A Divine Tapestry

Reading the Siddur, Reading Redemption, Reading Yeshua[1]

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Liturgy and ritual stand at the center of Jewish constructions of theology – especially concerning the topic of redemption.[2] The Siddur, as the text of Jewish ritual, is also a canonical statement of rabbinic hermeneutics in which the rabbis build and shape rabbinic thought through liturgical reconfiguration of scripture. The Siddur presents this multivalent hermeneutical system in short, repetitive, poetic phrases which can be easily memorized (even by people who do not understand Hebrew – the *Shema*, *Adon Olam*, and *Alenu* being central examples of this phenomenon). In this paper, I will explore Jewish views of redemption and an articulation of Yeshua's role in that redemption from the horizon of the Siddur with particular focus on the Sabbath morning liturgy. I will focus on *Shacharit LeShabbat* for two reasons. First, in contrast to the Haggadah, the Sabbath morning liturgy portrays God's interaction with Israel and the world *for* Israel's redemption as a tapestry of interwoven themes of which *yezi'at Mitzraim* (the Exodus) is central. Second, the Sabbath morning liturgy is one of the major axes of our community's prayer life. In both the messianic Jewish world and the broader Jewish community, Sabbath morning worship is one of the more frequently attended services and serves as the locus for a number of life-cycle events such as Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

[1]I would like to thank Troy Bronsink, David Dault, Mark Kinzer, Deborah Pardo, Paul Saal, and Tzvi Sadan for their careful reading of this paper and many provacative comments and help suggestions for revision.

[2]As we remind ourselves and teach our children at Passover: "*vayotzi'enu Hashem mimmitzraim* – and Hashem brought us forth from Egypt." Jewish memory functions as *anamnesis* wherein every Jew in each generation participates in the history of his or her ancestors as a *present* reality. One prominent example is the conviction that every Jew throughout time was present at the giving of Torah at Sinai (e.g. *b. Ned.* 8a). The Passover liturgy is but one of several arenas in which we recite the divine drama of redemption and invite the next generation to participate with "us" in this redemption. For the notion of recital and anamnesis as prominent categories of Jewish memory see Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), 5-26 in particular.

In the first major section of this paper, I will examine the Sabbath morning liturgy looking for language of redemption in the central prayers of each section. As a whole, I view the Siddur as presenting a complex tapestry of interwoven (though not always interconnected) themes about redemption which presents a complex vision of God's work of redemption. Broadly speaking, I understand redemption to be the transformation of life circumstance by God.[3] In this exploration, I will examine the individual threads of thought about redemption which make up the detail of the tapestry of the Siddur.[4] I will conclude my exploration by stepping back and looking at the tapestry as a whole in order to detail the overall picture of redemption in the Sabbath morning service. Next, I will explore how we might understand Yeshua's role in redemption from the horizon of the liturgy. How does Yeshua enter the picture of the tapestry itself? Or from another perspective I will ask, "How does the liturgy read Yeshua?" I will use these questions to help problematize existing articulations of Yeshua in the messianic Jewish community suggesting some new trajectories for our thinking about redemption. I will then conclude with a few suggestions about how we might "read" the liturgy from the horizon of our messianic convictions and integrate our messianic convictions into our prayer life in a way that is consistent with the pattern of our community. But before I begin, I will make a few additional comments about the role of liturgy in articulating Jewish theology and the particular theological method I employ in this paper.

Liturgy and Theological Method

Because of its central role in articulating Jewish thought, liturgy has often been the place to develop innovative theologies in the broader Jewish world. In 800 CE, during the Gaonic

[3]Here I am betraying my own theological proclivities for understanding redemption as centrally God's work; quite a different paper could be written by exploring *our* role in redemption from many horizons within classical and contemporary Jewish thought.

[4]Note that I will be looking beyond the complex of terms built around the root gimel, aleph, lamed (to redeem) to search out language which speaks of a broader pattern of redemption.

period, Amram Gaon utilized the opportunity presented by a letter from Spain requesting liturgical guidance to assert the predominance of the Babylonian custom over that of Palestinian regarding the regularized fixed form of prayer. Amram's reply led to the first comprehensive ordering of the prayers.[5] After the Expulsion, Isaac Luria and his colleagues in Safed re-read the Siddur in Kabbalistic terms as an arena for reuniting the fallen sparks of creation through prayer. The followers of the Baal Shem Tov further developed these liturgical practices in the Ashkenazi world. In a different direction, the Reform movement used the writing of prayer books in America in the late 19th Century to express their distinctively rationalist American theology. Works such as Isaac Mayer Wise's *Minhag America*, David Einhorn's *Olat Tamid*, and the *Union Prayer Book* articulated Reform Jewish identity instep with broader social movements of the period and Reform commitments to articulating distinctively American Jewish identity. In the 20th Century, Mordechai Kaplan and the Reconstructionist movement released several influential prayer books which gave liturgical expression to Kaplan's rationalist and naturalist theology and his rejection of Jewish election.[6]

What Kaplan, the Reformers of the 19th Century, Luria, and Amram Gaon have in common is that they used the liturgy of their community as the language through which to communicate their theology. They all understood that subtle adjustments and modifications in rabbinic form can lead to subtle shifts in the hermeneutical horizon of the prayers and to the birth of new theology. A prominent example of this phenomenon in the Reconstructionist movement is the replacement of the *chatimah* (closing phrase of a benediction) for the second benediction of the *Shemoneh Esreh – mechaye hammetim* (who gives life to the dead) with the decidedly less

[5]*Seder Tefilot uBerachot shel Shanah Kalah* (known alternately as *Yesod Ha'amrami* or *Seder Rav 'Amram*); see Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*, translated by Raymond P. Scheindlin (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1993), 275.
[6]Most recently see the Reconstructionist prayer book series; David Teutsch, ed., *Kol Haneshamah Prayerbook Series* (Elkins Park, PA: Reconstructionist Press).

supernatural *mechaye hakkol* (who gives life to all). This simple replacement subtly shifts the theology of the whole benediction from a statement of God-as-supernatural-being who controls the life and death of all of creation to one about God-as-life-force who sustains creation.

The examples from these four time periods also illustrate three other features of the role of the Siddur and liturgy in the life of the Jewish community. First, what we do and say in worship shapes our community. By getting the Spanish communities to follow Babylonian custom, Amram Gaon cemented a relationship of authority of the Babylonian Academies over the Sephardic communities. Second, liturgy is inherently pluriform. Though the basic forms of the services are fixed, they nevertheless have acquired various accretions and modes of reading the prayers that reflect different (and often competing) constructions of Jewish theology. Third, all of our above thinkers and movements assume to some degree that the Siddur is the central place to learn rabbinic theology for the wider Jewish community. Now at this point, I must pause because, in America, many Jewish people are neither affiliated with a synagogue nor attend services on a regular basis. This being said, I contend that the *most likely place* at which they would gain exposure to Jewish religious thought is in worship. Therefore, in addressing the questions of Jewish thought, liturgy is a logical starting point in the horizon of the tradition from which to articulate innovations in Jewish thought for worshipping communities.

Traditionally, much of the theology done in the wider messianic Jewish world has been of the *translation* type whereby "transcultural" elements of the *besorah* (Good News) are translated into a "Jewish context." This is the theological legacy of the missions movement. I suggest that the Hashivenu Forum is engaged in a far different theological task – that of doing theology from an *anthropological* horizon.[7] By anthropological, I mean (quite broadly)

[7]See Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, Faith and Culture Series (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992). Bevans defines another essential feature of the Anthropological model is its use of "the insights of the social science of anthropology" (48); Anthropological modes of theology are self-conscious (in ways which translation models are

approaching theology from the horizon of one's own community and its shared religious and cultural values. We see this shift clearly expressed in the topic of this year's forum:

> Redemption in the Jewish perspective refers to the renewal of Israel, all humanity, and the cosmic order. As Messianic Jews, *we share this view with our fellow Jews*. However, for us Yeshua is central to the accomplishment of this redemption. What exactly is Yeshua's role in the Divine scheme of redemption? (emphasis is mine)

We are concerned with articulating our understanding of Yeshua's identity and mission from the broader horizon of Jewish perspectives on redemption. Engaging in liturgical theology is inherently anthropological because it views the lived praxis of the community as the arena within which and out of which to construct and retell the community's narrative of theological identity, particularly its understanding of redemption.

Redemption in the Shabbat Morning Liturgy

Liturgical Structure as Archetype of Redemption

In charting the structure of morning worship, two predominate metaphors are often used to describe the service. One relies on understanding the service as a progression into the throne room of the Holy King with each stage being a different section of the king's palace, each section more restricted and holy then the previous ones. A second metaphor for understanding the prayer service which is more helpful for our current task is the morning worship service as reenactment of the drama of our journey to Sinai to receive revelation from God.

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not) of the sociological dimension of theology. Note that this tension is apparent in Jews for Jesus' trenchant critique of the UMJC and Hashivenu in the October 2003 issue of *Havurah* (Rich Robinson and Ruth Rosen, "The Challenge of our Messianic Movement, Part 2: Us and Them," *Havurah* 6 (2003): 1-6) and in Paul Saal's and Richard Nichol's critiques of Jews for Jesus in the Hartford Courant (Frances Grandy Taylor, "The Gospel Truth?" 2002) and the Jewish Advocate (Letter to the Editor, "Can be a Jew, Embrace Jesus," 10/20/02) respectively.

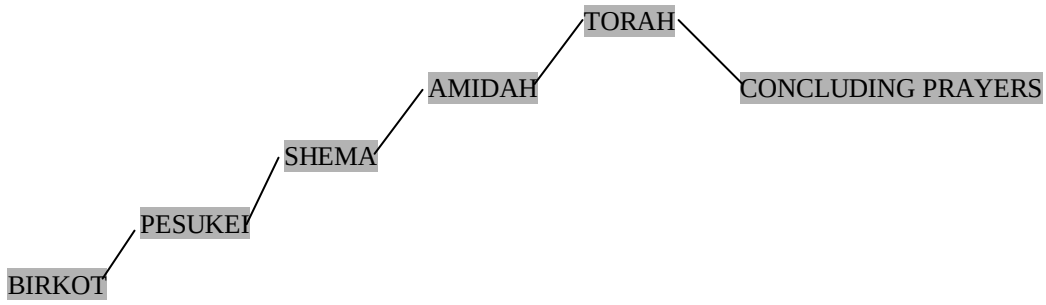

Figure 1 – Shape of the Sabbath Morning Service

In ***Birkot Hashachar***, we prepare for our journey to see the King. We announce whom we are coming to worship and prepare ourselves for worship. In ***Pesukei Dezimra***, we sing songs which speak of God's past engagement with us along the way to the mountain of revelation – particularly *Ashre* and *Shirat Hayyam*. In the ***Shema* and its Blessings** and the ***Amidah*** sections, we declare whom we are worshiping and offer our sacrifice of prayer as we ascend the mountain. In the **Torah Service**, we hear from God through the Torah, the Haftorah, and the Brit Chadashah as God meets us on the peak of the mountain, affirms covenant and reveals Torah. Finally, in the **Concluding Matters**, we journey back down the mountain to live out that word in God's creation; we work in expectation of the day when God's kingdom will be fully realized on earth.[8] The service becomes a dramatization of a schema which envisions covenant and revelation as the culmination of God's redemptive action. God delivers us from Egypt not so we might be freed slaves, but so that God might make particular commitments to us and we might make particular commitments in return – most notably *Avodat Hashem* (the service/worship of God; e.g. Exodus 7:16).

[8]Note that traditionally on Sabbath morning, the *Mussaf* is the central prayer of the section I referred to more generally as "Concluding Matters."

Birkot Hashachar

Birkot Hashachar (the blessings of the morning) is the section of the service one prays upon waking and preparing for the day. In its earliest formulation, *Birkot Hashachar* centered on a section of blessings and a section of study. *B. Ber.* 60b describes the ritualization of these blessings to correspond to each action of the morning from preparing for the day to prayer to study. The *Birkot Hashachar* (here in reference to the blessings for the morning and not the section as a whole) consist in their standard, Ashkenazi orthodox formulation of 14 blessings said responsively in Ashkenazi custom.[9]

The first blessing locates the whole set in the liminal space between day and night. God is the one who gave understanding to humanity "to distinguish between day and night."[10] Beginning the set of blessings this way reflects rabbinic concern for the tenuousness of night for human well-being. The rabbis perceived night and the liminal period that delineates it from day as times when humans are at risk and need God's protection. This is one of the reasons why we pray *Hashkivenu* during the *Shema uBerachot* section of the Maariv service. This blessing makes us aware of the fragility of life and God's role in protecting it.

Modern Jewish movements, such as Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist, have attempted to address the particularity and male centered character of blessings two through four (the three *shelo asani* blessings). All three movements have reformulated these three blessings to reflect their own particular uneasiness with the notions of Jewish election and ancient (misogynist) conceptions of the hierarchical relationship of men and women. Nevertheless, these three blessings in their classical formulation (the first two in particular) have a number of things to tell us about rabbinic understandings of God's redemptive interaction with Israel. The first

[9] Rabbi Nosson Scherman, *Siddur Qol Ya'aqov: The Complete Artscroll Siddur* (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publishers, 1984, 2001), 18-21.
[10]Possibly as a statement of response to God's questions to Job in Job 38:36.

blessing of these three (*shelo asani goy*; and second of the blessings as a whole) stated in positive terms refers to Israel's particularity, their chosen position in relationship to God. Israel's relationship with God anchors God in the history of the world, particularly with regard to Israel's redemption. The second blessing of the three has been positively stated in *Siddur Sim Shalom* (Conservative), *Kol Haneshamah* (Reconstructionist), *Ha'avodah Shebalev* (Israeli Reform), and *the Gates of Prayer* (Reform) as "*she'asani ben/bat horim* – who has made me free" (in classical formulation "*shelo' 'asani 'aved* – who did not make me a slave"; the third blessing of the blessings as a whole). Freedom is fundamental to Jewish self-definition. Liberation from slavery – particularly from Egypt – provides a narrative upon which to model all further statements about what it means to be redeemed. Because someone prays this prayer as a freely created person reflects positively Israel's ongoing state of liberation from its origins in slavery.

Blessings five to fifteen move into the realm of God's activity vis-à-vis particular groups of people. Much of the language from the *chatimot* in this section is borrowed from the Psalms, particularly Psalm 146:3. These blessings function as a liturgical restatement and expansion of this text. The language of these *chatimot* combined with the rhetoric implied in the first four *chatimot* brings forth themes and language that will reappear throughout the rest of the service. They anchor the threads which will be woven together to form the beautiful tapestry of the prayer service. They picture God as a being intimately engaged in transforming the difficult circumstances of humanity. God "opens the eyes of the blind," "clothes the naked," "frees the captive," "straightens the bent," and "gives strength to the tired." The God of Israel engages in redemption which entails a radical overturning of the circumstances of humanity. These themes are interwoven with statements of God's activity in creation (who spreads out the land on the waters; cf. Psalm 136:6), in the life of Israel (girds Israel with might, crowns Israel with glory),

and in the daily life of the person praying this prayer (provided for my every need, firms people's footsteps, removes sleep from my eyes). God's acts of liberation, as expressed through a radical overturning of life's circumstances, stand in balance to God's ongoing activity in creation, the world, and the life of the person praying the prayer. The tension between these two horizons in *Birkot Hashachar* highlights the notion that redemption is fundamentally a function of God's ongoing work to consummate creation.[11]

Pesukei Dezimra

In *Pesukei Dezimra*, we adorn God with unfettered praise. Structurally, the core of *Pesukei Dezimra* is the Daily Hallel (Psalms 145-150) with other psalms included as well. *Baruch She'amar* introduces the section while *Yishtabach* in all its various permutations concludes it. On Sabbath a number of special psalms and songs are added. In our search for language of redemption in the Siddur, I will focus my exploration of *Pesukei Dezimra* on Psalm 145, *Baruch She'amar*, and *Yistabach*. Additionally, I will also explore Psalm 136, *Shirat Hayyam* and *Nishmat Kol Chai*, which are added to *Pesukei Dezimra* on Sabbaths and festivals.

Pesukei Dezimra begins and ends with summary paragraphs, known respectively as *Baruch She'amar* and *Yishtabach*. Central to both paragraphs is the theme of God as creator. God as Creator "endures to eternity" and actively maintains the creation that came into being through God's speech. This God, self-revealed to our ancestors, deserves, in the words of *Yishtabach*, "song and praise, lauding and hymns, power, and dominion, triumph, greatness and strength, praise and splendor, holiness and sovereignty, blessing and thanksgivings." The

[11]R. Kendall Soulen, in *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), argues that much of Christian theology has articulated redemption as the end of God's work in creation rather than consummation of creation as redemption's final goal. He points out that this move has disastrous consequences for understanding Israel's ongoing place in the world. Israel can then be easily superseded, and a theological argument can be constructed in which Israel has no ongoing covenantal life.

language for this onslaught of praise on the creator God is principally the words of David, the psalmist *par excellence* in Jewish tradition.

In addition to the focus on praise of God as creator in these two prayers, God is also named as the one "who redeems and rescues" (*podeh umatzil*) in *Baruch She'amar*. Both verbs evoke the Exodus from Egypt and other acts of divine rescue in the Hebrew Bible. In Exodus 13, *podeh* is the central verb of *Pidyon Haben* (redemption of the first born; the ritual designed to commemorate *Yeziat Mitraim*) and is associated with the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The unspoken assumption for Jews praying *podeh umatzil* is that the Jewish people are the locus of God's redemptive activity as in days past. Redemption, then, is subordinated, in *Baruch She'amar*, to God's activity as creator. Redemption is the creative process whereby God, as sovereign, rights what is wrong in creation through ongoing maintenance (and in an eschatological sense consummation) of creation specifically expressed in God's redemption of Israel.

Psalm 136 is part of a complex of psalms and prayers between *Baruch She'amar* and the start of the Daily Hallel with *Ashre*. In *b. Pesach.* 118a, Psalm 136 is referred to as *hallel haggadol*. There R. Joshua b. Levi compares "these twenty-six [verses of] 'Give thanks' . . . to the twenty-six generations" between when God created the world and when God revealed the Torah. During this time, God "sustained them [these generations] by his love." R. Joshua b. Levi makes this exegetical inference because of the enduring character of God's love declared in the refrain *Ki le'olam chasdo*. Again in Psalm 136, the focus of praise is two-fold. The adoration of God in Psalm 136 begins in a declaration of God's position in the world, as king and creator, and then moves in verse 10 to the particularity of God's action in the life of Israel. For the writer of Psalm 136, the archetypal event of God's redemptive activity in the life of Israel is the Exodus and eventual conquest and settlement of the land of Canaan. The land is "a heritage

for Israel . . . that in our lowliness, God remembered us . . . and released us from our tormentors" (136:22-24). The psalm then returns to God's role as creator who "gives nourishment [bread] to all flesh" and who is "the God of the Heavens" (136:24). God's activity as redeemer is bounded by God's activity as creator. God's redemptive activity in the life of Israel is the particular, grounded expression of God's care for all creation.

The liturgical formulation *Ashre* expands Psalm 145 to include prefatory verses from Psalms 84:5 and 144:15 and a concluding verse from Psalm 115:18. These prefatory verses set the agenda of this prayer as an act of a community whom God blesses in their relationship with God. The practitioners of the praise enumerated in this psalm are described variously as "those who dwell in your house," "the people for whom this is so," and "the people whose God is the LORD." Certainly Christian communities read themselves into these groupings, but the original intent of the psalm is that this is the praise of Israel. Its location in the liturgy suggests that it is fundamental to the Jewish people's praise of God. This psalm is itself an acrostic, suggesting the completeness of praise by the use of the whole Hebrew alephbet (except nun). This psalm is one of the key psalms of the liturgy. Here it begins the Daily Hallel (Psalms 145-50) and is part of both the Torah and Minchah services. Traditionally, then, it functions as a primary psalm in the Jewish people's daily declaration of praise to God.[12]

Rhetorically, the song focuses on I-Thou language. The psalmist directs his praise towards God personally (vv. 1-16), and then concludes by turning to those around him to tell them about this God with whom he has this relationship (vv. 17-20). Reuven Kimelman outlines the structure of Psalm 145 thematically.[13] In Kimelman's structure, the psalmist's prelude in

[12]For many people the importance of Psalm 145 is highlighted by the custom of saying Psalm 145 as a preface to *Keriat Shema uBerachot* and the *Amidah* when praying an abbreviated version of the morning service.
[13]"Ashre: Psalm 145 and its Rhetorical Structure," pp. 31-39 in *My People's Prayer Book, Tradition Prayer, Modern Commentaries: Volume 3, P'sukei D'zimrah (Morning Psalms)* ed. by Lawrence A. Hoffman (Woodstock,

verses one and two locates the song as the singular and perpetual praise of the psalmist. The first stanza (3-6) centers on God's greatness as described by the use of *gadol* (3 times), *gevurah*, *kevod*, *niflah*, and *nora*. The second stanza (vv. 7-9) shifts the focus of the psalmist's praise to a meditation on God's goodness, which is emphasized by the use of *tov* twice and other words from its semantic range (*tzedeqah*, *rachum*/*racham*, *chesed*). Verse 8 in particular piles on the adjectives to overwhelm the listener with the reality of God's goodness in the psalmist's life – *Chanun verachum Hashem, erekh appaim ugdal-chased*. Attentive listeners will recognize a close correspondence between this verse and God's self-disclosure to Moses in Exodus 34:6 after the golden calf incident.[14] Following an interlude (v. 10) in which the psalmist declares how God will be blessed by creation and his faithful ones, the psalmist declares God's kingship in the third stanza (vv. 11-13; note the appearance of *malchut* three times and its synonym *memshelah* once). The final, fourth stanza (vv. 14-21)[15] appears in two parts. In part A, the psalmist declares to God how God's benevolence is enacted in the world. In part B, the psalmist declares to the listener (note shift from second to third person) how God engages the world. Both parts of this stanza evoke the declarations about God from the middle section of *Birkot Hashachar*. Again God's actions to redeem creation are a function of God's royal divinity. God as king engages in nurturing, restoring, and consummating his kingdom even on the margins, where people are hungry and stumbling. These declarations about God lead the psalmist to invite the listener into a position "near" to God (v. 18) and to utter God's praise in expectation of "all creatures . . . bless[ing God's] holy name forever and ever" (v. 21).

Kimelman also notes that these stanzas alternate between God's transcendence (1 and 3) and God's immanence (2-4), while the prelude, interlude, and postlude move respectively from

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NY: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1999); adapted from Kimelman, "Psalm 145: Theme, Structure, and Impact," *JBL* 113 (1994): 23-44.

[14]There God passes before Moses and declares "*Hashem el rachum vechannun erekh appaim verav-chesed veemet*."

[15]Note that at this point I am departing slightly from Kimelman's structural outline.

the individual to the community to all of creation blessing God. This meta-structure suggests not only the careful composition of the psalmist and the previously mentioned artistic effect of declaring God's nature with the fullness of the Hebrew language but also reflects how this writer understood the God of Israel's engagement with Israel and the wider world. The God of Israel seeks to provide for the whole world, but the locus of that activity is in the community of those who fear him, those committed to *yirat hashem* (see *Modeh 'Ani* and Proverbs 1:7). God's transcendent kingship is particularized and made real in God's ongoing, immanent relationship with the Jewish people.

Shirat Hayyam (the Song at the Sea) follows the conclusion of the Daily Hallel and a passage from Nehemiah.[16] Like *Nishmat Kol Chai* to follow, *Shirat Hayyam* is Israel's unbridled praise. In this case, the song is a liturgical response of Israel to God's destruction of Egypt in the Reed Sea, literally when "Israel saw the dead on the seashore." Like so much of the liturgical discussion of redemption, *Shirat Hayyam* focuses on God's redemption of Israel from Egypt as the cosmic archetype of God's redemption of Israel. This song presents three major points which help elucidate the vision of God as redeemer. First, God's capacity as creator means that God can miraculously bend and manipulate creation for the sake of Israel. Israel can walk on dry land in the midst of two walls of water. Second, God is an *'ish milchamah* – a man of war. Redemption does not come without cost and that cost often entails God using what we as moderns often perceive as evil for the sake of good. Third, God's redemption of Israel from Egypt has both cosmic and international effects. Creation is restored to its fundamental harmony after being liberated from bondage to Pharaoh. As Terence E. Fretheim has argued regarding the narrative framework of Exodus, Israel's bondage is creation's bondage. Thus, Israel's liberation

[16]In its liturgical formulation *Shirat Hayyam* comprises Exodus 14:30-15:19.

is creation's liberation.[17] This cosmic liberation impacts the international scene as the writer of the song portrays the inhabitants of the land as having a vested interest in Israel's liberation (Exodus 15:14-16). Literally, they are confounded that a little nation could overturn the most powerful superpower in the world. If this is the case, surely they are in trouble.

The themes of God's immanence and transcendence are again picked up in *Nishmat Kol Chai*. *Nishmat Kol Chai* is an older prayer of the liturgy as its appearance in all early rites suggests. R. Yochanan is already quoted as referring to this song in *b. Pesach.* 118a and *b. Ber.* 59b. Interestingly, a myth circulated during the Middle Ages that *Nishmat Kol Chai* was composed by Kefa (Peter).[18] The character of its Hebrew suggests a Palestinian provenance. The language of *Nishmat* is stirring and evocative. Stitches of quotes from the Tanakh are woven together with powerful metaphors where the praises of Israel are compared to the fullness of the sea, the multitudes of the waves, the breadth of heavens, the brightness of sun and moon, the wings of eagles, and the swift feet of hinds. All these images suggest both the beauty and power of God's creation and its inability to praise the king completely and fully.

In praising God's singular sovereignty, the writer names God as savior, liberator, rescuer, sustainer, and merciful one. The writer's conception of God's action on behalf of Israel centers on God's work to redeem Israel. The primary metaphors are God's redemption of Israel from Egypt, God's ongoing protective presence in Israel in face of sword, famine, and plenty, and God's capacity to overcome suffering in the world – making the mute speak, releasing the bound, and saving the poor. The God whom Israel praises is actively engaged in redeeming people from situations in which the powers of the world have become abusive and have enslaved people. God's redemption for the writer of *Nishmat* is not 'spiritual', but rather is gritty and

[17]Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991).
[18]Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 96.

grounded in the nasty exigencies of Israel's daily life, especially the life of those people on the margins of the community.

Keri'at Shema' uBerachot (The Shema and its Blessings)

In the morning, the *Keri'at Shema'* section contains three scriptural paragraphs (Dt 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Num 15:37-41), two blessings preceding them (*yotzer hama'arot*[19] and *habocher be'ammo Yisrael be'ahavah*[20]), and one blessing following (*ga'al Yisra'el*). The themes of the three blessings move from Creation to Revelation to Redemption following a well-established pattern in rabbinic thought about how God interacts with Israel and the world.[21] Much of Christian theology, particularly in its Western expression, operates within a framework of creation, revelation, and redemption, preferring a more universalistic trajectory than rabbinic understandings of God's interaction with Israel and the world. In the *Keri'at Shema'* section, we will begin to see clearly how Rabbinic Judaism arranges the raw material which first appeared in *Birkot Hashachar* as it constructs the relationship between creation, revelation, and redemption.

Keri'at Shema' begins with *Barkhu*, the official start of the worship service. The *Barkhu* is then followed by the opening blessing of *Yotzer* which declares more directly the nature of God who was blessed in *Barkhu*.

> Blessed are you, O LORD, our God, Ruler of the Universe,
> Former of light, creator of darkness, maker of peace, and creator of all.

The God named in this blessing is first and primarily the God of all creation. This is the same type of universalism suggested by the opening section of the *Tanakh* (Genesis 1:-2:4a). The universalism of God's engagement with creation continues in *Hakkol Yodukha*, the first major paragraph of *Yotzer*. Here the writer declares that all of God's creation will engage in praise of

[19]Known alternately as *yotzer*; note I am naming these blessings by their *hatimot*.
[20]Known alternately as *'Ahavah Rabbah* or *Birkat Hatorah*.
[21]E.g. Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. from the second edition of 1930 by William W. Hallo (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), 112-253

their creator. However, by the end of the paragraph, the writer moves from the universal dimension of God's activity in creation to the particular. Halfway through the paragraph, the language switches from third-second person to first-second person – *I-Thou* discourse – and describes God in redemptive terms. God is "shield of our salvation," "our Redeemer," "our savior." Additionally, the author pictures God's redemptive activity in eschatological terms. Redemption takes place "in the life of the world to come," "in the days of the Messiah," and at the "resurrection of the dead." These phrases suggest that God's work as redeemer is a subset of God's activity as creator. Even resurrection of the dead is a part of God's creative process rather than a supernatural phenomenon. Redemption in all its particularity and eschatological wonder is fundamental to the fabric of creation and God's activity as creator.

The liturgical song *'El Adon* follows *Hakkol Yodukha*. *'El Adon* is a song of Merkabah mysticism[22] which provides space in the liturgy for the initiated to imagine a journey to heaven where they join with the holy host in praise of God. Through envisioning the heavens where the creator God is praised, the person praying *Yotzer* is able to move in the next paragraph – *le'El* – to the idea that Sabbath is the culmination of God's creation, the day in which God rested from all the work of creation by sitting on the throne of glory.[23] This enthroned deity is now in a position to be "glorified in the heaven above and upon the earth below." The declaration and praise of God is primarily by the angels. It is a two-fold process. First, they praise God. Second, their declaration of God's sovereignty entails their assumption of the "*'ol malchut shamayyim* – the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven." Praise entails both giving to God and

[22]On the shape of Merkabah mysticism see the following works: David R. Blumenthal, *Understanding Jewish Mysticism, A Source Reader: The Merkabah Tradition and the Zoharic Tradition* (New York: KTAV, 1978), 3-97; Ben Zion Bokser, *The Jewish Mystical Tradition* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1981), 55-67; J. H. Laenen, *Jewish Mysticism: An Introduction*, translated by David E. Orton (Louisville: Westminster John Know Press, 2001), 18-42; Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends In Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995),40-79.
[23]The predominance of the consonants shin and bet links the concepts of Sabbath, Seventh, and God dwelling on the throne of glory.

submission to God's dominion in the world. God is rock, king, redeemer, and creator both in their adoration and submission to that sovereignty. This two-fold declaration leads the congregation of heaven to higher levels of praise. We too participate with the heavenly congregation as we join in declaration of praise and assume the yoke of the kingdom of heaven by singing *Qadosh* and *Baruch kevod*. An expectation of redemption highlights this declaration of God's utter, unassailable sovereignty (in Askenazi tradition). God who creates with light and "renews daily and perpetually the work of creation" will "shine a new light on Zion."[24] Here, we petition this exalted and enthroned God for the redemption of the people of Israel. God's redemption again is a subset of God's activity as creator and is particular to the life of Israel.

The particularities of God's engagement with Israel are more apparent in the *Birkat haTorah*. Here, God is pictured as the one who engaged in relationship with the patriarchs and is now asked to "be equally gracious to us" by teaching us. The content of the teaching is akin to rabbinic discipleship. God, the great rabbi "who acts mercifully," is invited to "have mercy on us," "instill[s] in our hearts to understand and elucidate, to listen, learn, teach, safeguard, perform, and fulfill all the words of your Torah's teaching with love." But Israel's keeping of the commandments is not only about being obedient to Torah. The commandments are central to our relationship with God. God reciprocates this relationship by "bring[ing] us in peace from the four corners of the earth." Our responsibility is Torah; God affects salvation. This dialectic is fundamental to God's loving election of Israel, and Israel's commitment "to offer praiseful thanks to you, and proclaim your oneness with love." Note the emphasis on love. This is not a relationship of mechanical reciprocity. Torah and salvation are components of a relationship whose point of unity and purpose is love. The *chatimah* of *Birkat Hatorah* emphasizes this point

[24]This line is missing from the Sephardic rite; for example see Shlomoh Tal, ed., *Siddur Rinnat Yisra'el: Nusach Hassefaradim ve'Edot Hammizrach* (Tel Aviv: Moreshet Ltd., 1976), 277.

beautifully when it says "blessed are you, LORD, who chooses his people Israel with love." Love, salvation, and Torah are fundamental to God's relationship with Israel.

The paragraphs of the *Shema* focus on the declaration of God's oneness and the assumption of the yoke of the kingdom of heaven in the daily intricacies of life. Yet, redemption is never far from the realization of God's sovereignty. The third and final paragraph of the *Shema* (Num 15:37-41) concludes with God's declaration of identity. *"'Ani Hashem 'Elohechem 'asher hoze'ti 'etchem me'eretz mitzrayyim lihyot lachem le'Elohim, 'ani Hashem 'Elohechem* – I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God, I am the LORD your God." God is Israel's God. God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt demonstrates this relationship. Again a loving relationship expressed in Torah is realized through redemption. Redemption is fundamental to Israel's understanding of her relationship with God.

The central place of redemption in God's relationship with the Jewish people is further apparent in the concluding blessing of the morning recitation of the *Shema – Ga'al Yisra'el* (who redeemed Israel). The writer declares the God who is in relationship with Israel's ancestors (rock of Jacob/rock of Israel) as their shield of salvation. God's relationship with Israel is realized in God's liberation and salvation of the Jewish people. The archetypal event of this liberation is *yezi'at mitzraim* – the Exodus. This section recounts God's redemption of Israel, God's firstborn. The focal point of the prayer is the final narrative of the plagues (particularly the death of the firstborn) through Israel's crossing of the Reed Sea. It moves from a simple recounting of events to joining with Moses and Israel in singing *Mi Chamokha* and *Hashem Yimloch*. This recitation is a profound act of memory through which we take on the story of our ancestors' liberation as our own. We now stand with them on the dry land of the Sea of Reeds singing about the unsurpassable character of God. Here we speak of God's redemption in the

finished sense (as is suggested by the *chatimah – ga'al Yisra'el*)[25], but this section is also a statement of who God is in Israel's ongoing life. God is one "who humbles the haughty and lifts the lowly, brings out the captive, liberates the humble, helps the poor, and responds to his people's outcry to him." This present character is echoed in the last section of *Ga'al Yisrael – Tzur Yisra'el*, where we beseech God to arise to Israel's aid and reengage in this pattern of liberation for "Judah and Israel."

Amidah

In the morning service, the movement from *Keri'at Shema'* to the *Amidah* is quick and unencumbered by recitation of the *Kaddish* or other activities. The reason is clear in terms of halachah; one is supposed to "join redemption to prayer" (*yismoch ge'ullah letefillah*; *b. Ber.* 26a). The reason for the emergence of this injunction itself is lost to history. Nevertheless, the phrase *yismoch geullah letefillah* suggests how the rabbis (in this case probably the Tanaaim) understood the interrelationship of redemption and prayer. God's engagement with Israel to redeem them declares God's relationship with them (literally in the words of Exodus 15:13, "this people you redeemed") and opens up the capacity for Israel's response in prayer and petition. The *Amidah*'s structure also suggests this progression. In its daily form, the *Amidah* moves from a section of praise (the first three blessings) to a section of petition (generally 13) and to a concluding section of thanksgiving. On Sabbath, out of honor for the day (*meshum kevod shabbat*; *b. Ber.* 21a), the section of petition is replaced by a single blessing of sanctification for the day.

The blessings of the praise section (*'Avot*, *Gevurah*, and *Kedushah*) draw from the same themes as the blessings surrounding the *Shema*. In *'Avot*, we appeal to God first as the God who

[25]Note the contrast to the *chatimah* of the blessing of redemption in the Daily Amidah (which is *go'el Yisra'el*) where God is entreated to be engaged in redemption in the here and now.

is in a particular relationship with the descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (and, in more recent egalitarian formulation, of Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah as well). Only in the second line do we speak of God as *'El 'Eliyon* and *Qoneh Hakkol*, both suggestive of the universal character of God's sovereignty. From the horizon of God's relationship with the ancestors and their descendents, the Jewish people proclaim God as *mevi' go'el livnei benehem* (the one who brings a redeemer to their children's children). Redemption through the Messiah is the hope of the Jewish people and the outcome of God's ongoing covenant relationship with them. In *Gevurah*, God's capacity to resurrect the dead expresses God's capacity to save (literally *matzmiach yeshu'a*). Again God's work of resurrection occurs within the category of creation, a subset of God's capacity to both fashion and bring to an end life throughout creation. The ultimate expression of God's role as creator is God's ability not only to give and take away life but also God's ability to renew it. The section of praise concludes with the *Kedushah* in which we join in the heavenly host in sanctifying God's name. Here also God's praise is joined to hope for redemption and a return to Zion. "From your place our king, you will appear and reign over us, for we await you. When will you reign in Zion?" God's reign will not be fully realized until God's presence returns to Zion, and God gathers Israel to recite the *Kedushah*.

In the middle benediction of the *Amidah* for Sabbath morning, the Exodus reappears. This blessing centers on the recitation of *Veshamru* from Exodus 32:15 and three paragraphs which set the scripture in liturgical context. The command to keep Sabbath is central to God's revelation at Mt. Sinai and serves as a "sign forever that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day God rested and was refreshed." The particularity of God's gift of the Sabbath is made clear in the paragraph immediately following *Veshamru*. "You did not give it, O LORD, our God, to the nations of the lands, nor did you make it the inheritance of the worshippers of graven idols." The Sabbath signifies God's loving choice of Israel. In this way

Israel's keeping of the Sabbath both memorializes the creation of the world and sanctifies God's name. The horizon of this blessing is God's particular relationship with Israel; Israel's relationship with God marks God's continual engagement with the life of creation. In this framework, as I have noted above, God's work for Israel's redemption signifies God's engagement with creation for the sake of its consummation.

The last three blessings of the *Amidah* (*'Avodah*, *Hoda'ah*, and *Shalom*) focus principally on thanksgiving to God for God's inexhaustible beneficence and compassion. Salvation and redemption, however, are prominent in these blessings. In *Hoda'ah* we appeal to God as "God of our salvation," and in *Sim Shalom*, we invite God to establish peace in the life of the congregation and in the life of all Israel. Peace, or shalom, in this case is not a vague feeling that all is well with the world. Rather, it is a pointed appeal for God, who is maker of peace (Job 25:2), to realize peace which is the fullness and completeness of life in the life of *K'lal Yisra'el*.

The central appeal for redemption in this section appears in the *'Avodah* blessing. This blessing is Israel's daily appeal for the restoration of God's divine presence to Zion.

> Act favorably, O LORD our God, with your people Israel and their prayer. Restore the service of the Holy of Holies. The fire offerings of Israel and their prayer accept with love and with favor. May the worship of Israel always be favorable to you. May our eyes behold your return to Zion in compassion. Blessed are you, O LORD, who restores the divine presence to Zion.

The restoration of the divine presence to Zion and the reestablishment of Israel's worship at Zion presume several events in classical rabbinic thought. First, God must re-gather Israel to the Land (e.g. Isaiah 40). Classically, the ingathering of the exiles from "the four corners of the earth" (see *'Ahavah Rabbah*) has been interpreted as under the leadership of the Messiah. Second, the Temple must be restored so that divine worship in the Holy of Holies may be reestablished. Third, these two acts presuppose that Israel's sins – the reason for their exile – have been

forgiven.[26] Redemption in rabbinic terms (and in terms of the Bible as well) means the forgiveness of Israel's sins, the restoration of Israel to the promised land, the reestablishment of the Temple, and the return of the *Shekhinah* to Zion.

Torah Service

As I pointed out at the beginning of this paper, the Torah service is the apex of the Sabbath morning service and a central reason why we gather as a community on Sabbath. The Torah service serves as the climax of our liturgical reenactment of Israel's journey to Sinai to receive divine revelation. As in the *Shema* and *Amidah* sections, we begin the final stage of our journey to the mountain of revelation by declaring God's eternal kingship – *Hashem melekh, Hashem Malakh, Hashem Yimlokh le'olam va'ed.* The God who we meet in the opening of the ark and in the drawing out of the Torah is the God "who control[s] kings" and to whom the "kingship" belongs. As a congregation, this declaration carries us to the summit of the mountain when we responsively recite *Shema* and *'Echad 'Elohenu*.

Though the declaration of God's kingship and gift of revelation is the primary focus *Hoza'at Sefer Torah* (The bringing out of the Torah scroll), redemption remains as a subset of God's assertion of kingship over all creation. In *Vayihi Binso'a*, we quote Isaiah 2:3 and the expectation of God's Torah going forth from Zion, a declaration which, in its liturgical location, presupposes Israel's return to Zion. At the end of *'Al hakkol yitgaddal*, which is recited by the congregation as the *chazzan* carries the Torah to the bimah (though often not recited in messianic congregations), the congregation looks expectantly towards the time when God will return to Zion. At that time, "the glory of the LORD will be disclosed and all flesh will see together that

[26]Classic statements of sin as the reason for exile are, in reference to the Babylonian Exile, in Ezekiel 12 and, in reference to the destruction of the Second Temple and the expulsion from Jerusalem in 135 CE, in *b. Ber.* 56a and *b. Shabb.* 33a.

the mouth of the LORD has spoken" (Isa 40:5 as quoted in the Siddur). The reception of Torah is in expectation of the full-realization of God's kingship over all creation.

As I have both stated above, the Torah is a gift given in the context of God's relationship with Israel. God's election of Israel parallels God gift of Torah to Israel: *bachar banu mikkol ha'ammim, venatan lanu 'et Torato* – "who chose us from among the nations and gave to us his Torah." God's gift of Torah declares God's sovereignty over all of creation beginning with Israel. Israel's election and reception of Torah then function as the eschatological declaration of God's suzerainty in the midst of creation. It is important to note that there is no hint in rabbinic thought that Israel will be rejected or its particularity obviated in this messianic age. Rather, Israel's particularity will be at the center of God's redemptive activity. Israel's obedience to God in Torah continues as a sign of their particularity and as testimony to God's redemptive activity in the world.[27]

The blessings after the reading of the Haftorah further expand upon the themes of redemption present in *Hoza'at Sefer Torah*. In the second benediction – *masammeach tziyon bevaneha* (who gladdens Zion through her children) – Zion is described as the humiliated "source of all life" for whom God is asked to bring mercy. Zion, whose children were murdered in a horrific manner throughout the ages (e.g. Lam 2:20), will now be gladdened "through her children." Zion's restoration means first and foremost the restoration of her children. The other major component of redemption in these blessings is the restoration of the house of David anticipated by the arrival of Elijah, the preeminent messianic forerunner. In the third benediction – *Magen David* – God's restoration of the Davidic line is ultimately a realization of God's

[27]Note that unlike Augustine, whose Doctrine of the Witness was construed in purely negative terms, I understand the Rabbis to mean that Israel's obedience to Torah is their ongoing witness to God's sovereignty in the life of the community not as a covenant superseded or done away with in Yeshua but as one with generative, life-giving possibilities for the Jewish people. Israel's positive witness affirms God's ongoing interaction with creation.

promises to David to establish his kingdom "forever and ever" (cf. 2 Chr 13:5). The agent of this restoration is God's anointed – the Messiah – who is the continuation of David's line.

The appeal to God for the restoration of Zion and the coming of the Messiah reappears as we return the Torah to the ark. The coming of the Messiah is again linked to Israel's faithfulness by quoting Psalm 132:8-10 and Proverbs 4:2, "For the sake of David, your servant, do not turn away the face of your anointed. For I have given you good teaching, do not forsake My Torah" which is a "tree of life." Restoration means not only the return to Zion and the reemergence of the Davidic monarchy but also that Israel is set back upon paths of righteousness through keeping Torah. As we all fervently sing, "Bring us back to you, O LORD, and we shall return, renew our days as of old" (Lam 4:21).

Concluding Matters of the Morning Liturgy

In our congregations, messianic Jews tend to follow the Reform and Reconstructionist patterns of not doing a full *Mussaf* service on Sabbath. Rather, we conclude our services with a selection of prayers from the *Mussaf* service (generally omitting the *Mussaf Amidah* itself). For this reason and because I already covered the majority of the benedictions of the *Mussaf Amidah*, I will focus on themes of redemption present in the two prayers which appear frequently at the end of messianic Jewish services: *Alenu* and *Kaddish*.

Alenu represents a relatively old stratum in the prayer service, originally found in the *Mussaf Amidah* for Rosh Hashanah.[28] Its native location in the High Holiday liturgy suggests that it is a predominantly a prayer in which we declare God's kingship. *Alenu* begins with our commitment to praise God for the universal extent of God's activity both in creating the world and choosing Israel from among the nation. Israel's faithful worship and Torah keeping

[28]Elbogen, *Jewish* Liturgy, 71, notes that *Alenu* was placed as the conclusion of the main service around 1300 from its original placement as the introduction to the Kingship verses (*Malkhuyot*); Martin Jaffee (*Early Judaism* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997), 153) points to an even earlier date for the composition of *Alenu* based upon comparison to the hymn in Phil 2:5-11 which may represent an earlier stage of *Alenu* adapted to refer to Yeshua.

contrasts to the idolatry of the nations. *Alenu*, however, does not sustain this distinction between idolaters and the faithful, but rather looks forward to the eschatological day when all "will bend every knee and cast themselves down and to the glory of [God's] name they will render homage." This enthronement of God and the acknowledgement of God's sovereignty occur along with the "repairing of the world – *letaqqen olam*" by "the kingdom of the Almighty." This is not *Tikkun Olam* in the Lurianic sense,[29] but rather the consummation and repair of God's creation as a result of the establishment of God's kingdom. It is this expectation and hope which compels the faithful to praise and join with Zechariah (14:9) in looking forward to the day when Israel's internal speech in the *Shema* – God's oneness – is realized by the whole of creation. All of creation will then accept upon themselves the yoke which Israel bears along with the angels in heaven, "the yoke of the kingdom of heaven." Then, God "will become king over the entire earth."

The *Mourner's Kaddish* removes the expression of God's kingship from the universal to the particular. Here the mourner engages in a profound act of alterity by praising God in the midst of loss and suffering.[30] *Kaddish* brings together every word of praise in Aramaic as an assault of praise upon God. Life-through-praise comes into the liminal space of death as the mourner enjoins God to bring peace into the life of the congregation and all Israel.[31] In Ashkenazi practice the prayer has no specific messianic association, but in the Sephardic version there is explicit reference to the Messiah. Following the phrase "*veyamlikh malkhuteh* – may he establish his kingdom," Sephardim insert the phrase "*veyatzmach purkaneh viqarev meshicheh* –

[29]The *tiqqunim* developed by R. Isaac Luria (Safed, late 16th Century), as an elaboration of the innovations of the Zohar, entailed the reparation of the world and ultimately God in expectation of the age of salvation through prayer, study, and devotion.
[30]Cf. Jonathan Kaplan, "Mourning and the Maker of Peace: Job 25:2 and the Kaddish," *Kesher* 15 (Summer 2002): 62-77.
[31]Reconstructionist and Reform practice adds the phrase "And upon all the inhabitants of the world" (*ve'al qol yoshve tevel*).

and may he cause redemption to flower[32] and draw near his Messiah." The realization of God's kingship in the life of the mourner and the whole world is again intimately tied to the flowering of redemption and the arrival of the Messiah. In the *Kaddish*, praise (at least in Sephardic practice) leads to profound messianic hope.

Themes of Redemption in the Siddur

As I suggested above, the prayer service is a delicately woven tapestry in which various threads are woven together in praise of God. The unified picture which they form presents a vivid description of how the Jewish people understand God's activity in the world. In this section, I will step back from the microcosmic survey which I have been engaging in and look at the finished product. By having engaged in a survey of each section of prayers, we are now in a position to look at how each of the threads is woven together to form the whole.

Jewish prayer presupposes that God has entered into covenant relationship with the Jewish people and continues in this relationship. God chose Israel *mikkol ha'amim* (out of all the nations). Israel anchors and particularizes the Holy One's ongoing engagement in the world.[33] Note the absence of any notion of a central affirmation of classical Christian theology – that the Church has replaced the Jewish people as God's elect. Rather, *there is a bold declaration of God's ongoing relationship with the Jewish people*. As we have affirmed at other times,[34] the affirmation of ongoing Jewish identity is central to the construction of Jewish identity and our liturgical practice.

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[32]cf. the Hebrew phrase *matzmiach Yeshua'* in the *Gevurah* benediction of the *Amidah*.
[33]On the relationship of election and God's role as creator see David Novak, *The Election of Israel: The Idea of the Chosen People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 115-38.
[34]See David H. Stern, *Messianic Jewish Manifesto* (Jerusalem: Jewish New Testament Publishers, 1988), 11-34; Daniel Juster, *Jewish Roots: A Foundation of Biblical Theology* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 1995), 191-226; Mark Kinzer, *The Nature of Messianic Judaism: Judaism as Genus, Messianic as Species* (West Hartford, CT,: Hashivenu Archives); Theology Committee of the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations, "Defining Messianic Judaism" (Albuquerque, NM: UMJC, 2002); Russell L. Resnik, "Defining Messianic Judaism," *Kesher: A Journal of Messianic Judaism* 16 (2003): 63-70.

Liturgically, creation is the locus of God's redemption of Israel. The two parties are inextricably linked. As I pointed out above (through the observations of Terence Fretheim), Israel's bondage in Egypt was part of a broader subjugation of creation by Pharaoh. Israel's redemption meant the release of creation from Pharaoh's diabolic enslavement of the cosmos. Additionally, redemption in the classical Jewish conception is not an action of God to right some ontological flaw in the cosmos.[35] Rather, redemption is a process within creation in which creation is brought to its full consummation. Therefore, Israel's redemption is for the sake of the consummation of creation.

At the very start of this of this paper, I characterized God's work of redemption as the transformation of life circumstance by God. God's work for Israel's redemption is primarily an act of liberation. By liberation, I mean the freeing of someone or a group from a place of bondage (primarily physical) to a place in which they may live a life in new relationship with God, themselves, and the world. As Michael Wyschogrod characterizes redemption, "God redeems whatever bad things happen to people."[36] Liberation, in the life and liturgical expression of Israel, takes on many forms while following this general pattern.

Central to Israel's liturgical affirmation of God's role as redeemer is the understanding of God's control of life itself. As we saw above in the discussion of the *Gevurot* blessing of the *Amidah*, God's assertion of control over the fabric and flow of life is itself a declaration of God's work within life for redemption. In fact, God's capacity to give life, take life, and give it back again affirms provocatively God's unassailable position as creator of the universe. As Wyschogrod characterizes the powerful nature of this affirmation:

> So redemption is this broad pattern of liberation, and one of the forms of redemption is the conquest over death, though of course it is the most dramatic redemption

[35]Note, however, the contrasting constructions of both the Zohar and the school of Isaac Luria.
[36]Michael Wyschogrod, "Resurrection," *Pro Ecclesia*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Fall 1992), 109 as quoted in Neil Gillman, *The Death of Death: Resurrection and Immortality in Jewish Thought* (Woodstock: Jewish Lights, 2000), 228.

> because death is the one triumph of the negative over which we have not yet seen any triumph.[37]

Though Jewish prayer expresses quite clearly the miraculous nature of resurrection, it is not decisive about the specific nature of resurrection. Is *techiat hammetim*, the giving of life to the dead, a reconstitution of life as it once was or is it the bringing a person to a new phase of embodied existence? As the *Besorot* amply demonstrate (cf. John 11:38-44 and Luke 24), both trajectories were present in the affirmations of late Second Temple Judaism. In all fairness to the theology of the *Gevurot* blessing, such a question is of no immediate concern. Rather, the primary concern of this blessing is to affirm God's miraculous capacity to extract impossible newness from that which seems to be at its final end, death.

The archetypal expression of bringing life out of death on a communal level is *yetzi'at Mitzraim* – the Exodus.[38] As we have seen, the Exodus functions throughout the Morning Prayer service to give expression to Israel's understanding of how God acts for her redemption. The *Shirat Hayyam* appears prominently in *Birkot Hashachar* and in the blessing following *Qeriat Shema'*. God's activity for Israel's redemption expresses God's covenant commitment to Israel. Israel's redemption proceeds out of God's ongoing, faithful engagement with the chosen people. In contemporary expression, Jews understand God's relationship with them as a vibrant, living relationship. They are not a people falling apart, desperately in need of a messiah to save them and bring them into relationship with God. Rather, they are a people who *are* in relationship with God for whom the Exodus gives imaginative expression to their hopes – the full realization of peace in their midst and in the life of the whole world.

The coming realization of God's redemption for Israel is bound hand-in-hand with the realization of God's kingdom on earth. The full realization of God's sovereignty in the world is

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[37]*Ibid*.

[38]Paul seems to understand the relationship between resurrection and Exodus clearly in his articulation of baptism in Romans 6:1-4. On relationship between the Lord's Supper and the Exodus see 1 Cor 10:1ff.

pre-figured in Israel's assumption of the "yoke of the kingdom of heaven." The *'ol malchut shamayyim* is principally a life lived in obedience to God's commandments. Obedience enacts God's sovereignty in the life of the faithful. God commands; the observant person responds. Commandment or Law is not (as in Lutheran polemic) a way to win God's approval. Rather *Mitzvah* (commandment) is Israel's act of response to God's covenant making engagement with her. *Mitzvah* is the substance of Israel's response to God.

Israel's understanding of God's activity in the world is, in some sense, apocalyptic in that, through the realization of God's sovereignty, Israel anticipates a reversal (and in some cases an overturning) of the patterns and systems which dominate the world. This reversal takes on profound economic and physical dimensions. Particularly in *Birkot Hashachar,* God is blessed as the one who gives sight to the blind, clothes the naked, releases the bound, straightens the bent, and gives strength to the weary. Through God's activity, the world and all its inhabitants are made whole. For Israel this notion of wholeness is encapsulated in their anticipation of the ingathering of the exiles from the four corners of the earth and the restoration of temple worship in concert with the return of the *Shekhinah* to Zion. Thus, Israel articulates redemption as a *landed* theology. Contrary to much of Christian thought since the second century,[39] classical Jewish understandings of redemption are concerned primarily with God's return of them from exile to their home in Israel. Even the world will not be right until Israel returns to the land, and the *Shekhinah* returns to the Temple, God's earthly palace and the place which has been chosen for divine revelation (e.g. Ezekiel 40-48; *Mek* Pischa 1, Lauterbach I.4).

[39]Many scholars would argue that the roots of this landless theology are in the thought of Paul who decentralizes the privileged place of Zion in the Tanakh (Galatians) and argues instead for a universal notion of redemption. Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise and Challenge in Biblical Faith*, Second Edition, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 157-72, has observed that the landed dimensions of redemption in New Covenant thought remain in the categories of resurrection and the giving of land to the homeless and landless.

The principle agent who enables this return to Zion is, in classical rabbinic thought, the Messiah. The relationship between *shuvat l'Tzion* and the Messiah already appears in the Bible (see Is. 45:1; Cyrus of Persia is given the title Messiah here!). Throughout rabbinic tradition, the nature of the Messiah has been debated. Nevertheless, central to a Jewish understanding of the work of the Messiah is the Messiah's actions on behalf of Israel to lead them back to their homeland in keeping with God's promises to the patriarchs and matriarchs (*'Avot*).

The status of the law in Jewish concepts of redemption has been hotly debated.[40] Though much of Jewish messianic thought has tended towards anti-nomianism (e.g. Sabbatianism and Frankism), the core rabbinic affirmation has been that the realization of the Kingdom of God will entail an actualization of the divine imperative in the life of the world; God's ways will be followed throughout the world (*'Alenu*). As we saw in the above discussion of *yetzi'at Mitzraim* as an archetype of redemption, Israel's redemption from Egypt leads to the giving of divine revelation and Israel's assent to the covenant through the keeping of the commandments (*na'aseh venishma'*; Exodus 24:7). Likewise in classical Jewish thought, redemption leads to the practice of commandment and the sacralization of daily life.

The tapestry of Israel's redemption in the Siddur is multifaceted; the intensification of Torah is but one aspect. As we have seen, other major threads in the tapestry of redemption are the Exodus, the Messiah, Israel's return to Zion, and the accompanying return of the *Shekhinah* to the Temple. This vibrant collage of images and themes portrays a complex but accessible vision of God's interaction with Israel. This portrait of the relationship of God and Israel provides a rich horizon from which we can "read" Yeshua. It is to this reading task to which we now turn.

[40]Deborah E. Pardo, *The Status of the Law in the Messianic Era, from the Biblical Period to the Seventeenth Century*, unpublished MA Thesis (Quebec: McGill University, Department of Jewish Studies, 2001).

Yeshua from the Horizon of the Siddur

No one contests that the theologies presented in the New Covenant about Yeshua arise out of Jewish thinking during the Second Temple period concerning the shape of redemption and the nature of the Messiah. Much of the theology presented by the Siddur about God, redemption, and the Messiah arises out of this same milieu. Though both systems of thought share common origins and work with the same topoi, it would be naïve to suggest that we can merely harmonize the two systems. Yet we are able to explore the reality of Yeshua from the horizon of Jewish thought. Historically, this trajectory (at least in the Jewish community) has aimed to disprove Yeshua's messiahship. I proceed, rather, from the horizon of belief in Yeshua as Messiah and as such my reading of Yeshua from the horizon of the Siddur will have slightly different character. I want to ask what then does Yeshua being the Messiah mean in light of Jewish thought about redemption, particularly as expressed in the Siddur? What I pose below is by no means a final statement of the issue. Rather, I hope to present some areas for conversation which we can continue to probe how we may weave the thread of Yeshua into this divine tapestry and how this divine tapestry of redemption problematizes regnant constructions of redemption in the messianic Jewish movement.

Several years ago, primarily under the influence of the work of R. Kendall Soulen,[41] the Hashivenu Forum decided to pursue the question of canonical narrative.[42] The primary question, as I understand it, is how do we tell a distinctively messianic Jewish narrative of God's activity with the world? Following Soulen's lead many in this forum came to the conclusion that the messianic Jewish community had uncritically adopted the supersessionist narrative of the church.

[41]see Soulen's *God of Israel and Christian Theology*.
[42]At the 2002 Hashivenu Forum (February 3-5, 2002), the following papers were presented: Stuart Dauermann, "Making Israel's Story Our Own: Toward a Messianic Jewish Canonical Narrative"; Mark Kinzer, "The Place of Eschatology in the Messianic Jewish Community"; Paul L. Saal, "Origins and Destiny: Israel, Creation, and the Messianic Jewish Canonical Narrative."

Soulen posits adopting a model of the canon which views consummation rather than redemption as the end of God's work in creation. Redemption then "does not mean deliverance *from* this history but liberation *within* and *for* it. According to the Apostolic Witness, the Lord's eschatological fidelity to the work of consummation is proleptically enacted over against all destructive powers in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection."[43] In this construction the advent of Yeshua is not the final realization of God's promises to Israel whereby Israel is replaced by a new transnational ecclesial body. Rather, "the gospel summons everyone not to cease being Jews or Gentiles but to glorify the present and future victory of the God of Israel through conformity to Jesus' own solidarity with the other, even to the point of participation in Jesus' sufferings."[44]

As Soulen suggests, his new construction of the Christian canonical narrative allows for the ongoing presence of Israel, not as a witness to the promises of Christ or as "living letters of the law" who have been superseded in the age of grace.[45] In this new narrative, Jew and gentile participate in God's plan of consummation through what Soulen terms "the economy of mutual blessing," a realization of God's promises to Abraham. Jew and gentile then have ongoing roles as Jew and gentile. There is no new "third race" of followers of Yeshua.[46] Instead, the one new man is the unity of Jew and gentile where both can come together and the distinct identity of the other is not obliterated, but rather, is fully realized (Gal 3:28; Eph 2:15). For the Messianic Jewish community, this construction has led many to affirm both the importance of ongoing

[43]Soulen, *God of Israel*, 176; author's emphasis.
[44]*Ibid*.
[45]On the Doctrine of the Witness and the notion of Jews as "living letters of the law" see Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Cohen takes the phrase "living letters of the law" from Bernard of Clairvaux.
[46]As has been argued in classical Christian thought and has resurfaced recently in an article in Rich Robinson and Ruth Rosen's article "The Challenge of our Messianic Movement, Part 2: Us and Them" (*Havurah* 6 (2003):1-6); interestingly, in a side bar in this issue, maintenance of dietary laws by Jewish believers in Yeshua is presented as purely a missiological tool rather than a marker of ongoing Jewish obedience and covenant distinctiveness. Such a construction reflects the logic of supersessionism critiqued by Soulen whereby Jewish practice of the 'old law' is merely a witness to the truth of the gospel.

participation in the life of the wider Jewish community as Jews and the value of gentile identity in the body of Messiah.[47] This new, (or apostolic), construction of what Yeshua means is in concert with the rabbinic conviction that the ongoing identity of the Jewish people is not obliterated in God's redemptive work, but brought to a new level of fullness.

Nevertheless, a major problem haunted Yeshua's followers in the first century and continues to be a question posed by many in the Jewish community: if Yeshua is truly the Messiah, why has peace not been fully realized on earth?[48] This is certainly the expectation expressed in the liturgical theology of the Siddur. However, a consequent and related question may be a better place to start. What does Yeshua's life, death, resurrection, and ascension affect for the world? One classic answer has been that Yeshua affects atonement. Atonement in classical (particularly Medieval) Christian conception has centered on the importance of Yeshua's blood in atoning for our individual sins before an angry and vengeful God. All the varying forms (substitution or satisfaction) of this theology have their roots in the thought of Anselm of Canterbury.[49]

The New Covenant, however, presents a much more complex and involved construction of Yeshua. The apocalyptic event of Yeshua's life, death, resurrection, and ascension is too complex to describe through one image so the writers in the New Covenant present a variety of images. As Shirley Guthrie rightly points out, the writers of the New Covenant "used these images not to explain what God *must* do in order to save us but to interpret what God actually

[47]Gentiles then do not need to join messianic congregations to participate in some new eschatological work of God. Rather, they can remain in their own communities, comfortable in their identity as unique creations of God.
[48]This issue is addressed indirectly by Maimonides in Chapter 10 of his commentary on M. Sanhedrin; Maimonides, *Commentary on the Mishnah: Tractate Sanhedrin*, translated by Fred Rosner (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1981).
[49]See Anselm's "Why God became Man," pp. 100-183 in *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham*, ed. and trans. by Eugene R. Fairweather. Volume X in the Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956).

did do."[50] Guthrie himself list four images which are helpful for broadening our understanding of the atonement of Yeshua: financial (Mark 10:45; Rom 3:24; 1 Cor 6:20, 7:23; Gal 3:13; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18), military (Col 1:13, 2:15, 1 Cor 15:24-28), sacrificial (e.g. Mark 14:22-24; John 1:29; Rom 3:25; 1 Cor 5:7; Heb 8-10), legal (Rom 5:6-11; 2 Cor 5:16-21; Col 1:19-20).[51] These interpretations of what God did to effect salvation are incomplete; to arrive at a fuller picture of how the writers of the New Covenant understood Yeshua one should continue to explore these and many other ways of understanding the advent of Yeshua. Part of the process of constructing a messianic Jewish theology of redemption is locating those metaphors of atonement in the New Covenant that are most useful to the life of our community and drawing on them as major theological resources in our theological work.

Nevertheless, as the authors of the New Covenant themselves acknowledge (e.g. 1 Thess 4:13-18) the coming of Yeshua is particularly problematic precisely because he did not fulfill messianic expectation in terms of the restoration of Israel and the establishment of the messianic kingdom. The apocalyptic theology of Paul and others[52] allowed for this problem through the construct of the second coming. Yeshua's coming, death and resurrection were merely an advance party in God's apocalyptic invasion of creation. In this first coming, sin and death had been overcome. In the second coming, the full realization of the messianic kingdom would be established. In the midst of this invasion, the body of Messiah, Jew and gentile, stand as a beachhead of God's kingdom, serving as a provisional sign of what God's kingdom may look like (e.g. 1 Cor 12-13).

The problem of the nature of Yeshua's messiahship leaves a number of problems and questions for us as a messianic Jewish movement. First, how do speak of Yeshua in our

[50]Shirley C. Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine, Rev. Ed.* (Louisville: WJKP, 1994), 252.
[51]*Ibid*, 252-56.
[52]On the shape of apocalyptic thought in Paul see J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

community when peace has not been established and his coming is primarily associated with triumphalistic oppression of the Jewish people? Second, what constructs do we use in our liturgy to affirm both our faith in what God has done through Yeshua and our expectation of what God will realize for all creation in Yeshua's second coming?

To help answer these questions I would like to suggest the recovery of a well-worn construct: Yeshua as *Mashiach ben Yosef* and *Mashiach ben David*. I am reticent to use these models because I understand their torrid history as a tool by missionaries to explain the Gospel to our people.[53] They have become trite in this regard. However, in the context of liturgical theology, I suggest that they can become powerful statements of how we understand Yeshua's role in connection to the theological understandings of redemption proposed by our people. In this context, these two messianic roles become confessional affirmations rather than apologetic constructs

Recently, Byron L. Sherwin of Spertus College has attempted to shift the conversation about Yeshua beyond the Buberian construction of Yeshua as a nice older brother to a place where Jews actually wrestle with the person and the message of Yeshua in Jewish theology.[54] Though some in the Jewish community might regard Sherwin's work as an attempt to grant unwarranted theological legitimacy to Yeshua, I think his argument is a noble attempt to a have real theological discussion about Yeshua from a non-polemical horizon. Sherwin argues for the recovery of the Messiah son of Joseph archetype as a native feature of Jewish messianism, having already been applied to Bar Kochba and Isaac Luria.[55] Sherwin proposes that Yeshua

[53]E.g. Jacob Gartenhaus, *Winning Jews to Christ: A Handbook to Aid Christians in their Approach to the Jews* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963), 163-71.
[54]Byron L. Sherwin, "'Who do you say that I am?' (Mark 8:29): A New Jewish View of Jesus," pp. 31-44 in *Jesus Through Jewish Eyes: Rabbis and Scholars Engage an Ancient Brother in a New Conversation*, ed. Beatrice Bruteau (Maryknoll: Orbis Press, 2001).
[55]On the issue of the Messiah son of Joseph see notably Joseph Heinemann, "The Messiah of Ephraim and the Premature Exodus of the Tribe of Ephraim," *HTR* 68 (1975): 1-15; Charles C. Torrey, "The Messiah Son of

indeed "be considered *a* Jewish messiah, that is, a Messiah son of Joseph"[56] in concert with these other notables in Jewish history.[57] Following Moses Maimonides, Judah Halevi, Abraham Abulafia, Isaac Abravanel,[58] he argues Yeshua then has a role in God's divine plan of redemption "as *preparatio messianica.*"[59] Yeshua paves the way for the coming of the Davidic Messiah.

Messianic Jewish theology has much to learn from Sherwin's lead. Sherwin's work challenges us to construct our theology from the horizon of the lived experience of the Jewish people. As pictured in the work of Marc Chagall and Maurycy Gottlieb, Yeshua is someone who suffers *with* the Jewish people. As Sherwin envisions him,

> I picture Jesus as a tortured, wandering, wounded Polish Jew crawling in pain into the doorway of a Polish Catholic home during the Nazi occupation and asking for refuge. A small child finds him and calls his parents: "Mommy, Daddy," says the child, "there is a wounded Jew at the door asking for help and he says his name is Jesus." The parents come to the door and ask: "Are you a Jew? Are you Jesus?" And the man replies, "Who do you think that I am?"[60]

This shift to a "Christology-from-below" staunches the flow of the trenchant triumphalism which characterizes much of Christian theology since Constantine. Instead of the distant, universal Son of God pictured in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, our son of God lives in the gritty reality of our community's joys and losses. Yeshua as Messiah son of Joseph suffers *with us* on the road to the full flowering of God's work of redemption for Israel and the world.

Ephraim," *JBL* 66 (1947): 253-7l; see also Israel Knohl, *The Messiah before Jesus: The Suffering Servant of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 27ff; on the articulation of messianic suffering in Midrashic thought see Michael Fishbane, "Midrashic Theologies of Messianic Suffering," pp. 72-85 in *The Exegetical Imagination: On Jewish Though and Theology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[56]Sherwin, "Who do you say that I am?", 40 (author's emphasis); Yeshua's place in the gospels as a suffering messiah may be prefigured by his place as son of Joseph of Nazareth – literally and figuratively he is "son of Joseph."

[57]Sherwin notes (42) that in the Jewish mystical tradition Yeshua has often been linked to the Messiah son of Joseph through numerology; *Yom ha-Shishi* (the six day, the day before the eternal Sabbath, *preperatio messianica*) has the same numerical value (671) as *Yeshu ha-Notzri*.

[58]In the statement *Dabru 'Emet* released in 2000, the authors in the Jewish Scholars' Project state, "we rejoice that through Christianity hundreds of millions of people have come into relationship with the God of Israel."

[59]Sherwin, "Who do you say that I am?", 41.

[60]*Ibid*, 43-44.

Nevertheless, we must also wrestle with what we mean when we say that Yeshua is the triumphant Son of David. From the time of the earliest followers of Yeshua, this conviction has been a core claim about Yeshua's identity (e.g. Matt 1:1; Rom 1:3). Certainly, much work could be done on how the writings of the New Covenant about Yeshua might relate to these two constructions of Messiah. My concern rather is tilting the discussion back in the direction of exploring Yeshua's identity as Son of Joseph. This shift compensates for millenniae of focus on exalted notions of "Christ" and establishes a point of connection and conversation with the wider Jewish community on the nature of Yeshua's identity.[61] From the trajectory of this earthy construction of Yeshua's identity, Yeshua as Messiah son of David then functions primarily as a reality being proclaimed and realized in our community *in anticipation* of the fullness of God's kingdom in the world rather than as a triumphalist "Christ" whom we seek to impose on our neighbors. Through anticipating the full realization of God's kingdom, we wait with the rest of the Jewish community for the ingathering of the exiles and the establishment of the Messianic kingdom which will bring peace to the world. We stand and suffer with the rest of the Jewish people in anticipation of this common hope, though we may differ on the particulars.

Another major issue about the coming of Yeshua in Jewish thought is the problem of new revelation. Maimonides crystallized Jewish objections to the advent of new revelation in both Christianity and Islam by arguing that the revelation given to Moses at Mt. Sinai is the ultimate revelation. As it is stated in its liturgical formulation in *'Ani Ma'amin* (The Thirteen Principles of Faith), "I believe with complete faith that this Torah will not be exchanged nor will there be another Torah from the creator, Blessed is God's name." The tension between this widely held conviction and our confession that, in Yeshua, God's word is revealed (e.g. John 1:14) cannot be

[61]By conversation, I do not mean the type of discourse practiced in standard missionary apologetic which is primarily a monologue aimed at conversion.

obviated by a mere appeal to linguistic gymanastics over the meaning of *chadashah* in Jeremiah 31:31 as really meaning renewed. We also must be careful in our appeals to Yeshua as the true meaning of the revelation at Sinai apparent only through the eyes of faith. Such a statement resembles classical Christian convictions that the Jews have somehow missed the reality of Yeshua already prefigured in the *Old* Testament. In classical construction, such a conviction values both the text and the Jewish people only as "living letters of the Law," mere testimonies of the promise fulfilled in Yeshua. Such statements might lead us to join quickly with many others throughout history in a chorus declaring the perfidy of the Jews and advocating for their destruction either through inquisition or assimilation.

There are two trajectories in classical Jewish thought which might be helpful to us in how we understand the revelation given to Israel at Sinai. The first speaks directly to our theme at this forum – articulating Yeshua in Jewish terms. As we have seen above, the very shape of the Sabbath Morning Service is a dramatization of Israel's journey of redemption from Egypt to receiving the Torah at Sinai. In our exploration of the *Shema and it Blessings*, we learned that there is a circular pattern to the relationship of revelation of redemption. Structurally the blessing of revelation precedes the blessing of redemption. However, revelation leads to appeals for the process of redemption, and redemption leads to the expectation of a fuller realization of revelation. Likewise *Alenu* portrays the day when the whole world will be redeemed and come to a realization of God's revelation. In the context of this construction, Yeshua is not the fulfillment and cessation of God's engagement of Israel as Israel. Rather, Yeshua becomes the further realization of God's promises to Israel which leads to the enactment of redemption for the Jewish people and the further extension of revelation to the world.

A second trajectory that is helpful to articulating how we understand Yeshua from a Jewish perspective is the conception of secret revelation present in Jewish mystical thought.

Though Yeshua's own revelation is consciously portrayed in the same manner as Moses' declaration to the people at Sinai (compare Matt 5-7 and Ex 19ff), Yeshua also functions as a bearer of secret revelation in the same way the transfigured Enoch does in apocalyptic literature (e.g. 1 Enoch 65, cf. Luke 17:22-35). Yeshua brings, to borrow a term from Kabbalistic thought, *sitrei d'oraita* – the secret meaning of Torah. Unlike in the classical supersessionist construction, this revelation does not obfuscate or fulfill the other meanings of Torah but rather adds a different dimension to the conversation. Perhaps, they function as a revealed way of interpretation through which we encounter the revelation of God at Sinai.[62] In this respect, they are a presentation of a messianic way of reading the text of Torah in similar fashion to the Zoharic approach which views the Torah as a statement of how the different aspects of God's personality relate intradeically and with the world. Our messianic reading of the *Tanakh* is then one among many reading strategies present in the Jewish community (*peshat*, *derash*, *remez*, *sod*) and does not replace any of the others but rather complements them.

In classical Jewish mystical thought, the experience of God through spiritual interpretation of the text does not obliterate careful observance of the commandments. Halakhic observance and mystical practice work hand-in-hand. In this way, mitzvah grounds mysticism and keeps it from becoming an overwhelming experience which threatens person, home, or community (Zohar III.62a-62b). Likewise in classical Jewish thought as expressed in the Siddur, God's acts of redemption do not obliterate the intrinsic distinction between Jew and gentile or annul Jewish observance of Torah. Rather, as we have seen, one essential aspect of redemption is the acceptance of the yoke of God's kingship. For Jewish people, this yoke *is* the Torah. In our messianic engagement with scripture, we have already begun to move away from

[62]On the character of interpretation in the New Covenant, see most notably Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

oversimplifications of the thought of writers like Paul who have been characterized as presenting a dualism between law and grace. In our community, we have begun to engage Jewish understandings of commandment not as veiled attempts to "earn salvation" or as missionary ploys but rather as a Torah observance which affirms our ontological distinction as Jews and declares God's kingship to the world.

We have seen that reading Yeshua from the horizon of the Siddur challenges many convictions about the nature and activity of the Messiah and the way God enacts redemption in the world. I will now briefly suggest four trajectories, which I think emerge out of the discussion above, about how we might re-construct our understanding of God's redemption through Yeshua in conversation with the liturgical life of our community.

1. Redemption does not result in the supercession of Israel or merely the realization of redemption among Israel *but* the realization of redemption *for k'lal Israel* as the corporate and ongoing covenant people of God.

2. Redemption does not entail a departure from historical reality – a flight from history – but rather *re-investment in* history through a community-life governed by the category of mitzvah (regardless of the specific halakhic exigencies of that term).

3. Redemption is not merely about the *spiritual* realization of God's promises here for the individual but the community's playful, prayful, and praiseful anticipation of those promises for the community of Israel and *qol yoshve tevel* (all the inhabitants of the world) in God's coming kingdom.

4. Atonement is not only about the absolution of individual sins but also the redemption and reworking of the sin-enslaved structures of the cosmos. In other terms, redemption and atonement are not commodities to be purchased by the individual but a task and a process to be affected for Israel as a community and the whole of the world.

Certainly, these trajectories are not the only trajectories which will emerge out of our reading of Yeshua from the horizon of the Jewish liturgical tradition. The tapestry picturing God's redemptive activity is much richer and more complex than these four statements. Rather, these

four statements are meant to invite further discussion, more detailed description of the tapestry, and a more imaginative weaving of Yeshua into our understanding of the tapestry.

Keva and Kavvanah

In this paper, I have explored themes of redemption in the Siddur as a basis for understanding Jewish notions of redemption and have suggested trajectories that I view as important to articulating an understanding of Yeshua's role in the divine schema of redemption. I fear, however, I would be guilty of the same errors as Paulo Christiani and others, people who used rabbinic thought "to prove the truth of Christianity," if I did not make some suggestions about how we might integrate the trajectories I have explored above into our liturgical practice. In making these suggestions, I will leave them largely on the theoretical level as I believe we are in a time of experimentation in terms of liturgy in which we, like other communities of Jewish renewal, are working to recover the heart and soul of Jewish worship. This task must largely be done on the local level in the particular expression of each synagogue community. As such, I will make a few comments on the liturgical categories of *Keva* (form/fixity) and *Kavvanah* (intention) through which I will suggest how we might go about integrating our convictions about Yeshua into our liturgy in a way that respects the multi-vocality and integrity of the liturgy.

Keva refers to the structure of prayer both on macro and micro levels. What are the blocks of prayer and how are they interrelated? What is the internal shape of each section of prayer? When must the prayers be said? What must be done in our prayers to fulfill the mitzvah of the prayer? *Keva is a point of connection with our community.* It is what enables Reform, Reconstructionist, Conservative, and Orthodox Jews to enter into our congregations and recognize that what we are doing is Jewish. As such, we must be careful that our work at making Yeshua alive and apparent in our worship does not distance our worship from the wider

Jewish community. Innovation is good but sometimes it can obscure the connection we have to our community.

For instance, in the summer of 2003 I was sitting at Sabbath table with a number of other people at the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations Conference in Jerusalem. An elderly orthodox couple who was staying at the conference hotel unconnected to the conference was sitting with us and participated with us in a number of the rituals in the meal. They even *benched* with us. However, there was a prominent point of disconnect for the gentleman when, during the end of *Birkat Hamazon* (Grace After Meals), "Yeshua" was inserted into the prayers in connection with the titles Messiah and the Son of David. This elderly gentleman could not understand why we had changed the liturgy. I myself was unable to explain to him why. Certainly, we were engaging in activities in which we were not expecting non-messianic Jews to participate. But the reality was that they were there (as they often are). His question forced me to ask myself why we changed the liturgy when for us it is quite obvious that the Messiah is Yeshua. Both of us could have prayed this prayer together with quite different understandings of its meaning, but instead, distance was created between our community and this couple from New York by our alteration of a fairly standard prayer.

We have other constituencies in the formulation of our liturgy to which we must also be attentive – those Jews who participate in the life of churches across a variety of denominations. These "Church Jews" often desire to connect to our worship but find themselves unable for a variety of reasons. There are largely two extremes of "Church Jews." The first is the Jew who participates in the wider charismatic and evangelical Protestant worlds. These Jews often come from assimilated backgrounds or are seeking a path of assimilation. Nevertheless, they desire some connection to Judaism (at least in a cultural expression). Often our worship services fail to connect with them because they are unable to understand the flow of the service or relate to it

spiritually. In a sense we are dealing with a two-fold task. First, we must work hard to make our services spiritually accessible to these potential participants in our community. This is a task of *Kavvanah* which I will discuss below. Second, we must work to help them understand the shape of the liturgy – its *Keva*. This is a task of *kiruv* which requires us to be self-aware of our own liturgical theology and diligent in developing educational resources which connect people to the liturgy itself. This is also the case for scores of non-messianic Jews who remain unconnected to Judaism because they have either been unable to penetrate the complexity of the service or unable to connect with it spiritually.

The other extreme of "Church Jews" are those Jews who have begun to participate in the more liturgical traditions within Christianity – Anglicans, Catholics, Orthodox, and some strands of Presbyterianism. Many of these "Church Jews" come out of Orthodox communities where they strongly identify with the liturgical character of traditional Jewish worship. Lauren F. Winner, a twenty-something former *Baalat Teshuvah* (a woman who returns to observant practice), now Anglican, describes her experience of worshipping at one of our congregations during Sukkot in her recent work *Girl Meets God: On the Path to a Spiritual Life*.

> . . . we sing a mostly-English-but-laced-with-Hebrew song also based on that *slichot* prayer, but this tune is zippy, full of rhyme and vim and pep. In the middle of the song I slip out of the sanctuary and make my way, through the circle of dancing women, to the ladies' room, where I stare in the mirror and think. I wish for the service to be organic and seamless, but the seams show everywhere. Whatever part of me had come to [this congregation] hoping also to find the key to marrying Judaism with the cross is disappointed. I am not going to find any answers in a church that thinks clapping and tambourining its way through *Adonai, el rachum v'chanun* is a good idea.[63]

Winner's experience is more common than I think we would like to admit. I suggest that what is lacking in her experience of our congregations is a sense that our worship has integrated our convictions about Yeshua with a Jewish liturgical expression which respects the integral

[63]Lauren F. Winner, *Girl Meets God: On the Path to a Spiritual Life* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 2002), 17-18; Winner's work also evokes many of the themes present in Lisa J. Schiffman's work *Generation J* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1999).

character of Jewish worship. *The "seams" show far too much* making it difficult for someone accustomed to liturgical integrity in both Christian and Jewish communities to establish a connection to the worship of our community.

The other classic term for understanding Jewish worship is the concept of *Kavvanah*, the practice of directing one's thoughts and intentions in prayer. In classical rabbinic constructions, one engages in *Kavvanah* by bringing to mind the meaning of a particular prayer as the person is praying. A person can also extend the meaning of the prayer to the particular. For instance, when praying a prayer for healing one may direct his or her heart and thoughts to a person whom he or she knows who is sick. Or when one is declaring God's kingship in *Alenu* one can meditate on the extent of God's kingship throughout creation. In Zoharic and Lurianic expression, *Kavvanah* takes on a whole new definition. Prayer becomes a theurgic act through which the person praying feeds energy back into God either through the aspects of God's personality or through more abstract unifications of God's name.[64] *Kavvanah*, then, like interpretation, functions on many levels at the same time. A person can prayer the same prayer with simultaneous, multiple levels of meaning.

The Messianic Jewish community has yet to explore the full possibilities of a distinctive Messianic *Kavvanah*. This practice of *Kavvanah* can function in two ways. One, people can be taught to raise to consciousness certain messianic convictions as they pray the prayer service. When we arrive at places in the prayer service which have messianic themes, we are then able to particularize them *in our thoughts* to the realities we experience in Yeshua. For example, when during the first blessing of the *Amidah*, we pray *mevi' go'el livnei benehem* (the one who brings a redeemer to their children's children), we can particularize this prayer in our thoughts to Yeshua. For us Yeshua is the redeemer whom God brings to us. However, on another level, we

[64]For instance see the liturgy for *sefirat haomer* in *Siddur Qol Ya'akov* (282-87).

still prayer this prayer with the rest of the Jewish community *in expectation* of the fullness of redemption which God has yet to bring about.[65]

Second, I do believe that the messianic Jewish community has the obligation to integrate passages into the prayer service which express our messianic understanding of the prayer service. These passages direct the intentions of those praying with us and declare our convictions about the nature of God's activity in the world. They can both be explanations of rabbinic theology or messianic themes present in the prayer service and the physical insertion of passages into our prayer books drawn from the New Covenant and other works. In this later practice we must be careful not to engage in a hermeneutic of promise-fulfillment where we merely show how the expectations of redemption present in the prayer book are fulfilled in Yeshua. Such a practice does violence to the liturgy and sustains a supersessionist polemic to the detriment of our community. Examples of appropriate integration of passages from the New Covenant into our worship include the insertion of Phillipians 2:6-11 in *Alenu* in the Siddur of Congregation Zera Abraham in Ann Arbor, MI and the insertion of *Ha'Elohim 'Asher Dibber,* a Hebrew liturgical rendering of Hebrews 1:1-3, at the end of the *Shema* section in John Fischer's *Siddur for Messianic Jews*.[66] These insertions are attempts to integrate messianic passages into the service which, in the words of Paul Saal, "remain part of the liturgical flow rather than stand apart as an

[65]In his response ("A Divine Tapestry: The Key Element is Still Missing") to an earlier draft of this paper at the 2004 Hashivenu Forum, Tsvi Sadan pointed to Yehuda Liebes' discussion of the 15th blessing of the Daily *Amidah* ('*Matsmiach keren yeshuah,*' in *Mechkarei Yerushalaim beMachshevet Yisrael*, vol 3, Nisan 1983, pp. 313-348) where Liebes discusses the possible introduction of the current formulation of this blessing by Yeshua's disciples in the 1st century. *Yeshuah* in Hebrew means salvation and, to the ear, sounds exactly like the Aramaic name *Yeshua* (note the absence of a final *Heh*). Hence, in the oral culture of Ancient Judaism, all Jews, whether followers of Yeshua or not, could prayer this blessing while simultaneously expressing different understandings of the nature of salvation. Sadan proposes the adoption of this practice in our community.

[66](Palm Harbor, FL: Menorah Ministries, 2000).

apologetic corrective."[67] As such they punctuate the theology of the liturgy such that the messianic Jewish vision of Yeshua arises naturally, in and through the worship of our people.

Concluding Thoughts

I began this paper by proposing that the Siddur could serve as a basis for a conversation on Jewish understandings of redemption. A key assumption of my argument has been that the Siddur is a complex, multivalent document – a metaphorical tapestry. This liturgical tapestry is the weaving together of many threads of Jewish thought and tradition about the nature of God's engagement with the world to portray uniquely God's creative and redemptive work. In describing this divine tapestry of redemption, I also suggested how we might "read" Yeshua from the vista of this multivalent portrayal. As I argued above, reading Yeshua from this horizon problematizes a messianic Jewish understanding of Yeshua in at least four ways:

1. Redemption does not result in the supercession of Israel or merely the realization of redemption among Israel *but* the realization of redemption *for k'lal Israel* as the corporate and ongoing covenant people of God.

2. Redemption does not entail a departure from historical reality – a flight from history – but rather *re-investment in* history through a community-life governed by the category of mitzvah (regardless of the specific halakhic exigencies of that term).

3. Redemption is not merely about the *spiritual* realization of God's promises here for the individual but the community's playful, prayful, and praiseful anticipation of those promises for the community of Israel and *qol yoshve tevel* (all the inhabitants of the world) in God's coming kingdom.

4. Atonement is not only about the absolution of individual sins but also the redemption and reworking of the sin-enslaved structures of the cosmos. In other terms, redemption and atonement are not commodities to be purchased by the individual but a task and a process to be affected for Israel as a community and the whole of the world.

In charting out these themes, I sought to resist the violent trajectories of the work of Paulo Christiani and other Jewish converts to Christianity. The purpose of this paper is not to re-stock

[67]Paul Saal, "A Response to Jonathan Kaplan's 'A Divine Tapestry: Reading the Siddur, Reading Redemption, Reading Yeshua," presented at the 2004 Hashivenu Forum, February 1, 2004, Pasadena, CA.

the arsenal of missionary polemic. Rather, this paper is meant to nurture a Jewish understanding of Yeshua for the sake of our messianic synagogues as they grow and mature as well as add to a conversation on how we may communicate who we are as a stream within the wider Jewish community. This task is always unfinished. For, the Siddur, God's ongoing work of redemption, and Yeshua are a book, a process, and a person whose depths are too rich to plumb in one brief reading. Rather, the task ahead is an ongoing task of *reading-in-community*.[68] As we 'read' together (through worship and song, study and practice), the messianic Jewish community will come to express and deepen our understanding of the reality of redemption God has made known to us in Yeshua, our Messiah. Through this process of reading, we will come to a deeper understanding of the tapestry of redemption before our eyes, nourishing our life together as a life lived for the sake of all Israel and indeed for all the people of the world.

[68]Perhaps, this process is analogous to the practices of Textual Reasoning For a helpful discussion of this process see Peter Ochs and Nancy Levine, eds, *Textual Reasonings: Jewish Philosophy and Text Study at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); see particularly George Lindbeck's essay in this volume (252-58) "Progress in textual reasoning: From Vatican II to the conference at Drew."