

THE STRANGE BLESSING OF *YOTZER OR*

By Allen Friedman

Introduction

There is only one blessing whose text is altered on Shabbat and *only* on Shabbat: the first blessing of *Keriat Shema* of *Shacharit*. Why does this blessing have this unique status?¹ To sharpen the question, it appears that the extensive insertions and substitutions made to this blessing on Shabbat were met with widespread acceptance, despite their apparent post-Talmudic creation. By contrast, the seemingly much more minor post-Talmudic insertion of “*Or Chadash*” as the penultimate sentence of the same blessing was met with widespread and vociferous opposition lasting many centuries.

Overview

We will look at the language and themes of the first of the blessings of *Keriat Shema* of *Shacharit* as recited during the first six days of the week, and the language and themes of that first blessing as recited on Shabbat, noting the similarities and differences with the weekday version. We will follow that with a look at the history of the Shabbat version and see how the differences and similarities between the two versions of the blessing have been explained – or, as the case may be,

¹ I am grateful to Abe Katz for posing the question and for his extremely useful compilations of many relevant sources on *tefilla*. See: http://www.beureihatefilla.com/files/Kriyat_SHEMA_and_its_Brachat.pdf.

ignored – over the millennia. We will then suggest a hypothesis to explain the differences between the two versions and, in particular, the unique nature of those differences. We will examine the extent to which our hypothesis is consistent with (a) the *weltanschauung* of those who composed our *tefilla* and of those who selected those *tefillot* for inclusion in our *siddur*, and (b) themes found throughout our *tefillot* on Shabbat. Finally, we will test the hypothesis on the text of the Shabbat version to see how well the words of the *tefilla* bear it out.

To help the reader, set out below is the text of *Yotzer Or* (according to *Minhag Ashkenaz*), with the portions added or deleted on Shabbat clearly indicated.² It is strongly suggested that even if one is generally familiar with the *tefilla*, that the reader take a minute to scan the text before proceeding.

² *Minhagei Sefard, Eidot Ha-mizrach* and *Teiman* are very close to *Minhag Ashkenaz* except for small differences that will be discussed later.

Text of Yotzer Or according to Minhag Ashkenaz. Portions said only on Shabbat are set off by a box; portions said only on weekdays are set off by dashed lines.

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם. יוצר אור ובורא חשך. עשה שלום ובורא את הכל:

הכל יודוך. והכל ישבחוך. והכל יאמרו אין קדוש כה': הכל ירוממוך סלה יוצר הכל: הא-ל. הפותח בכל יום דלתות שיערי מזרח. ובוקע חלונני קריע. מוציא חמה ממקומה. ולבנה ממכון שבתה. ומאיר לעולם פלו וליושבויו. שברא במדת הרחמים:

המאיר לארץ ולדרים עליה ברחמים. ובטובו מחדש בכל יום תמיד. מעשה בראשית:

ביום חול: מה רבו מעשיך ה'. כלם בחכמה עשית. מלאה הארץ קניינך:

המלך המרום לבדו מאז. המשבח והמפאך והמתנשא מימות עולם
א-להי עולם. ברחמיך הרבים רחם עלינו. אדון עזנו. צור משגבנו. מגן ישענו. משגב בעדנו:

אין בערפך. ואין זולתך. אפס בלתך ומי דומה לך. אין בערפך ה' אלקינו בעולם הזה. ואין זולתך מלפניו לחיי העולם הבא. אפס בלתך גואלנו לימות המשיח. ואין דומה לך מושיענו לתחיית המתים:

<p>בשבת: א-ל אדון על כל המעשים. ברוך ומברך בפי כל נשמה. גדלו וטובו לפני עולם. דעת ותבונה טובים הודו: המתגאה על חיות הקדש. ונהדר בכבוד על המרפכה. זכות ומישור לפני כסאו. חסד ורחמים מלא כבודו: טובים מאורות שברא אלקינו. יצחק בדעת בבינה ובהשכל. כח וגבורה נתן בהם. להיות מושלים בקרב תבל: מלאים זיו ומפיקים נוגה. נאה זינם בכל העולם. שמחים בצאתם ונששים בכואם. עשים באימה רצון קונם: פאר וכבוד נותנים לשמו. צהלה ורנה לזכר מלכותו. קרא לשמש ויזרח אור. קאה והתקין צורת הלבנה: שבת נותנים לו כל צבא מרום. תפארת וגדלה שרפים ואופנים וחיות הקדש:</p>	<p>ביום חול: א-ל ברוך גדול דעה. הכין ופעל זכרי חמה. טוב יצר כבוד לשמו. מאורות נתן סביבות עזו. פנות צבאיו קדושים. רוממי ש-די. תמיד מספרים כבוד א-ל וקדשותו:</p>
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לא-ל אשר שבת מכל המעשים. ביום השביעי התעלה וישב על כסא כבודו. תפארת עטה ליום המנוחה. ענג קרא ליום השבת. זה שבת של יום השביעי. שבו שבת א-ל מכל מלאכתו: ליום השביעי משבח ואומר. מזמור שיר ליום השבת. טוב להודות לה':
לפיקך יפארו ויברכו לא-ל כל יצוריו. שבת קר וגדלה. ותנו לא-ל מלך יוצר כל. המנחיל מנוחה לעמו ושראל בקדשותו ביום שבת קדש:
שמך ה' אלקינו יתקדש. וזכרך מלפנו יתפאר. בשמים ממעל ועל הארץ מתחת:

תתברך **ביום חול:** ה' אלקינו **בשבת:** מושיענו על שבת מעשי ידך. ועל מאורי אור ששעשית
יפארוך סלה:

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תתברך צורנו מלכנו וגואלנו בורא קדושים. ישתבח שמך לעד מלכנו יוצר משקתים ואשר
משקתיו כלם עומדים ברום עולם. ומשמיעים ביראה יחד בקול. דברי אלקים חיים ומלך עולם:
כלם אהובים. כלם ברורים. כלם גבורים. נכלם עושים באימה וביראה רצון קונם:
נכלם פותחים את פיהם בקדושה ובטהרה. בשיחה ובזמרה. ומברכים ומשבחים ומפארים ומעריצים
ומקדישים וממליכים:
את שם הא-ל, המלך הגדול הגבור והנורא קדוש הוא. נכלם מקבלים עליהם על מלכות שמים זה
מזה. ננותנים רשות זה לזה להקדיש ליוצרים בנחת רוח. בשפה ברורה ובנעימה. קדושה כלם כאחד.
עונים ואומרים ביראה:
קדוש קדוש קדוש ה' צ-באות. מלא כל הארץ כבודו:
והאופנים נחיות הקדש ברעש גדול מתנשאים לעמת שרפים. לעמתם משבחים ואומרים:
ברוך כבוד ה' ממקומו:

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לא-ל ברוך נעימות ותנו. למלך א-ל חי נקדם זמירות יאמרו ותשבחות ישמיעו. פי הוא לבדו פועל
גבורות. עושה תדשות. בעל מלחמות. זורע צדקות. מצמיח ישועות. בורא רפואות. נורא תהלות.
אדון הנפלאות:
המחדש בטובו בכל יום תמיד מעשה בראשית. פאמור לעשה אורים גדלים. פי לעולם חסדו:
אור חדש על ציון תאיר ונזכה כלנו מהרה לאורו. ברוך אתה ה'. יוצר המאורות:

** Between the asterisks: angelic court theme.

The Weekday Version of *Yotzer Or*

The theme of the first part of the weekday version (from the opening of the blessing through סְלָהּ וְיִפְאָרוּךְ סְלָהּ) and of the last part (from לְאֵל-לְאֵל through the closing) is the Universal God, Creator and Sustainer of the natural world. This is a very appropriate theme for the first six days of the week because it refers to the continual renewal of God's work in the six days of Creation which parallel six days of the week. In between this envelope – from בְּרוּךְ כְּבוֹד ה' מִמְקוֹמוֹ through תְּתַבְרַךְ צוּרֵנוּ – we find a second theme, the angelic court praising God.³

The Shabbat Version of *Yotzer Or*

The Shabbat version makes the following changes: (a) we insert לְאֵל-אֲדוֹן before הַמְאִיר לְאֶרֶץ and אֵין בְּעֶרְכָךְ after it, (b) we substitute אֵל-אֲדוֹן for לְאֵל-בְּרוּךְ, and (c) we insert לְאֵל-לְאֵל אֲשֶׁר שָׁבַת before תְּתַבְרַךְ. We also make two other seemingly minor changes: we omit the verse מָה רַבּוּ מַעֲשֵׂיךָ ה' and we substitute מוֹשִׁיעֵנו for ה' אֵל-לֵהֲנוּ in the phrase תְּתַבְרַךְ ה' אֵל-לֵהֲנוּ עַל שְׁבַח מַעֲשֵׂי יְדִיךָ.

³ According to many interpretations, the transition from the Universal God as Creator theme to the angelic court theme starts slightly earlier, with the last ten words of לְאֵל-אֲדוֹן. פְּנוֹת צְבָאִיו קְדוֹשִׁים רֹמְמֵי שָׁמַיִם תְּמִיד מְסַפְּרִים כְּבוֹד אֵל-וְקֹדֶשְׁתוֹ בְּרוּךְ. These interpretations understand פְּנוֹת צְבָאִיו etc. as referring to the ministering angels.

The seeming disparateness of these two themes will not be discussed here other than to observe that it has generated much discussion over the centuries. It should be noted, however, that the theme of תְּתַבְרַךְ צוּרֵנוּ – discussing as it does the angelic court of the Universal God – is more appropriate for the first blessing of *Keriat Shema* than it is for either the second blessing – which focuses on the Revelation – or the third blessing – which focuses on the Exodus.

Some insist that the disparateness of the two themes is proof that תְּתַבְרַךְ was added later and that its theme is really not consistent with the “envelope,” see for example Ezra Fleischer, “*Kedushat ha-Amidah (u-She’ar ha-Kedushot): Hebeitim Histori’im Liturgi’im ve-Ideologi’im*,” in *Tarbiz: Studies in Jewish Liturgy – A Reader* (Jerusalem 2003), pp. 245-248. Others insist just as fiercely that the two parts were both in the “original” version and that they do very much relate to each other. For a forceful and persuasive articulation of the latter argument from a *theological* perspective, see Rav Soloveitchik’s *Worship of the Heart*, pp. 122-132. For a forceful and persuasive articulation of the latter argument from a *historical* perspective, see Moshe Weinfeld, pp. 167-178 and Reuven Kimelman, “The Shema Liturgy: From Covenant Ceremony to Coronation,” in *Kenishta – Studies of the Synagogue World*, vol. 1, pp. 88-89.

The insertions and the substitutions noted in the paragraph above elaborate on one of the two themes recited the other six days of the week, but leave the second theme untouched while adding three other themes:

א-ל בְּרוּךְ, the substitute for א-ל אֲדוֹן, elaborates on the ideas expressed in א-ל בְּרוּךְ and on the theme expressed in the first and last sections of *Yotzer Or* – the Universal God Creator and Sustainer of the natural world. It also contains an explicit reference in its last two phrases to the angelic court theme that is elaborated on later in the blessing: שְׁבַח: נוֹתְנִים לוֹ כֹּל צְבָא מְרוֹם תְּפָאֶרֶת וּגְדֻלָּה שְׂרָפִים וְאַוְפָּנִים וְחַיִּית הַקִּדְּשׁ.

The heart of the second theme, the angelic court praising God – from תְּתַבְּרַךְ צוֹרֵנוּ to מִמְּקוֹמוֹ ה' בְּרוּךְ כְּבוֹד ה' – is left untouched.

As noted, the Shabbat version adds three themes. The first two are added in the two sections bracketing לְאָרְץ הַמְּאִיר:

(1) The section added just before לְאָרְץ הַמְּאִיר adds the theme that **all** of mankind will praise God, emphasizing this theme through the five-fold repetition of הַכֹּל יוֹדוּךָ וְהַכֹּל יִשְׁבַּחוּךָ וְהַכֹּל יֵאמְרוּ אֵין קְדוּשׁ כֶּה'. הַכֹּל יְרוּמְמוּךָ: הַכֹּל יוֹצֵר הַכֹּל סֵלָה יוֹצֵר הַכֹּל.

(2) The section added just after לְאָרְץ הַמְּאִיר adds the theme of the uniqueness of God throughout history, with special emphasis on the eschatological aspects. The theme also unfolds through a five-fold repetition, this time by referring to God five times with the word אֵין, the opposite of the הַכֹּל used five times to refer to man: אֵין בְּעָרְכְּךָ וְאֵין זוּלָתְךָ. אֵין בְּעָרְכְּךָ ה' א-להינו בְּעוֹלָם הַהֵזֶה. וְאֵין זוּלָתְךָ מִלְּפָנֵינוּ לְחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא. אֵפֶס בְּלָתְךָ גּוֹאֲלֵנוּ לְיָמוֹת הַמְּשִׁיחַ. וְאֵין דּוּמָה לְךָ מוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ לְתַחִית הַמְּתֵימִים. This second insert emphasizes God's uniqueness in four realms, listed in the order that those who first recited the *tefilla* will have experienced them: this world (עוֹלָם הַהֵזֶה), the world to come (עוֹלָם הַבָּא), the days of the Messiah (יָמוֹת הַמְּשִׁיחַ) and the revivification of the dead (תַּחִית הַמְּתֵימִים).

(3) The insert of לְא-ל אֲשֶׁר שָׁבַת adds the third theme, the idea that the Shabbat is a proclamation of God's kingship. Several points are worth noting about this insert. First, it is the only Shabbat insert or substitution in *Yotzer Or* that mentions Shabbat. Second, the focus is on the Shabbat

as an actor – יום השְׁבִיעִי מְשַׁבֵּחַ וְאוֹמֵר – an entity unto itself. Third, the role assigned to human beings is an assignment to *all* human beings – כָּל יְצוּרָיו – who are to praise God because of His creation of the Shabbat; Israel, the one actor who one might think would have a prominent role in a description of Shabbat, is relegated to passing mention as the nation to whom the holiness of Shabbat is granted וְשָׂמַח בְּקִדְשׁוֹ לְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקִדְשׁוֹ. Fourth, לְאֵל-ל אֲשֶׁר שָׁבַת is clearly intended to parallel the opening insert of הַכֹּל יוֹדֵךְ in its repetition of הַכֹּל and of the idea of all mankind praising God.

The final point worth noting about this insert concerns the relationship between the themes: the weekday version segregates its two themes from each other by limiting the angelic court discussion to a self-contained unit sandwiched between opening and closing sections that deal with Universal God theme. The Shabbat version, on the other hand, intermixes different themes: it starts with the theme of all of mankind praising the Universal God in הַכֹּל יוֹדֵךְ, launches the angelic court theme with לְאֵל-ל אֲשֶׁר שָׁבַת, returns in the next section, שָׁבַח נוֹתְנִים לוֹ כָּל צָבָא מְרוּם, to the theme of all mankind praising the Universal God – לְפִיכֶךָ יִפְאָרוּ – before going back once again to the angelic court theme in תַּתְּבַרְךָ צוּרֵנוּ.

History of the Shabbat Changes and of Commentary on Them

The Shabbat changes are not mentioned in the Talmud. They are, however, found in two of the four classic early *siddurim*: that of Rav Amram Ga'on⁴ (Bavel, d. 875) and in the Machzor Vitri (France, 11th century).⁵ They are also found in early manuscripts of the Palestinian rite from the Cairo Geniza⁶ and in the *Perushei Siddur Ha-Tefilla la-*

⁴ *Seder Rav Amram Ga'on*, ed. R. Aryeh Frumkin, p. 242.

⁵ *Siman* 160. The original version of *Machzor Vitri* was compiled by Simcha ben Samuel (d. 1105) and was based on the ideas of his teacher Rashi.

⁶ Ezra Fleischer, *Tefilla u-Minhagei Tefilla Eretz-Yisraelim bi-Tekufat ha-Geniza* (Jerusalem 1988), pp. 267 & 291. The manuscript Fleischer quotes dates from 1211. Fleischer, *ibid.*, p. 12. In it, the heads of the Palestinian synagogue in Fustat (old Cairo) set forth their rites as they had been recited for generations and took an oath to preserve them. It is therefore fair to assume that manuscript reflects practices that had been

Rokeiach (France, 12th century).⁷ By the time of the Abudraham (Spain, 1340), recitation of the special Shabbat version in essentially the form we use today⁸ was widespread, if not universal, and is currently found in all modern *siddurim*. Interestingly, “our” Shabbat version is not found in the two other classic early *siddurim* – that of R. Saadia Gaon (Egypt, Israel & Bavel, 882-942) and of the Rambam (Spain, Morocco & Egypt, 1135-1204). R. Saadia’s *siddur* has only a modified version of לְאֵלֵינוּ אֱשֶׁר וְשָׁבַת and omits the other changes.⁹ In the Rambam’s *siddur*, there are no modifications at all; the Shabbat version is identical to the weekday one.¹⁰ The significance of the non-modifications of the Rambam and of the very partial modifications of R. Saadia will be discussed later.

Almost as notable as the Shabbat changes themselves is the near-absence of critical analysis of the changes on the part of both early and modern commentators on the *siddur*. To the extent they do note the modifications, they accept them as seemingly natural and attribute them to the fact that on Shabbat, we are not preoccupied with the workaday world and thus have more time to praise God, as we do with the “extra” inserts for Shabbat added to *pesukei de-zimra*.¹¹ This explanation makes sense to some extent, especially when applied to the substitution of לְאֵלֵינוּ אֱשֶׁר לְבָרוּךְ אַתָּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ for לְבָרוּךְ אַתָּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, as the former is largely an elaboration of the themes of the latter. It does not, however, explain why:

established long, and perhaps centuries, before it was written.

⁷ Chapter 92, p. 525.

⁸ The Shabbat version of *Yotzer Or* in *Sefer Avudraham, Shacharit shel Shabbat*, s.v. *yotzer barukh*, is very similar to the *nusach* we use today.

⁹ *Siddur R. Saadia Gaon*, eds. Davidson, Assaf & Joel (Jerusalem 2000), p. קז.

¹⁰ The Rambam’s *Seder Tefillot Kol Ha-Shana* indicates various insertions and additions to make to the *tefilla* on Shabbat (e.g., *Nishmat* and the fourth blessing of the *amidot*), but indicates no change that is to be made to the blessings of *Keriat Shema*.

¹¹ See, for example, the *siddur* of Rabbeinu Shlomo ben Shimshon of Worms: “And [referring to *Yotzer Or*] they lengthen on Shabbat the amount of praise [we say] because there is no interruption from work on Shabbat.” See, similarly, the *Siddur Avodat Yisrael* (“On Shabbat that is honored more than all other days we lengthen the praises we give in the blessing of *Yotzer Or*”) and the *Sefer Ha-Tamid* (quoted in *Tefilla Le-Moshe: Otzar Perushei Harishonim al Ha-Tefilla*, p. 604: “There is in [the Shabbat version of *Yotzer Or*] additional material in honor of Shabbat and the opportunity that one has to add to its praise.”).

1. the inserts, with their heavy eschatological aspects, were put specifically into a blessing with the seemingly unrelated theme of Universal God the Creator;
2. no other blessing in *tefilla* is altered on Shabbat (and only on Shabbat);
3. these inserts are not recited on *Yom Tov*, when the same lack-of-preoccupation-with-work argument would apply;
4. the “angelic court” theme does not “enjoy” the same alteration and expansion on Shabbat as does the Universal God theme of *Yotzer Or*.

The one exception to the lack of critical analysis is Rav Yehuda Ha-barcelona's *Sefer Ha-Ittim* (circa 1120):

It is customary in most places to say on Shabbat הַכֵּל יְיָ יוֹדֵךְ ... [and] לְאֵלֵינוּ לְאֵשֶׁר שָׁבַת ... And thus wrote our master Rav Amram and thus is the custom of all those who have come after him. In my humble opinion, it seems to me that this custom has no basis and is an error as we never find that the Rabbis established the mentioning of Shabbat except in the fourth blessing of the [*amida*] and in *birkat hamazon* [in *retzeh*]. Whoever mentions Shabbat in other blessings errs and does not fulfill his obligation because he is deviating from the fixed text that our sages established for the blessings... It is [therefore] a mitzva to object [to the insertions].¹²

The *Sefer Ha-Ittim*'s comments found no echo in any of the early or later commentators on the *siddur*.

¹² *Sefer Ha-Ittim*, *siman* 172.

The *Or Chadash* Controversy

The acquiescent silence to the Shabbat changes on the part of the *Geonim* and (all but one of the) *Rishonim* stands in marked contrast to their reaction to the other, and seemingly much more minor, post-Talmudic alteration to the first blessing of *Keriat Shema*: the insertion of *or chadash* just before the *chatima*. The nine-word phrase reads, אור חדש על ציון תאיר ונזכה כלנו מהרה לאורו, “May You shine a new light on Zion and may we all merit speedily its light.”

R. Saadia Gaon vehemently objected to the new insertion: “Anyone who concludes the blessing by saying ‘*or chadash*’ etc. makes a mistake, since the sages established this blessing not over the future light of messianic days, but over the light of the present which shines each day ... One who says [these words] takes the Name of Heaven in vain.”¹³

R. Saadia’s objection was by no means an isolated one. As Dr. Hoffman’s classic work on the canonization of the prayer service summarizes the issue,

unlike R. Saadia’s other isolated responsa or the individual opinions recorded by him in his prayer book, this ruling remained a cause celebre for centuries. It was known all over Europe, and scribes inserted his words in recensions of *Seder Rav Amram* lest people forget it. In Spain, R. Saadia’s caveat was followed; it is found neither in our present Sefardic rite nor in the early ritual unearthed by Goldschmidt nor in the commentary of the fourteenth-century authority, David Abudarham. In Germany and France, the argument was still being waged ... as late as the twelfth century.¹⁴

¹³ *Seder Rav Amram Ga’on*, p. 94. As just noted, R. Saadia’s objection was interpolated into *Seder Rav Amram Ga’on*. A similarly worded objection by R. Saadia, stating that the insertion “spoiled the original intention of the prayer,” was apparently included in R. Saadia’s *siddur* but the relevant pages were lost for centuries before being rediscovered in the Cairo Genizah. See Lawrence Hoffman, *The Canonization of the Synagogue Service* (Notre Dame 1979), p. 27.

¹⁴ Hoffman, *ibid.*, p. 29. It should also be noted that *or chadash* is omitted from the

There was, then, strong and continuous objection to the insertion into *Yotzer Or* of nine words referring to the redemption because, it was asserted, those words have nothing to do with the theme of the blessing – and the objections left a lasting impression: *or chadash* is omitted by *Eidot Ha-Mizrach* and the Yemenite rites to this day. By contrast, the far longer and more extensive changes of the Shabbat version – also heavily focused on the theme of redemption – were met with acquiescence and, in many cases, open endorsement – and those changes are largely normative in all *nuscha'ot* of the Shabbat *tefilla* recited today.

Why is This Insert Different: The Four Questions

These almost diametrically opposite reactions can only be understood if one assumes that the Shabbat changes *are* consistent with the themes of *Yotzer Or*. Put slightly differently, the almost universal acceptance of the Shabbat changes strongly suggests that there is an explanation for the changes that answers the four questions we posed above:

1. How do the changes, with their heavy eschatological aspects, fit specifically into a blessing with the seemingly unrelated theme of God the Creator?
2. Why was *Yotzer Or* the only blessing in *tefilla* whose text is altered on Shabbat (and only on Shabbat)?
3. Why, if the changes are in fact consistent with the rest of *Yotzer Or*, are they not made on *Yom Tov*?
4. Why does the “angelic court” theme not “enjoy” the same expansion on Shabbat as does the Universal God theme of *Yotzer Or*?

The “Millennial View of History” – an Introduction

The key to answering our four questions can be found in the “millennial view of history” – a view that sees history as having a finite beginning that starts with Creation, continues through six millennia of history and that has a finite end in a seventh, messianic, millennium. In

Machzor Vitri as well.

the next section, we will see that this understanding of how history will unfold was an important part of the world-view of those who shaped our *siddur*. In the section after that we will see that this understanding manifests itself in several places in our *tefillot* on Shabbat. In the final two sections, we will return to the text of *Yotzer Or* and note the direct relevance of this understanding to that *tefilla*.

One of the earliest sources for the millennial understanding of history is a mishna that we recite every Shabbat morning just before *Aleinu*. That mishna, the last one in Masekhet Tamid, tells us the chapter of Psalms, the *shir shel yom*, that the Levites would sing in the Temple during the service on a given day: יום ראשון, יום שני, etc., אומרים בְּבֵית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ שָׁבוּ הָיוּ הַלְוִיִּם. The mishna quotes the first verse from each of the given chapters, from each of the *shir shel yom*, without any commentary – except when it comes to the *shir shel yom* of Shabbat: The mishna tells us בְּשַׁבָּת הָיוּ אֹמְרִים מְזֻמָּר שִׁיר לְיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת. The mishna then offers this commentary on the psalm, “A psalm for the future time to come, for the day that will be entirely Shabbat and rest for all eternity.”

The gemara (*Rosh Hashana* 31a, and parallel sources in *Sanhedrin* 97a and *Avoda Zara* 9a) expands on this mishna and explains what the mishna’s “future time ... that will be entirely Shabbat” – the יום שָׁבָת וּמְנוּחָה – refers to. The gemara tells us that *Chazal* differentiated between the *shir shel yom* sung on each of the first six days of the week, each of which is understood to refer to the corresponding day of Creation, and מְזֻמָּר שִׁיר לְיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת, which does not refer to the Shabbat of Creation or to the weekly Shabbat. As Rashi elaborates, מְזֻמָּר שִׁיר לְיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת is not about the Shabbat of Creation or the seventh day of the week but is said in anticipation of the future time – the seventh millennium – when the world as we know it will be destroyed and all human endeavors as we know it will cease. And, as Rav Katina states explicitly on that *amud*: “Six thousand years the world will survive and in the seventh millennium the world as know it will cease.” Just as the six days of Creation were followed by the day of rest of Shabbat that proclaims God’s sovereignty, so too six millennia of mankind’s existence will be followed by one millennium in which mankind’s normal activity will cease and God’s sovereignty will be revealed, the righteous will be

rewarded and the wicked punished. *Mizmor Shir Le-Yom Ha-Shabbat* is a description of that future Shabbat, that future millennium, and provides a link between that future Shabbat and the Shabbat we observe every seventh day.

Subsequent to its appearance in the Talmud, the “six + one” conception of history is found in Geonic-era sources such as R. Eleazar Ha-Kalir (6th century Palestine),¹⁵ Avot de-Rabbi Natan (c. 700-900 CE)¹⁶ and Pirkei de-Rebbi Eliezer (Italy, c. 833 CE)¹⁷ and is commonplace in early medieval *parshanim* such as Rashi,¹⁸ Ibn Ezra,¹⁹ Ramban,²⁰ and R. Bahya b. Asher,²¹ and later sources as well, such as the Abarbanel²² and the Rema.²³

The idea was picked up by the *Zohar*²⁴ and Kabbalists such as R. Avraham Saba (Spain 1440-1508).²⁵ Interestingly, the two *Rishonim* that

¹⁵ *Siluk le-Parashat Shekalim*, discussed in Sacha Stern, *Time and Process in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford 2003), p. 78 ff.

¹⁶ Ch. 1, 8.

¹⁷ *Pirke De-Rebbi Eliezer*, ed. Gerald Friedlander (New York 1981), Ch. 19, p. 141. For this citation, and the following ones in this paragraph of the text I am indebted an excellent article by Mois Navon: http://www.nds.com/chidusheitorah/pdf/2006/english/one_thousand_years_of_shabbat.pdf.

¹⁸ His comments on the relevant passages in the Talmud appear to indicate that he views Rav Katina's statements as normative.

¹⁹ Quoted by the Ramban on *Vayikra* 25:2.

²⁰ *Sha'ar Ha-Gemul*, ch. 58.

²¹ Commentary on *Bereishit* 2:3.

²² Commentary on *Bereishit* Chapter 2.

²³ *Torat ha-Olah*, 2:25, p. 45a.

²⁴ *Zohar Vayera* 119a and *Shemot* 20b.

²⁵ Abraham Gross, *Iberian Jewry from Twilight to Dawn: The World of Avraham Saba* (Leiden 1995), p. 142 fn 3. Gross's book, and many other cites to discussions of this concept in Kabbalistic works are to be found in Reuven Kimelman, *The Mystical Meaning of Lekhah Dodi and Kabbalat Shabbat* (Jerusalem 2003), p. 26 & p. 46. For a complete discussion of the seven millennium conception of history and its relationship to the Kabbalistic concept of seven cycles of seven millennia (to be followed by a period of *Yovel* millennia), see I. Weinstock, *Be-Ma'agalei Ha-Nigleh Ve-ha-nistar*

have extensive discussions of how history will unfold and of messianic times that do *not* clearly subscribe to the “six + one” view are R. Saadia Gaon²⁶ and the Rambam.²⁷

In summary, the “six + one” conception of history appears in numerous sources discussing our future redemption. Those sources encompass the entire period and the entire geographical region responsible for our *siddur*: from the Mishnaic (and even pre-Mishnaic²⁸), Talmudic, Geonic, Medieval and early modern eras and from Bavel in the East, westward through Israel, Egypt and southern and northern Europe.

The Millennial View of History in our Shabbat *Tefillot*

Given its popularity in the eras and the areas in which our *siddur* was composed, it is not surprising to find the six + one conception of history in several places in our *tefillot* on Shabbat. We cited above one obvious example, the recitation every Shabbat morning of the last mishna in *Masekhet Tamid* that makes explicit reference to the idea of the millennial Shabbat.²⁹

Other examples of the “six + one” theme in our Shabbat *tefillot* are:

- ***Kabbalat Shabbat***. The most recent major addition to our *tefillot*, the sixteenth-century creation known as *Kabbalat Shabbat*, is structured around the six + one theme. As Reuven Kimelman notes, the six chapters of Psalms that precede *Lekha Dodi* and the two psalms that follow it – *Mizmor Shir Le-Yom Ha-Shabbat* and

(Mossad Harav Kook, Jerusalem 1969), especially pp. 153-241.

²⁶ See discussion of the redemption in R. Saadia, *Emunot ve-Deot*, Eighth Treatise. An excellent summary of R. Saadia’s views on the subject can be found in Mois Navon’s article, *ibid.*, p. 58 ff.

²⁷ Rambam, *Guide of the Perplexed* II:29.

²⁸ See discussion of Pseudo-Philo and other pre-Mishnaic sources in Stern, *ibid.*, p. 77 fn. 55.

²⁹ This mishna is included in the *tefillot* of Shabbat morning in *siddurim* from Machzor Vitri onward. Not surprisingly, expositors of the *siddur* (from Machzor Vitri onward) explicitly connect the mishna to the passage from *Rosh Hashana* 31a and elsewhere cited above. See, e.g., Machzor Vitri, *siman* 134 s.v. *l’kach anu*.

Hashem Malakh – are meant to invoke a dual parallel: between the six days of the week + Shabbat, on the one hand, and the six millennia of history + the millennial Shabbat, on the other.³⁰

- **Shabbat Mincha.** Another well-known example is to be found in one of the earliest post-Talmudic additions to the *tefilla*, the middle blessing of the *amida* of Shabbat *Mincha*.³¹ The introductory paragraph אָתָּה אֱהָיָה וְשִׁמְךָ אֶהְיֶה is widely understood as an allusion to the description of the messianic era found in the verse from Zekharia – וְהָיָה ה' לְמֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ. בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יְהִי־ה' אֱהָיָה – and as a reference to the “millennial Shabbat” referred to *Rosh Hashana* 31a.³²
- **Birkhat Ha-mazon.** The *birkat ha-mazon* we recite after each meal on Shabbat includes an explicit reference to the millennial Shabbat: הַרְחֵמְנוּ הוּא יַנְחִילֵנוּ יוֹם שְׂכוּלוֹ שַׁבַּת וּמְנוּחָהּ לַחַיִּי הָעוֹלָמִים.³³

³⁰ See Kimelman, *ibid.*, p. 26.

³¹ The three different introductory paragraphs (אָתָּה קְדוּשָׁתְךָ, אָתָּה מְלִשָּׁה, and וְשִׁמְךָ אֶהְיֶה) to אֱהָיָה לֵאלֹהֵינוּ וְאַל־לֵהִי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ רָצָה בְּמִנְחָתֵנוּ are already found in the *siddur* of Rav Amram Gaon. For an extensive discussion of the history of these introductory paragraphs, see Fleischer, *Tefilla u-Minhagei Tefilla Eretz-Yisraelim bi-Tekufat Ha-Geniza*, pp.19-92.

³² As the Machzor Vitri, *siman* 139 s.v. אָתָּה אֶהְיֶה states, “אָתָּה אֶהְיֶה refers to the future Shabbat, to the day that is entirely Shabbat [לְיוֹם שְׂכָלוֹ שַׁבָּת], to the seventh millennium.” The Artscroll Siddur commentary to Shabbat Mincha puts it as follows: “The Sabbath *Mincha Shemoneh Esrei* speaks of the spiritual bliss that will prevail in [the time of the Messiah] and universal recognition of God’s sovereignty... Thus the *Mincha Shemoneh Esrei* directs our focus not only to the holiness of the Shabbat day, but to the spiritual bliss of the future” (*Siddur Kol Yaakov*, pp. 502 & 516-517).

The Redemption theme of the Shabbat *Mincha amida* crowns the Creation/Revelation/Redemption trilogy that characterize both the middle blessings of the three (non-Musaf) *amidot* of Shabbat and many other parts of our *tefilla*, including (a) the blessings of *Keriat Shema* in *Shacharit* and *Arvit*, (b) *birkat ha-mazon*, and (c) the three middle blessings of *Musaf* on *Rosh Hashana*. See Machzor Vitri, *siman* 139 s.v. אָתָּה אֶהְיֶה (noting the trilogy of the Shabbat *amidot*); Tur, OC 292 (same); Ezra Fleischer, “*Tefillat Shemoneh Esrei – Iyunim be-Ofyah, Sidrah, Tokhnah u-Megamoteha* in *Tarbiz: Studies in Jewish Liturgy – A Reader* (Jerusalem 2003), pp. 191-192; Lawrence Hoffman, ed. *The Sh’ma and Its Blessings* (Woodstock VT 1997), p. 113.

³³ This “*Ha-Rachaman*” appears to be a relatively late addition as it is not found in *birkat ha-mazon* of the early *siddurim* (through the time of Machzor Vitri and the Avudraham).

The Millennial Shabbat and *Yotzer Or*

We have seen how the six + one conception of history is invoked frequently in discussions of the messianic era from the Mishnaic period onward, and how this idea is found in a number of places in our *tefillot* on Shabbat. We've also noted (and will discuss soon in more detail) that the Shabbat changes to *Yotzer Or* focus heavily on eschatological themes.

In fact, a close examination of the evidence strongly suggests that these points are related, and that the intent of the Shabbat changes to *Yotzer Or* is to incorporate the millennial view of history into that blessing and to emphasize a parallel between *Shabbatot* past, present and future: the primordial Shabbat of Creation, our weekly Shabbat and the “Shabbat” of the seventh, messianic, millennium. This thesis will explain:

- how the Shabbat inserts of *Yotzer Or* relate to each other;
- how the Shabbat inserts relate to the “untouched” part of *Yotzer Or* – the angelic court theme;
- the significance of an omission and a change we make to the text of *Yotzer Or* on Shabbat;
- why the Shabbat changes were *not* made in certain early *nuscha'ot*.

The relationship of the Shabbat inserts to each other. The eschatological emphasis of the Shabbat inserts starts with the first Shabbat insert to *Yotzer Or* – הַכֹּל יוֹדוּךָ – that talks of the praise of God by all mankind. The eschatological focus is clear not only from the theme of הַכֹּל יוֹדוּךָ, but also from its choice of words to express that theme. As noted above, הַכֹּל יוֹדוּךָ's five-fold repetition of הַכֹּל connects it to the next – אֵין כְּעֶרְכְּךָ – insert that is marked by the five-fold repetition of אֵין, the opposite of כֹּל. This second insert climaxes with the explicitly eschatological themes of תְּהִיַת הַמַּתִּימִים and יְמוֹת הַמְּשִׁיחַ by language and theme to the final insert – לְ-אֵל אֱלֹהֵי שָׁבַת. As noted above, the latter passage also talks of praise by all mankind of God and ties that praise specifically to a Shabbat that is a universally felt presence. That the context here is the millennial Shabbat is clear both from the plain meaning of the words – all mankind praising God for a universally felt

– and twice after their acceptance: *הַפְּסִיכָה יִפְאָרוּ וַיְבָרְכוּ לֹא-לִפְנֵי יְצוּרֵיוּ. שְׁבַח יִקְרָה וַיְגַדְלָהּ. יִתְנוּ לֹא-לִמְלֶךְ סָלָה יוֹצֵר הַפֶּל*. The theme word – *בְּלִים* – that we use for the angelic court every day thereby becomes the model for our description of all of mankind on Shabbat.

The second parallel: Just before *לֹא-לֵאשֶׁר שְׁבַח* we talk of the angels – giving general praise – *שְׁבַח* – and two specific types of praise: *תְּפִאֲרָתָהּ וַיְגַדְלָהּ*. Towards the end of *לֹא-לֵאשֶׁר שְׁבַח* mankind is described as giving general praise – *שְׁבַח* – and two specific types of praise – *יִקְרָה וַיְגַדְלָהּ*. The descriptions thus intentionally echo each other – *שְׁבַח תְּפִאֲרָתָהּ וַיְגַדְלָהּ* for the angels; *יִקְרָה וַיְגַדְלָהּ* for mankind – and remind us of the description of the glory of the king in *Megillat Esther* 1:4 – *יִקְרָה תְּפִאֲרָתָהּ גְּדִלְתוֹ*.³⁵

לֹא-לֵאשֶׁר שְׁבַח then concludes by explicitly connecting the praise of mankind with the praise of the angels: *שְׁמַךְ ה' א-להינו יתקדש וְזָכְרָךְ מִלְּפָנֵינוּ. תְּפִאֲרָה בְּשָׂמִים מִמַּעַל וְעַל הָאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת*

The repeated connecting and equating on Shabbat of the two groups – angels and mankind – and the linking of these two groups, in turn, to the praise of the Universal Creator and to Shabbat makes perfect sense if the *tefilla* is intended to equate the everyday activity of the angelic court praising the Universal God with the future – and similar – activity of all mankind on the millennial Shabbat.

Other omissions and changes to the text of Yotzer Or. There are two other changes we make on Shabbat that can only be understood if the intent of the Shabbat changes is to redirect the focus away from the quotidian to the ultimate redemption. First, on Shabbat we omit from *הַמַּאִיר לְאָרֶץ* the verse *רַבּוּ מַעֲשֵׂיךָ ה' בְּלִים בְּחִכְמָה עֲשִׂיתָ מִלְּאֵה הָאָרֶץ קִנְיָנֶךָ*. Omission of the verse is, for three reasons, consistent with a redirection of the Shabbat version of *Yotzer Or* away from the workweek and the first six days of creation: (1) *בְּרָכִי נִפְשֵׁי* (1), from which the verse is taken, has as

³⁵ Presumably *תְּפִאֲרָתָהּ* was chosen for the angels both because it fits into the alphabetical scheme of *א-ל אָדוֹן* and because it is more appropriate to talk of the angels (rather than man) giving glory – *תְּפִאֲרָתָהּ* – to God.

its theme the Creation of the world in six days, (2) the verse itself makes explicit reference to God as Creator (בְּלִמְ בְּחִקְמָה עָשִׂיתָ) and (3) the verse just before it in יֵצֵא אָדָם לְפַעֲלוֹ: וְלַעֲבוֹדָתוֹ עָדִי עָרֵב refers explicitly to the workweek.

The second change is the one we make to the concluding sentence of the first section of *Yotzer Or*, a sentence that summarizes the theme of the section it closes. During the week that sentence reads תִּתְבָּרַךְ ה' א-להינו. On Shabbat that sentence also serves as a summary, in this case of the redirected theme of *Yotzer Or* and of the Shabbat inserts that it concludes. Furthermore, on Shabbat the sentence is identical to the weekday version – except that we substitute מוֹשִׁיעֵנו for ה' א-להינו. This substitution makes perfect sense if, perhaps only if, the focus of the blessing on Shabbat is meant to be the Sabbath of the era of redemption.³⁶

Proof from silence – who does not make the changes. Interesting circumstantial proof for the “millennial Shabbat” explanation for the Shabbat version of *Yotzer Or* comes from the *siddurim* of R. Saadia and the Rambam, the great rationalists of the period of the Geonim and Rishonim, respectively. As was noted above, those *siddurim* omit the special – heavily eschatological – inserts. The Rambam, who is the only *Rishon* who (arguably) rejects the six + one conception of history outright,³⁷ is the only one whose Shabbat version of *Yotzer Or* is

³⁶ It should be emphasized that the thesis expressed in the text – that the focus of *Yotzer Or* on Shabbat is the millennial Shabbat – is consistent with the seven-day a week *peticha* and *chatima* of the blessing, especially with the words יוֹצֵר אוֹר וּבוֹרֵא חֶשֶׁךְ. *עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם וּבוֹרֵא אֶת הַכּל*. Both that phrase and the context of the verse in Isaiah 45:7 that is its inspiration – *עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם וּבוֹרֵא רַע* – make clear that God is not merely the creator and continual “renewer” of the natural universe, He is also the One Who guides history; the verse in Isaiah is taken from God’s address to Cyrus anointing him as the “human face” of the redemption of Israel. Put slightly differently, the Shabbat version of *Yotzer Or* highlights that Creation is not just about God creating and renewing the natural world, but about His continuing involvement with history.

³⁷ In *Guide of the Perplexed* II:29, the Rambam states that Rav Katina’s view is a *da’at yachid*. Mois Navon points out that the Rambam does not, however, explicitly reject, nor accept, the idea of the “six + one” theory on general (but merely rejects the

of the millennial Shabbat from R. Saadia's discussion of the end of days.⁴²

Conclusion

Let us conclude by revisiting our four questions:

(1) *How the Shabbat changes fit into Yotzer Or*: We now understand how the changes – precisely *because* of their eschatological aspects – fit specifically into a blessing with the seemingly unrelated theme of God the Creator. It seems plain that the Shabbat version of *Yotzer Or* is meant as a deliberate contrast to the one said on the other six days of the week. The weekday version emphasizes the continual renewal of God's work in the six millennia of history that parallel six days of Creation (and, of course, the six days of the week). The *Shabbat* version emphasizes the eternal rest of the millennial Shabbat that parallels the Shabbat of creation (and, of course, the weekly Shabbat). Or, to paraphrase Rashi's statement on *Rosh Hashana* 31a in a related context: “שכל ששת ימים נאמרים ה [ברכות] הללו על שם העבר ושל שבת על שם הבא.”

⁴² His omission of “our” changes and his tepid endorsement (“*ve-yeish mosifim*”) of even a modest addition to *Yotzer Or* cannot be attributed to an unwillingness to tamper on Shabbat with the regular *nusach*. If anything, R. Saadia is more willing than any of the other early classical editors of the *siddur* to tamper with the weekday *nusach*, as can be seen from the fact that he deviates from the weekday text in other blessings of *Keriat Shema* (specifically, in the blessings of *ma'ariv*). See *Siddur R. Saadia Gaon*, p. 110. These deviations are not mentioned in any of the other classic early *siddurim* (except in the Seder Rav Amram Ga'on where they are mentioned as something to be rejected). R. Saadia's *nusach* was likely due, at least in part, to his Palestinian background; there are other isolated early instances of different *nuscha'ot* on Shabbat (and other days) for other blessings in Palestinian rites. See Joseph Heinemann, *Tefillot haShabbat*, <http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/kitveyet/mahanaim/tfilot-2.htm>, Hoffman, *The Canonization of the Synagogue Service*, pp. 79-81. As is typical of cases where the Palestinian rite deviated from the Babylonian one, none of the uniquely Palestinian deviations from the weekday *nusach* of *birkot Keriat Shema* became normative. In any case, R. Saadia's deviations stick closely to the topic of the (non-millennial) Shabbat.

In contrast, the insertion of *Or Chadash*, which sparked a long and loud opposition, cannot be explained by the “millennial Shabbat” thesis and is thus left (in the view of many) looking like a thematic misfit.

(2) *Why no other blessing is altered:* Conversely, we understand why *Yotzer Or* was the only blessing in *tefilla* whose text is altered on Shabbat (and only on Shabbat). Precisely because *Yotzer Or* is the blessing whose theme is God’s activities in the six days of Creation (which, in turn, parallel both Sunday through Friday of each week and the six millennia of history), this first blessing of *Keriat Shema* is the most suitable vehicle of all the *berakhot* for conveying – via supplementation and alteration of the weekday text – this aspect of Shabbat highlighted above.

(3) *Why the changes are not made on Yom Tov.* We understand why the changes are not made on *Yom Tov* as the parallel between Shabbat and the seventh millennium is not apposite for any day other than Shabbat.

(4) *Why no change is made to the “angelic court” theme.* Finally, we understand why no changes are made on Shabbat to the “angelic court” theme. The angelic court of God is an eternal one whose character will not change with the redemption in the seventh millennium. Rather, it is the rest of creation that will change at that time. Hence, on Shabbat its description is brought into line with that of the angelic court.

This article has been an effort to demonstrate that a careful study of the origins and history of *tefilla*, of a comparison of different *nuscha’ot*, and of the period in which a given *tefilla* was composed can shed a new light – an *or chadash* – on prayers we recite on a regular basis. May this effort and others like it help achieve the goal of our *tefilla*, to bring us closer to our Redeemer and our redemption.