

The Search for the Sacred
Is Holiness a State of Space, Time or Mind?

A Senior Thesis by
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for the Academy for Jewish Religion
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This work is dedicated to the memory of my beloved daughter

**ליאת חנינה בת אריאלה ודוד (ז"ל)
LIAT CHANINA PASKIN**

who left this world with the kiss of God and on angels wings.

May her memory always be my inspiration to fully BE!

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PROLOGUE

Why a Thesis on Holiness?

The search for the sacred has taken people of faith, and those still navigating the waters of belief, far and wide. We have built majestic cathedrals and meditated quietly as we've walked on the shores of the grandest seas. We have found quiet moments in the hustle and bustle of our busy days and religiously attended communal prayer gatherings.

Whether or not our searches have led us to organized religion – the searches, themselves, have given meaning and purpose to our existence. Some would argue that it would be much easier to simply live our lives without giving the existence of holiness and the presence of God in the world a second thought. We should allow a forest to be a forest and not bother seeing it as a place where the beauty of God's sacred creations reside. It would take far less energy to simply let time pass without making a big deal at every turn.

It would be easier, more simple perhaps. But avoiding the search by closing our eyes, ears, hearts and minds to the possibility that there is something much deeper, much richer that has the ability to permeate every aspect of our world, in many ways, leaves our days empty and our memories meaningless. Without the search for the sacred in our lives, we are not living, we are simply existing.

In the course of this work, I hope to explore the nature, history and significance of *k'dusha* (which for now we may understand as "holiness") as it has been and continues to be understood and appreciated in three distinct, yet related, realms of experience: space, time, and person. We will begin with a historical survey of the Biblical period in which we will see that the experience of *k'dusha* was most prominent in the realm of physical space. Moving through to the destruction of the second Temple, we will then turn to the Rabbinic period and a re-focusing of the awareness of *k'dusha* in time. Through a close study of our historical experiences of holiness, we will discover that, holiness is not simply a state of space or time, but a state of mind. And more so, that we have a vital role in creating and realizing holiness in the world. For it is through our sanctification of a certain place or time that it is imbued with holiness.

Additionally, I hope that we will see that, we are again going through a historic transformation in our understanding and appreciation of *k'dusha*. Given that holiness is not bound to space or time and that we, through acts of awareness, ritual and connection, bring sanctity to our experience, it follows that we may sanctify any space and any time. This understanding presents the possibility that the experience of holiness can be both within the prescribed times and spaces identified in Jewish history and beyond them. What determines the presence of holiness is not a specific space or time, but a state of mind. It is this transition to recognizing and appreciating the role of the person and the intention that a person brings to an experience that has put its signature on the search for the sacred in the 20th and 21st centuries. Many Jews, hungry for connection to the Divine and sanctity in their lives, have turned back toward the models of holy space and holy time, while others have seen them as too restrictive and have instead, begun to acknowledge the possibility of creating their own holy space and time.

In acknowledging our ability to sanctify space and time, and by honoring that gift, we may realize, that those who have turned away from the traditional Jewish models of experience, are nonetheless linked to generations of Jews who have come before and who have traveled the same paths searching for the Divine in their lives. And that in recognizing that holiness is, in fact, a state of mind - that awareness brings us back to an awareness and appreciation for holy space and holy time.

A Note About God

Discussing holiness presupposes that there is a thing called “holiness” and that at some point, it was introduced into the world. Before we may begin looking into the history of holiness and the search for the sacred then, we must first make clear our assumptions about the One who brings holiness into the world and allows holiness to be searched out.

I come from a rather traditional upbringing from which I understood God as Transcendent, All-Powerful, and Supernatural. Having struggled with these beliefs for some time, I have since transformed my beliefs about God to those of transnaturalism and immanence. God has become,

for me, in the words of Mordecai Kaplan, “the Power that makes for salvation.” God is the Energy of Life, the Source of Strength, and the One Who is Everything. At the same time, I find, in my prayers, a deep desire to connect with a personal, God who is “Other.” A God I can approach, talk to, relate to, and seek support from.

Throughout this work, I do my best to understand God as God was understood in the time period that I am discussing. Certainly in every period of Jewish existence, God has had many manifestations and innumerable attributes. However, in each period of Jewish history, one or more of these images of God have come to the forefront and have shaped, to a certain extent, the history of that period of Jewish existence.

Throughout the Bible, God is understood as Creator, Revealer, and Redeemer. God manifests Godself through supernatural miracles and is communicated with through prayer, sacrifice, and ritual. To the rabbis of the *Talmud* and later rabbinic works, God is Law-Giver and Commander. God manifests Godself and is communicated with through *Torah* study, the observance of commandments, and through prayer.

While few comfortably admit it, my experience is that most Jews today, find meaning in understanding God as Spirit, Source, and/or Energy. I remember being told while I was studying at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical School that every Jew is a Reconstructionist Jew, they just don’t know it yet. To that extent, while many Jews profess a belief in a wholly “Other,” Supernatural, Transcendent God, my sense from working in the communities that I have, is that this theology is more reflective of what these Jews have grown up with, rather than beliefs based on their own personal searches.

I must also preface this work with a note on gender language. I firmly believe that to speak of God as “He” or “She” is to limit God. While it has been argued that avoiding the personal pronoun confuses our discussions of God and causes us to stumble over our words - I would propose that this is entirely appropriate. In talking about God, we need not have a sense of clarity or smoothness of speech. God is God and is beyond all human language or conception. With this in mind, I do my best throughout this work to use gender sensitive and neutral

language when referring to God.

With these thoughts behind us, let us begin with an examination of the many layers of meaning of *k'dusha*, and why the Jewish people, and all people, have continued on the search for the sacred throughout history.

INTRODUCTION: THE HEALING POWERS OF HOLINESS

קָדוֹשׁ - *Kadosh*

Let us begin with one little word “*K-d-sh*” which is most commonly translated as “holy.” It is found almost 900 times in the *TaNaKH*, making it a fairly common word. Of these almost 900 occurrences, about 150 of them are found in the book of Leviticus - more than in any other book of the Bible. *K-d-sh*, has many different meanings throughout the Bible: set apart, sacred, hallowed, honored, dedicated, holy, and consecrated.¹ From my students, I have learned still other understandings of *k’dusha* including: worthy of respect, special, blessed, different in a meaningful way, God-like, rich, sanctified, Godly, on a higher level, blessed for all time, prayerful, very important, awesome, elevated, and of great respect.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, “holy” can mean, (1) of God, (2) consecrated, sacred, (3) devoted to the service of God. In other words, something is *kadosh* if it is connected to God. On the other hand, Rashi (11th century) and Ramban (13th century) comment on Leviticus 19:2 and define *k’dusha* in terms of self-restraint, specifically in the realm of the physical. Rashi explains that קָדוּשׁ יִי וְתִהְיֶה means, “to be removed from *arayot*² and from sin (of a sexual nature)”. Nachmanidies builds upon Rashi’s teaching when he suggests that, “this abstinence does not refer only to restraint from acts of immorality, as the Rabbi (Rashi) wrote, but it is rather the self-control mentioned throughout the *Talmud*, which confers upon those who practice it the name of *P’rushim* (Pharisees), (literally: ‘those who are separated’ from self-indulgence, as will be explained, or those who practice self-restraint).”

So, on the one hand, from our dictionary references, we have the impression that something is holy if it is connected or in relation with the Divine. On the other hand, in the rabbinic mind, we may understand *k’dusha* as something that is separated from everyday indulgences. So it seems that *k’dusha* is both separation and connection. Separation from the mundane for the sake of connecting to and being in relationship with the Divine. In the words of kabbalist, writer of

1. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*

2. This refers to the most serious sins of sexual immorality, including incest, adultery, and relations with a woman impure due to menstruation. (*The Torah: With Rashi’s Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*, The Sapirstein Edition, footnote 3 to Leviticus 19:2)

ethical works, and Hebrew poet Rabbi Moshe Chayim Luzzato (1707–1746), sanctifying oneself “consists in one’s completely separating and removing himself from earthiness and clinging always, at all periods and times, to his God.”³

***Kadosh* As Being in Relationship With God**

The importance of connecting and being in relationship with the Divine is paramount in modern Jewish philosophy. Martin Buber's most famous work *I Thou*, calls upon us to re-image our relationship with God as one in which we see God not as some wholly separate being with which we cannot connect, but as an intimate and immanent partner with whom we are connected *panim el panim*. In his discussions on the prophets, Buber enters the conversation with a number of important assumptions: God is involved in history; God is in relationship with the Jewish people; and the internal nature of the Jewish community matters to God. From this, Buber understands that the role of the prophet is to be acutely conscious of this relationship and to share that awareness with others.⁴ As one can see from a study of the lives of the prophets; a by-product of having this unique connection and relationship with God, was their being separated and sometimes ostracized by the people. While I would not suggest that experiencing *k'dusha* in our lives will or should ostracize us from our communities, it is important to note that there is an element of separation which must go hand in hand with the ensuing connection.

Emil Fackenheim agrees in so much as he argues that in preaching social action and justice, the prophets are not suggesting that it is the moral thing to do, but rather that it is what God wants us to do. Separating ourselves from those who choose otherwise and acting morally, therefore, brings us into relationship with God.⁵

Prophecy, then, is a tool for relationship building. Much like the covenant of the *Torah*, it is a two-way street, which requires the participation of both God and person. God must care enough to want to be in relation and we must be prepared and aware enough to decode the message as a

3. Moshe Chayim Luzzatto, *The Path of the Just*, pg. 329

4. For a more complete discussion of the role of the prophet and prophecy in building relationships between God and people, see my paper "Transforming a *Haftarah* into a *Haftarah*: Finding Prophetic Power and Passion" written for the Academy for Jewish Religion, January, 2002

5. Emil Fackenheim, "The Revealed Morality of Judaism and Modern Thought" in *Quest for Past and Future*, pgs. 204-228.

Divine call to be in relationship. The prophet then, embodies the command, *k'doshim t'hiu* - you shall be holy. By separating themselves from the mundane and devoting themselves to be in relation with God, the prophets live lives of *k'dusha*.⁶

Rabbi Benjamin Hecht, writing in his on-line weekly *Torah* commentary, concurs when he explains that *k'dusha* is, “not simply a separation from the physical; it essentially defines the proper relationship between the physical and the spiritual. *K'dusha* is built upon a separation from the physical but only in order to re-enter this realm on a higher plane - and in that new bond is *k'dusha*.”⁷ As Professor William Scott Green of the University of Rochester suggests, the ultimate goal of a religion of sanctification is to make sure that the relationship between God and human beings is maintained.⁸

The Search for the Sacred

But why is *k'dusha* so important in our lives? Why is it so important to communities of faith to have a sanctuary with fixed seating, stained glass windows, a grand ark for the Torah scrolls? Why is it that every Jewish calendar comes with the exact times for *Shabbat* candle lighting in ten different cities? Why do we turn to our clergy and community for blessing and support when we move into a new home, recover from an illness, or suffer a loss? We do all of these because in doing so we find and feel a sense of connectedness; both to our fellow searchers and to God.

This search for connectedness to the Divine is found most prominently in the writing of the Hasidic Masters. *D'veikut*, commonly translated as “attachment” or “devoutness”, in both mystical and Hasidic usage came to mean “of close and most intimate communion with God.”⁹ The first time we see the word *.דבקות* in the Bible is in the context of the Garden of Eden where it says about Adam and Eve, “Hence a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, so that they become one flesh.”¹⁰ For the Hasidic masters, however, no passage is more important than Deuteronomy 11:22-23. There we read, “If, then, you faithfully keep all this Instruction

6. This topic of *k'doshim t'hiu* will be explored more fully in Chapter Ten.

7. Rabbi Benjamin Hecht, “Kedusha: Beyond the Spiritual,” as featured in *Nishma: Spark of the Week*

8. William Scott Green, *Great World Religions: Beliefs, Practices, Histories*, Part Three of Five: God and God's People: The Religion of Judaism, Lecture 2, Audiocassette.

9. Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, pg. 203

10. Genesis 2:24

that I command you, loving HASHEM your God, walking in all God's ways, and holding fast (*ul'davka*) to God, HASHEM will dislodge before you all these nations." Scholem notes that there is a difference of opinion amongst the *Rishonim* as to whether this cleaving (*d'veikut*) is a promise held only for the faithful, or as a possibility and a calling for all. Nachmanidies, whom I have cited before and who was steeped in *Kabbalistic* thought and learning, interprets this verse to be a command for all peoples.

So important is this connection or cleaving, to Hasidic teachings that, "the Baal Shem Tov identifies *emunah* (faith) [with] *devekut*. 'Faith,' he says¹¹, 'is the intimate communion of the soul with God.' And the first, and most pointed, consequence of this identification is the frequently repeated formula that to fall away from the state of *devekut* is essentially equivalent to separation of the creature from its Creator."¹²

"Everything begins with man's decision to cleave to God."¹³ And this is still true today in the Hasidic world and all of the spheres of Judaism. Searching for the sacred, what the Kabbalists and the Hasidim called *devekut*, and what I call *k'dusha* is our beginning and our end, and what brings meaning and worth to everything in the middle.

In the book of Ezekiel, the prophet is brought to a valley full of dry bones.¹⁴ Following God's command, Ezekiel prophesies over the bones saying, "O dry bones, hear the word of HASHEM...I will cause breath to enter you and you shall live again. I will lay sinews upon you, and cover you with flesh, and form skin over you. And I will put breath into you, and you shall live again. And you shall know that I am HASHEM."¹⁵ As Ezekiel proclaims God's word, the bones begin to come together as sinews, flesh, and skin form over them. Ezekiel then prophesies to the breath saying, "Come, O breath, from the four winds, and breathe into these slain, that they may live again."¹⁶ God reveals to Ezekiel at the end of this vision that these bones are the House of Israel. Like those who are dead, our bones are dried up; our hope is gone. To come

11. *Toledot* 195b

12. Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, pg. 209

13. *ibid.*

14. Ezekiel 37

15. Ezekiel 37:4-6

16. *Ibid* 37:9

back to life - to truly be alive, is to know that God is the One True God. To redeem ourselves from the darkness, the depths, and the void of spiritual death, we must fill ourselves with the breath of God. We must insist upon this relationship, this partnership with God, so that we may do more than survive. We must search out *k'dusha* - a vital relationship with our Creator so that we may thrive.

The History of *K'dusha*

Throughout Jewish History, *k'dusha* has been searched for and found most prominently in two distinct yet, connected realms of experience: space and time. However, as we will discover together, these realms of experience are only vessels through which we experience holiness. They are not intrinsically “holy” in and of themselves. As we will see, what we consider to be sacred spaces and times are only labeled as such because of an experience, an intention, that was created when one or more persons set their mind to and did their part in sanctifying that space or time. Holiness is not a state of space or time, but a state of mind.

In suggesting that holiness is a state of mind, it is important to understand that being of the mind does not limit the creation or awareness of holiness to a mere intellectual activity. Throughout the Bible and Rabbinic literature, the word, which we most often translate as “heart” - *lev*, in fact, refers to the mind. In these contexts, *lev* refers not just to the intellectual sphere but also the emotional. So in speaking of holiness as a state of mind, I would argue that it is the use of our intellectual and our emotive capabilities, which in many cases, in Jewish literature are one and the same, which allow for the creation of holiness in space, time and moment.¹⁷

The Creation of Holiness

A final note. Throughout this work, I speak of “creating” holy space and time. If it is not already obvious from the way in which I have chosen to define *k'dusha*, as separation from the mundane for the sake of connection to the Divine, it is important to state that creating holiness is not an activity which people can do alone. Certainly the existence of holiness, as I will argue, requires our participation in actualizing the holy potential, or at the very least, opening ourselves

17. Another example of a Hebrew word which has many layers of meaning with regard to intellect and emotion is *yadah* (know.) Biblically, to “know” someone is to have an intimate relationship with them. See Genesis. 4:1.

up to an awareness of its presence. However, we are but partners with God in creating holiness. While our part is vital, God's is equally necessary.

I am reminded of Rashi's comment on verse 16 of chapter 3 of the book of *Bamidbar*. In this chapter, Moses is instructed to take a census of all of the male children of the Levites who are one month or older. Rashi, an 11th century French scholar, notes that within the verse, וַיִּקְדָּם אֹתָם מִשָּׁה עַל-פִּי ה' כַּאֲשֶׁר צֻוָּה "Moses counted them according to the word of HASHEM, as he had been commanded," the words, "according to the word of HASHEM" seem superfluous. He wonders, "would it not have been enough to say, 'Moses counted them as he had been commanded'?" Rashi brings a *midrash*, a story-like commentary to resolve the seeming repetition. According to the *midrash*¹⁸, Moses, upon hearing God's command to count the children responded, "How can I enter into their tents to ascertain the number of their nursing infants? It would be a breach of modesty." To which God replied, עֲשֵׂה אֶתֶּה שְׁלֹךְ וְאֲנִי אַעֲשֶׂה, "You do that which is yours, and I will do that which is Mine," to suggest that Moses should go and stand at the entrance of the tent and a Heavenly Voice would come from the tent and say, "There is such and such number of babies in this tent."

In the creation of holy space and holy time we are called to do that which is ours with the knowledge that God will do that which is God's. The creation of holiness is a partnership between human beings and their Creator. With this knowledge, we begin the search for the sacred.

18. *Tanchuma* 16

Part One

Holiness: A State of Space

Biblical Period

“Seek the sacred within the
ordinary. Seek the remarkable
within the commonplace.

Is not the Song of Songs at once
a love song and the holiest of
all sacred teachings?
(Rebbe Nachman of Breslov, *Likutey Moharan* I:243)

Chapter One: Mountains, Bushes, Stones – Finding God in Our World

וַיִּקָּץ יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁנָתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אָכֵן יֵשׁ ה' בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וְאֲנִכִּי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי:

Jacob awoke from his sleep and said,
'Surely HASHEM is present in this place,
and I, I did not know it!'
(Genesis 28:16)

Introduction

In Abraham Joshua Heschel's monumental work, *The Sabbath*, he writes:

"The mind's preoccupation with things of space affects, to this day, all activities of man. Even religions are frequently dominated by the notion that the deity resides in space, within particular localities like mountains, forests, trees or stones, which are, therefore, singled out as holy places; the deity is bound to a particular land; holiness a quality associated with things of space, and the primary question is: Where is the god?"¹⁹

His observation is informative in looking at the ways in which God is experienced and realized throughout the Bible, beginning with the patriarch Abraham.

The Patriarchs Encounter God

The story of the Jewish encounter with holiness begins in the twelfth chapter of the book of Genesis, "HASHEM said to Abram, "Go forth from your native land and from your father's house to the land that I will show you."²⁰ Abram followed God's command leading him to Canaan as far as Shechem. God appeared to Abram and promised the land upon which he was standing to his offspring. Abram then marked that sacred site – not with words or a moment of silence, but by building an altar – a holy space through which Abram could offer his thanks for God's kindness and presence in his life. In fact each of our forefathers built similar spacial markers of sacred experiences.²¹

We Jews, like all ancient peoples, have humble beginnings. Just as our existence was dependent on the dust of the earth²², so too, our forefathers and mothers lived lives tied to and dependent on the earth. We looked to the earth for shelter, food, status, and protection. As such, it should not

19. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath*, pg. 4

20. Genesis 12:1

21. Isaac in Gen. 26:25 and Jacob in Gen. 28:18

22. Genesis 2:7

at all be surprising to learn that most of our encounters with the Divine, throughout the early Biblical days, were experienced in the context of nature and those features of the earth with which our ancestors were most familiar.

One of the most famous passages from the book of Genesis is Jacob's proclamation upon waking from a restless sleep in which he dreamt he saw angels ascending and descending a ladder reaching to heaven while God stood beside him all the while. Jacob declares, אֲכֵן יְיָ ה' בַּמָּקוֹם, "Surely HASHEM is present in this place, and I, I did not know it!"²³

Jacob continues, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the abode of God, and that is the gateway to heaven."²⁴ Jacob then takes the stone upon which he had rested and set it up as a מַצֵּבָה (*matzeivah*), a marker, pouring oil over it. He renames this place *Beit El*, the House of God.²⁵

Nahum Sarna in his commentary to Genesis notes that מַצְבוֹת (*matzevot*), pillars, were believed to be the repository of a divinity or spirit and were often used as cultic objects. For this reason they are proscribed in the *Torah* as being idolatrous. However, Sarna continues, "there is also the legitimate *matsevah*, such as, for instance, one that simply memorializes the dead...The lawful type is also attested in Genesis 31:45-54, where it serves as a mute witness to a treaty between Jacob and Laban. A large stone was similarly used to commemorate the covenant between God and Israel made at Shechem."²⁶ Whether or not Jacob intended for this pillar to be a repository of the Divine or a marker of an encounter and connection with the Divine, it is clear that by erecting this stone, Jacob was marking the sanctity of this space.

Later in his narrative, Jacob comes back to this place and again recognizes the holiness of this space by erecting an altar. It is described there, as the place where, "God had revealed Himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother."²⁷

23. Genesis 28:16

24. Genesis 28:17

25. Genesis 28:18-19

26. Nahum Sarna, *The Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary: Genesis*, pg. 199

27. Genesis 35:7

It is important to note here, a Hebrew word, which we have seen more than once already. Throughout the Patriarchal narratives, whenever the Patriarch is in a place in which he encounters the Divine, we find the word, *makom*, meaning “place.”²⁸ Sarna notes in his commentary on Genesis in reference to both 12:6 and 28:11 that the word *makom* “frequently has the connotation of “a sacred site.”²⁹

In fact, the awareness of the Divine in space became so important that in the rabbinic writings, *Hamakom* is also one of the names by which we refer to God.³⁰ And even today, when offering condolences to mourners, we use the traditional phrase, *המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבילי* (*HaMakom yinachem etchem b'toch sha'ar avei'lei tziyon v'Yerushalayim*), “May *HaMakom* console you amongst the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.” In the הגדה we also see the use of the word *מָקוֹם* (*Makom*) as a Name for God when we sing, *בָּרוּךְ הַמָּקוֹם בָּרוּךְ הוּא* (*Ba-ruch ha-Ma-kom Ba-ruch Hu Ba-ruch she-na-tan To-rah le-a-mo Yis-ra-el Ba-ruch Hu*) “Praised be the *Makom*, Praised be the One. Praised be the One who gave *Torah* to Your people Israel. Praised be the One!” To the rabbinic mind as to the ancient Israelite mind, God was to be found in space and was known as “the Space” or the “One Who Fills all Space.”

Throughout the narratives of the patriarchs³¹ our forebears live their lives intimately connected with the natural world around them. And as we have seen, the patriarchs noted the **places** in which they encountered and connected with the Divine by building *matzevot* and erecting altars. The places themselves, referred to as *מְקוֹמוֹת* (*m'komot*) (plural of *מָקוֹם*), according to scholars, are meant to be understood, themselves, as sacred sites.

Let us now look again, to the father of Judaism, Abraham and to a far more personal, intimate and terrifying encounter with God than those we have seen thus far.

28. See Genesis 12:6, 13:3, 13:4, 22:3, 22:9, 22:14, 28:11, 28:16, 28:17, 28:19, 32:3, 32:31, 35:7, 35:13, 35:14, 35:15

29. Sarna, pg. 197 and footnote 10 on chapter 12, pg. 358

30. see Genesis *Rabbah* 68, *Pesikta Rabbah* 21, *Niddah* 49b, *Berachot* 16b, and *Leviticus Rabbah* 5

31. Throughout Genesis, with few exceptions (see Genesis 16:7-14 and 18:15) the narratives tell us of the patriarchal encounters with the Divine. While one can create *Midrashim* on the many rich and powerful connections which must have been made between our fore-mothers and God - that is beyond the scope of this work.

The Binding of Isaac

Perhaps the most talked about, debated, commented on, and troublesome narrative throughout the *Torah* is the story of the binding of Isaac.³² According to the text in Genesis, God tests Abraham by telling him to take his son, his favored one, Isaac, whom he loves, and offer him as a burnt offering on one of the heights in the land of Moriah. Following the call, and some would say, rising to the challenge, Abraham packs up his son, the wood, the firestone and the knife and begins his journey with his son and two of his servants. After three days of journeying, Abraham instructs his servants to remain behind as he and his son continue on. At this point, the text tells us that Abraham and Isaac arrive at “*hamakom*,” the place of which God had told him.³³ As we have seen before, the choice of the word “*makom*” is significant here. We are, perhaps, being given a hint as to what we should expect - a profound connection between Abraham and God is going to be made - this is a holy place.

Upon arriving atop the mountain, Abraham builds an altar, lays out the wood and binds his son Isaac on top of the wood. And then, as Abraham prepares to sacrifice the most important thing in his life, at the height of anticipation, at the critical moment, an angel of HASHEM calls out to Abraham saying, “Abraham! Abraham!...Do not raise your hand against the boy, or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your favored one, from Me.”³⁴ The moment of connection arrives without human bloodshed.

Whether or not we should fault Abraham for his willingness to follow the command to slaughter his own son, or praise him for subverting his own desires to those of God - is for another discussion. What is interesting to note, is that this important moment of connection and re-affirmation of our covenant with God takes place in yet another *makom*, yet another holy space. A space which, according to tradition, is the place selected for the altar that would stand in the holy Temple.³⁵

It is in this place that Abraham secures his relationship and connection with the Divine and,

32. Genesis 22

33. Genesis 22:9

34. Genesis 22:11-12

35. II Chronicles 3:1

according to Rabbinic interpretation, ensures that that connection would never be lost to the Jewish people. And like his grandson Jacob would years later at *Beit El*, Abraham marks this place with the sacrifice of a ram on the altar built for his son.

Moses and the Burning Bush (Exodus 3:1-5)

The patriarchal narratives and their respective encounters with holiness and the Divine come to a screeching halt when we learn in Exodus 1:8, וַיָּקָם מֶלֶךְ-חָדָשׁ עַל-מִצְרָיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יָדָע אֶת-יֹסֵף, “A new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph.” For 220 years hence we hear of no holy spaces in the depths of Egypt. We hear of no intimate moments with God. That is until we meet the new leader of the Jewish people - Moses.

The first place that the *Torah* describes as actually being “*kadosh*” is Mount Horev (known later in the Bible as “Mount Sinai”). In the third chapter of the book of Exodus the text reads:

Now Moses, tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, drove the flock into the wilderness, and came to Horev, the mountain of God. An angel of HASHEM appeared to him in a blazing fire out of a bush. He gazed, and there was a bush all aflame, yet the bush was not consumed. Moses said, “I must turn aside to look at this marvelous sight; why doesn’t the bush burn up?” When HASHEM saw that he had turned aside to look, God called to him out of the bush: “Moses! Moses!” He answered, “Here I am.”

וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-תִּקְרֹב הָלֵם שְׁלִי-נִעְלִיךָ מֵעַל רִגְלֶיךָ
כִּי הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עוֹמֵד עָלָיו אֲדִמַּת-קֹדֶשׁ הִוא׃

And God said, “Do not come closer. Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you stand is **holy** ground.”³⁶

Here again we see the use of the word *makom* implying that Moses was in a sacred place. Then we are told, explicitly, that the land upon which Moses stands is “holy.” What makes this mountain “holy?” The text continues:

“I am,” God said, “the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.³⁷

Moses realizes that the bush before which he stands and the flames that do not consume it are a

36. Exodus 3:1-5

37. Exodus 3:6

symbol of God's Presence in that place. What ensues is one of the most intimate conversations between a biblical character and God. God instructs Moses to go to Pharaoh and free God's people, the Israelites, from Egypt. Moses responds with concern that he is not worthy and that the Israelites may not believe him. God assures Moses that he need not fear and that God will be with him. In the course of their discussion, Moses asks God's name and God responds, *Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh*³⁸.

It is the intimate connection between Moses and God which sanctifies the space Moses occupies and which paves the way for another fateful meeting at that very same mountain, as God explains, "And when you have freed the people from Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain."³⁹

Mount Sinai (Ex. 19-20)

After ten plagues, a narrow escape across the Sea of Reeds and a desert trek into the Sinai desert, in the nineteenth chapter of Exodus, we return to the holy place where Moses realized God's Presence in his life. This account of the revelation at Sinai (in Exodus chapter 3, called *Horev*) is, in many ways, similar to the earlier experience of Moses on this very mountain, but on a much more grand scale.

On the third day, as morning dawned, there was thunder, and lightning, and a dense cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud blast of the horn; and all the people who were in the camp trembled. Moses led the people out of the camp toward God, and they took their places at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke, for HASHEM had come down upon it in fire; the smoke rose like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled violently. The blare of the horn grew louder and louder. As Moses spoke, God answered him in thunder.⁴⁰

Reading this detailed account of the theophany we can almost imagine ourselves standing at the foot of Mount Sinai, child and adult alike overwhelmed by it all. Can one imagine a more profound moment of connection with God? So powerful was this connection that after the Ten Utterances (commandments) are given, the people cry out, "You (Moses) speak to us, and we

38. Exodus 3:14

39. Exodus 3:12

40. Exodus 19:16-19

will obey; but let not God speak to us, lest we die.”⁴¹ This is an important feature of holiness in the Bible and throughout Jewish history and life. We yearn for connection with the Divine yet at the same time recognize the, sometimes, fatal power which that connection holds.⁴²

A unique feature of the holiness of Sinai is that the connection made, included all of the people of Israel. On that day - as a people - we stood in a “holy place” and entered into a covenant with the Creator of Space.

41. Exodus 20:16

42. See also, Chapter Two in which I discuss the significance of the priestly garments worn when entering the Tabernacle.

Chapter Two: The Tabernacle

וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכְנָתִי בְּתוֹכָם:

And let them make me a sanctuary (holy place)
that I may dwell among them.

(Exodus 25:8)

Introduction

“With the conclusion of the revelation at Sinai, preparations are made for the spiritual welfare of the people during their trek through the wilderness on their way to the promised land. This requires the construction of a central, mobile sanctuary to serve as the symbol of God’s continued Presence in the midst of Israel.”⁴³ God commands that the Israelites build a *Mishkan*, a “holy place.” All of a sudden, we are introduced to the idea that God may not only be experienced in the context of the natural world, but also through spaces that we, ourselves construct.

The *Mishkan* - A Portable Sinai

The first such *Mikdash* was to be the *Mishkan*, or *Ohel Moed*.⁴⁴ It was through the *Mishkan* that God was to be accessible. So central was the *Mishkan* to the connection between the Israelites and God, Rabbi Mendell Lewittes notes that the *Mishkan* became, in effect, “a portable Sinai.”⁴⁵

We are introduced to the *Mishkan* in Exodus chapter 25. There, God gives the instructions for the building of the Tabernacle. As Sarna explains, “The Tabernacle is an oblong structure comprising three zones. These are, in descending order of holiness: the Holy of Holies, the Holy Place, and the Court. The structure is oriented longitudinally, on an east-west axis, with the most sacred zone in the west. An outer perimeter demarcates the sacred area. This is divided into two equal squares. The first two zones lie in one square and the Court constitutes the other square. From the Ark in the Holy of Holies, God reaches out to Israel; from the altar of sacrifice, the Israelites reach out to God. Each seems to be located exactly at the point of intersection of the

43. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus*, pg. 155

44. For a complete explanation of the various names for the Tabernacle see *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 15, pg. 679-680.

45. Mendell Lewittes, *Jewish Law: An Introduction*, pg. 22

diagonals of the squares.”⁴⁶

The Tabernacle itself, however, is not constructed until chapter 35 of Exodus. In between the instructions and the construction we find another hint as to why the Israelites of the Bible continued to search for holiness in space.

The Golden Calf

Rabbi Ovadyah Sforno (1470-1550, Italy), who’s commentary on the *Torah* bears his family name - Sforno (1567), explains that, “in the Sinai desert, before the Children of Israel built the Golden Calf, they had a high level of spirituality because they were so sure of their faith in God. God’s presence was upon each individual. But due to the Golden Calf, their level of spirituality (and connection) fell. As a result they were in need of a place where the Almighty’s Presence might reside among them. The Tabernacle became that site.”⁴⁷

As we have seen, the commandment to build a *Mishkan*⁴⁸ came only after the Golden Calf incident.⁴⁹ God recognized that even surrounded by great miracles, these people, these slaves, only knew how to experience, worship, and connect with the Divine when that Divinity was “contained” within a space as they had come to know in Egypt and as their forefathers before them had imagined. Hence the burning desire to build a Golden Calf that they could see, rather than put their faith in a God that they could not see. In their longing to experience holiness, the Israelites, once again, looked for God in a physical space.

That is not to say that the *Mishkan* itself was to be an idol for the Israelites as a concession for their inability to rise above the pagan culture in which they had been enslaved for 200 years. Rather, God had to, as we learn from the education community, meet the students where they are. God recognized that the Israelites needed some physical symbol toward which they could

46. Sarna, pg. 155-156

47. Rabbi Moshe Pinchas Weisblum, *Table Talk: Biblical Questions and Answers*, pg. 210

48. Exodus 32:1-33:23

49. The interruption of the account of the Tabernacle with the story of the making and worship of a golden calf conveys the impression that the people’s perceived alienation from God interfered with the building of the intended sanctuary that was to be the “Tent of Meeting” between God and Israel. The work could begin only after their reconciliation through the mediation of Moses. (Nahum Sarna)

direct their yearnings for God, and through which, they believed, God's Presence could be felt and experienced. Therefore, God commanded that the Tabernacle be constructed. In this structure, the word of God would be kept, and through this holy space, God could be addressed, beseeched and reached.

The Tabernacle is Complete

In the final chapter of the book of Exodus the construction of the Tabernacle is completed. There we read, "In the first month of the second year, on the first of the month, the Tabernacle was set up... When Moses had finished the work, the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the Presence of HASHEM filled the Tabernacle."⁵⁰ With the descent of the cloud representing the Divine Presence, the connection had been made - the Tabernacle was now a holy space. We had done our part and God had reciprocated.

With the Tabernacle complete, we move into the book of Leviticus which concerns itself primarily with how, and by whom, the *Mishkan* should be used. The Tabernacle was to be the place in which God spoke to us and through which we might communicate and commune with God. As Nahum Sarna has already noted, the outer court was the place in which we reached out to God through sacrifice. In that outer court, the Levites, on behalf of the Israelites, would offer different types of sacrifices including: (*olah*) burnt offerings, (*mincha*) grain offerings, (*hatta't*) sin offerings, (*asham*) guilt offerings, and (*zevach hash'lamim*) the well-being offerings. Through their sacrifices, the Israelites deepened their connection with and showed devotion to God.

The inner sanctum, the Holy of Holies was reserved for the tablets containing the Ten Utterances. Here, the High Priest would come only once a year, on *Yom Kippur*, and speak God's ineffable Name.

According to the book of Exodus, the High Priest, before entering the Holy of Holies, would don a number of specially made, unique garments. While each of these garments had its own

50. Exodus 40:17, 33b-34

religious or cultic significance, seen all together they resemble somewhat of a protective space suit. Entering the Holy of Holies was an act which was of the highest order and had to be done in the proper fashion according to the guidelines set out by God. It was also a terribly dangerous activity. So much so that on the *Me'il* which Aaron wore as part of his priestly outfit, there were bells which could be heard when he entered the Sanctuary and when he left. The text of the *Torah* explains that these are to be worn so "he will not die."⁵¹ Rashi explains that this means, that if he wears them as instructed, "he will not be subject to the death penalty at the hands of Heaven." At the same time, the bells serve as an announcement of the priest's well-being. When the bells can be heard, then the Israelites know that the High Priest is alive and well inside the Holy of Holies. When the bells fall silent, there is reason for concern that the power of the Holiest place known to humankind, has perhaps overcome the High Priest. Or in the words of Rashi, that the High Priest has been subjected to the death penalty at the hands of Heaven. Because of the deadly power of this holiest of places, there was a cord tied around the High Priest's ankle which extended outside of the Holy of Holies so that, if he did perish inside - if the ring of the bells was silenced, he might be pulled out and properly buried.

The Tabernacle was also the designated place for verbal communication between Moses and God. We see an example of this in Numbers chapter seven where we learn, "When Moses went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with God, he would hear the Voice addressing him from above the cover that was on top of the Ark of the Pact between the two cherubim; thus God spoke to him."⁵² Examples of conversations between God and Moses abound in the book of Numbers which recounts the thirty-eight year journey from the southern border of Israel to the Jordan River.

The Tabernacle was also the place where miracles took place. In the twelfth chapter of the book of Numbers, we read of Miriam and Aaron's rebellion against Moses. After challenging Moses' communicative responsibility vis-à-vis God, Aaron, Miriam, and Moses are called out to the Tabernacle. "Suddenly, HASHEM called to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, 'Come out, you three, to the Tent of Meeting.' So the three of them went out. HASHEM came down in a pillar of

51. Exodus 28:35

52. Numbers 7:89

cloud, (and) stopped at the entrance of the Tent.”⁵³ After rebuking Aaron and Miriam for their slander, the text goes on, “Still incensed with them, HASHEM departed. As the cloud withdrew from the Tent, there was Miriam stricken with snow-white scales!”⁵⁴ While the miracle of the infliction of Miriam’s skin disease could have occurred anywhere, the placement at the Tent of Meeting where so many of God’s miracles are announced links it directly with the Divine and builds upon that place as being holy.

The connection with the Tabernacle and the Presence of the Divine is made explicitly clear in the text. As soon as the Tabernacle was set up, we are told, the cloud, which represented God’s Presence, covered it.⁵⁵ So securely linked were the Tabernacle and the Cloud of God’s Presence, that when the Cloud (which in the evening would be the likeness of fire) would lift from the Tent, the Levites would break down the Tabernacle and the Israelites would set out accordingly. At the spot where the cloud settled, there the Israelites would make camp.⁵⁶

The *Mishkan* served as the second stage in solidifying the experience of holiness in space. Whereas earlier in the Bible, there were natural spaces that took on the quality of holiness, now the Israelites actually constructed a portable structure which would house the Presence of God and serve as the primary holy site for the wandering Israelites.

Once settled in the Promised Land, however, King David initiated the final step in securing a place for holiness and a “home” for God. That place would be the Temple.

53. Numbers 12:4-5

54. Numbers 12:9-10

55. Numbers 9:15

56. Numbers 9:17

Chapter Three: The Temple

וְהִנֵּנִי אֹמֵר לְבָנוֹת בַּיִת לַשֵּׁם ה' אֱלֹהֵי כְאֲשֶׁר | דִּבֶּר ה' אֶל-דָּוִד אָבִי

And so I propose to build a house for the name of HASHEM my God,
as HASHEM promised my father David.

(I Kings 5:19a)

The Transition from the Tabernacle to the Temple

Rashi comments on *Shir Hashirim* 4:6 on the transition from the Tabernacle as the central sacred space to the Temple. He writes, "...once the sun has spread, 'I will go to Mount Moriyah', into the eternal Temple, from *Bereishit Rabbah*⁵⁷, i.e., from when they sinned before Me by profaning My sacred offerings and by spurning My meal offerings in the days of Chofni and Pinchas⁵⁸. I will leave you and I will abandon this Tabernacle, and I will choose for Myself Mount Moriyah, into the eternal Temple. And there, 'you are completely beautiful...and you are without blemish,'⁵⁹ and there I will accept all your sacrifices."

In alluding to the story of Chofni and Pinchas where the Bible describes their actions as "treating HASHEM's offerings impiously"⁶⁰, Rashi creates a need for, and a bridge to, the building of the first Temple in Jerusalem, the seat of God's Presence in Palestine and the world. But this need is not only justified in the interpretive writings of the *Rishonim*, it is also found in the historical data presented in the text itself.

The Need for a Permanent Holy Space

"Following the destruction of Shiloh (c. 1050 B.C.E.), the need for a central Temple was felt. The military defeat suffered by the Israelites at Eben-Ezer, which ended in the capture of the Ark by the Philistines, brought about a severance of the Ark from the altar. For a generation and more, the ark wandered from place to place until David finally brought it to Mount Zion, where he erected a tent for it."⁶¹

Notwithstanding the Divine election of Mount Moriyah, choosing Jerusalem as the home for the

57. *Bereishit Rabbah* 55:7

58. See I Samuel 2:12-17

59. Song of Songs 4:7

60. I Samuel 2:17

61. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 15, pg. 943

Temple was a very smart political move on King David's part. "Jerusalem was situated on the border between the Rachel tribes and the Lean tribes; and on the border between Judah, the tribe to which David belonged, and that of Benjamin, the tribe from which sprang Saul, the first king of Israel."⁶² As it had not yet been assigned to any one tribe⁶³, it was "the one and only place likely to satisfy the claims of all the tribes."⁶⁴

After the Ark was brought to the city of Jerusalem, in a moment of peace and calm, David exclaimed to the prophet Nathan, "Here I am dwelling in a house of cedar, while the Ark of HASHEM abides in a tent!" (2 Sam. 7:2) Nathan's initial reply is one of consent. But later that night, Nathan hears the word of God and must report back to David that he will not be the one to build the Temple.

A Hint That God and Holiness are Not in Space

That evening God said to Nathan, "Go and say to My servant David: Thus said HASHEM: Are you the one to build a house for Me to dwell in? From the day that I brought the people of Israel out of Egypt to this day I have not dwelt in a house, but have moved about in Tent and Tabernacle. As I moved about wherever the Israelites went, did I ever reproach any of the tribal leaders whom I appointed to care for My people Israel: Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?"⁶⁵ Rather, God explains, it is I (God) who will build a home for you (David). This is a pivotal statement in the Bible. God is declaring that God is beyond space and that no one space can ever hold God or lay complete claim to the experience of holiness.

This statement by God is indeed profound, and is, in many ways, forecasting the move away from holy space with the destruction of the second Temple. But we are still in the Bible and still surrounded by nations who build shrines, temples, altars, and other venues for Divine connection. The Israelites of the Biblical period, are still in need of a centralized location through which they may access the Divine and in which the Presence of God may rest amongst them. And so, God tells Nathan regarding David, "When your days are done and you lie with

62. Encyclopedia Judaica, vol. 15, pg. 943

63. cf. Megillah 26a

64. Encyclopedia Judaica, vol. 15, pg. 943

65. II Samuel 7:5-7

your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own issue, and I will establish his kingship. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish his royal throne forever.”⁶⁶ But even this house, built specifically for God, cannot “contain” God. This Temple will not house God, Godself, but God’s Name.

Solomon Fulfills the Prophecy

Of all of David’s sons, Solomon (961-922) is the one chosen to continue the Davidic legacy and to build the holy Temple. Upon assuming the kingship, Solomon declares, “And so I propose to build a house for the name of HASHEM my God, as HASHEM promised my father David, saying, ‘Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, shall build the house for My name’.”⁶⁷

God charges Solomon, “With regard to this House you are building - if you follow My laws and observe My rules and faithfully keep My commandments, I will fulfill for you the promise that I gave to your father David; I will abide among the children of Israel, and I will never forsake My people Israel.”⁶⁸ But the work of the Temple is not left to human hands alone. For this to be a **holy** space, God must also contribute toward its completion. Toward this end, we read in the book of Kings:

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֵלָיו שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת־תַּפִּלָּתְךָ וְאֶת־תַּחֲנֻנְךָ אֲשֶׁר הִתְחַנַּנְתָּה לִפְנֵי
הַקֹּדֶשׁ אֶת־הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר בָּנִיתָ לְשׁוֹם־שְׁמִי שָׁם עַד־עוֹלָם וְהָיָה עֵינַי וְלִבִּי
שָׁם כָּל־הַיָּמִים:

HASHEM said to him, “I have heard the prayer and the supplication which you have offered to Me. I **consecrate** this House which you have built and I set My name there forever. My eyes and My heart shall ever be there.”⁶⁹

In the words of Rabbi Yochanan Meir Bechhofer, “Man can have his breakthroughs, but to make *k’dusha* institutional requires Divine intervention.”⁷⁰ And so here, having done our part, and with the Divine assistance of God, the Temple has become a holy space.

66. II Samuel 7:12-13

67. I Kings 5:19

68. I Kings 6:11-13

69. I Kings 9:3

70. Rabbi Yochanan Meir Bechhofer on Exodus 39:33. *Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshivas Yesodos HaTorah*, Jerusalem

The First and Second Temples

The Temple, as we call it, has many names in the Bible: “the House of HASHEM”⁷¹; “the House of God”⁷²; “the Holy Temple”⁷³; “the Temple of HASHEM”⁷⁴; and “the Sanctuary”⁷⁵. Throughout the period of the divided monarchy, the Temple remained, to the Jewish leadership at least, the center of Jewish life and Divine connection. “During this period two of the kings of Judah, Hezekiah (727-698 B.C.E.) and Josiah (639-609 B.C.E), outlawed the various shrines throughout the country and centralized the sacrificial worship at the Holy Temple.”⁷⁶

The site of the Temple itself was of such importance that Maimonides rules that the site of the Altar to be erected in the Holy Temple was delimited very specifically and is never to be changed, he writes, “It was on the site of the Temple that the patriarch Isaac was bound...This too was the place where Noah built an altar when he came out of the Ark. It is also the place of the altar upon which Cain and Abel offered sacrifice. There it was that Adam offered a sacrifice after he was created. Indeed, Adam was created from that very earth; as the Sages taught, ‘Adam was created from the place where he made atonement.’”⁷⁷

Throughout the years of the first and second Temples, sacrifice remained the prominent mode of worship in the context of the Temple. Like in the *Mishkan*, sacrifices served many purposes. Most importantly, sacrifices were meant to expiate sins and provide an opportunity for shared meals with the deity. While the first Temple would be destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E. the hopes of re-building this sacred space remained alive in the hearts and minds of the exiled nation.

The prophet Ezekiel⁷⁸ provides a vivid description of the Temple that was to be re-built. Beginning in 539 B.C.E., with the rise of Cyrus II the Great over the Babylonian army, this prophetic vision began to come to fruition. Just a year after his conquest of the entire area of

71. I Kings 3:1

72. Daniel 1:2

73. Jonah 2:5

74. II Kings 24:13

75. Ezekiel 45:4

76. Lawrence H. Schiffman, *From Text to Tradition: A History of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism*, pg. 21

77. Maimonides' *Hilchot Bet ha-Bechirah* 2:1

78. Ezekiel, chapters 40-48

Mesopotamia, Cyrus decreed that the Temple of the Jews in Jerusalem was to be re-built and that all the exiles who wished might return to Judea, now the Persian province of *Yahud*.

According to Ezra⁷⁹, it was Zerubbabel, who was the governor of the land of Israel who completed the work of re-building the Temple. With the re-building came the restoration of the sacrificial ritual. In March of 515 B.C.E. the Temple was completed amidst great rejoicing. And with the Aaronide priests providing leadership for the Jews of Palestine, the Temple, "remained the center of Jewish piety until its destruction for a second time in 70 C.E."⁸⁰

The Herodian Temple

Most of what we know about the second Temple period concerns the massive renovated structure begun under Herod in 20 B.C.E. Completed not long before its destruction in 70 C.E., it was one of the largest Temple complexes of its time. Like those before it, Herod's Temple adjoined the eastern wall of Jerusalem and faced the Mount of Olives. "The Temple included a main Sanctuary, a courtyard for sacrificial rites, and adjoining courtyards for visitors and worshippers. It stood at the center of an enormous, roughly rectangular terrace running to the north and south of the city wall. If Jewish writers of the time, such as Josephus, are to be believed, it was one of the marvelous national Temples of the ancient world."⁸¹

Those places, which in early Israelite tradition were considered "holy," were more often than not, found inside the boundaries of the land of Israel. "Israelite priestly tradition...tended to imagine the earth's surface as divided between the clean land of Israel and the unclean lands of the nations, the holiness of the Land and the commonness of all other space."⁸² As we can see, this understanding of sacred and common space was mirrored in the ground plan of the Herodian Temple.

But more important than its physical grandeur or physical layout, was the link that the Herodian Temple made with the earlier Temple, the Tabernacle of the wilderness journeys, and the other

79.Ezra 3:6-11

80.Schiffman, pg. 28

81. *ibid.*, pg. 166

82.Martin Jaffee, *Early Judaism*, pg. 167

sacred spaces which have been so central to Israelite religion thus far. “In addition to its physical magnificence, Herod’s Temple inherited the aura of sanctity enjoyed by its predecessors in Israel’s historical memory. The Temple of Solomon, which stood for some three-and-a-half centuries prior to 587 B.C.E., had preserved the holiness of the desert Tent of Meeting, the first shrine established by Moses as a dwelling place for the God of Israel. The Second Temple, rebuilt by 515 B.C.E., was seen as the smaller, but still holy, embodiment of God’s promise to dwell among his people. Herod’s Temple was a far grandeur structure than its Persian or Hasmonean predecessors. Its very grandeur added to the international prestige of the God and People whom it represented and the Land it protected.”⁸³

Conclusions

Throughout the Biblical period, different sacred spaces served as the locus through which God could be experienced and reached most profoundly. Beginning with the natural world and moving to the creation of a portable, semi-formal Tabernacle and then to a permanent, formal Temple, these spaces distinguished themselves from all others because it was there that a connection between humans and the Divine was possible. With the close of the Biblical period and the ensuing destruction of the second Temple, history would begin to tell a different story about how Jews would be in relationship with God, and how we would experience holiness.

83. *ibid.*, pg. 166-167

Part Two

Holiness: A State of Time

Rabbinic Period

Affirm your faith in yourself:

- I believe that I am very important in God's eyes.
- I believe that I can return, no matter how far I've strayed.
- I believe that I have the inner strength to change.
- I believe that I can become truly devoted and close to God.

(Rebbe Nachman of Breslov, *The Empty Chair*, pg. 69)

Chapter Four: A Life of *Torah*: Study and *Mitzvot*

הֵלֵל אוֹמֵר, וְאֵל תֹּאמַר לְכַשְׁאֲפֹנָה אֲשֶׁנָּה, שֶׁמָּא לֹא תִפְּנֶה:

Hillel said...Do not say,
‘When I have leisure time I will study,’
for you may never have leisure.’
(*Pirkei Avot* 2:4)

Introduction

The year is 70 C.E.: For the second time, our holiest space - the Temple in Jerusalem is destroyed; this time by the Romans. About this tragic date in the history of the Jewish people, Rabbi Irving Greenberg writes, “The catastrophe of destruction could easily have terminated both the Jewish people and their religion through mass defection and spiritual despair.”⁸⁴

Before the destruction and even earlier before the exile at the hands of the Babylonians, many Jews lived in communities within a *shofar*’s blast of one another. For others, who were a bit farther away, the *Shalosh Regalim*, the pilgrimage festivals of *Pesach*, *Shavuot*, and *Sukkot*, offered opportunities for community gathering and celebrating. But the lack of community connectedness was only half of the dilemma for the rabbis of the first centuries of the Common Era. The destruction of the Holy Temple and the exile of the Jewish people not only disconnected Jews from each other, it disconnected Jews from God.

The Jews lost what they had envisioned as their primary source for connection with God, for now, their Temple, their holy space was gone. “Yet an emerging Jewish leadership, soon to be called the rabbis, developed a program that would enable Jews to answer their religious calling -- and that, in fact, would save them.”⁸⁵

This program, developed by the rabbis, introduced a paradigm shift which would address the loss of their holiest place and would replace it with a completely different, yet connected, model of experience. As Abraham Joshua Heschel explains, “Holiness in space, in nature, was known in other religions. New in the teaching of Judaism was that the idea of holiness was gradually

84. Rabbi Irving Greenberg, “Forgotten hero of *Tisha B’Av* enabled Judaism to Survive Exile,” as featured in the Jewish Bulletin of Northern California, August 4, 1995.

85. *ibid.*

shifted from space to time, from the realm of nature to the realm of history, from things to events.”⁸⁶

This shift actually began earlier during the time of the second Temple. “In the course of time the Temple worship, which centered around the sacrificial rites, lost some of its position as the sole means by which the religious and communal life of the nation could find expression. To a considerable extent the center of gravity shifted to the study of the *Torah*, and the synagogue and *beit midrash* gradually assumed an even greater importance.”⁸⁷

From Temple to *Torah*

There is a long standing debate as to which form of literature came earlier, *Midrash* or *Mishnah*. For our purposes this question is only important in so much as we learn from the debate that Jews were actively engaged in both *Midrash* and *Mishnah* during the Second Commonwealth.

Due in large part to the exiles of the first Temple period, the creation and growth of the diaspora, and the Hellenization of the Jews, the Jewish communities both inside and outside of the holy land began to envision their connection with God differently. Jerusalem and the Temple remained the focal point of Judaism since many Jews saw it as the only appropriate site for bringing sacrifices and would travel there three times a year on the pilgrimage festivals to do just that. At the same time, the needs of the diverse and growing Jewish communities far from this spiritual source, required other ways of communicating with the Divine and experiencing holiness.

Some of these innovations like the creation of the synagogue, the “Temple in miniature,” were closely linked to the idea of sacred space which was, as we have seen, so important in the Biblical period. Others were forging a new model of religious life. *Torah* study which began with the creation of *Midrash* and *Mishnah*, in whatever order they appeared on the scene, was one of these new models.

While the seeds may have been planted during the period of the Second Temple, the fruits of this

86. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath*, pg. 79

87. Encyclopedia Judaica, vol. 15 pg. 983

new model were to blossom with the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans in 70 C.E. “While the Temple was gone and the Jewish hold on the Land of Israel was increasingly tenuous, the *Torah* and its study were left intact by the great national tragedy.”⁸⁸ And with the fall of the Temple and the end of the sacrificial system, “the gradual transfer of influence and power from the priestly Sadducees to the learned Pharisees went hand in hand with the transition from Temple to *Torah* which characterized the Judaism of this period.”⁸⁹

Yochanan Ben Zakkai

The youngest and most distinguished disciple of Rabbi Hillel, Yochanan ben Zakkai has been called the “father of wisdom and the father of generations (of scholars)” because he ensured the continuation of Jewish life and connection with the Divine after Jerusalem fell to Rome in 70 C.E.

Yochanan Ben Zakkai recognized that, as sacred as Jerusalem was, and as central as the Temple was, Judaism transcended any particular location or institution. He determined not to “go down with the ship,” but to provide a setting and a saving remnant that would enable Jewish life to go on.

According to tradition⁹⁰, ben Zakkai was a pacifist in Jerusalem in 68 C.E. when the city was under siege by General Vespasian. Jerusalem was controlled by the zealots, people who would rather die than surrender to Rome (these are the same people who would later die on Massada.) Ben Zakkai urged surrender, but the zealots would not hear of it, so ben Zakkai faked his own death and had his disciples smuggle him out of Jerusalem in a coffin. They carried the coffin to Vespasian’s tent, where ben Zakkai emerged from the coffin. He told Vespasian that he had had a vision that Vespasian would soon be emperor, and he asked Vespasian to set aside a place in *Yavneh* (near modern *Rehovot*) where he could start a small school and study *Torah* in peace. Vespasian promised that if the prophesy came true, he would grant ben Zakkai’s request. Vespasian became Emperor within a year, and kept his word, allowing the *yeshivah* to be

88. Steven Fine, “From Meeting House to Sacred Realm: Holiness and the Ancient Synagogue,” in *Sacred Realm: The Emergence of the Synagogue in the Ancient World*, pg. 24.

89. Schiffman, *From Text to Tradition*, pg. 112

90. *Babylonian Talmud, Gittin 55b-57a*

established after the war was over. The school ben Zakkai established at *Yavneh* became the center of Jewish learning for centuries and replaced Jerusalem as the seat of the *Sanhedrin*.

While ben Zakkai made his bold move in the year 70, during which the Temple itself was destroyed, Jacob Neusner notes that the full effect of the destruction of the Temple and the loss of sacred space was not felt until the year 140 “with the devastation of southern Palestine and the reconstitution of the rabbinic movement and the patriarchal government in the north. Only now was there an awareness that the break of 70 was irreparable.”⁹¹ During these difficult years when it was becoming clear that, “there would be no Temple and no restoration of earlier conditions in the foreseeable future”⁹² the rabbis decided that they needed to connect themselves with the Pharisaic tradition that had preceded them to lend credence to this new model of study and *mitzvot* which they had created. In the tractate of the *Mishnah* popularly known as *Pirkei Avot*, the Ethics of Our Fathers, it is made clear that it was Hillel the elder from whom Rabban Yochanan received the tradition.⁹³ Others have noted that “these writings offer first a list of the ‘pairs’ up to Hillel and Shammai, all of whom are interconnected back to Moses by the reception and transmission of the *Torah*. There is a break after Hillel and Shammai: after them, only Yochanan ben Zakkai is described in the same language of tradition (*qibbel - massar*), while the appended list of patriarchs and the enumeration of the other rabbis does not employ this typical terminology. This illustrates the desire to link Yochanan with the ‘pairs’, i.e. to connect the rabbinic with the Pharisaic tradition.”⁹⁴ With the chain from Sinai unbroken, Yochanan ben Zakkai and the rabbis of the first six centuries of the common era helped the Jewish community connect with God and find holiness in a different way.

Firmly established as the new model of Jewish living, learning and teaching became the key religious enterprise. Unlike their Christian cousins who claimed that God had abandoned the Jewish people and the Roman argument that God had been mastered by the Roman gods, the rabbis taught that God had become more “hidden” in so much as God was no longer available

91. H. L. Strack and Gunter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, trans. and ed. Markus Bockmuehl, pg. 4-5.

92. *ibid.*, pg. 4

93. *Pirkei Avot* 2:8

94. Strack and Stemberger, pg. 4.

through the sacramental Holy Temple. This transformation, they suggested, was a Divine call to the Jewish people to take more responsibility in the covenant. When God is hidden, then the people must be trained to take the time to detect the Divine Presence everywhere. While God may have been hidden in the realm of space, God was easily accessible in the realm of time. As such, the priests of the second commonwealth and later, after the destruction of the second Temple, the rabbis, conceived of the life of Israel as a comprehensive and integrated system of disciplined engagement with God.⁹⁵ This comprehensive and integrated system created by the rabbis came to consist of prayer, observance of commandments, *Shabbat* and Holiday celebrations and rituals, and most importantly, study. “In a world in which the Temple did not exist, the *Torah* came to be seen as the supreme source of holiness, the embodiment of the Divine Presence.”⁹⁶

All of this was done in such a way to show the people that they could live on without the Temple. At the same time, in a profound affirmation of continuity, the rabbis led by Yochanan established customs and prayers that kept the memory of the Temple alive and vivid in the minds and hearts of Jews. So much so, that the power of learning *Torah* is such that when one studies the laws of a particular sacrifice, it is as if the student actually brought that sacrifice.

In his book, *Love and Holiness*, Marc Hirshman writes, “During the time of the Temple this longing (to be close to God) was expressed in the hope to be sheltered in God’s house: ‘One thing have I desired of HASHEM, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of HASHEM all the days of my life...’⁹⁷. After the destruction of the Temple, and possibly even earlier, while the Temple was still standing, God’s presence was marked by a concern with His writings, and in the language of the *Mishnah* in *Avot*: ‘If ten men sit together and occupy themselves in the law, the *Shekinah* rests between them...And whence even of one? Because it is written, ‘In every place where I record my name I will come unto thee and I will bless thee’ (3:6).”⁹⁸

95. William Scott Green, *Great World Religions: Beliefs, Practices, Histories*, Part Three of Five: God and God’s People: The Religion of Judaism, Lecture 3, Audiocassette.

96. Steven Fine, “From Meeting House to Sacred Realm: Holiness and the Ancient Synagogue,” in *Sacred Realm: The Emergence of the Synagogue in the Ancient World*. pg. 24.

97. Psalm 27:4

98. Hirshman, *Love and Holiness*, pg. 84

But it was not enough that our words fill the void that was left with the destruction of the Temple and the sacrificial rites. The study of *Torah* was not meant to be, simply for its own sake. A parallel goal of study was that it should lead to action - specifically the observance of *mitzvot*. Through which, along with study and prayer, we would come into relationship with God and experience holiness.

The Performance of *Mitzvot*

Many of the *mitzvot*, or commandments, find their roots in the Bible. With the creation of the *Mishnah* and *Gemara*, an attempt was made to draw these commandments out and build upon them, creating a blueprint for how a Jew should live his or her life and therefore be ever aware of God's presence in our lives. This process was further clarified with the creation of Jewish legal codes, the first of which was Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*. In it, Rabbi Moses ben Maimon (12th century) outlines 248 positive commandments, and 365 negative commandments found in the *Torah*. These add up to 613 which is represented by the knots and strings of the *tallit*. Others have taught that these numbers represent the number of parts of the body; implying that the service of God is only accomplished when our whole being is involved. For many of the positive *mitzvot* listed by Rambam, and later by other codifiers, we recite the following blessing:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ...

Praised are You, HASHEM, our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who sanctifies us with Your *mitzvot*, and commands us...

In reciting this blessing, we affirm the belief held by the rabbis, that through the observance of *mitzvot* we attain and experience a life of holiness. It is through learning about and fulfilling God's commandments that we come into relationship with God. Through circular reasoning then, we learn that the greatest of the *mitzvot* is study itself. The *Talmud* itself teaches: "these are the things, the fruits of which a person enjoys in this world, while the stock remains for him in the world to come: honoring the father and mother, the practice of charity, timely attendance at the house of study morning and evening, hospitality to wayfarers, visiting the sick, dowering the bride, attending the dead to the grave, devotion in prayer, and making peace between man and his fellow; but the study of the *Torah* is equal to them all."⁹⁹

99. *Mishnah Peah* 1:1

Kashrut

The paradigmatic *mitzvah* of holiness is *kashrut*. While it is not one of the commandments over which the blessing, “who sanctifies us through Your *mitzvot*” is recited¹⁰⁰, keeping kosher is an observance through which Jews separate themselves from all other peoples and align themselves with the word of God. While there are many who have suggested numerous reasons for the *mitzvot* of *kashrut*, they remain in the category of *hukim*, decrees from God, for which no reasons are given.

We are therefore left to understand that the sole purpose in following these commandments is to connect us in some way to the word of God and through God’s word to the Divine itself. So through observing the *mitzvah* of *kashrut* we are separating ourselves from those who eat any food they may desire. In what way does this bring us closer to the Divine? The restriction itself, is what brings us closer to the Divine. The restrictions of *kashrut* make space for important values to be communicated and internalized. While the *Torah* remains largely silent about the specific values it wishes to communicate through *kashrut*, the rabbis, for whom this constant act of awareness was critical suggest many possibilities. One of the most compelling, I believe, is that in insisting that animals have cloven hooves and chew their cud, that fish have fins and scales, and that birds not be predators or carrion eaters, the *Torah* is severely limiting the variety and number of living creatures we are able to kill for food.¹⁰¹

While *mitzvot* such as *Torah* study and *kashrut* can be a part of every day at any time, they require that we commit ourselves to spending time to fulfill them. Other institutions of the rabbis of the *Talmudic* era, and later, ask that we not only dedicate ourselves to a life of *mitzvot*, but that we set certain “holy” times aside each day, week, and year to celebrate and become more acutely aware of God’s presence in our lives and the holiness of time. These times, discussed below, demand that we give voice to our awe and praise of the Eternal One.

100. The *mitzvot* of *kashrut* consist of many different *mitzvot* found in the *Torah* and in rabbinic literature and are considered negative commandments.

101. This reverence for life is a value that is implicit in the book of Leviticus and throughout the *Torah*.

Chapter Five: Precise Prayer

וְאֵלֵי תִפְלְתִי לְךָ ה' עֵת רְצוֹן אֱלֹקִים בְּרַב־חֶסֶדְךָ עֲנֵנִי בְּאַמֶּת יִשְׁעֶךָ:

As for me, may my prayer come to You, HASHEM, at a favorable time;
O God, in Your abundant faithfulness, answer me with Your sure deliverance.
(Psalm 69:14)

Introduction

“In Jewish tradition, study and prayer are intertwined; Jewish learning is a form of praying, a vehicle for communicating with and feeling the presence of God.”¹⁰² While this is true, the practice of prayer seems to have come before that of study. One can find, throughout the Bible, many examples of spontaneous prayer.¹⁰³ The only formal prayers are the confessions associated with the bringing of the first fruits and the tithe, and the confession of the high priest.¹⁰⁴ There are examples of some individuals who prayed thrice daily¹⁰⁵, and Chronicles suggests that some of the Psalms served as liturgical texts for the twice daily levitical service in the Temples.¹⁰⁶ While there were worship services outside of the Temple, prayer within the Temple focused primarily around the sacrificial service and was limited in its scope. However, “the fall of the Jewish state did not influence the development of the synagogue service more than did any other great event in the people’s history. The destruction of the Temple and the cessation of sacrifices did not result in any tremendous upheaval in the manner of worship; the status of the synagogue in religious life was already so firmly established that no noteworthy shift occurred. But it is clear that from this point on, the synagogue service became the focal point of the liturgy, acquiring a dominant position not only in practice, but also particularly in religious thought and theology.”¹⁰⁷

With the loss of the Temple, then, prayer became the sole mode of worship of the Divine and, in the mind of the rabbis, needed to be standardized and formalized. The liturgy itself has a long history of canonization which continues today. The times in which these prayers were offered, have their origins in the Bible and were later fixed by the rabbis and have held fast for 2,000

102. Isa Aron, *Becoming a Congregation of Learners*, pg. 174

103. See Numbers 12:13, Exodus 18:10, I Samuel 1:11, and I Kings 8:15ff, 23ff.

104. Leviticus 16:21

105. Daniel 6:11; Psalm 55:18

106. I Chronicles 23:30

107. Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*, pg. 199

years. The rabbis of the *Talmud* have taught us through their focus on time that, “there are fixed times, but no fixed place of prayer.”¹⁰⁸

Thrice Daily Prayer and an Additional Service

During the Second Temple period, the *Talmud* describes¹⁰⁹ the institution of *ma'amadot* - representation and participation of the Israelite people in the sacrificial service. The people were divided up into twenty-four *mishmarot* by the “prophets in Jerusalem” and, one week, every half year, each of these *mishmarot* would send a mission to Jerusalem that would “stand over” the sacrifice. During this week of service the representatives would hold four services each day; Morning, Additional, Afternoon, and Closing of the Gates. These services consisted of prayer and the reading of the *Torah* and seem to have been observed by those who stayed at home as well. “The establishment of the *ma'amadot* created for the first time prayer services that were held regularly throughout the land, even on weekdays, though at widely separated times.”¹¹⁰

These four services of the *ma'amadot* are a combination of two traditions; the first being thrice daily prayer as we see in Psalm 55:18, and the second - the twice daily sacrificial service in the morning and early afternoon in the Temple.¹¹¹ The morning ritual included both the sacrifice and the service. The Additional service was based on the midday prayer found in Psalm 55. The second sacrifice of each day had originally been made in the evening. When it was moved to the early afternoon, two prayers were born; one before the sacrifice known as *mincha*, and the second in the evening as the Temple gates were closed, known as *Neila*.

While these prayer practices on weekdays were held at first only twice a year during the week of the *ma'amad*, assemblies and services on *Shabbat* and *Hagim* had been popular for some time. Additionally, there remained the practice of many pious people to pray independently in the morning and evening.¹¹² And, “with the deepening of Jewish piety, the need for public worship increased. Not only the distance from the sites of the cult, but above all the longing for an

108. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath*, pg. 80

109. *Mishnah Ta'anit* 4:1f

110. Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*, trans. Raymond P. Scheindlin, pg. 190

111. *Mishnah Pesachim* 5:1

112. see Daniel 6:11

experience of devotion and for edification called the daily synagogue service into life.”¹¹³ One need not imagine how this desire for connection multiplied with the destruction of the cult and the Temple.

But even during the time of the *ma'amad*, the habit established by the *ma'amad* week and the custom of home prayers led gradually to the holding of services every day. Since it would be impossible to hold an extensive service, such as that at the *ma'amad* without interfering with people's ability to earn a livelihood, those services unique and peculiar to the Temple - “that is, the Additional and Closing services, were eliminated, and public services were held only in the morning (*shacharit*) and in the evening (*mincha*), before and after working hours.”¹¹⁴ The evening service (*arvit*) began as a domestic service until it too became part of the communal daily worship. The Additional Service was reserved for special days such as *Shabbat*, *Hagim*, and other smaller festivals, and the Closing Service (*Neila*) was held only on public fast days. Later *Neila* was reserved for the *Yom Kippur* alone.

During the *Tannaitic* period in the first and second centuries of the common era, it was only the congregation that had fixed times for prayers. During the *Amoraic* period in the third through sixth centuries of the common era, this view changed to teach that one who did not pray in the synagogue had at least to say his prayers at the same time as the congregation. This is taught in the *Talmud* in a short story:

R. Isaac said to R. Nahman, “What is the reason that the master does not come to the synagogue to pray?” He said to him, “I am not able.”

He said to him, “Let the master assemble ten and pray.”

He said, “It is too hard for me.”

“Then let the master say to the precentor that when the congregation is reciting the *Amidah* he should come and notify the master.”

He said to him, “Why all this?”

He said to him, “For R. Yochanan said in the name of R. Simon B. Yochai, ‘Why is it written “And as for me, may my prayer be at a time of acceptance, O HASHEM?”’¹¹⁵ This refers to the time when the congregation is praying.”¹¹⁶

113. Elbogen, pg. 192

114. *ibid.*

115. Psalm 69:14

116. *Masechet B'rachot* 7b

It was in the *Amoraic* period then that the “ritual order, as far as it relates to times of prayer and liturgical structure, is by and large fixed, as is little different from the ritual customary today.”¹¹⁷

Z'manim

"*Z'manim*" is the Hebrew word for "times." Not only were the thrice daily prayers assigned general times of the day, but there were limitations made on when these services might be conducted within those general time frames. These times are defined by *halakhic* principles and interpreted by various authorities. Most times are defined in terms of a proportional hour, the "hour-of-time" or "*sha'a zmanit*." This proportional hour is a fraction of the actual time between sunrise and sunset, typically one twelfth. Using these "hours," the rabbis determined what they believed to be "holy times" during which the lines of connection to God were more readily available and open.

In the *Talmud*, the opening line of *masechet B'rachot*, the first tractate, asks the question:

מַאימְתִי קוֹרִין אֶת שְׁמַע בְּעֶרְבִית?

From what time do we say the *Sh'ma* in the evening?¹¹⁸ This question and its answer, which continues for a number of pages of *Gemara*, typifies the rabbinic interest in time as a unique and vital mode of experiencing holiness and connection to God. If prayer is in fact the replacement for sacrifice, then time for the rabbis of the *Talmud* is the replacement for space as the key to experiencing *k'dusha*. In the realm of time, *Torah* study and the observance of *mitzvot* are to fill all time, prayer is to fill specific times each day, and the celebrations of *Shabbat* and *Hagim* are to mark holy days throughout the year.

117. Elbogen, pg. 209

118. *Masechet Brachot* 2a

Chapter Six: The Holy Days of the Year: *Shabbat* and *Hagim*

וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹקִים אֶת-יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי בּוֹ שָׁבַת מְכַל-מְלָאכָתוֹ
אֲשֶׁר-בָּרָא אֱלֹקִים לַעֲשׂוֹת:

And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy,
because on it God ceased from all the work of creation that God had done.
(Genesis 2:3)

Introduction

While both *Shabbat* and the *Hagim* are mentioned in the Bible, their real import may have only been realized after the shift from holiness in space to holiness in time. Abraham Joshua Heschel in his book, “The Sabbath” writes, “Judaism is a religion of time aiming at the sanctification of time...Judaism teaches us to be attached to sacred events, to learn how to consecrate sanctuaries that emerge from the magnificent stream of a year.”¹¹⁹

Shabbat

In the *Torah*, the word *kadosh* is used for the first time in the book of Genesis at the end of the story of creation. “And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.”¹²⁰ While *Shabbat* is clearly an important part of forging a relationship with God and holiness, it is not until the rise of the Rabbinical movement that *Shabbat* took on the importance that it may have deserved in the Biblical period. Heschel explains the tension between holy time and holy space: “Holiness of time would have been sufficient to the world. Holiness of space was a necessary comprise with the nature of man. The erection of a tabernacle was not commanded in the Decalogue. It was begun in answer to a direct appeal from the people who pleaded with God: ‘O HASHEM of the world! The kings of the nations have palaces in which are set a table, candlesticks and other royal insignia that their king may be recognized as such. Shall not Thou too, our King, Redeemer and Helper, employ royal insignia, that all the dwellers of the earth may recognize that Thou art their King?’”¹²¹

When this concession to human need, the Temple, began to lose its centrality to the Israelite

119. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath*, pg. 8

120. Genesis 2:3

121. Heschel, pg. 104, footnote 8

people, and when it was ultimately destroyed by the Romans, “the Sabbaths (became) our great cathedrals”¹²². Heschel continues, “The meaning of the Sabbath is to celebrate time rather than space. Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the Sabbath we try to become attuned to *holiness in time*. It is a day on which we are called upon to share in what is eternal in time, to turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation; from the world of creation to the creation of the world.”¹²³

In an effort to ensure the sanctity of time embodied by *Shabbat*, the rabbis of the *Talmud* and the major codifications of Jewish law defined quite carefully when *Shabbat* would begin and when it would end. Traditionally, *Shabbat* begins on Friday eighteen minutes before sunset, and lasts until nightfall (about one hour after sunset) on Saturday. For those who light candles, *Shabbat* begins as soon as the blessing is recited.¹²⁴ For others, *Shabbat* commences at the official time, or at the moment Psalm 92 (“A Song for the Sabbath Day”) is recited in the synagogue (whichever is the earlier.)¹²⁵

There is great debate and varying traditions as to when *Shabbat* actually begins and ends. The wealth of literature on this question alone reinforces the importance of the holy time embodied by the Sabbath. The first complexity with regard to the beginning and end of *Shabbat* is how one understands the *Talmudic* term, בֵּין הַשְּׁמָשׁוֹת (*bein hashmashot*). Technically, this term refers to the time period between the astronomical sunset and the appearance of stars. In layman’s terms this means, before בֵּין הַשְּׁמָשׁוֹת it is day and after בֵּין הַשְּׁמָשׁוֹת it is night. The debate revolves around the length of this period in between. Since we disagree, not only on the length of this period, but also on whether this period should be considered day or night, we follow the principle of סְפִיקָא דְאִוְרֵייתָא לְחומְרָא - in a doubt concerning a Biblical law we follow the stricter measure). According to this rule, then, the period בֵּין הַשְּׁמָשׁוֹת is always considered as part of *Shabbat*. Therefore, *Shabbat* begins before בֵּין הַשְּׁמָשׁוֹת on Friday (with the astronomical sunset) and after בֵּין הַשְּׁמָשׁוֹת on Saturday (with the appearance of the stars.)

122. *ibid.*, pg. 8

123. *ibid.*, pg. 10

124. *Shulchan Aruch, Orech Hayim* 263:10

125. *ibid.*, 263:14

The length of this period of time between the astronomical sunset and the appearance of stars has been debated greatly. The most accepted determination is the time it takes to walk three-quarters of a mile (1,500) cubits) - or about eighteen minutes.¹²⁶ According to this understanding one identifies nighttime when three medium size stars appear clustered together in the sky.¹²⁷

An additional factor in determining the exact times for *Shabbat* lies in the principle, מוסיפין מחול על הקודש - we add from the profane to the holy.¹²⁸ According to this rule, we should end *Shabbat* later than בין השמשות so as to increase “holy time.” While there is an opinion that this additional time is optional¹²⁹, most authorities hold that it is as important a part of the holy time of *Shabbat* as is any other part of the Sabbath day. Again, though there is disagreement on how long this period must last. While some have argued that it should be a full hour, there are other opinions that it need not be. Obviously, then, there are many different customs as to when *Shabbat* should end.¹³⁰

The purpose of this examination is not to determine the exact times for *benching light* or reciting *Havdalah*, but rather to explore the great importance that the rabbis placed on holiness in time. So much importance that pages and pages have been written about minutes and seconds, trying to determine the precise moments when *Shabbat* begins and *Shabbat* ends - when we turn from profane time to holy time, and back again.

The Shalosh Regalim

“The Jewish people, perhaps because we have done so much traveling in space, have developed a map for traveling in time. Called the ‘festival cycle,’ this map has its origin in the *Torah* and has continued to develop and change even in our era. The special days of the festival cycle are not random moments scattered over the year, but purposeful occurrences that draw their power

126. *Shulchan Arukh, Orech Hayim* 261:2; *Shabbat* 34b

127. *Shabbat* 35b; *Shulchan Arukh, Orech Hayim* 293:2

128. *Rosh Hashanah* 9a

129. *Shulchan Arukh, Orech Hayim* 261:2

130. Much of the information for this section was based on and borrowed from Isaac Klein, *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice*, pgs. 57-58

from multiple sources - the natural world and its seasons, myth, religious traditions, folk customs, and decisive historical events in the life of our people.”¹³¹ While some of these festivals are found in the *Torah*, “one of the chief prerogatives of the Great Court, crucial for all Israel, was the fixing of the Jewish calendar, which determined the days on which the Festivals were to be celebrated.”¹³²

Of those festivals that are ordained in the *Torah*, we read of three on which the Israelites were to make a pilgrimage to the Temple. “Three times in a year shall all your males appear before the HASHEM your God in the place which he shall choose; in the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and in the Feast of Weeks, and in the Feast of Booths; and they shall not appear before the HASHEM empty.”¹³³ In many ways, these *hagim* were agricultural festivals corresponding to the agricultural cycle of the year. On *Pesach*, *Shavuot*, and *Sukkot*, Israelites would travel to what was their holiest space - the Temple - to offer the first fruits of their fields. With the destruction of the Temple, these offerings were no longer possible and, in fact, with the turn from the space of the Temple came a turn from the spacial orientation of the *hagim*. “One of the most important facts in the history of religion was the transformation of agricultural festivals into commemorations of historical events.”¹³⁴ These holidays, at first associated with the fertility of the earth and ritualized using the produce of the field, became memorials not of holy spaces, but of holy times. Passover became a remembrance of our exodus from Egypt. *Shavuot* became a celebration of the moment of revelation. *Sukkot* became a remembrance of the wanderings in the wilderness on the way to the Promised Land. As Heschel explains, “to Israel the unique events of historic time were spiritually more significant than the repetitive processes in the cycle of nature, even though physical sustenance depended on the latter. While the deities of other peoples were associated with places or things, the God of Israel (became) the God of events: the Redeemer from slavery, the Revealer of the *Torah*, manifesting Himself in events of history rather than in things or places...Judaism is a *religion of time* aiming at the sanctification of time.”¹³⁵

131. Michael Strassfeld, *The Jewish Holidays: A Guide and Commentary*, pg. 1

132. Mendell Lewittes, *Jewish Law: An Introduction*, pg. 60

133. Deuteronomy 16:16

134. Heschel, pg. 7

135. *ibid.*, pgs. 7-8

Yom Kippur

Of all of the days we consider to be “holy” in the year, *Yom Kippur* is thought to be the “Holy of Holies.” Heschel writes of this day, “our Holy of Holies is a shrine that neither the Romans nor the Germans were able to burn; a shrine that even apostasy cannot easily obliterate: the Day of Atonement.”¹³⁶ It is on this day that Jews, who might otherwise never engage in a formal, communal moment of connection with God, flock to synagogues and temples in search of something sacred. What is most powerful about this day is perhaps the inherent power which it has.

Many have wondered, “how is it that one atones and is forgiven on *Yom Kippur*?” The answer, Biblically, seems to be through the special sacrifices and rituals associated with the day: “And you shall have on the tenth day of this seventh month a holy gathering; and you shall afflict your souls; you shall not do any work in it; but you shall offer a burnt offering to the HASHEM for a sweet savor; one young bull, one ram, and seven lambs of the first year; they shall be to you without blemish; and their meal offering shall be of flour mixed with oil, three tenth measures for a bull, and two tenth measures for one ram, a several tenth measure for one lamb, for the seven lambs; one kid of the goats for a sin offering; beside the sin offering of atonement, and the continual burnt offering, and the meal offering of it, and their drink offerings.”¹³⁷ While Temple sacrifices are no longer a part of our *Yom Kippur* ritual, there are sacrifices which have continued until today. There are the traditions of fasting and abstaining from bodily pleasures in addition to spending most of the day in the synagogue participating in the most lengthy worship services of the year. On *Yom Kippur*, we do in fact sacrifice food, pleasure, comfort and time.

But, the rabbis suggest that neither Temple sacrifices nor personal sacrifices bring about atonement on *Yom Kippur*. We are taught that for “missings of the mark” between people and their neighbors, they must seek out to appease those who have been wronged. However, for those “missings of the mark” that are between people and God, the day itself brings atonement. The *midrash* teaches, “for on this day atonement shall be made for you”¹³⁸ by means of

136. *ibid.*, pg. 8

137. Numbers 29:7-11

138. Leviticus 16:30

sacrifices. And from where in the scripture do we know this? For even though there are no sacrifices and there is no goat, the day makes atonement (for you). This text is therefore here to teach us that by means of the day, itself, God grants atonement. For sins, which are between a person and God, the Day of Atonement makes atonement.”¹³⁹

It is the holiness of the time of *Yom Kippur* itself, which allows for the broken connections between us and God to be healed. It is through recognizing the inherent holiness in time, that we are able to enter our “Holy of Holies” with the knowledge that we will be written in the book of life for another year and that that year will be one of sacred connections to our forgiving God.

139. *Torat Kohanim, parashat Acharei Mot, 8:1*

Part Three

Holiness: A State of Mind

“Entrances to holiness are everywhere.
The possibility of ascent is all the time.
Even at unlikely times and through unlikely places.
‘There is no place on earth without the Presence.’ (Numbers *Rabba* 12.4)”
(Lawrence Kushner, *Honey from the Rock*, pg. 48)

Chapter Seven: Creating Holy Space

Introduction

We have seen thus far how holiness has been experienced and understood throughout the two major periods of Jewish history, pre-rabbinic and rabbinic. In the former, holiness was understood as an experience which was most common in physical manifestations such as bushes, pillars, mountains, tents, and Temples. In coming in contact with these physical manifestations of holiness, people responded in kind by offering physical, material offerings such as sacrifices to appease and acknowledge the Divinity. As we should have, we drew upon that which we knew best from other peoples and practices and incorporated their ideas of holiness and how to come in connection with the Divine into our own faith and heritage. Our Biblical story tells us that God and holiness were found in space, and that it was space that was sanctified.

There is however a curious, often overlooked aspect to the sanctity of space in the pre-rabbinic paradigm. In each case, that I have presented in chapters one through three and in other cases of “holy space” recorded in the Bible, it may be argued that it was not the spaces themselves that were holy, but the people and the intentions that were brought to those spaces that endowed them with holiness. A space is not made holy, only because God is present, but also because we are present. As Heschel explains, “the quality of holiness is not in the grain of matter. It is a preciousness bestowed upon things by an act of consecration and persisting in relation to God.”¹⁴⁰

Mountains, Bushes, and Stones Revisited

On the surface, the Bible seems to be filled with natural holy spaces, at which one could experience a revelation and be changed forever. However, after a closer look, we see that the places themselves were no different than any other places. What was different was the intention, which we brought to those places in which we became aware of and participated in the creation of a connection between ourselves and God.

Let us look again at Abraham’s first encounter with God in which he is told to go to the place

140. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath*, pg. 79

that God will show him.¹⁴¹ That place, as we have already learned in chapter one was the land of Canaan, and the city of Shechem. As I have already explained, Sarna notes that the Hebrew word *makom* very likely, has the special meaning of “sacred site.” However, while Shechem may have been a *makom*, a sacred site for others, it has, until this point, not been one for Abram. Sarna explains, “Nothing in the narrative suggests that Shechem had any prior sanctity for Abram. Only after receiving a divine revelation does he build an altar there; he does not make use of an existing one.”¹⁴² For Abram, the holiness of that space only exists when two things happen: when God reveals Godself to him in relation to that space, and when Abram marks that revelation through the building of an altar.

This is true also for Jacob in his journeys in chapter 28 of Genesis. “And he lighted upon a certain place, and remained there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep.”¹⁴³ Claus Westermann has noted that, “for Jacob it (that place) is no more than a suitable place to spend the night; but it can also mean the holy place, the discovery of which is now hinted at. When Jacob prepares his camp for the night and lays a stone which is lying there ‘at his head(s)’ (1 Sam. 26:12), the narrator is letting us know that there is nothing to indicate that it is a holy place; Jacob becomes aware of this only through his dream. The narrative is in fact about the discovery of a holy place, not about the chance finding of yet another one already known.”¹⁴⁴ I would then go a step further in suggesting that this awareness of holiness is what, in fact, endows that place with holiness for Jacob. Whether or not, that place may be holy for others is irrelevant for Jacob or for any other traveler who happens upon that location. The experience of holiness is just that it is an experience of which we must be aware and which therefore requires our participation. The mystical ethical tradition teaches that “anything at all which is made use of by them (the righteous) in some way is elevated and enhanced through having been employed by a righteous individual, by one who communes with the Holiness of the Blessed One.”¹⁴⁵ A space or material object is therefore only “holy” when a person sets his or her mind to elevating that space or

141. Genesis 12

142. Nahum Sarna, *The Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary: Genesis*, pg. 91

143. Genesis 28:11

144. Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12-36: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion S. J., pg. 454

145. Moshe Chayim Luzzatto, *The Path of the Just*, pg. 331.

object to a level of holiness. This is clear when we look again at the revelation stories at Mount Sinai.

Mount Horev and Mount Sinai

Earlier, we saw strong evidence pointing to the inherent holiness of Mount Horev upon which Moses was commanded to remove his shoes because, as God tells Moses, “the place on which you stand is **holy** ground.”¹⁴⁶ The absence of this statement or one similar to it at the revelation on Mount Sinai (which is, according to tradition, the same mountain) leads some to question what made Horev “holy” and Sinai lacking in that same respect. The following teaching is a selection from a *d’var Torah* delivered by Rabbi David Greenstein, President of the Academy for Jewish Religion. In it, he suggests that, in fact, there is an important difference between the two revelations that took place on Mount Sinai¹⁴⁷ and that the difference between the two is key to understanding how we have the power to create holy space.

The *Meshekh Hokhmah*, Rabbi Meir Simcha Cohen of Dvinsk (1843-1926) read the verses (preceding the giving of the Ten Commandments) and made an interesting observation. We know, after all, that this was not the first time that Moses had ascended this mountain and had experienced there a Divine revelation. The revelation of the Burning Bush happened there, according to the traditional identification of Horev and Sinai, and according to the Biblical record of the Divine promise.¹⁴⁸

When HASHEM saw that he had turned aside to look, God called to him out of the bush: ‘Moses! Moses!’ He answered, ‘Here I am.’ And God said, ‘Do not come closer. Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which **you** stand is holy ground.’”¹⁴⁹

Here is the first time that Moses is granted a revelation from God on Mount Sinai. But at this scene of the Burning Bush God tells Moses to remove his shoes, for he is standing on holy ground. Why, asks the *Meshech Hochmah*, doesn’t God make the same demand from Moses the second time that Moses ascends this holy Mountain? Why didn’t God tell Moses to take off his shoes? Wasn’t this mountain, quaking with the Divine Presence, holy ground?

Why has God instructed Moses to take off his shoes (in the first revelation at the burning bush)? God has prevented Moses from approaching the Source of Revelation, toward which Moses yearns. Let us listen closely to God’s words. God tells Moses to take off his shoes, “for the place upon which *you* stand is holy ground.” God is not referring to the place of the

146. Exodus 3:1-5

147. Exodus 3 and Exodus 19-20

148. Exodus 3:11-12

149. Exodus 3:5

Burning Bush. God is revealing to Moses that the very place on which *Moses* is standing is, itself, holy ground, and Moses must therefore remove his shoes.

What makes it holy? It seems to me that the answer is - *Moses' desire to come closer to God's Presence* is what sanctifies that place...

Let us now return to Sinai...after examining the dynamic created by God with Moses at the Burning Bush, we can read this story a little differently. Perhaps God was not simply worried (that the Israelites would come closer). It was not that God merely suspected that perhaps the Children of Israel might want to come closer. Rather, God *wanted* the children of Israel to desire to come near (as Moses did).

But we didn't do that. We didn't want to come closer...Of course God could not say any longer, "Take off your shoes, for the place upon which you stand is holy ground." It had not been sanctified by (the desire of the Israelites to come closer).¹⁵⁰

"We must not forget that it is not a thing that lends significance to a moment; it is the moment that lends significance to things."¹⁵¹ In that moment on Mount Horev, Moses created a holy space. When we had the opportunity to do the same, standing at Mount Sinai, we missed the opportunity. For the Israelites as a community, that mountain was not a holy space.¹⁵²

The philosopher Emil Fackenheim has suggested that had an agnostic been at Mount Sinai, he would have experienced only thunder and lightning - and not the voice of God. He writes, "Revelation, as an objective event of communication, is hearable only to those already listening; and the listening is a listening in faith."¹⁵³ Like other philosophers including Aristotle and Maimonides before him, Fackenheim suggests that Revelation comes only to those who are ready to receive it. This call for preparedness and participation was lacking at Sinai and is key to the creation of holiness in our world. As an ongoing phenomena, Revelation requires our awareness, and our active listening - for the still small voice to be heard as a call to holiness.

The "Holiness" of the Tabernacle

In the book of Exodus, we read, "And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among

150. Rabbi David Greenstein, "What is a *M'qom Torah* - A Place of *Torah*?"

151. Heschel, pg. 6

152. This is not to suggest that the experience at Sinai was not holy or sanctified, just that the space in which it took place was not.

153. Emil Fackenheim, "The Revealed Morality of Judaism and Modern Thought" in *Quest for Past and Future*, pg. 207.

them.”¹⁵⁴ The *midrash* adds to this, “When God said to Moses: ‘Make a tabernacle for Me,’ he exclaimed in amazement: ‘The Glory of the Blessed Holy One fills heaven and earth, and yet God commands “Make a tabernacle for Me”!’”¹⁵⁵ Here Moses reminds us that while we may consecrate certain spaces as more qualified than others to evoke in us a sense of holiness, no created object, either by God or by human hands can ever have a claim to absolute holiness. The temporary, portable nature of the tabernacle teaches this as well. The materials of the tabernacle, which were assembled and disassembled numerous times throughout the wilderness wanderings, allowed for the experience of holiness wherever they were constructed. There is no intrinsic holiness, “holiness is created by human association of Time, Space, and Person with God.”¹⁵⁶

Mirror, Mirror on the Laver

Not only was it important to have, what the Israelites conceived to be, a “holy space” but the *Torah* goes out of its way to express the importance of each person’s participation in the construction and sanctification of such a place. In Exodus 25:2, God instructs Moses to accept donations toward the building of the tabernacle from each person who “gives it willingly with his heart.”¹⁵⁷ Later on in Exodus we learn of the gifts brought by the women: “and he made the basin of bronze, and its pedestal of bronze, from the mirrors of the women assembling, who assembled at the door of the Tent of Meeting.”¹⁵⁸ There are many *d’rashot* on this text and the donation of the women, two of which are important for our discussion. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch suggests that, it is deeply significant that the vessel designated for the consecration of hands and feet, dedicated to elevating and refining the animal movements and instincts of man, should be made from such a crucial boudoir item as a mirror, an object which draws attention to the human body as an object of sensual desire. Rabbi Hirsch suggests through this verse that we learn that any physical, material object which resides in space - even one which is used for the most mundane of activities, may be elevated and used as a vehicle of holiness.

The second teaching comes to us from the *Toldot Ya’akov Yosef*, a 19th century commentary.

154. Exodus 25:8

155. Exodus *Rabba* 34:1

156. Rabbi Daniel Pressman, *Torah Sparks: Parshat Terumah*, 5756

157. Exodus 25:2

158. Exodus 38:8

There we learn of the significance of the laver being made from the mirrors. We already know from the text that the *Kohanim*, before they approach the sacrifice on the altar, must wash (literally: raise) their hands. In fashioning the laver out of mirrors, “the *Kohanim* will see themselves in the mirrors, and they will see their faces, and they will know their intentions. That when they come to sacrifice they will do so out of purity and not of haughtiness. ‘Don’t bring me the offering of pride.’”¹⁵⁹ The priests’ role in actualizing the holy potential of that space was so important that their *kavanah*, their state of mind and intention had to be pure. If, in looking in the mirror, one were to see that they were not in the proper “place” to bring an offering, then that offering would be lacking the essential element of holiness that was needed to complete the connection between the offerer and the receiver - God.

The tabernacle of the wilderness, was not holy because it held some power that other spaces did not hold, it was holy because of the participation of the people in constructing and sanctifying it and the dwelling therein of God’s Presence. And throughout its use, the appropriate participation and attention of those involved in its use was demanded. That space would only be a holy space when we created it as such. “the whole reality of *k’dusha* on earth is something that must happen through the agency of a human being, a *tzelem Elokim*.”¹⁶⁰

The Holy Temple

With the end of the exile, after the destruction of the first Temple, Ezra encourages the Jews to return and rebuild the Temple. Led by Zerubbabel the Temple is rebuilt, and this account of its completion is given:

And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. And the people of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the returned exiles, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy, and they offered at the dedication of this house of God one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin offering for all Israel, twelve male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, at Jerusalem; as it is written in the Book of Moses. And the returned exiles kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month. For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves, all of them were pure; and they killed the Passover

159. *Toldot Ya'akov Yosef* on Exodus 38:8

160. Rabbi Yochanan Meir Bechhofer, *Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshivas Yesodos HaTorah*, on Exodus 39:33, Jerusalem, Israel.

lamb for all the returned exiles, and for their brothers the priests, and for themselves. And the people of Israel, who had returned from exile, and all those who had kept themselves apart from the filthiness of the nations of the land, to seek the HASHEM God of Israel, ate, and celebrated the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy; for the HASHEM had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.¹⁶¹

From this glorious description of the rededication of the Temple, there is one thing glaringly missing. Where is God? Where is the cloud? Where is God's Presence, which dwelt in the Tabernacle and the first Temple? It is absent from these verses. The third century Palestinian *Talmudic* sage Reish Lakish, suggests that most of the exiles chose not to return and be a part of this historic project; they chose to remain in exile. He argues that the reason the Divine Presence did not dwell on the Second Temple was that the majority of Jews did not care enough to return and take part in the building and consecrating of the Temple.¹⁶² This sense that something was amiss is found in the Ezra text itself when it relates:

And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the HASHEM, the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the HASHEM, according to the directions of David king of Israel. And they sang responsively in praising and giving thanks to the HASHEM: For he is good, for his grace endures for ever towards Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the HASHEM, because the foundation of the house of the HASHEM was laid. But many of the priests and Levites and chiefs of the fathers houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, though many shouted aloud for joy; and the people could not distinguish the sound of joyful shouting from the sound of people weeping, because the people shouted loudly, and the sound was heard from far away.¹⁶³

The elders who had experienced the holiness of the First Temple, worried that the Second Temple, because of the lack of participation on the part of the people would be lacking that essential elements of holiness - human awareness and participation. This in turn would deny the Temple of the other key ingredient - the Divine Presence. Just like at Mount Sinai, the people's lack of participation in sanctifying the space leaves us acutely aware of the importance of the moment of holy connection, which can be made with great rejoicing or lost in silent apathy.

161. Ezra 6:15-22

162. *Yoma* 9b

163. Ezra 3:10-13

Perhaps then, our search for how we might create sacred space began here, with the building of the Second Temple. The search intensified when the one space which we had hoped held the potential for holy connections was lost to us. We were left then having learned a difficult lesson, but one that would help us to survive for the next two millennia. For, “the awareness that sanctity is not bound to a particular place made possible the rise of the synagogue”¹⁶⁴ and later the understanding that any place can be sanctified as a “holy space.” As Eric Meyers explains, “the ancient synagogue is a reminder that any space anywhere can be imbued with sacred meaning, for after all, when men and women of good intent gather together to acknowledge God, to revere the words attributed to God as recorded in Scripture, the space they inhabit becomes holy.”¹⁶⁵

In the book of Exodus God tells us, “in every place where I cause My name to be mentioned I will come unto thee and bless thee.”¹⁶⁶ The question therefore is not, what places are “holy”, but what must we do to “cause God’s name to be mentioned.”

Creating Holy Space

One of the most important Jewish spaces is the home. It is here that the children are taught, the holidays are celebrated, and where so much of what it means to live Jewishly takes place. It should be no surprise then, to see that when one moves to a new home, one celebrates a *Hanukkat HaBayit* - a dedication of the home. This is more than an open house or a block party. A *Hanukkat HaBayit* is a ritual and celebration in which we designate this home as different from other houses in that it will be a place of sacred moments. In celebrating a *Hanukkat HaBayit*, we endow the home with holiness. The key symbol in doing so is the *mezuzah*. The tiny scroll containing two selections from the *Torah*¹⁶⁷, protected in an ornate container is placed lovingly on the doorpost of the front door and of most interior doors and entryways.¹⁶⁸ The custom of affixing a *mezuzah* to the doorpost fulfills the Biblical commandment: “You shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates” (Deuteronomy 6:9). Affixing

164. Heschel, pg. 79-80

165. Eric M. Meyers, “Ancient Synagogues: An Archaeological Introduction” in *Sacred Realm: The Emergence of the Synagogue in the Ancient World*, pg. 20.

166. Exodus 20:24

167. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Deuteronomy 11:13-21

168. Except bathrooms and closets

a *mezuzah* is one way of sanctifying the home, as it distinguishes a Jewish home and is a visible sign and symbol to all those who enter that a sense of Jewish identity and commitment exists in that household.

There are many ways to transform our homes into places with holy potential and where “God’s name is mentioned.” I have made some suggestions in the epilogue of this work. In striving to create such spaces, it may be instructive to look at our synagogues and sanctuaries that have served as the meeting place between God and Jews since the second Commonwealth.

Transforming a Room into a Sanctuary

The Prophet Ezekiel describes God as becoming a *mikdash m’at*, a small sanctuary to the Jews who have been scattered among the countries.¹⁶⁹ The *Talmud* picks up on this verse when it explains, “Rabbi Samuel b. Isaac: ‘I will be unto them a small sanctuary (*mikdash m’at*)’ (Ez. 11:16): These are synagogues and study houses.”¹⁷⁰ As early as the second Commonwealth, and some suggest earlier, the *mishkan m’at* - the synagogue had become the primary place of gathering for the Jewish people. Called by Philo *hierous topous*, “sacred places” and known in literary and epigraphic sources as *proseuche*, meaning “prayer place,” synagogues of the second Commonwealth earned their title as “holy” or “sacred place” because of the role they played in bringing people and God into relationship. For Philo, the source of the holiness in these “sacred places” was the “Sacred Scripture” that was studied by the people within the walls of the synagogue.¹⁷¹

There are few *halachik* requirements for the design of synagogues and their sanctuaries. Because of this diverse architecture abounds in synagogues around the world. In almost all, however, one rule holds true: the architecture and design must transform these bricks and mortar, wood and nails into a “holy space.” At different times and in different places, this was accomplished in different ways. The early and mid-19th century saw exuberant ornamentation, while the late 19th and early 20th century went to the other extreme building more simple

169. Ezekiel 11:16

170. *Megillah* 29a

171. Steven Fine, “From Meeting House to Sacred Realm: Holiness and the Ancient Synagogue” in *Sacred Realm: The Emergence of the Synagogue in the Ancient World*, pg. 23.

structures and designs. In the 20th century, we again looked to ornamentation to adorn our sanctuaries. "The complementary arts of painting, sculpture, textiles, mosaics, and stained glass were increasingly used in conjunction with architecture."¹⁷² In my own community, having fixed seating has been tremendously important in setting our sanctuary space apart from others in the synagogue as more suitable for prayer and holy moments.

Whatever design or decoration we choose to bring to our sanctuaries, they become our "sacred realms" because of that design and decoration. Precisely because we choose to place our *Aron Hakodesh*, our holy Ark at the head of the room under the *ner tamid*, the eternal light, with our stained glass windows and fixed seating¹⁷³ - this room becomes one in which the potential for connection is present.

Rashi teaches that a place of prayer must have windows so that the supplicant can see the sky, the sight of which inspires reverence and devotion during prayer.¹⁷⁴ This idea that nature helps us connect to God through prayer has led many to see nature as sacred space as well.

Nature as Sacred Space

I am continually struck by my daughter's amazement at the moon. To her, there is nothing quite as incredible as the sun dipping down at night and the moon replacing it in the sky. In the words of Abraham Joshua Heschel, it is this "radical amazement" that so many adults yearn to recapture as we mature. It is when we see nature as a creation of and a manifestation of the Divine and not just as "beautiful" that we may name these natural spaces - "holy space."

So many of us have witnessed awe inspiring natural phenomena; seen a magnificent sunset, witnessed a shooting star, or seen the strength and fury of a winter storm. To imbue nature with the quality of holiness, we must go beyond the awe and beauty of the natural world and connect with its Creator. There is a wonderful *midrash* of Abraham as a three-year old boy. In it we are

172. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, "Synagogue"

173. In many congregations around the country, there is a move to remove fixed seating and replace it with moveable seats so that one may "create new spaces" for different services or affairs. Certainly for those communities, it is the lack of fixed seating that "transforms" that space.

174. Rashi on *B'rachot* 34b

told that one day, Abraham went out of his cave and upon looking at the world, wondered in his heart: Who created heaven and earth and me? All that day he prayed to the sun. In the evening, the sun set in the west and the moon rose in the east. Upon seeing the moon and the stars around it, he said: this one must have created heaven and earth and me - these stars must be the moon's princes and courtiers. So all night long he stood in prayer to the moon. In the morning, the moon sank in the west and the sun rose in the east. Then he said: there is no might in either of these. There must be a higher Ruler over them - to God, I will pray, and before God I will prostrate myself.¹⁷⁵

Conclusions

Holiness can exist in both sanctuaries and on seashores, in homes and overlooking the hills of Jerusalem. "The cycle alternates between grand cathedrals and meditation amidst the trees of the forest. When people become convinced that the places and the things are themselves holy or that only some people have the spiritual power, then it is time once more to set out for the fields and rediscover the fundamental truth: Entrances to holiness are everywhere and all the time."¹⁷⁶

175. *Bet ha-Midrash*, ed. A. Jellinek [1820-93], vols. 1-4: Leipzig, 1853-57; vols. 5-6: Vienna, 1873-77, 2:118-196

176. Lawrence Kushner, *Honey from the Rock*, pg. 56

Chapter Eight: Creating Holy Time

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיָּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לַזְּמַן הַזֶּה.

Praised are You, HASHEM our God, Ruler of the universe
Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this time.
(The traditional blessing said upon doing something for the first time in a year.)

Finding Meaning in Study

Jewish tradition does not suggest that there are requisite times during the day during which we must study. Rather, we are taught, "Do not say, 'When I have leisure time I will study,' for you may never have leisure."¹⁷⁷ But, as we will see, *Torah* study does require the same participation that all other aspects of holy time require. In a famous *talmudic* debate over a Jewish legal question, we learn, *lo bashamayim hi*, "it (the *Torah*) is not in the heavens."¹⁷⁸ That is to say, authority does not come from a miracle or from a heavenly voice any longer - rather, authority comes from our interaction and understanding of any given text. This permission to interpret and re-interpret is called upon again and again throughout Jewish history. In his Chasidic text, *Degel Machaneh Efrayim*, Moses Hayyim Ephraim of Sudylkow (1740-1800?) teaches that permission is given for the sages in each generation to re-interpret the words of *Torah* according to their needs.¹⁷⁹

This permission to engage with the words of *Torah* was elaborated upon by the modern philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas suggests that more than just being permitted, we are obligated to engage in interpretation for without our participation, Revelation is not complete. Each person, through their uniqueness, he argues, brings a unique aspect of truth thus adding to the totality of truth that is revelation. This is to suggest that meaning does not dwell in the text nor does the reader impose meaning upon the text. Meaning arises in dialogue between the person and the text.¹⁸⁰ Again, here, we see the importance of our participation in bringing about holiness. It is in connecting with a text that we experience revelation, which is our ultimate moment of connection with God.

177. *Pirkei Avot* 2:4

178. *Bava Metzia* 59b

179. *Degel Machaneh Efrayim*, *Parshat Va'era*

180. Emmanuel Levinas, "Revelation in the Jewish Tradition" in *Beyond the Verse: Talmudic Readings and Lectures*, pgs. 129-150.

Making Time for *Mitzvot*

The collection of *mitzvot* derived from the *Torah* and the teachings of the rabbis constitutes the Jewish legal framework called *Halacha*. *Halacha*, which comes from the root ה.ל.ך meaning “go, or walk” connotes, that fulfilling the *mitzvot* is a way of life. The whole idea of *mitzvot* is that every moment of our lives can hold the opportunity to lift our mundane actions to a level of *k’dusha*. Given this, it is easy to appreciate the power and significance of *mitzvot* in the life of one for whom the search for the sacred is important. However, throughout my time serving as a spiritual leader within the Jewish community and as an educator, I have witnessed a sorry misunderstanding of the holy potential of *mitzvot*. When I ask a class of young students or adult students for that matter, what a *mitzvah* is, the response is more often than not, “a good deed.” I then have to take whatever lesson plan I had for the day, discard it and spend the time working toward helping my students understand the true meaning of *mitzvah*.

The term *mitzvah* is derived from the Hebrew root צ.ו.י which means “to command” or “to ordain.” In the *Torah*, there are many different terms to indicate laws given from God to the people: Some of these include: *hukkah* (“statute,” Exodus 27:21), *mishpat* (“ordinance,” Deut. 4:5), *edut* (“testimony,” Deut. 4:45), *mishmeret* (“observance,” Lev. 8:35), and *torah* (“teaching,” Ex. 16:28). Only the word *mitzvah* is generally used to include all of God’s commandments. This minimization of the meaning of *mitzvah* as “good deed” is found already in the *Talmud*. There, the word *mitzvah* is used for a meritorious act as distinct from the fulfillment of a positive commandment.¹⁸¹ While it is true that all good deeds are *mitzvot*, it is not accurate to suggest that all *mitzvot* are good deeds. And moreso, the object of the *mitzvot* is not to make us better people, but to make us more connected people - connected, in every facet of our lives, to God. The *mitzvot* are vehicles for the creation of holy time.

Timely *Mitzvot*

There are many ways to categorize the many *mitzvot* presented in the written and oral *Torot*. Amongst others, one may identify commandments as time bound or non-time bound. There are *mitzvot* that are intended to be performed at indiscriminate times throughout each day of our

181. see *Hullin* 106a; cf. *Gittin* 15a

lives: *hiddur p'nei zaken* - esteeming the elderly, *hachnasat orchim* - showing hospitality to guests. Many of these “*mitzvot* of the moment” do, in fact, fall into the “good deed” category. Other *mitzvot*, those which are often lost in the discussion amongst liberal Jews today - are set aside for specific times throughout each day, each week, and our lives - putting on *t'fillin*, wearing *tzitzit*, and *davening* with a *minyan*. These time-bound *mitzvot*, traditionally obligated only upon men, but now, almost universally in liberal Jewish communities, expected of both men and women, offer opportunities for connection at specific times that are completely reliant on our participation. A *minyan*, for example requires the participation of not only one or two, but a quorum of ten people¹⁸² to ensure that that appointed time for prayer reaches its potential and becomes a “holy time.” That cannot happen without God to whom we offer our prayers - and it cannot happen without us.

Prayers of Empathy

In his work *Man's Quest for God*, Abraham Joshua Heschel identifies two types of prayer, prayers of empathy and prayers of expression. In both prayers of empathy and prayers of expression, Heschel suggests that prayer happens when the soul meets the word. The only question is which comes first, the soul or the word. Later we will look at the significance of the prayer of expression.¹⁸³ For now, however, let us focus on the prayer of empathy.

In the prayer of empathy, one resonates with the words of prayer on the page and one's heart and soul is then moved to join one's voice in creating prayer. The ordained times for prayer spelled out in the *Talmud* and clarified in the legal codes of the Middle Ages, contain within them, ideally, both prayers of expression and prayers of empathy. However, Heschel argues, the prayer of empathy is of primary importance at these times because, “in the prayer of empathy we often arrive at thoughts that lie beyond our power of expression.”¹⁸⁴ We therefore, follow a fixed liturgy at fixed times to help us fulfill our need and desire to praise God appropriately at all times.

182. Traditionally, a *minyan* required ten adult males. In contemporary liberal communities, women are counted as equal members of the *minyan*.

183. see Chapter 9

184. Heschel, *Man's Quest for God*, pg. 30

Our liturgy consists of three central themes: praise, petition and thanksgiving. Three times each day, we are called to praise the One to whom all praise is due, humbly request that God's providence shine down upon us and offer thanks to the One who makes all things possible. Were it not for these thrice-daily prayers of empathy, we would lose sight of our need to open our hearts to God in prayer and open our ears to God in silent meditation. And were we able to commit ourselves to a regiment of thrice-daily prayer at the appointed times, without participating in the formal liturgy of the prayerbook, we would be unable to fully express the prayers of our souls.

The rabbis, in creating a formal worship service and centralizing that service around specific times of each day, declared that it would be during these "holy times" of the day that we would fulfill our duty to praise God and give voice to the prayers of our hearts that might have otherwise remained unspoken.

Can We Count the Ark?

There are two Biblical references suggested as the source for needing ten people to constitute a *minyan*. The first comes from the story related about the twelve spies sent by Moses to scout out the land of Canaan, ten of whom came back with a negative report. There¹⁸⁵ the word *edah* is used meaning "community" thus suggesting, deduced the rabbis, that ten people constitute a congregation.¹⁸⁶ Elsewhere¹⁸⁷, the rule requiring ten is related to Abraham's plea to God to save *S'dom* and *Amorah* if there are at least ten righteous men found there.¹⁸⁸ From wherever it is derived, the obligation to pray with a community of ten Jews has remained an important part of almost all Jewish communities until this day.

However, there are times when a *minyan* is not available. In *masechet B'rachot* we learn that there are two possible ways of counting a *minyan* when ten adults are not available. R. Huna suggests that "nine and the Ark join together [to be counted as ten]."¹⁸⁹ Later, we learn that in an

185. Numbers 14:27

186. *Berachot* 21b; *Mehillah* 23b

187. *Ketubot* 7b

188. Genesis 18:32

189. *B'rachot* 47b

emergency, nine adults and a minor over six years old holding a *chumash* may constitute a *minyan*.¹⁹⁰ While both of these options are accepted by some and rejected by others, they are both, almost universally, seen as last resorts. Based on Psalm 82:1 which reads, “God stands in the divine assembly,” the *Talmud* explains that if ten adults pray together the Divine Presence is with them.¹⁹¹ R. Johanan teaches that “when God comes to a synagogue and does not find a *minyan* there, God is angry, as it is written: ‘wherefore, when I came, was there no man? When I called, was there none to answer?’^{192, 193} For the designated time of prayer to become a “holy time”, it is not only God that has to be present, but a community of *daveners* as well. Again, we see that time only becomes holy when the Presence of God is met with the presence of people.

***Shabbat* and Holiness**

Based on a Talmudic discussion¹⁹⁴ Abraham Joshua Heschel admits that the holidays of the year - require the sanctification of people, however, he argues, “Even when men forsake the Sabbath, its holiness remains.” (pg. 82)

At the same time, however, he concedes, “With all its grandeur, the Sabbath is not sufficient unto itself. Its spiritual reality calls for companionship of man.” (pg. 52) Furthermore, “God has sanctified the day and man must again and again sanctify the day, illumine the day with the light of his soul. The Sabbath is holy by the grace of God, and is still in need of all the holiness which man may lend to it.” (pg. 54)

So it seems that on some level, perhaps what the Jewish mystics would call, the upper realm or world, the *Shabbat*, itself, is holy. However, in our world of experience, it only becomes holy when we endow it with that quality through our observance and celebration of it. When we actualize it's holy potential in our lives. This is similar to the *m'komot* of Genesis which may have been identified as sacred sites for others, but only were experienced as such by our fore-fathers when they participated in sanctifying them.

190. *B'rachot* 48a; *Shulchan Aruch, Orech Hayim* 55:4

191. *B'rachot* 6a

192. Isaiah 50:2

193. *B'rachot* 6b

194. *Nedarim* 78b

Creating Holy Time

Much like space then, holy time is a creation of our presence, our intention, and our participation. While it may be possible to argue that there are times which are “holy” in and of themselves, such as the Sabbath and *Yom Kippur*, their innate sanctity only exists in a realm beyond human appreciation. The question has been asked of the philosophers, “if a tree falls in a forest and no one is there to hear it - does it make a sound?” To this question, I would have to answer, “well, yes, I imagine it might make a sound, but if I don’t experience that sound - then it is meaningless to me.” In the same way, there may be times and spaces that are inherently holy, but they are only holy in a realm beyond our experience. For a time or space to be “holy” for us - we must experience that holiness, and for us to experience holiness, we must be active partners in bringing it about. And to do this, we must embody the quality which we hope to impose upon space and time. We must live as holy “be-ings.”

Chapter Nine: Holy “Be-ing”

Introduction

As we have seen, we have the capacity to be a partner with God in endowing space and time with holiness. And we have noted that there are specific spaces and times which have been understood to be more conducive to becoming holy spaces and holy times. We have also seen that at a critical moment in Jewish history, we shifted what we understood about holiness to suit our changing situation and to meet the needs of the Jewish people. That shift from a focus on holy space to one of holy time allowed for Judaism to flourish throughout the next two millennia. It provided a new vehicle for the experience of the Divine in our lives far away from the Temple and distanced from the religious practices and mind set of the ancient Israelites.

Once again, we find ourselves at a critical moment in Jewish history. Decades ago, “the religious establishment was already confounded by the seeming indifference of American Jews.”¹⁹⁵ “The Judaism that they had been offered was stultifying and, like the dominant culture in American society, spiritually deadening - it had never engaged them on a spiritual, intellectual, emotional, or aesthetic level.”¹⁹⁶

Jews are searching for holiness and many have not been able to find it in the traditional modes of experience handed down from our teachers and ancestors. We are once again called to search for a new model of experiencing holiness. One that draws and builds upon those that came before it while expanding and broadening the horizons of connection. That new model is what I call Holy “Be-ing.”

***K’doshim T’hiu* - And You Shall Be Holy**

“Twice in *Torah* our people hear the command: ‘Be *kadosh*’: ‘Be holy!’ ‘Be sacred beings!’ Our people’s entire spiritual endeavor - all of *Torah*, all the law, all the praise, all the songs, all the prayers, blessings, and sacrifices - can be seen as a response to that call: ‘Be sacred beings, be *kadosh*.’ ”¹⁹⁷

195. Samuel G. Freedman, *Jew vs. Jew: The Struggle for the Soul of American Jewry*, pg. 34

196. Michael Lerner, *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation*, pg. 2

197. Marcia Prager, *The Path of Blessing: Experiencing the Energy and Abundance of the Divine*, pg. 10

We have already discussed¹⁹⁸ the definition of *Kadosh* as separation from the mundane for the sake of connecting to and being in relationship with the Divine. The *Torah* does not explicitly describe how one is to fulfill this command. However, based on our definition, we understand minimally, that in order to fulfill the command *k'doshim t'hiu* we must separate ourselves from the mundane and strive to be in relation with God. What is the mundane that we are to separate ourselves from? That which is mundane is relegated to earthy pursuits. Note that we do not judge the mundane as evil or worthless, only as not-holy. Each Saturday night, with the conclusion of *Shabbat*, we thank God for the holy and the regular, light and darkness, Israel and the other nations, and the Sabbath and the other days of the week. Light, Israel, and *Shabbat* are holy; darkness, the other nations, and the days of the week are regular. Not bad, just regular. Our task is to always reach for that which is beyond regular. Our challenge is to cling to what is holy in our world; the light of God, the people Israel, and the Sabbath as a taste of eternity. We do so by participating in the life of the Jewish people, joining those places that we have endowed with holiness; synagogues and Jewish schools and celebrating the times which we have endowed with holiness; thrice-daily prayer, holy-days and *Shabbat*. More importantly, though, is that we approach these places and times with intention; that we bring to these potential holy encounters our full presence and being. In doing so, in living a life of expanded consciousness, we transform **ourselves** from regular to holy. In living a life of "be-ing," holy "be-ing," we fulfill the call to be holy. So the *Torah* does not need to identify or define that through which we may be, or become holy - precisely because it is in our "be-ing" that we become holy. In our presence, awareness, and intention we endow the things of space and time in our lives with holiness and thereby fulfill the command - *k'doshim t'hiu*.

Prophet As Paradigm

Were one to look beyond the social action and social justice layers of the writings of the prophetic books, one would see that a deeper message of the prophets and the experience of revelation is not so much about how we must act in relation to other people, but how we must BE in relationship with God. Heschel teaches that what is decisive about revelation is that which

198. see the Introduction, pg. 8

happens between God and the prophet rather than that which happens between the prophet and the parchment. In this way, the prophets embody the command to be holy - to separate oneself from the world of the mundane and connect oneself in relationship to God. It was because of this trait that the prophets were called "angels".¹⁹⁹

That the essence of the prophetic message is one of relationship between people and God is evident, not only in the subject matter of the prophetic writings, but also in the style and form those writings take. As a parent, partner, friend and confidant, God is presented as One with whom the prophets themselves had intimate relationships, while the text uses relational analogies and language to encourage the reader to perceive him or herself as one with whom God also wishes to share a relationship.

In the first chapter of Jeremiah, the prophet is told, "Before I created you in the womb, I selected you; before you were born, I consecrated you."²⁰⁰ God is in a relationship with Jeremiah even before he can choose to reciprocate. Using the image of a mother birthing her child, God is presented as not only Creator but Parent to the prophet. Similarly in Hosea, we read, "I fell in love with Israel when he was still a child; and I have called him My son ever since Egypt."²⁰¹

Later in Jeremiah, we are introduced to the analogy of God's relationship with Israel as that of a man and his wife. Longing for a loving relationship, the man is devastated when his wife goes about whoring with many lovers.²⁰² This motif of marriage is found throughout the prophetic books including the book of Hosea in which the marriage motif is central to the prophets' message. In chapter one, Hosea is told to live out, in his own life, what God has experienced with Israel. The names given to the children that Hosea and his wife of whoredom, Gomer parent tell the story of lost love and relationship: "Name him *Jezreel*; for, I will soon punish the House of *Jehu*...Name her *Lo-ruhamah*; for I will no longer accept the House of Israel...Name him *Lo-ammi*; for you are not My people, and I will not be your God."²⁰³ And then, as we, the

199. Moshe Chayim Luzzatto, *The Path of the Just*, pg. 327.

200. Jeremiah 1:5

201. Hosea 11:1

202. Jeremiah 3:1

203. Hosea 1:4, 6, 9

offspring of the union between God and Israel are to do, Hosea's children are instructed to rebuke their mother, "for she is not My wife and I am not her husband."²⁰⁴

The imagery of a marriage gone array because of marital infidelity on the part of Israel might leave one with the impression that while God might have hoped for a relationship with Israel that that is not possible. However, we also have, throughout the prophetic books numerous examples of hopeful yearning for a loving relationship between God and the prophet. The prophet Zechariah writes, "Turn back to Me and I will turn back to you".²⁰⁵ An almost identical message is heard in the prophet Malachi.²⁰⁶ The prophet Micah declares, "He (God) will take us back in love."²⁰⁷ And this relationship is not one that can be had with just any people. We are uniquely qualified to be God's partners as we read in Amos, "You alone have I singled out of all the families of the earth."²⁰⁸

The relationship between the prophet and God is an emotional one. Echoed in almost every prophetic statement, pathos is the central category of the prophetic understanding of God. Heschel teaches:

To the prophet, God does not reveal himself in an abstract absoluteness, but in a specific and unique way – in a personal and intimate revelation to the world. God does not simply command and expect obedience; He is also moved and affected by what happens in the world and He reacts accordingly. Events and human actions arouse in Him joy or sorrow, pleasure or wrath. He is not conceived as judging facts, so to speak, "objectively," in detached impassibility. He reacts in an intimate and subjective manner, and thus determines the value of events. Quite obviously in the Biblical view, man's deeds can move Him, affect Him, grieve Him, or, on the other hand, gladden and please Him. This notion that God can be intimately affected, that He possesses not merely intelligence and will, but also feeling and pathos, basically defines the prophetic consciousness of God.²⁰⁹

And for the prophet himself, God is One to Whom he can open his heart and bear his soul. Jeremiah cries out, "Woe is me, my mother, that you ever bore me...Why must my pain be

204. Hosea 2:4

205. Zechariah 1:3

206. Malachi 3:7

207. Micah 7:19

208. Amos 3:2

209. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Organized Excerpts*, pg. 10

endless, my wound incurable, resistant to healing?"²¹⁰ To which God responds, as God does in Zechariah and Malachi, "If you turn back, I shall take you back."²¹¹ It is God's sincere wish that God once again see us as God's companion. Ezekiel declares, "As I live - declares HASHEM, God - it is not My desire that the wicked shall die, but that the wicked turn from his [evil] ways and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways, that you may not die, O House of Israel!"²¹² Until that time, God patiently waits for us to fulfill God's wish that we execute justice and pursue peace in the world and thereby come into relationship with God and become holy "be-ings."

It is clear that the prophet's life is one dedicated to connecting with God and that the prophet's message is one of hope that a relationship between humans and God may once again be realized. It is also clear from a reading of the prophets that in order to devote himself to this relationship with God the prophet is not only separated but at times ostracized from the rest of the community. Jeremiah cries out, "I have not lent, and I have not borrowed; Yet everyone curses me."²¹³ Later in Jeremiah, Pashhur son of Immer, the priest and chief officer of the House of God, throws Jeremiah in jail upon hearing his call to holiness.²¹⁴ The life of the prophet was one of constant struggle against the powers that be and the complacency that reigns amongst the people. Both as an outgrowth of this struggle and as a necessity for "be-ing" holy, the prophet is in constant tension with his fellow Jews and separated from their community and way of life.

Holy "Be-ing"

Holy "be-ing" is both a focusing of the lens of holy time and space and another realm of holy possibility all together. One might mis-read this thesis and think that holy "be-ing" is an artificial construct no different than holy time or holy space. But quite on the contrary - holy "be-ing" affords us the freedom and empowerment to find God at every time and in every space. While the two traditional models of space and time limited our experiences of holiness to those spaces and times that the Biblical characters or rabbis understood to be more worthy or capable of containing holiness, holy "be-ing" allows us to become aware of that same worth and capability in every moment no matter the time or the space. For it is our presence and our

210. Jeremiah 15:10, 18

211. Jeremiah 15:19

212. Ezekiel 33:11

213. Jeremiah 15:10

214. Jeremiah 20

intention that we bring to time and space that endows that experience with holiness. Already in the book of Proverbs, the wisdom of Solomon teaches us, בְּכָל־דְּרָכָיִךָ יָדָעְתִּיךָ, “In all of your ways, know God.”²¹⁵ We are called to know the Source of Holiness in all our ways. We are challenged to bring *k’dusha*, the sacred, into every aspect of our lives. For, “the true meaning of existence is disclosed in moments of living in the presence of God.”²¹⁶

The Guru IS God

To live in the Presence (*Shechinah*) of God is to become fully aware of that Presence within yourself. My mother, who is a regular Temple goer also avails herself of the spiritual guidance and retreat of an Ashram in upstate New York. It was during one of these visits that she came to realize this truth - that to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *k’doshim t’hiu* we must see ourselves as Godly, because God is Holy.

I’d been going to the quiet ashram in the Catskills for four years, and I still didn’t feel myself to be as complete a believer as the others there. Despite whatever was missing in my beliefs, I always looked forward to my visits there, just like a child about to get a sweet. Meditating there, I had been moved in ways that I could never explain; but, as inexplicable as these experiences had been, they were the draw for me to return time after time to my Guru’s ashram.

I called it “My Guru’s ashram” because it was during my very first visit and meditation experience that I became aware that a heaviness I had owned, from as far back as I could remember, was lifted up and out of me. This heaviness was a composite of fear and anger to which I had become strangely attached. In my new, lighter, and very much happier state, I was hard-pressed to deny that the Guru of this ashram had had something, if not everything, to do with it. This experience had been no small gift for me, even if words do not describe it fully and properly here; and from then to now, I have gone to My Guru’s ashram as often as I could.

Many of my six-hour rides to the ashram had been made with a dear friend, Judy. It seems to me that she and I would have the same conversation on each ride through the snowy, flowery or stormy mountains of Pennsylvania. It went like this:

She would start. “Do you believe the Guru is G_D?”

I would respond with some form of “She is no more G_D than I am.”

215. Proverbs 3:6

216. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism*, pg. 283

She'd counter, "Then, why do you go to HER ashram?"

At this point, I would try to convey something of my muddled thinking about a situation for which, assuming I had an understanding, there would still be no adequate language. My rambling usually turned into a description of what the Guru was for me. I'd likely start by comparing the Guru to a master Rabbi, a teacher who teaches by his "being". I might even have pulled out the Hassidic story of the student who is about to study with a famous Rabbi, when he is asked what he will study. He answers simply, "I will watch him tie his shoes." How often had I simply watched how my Guru breathed, or smiled, or meditated, and as the song says, "I Followed"? That, to me, is what a master teacher is, one who by his or her very being inclines others to "BE". I would go on to say, by this definition, my Guru is a master teacher.

The name "Guru" is literally made up of the Hindi "gu", which means darkness; followed by "ru", which means light. I had interpreted this as meaning one who brings light from darkness, a spiritual Master who enlightens others. By this definition, I wasn't really telling Judy anything new, and our debate would continue. (Judy didn't give up that easily.) The bottom line here is that I had not, and could not, say that anyone or anything was God, not even my Guru, who is the most "Human BE-ing" I know. Thankfully, that never kept me from my Guru or she from me.

It bothered me that every time we had this conversation, I could only give the Guru the status of a master teacher. I seemed to be side stepping some issue, but I didn't know what it was or why I couldn't meet it head on. I was allowing that the Guru was a perfect human being, but I didn't want to agree to a false idol. This undercurrent of feelings came into the ashram with me and made me feel like a spy among all the others, all of whom seemed to agree with Judy, leaving me out and behind.

During one visit, we were taking a course in *Advaita Vedanta*, an ancient East Indian philosophy. The teacher recited beautiful Sanskrit texts before translating them for discussion. The words that kept catching my attention throughout were "non-dualism" and "ONE." It was at one point during his recitation that I started into a spontaneous meditation. In that meditation there was a holy moment that seemed to last barely a heartbeat; but, in that heartbeat (and here words are not adequate to the task) there was a shift. It was a shift so subtle, yet so dramatic, that I felt changed – changed by my awareness of an exquisite peace, right in the very center of my being. My oneness with God was fully "realized" in that peace. I won't even try to say more of what happened for fear of making it seem too simple, too grand, or just too unbelievable. What is most important is that in an instant I was awakened to an unspeakable holiness that is always in me.

When the class was over, Judy and I sat outside with a cup of coffee. We were quietly enjoying the fresh air when I simply started to cry. I rested my head on the table and tears just came, but not from any sadness. What had happened was slowly entering my consciousness, and I was in awe and humbled. The tears, I think, came from gratitude. Judy rubbed my arm and asked, "Are you alright?" Without hesitation, I answered, "My GURU is God."

Of course, she is God. I hadn't been able to conceive of it before this because I hadn't yet "realized" God. To "realize" a thing is more than to feel it emotionally or even to know it consciously. To "realize" something is to own its actuality with everything that you are, and to be fully aware of it. This realization was my awakening to an integral part of myself that had always been with me.

My mind started to dance with this knowledge and presented me with:

"How is it that an infinite Consciousness and Power is revealed in time and in space, in a physical body?"

"What is the process of Divine embodiment?"

"How is it that a human being can reveal God's graceful purpose in the world?"

Finally, I told myself that it is a Divine Mystery, and I would capitalize the word because I think it is the absolute, ultimate Mystery of existence itself: that God is, truly, with us, within us, as us. The Guru reveals that Mystery to us.

Well, now Judy and I were in agreement, but how could I explain all of this to my son, the "Rabbi"? The next wonderful lesson that I had was that, having a son for a "Rabbi"; he would help me to explain it. Understanding my story, my son was reminded of this quote from a teaching from the *Chasidic* text, the *Degel Machaneh Efrayim*. In his commentary on *parshat Yitro*, Moshe Hayim Efrayim brings a passage from the *Zohar*:

The righteous of the generation and the worthy in the generation, and the wise in the generation . . . these are the face of the *Shekhinah* . . . It is unchanging that we all are created in the image and likeness of God, but ours only a likeness and not an actual aspect of God. Only the righteous, the worthy, and the wise, are their faces really faces of the *Shekhinah*, and God rests within them.

The *Degel* goes on to explain, "Don't make yourself (*lecha*) an idol (*pesel*) or an image...According to the commentary of the *Or Ha-Chayyim*, the word *lecha* refers to a person's essence, and similarly, it would seem, 'any image' also refers to a person's essence." Thus, "Don't make yourself (*lecha*) an idol (*pesel*)" in other words, means not to make yourself [your essence] **only** an image and likeness of God. Rather see that you are one of those whose faces are really faces of the *Shekhinah* and within whom the *Shekhinah* rests - for they are the aspect of God.

V'hamaskil Yavin

You'll only understand this, if you already know this.

To re-envision ourselves as not only created in the image of God, but to ourselves, BE as aspect of God is to be a holy “BE-ing”. With this knowledge, we can go forth and bring that sense of sanctity to every space and every moment. Judaism offers us a number of ways to do just this, to BE fully in the Presence of God and to, through that relationship endow things of space and time with holiness.

One Hundred Blessings Each Day

Jewish mysticism teaches that there are moments in our lives when we are particularly aware of the awe, wonder, and holy possibilities that fill existence. In Hebrew this is called *mochin d’gadlut*, literally, “big mind” or expanded consciousness. While we all experience these moments, we all too often fall back into *mochin d’katnut*, “little mind,” or constricted consciousness in which we simply “get by” missing the miracles of life every day. This condition, which so many of us experience on a daily basis has been compared to the events of the destruction of the First and Second Temples. Just as the exiles to Babylon and Rome are referred to in Hebrew as *galut*, so too, this “alienation and exile from God”²¹⁷ is called *galut*.

To counteract this troublesome reality, Judaism asks that we sanctify every action, with a blessing; that we bring God into every facet of our lives, no matter how mundane that facet may seem. “*B’rachot* are a way of keeping our awareness of life’s holy potential ever present.”²¹⁸ Each day begins with a litany of *b’rachot* thanking God for every aspect of beginning life anew that morning. This list gives us a jump start on fulfilling the rabbinic dictum of reciting one hundred blessings each day.²¹⁹ Eating, seeing wonders of nature, seeing a *Torah* scholar, seeing a non-Jewish king or head of state, hearing thunder, hearing bad news, and using the bathroom are all mundane moments that have the capacity to be transformed into holy moments simply by our full Presence and intention in reciting a *b’racha*. Larry Kushner describes *b’rachot* as, “a way of keeping our awareness of life’s holy potential ever present.”²²⁰

217. Marcia Prager, *The Path of Blessing: Experiencing the Energy and Abundance of the Divine*, pg. 12-13

218. Rabbi Lawrence Square Kushner, “Let One Hundred Blessings Bloom: Enhancing the Spiritual Dimension of Everyday Life”, pg. 3

219. Rabbi Meir; Numbers *Rabba* 18:21, attributes the custom to King David; v. also *Menachot* 43b sources cited in *Otzar Dinim uMinhagim* p. 55.

220. Rabbi Larry Kushner, “Let One Hundred Blessings Bloom: Enhancing the Spiritual Dimension of Everyday Life”, pg. 3.

Awakening the Holy Sparks Within

In a wonderful *chasidic* teaching from the *Ba'al Shem Tov*,²²¹ we learn that each time we say a blessing over the food we are about to eat, we awaken the vitality, or God's spark in that food. In doing so, the spark of God inside of us and the spark of God inside of the food find one another according to the principle, *matza min et mino v'nei'or* - varieties of like kind find one another. In this way, by uttering a *b'racha*, the food nurtures not only our physical self but our spiritual self as well. It becomes, if you will, "soul food."

This short teaching speaks volumes about the creation of holiness. In this case, the holiness - that is the connection between us, the food, and the spark of God in each - is only made with the awakening of the sparks through the recitation of a blessing. It is our act of sanctification that endows the food we eat and the act of eating with *k'dusha*. We have a vital role, then in caring, not only for our body but for our soul, the seat of intention and presence, and therefore, the seat of holy "being." If we do not say a *b'racha* - if we are not aware of the holy potential in every creation - if we do not do our part in creating a connection and forging a relationship with the Source of all holiness - then our spark, our *neshamah* remains dormant and our soul goes unnourished.

The essence of the Besht's teaching is not so much that we should say blessings but rather, that we have the capacity to make powerful connections. When we sanctify the act of eating by reciting a blessing we connect the spark of the Divine within us with the spark in the food we are about to enjoy and with the Source of Divine sparks. In doing so we are fulfilling the call to "be" holy. It is the intention embodied in each blessing that we utter, which transforms the simple act of eating to a sacred act of connection..

Prayers of Expression

We have already seen Heschel's idea of the prayer of empathy as the prayer experience in which the word moves the soul to join the word in creating a holy moment of prayer. The purpose of the prayer of empathy is to help us give voice to all that we should be thankful for throughout

221. Ba'al Shem Tov, *Sefer Ba'al Shem Tov al HaTorah, Parashat Ekev: Bet*, pgs. 280-281.

our lives, that may escape our consciousness or limited abilities. In the prayer of expression however, one's soul is so moved by a sight or experience that one can only open one's mouth in praise and thanksgiving. In the prayer of expression the soul comes first and is followed by the word.

The dilemma arises between the two when the fixed times for prayer begin to lose their "holiness" because so many Jews simply ignore them. For too many Jews, the idea that we can open a prayerbook and empathize with words written hundreds of years earlier, simply does not ring true. They feel, like Heschel that true "prayer...is an outburst of the heart, an act of spontaneity and self-expression."²²² And, "the text must never be more important than *Kavanah*, then inner devotion."²²³ I would extend this principle to suggest that the ordained times of prayer must never be more important than or rule out the moments of connection we may make through worship outside of those traditional times.

At the same time, Jews rarely participate in any uniquely Jewish prayers of expression.²²⁴ While serving as a chaplain at Norwood Caritas Hospital in Norwood, Massachusetts, I would often end my visits by inviting the patient and his or her family to join me in a moment of prayer. While the non-Jewish patients were almost always open to the experience, very few, if any Jews seemed comfortable with the invitation. Liberal Jews have been taught that prayer belongs in the synagogue and that it only "works" if there is a trained rabbi, cantor, or prayer leader on the *bimah* orchestrating the service. Needless to say this is an unfortunate state of affairs. It has been suggested that prayer in synagogues in America is like a football game. In the stadium there are 70,000 people who need exercise watching 70 people who don't, run around. Similarly in the synagogue, we often find many people who need, or might benefit from, a meaningful prayer experience watching one or two who might have these experiences often, create one for themselves.

Embracing the importance and beauty of prayers of expression allows us to give voice to the

222. Heschel, *Man's Quest for God*, pg. 30

223. *ibid.*, pg. 34

224. What lacks amongst Jews is spontaneous prayer which has a uniquely Jewish tone, language, content and sensibility. I do not wish to suggest that many Jews do not offer spontaneous personal prayer in general.

“radical amazement” that a holy “be-ing” experiences throughout his or her life. In opening ourselves to the power of spontaneous prayer we allow ourselves to name the awesome experiences of creation and life. The name we give those experiences is “God.”

When *Shabbat* Begins at 3:58 p.m.

It is Friday afternoon and I find myself standing, once again, in front of a gym full of students, siblings, parents and grandparents. I’m talking about welcoming *Shabbat*, inviting those gathered to inhale the beauty of *Shabbat* and exhale the stresses of the week. I see the group relax. They are ready to welcome *Shabbat* but for me, there is still work to be done. *Kabbalat Shabbat* ends with a flurry of *Shabbat Shaloms* and then the rush to get home begins. My three children and all of their belongings need to be gathered from two different schools. Once everyone and everything is loaded into the car we begin the long ride home, fighting rush hour traffic for nearly an hour. In the car we try to make the drive different. We play our favorite Jewish artists and talk about our plans for the weekend. But, I know that if everything goes like clockwork we’ll have about one hour of turn around time before we have to head off in different directions. My children often play at their neighborhood friends’ homes on Friday afternoon, a special treat for kids that attend a Jewish day school. Sometimes we’re rushing off to attend services or, more often than not, I am rushing out the door to a *Kabbalat Shabbat* program that I am running. So, when do we light the candles, sing *kiddush*, make *motzi*, and enjoy the *challah* that is squished in someone’s backpack?

For us, these rituals for welcoming *Shabbat* will wait until tomorrow morning. In my home we gather at the breakfast table on *Shabbat* morning. We sit. We talk. We inhale the beauty of *Shabbat* and exhale the stresses of the week. As a family, we light our candles knowing that we will be able to sit at the table long enough to watch them burn. We sing *kiddush* and drink grape juice, it’s too early for wine! We make *motzi* and then turn our slightly squished *challah* into delicious French toast. And, our *Shabbat* begins. Others may have lit their candles hours ago but for us, *Shabbat* does not begin when the sun goes down or when the calendar says it should. *Shabbat* begins on Saturday morning when we are all able to be fully present in the moment and when we can truly appreciate the peace and beauty of *Shabbat*.²²⁵

It is a common dilemma amongst modern Jews living in America. Our jobs require long hours, overtime, and piles of work which never seem to end. For many Jews the idea of stopping at 5:00pm on Friday or even earlier during the winter months, seems an impossibility. For these Jews, *Shabbat* starts not when it has been designated to start by the rabbis, but when their work allows it to begin. It is difficult to argue against beginning *Shabbat* at the rabbinically ordained time when the alternative is to allow work to rule our spiritual and religious lives. The essence of *Shabbat* afterall, is to redeem us from the mundane life of the work week and allow us to

225. Jennifer Rudin-Sable is the Family Educator at the Rashi School of Newton, Massachusetts.

experience a taste of eternity. It does, then seem odd that we should postpone eternity for the sake of making a few more phone calls, answering a few more e-mails, or completing a few more tasks.

However, we cannot ignore the fact that more American Jews are working harder than ever and that for many, priorities have shifted. “Rather than service to a greater spiritual power or higher truth, religion is now conceptualized as something to be used in the attainment of personal goals.”²²⁶ We can remedy this unfortunate situation by expanding our “holy horizons” to include - not just the models of space and time but “be-ing.” In this way, we may re-discover the beauty and power of the day of rest.

It has become common in many households to not let go of the tradition of lighting candles on Friday night while those families may not be able or, may not choose to fulfill this tradition at the rabbinically ordained time. Rather, they wait, not only until every member of the family is home, but until every member of the family can be fully “present” around the *Shabbat* table. For many families, this means coming home after school and work, cleaning the house, preparing a *Shabbat* meal, changing into “*Shabbat* clothes” and letting go of the worries and troubles of the work week. For some families, this may mean that candles are not lit until well after the appointed time for lighting. It also means, though, that each member of the family, in that moment of lighting the candles, blessing the wine, and sharing the *challah* is embodying holy “be-ing.” Holiness is driven by intention - not performance. For these families, the intention is put before the performance, and in that decision they have created a holy moment outside of the restrictive model of rabbinic time.

Bringing the Sacred into the Secular

Jews have always marked the passage of time with ritual, prayer and celebration. It is at these times in our lives, that we turn to God with gratitude and the hope of transforming a life-cycle event into a sacred time in our lives. Traditional lifecycle events include naming a child and entering him or her into the covenant of the Jewish people, celebrating becoming a *Bar* or *Bat*

226. Roberta Rosenberg Farber and Chaim I. Waxman, eds. *Jews in America: A Contemporary Reader*, pg. 302.

Mitzvah at the age of thirteen, rejoicing with the bride and groom at the wedding, and attending to our beloved dead at their funeral. In addition to a wealth of new rituals and liturgies for these life-cycle events, a number of new life-cycle rituals and celebrations have become popular in an effort to lend a sense of holiness to important times in our lives that have, as of yet, gone unsanctified.

Many Jews have found that we can be a partner with God in transforming seemingly mundane or “usual” events or moments in our lives into holy moments. At the Rashi School, the Reform Jewish day school of greater Boston, it has been the first grade’s tradition each year, when studying the physiology of the tooth to write a *b’racha* thanking God for creating teeth. This *b’racha* can then be said when each student looses a tooth, bringing God into that life-cycle event, creating a connection, and transforming time.

As we grow there are innumerable opportunities to transform moments from the secular to the sacred. Beginning a new job, changing careers, celebrating an anniversary or a birthday. Rabbi Shohama Weiner writes, “ritualizing birthdays with a Jewish ceremony is an opportunity to assist adults in viewing their journey through life as a sacred one.”²²⁷ Similarly, many women have chosen to sanctify the times that are unique in a woman’s life cycle; the beginning of menstruation, becoming pregnant, and entering menopause.

The Kotzker Rebbe comments on the *Torah* portion *Behukotai* (Lev. 27:14), “when a person is involved in spiritual matters, it is relatively easy for him to do so in a sanctified setting. However, true holiness is when a person sanctifies the seemingly mundane activities in his household. When one behaves in an elevated manner in his own home, he is truly a holy person.”

Holidays or Holy Days

The difference between a holiday and a holy day, it has been said, lies in that, “on holidays we try to empty our minds, on holy days we attempt to replenish our spirits. On holidays we reach out for the things we want. On holy days we reach up for the things we need. Holidays bring a

227. Shohama Harris Wiener, “Ritualizing the Birthday as Sacred Jewish Time” in *Worlds of Jewish Prayer*, pg. 221.

change of scene, holy days bring a change of heart.”²²⁸ Those moments in our lives which we celebrate as personal holidays; birthdays, promotions, buying a new home, and those which we celebrate along with our non-Jewish neighbors such as Thanksgiving, can be transformed from mundane holidays to sacred holy days. Rabbi Weiner writes, “...[these] holiday[s] can easily be made (a) holy day[s], and in so doing, secular and religious life can be merged.”²²⁹ This is our calling as Jews; to search out the sacred in every place and time. To recognize that every moment has the capacity to be a holy moment if we commit ourselves to holy “be-ing.”

Shavuot: Holiness Beyond Space, Holiness Beyond Time

Holiness then, is not a state of space or time, but a state of mind. It is a status created through the Presence of God and the presence of human beings. We have already looked at the event of Revelation itself. We discovered that that moment at Mount Sinai had the potential to be one of the most profound moments of holiness. In remembering the Revelation on the Holy Day of *Shavuot*, one cannot help but notice the lack of hard evidence regarding the details of the event itself. As the most obvious remembrance of holy space and time in the Bible it is indeed odd that we have no idea where revelation took place and are conflicted about the time/date.

Rabbi Dr. Isaac C. Avigdor from West Hartford, Connecticut teaches, “Where is Mount. Sinai? To this day, we don’t know. Archaeologists have various theories about which peak in the Sinai desert is Mount. Sinai. It is doubtful whether the so-called Sinai, today, is actually the one from which the *Torah* was received. Throughout the generations, no structure of any kind was ever built in honor of the holy Biblical site of Mount. Sinai.

“The exact date of *Shavuot* is not specified in the *Torah*. All we know about the time of the receiving of the *Torah* is that it was 50 days after Passover. And even regarding that 50th day, the *Torah* uses unclear terminology. It says, ‘the morrow of the seventh Sabbath.’ This expression led to a number of misunderstandings with the Karaites, Samaritans and especially the Christians who held that the ‘Pentecost’ must fall on the day after the Sabbath, always on Sunday.

228. Rabbi Sidney Greenberg, “Days of Trepidation”

229. *ibid.*

“When did the giving of the *Torah* actually take place? This is already a subject of debate in the *Talmud*. All agree that it occurred on a Sabbath day. According to Rabbi Yosse, it happened on the seventh day of the month of *Sivan*, whereas the *Tanna Kamma* maintains that it was on the sixth day (*Shabbat* 86).”²³⁰

Conclusions

That we, to this day, do not know where this “holy mountain” (if it was in fact a holy mountain) is located and that we are unsure of the date of the revelation should not surprise us. The essence of the idea of holy “be-ing” is to understand that holiness is beyond space and time. While we may endow certain spaces and times with holiness, holiness itself cannot be relegated to either of those realms. Holiness is “in-between.” That is, holiness may be found in space or time, but only when they are caught in the middle of our being in relationship.

The Hebrew word for marriage is *kiddushin* (sanctification). In this holiest of moments between two people we are taught God’s Presence resides. God is not “in” either the *chatan* (groom) or the *kalah* (bride), but between them. Standing under the *chuppah*, a temporary, portable “space” which can be erected anywhere - we come to realize how a relationship can transform a space. Held, with few exceptions, at indiscriminate times throughout the year - we come to recognize how love can transform time. In sanctifying the union of two people and the “in-between” which they create, we both acknowledge and celebrate holy space and holy time and become aware of our role in “be-ing” a partner with God and with each other in bringing holiness into the world.

In the Talmud, the rabbis, teach us that Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai’s life is a model of how we should respond to catastrophe. From ben Zakkai we learn that we, as leaders of the Jewish community should 1) share the life experience of its people; 2) create newly needed institutions and ideas with vision and boldness; 3) bring the past with it holistically and faithfully; 4) be ready to stretch people to the limit while encouraging and nurturing a wide range of viewpoints and policies; 5) and bring a variety of people into leadership roles and train them to be serious leaders without taking themselves too seriously.

230. Rabbi Dr. Isaac C. Avigdor, “*Shavuot: Its Mystery of Name, Time and Place*,” West Hartford, CT.

We are again at a crossroads in Jewish History. Jews and, in fact, all people are searching for meaning in their lives and answers to their questions. Judaism teaches that this meaning and these answers are found in “be-ing” in relationship with God. Just as Rabbi Yochanan recognized the shift from holy space to holy time in the first centuries of the Common Era, we are now called to recognize the shift from holy time to holy “be-ing.” And like the rabbis of the Ancient world, we must appreciate where the American Jewish community is spiritually; respond to that awareness with courage and determination; connect our vision to the long and proud tradition of our people; encourage people to go beyond what they may have been taught and begin their own search for the sacred; and finally be prepared to empower those beginning the search or already on the path with the knowledge that, “none of the effort you put into coming closer to God is ever wasted.”²³¹

The rabbis of the Ancient world model for us how we might ensure the continuity of the spiritual life of the Jewish people. They had the courage necessary in their time. “The new era of Jewish history now unfolding will need no less.”²³²

231. Rebbe Nachman of Breslov, *Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom*, Breslov Research INstitute, 1973, #12.

232. Rabbi Irving Greenberg, “Forgotten hero of *Tisha B'Av* enabled Judaism to Survive Exile” as featured in the Jewish Bulletin of Northern California, August 4, 1995.

EPILOGUE

10 Easy Steps to Create Holy Space, Time and Moments in Your Life

The idea of creating and celebrating holy "be-ing" is both an expansion of the rabbinic model of holy time and the Biblical experience of holy space as well as a new paradigm with enormous potential in our search for the sacred. Below are some practical suggestions for how we may begin to create holy space and holy time, and become holy "be-ings".

1. Affix a *M'zuzah* to your doorpost.

The Hebrew word *mezuzah* means "doorpost." According to tradition, the *mezuzah* is to be affixed to the doorpost at the entrance to a Jewish home as well as at the entrance to each of the interior rooms except for bathrooms and closets. The *mezuzah* itself consists of a small scroll of parchment (*klaf*) on which are written two biblical passages, Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Deuteronomy 11:13-21. This scroll is then inserted into a wooden, plastic, glass or metal casing which is often quite beautiful and artistic in design.

The custom of affixing a *mezuzah* to the doorpost fulfills the Biblical commandment: "You shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates" (Deuteronomy 6:9). Affixing a *mezuzah* is one way to sanctify your home as it distinguishes a Jewish home and is a visible sign and symbol to all those who enter that a sense of Jewish identity and commitment exists in that household.

Tradition requires a certain form for the scroll (*klaf*) but not for the casing. The casing, then, may certainly be designed and created by the family or may be purchased along with the scroll, at any store which handles Jewish religious articles. To affix the *mezuzah*, one first recites the blessing:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לִקְבוֹעַ מְזוּזָה.
*Baruch Atah HASHEM, Elokeinu Melech ha-olam
asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu likboa mezuzah.*

Blessed are You, HASHEM our God, Ruler of the universe, who has sanctified us through Your commandments and commanded us to affix a *mezuzah*.

After the blessing is recited, the *mezuzah* is attached to the doorpost with nails, double-sided tape, or screws, on the right side of the door as one enters the room. Position the *mezuzah* about a third of the way down from the top of the doorpost tilted in toward the interior of the house or room.²³³

2. Bring Jewish art and ritual objects into your home.

The wealth of Jewish art which we in America, Israel and around the world have created is astounding. From paintings, to sculpture, glass to metals - we have fashioned stunning ritual objects and works of art. In almost every major city, you will find a Jewish book and gift shop which carries a wide selection of Jewish art, or you can shop on the web at any number of sites which carry the works of Jewish artists. Some ritual objects which are very popular to display include: *Hanukkah* menorahs, *tzedakah* boxes, *kiddush* cups, *havdalah* sets, Passover *seder* plates, and dreidel collections.

Some more popular Jewish art websites include: www.judaicawebstore.com, www.ajp.com, www.jewishartnetwork.com, www.silverheaven.com, www.studioshofar.com, and www.jews.com

3. Build a *Sukkah*

The third of the pilgrimage festivals is *Sukkot* which usually falls around September or October. One of the *mitzvot* associated with the holiday of *Sukkot* is the building of a *sukkah* (plural: *sukkot*), a hut built out of materials from the earth.

The *sukkot* that we build to celebrate the holiday of *Sukkot*, remind us both of the conclusion of the harvest, and of the temporary shelters that our ancestors lived in as they wandered for forty years in the desert. Even as we celebrate the joys of the harvest we are reminded of the pain caused by hunger and homelessness. Just as we remember the homelessness of the desert, so too must we remember the homeless of our own community.

233. Daniel B. Syme, *The Jewish Home: A Guide for Jewish Living*, pg. 1

Sukkot's connection with the harvest in the Land of Israel also reminds us that the forty years of wandering had an end, when our ancestors came to *Eretz Yisrael*. This can remind us of our own wanderings, and the messianic redemption that lies ahead of us. This redemption, however, will only come if we work to bring it.

On *Sukkot* our ancestors brought offerings to the Temple to thank God for the abundance of the harvest. Now that the Temple no longer stands, we should look for new ways both to thank God and to share the abundance that God has bestowed upon us.²³⁴

You can design your own *Sukkah* or buy a pre-fabricated *sukkah* kit. Many synagogues, Jewish organizations, lumber companies, and hardware store provide buying guides and instructions for building your own *sukkah*. The *sukkah* is erected in the open air, under the sky, not in a room or under a tree. While it traditionally consists of four walls, technically, two complete walls and part of a third wall satisfy the minimum requirements for a *sukkah*.²³⁵ While the walls may be made of any material, the covering, called *s'chach*, is traditionally of material that grows from the the soil and has been detached from the ground²³⁶ - usually cut branches or plants. The *s'chach* should be loose enough so that one can see the sky, yet thick enough so that there is more light than there is shadow in your *sukkah* (also, so you don't get too wet if it rains.)

Once your *sukkah* is built there are wonderful opportunities to enjoy it. It has become customary to decorate the *sukkah* with paper chains, gourds, strung popcorn and children's artwork. (My family saves our *Rosh Hashanah* cards and we hang them in our *sukkah*.) Once your *sukkah* is decorated, you may choose to invite friends or family over to share meals in it and if you are really brave to have a *Sukkot* Sleepover!

234. Rabbi David Kunin, "Timely Program Ideas" No. 7, Department of Congregational Programming, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.

235. *Shulchan Arukh*, *Orech Hayim* 630:5 in Rama

236. *ibid.*, 629:1

4. Hang a Jewish calendar on your refrigerator.

Since Biblical times the months and years of the Jewish calendar have been established by the cycles of the moon and the sun. The traditional law prescribes that the months shall follow closely the course of the moon, from its *molad* (birth, conjunction) to the next New Moon. Furthermore, the lunar months must always correspond to the seasons of the year, which are governed by the sun. The month of *Nisan* with the Passover Festival, for instance, must occur in the Spring and the month of *Tishri* with the harvest festival of *Sukkot* in Fall.

Thus, the Jewish calendar is Luni-Solar. It is in contrast to our civil calendar, the Gregorian, which is purely solar, and in which the months have completely lost their relation to the moon. It is also quite different from the Mohammedan calendar, an absolutely lunar system, in which every month follows the moon closely but wanders through all four seasons during the period of thirty-three years.²³⁷

If one is aware of the Jewish month and the holidays which fall within it, one is connected, not only to the Jewish people and 3,000 years of history but also with the great luminaries which God created on the fourth day of creation - the sun and moon.

Jewish calendars are in abundance and range from very simple to quite artistic and elegant. While most synagogues will give you one at no charge, they may also be purchased at Jewish book stores and sometimes in large-chain secular book stores as well. Important features to look for in a Jewish calendar include: the Hebrew date corresponding to each civil date, inclusion of Jewish holidays, the *Torah* portion for each *Shabbat* and holiday, and *Shabbat* candlelighting times for a major city near you.

5. Create a Friday night *Shabbat* celebration including candles, wine and challah.

The symbols and rituals used to usher in *Shabbat* are beautiful and inspirational, not only in their traditional use, but also as inspiration for unique new customs, symbols and traditions. *Shabbat* preparations actually being long before Friday night. We are taught that our

237. Arthur Spier, *The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar: Revised, Expanded Edition 5660-5860, 1900-2100*, pg. 1

preparations for *Shabbat* should begin well before the onset of *Shabbat* itself.²³⁸ Some of these preparations include: purchasing and preparing special foods, creating or purchasing flowers or decorations for the *Shabbat* table, baking *challah*, and obtaining something new to use for the first time in honor of *Shabbat* (i.e. A new piece of clothing, a new book).

Shabbat traditionally begins on Friday evening eighteen minutes before sunset and is welcomed in with the lighting of two candles, one representing the commandment to remember the Sabbath day and one representing the commandment to observe the Sabbath day. Many families choose to light one candle for each child or each member of the family, while other customs suggest that each person should light their own set of candles.²³⁹ After the candles are lit, it is traditional to wave one's hands three times above the candles spreading *Shabbat* around the home and bringing the light of *Shabbat* into our hearts. We then cover our eyes and say the blessing:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתַי, וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל שַׁבָּת.
*Baruch Ata HASHEM, Elokeinu Melech ha-olam,
asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Shabbat.*

Praised are You, HASHEM our God, Ruler of the universe, who sanctifies us through Your commandments and commands us to kindle the lights of *Shabbat*.

After the candles are lit, many families sing *Shalom Aleichem*, a traditional *Shabbat* song wishing peace to the ministering angels.

One of the most beautiful traditions of *Shabbat* evening is the blessing of the children following the Biblical formula found in the book of Numbers 6:24-27:

238. cf. *Shabbat* 113a

239. Whatever custom your family celebrates, one should be aware of the appropriate safety precautions that should be taken whenever open flames are left to burn. For more on this see "FIRE! Jewish Observance and Burn Prevention" by Suzanne Schwartz, M.D. at <http://www.tzemachdovid.org/chagim/fire.html>.

יְבָרְכֶךָ ה' וַיִּשְׁמְרֶךָ:
 יָאֵר ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּחֲנֶנֶךָ:
 יִשְׂאֵה' ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּשֵּׁם לָךְ שָׁלוֹם:

*Y'varechecha HASHEM v'yish'm'recha
 Ya'eir HASHEM panav eilecha vichuneka
 Yisa HASHEM panav eilecha v'yaseim l'cha shalom.*

May HASHEM bless you and keep you
 May HASHEM shine HASHEM's face upon you and be gracious to you
 May HASHEM lift HASHEM's face toward you and grant you peace.

This formula is proceeded for girls by the words: May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, and for boys with the words: May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe.

In some homes it is the custom to then allow the children to offer a blessing to the parents, or to go around the table and invite each family member or guest to offer a blessing to the group. The Reconstructionist *Birkon* and *Shiron* offers a simple and beautiful family blessing:

הַרְחֵמֵנוּ הוּא יְבָרֵךְ אוֹתָנוּ כָּלֵנוּ יַחַד בְּבִרְכַּת שָׁלוֹם
Harachaman Hu y'racheim otanu kulanu yachad b'virkat shalom

May the Compassionate One bless all of us together with the blessing of peace.

Following this the *kiddush* is recited. The traditional Friday evening *kiddush* contains an introductory paragraph consisting of the verses from Genesis describing the seventh day of Creation (Genesis 2:1-3), the blessing over the wine, and a blessing over the holiness of *Shabbat*.

וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר
 יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי. וַיְכַלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל צְבָאָם: וַיַּכֵּל אֱלֹקִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי
 מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה, וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה: וַיְבָרֵךְ
 אֱלֹקִים אֶת יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אוֹתוֹ, כִּי בּו שְׁבֹת מִכָּל מְלַאכְתּוֹ, אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא
 אֱלֹקִים לַעֲשׂוֹת:

סְבִירי מְרֵנוּ וְרִבְנוּ וְרִבּוּתֵי
בְּרִידְךָ אֵתָּה ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן.

בְּרִידְךָ אֵתָּה ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְרָצָה בָּנוּ, וְשִׁבֹּת
קִדְּשׁוּ בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרָצוֹן הִנְחִילָנוּ זְכוֹרֹן לַמַּעֲשֵׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית, כִּי הוּא יוֹם תְּחִלָּה
לְמִקְרָאֵי קִדְּשׁ, זִכָּר לִיצִיאַת מִצְרָיִם, כִּי בָנוּ בְּחֶרֶף וְאוֹתָנוּ קִדְּשָׁתָּ מִכָּל
הָעַמִּים, וְשִׁבֹּת קִדְּשָׁתָּ בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרָצוֹן הִנְחַלְתָּנוּ. בְּרִידְךָ אֵתָּה ה', מִקְדִּישׁ
הַשִּׁבֹּת.

Vayehi erev vayehi boker

*Yom ha-shishi: Vayechulu hashamayim v'ha'aretz v'chol tz'va'am vayechal elokim bayom
hash'vi'i m'lachto asher asah, vayishbot bayom hash'vi'i mikol m'lachto asher asah.
Vay'vareich Elokim et yom ha'sh'vi'i vay'kadeish oto, ki vo shavat mikol m'lachto asher
bara Elokim la'asot.*

Savri maranan v'rabanana v'rabotai:

Baruch Ata HASHEM Elokeinu Melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha'gafen.

*Baruch Ata HASHEM Elokeinu Melech ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'ratza vanu,
v'shabbat kadsho b'ahava uv'ratzon hin'chilanu zikaron l'ma'asei b'reisheet, ki hu yom
t'chilah l'mikra'ei kodesh zecheh l'tziyat Mitzrayim. Ki vanu vacharta v'otanu kidashta
mikol ha'amim, v'shabbat kad'shecha b'ahava uv'ratzon hinchaltanu. Baruch Ata
HASHEM, m'kadeish ha-shabbat.*

And there was evening and there was morning:

The sixth day: The heavens and the earth, and all they contain, were completed. By the seventh day God had finished the work which God had been doing; and so God ceased from all God's work. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it because on it God ceased from all God's work of creation.

Praised are You, HASHEM our God, Ruler of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

Praised are You, HASHEM our God, Ruler of the universe who has taught us the way of holiness through the *mitzvot*. Lovingly You have favored us with the gift of Your holy *Shabbat* as our inheritance, a reminder of creation, first among the sacred days which recall the Exodus from Egypt. You have chosen us of all peoples for Your service, and You have given us a sacred purpose in life. In loving favor, You have given us Your holy *Shabbat* as a heritage. Praise are You, HASHEM, who hallows the *Shabbat*.

While some families recite the entire *kiddush*, others choose to sing just the final two blessings.

The table, we are taught, symbolizes the altar upon which the Sabbath offerings were made. Today, our Sabbath offerings consist of prayer and celebratory meals. As such, each *Shabbat* meal begins with the washing of hands just as the Levites would wash their hands before

offering sacrifices in the Temple. The blessing which accompanies the washing of hands is recited while the hands are dried:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם.
*Baruch Ata HASHEM Elokeinu Melech ha-olam,
asher kid'shamu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al n'tilat yadayim.*

Praised are You, HASHEM our God, Ruler of the universe, who sanctifies us through Your commandments and commands us to lift up (wash) our hands.

From the time one finishes the blessing over the washing of hands until one says the blessing over the *challah* and eats a piece, it is customary to remain silent or to hum a *nigun*, a tune without words, so as to connect the act of washing the hands with the act of eating the bread.

While in the wilderness, the *Torah* teaches that on Fridays a double portion of manna would fall so that the Israelites could collect enough for both Friday and Saturday, thus ensuring that they would not need to work to collect their food on the Sabbath. Based on this, we today have *lechem misheh* - two *challah* loaves at every *Shabbat* meal. Traditionally, the *challot* are covered by a *challah* cover during the pre-meal ritual so as to not make the *challot* feel inferior to the wine which comes first. We recite the *b'racha* together:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.
Baruch Ata HASHEM Elokeinu Melech ha-olam, hamotzi lechem min ha-aretz.

Praised are You, HASHEM our God, Who brings forth bread from the earth.

There are some who suggest that one should not use a knife to cut the *challah* as the knife is an implement of war. Rather, one should tear a piece off for each person at the table. There is also the custom of tossing the piece of *challah* to each person at the table to "re-enact" the falling of the manna from heaven.

No *Shabbat* table would be complete without the singing of *Shabbat Zemirot* - *Shabbat* songs. While some are short and sweet, others are long and a bit more complicated. Nonetheless, they are all beautiful and there are wonderful recordings available to help anybody at any Hebrew level learn how to bring music to their *Shabbat* table.

6. Mark the beginning of each Jewish month with a special activity.

With the beginning of each Jewish month comes the excitement of the holidays to come and the possibility of renewing ourselves. This is particularly true for women, for *Rosh Hodesh*, the monthly holiday marking the new moon, has traditionally been identified with women through *midrash* and folk belief.

From the 1960's onward, Jewish women in the United States and later in Israel, began forming groups which met in their own homes and focused on a number of areas of concern: prayer, text study, liturgy, ritual and identity. This energy marked a new phase of Jewish female spirituality. *Rosh Hodesh* was a natural vehicle by which these groups could wrestle with the issues they needed to resolve in order to remain active participants in their own heritage.

Today, *Rosh Hodesh* continues to be marked in the synagogue with special prayers and blessings. It has evolved into a day that is special, not only to women, but to both sexes, as are the Sabbath and other holy days.²⁴⁰

While *Rosh Hodesh* Women's groups continue to meet and wrestle with important questions, other groups and individuals have found different ways of marking the passage of a month and the cycle of the moon. Some choose a *mitzvah* of the month to incorporate into their lives, others make a special donation to *tzedakah* in honor of the new month. Still others treat themselves or their families to a special meal or activity which gives them the opportunity to re-connect with themselves and one another.

240. Penina V. Adelman, *Miriam's Well: Rituals for Jewish Women Around the Year*, pgs. 1-2

7. When you do something new - recite the *She'he'cheyanu* blessing.

The traditional blessing for renewals, known as *birkat haz'man*, “blessing of time,” and commonly referred to as *shehecheyanu* (from one of its key words, meaning “which [or who] has revived us”), is perhaps one of the best-known and most-loved blessings in modern Jewish life. It has historically been recited at the onset of holidays and new events, often uttered in conjunction with another blessing; for example, before tasting a fruit for the first time in its season, one utters a blessing for that fruit and then says the *shehecheyanu* blessing.²⁴¹

Today, this blessing has become a regular part of celebrating the purchase of a new home, new car, new clothing, or participating in a new activity or tradition. This blessing, either read aloud, chanted to the traditional tune, or sung to the wildly popular contemporary tune by Debbie Friedman, sanctifies any celebration of the new or the renewed.

בָּרֹךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁהַחֲיֵנוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה.

*Baruch Ata HASHEM Elokeinu Melech ha-olam
she'he'che'yanu v'ki-y'manu v'higianu lazman hazeh.*

Praised are You, HASHEM, our God, Ruler of the universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and allowed us to reach this time.

8. Before you eat, recite a blessing.

A simple Hebrew blessing is a powerful thing - a one-minute, deeply meditative exercise exploring the nature of the Creative Force we call God and the dynamic relationship between God, human consciousness, and the unfolding universe. Far from a mindless mumble, each word of a Hebrew blessing is crafted to touch deep centers of awareness and receptivity within us. Each word is a stepping-stone inviting us to explore a rich treasury of images and associations.

Blessing offers us a personal consciousness-raising practice, a spiritual adventure bringing sensitivity and gratitude into the foreground of our lives. While we all have moments when a blessing rises spontaneously to our lips, the path of blessing can become a way of life.

241. Marcia Falk, *The Book of Blessings*, pg. 501

Through the practice of blessing we develop an ever-deepening receptivity to the abundant love and joy flowing through Creation. We learn to accept that love, absorb it into our souls, and offer it back to the Source of Joy. In this way we come to feel the Presence of God move within us and through us. The result is bliss.²⁴²

The most popular blessing said before eating is:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.
Baruch Ata HASHEM Elokeinu Melech ha-olam, hamotzi lechem min ha-aretz.

Praised are You, HASHEM our God, Who brings forth bread from the earth.

In our tradition, bread makes a meal. And so, whenever bread is eaten as a part of a larger meal, the blessing, *hamotzi lechem min ha-aretz* suffices for any food eaten at that meal.

When bread is not on your menu, there are many other blessings each for a different type of food. Each blessing begins with the six word blessing formula:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
Baruch Ata HASHEM Elokeinu Melech ha-olam,

(before eating products of wheat, barley, rye, oats, or spelt)

בּוֹרֵא מִיְּנֵי מִזֻּנוֹת...

...*borei minei m'zonot*

...Who creates species of nourishment.

(before drinking grape wine or grape juice)

בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן...

...*borei p'ri hagafen*

...Who creates the fruit of the vine.

(before eating tree-grown fruit)

בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ...

...*borei p'ri ha'eitz*

...Who creates the fruit of the tree.

(before eating produce that grew directly from the earth)

בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה...

...*borei p'ri ha'adamah*

...Who creates the fruit of the ground.

242. Rabbi Marcia Prager, *The Path of Blessing*, pg. 4

(before eating or drinking any other foods)
שְׁהַכֹּל נְהִיָּה בְּדַבָּרוֹ
...she'hakol n'hi'eh bidvaro
...through Whose word everything came to be.

9. Bring Jewish symbols and rituals into your everyday celebrations.

It was my father-in-law's 76th birthday celebration. When the whole family had finished a not-so-harmonious chorus of "Happy Birthday To You," my three-and-a-half year old daughter, my wife and I began singing, "*Yom Huledet Sameiach...*" That short song, made that moment a Jewish moment.

It has become very popular to bring the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* - charity into everyday celebrations. Instead of gifts, some choose to invite guests and/or friends to make a donation to a charity of their choice in their honor. Others still, make sure that the observance of *kashrut* and the recitation of *b'rachot* are elements of all of their celebrations, specifically Jewish or otherwise.

10. Carve moments out of each day to pray.

Recently the Conservative movement made available a business card size fold out containing the *mincha* service. As its introduction reads, "*Mincha* is a brief, reflective, spiritual break from the rest of the busy day. Prayer is a good habit to get into; like meditation or exercise, it frees the mind from daily clutter and helps to refocus energy on the things that really matter." Whether or not you choose to turn to the traditional liturgy of one of the three daily services, prayer is a gift that we can give to ourselves. Prayer provides for us a reason to carve out a holy moment in our day. The *Talmud* teaches that prayer is implied in the word meditate²⁴³, so our prayers may resemble those of the prayerbook, or may be more fluid and creative. Either way, the act of prayer reminds us of our capacity to live a life of holy "be-ing" and helps us fulfill the command *k'doshim t'hiu* - you shall be holy.

243. *Berachot* 26b

Afterword

Perhaps the most frustrating part of writing this thesis has been the realization that I have been deficient in bringing all of the sources and scholarship that exists together in a cohesive form to argue for the paradigms of holiness that have and continue to exist in the Jewish experience. I can no longer open a book, hear a lecture, or study one of our sacred texts without recognizing that I have missed an opportunity to include yet another teaching on the importance of the search for the sacred.

Having said that, I humbly offer the sources and scholarship that I have collected in this work as an introduction to a much larger and deeper discussion on the creation of holiness and the forging of an on-going relationship with the Source of Holiness. I am deeply indebted to so many for allowing this work to come to fruition. To all of my professors and rebbes at the Academy for Jewish Religion for opening the world of *Torah* to me in such a loving and committed way. To Livia Selmanowitz Strauss who helped me frame and re-frame my central question and broaden my scholarly perspective. To Rabbi Andrea Cohen-Keiner who encouraged me to look beyond what was familiar. To my mother, Frayda Glass, whose own search for the sacred has been such an inspiration to me. To my wife, Heather, whose inquisitive mind and depth of BE-ing constantly challenges and encourages me to search deeper. And to my angels, Dalia and Liat, in whose faces I see the face of the *Sh'chinah*, and who remind me that every moment, with full presence and right intention, can be a moment of *k'dusha*.

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