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Kaddish

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Oseh Shalom: Giving Peace a Chance in Heaven and on Earth

Dan Ornstein

"All We Are Saying Is Give Peace A Chance"¹

John Lennon's plaintive 1969 protest for world peace would later be drenched in blood-soaked irony when he became the murder victim of Mark David Chapman, a mentally ill man who shot him outside of his apartment building in New York City on December 8, 1980. In his later song "Imagine,"² Lennon, "the most famous Beatle," famously sang about contemplating an ideal world of peace free from strife and persecution—only to be felled by the very violence that he decried. What followed his tragic death was an international outpouring of grief and support for his family, as well as conspiracy theories that he was assassinated by right-wing government-backed operatives because of his outspoken political views. More than three decades later, his death reminds us of the dark truth that human violence will always be with us.

Jewish sources are emphatic about the stubborn propensity of human beings for violence and conflict—beginning with the early biblical story of Cain and Abel, the first homicide/fratricide, and continuing through today's writers who struggle to understand the religious, psychological, and ethical implications of the Holocaust and other genocides. Yet hard-boiled realism about what *is* is not the same as cynical despair about what *could be*. This essay explores *oseh*



shalom, the poetic verse that ends the Full, Rabbinic, and Mourner's Kaddish and that has become an extremely popular song. It not only requests but demands that God bring about peace and harmony on earth. As with John Lennon's chant, we might sing its words gently. But I will show that these words are actually an explosive protest demanding that peace on earth must happen in our time, ending violent human reality. Because it is placed at the end of Kaddish, *oseh shalom* completes the eschatological ("end of history") themes of Kaddish by moving us, the worshippers, from hopes for God's universal sovereignty to demands for total peace, the result of that sovereignty.³

I will show the reader the provocative spiritual nature and power of *oseh shalom* by comparing it with a poem about peace that was written by the great American poet Emily Dickinson. Why employ such an unusual way to read and explain *t'fillot*, Jewish prayers? The philosopher Rabbi Abraham Heschel understands the connection between prayer and poetry in the following way:

A word is a focus, a point at which meanings meet and from which meanings seem to proceed. In prayer, as in poetry, we turn to the words, not to use them as signs for things, but to see the things in the light of the words. In daily speech, it is usually we who speak the words, but the words are silent. In poetry, in prayer, the words speak.⁴

Rabbi Heschel calls our attention to the independent life and multiple meanings that words possess, apart from how we may use them to express ourselves in ordinary, everyday speech. Prayer and poetry are forms of verbal expression that are very different from an instruction manual, an email that I write to a friend, or even great prose. When I read a poem or chant a prayer, the words are supposed to have a profound emotional or spiritual effect upon me because of

the beautiful artistic techniques used to express them, their many possible meanings, and the ways those meanings influence how I think about or see the world. I see "the things in light of the words" because the words speak to me, rather than serve exclusively as tools for me to say what I want to say. The comparison of poetry and prayer can deepen our appreciation for both and help us to hear their words meaningfully in our own lives. Through what such a comparison can say, it can awaken us to the poetic and spiritual richness of *oseh shalom*, as well as help us to direct our hearts more deeply to God and to our greatest hopes for peace.

Peace Is a Fiction of Our Faith

Emily Dickinson (1830–1886) gave voice to many important truths in her poetry, and her insights about human life and behavior far transcended the mostly reclusive and somewhat mysterious life that she led in Amherst, Massachusetts. As one of her biographers explained, Dickinson related to others in the same way that she wrote: by weaving a complex and often elusive web of metaphors, which she referred to as a kind of poetic algebra.⁵ They allowed her to present her honest and penetrating struggles with love, faith, religion, despair, and death that would have challenged the orthodoxies of nineteenth-century New England culture and its declining Puritan religion in ways that were less threatening to that society than a more direct approach would have been, while still allowing her to maintain her deep sense of privacy. Similarly, Dickinson often used the pattern of alternating four- and three-beat lines (eight syllables, then six syllables) in her poetry. This was a standard metrical pattern for New England church hymns, which would have been familiar to someone in her day and locale (and which was certainly familiar to her).⁶ She

may have done this to rebel against the accepted religious ideas and social mores of her time, from a position of safety, by couching her often unconventional insights in these conventional rhythms.⁷

In contrast to John Lennon, one of Dickinson's shortest poems—a four-line epigram—reflects sadly upon the naïve trust that we place in our ability to achieve peace:

Peace is a fiction of our Faith—
The Bells a Winter Night
Bearing the Neighbor out of Sound
That never did alight.⁸

Dickinson could be telling us that faith in peace—its presence or its achievement—is a lie. Faith of course can refer formally to organized religion, to personal religious faith, or to the general hope upon which we rely as individuals and communities for a sense of well-being. We do not know if Dickinson is referring to her personal inner turmoil and despair, to the well documented conflict that was ongoing in her extended family, to her ideas about death and life after death, or to the carnage of the American Civil War (which took place during her life).⁹ The source of her despair is not of primary importance. One of the features of a great poem is its ability to suggest different powerful human emotions or ideas that resonate with numerous experiences using the smallest number possible of words, artfully arranged as evocative metaphors. I believe she has done exactly this in her poem.

Dickinson uses many idiosyncratic dashes in her poetry in place of punctuation and for poetic effect. (She also capitalizes many words mid-sentence.) The dash-line she adds after the word "Faith" appears to instruct us to pause, so that we contemplate the next three lines as her illustration of "Peace is a fiction of our Faith." She then tries to have us *feel this fiction*, by using a very simple yet haunting image.

We hear the sleigh bells of a carriage that is carrying to us someone whom we have been expecting on a cold, lonely winter night: perhaps a loved one or a lover, a cherished friend, or someone else whom we have missed terribly. Dickinson hints at the person being anticipated, "the Neighbor"—though we want to be careful not to interpret this phrase too literally, since the word "neighbor" can allude to a friend, someone close to you, or someone who merely lives next door. I suggest that the neighbor here might also be a sad, even cynical allusion to all of humanity, echoing the biblical commandment to "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18). Dickinson may be using this word in a double sense: the elusiveness of real peace is like the carriage that passes with our neighbor in it; our neighbor is all people, with whom and among whom peace can never really be achieved, no matter how much we believe that it will be.¹⁰ Ultimately, the carriage passes and we are left with an enduring sense of desolation. With this rich metaphor, the poet invites us to consider that faith in peace is colossal self-deception that, like our listening and hoping for that anticipated visit on a lonely winter night, brings us nothing but heartache and disillusionment. That person we longed to have stop in—perhaps all of humanity—is like the sound of those passing bells: increasingly, achingly distant, as is peace itself.

Rearranging and filling in Dickinson's words, we can read her evocative illustration as prose in the following way. Our false and misguided faith in peace is (*like*) the bells of a carriage on a winter night, carrying out of the reach of sound the neighbor who never descends from *that carriage*. The poet certainly could have simply said this in prose, but note how she instead uses rhyme and her distinctive rhythm in four compressed lines to give the reader the experience of having one's faith destroyed. Perhaps Dickinson uses here the alternating eight- and six-syllable lines that I mentioned above to intensify that feeling of descent for us. Longer lines suggest the effect of hopeful

“longing,” then they quickly sink into shorter lines that make us feel abruptly cut off when we read them. Like the longed-for neighbor at *night*, peace itself never *alights*; it never descends from the place toward which we direct our faith: heaven. As people and communities of faith, we can believe longingly that peace will finally drop by like a good neighbor, and that we should give it a chance; but our naïve hopes will be quickly dashed. Peace is that elusive, ringing bell we often hear (or wish to hear) in the desolate nighttimes of our lives, but whose passing sound moves quickly away, leaving us with nothing.

On Earth as It Is in Heaven

As I wrote above, *oseh shalom* is heard at the end of the recitation of every Kaddish. Though it likely originated as part of the Kaddish, it was added over time to the end of every silent Amidah (the silent, standing “prayer par excellence”) and at the end of Birkat Ha-mazon (the traditional prayer of thanks after a meal). It is also a favored chant at Jewish-themed rallies, conferences, concerts, and youth gatherings. Though it might not formally be a poem, it has become an extremely popular song that has been set to music by many well-known Jewish composers. I believe this is because its Hebrew is simple and its rhythms are gentle, but its message is forceful and relentless. Below is my translation:

<i>Oseh shalom bi-m'romav bu ya-aseh shalom aleinu v'al kol yisrael. (V'imru amen.)</i>	May God, who imposes peace in God's heights, impose peace upon us and upon all of the people Israel. (And respond with: Amen.)
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Even a casual glance at this passage reveals why people would be drawn to it. In ten brief Hebrew words, it emphasizes that genuine peace is imposed *by* God upon heaven (God's heights) and that we impose *upon* God to make that peace “alight,” to descend directly

upon us and upon the rest of the Jewish community. Realism about our violent present and faith in our tranquil future might struggle with each other, but despair about the eventual descent of peace is never allowed a voice here. *Oseh shalom* places the ultimate power to “impose” lasting peace upon us in God's hands, and the responsibility for “forcing” God to do this in our mouths. This verse encompasses literally the entire universe, in the sweep of its petition for peace. From the celestial heights of heaven down to each of us on earth, peace is something that we audaciously demand of God.

A deeper exploration of the language of *oseh shalom* shows how its author artistically conveys our demand that peace not be a mere fiction of our faith. The first part of the prayer borrows the Hebrew phrase *oseh shalom bi-m'romav* from the biblical Book of Job (25:2). Job is a thoroughly righteous man whose goodness is renowned. At the instigation of one of God's angels, God tests the purity of Job's motives for being so good by destroying his family, his property, and his health. God wants to see if he will maintain his faith and his goodness despite being hurt so badly. When Job lashes out bitterly at God for making him suffer, the three friends who have joined him, ostensibly to comfort him, set about to attack him for questioning God's justice and protesting his own innocence. In one response to Job, his friend Bildad exclaims:

Dominion and dread are God's;
God *imposes* peace in God's heights (*oseh shalom bi-m'romav*).¹¹

Bildad then launches into a conventional defense of divine justice that relies upon denying the ability of human beings, even those as

righteous as Job, to ever be vindicated morally before God. Many interpreters of the Bible assert that Bildad is referring to God's endless power to impose peace upon warring camps of angels and other celestial servants. His words are perhaps based upon an ancient Near Eastern myth about warring divine beings being subdued by the one God, or at least the most powerful god in the ancient pantheon.

According to this view, Bildad asserts that God's power to coerce the heavenly hosts into harmony is, among other divine powers, so great that people can never expect to be justified before God.¹² Puny humankind steeped in its moral weakness and spiritual disabilities, including its incorrigible violence, is nothing before God, who singlehandedly reins in the violent chaos of the celestial beings—the very same beings that are far greater than humans. Where, then, did Job ever get the temerity to believe that he could call God to account for the violence being done to him and his family?

I suggest that the author of *oseh shalom* has consciously taken this fragment of Job 25:2 and turned it on its head.¹³ In Bildad's eyes, no human being ever has the right to coerce or even request an accounting from God for anything that happens to him or her. God, after all, is the One who forcibly imposes peace upon the celestial powers. From the perspective of *oseh shalom*, every member of the community who chants it is attempting to "force" God, as it were, into imposing peace and harmony upon us. This is made clear by the parallelism between the first and second lines: we demand that God, who imposes peace on high, likewise impose it below upon us, those intoning these words, and upon the wider Jewish world as well. Our prayer expresses this presumptuous, seemingly unrealistic expectation of God in a highly deferential tone by retaining the third-person address to God that Bildad used to put Job in his place.¹⁴ Yet tone and content are completely at odds here, as the translation above demonstrates.

A talmudic tradition beautifully emphasizes this very point while employing our passage in Job, perhaps as a reflection upon the meaning of *oseh shalom*:

[The sage] Bar Kappara said: Great is peace, for even the angels among whom there is no enmity, jealousy, hatred, strife, rivalry, or dissension [have need for] the blessed Holy One to make peace among them, as it is stated, "Dominion and [dread] are with god; god imposes peace in god's high places" (Job 25:2). "Dominion" [is another name for the angel] Michael and "Dread" [is another name for the angel] Gabriel, one being of fire and the other of water, and yet they do not injure one another; how much more so then do mortal beings, among whom all these dispositions exist, [have need of peace].¹⁵

Note how this passage uses a rather formal, dry principle of logic employed by the ancient rabbis in legal arguments to make a very passionate claim. The principle, known as the "argument from minor to major" (*kal va-homer*), emphasizes how simultaneously difficult, imperative, and possible is God's intervention in human affairs for the sake of imposing peace. The angels lack all propensity for violence, yet they still need divinely imposed peace and order because they are made of fire and water, mutually exclusive elements that could cancel each other out. If God prevents them from destroying each other, *how much more* does God need to prevent evil- and violence-prone humanity from doing so. Interestingly, this teaching retains the original meaning of Job 25:2 that we discussed above—namely, that God imposes peace and order upon the warring celestial parties—yet in a very different manner. On the one hand, the angels don't fight with each other, because only humans do that; yet God still exercises control over them, which makes God's coercive supervision

of humanity even more important. On the other hand, the angels' "physical make-up"—sometimes fire and sometimes water—is inherently irreconcilable, yet God finds a way to keep the divine celestial entourage from mutual extinction. Humanity's violent tendencies are not an inherent part of our "physical make-up": we choose to be violent. Thus, how much easier should it be for God to stop us from behaving this way, given what God is able to achieve with the angels. We do not need to take any of this angel imagery literally to get the very serious point of this teaching and the point of *oseh shalom*, which is: we need God to help us give peace a real chance because we can't seem to figure this out for ourselves entirely. We know that with God's intervention in our efforts, there is no reason for peace to remain a fiction of our faith.

Just as I re-read and simplified Emily Dickinson's poem about peace as a fiction of our faith, let me also suggest a somewhat different, simplified reading of *oseh shalom*: *May the One who imposes coercive peace upon the warring parties in heaven...impose peace upon us and upon the whole of Israel!*¹⁶

This volume about the Kaddish contains many essays that discuss the entire prayer in great detail. I will only mention here that it has very ancient roots in the Torah-study academies of Israel and Babylonia. It was recited to proclaim the name—the essential power—of God as eternally great and to console the listeners with messages of hope for that time at history's end when God would finally deliver the Jewish people and the world from lawlessness, evil, and violence. Professor Joseph Heinemann, the renowned scholar of liturgy, points out that the Kaddish and *oseh shalom* are part of a genre of prayers originating in the *beit midrash* (academy), prayers of praise for God and hopes for redemption with which teachers in the ancient academies used to end Torah study sessions. These prayers were later attached to the ends of other prayers, in order to reinforce the individual's and the community's demand that God bring us peace and release the Jewish people from persecution.¹⁸ This appending of *oseh shalom* to the ends of other prayers is implied in the early rabbinic teaching that "Peace is so great, that all blessings and [Amidah] prayers end with words of peace."¹⁹

At first glance, *oseh shalom* seems to be a parochial prayer that focuses exclusively on the Jewish people. It prays for peace for one's local Jewish community as well as for the Jewish people as a whole, but not necessarily for the rest of humanity. I suggest that further examination of the sources and the context of *oseh shalom* also suggest that it should be read as a prayer of peace for the whole world. In the Book of Job, it is Bildad—a non-Jew²⁰—who asserts that God

imposes peace throughout the celestial heights. The use of *his* words possibly reflects the biblical author's subtle acknowledgment that the quest for peace in heaven and on earth belongs to everyone, not only Jews. Further, as I wrote above, we must look at how *oseh shalom* takes shape meaningfully when it is connected to the rest of the Kaddish. The first line of the Kaddish, *yitgaddal v'yitkaddash*, hopes for the day when God shall be magnified and sanctified victoriously as universal Ruler of the world that God has created. This first line echoes Ezekiel 38:23: *v'hitgaddil li v'hikadishi, v'nodati leinei goyim rabbim*, "Thus will I [that is, God] manifest My greatness and My holiness, and make Myself known in the sight of many nations." Ezekiel was a prophet who lived during the Jewish people's exile in Babylonia, likely several years before the Babylonians' destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. His prophecies often comfort his fellow exiles with visions of redemption in the wake of the destruction of evildoers and those who hate the Jewish people. Ezekiel 38–39 is a long, violent prophecy that describes a great apocalyptic ("end-of-days") battle between God and the worldwide armies of evildoers (symbolized by the mythic kingdom of Gog), who are committed to the destruction of the Jewish people. God warns that Gog will be obliterated when God comes forth to redeem God's people, revealing that, on the day of punishment, "I will manifest My greatness and My holiness, and make Myself known in the sight of many nations. And they shall know that I am the Eternal" (38:23). The Kaddish draws directly from Ezekiel's vision of God finally vindicating the Jewish people in the sight of all humanity, and transforms that vision into a broader universal prayer for God's supreme rule over all humanity—something that we still await. Further, as we read in the talmudic tradition cited above, the Babylonian sage Bar Kappara early on drew an inference from Job 25:2 about the supreme importance of God imposing peace upon *all* human beings—not only the angels and

not only the Jewish community. Thus, I detect a more universalistic undertone in *oseh shalom* than is usually acknowledged.

In our own time, many of us have become uncomfortable with the overtly parochial tone of *oseh shalom*. We must pray for peace for ourselves and our entire people, especially in light of attacks on the State of Israel and the persistence of anti-Semitism. Yet we must also pray for peace throughout the world—not only because peace is good for the Jewish people, but also because we fervently believe that God cares about all human beings and all living things. This is an authentically Jewish idea that is reflected in the famous Ashrei prayer.²¹ Drawing upon the implicit universalism of *oseh shalom* that I discussed above, many people now add the Hebrew words *v'al kol yash'vei teiv'eil*, "and upon all the earth's inhabitants," to the line after the words *v'al kol yisrael*, and this now appears in some printed editions of the prayerbook as well.

"Uncanting" the Can't

In Richard Powers' novel *The Time of Our Singing*, the father of one of the protagonists tells his African-American daughter that White America cannot hold her down and that she can do anything she wishes with her life. He exclaims, "What is history, except for 'uncanting' the can't?" His words later become ruthlessly ironic, as she and her white husband are repeatedly thwarted in their attempts to raise their children in the racist America of the 1950s, and she experiences horrible setbacks due to race that ultimately kill her. History is littered with tragic examples of when "can't" could not be undone, when limitless imagination and open-heartedness have been crushed mercilessly by the limits of dumb luck, closed minds, and hatred. How true this is with respect to the pursuit of genuine

peace in the often ugly history of human behavior! About this much

Emily Dickinson and the author of *oseh shalom* seem to agree: the existence of genuine peace *in real time* is nothing more than fiction, a matter that causes them—as it causes all people who love peace—the greatest anguish.

Whether or not Dickinson would have counseled us to abandon this fiction is largely irrelevant, for her words make clear what she believes: we cannot redeem ourselves from the hell that we, in our freedom, have created. By contrast, *oseh shalom* is a cry of protest from deep within the heart that demands—not requests—of God a thoroughgoing imposition of peace upon everything and everyone. The mirror image of this demand is an unrepentant Jewish hope for peace and justice that has its roots in the visions of our great prophets. The obstinate survival of that hope has carried us, and so many people of faith, forward through the long narrative of human evil with a counter-narrative, which insists that human life does not need to be all about brutality and violence. Those of us who believe it is God's prerogative to impose the terms of lasting peace upon the cosmos will hopefully continue to hold fast to this faith, which flies in the face of widespread cynicism and despair. Those of us who do not have faith in a dependable, all-powerful God who possesses such redemptive capacity will hopefully continue to reject despair nonetheless. For what can despair bring other than the chronic sickness of more despair...especially despair that poses as a hard-knuckled realism that dismisses faith in peace as nothing more than silly fiction? If true peace never comes, at least not in our lifetimes, the plaintive words of *oseh shalom* can still goad good people to press forward, acting and living and teaching in ways that make us feel it is nearby. When we chant this little fragment of a prayer, all we are praying is “give peace a chance.”

NOTES

¹ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Give_Peace_a_Chance for more information about the song's history.

² See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imagine_\(John_Lennon_song\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imagine_(John_Lennon_song)) for more information about the song's history.
³ *Oseh shalom* is also found at the end of the Amidah, the “prayer par excellence” of Jewish liturgy, and at the end of Birkat Ha-mazon, the Grace after Meals. As I will discuss below, an ancient rabbinic tradition explains that peace is so important that we have the practice of mentioning peace at the end of all blessings and prayers.

⁴ Abraham Heschel, *Man's Quest For God: Studies In Prayer and Symbolism* (1954; rpt. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1987), p. 26.

⁵ See Helen Vendler, *Dickinson: Selected Poems And Commentary* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), “Introduction,” especially p. 9.

⁶Ibid, pp. 4–5.

⁷ Richard Sewall, *The Life of Emily Dickinson* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 408 and 713–714. It should be noted, however, that only seven or eight of her poems were formally published in her lifetime. Dickinson carefully “published” many more poems in her many letters to friends and family, and the rest did not see the light of day until well after her death.

⁸ #912 (untitled) in *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1960), p. 430.

⁹This poem was likely written around 1864, four years into the bloody Civil War, during which more than 200,000 people died due to combat alone. Dickinson scholars increasingly acknowledge that some of her poetry, over half of which was written during the years of the war, reflects her anguish over the war’s brutality and her protest against the popular religious idea that it was being fought to help God defeat Satanic forces and usher in a new era. See Shira Wolosky, “Emily Dickinson’s War Poetry: The Problem Of Theodicy,” in *Massachusetts Review* 25:1 (Spring 1984), pp. 22–41.

¹⁰ Helen Vendler writes in her introduction (pp. 1 and 16) that Dickinson read the King James version of Hebrew Scriptures extensively, and one of the Dickinson Family Bibles translates Leviticus 19:18 in just this way. See *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments: Translated out of the Original Tongues* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1843). The Dickinson Family Library copy is kept in the Emily Dickinson Room 8, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. The entire Dickinson Family Bible may be seen online at <http://pdf.lib.harvard.edu/pdfs/iivew/24025603>. According to educators at the Dickinson House and Museum in Amherst, Massachusetts, the Dickinson family possessed nineteen copies of the King James Bible, of which the Harvard copy is one.

¹¹ NJPS translation, my emphasis. Note that God does not merely "create" peace in the usual sense of the Hebrew word *ozeb*, usually translated as "make"; rather, God "imposes" peace in a much more forceful sense.

¹² *The Anchor Bible: Job*, (ed. & trans. Marvin H. Pope Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973), p. 181.

¹³ This is a common literary technique in Jewish liturgy and Hebrew poetry known as intertextuality, wherein a writer uses the original words of a biblical or rabbinic source in a new, creative, or even radical way.

¹⁴ This deferential third-person tone was actually quite common for prayers like this one, which were used to conclude public Torah study in ancient times. We will discuss this further below.

¹⁵ M. Ginsberg, "Perek Hashalom: Chapter on Peace," in Abraham *The Minor Tractates of the Talmud, Vol. II*, ed. & trans. Abraham Cohen (London: Soncino Press, 1965), p. 599, #8. I highly recommend this entire brief collection of Jewish sayings about peace to the reader, which can be found in Cohen, pp. 597–602.

¹⁶ Though I will not demonstrate it in detail in this essay, I suggest that the phrase *shalom aleinu v'al kol yisrael*, "peace upon us and upon all of the people Israel," is our poet's conscious echo of the prayer *shalom al yisrael*, ("peace be upon Israel"), which phrase is found twice in the biblical Book of Psalms (at 125:5 and 128:6). Psalm 125 seems a particularly apt source for our phrase in *ozeb shalom*, since this psalm emphasizes God's assured and longed-for protection of good people, and of the entire people of Israel, in the face of evildoers who seek to destroy us—whom the psalmist assures us God will destroy. At the very end of this dual assurance and request for the vanquishing of evildoers, the psalmist exclaims, "Peace be upon Israel!" I imagine *ozeb shalom* adapting this phrase as an echo of the psalmist's prayer: we ask God to bring us peace in the form of protection from evildoers, and we also know that God can make this happen.

¹⁷ Ismar Elbogen, the nineteenth-century scholar of Jewish liturgy, writes: "We have no information as to when and where the same idea [found in the Aramaic line, *y'hei sh'lama rabba*] was later added again in Hebrew in the words *ozeb shalom bi-m'romav...*" Elbogen assumes that the latter is an addition to the former, rather than a Hebrew-language expression of hope for redemption and God's peace that developed independently of (or even before) *y'hei sh'lama rabba*. There is consensus among traditional commentators that Kaddish was composed mostly in Aramaic because it was the language that most laypeople in Israel and Babylonia understood at that time. See Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*, trans. Raymond P. Scheindlin (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1993), pp. 80–84.

¹⁸ Joseph Heinemann, *Prayer in The Talmud: Forms and Patterns*, trans. Richard Sarason (New York: Walter De Gruyter, 1977), chap. 10. One clue in *ozeb shalom* that it was originally such a prayer is the ending: *v'imru amen*, "Say Amen!" Likely a command by the teacher to the students to affirm his prayer of hope, it

became such a popular part of *ozeb shalom* that we recite it today as well—even though we normally would not command ourselves to respond *Amen* at the end of our own prayer.

¹⁹ Cohen, *Minor Tractates*, p. 602, #19.

²⁰ Bildad is identified in Job 2:11 as a Shuhite, from the family of Shuah. Shuah was one of Abraham's children through the latter's relationship with his concubine, Keturah, as we read in Genesis 25. According to that chapter, Abraham gave these children gifts but did not give them any of his estate as inheritance, before he sent them away eastward. This ensured that Isaac, Abraham's one son by his wife Sarah, would be the sole inheritor of his father's estate and the vehicle for God's promise to make Abraham's progeny into a great nation, the Jewish people. Bildad might be seen as hailing from a family of distant Abrahamic cousins to the Jewish people, who nonetheless were not included in the lineage of the Jews.

There are numerous Jewish traditions that Job is non-Jew. The general consensus of contemporary scholars is that Job and his friends are non-Jews and that the book was probably written by a Jew in the first millennium B.C.E., based on much earlier ancient Near Eastern folktales and poems. Though all four protagonists speak about God in exclusively monotheistic terms, their non-Jewish identities lend a distinctively universal tone to the book's concerns about God and human suffering. See Pope, *Job*, pp. xxiii–xlvi. Also see Nahum N. Glazzer, *a The Dimensions of Job: A Study and Selected Readings* (New York: Schocken, 1969), pp. 4, 16–17.

²¹ Psalm 145:9, "The Eternal is good to all, and God's mercy is upon all God's works."