornings and at every weekday Minhah, the “Avot” blessing is said according to the traditional formulation. At the morning minyanim on Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, which are led by the students from the Diaspora, the Shaliah Tzibbur (*Shatz*), should he or she so desire, may add mention of the Matriarchs according to the formulation given in Siddur Sim Shalom. Now a group of students are requesting a grant of discretion for the *Shatz* to add the Matriarchs according to the formulation given either in “Sim Shalom” or in “Va’ani Tefilati” [the Masorti Movement Siddur], in the official minyanim as well.

RESPONSE: [The reader should be sure to be familiar with the different formulations for the “Avot” blessing given in “Sim Shalom” and “Va’ani Tefilati”.]

(A) Introduction

One of the slogans of our movement is “Tradition and Change”. There is no doubt that many Masorti/Conservative Jews feel that there is something missing in the “Avot” blessing and wish to change it by adding mention of the Matriarchs. This is legitimate, for many changes in Judaism have resulted from and still result from certain feelings. However, in order to change *The* Tefillah of the Jewish people, it is insufficient to wish the change; it is essential to demonstrate that there is halakhic, liturgical, and theological warrant for the change. The applicable principle is “one who demands something from another has the burden of proof”. Authentic changes are made with the support of halakhic sources and historical precedents. Accordingly, I have already demonstrated that women may be counted in the minyan, may serve as *shatz*, may receive aliyot, may decide halakhah, may put on tefillin, and fulfill other tasks – all with the support of halakhic sources and historical precedents. A change that results from desire alone may be a change, but it is not an authentic change that is both connected to tradition and developing of that tradition.

(B) Those Who Permit

Those who permit the requested practice rely on the responsum of Rabbi Joel Rembaum (henceforth: RJR), which justified the formulation given in “Sim Shalom”. RJR makes three central claims, but to our mind, those claims do not stand up to scrutiny:

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①

(i) He claims that many formulations of the Amidah from the post-talmudic era differ from that which was standardized at the conclusion of the Geonic period. This is, of course, true, but it is irrelevant to our subject. For the question before us is not “is it possible to change a word or an expression in the Amidah?” but rather “is it possible to change the beginning or the end of the “Avot” blessing?”.

(ii) He claims that since the Rabbinical Assembly has altered certain expressions in the Siddur -- such as the omission of the words “and the fire-offerings of Israel”, the change of “we will offer [sacrifices]” to “they offered [sacrifices]”, and the change of the morning blessings referring to Gentiles, slaves, and women from the negative to the positive voice – it is now permissible also to change the beginning and the ending of the “Avot” blessing. However, as I have written elsewhere, “the question is not whether it is permissible to change the Siddur, but rather whether certain specific changes are permissible, necessary, or desirable”. Truly, it is permissible to change “we will offer...” and the morning blessings in reliance on halakhic sources and liturgical precedents, as we shall see. But such changes teach us nothing about changes in the “Avot” blessing.

(iii) There remains, therefore, the third claim of RJR, namely the halakhic claim. RJR argues that the proposed change is permitted by Maimonides. And this claim will be examined in the next section.

(C) Maimonides’s Approach to Changes in the “Coinage” of Tefillah

RJR relies on Maimonides, “Laws Concerning Blessings” (1:6): “And if one altered the coinage – as long as he mentioned God’s name and sovereignty and the theme of the blessing, even if not in Hebrew, he has fulfilled his obligation.” Truly, RJR acknowledges that in the previous law (1:5), Maimonides ruled that “the formulation of the blessings given by Ezra and his court ought not be changed, nor should their number be increased or diminished, and anyone who deviates from the coinage of the Sages in blessings is simply erring.” Moreover, he acknowledges that in “Laws Concerning the Shema” (1:7) Maimonides expresses an even more uncompromising view concerning changes in the coinage: “The basic principle is: whoever deviates from the coinage of the Sages in blessings is erring and must go back and recite the blessing as coined.”

Now the permissiveness in “Laws Concerning Blessings” (1:6) proves nothing in our case. It is clear from the language used by Rabbi Meir and Rav in the Gemara (Berakhot 40b), by Rav Hai Gaon (Otzar Ha-Geonim, Berakhot (commentaries, pg., 56)), by Maimonides himself, and by the Shulhan Arukh (Orah Hayyim 167:10 and 187:1) that one who deviates from the coinage as stated fulfills the obligation only after the fact. Those who wish to add the Matriarchs wish to do so three times daily ab initio, and there is no doubt that Maimonides would have strenuously objected to such a thing.

In addition, RJR failed to cite “Laws Concerning Tefillah” 1:9: “And as for the three initial and three concluding blessings [of the Amidah] – one may never add or detract from them, nor make any change in them”.

Many illustrious minds have already dealt with the apparent contradiction here in Maimonides. The Vilna Gaon believed that Maimonides actually changed his mind. On the other hand, R. Joseph Karo (Kesef Mishneh, on "Laws Concerning Blessings" 1:5-6) says that there is no contradiction between 1:5 and 1:6. In 1:6 "the worshipper says the formulation of the blessing instituted by the Sages, but he adds or subtracts something, or uses a paraphrase – and in such a case, there is no error. One should, however, not do it."

The case in 1:5 is where someone changes the intent of the blessing, as for example, saying "blessed be the Omnipresent who created this" instead of "Who brings forth bread from the earth", and similar cases, "and since he errs, he has not fulfilled his obligation, as Rabbi Yosi holds."

In the "Laws Concerning the Shema" [where it is said that the worshipper "is erring and must go back and recite the blessing as coined"], Maimonides is dealing with one who ended with "Barukh" or began with "Barukh" in a place where such an ending or beginning was not instituted. In "Laws Concerning Blessings" (1:6) we are dealing with a case of a change in the formulation in which "he did not use the exact language, but still adhered to the theme of the berakhah in different words, and did not change the beginning or the ending".

RJR claims that the inclusion of the Matriarchs in the "Avot" blessing "does not change the theme of the blessing". We shall argue that it does change the theme. But even if one were to argue that it does not change the theme, this would only prove that it is permitted after the fact and not ab initio.

In summary, RJR has not brought a single decisor or even a liturgical precedent that demonstrates the permissibility of changing the beginning and ending of the "Avot" blessing. Moreover, the proposed changes in the beginning and ending of the "Avot" blessing constitute a thematic change in that they attempt to rewrite biblical theology.

(D) Changes in the Ending of a Blessing

The proposed change in the "Avot" blessing is unprecedented in the last 2000 years, from the time of the composition of the Amidah.

- (i) Generally, the endings ("eulogies") in the Amidah have not changed in 2000 years, aside from a few exceptions made in the time of the Talmud.
- (ii) The eulogy for "Avot" has not changed in a single prayer rite in 2000 years. "Magen Avraham" appears in the siddur of every Jewish community, in every manuscript, and in every Genizah fragment that has thus far been examined.
- (iii) The eulogy "Magen Avraham" is based on the verse "Do not fear, Avram, I am a magen [shield] for you; your reward is very great." (Genesis 15:1)

(iv) The Amora Resh Lakish (end of third century), already knew and expounded on the traditional beginning and end of this berakhah (Pesahim 117b)

(v) The formulation “Magen Avraham U-Foked Sarah” is bizarre and astonishing, as Rabbi Harlow has already emphasized. The word “Poked” appears in Scripture 10 times, and in every case the meaning is “being remembered negatively”, as in the phrases “visiting [poked] the sins of the parents on the children”. It is possible that Diaspora Jews are insensitive to this; but the Jews of the Land of Israel, who have proficiency in Tanakh, know that “poked” has a very pejorative connotation.

(vi) Finally, those who support the formulation in “Sim Shalom”, rely on the verse “and God remembered [pakad] Sarah” (Genesis 21:1). That verse deals with Sarah’s pregnancy. Of this, Rabbi Harlow asks: “Is it not bizarre that feminists, who correctly point to the limitless roles that women play in today’s society, would want to use a language that suggests a limitation of Sarah’s rôle to that of a mother? The verse announces that God remembered Sarah only insofar as she was blessed with a son, with Isaac.”

(E) Changes in the Beginnings of Blessings

The proposed change in the beginning of the blessing is also without precedent in the last 2000 years. Moreover, the proposed change contradicts the theology of Scripture, as well as biblical language, which serves as the basis of the majority of the phrases in “Avot”. It also attempts to rewrite biblical theology.

(i) The first blessing of the Amidah is called “Avot” in five different places in talmudic literature. Indeed, this nickname reflects the content and intent of this berakhah, as we shall presently see.

(ii) The first phrase of “Avot” is not simply biblical language; it is a citation of a biblical verse (Exodus 3:15) – “Adonai, the God of your Ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob...” The Mekhilta actually cites this verse as the basis for the formulation of the berakhah.

(iii) This opening line reflects a fundamental belief in the Bible – that God cut a covenant with the Patriarchs. See also Genesis 28:13-14 and I Chronicles 16:16-17 (the last passage is recited every morning). The Rabbis innovated nothing here. They simply cited Exodus 3:15 for the beginning of the blessing and Genesis 15:1 for the ending. They did so in order to highlight the founding roles of the Patriarchs and their connection with the Holy One in the opening of The Tefillah.

(iv) On the other hand, the phrase “God of Sarah, God of Rebecca, God of Rachel, and God of Leah” is not a biblical phrase because God did not cut a covenant with the Matriarchs. Indeed, the expression “Imahot”, which appears 76 times in rabbinic literature, and the expression “Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah”, which appears 15 times in that literature (mostly in late midrashim) do not appear in Scripture at all. There are those who say that

we ought to import it into the Amidah in the wake of the Sages, who created the concept of the Matriarchs, but who were unable to import it into the prayer because of their pervasive patriarchy. But there is a simpler explanation for their failure to import the phrase. They did not include the Matriarchs – a concept they created – because “Avot” deals with the plain meaning of the biblical text and they did not want to rewrite history.

(v) Indeed, it is not surprising that Reform and Reconstructionist Jews would rewrite history by inserting the Matriarchs, for such is their approach to Judaism and to liturgy. But it is astonishing that members of the Masorti community would be interested, in this case, in rewriting history. This perplexity was expressed recently by a Conservative Rabbi (David Fine): “It seems to me to be an artificial exercise to attempt to represent Judaism as if it were always the most wondrous tradition in the world. True, it is a beautiful tradition, but it was conceived in a patriarchal universe.....if we want to change things in contemporary Judaism in order to make it consistent with our more enlightened egalitarian attitudes – well and good. But as Conservative Jews acquainted with history, we are obliged to recognize that there is historical development. We should not be afraid of recognizing that our ancestors lived in a patriarchal society. We no longer do, and we have changed our halakhah and our practices to reflect that fact. But to rewrite the past and to represent that Abraham and Sarah were equals....is to negate our very authority to develop the tradition and to rectify their errors.”

It would be like changing the Gettysburg Address to read: “.....Fourscore and seven years ago, our fathers and mothers brought forth on this continent.....”. The United States was founded by men and Lincoln meant fathers..... (One could also speak of David and Paula Ben Gurion as founders of the State, but it would be equally contrary to fact and to their own self-understanding).

(vi) If we are to add Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah to “Avot”, why would we not add “Joseph, Moses, Aaron, and David”, as we do in “Ushpizin” in the Sukkah, or “Moses, Aaron, David, and Solomon”, as we do in the prayer for healing? Because these men were not founders of the nation. And, if we are to add Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, what about Bilhah and Zilpah, for there are, after all, midrashim that set forth that there were six matriarchs! The answer is simple – “Avot” does not deal with midrash, but rather with the plain sense of the biblical text, according to which the nation was founded by three patriarchs and no more.

(vii) Finally, RJR also relied on the egalitarian “Mi Sheberakh” as a precedent. But Rabbi Harlow has already responded that the “Mi Sheberakh” is a late custom with no fixed text, and this proves nothing about changing the text of the Amidah.

(F) When May One Change the Formulation of Obligatory Prayers?

In our opinion, it is permissible to change the formulation of obligatory prayers for one of two reasons:

Golinkin

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(i) In order not to misrepresent things: This idea is already found in a well-known aggadah (Yoma 69b). Indeed, the Conservative Movement did exactly this in the Musaf service. Beginning in 1927, they said “they offered [sacrifices]” in place of “we shall offer [sacrifices]”, since they did not wish to ask for something contrary to their worldview. Indeed, from a halakhic point of view, this is permissible, since the only requirement in Musaf is that there be something that was not already said in Shaharit, and this requirement is also met by the Conservative formulation of Musaf. Similarly, Professor E. Urbach and Rabbi Hayyim David Halevi rewrote the formulation of “Nahem” for the Ninth of Av after the Six Day War in order not to say something palpably false: “the city that is ruined, scorned, and desolate.”

(ii) In order not to offend: This was the motivation for the change (in Silverman’s 1946 Siddur) in the berakhot about Gentiles, slaves, and women to the positive voice, thanking God for making us “Israelites, free, and in God’s image”. This change was done in reliance on decisors who were lenient in the matter, and on changes documented in these berakhot and no others.

(G) Is the Egalitarian Style Ideal?

Champions of the Imahot wish to convert the language of tradition into an egalitarian language. But besides the fact that this would be a rewriting of the tradition, it also undermines our tradition. For then logic would require that we would have to correct “Sabbath Queen” to “Sabbath King”; “Come O Bride...” [in Lekha Dodi] to “Come O Groom...”; “Hatan Torah” to “Kallat Torah”, etc. Such changes impoverish the tradition and make everything in Judaism homogenous and pareve. On the contrary, there are expressions in the masculine and expressions in the feminine, and this diversity enriches the Jewish tradition.

(H) The Difference Between Liturgy and Prayer

Rabbis Debra Reed Blank and Harlan Wechsler – both of whom oppose this proposed change – have already explained that there is an enormous difference between liturgy and prayer. Liturgy is a more or less unified text that expresses the classical ideas of the nation/religion. It is intended to connect us to the past, rather than to be relevant and up-to-date. Prayer, in contrast, is a personal expression of the worshipper, that must shift and change, and the Sages set down fixed places for such prayers: in the blessing “Shome’a Tefillah”, just prior to the endings of the 13 middle blessings of the Amidah, the end of the entire Amidah, and in Tahanun.

Therefore, the important national events of the last 2000 years were not brought into the Amidah. There is no hint in the Amidah of the Crusades, the Expulsion from Spain, the Persecutions of 1648-49, the Shoah, the establishment of the State, or the Six Day War. These things found their way into other parts of the liturgy, but not into the Amidah that is recited three times a day. The Crusades are spoken of in “Av Harahamim” and in piyyutim, other tragedies were memorialized in their own piyyutim, the Babylonian Yeshivot were immortalized in “Yekum Purkan”, and the State of Israel is mentioned in the Prayer for the State and in the blessing for IDF soldiers. Could

one claim that the Shoah and the establishment of the State are not central events in our people's history?? But they are not found in today's Amidah because the Amidah is liturgy that expresses biblical and rabbinic theology, and is not prayer that expresses the personal needs of individual worshippers.

(I) Piyyut as an Authentic Solution

I have been impressed with the powerful and sincere desire of students to include the Imahot in the Amidah, and to make the Amidah more relevant. The problem is not the goal, but rather the means. The means of changing the beginning or ending of the "Avot" is contrary to halakhah, contrary to our liturgy, and contrary to classical theology, as explained above. This suggestion flows from the fact that the formulation in "Sim Shalom" seems to have been originated by Reform or Reconstructionist Jews who have no proficiency in halakhah or in Hebrew. But there is an authentic way to import changes and innovations into the Amidah, and that is through the use of piyyut. From the talmudic period onward, liturgical poets continually composed piyyutim, in which they expounded scriptural portions, and even related to contemporaneous events. This approach was especially favored in the Land of Israel right through the end of the Geonic period. The authentic and traditional way to "update" the Amidah is to compose a short piyyut – or several short piyyutim – that will be said in the middle of "Avot" or other berakhot of the Amidah. I have consulted with Professor Avigdor Shinan, a well-known expert in the history of Jewish liturgy, and the two of us will be pleased to assist any group of students in composing such piyyutim. In this way, the students will be able to add the Imahot, without changing the coinage of the Tefillah.

(J) The Bottom Line

(i) The current practice at Shaharit on Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday will continue. The *shatz* will have the right to include the Imahot according to the "Sim Shalom" formulation, *or* using the ending "Magen Avraham ve-Sarah" [as given in "Va'ani Tefilati"], but not to use other changes given in "Va-ani Tefilati".

(ii) I hope that some students will accept the challenge to write piyyut on the Imahot for the middle of the "Avot" berakhah or for other appropriate berakhot. This would be an authentic contribution to Jewish liturgy, consistent with both halakhah and the history of the Siddur. It could serve as a model for other communities. As soon as such piyyut is authorized by me and Professor Shinan, any *shatz* who so wishes may use it on Monday morning or during any Minhah service.

(iii) I further hope that such piyyutim will be so successful that in a short time they will supplant the formulation in "Sim Shalom" at all of the minyanim held at the Schechter Institute.

Study questions for Rabbi Gordon Tucker's responsum

How does RGT deal with the six objections to the inclusion of the *imahot*?

Has RGT made you reconsider your opinions of RJR and/or RDG?

Having read the responsa, how do you now feel about the inclusion of the *imahot*?

WHY I AM PERSUADED THAT THE SIDDUR SIM SHALOM VERSION OF THE "IMAHOT" IS HALAKHICALLY CORRECT

A report to the Temple Israel Center Ritual Committee

Rabbi Gordon Tucker

A version of the "Imahot" (Matriarchs) appears in the Sabbath and Festival edition of Siddur Sim Shalom, as an alternative recitation of the first blessing of every Amidah (weekday or Sabbath and Festival). It is printed in that Siddur on a page that bears the same number as the more traditional version, with the letter "b" following the number. Thus, the weekday Minhah Amidah (which appears in this Siddur because it is recited just prior to the beginning of Shabbat on Friday afternoon) begins on either page 3a or 3b, and page 3b is the one that includes the Imahot. The version of the Imahot that appears here is the one that was argued for in a paper by Rabbi Joel Rembaum, submitted to the Rabbinical Assembly Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, and approved by that body in 1990. There are other versions extant, but this paper deals only with the Rembaum-Sim Shalom version, and will refer to it below simply as "the Imahot".

In brief, what the Imahot adds to the traditional formulation of the first blessing of the Amidah is this: (1) a description of God at the outset of the blessing as "The God of Sarah, the God of Rebeccah, the God of Rachel, and the God of Leah", following the usual description of God as "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"; (2) a change in the closing of the blessing from "Blessed are You, Adonai, the Shielder of Abraham" to "Blessed are You, Adonai, the Shielder of Abraham and the Visiter of Sarah"; and (3) a change in the line immediately preceding the closing that adds the word "and who visits" (it is the one word "u-foked" in Hebrew) to the phrase "Sovereign who aids, and who saves, and who shields" ("melekh ozer u-moshi'a u-magen").

Change #1 is the essential one. It seeks to respond to feelings that the traditional formula leaves a gaping hole for many worshipers who wish to be able to recall in each Amidah God's connection with the female ancestors of the nation. It adds a phrase that is based on rabbinic (but not biblical) idiom in listing the four matriarchs, and on the biblical phrase (from Exodus 3) that describes God as the God of the patriarchs. Change #2 seeks to follow a general liturgical rule that the closing of a blessing should match its opening. Having added the matriarchs to the opening of the blessing, the closing is changed to include Sarah along with Abraham. And since "shielder of Abraham" responds to a biblical phrase in Genesis 15, "visiter of Sarah" is added, on the basis of Genesis 21, in order to recall God's faithful remembrance of Sarah and God's response to her need for progeny to carry on her connection with God. Change #3 is then derivative of Change #2, in that another liturgical rule generally requires that the closing of a blessing not only match the opening, but also echo the phrase immediately preceding the closing.

The question then poses itself: are these changes halakhically correct? I do not ask here the very different question as to whether it is good policy for the community to adopt usage of the Imahot.

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I simply consider whether it is halakhically correct. For if it were not, it would *ipso facto* be bad policy to adopt its use.

In considering whether or not the Imahot is halakhically correct, it is natural to turn to those who have already written about it, and who have advanced various arguments against it. I have considered all of the arguments that I have seen advanced against the Imahot, and I have found all of them unconvincing. I shall explain why.

The points that have been against the Imahot (note that no arguments have, to my knowledge, been made against Change #3 per se) are as follows:

- (1) Maimonides allows that if “one altered the coinage of a blessing – as long as he mentioned God’s name and sovereignty and the prescribed theme of the blessing, even if not in Hebrew, he has fulfilled his obligation”. This means that, even if the Imahot do not alter the theme of the first blessing of the Amidah, adding the Imahot can only be considered valid after the fact. That is, Maimonides’s formulation allows at best that if one added the Imahot, then one would not have to go back and say the Amidah over again. It does not follow that one may add the Imahot as a regular practice. This argues against Changes #1 and #2.
- (2) Maimonides articulates an even more stringent principle – namely, that the first three and last three blessings of the Amidah have a unique status, and that “one may never add or detract from them, nor make any change in them.” This also argues against changes #1 and #2.
- (3) It is also argued (see Golinkin’s paper) that adding the Imahot is, in any event, a substantive change in the theme of the first blessing, and thus violates even the most lenient interpretation of Maimonides.
- (4) Precedent is on the side of not changing the closing of the blessing (i.e. Change #2). Although the closings of certain blessings in the Amidah have changed somewhat (as attested by fragments in the Cairo Genizah and many other documents), there is no attestation at all of any variant in the closing of the first blessing of the Amidah in the last 2000 years.
- (5) Further to Change #2, it is argued that there is a talmudic requirement that the closings of blessings not be compound – i.e. they should express one simple thought. But adding “u-foked Sarah” to “magen Avraham” creates just such a compound blessing that is unacceptable by the halakhic rules for liturgy.
- (6) Finally, it is noted that the formulation “magen Avraham” is itself discussed as part of a midrash given in the name of the third century sage Resh Lakish. In this midrash, the formulation “magen Avraham” (leaving out Isaac and Jacob) is defended on the basis of a verse in Genesis 12. To add Sarah to the closing of the blessing is thus also to violate the spirit of this talmudic midrash.

Those are the substantive objections to the Imahot, and I shall now indicate why I am unpersuaded by any of them.

(Objection 1) Golinkin concentrated on Maimonides's views because, for better or worse, Rembaum had based his argument in favor of the Imahot on Maimonides's position. At best, then, Golinkin's arguments would suffice to show that Maimonides would not have permitted the inclusion of the Imahot, at least as a standard addition (as opposed to a permissible addition after the fact). So there are two parts to this response to Objection 1. The first is to note that there are a host of other decisors other than Maimonides who took a very different view of the flexibility in the wording of blessings. The second is to note that it is hardly convincing that Maimonides himself would have objected to the Imahot as proposed.

Part one of the response notes several things: (a) virtually all of the Geonim (post-talmudic Babylonian authorities), such as Rav Saadiah, Rav Natronai, Rav Amram, and Rav Sherirah, maintain that additions to blessings are permissible as long as they are consistent with the general theme of the blessing, and that they are phrased similarly to the standard formulation. An even looser standard than this led Rav Sherirah (11th century) to approve even the most hotly contested addition of his day, namely the addition of "Or Hadash..." to the first blessing before the morning Shema. He said: "As long as one completes the blessing with "Yotzer Ha-Me'orot", what do we care what he says in the middle of the blessing?" And Rav Natronai is quoted some time later as having said: "We say Piyyut that is on topic during the first two blessings of the Amidah, and in each and every prayer of each and every festival...the practice is that in each and every blessing we speak of the theme of the opening and closing of the blessing, and in the middle we say words of Aggadah and words of praise of the Holy and Blessed One; this is a good practice." In any event, the addition of the Imahot, clearly on the theme of the ancestry of the Jewish people, and paralleling precisely the received text concerning the Patriarchs, meets the Geonic standards; (b) Most of the Tosafists (12th century and on) understand the relevant Mishnaic and talmudic passages to forbid lengthening a short blessing so that it requires a final blessing, or vice versa, but clearly permit the addition of words within blessings, as long as they are on theme. Virtually all of them approve the addition of even lengthy piyyutim (Golinkin's preferred solution!), and it is clear that according to their stated criteria, the addition of eight words in parallel language on the theme of Jewish ancestry would not have given them pause; (c) Both Joseph Karo (Shulhan Arukh) and Moses Isserles (Ashkenazic glosses to Shulhan Arukh) state that talmudic prohibitions on insertions into the first three and last three blessings apply only to requests, and even then only to individual requests. When insertions result from communal needs, they may be inserted even in the first blessing. Since both of them are willing to countenance piyyutim of praise and communal requests in the first blessing, they would without a doubt countenance Imahot, which are additional praise of God, and are not requests at all. Moreover, if the very proposal to insert them results from a deeply felt need of a substantial portion of the community, then the Imahot in addition have the status of a "communal need". In short, even if Maimonides is prohibitive on this question, he is widely "outvoted" by the vast majority of Geonim and post-Geonic authorities, down to and including the very authoritative Shulhan Arukh.

What's more, it is hardly clear that Maimonides would really prohibit the Imahot. Saying that he does hinges on interpreting his words narrowly as meaning that any change in the wording at all

is *a priori* unacceptable, or even requires one to repeat the blessing. But that is not the only way to interpret Maimonides. And indeed, we have a responsum of Maimonides on this very subject. He was turned to with the following question: "You have written that no requests may be added to the first three or last three blessings. But there is a custom (it doesn't say where) that individuals saying the Amidah add the following words during "Retzeh" (one of the last three blessings): 'On the lofty heights of the Land of Israel may we serve You, may we seek out all that you demand of us, bringing sweet offerings. May our eyes behold Your extending favor to us.' Is this permitted or not? For it seems to violate your stated condition (that nothing may be added to the first three or last three blessings)." Maimonides's answer to this is terse and to the point, even making no distinction between private and public recitation of the Amidah: "This language that you report being inserted into 'Retzeh' does no harm and is not at all wrong. It is not "asking for one's needs", but rather is on the general theme of the blessing."

Indeed, it seems quite likely that when Maimonides (and others) spoke of non-standard wordings and debated whether they were permissible before or after the fact, they were primarily speaking of individual variants, and not of what we are speaking of here, namely a community-wide change to reflect a communal need and theological view.

Thus it is that Objection 1 fails on two counts. And Objection 2, that Maimonides forbids additions to the first three or last three blessings, is seen to fail as well, by virtue of his clear response to a direct question on the subject. It should also be noted that we make other changes to these supposedly sacrosanct blessings

Objection 3 has it that the Imahot changes the substance of the blessing. Golinkin argues for this strenuously, and here there is certainly a certain amount of subjectivity that enters into the argument, no matter which way it goes. His assertion that it represents a thematic change is based on an *assumption* that it is a rewriting of history to insert the Imahot, and that rewriting of history is impermissible in a blessing. Golinkin likens it to emending the text of the Gettysburg address to include the "mothers" of the American nation. But that is surely a flawed analogy. No one is suggesting that a scriptural text be emended here, or that history be rewritten. In fact, blessings in the Amidah are not history at all, although historical figures may be referenced. They are about how the worshipper is prompted to experience God, not how people experienced God millennia ago. The question here is whether it makes good sense, in the context of contemporary theology, to prompt worshippers to experience God as the God of *all* of our ancestors, and not just of our male ancestors. Given that there are numerous examples in rabbinic (midrashic) literature in which the merits of the matriarchs are mentioned alongside the merits of the patriarchs, and even in which biblical figures such as Moses are depicted as praying to God to remember the merits of the matriarchs, and even in which the merits of the Patriarchs do not move God as readily as the merit of Rachel, it seems far-fetched to suggest that inserting the Imahot does violence to the theme of a blessing that is about experiencing God as "my God, and the God of my ancestors".

On the same point, it is also no objection that a phrase that is not a biblical verse gets inserted alongside one that is, for there are numerous examples in which liturgy includes not only phrases not of biblical origin, but even deliberate rewordings of biblical phrases. Objection 3 stands up only if an assumption is made that the covenant cannot include the Matriarchs, and that not only

begs the very question under consideration, but actually flies in the face of many post-biblical assertions and intimations.

As for Objection 4: It is apparently true that there has been no change in the closing of this first blessing ever recorded, though it is true that changes in other closings are attested. But that is more easily explained not as a singling out of the first blessing for special status, but simply as owing to the fact that the simple nature of this blessing would have suggested no change until an egalitarian consciousness began to take hold in the worshipping community.

Finally, I deal with Objections 5 and 6 together: The notion that "magen Avraham u-foked Sarah" is a compound form that is ruled out by the Talmud is most strange. The Talmud itself raises objections to this rule based on general practice. One of these objections is based on the second blessing of Birkat Ha-Mazon, which is an obvious compound: "al ha-aretz ve-al ha-mazon" – "for the Land and for sustenance". The answer is that it is permissible, since it is simply saying that the land provides sustenance. But that is impossible. The theme of the second blessing is the covenant through which we earned title to the Land of Israel. It is not the earth and its organic nutrients that "the Land" refers to here, but rather the Land of Israel. And "sustenance" is not the theme of this blessing at all, but rather that of the first blessing. This is not the place to try to explain how the second blessing of Birkat Ha-Mazon achieved its current formulation. Rather, we must note that an obviously impermissible compound was approved because it was in usage. And "magen Avraham u-foked Sarah" is hardly a compound in this sense at all, and crosses no thematic lines at all. Moreover, it is simply wrong to suggest that "Visiter of Sarah", which refers to Genesis 21 and Sarah's giving birth to Isaac, is somehow a mismatch with "Shielder of Abraham", which refers to Genesis 15. For in Genesis 15, God's promising Abraham to be a shield for him is precisely in the context of Abraham expressing distress about not having progeny! At any rate, to forbid the closing formula on the grounds of being an unacceptable compound is simply to say that whatever is already in usage is OK, and anything new, even if it is less radical than what is already in use, is ruled out. But that is completely untenable in a Conservative Jewish context.

It is true that Resh Lakish does say that we mention Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the blessing, but because of the verse in Genesis 12, we only speak of Abraham in the closing. But it is not at all obvious that this should be generalized to mean that only Abraham, as opposed to anyone else, may be mentioned at the end. If we have agreed to put the Imahot in at the beginning of the blessing, it is every bit as plausible to understand Resh Lakish as saying that the *first* generation of the nation's ancestry has priority at the end of the blessing, and that we ought not mention anyone from the second or third generation. Such an interpretation, which can only be ruled out by a question-begging assumption, would leave the closing in Sim Shalom unobjectionable.

It is hard to dignify Golinkin's derogatory comments about sensitivity to the biblical text on the part of Diaspora Jews, but suffice it to say that it is bizarre in the extreme to suggest that because one form of the root "pkd" has a negative connotation in the Bible, that it can never be used in prayer. The fact is that scores and scores of occurrences of "pkd" appear in our prayers, without any untoward implications (including in the Chief Rabbinate's version of the Prayer for the State of Israel!).

Thus, all halakhic objections that have been advanced seem to me to fail decisively, and the Imahot discussion can proceed without any fears of violating any halakhic norm.

⑥ Tucker

Lesson Plan

Unit 1: Background

1. Survey the group, and find out how each member feels about the inclusion of the *imahot*
2. Familiarize group with the various texts of the *Amidah*, *birchot hashachar*, *mi sheberach* and “*korbanot*”
3. Read and discuss the selected passages from *Mishneh Torah*
4. Read and discuss section (a) (“Conservative”) from Roth, “Introduction to *Va’ani Tefilat*”. Encourage the group to read the remaining section from Roth at a later time
5. Ask the group to read Rembaum, “Regarding the Inclusion of the Matriarchs in the First Blessing of the *Amidah*” by the next week

Unit 2: Rembaum

1. What three arguments does RJR make in favor of including the *imahot*?
 - a. Historical: Cairo Genizah, “Or Hadash”
 - b. Halakhic: Rambam on deviations from the *matbe’a tefillot*
 - c. Precedent: The Conservative Movement has already made similar changes to the liturgy
2. Which of these arguments convince you? Why?
3. Do you think that, overall, RJR proves his position?
4. Ask the group to read Golinkin, “A Responsum Concerning the Addition of the Matriarchs into the *Amidah*” by the next week.

Unit 3: Golinkin

1. What objections does RDG raise to RJR’s three main arguments?
 - a. Historical argument is too general
 - b. Precedents from other places in the *siddur* do not help us decide about the first blessing of the *Amidah*
 - c. RJR’s Halakhic argument is flawed: 1) *Brachot* 1:6 only applies after the fact and 2) RJR did not consider *Tefillah* 1:9
2. In addition to refuting RJR’s arguments, what arguments does RDG provide against including the *imahot*?
 - a. The inclusion of the Imahot is a thematic change in the *bracha*: 1) “Poked” has a negative connotation and 2) “Poked” refers to Sarah’s pregnancy – is that an egalitarian ideal?
 - b. Scriptural precedent: 1) the phrase, “*elohei avraham, elohei yizhak, elohei ya’akov*” has biblical origin; 2) there is a historical role of the *avot* in a

covenant with Hashem while there is no covenant with the *imahot*; 3) the *avot* is a biblical concept while the *imahot* is a Rabbinic concept

- c. Historical Accuracy
 - d. Logic: why stop with only the *imahot*? Why not include Bilhah and Zilpah, or Joseph, Moses, Aaron and David?
 - e. RDG also poses three questions related to this issue: 1) When is it appropriate to change a prayer? 2) Is egalitarianism in speech ideal for *tefillah*? 3) How does the difference between liturgy and prayer affect this discussion?
3. Has RDG made you reconsider RJR's responsum? How? With whom do you agree?

Unit 4: Tucker

1. How does RGT deal with the six objections to the inclusion of the *imahot*?
2. Has RGT made you reconsider your opinions of RJR and/or RDG?
3. Having read the responsa, how do you now feel about the inclusion of the *imahot*?