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Use of the Discarded Past to Create the Future: Renewal and Incorporation of the Ancient Eretz Yisrael Rite in Contemporary Prayer Books

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This essay is part of a larger project examining the renaissance of prayer in the State of Israel. In the last two decades, we have witnessed a renewed interest in prayer, liturgy and Jewish rituals. I do not refer here to the *hazarah bitshuvah* movement (lit. "returning" to religion, that is, Orthodoxy), but to a myriad of grassroots formal, semi-formal and informal prayer groups and circles that experiment with prayer in various ways. One of the unique features of this phenomenon is that many of its participants never experienced prayer before and as a result of their involvement have become empowered to do so actively. Among these groups are neo-Hasidic communities, feminist and egalitarian Orthodox prayer groups, Kibbutz (both classical and privatized) synagogues (liberal, unaffiliated and traditional), sacred singing circles influenced by the New Age practices, prayer in the military, the *piyyut* revival movement, and, of course, communities belonging to the Reform, Conservative and Renewal movements.

This study of the use of old Eretz Yisrael (also called Palestinian) rites and Geniza fragments in contemporary liturgy in the last two decades is an inquiry into a phenomenon that may be rather minor but is nonetheless a characteristic, multifaceted and revealing one, directly linked to the Jewish life in the sovereign Jewish state.[1]

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[1] The scope of the present essay does not allow for a more general discussion of liturgical innovation and liturgical creativity. But see, for example, Eric Caplan,

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A fascinating and relatively unknown chapter in Jewish liturgy is concealed within the fragments of the Cairo Geniza. The Geniza was located in the attic of Ben Ezra synagogue in Old Cairo and served the Jewish community since the ninth century for almost a millennium as the storage place for damaged Scriptures, worn-out Hebrew books and documents.[2] The discovery of the Cairo Geniza at the turn of the 19th century spurred a revolution in research of Jewish history, law, midrash, religious poetry, liturgy and more.[3] It is hard to imagine the achievements of contemporary Jewish studies without the contribution of the Geniza material.[4]

Among the great many fragments, about 10,000 liturgical fragments were found.[5] Examining them provides us with a unique window into the prayers that were recited by Jews before some of them passed into oblivion. They reflect a richness of prayers and liturgical customs that could not be imagined prior to its discovery. The Geniza contains many texts that reflect the Babylonian rite, which was consolidated in the Geonic era and upon which all contemporary prayer books are based;

From Ideology to Liturgy: Reconstructionist Worship and American Liberal Judaism (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2002); Gabriel H. Cohn, ed., *Jewish Prayer: Continuity and Innovation* (Hebrew; Jerusalem: Makhon leYahadut, 1978); David Ellenson, "Modern Liturgies," in *My People's Prayerbook*, ed. L. A. Hoffman (10 vols.; Woodstock: Jewish Lights: 1997–2007); Marcia Falk, *Book of Blessings* (San Francisco: Harper: 1996); Eric L. Friedland, *Were Our Mouths Filled with Song: Studies in Jewish Liturgy* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1997).

[2] The Jewish tradition prohibits discarding religious as well as secular writings containing the name of God and so they must be brought for proper burial (Maimonides, *Yesodey HaTorah* 6:1). *Genizot* (from the root GNZ, meaning "keep" or "hide") serve in many cases as storage places for such documents. See Shlomo D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza* (6 vols.; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967–93) 1.7–9.

[3] Some people acquired Geniza fragments in the 18th century. However, two Scottish sisters, Agnes Lewis and Margaret Gibson, are considered responsible for sparking scholarly interest in the Geniza's treasures. In 1896 they shared with Solomon Schechter manuscripts they had purchased in Egypt. He identified the utmost importance of the documents and acquired many thousands of fragments for his library in Cambridge. So, too, did numerous scholars from other universities, so that now many libraries and research institutions hold Geniza fragments. See Stefan C. Reif, *A Jewish Archive from Old Cairo* (Richmond: Curzon, 2000) 15–16.

[4] Vital work is being done documenting Geniza fragments and uploading them online in order to maximize the scholarly and public benefit that can be derived from them. Some of the central institutions involved are the Friedberg Jewish Manuscript Society of Toronto, Taylor-Schechter Geniza Research Unit at Cambridge University and University of Haifa's Centre for Interdisciplinary Research of the Cairo Geniza.

[5] Uri Ehrlich, *The Amidah Prayer for Weekdays* (Hebrew; Jerusalem: Yad ben Zvi, 2013) 3.

however, its primary importance lies in those fragments that reflect the prayer customs of the Jews of the Land of Israel, which gradually waned toward the end of the first millennium as the Jewish community in Israel declined. Only some of its elements found their way into the rites that later emerged.

Until recently, interest in the Geniza's liturgical texts was exclusively scholarly. It is not surprising to learn that Orthodox Jews had no interest changing their prayer books, but the liberal streams of Judaism also showed almost no interest in enriching their liturgy using newly found Geniza texts.[6] Stefan Reif, a scholar of liturgy who was formerly head of the Geniza project at Cambridge University, examined the influence of Geniza studies on research and Jewish identity. He inquired "whether current and future interpretations of Judaism will at some stage be directly influenced by Geniza research, and will the [religious] movements see the study of Hebrew manuscripts as important enough to warrant close communal attention and substantial financing?"[7] Reif ended his study on a rather unhopeful note reflecting on the chances that such an institutional paradigm shift would take place.

Yet in recent years, especially since the beginning of the 21st century, there has been a modest and steadily increasing tendency to include texts that reflect the old Eretz Yisrael rite, including texts from the Cairo Geniza, in liturgical practice. These tendencies are especially present in the State of Israel, where the vernacular Hebrew meets theological and ideological needs. In the following, I examine this phenomenon. First I discuss the attempts to create integral prayer books according to the old Eretz Yisrael rite, then I offer a typology for the inclusion of local citation of such texts. Last, I present some innovations in which authors and editors of prayers employ the style of the Eretz Yisrael rite in the creation of new liturgical passages and thus continue the liturgical creativity of the days of old.

A factor common to those engaged in these tasks is that they combine academic study, or at least the fruits of research, with rabbinic, educational and popular involvement in the world of Jewish prayer as

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[6] Jakob Petuchowski, who examined many dozens of European Reform Prayer books, found only one attempt to include a text from the Cairo Geniza in a contemporary siddur. "[I]t is one thing to have texts available," he wrote. "It is quite another, again, to utilize them for actual worship purposes"; Jakob Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe* (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1968) 238–239.

[7] Stefan Reif, "Has More Than a Century of Geniza Research Adjusted Jewish Notions of Scholarship, History, and Identity? Some Reflections and Speculations," in *Envisioning Judaism, Studies in Honor of Peter Schäfer*, ed. Ra'anan Boustan et al. (2 vols.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013) 2.1355.

expressed in the State of Israel. The quasi-subversive efforts to revive the ancient prayer of the Land of Israel bring about some unexpected cross-denominational contacts and cooperation between Jews from different streams who disagree on many religious matters but are motivated by the same passion for this material and its modern value. My interest is to examine whether there is something essential and unique to the fact that that Israelis are engaged in such attempts.

Renewing Our Days as the Days of Old: Creating New Prayer Books According the Eretz Yisrael Rite

Attempts to renew the ancient Eretz Yisrael rite[8] are part of a wider phenomenon, namely the search for Torat Eretz Yisrael (the teaching or law of the Land of Israel). The origin of this name is found in the following midrash indicating the superiority of the Torah as studied and expounded in the Land of Israel: "*And the gold of that land is good* (Gen 2:12) teaches that there is no Torah like the Torah of the Land of Israel, and there is no wisdom like the wisdom of the Land of Israel: *there is bdellium and the onyx stone*" (Gen 2:12) – Bible, Mishnah, Talmud, Tosefta and Aggadah" (*Gen Rabbah* 16:4).

Those who advocate for Torat Eretz Yisrael promote the study of the Jerusalem Talmud (known as the Yerushalmi or Palestinian Talmud) and other Eretz Yisrael sources. More importantly, they celebrate the overt, as well as the subtle, ways that being in Israel, dwelling on its soil and being part of a sovereign Jewish state, affect the study of Jewish tradition and Torah. Rabbi Avraham Yizkhak Kook (1865–1935) is credited with formulating these concepts. Another key figure is Rabbi Shlomo Goren (1918–1971), the third Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel, who dedicated the bulk of the study in his yeshiva, Ha'idra, to the Eretz Yisrael rabbinic sources.[9] The ideal of Torat Eretz Yisrael is gaining popularity among religious Zionist circles and in the circles of Eretz Yisrael Hashlema (Greater Israel).

As part of reshaping Judaism and returning it to its land and authentic sources, attempts are also being made to rethink Jewish liturgy so that the prayers suit the return of the Jews to their homeland. Reconstructing

[8] The idea of "the" Eretz Yisrael rite is a gross simplification, since there was no singular authorized Eretz Yisrael liturgical custom. In fact, the old Eretz Yisrael rite is known for lending itself to greater liturgical plurality.

[9] See Yehoshua Weisman, *Meitav Ha'aretz: Rules of Study and Lessons on Torat Eretz Israel* (Ma'alot: Z'hav Ha'aretz, 2010).

and reconstituting the liturgy is a rather complicated task, since it is well known that there was never a singular Eretz Yisrael prayer book, and there is significant liturgical variety within the sources that are available. We do not have even one complete prayer book from the Cairo Geniza (or in the rabbinic sources). Speculating about the distribution and authority of the Geniza fragments is also difficult, since the texts that were preserved are in fact those that were discarded (whether due to their physical state or their content).

My research is based on written materials that prayer book editors have created and on interviews and correspondence with such editors. Most of the material discussed here has not been published or only minimally circulated. In some cases, editors chose to conceal their identity and zealously preserved their privacy.

Rabbi David Bar-Hayim, head of the Shilo Institute, which is dedicated to the study and promotion of Torat Eretz Yisrael, is a prominent figure among those who are active in renewing the prayer traditions of Eretz Yisrael. He has worked for two decades compiling a prayer book that follows the old Eretz Yisrael rite, and for almost 15 years, up until recently, he and his disciples led a weekly *minyan* (prayer circle) that followed his version of the Eretz Yisrael rite. One of the unique features of this *minyan* was the revival of the old custom of translating the Torah portion during the weekly reading: Just as in ancient practice it was translated into Aramaic (the former vernacular), in Bar-Hayim's *minyan* the Torah was translated into simple colloquial Hebrew, which is more accessible to modern worshippers. Bar-Hayim says that the "translation" from biblical to contemporary Hebrew slowed down the reading, allowing listeners to absorb it better. This practice lengthened the Torah service, but the readings are relatively short, since the group used a triennial reading cycle, which was common in the Land of Israel. Lately, the *minyan* has ceased worshiping together, but the work on the prayer book continues.

Bar-Hayim celebrates what he calls "the concise and vivacious nature of the prayer of Eretz Yisrael," and says that its succinctness helps to increase *kavvanah* (heartfelt intentionality) in prayer. However, this is ancillary to his main motivation – that is, to return to an authentic tradition rooted in the land and to reinvigorate Judaism according to its ancient indigenous sources. In a phone conversation, he told me that "every true Jew must negate the exile"; that is, life outside the land is a corruption that must be actively and consciously mended. An Ashkenazic Jew who was born in Australia and worships mostly in a Yemenite synagogue, Bar-Hayim yearns to neutralize the distinctions between the various contemporary rites – the Ashkenazic, Sephardic, Hasidic,

etc. – and to return to the old Eretz Yisrael rite, which is "fundamental, vivacious and common to all Jews."

In his prayer book in-the-making, Bar-Hayim concentrates on prose sections, which are concise and unembellished. He avoids the liturgical hymns (*piyyutim*) that were prevalent in the Eretz Yisrael rite, because he feels their length and density and their cryptic nature are not suitable for our generation. Part of the difficulty of his work lies in the need to select suitable versions from among the many options available, and to add liturgical selections that reflect the contemporary situation of the Jewish people.

So far, Bar-Hayim has published a text for the Grace After Meals. To the Geniza texts he added a festive Al Hanissim[10] version for the Day of the Revival of Israel (usually called the Day of Independence). He attests that the old Eretz Yisrael rite influences the style of these new texts and maintains:

> Only an Eretz Yisrael-oriented Judaism, which is significantly and essentially different from exilic Judaism, can create and recite such prayers on the Day of the Revival of Israel and in the Day of the Liberation of Jerusalem.[11]

In other words, according to Bar-Hayim, there is an essential element to dwelling in the land of our ancestors that is generative and can produce new texts, which in their essence are rooted in an authentic ancient Judaism.

One printed attempt to promote the Eretz Yisrael rite is *Siddur Eretz Israel*,[12] published by Yair Shaki, a mathematics professor. Shaki's main interest was to provide a comprehensive and authentic liturgy by using "the prayer idioms of the sages of the Land of Israel combined with original religious customs."[13] Though he acknowledges that it would be presumptuous to believe that one might find the original version of the liturgy, he says, "this is the way of prayer, and this is its essence, that it is [periodically] renewed, and therefore there are different variations"[14] (p. 15) from which to pick and choose. He argues that the return of the

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[10] Al Hanissim is an addition to the Amidah and to the Grace After Meals recited on Hannukah and Purim, thanking God for the miracles with which each holiday is associated.

[11] Personal correspondence (Sep 3, 2014).

[12] *Siddur Eretz Israel for the Days of the Year and for the Festivals* (Ashkelon: 2007). It seems that the publication of the book was not welcomed by his teacher and the final product, albeit hard-covered and *heimish* in its appearance, was not altogether acceptable to him.

[13] *Siddur Eretz Israel*, 3.

[14] *Siddur Eretz Israel*, 15.

Jewish people to its homeland requires a revision of the liturgy. In his introduction he cites Rabbi Israel Ariel, the founder of the Temple Institute, who wrote in the introduction of his prayer book, *Siddur Hamikdash*, the following:

> For the prayer of the Jew, when he is in desolated and painful exile, is not as the prayer of the Jew who dwells on his soil in his own land. Just as when a person who is humiliated and subject to persecution suffers and has to fight for his life prays for Jerusalem, his prayer in this condition is compared to a mere dream, to something that seems to be unattainable. It is different than for a person who dwells tranquilly in his ancient homeland and in the land of his ancestors. His prayer is also different […] could he stand in prayer facing toward where the Temple used to be, having the same sentiments he had in exile? Could he recite the same words as when he was so distant from his city and his homeland? […] it seems that this major change in the life of the people and the land should be expressed in the liturgy.[15]

The reintroduction of the old Eretz Yisrael rite is therefore part of a larger phenomenon that Bar-Hayim also addressed, namely the autonomous and sovereign existence of the Jewish people on its historical soil. Part of the transformation should be in the religious language employed. Thus prayer, too, must be spoken in an indigenous Israeli voice. Shaki, who seeks to engage traditional worshippers, states that the changes he made are only minimal. He aimed mainly to use Eretz Yisrael material found in the classical rabbinic literature, but he also incorporated Geniza material in the festival version of the Amidah and in introduction to the psalms for festivals and special days. Both he learned from scholarly material he found on the topic.[16] Shaki's publication, which is based in part on Bar-Hayim's work, was the first attempt to publish a comprehensive Eretz Yisrael liturgy. The significant criticism this project received may be explained by the fact that at the time, this was the only published prayer book that made this attempt.[17]

In addition to the projects discussed above, there are others in the world of Israeli Orthodoxy who seek to introduce liturgy based on the old Eretz Yisrael rite. Some of them incorporate mystical interpretations of the prayers; some celebrate the liturgical hymns (as opposed to Bar-Hayim, who avoided these altogether). It would be an understatement to say that in the Orthodox world such projects are not universally accepted and are considered rather bold, since they practically aim to replace

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[15] *Siddur Eretz Israel*, 15.

[16] The editor cites some scholarly work, but in a rather unsystematic manner.

[17] In 2016 Shaki launched a head-start project in order to print a second, updated edition of his siddur.

"authorized" versions of prayers that are universally accepted and codified in Jewish law. A shroud of secrecy characterizes much of the work done in these circles among those who take part in such experiments. Some of them have refused to talk with me about their work, while others agreed to speak with me but asked me not to reveal any aspect of this subversive liturgical work.

One characteristic common to many of those engaged in the renewal of the old Eretz Yisrael rite is that they base their endeavors on scholarly work, and they engage with scholars and solicit their input. They often cite scholarly works in the field (though in some cases in a rather unsystematic manner). Shulamit Elitzur, a prominent *piyyut* researcher from the Hebrew University, told me of at least four people who ask for her advice on the renewal of the Eretz Yisrael liturgy and correspond with her extensively. Some of them explicitly ask for her academic approval of this work. And Vered Raziel-Kretchmer from Beersheba University recently helped the editors of a new Israeli Reform prayer book in finding Geniza fragments for their work in progress. This is a fascinating example of how people who work in the public sphere depend upon on scholars. [18]

From the other side of the Israeli religious scene, liberal rabbis and religious leaders celebrate the fluid and flexible nature of the old Eretz Yisrael rite. In his later years, Conservative Rabbi Simcha Roth (who passed away in 2012) occupied himself with the reconstruction of the customs of Eretz Yisrael and even published a draft of a prayer book for the statutory prayers for individuals, *Miknaf Ha'aretz*. [19] He writes in the introduction:

> Since I am not an academic researcher and I claim no academic proficiency, the reconstruction presented in this book is based on the work of others greater and more learned than I, and it feeds off the fruits of their efforts …. My wish is to revive some of the manuscripts and present them as a (hypothetical) living and breathing prayer version; to shake, as it were, the dust of the generations from these ancient prayer leaves and to present them together as one unit, as a great, impressive, moving and tremendous spiritually profound tradition.[20]

Arguing that it was the Eretz Yisrael rite according to which our ancestors prayed in the land of Israel, Roth acknowledges the fact that it is

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[18] Regarding the use of field people in scholarly publication, and even more so in scholarly figures, see Yoram Bilu, "Studying Folk Culture in the Postmodern Era: A Personal Story," (Hebrew) in *Teoria U'vikoret* 10 (1997) 37–54.

[19] *Miknaf Ha'aretz zmirot shama'nu: Reconstruction of the Prayer According to the Ancient Custom of Eretz Yisrael* (Hebrew; Herzlyia: self-publication, 2011).

[20] *Miknaf Ha'aretz*, 9–10.

impossible to trace one singular and comprehensive text. What can be done is merely the following:

> One can present a representative version, compiled from various (and sometime variant) original prayer manuscripts. Clearly, such a representative version would reflect my own personal preferences – as if I am a typical worshipper in a Geonic Eretz Yisrael community. One must hope that such a representative version would enable some impression of the prayer experience among the children of the Land of Israel in the middle ages.[21]

Roth's words are telling – on one hand, the religious leader needs the instruction of the scholarly work done in the field, and on the other hand, such leaders have both the personal responsibility and the freedom to exercise choices in the selections that they make from a variety of manuscripts, in order to create a living and breathing "representative version." *Miknaf Haaretz* contains many psalms and some revisions of the actual benedictions (for example in the Amidah). It does not contain liturgical hymns, perhaps because the published draft is intended only for individual use.

Roth stressed the primacy of the Eretz Yisrael rite not only because it is more concise, ancient and rooted in the ethos of the land of Israel, but also due to its theological superiority. In a short essay he argued that the matters that bother contemporary liberal Jews are toned down or negligible in the Eretz Yisrael rite, compared to the Babylonian rite (the Urtext of all contemporary prayer books). Among these issues that may be problematical for liberal Jews, he notes the concepts of physical resurrection, the election of Israel, prayers for revenge against Gentiles, requests for the restoration of the sacrificial cult, and imagery having to do with angelology.[22] According to Roth, the measured use of these issues in the Eretz Yisrael prayer rite testifies to its superiority over the Babylonian rite.[23] In regards to some of these issues his argument cannot be disputed – for example, the fact that references to angels and heavenly beings are not as common in the Eretz Yisrael rite as in the Babylonian. However, in other cases (such as those regarding prayers for revenge or the election of Israel) his argument seems hard to support. [24]

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[21] *Miknaf Ha'aretz,* 10–11.

[22] Regarding the characteristics of liberal Jewish liturgy, see Jakob Petuchowski, *Guide to the Prayerbook* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1967) 54–55.

[23] Simcha Roth, "Differences in the Concepts and Beliefs Regarding the Babylonian and Palestinian Amidah Versions" (Hebrew), *Bet Midrash Virtualy of the Rabbinic Assembly in Israel* (2009, www.bmv.org.il/ivrit/h-ei-bavel.html).

[24] See, for example, Ehrlich, *Amidah,* 174–165.

After Roth's death his colleague Rabbi Michael Graetz, founding rabbi of the Conservative congregation of Omer, has continued his project. Graetz is working diligently to publish a prayer book based on the Eretz Yisrael rite as reflected in the materials from the Cairo Geniza. His goal is to "create a prayer book that would bond and unite the hearts in an indigenous and sustainable Eretz Yisrael prayer."[25] Even more than Roth, Graetz stresses the creative nature of incorporating Geniza liturgy in his new prayer book – in some cases he even revises the text in order to make it suitable for contemporary worshipers.

Roth and Graetz treat the Geniza material as useful past – they revise the prayers from within the ancient tradition, relying on ancient and therefore authentic, sources to express a contemporary message and voice.

As an example of the work of rabbis Bar-Hayim and Graetz, we will explore the rubric of the early morning prayers (Birkhot Hashahar) in their mss, along with the related passages from the Yerushalmi (Leiden ms) and a typical version of the Eretz Yisrael material from the Geniza (JTS, ENA 1874 1–4). Following are English translations; for the Hebrew texts, see chart, Appendix A.

Yerushalmi

I give thanks before You, Lord, my God and God of my fathers and mothers, for you have brought me forth from darkness into light (*Ber.* 4a; 4:1).

Blessed are You, Lord, who revives the dead.

My Sovereign, I have sinned against You. May it be Your will, Lord, my God, to grant me a good heart, a good portion, a good inclination, a good countenance, a good name, a good eye and a good soul, and a humble soul and a modest spirit. And do not allow Your name to be profaned among us. And do not make us the subject of talk among all people. And do not lead us in the end to destruction, nor our hope to despair. And do not cause us to depend on gifts from flesh and blood. And do not provide our sustenance through flesh and blood. For their generosity is small, and their disgrace is great. And set our portion in Your Torah, among those who do Your will. Build Your house, Your sanctuary, Your city and your Temple speedily, in our days (*Ber.* 4b; 7:4).

Blessed the One who did not create me an ignoramus; blessed the One who did not create me a woman; blessed the One who did not create me a Gentile. (*Ber.* 9a; 13:b)

Geniza

Blessed are You, Lord, our God and God of our fathers, who loosens the bonds of sleep, who preserves me as the apple of an eye, the One who opens the gates of east, who raises the pillar of dawn, who illuminates the entire

[25] Telephone conversation, summer 2014.

world with His glory, the One who removes sleep from my eyes and slumber from my eyelids. And save me, Lord, my God, from every evil thing, from every iniquity, from every guilt. And do not cause my tongue be accustomed to deception. And do not cause us to depend on gifts from flesh and blood, for their generosity is small, and their disgrace is great. Turn my heart to study Your Torah. Your Torah shall be my speech and trade. …

for You [Lord] revive the dead, and before You are life and healing. As it is written: *You have granted me life and favor, and Your providence has preserved my spirit* (Job 10:12). Blessed are You, Lord, who [revives] the dead. …

Blessed are You, Lord, our God, ruler of the universe, for You created [me a man and not a b]east, man and not woman, male and not female, Israel and not a Gentile, circumcised and not uncircumcised, free and not a slave. So may it be the will before You, Lord, our God and God of our fathers, that You set our portion in Your Torah and among those who do Your will. Blessed are You, Lord, our God, who created the first human being in His image, after His likeness. *Lord, deliver my soul from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue* (Ps 120:2).

Bar Hayim

Blessed are You, Lord, our God and God of our fathers, who loosens the bonds of sleep, who preserves me as the apple of an eye. I give thanks before You, Lord, my God and God of my fathers, for You have raised me from my bed for life and peace. *And You preserve them all* (Neh 9:6), as is it written: *You have granted me life and favor, and Your providence has preserved my spirit* (Job 10:12). [plus short morning blessings from b. *Ber.* 60b]

Blessed are You, Lord, our God, ruler of the universe, who did not create me a Gentile.[26] Blessed are You, Lord, our God, ruler of the universe, who did not create me a woman. Blessed are You, Lord, our God, ruler of the universe, who did not create me an ignoramus.

Graetz

A Song of Ascents. Unto You I lift up my eyes, O You that are enthroned in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants unto the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress (Ps 123:1–2).

I give thanks before You, Lord, my God and God of my fathers and Mothers, for you have brought me forth from darkness into light.

Blessed are You, Lord, Ruler of the universe, who revives the dead.

Sovereign of all the worlds, I have sinned against You. May it be Your will, Lord, my God and God of my forefathers and foremothers, to grant me a good heart, a good inclination, a good eye and a good soul, and a humble spirit. And do not cause my tongue be accustomed to deception. And do not cause us to depend on gifts from flesh and blood.

[26] After this blessing is a version in feminine voice, with the instruction: "a woman says …." There is no version for women of the next blessing ("who did not create me a woman").

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him; male and female created He them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. (Gen 5:1–2)

Blessed are You, Lord, our God and God of our fathers, who loosens the bonds of sleep, who preserves me as the apple of an eye, the One who opens the gates of the east, who raises the pillar of dawn, who illuminates the entire world with His glory, the One who removes sleep from my eyes and slumber from my eyelids.

Blessed are You, Lord, our God, ruler of the universe, who created the first human being in His image, after His likeness. Blessed are You, Lord, our God, ruler of the universe, who created me human [*adam*], man/woman, Israel and free.

The Graetz text opens with the blessing found in the Yerushalmi, revising the text to add "mothers," in addition to "fathers." (Bar-Hayim also cites this passage, but in the context of the ritual for morning Torah study). Graetz continues with the blessing upon awakening from sleep, thanking God who revives the dead (which is cited in the Yerushalmi as the custom of the "House of Yanai"), again including both fathers and mothers. The second part of this blessing is a citation from the opening of the Eretz Yisrael version of the morning blessings from the Geniza. The third passage is a periphrastic citation of the blessing thanking God for not creating the worshipper among undesired groups.[27] The blessing has been revised from exclusive and negative language ("who created me human and not a beast"), to a positive and gender-inclusive language: "who created me human, man/woman, free." By means of this revision Graetz harmonizes the theological and ideological concepts of Masorti (Conservative) Judaism (and liberal Judaism in general) that require gender equality and a non-discriminatory approach toward Gentiles. [28] He differs in this regard from his predecessor, Roth, who maintained the Geniza version thanking God who created me "a man and not a woman."

Graetz's first paragraph is based on the morning blessing from the Yerushalmi, and here too, he adds an inclusive adaptation using both male and female language: "I give thanks," and adding the "God of my

[27] The original blessing in the Geniza varies in the different manuscripts. See Dalia Marx, "Birkhot Hashahar in the Cario Geniza," (Hebrew) *Ginzei Qedem* 3 (2007) 109–162 and 4 (2008) 9–34.

[28] See Yoel Kahn, *The Three Blessings: Boundaries, Censorship, and Identity in Jewish Liturgy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Dalia Marx, *When I Sleep and When I Wake: On Prayers Between Dusk and Dawn* (Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Yediot Achronot, 2010) 224–236; Joseph Tabory, "The Benedictions of Self-Identity And the Changing Status of Women and of Orthodoxy," *Kenishta*, 1 (2001) 107–138.

foremothers" to "God of my forefathers." Instead of the mixed language in the Yerushalmi, which shifts between singular and plural voices, Graetz maintains the singular voice and omits the request for the reinstitution of the Temple. He selectively cites the ancient texts and uses them according to contemporary liturgical needs, and whenever possible he uses liturgical material from the Yerushalmi, because of its antiquity, canonicity and authority. When such material is not available, he cites from the Geniza.

Bar-Hayim takes a similar approach. In a conversation we had, he said he found the morning blessings in contemporary prayer books to be long and verbose, and stated that his aim was to propose a shorter and more concise version. His text opens with a citation from the morning ritual found in the Geniza. It then continues with his own wording, according to the Geniza style, "I give thanks … for You have raised me from my bed for life and peace," and concludes with the blessing thanking God who "revives the dead" from the Yerushalmi. Like Graetz, Bar-Hayim prefers to cite from classical rabbinic texts such as the Yerushalmi when they are available. However, he does not refrain from adding material that is clearly Babylonian, provided that it is widely accepted and presents no significant difficulties. He cites the short morning blessings that appear only in the Babylonian Talmud (b. *Ber.* 60b)[29] and then includes the blessings thanking God for not making the worshipper a member of undesired groups. He cites these as three separate blessings, rather than one composite blessing as in the Eretz Yisrael material from the Geniza. He keeps the old blessing thanking God "for not making me an ignoramus," which appears in tannaitic sources (Tosefta, *Ber.* 6:18), but not the blessing thanking God "for not making me a slave," which appears in the Babylonian Talmud (b. *Menah.* 43b–44a) and in traditional contemporary prayer books. He does not create a special blessing for women to replace the one thanking God "for not making me a woman," nor does he add a version to be recited by women in this case. However, he does change the blessing "who did not make me a Gentile" to less offensive language (in Hebrew he uses *nokhri* instead of *goy*, which is also documented in prayer manuscripts),[30] and he provides a formula for male and female worshippers.

[29] These blessings are found in most common prayer books. See Dalia Marx, "The Morning Ritual (Birkhot Hashachar) in the Talmud: The Reconstructing of Body and Mind through the Blessings," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 77 (2008) 103–129.

[30] Naphtali Wieder, *Formation of Jewish Liturgy in The East and the West* (Hebrew; Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi 1998), vol. 1, 199–218.

Both versions of the morning blessings by Roth/Graetz and Bar-Hayim are examples of new creations based on Eretz Yisrael material, which combine both Yerushalmi and Geniza material. Each was constructed in a manner that reflects the theology and style of its editor. Even if the results are rather different, the editorial approach was similar – selective and thoughtful citation of Eretz Yisrael sources, with relevant adaptations and additions.

In the context of renewing liturgy based on Geniza findings, one must mention the work of Avi Shmidman from Bar Ilan University, especially in the context of publishing of poetic and prose versions of the Grace After Meals (Birkat Hamazon) from the Cairo Geniza. It was important to Shmidman, as an Orthodox Jew, to show that the texts from the Geniza meet all the halakhic requirements and, consequently, that their recitation fulfills the halakhic obligation to recite the grace. To accomplish this, he published an essay charting the millennium-long evolution of Birkat Hamazon, in which he discusses the parameters set for this liturgical rubric by the sages of the Talmud and demonstrates the creativity and variety displayed in its many versions. Shmidman includes two examples for Birkat Hamazon, and explains:

> The two examples we have examined here represent but a small slice of the liturgical smorgasbord which the Palestinian Jews of the Geniza period found before themselves at the conclusion of each meal. Over two hundred such compositions are preserved in the Geniza manuscripts, with many prayer books presenting multiple options in tandem, side-by-side. Thus, as opposed to today's worshippers, who open their *benchers* and find a single mandated statutory text, the Jews of old were afforded a rich selection of variegated texts. [31]

Apart from fulfilling all the halakhic requirements, it was essential to Shmidman to maintain standards of academic accuracy. In order to achieve that, he consulted with the late scholar of *piyyut* Ezra Fleischer, who encouraged him to dedicate his graduate studies to the topic, and in the years following that conversation Shmidman completed both a master's thesis and a doctoral dissertation dedicated to the publication and analysis of the full corpus of Grace-After-Meals poems from the Cairo Geniza.

Following is one of the texts of the weekday Birkat Hamazon from the Geniza, published in Shmidman's dissertation and suggested by

[31] Avi Shmidman, "Grace After Meals: Essentials and Alternatives," *Jewish Education News* (spring 2006). All the texts written or discussed by Shmidman are translated by him.

Shmidman for daily recital. (For the Hebrew, see Appendix B.) This is a poetic version composed by the early poet Yosi ben Yosi, who lived in the Land of Israel, probably in the fifth century. While the poet composed a text for just the first three of the four blessings of Birkat Hamazon (as was the case in many of these texts), Shmidman points out that a close examination of the evidence from the Geniza indicates that, in practice, the Jewish communities of the Geniza period recited the fourth blessing in its prose form following the three poetic blessings.[32]

Blessed are you, Lord, our God, King of the World.
The Creator of the world / the maker of man, / He prepares provision / for all His Creatures, As it is written: *You open up Your hand and satisfy the will of every living thing* (Ps 145:17).
Blessed are You, Lord, who nourishes all.

You made the land / You laid out the table / In Torah and covenant / You have given us our portion, As it is written: *And you will eat and you will be satisfied and you will bless the Lord your God for the good land which he has given you* (Deut 8:10).
Blessed are You, Lord, for the land and for the food.

Build Your city! / Make firm Shalem! / And Your Temple / Redeem with mercy, As it is written: *The Lord builds Jerusalem, He gathers together the dispersed of Israel* (Ps 147:2), And it is said: *There I will raise the horn of David, I have set a candle for my anointed one* (Ps 132:17).
Blessed are You, Lord, who builds Jerusalem with compassion. Amen.

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe. Our Father, King, Great, Holy One, the Holy One of Jacob, the good and benevolent King, who in each and every day does good with us – may He bestow upon us everlasting kindness and grace, relief, compassion, and all goodness.

In spite of the fact that this text is significantly shorter than the traditional text, it contains all the components ordained by the classical rabbis. Shmidman believes that its brevity and poetic beauty will attract those who recite Birkat Hamazon. This version was published in Yale University's *birkon* (liturgy for mealtimes), which is in use by many American Jews of the various Jewish streams.[33] (After teaching this

[32] Regarding the question of why the *paytanim* only composed poetic treatments for the first three blessings, see Shmidman, "The Poems for the Grace after Meals from the Cairo Genizah: A Critical Edition" (Hebrew; PhD diss., Bar Ilan University, 2009) 77–78. The text of the fourth blessing printed here is in accordance with its text as found in many Geniza fragments.

[33] *Az Yashir Moseh: A Book of Songs and Blessings*, ed. Jay Michaelson (New Haven: Slifka Center for Jewish Life at Yale, 2003) 18–19.

text in my community, I was surprised to learn that some families have adopted it as their grace; one family even composed music for it.)

Shmidman says[34] that he approached the systematic and academic study of versions of Birkat Hamazon found in the Geniza following his efforts to bring such texts – both poetic and prose – to the praying community. He stresses that these texts are not only more edifying and refined, but may even sometimes, in a certain sense, be halakhically superior to the traditional versions. For example, see the Al Hamihyah version, [35] a shorter grace recited after consuming a meal that does not contain bread, which he printed in the *birkon* he prepared for his son Shaltiel's bar mitzvah in 2012 (for Hebrew, see Appendix C):

> Blessed are You, O Lord, Ruler of the universe for the sustenance of all / Torah, Covenant and Glorious Land, / Jerusalem, and the Kingdom [of David], / who increases His goodness towards us. Blessed are You, O Lord, for the land and for sustenance.

Shmidman maintains that although this is a very short text comprised of only 11 words (apart from the blessing formula), from a halakhic perspective one might suggest that it has an advantage over the versions in common use because it mentions the land (*u'tzvi*) and the reign of the Davidic dynasty (*malkhut*) and the Torah (*dat*).[36] The Geniza texts are not only more suitable to modern people, who are in a constant rush, they are more beautiful and have better literary structure.[37]

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[34] Communicated in a conversation with Shmidman during summer 2015. See Avi Shmidman, "Liturgical Function of Poetic Versions of the Grace After Meals" (Hebrew), *Ginzei Qedem* 2 (2006) 45–110; "Developments Within the Statutory Text of the '*Birkat ha-mazon*' in Light of its Poetic Counterparts," in *Jewish and Christian Liturgy and Worship,* ed. A. Gerhards and C. Leonhard (Leiden: Brill, 2007) 109–126; "When Were the Grace-after-Meals Piyyutim for Yom Kippur Recited?" (Hebrew), *Ginzei Qedem* 4 (2007) 61–90; "Poetic Versions of the Grace After Meals from the Geniza," *Pirkei Shira* 4 (2008) 9–25; and "On the Liturgical Function of DSS Document 4Q434a," *Zutot* 5 (2008) 15.

[35] The Hebrew text was published by Shulamit Elizur, "A Blessing That Is a Summary of Three or Four" (Hebrew), *Shanah B'shnah* 39 (1998) 423.

[36] These three elements – Messiah, Land and Torah – are mandated in the rabbinic literature for the Grace After Meals. Although the legal ruling regarding *Al Hamihya* does not require them, many early halakhic authorities did mandate their inclusion; see *Encyclopedia Talmudit,* vol. 4 (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1952) 276, n. 109.

[37] Shmidman adds that these texts also may sometimes be considered superior even from a strict halakhic perspective. The poetic texts preserved in the Geniza are often fragmentary, and various words or lines may be unrecoverable. In some cases Shmidman proposes a possible reconstruction of the missing material, as part of his effort to prepare the texts for practical use. He crafts the new material in accordance with the prosodic elements of the composition (rhyme, meter, acrostic, etc.) and in tandem with the overall message of the text. One case in point: when a group of people

This short review attests to the fact that those who seek to revive the old Eretz Yisrael rite come from different camps in contemporary Israeli Judaism and reflect different motivations. Some seek to discover the "original and refined" version of the Land of Israel (and we have seen that such a version is not to be found). Others, like Bar-Hayim and Graetz, acknowledge the flexibility and multitude of versions of this liturgy and seek to select from those texts so as to inspire the hearts of contemporary Israeli worshippers, and in so doing, they revise the text when necessary. And there are those, like Shmidman, who seek to provide a few choices from the Eretz Yisrael rite and encourage worshippers to experiment with these different versions.

Inclusion of Geniza Fragments and Short Passages in Contemporary Prayer Books

Apart from the creation of prayer books that are based essentially on old Eretz Yisrael liturgy, whether historically accurate or imagined, many prayer editors make use of specific selections or phrases found in the Geniza and Eretz Yisrael materials. I discuss here three types of such inclusions: emendations to the prayer, insertions for the purpose of diversity, and the introduction of new prayers. This typology is tentative, and undoubtedly the differences between the categories are not always clear. However, identifying the ways in which Geniza and Eretz Yisrael fragments are introduced into prayer books can reveal the different ideological motivations and ritual needs that brought the old rites into regular practice.

A. Using Eretz Yisrael Material to Emend the Text

Sometimes, a certain passage in the commonly used prayer books seems corrupted or wrong. In some cases alternatives from the Geniza that seem more linguistically appropriate are introduced. Following are two examples of this.

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from Efrat asked Shmidman for a poem to use as part of their weekly Melave' Malka gathering at the conclusion of Shabbat, because only a single fragmentary composition of this type survives among the Cairo Geniza manuscripts, he took it upon himself to author the missing sections of the text, ultimately producing a complete *piyyut* that was adopted for practical use; see http://tinyurl.com/pe7wbkh. (Shmidman's reconstructions appear in square brackets).

The first example is found in Me'ein Sheva, a blessing that is recited on Shabbat evening toward the end of the service. One of the cryptic phrases there refers to God as *me'ein habrakhot*, which does not make much sense, meaning "a sort of the blessings." This is probably a corruption of *me'on haberakhot* (dwelling place of the blessings), which is found in the Geniza fragments and makes much more sense here.[38] The Israeli Masorti (Conservative) siddur *Va'ani T'fillati* cites the phrase as *me'on haberakhot*.[39]

Another emendation with the intent to return to what seems to be an original text was done in this same prayer book. In the Torah service the word *hakol* (all) was changed in the sentence "All give praise to our God and pay honor to the Torah," to *haqol* (the voice). This altered the meaning of the sentence and became a call to attention for the worshippers to the beginning of the Torah reading. The editor, Rabbi Simcha Roth, cited his teacher, Naphtali Wieder, who showed that "the voice!" appears in various contexts of public prayer in the Geniza manuscripts and that its function is "to focus the attention of the attendees."[40] After receiving remarks from people who thought that the change was due to a misspelling, Zeev Keinan, editor of the second edition, highlighted the text with this explanation.

In this context, we should mention what we might refer to as "unintentional emendations," meaning changes that were made in the liturgy and only later were found to have precedents in the Geniza. For example, in order to include female figures in the liturgy along with the male ancestors, some prayer book editors added Miriam's name next to that of Moses in the first blessing after the recitation of the Sh'ma: "As Moses, Miriam and the children of Israel, to You they proclaimed song in great joy, saying: 'who is like You, O Lord?'" This formulation does not appear in the Geniza manuscripts, but many Eretz Yisrael texts include the three

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[38] See Gedalia Alon, "The Phrase: *Me'on hab'rakhot*," *Tarbiz* 14 (1953) 70–74 (also *Liqutei Tarbiz* 6, ed. Hananel Mack [Jerusalem: Magnes, 2003] 58–62; Shlomo Tal, "The Blessing 'Me'ein sheva,'" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 41 (1972) 150 (also *Liqutei Tarbiz*, 270).

[39] *Va'ani Tfillati* (Tel Aviv: Yedi'ot Sfarim, 2009). So, too, does the American Reform Siddur *Mishkan T'filah*. The editors added a footnote explaining the change as a scribal error that unintentionally entered the liturgy and wrote, "We restored it [the original version] here, so as to sense God as a place where we can enter and be at home, a spiritual destination where we go to find the blessings we seek" (p. 183).

[40] Wieder, *Formation*, 1.89–90, 94, 181–184, 193–194.

siblings: "Moses, Aharon, Miriam and the children of Israel" – in this way, the new emendation for gender equality has ancient precedents.[41]

B. Using Eretz Yisrael Material for the Sake of Diversity

In some cases old Eretz Yisrael material is used not for theological or ideological purposes, and not in order to restore older (and preferable) versions, but for the sake of diversity and in order to emphasize the pluralistic nature of Jewish liturgy.

One praying community that stresses the importance of pluralism and multi-vocal expression in prayer is Zion in Jerusalem. This congregation, founded and led by Masorti (Conservative) Rabbi Tamar Elad-Appelbaum, aspires "to create together an Eretz Yisrael Judaism immersed in the study of Torah, repairing the world, and prayer. Zion is building a new language in Israel, combining Eastern, Western and modern Israeli traditions"; it invites the residents of Jerusalem, a city known for its divisiveness and segregation, "to become a partner in the dreaming and creation of a reality."[42] The Zion worshippers use the Masorti siddur *Va'ani Tfillati* and also a handout in which content is changed every week and which contains poems and songs to be recited on that Shabbat. The text of the Amidah is based on Roth's version of the Eretz Yisrael prayer discussed above.

However, the boldest liturgical characteristic of this community is the inclusion of a special *piyyut* for every Sabbat morning service.[43] Occasionally they use a *shivata*, a poetic version of the Amidah of the additional service (Musaf) on special days, such as Shabbat, recited by the prayer leader. In this genre, a short poem replaces each one of the seven benedictions and ends with its own concluding formula. There are special *shivatot* for every week, and their content dealt with the themes of the Torah reading for that Shabbat. Zion's musical team, led by Cantor Uri Krueser, prepares a musical setting for every service. This demanding task (the poems are usually complicated and require considerable effort to create, perform and teach the changing texts and music) stresses the commitment of Zion to create a multi-vocal diverse and yet very local and Israeli form of prayer.

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[41] Among the Geniza fragments that contain this text are T-S K27.17 and T-S NS J 502. I thank Vered Raziel-Kretchmer, who checked this for me in the Liturgy Project of Beersheba University.

[42] The citation was taken from Zion's website (zion-jerusalem.org.il) in 2015.

[43] So far, the community meets every Friday evening and once a month on Shabbat morning. Rabbi Elad-Appelbaum says she hopes that soon they will be able to conduct a service every Shabbat morning, as well.

One can also attest to the use of Geniza material outside the State of Israel, albeit on a much smaller scale. The following example, which was the first deliberate use of Geniza fragments in contemporary liturgy, celebrated modern Zionism and has influenced later works. In 1972 Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman, who was then a graduate student, created a prayer service to celebrate the 55th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration (the first major international political acknowledgment of the Zionist Movement). In addition to contemporary Israeli songs, he included Palestinian texts from the Cairo Geniza. Richard Sarason, who was a rabbinical student at Hebrew Union College at the time, translated the texts into English. Both led the festive service at the HUC campus in Cincinnati, Ohio. By including the Israeli material, Hoffman and Sarason wanted to demonstrate that the "medium is the message" – that is, the date that symbolizes for many the birth of modern Zionism was celebrated using ancient texts from Zion.

In order to follow the old Eretz Yisrael rite, they included an Amidah of eighteen blessings, not nineteen as does the Babylonian version and, following it, all subsequent prayer books. They re-combined the 14th and 15th benedictions and restored what seems to be the original structure of the Amidah.[44] In the Sh'ma liturgy, they changed the ending of the blessing thanking God for the redemption from Egypt, so that instead of saying: "Blessed … who redeemed Israel," they used the Eretz Yisrael conclusion: "Blessed … Rock of Israel and its Redeemer."[45] In the introduction to the service, Hoffman wrote:

> We hope through this service, to illustrate the vast reservoir of creativity in our multi-faceted tradition; to give expression to the longings of our forefathers; and finally, to identify with our people through time, from the earliest expression of their hope to the present rebirth of the land where those footsteps were born.

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[44] See Ehrlich, *Amidah,* 189–206. I thank my teacher Richard Sarason for sharing copies of the original service from 1972, as well as the reconstructed version from 2014.

[45] The phrase "Rock of Israel and its Redeemer" already appears in the Yerushalmi (Ber. 1:9; 3d) and see Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*, trans. R. Scheindlin (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1993); Ezra Fleischer, *Eretz-Yisrael Prayer and Prayer Rituals* (Hebrew; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1988) 30, 238. This phrase entered the prayer for the State of Israel composed by the Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi Isaac-Halevi Herzog shortly after the establishment of the State of Israel; see Dalia Marx, "Particularism and Universalism in the Prayer for the State of Israel," in *All The World: Universalism, Particularism and the High Holy Days,* ed. Lawrence Hoffman (Woodstock: Jewish Lights, 2014) 49–76.

The significance of Hoffman and Sarason's work goes beyond the service that was meant to be performed only once, because they became not only Reform rabbis but also prominent scholars of liturgy. And indeed, parts of their work were later included in formal prayer books.[46] Here, too, we see the connection between scholarly research into the Geniza material and the efforts to introduce it to the modern synagogue.

C. Using Eretz Yisrael Material to Introduce Liturgical Innovations

In some cases, editors of contemporary liturgies include passages from the Geniza that never before appeared in commonly used prayer books. One example is the incorporation of a blessing before the recitation of the Sh'ma. This blessing is composed according the formula of blessings recited over performing religious commandments (for Hebrew, see Appendix D):

> Praised are You, Lord, our God, Ruler of the Universe, who hallows us with *mitzvot*, commanding us how to recite the Sh'ma, to declare wholeheartedly God's rule, to declare earnestly God is One, and willingly to worship God.[47]

This blessing was found in some Geniza manuscripts, and it seems that it was in use in spite of rabbinic objection.[48] The first to include it in contemporary liturgy were Hoffman and Sarason, who used it in their celebration of the Balfour declaration, mentioned above. It was then incorporated in *Ha'avodah Shebalev*, the Israeli Reform Siddur (1982), which was the first printed prayer book to include it.[49] The incorporation of this blessing is an example of how the liturgy is influenced by scholars of liturgy who are also rabbis and leaders in their movements.

Another example is the inclusion of the "blessing for the luscious wine" (*birkat yein asis*) in the prayer book of *Beit Tfilah Yisre'eli* (Israeli

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[46] See forthcoming. In 2014 Sarason created a revised version of the service and updated it based on recent scholarship (for example, Ehrlich, *Amidah*). This version was used as a celebratory opening for a week of discussions of Israel and Zionism on the Cincinnati campus of HUC-JIR in 2014.

[47] *Mishkan T'filah*, 35.

[48] See Jacob Mann, "Geniza Fragments of the Palestinian Order of Service," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 2 (1925) 286, 308, 332. This blessing is common in many Geniza fragments but does not appear in all of them; see Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 391, n. 1.

[49] Since then, this blessing was introduced to the New American Reform Siddur, *Mishkan T'filah* (New York: Union of Reform Judaism, 2007): "So important was the recitation of the Sh'ma to our ancestors in Eretz Israel, that they introduced it with a blessing. That blessing fell out of use over a thousand years ago; we reclaim it here as part of our liturgical heritage"; see pp. 59, 227, 453.

House of Prayer), an unaffiliated congregation in Tel Aviv. This vivid and joyous blessing was published by Naphtali Wieder, who wrote that "it is the most ancient example of a wine song in our literature […] it gladdens the heart, cheers up, comforts the mourners, causes poverty to be forgotten and heals the sick."[50] (For Hebrew, see Appendix E.)

Blessing for the luscious wine: Blessed are You, Lord our God, ruler of the Universe, Who created luscious wine and goodly nectar from the grapevines. It is sweet unto the soul and good for a person, and it gladdens the heart and brightens the countenance. It is solace to the mourners and helps the embittered forget their suffering. It cures all who drink it, all who imbibe it with sense and good taste. It is happiness for the heart, an exhilaration and a great joy to all who sip it. He, our God, created it from yore, in order to take pleasure in deeds fore-planned, so that all who drink it might bless God and praise the One who created wisdom, the One who fashioned the delights of the world and created the sweet things of the earth. He is our God, the One who created nectar from the grapevine, and made sweet juice from the grapes to satisfy the starving soul and fulfill the longing soul. May those who drink of it have a joyous heart for the fruit of His works, and let them sing praises to their Creator. Blessed are You Lord, the Sovereign who alone is exalted, the Holy God, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

The blessing is not included in most traditional prayer books, due to rabbinic objections.[51] However, the Argentinian-born Reform Rabbi Estevan Gottfried, editor of the siddur *Beit Tfilah Yisre'eli* incorporated it, noting that its origin is the Cairo Geniza. It was included in order to adorn the Kiddush (sanctification of the wine) on Friday nights[52] and to revive an ancient and forgotten tradition.

Creativity in the Light of the Geniza

So far we have discussed the introduction of the Geniza and old Eretz Yisrael passages into contemporary Israeli liturgy. In some cases we dealt with minor and local adaptations, and in other cases we observed an attempt to create comprehensive liturgy based on prayers and poems. Now I will discuss even bolder attempts to create new liturgical poems based on the ancient Eretz Yisrael style and literary criteria. This phenomenon is modest in scope, albeit interesting, and to my knowledge

[50] Wieder, *Formation*, 234. The translation is based in part on Gabriel Wasserman's translation, which he shared with me.

[51] Wieder, *Formation*, 234–240.

[52] The original use of Birkat Yein Asis was probably Friday nights and Passover evenings. See Wieder, *Formation*, 234–240.

only those who deal with the *piyyut* through academic study are engaged in this complicated and delicate task. They usually do so for personal and private use and not for publication. Here is one example of such work.

As mentioned above, Avi Shmidman has published versions of the Grace After Meals from the Geniza and advocated for their halakhic validity. Less known is that he has also composed such liturgy. For the most part he dedicates his creative efforts to the margins of the Grace After Meals, that is the initial portion of the summons to bless (*zimun*) or the supplications to the Merciful One (*ha-Rahaman*) recited at the end. These two rubrics are free from halakhic constraints, and indeed, for hundreds of years after the closing of the Talmud we find expansions to them. Following are Harahaman supplications composed by Shmidman together with Rabbi Ben-Zion Spitz, chief rabbi of Uruguay, to be recited by a Bar Mitzvah's family members. They appear in the *birkon* he edited for his son's Bar Mitzvah. (For Hebrew, see Appendix F.)

The parents say: May the Merciful One who has granted us life and sustained us, guide our child in choosing a good path. May He establish him with a pure heart, shelter him in the shadow of his shelter with curd and milk. May He sustain him and from His mouth most pleasant things.

The grandparents say: May the Merciful One bless a beloved grandson, crown of our heads, golden splendor. Our dear seed is more precious than stars. You have reached the age of commandments, of good decisions.

The siblings say: May the Merciful One bless a brother who is called to the Torah. How good and pleasant in joy and delight to dwell together in song and melody, love to increase, brotherhood to expand.

The uncles and aunts say: May the Merciful One bless him who has reached thirteen years of age, to know the beloved religion and to ponder on it at all times in understanding, wisdom, knowledge and philosophical literature, and when he becomes of age, gladden him with love.

The cousins say: May the Merciful One bless this kin-lad with rigor and with great strength just like Reuben (who found mandrakes), when he lays his *tefillin* as (requires) the religion of your beloved in comradery – cousins, we salute him!

The Bar-Mitzvah boy turns to the community, saying: May the Merciful One bless all those who gathered to bless me – my family members, my beloved ones and my teachers. You delighted in my glory, to elevate me like Mordechai – may I merit to make your paths mine!

Here Shmidman and Spitz created an elaborate composition containing special poems for different family members, men and women alike. They used the Eretz Yisrael poetic style found in the Geniza in terms

of the poetic stresses, rhyming norms (namely, a full syllable at the end of each line), biblical allusions and the use of idioms. The poets whose work is preserved in the Geniza did not compose poetic versions of the Harahaman supplications; rather, they focused their creativity on the bodies of the actual benedictions. The contemporary writers refrained from changing the body of the actual blessings, a matter that would have met with some opposition in their religious circles; instead, they focused their creativity on additions to the margins of the traditional prayer.

This example reflects a rather rare but interesting phenomenon, of actual attempts not only to revive the old Eretz Yisrael prayer but also to recapture its style and literary criteria in the creation of new literary works.

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In this article I have examined the use of ancient Eretz Yisrael material in contemporary Israeli liturgy. Until recently there was very little, if any, interest among Israeli Jews in incorporating such material in prayer books, but during the last two decades we have seen a modest but steadily increasing interest in such an endeavor. A careful but persistent inclusion of such texts in liturgical use can be discerned; sometimes it is done in a tentative or even a semi-subversive manner. These tendencies are especially telling in light of the insularity and refusal to innovate any aspect of the religious life in some segments of the Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox communities.

The phenomena we have discussed were divided into two parts – first, integral and comprehensive attempts to renew the Eretz Yisrael rite and create new prayer books according to it; second, the incorporation of passages and even phrases found in the Geniza. We saw the introduction of liturgical passages from the Geniza into contemporary prayer books in order to amend problematic texts, to express diversity, and to introduce liturgical innovations.

The motivation to revive the old Eretz Yisrael rite comes from different directions – a desire to find a rooted, vital and authentic local voice, to create new liturgies based on ancient sources expanding the liturgical repertoire, and to revise the prayer theologically and ideologically based on existing precedents. Some stress the concise nature of the Eretz Yisrael prose liturgy; others take delight in its rich poems. Some relate to its theological or halakhic superiority, while others maintain that it better reflects "the spirit of our people" – all of them use the ancient Eretz Yisrael material as a component of a useful past that can be molded in order to shape the future.

Close cooperation between scholars, rabbis and liturgists is evident, probably more than in any other period of creating Jewish liturgy. The editors of liturgy base their choices on scholarly work (if not always in a systematic manner). Sometimes they confer directly with scholars and ask for their advice and approval. In some cases scholars of liturgy and *piyyut* are also rabbis and educators who seek to bring the Eretz Yisrael liturgy to the larger public. These phenomena blur the distinctions between science and religion and between university research and what happens in the field.

The efforts to renew the old Eretz Yisrael rite are not free of areas of tension: there are cases of a rabbi whose work was published without his permission, a scholar who feels that his study was inadequately cited, and people who conceal their active interest lest their work be inappropriately used or because they fear harsh criticism fom conservative elements in their community.

The Geniza is a treasure of raw material used by religious and politically right-wing persons, as well as by people from the liberal movements in Judaism. This mutual interest, even if it comes from rather different motivations, creates somewhat unexpected allies, not only between scholars and religious leaders, but also between Jews who (at least technically) belong to ultra-Orthodox circles and Jews of the liberal movements, between people from the settler movement and people of the peace camp.

While there is minor interest in renewing the Jewish liturgy evident in the Diaspora (for example, the American Reform movement), the bulk of these creative efforts takes place in Israel. However, many of those engaged in the task are not native-born Israelis, but those who immigrated later in life, mostly from English-speaking countries (Roth from the United Kingdom, Graetz and Shmidman from the United States, Bar-Hayim from Australia, and Gottfried from Argentina).

Obviously, the necessity of Hebrew language proficiency makes these texts more accessible to Israelis. However, this is not the only reason for Israelis' engagement with the task of revealing and reviving the old rite and for Israel to serve as a percolator for the phenomena we describe. Clearly, those who want to promote Torat Eretz Yisrael wish to revive ancient Israel in modern terms. But others also relate to the task as a useful authentic past, which may serve to pave the way to a new and authentic future. And here ancient manuscripts, scholarly material, national sentiments and romantic aspirations meld together. It seems that there is also something fundamental about life in the Land of Israel – and even more so, in a sovereign Jewish state – that influences this involvement. And how it will unfold is yet to be determined.

Appendix: Hebrew Texts

A. Morning Blessings Comparison Chart (see p. 354)

Yerushalmi	Geniza	Graetz	Bar-Hayim
מודה אני לפניך ה״ אלהי ואלהי אבותי שהוצאתני מאפילה לאורה.		מודה/מודה אני לפניך יי אלוהי ואלוהי אבותי ואמותי שהוצאתני מאפילה לאורה.	
בא״י מחיה המתים		ברוך אתה יי אלוהינו מלך העולם מחייה המתים	
רבוני חטאתי לך יהי רצון מלפניך י׳י אלהי שתתן לי לב טוב חלק טוב יצר טוב סבר טוב שם טוב עין טובה ונפש טוב ונפש שפלה ורוח נמוכה וסבר טוב אל יתחלל שמך בנו ואל תעשינו שיחה בפי כל הבריות ואל תעשנו קללה בפי כל הבריות ואל תהי אחריתינו להכרית ולא תקוותנו למפח נפש ואל תצריכנו לידי מתנות בשר ודם ואל תמסור מזונותינו בידי בשר ודם שמתנתם מעוטה וחרפתם מרובה ותן חלקנו בתורתך עם עושי רצונך בנה ביתך היכלך עירך ומקדשך במהרה בימינו.		(מופיע בסיום ברכות השחר:) רבון כל העולמים חטאתי לך. יהי רצון מלפניך יי אלוהי ואלוהי אבותי ואמותי שתתן לי לב טוב יצר טוב עין טובה ורוח נמוכה. אל יתחלל שמך בי ואל תעשני שיחה בפי הבריות ואל תהי אחריתי להכרית ולא תקותי למפח נפש. הצילנו מכל דבר רע ואל תרגיל בלשוני רמיה. ואל תצריכני לידי מתנת בשר ודם.	

Bar-Hayim	Graetz	Geniza	Yerushalmi
ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם המתיר כבלי שינה מעיני כַּבלי שינה המשמרני כאישון בת עין. מודה אני לפניך יהוה אלהי ואלהי אבותי שהעמדתני ממטתי לחיים ולשלום. וְאַתָּה מְחַיֶּה אֶת כֻּלָּם ומלפניך חיים ומרפא ככתוב: חַיִּים וָחֶסֶד עָשִׂיתָ עִמָּדִי וּפְקֻדָּתְךָ שָׁמְרָה רוּחִי בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יהוה מחיה המתים [ברכות הפעולות בבלי]	ברוך אתה יי אלוהינו מלך העולם המתיר כבלי שינה המשמרני כאישון בת עין הפותח שערי מזרח המעלה עמוד שחר לכול המאיר לכל העולם כולו בכבודו המעביר שינה מעיני ותנומה מעפעפיי.	ברוך אתה י׳י אלהינו ואל[הי אבותינו] המתיר כבלי שינה המשמר[נ] כאישון בת עין הפותח שערי מזרח המעלה עמוד השחר המ[איר] לכל העולם כולו בכבודו המעביר שינה מעיני ותנומה מעפעפי. והצילני י׳י אלהי מכל דבר הט לבי ללמוד תורתך תורתך תה[א] סיחתי[!] ומלאכתי [...]שאתה [י׳י] מחיה המתים ומלפניך חיים ומרפא כ״כ חיים וחסד עשיתָ עמדי ופקודתך שמרה רוחי. ברוך אתה י׳י [מחיה] המתים.	
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁלֹּא עָשַׂנִי נָכְרִי. אשה מברכת: שֶׁלֹּא עָשַׂנִי נָכְרִיָּה. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁלֹּא עָשַׂנִי אִשָּׁה. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁלֹּא עָשַׂנִי בּוּר.	ברוך אתה יי אלוהינו מלך העולם אשר בראת אדם הראשון בדמותו כצלמו. ברוך אתה יי אלוהינו מלך העולם אשר בראת אותי אדם איש/אישה ישראל וחופשי.	[...] ברוך אתה י׳י [א]להינו מלך העולם אשר בראתה [אותי אדם ולא ב]המה איש ולא אשה זכר ולא נקיבה ישראל ולא גוי מהול ולא ערל חפשי ולא עבד כן יהי רצון ורחמים מלפניך י׳י אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו שתתן חלקינו בתורתך ועם עושֵי רצונך ברוך אתה י׳י אלהינו מלך העולם אשר בראתה אדם הראשון בדמותו כצלמו י׳י הצילה נפשי משפת שקר מלשון רמיה	ברוך שלא עשאני בור ברוך שלא עשאני אשה ברוך שלא עשאני גוי.

B. Grace After Meals (see p. 359)

ברכת מזון מפויטת מאת יוסי בן יוסי

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בּוֹרֵא עוֹלָם יוֹצֵר אָדָם מְכִין מָזוֹן לְכָל בְּרִיוֹתָיו
כַּכָּתוּב פּוֹתֵחַ אֶת יָדֶךָ וּמַשְׂבִּיעַ לְכָל חַי רָצוֹן
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הַזָּן אֶת הַכֹּל

אֶרֶץ עָשִׂיתָ/שֶׂלְחָן עָרַכְתָּ תּוֹרָה וּבְרִית/חָלְקָנוּ נָתַתָּ
כַּכָּתוּב וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבָעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ עַל הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָךְ
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ עַל הָאָרֶץ וְעַל הַמָּזוֹן

עִירְךָ תִּבְנֶה/שָׁלֵם תְּכוֹנָן
בֵּית מִקְדָּשְׁךָ/בְּרַחֲמִים תִּפְקֹד
כַּכָּתוּב בּוֹנֵה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם יְיָ נִדְחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יְכַנֵּס
וְנֶאֱמַר: שָׁם אַצְמִיחַ קֶרֶן לְדָוִד עָרַכְתִּי נֵר לִמְשִׁיחִי
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ בּוֹנֵה בְרַחֲמָיו יְרוּשָׁלָיִם אָמֵן

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵּנוּ אַדִּירֵנוּ קְדוֹשֵׁנוּ קְדוֹשׁ יַעֲקֹב הַמֶּלֶךְ הַטּוֹב
וְהַמֵּטִיב אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל יוֹם וָיוֹם הוּא מֵטִיב עִמָּנוּ הוּא יִגְמְלֵנוּ לָעַד חֵן וָחֶסֶד וְרַוַח וְרַחֲמִים וְכָל
טוֹב

C. Al Hamihyah Blessing (see p. 360)

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם עַל מְחִיַּת כֹּל/דָּת וּבְרִית וּצְבִי צֵלַע מַלְכוּת/מַרְבָּה
טוּבוֹ עִמָּנוּ בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ עַל הָאָרֶץ וְעַל הַמִּחְיָה

D. Blessing Before Shma (see p. 365)

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל מִצְוַת קְרִיאַת שְׁמַע
לְהַמְלִיכוֹ בְּלֵבָב שָׁלֵם וּלְיַחֲדוֹ בְּלֵב טוֹב וּלְעָבְדוֹ בְּנֶפֶשׁ חֲפֵצָה

E. Blessing for Luscious Wine (see p. 366)

ברכת יין עסיס

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא יֵין עָסִיס וְתִירוֹשׁ טוֹב מֵעֲצֵי גְפָנִים וְהוּא
עָרֵב לַנֶּפֶשׁ וְטוֹב לְאָדָם מְשַׂמֵּחַ לֵב וּמַצְהִיל פָּנִים
וְהוּא תַּנְחוּמִין לָאֲבֵלִים וּמָרֵי נֶפֶשׁ יִשְׂכְּחוּ רִישָׁן וְהוּא רְפוּאָה לְכָל שׁוֹתָיו לְמִי שֶׁיִּשְׁתֶּנּוּ
בְּטַעַם וּבְדַעַת. הוּא שְׁמְחַת לֵבָב שָׂשׂוֹן וְרֵב גִּילָה לַשּׁוֹתִין אוֹתוֹ
הוּא אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִצְרוֹ מֵאָז לְהִתְעַנֵּג בְּמַעֲשִׂים כּוֹנְנוּ מֵרֹאשׁ שֶׁכָּל שׁוֹתָיו יְבָרְכוּ לָאֵל וְיִשַּׁבְּחוּ
לְיוֹצֵר בְּרֵינָה הַמַּכִּין מַעֲדְנֵי תֵבֵל וְיֵצֶר לִמְתוּקֵי אָרֶץ

הוּא אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא תִּירוֹשׁ מִן הַגֶּפֶן וְהִתְקִין עָסִיס מִן הָעֲנָבִים לְהַשְׁבִּיעַ נֶפֶשׁ רַעֲבָה
וּלְמַלֵּא נֶפֶשׁ שׁוֹקֵקָה. שׁוֹתָיו יִשְׂמַח לִבּוֹ עַל פְּרִי מַעֲשָׂיו יְבָרְכוֹ לְבוֹרְאֵהוּ.
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' הַמֶּלֶךְ הַמְרוֹמָם לְבַדּוֹ הָאֵל הַקָּדוֹשׁ בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן

F. Bar Mitzvah Family Blessings (see p. 367)

ההורים אומרים:

הָרַחֲמָן אֲשֶׁר הֶחֱיָנוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ עַד כֹּה
הוּא יְדָרֵיךְ אֶת בְּנֵנוּ בְּבָחְרוֹ טוּב דַּרְכּוֹ
יָכִין טֹהַר לִבּוֹ יִשְׁמְרוֹ בְּצֵל סָכּוֹ
חָמְאָה וּדְבַשׁ יַאֲכִילֵהוּ מַמְתַּקִּים מֵחִכּוֹ

הסבים והסבתות אומרים:

הָרַחֲמָן הוּא יְבָרֵךְ נֶכֶד אֲהֻבִים
עֲטֶרֶת רֹאשָׁנוּ תִּפְאֶרֶת זְהֻבִים
זַרְעֵנוּ הַיָּקָר בָּרוּךְ מִכּוֹכָבִים
לְגִיל מִצְוֹות הִגַּעְתָּ לְמִשְׁפָּטִים טוֹבִים

האחים והאחיות אומרים:

הָרַחֲמָן הוּא יְבָרֵךְ אָח עוֹלֶה לַתּוֹרָה
מַה טּוֹב וּמַה נָּעִים בְּשִׂמְחָה וְאוֹרָה
לְשֶׁבֶת גַּם יַחַד בְּשִׁיר וְזִמְרָה
אַהֲבָה לְהַרְבּוֹת אַחֲוָה לְהַגְבִּירָה

הדודים והדודות אומרים:

הָרַחֲמָן הוּא יְבָרֵךְ בֶּן שְׁלוֹשׁ עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנִים
לְדַעַת דֶּת דּוֹדִים לַהֲגוֹתָהּ בְּכָל זְמַנִּים
בְּבִינָה הַשְׂכֵּל וָדַעַת גַּם חָכְמַת דּוֹדָנִים
וּלְעַת דּוֹדִים תַּגִּיעֵהוּ בְּשִׂמְחַת שְׁשׂוֹנִים

בני הדודים אומרים:

הָרַחֲמָן הוּא יְבָרֵךְ בָּחוּר בֶּן דּוֹדִים
בְּיֶתֶר שְׁאֵת וְיֶתֶר עֹז כְּמְצָא דוּדָאִים
הַנִּיחוֹ טִטָּפֹת כְּדָת יְדִידִים
בִּידִידוּת בְּנֵי דוֹד נִקְרָא לוֹ הֵידָדִים

חתן בר המצווה פונה לקהל ואומר:

הָרַחֲמָן הוּא יְבָרֵךְ כָּל קְהַל מְבָרְכַי
בְּנֵי מִשְׁפַּחְתִּי אֲהוּבַי וּמְחַנְּכַי
חֲפַצְתֶּם בִּיקָרִי לְרוֹמְמִי כְּמֻרְדָּכַי
כֵּן אֲזַכֶּה לַעֲשׂוֹת דַּרְכֵיכֶם דְּרָכַי