

SERVICE INSERTS

- i. Women of Reform Judaism has given us permission to reprint the following meditation and prayer, and we encourage your congregations to consider including them in your *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut/Shabbat* or other Israel/*Shabbat* services.

“Mine, In Every Sense”

My eyes
wandered in the wilderness
over the same rocks and crags and hazy-blue distant peaks
that countless numbers have viewed before me.

My hands
touched Herod's stones,
cold in the *Shabbat* night air,
yet warmed by the prayers of centuries.

I tasted
my own tears for the military heroes, 13, 17, 18 years old,
row upon row,
and for the named and nameless victims of a horror that
chilled and numbed me.

I smelled
the cool pine of forests lovingly planted tree by tree,
and marveled at the expanse of barren land
still untouched.

Pride swelled my heart
as a thousand blue and white flags snapped in the wind
and the roar of F-15s overhead vibrated my very being.

Shame touched me
for our marshmallow existence contrasting so sharply with
the sacrifices of pioneers past and present.

Joy overcame me,
tickled me, made me laugh, watching young
and old celebrate
freedom in song and dance.

Awe grabbed me,
beckoned me, pulled at me, realizing
how many have struggled
and yet will struggle for survival of an ideal,
a principle, a homeland.

At every turn my senses were bombarded, saturated.
My cup ran over with abundant milk and honey
and I savored every overwhelming drop.

I felt a struggle, a war with my own senses,
longing for rest, yet unable to resist the
treasures awaiting me.

If I forget thee O Jerusalem...
How could I possibly?
You are mine, in every sense.

(Covenant of The Spirit, Women of Reform Judaism, 2005.)

“Prayer For Peace”

Grant us strength, God,
to bring peace to Your world.

Guide our hands to dismantle injustice;
hone our ears to hear others’ cries.
Blunt our tongues from uttering malice;
blind us not, God, open our eyes.

Then can we reach out in friendship;
our hearts will listen for pain.
Then we will speak only kindness;
and we’ll walk without apathy’s cane.

Grant us strength, God,
to bring peace to Your world.

(Covenant of the Soul, Women of Reform Judaism, 2000.)

2. We reprint here the blessings that were offered in our booklet, *Our Israel: A Reform Response*

Nisim Yisraelim Sh'b'chol Yom—Israeli Miracles that Occur Each Day

(The following blessings were composed during July and August, 2006 by Israeli staff members at the URJ Kutz Camp in Warwick, NY.)

I love Israel because of the wonderfully sweet watermelons I get in Israel every summer. Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, creator of Israeli watermelons.

AMEN

I love that in Israel my Romanian grandparents exchange recipes with their Yemenite neighbors in Hebrew. Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who made Israel a mixture of Jewish cultures from all over the world. AMEN

I love Israel because all Israeli citizens share a unique existence and a bond which need not even be spoken. Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, for making Israelis unlike any other people in the world. AMEN

I love Israel because I know that I am always at home—a ben bayit—when I am in my friends’ houses; we are like each others family.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who made all Israelis care for one another. AMEN

I love Israel because when I walk down the street with my arms full of food every week to go to a friend's house for *Shabbat* dinner, the streets are filled with others doing the same.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, making *Shabbat* in Israel a *Shabbat* like no other. AMEN

I love Israel because the sense of camaraderie, built on our successes and travails, is the greatest in the world.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, that gave us the place to build our lives together. AMEN

I love Israel because it is the only place in the world where people who are so different can unite in such an amazing way around one simple thing—*hov'vei tzion*, a love of the State of Israel.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has united the Jewish people in the Jewish homeland. AMEN

I love Israel because on Sunday morning, I go to the train station, show my military ID and when I get on the train I find that it is filled with so many other soldiers like me returning to duty after *Shabbat*, that we have to sit on the floor.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, the guardian of Israeli soldiers. AMEN

3. Here are two readings: one for before the *Yotzer* prayer, the first of the two prayers before the morning *Shema*, and the other before *Ahava Rabah*, the blessing immediately preceding the morning *Shema*.

(Before the *Yotzer*)

For us, as Reform Zionists, Israel is once again a source of hope. As a people with a sovereign state, we are no longer merely speaking truth to others who wield power: we now have the opportunity and imperative to use power as a force of good. As we bring our values to bear on our collective national venture, our tradition calls on us to seek a higher standard for nation-building and policy-making, and to let Torah lead us towards being an exemplar for the world. When we gather from the four corners of the earth, will we hold our heads high, ever ready to do the difficult work of tempering power with righteousness?

Or chadash...It is taught that within each of us resides Holy sparks of Divine light. As Israel, we are a People with a mission. As Israel, we aspire to nurture the holiness within. As Israel, we gather our sparks into a great light—and work to direct that light for a holy purpose. In Israel, we have a locus for the gathering of our People's light and the chance to shine a light of holiness for the world. A new light once again shines from Tzion. May we work towards the day when each of us is reflected in that light.

Or Chadash al Tzion ta-ir v'nizkeh kulanu m'beirab le-oro. Shine a new light on Zion that we all may swiftly merit its radiance.

(Before the *Ahava Rabah*)

V'havi-einu l'shalom...Gather us in Peace.
Not fleeing persecution, But seeking wholeness
May we turn towards Zion
Not with bent backs, But with heads raised
Above the fray

Seeking justice, pursuing peace
Holding ourselves up
To Your highest standards

V'havi-einu l'shalom mei-arba kanfot ha'aretz v'tol'cheinu kom'miyut l'artzeinu

More than half of our People's children now live in Israel. *V'havienu L'shalom...* God, gather the children of Israel, here and in our Land, as one family. Here and in our Jewish State, Your People Israel are brothers and sisters—united with a common past and a shared destiny, even as each of us has a unique relationship to You and Your Torah. Help us reach across borders and boundaries, joining our greater Jewish family in building a nation that will ever be a source of pride and hope. Bind us together in love and purpose. Renew in us the will to engage in our People's national effort in the State of Israel, that our children and grandchildren will inherit a nation that will lead the way towards a better world.

IYUNEI TEFILLAH

Excerpted from “*Mishkan Tefilah* and Israel: Some Reflections,” by Rabbi Mark Washofsky, Professor at HUC-JIR, Cincinnati.

(The complete article is available at www.arza.org/6030.)

The prayerbook, as we know, is more than simply a collection of liturgical texts; it is in many ways the most “official” formulation of Jewish theology that we have. Recited on regular occasions by individuals and communities in their acts of devotion toward the *Kadosh Baruch Hu*, the texts of the *siddur* serve as a kind of *balachab* of Jewish theology, an indicator of those ideas and principles to which the people Israel has committed itself in its understanding of God, of itself, and of its history. This is true of both the traditional *siddur* and of our Reform prayerbooks.

Given that *Mishkan T'filab* is appearing during the year that we mark the sixtieth anniversary of the independence of the State of Israel, it is fitting to consider how this *siddur* understands Israel. We would ask, in general, just how this prayerbook teaches the role that Israel plays, or does not play, in the religious worldview of Reform Judaism?

What is new or different in *Mishkan T'filab's* treatment of Israel? We again find a special service for *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut* (pp. 538-553), although unlike the *Gates of Prayer (GOP)* version, which was a regular prayer service including the reading of the *Shema* and the *Tefilah*, [and even *Hallel*], this one is a ritual that stands on its own and that can be conducted outside the framework of the regular liturgy. One fairly dramatic change is *Mishkan T'filab's* restoration of some traditional liturgical passages that were excised from virtually all previous Reform prayerbooks. Chief among these is the phrase *vehavi'einu l'shalom...*, “Gather us in peace from the four corners of the earth and lead us upright to our Land,” which appears in *Abavab rabab*, the blessing immediately preceding the morning *Shema* (pp. 62, 230, and 456). This phrase, an expression of the traditional Jewish hope of *shivat Tziyon*, “the return to Zion,” was anathema to classical Reform ideology. The same is true with *Or chadash al Tziyon ta'ir*, “Shine a new light upon Zion,” that since Geonic times has appeared in *Yotzer*, the first of the two benedictions preceding the morning *Shema*. It would appear that we Reform Jews are no longer embarrassed about giving utterance in our prayer to what has come to be known as the Zionist dream.

In other respects, though, *Mishkan T'filab* pulls back, at least just a bit, from the Zionist passion of its predecessor. Gone is the inclusion of *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut* in *ya'aleh v'yavo* [traditionally reserved for the Toraitic pilgrimage festivals]; in its place, the day is mentioned by way of an insert into the *Birkat Hoda'ab*, the “blessing of thanks” (*modim anachnu Lakb*) in the *Tefilah* (p. 555). This equates Israel Independence Day with the “rabbinically” ordained festivals of *Chanukah* and *Purim*, which are also mentioned traditionally in *Birkat Hoda'ab*, rather than with the *Yamim Tovim*. This surely represents a more appropriate, less presumptive conception of the day's religious status.¹

We are therefore left to ask, what precisely, *is* the role of the State of Israel in our religious worldview according to our new *siddur*? One might say that the book seeks to enunciate a reasonable middle ground. Where the *Union Prayer Book* mostly ignores Israel, and where the *GOP* exalts it above the status it arguably should enjoy, *Mishkan T'filah* affirms the state as a positive good while refusing to identify this political entity with the dawn of the Messianic Age,² a claim advanced much too glibly by some Jewish religious extremists. Personally, I'd go a bit farther than that. I think that *Mishkan T'filah* teaches us to be Zionists in the best sense of that term. It intends, in the words of "*Ha'Tikvah*," that our eyes should gaze eastward, toward Zion. It would have us express our own spiritual longings in the traditional language of Jewish national rebirth. It instructs us to place the Land of Israel, along with the people of Israel, at the center of our religious concerns. And it beseeches us to love the State of Israel—not, to be sure, blindly or uncritically, not with a zeal that obscures its reality as a political construction of and by flesh-and-blood human beings—but to love it nonetheless, to pray for its security, to work for its betterment, and to see it as the embodiment of the age-old hopes and dreams of our people.

Is that, ultimately, *Mishkan T'filah's* message concerning Israel on this, the 60th anniversary of the State's independence? We don't yet know, of course. It is a question that must be decided over time by our communities as they pray from this book, discuss and argue its content, and ask whether they find themselves and their Judaism reflected in its pages. But if it turns out that this *is* the message, that this is the sort of Zionism to which this *siddur* is committed and to which it would have us aspire, then I think that *Mishkan T'filah* will serve very well as *our* prayerbook.

Notes

1 Moreover, the fact that the ritual for *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut* is no longer a full-fledged "service" is also in keeping with these liturgical models. A festival is the subject of its own special *Tefilah* in our liturgy; even *Rosh Chodesh* gets its own version of *Musaf*. *Chanukah* and *Purim*, by contrast, do not warrant their own "services" but are marked by special ceremonies, rituals, and inserts into the standard *Tefilah* of the days on which they occur. In this way, too, *Mishkan T'filah* portrays *Yom Ha'atzma'ut* as more like *Chanukah* and *Purim* and less like the Toraitic festivals.

2 True, *Mishkan T'filah* does reproduce the "Prayer for the State of Israel" composed in 1948 by the Israeli Chief Rabbinate (p. 552), which refers to the state as *reisbit tz'michat g'ulateimu*, literally "the beginnings of the sprouting forth of our redemption." The translation in our *siddur*, however, renders the phrase as "the dawning of hope for all who seek peace," which arguably blunts the claim that the state's founding was guided by God and is part of God's plan for the Jewish people.