

הפטרה AFTER THE ברכה OF THE SECOND חתימת הברכה

The second ברכה that follows the reading of the הפטרה presents a problem that is not easy to explain: why do we find so many variations in the חתימת הברכה? Even today those variations continue. In most נוסחאות the ברכה ends with: משמח ציון בבניה. However, in נוסח תימן it ends with: בונה ירושלים. Professor Joseph Heinemann in his book: התפלה בתקופת התנאים והאמוראים¹, Magnes, 1966, views the variations in the text of this ברכה as support for his thesis that the fixed text within Jewish prayer did not begin as an original text from which variations developed but rather was chosen to be the fixed text from a pool of diverse texts. Since this ברכה touches on such a major issue within the study of תפלה, let us allow Professor Heinemann to address this issue in his own words:

CHAPTER TWO

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRAYERS AND THE PROBLEM OF THE „ORIGINAL TEXT”

page 37-The Jewish prayers were originally the creations of the common people. The characteristic idioms and forms of prayer, and indeed the statutory prayers of the synagogue themselves, were not in the first place products of the deliberations of the Rabbis in their academies, but were rather the spontaneous, on-the-spot improvisations of the people who gathered on various occasions to pray in the synagogue. Since the occasions and places of worship were numerous, it was only natural that they should give rise to an abundance of prayers, displaying a wide variety of forms, styles, and patterns. Thus, the first stage in the development of the liturgy was characterized by diversity and variety - and the task of the Rabbis was to systematize and to impose order on this multiplicity of forms, patterns and structures. This task they undertook after the fact; only after the numerous prayers had come into being and were familiar to the masses did the Sages decide that the time had come to establish some measure of uniformity and standardization. Only then did they proceed carefully to inspect the existing forms and patterns, to disqualify some while accepting others, to decide which prayers were to be statutory on which occasions, and by which prayers a man „fulfilled his obligation”.

We can still find evidence in the Rabbinic sources of the initiative of the common people in creating prayers, many of which the Rabbis themselves rejected. We note,

1. The Hebrew version of this book is available for downloading from the Beurei Hatefila Institute website: www.beureihatefila.com. The excerpts brought down herein are taken from the English translation that was published in 1977 by Walter De Gruyter.

for example, the following passage in the 'Tosefta' (VII [VIII], 22), which is preceded by a long list of practices forbidden „on account of the ways of the Amorites” (e. g., because they have the appearance of superstitious heathen practices): „The following practices are permissible: A man beginning his work may give thanks and praise to G-d. Before fermenting wine or leavening dough, he may pray that a blessing enter them and not a curse”. We are dealing here with folk customs of giving thanks to G-d before undertaking each new task and of reciting a prayer before leaving . . .

page 39-Those formulations of prayers from the Tannaitic period which have reached us are primarily the ones which were selected by the Sages after careful sifting from among the many different forms that had been current from the time that the prayers came into being. But we may still find traces in the sources of alternative forms which ultimately came to be rejected. Before dealing with the different versions of the benedictions and prayers themselves (i. e., with their „main content” clauses, which vary from benediction to benediction), let us consider the introductory formula which is shared by all benedictions and which today bears the stereotype form, Baruk ‘attah ad-nay (ברוך אתה ה') (‘alohena malak ha’olam - (א-להינו מלך העולם) „Blessed art thou, O Lord (our G-d, King of the universe)”. This formula did not always contain the clause malak ha’olam (מלך העולם) (“King of the universe”) or the word ‘atta (אתה) („Thou”); nor was the basic phrase, Baruck ad-nay (ברוך ה') („Blessed be the Lord”), always used to the exclusion of all others. In the Dead Sea Scrolls we find the form, ‘odekah ad-nay (אודך ה') („I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord”), used as an introductory formula alongside the form, Baruck attah ad-nay (ברוך אתה ה'). On the other hand, in Ben Sira (51:12) we find a series of clauses which are familiar to us from the customary version of the Eighteen Benedictions — clauses such as „Shield of Abraham” (מגן אברהם), „Redeemer of Israel” (מקבץ נדחי עמו ישראל), „who gathers the dispersed of Israel” (גואל ישראל) - which are introduced by the formula Hodu le. (הודו ל.). („Give thanks to. . .”; as for example, „Give thanks to the Shield of Abraham”). Many of the formulae of praise which appear in the Bible - Hallelu (הללו) („Give praise to. . .”); Barechu (ברכו) („Bless ye. . .”); Nebārek (נברך) („Let us bless. . .”), etc.- may also have served originally as introductory formulae to benedictions . . .

page 42- Other forms, such as Nodah lecha (נודה לך) („We will thank thee”) or, in private prayer, Modeh ‘ani (מודה אני) („I thank thee”), also seem to have served as alternatives to Baruk ‘attah ‘ad-nay (ברוך אתה ה'); and in the talmudic sources themselves we still find instances where the two forms Modeh ani (מודה אני) and Baruk ‘attah ‘ad-nay (ברוך אתה ה') alternate as introductory formulae. In a similar

2. I added the original Hebrew for those who might find the Hebrew words easier to follow than the transliteration.

fashion, Arthur SPANIER by examining the diverse eulogy-formulae which have been preserved in the ancient Christian liturgies, has proven that equally diverse formulae were prevalent in Jewish prayers up to the beginning of the Christian era. Moreover, the eulogies of the ancient Christian prayers themselves actually preserve old Jewish patterns which were subsequently discarded from the Jewish liturgy (or were partially preserved as the transitional clauses which immediately precede the eulogy - but not as the eulogies themselves). Examples of such formulae are: „... for thine is the kingdom and in glory shalt thou reign forever and ever”, (כי המלכות, (שלך היא ולעולמי עד תמלוך בכבוד „praised and glorious be his great name for all time” (משובח ומפואר עדי עד שמו הגדול), and formulae which begin with the pattern, „for thou art. . . (כי אתה . . .)“ etc.

If such a diversity of styles and patterns prevailed during the earliest period of liturgical development with respect to the „introductory formula”, that element of the liturgical Berakah (ברכה) which is indeed „formulaic” in that it remains constant and unchanging in every benediction, so much the more so must this diversity have prevailed with respect to the „main content” clauses and the actual wording of the benedictions which even today display variations from one rite or custom to another. Therefore, we must lay down as a fundamental axiom for liturgical studies which would examine developmentally the texts of the various prayers that from the first no single „original” text of any particular prayer was created, but that originally numerous diverse texts and versions existed side by side. It follows, then, that the widely accepted goal of the philological method- viz., to discover or to reconstruct the one „original” text of a particular composition by examining and comparing the extant textual variants one with the other - is out of place in the field of liturgical studies. We must not try to determine by philological methods the „original” text of any prayer without first determining whether or not such an „original” text ever existed. For we are dealing with materials which originated as part of an oral tradition and hence by their very nature were not phrased in any fixed uniform formulation - which at a later stage came to be „revised” and expanded - but rather were improvised on the spot; and, subsequently, „re-improvised” and reworded in many different formulations in an equally spontaneous fashion . . .

page 48-Still other phenomena only become intelligible if we assume the existence— from ancient time until at least the Amoraic period - of a number of different versions of the same benediction, among which no single version was considered to be authoritative. First of all, we note the existence of both a Babylonian and a Palestinian „rite” of the prayers, and particularly of the amidah (עמידה), in which not one benediction is identical with respect to its wording in both rites. It is unreasonable to think that Babylonian Jews would change the fixed standard versions of every benediction that they had received from Palestine. In addition, the prevalence until late Gaonic times of alternative poetic versions of the statutory

prayers is incomprehensible on the assumption that, from the very first, every benediction had a single, normative wording. The fact that no source ever mentions any need to reformulate the benedictions after the destruction of the Temple in order to adjust them to the new realities is also instructive. Here again, we are led to the conclusion that there was no need to alter the old authoritative formulations- simply because no such standard texts ever existed. We have already pointed out certain formulations preserved in the sources, the very existence of which is inexplicable except as remnants of ancient alternative versions which were once completely interchangeable - such formulations as ‘amat weyassib (אמת ויציב) („True and firm”); Birnbaum, p. 77) and ‘amat wa’amunah (אמת ואמונה) („True and trustworthy”; ibid., p. 195); Sim shalom (שים שלום) („Grant peace”; ibid., p. 95) and Shalom rab (שלום רב) („Abundant peace”; ibid., p. 173); the different versions of the introduction to the Qedushat hay-yom (קדושת היום) benediction on the Sabbath (‘attah qiddasta (אתה קדשת) [„Thou hast sanctified”], ibid., p. 267; Yis’mah Mosah (ישמח משה) [Moses rejoiced”], ibid., p. 353; Tiqqanta shabbat (תקנת שבת) [Thou didst institute the Sabbath”], ibid., p. 395; ‘attah ‘ahad (אתה אחד) [Thou art one”] ibid., p. 453; Ume’ahbateka (ומאהבתך) [because of the love”]; U-lemosah siwrita (ולמשה צוית) [And Moses thou didst command”]; we’ hana lanu (והנה לנו) [„And cause us to rest”], etc.).

As an additional example of this phenomenon, let us now carefully examine the benediction Bonah Yerulshalayim, (בונה ירושלים) the prayer for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. This prayer is especially suited for our purposes since it appears in no less than four different contexts: in the weekday “amidah (עמידה) (BIRNBAUM, p. 89), in Grace After Meals, (ibid., pp. 763-5); in the benediction after the reading from the Prophets (Haftarah) (ibid., p. 375), and the benediction to be recited at the marriage ceremony (ibid., p. 755). Upon examining the various versions of this benediction (which are listed in the appendix to this chapter, p. 70 ff.³), we see that the present day version in Grace After Meals is essentially identical with the version in the Palestinian (or Egyptian) amidah (עמידה) and with the version in Seadyah’s Siddur (if we ignore the additions and deletions). From this we may conclude that originally there were no special, distinct versions ordained for each of these separate liturgical occasions on which the prayer for Jerusalem had to be recited, but that any particular version could serve equally well in the amidah (עמידה) and in Grace, as was indeed the case in the Palestinian-Egyptian rite. Thus it follows that if present day rites contain two completely different formulations of this benediction in the amidah (עמידה) and in Grace respectively - formulations which are neither mutually dependent nor is one a derivative of the other- then this is only because in this

3. I included the appendix as a supplement to Newsletter 7-30.

instance two of the many versions which were widespread at an earlier period happened to be preserved by chance in their present locations - one in the amidah (עמידה) and the other in Grace, although originally each of these versions could have served interchangeably in both cases. Having established this, it may not be too far-fetched to propose that the same holds true with respect to the version of this benediction recited after the reading from the Prophets, i. e., that this formulation too was not composed specifically for its present location, but was originally an alternative version of the Bonah Yerushalayim (בונה ירושלים) benediction, and could serve interchangeably on all occasions. If there is need for further proof, we note that the eulogy of the Haftarah benediction in several rites is „Blessed art thou, O Lord, Rebuilder of Jerusalem”, (ברוך אתה ה' בונה ירושלים) and that, in the Yemenite rite, the expanded version of this benediction in the “amidah for the Ninth of ‘Ab reappears word for word in the Haftarah benediction for the Ninth of ‘Ab. In other words, various formulations of the Boneh Yerushalayim (בונה ירושלים) benediction replace each other in the different liturgical contexts, because at base they are nothing other than alternate versions of the same benediction. We possess, then, no less than four different versions of this benediction with absolutely no relation or similarity to each other in their actual wording (though they share, of course, the same basic content), which cannot possibly be explained as derivatives of one original Urtext. On the other hand, we find numerous „derivatives” of these various „original” „texts” if, e. g., we compare the version which is found in the “amidah (עמידה) of the Ashkenazic rite with the versions in the Orders of Prayer of Amram and Maimonides and in the Sephardic rite, or if we compare the versions in the Genizah fragments with those of Se'adyah and the Ashkenazic Grace After Meals. But this is not the place to go into details. These examples are adduced only to clarify the difference between alternative, independent versions on the one hand, in respect of which the question of the antiquity of one version over against the other is not only unanswerable, but also meaningless, and derivative versions of a single Urtext on the other hand, where the comparison of textual variants may bring us closer to the original text — the original text, that is, of that particular version alone, which is not necessarily the single „original text” of the benediction in question.

By comparing the different extant versions of the Bonah Yerushalayim (בונה ירושלים) benediction, we also learn that even the eulogy formula concluding this benediction - and certainly other eulogies as well - was not always fixed and uniform. Here as well, generations of worshippers saw nothing wrong with using different formulations interchangeably as long as they were appropriate to the basic theme of the benediction. Twenty-seven different eulogy formulae are listed in the appendix to this chapter. Although some of these are undoubtedly arbitrary changes dating from a later period (among them changes made for halakic reasons, so as not to deviate, for example, from the ruling that „we do not conclude a benediction by

mentioning two subjects”), and others may be corruptions, nonetheless it is clear beyond all doubt that such eulogy formulae as „Comforter of Jerusalem” (מנחם ירושלים) (or: „of Zion”) „who makes Zion to rejoice her children (משמח ציון) and „who dwellest in Zion” (השוכן בציון) were interchangeable with the formula Bonah Yerushalayim (בונה ירושלים) itself.

Originally, therefore, the worshipper was not obliged to use a fixed word-for-word formulation of any benediction, but on the contrary, would spontaneously „compose” his own formulation on the spot while praying. Or, were he unable to do this, he would recite one of the common versions which he had at some time heard from someone else. Nor would the worshipper necessarily repeat this same formulation each time that he prayed, but would rather vary it through additions or deletions, whether accidentally or on purpose, according to his momentary needs and the amount of time he had available to pray. But in the course of time, certain phrases and idioms, as well as the mention of certain well-known subjects and items (over and above the primary subject of a particular benediction) struck roots and became accepted by a majority of the worshippers. It was at this stage that the halakic Sages fixed the mention of these subjects and the use of these idioms as obligatory. Each worshipper was still basically allowed to formulate his own benedictions as long he „mentioned in them” those items and idioms which, in the meantime, had become customary. This intermediary stage is reflected in the numerous Rabbinic dicta which require that mention be made of certain items in certain benedictions, as for example, „He who recites the morning Sema’ must mention the Exodus from Egypt in [benediction which begins] ‘amät weyassib ; (אמת ויציב) Rabbi [the Prince] says: He must make mention of God’s kingship. Others say: He must mention the splitting of the Red Sea and the plague of the firstborn. Rabbi Joshua ben Levi says: He must mention all these items and he must say [in conclusion]: ‚Rock of Israel and his Redeemer’ (צור ישראל וגואלו) (J. Berakot I, 3 d). So, too, with regard to the benediction for the land of Israel in Grace After Meals (BIRNBAUM, p. 761), we read, „Rabbi Simon in the name of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi says: if one did not mention the Torah in the benediction for the land, he must begin again... Rabbi Ba’ bar ‘Aha’ in the name of Rabbi says: If he did not mention the covenant of circumcision in the benediction for the land, or does not mention the [of the] Davidic monarchy in the benediction for the rebuilding of Jerusalem, he must begin again” (ibid.). „Rabbi Eliezer says: He who has not said ‚a desirable, good and spacious land’ in the benediction for the land, or mentioned the [of the] Davidic monarchy in the benediction for the rebuilding of Jerusalem has not fulfilled his obligation; Nahum the Elder says: He must mention the covenant of circumcision in it [benediction for the land]; Rabbi Yose says: He must mention the Torah in it. He must mention the covenant of circumcision before mentioning the Torah... Rabbi ‘Abba says: He must begin and conclude [benediction] with thanksgiving . . .