

1. Rabbi Dr. Haym Soloveitchik, Rupture and Reconstruction (Tradition 1994, [www.lookstein.org/links/orthodoxy.htm](http://www.lookstein.org/links/orthodoxy.htm))

In the multi-ethnic, corporate states of central and Eastern Europe, nationalities lived for hundreds of years side by side, each with its own language, its own religion, its way of dress and diet. Living together, these groups had much in common, yet at the same time they remained distinctly apart. Each had its own way of life, its own code of conduct, which was transmitted formally in the school, informally in the home and street—these are the acculturating agencies—each complementing and reinforcing one another...

The old ways came, in the closing years of the nineteenth century and the early ones of the twentieth, under the successive ideological assaults of the Socialist and Communist movements and that of Zionism. In the cities there was the added struggle with secularism, all the more acute as the ground there had been eroded over the previous half century by a growing movement of Enlightenment. The defections, especially in urban areas, were massive; traditional life was severely shaken, though not shattered... What was left of traditional Jewry regrouped in two camps: those who partially acculturated to the society that enveloped them, and those who decisively turned their back on it, whom we, for lack of a better term, have called haredim. They, of course, would define themselves simply as Jews- resolutely upholding the ways of their fathers.

They are that indeed. Resolve, however, is possible only in a choice, and ways of life that are upheld are no longer a given. Borough Park and Bnei Brak, not to speak of Riverdale and Teaneck, while demographically far larger than any shtetl, are, as we shall see, enclaves rather than cultures. Alternatives now exist, and adherence is voluntary. A traditional society has been transformed into an orthodox one, and religious conduct is less the product of social custom than of conscious, reflective behavior. If the tallit katan is worn not as a matter of course but as a matter of belief, it has then become a ritual object. A ritual can no more be approximated than an incantation can be summarized. Its essence lies in its accuracy. It is that accuracy that religious Jews are now seeking. The flood of works on halakhic prerequisites and correct religious performance accurately reflects the ritualization of what had previously been routine acts and everyday objects. It mirrors the ritualization of what had been once simply components of the given world and parts of the repertoire of daily living. A way of life has become a regula, and behavior, once governed by habit, is now governed by rule. If accuracy is now sought, indeed deemed critical, it can be found only in texts. For in the realm of religious practice (issur veheter), custom, no matter how longstanding and vividly remembered, has little standing over and against the normative written word...

### The Great Assembly

2. Avot 1:1

And Joshua passed it to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets to the Great Assembly. They said three things: Be patient in judgment; Establish many students; and Create boundaries for the Torah.

3. Talmud, Berachot 33a

The Great Assembly enacted for Israel blessings, prayers, *kiddush* and *havdalah*...

### Part 1: Imposing Structure

4. The Amidah

- Shevach (praise)
  - (1) *Avot* - Our historical connection to Gd
  - (2) *Gevurah* - Gd has the power to aid us
  - (3) *Kedushah* - Gd as arbiter and judge
- Bakashah (requests)
  - (4) Wisdom (Phase I begins)
  - (5) Aid with Repentance
  - (6) Forgive us
  - (7) Redeem us (Phase II begins)
  - (8) Heal us

- (9) Crops
- (10) Return of the exiles (Phase III begins)
- (11) Restore justice
- (12) Punish the saboteurs
- (13) Reward the righteous
- (14) Return to Jerusalem
- (15) Restore the family of King David
- (16) Hear our voices (Summary)
- Hodaah (thanks)
  - (17) Return the offerings
  - (18) We thank You
  - (19) Give us peace

## 5. The structure of individual blessings

- Long and short blessings
- Beginning with *Baruch atah* and Blessings juxtaposed with other blessings
- Plural and singular language

## Anchoring in Biblical text: Wording, Philosophy, Numerology, Silence, Posture

### Wording

#### 6. Exodus 3:6, 3:15, 32:13

And He said: I am the Gd of your father, the Gd of Abraham, the Gd of Isaac and the Gd of Jacob...

...Say this to the Children of Israel: Gd, the Gd of your ancestors, the Gd of Abraham, the Gd of Isaac and the Gd of Jacob has sent me to you. This is My Name forever, and this is the way you shall identify Me for all generations.

Remember Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to whom You swore...

#### 7. Deuteronomy 10:15-17

Only your ancestors did Gd embrace, to love them, and He chose their descendants... For HaShem, your Gd is the mightiest of the mighty, master of the masters, *haKel haGadol haGibor v'haNora*...

#### 8. Talmud, Berachot 33b

One descended before Rabbi Chanina and recited, "*HaKel haGadol haGibor v'haNora*..." Rabbi Chanina waited for him to conclude, and then he asked, "Have you completed all of the praises of your Master? Why say so much? Even those three which we recite, we could not say if not for the fact that Moses said them in the Torah and the Great Assembly established them in prayer – and yet you say all this?"

#### 9. Genesis 14:19; Daniel 3:26

And he blessed him: Blessed be Abram to *Kel elyon*, creator of heaven and earth.

Then Nevuchadnezzar drew near the entrance of the fiery furnace and he declared: Shadrach, Meshach and Avednego, servants of *Kel elyon*, come out!"

#### 10. Psalms 106:7-8

Our ancestors in Egypt did not have insight... And He saved them *l'maan shmo*, to inform of His might.

#### 11. Deuteronomy 33:29

Who is like you, a nation *nosha* by Gd, *magen ezrechal*

#### 12. Genesis 15:1

Do not fear, Abram! I am a *magen* for you!

### Philosophy

#### 13. Proverbs 2:6

For Gd provides wisdom; from His mouth comes intelligence and comprehension.

#### 14. Lamentations 5:21

Return us, Gd, to You, and we will return!

#### Numerology

#### 15. Tur, Orach Chaim 113

The Ashkenazi sages said that in the first three blessings there are 107 words, because they are based on Psalm 29 which contains 91 words, and Isaiah 29:23 [16 words].

#### Silence

#### 16. Samuel I 1:13; Kings I 19:11-12

And Chanah spoke upon her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard...

And there was a great wind, mighty, breaking mountains and smashing boulders before Gd; Gd was not in the wind. And after the wind, a noise; Gd was not in the noise. And after the noise, fire; Gd was not in the fire. And after the fire, a silent, small voice.

#### Posture

#### 17. Kings I 8:48

And they will pray toward You, toward their land that You gave to their ancestors, the city You chose, the house I built in Your Name.

#### 18. Psalms 130:1

A song of steps; from the depths I call you, Gd.

#### 19. Genesis 18:23, 44:18; Kings I 18:21

And Abraham stepped forth...                      And Judah stepped forth...                      And Elijah stepped forth...

#### 20. Ezekiel 1:7

And their leg was a straight leg...

#### 21. Talmud, Yevamot 105b

One sage said: One who prays must turn his eyes downward, as Kings I 9:3 says, "My eyes and My heart will be there forever." A second said: His eyes should be upward, as Lamentations 3:41 says, "We will raise our hearts in our hands."

Rabbi Yishmael son of Rabbi Yosi joined them; he asked, "What are you discussing?" They said, "Prayer." He said, "My father said: One who prays must turn his eyes downward and his heart upward, to satisfy these two verses."

#### 22. Psalms 146:8

Gd straightens those who are bent...

#### 23. Deuteronomy 33:2; Psalms 91:7

...On His right side was the law of fire.

A thousand will fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right; they will not reach you.

#### 24. Rabbi Avraham Gombiner, Magen Avraham 123:1

We are taught that in the merit of his three steps, Nevuchadnezzar merited to destroy the Temple. Therefore, we take three steps and pray to build the Temple. [See Talmud, Sanhedrin 96b.]

#### Summary

- The mission of the Great Assembly is to restore *masorah* (tradition) to the Jews who return from Babylon
- This is seen in the way they create structure for our relationship with Gd, and how they anchor it in Tanach