
Document Packet
for

The History of Reform Judaism
A Webinar...

Presented by:

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at HUC-JIR in Cincinnati.

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"MEMORIAL" -A PETITION TO THE PARENT CONGREGATION 1824
To the President and Members of the Adjunta
of
Kaal Kadosh Beth Elohim of Charleston, South Carolina

Gentlemen,

THE MEMORIAL OF THE UNDERSIGNED, SHOWETH UNTO YOUR HONOURABLE BODY, THAT THEY HAVE WITNESSED WITH DEEP REGRET, THE APATHY AND NEGLECT WHICH HAVE BEEN MANIFESTED TOWARDS OUR HOLY RELIGION. AS INHERITORS OF THE *TRUE FAITH*, AND ALWAYS PROUD TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE WORLD AS A PORTION OF "GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE," THEY HAVE BEEN PAINED TO PERCEIVE THE GRADUAL DECAY OF THAT SYSTEM OF WORSHIP, WHICH, FOR AGES PAST, *PECULIARLY DISTINGUISHED* US FROM AMONG THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH. Not unmindful, however, of the various causes which regulate human conduct; and at the same time, unwilling to shield themselves from any censure to which their actions may justly entitle them, they have ingenuously investigated the reasons which may have led them from the Synagogue, and are now seriously impressed with the belief, that certain defects which are apparent in the present system of worship, are the sole causes of the evils complained of.

IN POINTING OUT THESE DEFECTS, HOWEVER, YOUR MEMORIALISTS SEEK NO OTHER END THAN THE FUTURE WELFARE AND RESPECTABILITY OF THE NATION. AS MEMBERS OF THE GREAT FAMILY OF ISRAEL, THEY CANNOT CONSENT TO PLACE BEFORE THEIR CHILDREN EXAMPLES WHICH ARE ONLY CALCULATED TO DARKEN THE MIND, AND WITHHOLD FROM THE RISING GENERATION THE MORE RATIONAL MEANS OF WORSHIPING THE TRUE GOD.

It is to this, therefore, your memorialists would, in the FIRST place, invite the serious attention of your honourable body. BY CAUSING THE HASAN, OR READER, TO REPEAT IN ENGLISH SUCH PART OF THE HEBREW PRAYERS AS MAY BE DEEMED NECESSARY, IT IS CONFIDENTLY BELIEVED THAT THE CONGREGATION GENERALLY WOULD BE MORE FORCIBLY IMPRESSED WITH THE NECESSITY OF DIVINE WORSHIP, AND THE MORAL OBLIGATIONS WHICH THEY OWE TO THEMSELVES AND THEIR CREATOR; While such a course, would lead to more decency and decorum during the time they are engaged in the performance of religious duties. It is not everyone who has the means, and many have not the time, to acquire a knowledge of the Hebrew language, and consequently to become enlightened in the principles of Judaism. What then is the course pursued in all religious societies for the purpose of disseminating the peculiar tenets of their faith among the poor and uninformed? The principles of their religion are expounded to them from the pulpit in the language that they understand; for instance, in the Catholic, the German and the French Protestant Churches: by this means the ignorant part of mankind attend their places of worship with some profit to their morals, and even improvement to their minds; they return from them with hearts turned to piety, and with feelings elevated by their sacred character. In this consists the beauty of religion, when men are invoked by its divine spirit, to the practice of virtue and morality.

These results, it is respectfully submitted, would be sufficient of themselves to induce the alterations requested. BUT YOUR MEMORIALISTS CANNOT FAIL TO IMPRESS UPON THE MINDS OF YOUR HONOURABLE BODY, THE SINGULAR ADVANTAGES THIS PRACTICE WOULD PRODUCE UPON

THE HABITS AND ATTENTION OF THE YOUNGER BRANCHES OF THE CONGREGATION; BESIDES THE NECESSITY OF GOOD BEHAVIOUR, WHICH THE SOLEMNITY OF THE SERVICE SHOULD IMPOSE, THEY WOULD BECOME GRADUALLY BETTER ACQUAINTED WITH THE NATURE OF OUR CREED, THE PRINCIPAL FEATURES WHICH DISTINGUISH THE JEW FROM EVERY OTHER RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION, AND THE MEANING, AND THE REASON, OF OUR VARIOUS FORMS AND CEREMONIES. Believing, at the same time, that the above views of what is indispensable to the preservation of our faith, will meet with the approbation of every reflecting and liberal mind—they repeat, that they are actuated by no other motive, than to see our Synagogue in a better, a more wholesome, and a more respectable state of discipline; to see it elicit that regard from Jew and Gentile, which its great character deserves, and should always command; and finally, not to destroy long standing institutions, but to accommodate them to the progress of time, and change of situation and circumstances.

WITH REGARD TO SUCH PARTS OF THE SERVICE AS IT IS DESIRED SHOULD UNDERGO THIS CHANGE, YOUR MEMORIALISTS WOULD STRENUOUSLY RECOMMEND THAT THE MOST SOLEMN PORTIONS BE RETAINED, AND EVERYTHING SUPERFLUOUS EXCLUDED; AND THAT THE PRINCIPAL PARTS, AND IF POSSIBLE ALL THAT IS READ IN *HEBREW*, SHOULD ALSO BE READ IN *ENGLISH*, (THAT BEING THE LANGUAGE OF THE COUNTRY,) SO AS TO ENABLE EVERY MEMBER OF THE CONGREGATION FULLY TO UNDERSTAND EACH PART OF THE SERVICE. In submitting this article of our memorial to the consideration of your honourable body, your memorialists are well aware of the difficulties with which they must contend, before they will be enabled to accomplish this desirable end; but while they would respectfully invite the attention of your honourable body to this part of their memorial, they desire to rest the propriety and expediency of such a measure, solely upon the *reason* by which it may be maintained. YOUR MEMORIALISTS WOULD FURTHER SUBMIT TO YOUR HONOURABLE BODY WHETHER, IN THE HISTORY OF THE CIVILIZED WORLD, THERE CAN BE FOUND A SINGLE PARALLEL OF A PEOPLE, ADDRESSING THE *CREATOR* IN A LANGUAGE NOT UNDERSTOOD BY THAT PEOPLE? It is indeed surprising, that heretofore no innovation has even been *attempted*, although it is readily admitted your honourable body may boast of many very enlightened, liberal and intelligent members.

YOUR MEMORIALISTS WOULD NEXT CALL THE PARTICULAR ATTENTION OF YOUR HONOURABLE BODY TO THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF ABRIDGING THE SERVICE GENERALLY. They have reflected seriously upon its present length, and are confident that this is one of the principal causes why so much of it is hastily and improperly hurried over. This must be evident to every reflecting mind, when it is seen, that notwithstanding the evil complained of, the service of the Sabbath, for instance, continues until *twelve o'clock*, although usually commencing at *nine*. It is therefore manifest, that, according to the prayer of your memorialists, should the service be in future conducted with due solemnity, and in a slow, distinct, and impressive tone, its length would certainly occupy the attention of the congregation, until two o'clock, if not later.

THE OFFERINGS WILL NEXT COMMAND THE ATTENTION OF YOUR HONOURABLE BODY; AND UPON THIS PART OF OUR MEMORIAL, WE WOULD RESPECTFULLY CRAVE THE FAVOUR OF A PATIENT HEARING, WHILE WE CLEARLY SET FORTH THE ENTIRE USELESSNESS AND IMPROPRIETY OF THIS CUSTOM. In the first place, your memorialists earnestly protest against the unwise and absurd practice of rendering in the Spanish language, any offerings which may be intended to benefit the Synagogue, or which may be otherwise identified with our holy religion. Besides the free

scope which the practice of offering in a language understood by few, affords to mischievous and designing men to pollute the holy altars by gratifying their evil intentions we certainly think it highly inconsistent to select for this very purpose, the language of a people from whom we have suffered, and continue to suffer, so much persecution. But forgetting for a moment this consideration, your memorialists would further suggest to your honourable body, whether the arrangement recently made in the financial transactions of the congregation, would not altogether supercede the necessity of any offerings whatever? This is most seriously and strenuously desired by your memorialists, because they are prepared to show, by an act of your own body, that the practice of offering is not the result of any imperious necessity, but merely intended as an idle and absurd indulgence. By the 11th Article of the Constitution of your honourable body, it is provided, that such offerings as are made by any member of the congregation, shall, at the end of the year, be *deducted out of the amount of his annual subscription as well as that of his wife if he be a married man.* According to this part of the Constitution, a revenue is *created independent of the offerings which are subsequently made and deducted out of the amount of subscription at the end of the year.* Your memorialists would, therefore, inquire, wherein exists the necessity, under this arrangement, of any offerings whatever? How, and in what manner, the support of the congregation *depends* upon them and, in a word, whether the above article is not a tacit admission by your Constitution, that so much of the offerings as may amount to the annual subscription of a member, was never intended as a means of supporting the congregation, inasmuch, as the whole amount is already anticipated long before a single offering is made! In fact, many persons, when their amount of assessment is exhausted in offerings, are induced to go out and remain in the Synagogue yard, to prevent being compelled to offer against their will—a practice irregular, indecorous, and highly to be censured—because it sets an ill example to our children, and draws upon us the eyes of strangers.

Your memorialists are aware, it may be said, that some few subscribers offer *more* than the amount of their annual subscription. But to this it may be answered, that it is certainly not difficult for the general body, in their wisdom and discretion, to devise some means equally profitable to the congregation, and at the same time, as well calculated to meet the views of the liberal, without resorting to a practice, which only interrupts the worship of God, and is productive of so little good. Your memorialists therefore respectfully suggest, that the addition in numbers to your body, which it is expected will shortly take place, will greatly aid in the funds, and serve as an additional reason why the offerings should be abolished; but as a further inducement for their entire abolition, YOUR MEMORIALISTS WOULD RESPECTFULLY RECOMMEND, THE PROPRIETY AND EXPEDIENCY OF ADDRESSING TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE PEOPLE, AND MORE PARTICULARLY THE YOUNGER BRANCHES OF THE CONGREGATION, APPROPRIATE DISCOURSES, *IN THE PLACE AND AT THE VERY TIME THE OFFERINGS ARE USUALLY MADE.*

ACCORDING TO THE PRESENT MODE OF READING THE PARASA, IT AFFORDS TO THE HEARER NEITHER INSTRUCTION NOR ENTERTAINMENT, UNLESS HE BE COMPETENT TO READ AS WELL AS COMPREHEND THE HEBREW LANGUAGE. BUT IF, LIKE ALL OTHER MINISTERS, OUR READER WOULD MAKE A CHAPTER OR VERSE THE SUBJECT OF AN ENGLISH DISCOURSE ONCE A WEEK, AT THE EXPIRATION OF THE YEAR THE PEOPLE WOULD, AT AN EVENTS, KNOW SOMETHING OF THAT RELIGION WHICH AT PRESENT THEY SO LITTLE REGARD.

IT IS ALSO WORTHY OF OBSERVATION, THAT A NUMBER OF ISRAELITES, WHOM IT SHOULD

BE THE SPECIAL CARE OF YOUR HONOURABLE BODY TO BRING BACK UNDER YOUR IMMEDIATE PROTECTION AND INFLUENCE, ARE NOW WANDERING GRADUALLY FROM THE TRUE GOD, AND DAILY LOSING THOSE STRONG TIES WHICH BIND EVERY PIOUS MAN TO THE FAITH OF HIS FATHERS! IN THESE INDIVIDUALS, YOUR HONOURABLE BODY HAVE FAIR SUBJECTS FOR THE HOLY WORK OF REFORMATION; BY MOULDING YOUR PRESENT FORM OF WORSHIP TO SUIT THEIR COMPREHENSIONS, YOU WILL INSTANTLY RECEIVE THEM AMONG YOU; they will collect under your especial care and guardianship; they will aid in the pecuniary resources of your holy institution; and if, from among the whole number now scattered about our city and state, either through irreligion, through disabilities imposed, or any other cause, you are enabled to make but one convert, it will add much to those laudable ends which it should be the principal desire of your honourable body to accomplish. It should also be remembered that while other sects are extending the means of Divine Worship to the remotest quarters of the habitable globe-while they are making the most zealous efforts to bring together the scattered of their flock, offering the most flattering inducements to *all denominations*-we, who may be termed the mere remnant of a great nation, are totally disregarding the fairest opportunities of increasing our own numbers, and at the same time neglecting the brightest prospects of enlarging our resources, and effectually perpetuating our national character.

YOUR MEMORIALISTS TRUST THAT THEY HAVE BEEN PERFECTLY UNDERSTOOD BY THE FOREGOING OBSERVATIONS, THAT THEY ENTIRELY DISCLAIM ANY IDEA OF WISHING TO ABOLISH SUCH CEREMONIES AS ARE CONSIDERED LANDMARKS TO DISTINGUISH THE *JEW FROM THE GENTILE*; THEY ARE WHOLLY INFLUENCED BY A WARM ZEAL TO PRESERVE AND PERPETUATE THE PRINCIPLES OF JUDAISM IN THEIR UTMOST PURITY AND VIGOUR, AND TO SEE THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE GENERATIONS OF ISRAELITES ENLIGHTENED ON THE SUBJECT OF THEIR HOLY RELIGION, so as by understanding, they may learn the nature of its Divine source, and appreciate its holy precepts; that they would not wish to shake the firmness of any man's faith, or take from his devotion towards it; that they will always fervently and zealously support it as the first and most ancient of religions.

The alterations above submitted, being all your memorialists can in reason and moderation require, they would beg leave, in concluding, to bring to the notice of your honourable body, the reformation which has been recently adopted by our brethren in Holland, Germany and Prussia. The following is an extract from a German paper entitled the "*Frankfort Journal*."

"The functions relative to Divine Service, such as the rite of taking the Law out of the Ark, the promulgation of the Law, etc., shall no longer be sold by auction in the Synagogue. The Rabbis, and the Elders of the Synagogue, (the first in their discourses) must endeavor to put an end to the custom of *see-sawing* during the prayers, and to that of repeating the prayers in too loud a voice; all profane tunes during Divine Service are prohibited. The ceremony of striking the *impious Haman* at the festival of Purim, is most strictly prohibited. Children below the age of five years are not to be taken to the Synagogue. All unsuitable pleasantries, in which the young people sometimes indulge in the Synagogues on the eve of some festivals, or on the festivals themselves, as well as the distribution of sweetmeats by the women to each in the Synagogues, are strictly forbidden. Some of the

religious ceremonies must be accompanied by a German discourse [that being the vernacular] on a Hebrew text, in which the meaning of these solemnities shall be explained, and on the Sabbath a discourse shall be held in German in every Synagogue after the reading of the prescribed passage of the Law, and a chapter of the Prophets."

Thus, from the above extract, it appears, that no climes, nor even tyranny itself, can forever fetter or control the human mind; and that even amidst the intolerance of Europe, our brethren have anticipated the free citizens of America in the glorious work of reformation; Let us then hasten to the task with harmony and good fellowship. WE WISH NOT TO OVERTHROW, BUT TO REBUILD; WE WISH NOT TO DESTROY, BUT TO REFORM AND REVISE THE EVILS COMPLAINED OF; WE WISH NOT TO ABANDON THE INSTITUTIONS OF MOSES, BUT TO UNDERSTAND AND OBSERVE THEM; IN FINE, WE WISH TO WORSHIP GOD, NOT AS SLAVES OF BIGOTRY AND PRIESTCRAFT, BUT AS THE ENLIGHTENED DESCENDANTS OF THAT CHOSEN RACE, WHOSE BLESSINGS HAVE BEEN SCATTERED THROUGHOUT THE LAND OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC, AND JACOB.

And your memorialists will ever pray.

(Signed by forty-seven Israelites of the City of Charleston.)

למלך י"ה

הנותן תשועה למלכים וטמלה לנסיכים ומלכותו מלכות
כל-עלמים : הפוזה את דור עבדו . מחרב רעה : הנותן בם
הרך . ובמים עזים נתיבה : הוא יברך . ושומר . ונצור .
וניעור . וירום . ונידל . ונשא לטعلاה למעלה . את אדונינו
המלך : מלך מלכי הפלכים ברוחמי . ישמרך . ותחנו .
וממלך-ארה ונין יצילו : מלך מלכי הפלכים ברוחמי . ירים
וינקיה כובב מערכתו . ניאrik ימים על מלכתו : מלך מלכי
הפלכים ברוחמי . יתן בלבו ובלב כל-זעיזיו ושריו . רחמנות
לעשות טובעה עפננו . ועם כל-ישראל אחינו : בימיו ובימים
תשוע יהודה . וישראל ישבון לבטה . ובא לאיון גואל . וכן
יה רצון . ונאמר אמן :

לשדי מדינה

הנותן תשועה למלכים וטמלה לנסיכים ומלכותו מלכות
כל-עלמים : הפוזה את דור עבדו . מחרב רעה : הנותן בם
הרך . ובמים עזים נתיבה : הוא יברך . ושומר . ונצור .
את כל-שרי הדרינות האלו : מלך מלכי הפלכים ברוחמי .
ישמרם : יחיהם . וממלך-ארה ונין יצילם : מלך מלכי הפלכים
ברוחמי . ירים וינקיה כובב מערכתם . ניאריכו ימים על
טמשלתם : מלך מלכי הפלכים ברוחמי . יתן בלבם ובלב כל-
זעיזיהם ושריהם . רחמנות לעשות טובעה עפננו . ועם כל-
ישראל אחינו : בימים ובימים תשוע יהודה . וישראל ישבון
לבטה . ובא לאיון גואל . וכן יה רצון . ונאמר אמן :

A PRAYER FOR A ROYAL GOVERNMENT.

May he who dispenseth assistance unto kings, and dominion unto princes ; whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom ; who delivered his servant David from the destructive sword ; who maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters ; bless, preserve, guard, assist, exalt, and raise unto a high eminence, our lord the king.' May the Supreme King of kings, through his infinite mercy preserve him, and grant him life, and deliver him from all manner of trouble and danger. May the Supreme King of kings, exalt and raise him on high, and grant him a long and prosperous reign. May the Supreme King of kings, through his infinite mercy, inspire him and all his counsellors and officers with benevolence towards us, and all Israel our brethren. In his days and in ours may Judah be saved, and Israel dwell securely ; and may the redeemer come to Zion. May this be the will of God, and let us say, Amen.

A PRAYER FOR A REPUBLICAN GOVERNMENT.

May he who dispenseth assistance unto kings, and dominion unto princes ; whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom ; who delivered his servant David from the destructive sword ; who maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters ; bless, preserve, guard, and assist the constituted officers of the government. May the Supreme King of kings through his infinite mercy preserve them, and grant them life, and deliver them from all manner of trouble and danger. May the Supreme King of kings exalt and raise them on high, and grant them a long and prosperous rule. May the Supreme King of kings through his infinite mercy inspire them and all their counsellors and officers with benevolence towards us, and all Israel our brethren. In their days and in ours may Judah be saved, and Israel dwell securely ; and may the redeemer come to Zion. May this be the will of God, and let us say, Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE GOVERNMENT
HAMBURG TEMPLE PRAYERBOOK, 1819
(pp. 107*-108*)

May the Lord of the universe, the God of might, faithfulness, and graciousness, whose kingdom is an eternal kingdom, whose dominion is without end, bless and protect all kings, princes, and rulers who have been ordained as the representatives of his power on earth and as the heads of the nations, and above all, the princes and rulers of the German Fatherland. May He particularly bless and protect the Council[or] of this State [Hamburg], our duly ordained government, under whose protection we have been placed. May He grant them health and long life. May He fill them with His divine light and bestow upon them wisdom, insight, and strength to realize His divine will in everything they do; to dispense right and justice; to protect and further the good. May He direct their hearts toward His heavenly love so that they may decide and carry out at all times that which is best for the [entire] State, so that benevolence and love may guide all their steps, and so that Israel, too, may enjoy their goodwill.

So, too, for the entire state and its domains do we ask God's fatherly protection. May He take it up into His care and graciously keep it far from destruction and mishap, war and pestilence, famine, fire and flooding. May He cause all evil to pass it by and let prosper everything that furthers its welfare.

And let the entire congregation say now, Amen.

America

PRAYER FOR GOVERNMENT.

Almighty God! sole ruler and governor of the whole universe! Thou who hast created countless systems for thy glory! Thou, who fillest all space with thy wisdom, truth, order and benevolence, in thy boundless mercy, bless, preserve and enlighten the President of these United States, together with his counsellors, and all the officers of the General and State Governments, executive, legislative and judicial. O, may a portion of thy divine wisdom fill the halls of their assemblies, and direct their hearts and understandings for the honour of thy holy name, and the prosperity of our beloved country. May the spirit of peace be ever in their counsels, and integrity be their leading principle.

We have reason to bless and extol thy goodness, O Lord! that thou hast numbered us with the inhabitants of this thy much favoured land, uniting us all into one great family, where the noble and virtuous mind is the only crown of distinction, and equality of rights the only fountain of power. We bless thy holy name, that thou hast removed the intolerance of bigotry far from out this happy republic, and hast relieved the people from the yoke of political and religious bondage. May thy redeeming spirit visit all the nations of the earth, and may the smiles of thy auspicious goodness be a light to the eyes of rulers, and the fear of thy justice awaken contrition in the heart of the oppressor. Graciously incline thine ear to the supplications of thy servants, assembled here this day. Bless the people of these United States. May sentiments of charity and friendship unite them as citizens of one common country. May the lights of science and civilization, as the flaming sword of Eden, defend them on every side from the subtle hypocrite and open adversary. Spread thy benign influence, great Author of existence! over all mankind. Grant this for the sake of thy supreme excellence and never ending mercies, and let us all say, AMEN.

The Sabbath Service and Miscellaneous Prayers, adopted by the Reformed Society of Israelites, Charleston, South Carolina, 1830.