The reformers of 19th century Germany perceived a need to publish new prayerbooks which reflected the ethical outlook of their reinterpretation of Judaism. Since the basis of Judaism in Reform ideology had shifted from ritualism to morality, the liturgy required corresponding changes. Great efforts were made both to introduce moral values that were perceived to be lacking or underemphasized in the traditional liturgy, as well as to delete prayers expressing values antithetical to the moral thinking of the reformers, a thinking heavily influenced by the currents of German moralism of the time. The same pattern is true for members of the Reform movement in America, who sought to bring the liturgy in line with American ethics. Their ethical ideals, expressed clearly in the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885, required some adjustment from the moralism of their German counterparts, and resulted in the publication of a number of Reform prayerbooks, including the famous Union Prayer Book of 1884-5.

All this should come as no surprise. The fundamental assumption of the critical study of Judaism is that Judaism does not exist independent of its historical and social context. Historical and social factors — the political environment, economic circumstances, social system, geographic considerations, and, to be sure, ambient ethical outlook — influence the nature of Judaism in all times and places. Appropriately, the chronicle of the influence of ethics on Reform liturgy has received extensive study and detailed documentation.1


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Not so for the Conservative Movement. Since it has flourished for over a century now on American soil, and has merited the publication of six complete prayerbooks, not to mention assorted other liturgical compositions (Passover Haggadah, Slihot Service, Rabbis' Manual, etc.), we should expect to find some influence of American moralism on Conservative liturgy, as we do with Reform. Yet, a study of this topic is almost completely wanting. True, the Conservative movement has not made the radical changes characteristic of Reform prayerbooks, such as deleting entire prayers, substituting modern compositions, and completely restructuring the service, methods which reveal the ethical ideals of the editors in no uncertain terms. But this only means that the influence will be more subtle and elusive, though no less present, and the challenge to the scholar more formidable. Robert Gordis has observed that "the Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book probably did more than any other undertaking to give coherence and self-definition to the growing movement of Conservative Judaism." What is true for the Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book is true for the other Conservative prayerbooks, and a growing part of that self-definition involves the movement’s ethical vision. It is the challenge to document and analyze the influence of ethics on Conservative liturgy to which we now turn.

But, first, a word on methodology. If the Conservative Movement has not radically restructured services or rewritten prayers, it has, nonetheless, availed itself of certain techniques to modify the liturgy and introduce its moral ideals. Three main techniques have been employed: changes in the Hebrew text, translations, and editorial comments.

To introduce changes into the Hebrew text of the prayerbook is the most radical means of modifying the liturgy. Strictly speaking, the liturgy was never canonized. No single “traditional” text of the prayers ever served as the common inheritance of all Jews. Nevertheless, a relatively standard Ashkenazic liturgy gradually developed, and became the legacy of most Jewish communities in Europe and then in America. The range of documented readings is limited, and those that diverge from this range are easily identified. Now the Conservative movement is, of course, rather conservative. In the realms of both law and liturgy.


the movement does not whimsically alter inherited traditions. Therefore, any changes introduced indicate that a pressing need was perceived. In the context of liturgy, this need is generally a theological discomfort with the traditional text or the feeling that important values are lacking. With respect to ethics, this need is a discomfort with passages that seem unethical or the sense that important ethical ideals are underemphasized. Thus, changes in the Hebrew text, whether they take the form of deletions of offending passages, supplemental words, phrases, or entire prayers which fill a perceived lacuna, or modifications of the inherited text, represent the strongest evidence of influence on the liturgy.

Translations are a second means by which the theology of a prayer-book can be determined. In many cases where theological discomfort with the Hebrew text is felt, the editor will not wish to go to the lengths of changing it. Tradition carries a great deal of weight. A less radical means of coping with the theological discomfort is to introduce the change into the English translation. This can be seen as a type of midrash on the Hebrew. The Hebrew is interpreted in a non-literal manner which coheres better with the translator's theology. Changes introduced into translations are less easy to detect, and require methodological caution. No two languages share identical syntax, vocabulary, idiom, or poetic convention. Every effort at translation entails some degree of approximation; as the old truism puts it, "every translation is an interpretation." This is especially true when the goal of the translation is to provide a devotional text, a work of art of sorts, and not merely a literal, mechanical reproduction. Nonetheless, we can expect general faithfulness to the Hebrew text. Where the translation diverges, and the divergence cannot be explained by syntactic, stylistic, idiomatic, or any similar consideration, theological discomfort may be responsible. When such divergence occurs in repeated, predictable patterns, we begin to sense the theology of the prayerbook.

Editorial comments include instructions to the reader, introductions to prayers, and explanations of prayers or the accompanying ritual gesture (a bow, for example). Such comments occur infrequently. Like changes in the Hebrew text, their appearance indicates a perceived need. Often, this need will prove to be a simple point of information that the reader must know. Sometimes, however, the comments are surprisingly didactic. In such cases, they express the editor's understanding of the prayers and the values that he deems worthy of special emphasis.

The discussion of the influence of ethics on the liturgy will focus on three major ethical considerations. First, changes in the depiction of God. Second, changes in the treatment of women. Third, the stressing of social justice, love of the neighbor, doing acts of righteousness and, in general, leading a moral life.
The way that God is depicted lies partly in the realm of theology and partly in the realm of ethics. Whether God is portrayed as abstract and remote, or personal and close, need not reflect ethical influence. But whether God is portrayed as loving and peaceful, or unforgiving and belligerent, is ethically crucial. This ethical import derives from the fact that the doctrine of imitation dei stands among the foundations of Jewish theology, and serves as an underpinning of Conservative ethics. The locus classicus of this idea is Sota 14a:

R. Hama son of Hanina further said: What means the text, “Ye shall walk after the Lord your God (Deut. 13:5)”? Is it then, possible, for a human to walk after the Shechinah; for has it not been said, “For the Lord thy God is a devouring fire (Deut. 4:24)?” But [the meaning is] to walk after the attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He. As he clothes the naked, for it is written, “And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife coats of skin, and clothed them (Gen. 3:21),” so do thou also clothe the naked. The Holy One, blessed be He, visited the sick, for it is written, “And the Lord approached unto him by the oaks of Mamre (Gen. 18:1),” so do thou also visit the sick. The Holy One, blessed be He, comforted mourners . . . so do thou also comfort mourners. The Holy One, blessed be He, buried the dead . . . so do thou also bury the dead.

That this passage is included in Siddur Sim Shalom⁵ (albeit without the prooftexts), and that a similar passage appears in the Mahzor for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur,⁶ testifies to the importance of this teaching for Conservative theology. We shall see that God is distanced from traits repugnant to the editors, and given the ethical characteristics which they desire human beings to emulate.

Improvement in the status of women in the synagogue has been a trend in the Conservative movement for many years, and has found expression in the decisions of the Rabbinical Assembly Law Committee which now allow women to perform all liturgical functions, as well as the recent decision of the Jewish Theological Seminary to ordain women. Conservative liturgy reflects this egalitarian ethic by altering or modifying prayers which exclude or offend women, while expanding certain prayers to include women where they previously did not.

Additions to, or modifications of, the liturgy that promote justice, righteousness, and the importance of leading a moral life, are self-evident indications of the influence of ethics on the liturgy.

These three spheres of ethical influence will be traced through the six major prayerbooks published by the Conservative movement. These prayerbooks are as follows:

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⁵ P. 18. Publication information is given below.
⁶ P. 529. (The source is Tanna Dvei Eliyyhu, 135.) The passage reappears in a paraphrase on pp. 616-7. See p. 543 for a modernized version of the rabbinic source authored by Abraham Joshua Heschel.
ETHICS AND THE LITURGY OF CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM


*Festival* bears the imprimatur of United Synagogue of America; *Weekday* and *Mahzor* that of The Rabbinical Assembly; *Siddur* and *Sabbath* of both. *High Holiday* was not published under the direct auspices of these institutions. However, since it was compiled by Morris Silverman, who edited *Sabbath* (and who acknowledges many of those who sat in the committees that edited the other prayerbooks), and is widely used in many Conservative congregations, *High Holiday* must be counted as a prayerbook of the Conservative movement.

1) *Festival Prayer Book*

*Festival*, the first prayerbook published under Conservative auspices, betrays no influence of ethics. There are no changes in the Hebrew text. The translations are accurate and faithful to the Hebrew. (Below these translations are comments which will serve as a control by which we can measure ethically influenced translations in the other prayerbooks.) Even the “prayer before the ark” (pp. 101-2) lacks any distinctive ethical stress. Since this prayer is the free composition of the editor, it provides a golden opportunity to stress ethics. Yet none appears. In the “Prayer for the Government” (p. 201) the ideals of “true brotherhood,” “peace and freedom,” and general unity of “all races and creeds” are sought. But this is no surprise. A prayer for a secular state must be limited to hopes for security and the flourishing of moral values. Prayers for a deepening of religious faith or other theocentric concerns would be inappropriate.

2) *Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book*

Three principles that guided the editors of *Sabbath* are mentioned in the foreword: “continuity with tradition,” “relevance to the needs and ideals of our generation,” and “intellectual integrity.” Although the “ideals of our generation” are not defined precisely, they can be identified through the changes incorporated in the prayerbook.
A profound ethical influence can be seen in the portrayal of God. Sabbath avoids associating God with destruction, vengeance, death, and other such qualities. Note these examples:

a) 'Emet ve'emunah (p. 18). The English translation here is preceded with the subscription “adapted from the Hebrew.” The adaptation eliminates qualities of God that may be perceived as destructive or evil. Thus, the phrases ha'El hanifra' lanu mizarenu vehamesha'lem gemul lekhlo 'avei nafsheimu and hamake be'evrato kol bekho'rei Mizr'aim do not appear in the English. Festival had translated these phrases literally as “who on our behalf dealt retribution to our adversaries, and required all the enemies of our soul, and “who, in his wrath, smote all the first-born of Egypt” (pp. 6-7). The verse ha'ma'avi' bonav bein gizrei yam suf; 'et rodfei'hem ve'et sonei'hem bishemot tika' becomes “May He continue His protecting care over Israel/ And guard all His children from disaster.” This is a far cry from the literal meaning, which Festival rendered “who made his children pass between the divisions of the Red Sea, but sank their pursuers and enemies in the depths” (p. 7). The motivation behind the omissions in Sabbath seems clear. To link God with exacting retribution, requiting, wrath, and the murder of Egyptians, apparently produced acute theological discomfort. Consequently, the translation carefully omits the offensive qualities.

b) 'Ezrat 'avolei'nu (pp. 94-5). The superscription here reads “selected from the Hebrew.” Again, what are viewed as harmful qualities of God are deleted. The phrases kol bekho'rei'hem haragat ubekho'rkha ga'al'ah and vayekhassu mayim zare'ihem 'ehad me'hem lo' notar are not translated. Festival offered “all their firstborn thou didst slain, but thy firstborn thou didst redeem” and “while the waters covered their adversaries, not one of whom was left” (p. 76). The passage veyam suf baqat'a vezeidim tib'atu vishid'hem he'evrath becomes “Thou didst reveal Thy saving power at the Red Sea / So that the children of Israel passed through in safety.” The first clause removes the warlike elements of the Hebrew, which notes that God did “divide the Red Sea and drown the proud” (Festival, p. 76).

c) A less obvious but nonetheless significant example occurs in the weekday 'Amidah. The Hebrew text of the twelfth blessing, the Birchat ha-Minim (blessing for [the destruction] of heretics), has been altered from vehazeidim mese'ireh te'aqaq to umalkhu zodon meheira te'aqer, i.e., from “do thou uproot the arrogant” to “do thou uproot the dominion of arrogance.” This change softens the harshness of the prayer. God is not asked to destroy arrogant human beings but rather, euphemistically, the abstract, impersonal “dominion of arrogance.”

The common denominator in these examples is the attempt to downplay militant, evil or destructive attributes of God. God must be a God of peace, love and justice since these values lie at the cornerstone
of the ethical vision behind the prayerbook. This ethic, then, has exerted a powerful influence on the English translations and Hebrew text.

The desire to improve the status of women motivates one emendation. The morning blessing is changed in both Hebrew and English from “Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God … who has not made me a woman (shelo ḥasani ḥeshah)” to “who has made me in His image (sh- ḥasani bezalmo).” This change rejects any implication of the inferiority of women. The seeds of an egalitarian ethic have been planted.

Sabbath does not promote peace, justice, love, and other moral desiderata in an overt manner. A meditation is added both to the Sabbath musaf ḍamidah and to the festival musaf ḍamidah in order to create a prayer considered more currently meaningful than one which centers on sacrifices (pp. 140, 150). “Freedom” and “justice” are mentioned, but do not comprise the central thrust of the meditations. Similarly, in the prayers composed for recitation before the ark (pp. 119-120), “just and righteous living” receives but a cursory mention. Of the supplementary readings provided at the end of the prayerbook (pp. 269-355), the section entitled “Our Way of Life” contains readings which stress social justice, ethical living, world peace, etc. But other sections supply readings about “God,” “Torah,” “Israel (the people),” “Eretz Yisrael,” and “America.” Ethics, therefore, exert no more influence than do other Jewish values.

In the last blessing of the morning ḍamidah, however, a slight ethical influence appears. The word ba’olam is added to the Hebrew text (p. 155). The blessing thus reads “Grant peace, well-being and blessing unto the world, with grace, lovingkindness and mercy for us and for all Israel.” Without the addition, the blessing is restricted to Israel; with the addition, it becomes a prayer for universal peace. Sabbath has thus expanded the traditional ethic of peace.

3) High Holiday Prayer Book

High Holiday continues Sabbath’s policy of disassociating God from belligerent and destructive qualities. For ‘Emet ve’emunah (p. 9), High Holiday essentially reproduces the adaptation from the Hebrew offered by Sabbath. However, High Holiday deletes the verses “He causes us to triumph over our enemies/ And raises up our glory over our foes/ Wondrously He visited judgment upon Pharaoh/ Performing signs and wonders in the land of Egypt” which appeared in Sabbath. Not only are

7. This change is acknowledged by the editor, p. x.
8. See p. xi. The reading is based on Saadia Gaon. That this reading has a precedent in tradition does not counter our claim that this is an example of ethical influence. Precisely that ethical influence induced the committee to resurrect Saadia’s reading and substitute it for the accepted version.
9. There are two other differences. The language is slightly modernized: “hath” becomes “has” and “redeemeth” becomes “redeems.” Also, a transliteration is provided for two lines.
the lines describing how God killed the firstborn and exacted retribution deemed problematic, but any association of God with triumph or judgment is deemed ethically unsettling. In "Ezra, Avotenu (p. 72), High Holiday gives the same passages “Selected from the Hebrew” as in Sabbath, albeit in a different order. Thus, the lines that are deemed offensive are omitted.

High Holiday goes beyond the measures taken by Sabbath in a number of cases. The lines la’asot nekamah bagoyin tokhehot bale’umim le’esor malkheihem beqigim venikhbedehem behavelei barzel in Psalm 149 do not appear in the selections of the translations (p. 55). Sabbath translated accurately “To bring judgment upon the wicked nations/ And chastisement upon the peoples/ To bind their kings with chains/ and their nobles with fetters of iron” (p. 80). The selections from Psalm 24 omit the lines “Eloheinu, Adonai vegebir Adonai gibr milhamah” (p. 123). Similarly, when these lines appear in the Shofarot section, the translation skips over them (p. 160). Sabbath translated literally “The Lord strong and mighty, The Lord mighty in battle” (p. 135). In the piyyut "Atah hu Eloheinu, the line ne’epad nekamah is translated “He is girt with justice” (p. 276). This is a possible translation, although nekamah corresponds better to “vengeance.” In the la’el barukh paragraph (p. 69), High Holiday translates the Hebrew ba’al milhamot to “combats evil.” Sabbath translates it “triumphant in battle” (p. 91), while Festival gives the more literal “Lord of battles” (p. 73). High Holiday’s translation is so far from the literal sense that it must be understood as reflecting a powerful ethical, perhaps even pacifist, influence, as do many of the similar translations mentioned earlier. Thus, a development can be detected, with a stronger emphasis in High Holiday than in Sabbath, in disassociating God from destructive and punitive traits.10

The desire to improve the status of women, however, is less influential in High Holiday. The morning blessings revert to the original shelosh ‘asani ‘ishah (who has not made me a woman) in the Hebrew text (p. 29), thus abandoning the positive formulation of Sabbath, “who has made me in His image.” But the translation reads “who hast set upon me the obligations of a man.” This rendering of the Hebrew ameliorates the perceived attitude toward women, but does not go as far as Sabbath to provide an egalitarian formula.

In High Holiday, a clear attempt is made to emphasize the importance of ethical acts. This goal motivates several additions to the traditional liturgy. The passages which punctuate the sounding of the Shofar explain that the Shofar is “urging us to work with our brothers/ To combat the ills that beset man/ Accept ye the challenge to triumph/ O'er forces of wrath and destruction./ Remove from your midst crime and warfare,/ All poverty, greed, and contention” (pp. 119-120). The

10. High Holiday reverts to hazridim where Sabbath had substituted malkhut sadon.
Shofar has been interpreted, at least in part, as a moral symbol, one that should motivate us to achieve ethical perfection. A similar interpretation appears in the introductory reading before the Shofarot section (pp. 167-8). This reading juxtaposes the Biblical verses of the Shofarot liturgy with comments which explain what must be accomplished before God will reveal Himself anew. These comments are overwhelmingly ethical.

As we sanctify life by courageously upholding honor and righteousness, God reveals Himself anew . . . Through our leaders and teachers who carry on the prophetic traditions of justice and mercy . . . Through our efforts to restore the birthright of freedom to all those bruised and beaten in their struggle for bread and shelter . . .

The values stressed include “moral responsibility,” “peace,” “justice,” “harmony, understanding and mutual helpfulness,” and the abolition of “man’s inhumanity to man,” “violence and war,” “chaos, strife and greed.” Revelation, then, is primarily contingent on man’s moral state. The responsive reading before Kol Nidre repeatedly insists that ritual acts including fasting are useless unless one reforms his conduct toward his fellow men (pp. 211-2). Charity to the poor, mercy for a brother, freedom for the oppressed, feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, emerge as the true acts of piety and the goals for the day.

The most profound ethical influence is found in the Avodah service (pp. 368-376). Billed as a “modern interpretation of the Avodah,” the English alternates translations of the Hebrew text with passages explaining what the description of the High Priest’s actions should mean to us. For example:

Even as the High Priest prayed for the members of the Priestly tribe, the leaders of Israel, so do we pray for the leaders of our day . . . Give us men of faith, daring and vision who will bring about a society wherein none shall be master and none shall be slave, wherein all shall share the blessings of life, liberty and happiness.

Other passages stress ethics in a similar fashion. The upshot is a startling rereading of the traditional liturgy. A description of how the High Priest atoned for sin through sacrifices and the ritual of the scapegoat has been transformed into prayers for an ethical society and exhortations to lead a moral life. A note explains that the purpose of reciting the Avodah is to “be moved to a deeper religious spirit” (p. 368). It is clear that, for High Holiday, “religious spirit” is primarily expressed through leading an ethical life. Indeed, a separate “symbolical interpretation of the Avodah” is printed after the Avodah proper (pp. 377-8). This interpretation exceeds the first “modern interpretation” in exhorting the reader to lead a moral life. It covers the full gamut of ethical ideals of the most ardent social action enthusiast. The additions to the Shofar service, Shofarot liturgy, and the interpretations of the Avodah, demonstrate that ethics is the highest ideal of High Holiday.
4) Weekday Prayerbook

Weekday alters the techniques employed to cope with the destructive qualities of God, but retains the desire to distance God from such traits. The tendency of Sabbath and High Holiday to omit troubling lines from English translations is rejected. All lines appear in Weekday, although some have slight, yet significant, modifications. In the "'Emet ve'emunah (pp. 144-5), Weekday is willing to print "He brings judgment upon our oppressors/ And retribution upon our mortal enemies," and even "In wrath he smote all of Egypt's first born," which Sabbath and High Holiday omitted. However, the Hebrew "et rodfeihem ve'et sofeihem betehomot tibo" becomes "As their pursuers sank in the sea." The verb tibo is in the active, hence the translation should run: "He (God) sank their pursuers in the sea." Thus, Festival translated the Hebrew to "who ... sank their pursuers and enemies in the depths." But Weekday shrinks from the thought that God actively drowned the Egyptians. The passive verb absolves God from direct responsibility for their death.

Passive verbs are used in a similar manner for the troubling passages of 'Ezrat 'avoteinu (p. 51). The Hebrew places the verbs in the active: kol bekherinnehm haragta halokehorkha ga'alaih veyom suf baka'tah veseidim tibo ta viddim he'evartah is literally "You slew all the firstborn of the Egyptians and saved your firstborn. You split apart the waters of the Red Sea. You drowned the wicked; the faithful you rescued." The translation shifts the verbs into the passive: "The firstborn of the Egyptians were slain, The firstborn of Your children were saved. You split apart the waters of the Red Sea, The faithful You rescued; The wicked drowned." Only the verb "rescued" is in the active, since this is clearly a desirable quality. But that God would "slay the Egyptians" or "drown the wicked" is deemed liturgically unacceptable.

In several cases, however, Weekday exceeds the previous prayerbooks in efforts to this end. In Le'El barukh, the phrase ba'el milhamot, literally "Master of wars," is translated "champion of justice" (p. 45). High Holiday's translation, "combats evil," while removing God from the "battles" mentioned in the Hebrew, at least suggests that God fights. "Champion of justice" removes God yet another step away from war. The opening passage of the "Al hamisim blessing is treated in a similar way (p. 64). The Hebrew 'al hamilhamot, "for the wars," seems to be translated by "the triumphs." Sabbath translates more accurately: "thy victories in battles" (p. 24). The absence of the possessive pronoun "thy" in Weekday is also significant. The Hebrew attributes the battles to God; they are what God has done ('asitah) for our ancestors. Weekday thanks God for the "triumphs ... of our ancestors." The genitive indicates that they are our ancestors' triumphs, not God's. The reason is clear: God must not be associated with battle, war, destruction and the like.

11. Unless "triumphs" refers to the gerur, in which case milhamot is untranslated.
Finally, in the "Avinu Malkeinu, the line nekom nivkat dam "avadekha hasefuh, literally, "avenge the innocent blood of your servants," is translated "remember the innocent blood of Your servants" (p. 69). The verb nekom means to requite or to revenge, certainly not to remember. But these qualities are too harsh for God.

With respect to women, Weekday resurrects Sabbath's innovation, which High Holiday abandoned, of positive formulations for the morning blessing: "who has made me in His image," rather than "who has not made me a woman" (p. 10). An additional innovation in Weekday also improves the image of women. In the blessing after the Torah reading, the Hebrew reads hem unsehei hem avnei hem wonotei hem (p. 87). An accurate translation would be: "(May it be the will of our Father in heaven to sustain us among the sages of Israel. May he safeguard) them and their wives and their sons and daughters." Weekday translates "them and their families." Of course wives, sons and daughters add up to a family, so the essential meaning of the passage is preserved. Yet, this subtle substitution avoids a problematic implication of the Hebrew. By distinguishing them (the sages) from their wives, the Hebrew implies that only men are sages. Such a message is unacceptable to an ethic which recognizes the right of women to function as leaders, both in the secular and religious spheres. The English leaves open the possibility that sages may be women.

There are no overt additional prayers, introductions, modifications or suggestions to the reader which promote ethics.

5) Mahzor for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

With respect to the image of God, Mahzor follows Weekday's policy in most cases. While all lines of the Hebrew are paralleled in English, the translation plays down God's connection to anything violent. In "Evet ve'minunah (pp. 24-5) and "Ezrat avoteinu (p. 120-121), the active to passive substitution is used to absolve God of direct responsibility for the loss of life. And, as in Weekday, the phrase ba'al milhamot, "Master of wars," is translated "champion of justice" (pp. 114-5). In the Makhzoyot verses, the passage "Adonai "izuz vegibor "Adonai gbor milhamah is omitted from the translation.12 Yet, the verse is translated where it appears following the Torah reading as "The lord with dignity and power, the lord, triumphant in battle" (p. 260). Apparently, more liberty could be taken with Makhzoyot verses.

An interesting example of editing appears in the "Avinu malkeinu. Mahzor omits about ten lines of the traditional version from both the Hebrew and English (pp. 152-3; compare Weekday, pp. 139-133). Most

12. Here the translation is incomplete by design. The English divides the Hebrew into two sections of half the length, one for each day, and omits several verses. It is not coincidental that this verse is chosen to be omitted.
of the omitted lines impute harsh qualities to God. Thus: “Ignore the record of our transgressions” (which implies that God is a meticulous judge who keeps a record of our transgressions); “repeal evil decrees against us” (which implies that God occasionally makes evil decrees against us); “withhold the plague from your heritage” (which suggests that when plagues do strike, it is because God has chosen not to withhold them); “requite the innocent blood of Your servants” and “silence our malevolent accusers” (which are considered to portray God in a destructive and harsh manner, albeit toward our enemies). The omission of lines that do not reflect in such ways on God can also be explained on ethical grounds. The plea, “bless our storehouses with plenty,” is omitted, as it begs God for wealth. Associated with greed instead of with its potential as an incentive to creative effort, it is deemed of questionable moral value.

Mahzor continues the policy of positive formulations for the morning blessings. Mahzor also applies Weekday’s innovation of eliminating the distinction between sages and women. In the Mi sheberakh which follows the Yekum purkan (p. 194), the Hebrew reads kol hakahal hakadosh hazeh ‘im kol kehilat hakodesh, hem uneshehem uvenechem unotehem, which means “all this entire congregation with all holy congregations: them, their wives, their sons and daughters.” The translation reads “them, their sons, their daughters, their families.” Clearly, the intent is to avoid a distinction between “them” (the men = holy congregation) and “their wives” which would read women out of the congregation. The desire to include women results in an addition to the Hebrew text of the meditation before Kol Nidre (p. 348). The Hebrew provides a reading for a man, velshmoah ‘im ’eshet heiqi (“to rejoice with my beloved wife”) and gives the parallel phrase which women should say in parentheses: (bo’ali, “my husband”). Printing both forms reflects the consciousness that women are likely to be saying the prayers along with men. Women now belong in the synagogue, not in the home. They are members of the congregation, not just wives of members.

Mahzor presents a powerful array of additions and modifications which promote moral values, and demonstrate unmistakable ethical influence on the liturgy. This stress can be seen from the very beginning of the preliminary morning service (p. 58). There, the liturgy is supplemented by Psalm 15, which decries slander, evil to fellow men, mistreatment of one’s neighbor, usury, and bribery, and insists that one keep his promises, honor the pious, speak the truth, and do right. A veritable cornucopia of ethics! So important is this Psalm, that it is also selected as the introductory reading for the second day of Rosh Hashanah (p. 13). Following Psalm 15 in the morning service is the line, “I hereby accept the obligation of fulfilling my Creator’s commandment in the Torah: Love your neighbor as yourself.” This line is borrowed from the siddur of Rabbi Isaac Luria, the sixteenth century Kabbalist.
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Thus, from the very outset, *Maḥzor* emphasizes general ethics and universal love.

Peace is a central value of *Maḥzor*'s ethical vision. Recall that *Sabbath* universalized the prayer for peace found in the final blessing of the morning ʿAmidah by adding the word baʿolam, "in the world." *Maḥzor* now universalizes the blessing of the afternoon and evening ʿAmidot by adding the words veʿal kol yishvei tevel, "[Grant true and lasting peace to Your people Israel] and to all who dwell on earth" (pp. 36-7). Two passionate prayers for peace are incorporated into the Torah service (pp. 162-3, 198-9). The first, a meditation before the scrolls are removed from the ark, beseeches ʿAdon hashalom, "the God of peace," for peace between man and his neighbor, man and wife, the entire family, and the entire world. The second prayer, which precedes the Shofar service, entreats for peace on an international level. Thus, the Torah service is sandwiched between prayers for peace. The impact is a brilliant transformation of the symbolism of the Torah service, for the liturgy surrounding the Torah service has overtones of war. As the ark is opened, the congregation recites the verse: "Whenever the Ark was carried forward, Moses would say: May your enemies be scattered, Lord, may your foes be put to flight" (Numbers 10:35). After the Torah has been returned to the ark, Numbers 10:36 is recited: "Return, O Lord, unto the ten thousands of the families of Israel." This verse was said by Moses as the ark of the covenant came to rest, presumably after God had scattered His enemies and caused His foes to flee. Thus, the Torah symbolizes the ark of the covenant: its removal and return represent the motion and halting of the ark, which, in Biblical thought, symbolize God and His people going to battle. *Maḥzor*, while retaining the traditional liturgy and its symbolism, brackets the entire service with prayers for peace, thus transforming or balancing its symbolism.

*Maḥzor* presents a sustained and comprehensive emphasis on deeds of righteousness. In addition to the traditional Torah reading for the afternoon service on Yom Kippur (p. 628) from Leviticus 18, which warns against adulterous, incestuous and prohibited types of sexual intercourse, an alternate reading, from the next chapter of Leviticus, is provided — the famous "holiness code," considered by many to be the acme of Biblical ethics. An introduction which precedes the afternoon service before Yom Kippur exhorts the congregation to give charity to the poor and to treat them with kindness (p. 332). The reader is told that "giving charity ... is a very important way of making peace between the people Israel and their Father in heaven." Thus, deeds "between man and man" have become a means of atonement and of reconciliation with God. Ethics, in other words, is emphasized as the

13. The translation on p. 162 is rather loose and does not accurately reproduce the Hebrew.
key expression of piety. This message also can be found in an introduction to the 'Aleinu, which is adapted from the words of Martin Buber (p. 421) and explains that the purpose of humanity is the "great upbuilding of unity and peace. And when all nations are bound together in one association living in justice and righteousness, they atone for each other."

The Avodah service, as in High Holiday, undergoes an ethical re-interpretation. The introduction gives an overview of history from creation to the establishment of the priesthood with Aaron and his sons (p. 598). There follows the Biblical verse concerning Yom Kippur, mention of the covenant with God on Mt. Sinai, and passages about Moses performing sacrifices in order to atone (p. 599). What follows is a sustained polemic against sacrifices in favor of ethics:

But if the people break the covenant, sacrifices cannot heal the breach ... I need no bullock from your farms, no goat from your herds.... Do I eat the flesh of bullocks ... God's sacrifice is a humble spirit; a contrite heart he will not despise ... if you have no love for others, of what use are your sacrifices.... Is that what you call fasting, a fast that the Lord would accept? This is my chosen fast: let the oppressed go free, break every yoke (pp. 599-600).

This introduction closes with a passage to the effect that in the Avodah service we recall how our ancestors sought to demonstrate their purity through sacrifices brought "in gratitude and self-surrender." Thus, the introduction closes on a positive note. Yet, the message of Mahzor is abundantly clear. God does not want sacrifices. Perhaps God does not even want fasting! God wants ethical behavior and deeds of loving-kindness. This message is reemphasized at the end of the Avodah. "Atonement for sin in a world without the Temple" reads the caption (pp. 614-5). There follows the famous story of Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakka, who, when he saw Rabbi Joshua weeping over the destruction of the Temple, said, "Be not grieved, my son. There is another way of gaining atonement, even though the Temple is destroyed. We must now gain atonement for our sins through deeds of loving-kindness." Then the principle of imitatio dei is quoted, followed by a plethora of ethical injunctions. In the same way as the Torah service was bracketed by prayers for peace, the Avodah service has been bracketed by exhortations to ethical practice. A Avodah, the essence of worship, has thus been re-interpreted as ethics.

14. It is interesting to note that the Artscroll Mahzor prefaces the avodah by these words: "In the absence of the Temple, the sacred service is replaced by the recitation and study of its laws, a principle mentioned many times in the piyutim of Yom kippur" (p. 586). In Artscroll, speaking of the sacrifices replaces the Temple service. In Mahzor, ethics replace the Temple service.
6) Siddur Sim Shalom

To dissociate God from what are deemed baleful forces, Sim follows the techniques of Weekday and Mahzor. The translation of 'Al hanisim (p. 117) follows that of Weekday, as do translations of ba'al milhamot (p. 100, “Master of wars”; Sim: “championing justice”; Weekday, “champion of justice”), and the troublesome passages of Emet ve'emuna'h and Exra t'ovateinu (pp. 205, 105). The revengeful nekom nikmat dam 'ava-dekah hashafukh, “avenge the innocent blood of your servants,” is completely omitted by Sim. The reader is advised that the prayer Av ha-rahamim is recited in some congregations only three times each year (pp. 420-1). This prayer exhorts God to revenge the innocent blood of Jewish martyrs. Thus, a new technique is employed by Sim: the suggestion to reserve theologically unsettling prayers for recitation on special occasions.

Sim also innovates a wide gamut of liturgical forms to enhance the status of women. The innovations of the previous Conservative prayerbooks have been adopted and pushed to their logical conclusions. Sim’s first blessing suggests its egalitarian ideas by providing Hebrew forms in both the masculine and feminine: “Modeh (female: Modah) ani ... (p. 2).” Of course, the morning blessing reads “who made me in his image (pp. 10-11).” Sim emends the Hebrew of prayers which seem to exclude women from the congregation, where Weekday only modified the translations. Thus, the Yehi razon of the Torah service now reads heim umishpehotem, “them (the learned) and their families.” Recall that Weekday printed heim uneshehem in the Hebrew but translated “them and their families.” An example of liturgical development is evident: Weekday modifies the English; Sim then brings the Hebrew into line. Sim makes a comparable change in the Hebrew of the Mi shebeirakh prayer for the congregation on Sabbath in order to eliminate the distinction between members of the congregation and their wives (pp. 414-5).

The idea that women are now full-fledged members of the congregation does not only emerge from these minor emendations, but is articulated through numerous liturgical innovations. The forms of various blessing and honors now appear in both masculine and feminine conjugations. Mi shebeirakh prayers proffer forms for a male and female called to the Torah, and for a bar and bat-mizvah (pp. 14-5, 402-9). The poetic expansions of the coveted honors for the aliyot concluding and beginning the Torah on Simhat Torah, the HaTan ha-Torah and HaTan Bereishit, have been recast into the feminine to provide for a Kalat ha-Torah and Kalat Bereishit (pp. 554-557). The most significant theological statement surfaces in the meditations prior to donning the

talit and tefilin. Here, too, masculine and feminine forms are provided (pp. 2-4). Sim expresses more than the belief that it is permissible, perhaps even expected, that women wear a talit and tefilin. The message is that God has given these mitzvot to women, too. This is a radical theological statement, in that it rejects the traditional principle which exempts women from positive, time-bound commandments. The traditional distinction between male and female dress (beged 'ish and beged 'ishah) also begins to collapse as women are entitled to wear what had been considered exclusively male garb. For Sim, women are full members of the congregation, they are entitled to all synagogue honors, and they perform the same rituals as men. The ethic is clearly egalitarian.16

Confirmation of the egalitarian ethic is manifest in the tendency to appeal to female models. While the traditional liturgy appeals to male figures to a far greater extent than to female heroines, Sim often attempts to achieve a sort of parity. The first blessing of the "amidah, which invokes the "God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob," becomes "Abraham and Sarah, Rebecca and Isaac, Jacob, Rachel and Leah stood in awe before You" in the "alternative" "Amidah (pp. 232, 328, 331). Traditionally, the Mi shebeirakh prayers mention Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, David, and Solomon. Sim replaces the last four with the four matriarchs (pp. 402-9). In other places, balance is achieved not through the incorporation of corresponding female heroines but by elimination of the male models. In the Uva le'Ziyon, where the Hebrew cites Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the translation supplies the non-gendered "ancestors" (pp. 156-7). Avoteinu is regularly translated by "ancestors" where previous prayerbooks employed "forefathers."

Taken together, these changes add up to a type of historiography. Seen through the eyes of Sim, history appears in a new light. The founders of our faith, the spiritual giants who rejected their polytheistic heritage and discovered the One God, the God of the Jewish people, were both our forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their wives, the matriarchs, Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, and Rachel. Producing the progeny that was to become the Jewish nation no longer comprises the exclusive historical significance of the matriarchs. They now take their place along with their husbands as models of tenacious faith and spiritual prowess. This historiography communicates clear values to the worshipper. Women in the past have played central roles in the development of Judaism and the religious life of the people. Women today have a similar ability to occupy such roles.

Sim adopts several innovations pioneered by Mahzor to emphasize the value of deeds of lovingkindness. The same prayers for peace brack-

16. The kavanah before counting the 'omer does not provide the feminine form (p. 237). Is this an oversight? Note that the passages summoning the kohen to the first aliyah (pp. 140-1, 400-1) do not provide female forms. Is this because a kohen cannot be a woman?
et the Torah service (pp. 396-7, 416-7). The afternoon and evening *amidot* conclude with the universalized prayer for peace. The morning service appropriates the admission that one accepts the obligation to love one's neighbor as oneself (pp. 10-11). *Sim* also displays liturgical creativity of its own. In addition to the passage from the Torah traditionally recited at the beginning of the morning service, the priestly blessing of Numbers 6, *Sim* provides verses culled from Leviticus 19 as an alternative. These verses stress justice, charity and holiness, and contain once again the precept to "love your neighbor as yourself."

*Sim's* clearest display of ethical emphasis occurs in the selection of Talmudic passages which conclude the preliminary service. In the traditional liturgy, passages detailing the laws of sacrifices are recited in accord with the principle that studying the laws of sacrifices brings atonement in a world where sacrifices themselves cannot be offered. Following these passages, the *braita d'rabi Ishmael* which introduces the *Sifra*, the midrash most focused on sacrifices, is said. *Weekday* disposed of the sacrificial passages but retained the *braita d'rabi Ishmael*. *Sim* deletes even this (pp. 14-19), and in its place provides a number of passages stressing deeds of lovingkindness, ethics and love. The first passage is the famous interchange of Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai and Rabbi Joshua quoted above, which articulates the principle that deeds of lovingkindness now replace sacrifices and atone for sin.17 The next two passages are beautiful exhortations to perform deeds of lovingkindness, charity and justice. The third and fourth passages are classic formulations of *imitatio dei* and the obligation for humans to imitate God's moral excellence. These passages represent the clearest expression of *Sim's* theology. Having disposed of the traditional Talmudic material, *Sim* had free reign to choose the most important passages from all of rabbinic literature for recitation in the morning service. That the selection emphasizes deeds of lovingkindness, ethical behavior and, in particular, *imitatio dei*, reveals the centrality of these ideals for the prayerbook.

Peace plays an important role in *Sim*, as the full title, *Sim Shalom*, itself implies. The preliminary service concludes with a prayer that we "be disciples of Aaron the priest, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving our fellow creatures and drawing them near to Torah" (pp. 18-19). The blessing, "may the Merciful cause peace to dwell among us," is added to the *Birkait Hamazon* (p. 767). *Sim* also stresses peace by replacing several of the passages comprising the traditional *Tahanun* service. *Sim* was apparently uncomfortable with the traditional stress on the worthlessness, inherent sinfulness and unworthiness of man ("excessive self-abasement" is how the introduction puts it [p. xxv]). The replacement

17. See the introduction to the prayerbook, p. xxv, where the editor invokes this principle as his reason for including the Yohanan ben Zakkai passage rather than laws of sacrifices.
passages beseech God for a variety of things: mercy; freedom from unhappiness, trouble, and torment; faith, Torah and mitzvot; humility, modesty, and a generous spirit; and, especially, peace, both freedom from the "powers of wickedness" and inner serenity: "Bring us from peace to peace that we may find tranquility in our way of life" (pp. 128-133).

* * *

It is now possible to review these findings and address the question of liturgical development. With the exception of Festival, all of the prayerbooks published by the Conservative movement display clear signs of the influence of ethics on the liturgy. In Sabbath and High Holiday, a major focus of concern were the prayers that associate God with punishment, destruction and killing, even where it is the oppressors of Israel whom God destroys. Such passages produce theological anguish because they clash with the editors' conceptions of an ethical God who exemplifies peace and forgiveness. Moreover, the prominence of *imitatio dei* as a guiding principle of Jewish ethics demands that God be separated from forces of destruction, lest such images serve as models for human action. The technique adopted by Sabbath and High Holiday was to preserve the Hebrew passages intact, but totally to eliminate the offensive images from the English translations. Weekday, Mahzor and Sim accept the ethic of Sabbath and High Holiday but reject the radical method of dealing with problematic ideas. These prayerbooks supply more honest translations by providing a corresponding English line to every Hebrew one. To cope with the theological discomfort, an alternative method is employed. Verbs are switched from the active to the passive so that it is not God who slays, but the Egyptians who are slain. A related method is used by Weekday, Mahzor and Sim for other problematic passages — passages that neither Sabbath nor High Holiday revised — such as the epithet of God as ba'al milhamoi (Lord of battles) and the praise extended to God in the "Al hanisim for the wars that he fought on behalf of our ancestors. Translations of these passages tone down the force of the Hebrew with reinterpretations like "champion of justice" for ba'al milhamot, "Master of wars." Thus, as new prayerbooks were published, more passages associating God with destruction were found to be problematic, and new methods were invoked to handle the problem.

Parallel to these attempts to depict a pacifist God, are efforts to emphasize the importance of peace. This emphasis grew prodigiously over the course of time. Sabbath universalized the prayer for peace in the final blessing of the morning 'Amidah; Mahzor followed suit with the afternoon and evening 'Amidot. Mahzor also added prayers for peace to the beginning and end of the Torah service, which, as noted, resulted in a complete reinterpretation of that liturgical unit. These prayers are carried over in Sim, which, in turn, added entreaties for peace to the
preliminary service and the birkat hamazon. In this way, peace pervades
the liturgy and becomes a value of overriding import.

Development is also evident in the treatment of women. Sabbath
made the first step by eliminating the blessing for not being created
a woman. The blessing reappeared in High Holiday in the Hebrew, while
the English retained an egalitarian sentiment. Subsequent prayerbooks
reject the blessing. Beginning with Weekday, efforts were made to erase
the distinction between the “congregation” and “their wives” expressed
in certain prayers. Weekday and Mahzor emend the translations; Sim
then emends the Hebrew. The next stage of development was to provide
Hebrew forms for both men and women. This new technique is
employed by Mahzor in one meditation. Sim seizes this method and
applies it in numerous cases, including the meditations before donning
a talit and tefilin. In addition, Sim rewrites several passages to equalize
Israel’s spiritual heritage. Women become models of piety and sources
of inspiration. The ethic has progressed in several stages. First, the ex-
pression of the inferiority of women is rejected. Second, women are
recognized as full members of the congregation. Finally, women are
seen as equal to men, expected to receive synagogue honors and per-
form all the rituals that accompany the prayers.

Emphasis on interpersonal morality receives prominent expression
in High Holiday, Mahzor and Sim. Prayers that mention sacrifices are
consistently reinterpreted in terms of deeds of lovingkindness. The elab-
orate depiction of the sacrificial ritual in the Avodah service becomes
a type of symbolic code, the true interpretation of which centers around
ethical action. The Avodah passages are permeated with exhortations
to moral action as the true meaning of worship today. Sim completes
the shift from sacrifices to ethics with the substitution of passages stress-
ing ethics for those detailing sacrifices in the preliminary morning ser-
vice.

The influence of ethics pervades these prayerbooks, and is not lim-
ited to prayers which had invoked sacrifices. High Holiday adds med-
itations instructing the reader that the Shofar should inspire him to
moral action and love of his fellow men. The introduction to the Shofarot
service suggests that revelation is contingent on moral responsibility.
This influence is sustained in Mahzor. Introductions to the afternoon
service and the ‘aleinu impress the reader with the importance of ethical
behavior. New techniques employed by Mahzor to express its concern
for ethics testify to the growing liturgical importance of morality.
Whereas High Holiday was content with introductions in English or ad-
ditions to the translations as vehicles for promoting its ethical vision,
Mahzor begins to supplement the Hebrew prayers and to provide al-
ternatives. Prayers for peace are incorporated into the Torah service,

18. See above, in the text following footnote 12.
Psalm 15 and the obligation to love one's neighbor break into the morning service, and an alternative Torah reading surfaces for the afternoon service on Yom Kippur. Sim continues the development of accepting Mahzor's innovations and employing new methods to infuse ethical emphasis. Now certain passages are deleted from the Hebrew, including certain tahanun paragraphs and the sacrificial passages, which are replaced by those that stress morality. Thus, the influence of ethics has become more pronounced over the course of time. Not only have ethical values gradually permeated the entire liturgy, but the methods used to infuse ethical content have developed as well. High Holiday employs introductions and meditations, Mahzor adds to the Hebrew and provides alternatives, Sim replaces troubling passages.

It should be noted that Conservative liturgy shows evidence of theological change in areas other than ethics. Sacrifices are being deemphasized, the doctrine of election is toned down or relativized, the understanding of mizvot as commandments is questioned, and pluralism is given concrete expression by the appearance of alternative forms for many prayers. More study is needed to analyze the extent of these theological shifts, but given the profound influence of ethics as demonstrated in this study, it is not unlikely that important changes are rapidly occurring in these aspects of theology as well. It may well be that Conservative Judaism is closer to the pole of "change" than to "tradition."