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Preface:

The purpose of the “Introduction to Traditional Jewish Worship” is not to give you a working knowledge of what you will see as you begin attending Congregation B’nai Maccabim. This is not a definitive work, but it will give you a leg up on understanding, and hopefully embracing, traditional Jewish worship forms as a meaningful part of your worship experience.

As you begin reading, you will note that there are “Hebrew” words, most of which have been transliterated into phonetic English. I have to tell you that everyone has their own way of transliterating Hebrew, so don’t worry if you see things differently. The transliteration used is what I believe will give you the closest, accurate, phonetic reading of the Hebrew. One special note concerning pronunciation: whenever you see the letters “ch” in a transliterated word it is to be pronounced as a guttural sound; almost like you are trying to clear your throat. It is **NOT** a hard sound like you might hear in the word *China*

At the same time the Hebrew/Jewish terminology that is used will also be defined for you. While I was considering a glossary, I ultimately decided that as long as I had a working definition of the term(s) used it would be better served context than in a separate glossary page.

For those of you who are interested in further study I have included a small bibliography. Some of the books are relatively basic; others require both time and commitment to work through. However, they all have something unique to offer.

It is my hope that in providing this text for you, at least some of the questions you might have about why we do what we do, here in this congregation, will be answered.

“Introduction to Traditional Jewish Worship”

By Rabbi Betzael Budoff

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Each community defines its own worship, identity through its practices. With that sweeping statement we are able to appreciate different forms of worship and practice without being critical. This should be true if we are examining different forms in the Christian community or within the traditional Jewish community.

While I cannot speak from experience concerning a Reconstructionist Synagogue I can state with assurance that many of the basic practices in the Reform, Conservative, Orthodox or Chasidic communities are identical. It is the “How it is done”, and “Why it is done that way” that varies. And, there are things that are done in one community that are not done in another, and there is no attempt to make any apologies for those differences.

Congregations have split over forms of worship and practice, and have even lost families because melodies have changed and “they just can’t worship anymore”. Whenever people from different backgrounds and traditions come together to form community you are in for a rocky ride because one of the fundamental things which make for “common unity” is common understanding and practice.

This is especially true of Messianic Jewish groups, because they are made up of such a diverse group of people, and while most of the time we get our religious pre-dispositions from our experiences while growing up that is rarely the case with the messianic Jewish congregation. For most of us we have grown up with little, if any, religious training, and as a result we get indoctrinated into one or another set of religious/worship practices when, as adults, we come to “faith” and join some congregation. While these various slants on worship and practice, which we own, are neither right nor wrong, they surely exist. And, just as surely, they color the way in which we understand and embrace the things we do and the way in which we worship.

While teaching a class (*at B’nai Maccabim*) on the use of the traditional Siddur, in the frame of a Messianic Jewish congregation, we began talking about our personal prejudices when it came to “worship”. As we carried on a rather animated dialogue one of the participants gave this analogy.

“When my children were younger I would take them to school each day, and the route we took was always the same.

However, one day while on the way to the school I found the road I always took was closed due to construction. There were signs all over the place marking the way around the construction, and I got to my destination without any difficulty. However, even though it got me to the exact same place, I was uncomfortable taking a new route.”

She then brought the point home by saying that:

“...each of us is used to approaching G-d in our own way, and that we are comfortable taking that path. When something forces us to take another, less traveled path we are profoundly discomforted. This sense of discomfort is caused by our own personal prejudices when it comes to our personal practices and our worship of G-d.”

This prejudice is just as real in the Messianic Jewish Community as it is in any other denominational or congregational venue.

One of the great problems we have to deal with when it comes to developing and defining a Messianic Jewish lifestyle is the fact that for many of us our identity is a great big question mark. While seeking to distance ourselves (*in part*) from the traditions of the Baptist, Charismatic or High Mass faith communities we, at the same time, seek to embrace (*in part*) the traditions and worship styles of the Ashkenazi/Chasidic communities. While that is not necessarily bad it is problematic in that we approach those forms primarily from the perspective of *dah-aht* (*knowledge*) without much in the way of *binah* (*bih-nah – understanding*).

Dah-aht is knowledge that is obtained through study and which is by its nature almost entirely theoretical. Binah is the understanding of dah-aht through the experiences of life. Hence, when we discuss Messianic Jewish practices most of us do it from the basis of the theoretical. While this is not wrong it clearly reflects on our ability, or inability, to experience the depth and richness of the Jewish form. Therefore, it is ideal that one would combine both dah-aht and binah in everything we are going to learn.

The early messianic movement is filled with wonderful examples of the problem of not properly understanding “traditional” Jewish worship. In the early 1970’s most of the young men in the Messianic Jewish movement began wearing kippot and tzitzit. The intent was to identify with the “Jewish community”. The only problem was the fact that most of us did not know why we were doing these things (*tradition learned by rote*), and at the same time there was little if any desire to adhere to any of the lifestyle issues practiced by that same community. In this case the problem was one of

emotional/experiential attachment which was devoid of the knowledge needed to make the wearing of the kippa (*traditional head covering for men*) or the tzitzit (*commonly understood to be the fringes on the prayer shawl or four cornered garment*) relevant.

As a result two things happened. First, we were made keenly aware of our own ignorance when we became the brunt of the “Jewish community’s” anger and humor at our abusing the practice of wearing these “garments”. Second, we rapidly grew tired of having to do something that had little or no meaning to most of us. As such this practice very quickly fell into disuse. After all we’re not Orthodox, we’re Messianic. We can do what we want and still call it “Judaism” (???)

A second example of this problem, but from the other extreme, has to do with the attempted use of a traditional Siddur during services. While there are some of us in the Messianic Jewish community who came from a fairly observant Jewish tradition, most of us did not. This is still true of a large part of our movement today. As a result most of the worship practices we have adopted from the Jewish community have been done because we picked up a book and read about how to do them. There was little in the way of *ka’vah’nah* (*heart attachment*) or *avodah* (*service*) as we recited prayers from week to week. The result was and is not pretty.

Needless to say, when all was said and done there was great frustration and a willingness to give lip service to Jewish worship forms that were being used as window dressing. The “real, deeper” worship would be experienced through the use of Messianic Jewish songs and “Davidic praise”.

“Davidic Praise” is, for lack of a better definition, the Messianic Jewish answer to the traditional Jewish worship experience. Liturgy and form are replaced by song and “Israeli dance”, and rather than try to understand how to approach a traditional Jewish service we simply delegitimize it and invent our own form of worship which we call Jewish.

The problem is that without having known “Jewish liturgy as a spiritual system” (*the title of a book by Arnold Rosenberg*) it became a required and therefore learned form but it rarely was a form which gave rise to passion and joy before G-d. As a result, most of our congregations divided their services into two distinct portions:

- The “traditional portion”, which was said because it had to be said. After all we had to prove we were Jewish to ourselves if to no one else.

- Then, after we got that traditional stuff over with we were able to “enter into praise and worship”. To paraphrase Frank Sinatra: “We did it our way.”

One of my favorite stories and movies is “Fiddler on the Roof.” The opening sequence in the movie is wonderful. I especially like the last statement made by Teviah before the scene fades to the Fiddler: “Without our traditions we would be---like a fiddler on the roof.” Unfortunately, even with our traditions we seem to be like that unstable fiddler; always trying to keep our balance.

It is almost as if we are walking a fence; a fence not of our making, but one that we have allowed to stand for a very long time. I remember a seminar at one of the UMJC conferences, a number of years ago, where David Stern was asked about what community we should identify with: Jewish or Christian. At the time I thought his response was very wise, but now I am not too sure. David said that we are identified 100% with both communities. On the surface that sounds great, but in practical experience it is a virtual impossibility. Instead of trying to strike the balance between both communities, each of which tries to define us through their own eyes, we need to understand who we are in, and of, ourselves.

The modern messianic movement is caught between two worlds: the world of Judaism and the world of Christianity. We stand with our feet spread apart, seeking to accommodate both worlds, but not realizing that in so doing we are constantly off balance.

The Jewish world sees us declaring our “Jewishness” and yet much of what we do and say is cloaked in a foreign (*Christian*) cultural expression. Their response is to ask, with Jacob, "Who are these?"

Likewise, the Christian world sees us declaring our unity with the rest of the “body of Christ”, while holding on to some semblance of Jewish cultural and religious observance and their response is the same question: "Who are these?"

Who we are must be reflected in our lives, and our lifestyles. The thing that is so bothersome to us is that we often say, “We are Jewish”, while how we worship and live often proclaims just the opposite. It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words. How true! People will believe what they see rather than what they hear if there is a discrepancy between the two. Therefore, the identity that we hold must be declared both by the words we speak and the lives we live.

Perhaps the reason we don't seem to fit anywhere is because we are not sure who we really are. We are striving to find an answer to the personal

possessive form of Jacob's question. We are not asking, "Who are these?" Rather, we are asking, "Who are we?" While this is not an easy question to answer, but it must be done if we are ever to come to terms with what it means to be messianic Jews.

We may like to describe Messianic Judaism as a return to a 1st century expression of Jewish life, but that can never be a reality. It is impossible to do so. In fact that kind of thinking is self-deceiving. This is not Israel in the 1st Century. Nor is it the Golden Age of Judaism of the Rambam (*acrostic name for Rabbi Moshe ben Mai'mon*). Nor is it the Jewish community of Russia and Poland in the 1800's. The dynamics of the political, social and theological structure of those times have long since vanished, and there is no going back to it. We cannot reverse history, and as a result while we might long for "the good old days" they are not ours to live in.

We live in the 21st Century. We have been shaped by Inquisitions, Crusades, Pogroms and the Shoah (*Holocaust*). We have no Temple, there are no sacrifices, and the Sanhedrin no longer exists except in the pages of history. In short, it is necessary that we put aside our romantic notions of the "tales of yesteryear" and deal with the realities of being Messianic Jewish in a time called "NOW".

Congregation B'nai Maccabim is a Messianic Jewish synagogue, and as such it must speak clearly of the supremacy of our Messiah, the Lord Yeshua. We must do this not merely by inference or through some secret code that only *we* recognize; it must be done clearly, and openly, and without fear that somehow this might compromise our commitment to our Jewish identity, and the Jewish community.

At the same time we face another dilemma. As a Messianic Jewish congregation our membership is open to everyone who has made a confession of faith in Yeshua. As a result we find that our community is comprised of Jewish people who are well educated as Jews, and who are comfortable with the traditional worship forms. We also have Jewish people who have only a cursory understanding or appreciation of traditional Jewish worship, and who need to be reintroduced to the form and structure of a traditional service. Finally, we have non-Jews who for a variety of reasons feel drawn to our congregation, and who for the most part have not the slightest idea about the whys and wherefores of a traditional Jewish worship service. It is for these last two groups of people that we are writing this "Introduction to Traditional Jewish Worship".

This will not be an extensive work. Its goal will be to give a person a basic understanding of what we do here at B'nai Maccabim, why we do it, and what some of the symbolism is. It is only as people gain at least this

basic understanding that they will be able to appreciate our services and actively enter into them. At the end of this “introduction” we will include a short bibliography so that more reading can be done on the subject of traditional Jewish worship.

Entering the Synagogue:

The Tallit

Upon entering our Synagogue you will note there is a station right in front that has a number of things on it that are available for your use. First you will see ***talaisim*** (*Prayer Shawls*) hanging up. It is traditional that during services Jewish men should wear a tallit. This comes from the passage in the ***Numbers 13***, which speaks to us of wearing ***tzitzit*** on the corners of our garments.

The Prayer Shawl is the minimum for the doing of this mitzvah. On the corners of this “garment” are the ***tzitzit***, and it is used as a covering, almost like a tent or tabernacle over us.

There has been a great deal of discussion concerning the use of the tallit by women. Our congregation believes that women are permitted, although not commanded to wear a tallit, but that it must be a “women’s garment”. As a result we provide both men’s and women’s Talaisim.

Right in front of the Talaisim are the ***siddurim*** (*traditional prayer books*) and the ***kippot*** (*Traditional head coverings for men, plural*). Let’s talk about the ***kippot*** first.

The Kippah:

The ***kippah*** (*aka – yar’mul’kah*) is worn by Orthodox Jewish men throughout the waking hours of their day. In the less traditional community the ***kippa*** is used during prayer, both personal and communal, as a sign of submission to the mind of G-d. Its use comes from the passage of Torah that tells us that Israel is ***mahm’lechet Coh’ha’nim...a kingdom of Priests*** or a ***priestly people***. Since the priests of Israel were to wear a head covering when they went in to serve G-d in the temple, and since we were/are to be a priestly people, tradition says that we are to cover our heads when we go in to serve ***haShem*** (*a traditional form of referring to G-d without actually calling on one of His names. It means “the Name”*).

The Siddur:

Finally, you will notice a pile of books. These books are called Siddurim (*plural form of the word Siddur*), which loosely translated means “**order**”. Although the form of service has its roots in the Temple service, there was a difference between what was done in the temple and what was done in the local synagogue.

This form looked different from community to community, and it wasn't until after the return from the Babylonian exile that the “**men of the Great Assembly**” began the process of codifying an order of service to be used by the Jewish community. This was done so that people who were coming back from captivity, who may not have been familiar with the service of the Temple, would be able to have some “traditional Jewish form” to follow as they prayed.

From the time of the “**men of the Great Assembly**” the form remained the same, although many different “prayers” were added over the generations. The Siddur we use is written to fit the needs of a Messianic Jewish congregation. It follows the same general form as a traditional Siddur, and contains much of the same liturgy however it also includes a number of passages from the ***B'rit Chadashah*** (*the New/Renewed Covenant*) as an integral part of each service.

Some of these passages were chosen because they highlight the same truths that are seen throughout non-Messianic Jewish *siddurim*. Others were chosen because they clearly and eloquently exalt our Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. These readings are by no means comprehensive, but instead, provide a starting point in the recognition of the cultural and theological continuity that must exist in our worship as Messianic Jews.

If you are attending our congregation it is important that you become familiar with the ***Siddur***, and come to have some understanding of its use, and the symbolism found within the traditional Jewish service.

The Order of Service:

Preliminary Psalms and Readings:

It has been said that ***Psalm 100*** is the blueprint for prayer and worship. If that is so, and we have no reason to doubt it, then we need to take a careful look at verses 4-5:

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; be thankful to him, and bless his name. For the

Lord is good; his loving kindness is everlasting; and his faithfulness endures to all generations.

As a result of these two verses that almost every traditional Jewish worship service begins with what are called ***the Preliminary Psalms and Readings***.

When we enter the synagogue we bring the world in with us. We are so busy with our “hellos-and-how-are-you” and “sharing what’s been going on”, both good and bad, that we are not really focused on G-d. ***The preliminary Psalms and readings***, while somewhat different on weekday services, from the Kabbalat Shabbat (*A special part of the service said as we are just entering into the Sabbath. It means: Welcoming the Sabbath*) and the Shacharit Shabbat (*Morning service for the Sabbath*) services, are a tool to help us shift the focus from ourselves and our concerns, to G-d and His concerns. This portion of the ***Siddur*** may be chanted or incorporated as readings, or they can be used to augment the music and songs used in a congregation. However they are used it is clear that the ***Preliminary Psalms and Readings*** serve a very important purpose in our services. They help to bring the individual and the congregation through the gates and into the very courts of our G-d.

The Half Kaddish:

As we move past these ***Preliminary Psalms and Readings***, we become more focused with our worship. We begin to recognize and to declare certain aspects or attributes of our G-d in relationship to us as individuals and as members of the larger community of Israel.

To do this a form of the ***Kaddish*** is chanted. (*The word Kaddish comes from a Hebrew word meaning, to set apart. Traditionally, there are a number of forms of the Kaddish, one of which is called the Half Kaddish.*) The ***Half Kaddish*** is almost always used as a means of transitioning from one part of the service to another. In reciting the ***Half Kaddish*** we declare:

Magnified and sanctified is God's great Name throughout the world that He has created according to His will. May He establish His kingdom in our lifetime, and during our days, and within the life of the entire house of Israel, speedily and soon; and say, "Amen."

May the greatness of His Name be blessed forever and ever!

*Let the name of the Holy One, **blessed is He**, be blessed and praised, glorified and exalted, extolled and honored, adored and lauded, beyond all of the blessings and songs,*

praises and consolations that are ever spoken in this world, and say, "Amen."

The portions of the text that require a congregational response to the leaders reading or chanting are italicized and highlighted as bold in our Siddur. In fact any time there is a congregational response that is required the appropriate text is highlighted in the same way.

Amen:

Throughout the service there is the expectation that when G-d is blessed in some manner we are to respond by saying "***Amen***" (*pronounced: Ah'main*). ***Amen*** is an acronym which comes from three Hebrew words:

El – God or Power

Melech – King

Neh-eh-mahn – is faithful or true.

Hence, when we make the declaration "***Amen***" at the end of a reading or blessing, we are declaring our trust that G-d, the King is Faithful and has the power to fulfill His promises.

As we transition away from the preliminary psalms and readings we move into what I like to call the declarative section of the service. This part of the service begins and ends with a series of declarative statements about who G-d is, what He is like, and how we are to react to the One who is Holy.

Barchu:

This "section" of the Siddur begins with the ***Barchu*** (*From a Hebrew word meaning to bless or to set a liberty*). The ***Barchu*** was used as a call to worship.

Tradition tells us that when services were about to begin one of the Priests/Singers would go to the entrance of the Tabernacle and chant: ***Barchu et Adonai ha m'voh'rach*** (*Bless the L-rd who is to be blessed*). As the people heard this call they would make their way to the Tabernacle and in response they would call out: ***Baruch Adonai ha m'vorach l'olam vah'ed*** (*Blessed is the L-rd who is to be blessed forever and ever*).

Today, in most congregations, including B'nai Maccabim, this is done with the Ark open, and with the congregation standing. When we declare blessing to the L-rd it is traditional to bend the knee and bow at the waist. This, as with all other times we bow, is meant to show deference to our G-d, who is our King.

At the conclusion of the ***Barchu***, there is a silent meditation. In the west the concept of "silent" means **NO SOUND**. However, in most of the

Semitic world it holds a different meaning. It means that I am the only one who should be able to clearly hear what I am saying. In other words, when I am reading silently, I am actually reading quietly, so that I can hear what I am saying, but no one else around me is able to make out my words.

When we are finished with the “silent” meditation the *Chazzan* (*Cantor – a person trained to lead a traditional Jewish service*) chants the following: ***Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who created both light and darkness; who makes peace and brings forth all things.***

With this we now begin declaring that our G-d is the Creator of all; that He gives light to the creation; that His goodness is seen every day, and that it is extolled throughout all eternity. It is G-d who creates all things new! It is G-d who brings forth salvation and who creates healing! It is G-d who wars to bring forth justice...His loving kindness endures forever!

Shema:

As we move further into this “section” we will eventually come to the *Shema*. (*Sheh'mah – comes from a Hebrew word that can be understood to mean “name” or “to hear with understanding”. Some people believe this word is used to play both concepts off of each other. We are to hear G-d's name with understanding.*) Before getting into the significance of the *Shema* it is important to note that the *Siddur* we use contains a passage from the *B'rit Chadasha: Mark 12:28-34*. In this passage Yeshua is asked “which is great commandment.” He responds with the *Shema*, and the first line of what is called the *V'ah-havtah*. As we declare G-d's oneness we are also declaring how we are to respond to the One, True G-d.

The *Shema* is actually made up of a number of different passages. It begins with Deuteronomy 6:4 (*Deuteronomy is the English title for Devarim, the fifth book of Moses, which comes from a Hebrew word meaning “words” or “things”.*), which says: ***Hear O Israel, the L-rd your G-d, the L-rd is One.*** Traditionally a line of response is added here where we say: ***Blessed is His glorious Name, whose Kingdom is forever and ever.***

As we continue, we find that there are three traditional readings. In our *Siddur* we use a fourth passage, from *1 Corinthians 8:4-6*.

- ***Deuteronomy 6:5-9***

This begins with a command to love our G-d, as well as a response to the declaration of G-d's love for us. If He loves us shouldn't we respond in kind? Hence, the command to love the L-rd our G-d with all of our heart, soul and strength. Moreover, we are commanded to transmit our love of G-d to our children by both our words and our deeds. This portion is often said while standing and facing the ark.

- ***1 Corinthians 8:4-6***

This passage from the *B'rit Chadasha* reflects the same sentiment that is found in *Deuteronomy 6:4*, as it declares that no matter what the world says we know that we have only One G-d, the Father, and One L-rd, Yeshua the Messiah.

- ***Deuteronomy 11:13-21***

This passage reminds us that G-d is the giver of blessing to His people. If we want to see that blessing we must remember that He, and He alone is G-d. This passage ends with a reminder that G-d is the giver of life, and the keeper of His promises.

- ***Numbers 13:37-41*** (*This is the English name of the fourth book of Moses. It is called Numbers because the opening chapters of this book are all about the counting/numbering of the men of Israel. However, the Hebrew word for this book, B'midbar, has nothing to do with numbers at all. It comes from a word that is often translated "in the wilderness". However, there is a play on the letters of this word that can allow it to mean "in/from His words". Hence, we understand that when we are in the wilderness we may attain life in/from His words*).

This passage is about the wearing of the *Tzitzit* upon the corners of our garments. Having been told that we are to love G-d, and that part of that love is seen in our doing His commandments, this last passage tells us about G-d's reminder to us. This passage tells us that when we look upon the *Tzitzit* we will remember two things. The first is not to be led astray by our heart and our eyes. The second reminder is to do what the Word of G-d commands.

Following these passages there are a series of readings which culminate with *Mi Chamocha* (*which means: "who I like/compared to You"*). This portion of the *Siddur* is the "final" passage declaring the nature of G-d, and it really focuses on our response to who He is and what He has done. *Mi Chamocha*, which comes from *Exodus 15*, begins by declaring that our G-d is unlike any other: He is glorious in His holiness, awesome in praise, doing wonders. With the end of *Mi Chamocha* we come to the *Amidah*.

The Amidah

We have focused our hearts and minds on G-d through the *preliminary Psalms and readings*, and we have spent time declaring who G-d is, what He has done, and what our response to Him should be. Now, it is time for "prayer". *The Amidah* is a traditional form that is supposed to be used as a starting place for prayer.

In the traditional community it is done once by the individual in "silent devotion", and then it is repeated by the *Chazzan* on the part of the

whole congregation. During this repetition, it is traditional for the congregation to respond with “*Amen*”, whenever the phrase “*Blessed are You L-rd...*” is spoken.

There are a number of forms that you will observe when the *Amidah* is done. First, the congregation is asked to stand, and they are told to remain standing until they are done with “their time of prayer”. During this time you might see some of the men tent themselves with their *Tallit*. This is done to provide a private “room/place” to meet with G-d even when one is standing in the middle of a congregation. It is this tenting that we see when Elijah heard the voice of G-d in the breath. *(As a side note, Saul/Paul was said to have been a tentmaker. Some believe that this meant that his trade was the making of Tallaisim, within which people could stand, tented before G-d.)*

Second, you will notice some people taking a few small steps backward, and then taking the same number of steps forward. This is to physically symbolize the fact that we are coming before the King, and we are approaching His throne.

Third, you might notice some people periodically bowing. This is done traditionally whenever the phrase “*Blessed are You, L-rd...*” is spoken.

Finally, when a person is finished reciting the *Amidah* they will often take a few small steps forward and then the same number of steps back. This symbolizes the fact that we are leaving the presence of the King.

Each of these traditions come predominately from the Ashkenaz Jewish communities (*Eastern European/European Jewish communities*). The reason they take this form is because this was what was done in their “host cultures” when a person came into, or left, the presence of their king. In some of the older *Sephardi* communities (*Middle Eastern, Hispanic, North African, and Mediterranean Jewish communities*) you will see different traditions which reflect how their “host culture”, among which the Jewish people lived, approached their royalty.

(Please note: During the week this section of the service is also called the Shemona Esray, which means “Eighteen”. The reason for this name is because during the week the Amidah has eighteen separate blessings or benedictions. Eventually a nineteenth was added, which dealt with what are called “the minim” (the arrogant ones). It is a call for G-d to remember the need for judgment upon those who rose up in arrogance against Him and against His people. We do the Shemona Esray for a weekday service we use a modified form of this benediction which asks: “May all wickedness perish; may all Your enemies be soon cut down. Do this quickly and even in our days with the coming of our Messiah, Yeshua. May the arrogant come to know Your love, and may all Your enemies turn in sincere repentance before You. Blessed are You, L-rd, who breaks the enemies and humbles the arrogant.”)

K'riat haTorah

Prayer is not just our talking at a distant god. Prayer is our speaking to the Living G-d, and Him speaking to us in return. Often we wait for some miraculous sign, or a voice out of heaven saying..., and while that can and does happen occasionally the surest way in which G-d speaks to us is through His Word. With that in mind it is logical to move from the ***Amidah*** (*our speaking to G-d both as an individual and as a congregation*) to the reading of the ***Torah***, a Hebrew word that means “instruction” or “teaching”. (*In the Jewish community the concept of “the Torah” is specifically applied to the five books of Moses, although it can be understood to apply in a broader sense to all of the Word of G-d*), with its attendant readings from the Prophets (*often referred to as the HafTorah*), and for us as a Messianic Jewish congregation, from the ***B'rit Chadasha***, where G-d has the opportunity to speak into our lives, and into the life of our congregation.

Of all the sections of service this is perhaps the most filled with pomp and symbolism. The cantoral selection is very strong, and done properly it can have an amazing effect on those hearing it. The biggest problem with what happens here is that those who come from a non-Jewish or nominally Jewish background have a tendency to misunderstand the symbolism. As a result they often feel as if they “can’t enter into the worship”. To help with this problem, as we go through the forms and the traditions that surround them we will spend a bit more time highlighting why something is being done.

“There is no G-d like you...” These are the words that begin ***K'riat haTorah*** (*The public reading of the Torah*), and much of what we do today concerning the reading of Torah comes to us from Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Men of the Great Assembly.

The period of the second temple is marked by the need for survival from the spiritual onslaught of two great empires, the Greeks and the Romans. We had returned from the captivity in Babylon and were not only busy rebuilding Jerusalem under Nehemiah, and the Temple under Ezra, we were also rebuilding our identity as Jews.

The issues we were facing were many, but primary amongst them were language...we had lost the fluency of ***loshan ha Kodesh***, “the holy tongue”, and had become much more comfortable with the language of our “hosts”.

Culture was the second area that needed rebuilding. We had lived amongst the Babylonians and later the Persians for almost 70 years, and our

culture began the inexorable absorption of the cultural affectations of the culture we were living in the midst of.

Finally, our customs came under intense scrutiny, these being the things that ask and answer the question: “How do we do that?” “How do we keep kosher?” “How often do we fast?” “When should we read Torah?” “How should we pray?” The answers to each of the problems impacted our identity as Jews, as well as our understanding of Torah.

The Symbolism of K’riat haTorah:

Over the generations, from the days of the Men of the Great Assembly, a number of symbols began to be used in the Jewish world. These symbols were attached to the Torah and to the things that surrounded it. Unless one understands the symbolism surrounding these things one would be hard pressed to fully enter into the majesty of K’riat haTorah.

The Ark:

The Ark in a synagogue is known in Hebrew as the **Aron Kodesh** by the Ashkenazim and as the **Hechal** amongst most Sephardim. The name Aron Kodesh comes from Hebrew and means Holy Ark. This name is a reference to the Ark of the Covenant which was set in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle (*the Tent of Witness*), and in the Temple in Jerusalem. Hechal (sometimes called ***Hechal Kodesh***) comes from Hebrew and which means “palace” or “temple”. It is a term which was commonly used during the 1st Century to refer to the inner sanctuary of the Temple in Jerusalem.

An ark is generally understood to be a receptacle whose purpose is to receive and to protect what is placed in it. This is clearly seen in the Ark of Noah, and in the ark of reeds that Moses’ mother placed him in to save his life. In the case of the Ark found in the Synagogue, it is an ornamental cabinet that is meant to house and protect the synagogue’s Torah scrolls.

Whenever possible the ark is located on or near that wall of the sanctuary which is facing Jerusalem. This practice has translated itself to the Ark being placed on the eastern wall, even when that is not the direction most directly facing Jerusalem. This tradition has its roots in the actions of Daniel, which are recorded for us in ***Daniel 6:11***: “...he went into his house; his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, and he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his G-d...”

We like Daniel are in diaspora (*dispersion from the land of Israel*), so when we pray (*3x each day*) we also pray toward Jerusalem. In so doing we express

our hope, and desire that the Temple be rebuilt and that we, with all of G-d's people, would be able to return to Jerusalem, to pray in the Temple.

Most arks feature a *Parochet* (curtain). The *Parochet* can be placed outside the doors of the ark, which is typical of the Ashkenazi and Mizrachi [the Sephardic Jewish communities from the Middle Eastern and Eastern world] custom, or inside the doors of the ark, which is typical of the Spanish, Portuguese, and Moroccan Sephardi custom.

The Nehr Tamid

(The Light that never changes)

The Nehr Tamid is the light that hangs in front of the Ark. There is no place in Torah that commands this, so why is it there. The answer to this is twofold, each having to do with a different aspect of the command found in *Exodus 27:20-21*.

Toward the end of that text we read a description of how to make and put together the various parts of the Tent of Witness (*the Tabernacle*) we are told to “bring pure beaten oil olive for the light, for the lamp to burn always. In the Tent of Witness outside the veil, which is before the Testimony, Aaron and his sons shall order it from evening to morning before the Lord; it shall be a statute forever to their generations on behalf of the people of Israel.”

The first traditional understanding comes from a basic understanding of this commandment. Since we no longer have “The Tent of Witness” or the “lamps” that stood before “the Testimony” the Nehr Tamid is a reminder of those lamps that were to be tended by the priests in order to keep their lights burning at all times.

The second understanding of why we have a Nehr Tamid comes from asking a single, pertinent question: “What is the nature of this light?”

The answer to this question is both simple and profound. First, the light is meant to symbolize G-d's eternal, unchanging presence both with His people and in the whole of the creation. This is why it stands/hangs above the Ark. We recognize that “light” (*the essence of G-d's nature*) is the first thing to be introduced into the creation (*Genesis 1:1-3; Yochanan 1:1-9*), and that the Word of G-d (*Mehmra; Logos*) was the light and life of men.

Therefore, when we see the Nehr Tamid, we are not only to think of haShem's presence, but we are also to be reminded that we hold His light in our souls. As is the case of most of the “gifts” from our G-d, we are not to keep this light to ourselves; we are to share it with the world. This concept brings a new level of understanding to the words of Yeshua:

“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (*Mathew 5:14-16*)”

The Torah Scroll

The word ***Torah*** is most often translated as “***Law***”, but it really means “***Instruction***”, and has a very broad applicability to all of G-d’s Word. However, in the context of the Jewish worldview the Torah is understood to be the ***Five Books of Moses***.

These five books, ***B’rayshit*** (*From the beginning/Genesis*), ***Shemot*** (*Names/Exodus*), ***Vah-yikrah*** (*And He called/Leviticus*), ***B’midbar*** (*In the Wilderness/Numbers*), and ***D’varim*** (*Words/Deuteronomy*) present a continuous, although abbreviated, account from before the creation began to the end of the life of Moses. They deal with issues like G-d as the Creator of all things by the power of His Word alone, where we came from, who we were created to be, who our fathers were, what it means to be called G-d’s people, what it should look like if we are G-d’s people, the events that defined us, the events that judged us, and the events that eventually brought us to the Jordan and the land G-d had promised to our fathers.

The reading of these books is part of the command of Torah itself, and over the generations there have been a number of different reading cycles. But no matter the length of time it took to read through all of the Torah, whether ten, seven, three, or one year, at the conclusion of the last word, of the last portion, of the last book of Torah, the scroll is rewound, and the first words, of the first reading, of the first book are chanted.

The rules of the ***Sofer*** (*scribe*) are very demanding, and are arduously enforced, so that we know that the Torah we have in our hands today is the same as that which came to us from the hand of Moses. As a result Torah is seen as the basis of all the revelation that followed, whether we are talking about the Prophets, the Writings and Wisdom books, or the B’rit Chadasha (*renewed covenant*).

Because it is the basis of all of G-d’s word the Jewish community accords the Torah “honor in its midst”. It is housed in the Ark! It is “dressed” in “garments”, symbolizing different aspects of our relationship with G-d, and the way in which we are to understand the Word that was given to us at Sinai.

The Etz Chaim:

The Etz Chaim (*Trees of Life*) are the two poles to which the completed parchment of the Torah is attached. These poles must be long enough to extend beyond the top and bottom of the Scroll, and to allow for the attachment of decorative handles. This allows us to turn the scroll to the proper place when we are reading without handling the parchment itself. These pieces of wood are called ***Etz Chaim*** as a reminder of the words we find in Proverbs 3:18, where Solomon speaking of Torah declares: “She is a tree of life (*Etz Chaim*) to those who take hold of her, and happy are those who support it.”

As a result you will often see people reach out to take hold of the handles of the ***Etz Chaim***. This is to symbolize the individual making a commitment to hold the words, the wisdom, and the principles of Torah to themselves. This is often accompanied by a person touching the body of the Scroll with their hand, with a Siddur, or with their lips, showing their delight, their love, and their reverence for G-d’s Word. As you might imagine over time, with so many hands reaching out to touch the passing scroll, it might incur damage. As a result the Torah Scroll is robed in a ***Mantle*** and a ***Gartel***.

The Mantle and the Gartel:

The Mantle and ***the Gartel*** perform two primary functions. The first is practical, and that is the protection of the Scroll itself. The Torah is hand written by a ***Sofer*** (*a specially trained scribe*). ***The Sofer*** uses a reed or feather pen, and a specially prepared black ink to copy each letter of each word of the Torah on a scroll made of parchment (*the specially prepared skins of kosher animals*). It takes about a year to complete the writing of all 304,805 letters contained in the Torah, and if even one letter is missing or misshapen it invalidates the entire Torah Scroll, rendering it un-kosher. As a result a new Torah Scroll can cost between \$20,000 and \$50,000 dollars, and the longer it can be protected from wear and tear the better off it is.

However, the practical is not the only reason we have the mantle and the girdle. ***The Gartel*** (*Yiddish for belt*), is a tie that is used to hold the scroll together. This is both to make sure it remains in the proper place for the next reading, and to make sure that it will not tear if it is moved.

The Mantel is made to remind us of the Temple, the curtains that separated the Holy Place from the rest of the Temple, and the garments of the Priest when he went into that Holy Place. ***The Mantle*** is usually

decorated by embroidered pictures of Lions standing on their hind feet, supporting the symbol of the two tablets that were given at Sinai.

The Breastplate and the Crown:

The two most precious pieces of the Torah's accoutrement are ***the Breastplate*** and ***the Crown***. Usually they are made of silver.

The ***Breastplate*** has the symbols of the 12 tribes of Israel on it, and in some ways it is reminiscent of the Breastplate worn by ***Cohen haGadol*** (***the High Priest***), as a reminder that he was to not only bear the burdens of the people on his shoulders, but that he was to bring his people with him, in his heart, into the presence of the King. While the Torah is not in any way considered to take the place of Cohen haGadol its ***Breastplate*** reminds us of our need to go before ***haShem*** (***the Name/G-d***) with a pure heart, and in doing so to receive what He has for us from the hearing of His Torah.

The Crown is, of course the symbol of the King. While it might be said by some that the crown belongs to the Torah, it does not. The Crown belongs to the King who gave the Torah to His people, Israel, while we stood at Sinai. It is imperative that we never forget that Torah is holy and powerful only because it came to us "***ahl Pei Adonai***" (***from the Mouth of G-d***). Yes, Torah was recorded "***b'yahd Moshe***" (***by the hand of Moses***), but it is the Word of the King that we honor when we prepare for ourselves for the reading of the Torah.

The Yahd

The final accessory of the well dressed Torah is ***The Yahd*** (***the Hand***). ***The Yahd***, just like the Mantle and the Gartel has two purposes. The first is of course practical. Since the Scroll is made of specially prepared animal skins, and the ink is a very special ink, we want both to last as long as possible. Unfortunately, the oils found in our skin, and the dirt that adheres to those oils, can both stain and damage the Scroll if it is physically touched by our hands. Therefore, we use a Yahd. The Yahd is a pointer whose tip is shaped like a hand with its forefinger outstretched. As we read, we hold the Yahd in one of our hands, and we hold the Etz Chaim in the other so that the scroll remains open, and we point to each word as we read the text of Torah.

The second reason we use the Yahd is of course symbolic of the fact that when Moses went up to Sinai to receive the Ten Words from haShem, it was G-d who wrote them upon the stone tablets with "the Finger of His Hand". Therefore, when we use the Yahd to point to each individual letter in each individual word of the text of Torah it is almost as if the finger of G-d is writing each word again, only this time it is for my eyes to see.

The Liturgy before K'riat haTorah:

When we finally get to actually take the Torah out of the Ark it is done with great reverence. The opening portion of liturgy is majestic in its nature, and is intended to give us a sense that the very one who spoke the words of Torah was approaching. The melody lifts to a crescendo as we declare: ***Adonai Melech! Adonai Mahlach! Adonai Yimloch l'olam vahed!*** (*The L-rd is King! The L-rd was King! The L-rd shall be King forever and to the end of the age!*). Then as we beseech G-d to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, we all stand as the doors of the Ark are opened and the curtain is pulled aside to reveal the Sefer Torah (*the Scroll/Book of Torah*).

Upon seeing the Sefer Torah we declare two passages of Scripture. The first, from ***Numbers 10:35*** says:

“And it came to pass, whenever the Ark went forth, Moses would say, ‘Rise up O L-rd, and scatter Your enemies, and may those who hate You run from Your countenance.’”

The second, from ***Isaiah 2:3***, lays the basis for the processional that is to come. It says:

“Torah will go forth out of Tzion, and the L-rd’s Word from Jerusalem.”

We then bless G-d for giving His Torah to the people of Israel, and we proceed to a portion of liturgy that is called ***Zohar Vah'yankel***. The entire portion reads:

“Blessed is the name of the Master of the universe! Blessed is Your crown and Your place! May Your favor be with Your people Israel forever, and may You show the salvation of Your right hand to Your people in Your holy temple. Bestow on us the goodness of Your light, and, in mercy, accept our prayers. May it be Your will to extend to us a good life. May it be that I am counted among the righteous. Have compassion on me, and protect me and all that is mine, and all that belongs to Your people Israel. You are He that nourishes all and sustains all. You are He that rules over everything, and You are He that rules over Kings, for their Kingdoms are Yours. I am a servant of the Holy One, blessed is He, before whom I bow at all time. I do not put my trust in man, nor do I rely on any angel, but only on the God of heaven who is the G-d of Truth, whose Torah is true, and whose prophets are true, and who abundantly performs acts of kindness and truth.”

The Torah is then taken from the Ark, and the words of the Shema are sung out, with the congregation declaring them in response. The same is done as the *Chazzan* (*Cantor*) sing:

“One is our G-d; Great is our L-rd; holy and revered is His Name.”

As the congregation responds by repeating those same words, the reader turns back to the Ark, and bowing with the Torah in his arms he declares:

“Exalt the L-rd with me, and let us exalt His Name together.”

Processing the Torah:

In our congregation we will call all of those who are reading to the front before the Torah is removed from the Ark, and they will all participate in the processing of the Scroll through the congregation. The person reading the Torah portion will carry the Scroll, moving up one aisle and down another until every person who wants is able to reach out and touch the Torah as it passes through the midst of the people.

This is done to remind the people that the Torah is not to be seen as distant from them, or too high for them, but that it is in the very midst of them. We see this very concept in *Deuteronomy 30:11-14*:

“For this commandment, which I command you today, is not hidden from you; nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it?’ Nor *is* it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it?’ But the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.”

Reading from the Torah:

When the Torah Scroll finally returns to the front of the congregation the Torah is undressed, laid on the reading desk, turned to the proper column for the that week’s reading, and the reader recites a blessing before beginning to read.

There are any number of traditions when it comes to who says what blessings when. In some congregations each person called to read either Torah, or the Prophets, recites the blessings before and after the reading. In other congregations the first person, and each person after that who is reading, will recite the first blessing, but only the last reader will recite the closing blessing.

Our congregation has its own tradition when it comes to who says what blessings where. We have decided that the person reading the Torah

portion for the week will recite the blessing before the reading of the Torah. We will then read a portion of the weekly *Parsha* (*Portion of Torah*) in Hebrew and English.

Although we follow the one year reading cycle we do not read the whole Parsha each week. We have chosen to read one of the seven *Aliyahs* each year. (*Aliyah means to go up, and it has to do with a person being called up to read Torah, as well as being the name for the smaller divisions of the weekly portion.*)

One year we will read the *1st Aliyah*, the next we will read the *2nd Aliyah*, the next we will read the *3rd Aliyah*, and so on until we have completed all seven *Aliyot*, at which time we will begin all over again with the *1st Aliyah*. The reading of the Torah is followed by the readings from the Prophets and the Brit Chadasha, and when all of the readings are complete, the closing blessing is read by the person who read the Torah.

We have chosen this as our tradition because while we recognize the Five Books of Moses as “the Torah”, in a larger sense we acknowledge that all of Scripture is G-d’s instruction (*Torah*).

Reading from the Prophets and the Brit Chadasha:

Haftarah Readings:

The word *haftarah* comes from a Hebrew word which means “*to take leave*” or “*to part*”. As a result it has come to be understood as the concluding portion or reading for the week. However, this implies that there is nothing more to be heard from G-d’s word. Since we are a messianic Jewish congregation we believe that the writings of the B’rit Chadasha are an integral part of the revelation G-d has given to His people. Hence, we have chosen not to use the term *haftarah*, but instead to speak in terms of the readings from the Torah, the Prophets, and the B’rit Chadasha.

The custom of reading a portion from the prophets or the writings predates the Talmudic period. Some scholars say it can be traced all the way back to the 2nd century BCE (*Before the Common Era*) when **King Antiochus**, of Chanukah fame, forbade the Jews to read from the Torah. Since this ban did not extend to the Prophets the leaders of our people decided to read a portion of the prophets each week that was in some way connected to what would have been the weekly reading from Torah. Later, of course, when the ban was lifted, the tradition was maintained, as is the habit of most traditions, and the final reading became *the Haftarah*.

Traditionally, there is a single blessing that is read before *the haftarah*. This blessing praises G-d for the prophets, and for the word given to the prophets, while affirming the truth of their message.

At the end of the reading of the haftarah there are four blessings that are pronounced.

- The first emphasizes God's truthfulness and his faithfulness in fulfilling the word spoken by the prophets.
- The second is a prayer for the return of the Jewish people to Jerusalem, which was a common theme by all of the later prophets.
- The third is a prayer for the fulfillment of the prophecy that Elijah the prophet should bring us news of the coming of the Messiah, and of the restoration of the House of David.
- The fourth blessing offers thanksgiving to G-d for the Torah, for being able to worship G-d, for the prophets, and for the Sabbath. It also speaks of the future hope that one day all humanity will bless G-d's name.

The B'rit Chadasha Readings:

In the early days of the modern messianic Jewish movement the readings from the B'rit Chadasha were chosen in a very arbitrary manner. There was no continuity from congregation to congregation. However, as the movement matured it became evident that a more thoughtful manner for choosing these readings was needed. Eventually, a more broadly accepted, "formalized system" of New Covenant readings was established, and today most messianic Jewish congregations follow the same order of readings.

If you pay attention to the readings that are chosen you will find that some aspect of the Prophets and Brit Chadasha are directly related to the reading from the weekly Torah portion, and indirectly related to each other as well. This is very important. Without the Torah as the basis of G-d's Word we would not be able to fully understand what came after, nor would we easily recognize Yeshua as the Messiah. According to Saul, Yeshua is the "Telos", the focal point or end purpose of the Torah. Without it we cannot see Him properly, and without Him we cannot understand Torah properly.

There are blessings that are read both before and after the reading from the B'rit Chadasha, and when all of the readings and blessings are complete it is time to return the Torah to the Ark.

The Liturgy After K'riat haTorah:

Hagbah (lifting the Scroll)

Hagbah (*lifting or hoisting*), has its roots in a passage from the book of Nehemiah. We are told in chapter eight of that book that a Scroll of Torah was found in one of the storerooms of the Temple. Our people, who had been in captivity for over seventy years before returning to rebuild both the wall of Jerusalem and the Temple, had never heard or seen the Torah being read in the Holy Temple. So, Ezra, the Scribe, had the entire scroll read publically, in the presence of all the people. This is recorded for us in ***Nehemiah 8:5***.

“And Ezra opened the scroll in the ***sight*** of all the people.”

As a result of this passage a tradition arose which resulted in the very beautiful and ritualized Hagbah.

During ***Hagbah*** the scroll that has just been read is opened to show at least three columns of the text, and it is lifted high so that everyone in the congregation can see the words of the Torah. While this is done, everyone calls out or chants, “***V'zoht haTorah...***”

“***This is the Torah*** that Moses set before the children of Israel. It is from the hand of Moses...It is from the mouth of G-d.”

G'lilah (Dressing the Scroll):

After the Torah is lifted up for all to see, the person doing Hagbah is seated and the scroll is rolled up and dressed. This process is called ***G'lilah***. It is considered an honor to do this, and at least in our congregation we will call different groups of people to the bima to help in the dressing of the scroll. One person will put ***the gartel*** on, and as the next person places ***the mantel*** on the Torah a blessing is recited, which begins:

“Let them praise the name of the L-rd, for His name alone is to be exalted!”

To which the congregation responds:

“His praise is over earth and heaven, for He has lifted up the power of His people, to the honor of His loving one, the children of Israel, the people near to Him. Praise the L-rd.”

Etz Chaim

When the scroll is fully dressed, it is then ready to be placed in the Ark again. The person who raised the scroll for ***Hagbah*** rises, and after the

curtain of the Ark is opened again he places the Torah in the Ark. As this is being done *Etz Chaim* is chanted:

“It is a tree of life to those who take hold of it, and happy are those who support it. Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace. L-rd, turn us to You and we will return. Renew our days as of old.”

You Are Faithful:

At the completion of Etz Chaim we recite the following as we close the doors to the Ark.

“You are faithful, L-rd our G-d, and Your words are faithful, for no word of Yours shall remain unfulfilled. You are a faithful G-d and King. Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, who is faithful in fulfilling Your words.

“Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, who has given us the Word of Life, Messiah Yeshua.”

Concluding Prayers

Musaf:

Musaf comes from a Hebrew word that means *extra or additional*. This tradition has its beginnings during the times of the Temple, where we are told that on Holy days there were additional offerings given. An example of this is found in *Leviticus 23:37-38*:

“These are the feasts of the L-rd which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire to the L-rd, a burnt offering and a grain offering, a sacrifice and drink offerings, everything on its day—*in addition to* the Sabbaths of the L-rd, *in addition to* your gifts, *in addition to* all your vows, and *in addition to* all your freewill offerings which you give to the L-rd.”

Since we don't have a temple, or priesthood, and since we are still in *Diaspora*, the *Rabbonim* (*Rabbinic Authorities/Courts*) decided that these “*additional sacrifices*” would be offered in the form of prayer.

Musaf begins with the *Amidah* which is followed by a number of prayers and readings known as *Tikanta Shabbat* (*Lifting up Shabbat*). These prayers highlight the holiness of the Sabbath, and include the *Kedusha* (“*Holy, Holy, Holy...*”), *Yism'chu* (“*They shall rejoice in Your sovereignty...*”), *Eloheyenu* (“*Our G-d and G-d of our fathers, may you be pleased with our rest...*”), and

Retzei ("Be favorable, our G-d, toward your people Israel and toward their prayer, and restore service of your Temple...").

In our congregation we incorporate most of these prayers and readings into the Amidah for the Shacharit service for Shabbat.

The Alenu

A part of the *Musaf* service includes the *Alenu* (*Our duty*). *Rav Hay Gaon* (the last of the *Babylonian Gaonim* or *Masters*), believed that *Joshua ben Nun* composed this prayer as he led the people of Israel into the land G-d had promised them. The *Alenu* is recited at the conclusion of virtually every service, with the congregation standing and facing the *Ark*, while its doors and curtains are open.

The *Alenu* emphatically states that we have been called by G-d to be His people, and that we are different from the nations around us. It is divided into two parts. The first part of the *Alenu* is a reminder that our G-d is the only true G-d, and that apart from Him nothing truly matters. Everything we see around us, the whole creation, exists because our G-d keeps it. This section of the *Alenu* is usually chanted by the Chazzan and the congregation.

The second part of the *Alenu* is usually said in "quiet meditation", beginning with "Therefore..." In essence, because the first part is true, we can trust that the second part will be made true as well. The focus of this second section of the *Alenu* is the redemption of the world, and the establishment of G-d's kingdom upon the Earth.

When it becomes clear that the majority of the congregation has completed the reading, the *Chazzan* chants the last two lines of the *Alenu*, and upon its conclusion the *Ark* is closed and the congregation is allowed to sit.

Mourner's Kaddish

At the end of the *Alenu* those who are in mourning are encouraged to remain standing for the *Mourner's Kaddish*. Traditionally the *Mourner's Kaddish* is recited by immediate family members (*mother, father, sister, brother, son, daughter, etc.*) every day during the first month of mourning, and then each Shabbat during the remaining eleven months of bereavement. After that, it is said on the anniversary or *Yahrtzeit* of the death of their loved one, and during certain holidays when *Yiskor* (from the Hebrew "to remember") is said. The word *yahrtzeit* comes from the Yiddish words *Yahr* (*year*) and *Zeit* (*time*).

Although the *Mourner's Kaddish* is recited upon the death of a spouse, a sibling, a parent or a child, it has nothing to do with praying for the

dead, or for that matter with death itself. It is a prayer of praise to G-d, helping those who are enduring the pain of mourning to have a proper focus and perspective as they deal with their loss. It is in reality a *prayer for the living*; a reminder to everyone, including the mourner, that even in death G-d is to be praised.

Adon Olam

Adon Olam is attributed to the great medieval poet, *Solomon Ibn Gabriol*. It is a *declaration of faith*, and is treasured for the great truths which it declares. It is commonly recited at the end of the service and there are many melodies to choose from, coming out of the *Ashkenazi* (*Eastern and Western European Jews*), *Sephardi* (*Spanish, Portuguese, North African, and Middle Eastern Jews*), *Mizrachi* (*Israeli*), *Yemini* (*Yemenite*), *Persian/Iranian, and Iraqi* traditions.

After the Service Ends:

Oneg

An *Oneg* is a celebration. It is traditional in many Jewish communities to gather together on Shabbat for an informal celebration. During this time there is singing, talking, playing, singing, and of course eating. In some communities this is done in the setting of someone's home, however in many places, where people live longer distances from each other, the practice of this informal gathering called the *Oneg* is done in the Synagogue at the end of the Musaf service for Shabbat. This allows people who may not see each other on a regular basis to share time and life around food and festivity.

Birkat haMazon (*Grace after Meals*)

Birkat haMazon (*Grace after Meals*) or *Benching* (*a "Yinglish" [Yiddish/English] corruption of the word "Benediction"*) is a series of blessings that was established by Jewish Law (*read that tradition*) that is recited following a meal that includes bread or matzoh.

It is typical for *Birkat haMazon* to be read to oneself after regular meals, but it is often sung aloud following meals on Shabbat and festivals. The blessings can be found in almost all *Siddurim*, and can also be found separately, printed in small booklets called *birkon* or *benchers*.

The scriptural source for the recitation of *Birkat haMazon* is found in

Deuteronomy 8:10-18.

"When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the L-rd your G-d for the good land which he has given you. Beware that you forget not the L-rd your G-d, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command you this day; lest when you have eaten and are full, and have built goodly houses, and lived there; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the L-rd your G-d, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery; who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, where were venomous serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought you water out of the rock of flint; who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers knew not, that he might humble you, and that he might test you, to do you good in the end; and you say in your heart, My power and the might of my hand has gotten me this wealth. And you shall remember the L-rd your G-d; for he is who gives you power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he swore to your fathers, as it is this day."

Birkat haMazon is made up of four blessings:

- **A blessing over the food**

Tradition tells us that Moses composed a prayer of thanksgiving for haShem's provision of manna. The blessing over the food is based on this prayer.

- **Blessing for the land**

A part of G-d's covenant with our people was the promise of the land. While we usually think of this as solely being something from G-d to His people, the fact is that we became responsible to care for the land entrusted to us, and that meant being obedient to the commandments of G-d. The blessing for the Land, which tradition tells us was composed by Joshua when he lead us into the Land, addresses our thanking G-d for His giving us the Land, as well as our responsibility to be faithful to live as Israel. Remember it is not the land that is Israel; we are Israel, and the land is given to us.

- **Jerusalem**

It was under the rule of David that Jerusalem became known as the "city of the Great King". The blessing over the city of Jerusalem is attributed to David. However, it is not just the city that is the focus here. The "glory" of the City...that which made it "the City of the Great

King"...was the Temple. As a result, a part of this blessing focuses on the building and rebuilding of the Temple.

- **God's goodness**

We are told that *Rabban Gamliel* wrote the blessing of thanksgiving that is included in *Birkat haMazon*. It is considered imperative that we recognize G-d's goodness as one of the major attributes of His relationship with us. Therefore, the recitation of this blessing is regarded as an obligation.

The remainder of *Birkat haMazon* is made up of a series of short prayers, each beginning with the word *haRachaman* (*the Compassionate*). These prayers all ask, in one way or another, that God would show us His compassion.

Recommended Reading:

Budoff, Betzalel, trans/ed. *Messianic Jewish Siddur for Shabbat*.
Skokie, IL: Devar Emet Messianic Publications, 2006

Garfiel, Evelyn. *Service of the Heart: Guide to the Jewish Prayerbook*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1989

Rosenberg, Arnold S. *Jewish Liturgy as a Spiritual System*.
Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc. 1997

Elbogen, Ismar. *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*.
Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society and New York,
NY: Jewish Theological Seminary of America

Davis, Menachen, ed. *The Shottenstein Edition. The Siddur. The Artscroll Series*. Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 2008.