

T'filat HaAdam and the Maturation of Israeli Reform

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Introductory Remarks

Reform Judaism burst onto the scene of history in Germany as a movement of liturgical reform. In 1819, the Hamburg Temple published a *Gebetbuch* that expressed the ideals of the Reformers in embryonic form. However, as the late historian Steven Lowenstein has indicated, it was not until the 1840s with the “maturation of the Reform Movement,” that more mature expressions of a principled Reform as manifest in pamphlets and prayer books began to emerge.¹

In a parallel vein, it can be said that with the 2020 publication of *T'filat HaAdam: Siddur Reformi Yisraeli*, co-edited by Rabbah Dalia Marx and Rabbah Alona Lisitsa and released under the aegis of MARAM (the Israeli Progressive Rabbinical Council) and the Israeli Reform Movement, that Reform Judaism in Israel, like the German movement of the 1840s, has begun fully to come of age. To be sure, *HaAvodah SheBaLev*, the 1982 siddur of the Israeli Movement for Progressive Judaism, which was revised in 1991 under the editorship of Rabbi Yehoram Mazor, constitutes a significant Israeli Reform liturgical antecedent for *T'filat HaAdam*. As the eminent historian of modern Jewish liturgy Eric Friedland indicated, in his “Ha-Avodah sheba-Lev (1982): A Siddur from Zion,” this prayer book constituted a major step in the advancement of Reform Judaism in Israel, and Rabbi Mazor and Rabbi Esther Adler discussed the character and significance of this work in the pages of this journal in 1993.²

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In this article, we certainly acknowledge the importance of *HaAvodah SheBaLev* as a precedent for *T'filat HaAdam*. The editors themselves indicate that the text they employed as the basis for their siddur was the earlier 1982 Israeli siddur.³ At the same time, we maintain that the current iteration of Reform prayer in Israel unquestionably testifies to a giant leap forward in the growth of Israeli Reform over the past four decades. *T'filat HaAdam* bespeaks a self-confidence and maturity that marks contemporary Reform Judaism in Israel as it enters the third decade of the twenty-first century. It is that “leap forward” and what it says about Israeli Reform Judaism today that we wish to explore in this article.

At the outset, we would note that this prayer book is the product of an historical context that is much different than the one that produced *HaAvodah SheBaLev*. Liberal expressions of Judaism now occupy a much more prominent position on the Israeli scene than they did forty years ago. Surveys conducted under the aegis of the Avi Chai Foundation in 2011 and The Jewish People Policy Institute in 2019 found that 13 percent of Israeli Jews (800,000 persons) identify themselves as Reform and Conservative; 60 percent of all Israeli Jews believe that the Reform and Conservative Movements should be recognized by the State and that their rabbis should be allowed to perform legally sanctioned marriages; and 34 percent said they had attended a ceremony or service where a non-Orthodox rabbi had officiated and the Israeli Reform and Masorti movements report that they conduct approximately 3,500 bar or bat mitzvah ceremonies as well as 1,200 weddings each year.⁴

While these movements do not enjoy a large formal membership, the number of Reform and Masorti congregations have multiplied exponentially over past decades. Reform alone has jumped from eleven Reform congregations in Israel in 1982 to fifty-four today. In addition, fifteen Reform rabbis today as opposed to zero then now receive Israeli governmental support, and TALI schools under Reform aegis are providing an enriched Jewish curriculum for secular Israeli Jewish students throughout the country. Furthermore, in a landmark decision issued on March 1, 2021, the Israeli Supreme Court ruled in *Natalia Dahan and Others v. The Minister of the Interior and Others* (HCJ 11013/05) that persons converted to Judaism by Reform and Conservative rabbinical courts in Israel must be granted Israeli citizenship under the Law of Return. Equally noteworthy is that Rabbi Gilad Kariv, past head of the

Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism, now sits as a member of the Knesset. Finally, more than one hundred Israelis were ordained as Reform and Masorti Rabbis during the first years of the twenty-first century by Hebrew Union College and Machon Schechter in Jerusalem.⁵

Among these rabbis are Rabbis Marx and Lisitsa. Marx, a tenth generation Israeli, was ordained at HUC-JIR Jerusalem and Cincinnati in 2002 and completed her doctorate in Midrash at Hebrew University. Rabbah Marx, the Rabbi Aaron D. Panken Professor of Midrash and Liturgy at HUC-JIR/Jerusalem, is a prolific author and lecturer who writes and speaks in Hebrew, English, German, and Spanish. Her fame is now pronounced in both Israel and throughout the world. Similarly, Lisitsa, born in Kiev and ordained at HUC-JIR/Jerusalem in 2004, also teaches at HUC-JIR/Jerusalem, serving as Coordinator of Student Placement for the Israeli Rabbinic Program. Lisitsa, holder of a 2012 PhD in Talmud from Tel Aviv University, is a full-time adjunct professor of Halachah and Liturgy at the Jerusalem campus of the College-Institute as well. Most notably, she is the editor of *Dabri Torah*, the recently published Israeli Women's Pluralistic Torah Commentary. Together, Lisitsa and Marx embody and guide a proud new generation of Israeli Reform and liberal Jews and serve as catalysts for novel senses of religious and cultural belonging in Israel today. Indeed, this "belonging" is evidenced by the sale of *T'filat HaAdam* in Steimatzky bookstores and others throughout Israel—the first Reform prayer book to ever be sold in this way! In this essay, we will describe how Lisitsa, Marx, and the Israeli Reform Movement have achieved this prominence by presenting and analyzing the character and substance of *T'filat HaAdam*, the Israeli prayer book they and the Reform Movement have birthed.

The Significance of a Name

For years, Reform Judaism was unknown to most Israelis and the term "Reform" itself had a pejorative connotation on the Israeli scene. The nationalistic elements that informed the Zionist Movement caused the overwhelming majority of Israeli Jews during the first decades of the State to regard the anti-nationalistic stances that informed classical Reform Judaism in both Germany and the United States as a perversion of Judaism. As Eric Yoffie has

reported, this led authors of textbooks for Israeli secular schools to present Reform Judaism as an assimilatory movement designed to cast away Jewish identity for upper-class elites in *galut*.⁶ The Reform Movement was viewed so negatively by the Israeli Jewish populace that the Israeli Movement abjured the title “Reform,” causing an Israeli Reform official, as the late Israeli Conservative Rabbi Theodore Friedman reported in 1982, to regard the term “Reform” as “an albatross around our necks.” Indeed, it was Friedman who remarked, “It is revealing that in Israel the movement uses the appellation Progressive Judaism and not Reform.”⁷

It is small wonder then that the title of the first Israeli Reform siddur, *HaAvodah SheBaLev*, did not proclaim a connection to the Reform Movement. To be sure, the name of that first prayer book admittedly resonates with both traditional and liberal Jewish tradition. After all, the words in its name are inspired by a passage in *Taanit* 2a, where the Rabbis assert that prayer is defined as “service of the heart.” In this sense, *HaAvodah SheBaLev* is akin to numerous other Jewish liturgical works composed over the past two centuries, including the 1967 *Avodat HaLev* of the British Liberal Movement. However, nowhere on the cover or the spine of *HaAvodah SheBaLev* does the term “Reform” or even “liberal” or “progressive” appear—though inside on its third page where the title appears the book does identify itself as affiliated with the Movement for Progressive Judaism in Israel.

This “embarrassment” over the “appellation . . . Reform” is no more. The very subtitle given to *T’filat HaAdam*, “*Siddur Reformi Yisraeli*,” testifies to this. The words of the subtitle indicate that the prayer book unapologetically takes great pride in proclaiming its Reform affiliation. From this perspective, the new Israeli Reform siddur is a radical change from its predecessor liturgy as well from both previous traditional siddurim and classical Reform siddurim.

The full name and title page of *T’filat HaAdam: Siddur Reformi Yisraeli* proudly announces its multilayered character to the Israeli audience for which it is intended. It is, in keeping with Reform tradition, literally universalistic—the prayer of humanity.⁸ At the same time, it is highly particularistic and unabashedly identifies itself as being “Israeli and Reform,” which as Lisitsa observes, means that Reform is committed to both “tradition and innovation” and that it has the courage to proclaim this to the Israeli public and “not bow to external definitions.”⁹

As Rabbahs Lisitsa and Marx note in their introduction, for an Israeli audience, the title immediately recalls the Hannah Szenes poem “*Eili, Eili*,”¹⁰ and the poem appears in full as the frontispiece of the work (p. 10). Secondly, by announcing itself on the cover and the binding of the book as well as on its front page as an “Israeli Reform Siddur,” *T’filat HaAdam*, in the words of its editors, acknowledges unabashedly that the Israeli Reform Movement has merited great growth in recent decades and that the Movement is both burgeoning and multivalent (p. 13). We will now analyze what the contents of *T’filat HaAdam* say precisely about the nature of Israeli Reform today by looking at it as (1) a prayer book informed by Reform tradition and (2) a siddur that reflects a contemporary Israeli context and feminist sensibilities. All of this will bespeak the nature of Reform Judaism in present-day Israel and testify to the expanded role the Reform Movement occupies in the life and culture of Israel today.¹¹

***T’filat HaAdam* as a Reform Siddur**

T’filat HaAdam announces itself as a Reform prayer book on its very first page, where it indicates that it is the product of the Israeli Reform Movement and MARAM. Lisitsa and Marx, in their introduction to the siddur, go to great length to indicate that this work is the product of the Reform Movement and sees itself as a link in the chain of Reform Movement siddurim. Rabbah Lisitsa recognizes that while she and Rabbah Marx surely played central roles in the writing of *T’filat HaAdam*, she acknowledges that the siddur is the product of the entire Israeli Reform Movement. They give special thanks to Rabbi Gilad Kariv as head of the IMPJ and the staff of HUC-JIR/Jerusalem for the contributions and support they provided in the composition of the prayer book. They also acknowledge the help provided by the CCAR and Rabbi Hara Person in the publication and editing of the siddur. Lisitsa and Marx express further gratitude to HUC-JIR/Jerusalem Professor of Modern Jewish Thought Rabbi Yehoyada Amir and their colleagues in MARAM who accompanied them throughout the process of writing this work (p. 15). Indeed, immediately following the preface, Rabbi Amir, on behalf of MARAM and in the name of their partners in the Movement and at HUC, writes a two-page salutation congratulating the co-editors on their accomplishment in composing *T’filat HaAdam* (pp. 16–17).

During the six-year process (2014–2020) that the prayer book was produced, Lisitsa states that the co-editors paid careful “attention to the many diverse voices of the Movement”—its members, its rabbis, its activists, its prayer leaders, and its youth—as the siddur went through numerous iterations. She also notes that careful attention was paid to the many diverse voices teeming in Israeli society, especially its egalitarian prayer groups. Citations of all these influences testify to the dual Reform and Israeli character of *T’filat HaAdam*.¹² Unquestionably, *T’filat HaAdam* is self-consciously a Reform Movement product anchored in the contemporary context of *M’dinat Yisrael* and aims at a broad Israeli as well as Reform audience.

The co-editors emphasize that the Reform heritage of their prayer book is fully evidenced in the structure, characteristics, and substance of the prayer book itself. In their introduction, Lisitsa and Marx note that Reform prayer books throughout history express “the eternal values of the Jewish people” by providing links to past generations. This means that Reform siddurim—and *T’filat HaAdam* is no exception—retain the classical *matbei-ah shel t’filah*, the traditional Rabbinic structure of Jewish prayer. At the same time each Reform siddur seeks to combine those voices of previous generations with the needs of the contemporary community. *T’filat HaAdam* therefore consciously weaves “episodes, understandings and questions that animate our generation” with materials from the past. In this sense, the new Israeli rite unquestionably bears greater similarity to the “moderate” school of Reform siddurim embodied in the liturgical works of Abraham Geiger and Isaac Mayer Wise than in the more “radical” Reform siddurim of Samuel Holdheim, David Einhorn, and the *Union Prayerbook*.¹³ Having recognized where *T’filat HaAdam* stands in a two-hundred-year tradition of Reform prayer books, Lisitsa also notes that in the Israeli context the new Reform prayer book can also be described from one perspective as “radical” and from another as “conservative.” That is, the Orthodox, she states, view the siddur as “overly creative” and protest its inclusion of non-canonical sources within its pages. At the same time, secular Israelis see its affirmation of classical Jewish prayer structure and services as overly traditional.¹⁴

In adopting this moderate model for their prayer book, Lisitsa and Marx point out that Reform siddurim have never been of a single cloth.¹⁵ As Israelis, they are quite conscious that classical Reform

prayer books of the nineteenth century abjured any connection with Zion. Obviously, *T'filat HaAdam*, like other modern Reform prayer books composed in both Israel and the Diaspora, departs from this posture. At the same time, this iteration of the Reform Israeli siddur, like all Reform prayer books, rejects traditional prayers calling for the restoration of animal sacrifices and the rebuilding of a Third Temple. Furthermore, Lisitsa and Marx indicate their prayer book does not ask for the coming of a personal messiah. Rather, *T'filat HaAdam*, again like other modern Reform liturgies, speaks of social justice and the obligation of *tikkun olam*. While the Israeli rite affirms the unity of the people Israel, it also renounces negative expressions regarding other peoples and omits all traditional prayers that ask for divine vengeance on the enemies of Israel (pp. 10–15).

A representative glance at the contents of *T'filat HaAdam* displays all the qualities that Lisitsa and Marx have outlined in their introduction. The siddur is laid out as a modern Reform siddur. It begins with the *Arvit* service and cycles through the day. Of course, services for Shabbat and Holidays are included, and the new Israeli rite generally follows the table of contents of *HaAvodah SheBaLev*. However, there are also notable distinctions.

For example, while the *Avot* benediction in the *Amidah* reflects the ideological posture of Reform by eliminating the traditional call for a messianic “redeemer” (*go-eil*) in favor of “redemption” (*g'ulah*), the co-editors of *T'filat HaAdam* do not display such ideational purity in relationship to the *Kaddish*. Indeed, the 2020 prayer book always includes two versions of this prayer—the traditional Ashkenazic rite and the traditional Sephardic rite. As is well-known, the Sephardic rite includes a phrase asking for the coming of redemption and a personal messiah:¹⁶ ויצמח פרקנה—ויקרב (קץ) משיחה. In placing the Sephardic prayer in their siddur, Lisitsa and Marx show themselves to be worthy heirs of Abraham Geiger, who, as the communal rabbi of Breslau, composed an 1854 *Gebetbuch* that contained several traditional beliefs and ideals with which he personally disagreed. However, as rabbi of the entire community, he included these items in his prayer book for the sake of communal unity.¹⁷ Similarly, Lisitsa and Marx recognize that the need to have a significant prayer that grants comfort to many Israelis is more important than avoiding the “ideological contamination” that a yearning for a personal messiah represents. In so doing, the Rabbis reveal their overarching commitment to the creation of a Reform

liturgy that reflects the lived “Jewish experience of” Sephardic/Mizrachi Jews and their traditions (p. 13).

The sensitivity to Jewish liturgical tradition and the influence the Sephardic/Mizrachi Israeli possesses for the authors can be found in numerous places in *T’filat HaAdam*. The daily *Shacharit* prayer service includes *Tachanun*, which follows the rite of the Nusach Ari/Sfard and Oriental communities rather than the traditional Ashkenazic rite by including the *Ashamnu* and the thirteen attributes of God in the daily *Tachanun* service. However, in addition to the traditional text, there are modern Hebrew poems as alternative prayers. By including these additions, the newest Israeli Reform rite consciously weaves “episodes, understandings and questions that animate our generation” with materials from the past. The co-editors state that they consciously affirm “metaphorical” readings of their prayer texts and are content to have God understood in a variety of ways by different worshipers. Indeed, they are delighted to have each person and each community construct their own theological approaches to the Divine. The only sources they explicitly excluded from the siddur are ones that are “chauvinistic” or “racist.”¹⁸

T’filat HaAdam also adds back *Ashrei* in *P’sukei D’zimrah* and the *piyut El Adon* in the first blessing before the *Sh’ma*. In so doing, the Israeli prayer book follows the lead of other Reform siddurim in the modern era and reflects the spirituality that increasingly marks present-day Jewish religiosity. The Psalms for each day of the week also appear, and in the *Amidah*—in a nod once again to the Sephardic tradition—the alternative version for the winter blessing used by Sephardic rites for the blessing of the seasons (ninth blessing) is found.

The traditionalism of *T’filat HaAdam* manifests itself once again in the Shabbat section of the prayer book, which begins with “preparations for Shabbat” (*Hachanot L’Shabbat*). There are prayers for the separation of *Challah* and *T’rumah* followed by prayers, supplications, and readings drawn from the traditional and modern sources (including readings prepared by kibbutzim and a meditation by Rabbi Leo Baeck) to prepare the Jew for the sanctity and rest of Shabbat. Of course, while this admixture of classical and contemporary sources is an ongoing characteristic of *T’filat HaAdam*, the inclusion of the prayer for *T’rumah* underlines both the traditional as well as Israeli character of this siddur, as *T’rumah* applies only in Israel and would have resonance only with an Israeli

audience. Lisitsa also points out that within an Israeli framework the word *t'rumah* also connotes the giving of *tzedakah* in honor of the Sabbath. In this way, the inclusion of *T'rumah* in the siddur allows for innovation and renewal even as it affirms tradition. Once again, the “old-new” character of *T'filat HaAdam* is evidenced.¹⁹

The emphasis upon traditional forms and prayers in *T'filat HaAdam* is seen in other passages and prayers contained in this prayer book. For example, *Shir HaShirim* (The Song of Songs) is added in its entirety, and the Shabbat Morning Service ends with *Anim Z'mirot*. The inclusion of this mystical poem once again reflects the comfort Israeli Reform Jews feel with this staple of Orthodox worship. *Minchah* for Shabbat has an addition between *Ashrei* and *Uva L'tzion* of several psalms, though *T'filat HaAdam* moves the entire Saturday Afternoon Torah Service from its traditional site between *Uva L'tzion* and the *Amidah*, as does the North American *Mishkan T'filah*, to after the *Amidah*. It also includes the *Shir Hamaalot* psalms as a nod to the *Nusach Ari* with which Ashkenazic Israelis who attend synagogue are familiar. After *Havdalah*, *Kiddush L'vana* (Sanctification of the New Moon) is added to the new Israeli Reform rite. At the same time, following the work of Marcia Falk in *The Book of Blessings*, a special innovative *Kiddush* for Rosh Chodesh based on biblical and Rabbinic sources is found.

Other traditional additions not found in *HaAvodah SheBaLev* should also be highlighted. The appearance of *Tashlich* surely represents a departure from classical Reform prayer books. While this Yom Kippur ritual has long been observed by Reform congregations in Israel, the appearance of the service in the liturgy is novel and is in line with a resurgence of traditional forms in the prayers of contemporary Reform. *Tu BiSh'vat* has a service, the fast day of 17 Tammuz receives a short prayer, and *Tu B'Av* receives a page. There is a short service for *Tzom G'daliah*, and the fast of 10 Tevet appears while being reinterpreted as the day to recite *Kaddish* for all the departed who have no one to recite *Kaddish* for them. In so doing, *T'filat HaAdam* follows the reinterpretation of this fast in the Religious Zionist camp. *B'dikat chameitz* is placed in the siddur while *Lag BaOmer* receives its own very short benediction. All of this testifies to the renewed appreciation for the *Masoret* in contemporary Israeli Reform.

The way that *T'filat HaAdam* includes and treats two traditional prayers—*Aleinu* and *Musaf*—displays the character of how

present-day Israeli Reform Judaism affirms the structure of traditional Jewish prayer even as it adapts its manifest content to the principles of Reform thought. The *Aleinu* is retained as it is in countless Reform prayer books. However, the “overbearing” particularity, to quote Abraham Geiger, of those sections in the traditional *Aleinu* that speak negatively of other peoples and religious traditions are removed and two alternative versions of the prayer that express thanks to God for giving Israel the Torah and offering gratitude to God for bringing Israel near to divine service are substituted instead. Here the influence of classical Reform thinkers like Geiger as well as the model of contemporary Reconstructionist prayer are evident. Notably, a completely alternative *Aleinu* taken from Marcia Falk that speaks of the obligation to engage in *tikkun olam* is also included as are two texts by Israeli Reform Rabbi Dan Porat.

Musaf is a significant addition to *T'filat HaAdam*. Harkening back once again to moderate Reform liturgists like Geiger, Wise, and Jastrow in the nineteenth century and unlike all twentieth-century North American Reform siddurim and *HaAvodah SheBaLev*, the current rite includes a full Shabbat, Holiday, and Rosh Chodesh *Musaf* service. However, in the manner of Conservative Movement prayer books, all passages that ask for the actual restoration of animal sacrifices are excised. To be sure, a short *Zecher L'Musaf*, a short remembrance of the Temple and its sacrifices, is also included as an alternative in the new Reform rite. Nevertheless, the full *Musaf* offered in its pages stands in sharp contrast to *HaAvodah SheBaLev*, where a one page *Zecher L'Musaf* alone is included.

In sum, *T'filat HaAdam* stands proudly in a tradition of moderate Reform prayer books. It affirms the traditions of Jewish worship even as it reflects significant change and evolution from past rites. An analysis of its “Israeli” character and its subsequent attention to personal rites and ceremonies as well as feminist concerns will highlight its distinctiveness. It is to a description of those elements in the siddur that we now turn.

The Israeli Context and Feminist Sensibilities and Expressions

In assessing the Israeli context of *T'filat HaAdam* and what it says about the nature and growth of the Reform Movement in Israel

today, we now turn, perhaps unexpectedly, to an examination of the services and ceremonies it includes for personal rites in the liturgical life cycle of the Israeli Jew. As Friedland pointed out in his commentary on *HaAvodah SheBaLev*, “the excision of services that one would expect as a matter of course in a prayerbook as omnibus as *Ha-Avodah sheba-Lev: for a berit milah*, a wedding, and the final rites,” was extremely striking. He then observed, “Could it be that the exclusion is due to the situation in Israel today, wherein the Orthodox exercise a virtual monopoly over the central liturgical events in its citizens’ personal lives? If so, the absence of such services is a sad commentary.”²⁰

To be sure, the co-editors of *T'filat HaAdam* acknowledge their indebtedness to *HaAvodah SheBaLev* and they speak reverently about how the 1982 siddur spoke imaginatively to the Israel of its day (p. 15). Furthermore, as Friedland has pointed out in his article on *HaAvodah SheBaLev*, “There is no question that the Israeli experience has etched itself deeply in this prayerbook.”²¹ There is a service there for Yom HaZikaron, a *Mi Shebeirach* for young people entering the Israel Defense Forces, a service for planting of trees, and a revision of the classical *Al HaNisim* prayer to reflect the “miracle” of a new-born Jewish commonwealth. In that same vein, there is a word change for the benediction in *Birkat HaMazon* of *v'hashleim* (“complete”) in lieu of *u'v'nei* (“build”) that now asks for the “completion” of the rebuilding of Jerusalem that has already begun to be realized through the creation of the State, and the traditional benedictions relating to *kibbutz galuyot* (ingathering of the exiles) were altered to reflect that many Jews now live in “our land.” Hebrew poetry drawn from Israeli secular and religious sources are also found in *HaAvodah SheBaLev*, and a special *Kiddush* for Yom HaAtzma-ut, which we will discuss more fully below, is also placed in the 1982 rite. In short, the earlier Israeli Reform prayer book does bear witness to its Israeli context.

However, forty years later, the contents of *T'filat HaAdam* reflect how changed the position of Reform Judaism is in Israel today from what it was then. To paraphrase Friedland, the appearance of blessings, services, and ceremonies for special occasions in life is a positive commentary on Reform in contemporary Israel despite the ongoing outsized legal influence the *Rabbanut* continues to exercise in the State.²²

Mi Shebeirach prayers for personal occasions abound. They include blessings for *eirusin* and *nisuin*, the dedication of a home, the birth of a son or daughter, adoption, conversion, conscription into the Israel Defense Forces, and birthdays. Meaningful prayers for Yom HaMishpacha are included and other prayers for milestones in life also appear within the pages of this prayer book. There are prayers for *olim* and for meetings with Jewish communities from the Diaspora. The *Mi Shebeirach* prayer for the sick composed by Debbie Freidman is included in Hebrew translation. *T'filat HaAdam* also composes a special *Mi Shebeirach* for “chapter ending life events” (*siyum perek b'chayim*) such as divorce, layoffs (*piturim*), or other crises. A unique recognition of the changed reality LGBTQ+ persons experience in Israel and other parts of the world in our day is provided by a special blessing that celebrates “coming out of the closet” (*Mi Shebeirach l'y'tziah haaron*), where the individual is lauded for the “courage” (*ometz*) to declare the nature of their sexuality publicly. Three recently ordained Israeli rabbis—Rabbah Tamar Duvdevani, Rabbah Ayala Sha'ashua-Miron, and Rabbah Michal Ken-Tor—offer alternative versions of *T'filat HaDerech* even as the traditional version of the prayer also appears. Rabbah Marx provides a final prayer at the conclusion of the *sidur*, “Open for us a gate during the moment of the gate’s closing,” where she affirms, in the final two lines of her composition, “God create a pure heart for us, and renew a proper spirit within us.”

All these prayers reflect the confidence present-day Israeli Reform possesses and indicates the creativity and traditionalism that mark its rabbis and its members. *T'filat HaAdam* echoes and extends *HaAvodah SheBaLev* in offering an even more complete list of the *birchot hanehenin* (blessings upon food, drink, and life cycle) than were published in the earlier Israeli Reform liturgy. To the traditional *b'rachot* of *Hamotzi*, *shehakol nihyeh bidvaro*, *hagefen*, *minei m'zonot*, *p'ri haadamah*, *Shehecheyanu*, and *minei v'samim*, blessings for *isvei v'samim*, the rainbow, *chacham harazim* (for when a crowd of Jews is gathered), *hatov v'hameitiv*, *t'vilah*, and *m'zuzah* are included, as is the general *birchot hamitzvot*, for the commandments.

The religious and cultural-political reality that informs present-day Israel is seen in the way that *T'filat HaAdam* actively seeks to include the various rites of the Jewish people who currently reside in Israel and devotes ample room to contemporary Israeli poetry, song, and creations. Most such sources are Israeli. The notable

exceptions are an excerpt of an essay by Leo Baeck, a poem of the Canadian Jewish poet-singer Leonard Cohen, several pieces from the Chasidic master R. Nahman, and one reading by American Conservative Rabbi Jack Riemer. The overwhelming number (perhaps 90 percent) of the alternative readings are Israeli. These non-Israeli readings, of which several pieces are by Marcia Falk, fall into the contemporary categories of feminist or spiritual thought. This inclusion reflects the popularity these fields enjoy in contemporary Israel.

In addition to the inclusion of the Sephardic as well as Ashkenazic *nusach* for *Kaddish* mentioned above, the Sephardic *hashkavah* with *m'nucha n'chonah* is placed alongside the Ashkenazic *Yizkor* with *El Malei* and *Dayan ha-emet* for burial and the remembrance of souls. *Mimonah* is added as it has moved from a uniquely Moroccan Jewish to an Israeli festive occasion. There is a moving Memorial Day prayer for the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin. Prayers for *Yom Y'rushalayim* are given a universalistic cast that stand in marked contrast to a right wing chauvinistic Israeli appropriation of the day. A special *El Malei* is recited for the Ethiopian Jews who perished on the way to Israel. In addition, a series of readings stress the theme of Jerusalem as a city of peace and reconciliation for Israel.

A comparison of the different treatment accorded *Yom HaAtzma-ut* in *T'filat HaAdam* as opposed to how Israeli Independence Day is treated in *HaAvodah SheBaLev* captures the nature of "Israeli-ness" that informs Israeli Reform in 2020. With separate rituals for the night and day, the present Israeli liturgy consciously marks the transition from the solemnity of *Yom HaZikaron* to the joy of *Yom HaAtzma-ut* with a service of *Havdalah*. There is a specific liturgy and a *Kiddush* to mark the uniqueness of the day.

Of course, *HaAvodah SheBaLev* also contained a *Kiddush* for this holiday that modeled itself—without reference to miracles—after the *Kiddush* for Israeli Independence Day found in the *machzor* of the Orthodox Religious Kibbutz Movement, though it added a biblical prologue (similar in form to *Kiddush* for Shabbat) from Deuteronomy 8:18: "And you will remember Ado-nai since the Divine is the one that gives you the strength to bear arms (לעשרת היל) in fulfillment of the covenant that the Divine swore to your forebears, as is still the case."²³ The *Kiddush* continued with the blessing over wine and concluded with a blessing that states, "Blessed are you

Ado-nai our God, ruler of the Universe, who redeemed us and redeemed our forebears from slavery to freedom, from servitude to redemption, from despair to joy and from mourning to festive days. So should Ado-nai our God bring us in peace and in the future to festivals and pilgrimage holidays. Blessed are you Ado-nai our God who sanctifies Israel and *Yom Ha'atzmaut*." *Shehecheyanu* was then recited.

The *Kiddush* in *T'filat HaAdam* takes a different tack. It has a prologue from Psalms 126: "A song of ascents. When Ado-nai restores the fortunes of Zion—we see it as in a dream—our mouths shall be filled with laughter, our tongues, with songs of joy. Then shall they say among the nations, 'Ado-nai has done great things for them!' Ado-nai will do great things for us and we shall rejoice. Restore our fortunes, Ado-nai, like watercourses in the Negeb. They who sow in tears shall reap with songs of joy. Though he goes along weeping, carrying the seed-bag, he shall come back with songs of joy, carrying his sheaves."²⁴ The siddur then continues with the traditional line, "The Divine who restores before us the fallen booth of David and restores our days as in the past. Blessed are you, Ado-nai the redeemer for Israel. May it be your will Ado-nai that our share will be with all the builders of the House of Israel and Jerusalem the Holy City speedily in our days." This *Kiddush* concludes with the blessing over the wine and *Shehecheyanu*.

This *T'filat HaAdam Kiddush* thus moves from the Psalm traditionally said before *Birkat HaMazon* on Shabbat and Festivals to a messianic trope that recalls and asks for the restoration of the House of David. Once more, the Movement sacrifices "ideological purity" for a more traditional line of prayer familiar to the larger Israeli community. Such "inconsistency" surely characterizes the confidence that characterizes the current Israeli Reform Movement.

In concluding our analysis of *T'filat HaAdam*, we focus on its feminist bent. After all, Rabbah Marx and Rabbah Lisitsa are two of the foremost scholars of Rabbinic texts and feminist theory in the world today. That their prayer book would reflect and embody feminist concerns is anticipated. Furthermore, feminist sensibilities in our world today have grown exponentially over the past four decades since *HaAvodah SheBaLev* was written.

To be fair, as Friedland observed of the 1982 rite, "An egalitarianism of sorts" does appear at time in its pages. "For example, in the *mi she-beirakh* blessing offered on behalf of someone and usually

beginning formulaically ‘May He who blessed our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob . . . ,’ the matriarchs Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah are also included.” In addition, “The siddur also offers a unique *mi she-berakh* for a person just inducted into the Israeli Defense Forces. It begins, ‘May the One who blessed our fighters [long ago] Joshua, David, and Judah, Deborah, Jael, and Judith bless’ The creators of *Ha-Avodah sheba-Lev* also show their non-sexist sensibilities in launching the *birkat ha-mazon* with ‘*Friends* (rather than the customary *Gentlemen*), let us say grace.’ And they dutifully emulate the official rite of the Israeli Orthodox rabbinate’s placement of a feminine *modah* alongside the fixed masculine *modeh* for the familiar *modeh ani* prayer upon arising in the morning.”²⁵

Yet, as Marx had noted in 2009, “It would be fair to say that until” the Hebrew publication of Aliza Lavie’s book, *A Jewish Woman’s Prayer Book*, in 2005, “more than a decade after it became a central issue for North American Jewry!, questions of gender and worship were not present on the broader agenda of the Israeli public.” Marx contended that little attention was paid to gendered language despite the writings of North American feminists like Falk prior to the issuance of Lavie’s work. Of course, Marx also acknowledged that the gendered nature of Hebrew made the task of creating gender-neutral forms in prayer more difficult than in a language like English. Furthermore, she conceded that Israelis often resonate positively to the “feeling” and “authenticity” of the classical liturgy even as they find its manifest content and non-egalitarian imagery troubling.²⁶

As a result, Marx maintained, “When it comes to liturgical texts, contemporary Hebrew speakers must constantly choose between the comfort of familiar liturgical practice and the luxury of adequate ideological, theological, and aesthetic text theory. This makes their task quite complicated and at the same time extremely interesting. The discussions around these issues that are most passionate in Israel are those dealing with God language—the ways God is depicted and referred to in the prayers.” Thus, “there are no less than four dimensions of reference to gender in the liturgy of Israeli liberal movements, God language being only one of them: 1. Use of inclusive language to refer to worshipers; 2. Addition of representative female characters; 3. Reclaiming and adapting old rituals, creating new rituals and new ritual opportunities; 4. Gender inclusive and gender-balanced metaphors for God.”²⁷

T'filat HaAdam granted Rabbahs Marx, Lisitsa, and the Israeli Reform Movement the opportunity to construct a Movement-wide liturgy that could incorporate these four feminist mandates while addressing a broad Israeli public sensitive to these issues. This siddur is committed to complete equality between all genders and both female and male language is always employed when speaking of persons and addressing worshipers. Feminine images of God abound in its pages even as masculine images are not completely forsaken. God is not only *Adonai*, but *Shechinah*. The Matriarchs are included with the Patriarchs of the Jewish people in every prayer. In the ritual for *ushpizin* on Sukkot, the guests include the female spouses of the traditional male *ushpizin* guests. *Taanit Esther* is expanded to a fast for all *agunot* and women who are being denied a *get*.

Final Thoughts

T'filat HaAdam bespeaks the self-assurance and pride of Reform Judaism in Israel today. It contains the prayers of the different *eidot* (communities) in Israel and displays the rich prayer traditions of the Jewish people throughout history. By presenting a wide and rich range of options, Rabbah Lisitsa and Rabbah Marx make it possible for each community and individual to hew their own paths in prayer even as they create a common liturgy for all. This siddur is a significant achievement for which the editors and the Israeli Movement deserve congratulations. It constitutes, in the words of Rabbah Marx, "testimony to the 'Israeliization' of the Reform Movement" in present-day Israel.²⁸ This contemporaneous Israeli rite reflects a definition of Jewishness and an aspiration to address a broad swath of the Israeli public in keeping with the ideals and positions that mark the liberal Jewish community in twenty-first-century Israel.

Notes

1. Steven Lowenstein, "The 1840s and the Creation of the German-Jewish Religious Reform Movement," in Lowenstein, *The Mechanics of Change: Essays in the Social History of German Jewry* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 85–131.
2. See Eric Friedland, "Ha-Avodah sheba-Lev (1982): A Siddur from Zion," in Friedland, *Were Our Mouths Filled with Song: Studies in Liberal Jewish Liturgy* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press,

- 1997), 259–68. See also Esther Adler-Rephan, “The Reform Movement Has Made ‘Aliyah’: *Ha-avodah Shebalev* as Its ‘*Teudat Zehut*’: An Examination of the Israeli Reform Prayerbook,” and Yehoram Mazor, “Response,” *CCAR Journal* 40, no. 3 (1993): 21–37.
3. Rabbah Lisitsa stated this in an email she sent us on August 24, 2021.
 4. Information in this paragraph is taken from David Ellenson, “‘Jewishness’ in Israel: Israel as a Jewish State,” in *Essential Israel: Essays for the 21st Century*, ed. S. Ilan Troen and Rachel Fish (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 272–79. On the number of Israeli Jews self-identifying as Reform and Conservative, see <http://jppi.org.il/en/article/aa2019/reports/reformconservative/#.YL6Sn0wpCUm>, accessed on June 7, 2021. Finally, we thank David Bernstein, Deputy Director General of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism, for the information he provided on Reform in Israel in an email sent on June 15, 2021.
 5. On the *Dahan* case, see Nicole Maor and David Ellenson, “‘Who Is a Convert’: The Law of Return and the Legality of Reform and Conservative Conversions in Israel,” in *Israel Studies* (forthcoming).
 6. Eric H. Yoffie, “Israeli Textbooks on Reform Judaism and Orthodoxy,” *Journal of Reform Judaism* (Spring 1983): 94–101.
 7. Theodore Friedman, “Projections for Reform and Conservatism in Israel,” *Judaism* (Fall 1982): 414.
 8. Lisitsa and Marx are sensitive to the fact that for a non-native Hebrew speaking audience the title of their siddur, *T’filat HaAdam*, might appear to be “sexist.” As Marx remarks in an as-yet-unpublished paper, “*T’filat HaAdam*: An Israeli Reform Prayer Book” in *Israeli Reform Judaism* (tentative title), ed. Elazar Ben-Lulu and Ofer Shiff (Be’er Sheva: Ben Gurion University, forthcoming) (Hebrew), “There are those who criticize the title [for its use of *Adam*] and contend that it is a gendered word that excludes women.” Yet, she observes that the word *adam* first appears in Genesis 1, and there the word is defined as “male and female.” Hence, she concludes that the word connotes all humankind and is beyond gender. **Most significantly, in email communications with us on August 24, 2021, both Rabbah Lisitsa and Rabbah Marx assert that native Israeli Hebrew speakers understand *adam* as in fact denoting “humanity,” not “male” or “man.”** For this reason, they approvingly report that Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman translates the title of *T’filat HaAdam* as “The Prayer that Makes Us Human!” This understanding “allows us to assert the ‘universalistic’ nature of the title as ‘the prayer of humanity.’” We thank both Rabbahs Marx and Lisitsa for sharing their thoughts on this question with us and express our appreciation to Rabbah Marx for

sharing her article, "*T'filat HaAdam: Siddur Yisraeli Reformi*," with us. For a full discussion in English of gender issues the co-editors confronted in completing *T'filat HaAdam*, see Dalia Marx, "*T'fillat Haadam: A New Reform Siddur from Israel*," *Connection: Newsletter of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association* (Late Spring 2021/ Sivan 5781): 1, 11–12.

9. Alona Lisitsa, personal email communication to the authors on August 25, 2021.
10. To be exact, the formal title of the poem is "*Halichah l'keisaria*."
11. Interestingly, even the 2015 Reform *machzor* for the pilgrimage festivals, *HaSimchah SheBalev*, does not explicitly cite its Reform affiliation.
12. Lisitsa describes these influences and the circles that informed the prayer book in her article, "*Tefilat Ha-Orchot*," in *Midrash Rabah: Ha-rabanut ha-nashit ha-reformit b'yisrael* (tentative title), ed. Maya Leibowitz and Yehoyada Amir (Maram, forthcoming) (Hebrew). Marx speaks of them as well as the time frame required to produce the siddur in her "*T'filat HaAdam*." Once again, we thank both Lisitsa and Marx for sharing their articles with us.
13. On the differences between the "moderate" wing of "classical Reform" as represented by Geiger and Wise and the more "radical" approach championed by Holdheim and Einhorn, see Jakob Petuchowski, "Abraham Geiger and Samuel Holdheim: Their Differences in Germany and Repercussions in America," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book XXII* (1977): 139–59. David Ellenson delineates these ideological distinctions in their prayer books in "Reform Judaism in Nineteenth Century America: The Evidence of the Prayerbooks," in Ellenson, *Between Tradition and Culture: The Dialectics of Modern Jewish Religion and Identity* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 179–96.
14. Lisitsa, personal email communication to the authors on August 25, 2021.
15. For a full statement and description of how Rabbah Marx conceptualizes the characteristics of Reform Jewish Prayer, see Dalia Marx, "Prayer in the Reform Movement: Then and Now," in *A Life of Meaning: Embracing Reform Judaism's Sacred Path*, ed. Dana Kaplan (New York: CCAR Press, 2017), 349–68.
16. In email correspondence with us on August 24, 2021, Rabbah Marx noted that the word *keitz* was purposefully inserted here in this formula to indicate "that a messianic era, and not necessarily a personal messiah" was being emphasized. She further observed that while this word does not appear in most Sephardic renditions of this prayer, it is found in several Chasidic *nuschaot*. Finally, Marx pointed out that the word *keitz* appears in gray, meaning that it is optional for those who pray to decide whether to include

- it or not. In this way, she continues, “We [Rabbah Lisitsa and I] attempted to balance theological and sociological [concerns].”
17. For the “ideological inconsistency” Geiger displayed in his own prayer book, see David Ellenson, “The *Israelitische Gebetbücher* of Abraham Geiger and Manuel Joel,” in Ellenson, *After Emancipation* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2004), 208.
 18. Lisitsa, personal email communication to us on August 25, 2021.
 19. Lisitsa, personal email communication to us on August 25, 2021.
 - 20.. Friedland, *Were Our Mouths Filled with Song*, 265.
 21. Friedland, *Were Our Mouths Filled with Song*, 260.
 22. Lisitsa and Marx report to us in personal email communications of August 25, 2021, that “the dream” of the Israeli Reform Movement is to compose an entire volume devoted to the life cycle in the near future.
 23. The JPS translation of this verse differs from what we offer in our article, but we think that this is the meaning imputed to the verse when used here.
 24. JPS translation.
 25. Friedland, *Were Our Mouths Filled with Song*, 261–62.
 26. Dalia Marx, “Feminist Influences on Jewish Liturgy: The Case of Israeli Reform Prayer,” *Sociological Papers 14: Women in Israeli Judaism* (Bar Ilan University, 2009), 68ff.
 27. Marx, “Feminist Influences,” 77.
 28. Marx, “*T’filat HaAdam*: An Israeli Reform Prayer Book.”