

Prayer Manuscripts in Forced Labor and Concentration Camps: Theological Aspects

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Prayer during the Holocaust, which distilled religious thought, was an ultimate encounter between faith (sacred) and historical realities (profane). There are numerous memoir accounts and oral testimonies regarding prayer in the camps; and several Siddurim have survived, some with marginalia. Here I will focus on prayer manuscripts – of which there are very few: Two from Gross-Rosen sub-camps and two from Auschwitz. Two are Hungarian transliterations of Hebrew. (Shayndi Levi reported in *Lishuatekha kiviti hashem* that a pious woman, apparently in Auschwitz II-Birkenau, taught girls how to pray by heart and wrote a *Siddur tefillah* in transliteration for girls who could not read Hebrew.)

One: Gruenberg (Gross-Rosen sub-camp for women). After March 1944. Hungarian transliteration, 89 pages. Contains *Ashrei*; *Ahavat olam*; *Vayomer hashem elmasheh*; *emet ve-emunah*; *mi kamokhah*; *Hashkivenu*; *Shemoneh esrei*; *Aleinu*; *Hallel*; *Musaf*; *Ma'ariv*; *Havdalah*; *Shaharit*; *Musaf*; *Nishmat kol haj*; *Shabbat shemoneh esrei*.

Two: Langenbielau (Gross-Rosen sub-camp). Entitled *Imadsagok*. Written on *Lieferschein* tickets. Hungarian transliteration. Includes *Psalms 3* ("Lord, how they have increased who trouble me. Many are they who say of me, there is no help for him in God.) and *Psalms 91* ("Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty...No harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent); *Yiskor*). 22 pages

Three: Auschwitz. Halina Liebeskind. "A Prayer to God" Hungarian. 1943. 1 page.

Four: Auschwitz. Hebrew. Written on factory paper 35 Pages. Includes prayers for weekday morning prayer, Sabbath morning prayer, Sabbath additional prayer and *Hallel* service for festivals.¹

Questions to be addressed: Which prayer texts were selected and why? Do the manuscript versions differ from the published? What do the texts reveal about the writer's situation? What do the texts reveal about the writer's relationship to God – and God to the catastrophe?

¹ Specifically: *Ahavat olam*; *Emet ve-emenuh*; *Hashkivenu*; *Veshamru*; *Barukh she'amar*; *Hodu lashem*; *Vekarut imo haberit*; *Atah hu ad*; *Atah hu hashem*; *Vayedaber hashem el mosheh laymor ve'asita*; *Vayedaber hashem el masheh laymor tsav*; *Hamashah ulehayei*; *Ledavid mizmor lashem ha'arets*; *Kadosh hu*; *Le'el barukh*; *Ashrei*; *Inuyim*; *Haleluyah halelu*; *Barukh hashem leolam*; *Vayevarekh david*; *Ki gadol atah*; *Yiru einenu*; *Atah Kidashta*; *Vayekhulu hashamaym*; *Elohenu ve'elohei avoteineu*; *Hatodah*; *Shelemim kedoshim*; *Habekhor vehama'aser*; *Rabi yishmael*; *Mah tovu*; *Adon olam*; *Yigdal Elohim*; *Zivhej*; *Mizmor shir hanukat habayit ledavid*. *Elohaim neshamah*; *Apeha*; *Mah ashiv*; *Halelu et Adonai*; *Min hametsar*; *Anah hashem*; *Ahavat olam*; *Hoshi'einu*; *Hayom yom sheni beshabbat*; *Ranenu tsaddikim*.