

The Intra-lingual and Inter-lingual Translation of the Siddur by the American Reform Movement as an Expression of the Movement's Ideological Changes and in Light of the Historical Events and Social Transformations that Took Place from the Middle of the 19th Century until 2007.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the impact of the American Jewish Reform movement's ideology, which evolved as a result of historical events and social permutations, on intra-lingual and inter-lingual translations of its prayer books. The study reviews five prayer books that have been used from the establishment of the movement until today – *Minhag America*, printed in 1872; *The Union Prayer Book*, 1892 (UPB1892); *The Union Prayerbook for Jewish Worship* 1940 (UPB1940); *Gates of Prayer* 1975; and *Mishkan T'filah*, 2007.

This thesis addresses three research questions that examine the Reform prayer books from three different perspectives:

- a. What are the relations between the intra-lingual and inter-lingual translations which constitute the Reform prayer books and how do they reflect the status of the English language as the primary language spoken by the worshippers, compared to the status of Hebrew as the holy language?
- b. How do the various translations reflect the tension between the American identity of the worshippers and their desire for cultural and social immersion into American society, on the one hand, and their Jewish identity and longing to return to the Land of Israel as reflected in traditional Jewish prayer, on the other hand?

- c. How do the intra- and inter-lingual translations of these prayer books reflect the orientation to modernity that characterizes the Reform movement regarding ritual sacrifices, the supernatural, the relationship between humans and God, and the status of women?

In order to answer these questions, this study compares the prayer books from three different perspectives: (a) the Reform prayer books compared to the traditional prayer book; (b) each of the Reform prayer books compared to those preceding it; (c) the Hebrew and English versions of each prayer book. The prayers investigated in this study are the morning blessings, *Pesukei Dezimra*, blessings of the *Shema*, and the *Amida* prayer recited on weekday mornings.

Prior to the research, I formulated several hypotheses based on literature dealing with the history, ideology and philosophy of American Reform Judaism, and the Reform movement's platforms which, I supposed, influenced their prayer books. Four platforms were studied in this thesis: that of Cleveland Conference of 1855 (which preceded the *Minhag America* prayer book of 1872), *Pittsburgh* Conference of 1885 (which preceded the *UPB1892* prayer book), Columbus Conference of 1937 (which preceded the *UPB1940* prayer book), San Francisco Conference of 1976 (issued one year after the publication of *Gates of Prayer* in 1975), and Pittsburgh Conference of 1999 (which preceded *Mishkan T'filah* of 2007).

In order to answer the first question, I checked the debates in traditional Jewish law and in the Reform movement over the very possibility of praying in a language other than Hebrew; the degree in which each language is featured in the various prayer books (the quantity of each language in the various versions of the prayers) was assessed; the dominant language in each version of the prayers (the language which contain more omissions, changes in content, and original additions that reflect the ideology of the Reform movement at the time in which the

prayer book was published) was determined; and the use of English transliteration in the prayer books was noted.

The *Minhag America* prayer book based its justification for translating the traditional prayer book on the ruling that permits the use of a foreign language for prayer under certain conditions. The later Reform prayer books were formatted based on rulings made by the Reform movement as presented in its various platforms. I found that while *Minhag America* (1872) and *Mishkan T'filah* (2007) use equal quantities of Hebrew and English blessings and benedictions with Hebrew being the dominant language, English is more prevalent and is the dominant language in the other prayer books. Therefore, if my hypothesis before conducting this study was that the status of the Hebrew language was enhanced from one prayer book to the next, I found that its status, which was quite high in *Minhag America*, declined significantly in *UPB1892*, began to increase in *UPB1940* and in *Gates of Prayer*, and regained its high status in the most recent prayer book, *Mishkan T'filah*. My investigation also revealed that the majority of editing work in the Hebrew version of the prayer books consisted of omissions, while the English versions include changes of content and original additions. While the first four prayer books (*Minhag America*, *UPB1892*, *UPB1940* and *Gates of Prayer*) include very limited transliteration of isolated words or sentences, there is a significant increase in the *Mishkan T'filah* prayer book in which entire prayers and blessings are transliterated as well as translated into English. The hypothesis that transliteration reflects an increase in the status of the Hebrew language was therefore confirmed. Transliteration encourages worshippers to pray in Hebrew and assists those who are not fluent in the language.

The second research question addresses the historical changes that influenced the ideology of American Reform Judaism. The answer to this question is based on Reform Judaism's vision

in which the entire world and all of its nations are united under a single monotheistic faith, while the role of Reform Judaism is to realize this vision in the world. This ideology affected all contents connected to the relationship between Jews and non-Jews, but was also influenced by two monumental historical events – the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel. All prayer books omitted or changed any traditional prayers or parts of them that could be considered insulting to non-Jews. The editors of these prayer books grappled with declarations in the traditional prayer book that referred to the hostility of non-Jews against the Jewish people. Detailed descriptions of how the Egyptians mistreated the Israelite slaves were eliminated from the text or rephrased in more general terms.

There are several differences between prayer books published before and after the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel. Before the Holocaust, Reform Judaism believed that creating a unified monotheistic world was the role of the Jewish nation, and therefore regarded the Jews' dispersion among the nations as an advantage. This is why, in the platform of the Pittsburgh Conference of 1885, the Reform movement objected to the re-establishment of a Jewish state. The result of this objection was the elimination of all mention of aspiration for national independence from the Reform prayer books and the changes made in many prayers and blessings that address this theme. Prayer books that were published after the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel (*Gates of Prayer*, 1975 and *Mishkan T'filah*, 2007) do not abandon the idea of a united monotheistic world, but at the same time, do not reject the right of the Jewish people to a state of their own. *Gates of Prayer* and *Mishkan T'filah* are Zionist prayer books which contain unique prayers, especially composed for them, that commemorate Israel's Independence Day and Memorial Day. These two prayer books also include prayers that commemorate the memory of the Holocaust and other anti-Semitic events

in Jewish history. In line with the ideal of world peace and unity, *Mishkan T'filah* notes not only the murder of Jews at the hand of non-Jews, but also the stories of the righteous people among the nations, in order to present instances in which non-Jews saved Jews from death. Following the change in the Reform movement's attitude to Zionism, its attitude towards the Holy Temple changed as well. *Gates of Prayer* links the day of mourning on the ninth of Av in traditional Judaism to the memory of the Holocaust.

In an attempt to emphasize the American identity of the worshippers, various changes were made in the intra-lingual and inter-lingual translations. In order to emphasize the loyalty of the movement to the USA even after adopting Zionist ideology, a distinction between American and Israeli Jews was made in many of the blessings that appear in the later prayer books.

The third research question deals with the impact of modernization and socio-philosophical trends on the prayers. All mention of animal sacrifice was eliminated from the Reform prayer books. Original additions that express the unnecessary of this form of worship were included.

Three philosophical-theological theories influenced the intra- and inter-lingual translations of the Reform prayer books: Religious Naturalism (rejection of all supernatural explanation of events that occur in the world), Human Adequacy (prayer does not impact God, therefore praying for salvation is futile), and Process Theology (God does not only influence the world, but is also influenced by it). I examined the theory of Religious Naturalism in two instances. The first is the second paragraph recited after the *Shema* prayer, in which there is explicit connection between religious observance and agricultural prosperity, the second instance is the description of the splitting of the Red Sea as the Israelites crossed through it. While the first instance is handled consistently in all prayer books, such consistency is not evident in the second example. Some of the prayer books omitted all mention of the splitting of the Red Sea

as described in the traditional prayer book, and other replaced them with original passages that specifically describe the splitting of the Red Sea as well. Regarding the Human Adequacy theory, no consistent approach is evident in any of the prayer books. Some, but not all, of the traditional texts in which the worshipper pleads with God were omitted, some were replaced with original texts that include prayers for salvation nonetheless. Process Theology is connected in this thesis to the impact of feminism on Reform Judaism. Since its establishment, Reform Judaism has claimed that the status of female worshippers must be equal to that of male worshippers. From examining the gender of the worshipper in the prayer books, based on the intra- and inter-lingual translations, it is apparent that the worshipper who is represented in the prayer books gradually evolves from a male to a neutral figure. Since Process Theology claims that God does not only influence the world but is also influenced by it, it is quite likely that God would be influenced by feminism as well. All prayer books other than *Mishkan T'filah* refer to God as a male. *Mishkan T'filah* is the only prayer book that adopts full gender neutrality and does not refer to God as either male or female.

This study shows a lack of consistency on the part of the prayer books which probably resulted from the need to address the various philosophies and opinions of all members of the Reform movement. It is only natural that this denomination in Judaism, a dynamic one that interacts with history and contemporary ideology, as well as with the ancient roots of the Jewish faith, would offer a variety of formats of prayer and worship.

In surveying previous research literature on the Reform movement and its prayer books, I was unable to find any studies that discuss the ideology and history of the American Reform movement from a translation studies perspective. The completion of this gap is the contribution and innovation of the present research.