

Our Dialogue with G-d: Tradition and Innovation

Rabbi Daniel Sperber
February 11, 2007

The Hebrew prayer book (*Siddur*) is probably the most complex, and perhaps the least researched, book in rabbinic literature¹ - there is as yet no full bibliography of *siddurim* and *mahzorim* in manuscript and print!² It has a multitude of layers coming from different periods, which are often interwoven one within another: verses, and passages from all sections of the Bible, notably the Book of Psalms alongside formulations by the rabbis of the Second Temple period, passages from the Mishnah, the Talmud, the *Geonim*, the *Rishonim*, the kabbalists of Safed and even portions from the nineteenth, twentieth and possibly twenty-first centuries. It is often difficult to unravel the intertwining strands, but certain passages can be approximately dated.

Thus there are some portions that date from the latter part of the Second Temple period that we can identify very clearly in our texts; passages that date from the period of the Mishnah, in other words, the first two centuries of the Common Era, and the Talmud; the following three centuries of the Common Era; the period of the *Geonim*; additions and accretions that occurred in the time of the Baalei Hatosafot; and, of course, numerous additions from the period of the kabbalists of Safed, namely, the latter part of the 16th century, such as the whole of the *Kabbalat Shabbat* prayer service on Friday night that includes Psalms, and other sections³. As we go along, we can see that additional prayers were added⁴ in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. In addition, there are whole sections, small additions within existing prayers, and changes in accordance with what was deemed necessary in specific times or in a specific place. There are also prayers that were penned in the last 50 years, such as the Prayer for the State of Israel, the Prayer for *Hayalei Tzahal* (soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces), and a very beautiful prayer that was composed within the past few months for the missing soldiers, the three soldiers abducted prior to the Second Lebanon War, and so on and so forth.

So, our liturgy has always been evolving. There was never a fixed text; there was never a *tefillat keva* (a set liturgy) in which everything was fully formed so that no further changes could be introduced. Let me give you some examples just to demonstrate the degree to which our liturgy was in a state of flux even in the 8th and 9th centuries of the Common Era. We are all familiar with the daily *amidah* prayer. Let me read to you three examples of *berachot* (benedictions) with which we are certainly acquainted. I shall cite different versions, from the Gaonic period, from Eretz Yisrael.⁵

שמע קולנו ה' אלוקינו ורחם עלינו וקבל ברחמים את תפילתנו. בא"י שומע תפילה.

Hear our voice, o Lord, our G-d, have compassion on us and receive our prayers with mercy. Blessed are you, o Lord, who hears prayer.

That is very close to what we normally say in the Ashkenazic *nosach* (liturgy).

שמע בקולנו ושמע תפלתנו ורחם עלינו ועשה מהרה בקשתינו כי אל חנון ורחום אתה. בא"י שומע תפילה.

Please listen to us and please hear our prayers. Have compassion on us and please carry out what we have requested because you are compassionate and merciful. Blessed are you, o Lord, who hears prayer.

This version has been expanded, with additional sections in it, and it certainly is not identical to the first version that we just read.

שמע קולינו ה' אלוקינו וחוּס ורחם עלינו וקבל ברחמים את תפילתנו כי אל שומע תפילתנו ותחנונינו אתה. בא"י שומע תפילה.

Hear our voice, o Lord, our G-d, have pity and compassion on us and receive our prayers with mercy because you are a G-d who listens to prayers and entreaties. Blessed are you, o Lord, who hears prayer.

This latter prayer is fairly close to the so-called *Nosach Sefarad* or Sepharad version (the Sephardic version used by Ashkenazic Jews).

שמע קולנו ה' אלוקינו חוס וחמול ורחם עלינו וקבל ברחמים וברצון את תפילתנו. כי אל שומע תפילתנו ותחנונינו אתה וריקם מלפניך אל תשיבנו כי אב מלא רחמים רבים אתה והעתר לנו מלכינו בתפילתנו ושמע נאקתינו כאשר שמעת את נאקת אבותינו. בא"י שומע תפילה.

Hear our voice, o Lord, our G-d, have pity on us and show mercy towards us. Receive with compassion our prayers, which we hope will find favor in your eyes, because you are a G-d who listens to prayers and entreaties. Please do not turn us away empty-handed, because you are a father who is full of abundant compassion. Please listen to us, our King, as we recite before you our prayers, and please hear our moaning, just as you heard the moaning of our ancestors. Blessed are you, o Lord, who hears prayer.

Here we have a much longer version than the one most of you have probably heard and which is very similar to the Sefardic version. So we can see that, even in this simple *beracha* (benediction), which is part of one of the most crystallized prayers, the *amidah*, there has been a gradual process of expansion in different periods of time, and in different places. We will not go into the history of the evolution of this *beracha*, but it is sufficient to note that it has been expanded in a period that extends from the 8th to the 13th or 14th century. Perhaps a more significant example of an earlier *beracha* is the one concerning heretics (*"Ve-lamalshinim"*). Again

I will start with the shorter version. This one is from the Cairo *Geniza*, dating from the 6th or 7th century and representing *Nosach Eretz Yisrael* (the Palestinian version)

למשומדים אל תהי תקוה ומלכות זדון מהרה תעקר ותשבר בימינו. בא"י שובר רשעים ומכניע זדים.

May the apostate Jews have no hope and may the evil kingdom be uprooted quickly and be destroyed in our day. Blessed are you, o Lord, who destroys evildoers and forces villains to surrender.

This is a very short version that refers to a specific situation, presumably that of individuals who converted to Christianity.

Another version:

למשומדים אל תהי תקוה אם לא ישובו לתורתך, הנצרים והמינים כרגע יאבדו ימחו מספר חיים ועם צדיקים אל יכתבו. בא"י מכניע זדים.

May the apostate Jews have no hope if they do not return to your Torah, may the Christians and heretics instantly perish, may the days of their lives be erased and may they not be counted among the righteous. Blessed are you, o Lord, who forces villains to surrender.

Here we have the phrase "if they do not return to your Torah", that is, if they do not repent. Furthermore, both Christians and other heterodox people are included with the prayer that they "instantly perish, may the days of their lives be erased."

Here is an additional version:

למשומדים אל תהי תקוה ומלכות זדון מהרה תעקר ותשבר ותכניע בימינו והנצרים והמינים כרגע יאבדו וכל אויבי עמך וצורריהם מהרה יכרתו ושבור עול הגויים מעל צורתינו..(צוארינו?). בא"י שובר רשעים ומכניע זדים.

May the apostate Jews have no hope, may the evil kingdom be uprooted quickly and be destroyed, and may you force it to surrender in our day. May the Christians and heretics instantly perish and may the enemies of your people and those who are hostile to it be quickly sent to their deaths, and may you break the yoke of the Gentiles that weighs upon our bodies (necks?). Blessed are you, o Lord, who destroys evildoers and forces villains to surrender.

Once again we see that, at each stage in the development of the *beracha*, additions have been made. The original version started with *meshumadim* (apostate Jews), and then *notzrim* (Christians) and *minim* (heretics) were added. Next, the phrase *oyvei amcha ve-tzorereihem* (the enemies of your people and those are hostile to it) was introduced. Here again we see that, even in this *bracha*, which we consider a well-crystallized part of the *amidah*, there has been a constant evolution. The early, brief text was expanded and at each stage, and in each region, in accordance with the particular sufferings of the Jews in a particular community, additional

sections appeared. When the Jews felt that they were being persecuted, they spoke of *ve-chol oyvei* (and all the enemies of...).

To give yet a third example, let us look at *birkat ha-shanim* (the blessing of the years).

1. ברכינו ה' אלקינו בכל מעשה ידינו, בא"י מברך השנים.

1. Bless us, o Lord, in all our endeavors. Blessed are you, o Lord, who blesses the years.

2. ברכה עלינו ה' אלקינו את השנה הזאת לטובה ולברכה וברכה כשנים הטובות ותן ברכה במעשה ידינו. בא"י מברך השנים.

2. Grant us this, o Lord: Bless this year so that it will be a good and blessed year. Bless it as you have blessed all the good years. Impart a blessing on our endeavors. Blessed are you, o Lord, who blesses the years.

3. [ברך עלינו ה'] אלקינו השנה הזאת לטובה כל מיני תבואתה וקרוב לנו מהרה שנת גאולתנו ותן... ומטר וטל ברצון על פני האדמה ושבע עולמך מברכותיך. בא"י מברך השנים.

3. [Grant us this, o Lord] our G-d: Bless this year so that it will be a good year. Bless all its crops and quickly bring near the year of our redemption. Grant ... welcome rain and dew for the surface of the earth and grant that your world will be satisfied with your blessings. Blessed are you, o Lord, who blesses the years.

4. [ברך עלינו ה' אלקינו את השנה הזאת לטובה ואת כל מיני תבואתה] ותן טל ומטר על פני האדמה למען שמך ושבע את העולם כולו מברכות טובך ורוה פני תבל מעושר מתנות ידיך ושמרה והצילה ה' אלקינו את השנה הזאת מכל מיני משחית מכל מיני פורענות וחוס וחמול ורחם עלינו ועל כל פרותיה ותהא לאחריתה שבע ושלוה וברכה כברכת השנים הטובות ותן ברכה במעשה ידינו כי אל טוב ומטיב אתה. בא"י מברך השנים.

4. [Grant us this, o Lord our G-d: Bless this year so that it will be a good year. Bless all its crops] and grant dew and rain for the surface of the earth for the sake of your name, and grant that the entire world will be satisfied with the blessings of your bounty. Saturate the surface of the world with the wealth of the gifts of your hands. Guard and save this year, o Lord, from all kinds of destroyers, from all kinds of disasters. Treat us and all the fruits of this year with pity, mercy and compassion. May the year end in abundance, peace and a blessing like the blessing of all the good years. Bless all our endeavors because you are a good G-d who grants good things to others. Blessed are you, o Lord, who blesses the years.

Again, even in what we would regard as one of our standard liturgical texts, which we think of as having been crystallized at the time of Simon Hafakuli, according to the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Megillah, page 17b, in the Tanaitic period, we see that nonetheless it was changed and altered and that it evolved, with the result that currently there are a number of different versions of this text. Hence the differences between the Ashkenazic version, the Sepharad version, Nosach Adot Hamizrach (version used by Oriental Jews), etc.

One cannot, therefore, speak of a single crystallized version of the liturgy. In fact, even within the Sepharad and Oriental versions and that of the Hasidim there are numerous versions, as one can see from the following example, again from the *amidah*.⁶

- .1 והעלה רפואה שלמה לכל מכותינו.
1. And provide (lit. raise up) complete healing for all our wounds.
- .2 והעלה ארוכה ורפואה שלמה לכל מכותינו.
2. And provide (lit. raise up) a balm and complete healing for all our wounds.
- .3 והעלה ארוכה ומרפא לכל תחלואינו ולכל מאובינו ולכל מכותינו.
3. And provide (lit. raise up) a balm and complete healing for all our ills and all our pains and all our wounds.
- .4 והעלה ארוכה ומרפא לכל תחלואינו ולכל מאובינו רפואה שלמה לכל מכותינו.
4. And provide (lit. raise up) a balm and a cure for all our ills and all our pains, complete healing for all our wounds.
- .5 והעלה ארוכה ומרפא לכל תחלואינו ולכל מאובינו רפואה שלמה לכל מכותינו.
5. And provide (lit. raise up) a balm and a cure for all our ills and all our pains and all our wounds, complete healing for all our wounds.

There are certain *berachot* (blessings) that are particularly disturbing to women nowadays, and, of course, especially to feminists. Perhaps one of the most famous is one of the three *berachot* that we say in the morning, *she-lo asani isha* (that he [that is, G-d] did not make me a woman). It is particularly disturbing because the Tur (Rabbi Jacob ben Asher, 1268-1340), in explaining the meaning of this particular *beracha*, or even more so in explaining what *she-asani kirtzono* (that he [that is, G-d] made me in accordance with his will) means, states that, when women say the latter *beracha* (the female version for the prayer) they have to come to terms with the unfortunate situation of their status. In other words: "What can we do? - This is the way that the Lord created us." Indeed, Rabbi David Abudarhim says that, in reciting the female version of the prayer, Jewish women are performing *zidduk ha-din* - making peace with their divinely decreed "sentence," ("Siddur shel Hol," Jerusalem, 1907, pp.39-40). We know that this prayer was very offensive to many women. Some rabbis were keenly aware of this, so much so that a very important *halachist* (expert in Jewish law) of the late 18th century, Rabbi Aaron ben Abraham Wermish (Worms) of Metz would say it silently, because he considered it offensive to women to say it out loud.⁷ And, closer to our own times, Rebbetzin Rayna Batya, wife and granddaughter of prominent eighteenth and nineteenth-century rabbis – she was married to the Netziv (Rabbi

Naftali Zvi Judah Berlin) is said to have been deeply offended by this blessing. Rabbi Baruch Halevi Epstein (author of the *Torah Temima* and son of the Aruch Hashulhan), writes in his memoirs, *Mekor Baruch*, (part 4, chapter 46, section 3 [Vilna, 1928, p.981], as cited by Ross, *ibid.* pp.37-38):

How bitter was my aunt, that, as she would say from time to time "every empty-headed ignorant man," every ignoramus who hardly knew the meaning of the words and who would not dare to cross her threshold without first obsequiously and humbly obtaining her permission, would not hesitate to boldly and arrogantly recite to her face the blessing of *shelo asani isha*. Moreover, upon his recitation of the blessing, she was obliged to answer "Amen."

"And who can muster enough strength" she would conclude with great anguish, "to hear this eternal symbol of shame and embarrassment to women?"

But there were also various attempts at different times to "rectify" this situation. We are not speaking about contemporary times, changes suggested by representatives of Conservative, Liberal or Reform Judaism. We are speaking of classical times. Thus, for example, we find that, in the late 15th century, specifically in the year 1476, Rabbi Abraham Farisol wrote a prayer book in Ferrara, Italy, which can now be found at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) library in New York, and he gives alternative versions for these *berachot* : *baruch she-asani isha* (blessed is he who made me a woman) instead of *kirtzono* (in accordance with his will). This was a private *siddur* (prayer book). He was a scribe and he presumably wrote such *siddurim* (prayer books) for wealthy Renaissance Jewesses who specially ordered them. He also wrote there:

ברוך... שלא עשני אמה ושפחה.

Blessed art thou who has not made me a slave and a concubine.

And in a second *machzor* or prayer book for festivals, which was written two years later, in 1478, and a very beautiful, illuminated manuscript of which is to be found in the Jewish National Library in Jerusalem, we read

ברוך... שלא עשני אמה. ברוך... שעשני אשה ולא איש. ברוך... שלא עשני גויה.

Blessed art thou who has not made me a handmaiden. Blessed art thou who has made me a woman and not a man. Blessed art thou ... who has not made me a Gentile woman.⁸

These three blessings, which we normally say in the *shaharit* (morning) prayer services, are found in the Tosefta,⁹ and are actually parallel to Greek benedictions that are found in Greek classical sources, specifically in the writings of Plato and Aristotle and in other Greek sources from the 5th century B.C.E. :

Blessed art thou who has made me an Athenian and not a barbarian.
Blessed art thou who has made me a man and not a woman.
Blessed art thou who has made me a free man and not a slave.

Since the Jewish prayers were offensive to women, alternative versions were written as early as the 15th century in Italy. These versions actually repeat themselves at a later period in other places such as Bavaria; they were used and apparently were quite acceptable.¹⁰ So, when we ask ourselves about the legitimacy of change, we can demonstrate that, at all times, changes in the liturgy did take place. Sometimes there were minor changes, sometimes there were additions, and sometimes completely new prayers were formulated.

Let us consider the example of a fairly recent, and completely new, prayer. On *Tu Bishvat* some of us said a special prayer written by Rabbi Joseph Haim of Baghdad, the Ben Ish Hai, one of the major *halachists* of the late 19th and earlier 20th centuries. Let me just read you a few passages from this text:

אנא ה' הושיעה נא, היום הזה לאילן, הוא ראש השנה. אנא ה' הצליחה נא, היום הזה לאילן, הוא ראש השנה. אנא ה' הרויחה נא, היום הזה לאילן, הוא ראש השנה. אנא ה' הטיבה נא, היום הזה לאילן, הוא ראש השנה. אנא ה' ברך נא, היום הזה לאילן, הוא ראש השנה.

Dear G-d, please rescue us, on this day dedicated to trees, on this New Year's day. Dear G-d, please help us succeed in our endeavors, on this day dedicated to trees, on this New Year's day. Dear G-d, please provide us with prosperity, on this day dedicated to trees, on this New Year's day. Dear G-d, please be our benefactor, on this day dedicated to trees, on this New Year's day. Dear G-d, please bless us, on this day dedicated to trees, on this New Year's day.

We recognize that this passage is based on the Hallel, the song of praise that we recite on festivals and on *Rosh Hodesh* (New Moon); Rabbi Joseph Haim has, in effect, introduced a new type of Hallel for the trees, on this festival of the trees. This is the beginning of the year for the trees *ראש השנה לאילנות*. And then he continues:

ויהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלוקינו ואלוקי אבותינו, שתברך כל מיני האילנות, ויוציאו פרותיהם בריבוי שמנים וטובים, ותברך את הגפנים, שיוציאו ענבים הרבה שמנים וטובים, כדי שיהיה היין היוצא מהם מצוי לרוב לכל עמך ישראל, לקיים בו מצות קידוש ומצות הבדלה בשבתות וימים טובים. ויתקיים בנו ובכל ישראל אחינו, מקרא שכתוב (קהלת ט, ז): "לך אכול בשמחה לחמך, ושתי בלב טוב ייניך, כי כבר רצה האלקים את מעשיך."

And may it be your will, dear G-d, our Lord and the Lord of our ancestors, that you bless all the different varieties of trees and may they bring forth an abundance of luscious, wholesome fruit. Bless the grapevines, so that they may bring forth an abundance of luscious, wholesome grapes; so that the wine produced from them may be available in abundance for all the members of your people Israel; and so that they will be able to perform on Sabbaths and festivals the commandment of sanctifying the wine and the commandment of blessing the wine at the Havdala service signifying the end of the Sabbath or festival. For us and all our Jewish brothers and sisters, may the following verse from Ecclesiastes (9:7) become a reality: "Go forth, eat your bread with a happy soul and drink your wine with a joyous heart, because your actions have found favor in G-d's eyes."

So, whole new prayers were written by completely normative Jews, great authorities, in this particular case, a great leader of Sephardic Jewry, in order to give new meaning to specific days or events. And in the case of *Tu Bishvat*, Rabbi Joseph Haim felt there was not enough within the existing liturgy, and wishing to upgrade it, he penned a new prayer. Indeed, this was by no means an innovation, for this practice is encountered in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, when whole books of additional prayers were written to complement the existing liturgy. So, then, if the text of our liturgy is not really formally and finally crystallized, and since we see that, in all periods, additions, changes, alterations and updatings were made, why can we not continue in this liturgic tradition and add our own prayers to the "standard" liturgy in order to suit the contemporary situation? Why can we not add Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah to the *berachot*? Why should we not add additional sections in order to make our prayers more feminist?

The problem is that we have texts in the Talmud - in Tractate Berachot of the Babylonian Talmud - and in the Tosefta to the Berachot Tractate that seem to suggest that we cannot alter the *nosach*, or version, of the liturgy that the rabbis of old instituted; these prayers are referred to as "the coin our Sages minted" - מטבע שטבעו חכמים .

Maimonides, in his *Mishneh Torah*, where he presents the laws governing prayer (*Hilchot Berachot*) (1.5) writes as follows:

ונוסח כל הברכות עזרא ובית דינו תקנום. ואין רשאי לשנותן ולא להוסיף על אחת מהן ולא לגרוע ממנה. וכל המשנה מוטבע שטבעו חכמים בברכות אינו אלא טועה. וכל ברכה שאין בה הזכרת השם ומלכות אינה ברכה.

The version of all the benedictions was established by Ezra and his *beit din*, (his rabbinical court) and it is not suitable that we change, add to, or subtract from any of them, and anybody who deviates from the "coin that our Sages minted" - that is, from the version of the prayer our Sages instituted - errs, and every beracha that does not mention the name of God, and his Kingship is not a beracha.

And in the section on the *Kriyat Shema* prayer (*Hilchot Kriyat Shema*) (1.7), he says much the same thing:

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 ב"ברוך" אינו רשאי שלא לחתום, ומקום שהתקינו שלא לחתום אינו רשאי לחתום. מקום שהתקינו שלא לפתוח ב"ברוך" אינו רשאי לפתוח, ומקום שהתקינו לפתוח אינו רשאי שלא לפתוח. כללו של דבר – כל המשנה מוטבע שטבעו חכמים בברכות הרי זה טועה וחוזר ומברך כמטבע.

These benedictions that we have mentioned above, in addition to all the other benedictions that all the communities of Israel say, were established by Ezra and his rabbinical court and no one is not permitted to subtract from them or to add to them.

He then goes on to say that there is a certain basic structure to our *berachot*. They need to have a beginning, and an end and so on, and we must keep to this general structure:

Where our Sages ruled that we must end the prayer with “Blessed are you, O G-d,” that is how we must end the prayer. Where our Sages ruled that we must not end the prayer with “Blessed are you, O G-d,” that is how we must end the prayer. Where our Sages ruled that we must not begin the prayer with “Blessed are you, O G-d,” that is how we must begin the prayer. Where our Sages ruled that we must begin the prayer with “Blessed are you, O G-d,” that is how we must begin the prayer. The rule of thumb is that, if we deviate from the “coin that our Sages minted” - that is, from the version our Sages instituted – we are committing an error and we must repeat the prayer, following the Sages' version.

These rulings of Maimonides are based on a passage from the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berachot, p. 40b, where, inter alia, Rabbi Yossi says that, if we deviate from the version fixed by the Rabbis for the benedictions, we have not fulfilled our duty with regard to the benedictions. And in the Jerusalem Talmud, Tractate Berachot (9 ad init., 12d), we read: “You have no right to add to the formulation fixed by the Sages – אין לך רשות להוסיף על מטבע שטבעו חכמים – All of this would seem to be completely in contradiction with everything that has been said above. For we have seen that, *de facto*, throughout all the generations, in all communities, the greatest of authorities changed, added to, and subtracted from, the “received” version (*matbe'a shetavu*). Indeed, it is difficult to speak of a “received” version when you read all these different ones and you see that there are, in fact, many versions.

In our own era, we have a *Nosach Ashkenaz*, and a *Nosach Sefarad*, as well as a *Nosach Teiman* (Yemenite version), a *Nosach Haleb* (Aleppo version), a *Nosach Adot Hamizrach* (Oriental version), etc. The *nosach* depends to a large extent on the *siddurim* used by the community. When they were printed in Livorno, (Leghorn) they followed one version, and when, they were printed in Constantinople (Kushta) they were printed in another way. What really determined the *nosach*, perhaps more than the rabbis themselves, were the printers and their editions.

Maimonides addressed this apparent contradiction between the formal *halacha* (Jewish law) and factual evidence in a number of different responsa, and, in order to understand the halachic situation, we cannot limit ourselves to the brief formulations that are found in the *Mishneh Torah*; we have to refer to the expanded discussions in his various responsa.

We have already seen that he has two different formulations. In Hilchot Berachot, he says - ואין ראו “it is not suitable” and, in Hilchot Kriyat Shma, he says ואין אדם רשאי “and a person is not permitted.” These would seem to contradict one another. However, this is not the case. For, in Hilchot Kriyat Shma, he is saying that one cannot alter the structure of the *berachot*, and he

explains in detail how the *berachot* have to have a beginning, an end, and the name of G-d and his sovereignty. If the *berachot* are not structured in this fashion, then they are null and void. In the first passage that we read, he is talking about something different. He is saying that, within the given structure of a *tefillah* (prayer) or a *beracha* (benediction), alterations, additions or omissions are unsuitable, although the prayer or benediction will still remain within the accepted structure. In other words he is explaining and interpreting the phrase in the Talmud that says that no one is permitted to alter (לשנות) *matbe'a shetavu hachamim*, namely that no one may alter the structure of the benediction that was determined and established by the Rabbis.

Thus we begin - ברוך אתה ה' אלוקינו מלך העולם - "*Baruch Ata Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha-Olam*" (Blessed are you, o G-d, our Lord and King of the Universe), and we end with ברוך אתה ה' שומע תפילה "*Baruch Ata Hashem Shomea Tefilla*" (Blessed are you, o G-d, who hears our prayers). In all those versions which we cited from the *amidah*, we saw that the general structure was always preserved and was not changed, although, within that given structure, many additions and alterations have taken place. In one of his responsa, Maimonides was asked about the Jews of Alexandria, who insert in their Friday night prayers sacred poems (*piyyutim*), which are included in Saadya Gaon's *Siddur*. The questioners said that they had heard that he objected to this, and they wished to understand his position (ed. Blau, no. 181, p.487).

The upshot of his reply is that these *berachot* represent a deviation from the version the rabbis established and that this version may not be changed. According to Maimonides, these *piyyutim* should not be recited instead of the *berachot*. However, he concedes that, if people pray in this fashion with the various additions, then they have certainly carried out what is required of them as far as the benedictions are concerned (הרי יצא ידי חובת ברכות), because the original intention of the benediction is still to be found in this expanded version (כי כוונת הברכות שמורות הן). He adds that this point has already been discussed in many other of his responsa.¹¹

Indeed, there are other responsa in which Maimonides discusses the issue of performing what is required concerning the benedictions (הרי יצא חובת ברכות) e.g. ed. Blau no.254, pp. 465-466, and no.207, p. 363. In fact, there are four other different responsa in which Maimonides talks about this issue. Now, I think that the key, the crux, the most important part, is what he says at the very end, i.e. if the initial, original intent and meaning of the *beracha* is still being preserved, then, *de facto*, (*be-diavad*), one has fulfilled the duty of saying the *beracha*. What Maimonides is telling us is as follows: Ideally, we should certainly keep to the original version. מטבע שטבעו חכמים בברכות. We are certainly not permitted to change the structure - the beginning, the end, the *Shem u-Malchut* (G-d's name and sovereignty) etc.¹²

But if we make additions, even though perhaps it is not really the right thing to do, and not wholly suitable; if our additions do not change the intrinsic meaning of the *beracha*, (see responsum no.254, p.465: “However, this does not apply to the *piyutim*, which introduce new matters and include many things that have nothing to do with the topics of the liturgy” ואין כמו הפיוטים אשר הם ; תוספת עניינים והבאת דברים הרבה שאינם מעניין התפילה if they add, expand, and relate to a specific situation that may not have existed when the *beracha* was originally composed, then one does not have to repeat the *beracha* (יצא ידי חובת ברכות).¹³

So when we demonstrate that, throughout all the generations, there have been changes, modifications, additions, subtractions, and expansions of *berachot*, and that new *tefillot* were written that related to specific situations, according to Maimonides, this is legitimate provided that we do not change the structure of the *beracha* and we do not alter or obscure the original intent of that *beracha* and its primary meaning. Thus, when we recite a *beracha* about G-d accepting our prayers, we have to preserve the element of שומע תפלה “*shome'a tefillah*” (hears our prayers), שמע קולנו “*shma koleinu*” (hear our voices) and מברך השנים “*mevarech hashanim*” (blesses the years). Similarly, if we are talking about *lamalshinim* (regarding the informers), we may add or change the term to *Notzrim* (Christians), because this too is in accordance with the same basic concept, and we may end with *machnia zedim* (forces villains to surrender), etc. For here again we have not changed the original intent of the *beracha*.

Let us look a little further and a little more searchingly into this issue. The Tosefta to Tractate Berachot (4.4-5; with parallels in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berachot, p. 40b, and the Jerusalem Talmud, Tractate Berachot, 10.2) reports the following controversy:

Rabbi Meir says: “Even you see a loaf of bread and say, 'Blessed is he who created this loaf, how beautiful it is' – this is its blessing (i.e., this is a legitimate blessing). If you see figs and say: 'Blessed is he who created these figs; how beautiful they are' – this is their blessing. Rabbi Yossi says: “Anyone who changes the formulations that the sages formulated has not fulfilled the obligation of saying the required blessing (לא יצא).”

Apparently Rabbi Meir permits, *de facto* (*be-diavad*) , a completely new formulation, while Rabbi Yossi rejects any change in existing blessings.

The Jerusalem Talmud (ibid.) continues:

Rabbi Jacob, son of Aha, quoting Samuel, said: “The *halacha* [correct view of this Jewish law] is in accordance with the view of Rabbi Meir.” And that too is the opinion of Rav. [We learn this from the following story:] “Once a certain Persian came to Rav [and said], 'When I eat my bread, and not knowing how to recite the blessing, I say: "Blessed is he who has created this piece of bread." Have I fulfilled my obligation?' He [Rav] said to him: 'Yes.'”

Compare the story presented in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berachot, p. 40b.

Rabbi Hai Gaon (cited in *Sefer Ha'eshkol*, part 1, p. 72) follows Rabbi Meir's ruling, and so too does the view found in Maimonides (*Hilchot Hayerushalmi*, p.40, Tosafot of Rabbi Judah to the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berachot – ibid. etc.

Since the Jerusalem Talmud rules in accordance with the view of Rabbi Meir, and since the Babylonian Talmud has no clear ruling on the subject, most *poskim* (rabbinical authorities) follow the Jerusalem Talmud, and thus permit changes and new formulations. Even those few who reject this view are willing to overlook small changes. Indeed, the Tashbetz (Rabbi Simon Ben Zemach Ibn Duran, cited in *Responsa Teshuva Me-ahava*, by Rabbi Eliezer Flekeles, no.90) is of the opinion that the prohibition against changing formulations refers only to the beginning (פתיחה), the end (חתימה), or the basic kernel of the beracha. (עיקר הברכה).¹⁴

It is true that, at various times, there have been attempts to establish an absolute crystallized form of the *berachot*. Thus, for example, in 13th century Ashkenaz, in the period of Hassidei Ashkenaz, Rabbi Judah the Righteous (*Yehuda Hahassid*), a great Ashkenazic rabbinical authority in his era, was said to have claimed that he had received a tradition from Moses at Sinai that each of the *berachot* in the amidah and all the other berachot that we say all have a specific number of words, and even letters, and that there were books and manuals that told you the number of words that each blessing had to have, and the verses in the Bible to which they refer and which have the identical number of words and/or letters, or have the same *gematria* (sacred numerological value),_etc.¹⁵ This was a kabbalistic (mystical) approach, which was also an attempt to crystallize, standardize, and finalize the *nosach* of the *tefillah* (of the liturgy) so that no more radical changes could be made. According to Rabbi Judah, one was limited to the formula of the exact number of words or even the number of letters in each beracha. The Tur mentions that his father, the Rosh (Rabbenu Asher), had such a *kontras* (book) in which were listed all the "codes" needed to understand the number of letters or the number of words in each of the *berachot*; the Tur cites these "codes"¹⁶: However, Rabbi David Abudarhim, in the 14th century, one of the dominant authorities in formulating the *Nosach Sefarad*, writes "I have read what the Tur says and I can tell you that I have been in numerous synagogues and no two synagogues pray in the same fashion and have the same *nosach*. And I think it is a waste of time to try to establish the *gematria*_(numerological value), the number of words, or the number of letters in each *beracha* because no two *kehillot* (communities) have the same tradition". Therefore each Jewish community will have its own version of prayer. The Rema (Rabbi Moses Isserles) states that "there are so many entrances (12 *shearim*) that reach the Kisei ha-Kavod

[heavenly seat], and, regardless of your liturgical version, your prayers will go through their respective entrance (*shaar*) and will reach the divine seat of G-d."

So, when I am asked questions such as "To what extent may we add elements in our prayers? or "What method can be used for incorporating additional prayers?" or "Can we add new elements to existing prayers? or "Can we mention the *imahot* (foremothers) in addition to the *avot* (forefathers)?," I see the answer as very simple: "It is all completely permissible". Adding completely new prayers where one is not changing *matbe'a shetavu chachamim* - because that would amount to a new creation, a new composition - is certainly permitted. Adding words or phrases to an established *beracha* is less acceptable, according to Maimonides, but if the basic content is not changed, one who recites such a *beracha* does not have to repeat it in its previous form (*yatzah*). The question might therefore be more a sociological one than a *halachic* one. How do new prayers or new additions become accepted? Is it because they were written by great authorities like Rabbi Moses Cordovero, the *Ari HaKadosh* (the Holy Ari, Rabbi Isaac Ben Solomon Luria), or the Ben Ish Hai? Surely "*Lecha Dodi*," which we recite on Friday night in the synagogue, is accepted by everybody, and that was a new creation.

Can we nowadays sit down and decide to add to, subtract from, change or formulate new *berachot*, such as *she'asani isha velo ish* (who has made me a woman and not a man), *shelo asani ama?* (who has not made me bondswoman)? *Halachically*: Yes. *Sociologically*: Will it be accepted and by whom? That is a completely different question, which a sociologist will have to confront, not a *halachist*. Many of the changes that have come about, or that are coming about, will, in any case, gradually become accepted without a full awareness of the fact. For, if you look at modern *siddurim*, such as Artscroll, Rinat Yisrael, or Koren, they include many changes, of which most people are not fully aware, but which have become fully accepted mainly because they are in a printed edition. For the printed book is the canon. And even its mistakes have been canonized. See, for example the brief introduction by Koren in the *machzorim* of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, where the publisher pointed out that he tried to print certain *piyyutim* in a different fashion in order to eradicate mistakes, errors that were made in earlier *machzorim*. And the truth is that nonetheless all who chant these *piyyutim* from the "corrected" *machzorim* do so in the wrong fashion, because they cannot free themselves from what they are used to.

So, *halachically*, it would seem to be quite permissible to make changes provided one does not alter the overall content and the overall structure of the *beracha* or prayer.¹⁷ Traditionally what has happened is that these changes came about either through a great authority, such as, for example, Hassidei Ashkenaz, the Ari Hakadosh, and Ben Ish Hai, or because a kehilla *en masse* decided to adopt a certain change. Sometimes these changes come from the "top", i.e., a leading

authority, and sometimes they come from the "bottom" i.e., the community itself. To bring about such changes is by no means easy. Nowadays, you will not find many "tops" who are willing to make these types of changes for a variety of reasons that do not need to be spelled out. On the other hand, the hope or the challenge is that - if numerous congregations are willing to be creative, struggle against the trend and adopt for themselves new modes of prayer, making these changes within the parameters that we have pointed out - eventually these changes will be accepted, maybe not across the board, but certainly within a certain sections of the Jewish Orthodox community.

So, I think that, in the same way as great revolutions have taken place in the last 30-40 years in *limud torah* (torah study) on the part of women, which at one time was anathema and now is almost universally acceptable, and in much the same way that there are more and more *kehillot* that are developing and adopting certain elements of egalitarian prayer, in different degrees, so too, if we begin to make these changes in our various *kehillot*, gradually they will gain acceptance in ever wider circles. It should be borne in mind that, in any case, there is no standard version of Jewish liturgy¹⁸, that, for instance, Yemenites pray differently from Ashkenazim, and Halabim (Syrian Jews) differently from Moroccans. Therefore we should not, and need not, seek unanimity in our liturgy. So there will be yet another *nosach* of *tefillah*, one that will be acceptable within the context of modern-day Orthodox feminist thinking, and which hopefully will gain ever wider legitimacy.

¹ The best introduction to the history of the Hebrew prayer book remains to this day Ismar Elbogen's *Ha-Tefillah be-Yisrael be-Hitpathutah ha-Historit* (translated from the original German, Leipzig, 1913; edited by Y. Amir, and revised and updated by J. Heinemann, Tel Aviv, 1971). A useful addition to this is Stefan C. Reif's *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer: New Perspectives on Jewish Liturgical History* (Cambridge, 1993). Invaluable information is to be found in N. Wieder's *The Formation of the Jewish Liturgy in the East and the West* (two volumes, Jerusalem, 1998; in Hebrew). Partial Hebrew bibliographies on studies of prayer were published by J. Tabory in *Areshet* 4 (1984), 101-112; *ibid.* 5, 1985, 85-112; *idem*, *Siddur Hanau*, (with Meir Rafeld; Bar-Ilan University, 1994), pp.55-86.

² See my remarks in *Minhagei Yisrael* 1 (Jerusalem 1989), 13, note 8.

³ See I.J. Cohen's classic study, *Seder Kabbalat Shabbat u- Pizmon Lecha Dodi* (Jerusalem, 1969), republished in his *Mekorot ve-Korot* (Jerusalem, 1982), pp. 74-106.

⁴ Such as, for example, *Shaarei Tziyyon*, by Rabbi Natan Nata Kanover, ed. Prine. Prague 1642, (Tefillot ve-tikkunim al pi Kitvei ha-Ari), which has been republished over fifty times! And in a similar genre we find *Likkutei Tefillot*, based on the Teachings of Rabbi Nachman of Braslav, edited by his disciple Rabbi Natan Sternhart (two volumes; Breslau 1824-1827). There are innumerable examples of single prayers or collections of prayers written by rabbis both in the East and the West, a subject that requires further research and documentation.

⁵ See Y. Luger, *Tefillat ha-amidah le-Hol al pi ha-Genizah ha-Kahirit* (Jerusalem, 2001), pp.167, 135, 105-106, and his detailed discussions following the text and apparatus. On the Palestinian liturgy as revealed in the Cairo Geniza in general, see. E. Fleischer, *Eretz-Israel Prayer and Prayer Rituals as Portrayed in the Geniza Documents* (Jerusalem, 1888; in Hebrew).

⁶ See M. Medan's article "Nusach 'Sefarad' ve- shel Hassidim: Tivo ve-gilgulav", *Tagim* 5-6 (Jerusalem, 1975) 117-126, and especially 118.

⁷ *Beer Sheva: On the Blessings of Shabbat and Eruvin* (Mainz, 1819). And see most recently Rabbi Dr. Joel S. Wolowelsky, *Tradition* 29:4 (Summer 1995), 61-68, and again in his *Women, Jewish Law and Modernity: New Opportunities in a Post-Feminist Age* (Hoboken, 1997), pp. 14-84, who also advocated following this suggestion. His view was vigorously rejected by Rabbi Emanuel Feldman, *Tradition*, ibid. 69-74, who stated that doing so "became a daily confession to or accusation that is not true; that there is something intrinsically offensive to women in this *beracha*." Feldman instead suggests "Interpreting it properly". Feldman's view was followed by Rabbi E.B. Halivni, in his recently published *Distinctions between Men and Women in Halakha* (Jerusalem, 2007), English sect., pp. 8-10. However, Feldman's "proper interpretation" of the *beracha* is not that of the Tur, nor apparently that of Rabbi Aharon Worms (Wermish); their interpretation actually seems to be the *peshat* (straightforward interpretation) for it parallels the other two *berachot*: "who has not made me a Gentile" and "who has not made me a slave". Thus, saying it silently, while not perhaps an ideal solution, certainly indicates sensitivity to the feelings of others.

See further Rabbi Moshe Meiselman's discussion in his *Jewish Woman in Jewish Law* (New York, 1978), pp.49-51, who writes, inter alia:

The woman, when reciting her blessing, acknowledges that the role differentiation implicit in her exemption from certain mitzvot [i.e. the time-related ones, *mitzvot aseï she-ha-zeman geraman*] is part of the overall divine plan for the world, whose justification lies in the will and wisdom of God.

He further quotes a passage from the *Hinah Siddur* (Jerusalem & New York, 1932), relating to the three morning blessings:

These three aspects of our own [male] status impose upon us duties much more comprehensive than the rest of mankind. And if our women have a smaller number of mitzvot to fulfill than men, they know that the tasks which they must discharge as free women are no less in accordance with the will and the desire of God than those of their brothers. Hence their blessing is "who has created me in accordance with His will."

These are the sort of arguments – apologetic – put forward to explain, or justify, such blessings. See further Tamar Ross, *Expanding the Palace of Torah: Orthodoxy and Feminism* (Hanover and London, 2004), p.38, on Rabbi A.I. Kook's justification for this blessing.

⁸ See Y. H. Kahn's article, "*Baruch she-Asani Isha*", in *Baruch she-Asani Isha?*, ed. D.Y. Ariel, M. Leibovitz, Y. Mazor (Tel Aviv, 1999), pp. 124-126 [in Hebrew].

⁹ Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berachot 6 (7). 18, ed. Lieberman, p.38; parallels in Jerusalem Talmud, Tractate Berachot 9.2, 13b; Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Menahot, p. 42b, etc. See S. Lieberman, *Tosefta ki-fshutah*, vol.1 (New York 1955), pp.119-121, with bibliographic references. Lieberman himself is somewhat skeptical of the Greco-Hellenistic influence on these *berachot*.

¹⁰ Kahn, *ibid*.

¹¹ ויורנו בדבר מה שנהגו באלכסנדריא בלילות שבת ומוצאי שבתות לומר במעריב ברכות שחיברו המאחרים אשר מצאנו בסידור רב סעדיה גאון זצ"ל מקיימות והתיר לאומן... ושמענו שבמושבו הגדול ירומם הוא מגנה אותן ומונע לאומן. לא ידענו התשובה: אלה הברכות כולן יש בהן שינוי ממטבע בברכות והן מסוג החיזון המפורסם בכל הארצות, ועיקר זההסיבה בזה המנהג שידבק בו הדבק לפי קביעת החזנים, לא לפי קביעת תלמידי החכמים. סוף דבר, אסור לשנות בברכות מן המטבע שטבעו החכמים ולא להחליפן באחד מאותם הפיוטים אשר חיברום המאחרים. ואם יתפלל המתפלל הברכות בליל שבת ומוצאי שבת הרי יצא ידי חובת ברכות, כי כונות הברכות שמורים הן. וכבר התקנו זאת פעמים מספר בתשובות.

Or additions of *piyyutim* within *berachot*; see Elbogen *ibid*. pp.153-173, 210-265. Strong disapproval to the insertion of *piyyutim* within *berachot* is found in the writings of the Geonim of Babylonia and onwards. See Elbogen *ibid*. pp.226, 227, 449 notes 60-64, 70-74. See Tur Orah Hayyim sect. 68 and Beit Yosef *ibid*., Maaseh Rav of R. Eliyahu of Wilna sect. 127, all of whom express their dissatisfaction with these inserts. However, as Elbogen rightly points out, even these formidable authorities could not undermine the authority of these *piyyutim*, and cause them to be removed from the liturgy. See further Laurence Hoffman, *The Canonization of the Synagogue Service*, Notre Dame & London 1979, pp. 68-71, and pp.78-80 on Saadiah's Siddur.

¹² For further details on the structural requirements of the different kinds of *berachot*, see (B) Z. Groner, *Berachot she-Nishtaku* (Jerusalem, 2003), pp. 16-28.

¹³ A somewhat similar view is held by the Raavad but in a slightly different context. The question raised in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Pesachim, p. 7a&b, and Tractate Berachot, p. 38a&b is whether one formulates certain *birchot ha-mitzvot* (benedictions over performing a mitzvah) with *la'asot, levarech, litol* (lulav) etc., or with *al asiyat, al birchat, al netilat*. And in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berachot, *ibid.*, the question is raised whether, on eating bread, one should say *ha-motzi* or *motzi*. The issue is which of these formulations suggests a past activity - *al asiyat, motzi* (= *hotzi*) - or a future activity - *la'asot, levarech* etc. And concerning the search for *hametz* before Passover, the question was whether one should say *le-vaer* (future), or *al biur* (past). The Raavad states that, if you say *le-vaer*, you have certainly fulfilled the halachic requirement (*yatza*). However, a priori – *melechatchila* - you should say *al biur*. See Rabbi David Bagno's recent article, "Matbe'a Birchot ha-Mitzvot (laasot o al ha-asiya)," *Magal* 15 (2007), 32-33.

¹⁴ See Groner's discussion, *ibid.*, pp.22-25

¹⁵ See what I wrote in *Minhagei Yisrael* 1, .18, note 15, and 122-133; 2, (Jerusalem, 1991), 157-188. See also *Tur Orah Hayyim* sect.113. On Kabbalistic elements in our liturgy, see H. Hallamish, *Kabbalah in Liturgy, Halakhah and Customs* (Ramat Gan 2000). [In Hebrew].

¹⁶ Cited in the Beit Yosef commentary on *Orah Hayyim*, sect.113.

¹⁷ This is the conclusion of the Kesef Mishe (by Rabbi Joseph Karo, author of the *Shulhan Aruch*) in his commentary on Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, Laws Governing Blessings, no. 6, answering the question asked by the Ramah (Rabbi Moshe Hacohen), who saw a contradiction between two statements by Maimonides (see above). The Kesef Mishne brings further proof for this conclusion from the issue discussed in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Brachot, p. 40b, where the shepherd Benjamin changed the version of the first paragraph of the Grace after Meals. See most recently the discussion and summary of this issue in M.M. Shiloni, *Shomea umashmia*.

¹⁸ A good example of the complex evolution of a prayer in Amoraic times is to be found in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sota, p. 40a:

בזמן ששליח ציבור אומר מודים, העם מה הם אומרים? אמר רב: מודים אנחנו לך ה' אלוקינו על שאנו מודים לך. ושמואל אמר: אלקי כל בשר על שאנו מודים לך. רבי סימאי אמר: יוצרינו יוצר בראשית על שאנו מודים לך. נהרדעי אמרי משמיה דרבי סימאי: ברכות הודאות לשמך הגדול על שהחייטנו וקיימתנו על שאנו מודים לך. רב אחא בר יעקב מסיים בה הכי: כן תחיינו ותחנונו ותקבצינו ותאסוף גלוייתינו לחצרות קדשיך לשמור חוקיך ולעשות רצונך בלבב שלם על שאנו מודים לך. אמר רב פפא: הילך נמרינהו לכולהו.

We see then that the prayer that we call *Modim de-Rabanan* is actually a conflation of five different versions suggested respectively by Rav, Samuel, Rabbi Sinai, Nehardai, and Rabbi Aha Bar Yaakov. Rav Papa suggested blending them into one united prayer that would include all these different elements. See what I wrote in *Minhagei Yisrael*, vol.2 (Jerusalem, 1991), 23-24. In the Jerusalem Talmud, Tractate Berachot 1.5 we find additional versions:

.... ר' סימאי: מודים אנחנו לך אדון כל הבריות אלקי התשבחות צור עולמים חי העולם יוצר בראשית מחיה מתים שהחייטנו וקיימתנו וזכיתנו וסייעתנו וקרבתנו להודות לשמך. בא"י אל הודאות. רבי בא בר זבדי בשם רב: מודים אנחנו לך שאנו חייבים להודות לשמך תרננה שפתי כי אזמרה לך ונפשי אשר פדית. בא"י אל הודאות. רבי שמואל בר מינא בשם ר' אחא: הודייה ושבח לשמך לך גדולה לך גבורה לך תפארת יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלקינו ואלקי אבותינו שתסמכנו מנפילתינו ותזקפנו מכפיפותינו כי אתה סומך נופלים וזוקף כפופין ומלא רחמים ואין עוד מלבדך. בא"י אל הודאות. בר קפרא אמר: לך כריעה לך כפיפה לך השתחויה לך כריעה לך תכרע כל ברך תשבע כל לשון לך ה' הגדולה והגבורה והתפארת והנצח וההודו כי כל בשמים ובארץ לך ה' הממלכה והמתנשא לכל לראש והעושר והכבוד מלפניך ואתה מושל בכל ובידך כח וגבורה לגדל ולחזק לכל ועתה אלקינו מודים אנחנו לך ומהללים לשם תפארתך בכל לב ובכל נפש משתחוין כל עצמותי תאמרנה ה' מי כמוך מציל עני מחזק ממנו ועני ואביו מגזולו. בא"י אל הודאות. אמר ר' יודן: נהגין רבנן אומרים כולהו. ואית דאמרי: או דא או דא.

Here again we see a number of different versions, with one opinion that all the versions should be read, presumably in a conflated manner, and another that some say one while others say another (see L. Ginzberg, *A Commentary on the Palestinian Talmud*, vol.1 [New York, 1941], pp.186-187). The passage from the Jerusalem Talmud is cited in the Tosafot for Tractate Sota, p. 40a).

Rabbi Joseph Karo, in his Beit Yosef commentary on *Tur Orah Hayyim*, 127, writes:

I have found it written that it is called *Modim de-Rabbanan*, because it was formulated on the basis of many sages' [statements] (לפי שהוא תיקון הרבה חכמים).

The above example demonstrates the state of fluidity of this prayer up to the later Amoraic period. Many more such examples could be cited, and it could further be demonstrated that such processes continued on into much later generations; however, that would be beyond the scope of this study. See Reif's discussion, pp.123-206.

For a single example of an addition in the Kaddish prayer, see Hallamish, *ibid.*, pp. 619-626, who ends this chapter with a significant quote from S.Y. Agnon's *A Guest for the Night* (p.95):

...they differ as to the versions of the prayer and quarrel over each custom that a person brings from his city as though it is from Sinai, and make a fight over "*ve-yatzmach purkanei ve-yekarev meshichei*", and there are those who add "*ve-yekarev ketz meshichei*." Master of the Universe, send us the Messiah so that at least we may be freed of this (i.e. these squabbles).