

RTE 514: Liberal Judaism and Its Prayer Books: A Survey

Fall, 2014

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Course Description

The *siddur* has always been a diary of the Jewish people, recording the deepest aspirations and feelings of the people Israel. As such, the prayer book provides an ideal source for tracing the history and theology of the Jewish people. Liberal Jews of all kinds – Reform and Conservative, Reconstructionist and Feminist, Renewal and Non-Denominational – have been prolific authors of modern *siddurim* and they have expressed their approaches to Judaism in their liturgical creations. In this course, we will explore these works for their own sake. We will also employ their *siddurim* as vehicles to trace the growth and development of non-Orthodox varieties of Judaism in the modern era. Through a close examination of their contents, we will gain an understanding of the nuances and variety of non-Orthodox Jewish thought and practice during the last two centuries.

This course will not attempt an exhaustive survey of all these *siddurim*. Their numbers are simply too many to examine in a single course. Thus, our task of analyzing the development of Liberal Judaism through the prism of the prayer book will be accomplished through an examination of representative and prominent Liberal *siddurim* during this era. These will range from the famous Hamburg Temple Prayer Books of 1819 and 1841 in Germany, to the contemporary Reconstructionist *Kol Haneshamah* and the newest egalitarian version of the Conservative *Sim Shalom* and the most recent Reform *siddur Miskan Tefillah* in the United States as well as the Masorti *Va'ani Tefillati* in Israel.

As a result of time constraints, the class will not attempt to provide an analysis of the contents of each prayer book. Instead, representative sections from each *siddur* – *birkhot hashahar*, *shema u'virchoteha*, *haamidah* (daily and *Shabbat shaharit u'musaf*), *'aleinu*, and *kaddish* – so as to provide a consistent range of comparative analysis from week to week. If a section from another part of the service is particularly significant for an analysis of a given *siddur*, it will be included. In addition, the course will focus on daily and Sabbath services. If time permits, some selections from the liturgies of the *Yamim Noraim* and the *Hagim* may be included.

Texts

1. Course Reader on Sakai
2. Eric Friedland, Were Our Mouths Filled With Song
3. Lawrence Hoffman, Beyond the Text
4. Jacob Petuchowski, Prayerbook Reform in Europe (a copy of this book will be given to each member of the class)
5. David Ellenson, After Emancipation
6. Michael Meyer, Response to Modernity
7. Ellenson, Commentaries in Lawrence Hoffmann, ed., *Minhag Ami* (10 volumes – recommended)

Course Goals/Objectives: By the end of the course, each student will have achieved the following:

1. Familiarity with the major Reform prayer books in Europe, North America, and Israel from 1819 to the present.
2. Ability to articulate the underlying rationale and issues behind each of these prayer books and to compare them with each other.
3. Understanding of the aesthetic, theological, social-cultural, and identity-related issues that underlie the Liberal prayer books and liturgies we examine, and the ability to articulate clearly and reflect critically on these issues.
4. Ability to apply the insights gained to contemporary liturgical and worship-related issues.

Course Requirements:

- 1) Each student is expected to prepare liturgical texts and complete assigned readings prior to each class session. Your class participation and preparation will constitute 25% of your grade.
- 2) In consultation with the instructor, each student will select some element or work of Liberal liturgy produced during the last two centuries. You will then engage in research on the approved topic. The topic should be selected and approved no later than the end of the tenth week of class.
- 3) Each student will present a 30 minute oral version of their research to the seminar during the last two weeks of the semester. Your presentation will constitute 25% of your grade.
- 4) A ten (10) to twenty (20) page written paper, based on your research and in light of the feedback received from the instructor on the basis of your oral presentation, will be required on the last day written projects are to be submitted for the Fall semester. Your written work will constitute 50% of your grade.

Grading Criteria:

The final project will be graded as Pass-Fail for those who choose, and with letter grades (A-C are passing; F is not) for those who select that option.

- F indicates failure; that the work is poorly written and that, in the majority of the work, the student does not grasp, and cannot accurately translate or articulate what the texts are about and what they mean.
- C indicates that the work is passing, though in need of more precision and insight (more accurate details, more clarity of general understanding).
- B indicates that the work is good, though could still use further refinement.
- A indicates that the student has “gone the extra mile;” seeking out and presenting a level of detailed precision and insight that indicate full and thoughtful engagement with the issues of the project: the paper is insightful, is written grammatically with clarity and detail, and has successfully accounted for, and thoughtfully interpreted, both the “forest” (the big conceptual picture) and the “trees” (the specifics that add up to the big picture).

Course Outline:

- I. **Introduction – Manifest and Latent Content in Liturgy and the Role of the Modern West in the Reshaping of Jewish Liturgy (September 2)**
 - a. Lawrence Hoffman, "The Liturgical Message," in Hoffman, ed., Gates of Understanding
 - b. *Shabbat Musaf*: An Illustrative Comparison
 - 1) The Traditional Ashkenazic Text
 - 2) The 1945 Prayerbook of the Rabbinical Assembly
 - 3) *Siddur Sim Shalom* (1985 and 1998)
 - c. Ellenson, *After Emancipation*, 99-120
- II. **The Background to Early 19th Century Worship Reform and the Hamburg Temple *Gebethuecher* of 1819 and 1841 (September 9)**
 - a. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 10-61 and 114-119
 - b. Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe*, 22-36, 44-58, and 128-140
 - c. Gunther Plaut, *The Rise of Reform Judaism*, 10-11, 27-42, and 152-154
 - d. Ellenson, *After Emancipation*, 193-20
 - e. Andreas Braemer, "The Dialectics of Religious Reform: The Hamburger *Israelitische Tempel* in its Local Context 1817-1938," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 48 (2003):25-37
- III. **The 1854 and 1870 *Siddurim* of Abraham Geiger Manuel Joel and his Breslau Prayerbook of 1872 (September 16)**
 - a. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 181-187
 - b. Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe*, 149-152 and 165-175
 - c. Petuchowski, "Abraham Geiger, The Reform Jewish Liturgist," in Petuchowski, ed., *New Perspectives on Abraham Geiger*, 42-54
 - d. Petuchowski, "Abraham Geiger and Samuel Holdheim: Their Differences in Germany and Repercussions in America," in Petuchowski,
 - e. Petuchowski, *Studies in Modern Theology and Prayer*, 257-268
 - f. Ken Koltun-Fromm, *Abraham Geiger's Liberal Judaism*, 30-37
 - g. Ellenson, *After Emancipation*, 203-222

h. Ellenson, "The Mannheimer Prayerbooks and Modern Central European Communal Liturgies: A Representative Comparison of Mid-Nineteenth Century Works," in Ellenson, *Between Tradition and Culture*, 59-78

IV. Isaac Mayer Wise and a *Minhag America* (October 7)

a. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 235-244

b. Eric Friedland, *The Historical and Theological Development of the Non-Orthodox Prayerbooks in the United States* [Brandeis Ph.D. dissertation], 68-93

c. Friedland, *Were Our Mouths Filled with Song*, 50-55

d. Ellenson, "The Prayers for Rain in the *Siddurim* of Abraham Geiger and Isaac Mayer Wise," in *After Emancipation*, 223-236

e. Hoffman, *Beyond the Text*, 60-63 and 116-126

V. The *Olath Tamid* of David Einhorn and the "Proto-Conservative" *Avodat Yisrael Siddur* of Benjamin Szold (1864/5) and its Revision by Marcus Jastrow (1871/2) (October 14)

a. Friedland, *Were Our Mouths Filled with Song*, 17-49

b. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 244-260

c. Friedland, *Historical and Theological Development*, 40-67 and 94-114

d. Phillip Cohen, "David Einhorn's Reading for Tisha B'Av: Tradition and Transformation," in *CCAR Journal* 41/4 (Fall, 1994), 55-67

e. Kohler, "David Einhorn," in *CCARYB* 19 (1909):239-40, 252-256 (recommended)

f. Ellenson, "Reform Judaism in 19th Century America," in Ellenson, *Between Tradition and Culture*, 189-196

g. Plaut, *The Growth of Reform Judaism*, 299-301

h. Friedland, *Were Our Mouths Filled with Song*, 55-88

VI. Twentieth Century American Reform – *Union Prayer Book* and *Gates of Prayer* (October 21)

a. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 264-280, 320-22

b. Friedland, *Historical and Theological Development*, 115-137

c. Lou Silberman, "The Union Prayer Book: A Study in Liturgical Development," in Korn, *Retrospect and Prospect*, 46-80

d. Friedland, *Were Our Mouths Filled with Song*, 146-184

e. Samuel Cohon, "The Theology of the Union Prayer Book," and discussion, *Central Conference of American Rabbis Year Book* 38 (1928) 245-295

f. Solomon Freehof, "The Union Prayer Book in the Evolution of the Liturgy," *CCARYB* 40 (1930), 251-259g.

g. Hoffman, *Beyond the Text*, 126-14

h. Ellenson, "Reform Judaism in 20th Century America," in *Between Tradition and Culture*, 197-208.

i. A. Stanley Dreyfus, "The *Gates* Liturgies: Reform Reforms its Worship," in Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman, eds., *The Changing Faces of Jewish and Christian Worship in North America*, 141-156

VII. Hebrew Liturgical Creativity in British Reform and Liberal Judaism (November 4)

- a. Friedland, *Were Our Mouths Filled With Song*, 89-136
- b. Elliot Dorff, "British Prayer," *Judaism* (Winter, 1989), 113-119
- c. Petuchowski, "A Clarification of Terminology," *Judaism* (Summer, 1989), 383-384

VIII. Reconstructionist and American Conservative Liturgy in the Twentieth Century (November 11)

- a. Jules Harlow, "Revising the Liturgy for Conservative Jews," in Bradshaw and Hoffman, eds., *The Changing Face of Jewish and Christian Worship in North America*, 125-140
- b. Friedland, *Were Our Mouths Filled With Song*, 244-258
- c. Hoffman, *Beyond the Text*, 64-68
- d. Ellenson, "Envisioning Israel in the Liturgies of North American Liberal Judaism," in Ellenson, *Between Tradition and Culture*, 161-170

IX. Hebrew Liturgical Creativity in Israel (November 18)

- a. Eric Friedland, *Were Our Mouths Filled with Song*, 259-268
- b. Ester Adler-Rephan, "The Reform Movement Has Made Aliyah," *CCAR Journal* (Summer, 1993), 21-33
- c. Yehoram Mazor, "Response," *Ibid.*, 33-36
- d. Ellenson, "A New Rite from Israel: Reflections on Siddur Va'ani Tefillati of the Masorti Movement," *After Emancipation*, 473-499
- e. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 348-352

X. Feminist Liturgy and Influences (November 25)

- a. Simone Lotvan Sofian, "Pushing the Envelope: Reflections on *The Book of Blessings* by Marcia Falk," *CCAR Journal* (Spring, 1999), 84-95
- b. Ellenson, "Marcia Falk's *The Book of Blessings*," *After Emancipation*, 528-534
- c. Jules Harlow, "Feminist Linguistics and Jewish Liturgy," *Conservative Judaism* (Winter, 1997), 3-25
- d. Hoffman, *Beyond the Text*, 145-148
- e. Arnold Jacob Wolf, "The New Liturgies," *Judaism* (Spring, 1997), 235-242
- f. Elyse Frishman, "Entering *Mishkan Tefillah*," *CCAR Journal* (Fall, 2004), 57-67

XI-XII. Student In-Class Presentations and Summary and Final Conclusions (December 2

and 9)

- a. Hoffman, *Beyond the Text*, 149-182