# TRANSFORMATIVE TEACHING: CREATING A JEWISH SPIRITUAL PRACTICE FOR TEENS

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

After Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden, God caused a deep sleep to come over them, and then convened a council of angels. God said to them, “When Adam and Eve awaken, they will know they are no longer divine, and they will go in search of their divinity. Tell me angels, where shall I hide this piece of divinity?” One of the angels suggested the top of a mountain. Another suggested the bottom of the sea. Then one of the angels spoke up and said, “O God, let us conceal their Divinity within themselves, for that is the last place they will go in search of it.”[1]

[1] Adapted from Mindy A. Portnoy. “Spirituality.” *American Rabbi* 27, no. 4 (February 1995). 22. and Harold M. Schulweis, In God’s Mirror: Reflections and Essays (KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 2003). 252.

## DIGEST

This thesis examines the need for engaging Jewish teenagers in spiritual education, through exploring the history of spirituality in America and analyzing the present research on spiritual education and teenage faith development. By investigating the shifts in the spiritual culture of America over the past seventy years, this thesis illustrates how spirituality came to impact American Judaism. The first chapter of this thesis looks at the term "spirituality," and explores how it came to be popular within American culture and within Judaism today. The second chapter illuminates how the changes in spirituality in American Judaism have affected both synagogues and the Jewish religious life of individuals today. These shifts in spiritual culture have created a thirst for spirituality in today's Jewish adolescents and young adults. The third chapter displays the need for spiritual engagement and explains how this need has led clergy and educators to examine how to engage in spiritual education with teens. The fourth chapter discusses what models of spiritual education exist. The thesis argues that creating a deep and connective spiritual education for adolescents requires the spiritual development of Jewish clergy and educators. Due to this need, the fifth chapter provides a transformative retreat curriculum for clergy and educators. The retreats pushes the participants to undergo their own spiritual journey, engage with an understanding of the divine, and reflect on how Jewish artifacts play a role in their lives. Through offering various models of spiritual practice, the retreat illuminates the diverse ways of creating spiritual offerings for teens.

## INTRODUCTION

Today's teens are surrounded by more things clamoring for their attention than ever before. Between the multitudes of social media apps, blogs, websites, classes, after-school activities, and the need for family time, they are stretched thin. Due to this, it is often the synagogue and religious school classes that suffer when they ask for teen buy-in. More and more students are falling out of synagogue programming after their B'nei Mitzvah and are disconnecting from a space that is meant to help reconnect them, to ground them, amidst the drama of high school life. The question persists, how do we get teens involved in Jewish life?

In recent years there has been a rise in the discussion of the spiritual self in Jewish religious life and Jewish communities. Most recently the CCAR has turned to understanding the role of spirituality in our congregations in their Winter 2014 *CCAR Journal* publication. This movement towards the spiritual is not new, and in fact there has been increased interest in the role of these concepts since the 1950's. However, as these practices and concepts find their ways into our congregations, we will need to explore how to make them approachable to our teens. Indeed, these concepts of mindfulness, enriching spiritual self, and the connection with the divine nature in others may be a key to helping teens find a center in an ever-spinning world.

This thesis explores how to engage in spiritual education with adolescents. It strives to illuminate the benefits of sacred learning with teens and how such modes of learning can help them connect to Judaism in deeper, more fulfilling ways. To examine this, this thesis will look at the rise of attention to the spiritual life in the United States

and within the American Jewish community. The thesis will explore how the counter-cultures of the 1960's affected this phenomenon and examine how the search for Judaism outside of the synagogue was fueled by those who sought alternatives to 'bourgeois rationalist Judaism.' Through understanding the history of spirituality in America, and within American Judaism, the 'mainstreaming of spirituality' may become better understood.

This thesis will also explore what is known about the spiritual life of teens. Models of engaging in faith development and educating about spirituality in other faith traditions will be examined and will help to clarify what the potential is for teaching spirituality and what importance it has for teens in regard to their development and religious identity.

The thesis will culminate in a model for a retreat designed for clergy and educators that will not only provide resources for spiritual education with teens, but will also ask them to undergo their own spiritual journey. Through this introduction to history, understanding of teen spirituality, and practical models for engaging in such education, this thesis seeks to illuminate the benefits of spiritual education. Furthermore, it seeks to illustrate the necessity for spiritual education, as well as the importance of having clergy and educators who are able to create such models for learning. Together, the many facets of this thesis give an introduction to the realm of spiritual education for teenagers and the opportunities that are possible through using these models.

## CHAPTER ONE
## SEEKING SPIRITUALITY

One need look no further than the bookshelves of any bookstore to see that "spirituality" has become part of the mainstream, perhaps to the point of being a fad. What began as part of the counter-culture of the 1960's has boomed into an ever-present part of American socio-religious language. In some cases it has gone so far as to become simplistic and shallow, yet, there is a deeper and fuller spirituality that is currently being thirsted for by many Americans as individuals and within religious communities. What is this "spirituality" really? How is it defined within our American culture, as well as within Judaism?

*Ruchaniyyut* is the Hebrew term that is given to spirituality by Hasidic circles. It is derived "from the word *ruah*, which means both 'wind' and 'spirit,' and was seen by the ancients as a mysterious, godly wind that blows through the world."[2] Yet, this term is not one that is found in biblical text, and in fact does not appear until much later in the Middle Ages. The term *ruchaniyyut* "implies two things in Hebrew: the opposite of embodiment—*gashmiut*; and the *Ruach Elohim*, the spirit of God."[3] Such an abstraction as "spirituality" was not part of biblical thought and only in the Hellenistic period do conversations about a dichotomy between body and soul begin. It was not until the Jews of Europe in the medieval period longed to read the works of Greek and Islamic

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[2] Arthur Green, "*Ruhaniyyut,*" in *The Jewish Lights Spirituality Handbook: A Guide to Understanding, Exploring & Living a Spiritual Life,* ed. (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2004), 3.

[3] Mindy A. Portnoy, "Spirituality," *American Rabbi* 27, no. 4 (1995): 19.

philosophy that translators had to find a way to include such abstract concepts into the concrete and pictorial language of Hebrew.[4]

Although, the Hebrew term was a later addition to our language, concepts of soul and understandings of it have been found within Judaism for centuries. These biblical conceptions of soul are, however, tied with the physical body. Rabbi Rifat Sonsino explains that "an individual 'does not have a soul, he is a soul.' Each person is a *nefesh hayyah*, a living being. (Genesis 2:7)."[5] This concept of spirit as being one with the body was challenged by Hellenistic thought. "Greek and Christian views of spirituality are based on dualistic thinking,"[6] explains Sonsino, the idea that soul and body are separate. This dualistic thought impacted the view of Jewish philosophical apologist Philo Judaeus, who was influenced by middle Platonism and Stoicism. Philo "argued that a person is composed of two basic elements, body and soul, and that the rational soul connects the individual to God."[7] This dualistic thought also influenced rabbinic texts and thought where the body is thought of as "transitory and perishable, whereas the soul represent the pure element of a person's being."[8] The legacy of Hellenistic dualism continued to influence rabbinic tradition as well as Christian thought for centuries. However, in the current spiritual atmosphere in America "there has been a return to a more holistic

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[4] Green, "*Ruhaniyyut," 3.*

[5] Rabbi Rifat Sonsino, *6 Jewish Spiritual Paths: A Rationalist Looks at Spirituality* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2002), 20-21.

[6] ibid, 10.

[7] ibid, 29.

[8] ibid, 26.

perception of spirituality than a dualistic one. We don't really know where the body ends and the soul/mind/spirit begins."[9]

Although spirituality based on this kind of dualism has played a prominent role in Christianty for centuries, this does not mean that "Judaism is devoid of spirituality altogether or that it has to be defined in Greek and Christian terms."[10] Jewish tradition has provided quite a bit of its own terminology and practices since the term *ruchaniyyut* appeared in the Middle Ages. Today's Jewish spiritual seekers draw heavily upon the texts and practices of the mystical tradition which themselves were influence by Hellenistic-Islamic philosophical dualism.

The *Zohar*, a foundational work of Jewish mysticism that explores the hidden secrets of the Torah, discusses three terms for spirit or soul that play a role in the development of each person:

> *Nefesh, ruah, and neshamah,* collectively called NaRaN, form a sequence from lower to higher: *nefesh* enters at the time of birth and is the source of vitality; *ruah* is postnatal and is aroused when a person is able to surmount purely physical desires; and *neshamah,* the highest of the three, is developed when a person engages in Torah and its commandments and "opens his higher power of apprehension, especially his ability to mystically apprehend the Godhead and the secrets of the universe." And according to this heirarchy, "At death, the *nefesh* remains in the grave, lamenting over the death of the body. The *ruah* ascends to whatever level of celestial paradise it has earned by the merits it has accrued, and the *neshamah* goes directly back to the fullness of God." [11]

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[9] ibid, 34.

[10] ibid,10.

[11] Rifat Sonsino, "Jewish Definitions of Spirituality" in *The Jewish Lights Spirituality Handbook: A Guide to Understanding, Exploring & Living a Spiritual Life,* ed. (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2004), 14. Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York: Meridian, 1978), 155, and William Blank, *Torah, Tarot and Tantra* (Boston: Coventure,1991), 37.

This is only one of the many rich views of spirit and its interaction with the world that we gain from our mystical tradition.[12]

From the mystical tradition we receive the concept of *tzimtzum*, the contraction of God which made way for the creation of the world and led to *shevirat ha-kelim*, the shattered vessels of divine light which are an image of the imperfect. This generates the need for *tikkun*, the concept of repair, or restoration at the cosmic level. This kabbalistic concept has been reinterpreted over the past half-century or so in American Judaism as *tikkun olam,* repairing the world, which has gone beyond being a buzzword in Reform Judaism and can be found in the Reform movement's platform as one of its pillars. Masters of the Hassidic movement taught of *devekut,* the concept of clinging to and achieving contact with the divine. Rabbi Nachman of Breslov (1772-1811), a Hasidic master and spiritual seeker,

> spoke of *hitbodedut* (Hebrew for "being alone" [with God]) as a means of achieving communion with God. According to Rabbi Nachman: To be in solitude is a supreme advantage and the most important ideal. This means that a person sets aside at least an hour or more during which he is alone in a room or in a field so that he can converse with his Maker in secret, entreating and pleading in many ways, of grace and supplication, begging God to bring him near to his service in truth.[13]

The thoughts and teaching of Torah, rabbinic text, and Jewish mystical traditions and practices have all fed into the Jewish spirituality of today. The various understandings of how to connect with the divine, the community, and the self have provided for a complex spiritual landscape for the modern Jew. Although Judaism has

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[12] For more on the mystical perception of spirit and soul see: Scholem, *Kabbalah*; and Blank, *Torah, Tarot and Tantra.*

[13] Sonsino, *6 Jewish Spiritual Paths,* 33.

provided such a rich background for spirituality, the way that it has been reclaimed in our society since the 1960's makes it almost seem like a new phenomenon. As Rabbi Mindy Portnoy points out: "We may be newly attracted to spirituality, but Judaism's been offering it to us for a long time, if only we recognize and take advantage of the opportunities."[14] It seems that the time has come for Jews to be taking advantage. Many synagogues and Jewish organizations have programming dedicated to spirituality, some even have tabs about their spiritual activities on their websites. One need not look far to hear about the spiritual initiatives of many different Jewish organizations. Recent CCAR publications and the URJ Biennial have featured articles and sessions dedicated to spirituality. It seems, however, that these programs and articles all present different perspectives on Jewish spirituality, different methods for how to engage with the spiritual self. In this wealth of resources it seems that all parts of Jewish tradition and practice are being drawn upon for their unique offerings. With this ever-present discussion of spirituality, the question arises - what is Jewish spirituality?

The Institute for Jewish Spirituality (IJS) addresses this question on their website stating that "'Spirituality' is notoriously hard to define. Because it is an individual experience, spirituality is experienced differently by people depending on their theology, their attitudes, and their perspectives about the world"[15] Indeed, this gets at the core of the difficulty of engaging with "spirituality" as a whole. There are so many complex components that make up one's understanding of this pervasive term. It is often

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[14] Mindy A. Portnoy. "Spirituality." *American Rabbi* 27, no. 4 (February 1995). 22.

[15] "Our Spiritual Practices." Institute for Jewish Spirituality. Accessed November 18, 2014. http://www.jewishspirituality.org/our-spiritual-practices/.

"combined with other concepts such as living in harmony with nature, following one's own inner voice, seeking purpose and meaning in life, searching for the Ultimate, for God."[16] Spirituality also refers to the methods by which one connects to these concepts such as "liturgy, ritual, study, meditation," engaging with community, and acts of social justice.[17] So, with so many components that make up this term, the IJS is correct: it is very hard to define and without a single clear definition. Nonetheless, many Jewish thinkers have offered their definitions in attempts to include or highlight various aspects. Here are some examples:

- "Spirituality may inclusively be regarded as the sum of the efforts of the human psyche, individually and collectively, to attune to the impulses and rhythms of the universe, whether internal to the individual or external in nature."[18]
- "Man's spiritual life can easily be thought of in three divisions: his pursuit of truth, of beauty, and of moral goodness."[19]
- "Spirituality, as I understand it, is noticing the wonder, noticing that what seems disparate and confusing to us is actually whole."[20]
- "An overarching experience involving our search for meaning and purpose in life."[21]

Some define spirituality in terms of relationship to God:

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[16] Sonsino, *6 Jewish Spiritual Paths, 5*.

[17] Sonsino, "Jewish Definitions of Spirituality," 9.

[18] Martin A. Cohen, "What is Jewish Spirituality" in *Paths of Faithfulness: Personal Essays on Jewish Spirituality*. (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, 1997), 28, quoted in Sonsino, *6 Jewish Spiritual Paths,* 11.

[19] Roland B. Gittelsohn, *Wings of the Morning* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1969), 90, quoted in Sonsino, *6 Jewish Spiritual Paths,* 11.

[20] Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer "What is the Question?" *Sh'ma* 27, no. 522 (1996): 6, quoted in Sonsino, *6 Jewish Spiritual Paths,* 12.

[21] Sonsino, *6 Jewish Spiritual Paths,* 20.

- "The striving for life in the presence of God and the fashioning of a life of holiness appropriate to such striving."[22]

- "The cognitive and/or behavioral activities designed to help individual and community reconnect to God."[23]

- "The immediacy of God's presence."[24]

- "Spirituality is essentially a way of responding to God, becoming conscious of God."[25]

- "Spirituality is the process through which the individual strives to meet God."[26]

Some define it in terms of personal outlook and seeking:

- "A highly personal outlook about what is sacred about us; it is the expression of our most deeply held values, and it is the sense of higher purpose that guides our daily lives."[27]

- "Day after day, a questioning in our minds: Are we alone in the wilderness of the self, alone in this silent universe, of which we are a part, and in which we feel at the same time like strangers?"[28]

Some understand spirituality as leading to action and being engaged with ritual:

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[22] Arthur Green ed., *Jewish Spirituality from the Bible through the Middle Ages* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), xiii ff, quoted in Sonsino, *6 Jewish Spiritual Paths,* 12.

[23] Deanne H. Shapiro, Jr. and Johanna Shapiro, "Spirituality in Reform Judaism," *Jewish Spectator* (Winter1992): 32, quoted in Sonsino, *6 Jewish Spiritual Paths*, 12.

[24] Lawrence Kushner "Facing the Unity of God," *Tikkun* (May/June 1992): 53, quoted in Sonsino, *6 Jewish Spiritual Paths,* 12.

[25]Jeffery J. Weisblatt, "Spirituality," *The American Rabbi*, (October 1993): 9, quoted in Sonsino, *6 Jewish Spiritual Paths,* 12.

[26] Kerry M. Olitzky, "Toward a Personal Definition of Jewish Spirituality," *Paths of Faithfulness,* ed. Carol Ochs, Kerry M. Olitzky, and Joshua Saltzman. (New York: KTAV, 1999): 113, quoted in Sonsino, *6 Jewish Spiritual Paths,* 12.

[27] David S. Ariel, *Spiritual Judaism* (New York: Hyperion, 1998), 5, quoted in Sonsino, *6 Jewish Spiritual Paths*, 12.

[28] Abraham Joshua Heschel quoted in "Spirituality" by Mindy A. Portnoy, 18.

- “Spirituality is an act of will as well as a process. But primarily it is a state of mind. It can—and should—lead to action and often does, but basically it elevates our spirit and makes us more aware of ourselves and the place we occupy in life.”[29]

- “If our renewed interest in spirituality is to have any real meaning, it has to lead to some kind of action, and if we are to discover a renewed spirituality in Judaism, the one obvious vehicle is ritual.”[30]

All of these definitions and thoughts on spirituality revolve around similar themes: connection to God, understanding of self, relation to others, sense of responsibility, and the recognition of something greater. As Rabbi Rachel Cowan, co-founder of IJS, has put it, “Spirituality helps me see that I’m not the whole story here, I’m just part of something bigger.” In essence, spirituality is about connection: to God, to each other, to Jewish history and practice, to the earth, to our past as well as our communal future. Although it may seem like these are all various strands of spirituality, they are not parallel, as Rabbi Rifat Sonsino writes, “We are not dealing here with parallel lines of spirituality but with paths that often meet in an upward movement toward a Light that uplifts the spirits and makes one whole.”[31]

So what causes individuals to start seeking a spiritual connection? Furthermore, why are so many Jews and Americans currently part of this quest? One researcher speculates that “Americans are in an open, questing mood, not so much because they reject religious belief, but as a result of having perhaps lost faith in the secular

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[29] Sonsino, *6 Jewish Spiritual Paths*, 12-13.

[30] Portnoy, 22.

[31] Sonsino, *6 Jewish Spiritual Paths*, 18.

alternatives—in progress, science, therapy, politics, consumption."[32] Indeed, many individuals have become disillusioned with these alternatives and have been increasingly dissatisfied since the 1960's, as will be further discussed in the next chapter. Many have become cynical about (institutional) religion itself, which has given rise to the ever so popular saying "I'm spiritual but not religious." This phrase displays lack of confidence and comfort with institutionalized religion. Although the two have much overlap, "the claim to being spiritual need not assume belief in religious doctrines or affiliation with institutionalized religion."[33] However, it is possible to be both spiritual *and* religious and base one's spiritual search in a religious background and history. This has been the task of many synagogues and churches as they try to renew outlets for spiritual growth in their congregations. Yet, congregational numbers are dwindling. Smaller *chavurot* and prayer groups are popping up around the country independently from synagogues. They claim to create more open space for spiritual seekers. What is causing this increase of spiritual questing?

In his book *Spiritual Marketplace,* Wade Clark Roof suggests that "a set of social and cultural transformations have created a quest culture, a search for certainty, but also the hope for a more authentic intrinsically satisfying life."[34] Roof suggests that Americans are generally in this questing place, feeling unsatisfied, uncertain with what we have been taught. The specifically Jewish quest, although part of this larger American

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[32] Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion.* (Princeton, N.J., Chichester: Princeton University Press, 2001), 47.

[33] Steven M. Cohen and Lawrence A. Hoffman, *How Spiritual Are American Jews?: Narrowing the Spirituality Gap Between Jews and Other Americans,* March 2009. http://www.synagogue3000.org/files/S3KReportHowSpiritual.pdf.

[34] Roof, 9.

cultural atmosphere, derives from more than just this general dissatisfaction. Reb Zalman Schacter-Shalomi, “one of the most important leaders of Jewish Renewal movement today, writes, ‘Jews everywhere are on a quest motivated by a malaise, a feeling that there must be more in Judaism than the cut-and-dried version frequently encountered in contemporary services. The seeker [is] in search of a way to express spiritual stirrings, and a practical method with which [to] develop that holy source within so that it will begin to flow freely.’”[35] Reb Zalman makes two important points regarding Jews who are seeking spirituality. The first is that Jews are seeking a way of expressing their own spirituality, but have often been given little language to do so in customary synagogue and religious school settings. “God” is rarely mentioned outside of prayer services, let alone discussed in a complex manner. In earlier Reform Judaism especially, programs had focused on ”rational faith” and had left little room for wonderment and awe in worship, in ritual practice, in understanding the world around us. When Jews have encountered such feelings, they have been given little language with which to express it. The second point that Reb Zalman points to is that often some of our ritual practices and religious services have felt routine, boring, and thus may actually be turning our seekers away. So although many contemporary Jews “strongly identify with the cultural aspects of Judaism, they find that Jewish religious practices inhibit their quest.”[36] This feeling of inhibition is likely to be part of why we see so many Jews seeking different ways of connecting to the Ultimate outside of Judaism. Synagogues, religious schools, and other

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[35] Sonsino, *6 Jewish Spiritual Paths*, 6.

[36] ibid, 6.

Jewish organizations, though, can help create space to meet these needs through showing these seekers "legitimate avenues of spirituality in Judaism," while also making sure to show the diversity of Jewish spirituality and "being careful to avoid…one single path as the only valid approach."[37] As more Jews search for spiritual connection, this provides an opportunity for Jewish leaders to point out paths to seek and spaces to arrive in, as "not even Buber, for all his emphasis upon spontaneity, would have been entirely pleased with the notion of perpetual quest without arrival."[38]

The upturn in classes, retreats, seminars, articles and more on Jewish spirituality is significant, as it shows that Jewish leaders are trying to catch up to their seeking communities. These "classes and seminars are now being conducted throughout the Jewish world on religious subjects, as people recognize the limits of pure rationalism as the basis of contemporary Judaism and want something more."[39] Rabbi Neil Gillman, Professor of Jewish Philosophy at the Jewish Theological Seminary, notes: "The impulse behind the new spirituality is the primacy of feeling."[40] Indeed, in our contemporary society we have suffered in the realm of feeling. New technology has created a world that, although more connected, feels more alienating, and thus using spirituality as a means to unify and connect communities is becoming increasingly important.

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[37] ibid, 8.

[38] Steven M.Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen, *The Jew Within: Self, Family, and Community in America.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 41.

[39] Sonsino, *6 Jewish Spiritual Paths,* 8.

[40] Neil Gillman, *Sh'ma* (November 29, 1996), 5, quoted in *6 Jewish Spiritual Paths,* 17-18.

Mordecai M. Kaplan, founder of the Reconstructionist movement wrote, “No individual is spiritually self-sufficient. The meanings and values that life has for him are a result of his relationship to the civilization in which he participates.”[41] Indeed, what each person seeks today is a result of the complex troubles in our society. As Wade Clark Roof explains, “Modernity severs connections to place and community, alienates people from their natural environments, separates work and life, dilutes ethical values, all of which makes the need for unifying experiences so deeply felt.”[42] The problems of modernity are part of what is currently causing this need for spiritual connection, “for example, the realization that science cannot solve all of our problems and a resulting disappointment with our technology-oriented life; the precarious life we live under the constant threat of war, violence, and tragedy; and the understanding that we are not the center of the universe as we experience the world becoming ‘smaller’ thanks to global communication.”[43] Spirituality is a means to counter the difficulties that modernity has brought with it by helping individuals re-center their minds on the greater world around them. Engaging in spiritual practices and discussions and “living a spiritual life enables us to reach a comprehensive integrative sense of our purpose and role in life—in effect, mindfully place our selves in God’s universe suffused with God’s wonders.”[44]

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[41] Mordecai M. Kaplan, *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion Kaplan*, (New York: Reconstructionist Press, 1962), 92.

[42] Roof, 62.

[43] Sonsino, *6 Jewish Spiritual Paths*, 5-6.

[44] ibid, 13.

Although spirituality is certainly a sought-after, highly discussed, medium by which to connect individuals to a greater sense of purpose, there are many concerns and critiques regarding its modern presentation. Some argue that "popular-spirituality may appear shallow, indeed flaky,"[45] while others fear that spirituality "makes us believe that our problems can be solved by simplistic solutions, by the right attitude, by the right words…"[46] Others, who are not opposed to spirituality, are wary and warn that "spirituality must not become a 'substitute for the rigors of scholarship, for wrestling with reality, for struggling with the nitty-grittiness of existence."[47] The way to make sure that our practices do not become flaky or without considered thought is to make certain not to "nurture an illiterate spirituality, all the more so among a population well-versed in other areas of scholarship."[48] Rabbi Mindy A. Portnoy explains that "Deepening one's spiritual sense demands the use of one's brain, as well as one's other senses. It involves using mental capacity—it is not an intellectual escape, but an intellectual expansion."[49] Thus, it is clearly important not only to engage with Jewish spirituality, but to engage with it in an intellectual way, one that uses the resources of Jewish texts and traditions and practices, ways that expand the minds of Jewish community members while also helping them on

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[45] Roof, 9.

[46] Harold L. Gelfman, *Central Conference of American Rabbis Newsletter* (May, 1998): 9, quoted in Sonsino, *6 Jewish Spiritual Paths*, 9-10.

[47] Francine Klagsburn, "Feminine Spirituality," *Moment* (Aug. 1992): 12, quoted in Sonsino, *6 Jewish Spiritual Paths*, 9.

[48] Portnoy, 21.

[49] ibid.

their spiritual quest. “Spiritual life…requires an integrated approach, one that addresses the needs of the whole person—body and mind together.”[50]

Modern Jewish spirituality is a joint quest of intellectual Judaism and the personal search for feeling of connection with oneself and something greater. As Heschel understood it, “the problem of the individual is the urgent issue of our time…I mean a relatedness to the center of one’s being…the search for meaning.” Searching for meaning, engaging in spirituality is not a “quick high” but rather is meant to be connected to a much greater practice which ties those seeking it to a larger context of Jewish history and practice. As spirituality becomes a rising concern for Americans and for Jews, Jewish leaders will have to explore the various modes to help seekers on their journeys.

**Role of God in Spirituality**

In discussions on spirituality, the question of whether or not God should be explicitly part of the conversation arises frequently. Rabbi Mindy A. Portnoy points out that “most of us say spirituality more easily than we can say ‘God,’ except perhaps when we’re reading from a prayerbook.”[51] She further explains that this is because most people “are less sure about what they really think or believe about God than [they] are about the fact that [they would] like [their] lives to be filled with more than material goods.”[52] It

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[50] Sonsino, *6 Jewish Spiritual Paths*, 34.

[51] Portnoy, 18.

[52] ibid.

seems that when some individuals claim to be "spiritual and not religious" they are in part referring to their own uncertainty regarding the Divine.

Some scholars see spirituality as being inherently intertwined with God, like Lawrence Kushner who writes that spirituality is "that dimension of living in which each of us becomes aware of God's presence. Jewish spirituality or holiness is an ever present possibility for each individual about the potential of God's immediacy."[53] Others do not explicitly bring God into their definition, but rather focus on spirituality as related to a sense of purpose, such as Rifat Sonsino who claims that "spirituality…is a state of mind. It can—and should—lead to action and often does, but basically it elevates our spirit and makes us more aware of ourselves and the place we occupy in life."[54] Some stay away from explicitly mentioning God because there is a perception that modern Jews do not believe in God. However, for some, it is not so much that they do not believe in God, but rather that they are searching for a less patriarchal understanding of God. Certainly there are those in the Jewish community who do not believe in God, yet this "cognitive doubt does not preclude their worship or observance."[55] For them, spirituality takes shape in connection to others and a greater sense of purpose.

Spirituality is related to God even if it is not explicitly stated, because a component of spiritual exploration is negotiating what one's belief is in God, what one

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[53] ibid, 19.

[54] Sonsino, *6 Jewish Spiritual Paths*, 12-13.

[55] Cohen and Eisen, 164.

wants their relationship to be with God, and whether they want that relationship. Even choosing not to believe in God is an act of spiritual exploration.

## CHAPTER TWO
## SPIRITUAL CULTURE IN AMERICA

To truly understand the topic of American Jewish spirituality and where it is today, one needs to begin by looking at how our society reached this place. Although, as explained in the first chapter, the concept of Jewish spirituality (albeit not by that name) and spirituality in general, is not new, the way it is being understood in American society today is a relatively recent phenomenon. The early rumblings that created this mainstream culture of spirituality began with the counter-culture of the 1960's.

The story begins with the cultural shifts in American life in the post-World War II era. The period beginning in the 1960's saw a shift in the American focus on communal religiosity toward privatized individual spiritual fulfillment. Wade Clark Roof's research displays the decline of strong connection to religion after this shift as "two thirds of those born in this century prior to WWII claimed a 'strong' religious preference; for those born after only about 40% did so." After the war, people found themselves going to church as an expression of patriotism, as well as in reaction to the Red Scare. These were the years where Eisenhower famously added "under God" to the pledge of allegiance and there was an understanding that faith and Americanism were interconnected. This was likely in part due to the heavy influence of Protestantism that shaped "religious consciousness in the modern West."[56] The influence of Protestantism on American culture "generated an internal momentum toward a more institutionalized and doctrinally privileged style of religion cut off from…some of the most powerful aspects of the

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[56] Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion* (Princeton, N.J., Chichester: Princeton University Press, 2001), 60-61.

sacred."[57] During the time before the war, Jews, and all immigrants, were still very much living in small pockets, cloistered together. The synagogue was a space where Jews went to engage with each other, where they expressed their Jewish culture as well as their Jewish religion. There was an emphasis socially on community and fellowship exhibited within Jewish and Christian populations.

A sense of greater individual initiative arose for many Americans after the war, in part due to the sense of opportunity to rebuild the country that the victory provided.[58] In the "late forties and early fifties the religious discourse shifted in its style toward greater emphasis on the spiritual growth of individuals."[59] In an America that once valued "community and social obligation," now there was a sense of desire "toward a more privatized view [of religion] that looked on the religious institution as 'a service agency of its individual members.'"[60] After the war there was a great focus on teaching the large generation of children the American way of life through an emphasis on values, faith, and morals.[61] Yet, this "synthesis of moral, religious, and civic values…fell apart in the mid to late 1960's."[62] In the 1950's and early 1960's there grew an "intellectual critique of popular piety [that] further helped to shape an environment that deeply questioned the religious establishment…. The cozy relations of an Americanized Deity with bourgeois

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[57] ibid.

[58] ibid, 64.

[59] ibid.

[60] ibid.

[61] ibid.

[62] ibid.

culture and blind patriotism came in for serious appraisal."[63] The meaning systems of the pre-war period in general were being examined, and coming to the fore were new systems such as the "social scientific, and secular-individualistic perspectives," which held overlapping views and thus "created diffused, more personalized interpretations of the forces governing life."[64] Furthermore, at the time when the baby-boomers went off to college, the short-lived "Death of God" movement surfaced, which undoubtedly contributed to some of the shifts in understanding religion as it "encouraged people to think more for themselves about what they believed and not simply to accept conventional notions."[65] As this generation grew into college students they would continue to examine, criticize, and push away conventional notions of religion.

During this period there was also a large expansion of institutions of higher education. These institutions put an emphasis on science and technology that influenced their students who came out as adults in the work force. This expansion of higher education was partly in response to "the fear that the atheistic Communists would get to the moon before the God-fearing US."[66] As the post-WWII generation gained entrance into the ever-expanding centers for higher education the "Judeo-Chrisitan notions of morality existing at mid-century came seriously into question."[67] The generation of boomers was surrounded by a powerful collection of influences including the social

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[63] ibid. 55.

[64] ibid.

[65] ibid.

[66] ibid.

[67] ibid, 51-52.

unrest of the 1960's, the civil rights movement, the Vietnam war, the rat-race mentality that impacted their parents during the Great Depression, and the greater material prosperity experienced after WWII. These boomers now as college students "experimented with alternative ways of living, openly rejecting the bourgeois family values; they insisted on finding more meaning for their own lives…living their values to the brim."[68] As they focused on these values and as those values spread, the focus on the individual's spiritual religious journey grew exponentially. This focus on personal meaning reflected "sentiments of protest against the religious and cultural establishments."[69] Wade Clark Roof notes that "it is well documented that many in this generation dropped out of active involvement in churches and synagogues in their youthful years."[70] These students were throwing off these institutions that, to them, represented the bourgeois, materialistic culture of their parents. Political scientist Ronald Inglehart refers to this post-World War II generation as "postmaterialist," by which he means that they "are more oriented toward self-expression, quality of life, environmentalism, peace, and inner well being — values and concerns that take on greater meaning in advanced societies where material concerns are largely met with or have failed to make life sufficiently happy and satisfying."[71]

This shift away from a commitment to religious institutions paralleled the society's relationship to institutions in general. With the assassination of President John F.

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[68] ibid.

[69] ibid, 46.

[70] ibid, 50.

[71] ibid, 58.

Kennedy, and later the Watergate scandal, as well as many other incidents in between, there came a "plummeting of confidence among the young in all dominant institutions—political, economic, cultural, and religious. This turmoil only emphasized the already growing distrust of institutions, "quickened the pace of social and religious change,"[72] and highlighted the impact of the boomer generation on the tone of American culture. It is due to these shifts, and to the baby boomer generation that fueled them, that spirituality has become part of the mainstream today as Roof explains, "Demography collided with religious and cultural changes to make this sector of the population the principal carrier of an emerging spiritual quest culture."[73] Furthermore, the "legacy of doubt, suspicion, and distrust of institutions and of religious authority" that was bred in the 1960's, continues to be diffused in mainstream culture today.

For Jews, this post-war period was also a time of great shift in understanding a spiritual search as part of community or as an individual. In the wake of the war Jews held close together, meeting at synagogues, and their country clubs, and joining together as they were still being "othered" in their work places, at schools and in general. It was during this period that Jews began making the shift from their urban Jewish communities into the suburbs. Where they once had almost exclusively Jewish friends and "retained a social distance from Gentile co-workers,"[74] they now had Gentile neighbors whom they

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[72] ibid, 50.

[73] ibid, 49.

[74] Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen. *The Jew Within: Self, Family, and Community in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 33.

interacted with as they shopped or played with children at the park, and attempted to connect to their co-workers so that they would be more accepted within the workplace.

As they moved to the suburbs, the children were the ones who most felt the pull of the American values and morals that were being taught in school and were being lived by their friends. These grandchildren of immigrants "sought to take advantage of political and economic opportunities that promised unparalleled acceptance by the surrounding Gentile society."[75] During the 50's and 60's Jews "increasingly inhabited Gentile, more than Jewish, time and space, at work as well as at play, and filled the storehouses of consciousness with Gentile faith and peoplehood, rather than with Jewish cultural artifacts."[76] As Jews began to interact on a more regular basis with their Christian neighbors, they too began to feel the impact of the religious shift toward distrust of institutions and focus on the power of the individual.

Jews increasingly began to "sacrifice their exclusivity in return for civil rights and economic opportunities."[77] The cultural practices of Jewish life and the practices brought over from Eastern Europe were tempered as they sought new social interactions with those around them. Dietary practices and Sabbath observance, as very visible barriers, were those that were more easily thrown off, as Cohen and Eisen explain, "Sabbath observance, a bar to employment opportunities as well as to leisure activities, atrophied. Dietary laws, a barrier to social relations with non-Jews and so to acceptance in their

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[75] ibid, 31-32.

[76] ibid, 31.

[77] ibid, 30.

society, were relaxed or abandoned."[78] Yet, Jews did not totally abandon their practices. Rather they sought out new ways to be and feel both Jewish and American.

So, in the 1960's there grew a movement of "Civil Judaism." The movement sought to find and bring together values of American and Jewish thought. As Eisen and Cohen explain:

> The key tenets embraced by the adherents of civil Judaism included the following: that one could be a good Jew and a good American; that the separation of church and state was essential; that Jews were one people and could not permit denominational differences to divide them; that while theology was somewhat irrelevant, ensuring the Jewish survival was central; that Jewish rituals were valuable, but individuals must be free to observe them or not as they chose; that every Jew was obliged to work for the survival of Israel.[79]

These tenets express so many of the struggles and variations that arose in Judaism as it intersected with American life. One of the most influential changes still today was the denominationalism that further institutionalized during the postwar years. As Reform Jewish prayer books were being written in America, there came to be a new understanding of Jewish selfhood as there was a "need to qualify it with an adjective such as 'Reform' or 'Orthodox' or, later, 'secular.' One could now choose what sort of Jew to be." [80]

While Jews split into various denominations, there was still a sense of peoplehood and survival as mentioned above. There was still a belief that Judaism was valuable and important, and particularly that it needed to survive. Synagogues were moving to the

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[78] ibid.

[79] ibid, 34.

[80] ibid, 31.

suburbs with bigger and more impressive buildings, beacons that American Jews in their many varieties had arrived. One piece that brought the various denominations of Jews together during these years was the State of Israel. In the wake of the 1967 Six Day War between Israel and her neighbors, there was a heightened sense of a need for Jewish survival in the United States. Although synagogues had built new, large, beautiful buildings, they were not institutions that benefitted from the community's focus on survival. Rather, it was "Federations of Jewish Philanthropies [that] raised unprecedented amounts of money."[81] Jews had begun to support more secular organizations that "could claim to speak for American Jews as a whole rather than for a particularist or partisan sectors of the population."[82] As American Jews looked at Israel, they admired the socialist values and drive of kibbutzniks, and felt connected to their Jewish brothers and sisters living thousands of miles away. There was a renewed belief in a sense of community, but this time it was a more global sense.

The young Jews of this generation were the ones who grew up in affluence, without the struggles of the Depression and World War II. It was for these Jews, as they went to college in the late 60's and 70's, that God-talk and individual spiritual exploration became important to investigate, just as was the case with their Gentile neighbors. As they went to college, they would be the ones who, without the pressures of economic struggle, could sit and philosophize and discuss theology, philosophy, and explore how Judaism connected to them. They would be the ones for whom the civil rights movement

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[81] ibid, 34.

[82] ibid.

and the Vietnam war would influence their Judaism as they redefined their Jewish practice in terms of social justice. These young Jews, influenced by Eastern religious and spiritual practices popular in America in the 60's, influenced by the Beatles and rock music, led the move from rationalism to romanticism and personalism.

As the boomer Jews reached college, they struggled with the Judaism they had been raised with, the influences of rationalism and suburban materialism, and they turned away. What they found were the teachings of Buber, Rosenzweig and Scholem. From Buber's teaching on relationship, to Rosenzweig's understanding of reconnecting to tradition, and on to Scholem's dance with the irrational within Judaism, this generation of Jews sought and found a Judaism that was more energized than the one they found in their suburban synagogues. They desired an ecstatic Judaism, a Judaism linked to mystical traditions. Under the influence of Reb Zalman Schachter they became fascinated with the insights and practices of Hasidism, of that essence of ecstatic connection. They sought to reclaim what their parents had tried to acculturate away from.

This counterculture that they were developing was in part related to the massive social changes they saw around them. The women's movement was one part of the counterculture that influenced the changing theological and religious views within Judaism as well as other faiths. There was a shift to looking at the sense of divine within nature, the reaching out to the cosmos, the understanding of earth-mother and womb. The throwing off of "old religion" was a rebellion against institutionalized patriarchy, and a new acceptance of the religion of body, of intuition, of soul. There was a movement from the lone individual back to a sense of community responsibility, which would be felt even

more during the Vietnam years. There was a renewed sense of the Jew as minority and standing together with those other groups that were oppressed: the women's movement, the civil rights movement, and later the gender revolution. The boomer generation, the college students of the 60's and 70's who threw off the bourgeois aspirations of their parents, who steeped themselves in the search for self and purpose, who discussed philosophy on their campuses, who redefined Judaism in terms of social action, were the cultural carriers whose story is echoing in the current generation.

The generation of college students in the 60's and 70's created a spiritual counterculture that has bloomed into the mainstream culture we see today. In the decades following, there would be other pieces that influenced the way the spiritual-religious culture has developed in recent years. The 1970's brought "anti-Vietnam war protests, civil rights struggles, gender revolution, environmental awareness, and experimentation in new styles."[83] These events added to the emphasis on social justice that grew in Judaism. In the second half of the century, American culture continued to move towards "increased personal autonomy, greater reliance on mass media and the cultural industries, and a great deal of spiritual ferment and experimentation."[84] Yet, as things became more autonomous, there was also a rise in competition between the different cultures that were becoming more defined socially. Roof refers to this as a period of "'culture wars' between liberals, progressives, and secularists, on the one hand, and conservatives, moralists and

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[83] Roof, 50.

[84] ibid.

hard core religious believers on the other."[85] These culture wars yielded the rise of both born-again and evangelical movements on the right, as well as the spiritual seekers on the left. Today, "Americans are asking questions such as, 'Does religion relate to my life?' 'How can I find spiritual meaning and depth?' and 'What might faith mean for me?'"[86] Modernity has had a profound effect on the search for religion, and also for how religion itself is understood.

Religion has taken on a different meaning since the late 1970's. As Roof explains, there are two definitions of religion: "'ordinary' involving fundamental cultural symbols and values, and 'extraordinary' involving an encounter with a world beyond this one." These differentiations in how religion is understood have existed for some time, but in the modern age seekers are trying to negotiate a balance between the two. "Modernity with its pluralizing and privatizing tendencies challenges absolutes of all kinds and relativizes the beliefs, values, and practices linked to every religion."[87] Furthermore, modernity challenges the "forces of rationalizations and institutional differentiation"[88] which take away from the richness of the mysteries of life. The mystery of God is still a subject of present debate in contemporary culture, as Americans continue to extrapolate from the "mix of natural and supernatural influences governing life"[89] that was explored

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[85] ibid, 5-6.

[86] ibid, 7.

[87] ibid, 61.

[88] ibid.

[89] ibid, 54.

in the 60's and 70's. Overwhelmingly, though, the traditional view of God has declined and made way for a open doubting and uncertainty regarding a divine presence.

Rationalism has also seen a decline in recent years. Where science, standardization, rules and like were once praised, now they are seen as hindering the experiencing of life. Rationalism, which "privileges mind over body, the cognitive over the imaginative and the emotional," is now being superseded by a more intuitive and innovative way of life. The rise in post-materialism has also impacted the interest in religion and spirituality today. As American sociologist and political scientist Ronald Inglehart explains, "A religious message based on economic and physical security finds little resonance among post-materialists—but one that conveyed a sense of meaning and purpose in contemporary society might fill a need that is becoming increasingly widespread."[90] Today, as many individuals are continuing to be more post-materialist and throwing off an exclusive rationalism, they seek a religious connection that is tied to a sense of greater meaning and purpose, a need for connectedness, and a desire to make an impact.

Another compelling push towards spirituality has been the rise of differentiation that came along with rationalization in the workplace and in society. In the years after World War II, "religious values, beliefs, and sentiments…were integrally part of other social realms, especially diffused in the family, the ethnic group, and society at large."[91] However, "the process of differentiation encouraged greater compartmentalization or

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[90] ibid, 58.

[91] ibid, 62.

separation of the religious from other realms."[92] So too did the process of differentiation continue to push individuals into clear categories, categories that the women's movement, the gender revolution, and the civil rights movement tried to break down. Although some of that differentiation has dissipated in certain communities in America, there is still a lingering sense of differentiation that one need look no further than at a high school cafeteria to recognize. In recent generations, students have been marked as jock or geek, cheerleader or choir nerd–and they feel the pressure to remain in their compartmentalized boxes as they go off to college, jumping into majors based on what category was thrown upon them in their younger years. One has perhaps heard the joke about Mrs. Goldstein, who was walking down the street with her two grandchildren. A friend stopped to ask her how old they were. She replied, "The doctor is five and the lawyer is seven."[93] The disconcerting humor in this joke sheds light on the immense pressure being put on today's children regarding who they will become. As those who have had these pressures put upon them grow up, it is no wonder they are seeking outlets to move away from such differentiation.

Roof believes that "as a species we may be reaching the limits on the extent to which we can, or will, tolerate compartmentalization."[94] He explains that with differentiation comes, what he calls, "wholeness-hunger," a term he uses to explain this desire to feel whole, connected to community and nature, and generally the yearning to

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[92] ibid.

[93] Adapted from Thomas Cathcart and Daniel Klein, *Plato and a Platypus Walk into a Bar . . .: Understanding Philosophy Through Jokes*, reprint edition (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 8.

[94] Roof, 62.

re-unify the pieces of life that have become disconnected, such as life and work, values and lived experience, etc. Roof explains that "once wholeness-hunger sets in, it manifests itself in a process of 'de-differentiation'—that is, in constructive efforts at reintegrating life experiences, whether specifically in the form of holistic health, 'total living' communities for senior citizens, or on-the-job spiritual workshops."[95]

Today the manifestations of "wholeness-hunger" are readily apparent and this "de-differentiation" is occurring. Large creative companies like Google and Pixar pride themselves on, as well as attribute their success to, the spiritual and creative space they allow their employees. Open-office spaces are becoming more popular, as are meditation and yoga workshops in corporate work spaces. Today "a culture of choice and spiritual exploration prevails — both inside and outside the religious establishments."[96] This spiritual exploration stems from this "wholeness-hunger" yet, it was the great changes in the past half century, effecting the realignments of religion and culture, that have shifted where people are searching for their answers. Roof explains the many factors that have influenced today's understanding of religion:

> The emergence of a global world, an influx of new immigrants and cultures, widespread changes in values and beliefs, the immense role of the media and visual imagery in shaping contemporary life, an expanding consumer-oriented culture targeting the self as an arena for marketing, the erosion of many traditional forms of community—all point to major realignments in religion and culture.[97]

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[95] ibid.

[96] ibid, 53.

[97] ibid, 8.

These factors have significantly influenced the language of religion in today's world. As Roof explains, " The consensus language that dominated at midcentury, now at the century's end seems empty to many in the younger generation and does not come as readily as does talk of experiences and encounters associated with the occult and the paranormal, which now penetrates the cultural mainstream."[98] The shifting language has left a gap between generations. The parents of the current generation, those who threw off religion to the point of total disengagement, and their children are left with only the language prevalent through media and their surrounding culture about faith. There are now a number of individuals who were "never exposed to religious culture, or who dropped out of churches and synagogues when they were quite young, [and they] report that when they do go to religious services they often feel awkward, not sure of what to say or how to act."[99] The younger generation not only struggle with their unawareness of the social codes of religion, but also with the diverse opinions present within religious communities. They have trouble connecting with practices and traditions they have not experienced and that have no anchor of meaning or value that has been expressed to them.

This issue, of modern spiritual seekers not finding an anchor within their faith traditions, is common across religious groups in America, but is certainly strongly felt by Jews. Jews specifically are feeling spiritually empty, and are searching outside of Jewish practice to fill this emptiness, since many see synagogues as cold and impersonal

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[98] ibid, 52.

[99] ibid, 57.

transmitters of an outdated faith. As Rabbi Michael Lerner, a leader within the Jewish Renewal Movement, writes: "It is no wonder that after having faced massive and staggering destruction and dislocations, many Jews feel spiritually and emotionally dead…It has take decades for Jews to feel secure enough to begin to renew the spiritual tradition."[100] Yet, as Jews have sought to address their spiritual needs, it seems that they often have not found meaning, or God for that matter, in institutionalized Judaism. So instead, they have sought it in the yoga centers, ashrams, cults, self-help, 12-step and so on, but God and meaning, all the things they are seeking elsewhere, can also be found within Judaism. Rabbi Wayne Dosick blames this searching elsewhere in part on rabbis and Jewish educators: "When Jews came to Judaism seeking God, most often all we found were sign-up sheets for the Hebrew school carpool and pledge cards for the building fund."[101] He argues that perhaps the focus institutionally has been too much upon saving our synagogues while we missed the opportunity to "convey the greatness and the grandeur—indeed the very existence—of the world of the Jewish spirit."[102]

Although the spiritual and divine aspects of Judaism have been overlooked by many in recent years, a sense of commitment to Jewish peoplehood and survival still persists. Jews interviewed by Cohen and Eisen revealed that there is a "high degree of commitment to Judaism and concern for the continued existence of the Jewish people, [however, this is often] accompanied by relatively infrequent participation in

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[100] Michael Lerner, *Jewish Renewal* (New York: Putnam, 1994), xvii, quoted in Rabbi Rifat Sonsino, *6 Jewish Spiritual Paths: A Rationalist Looks at Spirituality* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2002), 6.

[101] Wayne Dosick. "The State of Faith" in *The Jewish Lights Spirituality Handbook: A Guide to Understanding, Exploring & Living a Spiritual Life*, ed. Stuart Matlins(Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2004), 18.

[102] ibid.

conventional Jewish communal activities."[103] While there does seem to be a high level of concern, it seems less is being acted upon in a communal way. Rather, it seems there is a desire to create sacred space within people's homes, in the private spaces as opposed to the communal ones. Sharing their often personal understanding of Judaism with their family is what seems to be held as sacred, as deeply valued.[104] This generation of Jews is not only organizationally unassociated, but generally unaffiliated and are unfazed by this, as Eisen and Cohen note, "They take for granted the compatibility of being both Jewish and American…and they are even less interested in denominational differences than their parents' generation was, insisting from first to last on the right—and fact—of individual autonomy when it comes to deciding the details of Jewish practice."[105] This sense of individual autonomy, or personal connections, is part of what makes up the "postmodern" Jewish self as Eisen and Cohen define it. The main components they identify as making up the "postmodern" Jew are as follows: personal meaning as the arbiter of their Jewish involvement; Jewish meaning is not only personal but constructed, one experience at a time; combining great concern for issues of spirituality and meaning with severely diminished interest in the organizational life of the Jewish community.[106] They go on to explain that Jewish identity is more fluid than it has ever been before.

So, too, are the beliefs within Judaism becoming extremely fluid. Many Jews when interviewed about God describe a universalist notion of God for whom the

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[103] Cohen and Eisen, 37.

[104] ibid, 35.

[105] ibid, 35.

[106] ibid, 36-38.

synagogue is *a* site of relation but not the primary site. “With the devalorization of tradition, the absolute commitment to pluralism, and the continuing assumption of individual autonomy, they [modern Jews] feel free to borrow selectively, and perhaps temporarily from traditional Jewish religious and cultural resources.”[107] These Jews have also become comfortable with mixing in elements drawn from other backgrounds “including non-Jewish religious or spiritual traditions.”[108] Thus, it has been the goal today for many synagogues and Jewish organizations to try to fill the gap that exists between spiritual-seeking Jews, and the places they feel do not offer them a spiritual home to explore within.

Today, the Jews who sought elsewhere are trying to connect their Jewish identity and their spiritual-seeker identity. These Jews, as well as young modern Jewish seekers, now have a marketplace of resources with which to find Jewish explorations of God, of mythical and mystical religion, of holistic identity. The Institute for Jewish Spirituality offers retreats for lay people and clergy alike, helping to broaden the knowledge and opportunity for spiritual engagement. Renewal Centers, Havurahs, and Moishe Houses have popped up around the country trying to fill the need that was felt by so many Jews for different ways of connecting with their fellow Jews. Aleph: The Alliance for Jewish Renewal continues to build upon Reb Zalman’s vision of bringing “creativity, relevance, joy, and an all-embracing awareness to spiritual practice, as a path to healing our hearts

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[107] ibid, 36.

[108] ibid.

and finding balance and wholeness—*tikkun halev.*"[109] The Center for Jewish Mindfulness teaches about the "contemporary and timeless practice of Jewish mindfulness," and explores how to "strengthen our capacity to live with awareness, generosity and compassion."[110] Synagogues are creating sections for spirituality on their website, and listing adult education programs including "Torah Yoga," Jewish meditation, and classes on Jewish mysticism. Sunday schools are developing and adding curriculum to help students to be more mindful, and to explore God and themes within prayers, as well as the child's personal spiritual relationship to texts through programs such as Torah Godly Play, and the like. For those who are seeking and may not be affiliated, Jewish federations and organizations are also offering classes, programs and speakers that touch upon this topic of spiritual development. For those who would rather read, they need look no further that Jewish Lights Publishing for an extensive amount of literature on spirituality in Judaism. In the past couple decades, Jewish organizations have surged with offerings about this highly desired topic and to fill the need that has become felt more and more by Jews and all Americans.

Yet, there is one area that strikingly has not been addressed regarding spiritual need and fulfillment: The role of spiritual engagement with teenagers, the age-cohort that is most impressionable and struggling with individuation and identity formation. The attempt to fill this gap will be explored in the next chapter.

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[109] "Aleph: Alliance for Jewish Renewal," accessed November 24, 2014, https://aleph.org/.

[110] "Center for Jewish Mindfulness," accessed November 24, 2014, http://centerforjewishmindfulness.blogspot.com/.

## CHAPTER THREE
## SPIRITUALITY AND THE AMERICAN TEEN

Very little is known about the spiritual life and development of teenagers. While there are numerous books on the topics of spiritual teaching for school children, these resources become mostly absent for high school-aged students. Furthermore, few studies have been conducted to understand the spiritual nature of teens and what the outcomes might be of engaging them in spiritual education. Although little on this topic exists, the research that does exist indicates that creating opportunities for spiritual development in teens may be very beneficial.

Research across faith groups suggests that spiritual engagement during teenage years may decrease drug use and juvenile delinquency and increase students' prosocial values (such as compassion and commitment to helping others).[111] Although we would like to believe that Jewish adolescents are not as likely to be at risk of drug and alcohol use, one study found that "Rates of sexual and drug use (mainly alcohol and marijuana) [amongst Jewish teens] were similar to those for comparable national samples of teenagers."[112] There is also a fear that, if schools do not begin to create such spaces for spiritual exploration in learning, "students in growing numbers [will] become depressed, attempt suicide, or succumb to eating disorders and substance abuse."[113]

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[111] Peter Benson, "Spirituality and the Adolescent Journey," *Reclaiming Children and Youth: Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Problems* 5, no. 4 (January 1997): 209.

[112] Charles Kadushin et al., "Being A Jewish Teenager in America: Trying to Make It," December 1, 2001, http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=3478, vii.

[113] Rachael Kessler, T*he Soul of Education: Helping Students Find Connection, Compassion, and Character at School* (Alexandria, Va: ASCD, 2000), xii.

Spirituality helps decrease these risk factors because it helps students deal with some of the struggles they face of self-esteem, identity, and materialism. Beyond the possible benefits of decreasing these aforementioned risk factors, the benefits of helping teens deals with such struggles aid them as they develop towards adulthood. Rabbi Michael Lerner suggests that spirituality is an "antidote to the 'arrogance and… insensitivity' that undergirds contemporary forms of violence and exclusion"[114] Through spiritual education, students become more aware of their place within community and as well as achieving a better  understanding of their beliefs and motivations. As Jewish education helps students to seek meaning in Judaism, in sense of purpose, and in relationship to community, it helps teens to move beyond the material values that society has raised upon a pedestal. Furthermore, as teens engage in these practices and understand more of themselves, they see the value they have in their community and family, and the unique talents they can offer, which helps them to build self esteem.

Adolescence is a difficult time in life, and often many of the highs and lows teens experience get attributed to hormones. Although certainly hormones may play a part, the "larger questions of meaning, identity, responsibility and purpose begin to press [on teens]"[115]  that cause these intense emotions.Creating spaces for such spiritual development in Jewish places of learning will help adolescents to explore and begin to answer these questions and offer them a safer space for them delve into the struggles they are facing in their lives.  Rachael Kessler explains that in such a space where students

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[114] Benson, 206.

[115] Kessler, xiii.

share their feelings, their fears and their spiritual struggles, they will "[see] deeply into the perspectives of others, [accept] what has felt unworthy in themselves,"[116] which will lead them to understand the concepts of compassion and forgiveness. To better understand the struggles for meaning and pressures of identity that adolescents face, it is important to understand the stages of faith development they are going through.

In 1981, Dr. James W. Fowler published his book *Stages of Faith* that explores the stages of faith development that an individual may go through in their life. Adolescents as they move into young adulthood are likely moving between two of Fowler's six stages: synthetic-conventional faith and individuative-reflective faith.[117] The synthetic-conventional faith stage is characterized by conformity, where the individual associates themselves with a particular religious authority or perspective and does not reflect on those views critically. People with different opinions are recognized during this stage but are seen as "other" and any conflicting views are often ignored due to a fear of inconsistency. There are a number of struggles that can impact an individual in this stage such as the internalization of symbolic systems (goodness and badness), which can cause struggles in objective evaluation as well as difficulty negotiating contradictions between authorities.

As an individual continues on the path of faith development, which not all do, they will move into the individuative-reflective stage. This is the stage at which an individual begins to take responsibility for their beliefs and feelings and thus is filled with

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[116] ibid, x.

[117] James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, new edition (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1995).

much struggle as they seek to answer questions about their identity. Those who enter this stage usually do so in their mid-twenties or later. During this stage, individuals withdraw from the defining identities they were once part of and work towards an awareness of themselves as individuals. As one works towards their own awareness, they become more comfortable scrutinizing and questioning the beliefs they once held. The struggle of this stage exists in its existential nature and the discomfort of de-mythologizing what was once believed.

Although teenagers are unlikely to be in this stage, they are on the path to it as they reach 17 and 18 years old. Furthermore, it is important to consider this stage since research shows that during college and the years that follow (usually mid-twenties to mid-thirties) is when many individuals disassociate from religion. It may be the case that engagement in spirituality may aid in this transition between stages as it asks the individual to be in struggle and offers them language to discuss their development of identity. Part of developing spiritual education modules for teenagers is to help give them tools for development of Jewish identity as they transition into their college years.

Teenagers are much like a rubber band stretched between the desire to be part of a group, a family, a community, and the desire to be autonomous individuals. With one hand they are holding on to their family and the comfort of protection as a child; with the other they are stretching outwards trying to figure out who they are and what their unique destiny might be. Fowler's stages support this concept, as they are between these two stages and possibly developing from one into the other. Like a pulled rubber band, there is a lot of tension for teenagers during the years of high school. They are being pulled in

many different directions between social groups and college requirements, between extracurricular activities and succeeding on standardized tests.

Today students are facing increasing academic pressures and extracurricular pressures "that concentrate the teens' social life within the institutional setting."[118] They are being pushed to deal with sub-cultures and status hierarchies within their schools. Due to these pressures, students are lacking in opportunities to develop themselves. As one study points out, "In this regimented atmosphere, unstructured individual pastimes tend to be neglected. For example, fewer than 20% of tenth-grade students read for pleasure nearly every day."[119] With such pressures of academic and social achievement and with little recognition of the need for individual reflection time, it is no wonder that anxiety and depression seem to be on the rise in American teens. "In a culture that values academic achievement, personal growth, physical well-being, and the ability to be placed in a good affordable college above all else, it is not surprising that spiritual health, religious practice, and a community of values and belief is so often overlooked and seen as worthless."[120] Yet, it may be spirituality and religious schools that have the unique opportunity to provide these pressure-cooked students with some support and relief. As Jewish educator Moshe Ben-Lev explains: "The congregational school has a unique opportunity in enabling teens to talk about such issues as teen depression, suicide,

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[118] Kadushin, 7.

[119] ibid.

[120] Moshe Ben-Lev, "Avirah-Ruchani : Creating a 'Spritual Atmosphere' for Jewish Teens," *CCAR Journal: The Reform Jewish Quarterly*, Sacred Education and Spiritual Learning, 61, no. 1 (Winter 2014), 57-58.

substance abuse, relationships and more."[121] Religious schools have the ability to create safe spaces to discuss and create support for teens outside of the social pressures of their school and without the rigid demands of public school curriculum. Engaging in spiritual education with teenagers, religious schools, camps, youth groups and more can offer teens not only a safe space to engage with the difficult situations that surround them, but also help them to prepare for their personal and spiritual transitions towards college.

Although there is not much published about the spiritual life of teens, there is more research being done on the topic; however, still more is necessary. Leading up to high school, there are more opportunities for spiritual learning. For elementary school and middle school-aged children, there are programs within religious schools as well as in some public schools that help students with creative and reflective processes. There are resources for teachers of these age groups as well, including books such as Lawrence Kushner's *Book of Miracles: A Young Person's Guide for Jewish Spiritual Awareness*, and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso's classic *God's Paintbrush*. Yet, there is a decline in programming and resources after *b'nei mitzvah* as teens enter high school. This does not, however, reflect the way that teens themselves feel towards spirituality. As Ben-Lev writes, "If you have the opportunity to spend some time with teens, you will know, especially from their confirmation year, that when asked what they are most looking for from a synagogue their answer is invariably, 'spirituality.'"[122] The research from the December 2000 study "Being a Jewish Teenager in America and Trying to Make It"

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[121] ibid, 68.

[122] ibid, 57.

would support this, since it reports that "three quarters of the teenage respondents were preoccupied with a search for meaning in life."[123] This desire for something spiritual is not specific to Jewish teens. One study of 12,000 students of various faith groups found that "48% said that 'being religious or spiritual' is of high importance; another 17% attributed some importance to it."[124] More interesting was when students were asked to describe what they understood spirituality to be. One of the themes to emerge in their responses "was the identity of the spirit with what many students described as the 'real me inside.'"[125] This shows that students are seeking opportunities to explore what they consider to be spirituality which is part of their internal development of identity. Another study looked at teen value systems to see where spirituality ranked. They found that "of a number of values studied, religion/spirituality is attributed high importance at a rate below that for 'helping other people,' 'making the world a better place,' 'equality,' and 'honesty.' These other values could be understood as expressions or components of the spiritual life."[126] These values do contribute to an adolescent sense of spiritual self, but these values may not connect to their faith.

Although it is clear that teens, including Jewish teens, are interested in spirituality, they do not see Judaism as an important or necessary part of such engagement. Of the three quarters from the study on Jewish teens who claimed they "cared seriously about a

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[123] Kadushin, 73.

[124] Benson, 207.

[125] Barbara Wintersgill, "Teenagers' Perceptions of Spirituality:A Research Report," *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 13, no. 4 (November 1, 2008): 373.

[126] Benson, 208.

search for meaning in life," the report found that "only 40% sought to find that meaning through Judaism."[127] In the same survey, adolescents who responded that they care about being Jewish and about Jewish history and culture "do not express this allegiance by engaging in practices that might set them apart from a largely secular, pluralistic culture in which they are trying to 'make it.' Judaism is important to them, but only as it coheres or coexists with their aspirations for academic success, financial security, and social belonging."[128]

It appears that teens seek spirituality but resist its affiliation to organized religion or religious institutions. This rejection is not unusual or unexpected. As Ben-Lev explains, "According to psychological development, teen rejection of organized religion is both normal and appropriate."[129] Yet, this does not mean that these students are not seeking spiritually fulfilling experiences. Part of what turns teens away is some of the rigidity and dogmatic nature of religion, as Peter Benson explains: "To the extent that religious institutions emphasize creed to the exclusion of nurturing spiritual capacity, they too often push adolescents away–not only from that particular faith, but from the spiritual quest itself."[130] This pushing away of adolescents can be seen through the decline in institutional participation in grades 6-12. Surprisingly, however, "spiritual or religious

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[127] Kadushin, vii.

[128] ibid.

[129] Ben-Lev, 58.

[130] Benson, 219.

interest stays consistent across adolescence, [while the] participation in the institutional expression of it declines."[131] This decline is true across faith groups.

Within Jewish religious organizational life specifically, there is a clustering of types of involvement, so although "synagogue involvement does not cluster closely with spirituality….it is part of a cluster of Jewish organizational activity that also includes philanthropy and volunteering for Jewish organizations. Connecting with other Jews… also forms a cluster with ethics and improving the world."[132] These clusters show how Jewish spirituality is connected to the concepts of *tikkun olam* and *am Yisrael.* While the message of spirituality being related to those concepts is being taught by our religious institutions, it seems, however, that other parts of the puzzle are being overlooked. One such area is connection to the divine. It seems that Jews, and specifically progressive Jews, for a number of years have pushed away discussions of God and different types of God-language as a taboo topic. This has raised at least a couple of generations that feel as though they have little to no language to discuss God-views. As Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman writes, "When I…ask for instances of the profound in people's lives, Jews have no trouble responding positively. And when I ask them to delineate their instances of the profound, they replicate almost precisely what Roman Catholics call God's presence. It is not the experience but the language of God that eludes them."[133]

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[131] ibid, 207-208.

[132] Kadushin, 69.

[133] 1. Lawrence A. Hoffman, "Beyond Romanticism: Having Something Spiritual to Say," *CCAR Journal: The Reform Jewish Quarterly, Sacred Education and Spiritual Learning,* 61, no. 1 (Winter 2014), 10.

The lack of God-language is part of what some may call the "cerebralized Jewish synagogue." With the turn towards rationalism combined with the secularism in the pews, any discussion of transcendence, the divine, and the profound were whisked out of the synagogue. Today, as so many seek to connect with these concepts, many synagogues continue to feel cold and removed. As synagogues became more focused on the world of science, Jews became "self-conscious discussing matters of the spirit."[134] Peter Benson discusses this type of institutionalized faith that exists in various faith groups, stating:

> Religious involvement for most participating adolescents is rather conventional and routinized, more cerebral than affective, more about truth filtered and handed down than about the truth that emerges from deep and personal engagement with spirit. In essence, the surface of spiritual capacity has barely been scratched for adolescents and, perhaps also, for adults. In the case of adults, however, three are emerging legions of resources, supports, and opportunities relating to the spiritual journey.[135]

Indeed, much of religious practice in synagogues has become routinized and is lacking that deep personal connection. This model will not work with teens who are part of Generation-me, who have grown up with not only the capacity for, but the experience of, shaping so much of their own experience. This is a generation that knows they have a voice, and it is an opportune time for religious educators to make use of learner-centered education models, spiritual learning models, and to facilitate deeply transformational learning experiences.

There are two concepts that are connected to spirituality and education: sacred teaching and spiritual learning. "Sacred" is a term that is defined through an individual

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[134] ibid, 10-11.

[135] Benson, 209.

group's decision about what is or is not sacred. Thus, "the notion of 'sacred teaching' means teaching that which the community holds sacred."[136] Rabbi Rami Shapiro explains that "'sacred teaching' is teaching the tools of making the shift between *mochin d'katnut* to *mochin d'gadlut*."[137] He further defines *mochin d'gadlut as* "that level of consciousness..that sees itself as a part of rather than apart from God,"[138] and *mochin d'katnut a*s "that level of consciousness associated with self and selfishness."[139] Shapiro understands spirituality as the path from *mochin d'katnut* to *mochin d'gadlut.* "Spiritual learning" then becomes the "internalization of [the tools to make the shift from *mochin d'katnut* to *mochin d'gadlut*] in such a way as to actually achieve the shift."[140] Spiritual education in essence is about creating the space and nurturing a transformation of the students to a level of connectedness to each other and the divine. Yet, how does one actually create the space to help students on this journey of spirituality?

There are a few discrete models that exist with regard to spiritual education. One author created a model based on the acronym S.P.I.R.I.T. that breaks down into: spirit, process, imagination, relationship, intimacy, and trust. These six categories help to guide educators to make sure they include and recognize each piece as they plan to teach. Each of these categories resonates with social emotional learning (known as SEL). The SEL

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[136] Rami Shapiro, "A Transformational Model for Jewish Education," *CCAR Journal: The Reform Jewish Quarterly, Sacred Education and Spiritual Learning*, 61, no. 1 (Winter 2014), 43.

[137] ibid, 44.

[138] ibid, 42.

[139] ibid, 43.

[140] ibid, 44.

model asks “teachers…to make an effort to connect with students by taking the time to get to know them. Lessons begin with a check-in time, a personal moment of reflection. Students are encouraged to talk about themselves and share in a safe environment.”[141] These models create an educational base for how to approach the classroom in a spiritual way.

Another important component that is explored in texts on spiritual education is the creation of opportunities for teens to lead. Ben-Lev explains that “teens embrace opportunities that enable them to shine, take control of their learning, and make an impact on the lives of others.”[142] This is one reason that *madrichim* programs can be very successful with adolescents.

Authors on spiritual education also highlight the importance of flexibility. This comes in many forms, from the times and nights on which programs are offered to the diversity of pathways for them to engage with subject matter. A pillar of engaging teens in sacred learning is *kavod*, or respect. Respect with teens is especially important since they “view the world through a prism of justice and injustice. If teens feel irrelevant, discounted, or ignored in being active partners in their own Jewish education, we will lose them.”[143] Thus it is crucial to not only create a basis of respect when working with teens, but to ask for their input and include their voice in the process of creating curriculum. This turning over of responsibility for Jewish education is quite crucial. If the

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[141] Ben-Lev, 59.

[142] ibid, 65.

[143] ibid.

"orientation is to move away from the prefabricated, spoon-fed, nearsighted Judaism into the stream of possibilities for personal responsibility and physical participation, [it will entail] a returning of the control of the Jewish environment to the hands of the individual —through accessible knowledge of the what, where, who, and how of contemporary Judaism."[144] It is important to renew a sense of ownership and excitement in engaging in Judaism through diverse pathways.

The space in which one teaches is also a component of sacred education: both the physical space and the *avirah,* or the atmosphere. Ben-Lev offers the concept of *avirah ruchanit*, or a spiritual atmosphere, which is meant to create a sacred sense of community in the classroom.[145] In her book, *The Soul of Education*, Rachael Kessler explores the importance of the classroom atmosphere, stating that the spiritual experience can be fostered in "classrooms where the heart is safe and the soul is welcomed."[146] Here she touches upon the importance of creating the classroom to be a safe space for all students to share and explore openly and honestly. If a student feels that the "threat to the self is low, experience can be perceived in differentiated fashion and learning can proceed. When [the learner] is in an environment in which he is assured of personal security and when he becomes convinced that there is no threat to his ego, he is once more free to… move forward in the process of learning."[147] When dealing with the vulnerabilities that

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[144] Richard Siegel, Michael Strassfeld, and Sharon Strassfeld, eds., T*he First Jewish Catalog: A Do-It-Yourself Kit,* 1st edition (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1965), 9.

[145] Ben-Lev, 58.

[146] Kessler, 16.

[147] Carl R. Rogers, *Freedom to Learn* (New York and Toronto: Pearson, 1994), 16.

come with exploring one's identity and one's relationship to community and the divine, it is of utmost importance to create a safe learning environment.

The next piece to consider when creating a spiritual curriculum is the method of communicating content. There is the transmissional method and the transformational method. For the purposes of spiritual education which focuses on the transformation of individuals, it is important to use the transformational method. The transmissional method is one that is seen in many synagogues and religious schools today. This method focuses on "transmitting facts about the artifacts of Jewish life and need not insist or expect students or teachers to engage with these artifacts outside the classroom."[148] Currently many teachers are using "artifacts as artifacts rather than as catalysts for transformation, [and thus they] spend most if not all of [their] classroom time on transmission and leave transformation to others."[149] The problem is that there are not other individuals who are helping them with this process of transformation and that schools have given neither the students nor the parents the resources to go about this process at home. In the transformational model, these artifacts of Jewish life are still taught but it "doesn't restrict Jewish civilization to them. On the contrary, the transformational model of Jewish education recognizes that Judaism is what Jews make of it; and that a living, spiritually transformative Judaism is…as valid as any expression of Judaism from the past."[150] The transformational model asks that students and teachers

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[148] Shapiro, 48.

[149] ibid, 44.

[150] ibid, 56.

explore artifacts in a way that leads them to *t'shuva* and to *tikkun.* Shapiro gives the example of *kashrut* and explains that "in the transformational model of learning, kashrut is defined not as a set of ancient and fixed practices, but as a set of timeless principles calling us to elevate our consuming to the highest moral, ethical and environmental values to which we can aspire." This displays how the transformational model can give artifacts meaning that will connect to modern progressive Jews and push them to understand what they understand as sacred within the frame of what their community considers sacred.

Rabbi Shapiro extrapolates on what a transformational teacher should do:

> First, identify a real personal or social need, in this case the need to free ourselves from a consumptive lifestyle that defines all people as consumers and reduces all relationships to commodities. Second, show how this issue is something Jews have wrestled with for millennia. Third, explore how Jews have dealt with this in the past. Fourth, extrapolate from the past principles and values that are applicable to changing the situation in the present. Fifth, empower the individual to apply those values to her own life in her own way. And sixth, ground communal solidarity in shared principles rather that shared practices.[151]

For this form of "transformational Jewish spirituality to work within the context of Reform Judaism, it must allow a wide range of creative expression of…principles and practices, a range far beyond what other forms of Judaism may accept."[152]

It is important that not only the artifacts being taught are Jewish, but also that the transformation is made using the "principles and practices of Jewish life."[153] One such

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[151] Shapiro, 47.

[152] ibid, 48.

[153] ibid.

way to do this is through the use of *midot*, ethical principles and character traits. As one engages in the various methods, models, and modes of Jewish spiritual engagement, it is important that *midot* be utilized "as a common way to instill a sense of Jewish ethics, spirituality, justice, and fairness."[154] However, just using the language of *midot* is not enough. It must also be a goal to "model them within our approach to Jewish education and to offer opportunities for our students to do so within the institution."[155] As previously mentioned, it is of great importance to allow teens to shine and demonstrate their skill sets through modeling. It is also of great importance that the dedication not only to *midot*, but to a model of spiritual education in general, be modeled by educators and by clergy. This is difficult because "many of our leaders and educators fail to live spiritually transformative lives themselves. If our teachers are not engaged in using Jewish artifacts to shift from *mochin d'katnut* to *mochin d'gadlut*, we cannot expect them to pass this knowledge on to their students."[156]

It is crucial to spiritually transformative education to have spiritually transformative educators and clergy. If we want a teacher or clergy person to help students delve deeply into their relationship with God, but that person is "not able to delve deeply into their own relationship with God [they] will be unable to imbue that [in] their students."[157] If students are expected to seek out ways to differently connect with Jewish artifacts in their own lives, then the teachers would also "have to use these

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[154] Ben-Lev, 61.

[155] ibid.

[156] Shapiro, 44.

[157] Ben-Lev, 67.

artifacts in their own lives and they would have to continually experiment with and adapt Jewish texts, teachings, and mitzvoth to their own lives."[158] If educators and clergy are going be capable of teaching in this transformative manner, the method for training educators will have to change: "We will have to teach our teachers to use the artifacts of Judaism as catalysts for the transformation of Jews."[159] Educator training should also require teachers to undergo transformation themselves. Thus, educator training should include areas such as "talking about God, spirituality, and asking and answering difficult questions [that] will help develop a level of personal and professional comfort in addressing issues of faith and guidance in developing a stronger and more meaningful relationship with God and Judaism."[160]

It is not only clergy and educators who need to be addressed in the transition to a transformational model of Jewish spiritual education. The parents and family also play a great role in how the engagement with artifacts "sticks" for the student. If parents do not value what is being taught, their teenager won't either. Despite the fact that teens are often rebellious on many levels, "they often follow the same values as their parents."[161] Ben-Lev explains that "regardless of how we envision Jewish education in our congregations, we cannot succeed in creating spiritually fulfilled and committed Jews if we do not fully engage parents and families as a unit and teach that Judaism is an

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[158] Shapiro, 49.

[159] ibid, 48-49.

[160] Ben-Lev, 71.

[161] ibid, 57.

'everyday' religion."[162] This is why parent-oriented classes are so important to congregational goals in student education. For one example, "the impact of a successful adult Hebrew class can significantly impact both the attitude and level of students' Hebrew knowledge."[163]

It is important that the community, parents, teachers, student, and clergy alike be involved in creating a transformative spiritual model. If not all members of the system are onboard, there will likely be struggles in adopting the beneficial practices offered in sacred education. Once this obstacle is overcome, the next difficulty is finding a balance between teen needs and interests and educational goals. Once the community is moving forward engaging the right teachers and clergy to model the push towards a spiritual curriculum, then the diverse pathways of spiritual practice can be explored.

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[162] ibid, 59.

[163] ibid, 61.

# CHAPTER FOUR
# PATHS OF SPIRITUAL ENGAGEMENT

It should be clear at this point that spirituality has many facets to its definition and is understood in a variety of ways. There are also many ways to engage in spirituality and thus it is crucial, especially in working with teen learners, to offer an array of opportunities to connect. Thus, this chapter will lay out a number of modes of spiritual engagement, giving basic insight and background information on each. The next chapter will be a retreat curriculum that will make use of many of the following modes, and provide application for their use. These modes, while very different in practice, have a few similarities. The primary similarity is that they all use reflective practice in some capacity, which is in part what makes them modes for spiritual engagement. Each of the activities proposed in the following chapter either inherently has a reflective practice component, or can be reflected upon in such a way that allows for the participant to transform from consciousness of self alone to the consciousness of self as part of a greater whole. These modes not only carry the opportunity to be transformative within the learning environment, but they also are tools that teens can return to during their daily lives that can both ground them Jewishly and spiritually amidst the stressors of high school.

Although seemingly different, these modes activate similar pathways to relating to students' souls. In her book *The Soul of Education*, Rachael Kessler offers seven pathways to nourishing the souls of high school students in school situations. She explains that through her research she "found seven gateways to their souls, each gateway

representing a set of key experiences embedded in their stories. Together these gateways offer both a language and a framework for developing practical teaching strategies."[164] These pathways provide a wonderful foundation to understand the different modes of spiritual engagement and how they access the souls of learners. The seven gateways are:

> **The yearning for deep connection** describes a quality of relationship that is profoundly caring, is resonant with meaning, and involves feelings of belonging or of being truly seen and known.
>
> **The longing for silence and solitude**, often an ambivalent domain, is fraught with both fear and urgent need. As a respite from the tyranny of "busyness" and noise, silence may be a realm of reflection, of calm or fertile chaos, an avenue of stillness and rest for some, prayer and contemplation for others.
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> **The search for meaning and purpose** concerns the exploration of big questions, such as "Why am I here" Does my life have a purpose? How do I find out what it is?" "What is life for?" "What is my destiny?" "What does my future hold?" and "Is there a God?"
>
> **The hunger for joy and delight** can be satisfied through experiences of great simplicity, such as play, celebration, or gratitude. It also describes the exaltation students feel when encountering power, grace, brilliance, love, or the sheer joy of being alive.
>
> **The creative drive,** perhaps the most familiar domain for nourishing the spirit in school, is part of all the gateways. Whether developing a new idea, a work of art, a scientific discovery, or an entirely new lens on life, students feel the awe and mystery of creating.
>
> **The urge for transcendence** describes the desire of young people to go beyond their perceived limits. It includes not only the mystical realm, but experiences of the extraordinary in the arts, athletics, academics, or human relations.

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[164] Rachael Kessler, T*he Soul of Education: Helping Students Find Connection, Compassion, and Character at School* (Alexandria, Va: ASCD, 2000), 15.

> **The need for initiation** deals with rites of passage for the young—guiding adolescents to become more conscious about the irrevocable transition from childhood to adulthood.[165]

Each mode will be explored within its primary gateway, but it should be acknowledged that the modes can fall within multiple gateways. The following listing of modes is certainly not complete or exhaustive, nor is it meant to a be a checklist of which each piece must be included. Rather, it is a suggestion of some of the popular methods of interaction with Jewish spirituality for use with high school students.

### Silence and Solitude: Meditation and Yoga

Silence is perhaps the basis for much spiritual practice. Our day-to-day lives are filled with buzzing phones, blinking computer alerts, and never-ending trails of email. The noise pollution from all of the devices the modern American has on hand at any moment in time drowns out the grounding sounds of wind, rain, and bird song. With such a constant stream of noises begging for our attention at every moment, it should not be surprising that many Americans are actually very uncomfortable with silence. For many, it is difficult to think of a time where they sat in silence without games, youtube videos or other people to distract them. Sitting alone without a movie or music in the background is an uncommon occurrence for the American teen and twenty-something. Yet, this pace of life is unsustainable, as author Thomas Moore writes: “Soul cannot thrive in a fast-paced life because being affected, taking things in and chewing on them, requires time.”[166]

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[165] ibid, 17.

[166] Thomas Moore, *Care of the Soul : A Guide for Cultivating Depth and Sacredness in Everyday Life*, reprint edition (New York, NY: HarperPerennial, 1994), 286.

Indeed, Jewish practice and tradition has long understood the need for a pause amidst the busyness of life and has offered the outlet of Shabbat. Shabbat, whether observed halachicallly, in a personal progressive style, or through bringing aspects of Shabbat into each day, is a powerful way of re-centering. Shabbat is a reminder to rest, reflect and renew.

Bringing silence into daily experience allows for moments of "Shabbat," of connection to self, community and the divine. Through teaching individuals to engage in moments of silence, as well as having clergy and educators practice silence as well, we help to provide rest to the nervous system and honor the patterns of circadian rhythms.[167] Silence benefits more than just the nervous system, however, and restores the equilibrium. As Kessler explains, "Brief periods of silent reflection allow us to sift and sort our feelings, thoughts, and sensations. As we 'witness' the state of our emotions, we can discover the equilibrium that is a precondition for the social and emotional capacities essential to all learning: understanding and managing one's own emotions, recognizing the emotions of others as distinct from one's own, managing and reducing stress, becoming ready to focus on new information."[168] Silence offers students an opportunity to refocus and recognize "feelings and thoughts that might otherwise be buried under the commotion of activity and constant interaction with others and with technology." [169] As

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[167] Kessler, 39.

[168] ibid, 40.

[169] ibid, 40.

Jewish educators hope to help students explore their identity through reflection and self-inventory activities, silence is a crucial component in this process.

As was noted about the techniques of spiritual learning in general, it is necessary for educators and clergy to model the use of silence and to show their own personal buy-in. This includes demonstrating a comfort with silence even during services when the place of ‘”silent meditation” is reached within the *amidah.* The short 15-30 second silent reflections within the prayer service are of some aid, but their short length show a discomfort with  silence on the part of the clergy and leaders as well as the lay people. Rabbi Samantha Orshan Kahn explains that “it is important that clergy themselves also sit down and close their eyes, modeling and signaling to the community that they are taking this reflection seriously.”[170]

Silence has an important role in spiritual practice overall, as it can and should be woven into all sorts of classroom activities as a tool to help ground students as well as a tool for reflection on their learning. Structured silence can be employed with students, just sitting quietly together. However, silence can also be explored in two very distinct modes: the stillness of meditation, or the active focus of yoga.

**Meditation**

Meditation is a popular medium for connection in a spiritual capacity for many Jews. Its popularity is in part due to its accessibility. It is open to all people and requires little else

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[170] Samantha Orshan Kahn. “Igniting Souls: Creating Meaningful Communal Worship Through Spiritual Experimentation,” rabbinic thesis/master’s thesis in Jewish Non-Profit Management,Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, 2011, 43.

than one's time and a quiet space. Some synagogues have begun to offer Jewish meditation courses, and so many rabbis and educators have brought moments of meditation into Torah study, board meetings, religious school classes and more. Some meditative practices being explored use breathing exercises to ground learners, while others are creating Jewish guided meditations that utilize various Jewish texts and practices. Although some struggle with meditation as a mode for Jewish spiritual engagement, the "main philosophical base of Jewish meditation is Jewish mysticism. This tradition has existed throughout Jewish history, and it centers on an intimate, immediate contact with the divine."[171]

Beyond its connection to the practices of the mystical tradition within Judaism, today's Jewish mediation can be used to help Jews connect to practices and artifacts in different ways. Some types of Jewish meditation use "images, words, and symbols that come from the Jewish tradition."[172] Although these texts and traditions are what ground meditative practice within a Jewish context, the goals of Jewish meditation are more similar to those of general meditation practice. Nan Fink Gefen, author of *Discovering Jewish Meditation*, explains that "Jewish meditation aims toward exploring the silence within. In this way it is like other religious meditative traditions. All of them direct meditations to let go of their everyday concerns and ordinary patterns of thinking as they open their minds to spiritual experience."[173] The capacity of meditation to help

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[171] 1. Nan Fink Gefen, *Discovering Jewish Meditation: Instruction & Guidance for Learning an Ancient Spiritual Practice* (Woodstock, Vt.: Jewish Lights, 1999), 5.

[172] ibid.

[173] ibid, 7

individuals to let go of the burdens of daily existence and become more in tune spiritually is what makes it such a core piece of many spiritual practices and sacred curricula.

There are two main types of meditation techniques: concentration practice and awareness practice. “Concentration practices establish calmness, stability, and focus, and are a necessary foundation for seeing clearly in a sustained way. That which we see, the truth that underlies each moment of our experience, is what we can call an awareness practice. The concentration practice is in the service of developing the awareness practice.”[174] Concentration practices are often those that engage in breathing exercises, or the clearing of one’s mind to focus on breath, an object or a text, or on a guided journey into self. Awareness practice can also take many forms such as walking meditations, labyrinths, food meditation and many more. Both forms help to ground meditators and allow them to connect more deeply with themselves, the divine, or community.

Meditation is also a useful spiritual practice for beginning a lesson or Torah study as it asks participants to take a moment to focus on the present group and learning, and let go of the other agitations of life. Rabbi Sheila Peltz Weinberg teaches that meditation is about “letting go of preconceived ideas and gently bringing oneself into the presence of what is, not what we imagine or remember or desire.”[175] This concept of letting go is especially useful for working with teen populations. There are so many pressures on teens in their school lives that pull them between past and future. Many are flooded with

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[174] Rabbi Jeff Roth, *Jewish Meditation Practices for Everyday Life: Awakening Your Heart, Connecting with God* (Jewish Lights Publishing, 2011), 20.

[175] Rabbi Sheila Peltz Weinberg, quoted in Avram Davis “Best Practices: A Distillation of Techniques and Outlook” in *The Jewish Lights Spirituality Handbook: A Guide to Understanding, Exploring & Living a Spiritual Life*, ed. Stuart Matlins (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2004), 315.

thoughts of “I have no idea of how I am going to finish that homework tomorrow,” and “I can’t believe what so and so said about me the other day, it was so rude.” These pressures of being pulled between past and future become more pronounced as they prepare to go off to college. Here the teens are struck with overwhelming emotions as they move through a life transition that they have been given little permission or opportunity to spiritually unpack. Meditation is one mode that pushes these teen learners to focus on the present moment, to access a place of calm stability, and gives them an outlet from the ever-moving pace of their lives.

In using this method with teens, the goal stretches beyond giving them a moment to center themselves within the learning environment; it also gives them a tool that can help them Jewishly to find a sense of centeredness and connection in their everyday life. As Rabbi Rami Shapiro explains:

> Doing everyday things with a clear and attentive mind awakens us to the fact that we are both apart from and a part of everything else. We discover that from the perspective of *yesh*, we are unique, irreducible, irreplaceable manifestations of God. We discover from the perspective of *ayin* that we are totally interconnected with and dependent upon all other manifestations of God. We are awake to our being and our emptiness simultaneously.[176]

Meditation helps participants of all ages to feel calmly grounded through a sense of connectedness to other people, the divine, and nature while also creating a space to hear the inner stirrings of one’s soul. Its flexibility as a medium for spiritual education allows for the possibility of its use with text, prayers, holidays and so much more. Meditation helps with the transformative process of spiritual education as it asks participants to

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[176] Rabbi Rami Shapiro, quoted in Davis, 317.

recognize what exists beyond themselves and how they connect to it, as well as grounding participants to recognize the power of the present moment.

**Yoga**

Yoga has not only swept Americans by storm, but Jewish Americans as well. An ever-growing number of synagogues are offering Torah yoga classes, or Yoga worship experiences. Various approaches to yoga within Jewish communities "utilize Jewish mystical traditions to offer language for typical yoga movements, while others create movements to go along with Jewish liturgy."[177] Yoga, like meditation, asks participants to leave their usual state of consciousness to instead focus on a more grounded experience. However, with yoga, the focus is also upon the connection to body. "Through yoga, we can work with postures and movements in the body with attention to breath and sensation that cultivate a deep awareness of how we embody spiritual life from moment to moment, from one gesture and breath to the next."[178] Certainly, it is important as the spiritual self is explored, to explore the role of the body.

Spirituality is about recognizing a greater sense of connectivity and a more holistic perspective on existence. The Institute for Jewish Spirituality explains regarding Yoga that "it is essential to bring our bodies, minds, and hearts together in integrative awareness if we are to develop vibrant Jewish spirituality that heals the individual and the

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[177] Kahn, 54.

[178] "Embodied Practices," *Institute for Jewish Spirituality*, accessed December 1, 2014, http://www.jewishspirituality.org/our-spiritual-practices/embodied-practices/.

community."[179] It is especially important to engage in practices regarding the body with adolescents. During their high school years teens go through puberty and are often struggling with the hormonal surges that accompany their growth. This can lead to much confusion and frustration as teens deal with feeling their bodies growing and changing. Furthermore, as a growing number of adolescents struggle with body image issues, Yoga can be an important spiritual practice to help them reconnect and appreciate their own bodies while also dealing with how to respectfully engage with each other. As sexuality also blossoms during high school years, yoga and other physical spiritual modes can be tools to engage in important discussions with teens around the tender topic of sexuality. Through yoga as a spiritual practice, educators can help teens with the physical integration towards a balanced existence.

**Meaning and Purpose: Study and Prayer**

Contrasting with the spiritual modes of silence are the spiritual opportunities of study, prayer, and discussion. While silence is the key to internal spiritual reflection, authentic dialogue is the key to external reflection with community. This is dialogue in which there is a safe space created among members of the discussion so that they feel safe sharing openly and honestly with each other, even regarding vulnerable topics. To create a space like this takes time and effort on behalf of the clergy person or educator. Creating such space involves the respect and openness of all learners, because when individuals are vulnerable and a space turns unsafe, it can cause the learning to shut down

[179] ibid.

for many participants, and breaks the safe strength of the space. Through creating such space, educators and clergy can openly discuss topics related to meaning and sense of personal purpose.

Silence should be utilized in creating the spiritual space for discussion. But engaging in practices of text study and prayer is more focused on connection to others, tradition, and the divine. Text study and prayer ask participants to grapple with questions of meaning and purpose in life. Thus including Torah and the study of other Jewish texts is crucial not only to teach various Jewish values, but also as a means to engage with the spiritual gateway of meaning and purpose. As the Institute for Jewish Spirituality notes, "Torah is the foundation of Jewish life, and the study of Torah has been the energizing force of Jewish spirituality. Whatever else we might teach our participants to help them wake up in their lives and experience the presence of God in their lives, the core of our teachings is Torah."[180]

**Text Study**

Tying Torah into Jewish spiritual practice for adolescents through framing the texts with big questions, questions that focus their attention on meaning and personal purpose, helps them not only in understanding their own Jewish identity but also motivates them to use Judaism as a lens to understanding their lives. It brings texts and prayers off of the page and into their daily experiences. Today, more and more students both in public school as well as religious school lack motivation to learn. However, those

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[180] "Studying Spiritual Masters," *Institute for Jewish Spirituality*, accessed December 1, 2014, http://www.jewishspirituality.org/our-spiritual-practices/studying-spiritual-masters/.

"young people who have the opportunity to discover what has meaning for *them* and who feel they are going somewhere in life can be more easily engaged in learning and persisting through obstacles and setbacks." [181] Jewish texts help teens to uncover this sense of meaning because they

> challenge us to pay attention to what thoughts arise in our hearts and minds, to notice our response, and to raise these thoughts and our reactions up to God; to perceive God even in them, transforming them from 'our' thoughts and 'our' responses to the flow of God's intention in the world. This process, which might remain a curious intellectual idea on the page, is brought to life as a living practice through contemplative listening as text study.[182]

The study of text, the practice of prayer, and the opportunity for discussion can all aid adolescents who are struggling with a distorted sense of meaning provided by media. Some students no longer even consider asking questions about meaning as "the commercial media rush to fill the void."[183] Instead, there is a chance for Jewish spiritual practice to fill the void through allowing opportunities to grapple with a sense of meaning. Kessler highlights that "if we don't cultivate the inner life of adolescents as part of their search for goals…, they will likely make their decisions based on external pressures." However, if we provide a safe learning environment that uses the riches of our tradition to create contemplative, discussion-based text studies, then we can help students to use their core values to make large life decisions as they transition to adulthood. The Jewish Institute for Spirituality notes that, "When taken together, the

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[181] Kessler, 60.

[182] "Studying Spiritual Masters," *Institute for Jewish Spirituality*

[183] Kessler, 61.

contemplative approach to text study and the texts that we have chosen to study support the development of our core values (conscious awareness of God's presence; compassion; wisdom; love; openheartedness; justice), as well as other values that help to sustain these core values (humility; honesty; teshuva; joy)."[184]

**Prayer**

Prayer has been the "heart" of Jewish practice for centuries: it is called *ha'avodah shebalev,* or the service of the heart. Although it is a staple of Jewish practice, many Jews today struggle with prayer. "Contemporary Jews have so many questions about prayer: Is anyone listening? How can we overcome our self-consciousness in prayer? Does prayer matter? Does it change anything? Are there other Jews who share our perspectives and yearnings?"[185] Part of the goal of engaging in spiritual education is to help navigate these questions and create a safe environment for adolescents to explore what prayer might mean for them.

Prayer, like text study, pushes individuals to consider the questions of purpose and meaning. Prayer also helps to create a sense of community for teens, linking them to members of their community. However, fewer and fewer adults, let alone teens, are coming to prayer services. The formality of prayer in many synagogues, without alternative options or opportunities to ask questions about the service itself, creates a problematic situation in which learners feel like strangers within their own synagogue. As

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[184] "Studying Spiritual Masters," *Institute for Jewish Spirituality*

[185] "Prayer," *Institute for Jewish Spirituality*, accessed December 1, 2014, http://www.jewishspirituality.org/our-spiritual-practices/prayer/.

Ben-Lev explains, “For teens that become discouraged or disconnected with our formal liturgy, [an] approach of prayer choices has the distinct opportunity of enabling them to find a deeper and more culturally meaningful connection with Judaism.”[186] Many liberal synagogues are exploring various styles of worship service including “meditation, nigunim (wordless songs), yoga, drum circles, and so on as means of creating spiritual connection with prayer. [The] goal is to encourage alternative ways to connect as each adult must find his or her own path to spiritual growth and prayer.”[187] Although diversity is important in order to facilitate access for a variety of individuals, it is really this encouragement of finding a spiritual path to prayer that should be encouraged.

Many adolescents, and Jews generally, only hear snippets of Hebrew in the prayer service, with little context or explanation of what they are praying. It is no wonder then that they have little connection to any form of service. Much like Torah text, the liturgy and psalms offer great opportunity for study and discussion. Through engaging in the questions of meaning and purpose that arise in liturgy with teens, they may feel a deeper connection to liturgical pieces beyond the singular melody they know from NFTY or camp. Those melodies, however, should certainly not be disregarded as they are a creative mode (to be discussed later) of engaging spiritually. Using this other access point into Jewish prayer, however, can allow for greater discussion of the concepts present within prayer and the struggles with the theologies presented. Through engaging in discussion about liturgy, and illuminating the difficult questions presented, as well as the

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[186] Moshe Ben Lev, “Avirah-Ruchani -- Creating a ‘Spritual Atmosphere’ for Jeiwsh Teens,” *CCAR Journal: The Reform Jewish Quarterly*, Sacred Education and Spiritual Learning, 61, no. 1 (Winter 2014), 60.

[187] ibid.

struggles of clergy, educators, and rabbis from our tradition with various concepts, adolescents will feel validated in their own questioning of the practice and purpose of prayer.

**Creativity: Creative Modes of Reflection**

One gateway for engaging adolescents is through creativity and ”play.” The break from the formality that often characterizes their public school experience allows them to tap into spirit and emotions in a very different way. Through using improvisation, dance, music creation, and art therapy techniques we can awaken the imagination of teenagers. Furthermore, using creative methods to engage spiritually can help accommodate different learning styles and help bridge various concepts being taught. Rachael Kessler explains that, “Creativity flourishes most often as a synthesis or integration of many modes of knowing—left brain/right brain; reason and intuition; imagination and observation; and physical, emotional, and conceptual ways of knowing.”[188] Through using various creative modes while teaching teens, not only is a greater diversity of programming created, but also students are led to tell the story of their own spiritual journeys. The safety of the learning space grows even more important when engaging with creative modes, as “creative expression can become a vehicle for students to reveal their most joyful delights and their deepest sorrow and fear.”[189] As educators work towards creating transformative classrooms, this opens up the vulnerability of students in ways that must be safe, and where educators and clergy show compassionate support for

[188] Kessler, 104.

[189] Kessler, 110.

students. Having these spaces to openly discuss sorrows and struggles is an important part of spiritual and transformative education, as well as important to an adolescent's development. It shows that students are engaging deeply and personally with the material and also that the material has real-world impact on how they view and live their lives. The important part is that teachers are properly trained on how to handles such moments in the classroom to listen, be nonjudgmental, and recognize the reality of the experience for the teen, offering them a safe space to talk to other counselors and clergy if needed. Spiritual education allows students a safe place to creatively explore their experiences, their identity, and their journey.

Kessler explains that creativity is a vital part of the success of a soulful educational experience, stating that:

> When creativity breaks through, both teacher and student come alive. We connect deeply to ourselves and others, imbue life with freshness and meaning, and experience the delight that comes with transcending old or limited ways of thinking and doing. Mind, body, heart, and spirit come together to spark the passion that fuels the motivation to learn, to contribute, and to savor our infinite capacity for growth.[190]

Whether the creative mode is art, music, dance, sculpture, writing, storytelling, Torah Godly play, writing *midrash,* etc., creativity is an important mode to engage the spirit when teaching adolescents.

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[190] Kessler, 114.

# CHAPTER FIVE
# TRANSFORMATIVE RETREAT FOR CLERGY AND EDUCATORS

This chapter presents an outline and programming for a Shabbaton, a retreat for clergy and educators that would occur during a weekend, and asks them to engage in personal spiritual transformation as well as giving them resources for working with teens. Through a retreat on the topic of spiritual education with teenagers, participants will gain the resources to undergo their own Jewish spiritual journey and will have the skills to then lead their students through this journey as well. The retreat will also model for participants the process of spiritual education. It will focus on the core components of creating a safe space for spiritual learning, activities that tie Jewish practice and tradition to the participants, and the reflective process that explores the effects of the activity and its value within the framework of working with teenagers.

The retreat also includes a panel with teenagers from the local congregations/ youth groups/Jewish community, and asks that these teens be part of the Friday evening programming through the end of Shabbat services. This allows teens to be part of the conversation on what the educational process would be like for them. Furthermore, it gives the clergy and educators an opportunity to frame their whole retreat experience through the eyes of teens themselves. It helps to ground the leaders in what the students are looking for and what affects them spiritually, and pushes them to keep their thoughts on what would be most beneficial for those teens. In addition, having the students present for the dinner and Shabbat service components of the retreat models the respect between educators, clergy, and students that is crucial for working with teenagers. Having them

present at a meal after the panel also creates an informal opportunity for educators and clergy to ask more questions of the students and follow up on the discussions from the panel. The suggestion for the retreat proposed here is to have 6-8 students that span between 9th and 12th grades, represent different congregations or youth groups, vary in gender, and vary in level of participation in their local Jewish organizations and programming. It is important to have a broad group of students who can speak to the various aspects of spiritual education in the community and can also explain what has turned them away from being involved.

The model of a retreat is also quite purposeful. Retreats are a very unique mode for engaging in spiritual education and carry many benefits that are different from spirituality in the classroom. Religious school is often viewed as the antithesis of the Jewish camping experience that gives campers a sense of excitement about integrating Jewish meaning and practice into their lives. Retreats are a unique opportunity because they are a briefer way of creating that environment. Using retreats as a medium to explore transformation and spirituality can impact the way educators and clergy bring their experience back into the classroom, incorporating the feel of camp and retreats that create a vulnerable safe space for students. Also, using a retreat can help model for educators and clergy the opportunity to take their teens on a retreat that helps to "provide a forum to process the knowledge taught during the [school] years."[191] Retreats create an opportunity for relationship-building between participants, and allow them to be more vulnerable with one another. This vulnerability creates a fertile space for growth. The

[191] Moshe Ben Lev, "Avirah-Ruchani -- Creating a 'Spritual Atmosphere' for Jeiwsh Teens," *CCAR Journal: The Reform Jewish Quarterly*, Sacred Education and Spiritual Learning, 61, no. 1 (Winter 2014), 68.

retreat also utilizes a new space that is unfamiliar to participants that allows them a fresh lens through which to deepen their spiritual exploration.

The programming represented here is one format for doing such a retreat. This format assumes that this is the first retreat that the group of participants has done on this topic and that it is happening at the end of the summer and prior to beginning a new religious school year. However, congregations and Jewish communal leaders are encouraged to go on a regular, perhaps annual, retreat to reexamine themselves and build upon their resources for the sacred education of teens. Thus, the following retreat explores a basic format to begin this discussion and lay the foundation work for nurturing the spiritual transformation of clergy and educators. This model should be shaped by the leaders, however, to best suit the community they are working with. Many of the activities that will be included in various sessions (and also laid out more fully in the appendices) are created so that they could be lifted directly from this work and used with teens. However, it is important that educators and clergy explore each resource to determine if it would best suit their group of students and how to make sure to accommodate different types of learners.

The retreat will also model and make use of silent space. After evening programming on Friday through lunch on Saturday, and again after evening programming on Saturday through the closing program on Sunday, participants will be asked to refrain from communicating with each other (verbally or nonverbally) or with anyone else not at the retreat (refraining from texts, emails, phone calls, Skype, etc. and use of technology). This is so that participants have time to journal and sit with themselves and their feelings

as they explore their own spiritual journeys over the weekend. It is important that participants respect this silent time for themselves and for others on the retreat so that they may truly reflect upon their learning and recognize the importance of silence in spiritual education. Through meditation, silence, reflection, and group discussion, the retreat will push participants to go on their own spiritual journey so they may authentically be able to create transformational learning environments for their teens.

**Retreat Schedule**

**Friday**

4:30 pm Arrival and Check-in begins
5:30 Welcome and Introduction
6:00 Short meditation/Journaling time
6:30 Teen Panel
7:30 Dinner
8:30 Shabbat Services
9:00 Session 1 - Setting the Stage
10:00 Goodnight/Silent time

**Saturday**

7:00 am Orientation to Torah Yoga Meditation
8:00 Breakfast/ walking and journaling time
9:00 Morning Services
10:00 Stretch Break
10:15 Creative Exploration of Self
11:30 Stretch break
11:45 Session 3 - Body and nature through meditation
1:00 pm Lunch and Free Time [Speaking welcomed after this point]
2:30 Meditation hike (optional)
3:30 Tea, Coffee, Snack break
4:15 Session 3 - Making midrash
5:30 Stretch break
5:45 Session 4 - Who am I? Who are you?
7:30 Dinner
8:30 Havdalah
9:00 Dessert and social time
10:00 Goodnight/ Silent time

**Sunday**

7:00 Sitting Meditation
8:00 Breakfast/ walking and journaling time
9:15 Reflections
11:15 Departures

## Retreat Outline

**Friday**

4:30pm Arrival and Check-in begins

- Participants will arrive at the retreat center
    - They will be greeted by the retreat leaders and will be given:
        - a name tag in a name tag holder that can go around their necks so that it may aid participants in learning each other's names
        - a schedule of the weekend with locations of events as well as when silent times
        - Any information that is important regarding the grounds of the retreat center
    - They will then be shown their rooms and able to drop off luggage and get settled in
    - They will have time explore the retreat center and grounds and get to meet other retreat participants
    - High School participants will also arrive during this time. Prior to the retreat, the teen and their guardian(s) should be informed what time they should be picked up on Friday evening. It is important that these participants be told ahead of time what the goals of the retreat are and the intentionality behind having them present.

5:30 - Welcome and Introduction

- 00:00-00:05 - Breathing together
    - Participants will be welcomed into a circular seating arrangement with just enough chairs for everyone. Seats can either be off the ground, or 'back-jacks' and cushions made for floor sitting.
        - There should be no objects obstructing the middle of the circle, except possibly a burning candle
        - Leaders should sit within the circle, like other participants, so as to not create a sense of hierarchy, but rather community.
    - Leaders will sit quietly in the circle while other participants are joining the circle.
        - Ask participants to take a few moments to close their eyes, sit quietly, and take a few deep breaths. Give participants about a 3-4 count to breathe in as well as out.

- "Deep breath, and out. Deep breath in again, and out. One more deep breathe in, and now out. Now breathe regularly for a few moments and clear your mind."
- Give participants a couple minutes to just sit and breathe.
- "When you are ready, open your eyes slowly and join us for our first session."

- 00:05-00:15 - Welcome and meeting each other
    - After the meditation, once everyone's eyes are opened, leaders thank them for taking part and being there. Leaders will the introduce themselves and will introduce the location and any important individuals relating to the retreat location.
    - Then leaders will ask participants to go around the circle and introduce themselves to the group and tell the group what congregation/organization they are affiliated with.
- 00:15-00:25 - Setting the stage: Important information
    - Leaders will pass out journals to each participant and will explain that they can use the journals however they want to explore their journey over the weekend.
        - Journals should be used to reflect upon activities during the retreat as well as how they could be used in a religious school classroom
        - Participants can also use the journal to explore their own feelings and reactions to silence, nature, and spiritual experience.
    - Leaders will explain that there will be silent time from the end of the evening program through the end of morning programs and that participants are encouraged to journal during these times. Cell phones should stay in rooms during the day.
        - They will clarify that participants should try to refrain from verbal and nonverbal communication with each other as well as through technology with those not at the retreat. This will be to really help with the spiritual journey, as well as pushing participants to explore their own sense of Shabbat.
        - It should also be explained that the leaders, and group, respect that some individuals may have extenuating circumstances and if that is the case, they should step into their rooms to make calls or use cell phones
    - Leaders will explain use of the kitchen and plans for food throughout the weekend, as well as the ability to walk the grounds. (This will all depend on caterer and retreat center).
- 00:25-00:30 Questions and wrap up
    - Leaders will ask if participants have any questions regarding the retreat.
    - Leaders will explain that if participants have any questions regarding the weekend they can come to the leaders at any time.

6:00 Short meditation/Journaling time

- 00:00-00:30 Meditation and journaling time
    - Participants will be instructed to take some silent time to journal and meditate on where they are at the beginning of this journey and what they seek to gain from the retreat.
    - They should find a comfortable and thoughtful space to work and they will reconvene in 30 minutes.

6:30 Teen Panel

- 00:00-00:03 Intro to panel
    - Leader will welcome the students and thank them for being there on behalf of the group. Leader will explain that students are there to help give participant insight to what teenagers are thinking about regarding spirituality.
- 00:03-00:20 Panelist introductions
    - Panelists will take a few minutes each to introduce themselves and their involvement in Jewish life.[192]
- 00:20-00:55 - Questions for panelists
    - Leaders will start off the questioning of the panelists with the following questions:
        - What experiences have they had that were spiritual?
        - What would they like to learn regarding spirituality?
        - What might help them with their lives outside of the synagogue/ Jewish communal life?
        - What has been unsuccessful regarding your Jewish spiritual education?
    - Once a few questions have been asked and conversation is going, leaders should invite participants to ask questions.
- 00:55-01:00 - Wrap up
    - Leaders will thank students for being here and tell the participants that they are encouraged to keep the discussion going during dinner.

7:30 Dinner

- Blessings are to be said as a group before getting food
    - Prayer sheet with alternate *Birkat Hamazon* to be sung together afterwards
        - See Appendix A

[192] Panelist should be briefed well in advance of the retreat of the topic or the retreat and what some of the opening questions might be so that they offer their best answers.

8:30 Shabbat Services

- Chairs, and/or ground pillows and back-jacks will be seated in a circle for participants
- Prayer books will be available as participants enter the room.

- Services should be started with a *niggun*, a wordless melody, leader should sing this quietly as they draw participants to join in. Once it is clear that all participants have picked up on the melody, the leader may lead them into a secondary part of the *niggun.* Once participants are comfortable with the second part, they can once again move back to the first more quickly and loudly. Leaders should do their best to be in tune with the energy of the group so that they can hear when people are being energized by the music and when it is time to slow the piece down and become more quiet and as they move into candle lighting.
    - *[Note: The* niggun *chosen at as the opening* niggun *should be used throughout the service, underneath sections that are read, and also to close the service together. This creates a unified musical theme of the service and allows participants to feel connected throughout even if they are not as familiar with other melodies]*
- The Friday evening service is highly musical, and so this service will make use of music and chant as a means by which to engage in prayer differently. Leaders should choose moving melodies to connect the whole service, and when *iyunim* or readings are shared, a leader should lightly hum the *niggun* underneath.
- After *niggun,* leaders should explain that this service will be an exploration of connecting to Shabbat through music and chant. They may move around in their seats, or get up and move as the music moves them. They are asked to explore prayer through this musical meditation and try something that may be different from what they are comfortable with.
- *Yiram Hayam*
    - Chanting this Psalm text asks participants to try the model of chanting early in the service and asks them to focus on a text they may not have often thought about in Kabbalat Shabbat services.
    - Rabbi Shefa Gold's chant of this text should be utilized and can be found at:

•*http://www.rabbishefagold.com/that-roar/*

        - Appendix B includes handout that Rabbi Gold wrote up about this chant and should be handed out to participants as a piece that will help them open themselves to the text in a different way.
- *Hashkiveynu*
    - Chanting this Psalm text asks participants to return to chant and asks them to focus on a text for which they may have heard melodies previously, but to connect to it in a new way.
    - Rabbi Shefa Gold's chant of this text should be utilized and can be found at:
        - *http://www.rabbishefagold.com/sukkat-shalom/*

        - Appendix B includes handout that Rabbi Gold wrote up about this chant and should be handed out to participants as a piece that will help them open themselves to the text in a different way.
- *Amidah*
    - The *amidah* section of the service should feel quite different from the rest of the service. It is a time that will bring participants back to silence after their experience with such musical prayer.
        - The leader should ask participants to rise when they approach this section and to spread out around the room, to windows if possible (this depends on the retreat center), and take their time silently to explore this section of the service. The leader should let participants know that once the participants are done with this section, they should return to their seat in the circle.
        - The opening of the *amidah, "Adonai Sefatai Tiftach…"* should be led aloud, and then participants should continue along on their own.
    - Once all participants are seated, a repetitive melody of *Oseh shalom* or *Yihiyu L'ratzon* should be utilized to bring participants back into musical prayer together.
- Closing
    - The service should be closed similarly to how it began. Leaders should quietly begin the *niggun* and grow louder and faster as participants join in. Once all have shared in the *niggun* together for a few rounds, the leaders should bring the *niggun* back to a slower and quieter place as they draw the service to a close.

<u>9:00 Session 1 - Setting the stage</u>

*(Students should be dismissed before this program due to the late hour and respect for families getting them home)*

- 00:00-00:05 - Opening meditation
    - Ask participants to take a few moments to close their eyes, sit quietly, and take a few deep breaths. Give participants about a 3-4 count to breathe in as well as out.
        - "Deep breath, and out. Deep breath in again, and out. One more deep breath in, and now out. Now breathe regularly for a few moments and clear your mind."
        - Give participants a couple minutes to just sit and breathe.
        - "When you are ready, open your eyes slowly and join us for our first session."
- 00:05 - 00:40 - Exploring the purpose of the retreat
    - Explain the reasoning for the retreat to the participants:

        - Research suggest that it is crucial to train clergy and educators to themselves undergo spiritual transformation in relation to God, Judaism, and texts if we are to hope that they will inspire transformation in teenagers. This retreat is designed to help us all to gain resources so that we may undergo our own Jewish spiritual journey and have the skills to then lead our students through this journey as well. The retreat will also model for the process of spiritual education. It will focus on the core components of creating a safe space for spiritual learning, engaging in an activity the ties Jewish practice or tradition to the participants, and then going through a reflective process that both explores the effects of the activity for each person as well as its value within a the scope of working with teenagers.
        - Leaders from the various congregations/Jewish communal groups should take a moment to explain why they have joined on to this initiative of learning for their staff and model the importance they see in doing this work.
- Explain that the sessions of the weekend will model the modes of spiritual practice as well as a format to create a safe and reflective space. This format includes:
    - A meditative introduction or set induction to bring participants together to the same vulnerable but safe space.
    - An activity that is meant to show a new lens through which to engage with Jewish artifacts, texts, and traditions. Activities are meant to push the learner to reexamine and deepen their relationship to different parts of Judaism. They are also meant to be practices that participants, and thus high school students, can use at home to further their own Jewish spiritual practice.
    - Two modes of reflection should be engaged in after each activity.
        - The first is a reflection on how the activity impacted you. What issues in your life did it bring up? How did it shape your Jewish identity? How did it impact your practice? This first level of reflection will model the exploration of one's own transformation through each activity and over the course of the weekend as a whole. This will also model the reflective process that should be engaged in as we teach teens.
        - The second mode of reflection is to consider how each activity could be used in your community with your teens. What aspect may need to be tweaked? What texts might inspire them depending on the different experiences they are going through? Could this be applied in the settings I, or my coworkers, work in with teens?

        - Explain that the reflections throughout the weekend are to be done in the journals. At the end of the programs there will be time to journal about your experience with the activity. Consider the questions we have already mentioned to reflect on both modes.
            - Discuss with participants how important it is to use this opportunity for them to create space for themselves to undergo some form of spiritual transformation. This means really using the silent time to journal and reflect, to use down-time to nurture their journey. To go for walks, to pray, to meditate throughout the weekend and explore what it might be like to bring these practices into their daily lives, even in some small way.
        - Discuss the final reflection session with participants.
            - Explain that at the end of the retreat there will be a final reflection session that will ask them to look over their work from the weekend. The final reflection will also ask that as clergy and educators who work with teens, they brainstorm together how they can best implement such practices and models in the various ways they teach teens. Although silence will be utilized, it is also recognized how important the social components are of such a retreat and of working with teenagers. Building relationships is an important part of creating a safe and transformative learning environment.
- 00:40 - 00:50 - Questions and comments
    - Leaders will ask participants what it is they hope to gain during the weekend.
        - Once they have responded, the leaders will try to take these things into account and try to highlight them or incorporate them throughout the weekend.
    - Participants will then be given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments from their own experiences.
- 00:50 - 01:00 - Reflection
    - Participants will have time to write in the journals and reflect on what they have done so far as well as what they want to learn.

10:00  Goodnight/Silent time

- Participants will join together in a closing prayer of thanksgiving for the opportunity to study together and share this time together.
    - Participants will also be reminded about silent time as they head off to their rooms.

**Saturday**

7:00 am  Orientation to Torah Yoga Meditation (in the context of retreat theme)

- 00:00 - 00:05 - Getting prepared
    - Participants will be instructed to get whatever materials they will need for their Yoga practice: blocks, blanket, yoga mat. Participants should then find their place within the space and sit quietly and prepare themselves for the practice.
        - Incense or candle can be used to create a relaxing atmosphere
        - Music should be avoided so as to amplify the importance of silent space
    - Once all participants are present and quietly sitting on their mats the practice may begin.
- 00:05 - 00:12 - Jewish framing
    - Retreat leader leads a session that gives Jewish context to the yoga practice. This is in part to create the distinction between the Jewish content and yoga, which is its own practice. However, the practice of yoga can help to differently and more deeply engage in how texts from Jewish tradition relate to individuals today.
    - Leader begins with a meditation[193]:

> Begin by taking a deep breath, and exhale. Do this several times and then return to your ordinary breathing.
>
> The word *hineini* is potent with meaning in the Jewish tradition Within the Torah it is most often used to describe a state of utter readiness. The book of Exodus, for example, tells us that the shepherd Moses heard the voice of God speaking to him from a burning bush. "Moses, Moses," God called. "*Hineini,"* he replied. "Here I am" (Exodus 3:4).
>
> Moses' answer conveys his willingness to receive what will come next. He is physically present, emotionally ready, and spiritually open to the Divine.
>
> *Hineini* is a centered state of being. It means being "here" in body, mind, and spirit. It means being open to the possibility of spiritual connection.[194]
>
> We have all gathered here to become more present, as teachers, as educators, as students of life. We each are seekers, hoping to become more open to the possibility of connecting to that which is greater than us: to God, to the world, to community. Through exploring new practices, through allowing ourselves new ways to connect, we can

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[193] Nan Fink Gefen, *Discovering Jewish Meditation: Instruction & Guidance for Learning an Ancient Spiritual Practice*, (Woodstock, Vt.: Jewish Lights, 1999), 82-85.

[194] ibid, 82-83.

become more present in each moment. As we awake this morning to yoga, a practice familiar to some, and new to others, we ask ourselves to be compassionate with our own bodies as we seek to be present in this physical, mental, and spiritual way. As you are ready, turn your attention to the word *hineini.*

*Hineini.* Here I am.

Focus on *hineini.*
Repeat it silently to yourself.

*Hineini.* Here I am.

Let the word become filled with your breath.
Merge with it, so that you experience being fully present.

*Hineini.* Here I am.
Not thinking
Not accomplishing
Not doing
Just being.

*Hineini.* Here I am.
Full presence
Readiness to receive
In body
Heart
Mind
Spirit

*Hineini.* Here I am.

When your mind wanders, as it inevitably will, do not judge yourself. Simply notice where it has gone and return to *hineini.*

If you are distracted by the sounds around you, notice them and return to *hineini.*

*Hineini.* Here I am.

- 00:12 - 00:50 - Yoga practice
    - Have a trained yoga instructor lead participants through a yoga practice

- [Leader and yoga instructor should work together to choose a yoga practice style, as well as poses, that will compliment the theme and framing that the leader has chosen - in this case the concept of *hineini*, of being present.]

- 00:50 - 01:00 - Shavasana
    - During the shavasana portion of the practice, participants should be instructed to enter into the shavasana pose where they are laying comfortably on their backs with arms and legs slightly spread, relaxing and deeply breathing at the end of the practice
    - Once participants are in shavasana, they should lead the participants in a meditation that ties the framing portion of the practice back in:

> *Hineini* [can also convey] the idea of being present in the most honest, humble way. Rather than inflating the self to hide our flaws, we offer ourselves fully. We know who we are and what we have done. Yet this does not cause us to waver: We still say *hineini.*[195]
>
> *Hineini.* Here I am.
> Not thinking
> Not accomplishing
> Not doing
> Just being.
>
> *Hineini.* Here I am.
> Full presence
> Readiness to receive
> In body
> Heart
> Mind
> Spirit
>
> *Hineini.* Here I am.[196]

    - Leader and yoga instructor thank the participants for their practice and inform them that they can now get up and go to practice, taking their time as need be as they come out of the practice.

8:00 Breakfast/ walking and journaling time

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[195] Gefen, 83.

[196] ibid, 84-85.

- Participants will silently go to the dining area and engage silently in eating
    - There will be a handout with meditations for *motzi* and alternates for *birkat hamazon*
        - See appendices A and C

9:00 Morning Services

- Chairs, and/or ground pillows and back-jacks will be seated in a circle for participants
- Prayer books will be available as participants enter the room.

- Services should be started with a *niggun*, a wordless melody, leader should sing this quietly as they draw participants to join in. Once it is clear that all participants have picked up on the melody, the leader may lead them into a secondary part of the *niggun.* Once participants are comfortable with the second part, they can once again move back to the first more quickly and loudly. Leaders should do their best to be in tune with the energy of the group so that they can hear when people are being energized by the music and when it is time to slow the piece down and become more quiet.
    - This service, unlike the Friday night service, will focus more on engaging in prayer through meditation, through contemplating the prayers. For this service, the leaders should utilize the Hebrew of the service, reading slowly, considering each word.
    - Leader should explain to participants that this is the style for the service, and that they should engage with the Hebrew and English as the Hebrew is read slowly to allow for them to best understand and consider how they relate to the prayers.
- *Birkot Hashachar*
    - When *Birkot Hashachar* are reached in the service, leaders should ask participants to stand and find their own space within the room. They should then instruct participants that as each blessing is chanted, the participants should take a few moments to explore how they might embody that blessing. Leaders should give participants about 30 seconds to do this after each blessing.
        - If this activity is being done with many people who struggle with Hebrew, or with a group of teens who struggle with Hebrew, the beginning of the blessing could be chanted in Hebrew, while the second, unique, part of each blessing could be chanted in English to help clarify for the movement part of the activity.
    - For another way of meditating on the morning blessings, see appendix D
- *Sh'ma*

- A meditation before reciting *Sh'ma:*[197]

  If God exists in all life, then we humans are part of God. The Oneness of God includes us too.

  Thus the *Sh'ma* can be seen as a call to become aware of that spark of divinity within ourselves. To nourish it. To help it expand.

  And it is a call to honor the presence of holiness in all living beings, because they too are part of God. And it is a call to see the connection, the Oneness, of us all. [198]

  Breathe normally.
  Observe the gentle rise and fall of your breath.
  The sound of it entering
  the sound of it leaving.

  When you are ready, silently repeat the words of the *Sh'ma.*
  Breathe out: *Sh'ma Israel*
  Breathe in: *Adonai Eloheinu*
  Breathe out: *Adonai Ehad.*

  Focus all your attention on the sound of these words.
  Don't think about them.
  Don't analyze them.
  Don't try to figure out their meaning.

  Simply let the sounds of the words fill you.
  Let it reverberate through you.
  Receive it.
  Hear it.
  Listen.

  *Sh'ma Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Ehad.*

  Let yourself become enveloped in the sound of these holy words.
  *Sh'ma Yisrael*
  *Adonai Eloheinu*
  *Adonai Ehad.*[199]

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[197] Note: it is against some practices to take a break in the chanting going straight from *Ahahah Rabbah* through the *Sh'ma.* If this is a concern for the leaders or they believe it might be concerning to the group, this meditation can be done after *Barchu,* going into *Sh'ma* and its blessings as a way of framing the section.

[198] Gefen, 101.

[199] ibid, 102-103.

[Leader then chants:]
*Sh'ma Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Ehad.*

- *Amidah*
    - The *amidah* section of the service should feel quite different from the rest of the service. It is a time that will bring participants back to silence.
        - The leader should ask participants to rise when they approach this section and to spread out around the room, to windows if possible (this depends on the retreat center), and take their time silently to explore this section of the service. The leader should let participants know that once the participants are done with this section, they should return to their seat in the circle.
        - The opening of the *amidah, "Adonai Sefatai Tiftach…"* should be led aloud, and then participants should continue along on their own.
        - While participants are praying, leader should place a paper with *Yod-Hay-Vav-Hay* on each participant's seat. See appendix E.
    - Once all participants are seated, a melody of *Yihiyu L'ratzon* should be utilized to bring participants back into prayer together.
- Meditation after the *Amidah*
    - As participants return to their seats after the *Amidah,* have them stay seated with prayer books open to *Yihiyu L'ratzon,* picking up the paper left on their seats while they were up praying. Leader should then lead participants through this meditation on the ineffable name of God (*yod-hay-vav-hay).*

Through history many Hebrew names for God have been devised. Each one reflects a different dimension of Divine Being as we seek it. Thus we have *Adonai* as sovereign being and mighty power, *Elohim* as judge, and *Shekhinah* as the indwelling One who sustains and nourishes us.

We hold these God-names close to us, running our tongues over them, creating images of God from the sounds. But we can't do this with the name *yod-hay-vav-hay.* We can't even pronounce it.

This name is considered to be higher and more true than the others. It is sight without sound, part revealed and part unrevealed. Thus we gaze at the letters and absorb them, but we are not given the sounds, except as we experience them in the silence within.[200]

When you are ready, gaze at the Divine Name on the page. Or close your eyes and see the letters in your mind's eye.

Observe the shape of each letter.
Its height

[200] Adapted from ibid, 104-105.

Its breadth.
See the lines of the letters meeting.
See the lines of the letters diverging.

Notice how the letters fit together.
Their closeness
Their distance.

Close your eyes and trace the letters in your mind's eye.

*Yod*
*Hay*
*Vav*
*Hay*

Say the letters silently to yourself.
*Yod Hay Vav Hay*

Open to their beauty.
Explore their spaciousness.
Let them enter you.
Let yourself enter them.

This is the Divine Name of God.
The Mystery of Being
The Presence
The Name. [201]

10:00 Stretch Break

- Participants will be given time to stretch, go to the restroom, grab a snack or to sit and journal if they wish
    - Leaders will let participants know to where the next session will be and tell them that it will begin in 15 minutes.

10:15 Session 2 - Creative Exploration of Self

- 00:00-00:05 - Welcoming
    - As participants return from their break they will be welcomed by leaders into one of the larger rooms. Around the walls will be 5 giant post-it notes with

[201] Adapted from ibid, 105-106.

quotes from biblical text on them. Below each of the giant notes will be a chair with handouts of that same text. Around the floor more towards the middle of the room will be stations (as many stations as there are participants). Each station will have a large piece of white butcher block paper with a life size outline of a human body on it (these are to be prepared ahead of time). Next to the giant paper will be a few different sized paintbrushes and sponges, a watercolor set, and a cup of water to rinse brushes in (paper towels should be kept on hand).
        - Texts are in Appendix F
    - As participants enter the space, a leader will inform them that they are to look at all the texts around the room, choose one and take the piece of paper with them to their station, and follow the instructions on the bottom of the paper.
        - The handouts will inform the participants to slowly go word by word and line by line through the text and explore what feelings it evokes and where in their body that feeling or emotion is felt. As they explore each word they are to use the watercolors as they wish to explore this on the life size paper of themselves.
- 00:05 - 00:15 - Choosing of texts
    - participants will choose their text and head to a station
- 00:15 - 01:00 - Creating
    - Participants will take the time to explore and paint. If they get through one text, they can choose to continue their work and build upon it, reading it through a second time, or they can sit and mediate, or choose a second text to explore.
- 01:00 - 01:15 - Reflection
    - Leader will gently inform participants that they have 15 minutes until their next break and that they can continue on if they wish, or turn to reflecting on the activity, how it affected them, and its potential uses with teens.

<u>11:30 Stretch break</u>

- Participants will be given time to stretch, go to the restroom, grab a snack, or to sit and journal if they wish
    - Leaders will let participants know where the next session will be and tell them that it will begin in 15 minutes.

<u>11:45 Session 3 on retreat theme (meditative walking)</u>

- 00:00-00:10 - Meditation
    - Participants will gather in a room with chairs, and/or ground pillows and back-jacks in a circle for participants

- Ask participants to take a few moments to close their eyes, sit quietly, and take a few deep breaths.
    - Meditation on body image

    Take a moment now to consider your thoughts and ideas about your own body. How are you feeling right now as you consider your body image?

    You might feel neutral, unhappy, content, satisfied, frustrated, accepting, uncomfortable. It is *okay* to feel however you are feeling.

    Consider for a moment what might it be like to accept your body, just as is? What if you felt okay about your physical self? Take a few deep breaths and imagine for a few moments what that would be like.

    Think about a time in your life when you felt accepting of your physical self - your whole self, or even part of yourself.

    Which parts of your body are the easiest for you to accept? Imagine if you could accept your body as a whole, rather than as a collection of individual parts.

    You have been doing some difficult thinking these last few moments. Let's take a step back now, mentally, to relax.

    Breathe in, deeply. And breathe out. And again in, and out. One more time in, and out. Keep breathing more regularly, and take a moment to just notice your breath.

    I will now say some affirmations. You may repeat them in your mind, or just continue to breath and relax. Each affirmation is true, even though in this moment it may not seem true.

    I am okay the way I am.
    I can accept myself the way I am.
    My body is acceptable just the way it is.
    I am an okay person.
    There is no need to be perfect.
    My imperfections make me unique.
    I am perfectly alright just the way I am.

    I free myself from judging my body.
    I am okay just the way I am.
    I accept myself.

    I was made *b'tzelem elohim* (in the image of God).

    It is okay to feel however you are feeling right now, good or bad. Accept the variety of feelings you may have. Take a moment now to

just relax. Let all the worries and tension go as you breathe slowly in and out, in and out.

When you are ready to return to your waking level of consciousness, slowly leave this relaxed state you are in. Keep with you a feeling of calm, while becoming more awake and alert.[202]

- 00:10 - 00:15 - Go outside
    - Leader takes participants outside to an open space where everyone can find about a 20-foot area for themselves. Leader instructs participants to find a space where they will be comfortable walking and that gives them plenty of space away from other participants, but also within visible distance of each other.
- 00:15 - 00:55
    - Once participants are comfortably spread out, leader leads them through the following walking meditation. [Meditation should be spoken very slowly with long pauses between lines, and 3-5 minute pauses between paragraphs]

Now, breathe normally
Feel your breath enter and leave.
Notice your body receiving it and letting it go.
Keep your eyes open as you do this, and look around you.

When you are ready, begin to move in very slow motion along your path.
A good way to do this is to let your heel touch the ground first, then roll onto the ball of your foot as the other heel is raised and comes down.
Do this as slowly as you can, without causing discomfort or imbalance.[203]

Feel the ground beneath you as you move.
What do you notice?
How does your ankle have to adjust to different terrain, to different angles?
How do the muscles in your foot shape as they move over grass, or over stones.

What muscles in your leg does it take to move, to take a step?
How do you have to rebalance from one foot to the other as you move forward?

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[202] Built upon and edited from "Body Image Relaxation," *Inner Health Studio*, accessed December 1, 2014, http://www.innerhealthstudio.com/body-image.html.

[203] Gefen, 115.

Think about how your body moves through space.
How do the sun and wind feel against your skin?
Consider how many muscles and veins it takes to make each movement.

Continue along your path.
Look carefully around you as you move.
Notice the objects:
Their textures
Their lines
Their shapes
Their colors.

Each object, shimmering with holiness.
God in all creation
Unfolding.

If you stop paying attention and your mind wanders, slow down.
Fix your gaze on one thing.
Stay with it until it reveals its glory.

Take your time.
When you become distracted,
    remember to look carefully.
Name what you see.
Flower blooming,
Rock resting,
Soil generating,
Chair inviting,
White purifying,
Red vibrating,
Edge distinguishing.

Each is a gift of God.
Each is a part of creation unfolding.[204]

*[As the time of the walking meditation draws to a close:]*

*Baruch atah Adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam, hamechadesh b'chol yom tamid ma'aseh vereshit.*

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[204] ibid, 115-116.

Blessed are you, Adonai our God, ruler of the universe, who each day renews the acts of creation.

- 00:55 - 01:00 - Return inside to circle
    - Leader will ask participants to quietly make their way back indoors and to find a seat in the circle when they get there.
- 01:00 - 01:5 - Reflection
    - Leader should suggest that participants reflect on the following in their journals:
        - What did they notice during their walking meditation?
        - How did the framing meditation on body image impact the walking mediation?
        - Was it easier to meditate while walking/moving? Or more difficult?
        - How did it change the way they saw the world around them?
        - How did the framing meditation impact their walking meditation?
        - How could they see using such practices with teens?
    - Silent reflection
        - Participants are informed to go reflect and journal wherever they are most comfortable

<u>1:00 pm Lunch and Free Time</u>

- Lunch is served. Blessings are said together over the meal. Participants are informed to be in proper clothing to go hiking at 2:30pm
- Short *birkat hamazon* blessing is said together after the meal.
- Participants have down-time to spend as they wish in their rooms, journaling, or exploring the grounds.

<u>2:30 Meditation Hike (optional)</u>

- For those participants who wish, there will be a nature walk/hike that will silently take them through the grounds of the retreat center (again dependent on center and time of year). They can bring along journals so they will have time to reflect on the spiritual potential of nature.

<u>3:30 Tea, Coffee, Snack Break</u>

- Participants can go to the dining area and engage in snack
    - There will be a handout with meditations for *motzi* and alternates for *birkat hamazon*
        - See appendices A and C

<u>4:15 Session 3 - Making Midrash</u>

- 00:00-00:05 - Opening meditation
    - Chairs, and/or ground pillows and back-jacks will be seated in a circle for participants
    - There should be Plaut Torah commentaries, and Torah: *A Women's Commentary* near by the circle and ready for individuals to take.
    - Ask participants to take a few moments to close their eyes, sit quietly, and take a few deep breaths. Give participants about a 3-4 count to breathe in as well as out.
        - "Deep breath, and out. Deep breath in again, and out. One more deep breath in, and now out. Now breathe regularly for a few moments and clear your mind."
        - Give participants a couple minutes to just sit and breathe.
        - "When you are ready, open your eyes slowly and join us."
- 00:05 - 00:20 - Introduction to activity
    - Leader should discuss Midrash with participants:
        - For many years Jews have studied Midrash to explore the Bible and the hidden mysteries within. Midrash helps us to dive deeper into texts to explore the details that are not offered to reader through the biblical narrative, like what Isaac was thinking on the three-day journey with his father up Mount Moriah, or the mysteries of the creation of man and woman.
        - The creation of Midrash is still used explored as a means through which individuals can understand the narratives and find themselves within the text. Today, we will explore a biblical narrative and engage in our own process of creating Midrash, to look at the details of the text, the relationships between characters, understand how the narrative can help us on our own spiritual path.
    - The biblical narrative we will be looking at will be Exodus 1:9-2:15; 3:1-3:12 (See Plaut 346-352).
        - This text tells of the women who surrounded Moses in his earliest months. These women, who undermined Pharaoh, were ultimately the ones who led to Pharaohs downfall. We will also look at Moses in the narrative as he grows through adolescence, being brought up as Egyptian, but having his mother in the palace as a nurse maid to him, up until the time he was weaned. The last part of the text we can explore is Moses ultimately running away from Egypt to be called by God in the bush, to return to save the people. These stories tell of relationships between women, between women and authority, between women and their family, between an individual and their complex identity, and between an individual and God.
    - Use the Torah text primarily, and perhaps some help from the footnoted commentary that gives insight into the Hebrew, to help you explore these narratives. When you come across a part of the narrative that you relate to, or

that intrigues you, take time to look through word by word at that piece of the story - and then write your own midrash of what we are not told in the biblical text, a midrash that allows you to put a bit of your connection to this character, these relationships into the story.

- Whether it be the relationship between the Hebrew nursemaids, between Miriam and her little brother, between Moses' mother Yocheved and the Egyptian princess as she nurses Moses until he is old enough to be in the palace. Or perhaps explore being Moses in the basket, surrounded by 3 women who care for him, or Moses as he relates to his nationality in contradiction to his status in the palace, or Moses as he is told by God that he is being chosen to return.
    - Explore what resonates with you, regardless of gender. Be creative with your narrative, explore the mystery of this narrative and uncover where you are within the text.

- 00:20 - 01:00 - Time to create
    - Participants are instructed to quietly take a commentary and find a comfortable place for them to write, meditate, and think about their relationship to these text and characters.
- 01:00 - 01:15
    - Leader instructs participants to take time to reflect once they have reached a good stopping place.
        - They should take time in their journals to reflect upon the following:
            - How did they feel doing this activity?
            - Did it help illuminate anything new about yourself? If so what?
            - How did it help you to look at the biblical text in a new way?
            - How did approaching the text in this way help you to feel connected to a chain of Jewish tradition?
            - How did this activity help you to explore how Jewish texts could impact your daily life?
            - How could you see using this activity with your teens?

<u>5:30 Stretch break</u>

- Participants will be given time to stretch, go to the restroom, grab a snack, or to sit and journal if they wish
    - Leaders will let participants know where the next session will be and tell them that it will begin in 15 minutes.

<u>5:45 Session 4 - Who am I? Who are you?</u>

- 00:00-00:05 - Opening meditations
    - After the break, have participants move into a large room with no chairs. When considering rooms for this activity, perhaps look for rooms with more than one exit for participants so that if they feel uncomfortable at any time they can leave the room with a facilitator. The room must be large enough for participants and facilitators to make a large circle on the outside and also be able to step into the middle of the room to make a smaller circle. For the beginning of the activity they may be sitting in a big circle.
    - Ask participants to take a few moments to close their eyes, sit quietly on the ground, and take a few deep breaths. Give participants about a 3-4 count to breathe in as well as out.
        - “Deep breath, and out. Deep breath in again, and out. One more deep breath in, and now out. Now breathe regularly for a few moments and clear your mind.”
        - Give participants a couple minutes to just sit and breathe.
        - “When you are ready, open your eyes slowly and join us.”
- 00:05-01:05 - Large Group Step-in
    - Explain activity:
        - Stand in a big circle
        - This activity is done in total silence.
        - Make sure everyone can see each other in the circle. Explain to everyone that this program is an opt-in program; at any point in the program they may seek out a facilitator to take time to reflect quietly or discuss. The program is intense and vulnerable. During the program they will be asked about their identity. They do not *need* to act in a way that allows others to know how they identify. It is their choice how they choose to open up about how much they show to others about their identity. If they feel uncomfortable they may choose to answer differently than they might really feel, or step out with a facilitator.
        - Explain that you will be reading numerous statements. If the statement applies to them, they should step into the circle and join others like themselves. If the statement does not apply, they should remain on the outside of the circle. When they step in, they are to look around the inner circle trying to make eye contact with all of those people who are similar to them. Then they will be asked to turn around to look into as many eyes as they can of those who are in the outside circle.
        - Tell them they should not ask questions about what each statement means. Everyone must define for themselves what certain questions mean and they must decide for themselves whether to self- identify or not. Explain that there should not be any discussion about why they choose to step into the circle (or not step in) during the exercise,

but there will be time at the end to discuss. (remind again - it is a silent program).
        - Emphasize the importance of creating a safe space, maintaining confidentiality, and being non- judgmental. Ensure everyone that the exercise is completely voluntary and that if they are not comfortable self-identifying with a particular statement, they should feel free not to step into the circle. However, encourage them to challenge themselves and go beyond their comfort levels during this exercise.
        - This is a place of trust, we don't share what we learn from within this circle, if you don't feel comfortable standing up for something - that is okay, you don't have to.
- Have a demonstration round with facilitators.
    - "If you are one of the facilitators please step into the circle"
    - Facilitators step in. Please look at everyone who is within the circle. After they do such: please turn around and look at those who are not inside this circle. After a few moments as they do this: please step back.
    - We are now going to begin. Please respect the space, the silence, but mostly - each other.
- Statements for activity:
    - I am Jewish
    - I am a leader
    - I am close with most of my family
    - I identify myself as agnostic or atheist
    - I identify myself as spiritual, but not religious
    - I have attended a religious or spiritual service that is not of my own religious/spiritual identity
    - I consider myself an American
    - I consider myself an older sibling
    - I consider myself a younger sibling
    - I consider myself as coming from a 'non-average' American family
    - I consider myself as coming from a dual-parent home
    - I consider myself as coming from a single-parent home
    - I consider myself as coming from an interfaith home
    - I consider myself a good student
    - I consider myself an average student
    - I am a Geek or techy
    - I am part of the popular crowd
    - Take a step if you've ever been put down by someone else.
    - Upper middle class
    - Lower middle class

- I had “enough” growing up as a child (however you define “enough”)
- I had “more than enough” growing up as a child (however you define “enough”)
- I had “less than enough” growing up as a child (however you define “enough”)
- I have a physical disability
- I have a hidden disability (physical or learning)
- I am comfortable with my body
- Take a step if you've ever thought something really mean and critical about yourself, like “I’m fat, stupid or ugly.”
- Take a step if you've ever been teased because of how you look
- Take a step if you’ve ever been teased because of where you come from
- Take a step if you’ve ever been teased because of your race or ethnicity, background or economic status.
- Heterosexual
- Cisgendered (Explain - someone whose biological sex DOES align with their gender identity [as opposed to trans identities])
- Queer
- Gay
- Lesbian
- Unsure/questioning/not fully heterosexual
- As conforming to how society views gender roles
- As non-conforming to how society views gender roles
- I am an ally to lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered people
- I have felt discriminated against on the basis of my gender, race or ethnicity, religion, ability or disability, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status
- Take a step if you have ever known a person who’s been abused in some way.
- Take a step if you’re proud of something you’ve done. Take a step if you you've ever been the victim of a rumor or gossiped about by your friends.
- Take a step if you love something about yourself.
- Take a step if you've ever felt like no one cared about you.
- I have felt ashamed of myself because of my body, my intellect or education, or my family
- A friend
- Take a step if you’ve ever stood up for someone who was being hurt in some way.
- Take a step if you have a dream, a life’s passion, a goal.

        - Take a step if you believe you're valuable or sacred.
- 01:10-01:30 - Group reflection
    - A moment of silence for everyone to just sit where they are standing and let the activity sink in.
    - What does this activity show us? What did you learn about each other?
    - This activity shows us that we're not alone; many of us have experienced disrespect and self-respect, too. Also, when one person is disrespected—or spreads respect—it can "touch" all of us, affect all of us.
- What did it feel like to step into the circle? What was it like not to be in the circle?
    - After this program how do you understand the holiness of others?
    - We all have different backgrounds that we come from.
    - Sometimes we have connections to others that we didn't know we had.
    - By show of hands, who learned something about someone else they didn't know before this program?
    - How does this shift your thoughts about these various identities? About how you choose language with respect to those around you?
    - In every interaction, in everything we say, do, or even hear - we must be conscious of all the things we just revealed about each ourselves and learned about each other. Teens hear things regularly in school and elsewhere that show a lack of understanding and thought about this: "That's so gay" "That's retarded" - We, and they, have to think about it and recognize that what we say and what others say without thinking could hurt someone, could be extremely insensitive, because we don't always know their backgrounds.
    - We each are unique, we each have stories, baggage, and we will continue to grow and gain more layers to the way we identify our selves.
    - We are each strangers in some way, unique in our stories and experiences, and when we see someone else struggling, or being bullied, harassed, names or labels being used negatively, we must consider the way this impacts those who, have different stories, different backgrounds, different identity baggage then our own.
    - A few verses after Lev. 19 where we are told to love our neighbor as ourself, we read:

כְּאֶזְרָח מִכֶּם יִהְיֶה לָכֶם הַגֵּר הַגָּר אִתְּכֶם וְאָהַבְתָּ לוֹ כָּמוֹךָ כִּי גֵרִים הֱיִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם.

> The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I the LORD am your God.

    - In this chapter, we are told that the whole of the Israelite community shall be holy, we have been taught to love our neighbor, and now we are taught to love the *ger,* the stranger amongst us, as ourselves. We are taught to do this because we too were once strangers in a strange land. We were not treated

well - and so we are taught to make sure that we are welcoming, and loving to those who are the different from us.
        - Remember to look upon each other with eyes that recognize they only see part of the greater whole. Recognize that you only know part of the story. We are each holy beings, but many of us, as we saw just now, struggle about feeling appreciated, or about understanding our value, in seeing our own holiness.
- 01:30 - 01:45 - Journaling and reflection
    - Take your journals and write how you felt about this activity.
    - How did it change your understanding of loving your neighbor?
    - How did it change your understanding of holiness?
    - Were there any things that came up about your own identity that surprised you?
    - Were there any things that comforted you to see during this program?
    - How did this program possibly change the way you interact with others and care for them?
    - How could you use this program with your teens?

<u>7:30 Dinner</u>

- Blessings are to be said as a group before getting food
    - Prayer sheet with alternate *Birkat Hamazon* to be sung together afterwards
        - See Appendix A

<u>8:30 *Havdalah*</u>

- Participants will gather outside by a fire pit for *havdalah*
    - Leaders will instruct them to stand in a circle around the fire pit. Guitar should be utilized to lead *havdalah* blessings and prayers before and afterward.
        - *Layehudim* could be sung as participants gather together and arrangee into a circle.
        - Candles should be passed out to each participant as they enter with cups at the bottom to protect their hands from wax.
    - As the *havdalah* blessings begin, and the *havdalah* candle is lit, the *havdalah* candle is used to light one participant's candle, and then around the circle each participant lights the candle of the person next to them. This is continued until all participants candles are lit
        - If it is windy - forget this activity, and instead have participants join hands as they pray together
- While a guitar plays the music of the *havdalah* blessings, while people light their candles or gather together, the leader should offer an *iyun* about sacred separation, about how during this retreat they have separated from the ordinary into the sacred.

        - i.e.: This Shabbat we have taken time to separate ourselves from our lives, from technology, from the buzz and busyness. We have stopped, meditated, listened, explored and reflected within ourselves and with each other. As we enter into *havdalah*, blessings marking that liminal state between sacred and everyday, let us consider also how we may bring what we have learned, what we have practiced, what we have explored - into our daily lives and into our classrooms.
- *Havdalah* blessings are sung, as the final blessing (*hamavdil being kodesh l'chol)* is sung and the *havdalah* candle is extinguished, leaders model that participants should blow out their own candles.
- Prayers for after the *havdalah* blessings are sung such as Eliyahu HaNavi and Shavua Tov.
- Participants are informed they now have down-time to interact and have desert.

9:00 Dessert and social time

- Participants will be given social down-time to use as they wish, to get to know each other, or to go journal or walk the grounds.
    - Dessert will be available

10:00 Goodnight/ Silent time

- Participants will join together in a closing prayer of thanksgiving for the opportunity to study together and share this time together
    - Participants will also be reminded about silent time as they head off to their rooms

**Sunday**

7:00 Sitting Meditation

- 00:00-00:05 - Opening meditation
    - Chairs, and/or ground pillows and back-jacks will be seated in a circle for participants
    - Ask participants to take a few moments to close their eyes, sit quietly, and take a few deep breaths. Give participants about a 3-4 count to breathe in as well as out.
        - "Deep breath, and out. Deep breath in again, and out. One more deep breath in, and now out. Now breathe regularly for a few moments and clear your mind."
        - Give participants a couple minutes to just sit and breathe.
        - "When you are ready, open your eyes slowly and join us."

- 00:05 - 00:20 - Meditation 1
    - Leader informs participants that this morning they will be exploring longer sitting meditations. These can be difficult, as they ask us to continue to let go of thoughts that pass through our mind, and return back to our breath or to a centering theme.
    - For this first practice we will use our breath to return our minds to our practice as thoughts lead us astray. So when you notice you have followed a thought, be gentle with yourself, acknowledge the thought or emotion, let it go - and return to the practice of sensing your breath. We will now take about 15 minutes to meditate silently. Find a comfortable position. Close your eyes. Focus on your breath.
        - Notice how your breath feels as it goes in through your nose, down through your throat, into your lungs lifting your chest and diaphragm and then once again up and out through your nose.
        - Continue to focus on your breath as you ease into meditation.
- 00:20 - 00:50 - Meditation 2
    - Leader gently congratulates participants on their 1st longer sitting meditation. For this practice they will again stay seated in a comfortable position. For this longer meditation they may choose to either use their breath as a centering theme or a Jewish word or line of text as something they will come back to, to frame their practice. They can choose a text that has meaning to them, or use one of the following examples.
        - Examples of Jewish words or texts to use:
            - *Shalom* - wholeness
            - *Rachamim* - compassion
            - *Chesed* - loving-kindness
            - *Sh'ma* - listening
            - *Yihiyu L'ratzon* - A text from the end of the *amidah* that, in full, reads "May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to you, oh God, my Rock, and my Redeemer."
            - *Adonai S'fatai tiftach* - A text from the introduction of the *amidah* that means "Adonai, open up my lips"
- 00:50 - 01:00 - Reflection
    - Participants should be instructed to now take time to silently reflect in their journals about this exercise:
        - What was it like doing a longer meditation?
        - What thoughts continued to cross your mind?
        - Was it difficult to put your thoughts a side and just quiet your mind?
        - What was it like to use a Jewish text as a guiding theme?
            - How did that frame your practice?
        - How could you use this practice with teens? How might it be helpful to them?

8:00 Breakfast/ walking and journaling time

- Participants will silently go to the dining area and engage silently in eating
    - There will be a handout with meditations for *motzi* and alternates for *birkat hamazon*
        - See appendices A and C

9:15 Reflections

- 00:00-00:05 - Gathering
    - Chairs, and/or ground pillows and back-jacks will be seated in a circle for participants
    - Ask participants to take a few moments to close their eyes, sit quietly, and take a few deep breaths. Give participants about a 3-4 count to breathe in as well as out.
        - “Deep breath, and out. Deep breath in again, and out. One more deep breath in, and now out. Now breathe regularly for a few moments and clear your mind.”
        - Give participants a couple minutes to just sit and breathe.
        - “When you are ready, open your eyes slowly and join us.”
- 00:05 - 00:25 - Reflecting on one’s own
    - Leaders will instruct participants to take some time to go through their journals of the weekend and to look at the journey they have made, and what they have reflected upon throughout the retreat. They should take time to then consider their journey and write a new reflection about their whole experience. Participants can take time to spread out around the space to find a comfortable place to reflect. They should be informed that they will have 20 minutes and should return at that time for the next portion of the activity.
    - While participants are journaling, leaders should quietly set up the room for the second part of the activity - posting pre-made giant post-its around the room with the questions already on them and lots of space to put responses (see next section for questions).
        - These can also be put up before the program begins if there is a concern that putting them up during reflection may be distracting in a smaller room. The suggestion to do it during the reflection period is so that participants do not start reading the questions ahead of time, distracting them from their own reflection. Another option is to post the question beforehand but cover them with another giant post it as to be less distracting.
- 00:30- 00:55 - Group silent reflection
    - Once participants return to the circle, they will be given a small stack of regular sized post-it notes, or the slightly larger lined post-it-notes.

- Leader will instruct them to silently go around the room and look at the questions on the wall. The participants are to write their responses to the question on post-it notes and then post them onto the giant post-it note. Participants can go in whatever order they want and can skip questions to come back to them later. Once they have reflected on all of the questions, they should go around the room again and look at the reflections of the other participants. Once they are done they should return to their seats in the circle.
- Questions:
    - What spoke to you most?
    - What made you disconnect?
    - What was a moment you felt clarity?
    - What was a moment you felt connected to something greater?
    - When was a moment when you felt connected to another person?
    - Are you hoping to incorporate any of these practices into your life? If so, which one?
    - Did any of the activities impact how you viewed Judaism?
    - How has your personal Jewish identity been impacted through these programs?

- 00:55 - 01:30 - Discuss reflections
    - Once participants are back seated, leaders ask them to share their individual reflections.
        - If conversation moves smoothly from this reflection to the reflections around the room, then work from that momentum.
        - If not, leaders should help transition the group to their reflections on the questions around the room.
    - Once participants have had a thorough opportunity to discuss these reflections, leaders should move onto the topic of bringing spiritual transformation into the classrooms or other educational settings with their teens.
        - Leaders can ask prompts such as:
            - How could these activities and models from this retreat be used with teens in various educational settings?
            - We know that what teens face at home with parents and siblings regarding Jewish practice has a huge impact on their own attitude toward Jewish learning. With this in mind, how can or should we bridge this work with their families and parents at home?
- 01:30 - 01:40 - Closing meditation and prayer
    - Once participants have had time to discuss and share, leader should ask them to close their eyes so that they may meditate together one last time.
    - Ask participants to take a few moments to close their eyes, sit quietly, and take a few deep breaths. Give participants about a 3-4 count to breathe in as well as out.

- "Deep breath, and out. Deep breath in again, and out. One more deep breath in, and now out. Now breathe regularly for a few moments and clear your mind."
- Give participants a couple minutes to just sit and breathe.
- After a couple minutes ask participants to stand and lead them in a prayer of gratitude that touches upon various activities, or moments from the retreat:
    - i.e.: Thank you for this opportunity to learn and study together. Thank you all for bringing of yourselves, sharing your reflections, your passion for teaching, and your own transformation. Thank you for making this retreat possible, for without each of you this retreat would not have quite been the same. Through art, and story, through text and prayer, you all helped to create open and safe space for each other to explore themselves and how they connect to Judaism in a different way. Thank you for helping to explore how we might reach to our students to help them to engage with Judaism, to help them as they go on their own journeys of growth, struggle, and joy. May we go forward from this retreat remembering the gifts we both shared and received through our work together.

- 01:40 - 01:45 - Goodbyes
    - Leaders thank participants for being part of the retreat and for sharing of themselves and creating an open space for everyone to be vulnerable.
    - Leaders give out their own contact information so that participants may be in touch if they wish. Leaders also encourage participants to share contact information so they can continue to work together and use each other as resources in their work with teens.

<u>11:15  Lunch and Departures</u>

- Participants will be given lunch and the opportunity to eat there or start departing as they need.
- Lunch will be provided
- Participants will return linens, keys, etc. as is require by the retreat center.

## Appendix A

Alternates to *Birkat Hamazon*:

**Grace - Cantor Benjie Ellen Schiller**

Holy One, Holy One, Holy One of Blessing
You nourish the world with goodness and sustain it with grace.
Holy One, because of you, the earth yields its fruit
For you sustain and strengthen all that lives.
We thank You, God, for all Your gifts
And praise You as all who live shall praise You
May we be worthy of peace
Holy One, Holy One, Your presence fills creation
May we be worthy of peace

**From the Sephardic liturgy of Birkat Hamazon** (Based on Talmud Berachot 40b)

Mah she-achalnu yihiyeh l'sova
u-mah she-shatinu yihiyeh lir'fuah
u-mah she-hotarnu yihiyeh liv'rachah

מה שאכלנו יהיה לשובע
ומה ששתינו יהיה לרפואה
ומה שהותרנו יהיה לברכה

B'rich rachamana, malka de'alma
marey d'hai pita

That which we ate, may it satiate us;
And that which we drank, may it give us good health;
And that which is left over, may we see it as a blessing;

Blessed are You, Source of Mercy, for You are the master of this bread.[205]

[205] "Grace After Meals Meditation," *Ritualwell*, accessed December 1, 2014, http://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/grace-after-meals-meditation.

## Appendix B

Rabbi Shefa Gold Chant Handouts:

**That Roar - Yiram Hayam[206]**

# That Roar

by Rabbi Shefa Gold

Yiram hayam um'lo'o, tevel v'yoshvay vah. (Psalm 98:7)

יִרְעַם הַיָּם וּמְלֹאוֹ תֵּבֵל וְיֹשְׁבֵי בָהּ

The sea in its fullness will roar, (also) the world and all its inhabitants.

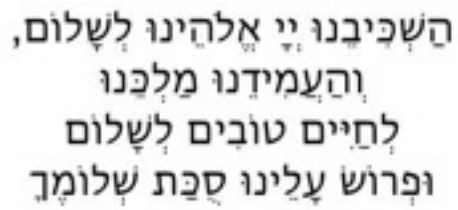
While walking on the beach in Los Angeles, I listened to the great roar of the ocean and felt it as wilderness. The message of that roar cut through the thin veneer of civilization. I realized that just as the seas cover 70% of our planet, the waters within me also constituted 70% of my seemingly solid body. I felt a kinship with the ocean, and I heard that roar within me. I saw that all of our constructed reality- the inhabited world – was dwarfed in comparison with that vast wilderness that edged across my toes. As I listened to the roar of the ocean, I opened to the roar of our human lives surrounded like islands by the great sea of Oneness.

This is a practice of opening to the wild, oceanic, wondrous expanse, so that we might tap into that immense energy as the source of our creativity.

[206] Rabbi Shefa Gold, "That Roar: Yiram," *Rabbi Shefa Gold*, accessed December 20, 2014, http://www.rabbishefagold.com/that-roar/.

**Sukkat Shalom: Hashkiveynu Adonay**

Hashkiveynu Adonay Eloheynu L'Shalom
V'Ha'amideynu Malkeynu
L'Chayyim Tovim L'Shalom
Uf'ros Aleynu Sukkat Sh'lomecha




Oh Lord, Our God, Let us lie down in Peace
Our King, raise us up again to Good Life and Peace
Spread over us a Shelter of Peace. (Liturgy)

This prayer, Hashkiveynu, is considered to be an extension of the Geula, our prayer for Redemption. We cannot be free as a people unless we do the work of liberation each night as we face our fears of the dark, of the unknown, of the enemy within and without.

We do this work by attuning ourselves to the shelter of Peace that is spread over the whole of Life, regardless of passing circumstance.

We have no control over the forms of our life that are always passing away, always changing. That constant flux can be frightening. And when we live from fear, we don't have access to the depths of our wisdom and the breadth of our love.

And so the practice of Hashkiveynu reminds us of that abiding Presence of Wholeness and Peace that holds all of us within its loving embrace, no matter how the forms of Life come and go.[207]

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[207] Rabbi Shefa Gold, "Sukkat Shalom: Hashkiveynu Adonay," *Rabbi Shefa Gold*, accessed December 20, 2014, http://www.rabbishefagold.com/sukkat-shalom/.

## Appendix C

Meditations for a Mindful *Motzi:*[208]

It is written in the *Shulhan Aruch, Orah Hayyim* 123:1 that a person's intention while eating, drinking and performing all of his [or her] other physical and material needs, should be to gather strength in order to serve the Creator, and thus fulfill the verse, "In all your ways know God" (Prov. 3:6). (Kedushat Levi)

Our father Jacob served God with his particular attribute, which is *Tiferet* (Beauty)[209]. Hence, whatever he said, heard, did or ate, he derived from it a lesson for the glorification (*hitpa'er*) of the Creator. For instance, when he ate something delicious, he considered that the food was created, and who then instilled the good taste if not the Creator. (R. Elimelekh of Lizhensk).

As we make ready to eat this food
We remember with gratitude
The people, animals, plants, insects,
Creatures of the sky and sea
Air and water, fire and earth
All turning in the wheel of living and dying
Whose joyful exertion
Not separate from ours
provides our sustenance this day.

May we with the blessing of this food
Join our hearts
To the one heart of the world
In awareness and love
And may we together with everyone
Realize the path of awakening
And never stop making effort
For the benefit of others. (Norman Fisher)

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech Ha'olam, hamotzi lechem min ha-aretz.*
or
*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech Ha'olam, shehakol niheyeh bidvaro.*
or

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[208] Institute for Jewish Spirituality. *Meditations for a Mindul Motzi.* Handout. June 2014.

[209] Referring to the *sephirot,* the Kabbalistic understanding of the 10 attributes/emanations through which God reveals Godself both in the physical world and in metaphysical realms.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech Ha'olam, borei peri ha'adamah.*
or
*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech Ha'olam, borei peri ha'eytz.*

## Appendix D

Body Awareness Meditation for Morning Prayer:[210]
By Rabbi David Dunn Bauer

MEDITATION:
If you feel comfortable, please stand and let your eyes gently close. Let your breath be gentle and natural.

Notice how you are aware of light even through your closed eyelids. Colors, sparks, shades.

Let your awareness go to what you hear. With your eyes closed, how much of the world can you perceive through your ears. Your breath, your neighbor's, the traffic, the air conditioning....

Mindful of your safety, let your weight shift from one foot to the other. God is the roka ha'aretz al hamayim, who puts solid earth under our feet.

With compassion, let your eyes gently open. Notice how your perception of light has changed in the last few minutes. Notice light, color, shapes, architecture, fashion, faces. God is the poke'akh ivrim.

Shrug or shimmy, move to feel the friction of your clothes against your skin. God is the malbish arumim, who clothes the naked. Let yourself feel all that sensation, now and throughout the service.

Mindful of your neighbor's well-being, lift your arms up to your sides. Rotate your arms. Check all your joints. God frees the captive, matir asurim. How are you free to move today? Where is there restriction?

Bending your knees slightly, allow your head to tilt forward. Roll forward vertebrae by vertebrae. Let yourself double over as far as you can without any pain or discomfort. Roll back up, one vertebrae at a time. God is the zokef kefufim, who straightens up those who are bent over.

Let that movement continue to carry you upward, onto your toes as we do during the kedushah. Reach up towards the heavens. God makes firm our steps.

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[210] 1. Rabbi David Dunn Bauer, "Body Awareness Meditation for Morning Prayer," *Ritualwell*, accessed December 20, 2014, http://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/body-awareness-meditation-morning-prayer.

Settle back down into your feet. Feel all four corners of your feet firmly settled into your shoes. This blessing, she' asah li kol tzorki, God who meets my needs, was originally for the privilege of wearing shoes. It can also be translated, "God who creates all my needs." Everything we need or desire is a function of our nature as created by God. Breathe into that possibility.

With your next inhalation, tense or flex every muscle in your body. Feet, legs, thighs, tuchus, groin, gut, chest, arms, all the muscles in your face. Feel your strength. Hold your breath and feel your strength, your gevurah.

As you exhale, allow everything to relax as you feel your blood flow, your breath slide out, your radiant energy infuse your whole being. God crowns us with tifarah, with splendor.

Now the hard part. What is some aspect of yourself you find beautiful or that someone you love loves about you. Perhaps it's of your physical self, your intellect, your emotional self, your body, your mind, your spirit. Close your eyes, everyone. [WAIT for that!] Place your hands someplace on your body that you associate with that Divine beauty, that reflection of God. Breathe gently and fully into that awareness. Blessing God she'asani b'tzalmo, who made me in the Divine image.

Open your eyes and swivel or pivot your body to see everyone else in the room. We bless God who made us a part of this Jewish community this morning.

Now take a deep breath in for energy, blessing God, hanotein l'yayef ko'ach, who gives strength to the sleepy.

## Appendix E

Hebrew Letters for Amidah meditation on Yod-Hay-Vav-Hay[211].

[211] Hebrew calligraphy from Lawrence Kushner, *The Book of Letters: A Mystical Hebrew Alphabet,* Second Edition edition (Woodstock, Vt: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1991).

## Appendix F

Texts for Creative Exploration

How long, Adonai; will you ignore me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
How long will I have cares on my mind,
grief in my heart all day?
How long will my enemy have the upper hand?
Look at me, answer me, Adonai, my God!
(Ps. 13:2-4)[212]

The word of Adonai came to me:
Before I created you in the womb, I selected you;
Before you were born, I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet concerning the nations.
I replied:
Ah, Adonai, God!
I don't know how to speak,
For I am still a boy.
And Adonai said to me:
Do not say, "I am still a boy,"
But go wherever I send you…
Have no fear of them,
For I am with you to deliver you
declares Adonai.
(Jer. 1:4-8)[213]

Let me be a seal upon your heart
Like the seal upon your hand.
For love is fierce as death,
Passion is mighty as Sheol; (the place of the dead)
Its darts are darts of fire,
A blazing flame.
Vast floods cannot quench love,
Nor rivers drown it.

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[212] Carol Ochs and Kerry M. Olitzky, Jewish Spiritual Guidance: Finding Our Way to God (BookSurge Publishing, 2009), 48

[213] ibid, 87.

(Song of Songs 8:6-7)

Adonai, my heart is not proud
nor my look haughty;
I do not aspire to great things
or to what is beyond me;
but I have taught myself to be contented
like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child am I in my mind.
O Israel, wait for Adonai
now and forever.
(Ps. 131:1-3)

Adonai is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
Adonai is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
When evilmen assail me to devour my flesh,
It is they, my foes and my enemies, who stumble and fall.
Should an army besiege me, my heart would have no fear; though war should rise up against me, even then will I be confident.
(Ps. 27:1-3)

## Appendix G

Havdalah Blessings[214]


[214] "Havdalah Blessings," Temple De Hirsch Sinai Jewish Reform Synagogue, accessed December 20, 2014, http://www.tdhs-nw.org/index.php/our-media/havdalah-blessings.

# CONCLUSION

Much has changed since the early rumblings of spiritual culture in America over the past seventy years. Spirituality has gone from subculture to mainstream and now is even leaning towards faddish. This current wave of spiritual engagement is being felt across faith groups, and Jews today are searching to find their own pathway to spiritual development. Synagogues and schools have begun to create spaces within worship and other programs for spiritual development. However, there is still a large gap in the offerings for adolescents as they go through huge personal and spiritual transitions.

The past fifty years of synagogue life have left today's young adults thirsting for spiritual connection, but have given them little language or opportunity for such engagement. Thus, young adults and adolescents are seeking such fulfillment elsewhere. However, by creating modes of spiritual education in circles of Jewish learning, teens and young adults may yet gain the language to explore their sense of meaning and something greater within a Jewish context and through a Jewish lens. Jewish clergy and educators must seek to create such spaces, where authentic dialogue, unrestricted struggle with the Divine, and openness to exploring relationships to Jewish artifacts are available to teen learners.

If clergy and educators are to be successful in undertaking such a task, it is crucial that they themselves are given the opportunity for their own spiritual development and exploration. For the creation of learning environments to be transformative spaces, Jewish communities and synagogues must value hiring and creating spiritually engaged clergy and educators. Through modeling a respect for such development, clergy and

educators can become empowered to engage in their own spiritual practice and create engaging opportunities for growth amidst adolescent learners.

In many ways spiritual education is less about the content being taught and more about the creation of a compassionate and reflective classroom. The Jewish artifacts and content pieces remain the same, but the way in which we engage how students relate to them is different. Spiritual education is about helping learners to develop their own connections to self, community, and greater meaning as well as finding their own authentic connection to Jewish texts, history, and practices.

There is much research that still needs to be done regarding spiritual education, specifically with regard to teen learners. Currently, little empirical research exists about the development of these learners and what benefits spiritual education may have on them over time. Adolescents experience large transitions of mind, body, and spirit, and thus have specific needs regarding their spiritual education. Teens face great pressures and struggles during their high school years, and thus modes of spiritual education that help them to deal with these pressures should continue to be explored and developed.

One cannot predict how future shifts in American culture may view spirituality. However, spiritual practice and exploration has been part of Judaism for centuries, cycling in and out of popularity, but always a thread of Jewish life nevertheless. Today, these modes of engagement can continue to be used, reexamined, and re-imagined to help teens as they search for meaning and connection.

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