

## **Reform feministic prayers in Israel**

New and renewing elements in their contents and form  
as a further step in the development of Jewish prayer

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Motto: “I needed to go in search of People who consciously or unconsciously,  
were able to make manifest the female side of God”.

Paulo Coelho, *The Witch of Portebello*

This paper is dedicated to Channah Safrai of blessed memory (1946-2008, Jerusalem)  
who was one of the first teachers to open for me the gates of Torah.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Motivation

On the face of it, dealing with feministic prayers in Israel, may sound revolutionary. However, as I will attempt to show, the prayers are well anchored in the tradition from which they often draw the form as well as contents. They are often inspired by existing liturgy, creating new answers and complementing gaps that were created by the exclusion of half of the Jewish population, especially women and girls. This meant exclusion of an important aspect of human experience such as life cycles changes of the female body and the feeling side of life, experienced also by some men.

Thus, following a good Jewish tradition I will start with a story for it expresses clearly the point of my motivation:

An American rabbi is called to the final judgment. He comes before the heavenly throne and the angels plead on his behalf. His deeds are many, his sins few. All his life he has been guided by the principles of Torah and by his desire to secure a place in the world to come.

A modest, unassuming man, he is shocked when informed that he is guilty of hubris, the sin of exceeding pride. Every Yom Kippur, as he reviewed the litany of sins in relation to his own life, excess pride was low on the list.

“Why?” he cries. “What have I done?”

The angels oblige. They flash before him one earthly scene, and then another and another. It is Shabbat on earth. The setting is a women’s minyan. The rabbi recognizes many of the women-friends, students and members of his congregation. The scene shifts to the heavenly throne. The Holy One, blessed be He, is pleased with His children Israel. His name has been invoked. He is called again and again, in a thousand places over all the earth, to hear the pleas and praises of His children.

Suddenly, however, there is a great stirring around the heavenly throne. Something has gone awry. The women have withheld praises that His children in a thousand other places on earth call out with full voice, words and phrases that attest to the holiness and kingship of God.

“My daughters, My daughters, why do you deny My kingship?”

The women reply: “Our brothers, our leaders have so instructed us.”<sup>1</sup>

### 1.2 My own story

I have grown up in Israel, in a liberal surrounding. Ever the same the general feeling of oppression of the feminine somehow sipped through, mostly unconsciously. Later on as a young adult, I lived in New York City during the years that are considered to be the second feministic wave, which I will discuss later. This resulted in 1979 in the publication of a small booklet which I called: *Jewish holidays - impressions of a woman* (written in Hebrew), which expressed the pain, the feeling of exclusion, the oppression I must have felt within the tradition. The booklet went through the yearly cycle of Jewish holidays.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Blue Greenberg, *On women and Judaism* (Philadelphia 1998) 77.

<sup>2</sup> Navah Shmuelit, *Jewish Holidays - impressions of a woman* (Haifa 1979).

The feministic prayers I have discovered in Israel in 2007 were for me an answer to my outcry in the above booklet. This was one personal reason to dedicate a paper to this subject.

While applying to the rabbinic study, one of my motivations was the empowerment of women within Judaism. By writing this paper I want to shed more light on these relatively unknown prayers, so that they may become more publicly known and inspire other men and women, as they have inspired me. I am convinced that the whole community could benefit from this.

I quote two selections from my booklet<sup>3</sup>:

#### יום כפור

אינני יכולה להגיע השמימה  
כשהוא והם בשיח  
כמוהם אקונן  
כמוהם אשא תחינה  
עת יכשפני הניגון  
ואין סליחה לי-  
אני רק אשה

#### Yom Kippur

I cannot reach the sky  
while He and They are talking  
like them I cry  
like them I die  
bewitched by our music  
and still I cannot be atoned  
I am a woman only

#### שבת

יום השבת ניתן למנוחה  
אברך הנרות- אך רק כאשת- איש  
השולחן רק אז הוא מתוק  
האור הילה  
הגבר מלכי ואני הכלה  
האם אי-פעם זה יהיה אחרת?

#### Shabbat

The seventh day of the week  
is rest, the candles are mine  
to bless- but if I am married  
the table is then sweet, the light is bright  
the man my king and I am his bride  
would that ever, ever change?

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<sup>3</sup> Navah Shmuelit, *Jewish Holidays - impressions of a woman* (Haifa 1979) 6, 18.

### *1.3 The research theme*

For the purpose of this paper I have chosen ten (feministic) prayers which have been written during the last ten years. Seven of them are by seven different women, and three by three men, which is the reason I chose the title “feministic” (and not just “women’s prayers”). All ten authors are involved with the Movement for Progressive Judaism in Israel.

Each of the prayer is dealing with a different theme, they vary also in form, but they all share clear connection to the sources and to scriptures, as well as being inclusive and sensitive to feministic issues.

I will attempt to analyse each prayer and in the process I will show in what way do I see them not only bringing forth new material but also creating a continuation and a step forward in the development of Jewish liturgy as the title of this paper proposes. I will also explain what makes them “feministic”, following definitions and concepts from feministic literature.

## 2. Sources

### 2.1 *A complex but fruitful relationship: a short historical background of Reform Judaism and of Feminism*

The developments and growth of the feminist movement seems to go somewhat parallel to the development of the reform movement. Both were an outcome of the enlightenment and of a growing demand for democratization, (in the general society as well as within Judaism.) The struggle was first for “equality of identity”<sup>4</sup>, in which women and men fought for the rights of women to be equal in all areas of life, what is seen in feminism as “the first wave”.

Both the Reform movement and feminism started at the eighteenth century in West Europe, both moved further to North America. Both movements are still involved in an ongoing process of growth and development.

Through the years different statements and principles were developed by the Reform movement that gradually prepared the ground for more openness, more flexibility and eventually more equality.

Its builders (Germany, end of the eighteenth century) considered themselves as ones who continued a *flexible and open-minded* Jewish tradition from before the Middle ages. They emphasized the *harmony between Jewish values and universal humanistic values*. In the year 1792, fourteen principles of faith and ritual were written, that will be “*acceptable for the modern person*”. The feminist movement started in England in 1792. While in 1824 some of the reformists reached the shores of the US, the first feminist conference took place in 1848 as well in the US. There the Reform movement developed eventually into the American reform movement of nowadays, which is powerful and forms the largest Jewish stream in the US. The center of the movement has moved to Jerusalem, but the American movement remains central.

What is considered the “second wave” in the development of the feminist movement took place in the years 60’s-70’s of the twentieth century. Now both women and men fought (and still do) for the unique voice of women to be heard within society at large, as well as within the religious community, as the struggle for “equality of difference”.<sup>5</sup> While the first wave feminism attempted to imitate men, the accent now was on what is unique in being female, on the one hand liberating women from being mothers and wives only, and on the other hand emphasizing their ability to care and be emotionally involved. This was thought to be what society needed: women must be more appreciated for who they are as human being, and society as a whole ought to become more feminine. All this in contrast to what the patriarchal society considered to be feminine and therefore “lower” and subordinated to men.

As is with the reform movement, the center of feministic activities has been in the US, where a Jewish feminist movement has flourished, and has influenced Jewish feminism in Europe and in Israel, creating Rosh Chodesh groups in many places, renewing rituals and creating new ones.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Tamar Duvdevan, “Let me hear your voice” - over women’s voice in the progressive Jewish prayer’ in: Meir Azari ed., *Reform Judaism* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv 2005) 91-97, here 91.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>6</sup> Penina V. Adelman, *Miriam’s well* (New York second edition 1990) preface.



In Israel, the Reform movement started in 1958, and became officially recognized in 1971 and is known by the name Movement for Progressive Judaism. As there is no separation of state and religion in Israel especially concerning personal matters, the movement though slowly gaining ground, faces many a struggle. Especially painful is the way the orthodoxy views the Reform movement, as “another religion”<sup>7</sup>. This special situation in the state of Israel by necessity imposed additional hardships for the development of feminism. Only in the years 80’s-90’s of the twentieth century organized feministic activities and awareness began to take roots in the consciousness of Israeli society. A real deep change is still in its early stages.<sup>8</sup>

However, in the present Platform of the Israeli Movement for Progressive Judaism we find the following statement:

**Equality between the sexes:**

“Equality between the sexes is a basic element in the religious way of the progressive Judaism from its start. Our goal is to reach a full and equal partnership between men and women. This is being realized in all areas of life, including religious and communal life. Among its expressions are: complete annulment of distinction between men and women as far as fulfilling mitzvot, absorption of equality in the language of prayer, building an equal system of life circle rituals and full partnership in rabbinic, communal and professional leading roles. Since the time that progressive Judaism courageously declared equal rights and equal obligations for women, our Jewish lives have been enriched in many areas. The effort to achieve complete equality between the sexes, fortifying the protection of women’s rights is one of the main banners of progressive Judaism in Israel.”<sup>9</sup>

At the present time a “third wave” of feminism has erupted. According to Tamar Ross, “Biological sex difference between male and female are much less significant than the similarities”.<sup>10</sup> The sexes are not identical but equal in that every human being has both female and male qualities inherent in them, and each has the right to express it in her/his unique voice. This allows mutual reflection in each other (women and men), which is positive and constructive.<sup>11</sup>

It should be noted that experience of the different feministic waves is not necessarily connected to chronology, and one may find oneself still present in some aspects of one wave or another.

## 2.2 Prayer in Reform Judaism

The following statement is to be found in the above mentioned Platform of the Israeli Movement for Progressive Judaism:

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<sup>7</sup> <http://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%A4%D7%9E%D7%99%D7%A0%D7%99%D7%96%D7%9D> (consulted: December 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Orit Kamir, *Feminism, rights and justice* [Hebrew] (n.p. 2002) 42 (English translation is mine).

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.reform.org.il/Heb/IMPJ/Platform.asp> (consulted: December 2007).

<sup>10</sup> Tamar Ross, *Expanding the palace of Torah* (Waltham, Mass. 2004) 5.

<sup>11</sup> Tamar Duvdevani, “Let me hear your voice” - on voices of women in prayer of progressive Judaism’ in: Meir Azari ed., *Reform Judaism* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv 2005) 91-97, here 97.

“We consider prayer to be in the first place an essential human need to deeply sense the hidden meaning of our lives in moments of joy and of sorrow, thankfulness and opposition. A need that can be aroused at any time, at any place... Our belief in complete equality between the sexes, in the spirit of tolerance, and in inter-faith acceptance, gets its extensive expression in the order of our prayers... The world of prayer has been since its start a world of creativity and renewal... We are constantly enriching our individual as well as our public prayer with creative works of all generations, including our own generation.”

The selection of prayers in this paper confirms this statement at the same time that they form a consequence of it. It can be seen as a natural growth sprouting from the coming together in time and space of the development of the Reform movement and the second and third wave of the feminist movement (for obvious reasons this would not have been possible at the first feminist wave). This coming together has been a fertile and inviting ground for a new and renewing Jewish-feminist creativity of women (in the second wave) and eventually also of men (in the third wave).

### 2.3 *The Prayers selection:*

1. Morning Blessings Rabbi Tamar Duvdevani, 1997	ברכות השחר	12
2. A Prayer for the sufferers of home violence Naama Dafni, 2003	תפילה למוכי אלימות במשפחה	16
3. He who answered-She who answered Rabbi Yehoram Mazor, 2003	מי שענה-מי שענתה	19
4. A Prayer connected to the yearly seasons/situation within nature Rabbi Mira Raz, 2004	עונות השנה. מעמדים בחיק הטבע	24
5. A Prayer for mother after a birth of a daughter/after a birth of a son Rabbi Corrie Zeidler, 2004	תפילה ליולדת לאחר הולדת בת/בן	27
6. A Ritual of Immersion in the mikveh for bride and bridegroom Rabbi Alona Lisitza, 2006	טקס טבילה לכלה ולחתן	30
7. A Prayer for The mother Rabbi Dalia Marx, 2006	תפילה על האמא	35
8. A prayer upon emerging from the mikveh water Rabbi Rachel Shabath Beit-Halachmi (date unknown)	תפילת העולה ממי הטבילה	39
9. A blessing for fighting racism Rabbi Yehoyada Amir, 2007	ברכה למאבק בגזענות	45
10. A prayer of thanks Rabbi Ishai Ron (date unknown)	מודה אני	48

### 2.4 *Choice motivation*

I have chosen the above prayers so as to have a diversity of authors and of themes. As is obvious from the above selection, I found more women's prayers than men's up to the present time.

## *2.5 Analysis*

The analysis is based upon the original Hebrew version of the prayers, in which gender is clearly present by nature of the language, which is lost in the English translation (for Hebrew texts see appendix). Only one prayer (no. 8) though written in Israel, had been written originally in English and translated into Hebrew.

## *2.6 Criteria for analysis of the selected prayers*

### *1. Image of God*

What is the reference to God: masculine/feminine?

Which aspect of God is being presented (i.e. mother, king etc.)?

### *2. Purpose*

What is being asked, for who, and for what occasion (public, private)?

### *3. Intertextuality*

Is there reference to existing/traditional prayers or scriptures?

### *4. Feministic position*

To which feminist wave does the prayer belong and why?

### *5. Renewing elements*

What is renewing and what is new in each prayer?

### 3. Analysis of the selected prayers

#### 3.1

Morning Blessings<sup>12</sup>

by Rabbi Tamar Duvdevani<sup>13</sup> (1997)

English translation: Orna Meir

Blessed are you Yah, source of life, creator of light and remover of darkness,  
spreading lands and opening roads.

Blessed are you Yah, source of life, former of human beings in wisdom,  
creating within them openings and vessels,  
and blowing the wind of God to play them.

Blessed are you Yah, source of life, who made me in your image,  
who made me free,  
who made me me.

Blessed are you Yah, my mother, mother of all living,  
who spreads her wings upon me -  
Be a shelter and a tent unto me,  
give strength to the weary.

### Analysis

#### 3.1.1 Image of God

On first look at the Hebrew version, this morning blessing is spread upon the paper as a piece of poetry. A prayer is not necessarily a poem, and a poem is not necessarily a prayer, but the two may combine as they do in this case. What is certain is that a poem draws itself on the paper in a certain form, as is the case here, and further uses metaphors and symbolic images, as is also the case in the Morning Blessings of Tamar Duvdevani. The opening sentence: *Brucha at Yah mekor hachayim* (Blessed are you Yah, source of life) is significant, for it is being repeated four times. Two times in the first part, one time in the middle part and one time in the third part, where *mekor hachayim* (source of life) is identified with *Imi* (my mother): *Brucha at Yah imi* (Blessed are you Yah my mother). This is a reference to God in the feminine gender, a mother out of whose womb everything is coming forth.

How does the author come to this portrayal of God as a woman? While the word *makor* in Hebrew is in fact masculine, the Even-Shusan dictionary<sup>14</sup> lists as the fifth possibility of the meaning of the word *makor* (source) “womb”. This is based on Vayikra 20:18 where we read:

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<sup>12</sup> Tamar Duvdevani, 'Birkot Hashachar', in: Offer Shabat Beyt Halachmi ed, *El Halev* [Hebrew] (n.p. 2005) 24.

<sup>13</sup> Rabbi Tamar Duvdevani is teaching Talmud and Halacha in the HUC in Jerusalem and in other institutions.

<sup>14</sup> Avraham Even-Shushan, *The new dictionary* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem 1979) 1498.

*Et mekora he'era vehi gilta et mekor dameha* ("he hath made naked her fountain and she hath uncovered the fountain of her blood")<sup>15</sup> It should be noted that the English translation of the word *Makor* as "fountain" corresponds to the Hebrew word *Maayan*, which is a source of water – *Mekor mayim*, in itself a very feminine symbol. However in our context the meaning of *Makor* is "source of life", namely the womb. This feminine image of God becomes further obvious from the Hebrew feminine form of the verbs *brucha*, *boreyt* (blessed, creating) and from the name Yah. This name for the Divine is not necessarily feminine, but may be seen as such, if we consider that the ending "ah" in Hebrew is often marking the feminine form. For these reason many feministic prayers, wishing to turn to God in a feminine way, choose the term Yah. In the prayer God is being presented as a source of life, creator of all, a mother, mother of all living. Another feminine reference in the first part is the image of God as "spreading lands and opening roads" and furtheron the mentioning of openings and vessels. These are all terms that are closely associated with the feminine body: having openings, being a vessel for carrying a child. This relates this blessing to the second feminist wave in which much accent was put on the female body and on motherhood.<sup>16</sup>

### 3.1.2 Purpose

What is being asked, in a manner of praise ("Blessed are you") is based on human needs for well-being. In the first part: life, light, lands and roads, openings and vessels and breath on the bodily level. The second part is about freedom, keeping a divine image, being oneself, in the author's words: "Blessed are you Yah... who made me in your image, who made me free, who made me me". And in the third part, motherly protection, cover and strength (energy) are mentioned.

### 3.1.3 Intertextuality

A clear reference to both traditional and progressive siddurim is obvious by the name of the prayer: Morning blessings. In the first part of the prayer there is reference to the orthodox siddur "Blessed are you... our God... who fashioned man with wisdom, and created within him many openings and many cavities".<sup>17</sup> Reference again to both traditional and reform siddurim is in "Blessed are you... who gives strength to the weary, which in the prayer in question we find at the last line."<sup>18</sup>

In the second part reference is clear to the morning blessings as we know them from the Israeli progressive siddur: "Blessed are you who made me in his image, who made me free."<sup>19</sup>

In the third part there is reference to Bereshit 3:20, borrowing the title that was given to Chava "Mother of all living". Thereafter God, the mother spreading her wings upon us reminds us of prayer Hashkiveynu, in which the signature is "Blessed are you God who spread over us his shelter of peace".<sup>20</sup> In psalm 36:8 we find "Mankind shelters in the shadow of your wings" and in psalm 32:7 "You are my shelter".<sup>21</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Similar reference is also found later in Chazal: for instance: Tosefta Nida 9 10 and in Mishna Nida Chapter 2 mishna 5.

<sup>16</sup> Orit Kamir, *Feminism, rights and justice* (n.p. 2002) 34, 39.

<sup>17</sup> Translation from Siddur *Kol Yaakov* (New York 1998) 15.

<sup>18</sup> Siddur *Kol Yaakov* 20 and Siddur *Haavoda Shebalev* (Jerusalem 1998) 29.

<sup>19</sup> *Haavoda Shebalev* 28.

<sup>20</sup> Translation from reform siddur *Mishkan Tfila* (New York 2007) 160.

<sup>21</sup> Jewish publication society, *Tanakh the holy scriptures* (Philadelphia/Jerusalem 1985) 1142.

This borrowing of images from scriptures and from traditional blessings shows a deep connection, a being rooted in a long and ancient Jewish tradition that the author is coming from, side by side with the need to renew and expand so that she can take her place in it.

### *3.1.4 Feministic position*

This prayer belong to the second feminist wave, in that it no longer attempts to be “equal” or man-like, as in the first wave, but rather redefines and/or glorifies feminine motherly qualities which was one of the characteristics of the second wave. “She need not continue to be what man has made her to be; she can refuse to internalize the male view of her as object. Woman can engage in positive action in society, and can redefine or abandon her roles as wife, mother... or any other role Western civilization has relegated to her.”<sup>22</sup> As Tamar Ross presents it, this is a new concept of womanhood and of feminism, which allows a religious person to find and even emphasize feminine aspects of God without the “danger” of demeaning the Divine. As there is no gender mentioned for the praying person, it could be either feminine or masculine and as such it is an invitation to men to use this prayer as well, which brings it in fact to the boarder line between the second and the third feminist wave in which both sexes are encouraged to bring out their unique voice.

### *3.1.5 Renewing elements*

Renewing element in this prayer is the removal of the image of God from a conventional father image, and emphasizing the motherly side. The expression “remover of darkness” is new, which is rather comforting (as a mother would do). In the siddur it appears as “*creator*” of darkness. New are also “spreading lands and opening roads”, which follows the “removal of darkness”, strengthening the motherly image as being constructive, encouraging to go on new roads, which symbolically is what women were and are still searching for. A new image is that of human being created with openings and vessels as a musical instrument for God to play through. That brings to mind the harp of King David according to quite a few midrashim, although here it is a wind instrument, while David’s harp is a string one: “Rav Acha bar Bizna said in the name of rabbi Shimon Chasida: a harp was hanging above the bed of David, when it became midnight a northern wind would come and blow through it and it would play by itself. At once (he) stood and studied Torah till dawn” (Talmud Bavli: Brachot 3a – translation from the Hebrew is mine).<sup>23</sup>

One more new element is the gratefulness for having been created as oneself: “Blessed are you... who made me me”. This is a playful self confirmation of the praying person’s uniqueness, again putting the prayer on the edge of the third feminist wave and bringing it up to date, as we live in a time of self awareness.

### *3.1.6 Conclusion*

This morning blessing is a good example of a feminist prayer in that it dares to turn to the Divine in the feminine gender, while being inspired and based on both traditional

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<sup>22</sup> Tamar Ross, *Expanding the palace of Torah* (Waltham, Mass. 2004) 5.

<sup>23</sup> A similar midrash is in Bamidbar Rabah chapter 15:16.

and reform liturgy and scriptures. It adds new feminine elements as well as new images and metaphors, which enable the praying person -male or female- to feel close to God as one feels close to a mother. This intensifies the power of such a prayer for it does not discriminate but rather shows respect for both body and spirit, and for creation, thus being holistic. For a female praying it brings about a positive confirmation of who she is, for a male praying it can give a confirmation of the feminine part in himself.

### 3.2

A prayer for the sufferers of home violence

by Naama Dafni<sup>24</sup> (2003)

English translation: Navah-Tehila

Our God and God of our forefathers and foremothers,  
help us to strengthen the broken voice, the silent outcry,  
of those for whom the protective family walls become walls of a prison.  
Help us to strengthen those who pray that we may relate to their suffering,  
those who call out: “and my tear too put in your bag”.<sup>25</sup>  
Let us hear the voice of blood of our screaming brothers and sisters,  
and let us remember that we are created in your image, and that about you it is said:  
“stillness and a voice I hear” (Job 4:16).

Help us to discover inside us the true will to help them to start anew,  
to find the enormous courage to cry out, and not to hide the hope to grow towards a  
better future. Give us the right to support them when they reveal power of soul and  
when they choose for life.

And for the women who suffer from violence in the family we call out from our heart:  
“Open for me my sister” (Song of Songs 5:2), “Raise your voice with power have no  
fear” (Isaiah 40:9), “There is reward for your labor” (Jeremiah 31:15).  
“Shed tears like a torrent” (Eicha 2:18), “I have seen your tears” (Isaiah 38:5).  
“You are our sister, you are our sister, you are our sister, may you grow into thousands  
of myriads” (Genesis 24:60).

Please our God in heaven, you listen to the cry of the lowest and you rescue, create in  
them and in us a new soul, and bring us salvation and life.  
Blessed are you God, who in his goodness renews daily perpetually purity of the soul of  
human beings.  
Blessed are you God, who strengthens our hands in establishing a society in which all  
people have the right to live life of respect and of love.  
Please God pray heal us (Bamidbar 12:13).

## **Analysis**

### *3.2.1 Image of God*

This is a prayer with a direct appeal to God the masculine, as can be seen from the use  
of verbs in the Hebrew: help, give, listen, bring salvation, create, heal, which at once  
emphasize these aspects of Him. The language of the ones who pray is grammatically in  
the plural, indicating a group of praying individuals, even a whole community of  
women and men. The opening “Our God and God of our forefathers and foremothers”  
already indicates that there is more than one person who is praying. The reference to a

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<sup>24</sup> Naama Dafni is director of “Kehilat Tzedek” in the Israeli Religious Action Center.

<sup>25</sup> This quotation is from a Selichot Piyut “To you God I lift my eyes” in a Sephardic siddur.



God of forefathers and foremothers is telling about being in a relationship with that God over historical time, suggesting trust in Him. From the word: “foremothers” it is clear that this is not a traditional prayer in spite of the relative “conservative” relationship to God.

### 3.2.2 Purpose

What is being asked is double fold: help for those who suffer from violence in the family and help for the helpers, who may all be both feminine and masculine. However: a special part is dedicated in the middle of the prayer to the suffering women: “And for those women who suffer from violence...”, thereafter appealing to them individually (it makes it more personal and more powerful) “Open for me my sister”, encouraging each one to open up, to carry her voice powerfully, not to be afraid. What is of importance here is the acknowledgement of each woman and her pain “I have seen your tears”. This special segment ends in a confirmation for the individual woman: “You are our sister” repeating ritualistically three times. This ritual of calling one three times is borrowed from *Simchat Torah* in the synagogue, when the *chatan* and *kalat Torah* are being called up. In the prayer of Naama Dafni it certainly shows acceptance of the individual suffering woman, which is so basic in these kind of traumatic experiences.

### 3.2.3 Feministic position

The second feminist wave was very instrumental in creating a new public awareness of difficult situations that many families are confronted with, a new awareness of the consequences of rape for its victims, and in particular awareness of what was considered marginal in a patriarchal society, which comfortably ignored crimes and difficulties on the home front. This emphasis on violence within the family, in particular the victimization of women therein, as well as promoting sisterhood among women is very characteristic of the second feminist wave. Thanks to this shelters for beaten women were created and women were encouraged to come out of their isolation and shame. Orit Kamir describes it in her book: “Shelter for beaten women were built as well as lines of support for victims of rape and sexual violence. Women came out for big demonstrations to promote what was important for them, and public space was finally expropriated from the exclusive ruling of men. Men and institutions that expressed themselves or acted in a sexist manner were disdained without fear, a phenomenon that started to influence norms of expression and behaviour of the wide public.”<sup>26</sup>

### 3.2.4 Renewing elements

By writing her prayer Naama Dafni brings in the open the issue of family violence and the suffering it causes to women in Israel. It is an outcry for recognition that there is a problem as well as a request for help and support, which categorizes the prayer to the second feminist wave.

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<sup>26</sup> Orit Kamir, *Feminism, rights, and justice* [Hebrew] (n.p. 2002) 36 (English translation is mine).

### 3.2.5 Intertextuality

The prayer keeps a structure known from the siddur. Starting with the opening “Our God and God of our forefathers” and ending with a formula of blessing – signature: “Blessed are you God”. It can be categorized as the prayer known as *Tachnun*, which must have been inspired by the traditional siddur:

“Incline Your ear, my God and listen, open Your eyes and see our desolation” or “Look, we beg You, and have mercy on Your people speedily” and the last part of the prayer in which the first line and the last line starts with “Please” which we also find in the traditional siddur.<sup>27</sup> In the first part there is a quotation from a Sephardic siddur: “and my tear too put in your bag”. Thereafter the prayer is hinged upon biblical quotations, especially in the middle part that refers to women in particular.

Besides these quotations there is use of expressions that are known to us from the bible, such as “let us hear the voice of blood” in the first part of the prayer which is inspired by Bereyshit 4:10 “Your brother’s blood cries out to me” or “let us remember that we are created in your image”... taken from Bereyshit 1:26: “and God said let us make man in our image” and one more such reference in the second section “when they choose for life”, coming from Devarim 30:19 “choose life”. The very last line “God pray heal us” is again a quotation from Bamidbar 12:13, with a small change, heal us instead of heal her - as Moshe prays for the sick Miryam.

In the last part there is a reference to a sentence from the morning prayer - blessing of creator of light: “who in his goodness renews daily perpetually” which is creatively combined with another part of an earlier prayer in the morning order which refers to the purity of the soul: “God the soul you gave me is pure.”<sup>28</sup> All these intertextual references to traditional siddurim show that there has always been a need for a listening ear, human and divine, and a need for healing.

### 3.2.6 Conclusion

This prayer is a rich mixture of existing prayer structure interwoven with fitting quotations from scriptures, with which to introduce a new feministic theme, that of awareness of violence in the family, combined with traditional masculine aspects of God, mixed with daily spoken Hebrew. The biblical quotations give the prayer a poetic colouring though it is written in a prose style. The traditional form may be “politically” helpful, for as such it could be also prayed in traditional (Orthodox) synagogues. The praying persons are offering a listening ear, asking from God to listen as well. The task at hand is heavy and God’s help is of paramount importance. It expresses care and offers hope and opening in situations that seems hopeless and closed. The so-called lowest of society get a place, a safe place, in which shameful secrets can be at last revealed and deep wounds have a chance to heal with new perspectives. (As said this in itself is a feministic process).

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<sup>27</sup> Translation from Siddur *Kol Yaakov* (New York 1998) 127, 129.

<sup>28</sup> Siddur *Haavoda Shebalev* (Jerusalem 1998) 112, 103.

### 3.3

He who answered - She who answered<sup>29</sup>

by Rabbi Yehoram Mazor<sup>30</sup> (2003)

English translation: Navah-Tehila

Intended for women who face difficulties during their pregnancy, or are after an abortion or after heavy gynaecological activity.

God who answered Chava, mother of all being, with the message: "In pain shall you bear children" - answer me (Bereyshit 3:16).

Shechina who answered Our mother Sarah at the end of her childlessness, with the message "At the time next year and Sarah shall have a son" - hear my voice (Bereyshit 18:15).

God who hears the weeping of our mother Rivka, having difficulty while giving birth and asking: "if so why me" answer me (Bereyshit 25:22).

Shechina that hears the plea of the sister Rachel and Lea, praying for offsprings - hear my voice.

God who listens to the fears of Yocheved mother of Moshe, giving birth I times of decrees, answer me.

Shechina that listens to the prayer of Channah mother of Shmuel, that rejoices: "It was this boy I prayed for" - hear my voice (I Shmuel 1:27).

## Analysis

### 3.3.1 *Image of God*

Of all the chosen prayers in this paper the prayer of Yehoram Mazor is the only one that uses for God the name Adonai and not Elohim, which is rather traditional (both these names of God are traditional) as we follow the scriptural stories: "Adonai is being used whenever the Divine is spoken in a close relationship with men or nations, Elohim denotes God as the creator and moral Governer of the universe."<sup>31</sup> In the biblical stories of Sarah, Rivka, and Channa the name Adonai is being used. In the story of the birth of Moshe, the name Elohim is being used in connection to the midwives, not directly with Yocheved. In the story of Lea giving birth, the name Adonai is used, while with Rachel the name Elohim appears. The term Shechina used here for God is also used in Prayer no.6<sup>32</sup>, Shechina being the feminine aspect of God. The use of the name Adonai here brings God close to the praying women, and is supporting them in getting close to Him. A man on behalf of women writes "He who answered - She who answered", on a subject that is most feminine. The chosen combination of "Adonai" and "Shechina" is expressive of the author's belief as a man, that a woman is a complete human being, with her pain, frustration and aspiration.

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<sup>29</sup> Yehoram Mazor, 'Tfilat Imahot' in: Ofer Shabat Beyt-Halachmi ed, *El Halev* [Hebrew] (n.p.2005) 57.

<sup>30</sup> Yehoram Mazor was the rabbi of Dachev-Noam congregation in Ramat Hasharon for many years, is a teacher of Jewish Liturgy and the secretary of the Council of Progressive Rabbis (Maram) in Israel.

<sup>31</sup> The Soncino Press, *Pentateuch and Haftorahs* [Hebrew/English] (London 2001) 7.

<sup>32</sup> See page 30.

As such she has choices to which aspect of God she wants to appeal (feminine or masculine), and she has powerful role models in the image of the foremothers.

### 3.3.2 Intertextuality

The title *Mi sheana - Mi sheanta*, brings at once to mind a formula of blessing common in the traditional siddur: “*Mi shebeyrach avoteynu Avraham... hu yevarech et*” (He who blessed our forefathers Avraham... may he bless...) and in another variation: “*Mi sheasa nisim lavotyenu*” (He who performed miracles for our forefathers...) <sup>33</sup>. In the reform siddur the foremothers are included as well: “*Mi shebeyrach Avoteynu Avraham Itzhak and Yaakov, Sarah, Rivka, Rachel veLea, hu yevarech*” <sup>34</sup>. The word *Avoteynu* (forefathers) is in the case of this prayer inclusive for forefathers and foremothers, as is common in Hebrew. <sup>35</sup>

### 3.3.3 Renewing elements

As for renewal, the way from *Mi sheasa* to *Mi sheana* is very short, and possibly the author might have also been inspired by the sound of the other word “*Ana*” written with the letter *Alef* meaning “please”, which comes from the *Tachanun* prayer, however he came out with the word “*Ana*”, written with the letter *Ayn*, meaning “gave answer”. Thus the blessing formula got a new meaning with its very feminine theme, extending the part of foremothers beyond even what is common in the reform siddur, by adding Yocheved and Channah to the foremothers list. The author creates his own new order by turning intermittently to God as a masculine and to Shechina- God as a feminine form: “*Adonai sheana lechava... aneyni. Shechina sheanta leSarah... shimi koli*”. This ending *Aneyni/ shimi koli* repeats three times over the six lines of the prayer. Noticeably the first five lines deal with pain and difficulty around becoming pregnant and giving birth, while the last line is positive and expresses joy of the mother Channah whose prayer had been heard and answered: “It was for this boy I prayed for” (I Shmuel 1:27).

The verb answers in the first set of two lines “God who *answered* Chava” and “Shechina who *answered* Sarah” are written in the past tense, and is followed in both cases by a verbal answer from God. In the other two sets of God and Shechina the verbs are in present tense: “God who *hears* Rivka” and “Shechina who *hears* Rachel and Lea”, as well as God who *listens* to Yocheved and Chana. In these four cases the answer of God and the Shechina appears in a form of a deed (child bearing) after the request. Possibly these last four models appear in present tense so as to make them relevant to our days, implying generations of mothers praying for a child from then till present day. A continuous chain of women struggling with this issue of difficulty around child bearing, could offer some solace. The recognition of the difficulty, giving it a name and a place, validates it, which is in itself a comforting act. And of course the “happy end” can offer hope to the praying women.

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<sup>33</sup> Translation from siddur *Kol Yaakov* (New York 1998) 445, 453.

<sup>34</sup> Siddur *Haavoda Shebalev* (Jerusalem 1990) 128.

<sup>35</sup> This is a point of discussion outside the space of the present paper.

In the prayer of Yehoram Mazor the text is sandwiched as it were between a rhythmical order of the opening and end of the lines:

Adonai sheana (God m. who answered)	Chava.....	aneyni (answer me)
Shechina sheanta (God f. who answered)	Sarah.....	shimi koli (hear me)
Adonai hashomea (God m. who hears)	Rivka.....	aneyni
Shechina hashomaat (God f. who hears)	Rachel/Lea...	shimi koli
Adonai hamakshiv (God m. who listens)	Yocheved.....	aneyni
Shechina hamakshiva (God f. who listens)	Channah.....	shimi koli

The form in which the prayer is composed shows a balance between Adonai and Shechina, Adonai being masculine but with a softer side, that which is connected to human being, the side of *Chesed* (loving kindness and not the side of *Din* -justice- that is connected with the name Elohim).

### 3.3.4 Feministic position

As of the sixteenth century with the development of printing, prayer books for women started to appear in Europe. They were called *Techinot* (supplications)<sup>36</sup> and though not fixed by the rabbis, they were mostly written by men for women,<sup>37</sup> not from a feministic point of view but rather from a patriarchal point of view, which looked at women in “all life situations: Virgin, bride, wife and mother”<sup>38</sup> who are subjugated to men and to a male God. One such prayer for a bride somberly reads: “...Following your divine law, I must say goodbye to my father and mother, friends and relatives, the dreams and play of my youth and follow the man and my future domestic destination, my innocent noisily joy I must offer to a serious meaning of life...”<sup>39</sup> (the English translation is mine).

This sad example is obviously different than the prayer of Yehoram Mazor in its perception of women, which is very limited to their expected and laid upon role: Virgin, bride, wife and mother. It does not express any feeling of empathy to the praying woman, but fixes her pain as a matter of course, as she does not seem to have a choice but to accept and follow men’s ruling over her in the name of God. She is a second-class citizen. While in the somber *techina* example the woman is described as small and almost hopeless, having to give up who she in essence is, the women in the present prayer are all strong and are being presented as role models, unlike in the bible, where they have an important role but secondary to the forefathers. Therefore the prayer of Yehoram Mazor, although based on those *Techinot*, does not share with them the patriarchal point of view and is in fact a feministic prayer.

Both aspects of God presented in the prayer are equal, having the same divine weight. If the praying person is choosing for both it may give her/him a feeling of having divine mother and father who have an open ear for her/his plight. This prayer also offers a choice - one could pray for a masculine God or to a feminine one. It is also possible to

<sup>36</sup> These supplications, called in Yidish “techines” were originally written in Yiddish and therefore also called “Waybertaytsh”.

<sup>37</sup> Annette M. Boeckler, ‘Jüdische Frauen beten. Abriss einer Erfolgsstory’, *Schlangenbrut* 23 (2005), 14-18, 33.

<sup>38</sup> This is the secondary title of the book referred to in footnote 39.

<sup>39</sup> M. Letteris, *Gebeden voor Israëlitische vrouwen* [Dutch translation] (Amsterdam 1882) 46.

use the role model (foremother) with whom the praying woman can identify the most. This possibility of offering choices -so different from the *Techina* above that had absolutely no choice, which feels as very painful- shows great empathy for the women in need of such a prayer, from the side of the male author. It expresses sensitivity and feeling with and for the women, regarding them as full human beings. As the author is a man writing for and on behalf of women, it would relate the prayer to the third feminist wave, for it shows a male author who is aware of the feminine aspect of himself, from where he is able to feel the strong empathy for women and generate a prayer for them. As Rachel Adler puts it “Engendering Judaism, like other kinds of human engendering, is a project that women and men must undertake together. We must converse, tell stories, play and know one another if we are finally to inhabit a single *nomos* as partners and friends”.<sup>40</sup> Since the praying models are all women and the subject -difficulties in pregnancy- is usually connected with women, this prayer may be classified as belonging to the second feminist wave. Men and women then are equal but separate and each gender has its own concerns though none higher or lower than the other.

### 3.3.5 Purpose

God, either masculine or feminine or both (as it is suggested here by using the two forms) is requested to hear, to listen and to respond, qualities associated with a mother and (hopefully) also with a sensitive father... Although at first look the prayer would be said by a woman, a man, together with his wife, could also use it praying probably at home, or in the hospital. It can also be prayed by a group of friends of both sexes. I could even imagine a man saying this prayer out of his heart on behalf of his woman and his desire for an offspring.

### 3.3.6 Conclusion

This prayer could be compared with Prayer no.5<sup>41</sup> in which Corrie Zeidler uses feminine and masculine text side by side referring to childbirth of a daughter and/or a son. The only difference between these prayers is in the language (f/m). Both prayers are about feminine issues. Childbirth is very much women’s own, unavoidably accompanied by pain and suffering. The prayer shows us that there were precedents to difficulties around this theme, as we follow a line of women in the bible. It is important to note here that reference to the foremothers seems to have been common in *Techinot prayers*: “In contrast to the standard prayers liturgy, which refer to the God of the Patriarchs, *techines* [supplications] invoke the merit of the Matriarchs or other biblical heroines as well as noted Jewish women, to intercede on behalf of the petitioner.”<sup>42</sup> These were all strong powerful women. The prayer of Yehoram Mazor is probably based on that tradition, as it moves between Sarah who showed patience and Channah who showed trust, including Yocheved, which is mostly not mentioned in the lines of foremothers, while she was a woman of courage and was daring to ignore the decree of the Pharaoh. All women in the prayer were answered and this can offer women great support and encouragement, which is new in liturgy. God and the Shechina are in balance here (they are in fact One) and are near to the suffering women, able to turn a listening ear for otherwise it would not be asked. We may see this aspect of God as well

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<sup>40</sup> Rachel Adler, *Engendering Judaism* (Boston 1998) 58.

<sup>41</sup> See page 27.

<sup>42</sup> Susan Grossman, Rivka Haut, *Daughter of the king* (Philadelphia/New York /Jerusalem 1992) 76.

in Prayer no.2<sup>43</sup> in which listening plays also a crucial role. By composing the prayer in this manner, Yehoram Mazor succeeded in transforming biblical stories about women in agony, into a useful praying tool for present day women. This bring those women out of their painful isolation. They can draw courage and support from powerful women of our ancient Jewish tradition and feel hope again. The special form offers them more than one choice, as stated above, and let them feel that they belong to that tradition, that they have their full and rightful place in it finally, after so many ages of unjust repression.

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<sup>43</sup> See page 16.

### 3.4

Yearly seasons/situations within nature <sup>44</sup>

by Rabbi Mira Raz<sup>45</sup> (2004)

English translation: Navah-Tehila

May it be your will

My God and God of my forefathers and foremothers

That I will leap over repetitious time's mountains (*zman nishne*)

And will bound towards the time of change (*zman shel hashinuy*)

that you will be drawing me after you and I will run

in beds laid in order under the sun

and through their perfum

I shall ascend above the sun

that the cycle of nature

may carry me back to you

## Analysis

### 3.4.1 Intertextuality and Image of God

“May it be Your will My God and God of my forefathers and foremothers” is a traditional opening of a prayer, with the addition of foremothers. It is to be found in both traditional and reform siddurim in the prayer of Shacharit. In the traditional siddur it appears many times, for instance “May it be Your will, Hashem our God and the God of our forefathers that we observe Your decree”.<sup>46</sup> In the reform siddur it appears in the morning blessings: “May it be Your will our and God of our forefathers that we may feel at home with Your Torah and cling to your mitzvot”.<sup>47</sup> In both traditional and reform siddurim it is the opening of the blessing of the month,<sup>48</sup> to mention just a few examples.

The turning to God is clearly masculine as can be seen from two words that are missing in the English, the third word, in the Hebrew “*milefanecha*” (before you) and the very last word “*elecha*” (to you). The praying person is speaking in the first person singular, either feminine or masculine. God is here the creator of nature with its time cycles. But there is more to it, for there are two aspects of time: Time that repeats itself in cycles, and linear time that is ever changing. The praying person is “caught” between these two aspects. In her accompanying remarks to this prayer writes Mira Raz: “In Hebrew the root” *shin- nun-hey*” is two fold, it means to repeat again and again, and on the other hand, exact the opposite, it means to change something. It is as if the language (Hebrew) wishes to teach us that these two forms of existence are dualistic, and had been imbedded in human beings since creation... *Lishnot* (to repeat) belongs to the world below... the world of nature, the cycles of which we experience daily and through the

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<sup>44</sup> Mira Raz, ‘Onot Hashana - Mamadim becheyk hateva’, in: Ofer Shabat Beyt-Halachmi ed., *El Halev* [Hebrew] (n.p. 2005) 26.

<sup>45</sup> Mira raz is the Rabbi of Natan-Yah congregation in Natanya.

<sup>46</sup> Translation from siddur *Kol Yaakov* (New York 1998) 157.

<sup>47</sup> Translation from siddur *Sim Shalom* (New York 2003) 65.

<sup>48</sup> Siddur *Haavoda shebalev* (Jerusalem 1999) 129.



seasons, nothing new under the sun.... *Leshanot* (to change) belongs to the upper world, the world above nature, the world above the sun, the world from which nature had been created and therefore can be changed". The idea being that a human being can choose to climb upwards spiritually and change and develop and give meaning to his/her life."<sup>49</sup>

### 3.4.2 *Renewing elements*

The expression "Under the sun" is quite often used in Kohelet, like in 9:9: "For that alone is what you can get out of life and out of the means you acquire under the sun".<sup>50</sup> In this prayer we meet a new element: the wish, the possibility even to ascend *above* the sun, namely to change one's awareness, to come above the cycle of repetition, closer to God, as the author says: "I shall ascend above the sun, that the cycle of nature may carry me back to you". It is as if Kohelet and Song of Songs are meeting in this prayer, for it brings forth smells and sounds of the Song of Songs, referring to the cyclic character of nature which is very feminine<sup>51</sup> with which the author's own words are interwoven: "I will leap over repetitious time's mountains and will bounce towards the time of change" brings directly to mind Song of Songs 2:8 "My beloved, there he comes, leaping over mountains, bounding over hills".<sup>52</sup> The line "that you will be drawing me after you and I will run" is borrowed from Song of Songs 1:4 "draw me after you, let us run".<sup>53</sup> Further there is reference to the beds of perfume in Song of Songs 6:2 "My beloved has gone down to his garden to the beds of spices"<sup>54</sup> and in the line "in beds laid in order under the sun and from their perfume I shall ascend above the sun".

The reference to the Song of Songs seem to fit well in this prayer as its theme is the yearly seasons and the nature of which the book is full of. One other prayer in this paper that makes use of the Song of Song is Prayer no.2<sup>55</sup> where in its middle part the woman is called sister, a loving name much used in the book. At the same time, there are important differences between the biblical source and the prayer of Mira Raz:

- a. In the prayer we see a new element: in Song of Songs the beloved descends to the garden, in the prayer the person praying ascends, carried up by the perfume of the beds, which the author understands as the Divine.
- b. In the Song of Songs the one who goes down to the garden is masculine, the story being told at that particular moment by a feminine being. Here whoever the praying person is, she/he can go to the garden and benefit from it by being uplifted. All of these emphasize that the prayer is asking for renewal and spiritual uplifting and closeness to God.

<sup>49</sup> Mira Raz, 'Onot Hashana - Mamadim becheyk hateva', in: Ofer Shabat Beyt-Halachmi ed. *El Halev* (n.p. 2005) [Hebrew] 26.

<sup>50</sup> The Jewish Publication Society, *Tanakh the holy scriptures* (Philadelphia/Jerusalem 1985) 1452.

<sup>51</sup> Relating the cycles of nature to femininity has developed during the second feminist wave: "Group members see every subtle turn of the life cycle and year cycle as containing potential ritual moment..." In: Penina V. Adelman, *Miriam's well* (New York; second edition 1994) preface.

<sup>52</sup> *Tanakh* 1407.

<sup>53</sup> *Tanakh* 1406.

<sup>54</sup> *Tanakh* 1413.

<sup>55</sup> See page 16.

### 3.4.3 Feministic position

As nature cycles, which are usually associated with women, are mentioned, it could fit a woman praying. However a man too can use this prayer in which he would be asking sensitivity to the feminine aspect in himself. It seems therefore that the prayer belongs to the third wave of feminism, which is inclusive to both sexes, both having feminine and masculine aspects in themselves, that maybe are yet to be discovered. About this Rachel Adler writes: “To polarize by gender is to deny that... human beings are much more alike than unlike. Gender variations are meaningful only within the context of human sameness”.<sup>56</sup>

Over the theological response to third wave feminism Tamar Ross writes: “God is the foundation of our being, and what connects us to the greater whole, giving us a sense of and allowing us to become our true selves.”<sup>57</sup> Both authors understand that women and men are equally human; equally a part of a whole, while each has her/his own true self, in which God is always reflected. This notion is very much present in this prayer.

### 3.4.4 Purpose

The prayer of Mira Raz fits the above description well, being suitable for use by both genders, in a private celebration that is connected to life cycles or to change, such as the onset of menstruation for a young girl, a birthday, or a coming of age for either sex. It can also be used in a setting of an “alternative service” for Shacharit or Arvit.

### 3.4.5 Conclusion

The use of images and smells from the Song of Songs are creating a “bed laid in order” for this poetic prayer of Mira Raz. It is quite unique for prayers texts, as the Song of Songs is a sensuous, erotic experience of God’s creation while most midrashim choose to see it rather symbolically, as the relationship between God and Israel (for instance Midrash Rabah on Song of Songs). New and creative is the meeting of the sensuous Song of Songs and the moralistic Kohelet with its motive of nothing new under the sun, which the prayer uses to make its point about the repetition of nature cycles, coming in regular time that do not change. However the prayer also shows that being close to nature is also a way to come close to God: “That the cycle of nature may carry me back to you”. In the prayer we are made aware of both the transcendent and immanent aspects of God, for while the cycles of nature repeat themselves, getting close to the Divine is the way to ascend, to be lifted spiritually, which bring about inner awareness, change, personal development and growth.

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<sup>56</sup> Rachel Adler, *Engendering Judaism* (Boston, Mass. 1999) 7.

<sup>57</sup> Tamar Ross, *Expanding the Palace of Torah* (Waltham, Mass. 2004) 115.

### 3.5

A prayer for a mother after a birth of a daughter /  
A prayer for a mother after a birth of a son<sup>58</sup>  
by Rabbi Corrie Zeidler<sup>59</sup> (2004)  
English translation: Navah-Tehila

Blessed are you God [*Yah*]  
Mother of all living being  
that out of me came new life  
in the world.  
Blessed are you God [*Yah*]  
whose wonders I now see and admire  
deep are your thoughts.  
Blessed are you God [*Yah*]  
who guarded me  
during recent nine months.  
Guard my new-born daughter  
and be with her as you were with me.  
Help me raise her in your ways  
pour of your spirit on me and on her.  
Spread your shelter of peace on her  
for a good life and for peace  
in health of body and soul.  
Blessed are you God [*Yah*]  
who kindly renews life in her world.

Blessed are you God [*Yah*]  
Mother of all living being  
that out of me came new life  
in the world.  
Blessed are you God [*Yah*]  
whose wonders I now see and admire  
deep are your thoughts.  
Blessed are you God [*Yah*]  
who guarded me  
during recent nine months.  
Guard my new-born son  
and be with him as you were with me.  
Help me raise him in your ways  
pour of your spirit on me and on him.  
Spread your shelter of peace on him  
for a good life and for peace  
in health of body and soul.  
Blessed are you God [*Yah*]  
who kindly renews life in her world.

## Analysis

### 3.5.1 Image of God

The author of this prayer turns to God in the feminine form *YAH*<sup>60</sup> as a mother of all living being, (Em Kol chai), a term borrowed from Chava in Bereyshit 3:20, as we have seen in Prayer no. 1<sup>61</sup>). By setting the two following lines after each other: "Mother of all living being, That out of me came new life in the world" a link is created between God as a mother and the author as a mother, both creating new life. The earthly mother who is now praying is praising: "Blessed are you God, whose wonders I now see and admire, deep are your thoughts" referring to Psalm 92:6 which is central in the Shabbat morning service in both traditional and reform prayers: "*Ma gadlu ma'asecha Adonai, meod amku mach'shevotecha*" (How great are Your work, O Lord, how very subtle Your designs).<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Corrie Zeidler, 'Tfila Layoledet' in: Ofer Shabat Beyt-Halachmi ed, *El Halev* [Hebrew] (n.p. 2005) 56. The prayer appears in one column unlike the version in this paper which has two columns f/m side by side.

<sup>59</sup> Corrie Zeidler is the rabbi of Ma'alot-Tivon congregation in Tivon.

<sup>60</sup> See remark in Prayer no.1, page 12.

<sup>61</sup> See page 12.

<sup>62</sup> Jewish publication society, *Tanakh The Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia/Jerusalem 1985) 1219; translation from Siddur *Kol Yaakov* (New York 1998) 388; and Siddur *Haavoda Shebalev* (Jerusalem 1999) 107-108.

She then goes on to give thanks, for having been protected during her pregnancy: “Blessed are you, God, who guarded me during recent nine months”. A look at the graphic form of this prayer as it is written on the page, (the Hebrew version) shows an image like a pregnant belly, where this line about pregnancy is the most protruding. The author was not aware of this, when I checked with her, but she said that she believed nothing in life to be accidental.

### 3.5.2 Intertextuality

This line is followed by praying for protection for the newly born, and for help in her/his upbringing: “Guard my new-born daughter/son...help me raise her/him in your ways” asking further for inspiration, and that God will spread a shelter of peace over the child, referring to the prayer of Hashkiveynu (who spread a shelter of peace upon us), which is part of the evening prayer in both orthodox and reform prayers<sup>63</sup>. As she asks for “good life, and for peace, in health of body and soul”, we are reminded of the prayer for Rosh Chodesh,<sup>64</sup> again in both traditional and reform siddurim in which asking for good life and peace are among a list of requests for the new month. The prayer opens with a blessing and ends up with one, the signature referring to the blessing of Creator of light<sup>65</sup>: “*Hameir la’aretz veladarim aleja berachamim, uvetuvo mechadesh bechol yom tamid ma’ase bereshit*” (He who illuminates the earth and those who dwell upon it, with compassion, and in His goodness renews daily, perpetually the work of creation). The intention to sign off with a reference to that particular prayer may be indicating that a new born brings light to the world of a mother, in contrast to a common traditional expression: *Bat babayit - or babayit* (a daughter in house - light in the house) which in this particular and exceptional case would be making an opposite equation: equalizing the joy of the new born son to a new born daughter as far as that particular expression goes. Also a son brings light with his birth.

### 3.5.3 Feministic Position

Thus the prayer of Corrie Zeidler is clearly composed for a world in which either a daughter or a son is equally welcome. There is no preference. It is therefore belonging to the first feminist wave, in which equality between the sexes was important and emphasis on difference was not welcome. Orit Kamir writes: “Feminism of the first wave claimed that liberalism that refers to the human being is correct and has to include also the woman. Like the man, so claimed the liberal feminist, the woman is a thinking creature, which deserves freedom, equality... like men they have the right to decide what is good for themselves. Women like men have the right to vote... to be represented in parliament, women like men have the right to think, to be heard in public, to study, to have a career, to work outside their home, to earn money, to own property. Women in short are human beings exactly like men”.<sup>66</sup> This is well reflected in this prayer.

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<sup>63</sup> Translation from *Siddur Kol Yaakov* (New York 1998) 262; *Siddur Haavoda shebalev* (Jerusalem 1999) 10.

<sup>64</sup> *Yaakov* 452; *Haavoda* 129.

<sup>65</sup> *Yaakov* 408; *Haavoda* 112.

<sup>66</sup> Orit Kamir, *Feminism, rights and justice* [Hebrew] (n.p. 2002) 32.

### 3.5.4 *Renewing elements*

What is new are pregnancy and childbirth, a situation that requires protection, as a theme on its own. This would relate the prayer to the second feminist wave in which awareness of feminine characteristics like motherhood are seen as a cause of joy rather than inferiority. In the bible pregnancies are mentioned but never in detail, except the pregnancy of Rivka, of whose pregnancy we read in Bereyshit 25:22 "But the children struggled in her womb".

As said above, the prayer of Corrie Zeidler reflects a different and new state of mind as giving birth to a boy or a girl are equally treated with the same care and love.

### 3.5.5. *Purpose*

Further there is a request for protection for the child, which we can only imagine that it occupied the mind and heart of the foremothers in the bible. In the siddur we do not find any such prayer, except a *Misheberach* blessing for a woman who just gave birth, which however does not appear in the reform siddur *Haavoda Shebalev*. This would support a possible creation of space for such a prayer, to be said by a mother when she first comes to the reform synagogue after childbirth, in order to share it with the community. This is an aspect of the second feministic wave, which attempted to let the women's voice heard in the synagogue alongside men. About this Tamar Duvdevani writes: "In recent years women started writing prayers and rituals, which are trying to relate to needs and wishes typical for women (or only for women).

Within this framework, rituals were created that did not exist in the Jewish tradition, for women that gave birth, women after abortion or miscarriage... In addition prayers and rituals were created trying to find the specific feminine voice within existing Jewish prayer."<sup>67</sup> The prayer of Corrie Zeidler can be said in the privacy of home or hospital, in the presence of family member and/or friends. Possibly it could also be shared in public prayer, if a special space can be created for it, in a community that is open for it.

### 3.5.6 *Conclusion*

The prayer of Corrie Zeidler shows again that different prayers can belong to more than one feminist wave, in its different aspects. It is in fact a thanksgiving prayer for God's creation on an earthly level. It ought to be mentioned that men have their natural share in this process, of course, however it is the woman who carries nine months. It is a process that she alone goes through, though sensitive and aware men have been known to be pregnant together with their partners. The joy and welcome for a girl or a boy is identical, which is long overdue after thousands of years of a tradition that had preferred boys over girls and gave them, unjustly from a feministic point of view, a first class status citizen in society.

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<sup>67</sup> Tamar Duvdevani, "Hashmini et kolech" - on 'feminine voices within progressive Jewish prayer', in: Meir Azari ed., *Reform Judaism* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv 2005) 91-97, here 95 (the English translation is mine).

### 3.6

Ritual of immersion in the Mikveh for bride and bridegroom<sup>68</sup>

This ritual is meant for bride or bridegroom before their chupa  
by Rabbi Alona Lisitza<sup>69</sup> (2006)

English translation: Navah-Tehila

I want to add two commandments to the Ten Commandments:

This is the 11<sup>th</sup> commandment: thou will not change  
[in the Hebrew written for both genders: Lo tishtani, lo tishtane]

This is the 12<sup>th</sup> commandment: change, change (hishtani, hishtane)  
[also written for both genders].

(according to Yehuda Amichai)

Before my chupa I immerse and pray that I may stay who I am  
and that I may be a blessing wherever I am  
and that I may change with my partner in order to create a blessing together.  
So may it be.

#### **First immersion:**

Blessed are you, God, our God, king of the universe, that has sanctified us with  
his commandments and has commanded us to immerse.

#### **Second immersion:**

Blessed are you, God, our God, king of the universe, who made me a woman.  
Blessed are you God, our God, king of the universe, who made me a man.

#### **Third immersion:**

Blessed are you God, our God, king of the universe, who has kept me alive, sustained  
me and brought me to this time.

#### **While coming out of the water:**

Shechina source of my life  
give me the power to guard the blessing that I am  
to guard my uniqueness in this covenant I am about to enter  
a covenant of which there is no stronger.

Living and enduring spirit, teach me to change for the sake of this covenant  
and we will become one flesh, one spirit, and an extra-special soul (*neshama yeteyra*).

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<sup>68</sup> Alona Lisitza, Dalia Marx, Maya Leibovitz, Tamar Duvdevani eds., *Al Parashat Hamayim: hatvila kehizdamnut* [Hebrew]; which is a book soon to be published, edited by four Israeli women rabbis, that includes prayers and ritual for immersion in water, during key happenings in yearly life cycles.

<sup>69</sup> Rabbi Alona Lisitza teaches Halacha at the Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem, and is directing educational projects in the former Soviet Union.

## Analysis

### 3.6.1 Feministic position

This prayer is inspired by words of the Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai (1924-2000)<sup>70</sup> as a kind of motto, dealing with a dichotomy: the need/wish to stay true to oneself, and at the same time the need/wish to adapt, to change, for a common cause such as a marriage. It is composed as a ritual to be performed by both bride and bridegroom as two equal individuals, who are never the less each unique, asking “that I may be a blessing wherever I am”, and at the same time asking “that I may change with my partner in order to create a blessing together”.

This brings to mind Prayer no.5<sup>71</sup> of Corrie Zeidler in which the text for both genders are written side by side and are identical except for the gender verbal references. The difference being that in Prayer no.5 the mother is praying and in this prayer both partners are praying together, simultaneously or each on her/his own. Possibly the pray in the presence of family and/or friends and the *Mikveh* attendant, but the intention (*Kavanah*) is for a partnership. This categorizes the prayer/ritual to the third feminist wave, which sees equality between women and men as based upon partnership. As Rachel Adler writes: “From these seeds, God’s human partners regrew their shattered *nomos* and cultivated a new world they and God could inhabit together. Out of its fructifying vision come the seeds of future nomic worlds... a world that Jewish women build together with Jewish men, a *nomos* we co/habit justly and generously.”<sup>72</sup>

Adler understands that inherent in the relationship God-Israel is the capacity to “remake justice for tender reciprocity with the divine Other”.<sup>73</sup> This is exactly what Alona Lisitza is creating in her dual ceremony. It is also reminiscent of Prayer no.4<sup>74</sup> in which Mira Raz is also caught between an element of not changing (though repeating the cycle of nature) and the wish for change. In both prayer no.4 and the present prayer the basis is the verb *Shin-nun-hey* (here in the motto: *lo Tishtani/tishtane* in the second person singular f/m imperfect (*hitpael*) and *Hishtani/hishtane* in the second person singular f/m imperative. This idea reflects the third feminist wave by acknowledging the difference between male and female as part of the “laws of nature”.

At the same time both are struggling to find a special space for each human being within those boundaries, or even by trying to extend them a little.

### 3.6.2 Renewing elements

The ritual of Alona Lisitza brings new elements to the Immersion. It is made of three parts: A blessing before the immersion, which is new, the three-part blessing during the immersion, and a blessing upon emerging out of the water which we will see also in Prayer no.8<sup>75</sup>. In the first part there is no direct appeal to God by name but it is clear

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<sup>70</sup> Yehuda Amichai, ‘Melon Horai 4’ in: idem, *Patuach Sagur Patuach* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem/Tel Aviv 1998) 56-58, here 58; the fourth poem in this cycle, dealing with the Ten Commandments told to the poet by his father. The above quotation from the poem is written in the masculine. Alona Lisitza chose to use it as motto but she changed it to be inclusive of the feminine gender as well.

<sup>71</sup> See page 27.

<sup>72</sup> Rachel Adler, *Engendering Judaism* (Boston 1998) 212.

<sup>73</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>74</sup> See page 24.

<sup>75</sup> See page 39.

from the blessing-signature “*Ken yehi ratzon*” (So may it be) that God is behind it. It is a blessing borrowed from the response of the community to the priestly blessing in the Amidah Prayer in both traditional and reform siddur.<sup>76</sup> This association with the priestly prayer seems to give the blessing extra weight, festivity and possibly add a sense of holiness to the ritual.

### 3.6.3 Intertextuality

As for the middle part, the immersion, turning to God is in the masculine gender. Traditionally there are two blessings by Mikveh immersion before a marriage. One after the first immersion: “...*Asher tzivanu al hatvila*” (... and has commanded us to immerse) and one after the second immersion “...*shehecheyani vekiyemani vehigiani lazman haze*” (...who has kept me alive, sustained me and brought me to this time). Alona Lisitza has added a new blessing before the first immersion asking to be a blessing through a process that combines being true to oneself, but at the same time having the flexibility to change and adapt to the new situation that *chupa* creates in the lives of the partners. Thereafter follows the first immersion.

By the second immersion she introduces again something new: “*Baruch ata Adonai..... sheasani isha/ ish*” (Blessed are you God... who made me woman/man). This has much weight in view of the morning prayer in the traditional siddur: “Men say: Blessed are you... for not having made me a woman. Women say: Blessed are you... for having made me according to His will”.<sup>77</sup>

Even if it was not meant originally as degrading, but a way of thanking God for the right to do Mitzvot and take responsibilities, it is exclusive and brought about much undeserved suffering and pain. A summary of an essay by Judith Plaskow “Chosenness, Hierarchy and Difference” reads: “[the writer] criticizes the idea of election not only because it establishes a hierarchy between the Jewish people and other nations but also because it serves as a model for further hierarchical distinctions among the Jews themselves.” In her own words: “The distinction men/women was never a unique hierarchy but emerged as a part of a system in which many people and aspects of existence were defined in terms of superiority and inferiority.”<sup>78</sup> It is therefore of great importance that Alona Lisitza introduces a correction, repair of this hierarchy, so that both partners enter their liason as equals.<sup>79</sup> The reference to Amichai’s poem reflects the idea that modern Hebrew poetry is part and parcel of the Jewish “Holy scriptures”, thus creating an inviting environment for secular Israeli Jews.

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<sup>76</sup> Siddur *Kol Yaakov* (New York 1998) 116, siddur *Haavoda Shebalev* (Jerusalem 1999) 47.

<sup>77</sup> Siddur *Kol Yaakov* 18. The woman is mentioned here third in line preceded by goy and slave, which do not show much respect for her.

<sup>78</sup> Judith Plaskow, ‘Chosenness, Hierarchy and Difference’, in: Michael Walzer, Menachem Lorberbaum, Noam J. Zohar eds., Ari Ackerman co-ed., *The Jewish Political Tradition* vol.2: *Membership* (New Haven/London 2003) 73-80, here 73-74.

<sup>79</sup> The reform siddur adopted a feministic liberal style (first feminist wave) for these blessings - both f/m say “*Sheasani betzalmo*” (that made me in his image) erasing the orthodox distinction between the sexes. The dual ritual of Alona Lisitza is a third wave feministic correction to the reform siddur in that they are equal and unique at the same time.



### 3.6.4 Purpose

In the last third part of the ritual, both partners turn to God in the name *Shechina*, the feminine aspect of God. While in the middle blessing, by the second immersion, the emphasis is on the uniqueness of each partner, in the last part, as in the first pre-immersion blessing, the request of the praying partners is again to guard their uniqueness. To this request they referred also by the second immersion. At the same time they ask to be taught to change as well, in order to fit the new situation they are facing, by entering a marriage. They need to learn this without losing their “ownness”, which is what the third feminist wave is calling for, namely partnership of both genders as equals, each with her/his uniqueness. This must be the innermost unuttered prayer of a couple about to be wed. The prayer of Alona Litzisa dares to say it out loud.

### 3.6.5 Image of God

The use of the name *Shechina* is common to this prayer and Prayer no.3<sup>80</sup> of Yehoram Mazor in which he intermittently changed between turning to Adonai and turning to *Shechina*. Here too, in the last two lines of the prayer the name of God is changed again to “*Ruach Chay vekayam*” (living and enduring spirit), which in the Hebrew version is in the masculine gender. Yet what is being asked is to become “one spirit”, which in the Hebrew version is in the feminine now “*Ruach achat veneshama yeteyra*” (an extra soul), a word play with the word *Ruach*.

In Hebrew *Ruach* is both masculine and feminine, and its use here in both genders is in line with the rest of this dual prayer, as a summary. *Ruach* is the divine spirit, and was given to human being when God in Bereyshit 2:7 blew of his own breath (*ruach chayim, nishmat chayim*) into the new creature: “*Vaipach beapav nishmat chayim*” (He blew into his nostrils the breath of life). In this way the bride and bridegroom are asking Divine guidance for their covenant, which requires both uniqueness of each, and the ability to melt together to something special in the trend that one plus one are more than two. The association here as well is of them being created, like all people, *Betzelem Elohim* (in God’s image), as we learn from Bereyshit 1:27 “*Betzelem Elohim bara otam, zachar unekeyva bara otam*” (In the image of God he created them male and female he created them). Thus the genderly inclusive image of God in this prayer is expressed in a direct way by the use of both “God” and “*Shechina*”, in an indirect way by reminding us that both man and woman were created in the image of God.

### 3.6.6 Conclusion

In her book *Life cycles*, Rabbi Debra Orenstein tells about the creation of her own Ketubah in which she and her partner “incorporated expressions from an ancient ketubah found in Assuan, Egypt, including the formula: *Thou are my wife and I am thy husband forever*. This phrase was disallowed by post-Talmudic rabbinical authorities because it implied that the groom consecrated himself to the bride as well. We like this phrase for precisely the same reason that the rabbis decided to eliminate it.”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> See page 19.

<sup>81</sup> Debra Orenstein, *Life cycles* vol.1 (Woodstock Vermont 1998) 164-165.

This is rather encouraging, showing that somewhere in ancient times bride and bridegroom were seen as equal partners, as is the case in the ritual of Alona Lisitza. Her prayer is renewing an ancient Jewish tradition, be it of Assuan in Egypt. In a creative feministic tradition she composed into it new elements. According to the old tradition only the bride has to immerse in Mikveh water before her wedding. Here with this renewed ritual the bridegroom has the same possibility as a new element. Thus while being rooted in modern psychological awareness (of not losing oneself in the other, but being able to grow together) the prayer is leaning on existing Jewish tradition, but adding to it new depth and even poetry.

The Hebrew version of the prayer is written in two columns, feminine and masculine side by side, just like in Prayer no.5<sup>82</sup> of Corrie Zeidler. This is however lost in the English translation. The ritual of Alona Lisitza is transforming an ancient situation in which the bride is inferior to the bridegroom, for they are referred to as equal partners undergoing a ritual in partnership of equality. The general feeling is of mutual feeling of respect, which offers directly personal confirmation. The motive of change is characteristic in fact of all the prayers in this paper, expressing a deep wish, a basic need to bring about holistic change in Jewish attitude towards women and men working together, creating together liturgy and rituals that no longer discriminate the one or the other gender.

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<sup>82</sup> See page 27.

### 3.7

Prayer for/about the mother<sup>83</sup>

by Rabbi Dalia Marx<sup>84</sup> (2006)

English translation: Navah-Tehila

God, hold the hands of the mother  
Smoothing a sudden angry forehead.  
Strengthen her hands, for she is tired and did not sleep well for many a night.  
She wants and loves and is longing but does not know.  
A curl giving in to mother's hand (was it aware of her weakness?)  
And who will caress the mother in this long exilic night?

God, hold the hands of the mother  
Caressing a forehead (thinner than thin).  
Help her to tell good, to be a blessing in time of embarrassment and estrangement  
She is so lonely, the mother.  
Embrace her embracing arms, God.  
An embrace of arms of all generations of her foremothers-  
Berlin, Turkey, Tzfat, Jerusalem...

God, hold the hands of the mother  
Slowly release the murmuring of her foremothers (Ladino, Yiddish, Hebrew) into her  
murmurs  
Softly will they hover as a wreath of blessings above her head.  
Inspire their reflections (but on the good ones, please only the good ones)  
With her reflections (those are revealed for a brief moment in her dreams).  
Caress her forehead with the caresses of all her foremothers.

Please hold, please remove, please disperse the fright  
In this exilic night.

## Analysis

### 3.7.1 Purpose

This is a prayer about “The mother” being presented not as a conventional ideal but rather as a human being with feelings all too known, of fatigue, weakness, loneliness and fright. Each of the three parts of the prayer opens with a turning to God very directly, “Elohim” (the most direct call to God in modern daily Hebrew even by secular people). Judging from the use of Hebrew verbs, the call to God is in the masculine gender second singular imperative, although what is requested from him is motherly:

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<sup>83</sup> Another version of this prayer given to me as a manuscript-which I prefer for poetical reasons read: “God, hold the hands of *this* mother...” instead of *the* mother which is the preference of the author of the prayer and to which I will refer later on.

<sup>84</sup> Rabbi Dr. Dalia Marx teaches Liturgy and Midrash at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and at the HUC in Jerusalem.

“...God, hold the hands of the mother... help her... embrace her... caress her... disperse the fright...”. The last two lines, a kind of signature, repeat the word *ana* (please) three times: “Please hold, please remove, please disperse...”

### 3.7.2 Intertextuality and the image of God

This is all typical of the prayer sort “*Tachanun*” (supplication) to be found in the traditional siddur, shacharit, “*Vehu Rachum*” (He the merciful one) where we read as well a series of verbs in the second person singular, imperative form: “Incline your ear, my God and listen, open Your eyes and see our desolation... forgive... be attentive and act... look... have mercy...” after which comes *Ana* (please).<sup>85</sup> In the Reform siddur the text “*Vehu rachum*” is just one sentence, a quotation from Psalm 68:38 as part of a *Leket psukim* (a collection of psalm verses), in shacharit for Shabbat.<sup>86</sup> In both traditional and reform siddur the verse: “God save us, the King will answer us on the day we call...” (Psalm 20:10) is present, in the traditional siddur as part of a broad *tachanun*, and in the reform siddur as part of a collection of verses to be read on Shabbat. (*Tachanun* is not recited on Shabbat according to Halakha). This last sentence though not present in the prayer of Dalia Marx, seems to subtly hide behind it, the trust that it elicits bringing about perhaps the courage to turn to God, like to a mother, knowing that She/He can do all that is being asked, for without trust it would not be asked. A child cries to his mother only when he knows that she is listening and there is a good chance she will answer him. The same idea is here: the praying person, like God’s child, turning to the motherly side of God.

Another reference to the traditional siddur, to the same *tachanun*, is in the mention of “a long exilic night” in Dalia Marx’s prayer, implying a difficult situation in which the praying person finds herself, at the end of the first part as well as at the very end. A clear reference to exile in the *tachanun* is “Gather us from among the peoples”, and later on “Gather in our dispersed from the four corners of the world”. It seems to refer to a national exile, while in the prayer the concept of exile gets a very personal meaning, as the mother herself feels that she is experiencing a threatening exile in her personal life and in need to be gathered in God’s arms, while she herself is embracing a child in need “Embrace her embracing arms, God... In this exilic night...”.

The language used in the prayer is non-sacred, mundane, modern daily Hebrew, with the words *Elohim* (God) and *ana* (please) setting it in a framework of a prayer. However two more elements bring to mind a strong association to the siddur, either traditional or reform: the mention of generations, and foremothers. In the middle part: “An embrace of arms of all generations of her foremothers” and in the third part “with the caresses of all her foremothers”. The mention of Foremothers in the reform prayer book is not unanimous, for it could be argued that the Hebrew *Avoteynu* refers also to the foremothers (as is accepted in Hebrew that the masculine include the feminine). In one American reform siddur we find: “Blessed are you... God of our fathers and mothers... followed by all their names God of Avraham... etc., God of Sarah... etc.”,<sup>87</sup> while in the Israeli reform siddur the mentioning of foremothers and their names is an option and is printed in *italics*.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Translation from siddur *Kol Yaakov* (New York 1998) 124.

<sup>86</sup> Siddur *Haavoda shebalev* (Jerusalem 1999) 109.

<sup>87</sup> Translation from siddur *Mishkan tfila* (New York 2007) 166.

<sup>88</sup> Siddur *Haavoda shebalev* 10.

### 3.7.3 Feministic position

As for the praying person, since the prayer is speaking about “The” mother in the third person singular, it can be the mother herself, speaking about herself in the third person, which would be the case if Dalia Marx had chosen for the title “Prayer for *this* mother”. This reference to herself in the third person emphasizes the sense of exile, distance from the self. Under the old title the prayer would clearly belong to the second feminine wave in which “Women were called to look into themselves [consciousness raising] and into their reality, and to define what is characteristic of their hardships, and to bring about a change in order to solve these hardships”.<sup>89</sup>

By changing the title of the prayer to: “Prayer for/about The mother”, a possibility has been created for another person than the mother to be praying, such as a sensitive, concerned and involved partner -feminine or masculine- who prays for an exhausted mother, at home, (it is too personal to be public). Thus choosing for the latest title the author moved the prayer also to the realm of the third feminist wave in which both sexes are equally unique and participating in life together and no longer are apart as in the second wave. However, it must be stated that the second wave brought with it a transformation of the image of God, it is one of a God that is no longer patriarchal, judgemental, or commanding but rather “a new image of God - feminine, loving, embracing... Far from wanting to judge me for the lapse in performing my normal religious obligations”,<sup>90</sup> as it is well put in the words of Rabbi Emy Elberg. The normal religious obligations are not even mentioned in the prayer about/for the exhausted mother.

### 3.7.4 Renewing elements

New in the prayer at hand is reference to the foremothers in the third person plural “*Imoteha*” (*her* foremothers), instead of *our* foremothers, but no names are given, although they are obviously the author’s personal foremothers. Instead places are mentioned which we assume are the origin places of the foremothers, or places where the family had lived or has been living in Israel, accidentally or not, four in numbers (in association with the four biblical foremothers or maybe her personal four grandmothers): “Berlin, Turkey, Tzfat, Jerusalem” of which three are cities and one is a country. This mention of a “*kibbutz galuyot*” – the gathering of the people of all four corners of the world (Berlin-Germany and Turkey) is in line with the mentioning of exile in the prayer as a metaphor for a horrible night. It tells us of the background of the author being both Ashkenazi and Sephardic, that is “multi-cultural” a mix so common within Israeli society, at the same time symbolizing *kibuts galuyot* (the gathering of the exile back to the land as we have seen in the Tachanun).

The mention of “generations” remind us of “*Ledor vador nagid godlecha*” (from generation to generation we will declare Your greatness”) which appears in reform siddur<sup>91</sup> and in the traditional siddur as well.<sup>92</sup> The new element herein is the reference

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<sup>89</sup> Orit Kamir, *Feminism, rights and justice* (n.p. 2002) 35 (English translation is mine).

<sup>90</sup> Amy Elberg, ‘Revelation’, in: Debra Orenstein, Jane Rachel Litman eds., *Life cycles* vol.2 (Woodstock, Vermont 1997) 104-135, here 107.

<sup>91</sup> Siddur *Haavoda Shebalev* 41.

<sup>92</sup> Siddur *Kol Yaakov* 101.

to personal generations of mothers going back from the writer along a long line of foremothers, creating a chain, a continuation back into near and distant background, which is very inclusive and personal, in comparison with the “jump” we make when mentioning only Sarah, Rivka, Lea and Rachel.

### 3.7.5 Conclusion

The prayer of Dalia Marx sketches a very personal concrete and detailed situation of a mother as she is as a human being in difficult hours, longing, lonely, frightened, maybe confronted by war or illness of a child whom she is trying to comfort. The second feminist wave to which this prayer belongs, wished on the one hand to liberate women from a matter of course domesticity and on the other hand saw in motherhood something unique and powerful.<sup>93</sup> The mother in this prayer is unique and powerful exactly because of the courage with which she is daring to be vulnerable. She knows she can draw strength from a long historic line of foremothers, national as well as personal, and from God in whose arms she longs to find her own solace so that she can give it further to her children. In spite of all the anxiety and loneliness, the prayer radiates softness. In its outcry and the opening of personal pain, it can be compared to Prayer no.2<sup>94</sup> and in its theme of motherhood to Prayer no.3<sup>95</sup> (though the pain has different emotional origin), and to Prayer no.5<sup>96</sup> where motherhood is the theme but is joyful.

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<sup>93</sup> Orit Kamir, *Feminism, rights and justice* [Hebrew] (n.p. 2002) 39 (English translation is mine).

<sup>94</sup> See page 16.

<sup>95</sup> See page 19.

<sup>96</sup> See page 27.

### 3.8

A prayer upon emerging from the Mikveh water <sup>97</sup>  
by Rabbi Rachel Shabbat Beit-Halachmi <sup>98</sup> (date unknown)  
(The Hebrew translation is by Ofer Shabbat Beit-Halachmi)<sup>99</sup>

May every limb of my body  
touched by these living waters,  
be renewed for goodness and life.

May my toes and feet dance,  
may I run to do mitzvot and to aid those in need.

May my arms embrace those in need of comfort  
may my hands write words of truth and teaching  
may my fingers touch others with love and play music.

May my mouth speak words of kindness,  
*torat chesed al l'shoni*  
and may my tongue teach words of Torah and prayer.  
May my eyes see sights of God's many wonders,  
*mah rabu ma'asekha!*  
and reflect love and gratitude for this whole body.

May the month to come be one of hope and love  
as my womb cycles toward fullness and  
again sheds like the waxing and waning of the moon.  
May I cycle upwards, toward righteousness,  
rebirthed now, *b'tzelem elokim*, in the image of God.

## Analysis

### 3.8.1 Feministic position

The prayer is somewhat different from the others in that it was written together by two partners, a woman and a man. The woman had written the prayer in English and the man wrote the Hebrew translation. As the title suggests, it is to be recited upon emerging from the Mikveh water. The prayer is built out of five parts. While the first four parts are genderless, the fifth part refers to the monthly cycle of a woman and would be said after the immersion in the Mikveh at the end of the monthly cycle. Words like “womb” and “moon cycle” and “month” are a part of women's lives. In the Hebrew version the word for month is *Yerach*, which means both moon and month.

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<sup>97</sup> Rachel Shabat Beyt-Halachmi, ‘Tfilat haola mimey hatvila’, in: Ofer Shabat Beyt-Halachmi ed., *El Halev* [Hebrew] (n.p. 2005) 31.

<sup>98</sup> Rabbi Rachel Shabat Beyt-Halachmi is teaching at the Hartman Institute in Jeruzalem.

<sup>99</sup> Ofer Shabat Beyt-Halachmi is the rabbi of Tzur-Hadasa congregation.

Reading the first four parts, it would be possible for a man to pray this prayer after immersion in the Mikveh, if and when he does, or in the sea when it is done as a ritual, but this may perhaps be doing an injustice to the prayer for it is titled specifically<sup>100</sup> *Tfilat haola* in the feminine form. Ever the same, the first four parts refer to the body and its different parts, which could equally be a body of a woman or a body of a man. All of these might indicate a prayer that belongs to the third feminist wave.

At the same time reference and awareness of the woman's body came about during the second feminist wave in which as said by Orit Kamir "women wrote feminist fiction and poetry, guidance books for self discovery, books about the woman's body and her sexuality".<sup>101</sup> On the same subject Judith Plaskow writes the following: "Feminist writing on the body and sexuality has been so rich and voluminous... It has encompassed everything from compilation of basic information, to analysis of central institutions shaping women's sexual attitudes and lives, to exploration of the sensations and meanings of a woman-defined sexuality. It has delineated important male ideas about sexuality and their impact on women and also described women's experience of and reflections on our own sexual lives".<sup>102</sup> The second feminist wave brought about a great change by bringing to the open women's sexuality and interest in their body, which until then were taboo and subject to repression by a patriarchal system. This awareness to the feminine body, respect for its different functions and realising its spiritual possibilities are very much present in this prayer.

### 3.8.2 Intertextuality and Purpose

Judging by the gender of the used Hebrew verbs, turning to God is in the masculine, second person singular imperative: "*ten*" (give), in opening of the first and second parts, and the last fifth part. The verb "*ten*" appears also in both traditional and reform prayer for Dew: "*Tal ten lirtzot artzecha*" (Dew, give it to favour your land).<sup>103</sup> The verb *nun-tav-nun* appears also in another special prayer, that of King Salomon who in *Mlachim* I 3:9 is asking of God: "*Venatata leavdecha lev shomea lishpot et amcha lehavin beyn tov lera*" (Grant then your servant an understanding mind to judge your people to distinguish between good and bad).<sup>104</sup>

The prayer for Dew has to do with water and fertility, we ask for dew so that the land can stay fruitful even during the dry season. Possibly this is a subtle hint behind the prayer of Rachel Shabat or any other immersing woman, hoping to conceive during the new cycle: "As my womb cycles toward fullness" she says in part five. The wish for renewal by the water is also a spiritual one: "May I cycle upwards, towards righteousness / rebirthed now in the image of God". Such spiritual power is also what King Salomon is praying for (*Melachim* 3:9). This association gives the prayer of Rachel Shabat a base in an ancient tradition; she is not alone in what she is asking for. This need to be righteous, to renew the image of God in her/himself is the deep wish of every conscious Jew, and every human being who wishes to live with integrity.

<sup>100</sup> Based upon the fifth part the unpunctuated Hebrew title should be read in the feminine *Tfilat haola*.

<sup>101</sup> Orit Kamir, *Feminism, rights and justice* [Hebrew] (n.p. 2002) 36 (English translation is mine).

<sup>102</sup> Judith Plaskow, *Standing again at Sinai* (San Francisco 1989) 192.

<sup>103</sup> Translation from *Siddur Kol Yaakov* (New York 1998) 703; *Siddur Haavoda Shebalev* (Jerusalem 1999) 181.

<sup>104</sup> Jewish publication society, *Tanakh the holy scriptures* (Philadelphia/Jerusalem 1985) 521.



Other verbs such as in part three and four: “*Theyu zrootai mechabkot*” (may my arms embrace), “*Theyu yaday kotvot*” (may my hands write), “*Theyu etzbeotai nognot... nogot*” (may my fingers play, touch), “*Theyu sfatai dovevot*” (may my tongue teach), “*Theyu eynai rovat*” (may my eyes see) are to be found in the traditional siddur at the end of the Amida: “*Theyu leratzon imrey fi*” (May the expressions of my mouth... find favour before you)<sup>105</sup> as well as in the reform siddur at the same place (end of Amida)<sup>106</sup>. This verse has been taken from Psalm 19:15. Another verb “*Imale fi*” (may my mouth speak) is reminiscent of Psalm 126:2 “*Az imale schok pinu*” (Our mouth will be filled with laughter). This last linguistic use is adopted by the tradition for a national story of exile or redemption. We have seen it being borrowed in Prayer no.7<sup>107</sup> where the mother experiences herself in a private exile, and is praying for redemption.

In the present prayer, though we are reminded of that exilic psalm, the context is now completely bodily/spiritual and personal, from a feministic point of view a very political one. Judith Plaskow writes the following in this regard: “The personal is political meaning that seemingly personal problems are often rooted in the wider social context, and the social change must bring change in daily life”.<sup>108</sup> The female body in this prayer is not just a vessel for blood and pain but also a vessel for speaking words of kindness, for teaching words of Torah and prayer. The body is no longer taboo, but rather validated.

A powerful reference to both siddurim is from a blessing of Shabbat Shacharit *Pesukei dezimra: Nishmat kol Chay* (The soul of every living being). There we find: “Were our mouth full of songs as the sea, and our tongue as full of joyous song... and our lips as full of praise... and our eyes as brilliant as the sun and the moon... and our hands as outspread as eagles... and our feet as swift... we still could not thank you sufficient”<sup>109</sup>. This prayer out of the siddur is called in the reform siddur “*birkat hashir*” (blessing of the song) and the quoted part is speaking also about the body “singing and playing” as does the body in the prayer of Rachel Shabat, being a vessel for spirituality. In Prayer no.1<sup>110</sup> we have seen as well reference to the body as a music instrument of God. This is a great feministic transformation in both prayers, relating to the human body, and in particular the female body, as a beloved, positive creation of God, a vessel for life and for spirituality.

By way of contrast we find in the morning prayers a personal blessing and thanks for the wonders of the body being made with openings and cavities.<sup>111</sup> It is not often that there is clear reference to the body and its functions in the traditional prayer. It is the only prayer that refers to the very physical body as such. It is included in the traditional siddur<sup>112</sup>, but not in the reform siddur *Haavoda Shebalev*. Rachel Shabat-Beyt Halachmi has chosen in the prayer to expand, more in the style of *Nishmat Kol Chay*, for by each sentence there is a deep connection to God, to spiritual matters and to good deeds.

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<sup>105</sup> Siddur *Kol Yaakov* 119.

<sup>106</sup> Siddur *Haavoda Shebalev* 48.

<sup>107</sup> See page 35.

<sup>108</sup> Plaskow, *Sinai*, 231.

<sup>109</sup> Siddur *Kol Yaakov* 401-403 and Siddur *Haavoda Shebalev* 109-110.

<sup>110</sup> See page 12.

<sup>111</sup> See my broad discussion of this in prayer no.1, page 12.

<sup>112</sup> *Kol Yaakov* 15.

Right at the beginning we read: “May every limb of my body / touched by these living waters / be renewed for goodness and life”. Living water is of course a common reference to the Torah. It is also mentioned in Song of Songs 4:15: “A garden spring, a well of living water”, in which context “living water” is used as a feminine symbol. Water is also described as a purifying agent, almost Mikveh like. In Yechezkel 16:9: “*ve’erchazech bamayim vaeshtof damaich mealayich*” (I bathed you in water and washed the blood off you) and in Yechezkel 36:25 “*vezarakti aleychem mayim tehorim utehartem*” (I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean).<sup>113</sup> The line: “*Mah rabu ma’asecha*” (How many are your works) is borrowed from Psalm 92:6 “*Mah gadlu ma’asecha Adonai*” (How great are your works), which is written in Hebrew even inside the English version. Another possible reference to the reform siddur is the third line in part four: “*Iheyu sfatay dovevot Torah utfila*” (may my lips [tongue] teach words of Torah and prayer) which brings to mind the line: “*Lamed et siftotay bracha veshir halel*” (teach my lips words of blessings and of praise) from a poem by Lea Goldberg.<sup>114</sup>

### 3.8.3 Renewing elements

What is being asked is renewal for the sake of goodness and creation. The immersion in the Mikveh can become a purifying experience on both physical and spiritual levels. This spiritual connection and the way it is expressed in the prayer add a new dimension to such an immersion.

### 3.8.4 Purpose

In the second part of this prayer we find other requests: “May my toes and feet dance/ May I run to do mitzvot and to aid those in need”. This pattern repeats itself through all five parts and ends with: “May I cycle upward, toward righteousness, rebirthed now, *b’tzelem elokim*, in the image of God”. Here the happiness of being devoted to God and his mitzvot, especially those mitzvot that are connected with women (“aid for those in need”<sup>115</sup>), is being asked for. The body with all its different part and its spirit is acknowledged as being in the image of God.

The word “love” is mentioned three times. In part three: “May my fingers touch others with love and play music”. In the Hebrew version there is a word play between “*iheyu etzbeotai nognot, nogot beahava*”, as the letter *nun* in *nognot*, becomes the letter *ayin* in *nog’ot*. This word play (*lashon nofel al lashon*) is also a play with sound, adding to the special soft tone that the prayer as a whole radiates. Special is also the combination of the letters *nun-gimel*, which is known to be sonorous, like in the word *Nigun* (melody). In part four there is again a different request, however it is still connected with love: “May my eyes see sights of God’s many wonders/ And reflect love and gratitude for this whole body”, and in part five: “May the month to come be one of hope and love/ As my womb cycles toward fullness”.

<sup>113</sup> Jewish publishing society, *Tanakh the holy scriptures* (Philadelphia/Jerusalem 1985) 912, 956.

<sup>114</sup> *Haavoda Shebalev*, 85. See discussion about the use of Hebrew modern poetry in Prayer no.6, page 30.

<sup>115</sup> According to the second feminist wave these virtues of caring for others are feminine, and the Jewish revelations of that wave emphasized the mitzvot connected with them. Cf. Kamir, *Feminism*, 39 and Plaskow, *Sinai*, 232-238.

Love is expressed here as a quality that is also connected to the body functioning far beyond the reference in the morning blessing to openings and cavities of the body, that God knows, we cannot do without. When love is mentioned in the siddur it is God's love of the people, as in the second blessing before *Shma*: "*ahava raba ahavtanu*" (with an abundant love have You loved us) in the traditional<sup>116</sup> and in the reform siddur.<sup>117</sup> The mention of love after the *Shma* "*Veahavta et Adonai Elohecha bechol levavcha uvechol nafshecha uvechol meodecha*"<sup>118</sup> (You shall love Adonai your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your resources) is precisely what the prayer of Rachel Shabat is asking for: to function out of love with all possible God given resources. That is how she understands being renewed and being born in the image of God, and in her own words: "May I cycle upward, towards righteousness/ Reborned now *b'tzelem elokim*, in the image of God".

### 3.8.5 Image of God

The idea of being cycled upward reminds us of Prayer no.4<sup>119</sup> of Mira Raz in which the praying person wishes and hopes to climb up above the sun. The cyclic character of nature is referred to as a road to God: "That the cycle of nature may carry me back to you". In Mira Raz's prayer, men too though, are able to connect to the periodicity of nature as it is introduced as a permanent element. Here however the feminine monthly cycle is introduced as an expression of God's image. After all it is also God's creation. The line "May my eyes see sights of God's many wonders" comes in the Hebrew version the word *Eloha* for God, which we will meet again in Prayer no.10<sup>120</sup>. Here it is a masculine form in spite of the ending *Ha*, which in Hebrew is often feminine. It does not seem to be the intention here, to turn to God in the feminine, in contrast to what is taking place in Prayer no.10.

### 3.8.6 Conclusion

In a meditation for the Mikveh Jane Litman writes the following: "Let this womb hold you. Feel its strength and purity... Feel the warm water surround you, comfort you, bathe you. This is the womb of the Jewish people. Let it rebirth you as a Jew".<sup>121</sup> In comparison with the prayer of Rachel Shabat I was struck by similarity of feelings and imagery. The idea of the Mikveh as a womb, a Jewish womb, though not explicitly stated in the prayer of Rachel Shabat, is very much experienced as such in essence, as she writes about being "Touched by these living waters" in the second line of the prayer and being "Reborned now" at the last line. The bodily functions that she mentions in between are reminiscent of a process of an embryo in the womb, a process of physical development, which as we have seen is spiritual as well.

As I read the prayer I experience the dancing, embracing and loving, exactly as it is described. The combination of physical bodily images with spiritual ones touches the praying woman as if it were a Mikveh of poetic sounds and of caressing words.

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<sup>116</sup> *Kol Yaakov* 89.

<sup>117</sup> *Haavoda shebalev* 36.

<sup>118</sup> *Kol Yaakov* 93 and *Haavoda shebalev* 37.

<sup>119</sup> See page 24.

<sup>120</sup> See page 48.

<sup>121</sup> Jane Litman, 'Meditation for the Mikveh' in: Debra Orenstein ed., *Life Cycles* vol.1 (Woodstock, Vermont 1998) 253-254, here 253.

As stated earlier the prayer could belong in a way to the third feminist wave, having been worked on together by female and male partners, who were obviously able to share this (she wrote and he translated with sensitivity). However it was the second feminist wave which took upon itself the renewal of femininity as well as renewal of the mitzvoth commanded to women (like immersion in the Mikveh). Not because they are prescribed to them by a repressive patriarchal system, but rather by taking these mitzvoth and giving them a new spiritual meaning, from a place of inner intense empowerment. Tamar Ross expresses this same idea by referring to Simon de Beauvoir who had great influence on the second feminist wave: “We, as human beings, create essential identities for ourselves only through exercising our freedom in conscious action”.<sup>122</sup> The Emersion from the Mikveh of Rachel Shabat is precisely such a conscious action.

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<sup>122</sup> Tamar Ross, *Expanding the Palace of Torah* (Waltham, Mass. 2004) 4.

### 3.9

A blessing for fighting racism  
by Rabbi Yehoyada Amir<sup>123</sup> (2007)  
English translation: Navah-Tehila

For hatred of the stranger let there be no hope  
and every desecration of God's image, as a fleeting instant will perish;  
The mouth of hatred instigators may You speedily shut and all hatred and enslavement,  
discrimination and murderous tendency may You speedily uproot and smash;  
and humble our hearts to worship you whole-heartedly speedily in our days.  
Blessed are You, God who loves human beings.

## Analysis

### 3.9.1 Purpose and Feministic position

At the end of the Hebrew version of this blessing the author notes that it had been inspired by the traditional blessing against heretics in the Amida prayer, (*Birkat haminin*) "*Velamalshinim al tehi tikva*" (And for slanderers let there be no hope; may all wickedness perish in an instant, and may all your enemies be cut down speedily... speedily in our days...).<sup>124</sup> Yehoyada Amir calls his prayer "A blessing for fighting discrimination". The issues at hand in the prayer are known to us from biblical passages and unfortunately we are faced with them in present day actuality: strangers hate, *Chilul Hashem*, desecration of God's name (performing atrocities in the name of religion), inciting hate, (all) enslavement, (all) discrimination and genocide.

Where the traditional prayer is to some extent general and abstract, mentioning slanderers, all wickedness, and all enemies. Yehoyada Amir makes it specific, and brings it very much up to date. This is what we are facing here and now. Like in the traditional prayer he also uses an inclusive language "all", which in modern feministic context is to be understood as all human beings, feminine and masculine. (The traditional Hebrew prayer is in masculine gender plural - *malshinim, oyvim, zeydim* - as is the custom of the Hebrew language, the masculine is inclusive). This relates the prayer to the third feminist wave, in which there is great awareness of sexual and racial discrimination and deprivation. In her book, *Engendering Judaism*, in the third chapter, titled "And Not to Be silent: toward Inclusive Worship". Rachel Adler writes the following: "A prayer that belies or misrepresents our experience or understandings violates integrity and insults God."<sup>125</sup> The blessing fighting for discrimination responds to this kind of remark, having been written by a man, sensitive to discriminative issues.

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<sup>123</sup> Yehoyada Amir is Rabbi professor and is Director of the Israeli Rabbinic Program at the HUC in Jerusalem.

<sup>124</sup> Translation from *Siddur Kol Yaakov* (New York 1998) 106.

<sup>125</sup> Rachel Adler, *Engendering Judaism* (Boston 1998) 61-62.

### 3.9.2 Intertextuality

The issues of the blessing are all to be found in the bible in the Ten Commandments (Shmot 20:1-17, Devarim 5:6-21) and in a broader form in the Book of Vayikra. Relationship to the stranger, the *Ger*, is very essential in the bible as it is often mentioned (36 times).<sup>126</sup> To give just one example from Shmot: 23:9 “You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourself been strangers in the land of Egypt”.<sup>127</sup> Over hate we read in Vayikra 19:17 “*Lo tisna et achicha bilvavecha*” (You shall not hate your kinsfolk in your heart). Though the Hebrew *achicha* is in the masculine form, I believe that kinsfolk is to be understood in a broad meaning of the family of human beings, including women. Over the desecration of God’s name we read in Vayikra 19:4 “*Al tifnu el haelilim velohey maseycha lo taasu lachem ani Adonai Eloheychem*” (Do not turn to idols or make molten gods for yourselves. I the Lord am your God)<sup>128</sup> and in Vayikra 19:12 “*Velo tishavu vishmi lashaker vechilalta et shem Elohecha Ani Adonai*” (You shall not swear falsely by My name, profaning the name of your God, I am the Lord).<sup>129</sup> Clearly any form of misusing God’s name or creating images of God are forbidden. They would all be *Bizuy tzelem elohim* (desecration of God’s name), as the first line of the blessing of Yehoyada Amir is stating. The Bible states extremely clear that there is but one God. Unfortunately what we see in the world around us is discrimination, racism and persecution based on a so-called faith in a God, while the same strict prohibition concerns of course the the commandment of “*Lo tirzach*” in Shmot 20:13 (You shall not murder).<sup>130</sup> These evil phenomena necessitate a special blessing, in the experience of Yehoyada Amir, as a positive light to counter balance the dark forces that seem to flood present day actuality.

In this blessing first are heard all the supplications. The last blessing starting with “and humble our hearts...” is direct turning to God in the masculine gender. In siddur *Haavoda shebalev* we find a version that replaces *Barchu* in case there is no Minyan: “Blessed are you God... who commanded us the mitzvah of *Kriat Shma*, to crown him whole-heartedly, to pray to him with a good heart, and to worship him with a willing soul.”<sup>131</sup> This commandment to worship God whole-heartedly is similar to what we find in the blessing of Yehoyada Amir who is using identical words: [to crown him] “*belevav shalem*”. Worship “whole-heartedly” is known to us from the first blessing after the *Shma* “*Veahavta et Adonai Elohecha bechol levavcha*” (You shall love your God with all your heart).<sup>132</sup>

### 3.9.3 Renewing elements and the image of God

While this blessing is full of renewing elements, the signature is very new as a signature: “*Baruch ata donai Ohev ha’adam*” (Blessed are you God who loves human beings), inspired perhaps by the prayer “*Ahava raba ahavtanu*”<sup>133</sup> (With an abundant love you loved us).

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<sup>126</sup> Shefa Gold, *Torah Journeys* (Teaneck 2006) 82.

<sup>127</sup> Jewish Publication Society, *Tanakh, the holy scriptures* (Philadelphia/Jerusalem 1985) 120.

<sup>128</sup> Idem 185.

<sup>129</sup> Idem 185.

<sup>130</sup> Idem 117.

<sup>131</sup> Siddur *Haavoda Shebalev* (Jerusalem 1999) 35.

<sup>132</sup> Siddur *Kol Yaakov* 415 and Siddur *Haavoda Shebalev* 37.

<sup>133</sup> *Kol Yaakov* 413; *Haavoda Shebalev* 114.

It is significant and creative that a blessing full of negative human actions, for which we ask speedy healing, end with a signature of God's love for human beings. This is the exact opposite of all that negativity, indicating the remedy: it could all be healed with love. Love of God for us humans that can permeate the human heart when it becomes humble. It may be summed up by the verse from Vayikra 19:18 "*Veahavta lereacha kamocha, ani Adonai*" (Love you fellow as yourself: I am the Lord). In this connection Mira Raz writes the following in the introduction to her book, *The Torah, Way to Love*: "The Torah assumes that the soul of every human being in the world is a real divine part. The aim of life in faith is to bring a human being to the recognition of that divine part in her/him... and to cause a person to choose deeds that come forth from the power of the soul".<sup>134</sup> This seems to be the message hidden in this blessing for fighting against discrimination. It has common ground with Prayer no.2<sup>135</sup> of Naama Dafni in the call for new awareness of aggression, repression and violence. Both call for healing of these and both are to be used in a mixed (women/men) community as an alternative and/or additional blessing in the Amida prayer. Both prayers could even be used together.

### 3.9.4 Conclusion

As stated above the blessing of Yehoyada Amir belongs to the third feminist wave to which Prayers no.1, 3, 6, 10<sup>136</sup> belong as well. It sounds like it is taking for granted that what is said refers to human beings (of both genders), who may use it in a prayer together. It seems obvious by the signature: "*Baruch ata Adonai ohev ha'adam*" (Blessed are you God who loves human beings). No difference is mentioned between people: men, women, Jews (and non-Jews it is assumed), are included in the category of human beings whom God loves. By the same token, discrimination and racism is known to exclude no one. The evildoers may be women not only men, Jews or non-Jews. The author achieves this exactly through omission of gender, race and national or religious references. All of which make his blessing distinct from the other prayers I chose. He sounds like a man that is being aware of living in a society of people male and female, Jews and strangers, whose concern is the *tikkun* (repair/healing) of the world and the removal of evil of all sorts and of all sources. In this manner the prayer reflects a feministic concern for repair not only of the relationship between the sexes, but also for repair of hate and discrimination among cultures, nations and religions. By calling it a "blessing" and composing it in the form of a blessing, the author attempts to bring light to a very dark place in the human world.

As we know, many a shadow can be healed by a little bit of light, especially the light of our heart, trusting in a God who loves human beings. In her chapter about third wave feminism Tamar Ross writes: "Replacing [predominantly male orientation] requires a profound paradigm shift to a new non-authoritarian model of spirituality, founded upon a relational rather than a hierarchical view of reality and other selves. This view would allow for heterogeneity and pluralism, for living in harmony with the universe".<sup>137</sup> The blessing of Amir is such a call, such a paradigm shift, for a pluralistic society of justice and harmony speedily in our days. It was this that appealed to me in choosing this feminist prayer of a man for my paper.

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<sup>134</sup> Mira Raz, *The Tora Way to Love* (Tel Aviv 2003) 5.

<sup>135</sup> See page 16.

<sup>136</sup> See pages 12, 19, 30, 48 respectively.

<sup>137</sup> Tamar Ross, *Expanding the palace of Torah* (Waltham, Mass. 2004) 114.

### 3.10

A prayer of thanks  
by Rabbi Ishai Ron<sup>138</sup> (date unknown)  
English translation: Navah-Tehila

Teach me  
O God - coming from inside me  
in my voice  
to listen  
to the words - being formed in me  
slowly: I offer thanks to you

My God that you have restored  
within me my soul  
with compassion

## Analysis

### 3.10.1 Intertextuality

The very first prayer upon arising in the morning is a thanks offering prayer, very similar to the one written by Ishai Ron. In the traditional siddur it reads: “*Mode ani lefanecha, melech chay vekayam, shehechezarta bi nishmati bechemla- raba emunatecha*” (I gratefully thank You, O living and eternal king, for You have returned my soul within me with compassion – abundant is your faithfulness”).<sup>139</sup> The turning to God “*Elohay*” (my God) in the last part of the prayer is a new addition in the context of this thanks-offering prayer. There God is referred to as *Melech chay vekayam* (Living and eternal king) but it is not new in concept, for the traditional<sup>140</sup> as well as reform siddur<sup>141</sup> refer in the Amidah prayer to God of Avraham, God of Itzhak and God of Yaakov. In the reform siddur there is an optional addition in *italics* for the foremothers: God of Sarah, Rivka, Rachel and Lea, indicating that each person needs to connect anew to our God.

### 3.10.2 Feministic position

According to the Hebrew verb *Mode* in the first person singular, it is masculine. In the reform siddur there is the feminine addition: *Mode/Moda*.<sup>142</sup> The Hebrew title of the prayer of this author is unpunctuated, as is the same word *mdh* in the sixth line “Slowly: I offer thanks to you”, while the rest of the words and the verbs are clearly punctuated and indicating a feminine God.

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<sup>138</sup> Ishai Ron is the Rabbi of Yedid-Nefesh congregation in Carmiel.

<sup>139</sup> Translation from Siddur *Kol Yaakov* (New York 1998) 3.

<sup>140</sup> *Kol Yaakov* 99.

<sup>141</sup> Siddur *Haavoda Shebalev* (Jerusalem 1999) 118.

<sup>142</sup> *Haavoda Shebalev* 25.



This unpunctuated form leaves it open for either feminine or masculine praying person that would then say respectively: *Moda* (f) or *Mode* (m). This possibility to pray in either gender is a clear invitation to men to pray to a feminine God, which sets this prayer in the third feminist wave. The third wave recognizes in both genders feminine and masculine qualities, reflecting of course the Divine with all Her/His faces.

### 3.10.3 Image of God

In the second line the word for God is *Eloha*, usually considered masculine, however in the context of the rest of the prayer it is clear that the ending “*ha*”<sup>143</sup> is being used here to indicate a feminine God. In recent years there seems to be a tendency within Israeli feminism to move away from the use of *Yah*, which was started by the Jewish-American feminism to use of the form *Eloha*. The prayer of Ishay Ron indicates a recognition here that God is also within us. Sheila Peltz Wienberg expresses a similar idea: “I pray to the ‘inner’ and the ‘deeper’ more than to the ‘higher’. I pray as a way of declaring my intentions to be fully present to what life brings”.<sup>144</sup> This internalization of the Divine is another characteristic of the third feminist wave, possibly also under influence of New Age ideas.

As I said above this prayer expresses the notion of a “personal” or “inner” God by turning to God as “Elohay” (my God). Rabbi Emy Eilberg expresses this as well: “I am beginning really to know that I can find God within me as well; for me the teaching of the first chapter of Genesis -that we are all created in the image of God- means that God is present within me... when I slow and quiet down and listen to the still, small voice within, the voice of God can speak to me and through me.”<sup>145</sup>

### 3.10.4 Purpose

What is requested in this prayer is to be taught to listen, to take time for it, not to murmur it in a hurry, or automatically, but to say it with *Kavanat halev* (intention of the heart) so that offering thanks would have a real meaning. The praying person is asking God to give her/him the ability to pray to her, to learn to listen to her inside. This is a post-modern idea that probably would not cross the mind of an orthodox person of the kind that rushes automatically through the prayers, so as not to miss a letter. It would also not occur to a person who experiences God as transcendental, outside her/himself.

### 3.10.5 Renewing elements

The first five lines are new, but they are in line with internalization of the Divine: “Teach me / O God –coming from inside me / in my voice / to listen / to the words being formed in me / slowly”. The prayer of Isyah Ron is a tiny prayer, very much poem-like, saying a lot with few words creating a visual rhythm on the paper as well as in sound:

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<sup>143</sup> Like in *Yah* as we have seen in Prayer no.5, see page 27.

<sup>144</sup> Sheila Peltz Weinberg, ‘Prayer in the Wilderness’, in: Debra Orenstein, Jane Rachel Litman eds., *Life cycles* vol.2 (Woodstock, Vermont 2001) 265-269, here 267.

<sup>145</sup> Amy Eilberg, ‘Revelation’, in: *Life Cycles* vol.2, 104-122, here 109.

Line 1: 1 word - ending sound i  
Line 2: 3 words - ending sound i  
Line 3: 1 word - ending sound i  
Line 4: 1 word - ending sound iv  
Line 5: 3 words - ending sound i  
Line 6: 4 words - ending sound aich  
Line 7: 2 words - ending sound art  
Line 8: 2 words - ending sound i  
Line 9: 1 word - ending sound a

This particular rhythmical sound of the Hebrew words ending, namely the way from the 'i' to the 'a' confirms the process of internalization of the feminine God of the author<sup>146</sup>. This in turn confirms his awareness of feminine aspects in himself as a man (as we see in third wave feminism). For another praying person (besides the author) either male or female, it would serve as a tool for this internalization. The prayer begins with *Horini* (teach me), which I see as a call to the feminine aspect of God to become known to the praying person, by helping her/him to hear her particular voice inside.

### 3.10.6 Conclusion

The author is a man praying to a feminine God and by doing so sets an example, an invitation, to other men to do the same. In prayer no.3<sup>147</sup> Yerhoam Mazor is also praying to the Shechina side by side with the masculine God. He is also setting a precedent and an example for other men to do the same. Mazor's prayer, however, is basically intended for women and it is based on the premise that men and women are equal but separate (according the second feminist wave). In this prayer God is feminine, the praying person is masculine, taking it a step further (from second wave to third wave feminism), understanding and accepting that divinity inside and outside ourselves is interchangeable as far as feminine/masculine aspects are involved. God is *Echad* (one) inclusive of all aspects of life, and so are we: one with many interchangeable feminine/ masculine qualities.

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<sup>146</sup> Physically the sound 'i' resonates in the head, while the sound a resonates lower in the body, namely in the heart. This is known to me from my working experience with the human voice.

<sup>147</sup> See page 19.

#### 4. General conclusion

Applying the criteria used in this paper, the following has been observed:

##### 4.1 Image of God

In the selected prayers, different images are being used:

Creator, source of all, king, mother, shechina, ruach chay vekayam, Elohim, Adonai, Eloha. In the diverse prayers God is being referred to in some as both male and female, in others either male or female only.

Thus in two prayers God is referred to as both male and female: 3, 6.

In three prayers God is referred to as female: 1, 5, 10.

In four prayers the use is of the traditional male form: 2, 4, 7, 8.

An inventarisation of the selected prayers on this point show the following:

Prayer 1: Yah, creator, source of life, mother of all living (f)

Prayer 2: Our God, God of our forefathers and foremothers (m)

Prayer 3: God, Schechina, Adonai (m/f)

Prayer 4: Adonai, Elohim, Divine (m)

Prayer 5: Yah, mother of all living (f)

Prayer 6: Elohim, king of the world, Shechina, source, ruach chay vekayam (m/f)

Prayer 7: Elohim (m)

Prayer 8: Elohim (m)

Prayer 9: Elohim, Adonai (m)

Prayer 10: Eloha (f)

It is interesting to note, that the three prayers composed by male authors, represent all three possibilities: Prayer (3), the earliest of the three, uses both male/female, Prayer (9) uses male, and prayer (10) uses female.

Regarding the female image of God, as we don't really know what and who God is, and therefore traditionally we have at least seventy names for him/her, it stands to reason that there must be space for feminine images as well. All the prayers that use feminine metaphor or image of God are doing exactly that: expanding the range of images and metaphors to include the feminine. Thanks to the feministic awareness we finally realize that *Tzelem Elohim* in Bereyshit 1:27 must be read with a new awareness, that it cannot but be inclusive: *Betzelem Elohim bara otam, zachar unekeyva bara otam* (in the image of God he created them, male and female He created them).<sup>148</sup> It is amazing how this fact, and what is called "the first creation story" has been conveniently overlooked for thousands of years of repression of the feminine. Because of this repression every feminine image was considered lowly and demeaning. This prevented for centuries any use of a feminine image of God. As said by Tamar Ross<sup>149</sup> the second feministic wave changed this attitude completely and made it therefore possible and fit to use feminine images of God.

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<sup>148</sup> Jewish publication society, *Tanakh the holy scripture* (Philadelphia/Jerusalem 1985) 4.

<sup>149</sup> See discussion in 3.1.4, page 14.

## 4.2 *The purpose*

In all the prayers we find an expansion of what is traditionally being asked and by whom: be it the theme of the prayer, or the praying person, the situation and the praying space being either public (in the synagogue with the community) or private (alone) or with family and friends. It must be noted that not all the themes in the prayers selection are new. Motherhood, violence in the family, thanksgiving and request for protection are known themes in reality. However within the feministic context a new light is shed upon them, they receive new dimension and what is of great importance they are introduced in the liturgy. When we categorize these prayers it results in the following list:

- Prayer 1: Morning blessings from a feminine point of view: asking for well being, motherly protection, keeping a divine image, strength and freedom. Could be either private or public.
- Prayer 2: Help for violence victims, personal acceptance, confirmation of human dignity, listening ear, shedding light on dark secrets, call for healing. Could be private, definitely public (even in traditional synagogue).<sup>150</sup>
- Prayer 3: Listening ear, support and response around the theme of conception. This is a private situation mostly.
- Prayer 4: Spiritual growth. This prayer could be both private and public.
- Prayer 5: Thankfulness, protection, guidance, inspiration connected to birth of either boy or girl. This could also be either private or public.
- Prayer 6: The guarding of one's uniqueness and learning to adapt and to bond. This is a private ritual.
- Prayer 7: Handling gently mother's human emotions of weakness, fatigue, fear. This is a private prayer.
- Prayer 8: Immersion in the Mikveh: beyond the physical also as spiritual purification and empowerment. This is a private prayer.
- Prayer 9: Turning all evil into positive, extinction of discrimination. The author specifies this prayer as public (as an addition/alternative to one blessing of the Amida).<sup>151</sup>
- Prayer 10: Specific teaching and guidance in the process of discovery of one's feminine aspect. This is a private prayer.

This means that the Prayers 1, 2, 4 and 5 could be used both publicly or privately; Prayers 3, 6, 7, 8 and 10 are private, while Prayer 9 is meant for public use only. We see four prayers which are suitable for both public and private use, five prayers are only private, and one prayer which is public only. This is a process of expansion and deepening of praying and blessing themes, the praying persons range is extended, as well as the praying space, sometimes private sometimes public, and sometimes fit for both. The fact of their creation is indicative of what is needed in the community and by individuals for otherwise the prayers would not have been written. It is interesting to note that within the progressive Jewish public there is an openness, a need for renewal of prayers and even a need for new prayers. This need is the hardest calling from within the private sphere. It is as if an enorm gap has to be filled to make up for long eras in which women were not able to let their voice be heard on issues that concern them.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> See discussion in 3.2.6, page 18.

<sup>151</sup> Birkat Haminim, the 12<sup>th</sup> blessing in the Amida prayer in the traditional siddur (see 3.9.1, page 45).

<sup>152</sup> See discussion in 3.5.5, page 29.

Thanks to the feministic awareness they are taking their place as partners in the world and their issues concern feministic-oriented men as well. Certain fields of thoughts and feelings, certain life cycle events that were until now hidden from the public eye (i.e. male) are becoming part of the Siddur and take their rightful place in the Jewish community. As said by Judith Plaskow<sup>153</sup> personal issues become political and vice a versa.

### 4.3 Intertextuality

Summarizing the used texts of other sources, I can present the following list:

- Prayer 1: Bereshit 3:20; Vayikra 20:18; Psalms 32:7 and 36:8; traditional Siddur Kol Yaakov; Progressive Siddur Haavoda shebalev.
- Prayer 2: Bereshit 1:26, 4:10, 24:60; Bamidbar 12:13; Devarim 30:19; Isaiah 38:5, 40:9; Jeremiah 31:15; Job 4:1; Song of Songs 5:2; Eicha 2:18; Sephardic siddur.
- Prayer 3: Bereshit 3:16, 18:15, 25:22; I Shmuel 1:27; Siddur Kol Yaakov; Siddur Haavoda shebale; Techinot.
- Prayer 4: Song of Songs 1:4, 2:8, 6:2 ; Kohelet 9:9; Siddur Kol Yaakov; Siddur Haavoda shebalev.
- Prayer 5: Bereshit 25:22; Psalm 92:6; Siddur Kol Yaakov; Siddur Haavoda shebalev.
- Prayer 6: Bereshit 1:27, 2:7; Siddur Kol Yaakov; Siddur Haavoda shebalev; Poem of Yehuda Amichai.
- Prayer 7: Siddur Kol Yaakov; Siddur Haavoda shebalev.
- Prayer 8: I Melachim 3:9; Psalm 19:15, 92:6 126:2; Yechezkel 16:9 36:25; Song of Songs 4:15; Siddur Kol Yaakov; Siddur Haavoda shebalev; Poem by Lea Goldberg.
- Prayer 9: Shmot 20:1-17, 20:13, 23:9; Vayikra 19:17, 19:18; Devarim 5:6-21; Siddur Kol Yaakov.
- Prayer 10: Siddur Kol Yaakov; Siddur Haavoda shebalev.

This means that in the ten prayers, so many times references are made to:

Torah: 18 times

Neviim: I Shmuel; I Melachim, 2x (rishonim)  
Isaiah; Jeremiah; Yechezkel, 4x (achronim)

Ketuvim: Psalmen, 6x  
Job, 1x  
Song of Songs, 5x  
Kohelet, 1x

Siddurim: Traditional siddur Kol yaakov, 21x  
Sephardic siddur, 1x  
Progressive siddur Haavoda shebalev, 21x  
Modern Israeli poetry, 2x (Yehuda Amichai, Lea Goldberg)

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<sup>153</sup> See discussion in 3.8.2, page 40-41.

The selected prayers make great use of intertextuality: We find many a reference to Torah texts, Neviim (both rishonim veachronim), and Ketuvim, references to both traditional as well as progressive siddurim and on two occasions references to two modern Israeli poets. This shows beyond doubt that the prayers are well rooted in the Jewish tradition, building upon it, expanding it and as I stated in my introduction, carrying Jewish liturgy further in a creative and innovative way (and as said before, including modern Israeli poetry as part and parcel of Jewish tradition).

#### *4.4 Feministic position :*

A classification of the prayers according to the three feministic waves results in:

Prayer 1:	second/third wave
Prayer 2:	second wave
Prayer 3:	second wave
Prayer 4:	third wave
Prayer 5:	first wave
Prayer 6:	third wave
Prayer 7:	third wave
Prayer 8:	second wave
Prayer 9:	third wave
Prayer 10:	third wave

first wave:	1 prayer
second wave:	4 prayers
third wave:	5 prayers

We see that prayer (5) belongs to the first feministic wave, because at the beginning of the feministic movement the emphasis was on equality between the sexes. By the second wave more specific feminist issues came to the front, difficulties women were facing, such as violence in the family (2), fertility problems (3) awareness of the feminine body (8). I classified prayer no.1 as boarder line, because of the use of the feminine side of God, thereby supporting the identity of the feminine image. At the same time, as it can be used by both genders, it can also be classified with the third wave. The third wave brought with it awareness of sexual and racial discrimination (9) and the notion that men and women share sameness as human beings yet each is also separate and unique (4, 6, 7, 10).

The three feministic waves brought about an enormous change in human awareness, which in turn brings about changes in society. Not without struggles and not without obstacles, certainly in Israel, as long as religion there is not separate from the state. As we can see from the list of prayers above, taking it as a sample, the second and third waves are what prevail. The second wave brought to the open feminist issues that in fact concern men as well (though the second wave concentrated upon the feminine), which the third wave can confirm. From that point of view men and women are included, a point of view which is shared, as had been said, by the Israeli Movement for Progressive Judaism. This makes it possible, invites and even necessitates a new examination of the liturgy, a new reading of Scriptures, which in turn lead to a feministic creation and renewal of liturgy by both genders.

#### 4.5 *Renewing elements*

Each of the prayers brought in its own way new elements of themes, images, combinations and/or used existing prayers, blessings and rituals as basis for renewal, giving them a new added value.

- Prayer 1: God's image in the morning blessings as mother, as remover of darkness, spreading lands and opening roads. The body openings as a musical instrument. Thanksgiving for who I am.
- Prayer 2: Breaking matters that were taboo, like family violence. The need of victims to be seen and helped, restoring their human dignity. The responsibility of the community for things that are being done to and by its members in private.
- Prayer 3: Sharing the pain of women in difficult gynaecological situation, offering them support, recognition, and hope.
- Prayer 4: Relating Kohelet and Song of Songs; ascending through the perfumed garden; seeing the beds of perfume as the Divine; deepening the concept of time (*zman nishne* and *zman shel hashinuy*).
- Prayer 5: Thanks for successful pregnancy and childbirth as a detailed theme, equal joy and thanks expressed for the birth of a girl or the birth of a boy.
- Prayer 6: A new pre-marital ritual asking for both the steady and the change that life offers; equal ritual for both genders.
- Prayer 7: The theme of mother as a human being, not the ideal but rather her vulnerable side, personal foremothers, personal exile.
- Prayer 8: Immersion in the Mikveh as a spiritual experience, each part of the body has its physical, but also its spiritual task.
- Prayer 9: God's new title: lover of human beings; call for healing.
- Prayer 10: Internalization of feminine aspect in oneself; a male praying for a feminine God as his teacher.

The old and the new in these prayers interact with each other in a way that may be regarded as a natural continuation and enrichment of the existing Jewish liturgy, expanding it, taking it a step further in its development. It is to be hoped that the new and renewed light the prayers carry with them, will shed its brightness also in circles that are still resistant to its inspiration.

#### 4.6 *Final conclusion*

As I have shown, the selected prayers are without exception rooted in our ancient traditional Jewish Scriptures and liturgy and are inspired by it. They are rich with intertextuality, combining existing texts, including modern Israeli poetry, with new feministic experiences, that grew out of the feministic movement with its three waves. The authors, women as well as men, take for themselves space that they were missing during thousands of years, thus creating a feministic and holistic continuation to existing liturgy. In this way they renew some prayers and rituals and bring new elements that are long overdue in the Jewish prayer book.

The fact that men too are writing feministic liturgy strengthen and supports the women struggle and offers confirmation to their effort. At the same time, the men themselves are developing with it by learning to look at their own softer side, while the women

learn to be assertive and come into their own power, no longer dictated by a patriarchal system. In this way, women and men learn to share mutual feelings but also their uniqueness, as they learn to reflect in each other as human beings.

There is no doubt in my mind that this is a process that can benefit not only individuals, but the whole community. Writing such prayers opens new gates through which feministic women and men can step inside the Jewish liturgy and regain their natural rightful place in it. Clean, open, respectful and honest relationship between the genders and between people in general as aspired by the third feminist wave, reflect as well our relationship to God. The prophet Hoshea describes such a relationship in 2:21-22 “*Verastich li leolam, veerastich li betzedek uvemishpat uvechesed uverachamim. Veerastich li beemuna veyadaay et Adonai*” (And I will espouse you forever; I will espouse you with righteousness and justice, and with goodness and mercy. And I will espouse you with faithfulness, then you shall be devoted to God).<sup>154</sup>

These values of righteousness, justice, goodness and compassion are none other than what the Israeli Movement for Progressive Judaism for one, and the Feministic movement as well, set for themselves as their aspired goal (see 2.1, 2.2). Living up to such qualities, is a true knowledge of God, is what being “a chosen people” is all about. The ten prayers I analysed give a Jewish-feministic voice to these same values. *Ken iyrbu* - may many more of them be created soon in our days.

#### 4.7 Epilogue

In the Introduction under 1.2 I presented two poems out of my booklet *Jewish Holidays -impressions of a woman*. I stated there that working through the feministic prayers in this paper I found an answer to my questions about the place of women in Judaism. I wish to end this paper with the last poem (see next page) of my booklet<sup>155</sup> written, as I now acknowledge, during the second feminist wave, with an eye to [then still] unknown future. Today I can see in it the buds of my personal feministic journey toward the third feministic wave.

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<sup>154</sup> The Jewish publication society, *Tanakh the holy scriptures* (Philadelphia/Jerusalem 1985) 984.

<sup>155</sup> Navah Shmuelit, *Jewish Holidays - impressions of a woman* (Haifa 1979) 24-25.



Tish'a Be'Av

They tried to destroy my temple again  
a cancer I drank at my mother's breast  
while her mother was death-doomed  
in Poland  
the house where she hid  
collapsed in a bomb  
as she waited in vain for Messiah

he did not come, now you know,  
but we have a message together:  
let us our Earth, our breast;  
we will suckle each other

for not only are We Women

תשעה באב

שוב כמעט וחרב מקדשי  
סרטן שינקתי משדי אמי  
כשנגזר דין אימה בפולניה  
מרתף מחבואה  
התמוטט בפצצה  
כשלווא חיכתה למשיח

עכשיו את יודעת, משיח לא בא  
אך לנו יש יחד כאן יעד:  
הניחו לנו אשה את שדמותה  
ונזין את את רעותה

כי אין אנו רק נשים

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## 6. Appendix: The Hebrew version of the ten prayers

.1

ברכות השחר

ברוכה את יה מקור החיים, בוראת אור ומרחקת חשך,  
הפורשת ארצות ופונחת דרכים.  
ברוכה את יה מקור החיים, יוצרת האדם בתבונה, נותנת בו נקבים וקבילים חלולים ונופחת  
רוח אלהים לנגן בם.

ברוכה את יה מקור החיים, שעשיתני בצלמך,  
שעשיתני בת-חורין,  
שעשיתני אני.

ברוכה את יה, אמי, אם כל חי,  
הפורשת עלי כנפוד -  
היי לי מחסה ואהל,  
תני לעיני כח.

הרבה תמר דבדבני

## תפילה למוכי אלימות במשפחה

אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו ואמותינו,

עזור לנו לחזק את קולם הנשבר, את זעקתם הדוממת, של אלו שקירות המשפחה המגנים הופכים עבורם לחומות בית האסורים. את אלו המתפללים לכך שנתייחס לסבלם, הקוראים: "וגם את דמעתתי שיקמה בנאדך". תן לנו לשמוע את קול דמי אחינו ואחיותינו זועקים, ולזכור כי אנו ברואים בצלמך, ועליך נאמר: "דממה נקול אשמע" (איוב ד 16).

עזור לנו לגלות בתוכנו את הרצון האמיתי לעזור להם להתחיל מחדש, למצוא את האומץ האדיר לזעוק ולא להסתיר. את התקווה לצמוח לעתיד טוב יותר. תן לנו את הזכות לסייע להם בגלותם תעצמות נפש ובבוחרם בחיים.

ולסובלות מאלימות במשפחה אנו קוראים בכל ליבנו:

פתחי לי אַחוֹתַי (שח"ש ח' ב'), הַרְיָמִי בְכֶת קוֹלְךָ... הַרְיָמִי אֶל תִּירְאִי, כִּי יֵשׁ שָׂכָר לַפְּעֻלָּתְךָ (ישעיה מ' ט'), ירמיה, לא 15).

הוֹרִידִי כְּנֶסֶל דְּמָעָה, כְּאִתִּי אֶת דְּמָעָתְךָ. (איכה ב' י"ח, ישעיה ל"ח ח')  
אַחֲתֵנוּ אֶתְּ, אַחֲתֵנוּ אֶתְּ, אַחֲתֵנוּ אֶתְּ. תִּי לְאֶלְפֵי רִבְבָת. (בראשית כד 60).

אנא, אלוהינו שבשמים, שועת הדל תקשיב ותושיע, ברא בתוכן ובתוכנו נפש חדשה, והנחילנו ישועה וחיים.

ברוך אתה ה', אשר מחדש בטובו בכל יום תמיד טוהר נפשו של אדם.  
ברוך אתה ה', המתזק ידינו בכינון חברה בה כולם זוכים לחיות חיים של כבוד ואהבה.  
אנא אל נא רפא נא לנו.

נעמה דפני

### מי שְׁעָנָה - מי שְׁעָנָתָהּ

(מיועד לנשים המקשות בהריון, לאחר הפלה או פעילות גינקולוגית קשה)

אֲדֹנָי שְׁעָנָה לְחַנּוּהָ, אִם כָּל חַי, בְּבִשׁוּרְתָּהּ "בְּעֶצֶב תִּלְדֵי בָנִים" - עֲגֹנִי.  
 שְׂכִינָה שְׁעָנָתָה לְשִׁרְתָּה אֲמִנּוּ בְּתָם עֲקָרוּתָהּ, בְּבִשׁוּרְתָּהּ "כִּפְעַת חַיָּה וּלְשִׁרְתָּה בֶן" - שְׁמַעֵי קוֹלִי.  
 אֲדֹנָי הַשּׁוֹמֵעַ בְּכִי רַבְקָה אֲמִנּוּ, הַמְקַשָּׁה לְלֶדֶת וְשׂוֹאֵלֶת "אִם כֵּן לָמָּה זֶה אֲנִי" - עֲגֹנִי.  
 שְׂכִינָה הַשּׁוֹמֵעַת אֶת תְּחִנּוֹת הָאֲחִיוֹת רַחֵל וְלֵאָה, הַמְבַקְשׁוֹת צְאֲצָאִים - שְׁמַעֵי קוֹלִי.  
 אֲדֹנָי הַמְקַשֵּׁיב לְחַשְׁשָׁה שֶׁל יוֹכָבֵד אִם מִשָּׁה, הַיּוֹלְדֵת בְּעַת גְּזֵרוֹת - עֲגֹנִי.  
 שְׂכִינָה הַמְקַשֵּׁיבָה לְתַפְלֵתָהּ שֶׁל חַנָּה אִם שְׂמוּאֵל, הַעוֹלָזֵת "אֵל הַנֶּעֱרַר הַזֶּה הִתְפַּלְלָתִי" - שְׁמַעֵי קוֹלִי

הרב יהורם מזור

### עוֹנוֹת הַשָּׁנָה - מַעֲמָדִים בַּחֵיק הַטֶּבַע

יְהִי רַצוֹן מִלְפָּנֶיךָ  
 ה' אֱלוֹהֵי וְאֱלוֹהֵי אֲבוֹתַי וְאִמּוֹתַי  
 שְׂאֲדַלֵּג מֵעַל הַרְדֵי הַזְּמַן הַחֹזֵר וְנִשְׁעָנָה  
 וְאֶקְפֹּץ אֶל הַזְּמַן שֶׁל הַשָּׁנָה  
 שֶׁתִּמְשַׁכְּנֵי אַחֲרֶיךָ וְאֶרְוֶנָה  
 בְּעֵרוּגוֹת הַסְּדוּרוֹת תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ  
 וּמִנִּיחוֹחַ בּוֹשָׁמֵן  
 אֶעֱלֶה אֶל מֵעַל לַשָּׁמֶשׁ  
 שְׁמַחְזוּרִיוֹת הַטֶּבַע  
 תּוֹלִיכֵנִי חֲזָרָה אֵלֶיךָ  
 הרבה מירה רז

תפילה ליולדת לאחר הולדת בת

תפילה ליולדת לאחר הולדת בן:

ברוכה את יה  
 אם כל חי  
 שממני יצאו חיים חדשים לעולם.  
 ברוכה את יה  
 שבנפלאותיך אני מתבוננת עכשיו.  
 מה גדלו מעשיך יה  
 מאוד עמקו מחשבותיך.  
 ברוכה את יה  
 ששמרת עליי בתשעת החודשים האחרונים.  
 שמרי על בני שזה עתה נולד  
 ולווי אותו כמו שלווית אותי.  
 עזרי לי לגדל אותו בדרכך  
 והשרי עליי ועליו מרוחך.  
 פרשי סופת שלומך עליו  
 לחיים טובים ולשלום  
 בבריאות הגוף והנפש.  
 ברוכה את יה  
 המחדשת בטובה חיים בעולמה.

ברוכה את יה  
 אם כל חי  
 שממני יצאו חיים חדשים לעולם.  
 ברוכה את יה  
 שבנפלאותיך אני מתבוננת עכשיו.  
 מה גדלו מעשיך יה  
 מאוד עמקו מחשבותיך.  
 ברוכה את יה  
 ששמרת עליי בתשעת החודשים האחרונים.  
 שמרי על בתי שזה עתה נולדה  
 ולווי אותה כמו שלווית אותי.  
 עזרי לי לגדל אותה בדרכך  
 והשרי עליי ועליה מרוחך.  
 פרשי סופת שלומך עליה  
 לחיים טובים ולשלום  
 בבריאות הגוף והנפש.  
 ברוכה את יה  
 המחדשת בטובה חיים בעולמה.

הרבה קורי זיידלר

### טקס טבילה לכלה ולחתן

הטקס מיועד לחתן או לכלה, לפני חופתם.

אני רוצה להוסיף שני דיברים לעשרת הדברות:

זה הדיבר האחד עשר: לא תשתנה  
זה הדיבר השנים עשר: השתנה, תשתנה.

(על-פי יהודה עמיחי)

לפני חופתי אני טובלת ומבקשת להישאר מה שאני ולהיות ברכה באשר אהיה. להשתנות עם בן/בת זוגי כדי לצור ברכה יחד. כן יהי רצון.	לפני חופתי אני טובלת ומבקשת להישאר מה שאני ולהיות ברכה באשר אהיה. להשתנות עם בן/בת זוגי כדי לצור ברכה יחד. כן יהי רצון.
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#### טבילה ראשונה:

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצוותיו וצונו על הטבילה.

#### טבילה שניה:

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם שעשני אישה ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם שעשני איש

#### טבילה שלישית:

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם שהחייני וקיימני והגעני לזמן הזה.

ביציאה מן המים:

שכינה, מקור חיי, תני בי כוח לשמור על הברכה שבי, לשמור על יחודי בברית שאליה אני נכנס, ברית שאין חזקה ממנה. רוח חי וקים, למדני להשתנות למען הברית הזו ונהיה לבשר אחד, לרוח אחת ולנשמה יתרה.	שכינה, מקור חיי, תני בי כוח לשמור על הברכה שבי, לשמור על יחודי בברית שאליה אני נכנסת, ברית שאין חזקה ממנה. רוח חי וקים, למדני להשתנות למען הברית הזו ונהיה לבשר אחד, לרוח אחת ולנשמה יתרה.
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הרבה אלונה ליסיצה

## תפילה על האמא

אלהים, החזק את ידיה של האמא  
 המחליקות מצח שפתע הזעיף.  
 חזק את ידיה, כי היא עייפה ולא ישנה טוב כבר הרבה לילות.  
 היא רוצה ואוהבת וכמהה אבל לא יודעת.  
 תלתל נכנע ליד של אמא (האם ידע חולשתה?).  
 ומי ילטף את האמא בלילה הארוך הזה של גלויות?

אלהים, החזק את ידיה של האמא  
 המלטפת מצח (דק מן הדק).  
 עזור לה לבשר טוב, להיות ברכה בתוך מבוכה וזרות.  
 היא כל כך בודדה, האמא.  
 חבק זרועותיה המחבקות, אלהים,  
 בחיבוק זרועות כל דורות אימותיה -  
 ברלין, תורכיה, צפת, ירושלים...

אלהים, החזק את ידיה של האמא  
 השהה מלמולי אימותיה (גרמנית, לדינו, יידיש, עברית) במלמוליה  
 ירפרפו כזר של ברכות על ראשה.  
 השרה הרהוריהן (אבל רק הטובים, אנא, רק הטובים)  
 בהרהוריה (אלה מתגלים להרף בתוך חלומותיה).  
 לטף את מצחה בליטופי כל אימותיה.

אנא החזק, אנא הרחק, אנא סלק האימה  
 בלילה הזה של גלויות.

הרבה דליה מרקס



תפילת העולה ממי הטבילה

תן לְכֹל אֵיבָר בְּגוּפִי  
שְׂנוּגֵעַ בְּאֵילוֹ הַמִּים הַחַיִּים,  
לְהַתְחַדֵּשׁ לְמַעַן הַטּוֹב וְהַבְּרִיאָה.

תן לְבַהֲנוֹתַי וְרַגְלֵי לְרִקּוּד.  
תַּנְנִי לְהַזְדַּרֵּז אֵלַי מְצוּתָדָה, אֶל גְּמִילוֹת חֲסָדִים.

יְהִיו זְרוּעוֹתַי מְחַבְּקוֹת אֶת הַזְּקוּק לְנַחֲמָה  
יְהִיו יָדַי כּוֹתְבוֹת מְלוֹת אֶמֶת וְהוֹרָאָה  
יְהִיו אֶצְבְּעוֹתַי נוֹגְנוֹת, נוֹגְעוֹת בְּאַהֲבָה.

יְמַלֵּא פִי דְבָרֵי חֶמְלָה,  
תּוֹרַת חֶסֶד עַל לְשׁוֹנִי.  
יְהִיו שְׁפָתַי דּוֹבְבוֹת תּוֹרָה וְתַפִּילָה  
יְהִיו עֵינַי רוֹאוֹת פְּלֹאוֹת אֱלֹהִים,  
מָה רַבּוּ מַעֲשֵׂיָדָה!  
וַיִּשְׁקֹפוּ אֶת אַהֲבָתוֹ וְתוֹדָתוֹ שֶׁל הַגּוּף.

תן בְּרַכַּת אַהֲבָה וְתַקְנָה עַל הַיָּרַח הַבָּא  
בְּרַחֲמֵי, אֶל מַחְזוֹר שְׁלֵמוֹת  
וּמִיעוּט, כְּמַלּוּי וּגְרִיעַת הַלְבָנָה.  
יְהִי רְצוֹן שְׂאֵתְחַדֵּשׁ לְטוֹבָה, אֶל דָּרַד הַיּוֹשֵׁר.  
אֵינְלֵד עֶכְשָׁיו בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים.

הרבה רחל שבת-בית-הלחמי

## ברכה למאבק בגזענות

לְשׂוֹאֵת-הַזֶּר לֹא תְהִי תִקְוָה וְכֹל בְּזוּי צֶלֶם-הָאֱלֹהִים פְּרַגַּע יֵאבֹד; פִּי מִחֶרְתְּךָ-  
שׂוֹאֵה מִהֲרָה יִסְכַּר וְכֹל אִיבָה וְשַׁעֲבוּד, אֶפְלִיָּה וְנִצְחָנוּת מִהֲרָה תַעֲקֹר וְתִשָּׁבֵר;  
וּלְבוֹתֵינוּ תִכְנִיעַ לְעִבְדְּךָ בְּלִבְּ-שָׁלֵם בְּמִהֲרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אוֹהֵב הָאָדָם.

הברכה חוברת על ידי הרב יהודע עמיר (בעקבות נוסחה המסורתית של "ברכת המינים" שבתפילת העמידה)

## מודה אני

הוֹרִי נִי

אֱלֹהִים - הַבָּאָה מִתּוֹכִי

בְּקוֹלִי

לְהִקְשִׁיב

לְמִי לָיִם - נְהַגוֹת בִּי

לְאֵט: מוֹדֵה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ

אֱלֹהֵי שְׁהַחֲרִתְךָ

בִּי נִשְׁמַתִּי

בְּחַמְלָה

הרב ישי רון