



Chapter 1

One should never deviate¹ from his ancestors' liturgy of prayer, for Israel's prayer ascends to the gates of Heaven, and there are twelve gates there, which are called the Gates of Prayer, parallel to the twelve tribes.² Every person receives from his parent,³ who received from his ancestors, who received from the head of their tribe, the son of our father Yaakov of blessed memory, the order of his prayer, for when the sons of Yaakov prayed, Gd prepared twelve gates in the heavens, and each gate is positioned opposite each tribe according to its attributes. It turns out that anyone who deviates from the liturgy that his ancestors prayed, which the head of his tribe prayed, confuses the gates, and his prayer enters in a jumble.⁴ And the recent generations have been punished, those who switched the liturgy of prayer and introduced mass destruction⁵ in the heavens and the world below and increased division in Israel and drained the strength of Israel below and above. And the world has still not returned to its proper state.

Chapter 2

The order of prayer I pray has deviated from that which my ancestors prayed. Not only that, but I go and trade liturgy for liturgy and order for order. How may one deviate from his ancestral liturgy and switch order for order? But the tossing about that I have endured from my beginnings until today caused this.

How so? At first I prayed with my father, of blessed memory, in the *kloiz* of the Chassidim. The Chassidim in the *kloiz* prayed according to the Sephard custom, and so I also prayed according to the Sephard custom.⁶

When I grew a bit, I went to study Torah in the old study hall, where they prayed in the Ashkenaz liturgy, which they received from their ancestors, and their ancestors from their ancestors, from the days of the first Ashkenazi leaders. They were careful not to add anything and not to subtract anything, and not to alter anything, even one word.⁷ I said, "Could I, the smallest of the students, stand and deviate from the custom?" I joined my prayer with their prayers and prayed according to their custom.

When I grew older I merited to ascend to the Land of Israel. I established my life in Jaffa, because Jaffa was a metropolis for people seeking work. Jaffa was settled by Pharisees⁸ and Chassidim at that time. Even though these prayed the Ashkenazi liturgy and these the Sephard liturgy, the liturgy of these was not like the Ashkenazi liturgy of our old study hall, and the liturgy of these was not like the Sephard liturgy of the *kloiz* in our town, for in the *kloiz* in our town they prayed according to the liturgy of the Chassidim of Poland, Volhynia and Ukraine, as established by the *tzaddikim* of the generation, students of the students of the Baal Shem Tov of blessed memory,⁹ and the Chassidim of Jaffa prayed according to the prayer of the Rav from Liadi of blessed memory.¹⁰ In our old study hall they prayed the Ashkenazi

¹ The Hebrew, אל יטנה אדם, is used frequently in Talmudic and Halachic literature regarding not deviating from local practice. See, for example, Pesachim 51b, Rama Orach Chaim 619:1 and Aruch haShulchan Orach Chaim 619:6. At least the first two, and likely the third, would have been familiar to Agnon.

² This idea is developed by Rabbi Chaim Vital, in the name of his mentor, the Ari z"l.

³ I have chosen the gender-neutral "parent" for the contemporary ear, but I'm not sure that Agnon would have agreed

⁴ Avodah Zarah 2a describes the nations of the world entering before G-d in *irbuvya*, a jumble, and G-d telling them to enter instead by individual nationality.

⁵ The original is *androlomusia*, a term used rabbinically to describe chaotic destruction. See, for example, Rashi to Bereishit 6:13 (regarding the Mabul flood), citing Vayikra Rabbah 23:9. For a brief discussion of the Greek etymology of this word, see <https://www.balashon.com/2015/06/androlomusia.html>.

⁶ The early Chassidim adopted the prayer format of the Ari z"l, which developed in 16th century Safed. The community there were largely part of the Spanish diaspora (via various lands), and so it was known as the Sephard (Spanish) liturgy.

⁷ Ashkenaz refers to Germany, and the German authorities of the medieval period were very particular about maintaining their liturgy, and even the tunes used for prayer. See, for example, Rama Orach Chaim 619:1 cited above.

⁸ "Pharisees" is Agnon's term for what are often called *Mitnagdim*, the mainstream traditional Jews who did not accept the changes made by Chassidim. Literally, it means "those who are separate."

⁹ Founder of the modern Chassidic movement

¹⁰ The first Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi

liturgy they received from their ancestors, and their ancestors from their ancestors, from the days of the first exiles of Germany, and in Jaffa they prayed according to the Ashkenazi liturgy established by the Gaon Rabbi Eliyahu of blessed memory. Sometimes I prayed with the Pharisees because they prayed early, and sometimes I prayed with the Chassidim because they delayed their prayers. In order not to separate from the community, I prayed in each place according to its liturgy. As a result, I became accustomed to pray in different liturgies. I knew it was prohibited to change from one liturgy to another liturgy, but because of the prohibition of "*Lo titgodidu*"¹¹ and because public prayer is beloved,¹² I permitted myself to deviate.

There were another two congregations in Jaffa, Sephardim and Yemenites. They were also divided into multiple synagogues, and they were divided from each other by the liturgy of prayer. Even though all of them were included in the community of Sephardim, the liturgy of Yemenites was not like the liturgy of the Sephardim, and both of them were different from the Sephard liturgy of Lubavitch Chassidim, which was also different from the Sephard liturgy of the Chassidim of our town. And since I lived in their neighbourhood and I was careful not to be called a bad neighbour,¹³ I would enter to pray at times in this synagogue and at times in this synagogue, and when I came to pray they would extend to me a *siddur* of theirs. I showed respect to the host¹⁴ and prayed in the order of their prayers.

After I spent six years in the Land of Israel, like the law of a Hebrew slave,¹⁵ it was decreed upon me that I depart to the Diaspora. I descended to the land of Germany and I rolled about from place to place, sometimes in this region and sometimes in this region, and the Land of Germany was also divided in the liturgy of prayer into the Ashkenaz custom and the Polish custom, with the Elbe River dividing between them. And so that I would not be one of those who shock,¹⁶ I prayed in each place according to the custom of the place, here the Ashkenaz custom and here the Polish custom. And when I arrived in a place that had a *minyán*¹⁷ of Chassidim, I entered to pray with the Chassidim. And because their prayer is recited pleasantly, I was drawn after it and I prayed with their order.

After some years, the years of my exile were complete and I merited to return to the Land of Israel, and I merited to establish my dwelling in Jerusalem. I thought that here I would establish a place for my prayer and pray with a set liturgy. But out of love of the holy places, I circulated in all of the synagogues and study halls, and there are 480 synagogues and study halls in Jerusalem,¹⁸ and in each one they pray with a unique liturgy, and wherever I went I prayed in that liturgy, in order to include my prayer with the prayer of the community. And still, I move from liturgy to liturgy and from *siddur* to *siddur*, other than for *birkat hamazon*¹⁹ for which I have not deviated from the liturgy of my father of blessed memory. And just as he was accustomed to say in the request of *Rachem*²⁰ "that we not be shamed and that we not be embarrassed and that we not stumble," so I am accustomed, even though the request of "and that we not stumble" is not mentioned in most *siddurim*.²¹

¹¹ This is Devarim 14:1. The most literal translation is "You shall not cut yourselves," but as explained in Yevamot 13b, it includes not carving our nation into sects.

¹² Beloved to G-d, as in Berachot 7b-8a

¹³ Berachot 8a labels a person a "bad neighbour" for not attending a local synagogue

¹⁴ Berachot 63b demonstrates the importance of honouring one's host

¹⁵ Shemot 21:2, and see Shemuel I 26:19

¹⁶ Menachot 40a describes someone who deviates from local practice, appearing to be doing something inappropriate, as "one of those who shock".

¹⁷ Prayer quorum

¹⁸ This census comes from Eichah Rabbah 2:4

¹⁹ The blessing recited after meals

²⁰ The third blessing of *birkat hamazon*

²¹ See Rabbi Avraham Dovid Wahrman of Buczacz, Eishel Avraham Orach Chaim 187, as well as Aruch haShulchan Orach Chaim 188:6

Chapter 3

One time, we hosted a pretty young woman, daughter of good people,²² daughter of leaders of Ashkenaz, whose ancestors served in the rabbinate of several holy communities in the Diaspora. She heard me say “and that we not stumble” and she asked the place for this request. I told her, “So I have received from my father’s house.”

She said, “How do you say, ‘So I have received?’ This request is not mentioned in the *siddur!*”²³ I told her, “It certainly is mentioned.”

She produced the *Sfat Emet siddur*²⁴ and showed me that this request was not mentioned there at all.

I joked, saying, “You are fortunate, dwellers of the land of Germany, that you never needed this, for all of you are scholars, from your great ones to your little ones, and you do not come to stumbling. Therefore, your *siddurim* have let this request go. But we Poles, woe is me that I say this, we need this prayer. May we merit before Gd, such that He hears our request! Therefore they established it in our *siddurim*.”

I took a *siddur* to show her, and I did not find this request. I took another *siddur* and I did not find this request in it. Because I am accustomed to many liturgies for prayer, I collected many *siddurim*. I rose and checked in all of those *siddurim*, and I did not find in *birkat hamazon* a mention of these two words, of “and that we not stumble”.

The young woman said, “Didn’t I tell you that these words are not part of the request?” And when she said this, she peered at me²⁵ like someone who says to his friend, “This coin has been disqualified.”²⁶

Some time later she went to the valley and to the Galil,²⁷ and from there she descended to the *Adloyada* in Tel Aviv.²⁸ From there she returned to Germany to complete her studies. From there she wrote us a letter of thanks for the hospitality we provided her, me and my wife. After some time she sent us a book she composed for her doctorate, on customs among nations and in Israel which are founded on false ideas.²⁹

This book did not sit well with me. I wanted to write to her that I had heard from one sage named Rabbi Shemuel, “What are false ideas? Anything not mentioned in the Code of Jewish Law.³⁰” But I said, “If I will start critiquing every book that they send me, I will never manage it.” But if I averted my eyes from her book and did not thank her, I was obligated to bless her upon earning her doctorate. But my wife was busy with household matters, and I have difficulty writing letters. And I left the matter and said, “Tomorrow I will write, after tomorrow I will write, the time will come and I will write to her.” Along the way, I never wrote anything to her.

²² This term is used for someone who descends from good stock, but especially for someone who personally does not live up to their ancestors. See, for example, Ketuvot 66a and Ketuvot 67b.

²³ This was a standard argument from the German Haskalah movement to traditionalists, demanding that their Halachic positions be grounded in text rather than mimesis.

²⁴ This is also known as the Rodelheim or Roedelheim Siddur, a German-Hebrew siddur published in more than 200 editions by Rabbi Wolf Heidenheim in the late 19th-early 20th century.

²⁵ The unusual Hebrew word for looking, הציצה, appears four times in this short story. Dr. Dina Levin (שלא נבוש ולא נכלם ולא נכשל) (Limudim 12, 2015) connects this with Shir haShirim 2:9, which describes G-d lovingly peering at the Jewish people through gaps in a wall.

²⁶ This turn of phrase comes from Sanhedrin 104b, explaining Eichah 1:15, that G-d looked upon our mightiest people as one who says, “This coin has been disqualified.” The sense is total rejection.

²⁷ This was a term for a type of tour in the 1930’s; see

https://web.nli.org.il/sites/nli/hebrew/digitalibrary/pages/viewer.aspx?presentorid=NNL_Ephemera&DocID=NNL_Ephemera700116847

²⁸ This is an annual Purim parade held in Tel Aviv since 1912. The name comes from the Talmudic description of intoxication on Purim, עד דלא ידע *ad d’lo yada* – until one does not know the difference between “Cursed is Haman” and “Blessed is Mordechai”. For more on the parade, see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adloyada>.

²⁹ Possibly: superstition

³⁰ I have not been able to trace the source for this statement. I suspect that Agnon is quoting himself. See בלבב ימים, where he also refers to himself, as Rabbi Shemuel Yosef.

Chapter 4

In this period, the *yahrtzeit* of my father of blessed memory came. I went to the city to pray. Along the way it occurred to me that for a long time I had prayed in many liturgies; now that I would lead the services, I would be confused in my prayer. I shall go and acquire a *siddur* for myself.

I entered a bookstore, and a *birkat hamazon* came to my hand, like the one that hung above our table in my father's house. I peered and saw that recorded in the prayer of *Rachem* was "and that we not stumble." I purchased the book and left happy. After the prayer, I returned to my home and ate the evening bread. Once I ate and drank, I took the *birkat hamazon* that I had bought and blessed from it, in honour of the new book and in honour of these two words, "and that we not stumble," that I had found in it.

When I reached the prayer of *Rachem*, the letters came³¹ and said, "You see that your father's words have a basis."

A thought arose in my heart: I will send that young woman this book, to show her that I never made up words and in order to satisfy her regarding her letter and her book. Immediately I converted thought into action,³² and I took an envelope and I wrote her name and her last name and her title of honour and the name of her city and the name of the street on which she lived. And I dipped the end of the quill in red ink and I drew a line beneath the words, "and that we not stumble," so that she would see it if she read it.

After some time she wrote to me a letter of thanks for the gift I had sent her. She also wrote that she was preparing to move to Israel, her mate with her, and they were going to make their *chuppah* in Jerusalem. It was not long before she came, with her mate, and they invited me to come to their *chuppah*.

Chapter 5

There is no *chen*³³ like that of a bride in her *chuppah*, and there is no joy like the joy of a groom upon a bride. But they were also like most of our generation who do not taste the taste of the joy of a mitzvah;³⁴ they reduced the joy of their *chuppah* and they did not do it publicly, but they entered the home of the Rabbi in their neighbourhood and he conducted their wedding and they departed and went on their way. And they took ten men,³⁵ including me, and they entered their host to hold a wedding meal. Once we ate and drank, they honoured me to bless the seven blessings.

They poured two cups for me. I took one cup in my hand and I recited, loudly and musically, "Remove grief and also rage, etc."³⁶ And I blessed "The One who has joy in His abode," and I blessed *birkat hamazon*, and when I reached the prayer of *Rachem* I said, as is my custom, "And that we not stumble."

I felt the bride looking at me affectionately. Even though my eyes were closed in the manner of those who recite blessings,³⁷ I felt her looking at me. I pressed my eyes closed more, so that I would not be distracted from the One to whom we bless.

After *birkat hamazon*, I put down the first cup from my hand and picked up the second cup, and I blessed "Who created all for His glory" "Who created humanity" "Who gladdens Zion with her children" "Who gladdens the groom and the

³¹ Eichah Rabbah Petichta 24 speaks of the letters of the alphabet testifying to Jewish violation of Judaism, in ways that relate to each letter.

³² Agnon borrows this phrase from Kiddushin 39b-40a, although there the usage is different, describing considering intent for action like action itself

³³ *Chen* is often translated as "favour". It refers to a form of beauty which attracts the favour of all who see the bearer.

³⁴ This is a note of disapproval; eating at a meal in honour of a mitzvah is especially meritorious. See Rama Yoreh Deah 265:12.

³⁵ The quorum for the ritual of holding a *sheva berachot* meal in the week after a wedding. At such a meal, seven special blessings are appended to the *birkat hamazon*. Two cups of wine are used; one cup is associated with the standard *birkat hamazon*, and the other is in honour of the *sheva berachot*.

³⁶ This is the ritual introduction to the *birkat hamazon* at a *sheva berachot* meal.

³⁷ Regarding closing one's eyes to improve concentration while praying, see Mishneh Berurah 90:63, 93:2 and 96:5, and Aruch haShulchan Orach Chaim 93:8

bride" "Who gladdens the groom with the bride" and then I again picked up the first cup and blessed upon the wine and I drank of the two cups and I gave to the groom and bride and to all of those attending and I blessed *al hagefen* and I departed and went on my way.

Chapter 6

The bride came out to escort me. I told her, "Go back, it is not fitting for a bride's honour to escort others."³⁸

She said, "Does Rebbe³⁹ fear lest the *mazikin* affect me when I go back?"

I said, "G-d forbid, thus should not happen. But still, one needs to be concerned."

She said to me, "I am not concerned; I have superior protection."

I said to her, "What is it?"

She produced a small book, encrusted with precious stones and gems.

I peered and saw that it was the *birkat hamazon* I had sent her.

I said, "The book cost a *perutah*⁴⁰ and it is bound in gold!"

She said to me, "This book deserves an even finer binding."

I said to her, "All of our books deserve to be encrusted in precious stones and gems, certainly the books of our prayers, with which we come before G-d!"

She said, "And this book all the more so."

I said to her, "And why this book in particular?"

She lowered her head in embarrassment and said, "Because a miracle occurred for me through it."

What miracle happened for her? A non-Jew was pursuing her to take her as a wife, and she set a time for him. When his time arrived, he came to her. He took her hands in his hands, and sat with her. Then they knocked on the door, and they brought her something. She left and took it. She opened it and peered at it. The two words, "And that we not stumble," came and bowed low before her. She took it to heart and thought quickly about herself. She stood and dismissed the non-Jew and returned to her father. There she found her Jewish friend; in their youth they had exchanged pledges. Their love returned and was awakened. She ascended with him to the Land of Israel and she married him according to the law of Moses and Israel. The woman said to me, "Every day, we bless you, for in the merit of your gift I remained in my Judaism and I merited to ascend to the Land of Israel."

I said to her:⁴¹ If there is to bless, bless our G-d, with Whom are all blessings, for in His love with which He loves us and in His gladness with which He is glad in us, He chose us from all of the nations and consecrated us with *chuppah* and marriage.⁴² How great are the words of the Sages who said, "One should always be careful with the custom of his ancestors." If for two words a life was saved from Israel and she remained in her Judaism, how many Jewish souls would be saved from assimilation and from destruction if all Israel would be careful with the custom of their ancestors.

1. The trail

- The Maggid of Yerushalayim in שאל אביך ויגדך
- Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein in טובך יביעו
- Artscroll Siddur of Rav Chaim Kanievsky?
- <https://web.archive.org/web/20111125224602/http://www.shturem.net/index.php?section=artdays&id=352> (Rabbi Yehoshua Mondschein)
- Kitty Steinschneider? https://www.bhol.co.il/forums/topic.asp?whichpage=2&topic_id=2452077

³⁸ As a matter of Halachah, the entire community is obligated to cease its affairs to escort a bride; see Ketuvot 17a. In addition, this chapter references a separate concern that a groom or bride who is unescorted is vulnerable to attacks by invisible forces. These forces are what Agnon calls *mazikin* here. See Mishneh Berurah 239:9.

³⁹ "My teacher" or "My master"

⁴⁰ The most minimal Talmudic coin

⁴¹ I am not certain how much of this paragraph is a record of his words to the bride.

⁴² This is part of the text of one of the wedding blessings

2. S. Y. Agnon, ספר, סופר וסיפור, pg. 362 (1962 edition), citing Chassidic sources

בנידו מה שיש נוסחאות שונות בענין התפילה ונסתפק השואל האיך לנהוג בנפשו בדברים כאלו. אמרתי דברים כאלו אי אפשר לבאר בכתב, אמנם זאת כבר נודע שאמרו רבותינו ז"ל (שקלים ו:ג) "י"ג השתחויות היו במקדש כנגד י"ג שערים ונרמזו ביחזקאל לעתיד אי"ה (יחזקאל מח:לא) 'שער ראובן אחד וגו' כי אז יהיה קדושת ירושלים כקדושת המקדש העבר. "הנה הי"ב שערים הם שער לכל שבת ושבת. וידוע שבית המקדש מכוון כנגד בית המקדש של מעלה ונמצא שיש לבית המקדש שלמעלה ג"כ שער לכל שבת ושבת כמבואר בכתבי האר"י זצלה"ה..."

Regarding the fact that there are different liturgies in prayer, and the questioner asked how to conduct himself in these matters. I said: One cannot explain such things in writing, but this is already known, as our Sages said (Shekalim 6:3), "There were 13 [sites for] bowing in the Temple, opposite the 13 gates. It is hinted in Yechezkel (48:31) that in the future, Gd willing, 'One gate of Reuven, etc.' For then the sanctity of [all of] Jerusalem will be like the past sanctity of the Temple." The twelve gates are a gate for each tribe. And it is known that the Temple is aligned opposite the Temple in the Heavens, so that the Temple in the Heavens also has a gate for each tribe, as explained in the writings of the Ari z"l...

3. Talmud, Avodah Zarah 2a

מיד מתקבצין ובאין עובדי כוכבים בערבוביא שנאמר "כל הגוים נקבצו יחדו [וגו'] (ישעי' מג:ט) "אמר להם הקב"ה: אל תכנסו לפני בערבוביא אלא תכנס כל אומה ואומה וסופריה..."

Immediately, all of the idolaters will gather and come in a jumble, as Isaiah 43:9 says, "All of the nations gathered together, etc." Gd will say to them: Do not enter before Me in a jumble, but each nation should enter with its sages...

4. Rabbi Yehudah heChasid (12th century Germany), Sefer Chasidim 114

המשנה מנהג ראשונים כמו פיוטים וקרובין, שהנהיגו לומר "אין צור" חלף קרובין הקליר וזהו המנהג, ואמר קרובין אחרות, עובר משום "אל תשיג גבול עולם אשר עשו אבותיך" (משלי כ"ב כ"ה) "לא תשיג גבול רעך אשר גבלו ראשונים (דברים י"ט י"ד)".

One who alters the early custom, such as in *piyutim* and *krovetz*, [for example] that they said *Ein Tzur* instead of the *krovetz* of Rabbi Yehudah haKallir and this is the custom, and he says other *krovetz*, violates "Do not overstep the eternal border made by your ancestors (Proverbs 22:28)" and "Do not overstep the border of your friend, established by the first ones (Devarim 19:14)".

5. Rabbi Avraham Gombiner (17th century Poland), Magen Avraham 68:Introduction

האר"י ז"ל לא היה אומר פיוטים ופזמונים אלא מה שסדרו הראשונים כגון הקלירי שנתקנו ע"ד האמת, אמנם המנהגים שנהגו בשרשי התפלה אין לשנות ממנהג מקומו כי י"ב שערים בשמים נגד י"ב שבטים וכל שבת יש לו שער ומנהג לבד מה שנזכר בגמרא שוה לכל (הכוונות). וז"ל הגמרא ירושלמי (עי' ירושל' עירובין ג:ט) "אף על פי ששלהנו לכם סדר התפלות, אל תשנו ממנהג אבותיכם. "עכ"ל וכ"כ בס"ח סי' רנ"ו וכתב שגם הפוסקים שאומרים על הפיוטים צריך לנגן כמו שמנגנים הקרובין".

The Ari z"l did not say *piyutim* and *pizmonim*, other than what the early ones has established, like Rabbi Elazar haKallir, which were established in the path of Truth. But customs which have been practiced in the roots of prayer, one should not deviate from the practice of his place, for there are twelve gates in the Heavens opposite the twelve tribes, and each tribe has a gate and custom, apart from what is mentioned in the Talmud which is the same for all. (*HaKavanot*) And this is the text of the Jerusalem Talmud (see Eruvin 3:9), "Even though we have sent you the order of the prayers, do not deviate from the custom of your ancestors." And so wrote Sefer Chasidim 256, and he also wrote that the verses said with the *piyutim* must sung with the tune of the *krovetz*.

6. Rabbi Moshe Schick (19th century Hungary), Responsa of Maharam Schick Choshen Mishpat 23

ואף על גב שכ' המג"א הנ"ל דלכל מנהג יש שער למעלה ואין לשנות. מ"מ נ"ל מי שנפשו חשקה למנהג האחר ע"ז לא אמר המג"א דמצינו בגמרא וכן הוא בחובת הלכות שלמצוה או מעשה שהאדם מוצא בנפשו חשק בוודאי יש לזאת המצוה והמעשה שייכות לנשמתו טפי... וכבר נתפשט הדבר בהרבה קהילות כי האנשים שרוצין להתפלל נוסח ספרד עושין להם מנין בפ"ע. וכבר כ' מרן הגאון בעל הת"ס זצ"ל בחלק ששי מתשובת הת"ס בתשובה הראשונה דאין בזה משום אגודות אגודות:

And even though the Magen Avraham wrote that every custom has a gate above and one should not deviate, still, it appears to me that if someone's soul yearns for a different custom, Magen Avraham was not talking about this. We have found in the Talmud, and so in Chovot halevavot, that for a mitzvah or behaviour for which one finds a yearning in his soul, certainly, this mitzvah of behaviour has a greater connection to his soul... And it has already spread in many communities that those who wish to pray in the Sephard liturgy make their own *minyán*. And the Chatam Sofer wrote (6:1) that this does not involve [the prohibition against] splintering the community.

7. Rabbi Moshe Isserless (16th century Poland), Orach Chaim 619:1, citing Maharil (14th-15th c. Germany) ואל ישנה אדם ממנהג העיר, אפילו בניגונים או בפיוטים שאומרים שם (מהרי"ל).

And one should not deviate from the local custom, even the in tunes or *piyutim* they say there.

8. Rabbi Dovid Zvi Hoffman (19th-20th century Germany), Commentary to Vayikra 18:1-5

לדעת התוספות במסכת עבודה זרה יא, א ד"ה ואי, נכללו באיסור "ובהוקותיהם לא תלכו" שני מיני חוקות: א) מנהגים הקשורים בעבודת אלילים; אלה אסורים אף אם היו נהוגים לפנים בישראל, ב) מעשים שאין להם יסוד בתבונה ומקורם באמונות תפלות, הם הם "דרכי האמורי" במובן המצומצם (תוספתא שבת פרקים ז – ח).

According to Tosafot Avodah Zarah 11a *v'ee*, the prohibition of "And do not walk in their statutes" includes two kinds of statutes: 1) Customs tied to idolatry, which are prohibited even if they were previously done in Israel; 2) Deeds which have no logical basis, and their source is in superstition, these are "Emorite ways" in the narrow sense. (Tosefta Shabbat 7-8)

9. Rabbi Avraham Dovid Wahrman (18th-19th c. Buczac), Eishel Avraham, Orach Chaim 187

אני אומר על פי הרגילות שלי "שלא נבוש ולא נכלם ולא נכשל" גם בברכת המזון כי כן שמעתי. אך מצד שלא נדפס כן בשום נוסח, אם ירצה ד' בלי נדר כשאהיה נזכר מעכשיו לא אומרנו בברכת המזון, כי בברכת אהבה שייך כן לנכון על כל ההנהגות, וכמו שכתבנו במקום אחר בזה. משא"כ כאן דקאי אפרנסה שתהיה מתחת יד השי"ת ולא מתחת ידי בשר ודם, אין נכון לומר "שלא נכשל", דמשמע כאלו בפרנסה שע"י בשר ודם אי אפשר בלי מכשול, וח"ו לומר כן, והרשות נתונה לשמור את עצמו גם בפרנסה שע"י בשר ודם שלא יהיה בה מכשול, ולזה נכון שלא לומר רק "שלא נבוש ולא נכלם לעולם."

I habitually say, "That we not be shamed and that we not be embarrassed and that we not stumble" in *birkat hamazon* as well, for so I heard. But since it is not printed thus in any liturgy, Gd willing and without a vow, from now on, when I remember, I will not say it in *birkat hamazon*. For in the blessing of *Ahavat Olam* it is properly relevant, according to all practices, as we have written of this elsewhere. As opposed to here, where it is about livelihood, [asking] that it should come from Gd's hand and not the hand of flesh and blood, it is not proper to say, "that we not stumble." That would indicate that livelihood at the hands of flesh and blood must involve stumbling, and Gd forbid to say so! All are licensed to guard themselves also in livelihood that comes at the hands of flesh and blood, that there should be no stumbling. Therefore it is correct to say only, "That we not be ashamed and that we not be embarrassed, ever."