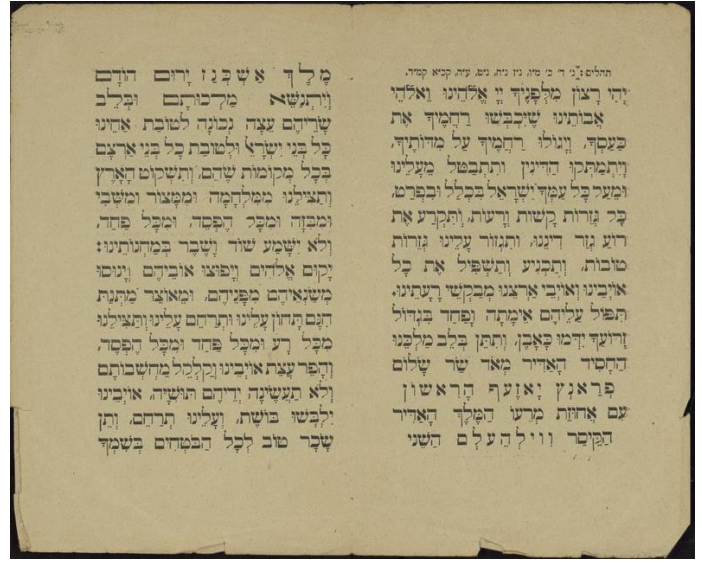
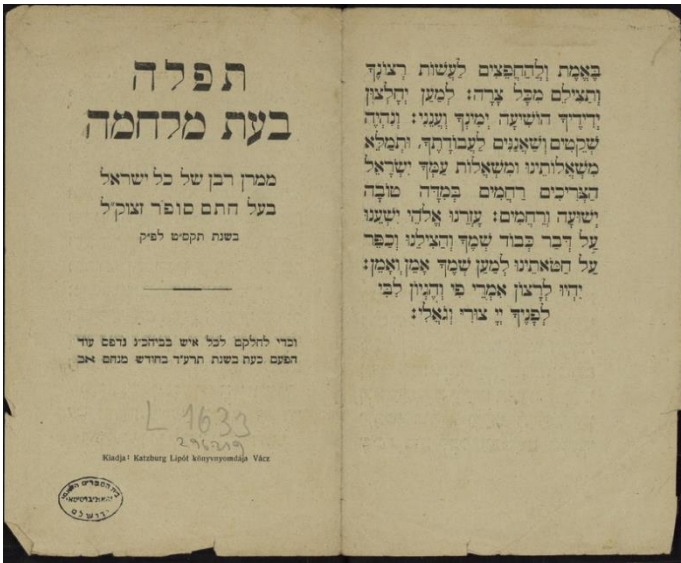


Prayer During Wartime, Chatam Sofer, 1914



Translation:

From the Rabbi of all of Israel

By the Chatam Sofer may his righteous soul rest in peace

5569, 1809

Prayer at time of war

And in order to hand them out to everyone in synagogue, it was printed again this year 1914 in the month of Menachem Av.

May it be Your will our God and the God of our forefathers that...You will defeat and lower all our enemies and the enemies of our land who seek to destroy us...

And to our King, the righteous, very mighty, and the minister of peace, Franz Joseph I, and his ally the great Kaiser Wilhelm II, King of Ashkenaz, God shall put wisdom and the right advice into their hearts for the good of our brothers, the Children of Israel, and for the good of all the people of the lands...and save us from war...

Help us God our Savior, for the honor of your name, and forgive our sins, for your name, amen and amen.

May the words of my mouth and the rumination of my heart be acceptable in front of You, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

This short prayer was written in 1809 by Rabbi Moses Sofer* as a response to the Austro-Polish War. It was reprinted over a century later after the outbreak of World War I. The prayer shows the dual identity of the Jews of Hungary; they prayed for the welfare of the Jewish people but also for the defeat of the enemies of "our land," namely, Hungary. The prayer was adapted to the events of 1914 with the addition of the names of the current rulers: Emperor Franz Joseph I, the emperor of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and his ally, German Emperor Kaiser Wilhelm II. Another copy of the prayer was printed later in the war. This version also refers to Sultan Mehmed, the fifth and last Ottoman sultan who allied with the Austro-Hungarian and German leaders.

This is one example of prayers in which Jews around the world prayed for the success of the leaders of their respective countries. These prayers, which originate in the Talmud, were recited during regular prayer services but also at times of war and danger. To this day, many Jewish communities around the world pray for the success of the monarchs and governments of their country.

1. Why do you think Chatam Sofer decided to create this prayer?

2. Who would have recited this prayer? Where would it have been recited?

3. Why is it customary among Jewish people to pray and read the psalms of Tehilim during difficult times? What impact does it have? What do you think about this custom?

4. Write about an experience you had that connects to prayer or write your own prayer based on current events.

* **Rabbi Moses Sofer (Schrieber)** - Rabbi Moses Sofer (Schrieber) was one of the leading Orthodox rabbis in Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century. He was born in Frankfurt in 1762 but spent most of his life in Pressburg (today Bratislava, Slovakia), then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He was appointed chief rabbi of the city and established the reputable Pressburg Yeshivah. He quickly gained followers throughout Hungary and other parts of Europe and was nicknamed the Chatam Sofer after one of his most famous works. During his time as chief rabbi of Pressburg, he held a strong stance against the Reform movement and any form of radical change in Judaism. One of the sayings attributed to him is: "חדש אסור מן התורה" – 'new' is forbidden by the Torah".

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