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Exploring Reform Judaism Through the Lens of Jewish Ritual and Sacred Practices

by Olga Frankstein Bluman

Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion
Rhea Hirsch School of Education
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Rationale

Judaism has evolved and transformed throughout its history: from Biblical Judaism to Rabbinic Judaism to Medieval Judaism to Modern Judaism. During each time period, Judaism was forced to adapt based on the situations in which Jews lived and Judaism was transformed based on its historical and cultural contexts. It is important for all Jews to be aware of these phenomena so that they can recognize the richness and the evolution of their religious tradition. The Reform Movement's innovations and adaptations are relatively recent examples of changes that have taken place throughout the history of Judaism. It is important for Reform Jews to be aware of this phenomenon so that they can feel part of an evolving Judaism and so that their Judaism can remain relevant to their lives.

The Reform Movement in North America is proud to be comprised of more than 900 congregations with 1.5 million Reform Jews[1]. However, how many of these Reform Jews know what Reform Judaism is? How many school aged children and adults learn about Reform Judaism in their life in and outside of their congregation? How many Reform Jews have an opportunity to learn about the roots of Reform Judaism and how the movement has developed since its inception? How many Reform Jews have an opportunity to discover the tenets of Reform Judaism and apply those principles to their daily lives? It has been the experience of the author that few Reform Jews have an opportunity to explore these questions. As a result, this curriculum guide is designed to help Reform Jewish teenagers explore these significant questions in the context of their congregation in sophisticated and engaging ways.

Although many religious school students choose to discontinue attending religious school once they reach high school, there are some who remain. These teenagers are generally invested in their Jewish education. They are beginning to think in more sophisticated ways about their religion and their identity. At the same time, they are influenced by outside forces, such as pop culture and their friends. They are at a liminal time in their life, when they are transitioning between being a child in their parents' home, to being an independent adult. This liminal time is a great opportunity for these students to

[1] http://urj.org/about/

investigate their Jewish denomination, to learn more about its origins and what it means to be a knowledgeable and well-educated Reform Jew.

In the beginning, this curriculum guide was organized around the history of the Reform Movement and Judaism, from the Biblical period to the Modern Day. It became clear that this content would not be as engaging for the learners. Consequently, the content was of the guide was changed so that the learners could explore the process of Reform Judaism through the lens of ritual. The learners will engage with history by investigating the struggles our ancestors faced when their ability to practice Judaism was at stake and how our ancestors made changes and adapted Judaism because of the situations they faced. However, throughout most of the curriculum guide, the learners will be Reform Jews in action, applying the evolving philosophies of Reform Judaism and using those philosophies to develop their own Jewish beliefs and practices.

In the first unit, the learners will begin their journey by exploring their Jewish identity and learning about the foundational texts of the Reform Movement in America (the CCAR Platforms). The learners will then be introduced to the idea that we can add more holiness to our lives by incorporating Jewish ritual, sacred practices and values. The subsequent three units, on sanctifying time, space and ourselves, will present the learners with Jewish rituals, sacred practices and values that can add holiness to their lives. The language of "adopt" and "adapt" is introduced in these units. We learn from Jewish history that Judaism's ability to survive depends on our ability to adopt and adapt. Reform Judaism allows us to figure out what to adopt from the tradition and what to adapt from the tradition so that it meaningful to us. Teaching this process to these learners will help them make Jewish choices throughout their lives so that Judaism remains relevant and meaningful.

When some of these teenagers will leave high school and arrive in college, they will be bombarded with invitations to a variety of Jewish and non-Jewish programs. They will be exposed to diverse Jewish and non-Jewish communities. These interactions may cause them to question their own beliefs and their own Jewish identity. Although the Reform Movement is a pluralistic movement, in

which a variety of beliefs and practices are accepted and practiced, other movements are not. Our teenagers may feel out of place, embarrassed and ignorant, because they will lack the tool-kit necessary to make Jewish choices. It is the purpose of this curriculum guide to provide these teenagers with a tool-kit to prepare them for college and beyond. Throughout this curriculum guide, the learners will experience making Jewish choices, through the exploration of Jewish texts from the traditional and contemporary point of view and then will be invited to decide whether or not they will adopt or adapt those teachings.

This Reform Judaism tool-kit will be based upon the following enduring understandings:

1. Political, social and intellectual changes in different Jewish communities prompt Jewish leaders to adapt and transform Judaism.

2. As Jews acculturate to living in America, Reform Jews renew their tenets, practices, and the aesthetics of their worship, expressing greater intellectual and psychological comfort with Jewish tradition.

3. Engagement in an ongoing dialogue with the sources of our tradition infuses our lives with קְדֻשָּׁה (holiness).

4. Ritual and Jewish sacred practices can enable us to infuse our lives with holiness and meaning.

Most human beings at one point or another may experience an "identity crisis." Erik Erikson, a developmental psychologist, suggested that people experience an identity crisis when they lose "a sense of personal sameness and historical continuity".[2] It is the goal of this curriculum guide to provide Reform Jewish teenagers with an understanding of their place on the Jewish historical and spiritual continuum. Our teenagers need to be aware of the development of Judaism and of Reform Judaism. This understanding will hopefully provide a foundation for their Jewish identity building which will prepare them to handle the many challenges adulthood will pose. If our teenagers have a solid grounding in the evolution of Judaism throughout the ages, they would be equipped to face an "identity crisis" with adequate tools.

[2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Identity_crisis_(psychology).

Enduring Understandings

1. Political, social and intellectual changes in different Jewish communities prompt Jewish leaders to adapt and transform Judaism.

2. As Jews acculturate to living in America, Reform Jews renew their tenets, practices, and the aesthetics of their worship, expressing greater intellectual and psychological comfort with Jewish tradition.

3. Engagement in an ongoing dialogue with the sources of our tradition infuses our lives with קְדֻשָּׁה (holiness).

4. Ritual and Jewish sacred practices can enable us to infuse our lives with holiness and meaning.

Curriculum Guide Goals

Unit 1

- To introduce the learners to the curriculum guide.
- To encourage students to reflect on one's Jewish identity.
- To teach the difference between Reform Judaism and other streams of Judaism.
- To show how Reform Jewish thought has developed since its inception in America.
- To introduce the concept of holiness and how it can apply to every Reform Jew.

Unit 2

- To present students with a Jewish framework for sanctifying time and how as Reform Jews we can adopt or adapt those rituals.
- To expose Reform Jewish students to lesser known and less practiced rituals that sanctify time.
- To encourage students to reflect on one's Jewish identity.
- To demonstrate that we can sanctify time through Jewish rituals, sacred practices and blessings.
- To introduce the concepts of *m'lachah* and *menucha* and how they can enrich our Shabbat and festival observance.
- To invite students to create ways that they can adopt and adapt Jewish rituals, sacred practices and blessings that can sanctify time.

Unit 3

- To present students with a Jewish framework for sanctifying space.
- To expose Reform Jewish students to lesser known ritual objects and lesser known and less practiced rituals that sanctify spaces.
- To expose Reform Jewish students to lesser known Jewish, holy spaces (the Temple and the Mikvah).
- To encourage students to reflect on one's Jewish identity.
- To demonstrate how Jewish ritual objects can sanctify spaces.
- To introduce Jewish rituals and sacred practices that can sanctify spaces.
- To show the relationship between the Synagogue and the Temple.
- To demonstrate how our ancestors transformed Judaism at a time of crisis.

Unit 4

- To encourage students to reflect on one's Jewish identity.
- To teach the concept of being created *B'tzelem Elohim* (in the image of God).
- To demonstrate how being created in the image of God means that we need to take care of ourselves and our bodies.
- To inspire students to make choices based on Jewish values, when deciding how to clothe, eat and respond to drugs and alcohol.
- To convince students that it is important to take care of ourselves and our bodies.
- To teach Jewish perspectives on taking care of the body.

Unit 5

- To teach the significance of a ritual in Judaism.
- To introduce students to new rituals which have been created relatively recently.
- To demonstrate how rituals can transform a seemingly mundane experience into a sacred and holy experience.
- To inspire students to create new rituals for situations which they think warrant them.
- To facilitate the students' design of a rubric for a ritual.

Letter to the Teacher

This curriculum guide is intended to provide the learners with an opportunity to explore Reform Judaism and for the learners to become Reform Jews in action. The learners will need your help as they endeavor on this amazing journey. Provided for you are a series of suggested learning activities, scripted lesson plans and resources. They are meant as a guide. As you engage in this journey with your students, feel free to adapt what is presented here, so that this content remains meaningful and relevant to the learners.

A few comments about the specifics of this curriculum guide. The units are organized around lessons. Each unit contains a scripted lesson plan, which includes a timeline and all directions for all of the activities from the set induction to the wrap-up. In the rest of the lessons in the unit I have provided suggested learning activities and corresponding materials. I imagine that each lesson will take an hour but the lessons can be adapted depending on the timeframe of your institution. In some cases, two lessons are listed together. This means that the first lesson is geared toward learning and gathering information and the second lesson is designed for presentations. Also, for each lesson all of the materials are provided immediately following the lesson description and in the order that they are to be used.

Throughout the Curriculum Guide, the students are invited to think about what Jewish rituals, sacred practices and values they would adopt and/or adapt in order to be able to integrate them in to their lives in a meaningful way. This is an attempt to teach the students about the process of Reform Judaism and to enable them to practice this process. The process would not be complete without some reflection on the students' behalf about what they are learning and how they feel about it. As a result, I sometimes suggest the activity of journaling and often I provide prompts. Feel free to include more journaling activities as you see fit. Sometimes it may be beneficial for the students to reflect out loud with each other but it may also be worthwhile for students to keep a journal throughout the year, so that they can write down their thoughts on their journey through this process.

B'hatzlacha,

Olga Bluman
ravolga@gmail.com

Unit 1 - Introduction

Overview

This unit introduces the learners to the content of the entire curriculum guide. First, they will explore why being Jewish is important to other Jews and then to themselves. Then they will begin to explore the tenets of Reform Judaism. The unit will culminate with an exploration of holiness, based on Rabbi Richard Levy's assertion that the new vision of Reform Judaism is one that invites us to add holiness to our lives by incorporating more Jewish sacred practices and rituals into our lives. This unit will be an introduction to the rest of the curriculum guide, in which students will explore different Jewish rituals, sacred practices and values that can inform how they can add holiness to their lives.

Understandings:

- Political, social and intellectual changes in different Jewish communities prompt Jewish leaders to adapt and transform Judaism.
- As Jews acculturate to living in America, Reform Jews renew their tenets, practices, and the aesthetics of their worship, expressing greater intellectual and psychological comfort with Jewish tradition.
- Engagement in an ongoing dialogue with the sources of our tradition infuses our lives with קְדֻשָּׁה (holiness).

Goals:

- To introduce the learners to the curriculum guide.
- To encourage students to reflect on one's Jewish identity.
- To teach the difference between Reform Judaism and other streams of Judaism.
- To show how Reform Jewish thought has developed since its inception in America.
- To introduce the concept of holiness and how it can apply to every Reform Jew.

Essential Questions:

- Why is being Jewish important?
- What does it mean to be holy?
- How can we add holiness to our lives?

Unit 1 Lessons 1 and 2 – Why be Jewish?

The purpose of this lesson is for students to think about their Jewish identity and why there are in this class. One cynical answer might be, "because my parents make me" but it would seem that these high school students would have something to say about their participation in religious school and have a deeper answer to this question. They will have an opportunity to explore how other Jews express their Jewish identity and then they will have an opportunity to express their own Jewish identity and why being Jewish is important to them.

Objectives – At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify the different ways some Jews express their Jewish identity.
- Categorize the different ways some Jews express their Jewish identity.
- Express their own Jewish identity and why it is important for them to be Jewish through a medium of their choice.

Suggested Learning Activities

I am Jewish: Personal Reflections Inspired by the Last Words of Daniel Pearl

Post around the walls of the room different excerpts from *I am Jewish: Personal Reflections Inspired by the Last Words of Daniel Pearl*[3] that are attached. These are 10 ways that 10 different Jews express what it means for them to be Jewish. The students will walk around the room and read through the descriptions. The students will take notes about which descriptions they identify with and which th ey do not. They will also categorize how that person identifies with being Jewish, (*culturally Jewish, just part of who they are, because of commitment to social justice, due to the imperative to be a good human being*.) As a class, discuss the different expressions of Jewish identity that the students encountered.

Jewish Identity Expression

Students will be given the option of choosing different media through which to express their own Jewish identity (art, music, writing, film, dance, etc). Students will choose a medium and through that medium will express how they are Jewish and why being Jewish is important to them. Students can incorporate Jewish texts, Jewish symbols, Jewish ritual objects, etc in their creations. It might be helpful to supply the students with Jewish Bibles, textbooks and other Jewish resources that they could peruse and get ideas from. In the follow up lesson, they will present to the rest of the class their current expression of their Jewish identity. The creations, if possible, will be displayed around the classroom/school throughout the year.

[3] Pearl, Judea and Ruth. Ed. *I am Jewish: Personal Reflections Inspired by the Last Words of Daniel Pearl*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2004.

JOSHUA MALINA was tapped by Aaron Sorkin to fill the shoes of White House speechwriter in the Emmy Award–winning series *The West Wing*.

"Judaism is the foundation of my identity."

For me the statement "I am Jewish" is no different from the statement "I am." Judaism is the foundation of my identity, the fixed base upon which all other aspects of my self are balanced—actor, husband, father, American.

"I am Jewish." It is an assertion of identity that has caused so many of our people throughout history to be hated, exiled, killed. That Daniel Pearl was murdered for embodying the truth of his final statement is a terrible tragedy. But nothing can truly extinguish the light of identity. And in a real way, his statement allows me to say that although I never met him, he was my brother.

IRWIN COTLER is the Canadian Minister of Justice and a professor of law. He is an international human rights lawyer and has defended political prisoners all over the world for the past twenty-five years.

"I am a Jew. My mother is a Jew. My father is a Jew. We all met at Sinai."

Daniel Pearl's last words, "My father is Jewish, my mother is Jewish, I am Jewish," were not just a statement of fact; under the circumstances, they were a courageous assertion of identity. And they have inspired me to reflect upon my own identity—on my parents' contribution to it—and, most importantly, the values imparted to me that underpin this identity.

My father—of blessed memory—was a lawyer with the soul of a poet, for whom being a lawyer was a *melitz yosher*—a counsel for

"I am Jewish..." edited by Judea and Ruth Pearl

strength to act for the benefit of the rest of humanity.

Daniel Pearl's last words testify that he was a man who knew where he came from. He was not alienated from his identity. Only such a man could have been free and brave enough to take upon himself the important and dangerous mission during which he was murdered. The freedom that beat within him, the freedom that came from within his identity, is what gave him the strength to leave his land and his family and to do what he thought was right and important, for the sake of the rest of the world.

Norman Lear is a writer, producer, and social activist.

"A 'cultural Jew' ... total Jew."

I identify with everything in life as a Jew. The Jewish contribution over the centuries to literature, art, science, theater, music, philosophy, the humanities, public policy, and the field of philanthropy awes me and fills me with pride and inspiration. As to Judaism, the religion: I love the congregation and find myself less interested in the ritual. If that describes me to others as a "cultural Jew," I have failed myself. My description, as I feel it, would be: total Jew.

David Horovitz is the editor of *The Jerusalem Report* newsmagazine and author of *A Little Too Close to God: The Thrills and Panic of a Life in Israel* and the new *Still Life with Bombers: Israel in the Age of Terrorism.*

"I am Jewish, and it colors everything I've done, do, and will do."

Sometimes I say it differently. Sometimes I say, "I'm a journalist from Israel." But it comes down to the same thing: I am Jewish, and it colors everything I've done, do, and will do.

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understanding of my religion and its traditions came from Shabbat and other traditions at my grandparents' and aunts' homes. Growing up, my neighborhood was mostly Jewish, as were the grammar and high school I attended. When I went to Israel in 1978, bringing a mixed group of Christians and Jews from Massachusetts, I had a profound and spiritual experience.

Being Jewish for me is more than matzo balls, chopped liver, and chicken soup, though food and the generosity that go with it are very much a part of who I am. I love the Jewish traditions and was brought up to believe that fairness with all people was sacred.

JAMIE SISTINO, 19, Charleston, South Carolina

Growing up in an interfaith household, being actively Jewish was a choice for me. Judaism now can be seen throughout all of my actions in my life. Being Jewish is who I am before anything else. Before I am an American, or a girl, or from South Carolina, I am Jewish.

THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN is a three-time Pulitzer Prize–winning columnist for the *New York Times*. He is the author of *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization*, and *Longitudes and Attitudes: Exploring the World After September 11*.

"A very important part of my identity, but not the only part of my identity."

I have to confess, I always had a hard time reading the stories about Danny Pearl's abduction. It was just too close to home for me. I did not know Danny. Our career paths never crossed, but it was always clear to me that our dreams and passions must have. We were both American Jewish young men who loved journalism and had a particular passion and interest in the Arab and Muslim worlds. We both

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Sarah Rosenbaum, 15, Coto de Caza, California

When I say that I am Jewish, I am identifying myself as part of a tradition, connected to our foremothers and fathers, and carrying on to the future a culture, a religion, a way of life. I feel pride, and am overwhelmed with joy when I declare that I am part of this incredible people, our people Israel.

W. Michael Blumenthal has had a distinguished career in business, government service, and education, including serving as the sixty-fourth secretary of the United States Treasury. In 1997 he accepted an invitation from the city of Berlin to become president and CEO of the Berlin Jewish Museum.

"While still young, I wondered whether my Jewish heritage was only a burden to be borne, rather than a privilege and blessing to be acknowledged with pride. Today I know better."

I was born a German Jew and escaped at the last moment from the Nazi Holocaust—to Shanghai, one of the few places that would accept Jews in 1939. Eighteen thousand fellow Jewish refugees survived a difficult life there, including two and a half years in a Japanese-run ghetto. As a postwar immigrant to the United States, I came to a country in which anti-Semitism was still an active force in many places.

Without strong religious anchors there was a time when, while still young, I wondered whether my Jewish heritage was only a burden to be borne, rather than a privilege and blessing to be acknowledged with pride. Today I know better.

The Jews are the oldest intact biblical people on the face of the earth. Through the ages, they have survived in a hostile environment, clinging stubbornly to their traditions and faith, even in the face of untold hardships. Millions paid for it with their lives, but others kept the heritage.

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for meditation so that they become uniquely Jewish. I love all of my teaching, but it is especially pleasurable for me to feel that I've learned something valuable that I am able to share with my family.

David J. Azrieli, architect and developer, is president of Canpro Investments Ltd., which develops, builds, and manages shopping centers and office buildings in North America, and established the first enclosed shopping mall in Israel. He won the Prime Minister's Jubilee Award in 1998 for his contributions to the Israeli economy.

"To accept a Jewish identification is to embrace much more than belief alone."

To accept a Jewish identification is to embrace much more than belief alone—it is to accept responsibility that you are part of something bigger and greater than yourself. It is to accept that you are part of a history, a tradition, and a people that emphasizes learning; a people that is often gifted with talents that contribute to society at large.

Martin Peretz taught social theory and politics at Harvard University for more than three decades. He has been editor in chief of *The New Republic* since 1974.

"This is the lesson of Israel, the lesson that Zionism spoke to the exiles. Jewish meaning is made out of life, not out of martyrdom."

Would it not have been preferable had Abraham actually consummated the Akedah, the sacrifice of his son, and that his hand had not been stayed by the Angel? Then Isaac would have died, like Jesus later

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idea whether that is true or not, but that story has always contextualized my religious practice.

When I was a student at the Yeshiva of Flatbush, my mother, Lola, served the children hamburgers with string beans and butter sauce, a deliberate kosher violation. She told the rabbi's children, who appreciated the sweetness of the beans, that it was really lemon juice. In my childhood mind, I thought a burning bush or flying hand would come through our window in Flatbush at any moment.

And yet, in many ways, those dinners seemed to me at the heart of why I consider myself Jewish. My sense of identity comes directly from the creativity of my mother and her profound sense of family. My mother, who had to be convinced by me to celebrate Passover yearly, used to bang on televisions and tell who exactly was Jewish. I remember distinctly her explaining to me that she didn't care what anybody said, but that Senator Barry Goldwater was Jewish. I didn't even know Jews lived in Arizona at that time.

I am often asked if I consider myself a woman writer or a Jewish writer. I am also often asked if I think my work is "too New York" to be appreciated in the rest of the country, or the world. My answer is: If I am not a Jewish or female writer, then I have no idea who I am. And as for being "too New York," I know what that is a euphemism for. I now have a four-year-old daughter. When I define myself, I am happily now not only a Jewish female writer but also the ultimate form of Judaism: a Jewish mother.

Sarah Silverman is a comic, actress, and writer. She is very pretty.

"Remember the guy who smashed all the idols in the idol store?"

Remember the guy who smashed all the idols in the idol store? His mother had a heart attack when she saw the mess, but I'm sure she bragged about it later. That's us. That's me. I am Jewish.

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with freedom and joy. In this sense, being Jewish is to have the possibilities of the world permanently open to the wonder of life. The joy, optimism, and creativity of Jewishness demarcate the horizon of the eternal in time.

Jackie Mason was raised on the Lower East Side of Manhattan surrounded by rabbis—his father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and great-great-grandfather were all rabbis, as are his three brothers. He rose to be one the hottest comics in America in the early 1960s and continues to entertain his many loyal long-time fans and the legions of new fans he earns each year.

> "Everyone knows by now that no one can kill our spirit."

To be a Jew is to watch with good humor how this planet has treated its Jews, and to remain humorous.

Among the most often thought-of peoples are the Jews, existing by a code of living given to the world and accepted thousands of years ago. In return, those inspired by the Jews reduced our numbers by torture, mass murder, forced conversion or dispersion, assimilation, or intermarriage, to the least number of people—barely thirteen million throughout the planet. Our divine birthright, the continuously embattled nation of Israel, is also among the tiniest nations on the globe, yet she manages to survive. Everyone knows by now that no one can kill our spirit, yet some are still trying.

I told you, it takes a Jew to read this script and stay humorous.

live out the Torah we have received. And together may we live our lives so as to shape the Torah, the teachings, and the wisdom that is yet to unfold.

1. Rabbi Edward Feld, private correspondence.

Shia LaBeouf appeared in 2003's *Dumb and Dumberer, Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle,* and *Holes.* He won a Daytime Emmy for his role in the Disney Channel series *Even Stevens.*

"Judaism to me is the name of the telephone in my heart that allows me to speak to God."

First off, let me make it clear that I am in no way a Jew who attends Shabbat every Friday or puts *t'fillin* on before I go to sleep.

I am what you would call a claimer Jew. See, I claim to be Jewish because it is beneficial to be Jewish. I benefit from saying I am Jewish. How?

I have a personal relationship with God that happens to work within the confines of Judaism.

Judaism to me is the name of the telephone in my heart that allows me to speak to God.

Really, I feel cocky when I say I am Jewish, not bad cocky, but good cocky. Because what I am really saying is that I am one of the few chosen ones out there. I made it; God chose me and I take pride in that.

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You do not have to be an Orthodox Jew to answer these questions. In fact, you do not even have to be a Jew. You have to take God and the Torah seriously. This is why most religious Christians understand the Jews' role better than secular Jews do. They believe in the Jews' God, the Jews' Torah, and the Jews' chosenness.

It is time for Jews to.

KIRK DOUGLAS has acted in eighty-five movies and has been awarded a special Oscar for Lifetime Achievement from the Academy of Motion Pictures. His Douglas Foundation was responsible for the construction of playgrounds in Israel for both Israeli and Palestinian children.

"'Kirk, I think you like being Jewish 'cause it's so dramatic.'"

After a mid-air helicopter crash, I broke my back and two young people were killed. Then a pacemaker, to help my aching heart. This was followed by a stroke and I lost my speech.

I began to think maybe God was punishing me for abandoning my Judaism since my first Bar Mitzvah. I began to study Judaism. I worked with many rabbis; as a matter of fact, I knew more rabbis than Jews. One of them, Rabbi Braverman, said to me: "Kirk, I think you like being Jewish 'cause it's so dramatic." Maybe that's true. It led me to a second Bar Mitzvah when I was eighty-three years old. I'm still around, and I think my Judaism has helped me.

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ELIE WIESEL is the Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities at Boston University, and the author of more than forty books, the latest of which is *Wise Men and Their Tales*. In 1986, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

"For a Jew, Judaism and humanity must go together."

Daniel Pearl's last words are those of a Jew who was assassinated only for his Jewishness. They will resonate in many hearts. They are meant to be an answer to his murderers' questions: Why are you here? Why do you oppose terrorism? Why do you denounce injustice? "I am Jewish," answered Daniel Pearl.

Did he believe that to be Jewish today means what it meant yesterday and a thousand years ago? I do. It means for the Jew in me to seek fulfillment both as a Jew and as a human being. For a Jew, Judaism and humanity must go together. To be Jewish is to recognize that every person is created in God's image and thus worthy of respect. Being Jewish to me is to reject fanaticism everywhere.

As a Jew I must be sensitive to the pain of all human beings. To remain indifferent to persecution and suffering anywhere, in Afghanistan or in Kiev, is to become an accomplice of the tormentor.

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Unit 1 Lesson 3 – What is Reform Judaism? - *Scripted Lesson*

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce and explore the nature of Reform Judaism. Although the students are part of a Reform Jewish congregation, this does not necessarily mean that they know the nature of Reform Judaism.

Objectives – At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Explain what differentiates Reform Judaism from other streams of Judaism.
- Compare and contrast how Reform Judaism's view on particular concepts has developed from the beginning of the movement to today.
- Report to other students Reform Judaism's view on a particular concept.

TIME	ACTIVITY
10 min	Set Induction
20 min	Analysis of the Four CCAR Platforms – Jigsaw Part 1
25 min	Analysis of the Four CCAR Platforms – Jigsaw Part 2
5 min	Wrap-up

Set Induction - What is freedom?[4]

Students will receive the "What is freedom" worksheet (attached) which contains various definitions of the word "freedom". Ask students to read over the definitions as a group. What is similar about the various definitions? What is different? What are the advantages and challenges that come with freedom? Make 2 columns on the board with the students' answers. Can freedom be taken too far? How is freedom related to Judaism? *(Reform Judaism introduced the idea that we are free to choose which thoughts/practices/ideas to disregard and which ones to adopt into our Jewish lives according to social, philosophical, ethical and modern sensibilities).* Explain that today the students will be learning about Reform Judaism, the major tenets of Reform Judaism and how they have developed since 1885 (when Reform Rabbis in the United States for the first time established guidelines for Reform Judaism.)

Analysis of the Four CCAR Platforms – Jigsaw Part 1

Explain that four times since the inception of Reform Judaism in the United States, Reform Rabbis have gathered to adopt comprehensive statements to guide the practices and thoughts of the Reform Movement. Most recently, the rabbis met in 1999 to create new principles to define Reform Judaism and to set a vision for the future. The students will study these documents in order to better understand what Reform Judaism is about. Divide the students into 6 groups. Each group will receive a packet of the 4 CCAR Platforms (1885- Pittsburgh Platform, 1937 – Columbus Platform, 1976 – Centenary Perspective and 1999 – Pittsburgh Principles) as they relate to different concepts (The God-Idea, The Jewish People, Torah, Religious Practice, Palestine/Israel, The Mission of Israel). The groups' job is to become an expert in their one area, assigned by the teacher, so that later they can teach the material to other students. The group should use the guiding questions (attached) as a basis for analyzing their sourcesheet.

[4] Adapted from Patz, Naomi and Kerry Olitzky, *A Teacher's Guide for Explaining Reform Judaism*. New York, NY: Behrman House, 1986, p. 30.

Analysis of the Four CCAR Platforms – Jigsaw Part 2
Students will form 6 new groups, so that each group has one representative from each concept area. Each member of the group should teach the rest of the group about the concept area they studied previously. Students can use their answers to the guiding questions as the basis of their report. The rest of the small group may follow along in the packet of information. After each group member has taught his/her concept area, the group will come up with a summary of the 1999 Principles.

Wrap-Up
As a whole group, ask students to share out loud what surprised them about the texts they studied and what new insights they learned about Reform Judaism.

What is Freedom?

1. The condition of being free of restraints.[5]

2. Liberty of the person from slavery, detention, or oppression.

3. Political independence.

4. Exemption from the arbitrary exercise of authority in the performance of a specific action; civil liberty: *freedom of assembly.*

5. Exemption from an unpleasant or onerous condition: *freedom from want.*

6. The capacity to exercise choice; free will: *We have the freedom to do as we please all afternoon.*

7. Ease or facility of movement: *loose sports clothing, giving the wearer freedom.*

8. Frankness or boldness; lack of modesty or reserve: *the new freedom in movies and novels.*

9. The right to unrestricted use; full access: *was given the freedom of their research facilities*.

10. The right of enjoying all of the privileges of membership or citizenship: *the freedom of the city*.

11. A right or the power to engage in certain actions without control or interference.

[5] All definitions taken from: http://www.answers.com/freedom.

Analysis of the four CCAR Platforms

1. How does each platform view your concept (i.e. the God idea, Torah, Jewish People, etc.)?

2. What are the similarities and differences between the different platforms and the concept?

3. What ideas are rejected? What reasons are provided? Why do you think those ideas were rejected?

4. What distinctions, if any, are made between different kinds of practices/ideas? (i.e. ritual and ethical, ancient and modern)

5. Do you notice any patterns from the 1885 Platform to the 1999 Platform? Please explain.

6. How do you view this concept? (can incorporate ideas from the platforms and your own ideas)

THE FOUR IDEOLOGICAL PRONOUNCEMENTS of REFORM JUDAISM IN AMERICA

The Jacob Rader Marcus Center
of the
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

located on the Cincinnati campus of the
Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion
Cincinnati · New York · Los Angeles · Jerusalem
3101 Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45220-2488

www.americanjewisharchives.org

1. THE GOD-IDEA

1885 — Pittsburgh Platform

We recognize in every religion an attempt to grasp the infinite One, and in every mode, source, or book of revelation held sacred in any religious system the consciousness of the indwelling of God in man. We hold that Judaism presents the highest conception of the God-idea as taught in our Holy Scriptures and developed and spiritualized by the Jewish teachers in accordance with the moral and philosophical progress of their respective ages. We maintain that Judaism preserved and defended, amid continual struggles and trials, and under enforced isolation, this God-idea as the central religious truth for the human race.

1937 — Columbus

The heart of Judaism and its chief contribution to religion is the doctrine of the One, living God, who rules the world through law and love. In Him all existence has its creative source and mankind, its ideal of conduct. Through transcending time and space, He is the indwelling Presence of the world, we worship Him as the Lord of the universe and as our merciful Father.

1976 — Centenary Perspective

The affirmation of God has always been essential to our people's will to survive. In our struggle throughout the centuries to preserve our faith we have experienced and conceived of God in many ways. The trials of our own time and the challenges to modern culture have made steady belief and clear understanding difficult for some. Nevertheless, we ground our lives, personally and continually, on God's reality and remain open to new experiences and conceptions of the Divine. Amid the mystery we call life, we affirm that human beings, created in God's image, share in God's eternality despite the mystery we call death.

1999 — Pittsburgh Principles

We affirm the reality and oneness of God, even as we may differ in our understanding of the Divine presence. The Jewish people are bound to God by an eternal ברית *(b'rit)*, covenant, as reflected in our varied understandings of Creation, Revelation, and Redemption. We affirm that every human being is created בצלם אלהים *(b'tzelem Elohim)*, in the image of God, and that therefore every human life is sacred. We regard with reverence all of God's creation and recognize our human responsibility for its preservation and protection. We encounter God's presence in moments of awe and wonder, in acts of justice and compassion, in loving relationships and in the experiences of everyday life. We strive for a faith that fortifies us through the vicissitudes of our lives — illness and healing, transgression and repentance, bereavement and consolation, despair and hope. In spite of the unspeakable evils committed against our people and the sufferings endured by others, the partnership of God and humanity will ultimately prevail. We trust in our tradition's promise that, although God created us as finite beings, the spirit within us is eternal. In all these ways and more, God gives meaning and purpose to our lives.

2. THE JEWISH PEOPLE

1885 Pittsburgh Platform

We recognize in Judaism a progressive religion, ever striving to be in accord with the postulates of reason. We are convinced of the utmost necessity of preserving the historical identity with our great past. Christianity and Islam being daughter religions of Judaism, we appreciate their mission to aid in the spreading of monotheistic and moral truth. We acknowledge that the spirit of broad humanity of our age is our ally in the fulfillment of our mission, and therefore we extend the hand of fellowship to all who cooperate with us in the establishment of the reign of truth and righteousness among men.

1937 Columbus

Judaism is the soul of which Israel is the body. Living in all parts of the world, Israel has been held together by the ties of a common history, and above all, by the heritage of faith. Though we recognize in the group-loyalty of Jews who have become estranged from our religious tradition by a bond that still unites them with us, we maintain that it is by its religion and for its religion that the Jewish people have lived. The non-Jew who accepts our faith is welcomed as a full member of the Jewish community. In all lands where our people live, they assume and seek to share loyally the full duties and responsibilities of citizenship and to create seats of Jewish knowledge and religion.

1976 — Centenary Perspective

The Jewish people and Judaism defy precise definition because both are in the process of becoming Jews, by birth or conversion, constitute an uncommon union of faith and peoplehood. Born as Hebrews in the ancient Near East, we are bound together like all ethnic groups by language, land, history, culture and institutions. But the people of Israel are unique because of their involvement with God and their resulting perception in the human condition. Throughout our long history our people have been inseparable from their religion with its messianic hope that humanity will be redeemed.

1999 Pittsburgh Principles

We are Israel, a people aspiring to holiness, singled out through our ancient covenant and our unique history among the nations to be witnesses to God's presence. We are linked by that covenant and that history to all Jews in every age and place. We are committed to the מצוה *(mitzvah)* of אהבת ישראל *(ahavat Yisrael)*, love for the Jewish people, and to כלל ישראל *(k'lal Yisrael)*, the entirety of the community of Israel. Recognizing that כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה *(kol Yisrael arevim zeh bazeh)*, all Jews are responsible for one another, we reach out to all Jews across ideological and geographical boundaries. We embrace religious and cultural pluralism as an expression of the vitality of Jewish communal life in Israel and the Diaspora. We pledge to fulfill Reform Judaism's historic commitment to the complete equality of women and men in Jewish life. We are an inclusive community, opening doors to Jewish life to people of all ages, to varied kinds of families, to all regardless of their sexual orientation, to גרים *(gerim)*, those who have converted to Judaism, and to all individuals and families, including the intermarried, who strive to create a Jewish home. We must not only open doors for those ready to enter our faith, but also to actively encourage those who are seeking a spiritual home to find it in Judaism. We are committed to strengthening the people Israel by supporting individuals and families in the creation of homes rich in Jewish learning and observance; and to making the synagogue central to Jewish communal life, so that it may elevate the spiritual, intellectual and cultural quality of our lives.

3. TORAH

1885 — Pittsburgh Platform

We recognize in the Mosaic legislation a system of training the Jewish people for its mission during its national life in Palestine, and today we accept as binding only the moral laws and maintain only such ceremonies as elevate and sanctify our lives, but reject all such as are not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization.

1937 — Columbus

God reveals himself not only in the majesty and orderliness of nature, but also in the vision and moral striving of the human spirit. Revelation is a continuous process, confined to no one group and to no one age. Yet the people of Israel, through its prophets and sages, achieved unique insight in the realm of religious truth. The Torah, both written and oral, enshrines Israel's ever-growing consciousness of God and of the moral law. It preserves the historical precedents, sanctions and norms of Jewish life, and seeks to mould it in the patterns of goodness and holiness. Being products of historical processes, certain of its laws have lost their binding force with the passing of the conditions that called them forth. But as a depository of permanent spiritual ideals, the Torah remains the dynamic source of the life of Israel. Each age has the obligation to adapt the teachings of the Torah to its basic needs inconsonance with the genius of Judaism.

1976 — Centenary Perspective

Torah results from the relationship between God and the Jewish people. The records of our earliest confrontations are uniquely important to us. Lawgivers and prophets, historians and poets gave us a heritage whose study is a religious imperative and whose practice is our chief means to holiness. Rabbis and teachers, philosophers and mystics, gifted Jews in every age, amplified the Torah tradition.

1999 — Pittsburgh Principles

We affirm that Torah is the foundation of Jewish life. We cherish the truths revealed in Torah, God's ongoing revelation to our people and the record of our people's ongoing relationship with God. We affirm that Torah is a manifestation of אהבת עולם *(ahavat olam)*, God's eternal love for the Jewish people and for all humanity. We affirm the importance of studying Hebrew, the language of Torah and Jewish liturgy, that we may draw closer to our people's sacred texts. We are called by Torah to lifelong study in the home, in the synagogue and in every place where Jews gather to learn and teach. Through Torah study we are called to מצוות *(mitzvot)*, the means by which we make our lives holy. We are committed to the ongoing study of the whole array of מצוות *(mitzvot)* and to the fulfillment of those that address us as individuals and as a community. Some of these sacred obligations have long been observed by Reform Jews; others, both ancient and modern, demand renewed attention as the result of the unique context of our own times.

4. RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

1885 — Pittsburgh Platform

We hold that all such Mosaic and Rabbinical laws as regulate diet, priestly purity, and dress originated in ages and under the influence of ideas altogether foreign to our present mental and spiritual state. They fail to impress the modern Jew with a spirit of priestly holiness; their observance in our day is apt rather to obstruct than to further modern spiritual elevation.

1937 — Columbus

Judaism as a way of life requires, in addition to its moral and spiritual demands, the preservation of the Sabbath, festivals, and Holy Days, the retention and development of such customs, symbols and ceremonies as possess inspirational value, the cultivation of distinctive forms of religious art and music, and the use of Hebrew, together with the vernacular, in our worship and instruction.

1976 — Centenary Perspective

Judaism emphasizes action rather than creed as the primary expression of a religious life, the means by which we strive to achieve universal justice and peace. Reform Judaism shares this emphasis on duty and obligation. Our founders stressed that the Jew's ethical responsibilities, personal and social, are enjoined by God. The past century has taught us that the claims made upon us may begin with our ethical obligations but they extend to many other aspect of Jewish living, including: creating a Jewish home centered on family devotion; life-long study; private prayer and public worship; daily religious observance; keeping the Sabbath and the holy days; celebrating the major events of life; involvement with the synagogue and community; and other activities which promote the survival of the Jewish people and enhance its existence. Within each area of Jewish observance, Reform Jews are called upon to confront the claims of Jewish tradition, however differently perceived, and to exercise their individual autonomy, choosing and creating on the basis of commitment and knowledge.

1999 — Pittsburgh Principles

We respond to God daily; through public and private prayer, through study and through the performance of other מצוות *(mitzvot)*, sacred obligations — בין אדם למקום *(bein adam la Makom)*, to God, and בין אדם לחברו *(bein adam la-chaveiro)*, to other human beings. We bring Torah into the world when we seek to sanctify the times and places of our lives through regular home and congregational observance. Shabbat calls us to bring the highest moral values to our daily labor and to culminate the workweek with קדושה *(kedushah)*, holiness, מנוחה *(menuchah)* rest, and עונג *(oneg)*, joy. The High Holy Days call us to account for our deeds. The Festivals enable us to celebrate with joy our people's religious journey in the context of the changing seasons. The days of remembrance remind us of the tragedies and the triumphs that have shaped our people's historical experience both in ancient and modern times. And we mark the milestones of our personal journeys with traditional and creative rites that reveal the holiness in each stage of life.

5. PALESTINE/ISRAEL

1885 Pittsburgh Platform

We recognize in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect the approach of the realization of Israel's great messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice, and peace among all men. We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the administration of the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.

1937 Columbus

In the rehabilitation of Palestine, the land hallowed by memories and hopes, we behold the promise of renewed life for many of our brethren. We affirm the obligation of all Jewry to aid in its up-building as a Jewish homeland by endeavoring to make it not only a haven of refuge for the oppressed but also a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life.

1976 — Centenary Perspective

We are privileged to live in an extraordinary time, one in which a third Jewish commonwealth has been established in our people's ancient homeland. We are bound to that land and to the newly reborn State of Israel by innumerable religious and ethnic ties. We have been enriched by its culture and ennobled by its indomitable spirit. We see it providing unique opportunities for Jewish self-expression. We have both a stake and a responsibility in building the State of Israel, assuring its security and defining its Jewish character. We encourage *aliyah* for those who wish to find maximum personal fulfillment in the cause of Zion. We demand that Reform Judaism be unconditionally legitimized in the State of Israel.

At the same time that we consider the State of Israel vital to the welfare of Judaism everywhere, we reaffirm the mandate of our tradition to create strong Jewish communities wherever we live. A genuine Jewish life is possible in any land, each community developing its own particular character and determining its Jewish responsibilities. The foundation of Jewish community life is the synagogue. It leads us beyond itself to cooperate with other Jews, to share their concerns, and to assume leadership in communal affairs. We are therefore committed to the full democratization of the Jewish community and to its hallowing in terms of Jewish values.

The State of Israel and the diaspora, in fruitful dialogue, can show how a people transcends nationalism even as it affirms it, thereby setting an example for humanity which remains largely concerned with dangerously parochial goals.

1999 Pittsburgh Principles

We are committed to מדינת ישראל *(Medinat Yisrael)*, the State of Israel, and rejoice in its accomplishements. We affirm the unique qualities of living in ארץ ישראל *(Eretz Yisrael)*, the land of Israel, and encourage עליה *(aliyah)*, immigration to Israel. We are committed to a vision of the State of Israel that promotes full civil, human, and religious rights for all its inhabitants and that strives for a lasting peace between Israel and its neighbors; and to promoting and strengthening Progressive Judaism in Israel, which will enrich the spiritual life of the Jewish state and its people.

We affirm that both Israeli and Diaspora Jewry should remain vibrant and interdependent communities. As we urge Jews who reside outside Israel to learn Hebrew as a living language and to make periodic visits to Israel in order to study and to deepen their relationship to the Land and its people, so do we affirm that Israeli Jews have much to learn from the religious life of Diaspora Jewish communities. We are committed to furthering Progressive Judaism throughout the world as a meaningful religious way of life for the Jewish people.

6. THE MISSION OF ISRAEL

1885 — Pittsburgh Platform

In full accordance with the spirit of Mosaic legislation which strives to regulate the relation between rich and poor, we deem it our duty to participate in the great task of modern times, to solve on the basis of justice and righteousness the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society.

1937 — Columbus

Judaism seeks the attainment of a just society by the application of its teachings to the economic order, to industry and commerce, and to national and international affairs. It aims at the elimination of man-made misery and suffering, of poverty and degradation, of tyranny and slavery, of social inequality and prejudice, of ill-will and strife. It advocates the promotion of harmonious relations between warring classes on the basis of equity and justice, and the creation of conditions under which human personality may flourish. It pleads for the safe-guarding of childhood against exploitation. It champions the cause of all who work and of their right to an adequate standard of living, as prior to the rights of property, Judaism emphasizes the duty of charity and strives for a social order which will protect men against the material disabilities of old age, sickness and unemployment.

1976 — Centenary Perspective

Early Reform Jews newly admitted to general society and seeing in this evidence of a growing universalism, regularly spoke of Jewish purpose in terms of Jewry's service to humanity. In recent years we have become freshly conscious of the virtues of pluralism and the values of particularism. The Jewish people in its unique way of life validates its own worth while working toward the fulfillment of its messianic expectations. Until the recent past our obligation to the Jewish people and to all humanity seemed congruent. At times now these two imperatives appear to conflict. We know of no simple way to resolve such tensions. We must, however, confront them without abandoning either of our commitments. A universal concern for humanity unaccompanied by a devotion to our particular people is self-destructive; a passion for our people with involvement in humankind contradicts what the prophets have meant to us. Judaism calls us simultaneously to universal and particular obligations.

1999 — Pittsburgh Principles

Throughout our history, we Jews have remained firmly rooted in the Jewish tradition, even as we have learned much from our encounters with other cultures. The great contribution of Reform Judaism is that it has enabled the Jewish people to introduce innovation while preserving tradition, to embrace diversity while asserting commonality, to affirm beliefs without rejecting those that doubt, and to bring faith to sacred texts without sacrificing critical scholarship. We bring Torah into the world when we strive to fulfill the highest ethical mandates in our relationships with others and with all of God's creation. Partners with God in תיקון עולם *(tikkun olam)*, repairing the world, we are called to help bring nearer the messianic age. We seek dialogue and joint action with people of other faiths in the hope that together we can bring peace, freedom and justice to our world. We are obligated to pursue צדק *(tzedek)*, justice and righteousness, and to narrow the gap between the affluent and the poor, to act against discrimination and oppression, to pursue peace, to welcome the stranger, to protect the earth's biodiversity and natural resources, and to redeem those in physical, economic and spiritual bondage. In so doing, we reaffirm social action and social justice as a central prophetic focus of traditional Reform Jewish belief and practice. We affirm the מצוה *(mitzvah)* of צדקה *(tzedakah)*, setting aside portions of our earnings and our time to provide for those in need. These acts bring us closer to fulfilling the prophetic call to translate the words of Torah into the works of our hands.

Unit 1 Lesson 4 – Holiness

In this unit so far, the learners have explored what it means for them to be Jewish and the foundations of Reform Judaism. Now it is time for them to explore how to practice Reform Judaism. One of the framers of the most recent CCAR platform, Rabbi Richard Levy, invites us to incorporate Jewish sacred obligations (*mitzvot*), which include Jewish practices and rituals, to infuse our lives with holiness (קְדֻשָׁה). Therefore, the purpose of this lesson is to introduce the students to the concept of *kedushah*. In the subsequent lessons, students will explore Jewish sacred obligations, practices and rituals which can infuse their lives with more holiness.

Objectives – At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Define the word holy (*kedushah*).
- Distinguish holy behavior from unholy behavior.
- Articulate concrete ways they can act holy based on Leviticus 19:1-37.

Suggested Learning Activities

Brainstorm - What is holy?[6]

Ask students, "What is holy in Judaism?" You may suggest they think of places, objects, times and people. Make a list on the board. What characteristics do these holy things share? Do the shared characteristics have to do with the function or purpose of the holy things? Who/what makes these things holy? *Most likely the students will have an easier time brainstorming places, things or times, but with regards to people, they may think that is reserved to Rabbis/Cantors and maybe other Jewish Professionals.* Explain that today they will learn about how all of us can become holy through the ways we behave.

Text Study – Leviticus 19

Explain to the students that Chapter 19 of the Book of Leviticus is known as the "Holiness Code". Students will read Leviticus 19:1-37[7] (attached) in chevruta or small groups.

Suggested Questions:

- According to the text, what does being holy or holiness mean?
- Why should we be holy?
- Who can be holy?
- What are some overarching principles that organize these verses?
- How is holiness built into the way we interact at work? With our family? With our friends? With strangers?
- Which of these practices are already incorporated into your life? Which of these practices are harder for you to incorporate into your life?
- What kinds of practices do you think are missing?

  Holiness can mean a variety of things: sacred, unique, separate, divine, related to God, pure, religious, morally and ethically correct. In Leviticus 19, we learn that every person has the potential to become holy through their actions. The mitzvot specified in this chapter are very diverse. We cannot compartmentalize holiness, rather it is achieved through every day actions, such as honoring one's parents, giving tzedakah, not lying, etc.

[6] Adapted from Loeb, Sorel Goldberg and Barbara Binder Kadden. *Teaching Torah: A Treasury of Insights and Activities*. Denver, CO: ARE Publishing, Inc, 1997.

[7] Eskenazi, Tamara Cohn and Andrew L. Weiss. Eds. *The Torah, A Women's Commentary.* New York, NY: URJ Press, 2008, pp. 702 – 711.

Additional commentaries:

- Another view[8] by Dr. Tamara Cohn Eskenazi (attached)
- Rabbi Richard Levy's point of view[9] on bringing a greater sense of holiness in to our lives (attached).

Ask students in their groups to pick a few verses and to come up with concrete ways they could accomplish this teaching of the Torah. Alternatively, the teacher can assign verses to each group. Each group will present their findings.

Explain that during the rest of the year, the students will be exploring different ways they can infuse holiness in their lives. One way to infuse holiness is through ritual. Ritual is a way to make an ordinary moment, sacred. It is a way to formalize and call attention to an event and etch Jewish meaning in to it. For example, saying *hamotzi* before eating bread is a way to make the act of eating holy and Jewish, by recognizing that our food is provided to us by the grace of God. First they will learn about ways and rituals that sanctify time, then ways and rituals that sanctify space and then ways and rituals that sanctify themselves. Throughout the units they will learn about different rituals or practices that can bring more holiness into their lives and then they will have an opportunity to create their own rituals. As they explore these rituals and practices, they will have an opportunity to think about whether they would like to adopt or adapt these rituals, as knowledgeable Reform Jews.

[8] Eskenazi, Tamara Cohn and Andrew L. Weiss. Eds. *The Torah, A Women's Commentary.* New York, NY: URJ Press, 2008, p. 716.
[9] Hurt-Manheimer, Aron. *Reform Judaism.* New York, NY; UAHC Press. Winter 1998, Vol. 27, No.2.

Outline–

I. A Compendium of Paths to Holiness (19:1–37)

- A. The holiness formula (vv. 1–2)
- B. On parents and idols (vv. 3–4)
- C. Democratization of sacrifice (vv. 5–8)
- D. Rights of the poor (vv. 9–10)
- E. Theft, deceit and fair courts of law (vv. 11–16)
- F. Handling anger in action and thought (vv. 17–18)
- G. Maintaining distinct categories (v. 19)
- H. Ambiguous status of the slave woman (vv. 20–22)
- I. First fruits (vv. 23–25)
- J. What we do with our bodies (vv. 26–28)
- K. The sacred status of daughters (vv. 29–30)
- L. Consulting ghosts and spirits (v. 31)
- M. Respect for elders (v. 32)
- N. Care for the stranger (vv. 33–34)
- O. Fair commerce practices (vv. 35–36a)
- P. Conclusion (vv. 36b–37)

II. Danger to Holiness and the Dynamics of Holiness (20:1–8)

- A. Desecrating God's name through Molech worship (vv. 1–5)
- B. Consulting ghosts and spirits (v. 6)
- C. The dynamics of holiness (vv. 7–8)

III. Family and Sex Ethics (20:9–21)

IV. Holiness of the Land (20:22–27)

"The Torah: A Women's Commentary" 34
edited by Tamara Cohn Eskenazi and Andrea Weiss

יהוה spoke to Moses, saying, [2]Speak to the whole Israelite community and say to them:

You shall be holy, for I, your God יהוה, am holy.

יט א וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר׃ ב דַּבֵּר אֶל־כָּל־עֲדַת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם קְדֹשִׁים תִּהְיוּ כִּי קָדוֹשׁ אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם׃

A Compendium of Paths to Holiness
(19:1–37)

Within the framework of holiness, *parashat K'doshim* groups together laws that, in the main, appear elsewhere in the Torah. Why do the biblical writers repeat and enumerate these particular laws at this point in Leviticus? A number of Jewish biblical scholars recently have argued that these units were written by priests who were influenced by the work of the prophet Isaiah. If this is correct, then Leviticus 17–26 can be read as a response by reform-minded priests (a group of anonymous writers) to an earlier group of priests whose writings are preserved in Leviticus 1–16 and elsewhere in the Torah. (Modern critical scholars refer to Leviticus 17–26 as "H," which stands for the Holiness Code, in contrast to "P," which stands for the earlier priestly writings.) *Parashat K'doshim* expresses, clearly and beautifully, the theological position of these presumed religious reformers.

Parashat K'doshim begins with echoes of three of the Ten Commandments, in laws that address respect for one's parents, observance of Shabbat, and a prohibition against the worship of other gods. There may be further traces of the Decalogue elsewhere in this unit: the prohibition against murder has been likened to v. 16; the commandment against adultery, to v. 29; the law against stealing, to v. 11; the admonition against bearing false witness, to v. 11 or v. 16; and the commandment concerning coveting, to v. 18. But note a significant difference in the order of the commandments: the laws in this collection start with an emphasis on the relationships between human beings (in rabbinic parlance, *bein adam lachavero*), whereas the Decalogue begins with a focus on laws between people and God (*bein adam lamakom*). This arrangement suggests that Israel brings holiness into its communities with attention to the realm of everyday life, particularly the family.

THE HOLINESS FORMULA (19:1–2)

2. Speak to the whole Israelite community. The entire community is addressed, women and men.

You shall be holy, for I . . . am holy. The call to holiness and the identification of this deity as Israel's God frame Leviticus 19, and these elements are intended to impact our understanding of our obligations in following these laws. The term *k'doshim* (holy), although familiar, is a difficult term

◗ In *parashat K'doshim*, holiness comes from cultivating relationships.

ANOTHER VIEW ➤ 716

◗ Confrontation can clear up misunderstandings and obviate resentment or even hatred.

POST-BIBLICAL INTERPRETATIONS ➤ 716

◗ How do women experience holiness?

CONTEMPORARY REFLECTION ➤ 718

◗ When my father died, my mother would not permit others to take her daughters' place in saying the *Kaddish*.

VOICES ➤ 720

[3]You shall each revere your mother and your father, and keep My sabbaths: I יהוה am your God.
[4]Do not turn to idols or make molten gods for yourselves: I יהוה am your God.
[5]When you sacrifice an offering of well-being to יהוה, sacrifice it so that it may be accepted on your behalf. [6]It shall be eaten on the day you sacrifice it,

[3] אִישׁ אִמּוֹ וְאָבִיו תִּירָאוּ וְאֶת־שַׁבְּתֹתַי
תִּשְׁמֹרוּ אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם׃
[4] אַל־תִּפְנוּ אֶל־הָאֱלִילִם וֵאלֹהֵי מַסֵּכָה לֹא
תַעֲשׂוּ לָכֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם׃
[5] וְכִי תִזְבְּחוּ זֶבַח שַׁלְמִים לַיהוָה לִרְצֹנְכֶם
תִּזְבָּחֻהוּ׃ [6] בְּיוֹם זִבְחֲכֶם יֵאָכֵל וּמִמָּחֳרָת

to define. The basic word, in its varying formulations, appears fifty-nine times in the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17–26).

Our ancestors understood this notion of holiness in varying ways. The Holiness Code offers a distinct (and complex) understanding of holiness. In the book of Deuteronomy (see 7:6), all of Israel is considered holy by the fact of its covenantal relationship with God. Yet in most priestly writings (for example, in Leviticus 1–16), holiness is defined in cultic terms: the priestly writers ascribed holiness to God's sancta (the sanctuary and its contents), to time—namely, *Shabbat* and holy days—and to the priests from the family line of Aaron. The priestly writers viewed holiness as a primary attribute of God; they believed, however, that certain people, places, and times could share the condition or status of holiness. Israel is commanded to follow God's laws in order to maintain the boundaries between the holy and the not-holy, which thus assures God's presence (*kavod*) in the sanctuary. Whereas the notion of holiness in the earlier priestly writings is highly static, the Holiness Code offers a radically new view of holiness that is dynamic and constantly shifting according to our actions in the world. Holiness is also democratized; it extends beyond the priesthood and the sanctuary to the entire community and the whole Land of Israel. Anyone in Israel can strive toward the holy through right action.

ON PARENTS AND IDOLS (19:3–4)

These two verses together echo three of the Decalogue's precepts.

3. your mother and your father. In other biblical passages that mention both of these parental roles, the father is listed before the mother (for example, Exodus 20:12; 21:15, 17; Deuteronomy 5:16; 21:18; Proverbs 1:8; 20:20). The inverted order here gives special honor to the mother.

4. to idols or . . . molten gods. Both *elilim* ("idols") and *elohei maseichah* ("molten gods") refer specifically to tangible, human-made representations of gods.

DEMOCRATIZATION OF SACRIFICE (19:5–8)

Modern critical scholars believe that most of Leviticus 1–16 was originally intended as a priestly manual regarding procedures for communal sanctuaries. Leviticus 19:5–8 is an excerpt from that priestly manual, with modifications introduced for the laity. This passage conveys the message that holiness must attend to all aspects of life. By now applying the material that already appeared in Leviticus 7 to a wider audience, this writer communicates to the Israelites in general that they have a larger role in the complex system of sacrifice. They cannot rely completely on the priests but must themselves be invested in the rituals.

5. offering of well-being. Leviticus 7:11–21 breaks down the offering of well-being into different sub-categories. The Holiness Code writers are not concerned with expounding the details of each type of sacrifice. They are interested in the broad category of the well-being offering because it is the only holy object that a lay person may handle and even consume.

be accepted on your behalf. The writers of the Holiness Code added this phrase to the earlier for-

וְהַנּוֹתָר עַד־יוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי בָּאֵשׁ יִשָּׂרֵף׃
ז וְאִם הֵאָכֹל יֵאָכֵל בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי פִּגּוּל
הוּא לֹא יֵרָצֶה׃ ח וְאֹכְלָיו עֲוֹנוֹ יִשָּׂא כִּי־
אֶת־קֹדֶשׁ יְהוָה חִלֵּל וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהִוא
מֵעַמֶּיהָ׃
ט וּבְקֻצְרְכֶם אֶת־קְצִיר אַרְצְכֶם לֹא תְכַלֶּה
פְּאַת שָׂדְךָ לִקְצֹר וְלֶקֶט קְצִירְךָ לֹא תְלַקֵּט׃
י וְכַרְמְךָ לֹא תְעוֹלֵל וּפֶרֶט כַּרְמְךָ לֹא
תְלַקֵּט לֶעָנִי וְלַגֵּר תַּעֲזֹב אֹתָם אֲנִי יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵיכֶם׃
יא לֹא תִגְנֹבוּ וְלֹא־תְכַחֲשׁוּ וְלֹא־תְשַׁקְּרוּ

or on the day following; but what is left by the third day must be consumed in fire. 7If it should be eaten on the third day, it is an offensive thing, it will not be acceptable. 8And one who eats of it shall bear the guilt for having profaned what is sacred to יהוה; that person shall be cut off from kin.

9When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I יהוה am your God.

11You shall not steal; you shall not deal deceit-

mulation of the well-being offering, and they apparently did so for a specific theological purpose. By its form, the Hebrew word *lirtzonchem* is ambiguous; it means both "be sure that the offering is acceptable (to God) on your behalf" and "be sure that the sacrifice is offered by you willingly and with full heart." The usage of the plural emphasizes that the writer addresses all Israel, not just the priests. This seemingly minor addition actually demands that the entire population become invested in what had become the domain of the priests alone.

8. that person shall be cut off from kin. This formulaic expression (which appears frequently in the Torah) probably indicates that the offender will suffer an untimely death, not excommunication (but see at 7:20).

RIGHTS OF THE POOR (19:9–10)

This section moves from ritual duty to the domain of economic justice. The writers of the text acknowledge the uneven distribution of wealth, and they put measures into place to ensure that these inequalities are addressed, even if only in some small measure. The rationale for the precepts is neither mercy nor pity, but rather duty and justice. Deuteronomy 24:19–20 adds to this teaching, emphasizing that whatever falls to the ground during the reaping season cannot be picked up again in a second sweep. The book of Ruth describes the practice mandated in our passage. In Ruth 2 we find an example of women participating in this program. Ruth stands behind the reapers as they cut and gather the sheaves. Whatever they do not grab by hand is left on the ground for Ruth and others to pick up. Ruth 2 also mentions that Boaz, the property owner, orders his workers not to touch Ruth.

10. pick . . . bare. Although the meaning of the Hebrew verb *t'olel* is not entirely clear, the sense is that some grapes were to be left on the vine, in parallel to leaving a furrow of the field for the poor to harvest. In both cases, the poor were to have the opportunity to pick what had been dropped or left by regular workers.

THEFT, DECEIT, AND FAIR COURTS OF LAW (19:11–16)

This collection of laws addresses potential opportunities for exploitation between neighbors and within courts of law. Justice is the central theme, whether the justice is to be carried out in courts of law or only in the eyes of God.

11. steal. Heb. *ganav*, a term that refers to kidnapping and not only to theft of property. There are only two cases in the Bible of women stealing: the matriarch Rachel stealing her father's *t'rafim* (the household religious figurines) when she leaves

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fully or falsely with one another. [12]You shall not swear falsely by My name, profaning the name of your God: I am יהוה.

[13]You shall not defraud your fellow [Israelite]. You shall not commit robbery. The wages of a laborer shall not remain with you until morning.

[14]You shall not insult the deaf, or place a stumbling block before the blind. You shall fear your God: I am יהוה.

[15]You shall not render an unfair decision: do not favor the poor or show deference to the rich; judge your kin fairly. [16]Do not deal basely with members of your people. Do not profit by the blood of your fellow [Israelite]: I am יהוה.

[17]You shall not hate your kinsfolk in your heart. Reprove your kin but incur no guilt on their account.

אִישׁ בַּעֲמִיתוֹ. 12 וְלֹא־תִשָּׁבְעוּ בִשְׁמִי
לַשָּׁקֶר וְחִלַּלְתָּ אֶת־שֵׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲנִי
יְהוָה׃
13 לֹא־תַעֲשֹׁק אֶת־רֵעֲךָ וְלֹא תִגְזֹל לֹא־
תָלִין פְּעֻלַּת שָׂכִיר אִתְּךָ עַד־בֹּקֶר׃
14 לֹא־תְקַלֵּל חֵרֵשׁ וְלִפְנֵי עִוֵּר לֹא תִתֵּן
מִכְשֹׁל וְיָרֵאתָ מֵאֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה׃
15 לֹא־תַעֲשׂוּ עָוֶל בַּמִּשְׁפָּט לֹא־תִשָּׂא פְּנֵי־
דָל וְלֹא תֶהְדַּר פְּנֵי גָדוֹל בְּצֶדֶק תִּשְׁפֹּט
עֲמִיתֶךָ׃ 16 לֹא־תֵלֵךְ רָכִיל בְּעַמֶּיךָ לֹא
תַעֲמֹד עַל־דַּם רֵעֶךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה׃
17 לֹא־תִשְׂנָא אֶת־אָחִיךָ בִּלְבָבֶךָ הוֹכֵחַ
תּוֹכִיחַ אֶת־עֲמִיתֶךָ וְלֹא־תִשָּׂא עָלָיו חֵטְא׃

her father's household (see at Genesis 31:19), and the princess Jehoshabeath, who steals away the young prince Joash to protect him from a military coup and slaughter (II Chronicles 22:11; she is named Jehosheba in II Kings 11:2). In both cases, the act of theft is motivated by a desire to protect the continuity of the family line.

*14. **insult.*** Literally, "utter a curse." Just as the blind cannot see a physical obstacle in their path, so the deaf cannot hear a curse and take precautions against it.

You shall fear your God. This phrase serves as a warning against haughtiness, reminding each individual that there is a force far beyond one's understanding. Proper perspective helps persons to treat others with compassion.

*16. **basely.*** The corresponding Hebrew word is also associated with gossip, the misuse of speech. In this particular context, the Torah teaches that unfair accusations and rumors may have dire consequences. (Nowhere does the Bible explicitly associate women with gossip. It is only in rabbinic literature that gossip, *l'shon hara*, comes to be connected with women, through a midrash on Numbers 12 and Miriam.)

Do not profit by the blood of your fellow. Two other translations for this clause are "do not stand by idly" and "do not conspire against" your fellow.

HANDLING ANGER IN ACTION AND THOUGHT (19:17–18)

The commandments in these two verses are particularly striking insofar as they command what one ought to feel. These laws deal with intentions and emotions. The biblical writers make no distinction between those laws that other people could monitor and enforce, and those that only God could watch, so to speak.

*17. **hate.*** The corresponding Hebrew term denotes both an emotion and a cognitive state of being. Our ancestors recognized that it is difficult to separate one's emotions from one's attitudes and actions.

incur no guilt on their account. There are a multitude of interpretations for this clause. Some suggest that if you do not reprove the offending individuals, you become an accomplice in their wrongdoing. Others believe that if you do not face the source of your disquiet, it may grow into rage and possibly result in injury.

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count. [18]You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against members of your people. Love your fellow [Israelite] as yourself: I am יהוה.

[19]You shall observe My laws.

You shall not let your cattle mate with a different kind; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed; you shall not put on cloth from a mixture of two kinds of material.

[20]If a man has carnal relations with a woman who is a slave and has been designated for another

18 לֹא־תִקֹּם וְלֹא־תִטֹר אֶת־בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ
וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֲךָ כָּמוֹךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה׃
19 אֶת־חֻקֹּתַי תִּשְׁמֹרוּ
בְּהֶמְתְּךָ לֹא־תַרְבִּיעַ כִּלְאַיִם שָׂדְךָ לֹא־
תִזְרַע כִּלְאָיִם וּבֶגֶד כִּלְאַיִם שַׁעַטְנֵז לֹא
יַעֲלֶה עָלֶיךָ׃
20 וְאִישׁ כִּי־יִשְׁכַּב אֶת־אִשָּׁה שִׁכְבַת־זֶרַע
וְהִוא שִׁפְחָה נֶחֱרֶפֶת לְאִישׁ וְהָפְדֵּה לֹא

18. not take vengeance or bear a grudge. Taking vengeance means a deed, and bearing a grudge reflects thought. Again, deed and thought—act and intention—are interwoven.

Love your fellow. The verb for love, *ahav*, is here followed by the preposition using the letter *lamed* ("l" in English). This form is found in only four cases in the Bible; Abraham Malamat notes that in all four cases, there is an implication of action, not just feeling ("You Shall Love . . . ," 1990). See, for example, Leviticus 19:34, where Israelites are commanded to love the foreigner in their midst, which implies merciful and kind action.

19. mixture. Heb. *shaatnez*; the word's precise meaning is unclear. It appears in the Bible only here and in Deuteronomy 22:11 (which clarifies that this term refers to a combination of wool and linen). Languages related to Hebrew seem to lack a similar word.

MAINTAINING DISTINCT CATEGORIES (19:19)

This verse forbids the breeding or mixing of animals, seeds, or cloths of different species or categories (see also Deuteronomy 22:9–11). The rationale behind this prohibition is connected to the rationale behind the dietary laws (Leviticus 11, Deuteronomy 14), the law that forbids cross-dressing (Deuteronomy 22:5), and the law requiring that animals die for killing human beings (Exodus 21:29). Our ancestors believed that species and gender were set out at creation and were to be maintained as distinct categories. Genesis 1:20–30 describes the creation of trees according to their kind, and animals according to their place in the world; Genesis 1:27 states that God created human beings, male and female. Mary Douglas has shown that the dietary laws are an attempt to maintain these clear categories and differentiations. It is this kind of thinking, in sharp categories and distinctions, that leads to the banning of same-sex sexual relations in the Bible (see at Leviticus 20:13) and in other ancient texts—and that assigns different dress, behavior, and social roles for women and men.

AMBIGUOUS STATUS OF THE SLAVE WOMAN (19:20–22)

The transition to this topic is rooted in the idea that it is problematic to mix categories. In this case, the "mixing" involves sexual relations, and the complication concerns a woman who is both a slave and an intended wife. The slave woman has been designated for a man (who is not her owner) when another man has sexual relations with her. This passage portrays the woman as an object: the man performs the sexual act upon her (on this idiom, see at Exodus 19:15); and the guilty party is the man who has offended both her current owner and God, to whom the offender must make amends through a ritual sacrifice. The fate of the woman is not the primary concern of the writers of this text. They do not address whether she is likely to remain a slave

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נִפְדָּתָה אוֹ חׇפְשָׁה לֹא נִתַּן־לָהּ בִּקֹּרֶת
תִּהְיֶה לֹא יוּמְתוּ כִּי־לֹא חׇפָשָׁה: 21 וְהֵבִיא
אֶת־אֲשָׁמוֹ לַיהוָה אֶל־פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד
אֵיל אָשָׁם: 22 וְכִפֶּר עָלָיו הַכֹּהֵן בְּאֵיל
הָאָשָׁם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה עַל־חַטָּאתוֹ אֲשֶׁר חָטָא
וְנִסְלַח לוֹ מֵחַטָּאתוֹ אֲשֶׁר חָטָא: פ
23 וְכִי־תָבֹאוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ וּנְטַעְתֶּם כָּל־עֵץ
מַאֲכָל וַעֲרַלְתֶּם עׇרְלָתוֹ אֶת־פִּרְיוֹ שָׁלֹשׁ
שָׁנִים יִהְיֶה לָכֶם עֲרֵלִים לֹא יֵאָכֵל:

man, but has not been redeemed or given her freedom, there shall be an indemnity; they shall not, however, be put to death, since she has not been freed. [21]But he must bring to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, as his reparation offering to יהוה, a ram of reparation offering. [22]With the ram of reparation offering the priest shall make expiation for him before יהוה for the sin that he committed; and the sin that he committed will be forgiven him.

[23]When you enter the land and plant any tree for food, you shall regard its fruit as forbidden. Three years it shall be forbidden for you, not to be

or to become the wife of the prospective husband. (See also Exodus 21:7–11 for laws about women sold into slavery.)

20. has carnal relations. The verb *shachav*, "to lie down" or "to engage in sexual intercourse," can take either the direct-object marker *et* or the preposition *im* ("with"). In this case, the writer has used the former. This grammatical form—in which the object is relatively passive—may be a linguistic convention, or it may be a clue to the priestly understanding of the relationship between the sexes in this case.

slave. In Leviticus 25, also part of the Holiness Code, the writers abolish slavery completely for all Israelites. This contradiction suggests that Leviticus 19 is a compilation of laws from various sources whose purpose was to express the specific concerns of this particular school of ancient Israel (see at 19:2). If the woman in this case had not been a slave, Deuteronomy 22:23–27 would have applied, prescribing the death penalty for the woman and man. But the woman here is in an ambiguous state, for she is both a slave woman and a nearly betrothed woman. As seen in v. 19, the Holiness Code writers are particularly interested in liminal states and concerned about confusion caused by overlapping categories.

indemnity. The corresponding Hebrew word appears only here in the Bible; others translate it as "inquisition." The question is whether an investigation to clarify her status is required or whether the offender is required simply to pay a fine to the man who owns the woman (either the current master or the future husband).

21. reparation offering. Since this illicit sexual act is not subject to the death penalty (v. 20), the offender must appease God through a sacrificial offering.

FIRST FRUITS (19:23–25)

The Holiness Code writers believed that the community of Israel maintains holiness not only by the way it treats its members and the sancta (the sacred things), but also by the way it cares for the fruit of the land. One was not to pick fruit from new fruit-bearing trees for three years. In the fourth year, Israelites would dedicate the first fruits to God.

23. you shall regard its fruit as forbidden. Literally, "you shall treat as foreskin its foreskin with its fruit." As Jacob Milgrom has argued, the foreskin refers to the fruit while it is still in its bud; therefore the text commands the removal of the buds—with the incipient fruit inside—from juvenile trees during their first few years (*Leviticus 17–22*, 2000, p. 1679). Thus, the term *arel* ("foreskin" or "uncircumcised") here has both a literal meaning (referring to the bud) and a metaphoric meaning (referring to its forbidden nature).

eaten. [24]In the fourth year all its fruit shall be set aside for jubilation before יהוה; [25]and only in the fifth year may you use its fruit—that its yield to you may be increased: I יהוה am your God.

[26]You shall not eat anything with its blood. You shall not practice divination or soothsaying. [27]You [men] shall not round off the side-growth on your head, or destroy the side-growth of your beard. [28]You shall not make gashes in your flesh for the dead, or incise any marks on yourselves: I am יהוה.

[29]Do not degrade your daughter and make her a harlot, lest the land fall into harlotry and the land be filled with depravity. [30]You shall keep My sabbaths and venerate My sanctuary: I am יהוה.

24 וּבַשָּׁנָה הָרְבִיעִת יִהְיֶה כָּל־פִּרְיוֹ קֹדֶשׁ
הִלּוּלִים לַיהוָה׃ 25 וּבַשָּׁנָה הַחֲמִישִׁת
תֹּאכְלוּ אֶת־פִּרְיוֹ לְהוֹסִיף לָכֶם תְּבוּאָתוֹ
אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם׃
26 לֹא תֹאכְלוּ עַל־הַדָּם לֹא תְנַחֲשׁוּ וְלֹא
תְעוֹנֵנוּ׃ 27 לֹא תַקִּפוּ פְּאַת רֹאשְׁכֶם וְלֹא
תַשְׁחִית אֶת פְּאַת זְקָנֶךָ׃ 28 וְשֶׂרֶט לָנֶפֶשׁ
לֹא תִתְּנוּ בִּבְשַׂרְכֶם וּכְתֹבֶת קַעֲקַע לֹא
תִתְּנוּ בָּכֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה׃
29 אַל־תְּחַלֵּל אֶת־בִּתְּךָ לְהַזְנוֹתָהּ וְלֹא־
תִזְנֶה הָאָרֶץ וּמָלְאָה הָאָרֶץ זִמָּה׃ 30 אֶת־
שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמֹרוּ וּמִקְדָּשִׁי תִּירָאוּ אֲנִי
יְהוָה׃

24. set aside. Heb. *kodesh*; that is, the fruit is to be considered *kadosh* (holy). This designation is no coincidence; biblical literature commonly distinguishes between "the uncircumcised" (see at v. 23) as foreign to God and "the holy" as a part of God.

WHAT WE DO WITH OUR BODIES (19:26–28)

These prohibitions refer to practices that the writers associated with non-Israelite worship.

26. You shall not eat... blood. In Leviticus, meat may not be consumed until the blood has been drained and offered to God. The biblical writers understood blood as being the life-source of a being (as in 17:11; Deuteronomy 12:23).

27–28. These prohibitions refer to certain acts of mourning in the ancient Near East (see also at Deuteronomy 14:1–2). Mourning acts that the Bible considers appropriate include wearing sackcloth and ashes, and fasting.

28. incise any marks. The corresponding Hebrew term appears nowhere else and, in this context, is assumed to refer to tattoos.

THE SACRED STATUS OF DAUGHTERS (19:29–30)

These verses reflect one of the central themes in the Holiness Code as a whole: the Israelite role in the maintenance and expansion of holiness. On the surface, v. 29 simply seems to prohibit the use of daughters as prostitutes. The key word in this verse is "degrade," which should be rendered more accurately as "desecrate." The verb *ch-l-l* is a technical term in the Holiness Code indicating a decrease in the level of holiness. The use of this verb implies that the daughter is not only a member of society, but also bears the responsibility for aspects of holiness in the community. If a father puts his daughter in a position that diminishes her holiness, that action affects the entire land negatively. This point is made even more strongly by coupling this teaching with a reminder to observe Shabbat and to keep watch over God's holy space. To some degree, the holiness of a daughter is akin to the holiness of the sanctuary.

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31 אַל־תִּפְנוּ אֶל־הָאֹבֹת וְאֶל־הַיִּדְּעֹנִים
אַל־תְּבַקְשׁוּ לְטָמְאָה בָהֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵיכֶם׃
32 מִפְּנֵי שֵׂיבָה תָּקוּם וְהָדַרְתָּ פְּנֵי זָקֵן
וְיָרֵאתָ מֵאֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה׃ ס
33 וְכִי־יָגוּר אִתְּךָ גֵּר בְּאַרְצְכֶם לֹא תוֹנוּ
אֹתוֹ׃ 34 כְּאֶזְרָח מִכֶּם יִהְיֶה לָכֶם הַגֵּר הַגָּר
אִתְּכֶם וְאָהַבְתָּ לוֹ כָּמוֹךָ כִּי־גֵרִים הֱיִיתֶם
בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם׃
35 לֹא־תַעֲשׂוּ עָוֶל בַּמִּשְׁפָּט בַּמִּדָּה בַּמִּשְׁקָל
וּבַמְּשׂוּרָה׃ 36 מֹאזְנֵי צֶדֶק אַבְנֵי־צֶדֶק אֵיפַת
צֶדֶק וְהִין צֶדֶק יִהְיֶה לָכֶם
אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר־הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם

31 Do not turn to ghosts and do not inquire of familiar spirits, to be defiled by them: I יהוה am your God.

32 You shall rise before the aged and show deference to the old; you shall fear your God: I am יהוה.

33 When strangers reside with you in your land, you shall not wrong them. 34 The strangers who reside with you shall be to you as your citizens; you shall love each one as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I יהוה am your God.

35 You shall not falsify measures of length, weight, or capacity. 36 You shall have an honest balance, honest weights, an honest *eifah*, and an honest *hin*.

I יהוה am your God who freed you from the

CONSULTING GHOSTS AND SPIRITS (19:31)

Some scholars argue that consulting ghosts and using divination was problematic because of their inherent magical tendencies, that is, the attempt to manipulate the divine realm. Others assert that there were bans on such practices because they were considered too pagan-like. These conclusions fail, however, given the use of Urim and Thummim by the biblical priests (see Exodus 28:30), for this was a pagan-like device that arguably manipulates the divine. Therefore, one might conclude that the prohibition was motivated in part by the desire to curtail women's access to the divine. (See further at 20:6.)

RESPECT FOR ELDERS (19:32)

The biblical tradition is consistent in its call for respect and care for the elderly.

CARE FOR THE STRANGER (19:33–34)

Every law collection in the Bible advocates care for the foreigner who resides in the land of Israel (for example, Exodus 22:20; 23:9; Deuteronomy 14:29; 24:14, 17). These admonitions frequently remind the reader that our ancestors were once strangers in the land of Egypt and that we should remember the vulnerability of the outsider. Elsewhere in the Bible, the stranger is mentioned alongside the widow and orphan.

33. strangers. The *ger* was the non-Israelite who lived either temporarily or long-term in the Land of Israel but did not belong to the ethnic (later political) body of Israel. [Because the *ger*'s situation and responsibilities do not require that only a male could have such a status, the present translation construes the Hebrew term as gender inclusive and renders the Hebrew masculine form in the plural. —*Ed.*]

FAIR COMMERCE PRACTICES (19:35–36a)

The use of fair weights and measures is also discussed in Deuteronomy 25:13–16.

CONCLUSION (19:36b–37)

36. I יהוה am your God who freed you from the land of Egypt. The formula *ani* יהוה ("I יהוה" or "I am יהוה"), which appears fifteen times in Leviticus 19, is an abbreviation for the full text that is now provided as a conclusion. This clause encourages the reader to remember that one must emulate

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מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם׃ 37 וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־כָּל־חֻקֹּתַי
וְאֶת־כָּל־מִשְׁפָּטַי וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם אֲנִי
יְהוָה׃

20 וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר׃ 2 וְאֶל־
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תֹּאמַר
אִישׁ אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִן־הַגֵּר
הַגָּר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר יִתֵּן מִזַּרְעוֹ לַמֹּלֶךְ מוֹת יוּמָת
עַם הָאָרֶץ יִרְגְּמֻהוּ בָאָבֶן׃ 3 וַאֲנִי אֶתֵּן אֶת־
פָּנַי בָּאִישׁ הַהוּא וְהִכְרַתִּי אֹתוֹ מִקֶּרֶב עַמּוֹ
כִּי מִזַּרְעוֹ נָתַן לַמֹּלֶךְ לְמַעַן טַמֵּא אֶת־
מִקְדָּשִׁי וּלְחַלֵּל אֶת־שֵׁם קָדְשִׁי׃ 4 וְאִם
הַעְלֵם יַעְלִימוּ עַם הָאָרֶץ אֶת־עֵינֵיהֶם
מִן־הָאִישׁ הַהוּא בְּתִתּוֹ מִזַּרְעוֹ לַמֹּלֶךְ
לְבִלְתִּי הָמִית אֹתוֹ׃ 5 וְשַׂמְתִּי אֲנִי אֶת־
פָּנַי בָּאִישׁ הַהוּא וּבְמִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ וְהִכְרַתִּי אֹתוֹ

land of Egypt. 37 You shall faithfully observe all My laws and all My rules: I am יהוה.

20 And יהוה spoke to Moses: 2 Say further to the Israelite people:

Anyone among the Israelites, or among the strangers residing in Israel, who gives any offspring to Molech, shall be put to death; the people of the land shall pelt the person with stones. 3 And I will set My face against that person, whom I will cut off from among the people for having given offspring to Molech and so defiled My sanctuary and profaned My holy name. 4 And if the people of the land should shut their eyes to that person's giving offspring to Molech, and should not put the person to death, 5 I Myself will set My face against that person's kin as well; and I will cut off from among

God and seek to become holy because God saved Israel in the past.

Danger to Holiness and the Dynamics of Holiness (20:1–8)

This unit warns against the practices that desecrate God's sanctity.

DESECRATING GOD'S NAME THROUGH MOLECH WORSHIP (20:1–5)

The book of Kings mentions a practice wherein individuals (including kings) would sacrifice their children by putting them to the fire for the worship of Molech, the god of the Ammonites, who are Israel's neighbors to the east (I Kings 11:7; II Kings 23:10). Although some extra-biblical evidence suggests that such practices did take place, the biblical writers—as anti-pagan polemic—probably exaggerate their extent (see also Leviticus 18:21 and Jeremiah 7:31 on child sacrifice).

3. *profaned My holy name.* Traditional Jewish commentators have interpreted this phrase to mean that one can damage God's reputation among the nations of the world through wrong actions. The concept is still current today in describing public acts that can bring shame upon the people Israel and its God as acts of *chillul haShem*. However, in the context of the Holiness Code, the teaching is much more profound, for the message is that wrong human actions can actually have an impact upon that aspect of God known as *shem*, name. One can increase God's holiness through right actions, and one can diminish God's presence in the world through wrong actions. Holiness, being pliable and malleable (see 19:2), is the arena in which persons are in relationship with the Divine. God is affected by human actions—both the good and the bad. According to the Holiness Code, God does not remove the divine Presence (*kavod*) from Israel's midst, nor does God act out of great wrath. God may detach an individual from the covenantal promises ("I will set My face against X . . . whom I will cut off from among the people," 17:10; 20:3; 20:6); but more often, wrongdoing simply diminishes God's *shem*.

Another View

PARASHAT K'DOSHIM ARTICULATES more comprehensively than any other portion of the Torah what it means for persons and community to be holy. Dictionary definitions of the Bible's concept of holiness emphasize the notion of separation. In *parashat K'doshim*, however, holiness comes from cultivating relationships. Connections—not only separations—define the holy community: the connection to parents whom one must honor, to the poor and the disadvantaged whom one must protect, to the neighbor and stranger whom one must love, and of course to God.

God commands Israel to "love" three times in the Torah. One case is in the text that follows the *Sh'ma* ("You shall love your God יהוה with all your heart," Deuteronomy 6:5), known as the *V'ahavta*. Our parashah mentions the other two commands: to love the one who is a member of one's group ("Love your fellow [Israelite] as yourself," 19:18); and finally, to love the stranger (19:34). Loving the stranger is a unique notion in the ancient world. The verse's rationale for loving the stranger—"for you were strangers in the land of Egypt"—has continuing ramifications that are often overlooked: the proper response to having suffered abuse is not vengeance or special entitlement, but rather sensitivity and determination to prevent such an abuse of others, including strangers. The three commandments are three dimensions of a single, deep connection: to love God is to love others, those like us and those who are not.

Ruth the Moabite stands as the exemplar of what it means to love, including loving the stranger. While still in the land of Moab, Ruth vows an undying loyalty to Naomi, Naomi's people, and Naomi's God (Ruth 1:16–17). After she arrives in Bethlehem, Ruth's behavior and commitment become a model for others: Boaz acknowledges that his kindness to Ruth is prompted by her prior generosity to Naomi (2:11); and the women of the town proclaim that Naomi's eventual reversal of fortune came about because of "your daughter-in-law, who loves you" (4:15). Even without using the word *kadosh* ("holy"), the story of Ruth points to the transformation that the "love commandments" in this parashah can bring about—and to the ways that these precepts serve to sanctify life and community.

Ruth the Moabite stands as the exemplar of what it means to love.

—*Tamara Cohn Eskenazi*

Post-biblical Interpretations

You shall be holy (19:1). Commentators have been challenged by the interweaving of ritual and civil commandments in *parashat K'doshim*. Observing that both Leviticus 18 and 20 list prohibited sexual partners, Rashi suggests that 19:1 teaches that separating ourselves from forbidden sexual relations and transgressions is the path to holiness, "for every place (in the Torah) you find instruction to fence yourself in against such relations, you also find mention of holiness." Nachmanides views this verse as commanding moderation in satisfying physical urges such as eating, drinking, and sexual relations.

Do not deal basely with members of your people

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INTERVIEW

Is It Time To Chart a New C For Reform Jud

Rabbi Richard Levy Says Yes—by Reclaiming Once Rejected Practices In Pursuit of Holiness

Only three times over the last century and a half has the American Reform rabbinate issued official platforms to help guide the theology and practice of the Reform movement. In November 1885, in Pittsburgh, PA, eighteen Reform rabbis adopted and published a set of guidelines which defined Reform Judaism for half a century. A second Reform platform, the Columbus Platform, was adopted by the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) in Columbus, OH in 1937. On the occasion of the centenary of the CCAR, a third set of guidelines, the Centenary Perspective, appeared in 1976.

Next June, the CCAR will convene once again in Pittsburgh, where our rabbinate will consider the adoption of a new statement—the "Ten Principles for Reform Judaism"—drafted by CCAR President Rabbi Richard Levy, director of the Los Angeles Hillel Council, in consultation with the Executive Board and the membership of the Conference. In a radical departure from the earlier platforms, these guidelines call for the reclaiming of some traditional Jewish practices rejected by our Reform forefathers and for embracing new pathways to holiness and social justice.

In the following interview, conducted by RJ *editor Aron Hirt-Manheimer,*

PHOTO BY ROSE EICHENBAUM

Levy Interview

continued from page 12

"*mitzvah*" but only the English word "obligation," whereas most Reform rabbis and lay people are trying nowadays to build more and more *mitzvot* into their lives. The experience of a year in Israel, a growing comfort with traditional practice, an enhanced desire among congregants for a richer Jewish life, even an increasing number of college-age Reform Jews who become acquainted with the practices of the wider Jewish community by their involvement in Hillel—this is very different from when the Centenary Perspective was written.

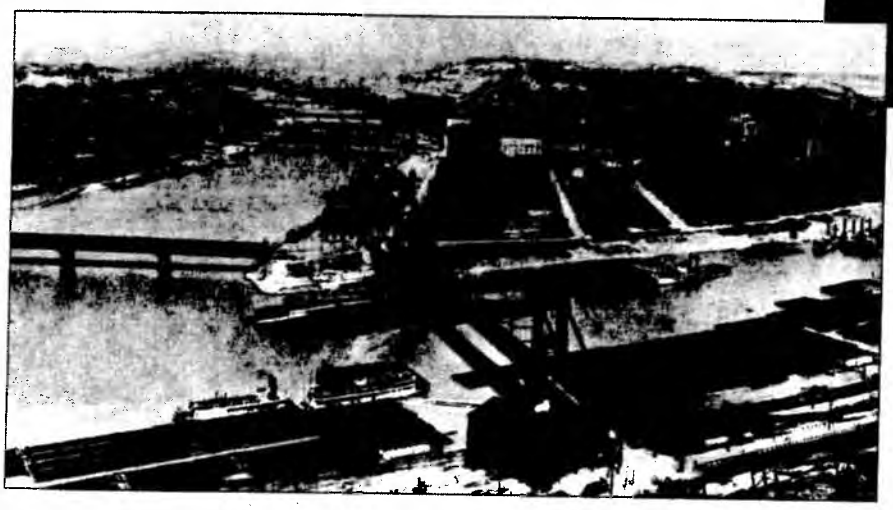
The new Principles, as currently drafted, encourage us to listen to the call of *mitzvot*, not only out of "our individual understanding of what is holy in our own time," which Reform has always done, but also "out of the ever-growing body of interpretations by *Kenesset Yisrael*, the eternal community of the Jewish people." Principle seven urges that we and all the other Jewish movements "work together in mutual respect, aware of our many serious differences, trying to understand the motivations that lead to our divergence...If we can only listen to each other, we can learn much."

The Ten Principles also encourage Reform Jews to explore a variety of active encounters with God. The first point says, "We pledge to create texts and worship environments that will enable us as individuals and communities to drink deeply from the Fountain from which our lives spring, and regularly to praise, thank, celebrate, petition, sing to, argue with, and cry out to the *Ribono shel Olam*, the Great One who presides over all time and all space."

In the new guidelines, Jewish lifecycle, ritual, and holiday observances are emphasized more than ever before. We are encouraged to observe Shabbat, for example, because doing so "liberates us from the obligations which our work places upon us so that we may focus on our obligations to God." The Principles advocate a disciplined commitment to lifelong Torah study "in the widest sense—biblical, rabbinic, medieval, and modern texts, history, literature, philosophy, art, music, and dance." We are also enjoined to read, pray, study, and speak in Hebrew. "The more Hebrew we use in our prayer and our study, the more we shall share in the holiness of our people's heritage."

Our relationship to Israel has changed significantly since the Centenary Perspective. It is vital that we expand our Reform presence in the Jewish state; the stakes are much higher today than they were in 1976. The Centenary Perspective said only: "We demand that Reform Judaism be unconditionally legitimized in the State of Israel." Echoing the Reform Zionist platform passed by the CCAR in 1997, the Ten Principles "call upon Reform Jews everywhere to dedicate their energies and resources to strengthening an indigenous Progressive Judaism that can help transform *Medinat Yisrael*."

Finally, we need a new set of guiding principles that heralds our progress and encourages further growth in gender equality. In the mid-seventies, HUC-JIR had just begun ordaining women rabbis and investing women cantors. Since then, these dedicated colleagues have had a growing influence on our understandings of God, synagogue and communal life, and the language of prayer. The current draft of the Ten Principles includes a whole section on equality, which notes in part: "We all commit ourselves to honor the different contributions men and women can make to our movement and to ensure that the women and men who lead us, whether professionals or laypeople, are able to fulfill their calling with appropriate recognition and respect."



Pittsburgh 1885 — and 1998.

LEFT: HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA; RIGHT: JEFF GREENBERG

A major thrust of the Ten Principles is a call to bring a greater sense of* kedushah, *or holiness, into our lives through the observance of dietary laws and other traditional Jewish practices. What exactly do you have in mind?

In Leviticus 19, which we Reform Jews read on Yom Kippur afternoon, God tells us: "*kedoshim tihyu*—You shall be holy—for I, Adonai your God, am holy." Lest we think God is setting before us an impossible task, the text then shows us the way to *kedushah*. The path lies through *mitzvot*, through responding to God's call in our day-to-day actions—revering our parents, observing Shabbat, respecting the land,

and much more. I believe our task as Reform Jews—and as part of the Jewish people—is to become as much like the God in whose image we were formed as we can.

We will begin to explore some of these issues this November at the President's Kallah, a retreat at the UAHC Kutz Camp in Warwick, NY which will be attended by two dozen or so Reform rabbis. We will focus on issues surrounding *kashrut*, understanding that a kosher diet can not only fulfill the *mitzvot* of forsaking forbidden foods in the Torah, but can also respond to ethical injunctions. Keeping kosher, I hope, will not be restricted to the separating of milk and meat, refraining from biblical *treif*, and accepting only traditional methods of *shechita* (slaughter). A Reform approach to *kashrut* should also encourage concern for *tzar ba-alei chayim*, the pain of living creatures cruelly penned in and fattened. Similarly, a Reform embrace of *kashrut* might well ban veal as well as biblical *treif*, and might prohibit fruits and vegetables grown with pesticides or harvested under inhuman conditions.

There are many ways we can reform *mitzvot* into an ethical framework that responds to the challenges of contemporary life. I hope that Reform observance of *kashrut* will, in time, create such a model for associating spirituality with other life choices, such as the clothes we wear, the kind of homes we live in, the way we use money, and the nature of family intimacy.

How do you propose we link ethical behaviors with ritual* mitzvot *in these arenas?

In the realm of clothing, the Torah requires us to examine garments to insure they do not include improper mixtures of threads. These days, in the spirit of *oshek* (a concern for oppressive working conditions), it is appropriate to examine garments to make sure they are not produced in sweatshops or by firms paying less than the minimum wage.

In terms of the *kedushah* of the home, we might ask how each room in our house, apartment, or dormitory reflects the holiness of the acts that go on there. Is there a *tzedakah* box to which

we can contribute before Shabbat? Are there texts of songs and blessings on the table to be referred to before and after the meal? Are Jewish books and ceremonial objects displayed in our living rooms? Is there an accessible copy of the *asher yatzar* prayer (found in *Gates of Prayer*) praising God for the proper working of our body, to be said after we have finished in the bathroom? Does our *ketubah* (marriage contract) grace our bedroom walls? Do we have *mezuzot* not only on our front doors but also at the entrance to all the rooms of our houses—perhaps, in a creative variant on tradition, including not only the expected texts but texts which reflect the holy purposes of each room? And are we ready to make a commitment to go out in the community and help homeless people build their own personal spaces?

What you are suggesting is quite a departure from traditional Reform thinking. Your rabbinic forebears declared in Pittsburgh: "We hold that all such Mosaic and rabbinical laws as regulate diet, priestly purity, and dress originated in ages and under the influence of ideas altogether foreign to our present mental and spiritual state." How do you respond to those who argue that your proposals are undermining the very foundation of Reform Judaism and leading us toward neo-Orthodoxy?

To restore some of the things that our forebears rejected is perfectly legitimate. As Reform Jews, we believe in ongoing revelation—the idea that changing times reveal new, previously hidden, aspects of the Torah God gave us at Sinai. Part of that revelation is addressing the needs of the Jewish people right now.

We tend to forget three critical words inherent in the Pittsburgh Platform: "in our days." Kaufmann Kohler, the drafter of the original platform, declared that "in our days [observance of] diet, priestly purity, and dress...[is] apt to obstruct than to enhance and encourage our moral and spiritual elevation as children of God." "Our days" in 1998 are very different from an era when mail was delivered on horseback and newspapers and magazines (let alone nonexistent moving pictures and television) did not feature endless images of in your face sexuality and bloodshed. Today our people are crying out to elevate their lives in a society fraught with banality and violence.

When food is increasingly seen as something to be picked up from the local fast-food joint and wolfed down before a television sitcom, our people need a vision of a higher way of life. When the television news inures us to atrocities, we may forget the preciousness of every single life created in the image of God. Wearing clothing that reflects the presence of God and justice for the unknown children of God who manufacture it; learning in a disciplined, ongoing way the transcendent texts of our tradition in the company of others also seeking to elevate their lives; and preparing food as our tradition believes God wants us to—all these *mitzvot* can help us transform our own lives and model such transformations for others.

Kashrut ***was abandoned, at least in part, because it was seen as a barrier separating Jews from other people. But you seem to be saying that separation should not be of concern to us.***

That's right. I think there are positive aspects to separation. We separate ourselves from non-Jews in all sorts of ways. Our primary holy day is Saturday, not Sunday or Friday. Our liturgical language is Hebrew, not Latin or Arabic. These separations also make us more interesting to the larger world when we have the opportunity to share our different perspectives and experiences with people of different faiths.

In fact, in today's society, separation, or diversity, is becoming the norm, particularly in dietary preferences. These days the host will ask, "Are you a vegetarian? Is there anything you can't eat?" And, of course, you can dine out with friends and eat different foods.

Many of us know we need to be concerned with low fat and low cholesterol. Why shouldn't we pay at least equal attention to the spiritual dimension of what we consume? That is what *kashrut* is all about.

You talk about Sinai as if God literally gave us the Torah. What do you say to Reform Jews who are convinced that the Torah is a human document, albeit divinely inspired?

I think authorship is less of an issue today than it was in the past. What matters is that the Jewish people considers the Torah holy. By using words such as "the story of the Jewish people tells," you dispense with the question of who wrote the Bible and regard it as received text. The Torah isn't Homer or Shakespeare; it's a document that the Jewish people holds as authoritative. People sometimes ask me, "How do we know God wants us to do this?" My answer is simple: if the Jewish people believes God wants us to do it, that's as close as we can get.

"Reform Jews are much more willing today to rethink Jewish practices that have been taboo for a hundred years."

You have said that individual autonomy in Reform religious observance has been taken too far. What is too far?

I think Reform Jews have tended to interpret "you have autonomy" as "you don't have to."

We need to find a balance between the call of tradition and our own understanding of what Judaism requires of us. At Sinai we heard the Torah both as individuals and as a people. As Reform Jews we need to hear out of both ears, the individual ear, which Reform has emphasized, and the collective ear of *Kenesset Yisrael*, the greater Jewish community.

This tension between these two ways of hearing is reflected in Rabbi Akiba's paradox: All is part of God's plan, yet free will is given. To understand the will of God, we need to open

Unit 2 - Sanctifying Time

Overview

The Curriculum Guide continues with a unit on time, something that the learners experience every day of their lives. The first two lessons are about ways Jews can sanctify the time that they experience the most frequently and basic, every day. The next two lessons are about sanctifying Shabbat, which happens less frequently. The last two lessons are about Jewish Pilgrimage Festivals, which happen even less frequently (only 3 times a year). In this unit, the learners will be exposed to Jewish practices, prayers and blessings (brachot) that can be used to sanctify time. Some of these times might be intrinsically holy, such as Shabbat and Jewish Festivals but the every day may be seen as less intrinsically holy. Since the every day the learners experience more frequently, it is the starting point for their journey.

Understandings:

- As Jews acculturate to living in America, Reform Jews renew their tenets, practices and the aesthetics of their worship in an attempt to sanctify time, expressing greater intellectual and psychological comfort with Jewish tradition.
- Engagement in an ongoing dialogue with the sources of our tradition about how time can be sanctified infuses our lives with קְדֻשָׁה (holiness).
- Ritual and Jewish sacred practices can enable us to infuse our lives with holiness and meaning.

Goals:

- To present students with a Jewish framework for sanctifying time and how as Reform Jews we can adopt or adapt those rituals.
- To expose Reform Jewish students to lesser known and less practiced rituals that sanctify time.
- To encourage students to reflect on one's Jewish identity.
- To demonstrate that we can sanctify time through Jewish rituals, sacred practices and blessings.
- To introduce the concepts of *m'lachah* and *menucha* and how they can enrich our Shabbat and festival observance.
- To invite students to create ways that they can adopt and adapt Jewish rituals, sacred practices and blessings that can sanctify time.

Essential Questions:

- How can we sanctify time?
- Why should we sanctify time?

Unit 2 Lesson 1 – Being Jewish every day

This lesson is about how we can infuse meaning and holiness into our everyday lives. The primary text (adapted from Mishnah Peah 1:1 and Talmud B. Shabbat 127a) suggests some daily practices that can enrich our everyday lives. The commentary of Mark Washofsky adds a Reform Jewish perspective on some of these practices. Students are invited to engage with the classical rabbinic and contemporary sources and evaluate if these practices should be adopted and/or adapted in order to enrich their everyday lives with meaning and holiness.

Objectives – At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify practices that they can do on an ordinary day that sanctify time.
- Explain why these practices are important for a Jewish life.
- Evaluate which of these practices they will adopt and adapt in order to bring more meaning into their lives.

Suggested Learning Activities

Text Study – Eilu Dvarim

Students will study the text based on Mishnah Peah 1:1 and Shabbat 127a in chevruta (in pairs) using guiding questions.

Small Group Activity

Students will be divided into 4 groups. Each group will receive one of the four excerpts (which are attached) from *Jewish Living* by Mark Washofsky[10] related to one of the ten practices cited in the text study.

- Engaging in deeds of compassion: *Tzedakah* - pages 298-301
- Accompanying the dead for burial: *The Funeral Service and Burial* – pages 190-192
  This selection is about burial practices. Related to this practice is the community's responsibility to take care of the mourner. Since this may not be obvious for the learners, the teacher can suggest the practices of going to the funeral, shivah, providing meals, taking notes for a student that's absent in school, etc…
- Arriving early for study, morning and evening: *Torah Study and Jewish Education* - pages 179-180.
- Honoring one's father and mother: *Between Parents and Children* – pages 180-182

Each group will read through the Washofsky commentary. Suggested questions for the discussion:

- How does Washofsky present a specifically Reform Jewish interpretation of the daily practice?
  Examples: Tzedakah – traditionally we are only obligated to give tzedakah to Jews, as Reform Jews we should also give tzedakah to non-Jews.
  Burial practices – traditionally Jews are buried in the ground, some Reform Jews adopt the practice of cremation.
  Honoring Parents – this one is harder to deduce the specific Reform Jewish response but it might be seen through how a child decides to honor his or her parents as they grow older and may need more care and financial support.
  Torah Study and Jewish Education – renewal of commitment to Hebrew in Reform Congregations.
  It might also be that the Reform Jewish position on these practices is not so different from "traditional" views. There are times when Reform Judaism does not diverge from the tradition but there are also times when Reform Judaism adapts the tradition or adopts different practices.

[10] Washofsky, Marc. *Jewish Living: A Guide to Contemporary Reform Practice*. New York, NY: UAHC Press, 2001.

- What are some ways of incorporating this practice into your everyday lives?
- In light of both the text from the daily prayer and the Washofsky commentary, in what ways might you incorporate this practice to enrich your everyday lives?
  Possible ways: at Shabbat dinner express appreciation for all the hard work parents do to provide for me, at the end of the day put all of my spare change into the tzedakah box, going to a friend's house for shivah when a loved one has passed away, study the weekly Torah portion at home with my parents

Whole Group Activity

Each group will present the practice they learned about, how it can be incorporated into the learner's everyday life and how it can enrich the learner's everyday life. At the end of the discussion, the class can create a group document which lists practices (from the primary and contemporary sources) that they can incorporate into their everyday lives in order to add meaning and holiness. Ideally each learner would receive a copy of the document that can serve as a guide for a Reform Jewish teen in how to enrich their everyday life with meaning.

Being Jewish Every Day[11]

These are the obligations that are without measure, of which the person enjoys the fruit in this world, while the principal remains for in the world-to-come. They are:

Honoring one's father and mother
Engaging in deeds of compassion,
Arriving early for study, morning and evening
Dealing graciously with guests
Visiting the sick
Celebrating with the bride (and groom)
Accompanying the dead for burial
Being devoted in prayer
And making peace among people.
But the study of Torah corresponds to them all.

1. Which of these practices do you do on a regular basis?

2. Which of these practices have you never done?

3. Which of these practices do you wish were more a part of your life?

4. Why do you think the rabbis would say that these things are "without measure"?

5. Why are these practices important for a Jewish life? Are there any that you would adopt or adapt?

[11] This text appears in our daily morning liturgy, based on Mishnah Peah 1:1 and Shabbat 127a. The translation is based on the version that appears in *Mishkan T'filah*.

the Reform responsa literature is the primary focus of this book, the following discussion will center mostly, though not exclusively, upon the treatment of social justice issues in that literature.

Tzedakah

> If there be a needy person among you . . . do not harden your heart . . . Rather, you must open your hand and lend him sufficient for whatever he needs. (Deut. 15:7–8)
>
> It is a positive *mitzvah* to give *tzedakah* in accordance with one's means. And one ought to perform this *mitzvah* more carefully than any other, for a poor person may die as a result of one's failure to give promptly. . . . Do not say "why should I lessen my own fortune by giving my money to this poor person?" Bear in mind, rather, that the wealth we possess is but held in trust, for the purpose that we might use it to perform the will of the One who deposited it with us. (*Tur, Yoreh De'ah* 247)

In Jewish tradition, *tzedakah* is a *mitzvah*: a religious duty. It is more a tax than a voluntary contribution: even the poor person who receives *tzedakah* is obligated to give of his or her substance to *tzedakah*. The word itself is derived from the Hebrew root meaning "justice" and "righteousness," the need to put things in their proper order. It therefore should not be confused with "charity," from the Latin *caritas*, which connotes the "heartfelt" emotions of sympathy and compassion that lead one to give voluntarily to relieve the suffering of the unfortunate. Ideally, of course, *tzedakah* ought not to exclude "charity"; one should *want* to do the right thing rather than perform that duty grudgingly and in a mean spirit. Yet if one must choose between *caritas* and *tzedakah*, our tradition quite prudently gives preference to the latter. To call our act of giving to the poor "*tzedakah*" means that we are obliged to help them even when we would rather not, even when our sympathies are not aroused. We help the poor for the same reason that we fight for justice: it is our moral and religious obligation to do so. *Tzedakah*, we might say, comes to fulfill God's requirements rather than our own desire to feel good about ourselves.

Tzedakah, conceived as justice, means that the needs of the recipient lie at the heart of our concern. "You must open your hand and lend him sufficient for whatever he needs," says Deuteronomy 15:8. The Rabbis interpret this to mean that we must provide the poor with *whatever* they lack, whatever they require in order to maintain themselves at what the community considers a decent standard of living. This might involve gifts of cash or the provision of the tools by which the poor can learn to support themselves; the important thing is that we give primary consideration to the poor, and not to our own wishes, in determining our *tzedakah*. This includes the emotional as well as the material needs of the poor. For example, the Deuteronomy verse says that we must "lend" the poor that which they lack. How can this be, when we know that the poor most frequently cannot repay what they receive, that *tzedakah* usually involves an outright gift? The Rabbis teach that the word "lend" comes to tell us that when a poor person is too proud or ashamed to accept our gift, we call the *tzedakah* a "loan"—a "loan" we never intend to collect—in order to spare the person's feelings.

Priorities in Tzedakah. It is, of course, a monumental undertaking to eradicate poverty or other social ills. Our communal as well as personal resources are limited, and this means that we have to make difficult choices concerning the proper allocation of our *tzedakah* funds. Does Jewish tradition advise us as to the priorities that should determine these choices? In some respects it does, but the messages it offers us are decidedly mixed. Jewish law, for example, establishes a preference for local giving, teaching that we are obligated to care for those closest to us before we address the needs of others. "A member of one's family takes precedence over everyone else . . . The poor of one's household take precedence over the poor of one's city. And the poor of one's own city take precedence over the poor of other cities." This principle allows us to draw some practical ethical conclusions. For instance, we generally look upon the provision of nursing care for the elderly in our community as a public, communal responsibility, as well we might; the costs of establishing and maintaining facilities and the expense involved in supporting their residents are far beyond the financial ability of most individual families. Yet the community that accepts this responsibility is justified in demanding that the children or other close relatives of nursing home patients take seriously the rule that "a member of one's family takes precedence." The children or relatives have a moral obligation to provide a level of financial support that is appropriate to their means, and the community is entitled to exert both moral and social pressure upon them to bring about this end.

Jewish Living by Marc Washofsky

The strong local impulse which drives the Jewish law of *tzedakah* must be balanced, however, against other trends that direct our attention outward, toward assisting those who are not our immediate relatives and who dwell farther away. Thus, one who contributes to a communal *tzedakah* campaign must abide by the allocations decisions of those who administer that campaign; one cannot insist that one's contribution be directed toward his or her own relatives or favorite local cause. The sources, too, offer a powerful practical argument to be made against exclusively local giving: local needs will usually overwhelm our resources before they can be directed to worthy causes beyond our immediate vicinity. If we never contribute *tzedakah* elsewhere until we have completely discharged our responsibilities to our own families, then those poor persons who do not have prosperous relatives or who dwell in poor communities will never receive any assistance. We do not allow this to happen. Were we to refuse to give to "foreign" causes before we have entirely solved our local problems, we never would contribute toward the relief of world hunger; we never would take part in the struggle against disease and poverty on other continents; and we would never have been able to make the Zionist dream a reality and build the Jewish state. Rather, along with the principle that favors local giving, we must conclude that there are important objectives outside of our immediate communities, in Israel and in the Diaspora, which must be met and which make legitimate claims upon our attention. We may owe a special duty to care for those closest to us, but this does not exempt us from the duty to contribute toward the meeting of needs elsewhere.

In a similar way, the traditional obligation to give *tzedakah* was an entirely Jewish obligation: we owed no such responsibility toward those outside the community of Israel. This notion may strike us as parochial, but it does have a point: we Jews must see first to our own communal requirements and interests, since no one else will support them if we do not. For this reason, it is still quite proper to say that Jews have a special responsibility to contribute to Jewish causes. Yet this "special responsibility" does not exhaust our *tzedakah* obligations. The ancient Rabbis already instructed their people to provide *tzedakah* to non-Jews who were in need, "in the interests of preserving peaceful relations" (*mipnei darkhei shalom*). And if such a principle could be taught when the Jews were under Roman domination, when we did not enjoy equal rights with all other residents of the country, how much more does its ethical demand apply to us. In our own communities, in which we possess full

citizenship, we owe a corresponding responsibility to address the needs and problems of our societies alongside our fellow-citizens. We contribute to non-Jewish causes, therefore, not just out of self-interest, to "preserve peaceful relations," but because we recognize that it is the right thing to do.

Ultimately, all decisions concerning the allocation of *tzedakah* involve the drawing of a balance between competing obligations: local or non-local, Jewish or non-Jewish. Traditional sources speak of these obligations, but they do not answer for us the question of how best to resolve such competition, let alone how to distribute our *tzedakah* funds in detail. Perhaps that is the true message of the tradition on our subject: that while we can imagine such a thing as an order of priorities in giving, we must not take those priorities so literally that they blind us to the legitimate needs of those who rank lower on the scale. In the end, we owe a moral duty to *all* who need our help. The decisions as to how best to distribute our available *tzedakah* resources must be made by each Jew and each Jewish community, according to their best judgment.

Gifts to Organizations Inimical to Reform Judaism. We Jews have a special responsibility to provide for Jewish causes and to join with the rest of our people in the fulfillment of common Jewish objectives. This responsibility does not, however, extend to supporting organizations that deny the religious legitimacy of Reform Judaism and work against our political rights in Israel and elsewhere. We refuse to provide financial assistance to these groups. This is more than simply a matter of self-interest and self-preservation; indeed, the tradition itself suggests that we are obliged to withhold *tzedakah* from those whose behavior is antithetical to the cause of Jewish unity.

Halakhah declares that "one who intentionally violates a *mitzvah* and who has not repented does not deserve sustenance from us." The explanation given for this seemingly harsh statement is that our obligation to provide for our fellow Jews lies precisely in the fact that they are our *fellow* Jews, whom the Torah calls our "brothers," our kinfolk, members of our community. This relationship is a powerful one, but it is not indestructible. There comes a point at which, by means of behavior that destroys this attachment to community, a Jew can separate him- or herself from us and ceases in any effective sense to be our "brother." At that point, our duty to support that person likewise ceases. This text, we believe, speaks to the contemporary situation in which some Jews and Jew-

for burial, legal requirements may make embalming a necessity. When this happens, care should be taken to avoid any disrespectful treatment of the body (*nivul hamet*). The body's organs and blood, when removed for legally-required embalming, should be preserved for burial.

The Funeral Service and Burial

Burial; Cremation; Entombment. It is a *mitzvah* to bury the dead with all proper respect. Jewish tradition defines this *mitzvah* as the burial of the body in the earth. While Jewish dead were once interred in caves or mausoleums, burial in the ground has for centuries been the normative practice, regarded as the most direct means for "returning the body to the earth." Objections to mausoleum interment might be met by surrounding the coffin in its casing with earth. Burial at sea is contrary to Jewish tradition and should be avoided except in cases of dire emergency.

Some Reform Jews have adopted the practice of cremation. While this method of handling the dead is certainly contrary to Jewish tradition, there is no clear-cut prohibition of cremation in the halakhic literature. Cremation can be justified religiously in that it rapidly achieves the decomposition of the body. Ecological arguments, too, can be offered for it. It has been opposed, on the other hand, as a denial of faith in bodily resurrection; as an unnecessary imitation of Gentile practice; and as a reminder of the fate of our people in the crematoria of the Holocaust. The Reform rabbinate seeks to discourage cremation, when possible, in favor of the more traditionally Jewish practice. When a family has decided upon cremation, however, Reform rabbis do not refuse to officiate at the service.

Responsibility for Burial. The *mitzvah* to bury the dead is incumbent first of all upon the heirs of the deceased. A spouse buries the deceased spouse. In the event that no heirs are available to provide for burial, that responsibility falls upon the community as a whole. If the family can afford to pay the funeral expenses, the community is entitled to levy a charge for those services. In the event of poverty, the community provides the funeral.

Timely Burial. Jewish tradition strongly emphasizes the need for speedy burial, regarding the delay of burial (*halanat hamet*) as an act of disrespect to the dead. Delay is permitted in order to make adequate preparations for the funeral and to allow the mourners to gather.

Days When Burial Does Not Take Place. Funerals do not take place on Shabbat, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, or *yom tov* (the major days of the festivals), since on these days Jews traditionally abstain from the kinds of labor required as part of the burial process. Some leniencies apply to Rosh Hashanah and *yom tov*, but we observe the widespread custom not to bury the dead on those days. While *halakhah* permits Jews to perform the labor of burial on the second day of the festival, the sensitivities of some relatives may argue against holding the funeral on that day; the rabbi should be consulted. Funerals may take place on all other days.

Arrangements. Simplicity and dignity govern the funeral arrangements. The dead are dressed in plain linen shrouds rather than in expensive garments that testify to the deceased's wealth and social position. It is preferable to use a simple wooden coffin, both because of its lack of ostentation and because wood does not excessively retard the decomposition of the body. Coffins made of other materials are acceptable, but again, simplicity of design and construction is the rule. Flowers are not utilized as decorations at many Jewish funerals. While Reform practice does not forbid flowers, the same rules of simplicity and dignity govern their use. Families are encouraged to request that gifts to *tzedakah* be made in lieu of flowers.

The Funeral Service. A liturgy for the funeral is found in the *Rabbi's Manual*, pp. 111–62. The service, like the blessing recited before the rending of the garment, is referred to as *Tzidduk Hadin*, the acceptance of the divine decree: even now, in our grief, when we cannot perceive the justice of God, we declare our faith that, in spite of everything, justice shall triumph and our consolation will come. It is a *mitzvah* to attend a funeral service (*halvayat hamet*). Even the study of Torah is postponed in order to assist in the burial of the dead. Traditionally, this is understood as the service of burial itself. If the mourners schedule a private interment, the *mitzvah* can be fulfilled by attending a service at a chapel or a funeral home.

Funeral services are sometimes held entirely at graveside. Frequently, however, a service will be held at a funeral home or at some other location prior to the procession to the cemetery. Some communities permit funeral services to be held in the synagogue and allow the coffin to be present there during the service. Some observe the custom of

halting the funeral procession at the synagogue so that an appropriate prayer such as *El Malei Rachamim* might be said.

It is a *mitzvah* to speak well of the dead. The eulogy (*hesped*) is a central feature of the funeral service. "What is a proper *hesped*? One lifts the voice to describe the deceased so as to break the heart, to inspire tears, to speak his praise," provided that the speaker does not exaggerate that praise beyond reason. Reform Judaism permits eulogies to be recited on any day.

Most Reform communities do not observe the custom of *ma'amadot*, halting the cortege seven times during the recitation of *Tzidduk Hadin*. The seven halts are said to correspond to the seven times that the word *hevel* ("vanity" or "emptiness") occurs at the beginning of the book of Ecclesiastes.

The funeral service consists of three major liturgical elements: *Tzidduk Hadin*, the prayer *El Malei Rachamim*, and the *Burial Kaddish*. Customs vary as to the order of these elements. In some communities, they are all recited prior to the burial; in others, burial precedes the liturgy. Tradition prescribes that the mourners remain at the graveside for the lowering of the coffin and the refilling of the grave. Some follow the custom of helping to fill the grave. If the family chooses not to remain at the cemetery for the completion of the burial, a representative should remain behind until the grave has been completely filled.

The mourners of the deceased recite *Kaddish* at the graveside. Reform Judaism encourages but does not require a *minyan* for the recitation of *Kaddish*. When the mourners leave the graveside, it is customary to have them pass through two rows of those attending, who recite to them the traditional words of consolation:

> *HaMakom yinachem etchem betokh she'ar avelei tziyon virushalayim.*
>
> May God grant you comfort among all those who mourn for Zion and Jerusalem.

Some individuals will observe, upon leaving the cemetery, the customs of plucking up some grass and earth, casting these behind them, and reciting the verses Psalms 72:16 and 103:14, which contrast the eternity of the spirit with the mortality of life on earth. Some will wash their hands and recite the verse Isaiah 25:8 ("May God swallow up death forever").

Special Situations

Burial of Non-Jews. Reform Judaism permits the burial of the non-Jewish family members of Jews in Jewish cemeteries. The interment is accompanied by a liturgy of our own devising; under no circumstances should a non-Jewish religious burial service be used, nor should any non-Jewish religious symbolism be displayed during the funeral or on the tombstone. This permit is restricted to the family members of Jews. Other non-Jews, including a prospective convert who had not yet completed the process of becoming a Jew, are not buried in Jewish cemeteries. The funeral service for a non-Jew is not held in the synagogue.

Burial of Jews in Non-Jewish Cemeteries. Since the establishment of particularly Jewish cemeteries is a long-standing custom in our tradition, we strongly encourage that Jews bury their dead in Jewish cemeteries. If a community cannot afford its own cemetery, the Jewish graves may be located in a separate section of the general cemetery, spaced or hedged from the other graves. An exception is burial in a national military cemetery when that cemetery is considered the property of all citizens and is in no sense associated with another religion.

When the burial takes place in a non-Jewish cemetery, a rabbi will officiate, provided that the funeral service is Jewish.

Burial of Apostates. We bury the apostate Jew in a Jewish cemetery, since every Jew, including those who have separated themselves from the community, deserves a proper burial. However, many of the honors normally bestowed upon the memory of the dead, such as the eulogy, are withheld from the apostate. We are obliged to care for the relatives of the apostate, since the comfort of mourners is a duty we owe to the living rather than to the dead.

A special stringency exists in the case of Messianic Jews, since their theology, which gives the unacceptable impression that Christianity is an acceptable form of Judaism, is particularly offensive and dangerous to the Jewish community. We treat Messianic Jews as Christians and not as apostates, so long as they do not return to Judaism; we do not bury them in our cemeteries.

Burial of Suicides. We bury suicides in a Jewish cemetery. The ancient prohibition against doing so is based upon the conception of suicide as the conscious and willful taking of one's life. Over time, however, Jew-

them with solid foundations for their moral, ethical, and personal lives. And in terms of common sense, we should remind ourselves that we do not "drive people away" from Judaism by proclaiming Judaism. We exist, not as a membership organization, but as a community of Jews committed to teaching Torah. We welcome all Jews into our midst and we want to keep them there, but we cannot afford to do so at the cost of denying the very reason and purpose of our existence. If some Jews decide not to associate with us because they do not share a commitment to even the most basic standards of Jewishness as we understand them, we certainly respect their decision and we regret it. But it is *their* decision, and not our insensitivity, that impels them to leave. Our doors remain open, and we look forward to their return.

Mezuzah: Dedication of the Home

It is a *mitzvah* to affix a *mezuzah* to the doorpost of a Jewish home. The *mezuzah* is the traditional fulfillment of the commandment in Deuteronomy 6:9: "You shall write [these words] upon the doorposts [*mezuzot*] of your house and upon your gates." Two passages from the Torah (Deut. 6:4–9 and 11:13–21), both of which mention the commandment of *mezuzah*, are inscribed by hand upon a parchment which is rolled and inserted into a cylinder or casing and affixed to the upper third of the right doorpost (as one enters the house) in a diagonal position, the top part facing inward. The diagonal setting is a compromise worked out in the tradition between the views of those authorities who require the *mezuzah* to be placed vertically on the doorpost and those who hold that it should rest horizontally. This *mitzvah*, therefore, can be said to embody within itself the virtues of compromise and accommodation, which are all-important as we seek to preserve *shalom bayit*, peace within the household.

There are no special requirements concerning the cylinder or casing, which may be constructed and decorated in many ways. The parchment, however, must be rolled so that the text faces inward, not outward. Those who observe the traditional practice place a *mezuzah* on the doorpost of each room in the house, with the exception of the bathroom.

The responsibility for affixing the *mezuzah* rests upon the one who dwells in a home (not necessarily the owner), who must do so within thirty days after he or she has moved into the home. A home which is

to be occupied for less than thirty days is not considered a permanent dwelling, and a *mezuzah* is not required. All this applies to the Diaspora; one who occupies a home in the land of Israel must affix the *mezuzah* immediately, as this fulfills the *mitzvah* of settling in the land. Prior to affixing the *mezuzah*, one recites the following blessing:

> *Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha'olam asher kideshanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu likbo'a mezuzah.*
>
> Blessed is Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who hallows us with the *mitzvot* and commands us to affix the *mezuzah*.

It is customary to invite friends to a ceremony of *chanukat habayit*, dedication of the home, at which the *mezuzah(ot)* will be affixed to the doorpost. A liturgy for this ceremony can be found in *On the Doorposts of Your House*, pp. 138–41.

Torah Study and Jewish Education

We are taught that *talmud torah keneged kulam*, "the study of Torah equals all the other *mitzvot* in importance." This is true, of course, because it is by studying Torah that we learn the other *mitzvot*. Yet Torah study represents more to the religious Jew than a practical guide to the duties of religious life. It is in many ways the *essence* of that life. The study of Torah is an act of Jewish prayer, for it is a cornerstone of traditional Jewish doctrine that God is to be found within the pages of our sacred texts. To study those texts is to take one's place in an eternal conversation between God and Israel as to the nature of the good and holy life. In the Jewish understanding of things, there is simply no better task to pursue. To put it another way: since the Torah is conceived as the very blueprint with which God created the universe, to study that blueprint is to learn the secrets of creation itself. We study, that is, because we are Jews in search of God, and it was for this purpose that we were placed on this earth.

Children. Children should be enrolled in Jewish study, whether in day school or in the synagogue's school, as soon as they are eligible. Many congregations mark the beginning of religious study with a service of Consecration held on or around the festival of Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah. This ceremony serves to impress the child and the rest of the congregation with the importance of embarking upon

formal Jewish learning. The ceremonies of Bar/Bat Mitzvah and Confirmation are important milestones along the road of the child's Jewish education, but they do not mark the end of that road. The *mitzvah* of Torah study lasts a lifetime.

Adults. The *mitzvah* of *talmud torah* is incumbent upon a Jew throughout life. Adults should study Torah, whether or not they received a formal Jewish education during childhood. They should study together with their children at home. It is particularly worthwhile for parents to attend Jewish study classes at the synagogue during the time their children are in religious school, for in so doing they demonstrate to their children by their own example the importance of Torah study. Adults who have not celebrated Bar/Bat Mitzvah or Confirmation but who are involved in continuing Jewish education should consult their rabbi as to the possibility of observing these joyous events in later life.

Hebrew. It is a *mitzvah* to learn and teach the Hebrew language. Hebrew connects us to Jews and to Jewish communities in all ages and locales. It is the language of Torah, of the State of Israel, and of Jewish religious and cultural creativity throughout history. The renaissance of Hebrew prayer in the Reform synagogue is but the most obvious expression of the movement's commitment to the Hebrew language as a medium of Jewish expression.

Between Parents and Children

It is the responsibility of parents to teach Torah to their children. The synagogue and the school are indispensable means to this end, and the community bears the obligation of providing for these institutions and for the training of teachers and other educational specialists. But the child's essential religious and moral development occurs at home, based upon values established and exemplified by his or her parents. It is therefore incumbent upon parents to insure that theirs will be a truly and unmistakably Jewish household. Home rituals, such as blessings recited over the meal and Shabbat and holiday observance, are the core of Jewish life and ought to be experienced as such in the Jewish home. It is a *mitzvah* to set aside time for daily prayer. When there are no services at the synagogue or if one cannot attend the synagogue, the home is a perfectly appropriate place for the prayer service. A Jewish

home should have a Jewish library, and time should be set aside for regular Torah study.

The Torah enjoins that each person "honor your father and your mother" (Exod. 20:12) and that "you shall each revere your mother and your father" (Lev. 19:3). According to the tradition, "honor" refers to the parent's physical needs: the adult child is obliged to feed, clothe, and provide for housing and sustenance for parents who cannot do these things for themselves. "Reverence" involves matters of respect: the child does not appropriate the parent's customary place, does not publicly contradict the parent's words, and does not refer to the parent by his or her first name. These duties are to be taken most seriously, note the Rabbis, because we owe the same obligations of "honor" and "reverence" toward God (Prov. 3:9 and Deut. 6:13).

These non-financial duties do not cease when the children grow into adulthood, but their observance at that point becomes problematic. To what extent may a parent expect deference from an adult child, especially when this deference may interfere with the child's marriage and family life? The child is not expected to heed the parent's instruction to violate another religious obligation. Tradition teaches that should the parent protest the child's desire to move to the land of Israel, to go to another city to learn Torah, to marry the person whom the young person wishes to marry, or to make peace with one of the parent's enemies, the child may ignore these objections. In general, the parent is warned against placing excessive demands upon the child. In an intergenerational conflict within the family, one's primary responsibility is toward spouse and children. When husband or wife objects to what he or she considers undue interference from the spouse's parents, the spouse must heed that objection over any sense of obligation owed to the parents. The trend of Jewish thought has been to stress the child's duties toward the parents but to limit the circumference of these duties so that the child would not be subjugated to every whim and desire of the older generation.

One of the obligations owed to a parent is that of financial support. It is therefore appropriate for communities to compel children to contribute toward the care of their aged parents. Jewish tradition disputes whether a child may compel an aged or ailing parent to enter a nursing home over the parent's objections. On the one hand, the very nature of the *mitzvah* to honor one's father and mother emphasizes the child's *personal* responsibility to provide the needed care, and the love we are ex-

pected to show to those who brought us into the world, raised us, and taught us would seem to require no less. Yet there are times, say the authorities, when a child is physically or emotionally incapable of providing the proper care and supervision for the parent, and in those situations the child is permitted to hire others to provide that care. This is certainly the case today, when complex and specialized treatment regimens far beyond the ability of the family are prescribed for the aged and infirm. The best that can be said, perhaps, is that in every case of this nature the children should carefully examine their own motives. If they are certain that their intended course of action is not undertaken out of selfish desires but rather truly for the good of the parent, then that action adheres to the standards of honor and reverence.

Kashrut and Reform Judaism

Many Reform Jews observe certain traditional dietary disciplines as part of their attempt to establish a Jewish home and life style. Each Jewish family should study *kashrut* and consider whether it may enhance the sanctity of their home.

The above statement taken from *Gates of Mitzvah* represents a revolution in the religious thought of North American Reform Judaism. Through most of its history the Reform movement has been closely identified with the rejection of *kashrut*, the traditional Jewish dietary laws. In 1885, the framers of the Pittsburgh Platform stated this position in no uncertain terms:

> We hold that all such Mosaic and Rabbinical laws as regulate diet, priestly purity, and dress originated in ages and under the influence of ideas altogether foreign to our present mental and spiritual state. They fail to impress the modern Jew with a spirit of priestly holiness; their observance in our days is apt rather to obstruct than to further modern spiritual elevation.

Although both the Columbus Platform of 1937 and the Centenary Perspective of 1976 take a more positive stance toward ceremonial observance than does their predecessor, neither mentions the dietary laws at all, let alone favorably. None of this meant that Reform Jews were somehow forbidden to "keep kosher" or that no Reform Jews ever chose to do so. It implied, however, that in the eyes of Reform Judaism the observance of the dietary laws was at best irrelevant to a proper conception of liberal Jewish religious life. Reform Jewish leaders and thinkers

were, when not openly hostile, at least supremely indifferent to the entire issue. This indifference is reflected in the fact that out of nearly 1100 published Reform responsa we find only one *teshuvah* which deals with a substantive matter of *kashrut* and that Rabbi Solomon B. Freehof's comprehensive *Reform Jewish Practice* does not refer to the subject at all. At no time prior to 1979 did any official Reform rabbinic document suggest that Reform Jews ought to think positively about the observance of *kashrut* or consider adopting it into their religious lives.

Gates of Mitzvah effectively reverses this trend. The book marks the first time that an "official" American Reform movement publication has looked favorably upon *kashrut* as a religious option. With the publication of *Gates of Mitzvah*, it is no longer the movement's official position that the dietary laws offer no spiritual meaning to today's Reform Jew. This means that while some Reform Jews will continue to find nothing of value in the observance of *kashrut*, those who do are encouraged to adopt it as a *mitzvah* which enhances the sanctity of the home.

What accounts for this change to a more positive attitude? It stems, first and foremost, from an acknowledgment of historical and religious fact: *kashrut* has been a basic element of Judaism for too long for Reform Jews—*as* Jews—to ignore. Put differently, we have come to recognize that Reform practice does not exist in isolation from historical Jewish religious experience, nor does it trace its roots exclusively to the European Enlightenment of the late-eighteenth century. If Reform Judaism has done away with certain aspects of traditional observance, it does not declare its independence from tradition itself. Reform religious expression takes shape rather within the broader context of historical *Jewish* religious life, and the centrality of *kashrut* to Jewish religious life can hardly be overstated. Since biblical times, the Jews have recognized a very real religious dimension to the preparation and consumption of food; the Jewish response to God's call has always included a dietary regimen. Through the discipline of *kashrut*, Jews have traditionally imposed sanctity upon the most elemental human necessity, transforming the physical act of eating into a symbolic sacrifice to God. As Jews, we are part of that tradition, that historical continuity, and this implies that the traditional Jewish sense of the holy is not foreign to us. It no longer makes sense to declare, by dint of "reason" or "enlightenment," that the dietary laws *cannot* be a source of spiritual fulfillment to the Reform Jew. On the contrary: it is more reasonable for a movement

Unit 2 Lesson 2 – Blessings - Brachot

The purpose of this lesson is to expose Reform Jewish students to lesser known *brachot* that can enable them to make ordinary and some extraordinary events that occur in their daily lives holy.

Objectives – At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify brachot that one cay say to sanctify an everyday practice.
- Explain how saying a bracha can add meaning to an everyday occurrence.
- Evaluate which of the brachot of gratitude they will adopt into their lives or which brachot of gratitude they will adapt, in order to make an everyday occurrence holy.

Suggested Learning Activities

1. Attached is a list of *brachot nehinin* (Blessings of Gratitude). They can be divided into five groups, based on the sense that is involved in experiencing the related phenomenon (seeing, hearing, tasting, touching and smelling). For each sense, design a learning station activity (see example below). All of the students will visit each of the stations.

   Sample Learning Station
   Hearing
   Students will receive a copy of the brachot one says upon hearing good news and upon hearing of a death. After reading through the brachot, the facilitator should guide a discussion with these possible questions: Why are the brachot different? Why do we say a brachah when we hear bad news? When might you have said one of these brachot? What are some of the challenges of praising God when hearing bad news? What might be the importance of saying a bracha in these situations?
   Possible Answers: We acknowledge that God is part of the good and bad things that happen in this world, the words of the brachot are different because they acknowledge the different aspects of God, it might be difficult to pray/praise God when something bad happens because it is hard to think that God wanted a bad thing to happen.

2. *Culminating Activity*
   Students will create a public relations campaign to encourage people to incorporate a *brachah* into their lives. They should choose a *brachah* that they encountered during the lesson, generate a list of reasons for why people should recite this bracha, and then create an advertisement that would encourage members of the congregation to incorporate this brachah into their daily lives. The synagogue's website/synagogue bulletin would be a great place to display these advertisements and could be changed once a month.

Brachot Resource

Brachot are a way to make an ordinary act, extraordinary. Through studying these different brachot, students can find a different way to sanctify their daily lives by taking a moment out of their busy schedule and saying a bracha. Joel Grishaver suggests two metaphors for saying brachot:

> Saying a bracha is like shining a spotlight. When we say a bracha, we focus our attention on an experience or an action, and in the process we turn the potentially mundane into an encounter with the holy. It is a bracha that metamorphizes the lighting of a light into the conjuring of a holy time. It is a bracha that makes the consumption of calories an acknowledgement of God's creative powers and God's loving concern for humankind. Through brachot, such possibly mundane acts as tying shoes, eating something bitter, and even shaking a collection of branches in the air all become opportunities to come closer to God.
>
> Saying a bracha is like looking in a mirror. Each and every bracha-saying experience is a moment of self-analysis. Brachot are first (and perhaps foremost) a statement of radical appreciation, an acknowledgement of God's actions. But, they also generate an important side-effect. When these are examined through the conceptual lens of our creation in 'God's image', that which we are praising God for being emerges as that which we will strive to become. Each time we acknowledge that God feeds, or God clothes, or God comforts, or God saves, or God lifts up, we are setting patterns for our own ethical actions: feeding, clothing, comforting, saving and lifting up.
> (Joel Grishaver, *And You Shall Be a Blessing*, Jason Aronson Inc., Northvale, NJ, 1993, pg. 119 in Teaching Tefilah, ARE Publishing, pg 21.)

The Sages established brachot so that no sensory experience of this world should be taken for granted, even our ability to enjoy the taste of food. They said, "It is forbidden to benefit from this world without a blessing" (Talmud B. Brachot 35a)

Blessings of Gratitude - בִּרְכוֹת הַנֶּהֱנִין

Tasting

Before eating bread

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמּוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

Praised are you, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, bringing forth bread from the earth.

When eating foods made of the five grains (but not including bread): wheat, barley, oats, rye or spelt

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא מִינֵי מְזוֹנוֹת׃

Praised are you, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, creating various grains.

Before drinking wine or grape juice

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן׃

Praised are you, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, creating the fruit of the vine.

Before eating fruits (that grow on trees)

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הָעֵץ׃

Praised are you, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, creating the fruit of the tree.

Before eating vegetables (that grow in the ground)

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה׃

Praised are you, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, creating the fruit of the earth.

Before eating of other foods or liquids

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַכֹּל נִהְיֶה בִּדְבָרוֹ׃

Praised are you, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, through whose word all things exist

Smelling

Upon smelling fragrant spices

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא מִינֵי בְשָׂמִים.

Praised are you, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, creating various spices.

Upon smelling the fragrances of trees or shrubs

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא עֲצֵי בְשָׂמִים

Praised are you, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, creating fragrant trees.

Upon smelling the fragrances of herbs or plants

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא עִשְׂבֵי בְשָׂמִים.

Praised are you, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, creating fragrant plants.

Upon smelling fragrant fruits

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַנּוֹתֵן רֵיחַ טוֹב בַּפֵּרוֹת.

Praised are you, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, granting pleasing fragrance to fruits.

Seeing

Upon seeing the wonders of nature - lightning, shooting stars, vast deserts, high mountains, a spectacular sunrise or sunset

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, עוֹשֶׂה מַעֲשֵׂה בְרֵאשִׁית.

Praised are you, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, renewing the work of creation.

Upon seeing a storm or hearing thunder

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁכֹּחוֹ וּגְבוּרָתוֹ מָלֵא עוֹלָם.

Praised are you, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, whose power and might fill the world.

Upon seeing a rainbow

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, זוֹכֵר הַבְּרִית, וְנֶאֱמָן בִּבְרִיתוֹ, וְקַיָּם בְּמַאֲמָרוֹ.

Praised are you, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, faithfully recalling the covenant by keeping the divine promise.

Upon seeing the ocean

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁעָשָׂה אֶת הַיָּם הַגָּדוֹל.

Praised are you, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, having fashioned the great sea.

Upon seeing trees in bloom for the first time each year

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁלֹּא חִסַּר בְּעוֹלָמוֹ כְּלוּם וּבָרָא בוֹ בְּרִיּוֹת טוֹבוֹת וְאִילָנוֹת טוֹבִים לְהַנּוֹת בָּהֶם בְּנֵי אָדָם.

Praised are you, Adonai our God, who rules the universe,which lacks nothing; for God created fine creatures and pleasant trees in order that humans might enjoy them.

Upon seeing one who is distinguished in the study of Torah

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁחָלַק מֵחָכְמָתוֹ לִירֵאָיו.

Praised are you, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, sharing wisdom with the faithful.

Upon seeing one who is distinguished in worldly wisdom

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁנָּתַן מֵחָכְמָתוֹ לְבָשָׂר וָדָם.

Praised are you, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, granting wisdom to humanity.

Upon seeing a friend after a year's absence

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, מְחַיֵּה הַמֵּתִים

Praised are you, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, reviving the dead.

Hearing

Upon hearing good news

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַטּוֹב וְהַמֵּטִיב.

Praised are you, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, the Source and Creator of all that is good.

Upon hearing of a death or bad news

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, דַּיַּן הָאֱמֶת.

Praised are you, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, the true Judge.

Touching

Upon visiting a place where one has been rescued miraculously

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁעָשָׂה לִי נֵס בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה.

Praised are you, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, and has performed a miracle for me in this place.

Upon wearing new clothes

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, מַלְבִּישׁ עֲרֻמִּים׃

Praised are you, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, clothing the naked.

Unit 2 Lesson 3 – M'lachah – "Work" - *Scripted Lesson*

The first purpose of this lesson to introduce two concepts: *m'lachah* and *menuchah*. *M'lachah* is work that is prohibited on Shabbat and Jewish Festivals, whereas *menuchah* is rest that can enrich Shabbat and Festivals. The second purpose of this lesson is to explore the concept of *m'lachah* as it is understood by the Torah, the Rabbis of the Mishnah and by Reform rabbis of our generation and the learners. Shabbat and Jewish Festivals are times that are set apart by our tradition but they do not become sanctified, holy, and meaningful unless we behave differently. The goal of this lesson and the one that follows is to enable the students to think about how they behave on Shabbat and Jewish Festivals. What activities might they refrain from doing on Shabbat and Jewish Festivals to make them holy? What activities might they add to their Shabbat and Jewish Festival observance to make them holy?

Objectives – At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Define the term *m'lachah* according to rabbinic texts.
- Describe how *m'lachah* is central to the Rabbinic view of Shabbat by analyzing a rabbinic text that lists the 39 categories of *m'lachah*.
- Distinguish between *m'lachah* and *menuchah*.
- Evaluate if refraining from doing *m'lachah* on Shabbat and Festivals can enrich our Shabbat and Jewish Festivals.

TIME	ACTIVITY
15 minutes	"What's the Category?"
40 minutes	Text Study - What is work?
5 minutes	Wrap-Up

Set Induction – "What's the Category?"

Students will form small groups of two to three. The teacher will pass out the "What's the category" worksheet. Teacher will read the directions aloud and then the groups should complete the worksheet.

With the whole group, each small group should present:

- What did your group decide to name the 2 categories?
- What additional examples did your group come up with?
  Depending on their answers, supplement them by explaining that category aleph represents the things that many of us or other people in our society do every day. Traditionally, these things are considered m'lachah, work that we can do every day but is prohibited on Shabbat and Jewish Festivals. Category bet represents ways that we relax or enjoy special occasions. These activities may be referred to as menucha, rest, that we do not always have time for every day of the week but that can make Shabbat and Jewish festivals different from the rest of the days of the year. By making Shabbat and Jewish festivals distinct or "set apart", we make them holy, kadosh. Both categories, m'lachah and menuchah, play a role in how we behave every day and on Shabbat and Jewish festivals. Explain that today and the next session we will be exploring ways that Judaism recommends we observe and keep Shabbat.

Text Study – What is work?
Teacher will pass out text study sheet titled, "what is work".

Ask a volunteer to read text #1 and then ask the following questions:

1. What does God command in this passage? To whom does this command apply?
   To observe the Sabbath, refrain from work. Applies to everyone who lives in your house, including slaves, animals and guests.
2. Why does God make this command?
   We were once slaves in Egypt until God freed us to serve only God. Therefore, we must rest on the day that God has made holy.
3. How should we observe this commandment?
   Students may respond "don't do any work". This is slightly a trick question because the passage does not specify what "work" is; therefore we do not know what kind of things we should abstain from doing. Explain that the rabbis, living after the destruction of the Temple, were also confused as to how we should observe this commandment, so they looked at other passages in the Torah that were near this commandment to try to figure out how to observe it.

Direct students to look at text #2 and #3 in chevruta. They should appoint one member to summarize their answers to the questions and anything else that comes up during the discussion, to the whole group.

> *The rabbis' definition of m'lachah is derived from the kind of work specified for the creation of the Tabernacle, Mishkan – the holy place in the wilderness, which the Torah often juxtaposes to Shabbat, the essence of holy time.*[12]

As a whole group, ask group members to present a summary of the small group discussions. Then generate a list on the board of modern *m'lachot* the groups developed. Final discussion question,

- How can abstaining from performing *m'lachah* on Shabbat and Jewish Festivals, enrich our Shabbat and Jewish Festivals?

Wrap-Up
Students will write in their journals at least one idea they learned today, what practices they will adopt or adapt on Shabbat and Jewish Festivals, based on their understanding and exploration of *m'lachah* and why.

[12] Richard Levy, *A Vision of Holiness: The Future of Reform Judaism*. New York, NY: URJ Press, 2005, p. 140.

What's the Category?

Below are two categories listing some ways we can spend time: Aleph and Bet.

1. What differentiates the two categories? What do all of the behaviors in category Aleph have in common? What do all the behaviors in category Bet have in common? Please create a label for each category.

2. Please create two or three more examples that belong in each category.

Aleph	**Bet**
• Making a fire	• Reading for pleasure
• Building	• Singing
• Doing laundry	• Catching up with friends
• Sewing	• Taking a leisurely walk
• Writing	• Eating a delicious meal
• Kneading dough	• Not worrying
•	•
•	•
•	•

What is work (*m'lachah)*?

1. Deuteronomy 5:12-15

Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as Adonai your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work (*m'lachah)*, but the seventh day is a Sabbath for Adonai your God; you shall not do your work (*m'lachah)*—you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, your ox or donkey, or any your cattle, or he stranger in your settlements, so that your male and female slave may rest as you do. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and Adonai your God freed you from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore Adonai your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

1. What does God command in this passage? To whom does this command apply?

2. Why does God make this command?

3. According to the text, how should we observe this commandment?

2. Mishnah Shabbat 7:2

These are the chief categories of acts of labor (*m'lachah* - prohibited on the Sabbath) are forty less one: (1) one who sews, (2) ploughs, (3) reaps, (4) binds sheaves, (5) threshes, (6) winnows, (7) selects [fit from unfit produce of crops], (8) grinds, (9) sifts, (10) kneads, (11) bakes; (12) one who shears wool, (13) washes it, (14) beats it, (15) dyes it; (16) spins, (17) weaves, (18) makes two loops, (19) weaves two threads, (20) separates two threads; (21) one who ties, (22) unties, (23) sews two stitches, (24) tears in order to sew two stitches; (25) one who traps a deer, (26) slaughters it, (27) flays it, (28) salts it, (29) cures its hide, (30) scrapes it, (31) cuts it up; (32) one who writes two letters, (33) erases two letters in order to write two letters; (34) one who builds, (35) tears down; (36) one who puts out a fire, (37) kindles a fire; (38) one who hits with a hammer; (39) one who transports an object from one domain to another— these are the forty chief acts of labor (*m'lachah)* less one.

1. How do the rabbis of the Mishna define *m'lachah* (work)?

2. How do you think the rabbis choose which categories of *m'lachah* to include?

3. Why do you think the rabbis of the Mishnah thought that not performing *m'lachah* is central to observing Shabbat?

3. Reform Definitions of *m'lachah*

a) Traditional Jewish practice blends the *mitzvot asey,* the "Thou shalt" mitzvot, along with the *mitzvot lo-ta'asey,* the "Thou shalt not" mitzvot. The Reform Movement has generally favored the "Thou shalt" mitzvot: lighting the candles, making *Kiddush* and *Havdalah*, engaging in study and rest, over the "Thou shalt not" mitzvot, such as not kindling fire or driving a car. The Reform preference emphasizes the day as a manifestation of holiness rather than a time of restriction.

Adapted from: Rabbi Richard Levy, *A Vision of Holiness: The Future of Reform Judaism, pp. 139-140.*

b) The individual is encouraged to choose from among a variety of responses to the holiness of Shabbat. One may avoid engaging in any kind of "creative" activity, actions which involve the manipulation of the world around us, as an acknowledgment that the universe is not our creation but God's. This approach might involve the observance of a number of the traditional prohibitions concerning Shabbat activity. We might abstain from driving, the use of money, the telephone, the computer and the like. Alternatively, one may decide to engage in any number of activities which, though traditionally forbidden on the Sabbath, are done *lichvod* Shabbat, in *honor* of the Sabbath. One might not drive to the mall to shop, for example, but might drive to a museum and pay the price of admission because one considers a visit to the museum an act that refreshes the soul.

Adapted from Rabbi Mark Washofsky, *Jewish Living: A Guide to Contemporary Reform Practice, p. 84.*

c) I, many years ago, decided that since I was very much concerned about being in touch [with the world], knowing what was going on and so forth, I would not go to the mailbox on Saturday…. And, for obvious reasons, I never turn on my computer on Saturday…. I used to love to garden on Saturday…to get out there, and schlep plants and dig…. I could do that and sweat it out, utterly anti-*Shabbastic*, as long as I was recreating myself, *vayinafash*. As soon as I got to the point that I realized I was finishing a job or doing work, I had to…leave the stuff there…. Now let me give you another peculiar thing. I don't study Jewish texts on Shabbat. That is my work in the middle of the week. No matter what text I picked up, no matter how distant from my work, I would find myself relating it back to what I was doing in the classroom.

Rabbi Eugene Borowitz, Shabbat Symposium, 2007

1. How are the Reform Rabbis' definitions of *m'lachah* similar to the Mishnah? How are they different?

2. What do the Reform Rabbis' definitions of *m'lachah* add to our understanding of Shabbat?

3. Many of the "forty less one" categories of *m'lachah* in the Mishnah are not activities with which we are engaged today (unless one is employed in the agricultural or clothing production industry, etc…). What kind of activities might we consider *m'lachah* with which we engage today?

Unit 2 Lesson 4 – *M'nuchah* – "Rest"

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce the concept of *m'nuchah* – rest. One of the ways we can sanctify Shabbat and make it holy is by incorporating *m'nuchah* into it. We often think of "rest" as abstaining from physical activity and letting our bodies do nothing. This is one part of the concept of *m'nuchah*. The second component of *m'nuchah* is spiritual rest. In this lesson, students will have an opportunity to explore the concept of *m'nuchah* as understood by the Torah, the Rabbis of the Rabbinic Era and Medieval Europe and Reform Rabbis and leaders and themselves. Afterwards, they will have an opportunity to develop ways that they think can enrich their Shabbat observance, either adopting practices that were suggested, or adapting them to make them relevant to their lives.

Objectives – At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Define the term *m'nuchah* as understood by the Torah, rabbinic texts and Reform Jewish commentaries.
- Distinguish between the positive and negative commandments associated with Shabbat observance.
- Develop ways to incorporate *m'nuchah* in their Shabbat observance that can enrich their Shabbat and make it holy.

Suggested Learning Activities

Text Study #1 – Shamor v'Zachor study Sheet

This source sheet contains the commandment to sanctify Shabbat. The commandment is first recorded in Exodus 20:8-11 and emphasizes "remembering Shabbat", which the rabbis understood as the positive commandment of adding activities to Shabbat that would enhance it. The commandment is recorded for a second time in the Torah in Deuteronomy 5:12-15 and emphasizes "observing Shabbat", which the rabbis understood as the negative commandment of refraining from doing *m'lachah*. The Torah text is surrounded by commentaries that cite Rabbis of the Talmud through the medieval period. Possible study questions:

- The commandment to celebrate Shabbat appears twice in the Torah. What is similar between the two texts? What is different? What core values or primary concerns do the texts convey?
- How do the Rabbis interpret the two biblical texts to communicate their values about Shabbat?

Text Study #2 – Defining M'nucha through a Contemporary Reform Lens

This source sheet contains commentaries on the concept of *m'nuchah* from contemporary Reform Rabbis and Reform community leaders.

Possible study questions:

- The first three passages differentiate between rest that is physical and rest that is spiritual in nature. When have you experienced spiritual rest?
- How would your life be different if you ended each week with twenty-four hours of spiritual *and* physical rest?
- How can we structure our Shabbat observance (personal and communal) so that we have both spiritual and physical rest?

Structuring our Shabbat Observance

At the 2007 URJ Biennial in San Diego, the URJ passed out a box of 52 cards. There is one card for each week of the year, each describing a ritual which serves to sanctify Shabbat in some way and to make it special, holy and different from the other days of the week. These suggestions were contributions from North American Reform Jews. Similarly, the students will create their own 52 ways of sanctifying Shabbat (many of these practices can be applied to Jewish festivals as well), after they have studied the

Biblical, Rabbinic and Contemporary views on *m'lachah* and *m'nuchah*. First the students should come up with the 52 ways to sanctify Shabbat and then design a way keep those practices in mind when they observe Shabbat. They can follow model of the URJ by designing a deck of cards, or creating a different model that would be appropriate and meaningful for them

Examples: refraining from doing homework on Shabbat, only listening to Jewish music, spending time with friends and family, not shopping, setting lights on timers so that I don't need to turn them on and off constantly, having a Shabbat meal every week with my family, taking a leisurely walk to appreciate the nature in my neighborhood, calling a friend who I haven't spoken to in a long time, take time to reflect about the good things that have happened in the past week.

Memorable Moment:

After learning about Shabbat, students will plan a Shabbat experience. This Shabbat experience should be scheduled into the religious school calendar. They will spend 25 hours of Shabbat together and structure the experience utilizing their understanding of texts learned and the exploration of Reform Jewish perspectives on Shabbat.

Rambam explains that Remember is a positive commandment to perform acts that enhance the sanctity of the Sabbath. *Observe* is a negative commandment which warns us to prevent and refrain from desecration of the Sabbath. With reference to these different texts, the Rabbis (*Mechilta; Shavuos* 20b) taught: *Remember* and *Observe* were both spoken in a single utterance.... The purpose of this miracle was to demonstrate that the themes of honoring the Sabbath in a positive manner and avoiding its desecration are interconnected.

The word *shamor* means "Keep in mind" (as in Gen. 37:11). All week long, one should keep the Sabbath in mind. But another interpretation holds the opposite view: "Remember" the Sabbath during the week, and "observe" it when it occurs.

Exodus 20:8-11

זָכוֹר

אֶת-יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ׃
שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ
כָּל-מְלַאכְתֶּךָ׃ וְיוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי
שַׁבָּת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
לֹא-תַעֲשֶׂה כָל-מְלָאכָה
אַתָּה וּבִנְךָ-וּבִתֶּךָ עַבְדְּךָ
וַאֲמָתֶךָ וּגְרִךָ בְּהֶמְתֶּךָ
אֲשֶׁר בִּשְׁעָרֶיךָ׃ כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת-
יָמִים עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֶת-
הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת-הָאָרֶץ אֶת-
הַיָּם וְאֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-בָּם וַיָּנַח
הַשְּׁבִיעִי עַל-כֵּן בֵּרַךְ יְהוָה
אֶת-יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת וַיְקַדְּשֵׁהוּ׃

Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy: Six days you shall labor and do all your work: but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Eternal your God: you shall not do any work. You, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, or your cattle, or the stranger who is within your settlements: For in six days the Eternal made heaven and earth and sea — and all that is in them — and then rested on the seventh day; therefore the Eternal blessed the Sabbath and hallowed it.

Deuteronomy 5:12-15

שָׁמוֹר

אֶת-יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ
כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוְּךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ׃
שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ
כָּל-מְלַאכְתֶּךָ׃ וְיוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי
שַׁבָּת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא
תַעֲשֶׂה כָל-מְלָאכָה אַתָּה וּבִנְךָ
-וּבִתֶּךָ וְעַבְדְּךָ-וַאֲמָתֶךָ וְשׁוֹרְךָ
וַחֲמֹרְךָ כֹּל-עִבֶּד הַיִּיתָ בְּאֶרֶץ
מִצְרַיִם וַיֹּצִאֲךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
מִשָּׁם בְּיָד חֲזָקָה וּבִזְרֹעַ
נְטוּיָה עַל-כֵּן צִוְּךָ יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֶיךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת-יוֹם
הַשַּׁבָּת׃

Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as the Eternal your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Eternal your God; you shall not do any work — you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your ox or your ass, or any of your cattle, or the stranger in your settlements, so that your male and female slave may rest as you do. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and the Eternal your God freed you from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Eternal your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

The *Maggid of Dubno* notes that certain groups of people differentiate between [*Shamor* and *Zachor*]. The pauper can easily observe the commandment not to desecrate the Sabbath, for he has no business enterprises that would suffer from closing down for a day. On the other hand, his poverty makes the positive commandment very difficult for him, for he cannot afford to buy... all that is necessary to honor and remember the Sabbath properly. On the other hand, the magnate easily and happily spends all that is necessary to increase Sabbath pleasure .... The commandment to observe it, however, he fulfills grudgingly, because shutting down all his affairs on the Sabbath seems to cause financial losses. Therefore, the Almighty emphasized the equality of the both commands by proclaiming them simultaneously in one utterance. The rich man must *observe* the Sabbath with the same gusto and enthusiasm that he *remembers* it. Moreover, he must give generously to the poor to help them *remember* the Sabbath just as they *observe* it.

On the eve of the Sabbath before sunset they saw an old man holding two bundles of myrtle and running at twilight. "What are these for?" they asked him. "They are in honor of the Sabbath," he replied. [They asked,] "But one should suffice you?" [He replied,] "One is for *Remember* and one for *Observe."* Said [the rabbi] to his son, "See how precious are the commandments to Israel."

The *Chofetz Chaim* taught that the exhortation *l'kad'sho*, to sanctify it, represents a level of Sabbath involvement surpassing the preliminary stages of *Remember* and *Observe*. A Jew can perfunctorily discharge his duty to *Remember* and *Observe* the Sabbath by absentmindedly performing a few familiar rituals and casually observing a few annoying restrictions — but such a Sabbath is sorely lacking in sanctity.

From the Union of Reform Judaism Guide, "Embracing Shabbat in your Congregation", page 72.

Defining M'nucha through a Contemporary Reform Lens

DEFINING *M'NUCHAH*[13]

[Shabbat] is not merely a day off; it is rather an expanse of time that is holy, different in quality and essence from all other days, consecrated both to God and to us for the purpose of our fulfillment as Jews.
Rabbi Mark Washofsky, *Jewish Living: A Guide to Contemporary Reform Practic*e

To the Talmudic rabbis who interpreted [the Creation narrative], the story does not mean that on the seventh day God rolled over, pulled up the covers and went back to sleep. In their view, only after the seventh day—Shabbat—came into being, was the world completed, and perfect.
Anita Diamant, *Living a Jewish Life: Jewish Traditions, Customs and Values for Today's Families*

Shabbat is a day of rest. However, it's not just a day to sleep late…. Rest means more than physical cessation of work. It implies taking oneself out of the ordinary, out of the routine, out of the rat race. This kind of rest gives us the opportunity to re-create our spirit and restore our soul.
Stephen J. Einstein and Lydia Kukoff, *Every Person's Guide to Judaism*

CHOOSING SHABBAT[14]

Friday and Saturday come automatically, but Shabbat takes place only when we make it happen. We must make the decision to establish Shabbat in our own lives if we want to have it.
Stephen J. Einstein and Lydia Kukoff, *Every Person's Guide to Judaism*

Shabbat is re-created weekly; Jews make Shabbat. The first verb for most Jews today, however, is not "make" but "choose." And choosing Shabbat is not one decision, but many. Choosing Shabbat means making a commitment to a weekly period of rest and peace. It means making distinctions between activities that are Shabbat-like from those that are workweek-like. It means avoiding things that might violate a sense of ease and peace, and planning ways to enhance that feeling.
Anita Diamant, *Living a Jewish Life: Jewish Traditions, Customs and Values for Today's Families*

[13] From the Union of Reform Judaism Guide, "*Embracing Shabbat in your Congregation", page 83.*
[14] From the Union of Reform Judaism Guide, "*Embracing Shabbat in your Congregation", page 84.*

Unit 2 Lessons 5 and 6 – Jewish Festivals

Aside from Shabbat, which is observed each week, the Jewish calendar is replete with celebrations which occur once a year. Among these are the *chagim*, the three "pilgrimage festivals" of Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot, so-called because in ancient times all Israelite males were required to appear at the Temple in Jerusalem and to offer special sacrifices at those seasons of the year. These holidays differ from the rest of the holidays because they are agricultural celebrations, each of them marking a particular point in the harvest cycle in the land of Israel. Each one also memorializes a historical event, corresponding to a significant moment in biblical Israel's journey from slavery to freedom. Celebrating all three of these festivals, each year allows Jews to relive Jewish history and to relive the covenant God made with the Jewish people. Celebrating these holidays allows Jews to sanctify their relationship with God. The purpose of these two lessons is to present the students with an opportunity to explore the religious significance of these holidays (beyond what they learned in the younger grades) and to evaluate the rituals associated with these holidays.

Objectives – At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Name the three pilgrimage festivals.
- Demonstrate their knowledge about a specific holiday by participating in a presentation and making a visual aid.
- Explain how the different rituals associated with a holiday are related to the themes of the holiday.
- Recommend a ritual which enables us to enrich our observance of Jewish Festivals.

Suggested Learning Activities

Group Projects/Presentations

Students will be divided into 3 groups. Each group will be assigned one of the Pilgrimage Festivals. Students will receive background information about each of the holidays and questions to explore. They can use the background information to answer the questions, as well as their previous knowledge. Then the students will prepare a presentation to teach the rest of the group about their holiday. The presentation can be of any genre (i.e. skit, power point, song, etc). They will need to prepare a visual aid as well. All members of the group need to play a role in the presentation.

Possible questions about the Festivals:

- What is the Biblical origin of this holiday?
- What names are given to the holiday and what is their significance?
- What is the agricultural significance of the holiday?
- What is the historical significance of the holiday?
- What is the spiritual significance of the holiday?
- What Biblical book, in addition to the Torah, is read on the holiday?
- What rituals are associated with this holiday?
- Nominate one of the rituals associated with this holiday as especially meaningful and explain how it brings spiritual meaning to a Jew who observes it. If you do not feel that any of the rituals bring spiritual meaning to the holiday, you can enhance one of the rituals which already exist, by adding to the ritual.

Materials – pages from Teaching Jewish Holidays[15], ARE Publication by Robert Goodman as resources for the students for the group projects.

- Passover pp. 153-161
- Shavuot pp. 215-219
- Sukkot pp. 63-68

A master chart is attached for the teacher as reference.

[15] Goodman, Robert. *Teaching Jewish Holidays: History, Values, and Activities*. Denver, CO: ARE Publishing, Inc, 1997.

Master Chart

	Passover	Shavuot	Sukkot
Biblical Origin	Book of Exodus, Chapters 1-13, Levicutus 23:5-8	Exodus 23:16, 34:22, Deuteronomy 16:10, Numbers 28: 26	Exodus 23:14-16, Lev 23:39-43
Names	Chag HaPesach – God passing over the homes of the Israelites during the 10th plague and Passover offering in the Temple Chag HaMatzot – Centrality of Matzah Chag HaAviv – Festival of the spring, agricultural focus Zman Chayrutaynu – season of our freedom	Chag HaKatzir – harvest festival Chag HaShavuot – holiday that occurs 7 weeks after Passover Yom HaBikkurim – bringing of the 1st fruits to the Temple Zman Matan Torataynu – Israel receiving the Torah on Mt. Sinai	Chag HaAsif – Feast of the Harvest/Ingathering Chag Adonai – Feast of Adonai HeChag – The Festival (the most important festival) Zman Simchataynu – The Season of Our Rejoycing.
Agricultural	Beginning of the spring harvest	Beginning of the wheat harvest, bringing of the 1st fruits to the Temple	End of the summer, ushers in the fall harvest and anticipates the rainy season in Israel.
Historical	Emergence of Israel as a nation and as a people,	God giving the Israelites the Torah on Mt. Sinai	Living in booths in the wilderness after leaving Egypt
Spiritual	God made a covenant with the people of Israel by freeing them from slavery, release from what enslaves us	God establishing the covenant with Israelites by giving the Torah at Mt. Sinai, partnership with God	Tangible reminder of the wilderness experience, Thanksgiving for the abundance that we know have, reminder of how fragile life is
Biblical Book	Song of Songs	Book of Ruth	Ecclesiastes
Rituals	Seder, cleaning out hametz from the house, eating matzah	Confirmation, *Tikkun Layl Shavuot*, eating dairy	Building and living in a Sukkah, *lulav* and *etrog*, inviting Ushpizin, *Simchat Bayt HaSho'ayvah*

CHAPTER NINE

PESACH

VOCABULARY

Adir Hu: "God Is Mighty" or "God of Might" is a hymn sung at the end of the *Seder* service. Composed by an unknown poet, it consists of eight stanzas of eight lines each. The hymn speaks of how God's might and power brought freedom to the Israelites and offers the hope of freedom for all people living in servitude.

Afikoman: Greek for "Dessert." A portion of the middle of the three *matzot* on the *Seder* plate, it is hidden by the person leading the *Seder*, and redeemed after the meal from the children who have searched for and found it. It is the last morsel eaten on the *Seder* night.

Arami Oved Anochi: "My father was a fugitive Aramaean" (Deuteronomy 26:5). The verse continues: " . . . He went down to Egypt with meager numbers and sojourned there; but there he became a great and very populous nation." The Passover *Haggadah* includes this verse to reinforce the idea that despite humble beginnings, even subjugation, the Jews became a great and free people.

Arba'ah Banim: Literally "Four Sons." The *Haggadah* labels four types of Jewish youngsters based on how each approaches the story of the Exodus. The wise one asks about Pesach and wants to learn (Deuteronomy 6:20). The wicked one contends that the observance of Pesach does not pertain to him (Exodus 12:26). The simple person is bewildered by the celebration of Pesach and asks what it is all about (Exodus 13:14). The ignorant person is unable to ask even the simplest questions related to Pesach and must be taught on the simplest level (Exodus 13:8).

Arba Kosot: "Four cups" of wine are served during the *Seder*, two before the meal and two during the concluding portion of the *Seder* service.

Arba Kushiyot: "Four Questions." Posed by the youngest child able to read or recite questions, this comes early in the *Seder* immediately after *Ha Lachma,* which opens the *Magid,* the fifth section of the *Seder* service. If there are no children present, an adult may ask the questions. The leader responds with a complex answer that includes: a brief historical account of the liberation of the Jews from Egypt, evidence of God's protection of Israel since the deliverance, and some of the rules of Pesach observance.

Baraych: Meaning "Bless," this is the thirteenth part of the *Seder* Service, and consists of the Grace after Meals with special Pesach additions.

Baytzah: "Egg." Usually roasted, an egg is one of the symbols on the *Seder* plate. It may be a substitute for the festival sacrifice (*Chagigah*), which was offered on Pesach in the Temple. The egg may also be a symbol of springtime and the rebirth of a people. Eating the egg in salt water may derive from the fact that this was a freeman's dish in ancient times.

Bedikat Chamaytz: "Search for Leaven." After having thoroughly cleaned one's home, a search for leaven takes place on the evening before Pesach. So as not to make this a vain search, a few crumbs are conspicuously placed, searched for by candlelight, and when "found," swept onto a wooden spoon with a feather. Once these last crumbs are burned, any other *chamaytz* in the house is considered to be just dust.

Bi'ur Chamaytz: "Burning of *Chamaytz*." By 10:00 A.M. on the morning of *erev* Pesach, all *chamaytz* which has not been sold is burned.

Chad Gadya: "An Only Kid," is a folk song which concludes the *Seder* service. Intended for the entertainment of the children, it consists of ten stanzas written in the form of a nursery rhyme using Aramaic rather than Hebrew. Some people regard it as an allegorical song that speaks of the eventual destruction of all tyrants and oppressors.

Chag HaAviv: "Festival of Spring," is one of the four names of Pesach. This is the end of the rainy season in Israel.

Chag HaMatzot: "Festival of the Unleavened Bread," is one of the four names given to Pesach (Leviticus 23:6).

Chag HaPesach: "Festival of Passover," is one of the four names given to Pesach. The word "*pesach*" is of uncertain origin. It may mean to "pass over," as the Angel of Death passed over the homes of the Hebrews, or it may refer to the lamb offered in sacrifice on the holiday, or it may refer to an ancient nomadic festival.

Chamaytz: "Sour" or "Leavened." No leavening agent may be used or owned during Pesach. *Chamaytz* is symbolically sold to a non-Jew before Pesach and then bought back after the festival is concluded.

Charoset: One of the symbols on the *Seder* plate, it is a combination of apples, nuts, cinnamon, and wine. This sweet mixture symbolizes the mortar used by the Israelites to make bricks for the building projects ordered by Pharaoh. It is used to sweeten the bitter herbs.

Chazeret: "Bitter Herb," is one of the symbols on the *Seder* plate. *Chazeret* can be any vegetable with a bitter taste — cucumber, watercress, radish, endive, etc. Numbers 9:11 speaks of eating the Paschal lamb "with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (*m'rorim*)." Since bitter herbs is in the plural, *chazeret* is used in addition to *maror.* While most Seder trays have a compartment for *chazeret,* its use is considered optional.

Chol HaMo'ed Pesach: "The intermediary days of Pesach." Of the eight days of Pesach, the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth days are considered intermediary. Chol HaMo'ed Pesach and Sukkot are semi-holidays, observed with special prayers. However, one may treat these days as any weekday with only minor restrictions. In Jerusalem, and among liberal Jews, Pesach is celebrated for seven days.

Echad Mi Yodea: "Who Knows One?" is a cumulative riddle that is sung at the conclusion of the *Seder* service. Using the format of questions and answers, basic Jewish beliefs and traditions are conveyed in the thirteen stanzas. Each number has a special meaning: 13 attributes of God, 12 tribes of Israel, 11 stars in Joseph's dream, 10 Commandments, 9 months of pregnancy, 8 days for *Brit Milah*, 7 days in a week, 6 sections in Mishnah, 5 books in Torah, 4 Matriarchs, 3 Patriarchs, 2 tablets of the Covenant, and One God.

Eliyahu HaNavi: "The Prophet Elijah." This ninth century B.C.E. prophet who took on the evil Ahab and Jezebel as described in I Kings, according to tradition, did not die, but ascended to heaven in a firey chariot. He remains among us testing the hospitality and generousity of people, protecting children, helping the poor, and primed to announce the coming of the Messiah. Opening the door for Elijah during the *Seder* symbolizes hope in that

time of redemption. A fifth cup of wine is on the *Seder* table for Elijah. Should he arrive, he will answer all difficult questions . . . including, are there to be four or five cups of wine at the *Seder*.

Eser Makot: "Ten Plagues" were inflicted upon Egypt (Exodus 7:14 - 12:36) because Pharaoh refused to let the Hebrew leave his country. The plagues were: 1) waters of the Nile turned to blood; 2) infestation of frogs; 3) lice; 4) swarms of insects; 5) a pestilence affecting livestock; 6) boils; 7) hail and fire; 8) locusts; 9) three days of darkness; 10) the death of the firstborn of man and beast. A drop is removed from the wine cup upon mention of each plague.

Haggadah: "Telling" or "Narrative." This book contains the rituals for the observance of the *Seder,* including the stories, songs, and prayers. *Magid,* which is the fifth section of the *Seder* service, comes from the same Hebrew root.

Ha Lachma: "This Is the Bread," is a prayer in Aramaic which marks the beginning of the *Magid* section of the *Seder* service. Holding half of the middle *matzah* from the stack of three, the leader announces: "This is the bread of affliction, the poor bread, which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt . . ." Dating back some 2000 years, this prayer goes on to invite the needy to join in the *Seder*, and it concludes with an expression of hope for all people: "This year we celebrate here. Next year in the land of Israel. Now we are all still slaves. Next year may we all be free."

Hallel: The *Hallel* consists of Psalms in praise of God. Psalms 113-118 are recited on the first two days of Pesach and serve as the fourteenth section in the *Seder* service. During the last six days of Pesach, the first 11 verses of both Psalm 115 and 116 are omitted. The *Chatzi-Hallel* is said on these days because of a tradition which states that God stopped the angels from singing praises when they saw the Egyptians drowning in the sea — a reflection of Jewish sensitivity toward the suffering of others.

Isru Chag: Meaning "Bind a Festival," this term comes from Psalm 118:27 which states: ". . . hold onto the festival even as it departs." Thus, the day following Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot is Isru Chag. It is a minor festival for liturgical purposes.

Kadaysh: "Sanctify." This is the first section in the *Seder* service, the recitation of the Passover *Kiddush* and the drinking of the first of four cups of wine.

K'arah: The Passover *Seder* plate.

Karpas: "Green Vegetable," is one of the symbols on the *Seder* plate. While parsley is the usual *karpas*, lettuce or celery may also be used. *Karpas* symbolizes the green of spring and the spirit of hope for the future. It also recalls the meager food available to the Hebrews living as slaves in Egypt. (See Appendix, page 253, for blessing.)

Kittel: A white robe, usually made of linen, that is worn on Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur, and Pesach. The *kittel is* worn on Pesach to symbolize the release from bondage and slavery and the beginning of a life of freedom. It is also worn by a groom, and serves as a burial shroud.

Koraych: Hillel "Sandwich," is the tenth section of the *Seder* service. So named because of the custom of Hillel to place *maror* on *matzah* and eat as a sandwich. The source of the practice is Numbers 9:11: "They shall eat it (i.e., the paschal lamb) with *matzah* and *maror*."

Koso Shel Eliyahu: The "Cup of Elijah" is set aside for the Prophet's arrival at the *Seder*.

Lechem Mishneh: "Double Portion of Bread," refers to the double portion of manna collected by the Israelites in the wilderness before the Shabbat

to last for two days (Exodus 16:22). It also is the term used to refer to two of the three pieces of *matzah* on the *Seder* plate.

Lechem Oni: "Bread for the Poor," refers to the *matzah* which was the bread eaten by those living in a state of stress and hardship. The third of the three *matzot* on the *Seder* plate is called *Lechem Oni.*

Magid: From the same Hebrew root as *Haggadah*, this is the section that tells the Pesach story. It begins with the *Ha Lachma* prayer and the Four Questions.

Ma Nishtanah: Meaning "What is different," this is a name for and also the first two words of the Four Questions.

Ma'ot Chitim: Literally "Money for Wheat," this is a special fund which provides even the poorest Jew with *matzah,* wine, and the other essentials for a festive celebration of Pesach. Thus all can celebrate Pesach in dignity. This fund is in addition to regular *tzedakah* gifts made throughout the year.

Maror: The bitter herb, usually horseradish root, which symbolizes the bitterness of slavery. (See Appendix, page 253, for blessing.)

Matzah/Matzot: Unleavened bread made from flour and water, quickly kneaded, and then rapidly baked so that no fermentation takes place during the baking. *Matzah* is also the term for the eighth section of the *Seder* service consisting of reciting the grace for the *matzah,* then the breaking of the upper *matzah* and distributing pieces to the participants at the *Seder.* (See Appendix, page 253, for blessing.)

Matzah Ashira: Literally "Rich *Matzah*," it is made with wine, oil, honey, and eggs instead of with just flour and water. The Talmud *(Pesachim* 36a) states that, since this kind of *matzah* does not conform with the idea of *matzah* as "bread of affliction" *(Lechem Oni)*, it may not be used for the celebration of Passover.

Matzah Sh'murah: Literally "Guarded *Matzah*," it is made from wheat that is watched carefully from harvest to baking so that it is not exposed to moisture or excessive heat. Once mixed with water, the batter must be kneaded, rolled, and baked within an 18 minute time period. It is considered by some the most desirable *matzah* to use during Pesach.

M'chirat Chamaytz: "The Selling of *Chamaytz.*" Since one must not own *chamaytz* during Pesach, it sold for the duration of Pesach, and then repurchased. While the transaction is technically a sale, it is really a "legal fiction." The Rabbi draws up a bill of sale for the *chamaytz*, temporarily transfering ownership to a non-Jew.

Motzi: "The Blessing over Bread" is the seventh section of the Pesach *Seder.* At the *Seder* it is said over a piece of the upper *matzah* immediately followed by the blessing for eating *matzah.* (See Appendix, page 253, for blessing.)

Nirtzah: "May it be Acceptable," is the fifteenth and final section of the *Seder* service. The *Seder* is concluded with the hope that all of the prayers recited will be acceptable to God, and with the final words *l'Shanah HaBa'ah Birushalayim* — Next Year in Jerusalem.

Nisan: The first month of the Jewish year, corresponding to March/April, it has 30 days, and its zodiac sign is Aries. In ancient times, Nisan 1 was the New Year for dating the years of a king's reign. The 15th is the first day of Pesach.

Pesach: The actual meaning of this word is in doubt. It may mean to pass over (as did the Angel of Death), or to skip (like a young lamb), or it may mean a young lamb (the sacrifice in the Temple), or it may have its origin in an ancient nomadic festival. Pesach is called Passover in English.

Pesach Shayni: "Second Pesach." Sometimes called *Pesach Katan* ("Small Pesach"), this was for someone unable to offer the Pesach sacrifice in Nisan

due to travel, illness, or ritual defilement. In accordance with Numbers 9:9-13, such a person may celebrate *Pesach Shayni* on the 14th of Iyar, a month after Pesach.

Rachatzah: Washing, is the sixth section of the *Seder* service, consists of washing one's hands accompanied by the customary blessing. (See Appendix, page 253, for blessing.)

Seder: Meaning "Order," it refers to the order of the *Seder* service on the first night(s) of Pesach. The *Seder* is traditionally divided into 15 sections, each of which has a name.

Sefirat HaOmer: "The counting of the *Omer*." An *Omer* was a measure of barley brought in ancient Israel to the Temple on the first day of Pesach as a thanksgiving offering. Leviticus 23:15-16 commands: "From . . . the day that you bring the sheaf *(omer)* of wave offering, you shall keep count until seven full weeks have elapsed: you shall count 50 days, until the day after the seventh week (Shavuot); then you shall bring an offering of new grain to *Adonai*." The Counting of the *Omer* is a part of the daily evening service from the day after Pesach until Shavuot. This provides a link between Pesach and Shavuot.

Shabbat HaGadol: "The Great Sabbath" precedes Pesach and is so called because the *Haftarah* for that day is Malachi 3:24, which ends with the words: "Lo, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before the coming of the awesome great day of *Adonai*." Traditionally, the Rabbi's sermon is devoted to the rules and dietary laws pertaining to Pesach.

Shalosh Matzot: "Three *Matzot*" are placed on the *Seder* plate, two are the *Lechem Mishneh*, and one the *Lechem Oni*.

Shalosh Regalim: "The Three Pilgrimage Festivals." On Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot, Israelites journeyed on foot to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices at the Temple in accord with Deuteronomy 16:16-17.

Shir HaShirim: "Song of Songs," one of the five *Megillot*, is read on Shabbat Chol HaMo'ed Pesach, the Shabbat in the middle of Pesach. *Shir HaShirim*, described as a love song between God (the bridegroom) and Israel (the bride), is read on Pesach to symbolize the courtship between Israel and God which began with the Exodus and continued with the wedding at Mount Sinai, when Israel accepted the Torah.

Shulchan Oraych: Literally, the "Table is Ready." This is the term for the eleventh section of the *Seder* service, eating the Passover meal. Four sections of the *Seder* service remain to be completed after the conclusion of the meal.

Ta'anit B'chorim: "The Fast of the Firstborn." On *erev* Pesach in Egypt, the firstborn of the Egyptian were slain, while the Hebrews were spared. In memory of that deliverance from the tenth plague, it is a custom for first born sons to fast all day until the *Seder*. To obviate the fast, it is customary to finish a tractate of Talmud that morning so as to celebrate with a *siyyum* — a celebratory snack.

Tefillat Tal: "Prayer for Dew" is recited at the Musaf service on the first day of Pesach. It was composed by Eleazar Kalir in the tenth century and takes the form of a reverse acrostic which asks for dew to freshen the soil of Israel.

Tzafun: "Hidden." This is the twelfth section of the *Seder* service. It consists of eating the *Afikoman* which had been hidden then found by a child. No other food may eaten after the *Afikoman*.

Urchatz: Literally, "And Wash." This second section of the *Seder* service consists of washing one's hands without saying the customary blessing.

Yachatz: This fourth section of the *Seder* service consists of breaking the middle *matzah* and putting half away to be hidden for the *Afikoman*.

Yizkor: The memorial service that takes place on the last day of Pesach, Sukkot, Shavuot, and on Yom Kippur.

Z'man Chayrutaynu: "The Season of Our Freedom." This is one of the names for the festival of Pesach. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt, and then during this season became a free people.

Z'roa: The roasted "Shankbone" is one of the symbols on the *Seder* plate. It represents the paschal offering that was brought to the Temple in Jerusalem. It can also be seen as a symbolic representation of God's "outstretched helping hand."

BACKGROUND

The story of the Exodus from Egypt is found in the first half of the Book of Exodus with chapters 12 and 13 serving as the focal point of the historical narrative.

Leviticus 23:5-8 contains the biblical injunctions to celebrate the Festival of Pesach: "in the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight, there shall be a passover offering (Pesach) to the Lord, and on the fifteenth day of that month is the Lord's Feast of Unleavened Bread (Chag HaMatzot). You shall eat unleavened bread for seven days. The first day shall be for you a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations. Seven days you shall make offerings by fire to *Adonai*. The seventh day shall be a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations."

Efforts to probe the origins of the Jewish holidays are in no way intended to denigrate the importance or the meaning of the festivals. Rather, they help to demonstrate the genius of the Jewish people who drew from their environment, transforming what might have begun as a pagan idea or practice into something with universal and timeless significance.

According to such scholars as Hayyim Schauss and Theodor Gaster, the modern festival of Pesach is a combination of a shepherd's festival and an agricultural festival. Leviticus 23 reinforces that idea.

It is possible that a Pesach festival had its earliest stirrings among semi-nomads who thousands of years ago wandered the desert and the semi-arid environs around Palestine. Nisan was the month when sheep most often gave birth. These nomads came to observe a festival at the time of the full moon. Just before nightfall, a sheep or goat was sacrificed. The animal was then roasted, and the family ate a hasty meal so that all of the animal would be eaten by daybreak. No bones of this sacrificial animal could be broken. Tent posts were daubed with the blood of the slain animal as an antidote to plagues, misfortune, and illness. The original meaning of the Hebrew word "*pesach*" is lost. The interpretation signifying "skip over" or "pass over" was later given to the word.

Perhaps the Feast of Unleavened Bread was a six or seven day festival marking the beginning of the spring harvest period that was celebrated by the farmers of Canaan. It was started with the cutting of the barley and the offering of the first sheaf of the newly cut barley to the priest as a sacrifice to God. The elimination of *chamaytz* may have originally been precautionary so as not to infect the new incoming crop. Or, it may have been a way of propitiating the priests and God so as to assure health and bounty.

As Judaism moved away from being agriculturally based, new interpretations and new customs were added to the Pesach ritual so that Jews living all over the world and in all ages could meaningfully celebrate Pesach. The prototype *Haggadah* finds its way into the Mishnah as Tractate *Pesachin*. By the end of the Talmudic period, its form and much of its content were as they are today. It must have been widely accepted, because the *Haggadah* was included in the very first prayer book of Rav Amram in the eighth century, as well as in the prayer book of Saadia Gaon in Babylonia (tenth century). Somewhere around the twelfth century it began to be copied as a separate book. It attracted many commentaries, and became the favorite subject of Jewish artists who found the subject

liberating. Illuminated *Haggadot* were especially prevalent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Prague, Amsterdam, and Venice, among other important cities. A magnificent Sephardic *Haggadah* made its way from Spain eastward in the fifteenth century and is named after the city which claimed it — *The Sarajevo Haggadah*. Today, the making of *Haggadot* is without end. The artistry and commentaries continue to delight and amaze. Often such works are not only used at the *Seder* table, they become treasured possessions.

Central Themes

- The four names for Pesach reflect four aspects of this festival:

  Chag HaPesach is linked with the account of the tenth plague when God passed over the homes of the Israelites, and with the Pesach offering that was brought to the Temple in Jerusalem.

  Chag HaMatzot, The Festival of Unleavened Bread, is an outgrowth of an early agricultural festival and reflects the centrality of *matzah* in the celebration of Pesach.

  Chag HaAviv, The Festival of Spring, reflects the seasonal significance of Pesach.

  Z'man Chayrutaynu, The Season of Our Freedom, marks the attainment of freedom from bondage by the ancient Israelites.

- Pesach can be viewed as a time of release, accompanied by a positive achievement. This theme is seen on three levels. On a seasonal plane, there is the release of the earth from the grip of winter, and the time of the reaping of the grain. The grain is harvested by people, but could not have been grown without God's help. On a historical plane, there is the release of the Children of Israel from the grip of Egypt, and the birth of the Jewish nation in Covenant with God. On a universal plane, Pesach symbolizes the hoped for release of all people from physical and spiritual bondage, and the ability of all to live in dignity.

- While Pesach was at first an agricultural festival, through the centuries it became a festival of freedom and deliverance. This gradual shift took place in response to the growing numbers of Jews living outside of *Eretz Yisrael* and to the reality of the end of the biblical period and the beginning of the Rabbinic era. Change brought added new symbolism, concepts, and dimensions to the festival.

- Pesach marks the emergence of Israel as a nation and as a people, freely accepting Torah as its constitution, and as the basis for Jewish life. Until Sinai, God made covenants with individual Jews; this time it was with *Am Yisrael,* the entire Jewish People.

- By participating in the *Seder*, one symbolically and vicariously relives the Exodus from Egypt. Around the festive table, past and present merge, and the future is promising. In a certain sense, the *Seder* ritual is a reflection of Deuteronomy 29:13-14, which speaks of just such timelessness: "I make this covenant . . . not with you alone, but with those who are standing here with us this day before *Adonai* our God and with those who are not (yet) with us here this day."

- The *Seder* is abundant in symbolism. Each aspect and item in the service can be interpreted on many levels, leading to ever newer interpretations which further enrich the meaning of the Festival. On such innovation took place in the late 1970s and the early 1980s. The Matzah of Hope was added to remind us of the plight of Soviet Jews who were then virtual prisoners in their country. While many Jews from the FSU have subsequently found a home in Israel, America, and elsewhere, we can still set aside a Matzah of Hope for people everywhere who are victims of political, economic, and religious oppression. It is our hope as Jews that all people everywhere will soon live in freedom.

- The *Haggadah* is a masterpiece of pedagogy. It uses many effective and affective learning techniques, employing the Socratic method of

questions and answers, storytelling, show and tell, song, play, food as stimulus and as reward, suspense (will Elijah appear?), pathos (plagues), and more. It is especially structured to involve children meaningfully and to hold their interest by carefully integrating activities for them. These include: a child reciting the Four Questions, the singing of familiar melodies throughout the service, the search for the *Afikoman*, and the question and answer approach during the *Magid* section of the *Seder* service.

- The origins of Pesach reflect Judaism's ongoing process of development and change. Two ancient pagan festivals, the semi-nomadic one-day Pesach festival and the seven-day Canaanite *Matzah* grain festival are mixed together in the blender of Judaism. It is interesting to trace to references to Chag HaPesach and Chag HaMatzot in the Torah. Sometimes they occur together, and at other times, Passover is described as one or the other. Time and again throughout Jewish history, ancient customs have been adapted for inclusion within the framework of Jewish life. In the process the meaning and significance of these practices, ideas, and customs were radically transformed and given a spiritual dimension. This brief explanation can serve as a backdrop for a discussion about how Judaism changes and develops in our day.

Order of the Passover Seder

There are 15 parts to the *Seder* service. Some are very short, and one, the *Magid*, is extremely long. For the order of the *Seder*, see below on this page.

Highlights of the Liturgy

For the first Day of Pesach, there are two Torah readings. First, Exodus 12:21-51 is a description the last of the ten plagues, the events leading up to the Exodus, and some of the basic laws regarding the Passover offering. The second portion, the *Maftir*, is Numbers 28:19-25, which describes in detail the Pesach offerings to be brought to the sanctuary.

The *Haftarah* is Joshua 5:2-6:1, which describes how Joshua gathers the Israelites at Gilgal; circumcizes all males who had been born after the Exodus; and, while still encamped at Gilgal, offers the Passover sacrifice.

On the Second Day, two Torahs are again taken from the Ark. First, Leviticus 22:26-23:44, con-

	Name	Description
1	KADAYSH	Recite the *Kiddush* over the day. All drink the first of the four cups of wine.
2	URCHATZ	Wash the hands without reciting a blessing.
3	KARPAS	The celery is dipped in salt water, blessed, and eaten.
4	YACHATZ	Break the middle *matzah*, putting half away for the *Afikoman*.
5	MAGID	Tell the story of the Exodus and sing praises to God over the second cup of wine.
6	RACHATZAH	Wash the hands with the customary blessing (*Al Netilat Yadayim*).
7	MOTZI	Recite the blessing over bread using a piece of the upper *matzah*.
8	MATZAH	Recite blessing over the *matzah*, break and distribute the upper *matzah*.
9	MAROR	Eat the bitter herbs dipped in *charoset*.
10	KORAYCH	Eat the *maror* and *matzah* in a sandwich.
11	SHULCHAN ORAYCH	Serve the Pesach meal.
12	TZAFUN	Eat a piece of the *Afikoman*, after which no other food may be eaten.
13	BARAYCH	Say the Grace after Meals.
14	HALLEL	Chant the *Hallel* (Psalms 113-118).
15	NIRTZAH	End the *Seder* with a prayer for the acceptance of the service.

tains instructions regarding the celebration of the major festivals of the Jewish year with specific reference to the bringing of the Omer. The *Maftir* is the same as for the first day.

The *Haftarah* is II Kings 23:1-9 and 21-25, which describes the Pesach celebrated by King Josiah around the year 621 B.C.E. when the Book of Deuteronomy was "discovered" in the Temple and read to the people.

The counting of the *Omer* begins on the Second Day of Pesach. Leviticus 23:15-16 is read each evening during the Counting of the *Omer*: "From the day after the Sabbath [i.e., Pesach], the day that you bring the sheaf of wave offering, you shall keep count until seven full weeks have elapsed: You shall count 50 days, until the day after the seventh week; then you shall bring an offering of new grain to *Adonai*." This passage is followed by: Blessed are You, *Adonai* our God, Sovereign of the World, who has hallowed us by Your commandments, and has commanded us concerning the Counting of the *Omer*." Then: "This is the _____ day of the *Omer*."

Because this seven week period is full of sad memories for the Jewish people, weddings are permitted only on Lag B'Omer, Rosh Chodesh Iyar, and Sivan, and recently Yom HaAtzma'ut and Yom Yerushalayim. A Yizkor service is held on the last day of Pesach.

The liturgy for the Shabbat that falls on Chol HaMo'ed Pesach essentially follows that of a regular Shabbat with the addition of a passage related to Pesach in the *Amidah*. The Torah portion is Exodus 33:12-34:26, about the Pilgrimage Festivals and ending with the command to eat unleavened bread. The *Maftir* is identical to that for the first two days of Pesach. The *Haftarah* is Ezekiel 37:1-14, the famous vision of the valley of dry bones. At the conclusion of the morning service, Song of Songs is read. It speaks of the love between a young man and young woman and has been likened to the covenantal relationship between God and Israel. The love song, whether it be understood literally or allegorically, is well suited for the spring. It speaks of the winter being past, the rain gone, and flowers upon the earth. Hope, too, springs eternal.

Passover Foods

Removing all leaven *(chamaytz)* from the home is part of making a home *Kasher l'Pesach* — Kosher for Pesach. In addition to removing any leavened foods, all utensils which came into contact with *chamaytz* may not be used during Pesach or on the day preceding Pesach. Two special sets of utensils, flatware, and dishes are used for Pesach: one for *milchig* (dairy) dishes and one for *fleishig* (meat) dishes.

All cooking, food preparation, and eating surfaces are scoured and usually covered for the duration of Pesach. The refrigerator is likewise cleaned to remove all traces of *chamaytz*. The care and the extent that Pesach preparations are made depends on the fervor with which a person celebrates Pesach. Some people do not prepare the home for Pesach, but refrain from eating anything that is *chamaytz*, while others meticulously follow all of the rules and regulations.

Many foods are labeled *Kasher l'Pesach*. Each year the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America publishes a directory of Passover products that are recognized by them as *Kasher l'Pesach*. In the choice of foods, there is also a wide range of observance.

In addition to bread products containing leaven, there are a few other foods which are not eaten on Pesach. The basic rule is that any product that is fermented or can cause fermentation may not be eaten, including five grains: wheat, rye, barley, oats, and spelt. Any food or drink that is made from one of these grains or which contains one of these grains, even in very small quantity, is considered *chamaytz*.

Ashkenazic Jews follow the custom of not eating rice, corn, peanuts, or other vegetables in the pea family, treating them as *chamaytz*, because these products swell when cooked and so resemble a leavening process. Neither the grains nor any of the flours or oils made from them may be used. Sephardic tradition allows these products to be eaten.

Matzah is an unleavened bread made from water and flour of any of the five major grains which have been carefully tended from harvest through

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

SHAVUOT

VOCABULARY

Akdamut: "Introduction" in Aramaic. The *Akdamut* is a hymn attributed to Rabbi Meir ben Isaac Nahorai of Orleans in southern France. It was written in the eleventh century. Ninety verses long, this is perhaps the best known liturgical poem in the *Siddur.* It is recited just before the Torah reading on the first day of Shavuot. The first part of the poem describes the majesty and glory of God who created heaven and earth. The second part of the poem takes the form of a dialogue between Israel (a constant victim of persecution) and those who seek to convince Israel to give up the faith that she retains with such tenacity. The poem concludes with a lavish description of the hoped for messianic era.

Aseret HaDibrot: Literally, "The Ten Statements," but usually translated as the "Ten Commandments." They appear twice in the Torah, in Exodus 20:2-14 and in Deuteronomy 5:6-18. Tradition teaches that the Ten Commandments were given to Moses on Mount Sinai and served as the basis for Torah legislation and all Jewish law. *Aseret HaDibrot* are also known as the Decalogue, from the Greek meaning "ten words."

Atzeret: "Cessation" or "Solemn Assembly." The Rabbis of the Talmud viewed Shavuot as the conclusion of Pesach and therefore referred to Shavuot as the solemn assembly of cessation. They drew a parallel with Shavuot and Shemini Atzeret, at the end of Sukkot.

Chag HaBikurim: "Festival of the First Fruits." Deuteronomy 26:1-11 commands the owner of land in Israel to take the first ripe fruits of the harvest to the Temple in Jerusalem. The first fruit offerings were limited to the seven species (Deuteronomy 8:8): wheat, barley, vines, figs, pomegranates, olive oil, and honey. These first fruits *(bikurim)* were to be brought to the Temple from Shavuot until Sukkot. Numbers 28:26 explicitly links the first fruits and Shavuot: "On the day of the first fruits, your Feast of Weeks, when you bring an offering of new grain to *Adonai*, you shall observe a sacred occasion."

Chag HaKatzir: "The Festival of the Harvest." Shavuot is observed when the first fruits of the wheat harvest are offered as a sacrifice. To celebrate the harvest, Israelites brought two loaves of bread from the newly harvested wheat. This name derives from Exodus 23:16 which states: " . . . and the Festival of the Harvest, of the first fruits of your work, of what you sow in the field."

Chag HaShavuot: "The Festival of Weeks." Seven weeks are counted from the second day of Pesach until Shavuot. Shavuot is therefore seven weeks of seven days plus one day after the first day of Pesach. It is celebrated on the sixth and seventh days of the month of Sivan.

Confirmation: Students completing the upper grade of their Religious School take part in the ceremony of Confirmation. The Confirmation

ceremony is linked to this holiday because Shavuot represents the time when Israel confirmed its faith and its commitment to Judaism by accepting the Torah Law and by forging a covenant with God.

Isru Chag: "Bind a Festival." The term is given to the day following a festival and is considered to be a minor festival for liturgical purposes. The expression is taken from Psalm 118:27 which states: "Hold onto the festival, even as it departs. Isru Chag, which occurs on the day after the festivals of Shavuot, Sukkot, and Pesach, in effect, extends each festival by one day.

Megillat Ruth: "Scroll (or Book) of Ruth," which is read as a prelude to the afternoon service on Shavuot. The story takes place against the backdrop of the barley harvest. It relates how a Moabite woman came to embrace the faith of Israel and throw in her lot with the Jewish people. The Book of Ruth reflects two important themes of Shavuot: the ingathering of the harvest, and the acceptance of the Torah by a non-Jew. According to biblical tradition, Ruth was an ancestor of King David. According to a tradition mentioned in the Talmud, David was born and died on the festival of Shavuot. Ruth demonstrates her loyalty to the Torah by becoming a Jew. Such a story is fitting for the festival of Shavuot which is dedicated to the centrality of the Torah.

Pentecost: A Greek word meaning "Holiday of 50 Days." This name is applied to Shavuot because it occurs 50 days after the first day of Pesach. There is also a Christian holiday by the name of Pentecost. The Jewish Pentecost is the anniversary of the establishment of the Jewish people, when Israel became a nation. Similarly, the Christian Pentecost is the anniversary of the time when the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples of Jesus, thereby making it the anniversary of the establishment of the Catholic Church. It is possible that the idea of having a Pentecost holiday was borrowed from Judaism by Christianity.

Sefirat HaOmer: "Counting of the *Omer*." An *omer* was a measure of barley brought to the Temple on the first day of Pesach as a thanksgiving offering. Leviticus 23:15-16 states: "From . . . the day that you bring the sheaf of wave offering, you shall keep count until seven full weeks have elapsed: you shall count 50 days, until the day after the seventh week; then you shall bring an offering of new grain to *Adonai*." This grain offering is therefore made on Shavuot. The ceremony of the Counting of the *Omer* during the Ma'ariv service each day serves as a link between Pesach and Shavuot.

Shalosh Regalim: "Three Pilgrimage Festivals." On Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot, Israelites journeyed on foot to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices at the Temple according to the injunction in Deuteronomy 16:16-17. Because the journey to Jerusalem was long and difficult for most Jews, it took on the character of a pilgrimage.

Shavuot: "Weeks." The Festival of Weeks occurs 49 days (a week of weeks) after the second day of Pesach. Shavuot takes place on the sixth and seventh days of Sivan.

Sh'loshet Y'may Hagbalah: "Three Days of Setting Bounds." The three days immediately preceding Shavuot are seen as days of preparation for the Festival of Shavuot. From Rosh Chodesh Sivan, all of the semi-mourning restrictions of the *Omer* period are dropped in anticipation of the forthcoming Shavuot festival. The three day period reflects back on the instructions given by God to Moses before the Revelation at Sinai: "Go to the people . . . Let them be ready for the third day; for on the third day God will come down, in the sight of all the people, on Mount Sinai" (Exodus 19:10-11). On *Sh'loshet Y'may Hagbalah*, Lag B'Omer, and Rosh Chodesh, marriages are permitted during the *Omer* period.

Sivan: The third month of the Jewish year. It has 30 days and its zodiac sign is Gemini, the twins.

Sivan coincides with the months May/ June. Shavuot takes place on the 6th and 7th of Sivan.

Tikkun Layl Shavuot: "Preparation for Shavuot," spending the first night of Shavuot in the study of selections from the Bible, Talmud, *Zohar*, the *Siddur*, and *piyyutim*. After the evening meal on *erev* Shavuot, the studying begins. An anthology also called *Tikkun Layl Shavuot*, is generally used for the night of study. Other sections from sacred literature may also be used.

Whitsun Day: A corruption of the term White Sunday. Whitsun Day is another name for Pentecost among Christians. It was customary to deck churches with wreathes and flowers. In the synagogue, lilies were used to symbolize the "lily of the valley" in Song of Songs that was symbolically taken to be Israel.

Yatziv Pitgam: "True Is the Word" in Aramaic. On the second day of Shavuot, just before the reading of the *Haftarah*, the *piyyut* (liturgical poem) *Yatziv Pitgam* is read. While this 15 line poem contains no reference to Shavuot, it serves as a prayer for the welfare of the Jewish people. It may be seen as the counterpart to the *Akdamut*, which is recited on the first day of Shavuot. Authorship is generally attributed to Rabbenu Tam (1100-1171), grandson of Rashi.

Z'man Matan Torataynu: "Season of the Giving of Our Torah." According to tradition, Shavuot is the day when Israel accepted the Torah.

BACKGROUND

The biblical names for the holiday are Chag HaKatzir (Exodus 23:16), Chag Shavuot (Exodus 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10), and Yom HaBikkurim (Numbers 28:26). Clearly, Torah references are to a harvest festival when the farmers would make pilgrimage to Jerusalem to offer a tithe of their first fruits/first barley grains to the Temple. Before the building of the First Temple, which was completed around 950 B.C.E. by King Solomon, Shavuot was probably not celebrated.

In the Talmud, the festival takes on two additional names. One is Atzeret (*Rosh HaShanah* 1), which is the same name as is linked to the day after Sukkot. By association this could indicate that the Rabbis viewed Shavuot as the end of Pesach, or at least the end of a significant period of observance.

The second name is Z'man Matan Torataynu, which is based on the Rabbinic tendency of tying every festival to an historic event. They justified this connection between Shavuot and receiving Torah on an interpretation of Exodus 19:1 which states: "On the third new moon after the Israelites had gone forth from the land of Egypt, on that very day, they entered the wilderness of Sinai." If, as Rashi points out, the Israelites arrived at the foot of Mount Sinai on the first day of Sivan, which was the third month after the Exodus (but not a full three months after the Exodus), then the identification of Shavuot with the events surrounding the giving of the Torah at Sinai is plausible. The earliest reference to Shavuot as Z'man Matan Torataynu is in the Talmud (*Pesachim* 68b). By forging the link between the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai and Shavuot, the Rabbis were able to lend greater significance to the festival.

Throughout history, there have been different traditions as to when the festival is to be observed. Some communities observe the 50th day after the end of Pesach, some chose to begin counting from the Sabbath after Pesach. Others fixed their calendar so that the festival would always fall on a Sunday. However, the sixth (in Israel and among liberal Jews) plus the seventh (among traditional Jews in the Diaspora) of Sivan are now the customary dates of observance.

Of the three Pilgrimage Festivals, Shavuot was the most difficult for the farmers in ancient Israel because it fell in the middle of the growing season. Making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem was easiest at Sukkot because the fall harvest was completed. Going to Jerusalem at Pesach was possible because the work load was not yet great.

The book of Jubilees in the Apocrypha states that Shavuot is celebrated to commemorate the pact between God and Noah, promising that there would be no general flood in the future. Each year, according to Jubilees, this pact is renewed on Shavuot.

Central Themes

- Shavuot, as the anniversary of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, is, in effect, the birthday of the covenant concluded between God and the Jewish people.

- Shavuot serves to highlight the centrality of the Torah in Jewish life. Torah is the foundation upon which all of Judaism rests. It has enabled the Jewish people to survive and prosper despite continual persecution.

- The giving of the Torah and accepting it were both important. A spirit of collaboration can be seen in the cooperative acts of offering and accepting. The Law issues from God, but its fulfillment lies with Israel. Similarly, inspiration comes from God, but aspiration stems from the people.

- The material harvest is paralleled by the spiritual harvest. The people were enjoined to bring an offering (to the Tabernacle/Temple) of two loaves of bread (Leviticus 23:17). The festival is thus symbolically tied to the giving of the Law in that the two loaves take the shape of the two tablets of the Law.

- In Shavuot, we see the relationship between God and people, not as one of boss and servant, but rather as mutually dependent partners in a joint enterprise of ongoing, continuous creation. Creative acts are not single, separate actions, but are linked together in an ongoing process of creative endeavor.

- The act of carrying the Torah around the sanctuary, of encircling the congregation during a *hakafah*, reminds us that Torah was received by all the people and is the possession of every Jew, regardless of education or social position. When *hakafot* are made during a worship service, the experience at Mount Sinai is symbolically reenacted.

Highlights of the Liturgy

Unlike Pesach and Sukkot, there is no distinctive ceremony that marks the celebration of Shavuot in the synagogue. In many congregations, it is customary to decorate the sanctuary with flowers and plants in honor of the festival and as a remembrance of the agricultural origins of Shavuot.

The Book of Ruth is read as a prelude to the afternoon service on the first day of Shavuot. The story of Ruth and Boaz takes place during the spring, at the time of the barley harvest, and is a fitting selection for Shavuot.

The *Akdamut* is read on the first day of Shavuot before the reading of the Torah. On the second day of Shavuot, another *piyyut* called *Yatziv Pitgam* is read. Both liturgical poems are written in Aramaic.

Torah and Haftarah

For the first day of Shavuot, Exodus 19 and 20 are read from one Torah. This describes the giving of Torah at Mount Sinai. A second Torah is then used to read the *Maftir*, which consists of Numbers 28:26-31. This begins with, "On the day of the first fruits, your Feast of Weeks, when you bring an offering of new grain to *Adonai*, you shall observe a sacred occasion." It continues with a description of the various offerings and sacrifices that are to be made on Shavuot.

Haftarah for the first day of Shavuot is Ezekiel 1:1-28 and 3:12. Chapter 1 describes a vision Ezekiel had concerning the conquest of Jerusalem. Out of the fire, heavenly creatures appear which reflect the glory of God and bring hope to Jews living in Babylonian Exile. Ezekiel 3:12 ends the portion on a high note: "Then a spirit carried me away, and behind me I heard a great roaring sound: Blessed is the Presence of God, in this place."

The Torah portion for the second day of Shavuot is Deuteronomy 15:19-16:17, which

contains a series of laws relating to Israel including: tithes for the Temple, rules for the release of debts every seventh year, setting aside food for the poor, the release of slaves every seventh year, and rules regarding the three Pilgrimage Festivals. Deuteronomy 16:9-12 deals specifically with Shavuot. The *Maftir* is the same as on the first day of Shavuot.

Haftarah for the second day of Shavuot is Habakkuk 2:20-3:19, which is often called the "Prayer of Habakkuk." This contains a vivid, poetic depiction of God as if a mighty warrior. While almost nothing is known about Habakkuk the man, the context of his writing reflects the time of the Assyrian exile (eighth century B.C.E.).

Customs

In Eastern Europe, children aged 3 to 5 were often introduced to their *Yeshivah* on Shavuot. Children were given cakes, honey, and candy on the first day so that they would associate Torah study with sweetness and joy.

The custom most commonly associated with Shavuot is the ceremony of Confirmation. The festival of Shavuot, because of its association with the giving of Torah, has been linked with the study of Torah. The ceremony of Confirmation was introduced by Reform Judaism in the early part of the nineteenth century in Europe and was brought to the United States about mid-century. Confirmation originally took place at the end of the eighth year of Religious School, but it has since been moved to the end of the ninth or tenth year (and occasionally later). In this ceremony, the now maturing student "confirms" a commitment to Judaism and to Jewish life. While boys and girls are considered to be spiritual adults by age 13, they are better prepared at age 16 and 17 to make the kind of emotional and intellectual commitment to Judaism that Confirmation implies.

The ceremony of Confirmation is almost universally practiced in Reform, Reconstructionist, and Conservative synagogues. It has also been introduced in some Orthodox congregations.

There is a custom to bake a special *challah* (round or elongated) for Shavuot. An elaborate braid in the shape of a ladder is placed on the top of the bread to symbolize the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. The reason for the design is that the Hebrew word for ladder (*sulam*) and the Hebrew word for Sinai have the same numerical letter value (130). Hence, the symbolic association.

Triangular-shaped *kreplach* (dumplings) are served on Shavuot to reflect the three Patriarchs of Israel (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob), the three categories of Jews (Israelites, Kohanim, Levites), and the three sections of Tanach (Torah, *Nevi'im*, *Ketuvim*). These dumplings are filled with either meat or cheese.

Cheese products are customarily eaten on Shavuot. The origin of this custom is somewhat unclear. Some people eat two cheese blintzes on Shavuot to remember the two tablets of the Law. One explanation cites Song of Songs 4:11 which states: "honey and milk under your lips." This links the sweetness of Torah with the sweet combination of milk and honey. A second explanation is based on Exodus 23:19: "The choice of first fruits of your soil you shall bring to the house of . . . your God. You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk." From this is extrapolated the idea that first a dairy dish is to be served as the main meal on Shavuot, followed by a meat dish at a later meal.

Some synagogues decorate the sanctuary with greenery as well as flowers. In the Talmud (*Rosh HaShanah* 1b), it is stated that Shavuot is the judgment day for fruit trees. This statement may have served as the basis for the custom of bringing greenery into the synagogue. A recent custom is for congregation members on the day(s) before Shavuot to plant flowers around the synagogue.

In Israel, especially on *kibbutzim* and *moshavim*, members dress in white and ride on carts filled with the late spring harvest.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUKKOT AND HOSHANA RABBAH

VOCABULARY

Aravah: Willow — one of the *Arba'ah Minim*. According to a *midrash*, it is shaped like, and symbolic of, the mouth. Since the willow has neither taste nor aroma, it represents homiletically those Jews who perform no good deeds and who are ignorant of Torah.

Arba'ah Minim: The "Four Species" mentioned in the Torah, which grow in *Eretz Yisrael* and are used in the celebration of Sukkot. They are the *etrog* (also called fruit of the *hadar* tree; a citron), *lulav* (palm), *hadas* (myrtle), and *aravah* (willow).

Chag Adonai: "Festival of *Adonai*." This name for Sukkot suggests that, in ancient times, Sukkot was one of the most important festivals in the Jewish calendar. The term is found in Leviticus 23:39: "Mark, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the yield of your land, you shall observe a Festival of *Adonai* seven days . . . ."

Chag HaAsif: "Festival of the Harvest" or "Festival of the Ingathering." In Israel, Sukkot marks the end of the agricultural year, when the last crops of the season are harvested. It is a time when people would express their joy and gratitude to God for the blessings of a good crop and for health and life. Deuteronomy 16:15 states: "You shall hold a festival for *Adonai* your God seven days, in the place that *Adonai* will choose; for *Adonai* your God will bless all your crops and all your undertakings, and you shall have nothing but joy" (see also Exodus 23:16).

Chag HaSukkot: "Festival of the Booths." One of the four names for Sukkot, the term is used in Leviticus 23:34: "On the fifteenth day of this seventh month there shall be a Festival of the Booths to God for seven days."

Chol HaMo'ed: "Intermediate Days of the Festival" — these are the third through the sixth days of Sukkot.

Etrog: A citron fruit of the *hadar* tree, this is one of the *Arba'ah Minim*. According to a *midrash*, it is shaped like and is symbolic of the heart. Since the *etrog* has both taste and aroma, it represents homiletically those Jews who have a knowledge of Torah and perform good deeds.

Hadas: Myrtle — one of the *Arba'ah Minim*. According to a *midrash*, its leaves are shaped like and are symbolic of the eye. Since the myrtle has aroma but no taste, it represents homiletically those Jews who perform good deeds, but who do not know Torah.

Hakafah/Hakafot: "Circle(s)" or "Circling." It is a relatively modern custom to march around (*hakafah*) the sanctuary with the Torah during holidays so that congregants can kiss it and show it honor. *Hakafot* are especially associated with Sukkot,

Hoshana Rabbah, and Simchat Torah (see Hoshana Rabbah below).

Hakhayl: "Assemble." Once every seven years, according to Deuteronomy 31:10-13, the Israelites were commanded to assemble on Sukkot (on the steps of the Temple in Jerusalem), to bring their offerings, to listen to the reading of the Torah, and to become acquainted with its laws. In recent years, an effort was made to reinstate this practice in symbolic fashion in Israel.

Hallel: Psalms 113-118. During the morning worship services on Sukkot, the *Hallel* Psalms are chanted while the four species are waved as a reminder of God's dominion over all of nature. The *Hallel* is recited only on joyous occasions. Some scholars believe that these Psalms were assembled for use at the rededication of the Temple after the Maccabean victory over Antiochus in 165 B.C.E.

HeChag: "The Festival." One of the four names for the festival, it underscores the idea that Sukkot was the most significant of the ancient festivals, surpassing both Pesach and Shavuot in importance. Serving as the culmination of the harvest season, Sukkot occupied a key place in the life of the ancient Israelites.

Hoshana: "Save us, please." Hoshana prayers are recited while making *hakafot* around the synagogue during Sukkot. The word comes from Psalm 118:25: "We beseech You, *Adonai*, save now! We beseech You, *Adonai*, make us now to prosper." The word is also associated with a willow branch. Both meanings apply to Hoshana Rabbah. To accommodate the second meaning of the term, some hold willow twigs as they chant Psalm 118.

Hoshana Rabbah: "The Great Hoshana." Hoshana Rabbah occurs on the seventh day of Sukkot. On this day, seven *hakafot* are made around the synagogue with the *lulav* and *etrog* in hand while reciting the Hoshana prayer: "Save now, we beseech you, *Adonai*" (Psalm 118:25). On each of the previous days of Sukkot, there is only one *hakafah* with *lulav* and *etrog*. After the *hakafot* on Hoshana Rabbah, it is a custom to beat willow branches until all of the leaves fall off. This symbolizes the casting off of sins.

Kohelet: The Book of Ecclesiastes, which is read on the eighth day of Sukkot. It begins with the somber words, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity . . ." Authorship is ascribed to King Solomon in his later years, reflecting of the passage of time and the changes that age brings, and yet . . . life is always the same — "There is nothing new under the sun." Possessions and pleasures are of no lasting consequence — merely a striving after wind. Sukkot, though a joyous festival, occurs in the autumn when summer's light begins to lessen and intimations of the winter of life are in the air.

Layl HaChotam: "The Night of Sealing." While one tradition has it that the fate of human beings is decided by God on Yom Kippur, there is also a tradition that the divine decision is not finalized until Hoshana Rabbah, the last night of Sukkot. Accordingly, this name is given to *erev* Hoshana Rabbah. The customary greeting on this evening and the days leading up to it is: "*G'mar Chatimah Tovah*" (May the final sealing decree be good).

Lulav: Palm — one of the *Arba'ah Minim*. The *lulav*, according to a *midrash*, is shaped like, and is symbolic of, the spine. Since the date palm has taste but no aroma, it represents homiletically those Jews who know Torah, but do not practice good deeds.

Masechet Sukkah: A tractate of the Mishnah which contains a detailed description of the rules and regulations pertaining to Sukkot, with particular emphasis upon the construction and use of a *sukkah*. The tractate begins: "If a *sukkah* is more than 20 cubits high (30'), it is not valid (Rabbi Judah declares it valid), and if it is not ten handbreadths high or has not three sides or if what

is unshaded is more than what is shaded, it is not valid . . . " (*Sukkah* 1:1).

S'chach: Evergreen twigs and leaves that are used to cover the roof of the *sukkah*. The shade created by the roof covering must exceed the areas exposed to sunlight, but one must be able to see stars through the *s'chach*.

Shalosh Regalim: Three Pilgrimage Festivals. On Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot, Israelites journeyed on foot (to Jerusalem) to offer sacrifices (at the Temple) in accordance with the injunction in Deuteronomy 16:16-17.

Simchat Bayt HaSho'ayvah: "The Joy of the Place of the Water Drawing." In the days of the Temple in Jerusalem, on each of the six intermediate days of Sukkot, priests filled containers with water drawn from the Pool of Siloam in the valley to the south of the Temple Mount. The water was then brought to the Temple in a joyous ceremony that included singing and dancing (*Sukkot* 5:1-5). The origin of the water drawing celebration is not known, but the festival was believed to have been linked to the people's prayers for rain. In recent years, some *yeshivot* in Jerusalem have instituted a *Simchat Bayt HaSho'ayvah* ceremony.

Sukkah: Booth. The term refers to the special, temporary structure erected for use during the festival of Sukkot. Tradition holds that the Israelites lived in *sukkot* during their 40 years of wandering through the wilderness of Sinai. Such booths were also used as temporary shelters by farmers during the fall harvest period in ancient Israel.

Sukkot: This term is the plural of *sukkah*, the name of the festival, and the name of a tractate in the Talmud.

Tikkun Layl Hoshana Rabbah: On the eve of Hoshana Rabbah, people gather to study the collection of readings by this name, which includes all of Deuteronomy, the 150 Psalms, and selections from mystical writings. Deuteronomy is read because on Simchat Torah the annual cycle of reading the Torah is completed. Psalms are read because they like the Torah are divided into five books, and their author, King David (according to tradition), spent his nights in study and prayer.

Ushpizin: Each day during Sukkot, a short prayer may be recited whereby one of the seven *Ushpizin* (guests) — Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, and David — is welcomed to join with the family in their *sukkah*. This custom derives from a mystical understanding of the phrase: "*U'Fros Alaynu Sukkat Sh'lomecha* " — as these leaders saved our people in their times, so may the *Shechinah* (Divine Presence) shelter us today beneath wings of peace. As they are welcomed to join us, so, too, is God's presence invited.

Z'man Simchataynu: "The Season of Our Rejoicing." Sukkot is a time to rejoice in gratitude for what we might at other times of the year take for granted — for the fall harvest and for all the harvests of one's life. *Midrash Tehillim* 80:56 states: "In the world to come, all prayers will be eliminated except for prayers of thanksgiving, which will never be abolished."

BACKGROUND

Sukkot

Sukkot begins at the full moon, on the eve of the 15th of Tishre, four days after Yom Kippur. While it occurs so close to the Day of Atonement, it is remarkably different from it both in mood and in content.

As the third of the *Shalosh Regalim*, Sukkot marks the end of summer, ushers in the fall harvest, and anticipates the beginning of the rainy season in Israel. Between Pesach and Sukkot, little if any rain falls, therefore, between Sukkot and the following Pesach, farmers depend on the rains to get them through the following dry season.

The three Pilgrimage Festivals were originally agricultural celebrations. At one time the festival of

Sukkot, which marked the fall harvest, may not have been linked to a particular day, but rather to the day on which the harvest was completed. Only later (see also Leviticus 23:24), was the period of Sukkot fixed to Tishre 15-22.

Exodus 23:14-16 refers to the three Pilgrimage Festivals in essentially agricultural terms: "Three times a year you shall hold a festival for Me: You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, eating unleavened bread for seven days as I have commanded you, at the set time in the month of Aviv, for in it you went forth from Egypt; and none shall appear before Me empty-handed; and the Feast of the Harvest, of the first fruits of your work, of what you sow in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in the results of your work from the field." Note that only in the case of Pesach is there even a suggestion of more than an agricultural interpretation for one of the Pilgrimage Festivals. In post-biblical literature, more universal interpretations were given to each of these festivals.

Reflecting a later time frame than Exodus 23:14-16 is Leviticus 23:39-43, which clearly links the agricultural and historical aspects of Sukkot: "Mark, on the 15th day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the yield of your land, you shall observe the festival of *Adonai* to last seven days: a complete rest on the first day, and a complete rest on the eighth day. On the first day you shall take the product of the *hadar* tree, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before *Adonai* your God seven days. You shall observe it as a festival of the Lord for seven days in the year; you shall observe it in the seventh month as a law for all time, throughout the generations. You shall live in booths seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in booths, in order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I am *Adonai* Your God."

In the course of time, Sukkot took on additional significance. Just as Pesach was linked to the Exodus and Shavuot to the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, Sukkot was seen as a tangible reminder of the wilderness experience. According to later thinking, the Israelites used *sukkah*-like structures during their 40 years of wandering in the Sinai. Therefore, the *sukkah* came to be seen as more than a shelter used by farmers during the harvest season. Sukkot, by taking on this historical significance, became relevant to Jews living outside of Israel in non-agricultural settings.

There are a dozen or so references to this festival in the Tanach. Some are quite interesting and raise more questions than they answer. Exodus 23:16 states that the Festival of the Ingathering was celebrated at the end of the year (*b'tzayt hashanah*), not at the beginning. Deuteronomy 31:10-12 states that the Torah was read every seventh year to the assembled people on Sukkot. Nehemiah 8:14-18 implies that that Torah was read before the people (on the first of the seventh month) and studied on Sukkot for seven days. These verses also include olive branches as one of the four species and omit willow. And, there is a reference here that the festival was not celebrated from the days of Joshua until the return from Babylonian exile. The so-called Psalms of enthronement (47, 93, 96-99) have led some to think that Sukkot at first was a time for reaffirming the covenant between God and the people. As if to reaffirm that idea, I Kings 8:2 states: "All the men of Israel gathered before King Solomon at the festival in the month of Etanim — that is, the seventh month . . . to bring up the Ark (of the Covenant) and place it in the Temple."

The Rabbis in the Talmud emphasize Leviticus 23:39-43, which reminds us that we dwelled in booths during the desert experience after the Exodus. Every celebrant is to rejoice with the *Arba'ah Minim* for all seven days of the festival. Reference is also made to the *Simchat Bayt HaSho'ayvah* — when on *Chol HaMo'ed* the people would sing and dance with torches as they carried up water from springs into Jerusalem.

Over the centuries, Sukkot has evolved. Today, the first two days of the holiday are considered Sukkot, the third through the sixth are *Chol*

HaMo'ed Sukkot, the seventh day is called Hoshana Rabbah, the eighth day is Shemini Atzeret, and the ninth day, which is a separate festival, is Simchat Torah.

On the eve of Simchat Torah, all of the Torah scrolls are taken out of the Ark and carried as part of the seven *hakafot* around the synagogue. At the end of each *hakafah*, there is singing and dancing. The *hakafot* are repeated for the morning service on Simchat Torah. The custom of *hakafot* on Simchat Torah originated in the sixteenth century in order to endear the Torah to the children of Israel.

Central Themes

- Sukkot is a Festival of Thanksgiving for the abundance of the harvest and for the mercies shown to the Israelites as they wandered through the desert after leaving Egypt.

- To today's urban dweller, Sukkot and the building of a *sukkah* are reminders that we were once farmers, and that only now after nearly 2000 years of being kept away from our land do we had the opportunity to work the soil once again.

- Sukkot is the link between the modern Jew and nature. It is also known by the following names: Chag HaAsif ("Feast of the Harvest/Ingathering"), Chag Adonai ("Feast of *Adonai*" – which reflects the connection between God and the People during Sukkot in ancient Israel), HeChag ("The Festival" – which may indicate that Sukkot was the most important of the ancient Pilgrimage Festivals), and Z'man Simchataynu ("The Season of Our Rejoicing" – which reflects the joyous nature of the Festival). The latter name also refers to Simchat Torah.

- The development of the three Pilgrimage Festivals is reflective of the creative genius of the Jewish people. The broader, more universal interpretations given to each festival make it possible for Jews of every age and in every location to celebrate each of these festivals joyfully and meaningfully.

- The *sukkah* unites the past, present, and future. It is the functional booth of wilderness dwellers and of yesterday's farmers, it is the symbolic reminder today of our connectedness to the land and to all of nature, and it points to the continuity of the Jewish people. Despite obstacles and persecutions, still Jews build and harvest, create and survive. Therefore, even when the present is fraught with difficulty the *sukkah* reminds us that one need only look upward to find the source of inspiration and encouragement.

- The *sukkah* lends a sense of needed perspective. We have surrounded ourselves with machines and devices by which and with which we live our lives. The genie of technology is most seductive. It is important therefore to get in touch periodically with nature so as to remind ourselves that "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Psalm 24:1).

- The *sukkah*, according to Maimonides, helps remind Jews to live modestly even in days of prosperity, so as to keep one's values in perspective.

- The Kabbalistic practice of *Ushpizin* reflects the importance of *Hachnasat Orchim*, hospitality, in Jewish life. It is customary for families to invite people to eat with them at any time of year, but especially on Shabbat, at the *Seder*, and in the *sukkah*.

- The Festival of Sukkot reinforces the Jew's sense of community. *Kol Yisrael Arayvin Zeh BaZeh*. That Jews are responsible for one another is the key teaching of Judaism. Eating together on Sukkot reinforces this sense of community.

- Without a doubt, the Pilgrims modeled their Thanksgiving celebration on the biblical Sukkot. One of the lesser known names for Sukkot is *Chag HaHodi'ah* (Festival of Thanksgiving).

- It is also likely that the first celebration of Chanukah was a delayed celebration of Sukkot.

The Maccabees and their followers were so busy fighting the Syrian-Greeks that they were unable to celebrate Sukkot. This may explain why they celebrated the rededication of the Temple for eight days.

- Sukkot is closely connected to nature. In showing gratitude to God for many blessings, one also feels a sense of responsibility to guard and protect God's world. The principle of *Bal Tashchit* (do not destroy) originally referred to trees in a battle zone (Deuteronomy 20:19), but it has come to be Judaism's ecology phrase. Humanity was not given the world to misuse and destroy; rather, the world is to enjoy and to preserve for future generations.

The Sukkah

The sixth tractate of the second division of the Mishnah is called *Sukkah*. It's very first verses contain a detailed description of the rules and regulations pertaining to the construction and use of a proper *sukkah*:

1. It must be less than 30' high.
2. The walls must be strong enough to withstand ordinary gusts of wind.
3. The shade offered by the roof covering of the *sukkah* must be sufficient to block out most of the sun's rays, while airy enough so that the stars are visible through the roof at night.
4. There must be at least three walls, made of any material.
5. The *sukkah* must be a temporary structure, so a screened in porch or a screened house cannot serve as a *sukkah*.
6. It is considered a *mitzvah* to eat one's meals in the *sukkah*.
7. One is not obliged to sleep in the *sukkah*, particularly in colder climates. One is not required to eat in the *sukkah* when it is raining.
8. The *sukkah* can be adorned or decorated with pictures, hanging gourds, fruit, tapestries, etc.
9. There is no prescribed minimum size; however, the *sukkah* must be large enough to accommodate at least one person.

Upon entering a *sukkah*, one pronounces the blessing over dwelling in a booth. Additionally, *Shehecheyanu* is said upon entering the *sukkah* for the first time. (For blessing in Hebrew and English, see Appendix, page 250.)

Midrash of the Four Species

The four agricultural species used on Sukkot are mentioned in Leviticus 23:40: "On the first day you shall take the product of the *hadar* tree (*etrog*), branches of palm trees (*lulav*), boughs of leafy trees (*hadas* – myrtle), and willows (*aravah*) of the brook, and you shall rejoice before *Adonai* your God seven days."

A *midrash* equates taste with knowledge of Torah and aroma with being righteous. Using taste and aroma it describes four types of Jews (*Leviticus Rabbah* 30):

The *etrog* is shaped like the human heart; it has both taste and aroma and accordingly represents those Jews who have a knowledge of Torah and do good deeds.

The *lulav* is long and narrow like the human spine. Since the fruit of the palm tree, the date, has taste but no aroma, it represents Jews who know Torah, but do not practice good deeds.

The *hadas* leaf is shaped like the human eye. Since it has aroma but no taste, it symbolizes those who perform good deeds, but who do not know Torah.

The *aravah* leaf has the shape of a mouth. Since it has neither taste nor aroma, it represents those Jews who perform no good deeds and are ignorant of Torah as well.

Before a worship service on Sukkot or immediately before reciting the *Hallel*, a blessing is said over the four species by each worshiper as he/she takes them in hand. They are waved in six directions: East, West, North, South, up and down, to indicate that God is everywhere. (For blessing, see Appendix, page 250.)

The *lulav* is not used on Shabbat, because it was feared that people would carry it through the streets to the synagogue, thereby violating the prohibition against carrying on the Sabbath.

Unit 3 – Sanctifying Space

Overview

The purpose of this unit is to explore Jewish, holy spaces, how those spaces become Jewish and holy and why it is important to create Jewish and holy spaces. Are these spaces intrinsically Jewish and holy? Or does the space become Jewish and holy once Jewish and sacred ritual objects are placed with it. Does the space maintain its sanctity once these objects have been placed within it? Or, do we need to maintain the space's sanctity by performing certain kinds of actions within those spaces?

The unit starts with the home, as it is the most familiar space to the learners. They will have an opportunity to explore ritual objects and rituals that can make the home a Jewish and holy space. The next space is the Temple. The Temple is the source of some of the ritual objects and rituals that take place in the home. It is also the space that God instructs the Jewish people to build as the ultimate holy space. Since we no longer have a Temple in Jerusalem, the learners will explore the transition from the Temple to the Synagogue and what makes the Synagogue a Jewish and holy space. The unit will culminate in the exploration of the mikvah, a space that claims holiness in a different way than the home, Temple or Synagogue. This is a space that the learners will probably be least familiar with.

Enduring Understandings:

- Political, social and intellectual changes in different Jewish communities prompt Jewish leaders to adapt and transform Judaism.
- As Jews acculturate to living in America, Reform Jews renew their tenets, practices and the aesthetics of their worship in an attempt to sanctify their synagogues and homes, expressing greater intellectual and psychological comfort with Jewish tradition.
- Engagement in an ongoing dialogue with the sources of our tradition about how space can be sanctified infuses our lives with קְדֻשָּׁה (holiness).
- Ritual and Jewish sacred practices can enable us to infuse our lives with holiness and meaning.

Goals:

- To present students with a Jewish framework for sanctifying space.
- To expose Reform Jewish students to lesser known ritual objects and lesser known and less practiced rituals that sanctify spaces.
- To expose Reform Jewish students to lesser known Jewish, holy spaces (the Temple and the Mikvah).
- To encourage students to reflect on one's Jewish identity.
- To demonstrate how Jewish ritual objects can sanctify spaces.
- To introduce Jewish rituals and sacred practices that can sanctify spaces.
- To show the relationship between the Synagogue and the Temple.
- To demonstrate how our ancestors transformed Judaism at a time of crisis.

Essential Questions:

- What makes a space Jewish and holy?
- Why is it important to create Jewish and holy spaces?
- Are there spaces that are intrinsically Jewish and holy? Or does a space become Jewish and holy by virtue of what is placed with it and by the activities that take place within it?
- How does a space maintain its sanctity?

Unit 3 Lesson 1 – The Jewish Home part 1

This lesson is an opportunity for the students to explore what makes a home Jewish by looking at ritual objects that are placed in the home. Ritual objects can make a home holy by inviting its participants to engage in activities that can bring holiness to their lives. Furthermore, they convey the values of those who live there and identify the Jewish nature of the home. It would be best to use a Jewish home as the setting, perhaps the teacher's, the educator's or the rabbi's or a student's. Whichever home is used, it can be supplemented with objects that are placed there. A wide variety of objects would be best such as: holiday objects such as shofar, chanukiah, seder plate; prayer objects such as a tallit and prayerbook; study materials such as the Torah and other Jewish books; objects that are not intrinsically Jewish but are used in a Jewish way such as the table when used for family meal or Shabbat/holiday meal; dishes that are used for Shabbat/holiday meals or that are used for observing Kashrut; telephone which is used to speak with relatives or friends that live far away.

Objectives – At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify Jewish ritual objects and explain what makes them Jewish.
- Explain how ritual objects add a Jewish character and holiness to the home.
- Evaluate if they would adopt or adapt any Jewish ritual objects and would include them in their home.

Suggested Learning Activities

Ritual Object Scavenger Hunt

Students will walk around the home and look for objects that are Jewish (this is intentionally vague). For each object that they will find, they will answer a number of questions:

- What makes this object a Jewish object?
- Is this object intrinsically Jewish? Or is this an ordinary object which has been adapted for Jewish purposes?
- How is this object used in a Jewish way?
- What values does the object's use express?

Sample: Tzedakah Box, it is Jewish because we are commanded to give tzedakah and it has Jewish art and writing on it, it is intrinsically Jewish because it was made for a Jewish purpose and that purpose is clearly displayed on the outside (it has tzedakah written on it), money is put in it and then donated to an organization that helps people or a person in need, it expresses the value of responsibility for others and generosity – we are commanded to give tzedakah but not the exact amount so it is up to each person's generosity to decide how much to give.

Whole Group Discussion

Students will present the objects they found and how those objects are Jewish (students will use the answers to the questions above). Additional discussion questions:

- How are these objects similar to those you have in your home? How are they different? Do you have any Jewish ritual objects in your home that you did not find here? (If yes, students can answer the questions above in relation to that object). Are there any objects that you would like to add to your home?
- How do these objects add holiness to this home?
- Why is it important to bring holiness into our homes?
- How is a home a Jewish and holy space?

Ritual Object Presentation

There are certain Jewish ritual objects that many Jews have in their homes that these Reform Jewish students may not be familiar with. If possible, the teacher will provide the object and have the students answer the questions above about the ritual object or tell the students about these objects and have them answer the questions.

- Ketubah (background information from *Jewish Living* pp 167-168 (attached)
- Washing cup for ritual hand washing (background information from *Jewish Living* pp 77-78, attached)

Additional discussion questions:

- Would you adopt or adapt these ritual objects? Why or why not? If you were to adopt them, how would you adapt them?

In traditional practice, the couple spend a few minutes alone together in a private room following the wedding ceremony. In addition to affording them a brief respite during an exciting and stressful day, this custom helps fulfill a requirement under the *halakhah*: according to some opinions, the word *chupah* refers to the private meeting (*yichud*) between bride and groom which declares symbolically that they are now married. Another view holds that "*chupah*" refers to a *tallit* that is held over the couple during the *Sheva Berakhot*; from there derives the custom of using a *tallit*, held aloft on four poles or by four people, as a wedding canopy. Some communities, on the other hand, make use of richly decorated, permanent *chupot* for weddings.

A wedding is a public event, the celebration of the establishment of a new household in Israel. Therefore, a *minyan* is traditionally required. If no *minyan* is present, the wedding is still valid. And as a wedding is also a legal ceremony, one which alters the status of two individuals under Jewish law, it is customary that a rabbi act as officiant.

Dignity and Sanctity. The Jewish wedding is a joyous celebration. It is a *mitzvah* to accompany the couple to the *chupah* and to rejoice with them. Yet the wedding is also an occasion of sanctity (*kedushah*). This value should be kept in mind in the planning of the ceremony and its surrounding events.

1. *Music.* It is a long-standing custom to celebrate a marriage with music. A great deal of Jewish music is available and should be selected in consultation with the rabbi, the cantor, or the congregation's music director. Other kinds of music are permissible, although selections drawn from the liturgical traditions of other religions are to be avoided.

2. *Expense.* The sense of *kedushah* should encourage the couple and their families to place appropriate restraints upon the lavishness of the wedding celebration. It is a *mitzvah* to give a gift to *tzedakah* in honor of one's marriage or the marriage of one's children.

3. *Decorum.* Flash photographs should not be taken during the ceremony. It is permissible to record the wedding on videotape, but those who hold the cameras should do so unobtrusively and take care to observe the sense of propriety prevalent in the community.

Times When Weddings Should Not Take Place. Jewish tradition has identified certain days on which it is inappropriate to hold a wedding. We do not schedule weddings on Shabbat and *yom tov*, since one does not enter into binding legal transactions on those days and because they are set aside for delight (*oneg*) or joy (*simchah*) of a communal nature rather than for personal celebrations. On the other hand, most Reform rabbis will officiate at weddings on *chol hamo'ed*. Most Reform rabbis will abstain from officiating on days of national mourning such as Tisha Be'Av and Yom Hashoah. Traditional practice prohibits weddings during the Omer period between Pesach and Shavuot as well as during the three weeks between the fast of 17 Tamuz and Tisha Be'Av (*bein hametzarim*). While Reform rabbis generally permit weddings during those times, personal observance along with family and communal considerations may warrant a degree of consideration for the traditional custom. Although some Jews do not hold weddings on the days of repentance between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, weddings are in fact permitted during that time.

The Ketubah. A document, signed and witnessed, attesting that a marriage has taken place will be prepared prior to the wedding and given to the couple. This document may be called a *ketubah*, after the name of the Jewish marriage "contract." The traditional *ketubah* is in fact a promissory note issued by the husband to his wife which specifies both the financial obligations he assumes toward her during the marriage and those owed to her by him or by his estate should the marriage end due to his death or to divorce. The document declares the amount of the husband's basic indebtedness to his wife (*ikar ketubah*) as well as any additional amount (*tosefet ketubah*) which he may decide to promise. In practice both these sums are determined by the communal custom. The *ketubah* will also specify the *nedunya*, or dowry, the property brought into the marriage by the wife and for which the husband accepts financial responsibility. The purpose of the *ketubah* in rabbinic law is to provide economic insurance to the wife and to make it more difficult for the husband to divorce her. The document must be ready to transmit to the wife prior to the wedding (*nisu'in*), because the debt to which it testifies is contracted from that time. Thus, "it is forbidden to marry without first writing the *ketubah*." Under rabbinic law, should the husband fail to write the *ketubah*, the *beit din* will nonetheless act as though

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one were written, allowing the wife to collect the standard amounts at the end or dissolution of the marriage.

All this holds in legal theory. Today, in practice, the *ketubah* has become a purely symbolic certificate. The financial details concerning the end of the marriage are determined by civil law in most of our communities. While the *ketubah* fell into disuse for many years in North American Reform Judaism, it has lately returned to widespread use. Numerous texts are in circulation, and others are being created all the time. Most of them, written in Hebrew and English rather than the customary Aramaic, speak of the spiritual commitments of marriage in place of or in addition to the financial obligations. One constant feature of Reform *ketubot*, however, is that they speak of the mutual obligations of both partners and not simply those of the husband toward the wife.

Marriage and Family Finances. Jewish law is sensitive to financial obstacles to marriage and has taken steps to overcome them. Jewish communities have often provided assistance to couples whose economic circumstances made it difficult for them to marry. This assistance, called *hakhnasat kallah*, is one of the most sublime forms of *tzedakah*. Our communities today are called upon to act in the spirit of this Jewish value and to render aid to those couples in need of financial help. In addition, Jewish law permits a couple to arrange its finances prior to marriage in such a way as to protect the assets of either spouse.

Divorce

If a man divorces his first wife, even the altar sheds tears. (*B. Gittin* 90b)

Divorce in Traditional Jewish Law. The procedure of divorce, as prescribed by the *halakhah*, is derived formally through *midrash*, a series of interpretations of a single biblical verse: "A man takes a wife and possesses her. She fails to please him because he finds something obnoxious about her, and he writes her a bill of divorcement, hands it to her, and sends her away from his house" (Deut. 24:1). Based upon this passage, the Rabbis declare that a divorce is effected when the husband executes a written document called a *get peturin* or, simply, a *get* and transmits it to his wife in the presence of two witnesses. Once the *get* reaches the wife's legal possession she is divorced, free to remarry. The document must be written specifically to dissolve this marriage, and its text can leave no doubt that the husband desires a complete and final separation from his wife. The writing, transmission, and receipt of the *get* may be performed by agents appointed by the husband and the wife, so that the couple need not be in each other's presence at any time during the divorce proceedings.

The Jewish law of divorce grants a clear legal advantage to the husband over the wife. The Rabbis of talmudic times read Deuteronomy 24:1 strictly: it is the husband who enjoys the exclusive power to initiate divorce. The divorce is valid only when the husband gives his consent to it; the wife, the recipient or "passive" party, may be divorced even against her will. To be sure, the rabbinic tradition has introduced important remedies into the law to provide a measure of equity for the wife. The famous *takkanah* (enactment) of Rabbeinu Gershom b. Yehudah (Germany, tenth century) prohibits a husband from using his Toraitic power to divorce his wife against her will. It also forbids him to marry another woman before divorcing his present wife; this rule, intended to prevent the wife from being stranded while the husband partakes of a new marriage, put a formal end to the biblically-sanctioned (if rarely observed) practice of polygamy among Ashkenazic Jews. The wife is entitled under talmudic law to sue for divorce, and should it find in her favor, the rabbinic court will instruct her husband to accede to her demand. Under certain circumstances the court may even coerce the husband, by physical means if necessary, to do so. Yet the basic inequity has never been erased, for the husband must still give his consent before a divorce can be issued. Judicial coercion may not be sufficient to persuade him to release his wife, and today, in any case, this power is denied to all rabbinic courts outside of Israel. The husband can therefore effectively prevent his wife from remarrying until such time as he deigns to free her. The wife, meanwhile, enjoys no such power over her husband. Should she refuse a justifiable request to accede to a divorce, the *takkanah* of Rabbeinu Gershom may be waived and the husband permitted to marry a second wife.

Reform Judaism and Jewish Divorce. The Reform movement in the United States accepts civil divorce as completely dissolving the marriage and permitting the remarriage of the divorced persons. No *get* or any substitute form of religious divorce is required. Virtually all Reform communities outside of the United States continue to insist upon Jewish religious divorce as a prerequisite for remarriage.

> Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who hallows us through the *mitzvot* and commands us to kindle the light of Shabbat.

Most blessings are recited immediately before the performance of the act to which they apply. The kindling of the Shabbat candles is a major exception to this rule. The problem is that as soon as one recites the *berakhah* (blessing), it is considered as though Shabbat has begun for that person; from that moment on, it is traditionally forbidden to kindle a fire. Thus, the candles must be lit before the blessing is pronounced. However, since the rule requires the blessing be said *prior* to the act, one places one's hands between the eyes and the candles as a kind of screen to "hide" the flame. At the conclusion of the blessing, one removes one's hands, now revealing the flame, as if the benediction preceded the kindling.

Blessing the Children. It is a *mitzvah* for parents to bless their children at the Shabbat table each week. This blessing precedes the recitation of *Kiddush*.

Kiddush. It is a *mitzvah* to recite *Kiddush* at the beginning of the Shabbat meal. This fulfills the requirement to "remember (*zakhor*) the Sabbath day to keep it holy" (Exod. 20:8): we remember the Sabbath by *sanctifying* it, by reciting a blessing which sets it apart and distinguishes it from the six days of labor. The word *kiddush* means, in fact, "sanctification." As God sanctifies the Sabbath in the heavens, so do we declare it a holy day here on earth, in our homes and in our lives.

Kiddush is recited over a cup of wine. It therefore consists of two blessings (*berakhot*). The first, *borei peri hagafen*, is the benediction we say before drinking wine; the second, longer paragraph, which concludes *mekadesh hashabbat*, "Blessed are You, Adonai, who sanctifies the Sabbath," is the *Kiddush* proper, the actual sanctification of the Sabbath day. One drinks from the wine cup at the conclusion of this second benediction. It is important to note that, by itself, *borei peri hagafen* is not the *Kiddush*; *both* blessings must be said. While the *Kiddush* should ideally be recited in Hebrew, it is entirely permissible to say it in the vernacular. In addition, prior to *borei peri hagafen*, it is customary to recite the verses of Genesis 1:31 (from *vayehi erev*, "it was evening and it was morning") through 2:3, which recount God's sanctification of the seventh day at the completion of the work of Creation. (For the *Kiddush* and accompanying readings, see *Gates of Shabbat*, 24–26.)

The proper place for the recitation of *Kiddush* is at the dinner table. For this reason, many traditional authorities require that we recite it while seated, to emphasize that we are gathered at the Shabbat table for our meal, although others permit or even recommend the recitation of *Kiddush* while standing. The *Kiddush* recited in synagogue is not a substitute for the performance of this *mitzvah* at home.

Since wine is traditionally associated with joy, the Rabbis decreed that the sanctification of Shabbat, a day of delight (*oneg*), be recited over wine. The term "wine" refers to grape wine or unfermented grape juice, beverages over which we recite the blessing *borei peri hagafen*. In some communities there is a preference to use red wine for *Kiddush*, though white wine is perfectly acceptable. If no wine is available, or if one cannot drink wine or grape juice for medical reasons, *Kiddush* may be recited over the bread at the Shabbat table. In this case, one would recite the verses Genesis 1:31–2:3, the blessing *Hamotzi*, and then the paragraph that sanctifies the Sabbath, after which one would break or cut the bread, eat from it, and continue with the meal.

Just as we sanctify Shabbat by reciting *Kiddush* at the Friday evening meal, so do we recite a *Kiddush* to begin the noon meal on Saturday. This *Kiddush* consists of an introductory paragraph, usually *Veshameru* (Exod. 31:16–17) and an excerpt from the Ten Commandments (the second half of Exod. 20:11), followed by the blessing over wine. Frequently, beverages other than wine are used for the Shabbat morning *Kiddush*; if so, the blessing recited is *shehakol nihyah bidevaro*. This ritual, called euphemistically *Kiddusha Rabbah*, "the great *Kiddush*," is customarily recited in synagogue after the Shabbat morning service.

Hamotzi. It is a *mitzvah* to say *Hamotzi*, the blessing over bread, usually *challah*, at the Shabbat meal. Jewish tradition specifies that this blessing be said over two loaves, preferably unbroken and unsliced, as a reminder of the double portion of *manna* (*lechem mishneh*) that fell to earth each Friday to feed the Israelites during their desert wanderings following the Exodus from Egypt. The loaves are placed on the table before *Kiddush* and covered with a cloth while the *Kiddush* is recited. In some homes, *Hamotzi* is preceded by a ritual washing of the hands, symbolizing the state of ritual purity in which the priests, during Temple times, would eat their food. The washing is accomplished by means

of a *keli*, a cup or some other container with which one pours water two or three times over each hand. Immediately before drying the hands, one recites the blessing:

> *Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha'olam asher kideshanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu 'al netilat yadayim.*
>
> Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who hallows us through the *mitzvot* and commands us to wash our hands.

After the recitation of *Hamotzi*, salt is often sprinkled over the bread after it has been cut or pulled apart and before it is distributed to those at the table. This too hearkens back to the sacrifices of old, which were consumed with salt. Both the washing of the hands and the sprinkling of the salt express the idea that our table is a kind of altar: the act of eating, surrounded by blessings and priestly rituals, becomes a religious rather than a purely physical act.

The Shabbat Table. The *mitzvah* of *oneg shabbat*, to "delight in the Sabbath," is fulfilled in part through the festive quality of the meal. Special foods and beverages are served, and *zemirot* (Shabbat songs) are sung. Even our conversation should be different from that of the rest of the week. The Rabbis interpret the verse Isaiah 58:13 as an instruction that "your speech on Shabbat should not resemble your weekday speech." This means that we should strive to speak of significant matters such as the weekly Torah portion or issues of concern to the Jewish people, topics that increase our sensitivity to Jewish and human values, rather than devote our conversation to business or to "idle talk" and gossip.

Birkat Hamazon. It is a *mitzvah* to conclude the Shabbat meal with the Grace after Meals. Since we eat bread at our meal, the appropriate *berakhah* is *Birkat Hamazon*, which includes a special paragraph for Shabbat in its third component benediction.

Shabbat Day. The Shabbat midday meal, like the meal of *layl shabbat* (Friday night), has a festive character. It is preceded by a brief *Kiddush* over wine and by the recitation of *Hamotzi* over *challah*, marked by the proper Shabbat atmosphere and conversation, accompanied with *zemirot* and concluded with *Birkat Hamazon*. It is customary in some households to eat *se'udah shelishit*, a formal "third feast" on Shabbat

afternoon. There is no *Kiddush* at this meal, but *Hamotzi* over *challah*, Shabbat songs, and *Birkat Hamazon* are recited.

The Conclusion of Shabbat. Havdalah. It is a *mitzvah* to recite *Havdalah*, the blessing which marks the distinction between holy and ordinary time, between the departing Sabbath and the beginning of the work week. The ritual encompasses four *berakhot*:

1. *The blessing over wine (borei peri hagafen).* Like *Kiddush*, *Havdalah* is recited over a cup of wine. If one has no wine, one may substitute another beverage (except for water) and recite the blessing *shehakol niheyah bidevaro*.

2. *The blessing over spices.* The leader of the service holds up a box or a vessel containing spices and says:

> *Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha'olam borei minei vesamim.*
>
> Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who creates varieties of fragrant spices.

The leader then smells the spices and passes them on so that all assembled may enjoy their fragrance.

The use of spices at *Havdalah* may stem from the ancient custom of bringing fragrant spices on burning coals into the room at the end of a meal. Since the act of burning spices violates the prohibition against work (*melakhah*), it signifies the end of Shabbat. Another explanation is that the spices help to cheer us up as Shabbat departs, to compensate for the loss of the "additional soul" (*neshamah yeteirah*) which dwells within each Jew on the Sabbath.

3. *The blessing over fire.* The leader of the service holds up a lighted *Havdalah* candle, one containing multiple wicks, and says:

> *Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha'olam borei me'orei ha esh.*
>
> Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, Creator of the lights of the fire.

Those present cup their hands and extend them palms up toward the candle.

The practice of reciting a blessing over fire at the end of Shabbat may also reflect the practice, mentioned above, of burning fragrant

Unit 3 Lesson 2 – The Jewish Home Part 2

Previously, the students explored the ritual objects that make a home a Jewish and sacred space. In this lesson, the students will explore the rituals that can make the home a Jewish and sacred space. The home maintains its sanctity by the rituals that take place within it.

Objectives – At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify rituals that make ordinary acts such as waking up, going to sleep and eating sacred home rituals.
- Explain how these rituals can add holiness to ordinary acts they do at home.
- Evaluate which of the rituals they will adopt or adapt and incorporate into their lives.

Suggested Learning Activities

Design a learning station activity, in which students will have an opportunity to explore 3 home rituals, which take ordinary acts of going to sleep, waking up, and eating holy acts. Texts (text for the Motzi and Birkat Ha-Mazon photocopied from *Mishkan T'filah*) and worksheets with possible questions are attached.

Additional resource: *The Way into Jewish Prayer* by Lawrence Hoffman. Woodstock, VY: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2000, pp 136-141.

HaMotzi – Blessing over Bread

The Motzi is recited before one eats bread. The wording of the blessings praises God as the one who "brings forth bread from the earth". The bread that we eat today, does not come directly from the ground, instead many beings are involved in the creation of bread.

- What are we acknowledging by saying this blessing?

- How can saying this blessing make eating, an ordinary act, a holy act?

- What is the value of saying this blessing?

- Is this a blessing that already is a part of your life at home? Why or why not?

- How might you adopt/adapt this blessing and incorporate into your life?

הַמּוֹצִיא, בִּרְכַּת הַמָּזוֹן

HAMOTZI AND BIRKAT HAMAZON

FOR FOOD

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ,
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
הַמּוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

Our praise to You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who brings forth bread from the earth.

BIRKAT HAMAZON, BLESSING AFTER EATING

ON SHABBAT

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת, בְּשׁוּב יְיָ
אֶת־שִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן, הָיִינוּ כְּחֹלְמִים.
אָז יִמָּלֵא שְׂחוֹק,
פִּינוּ וּלְשׁוֹנֵנוּ רִנָּה.
אָז יֹאמְרוּ בַגּוֹיִם,
הִגְדִּיל יְיָ לַעֲשׂוֹת עִם־אֵלֶּה.
הִגְדִּיל יְיָ לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּנוּ,
הָיִינוּ שְׂמֵחִים.
שׁוּבָה יְיָ אֶת־שְׁבִיתֵנוּ
כַּאֲפִיקִים בַּנֶּגֶב.
הַזֹּרְעִים בְּדִמְעָה בְּרִנָּה יִקְצֹרוּ.
הָלוֹךְ יֵלֵךְ וּבָכֹה
נֹשֵׂא מֶשֶׁךְ־הַזָּרַע,
בֹּא־יָבוֹא בְרִנָּה נֹשֵׂא אֲלֻמֹּתָיו.

A song of ascents. When Adonai restores the fortunes of Zion, we see it as in a dream, our mouths shall be filled with laughter, our tongues, with songs of joy. Then shall they say among the nations, "Adonai has done great things for them!" Adonai will do great things for us and we shall rejoice. Restore our fortunes, Adonai, like watercourses in the Negev. They who sow in tears shall reap with songs of joy. Those who go forth weeping, carrying the seed-bag, shall come back with songs of joy, carrying their sheaves.

ALL DAYS

Leader

חֲבֵרִים וַחֲבֵרוֹת, נְבָרֵךְ!

Let us praise God.

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲ *Shir hamaalot . . . A song of ascents . . .* Psalm 126

Birkat HaMazon – The Blessing After Eating

"You shall eat and be satisfied and bless Adonai your God for the good land that God has given you" (Deuteronomy 8:10). This biblical verse is the basis for the sacred obligation (mitzvah) of reciting the blessing after meals. *Birkat HaMazon* means literally, "the blessing of the food."[16]

- What are we acknowledging by saying this blessing?

- How can saying this blessing make eating, an ordinary act, a holy act?

- What is the value of saying this blessing?

- Is this a blessing that already is a part of your life at home? Why or why not?

- How might you adopt/adapt this blessing and incorporate into your life?

[16] Adapted from *Teaching Mitzvot* by Barbara and Bruce Kadden, Denver, CO: ARE Publishing 2003, p. 59.

הַמּוֹצִיא, בִּרְכַּת הַמָּזוֹן

HAMOTZI AND BIRKAT HAMAZON

FOR FOOD

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ,
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
הַמּוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

Our praise to You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who brings forth bread from the earth.

BIRKAT HAMAZON, BLESSING AFTER EATING

ON SHABBAT

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת, בְּשׁוּב יְיָ
אֶת־שִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן, הָיִינוּ כְּחֹלְמִים.
אָז יִמָּלֵא שְׂחוֹק,
פִּינוּ וּלְשׁוֹנֵנוּ רִנָּה.
אָז יֹאמְרוּ בַגּוֹיִם,
הִגְדִּיל יְיָ לַעֲשׂוֹת עִם־אֵלֶּה.
הִגְדִּיל יְיָ לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּנוּ,
הָיִינוּ שְׂמֵחִים.
שׁוּבָה יְיָ אֶת־שְׁבִיתֵנוּ
כַּאֲפִיקִים בַּנֶּגֶב.
הַזֹּרְעִים בְּדִמְעָה בְּרִנָּה יִקְצֹרוּ.
הָלוֹךְ יֵלֵךְ וּבָכֹה
נֹשֵׂא מֶשֶׁךְ־הַזָּרַע,
בֹּא־יָבוֹא בְרִנָּה נֹשֵׂא אֲלֻמֹּתָיו.

A song of ascents. When Adonai restores the fortunes of Zion, we see it as in a dream, our mouths shall be filled with laughter, our tongues, with songs of joy. Then shall they say among the nations, "Adonai has done great things for them!" Adonai will do great things for us and we shall rejoice. Restore our fortunes, Adonai, like watercourses in the Negev. They who sow in tears shall reap with songs of joy. Those who go forth weeping, carrying the seed-bag, shall come back with songs of joy, carrying their sheaves.

ALL DAYS

Leader

חֲבֵרִים וַחֲבֵרוֹת, נְבָרֵךְ!

Let us praise God.

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת *Shir hamaalot . . . A song of ascents . . .* Psalm 126

Group

יְהִי שֵׁם יְיָ מְבֹרָךְ
מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם.

Praised be the name of God, now and forever!

Leader

יְהִי שֵׁם יְיָ מְבֹרָךְ
מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם.
בִּרְשׁוּת הַחֲבֵרָה, נְבָרֵךְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
שֶׁאָכַלְנוּ מִשֶּׁלּוֹ.

Praised be the name of God, now and forever!
Praised be our God, of whose abundance we have eaten.

Group

בָּרוּךְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ שֶׁאָכַלְנוּ מִשֶּׁלּוֹ
וּבְטוּבוֹ חָיִינוּ.

Praised be our God, of whose abundance we have eaten,
and by whose goodness we live.

Leader

בָּרוּךְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ שֶׁאָכַלְנוּ מִשֶּׁלּוֹ
וּבְטוּבוֹ חָיִינוּ.
בָּרוּךְ הוּא וּבָרוּךְ שְׁמוֹ.

Praised be our God, of whose abundance we have eaten,
and by whose goodness we live.
Praised be God and praised be God's name.

Group

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ,
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַזָּן אֶת־הָעוֹלָם
כֻּלּוֹ בְּטוּבוֹ, בְּחֵן בְּחֶסֶד וּבְרַחֲמִים.
הוּא נוֹתֵן לֶחֶם לְכָל־בָּשָׂר,
כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ.
וּבְטוּבוֹ הַגָּדוֹל תָּמִיד לֹא חָסַר לָנוּ,
וְאַל יֶחְסַר לָנוּ מָזוֹן לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.
בַּעֲבוּר שְׁמוֹ הַגָּדוֹל,
כִּי הוּא אֵל זָן וּמְפַרְנֵס לַכֹּל,
וּמֵטִיב לַכֹּל, וּמֵכִין מָזוֹן
לְכָל בְּרִיּוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא.
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ, הַזָּן אֶת־הַכֹּל.

Sovereign God of the universe, we praise You: Your goodness sustains the world. You are the God of grace, love, and compassion, the Source of bread for all who live; for Your love is everlasting. In Your great goodness we need never lack for food; You provide food enough for all. We praise You, O God, Source of food for all who live.

כַּכָּתוּב: וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבָעְתָּ,
וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת־יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ
עַל הָאָרֶץ הַטּוֹבָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָךְ.
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ,
עַל הָאָרֶץ וְעַל הַמָּזוֹן.

As it is written: When you have eaten and are satisfied,
give praise to your God who has given you this good earth.
We praise You, O God, for the earth and for its sustenance.

וּבְנֵה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם עִיר הַקֹּדֶשׁ
בִּמְהֵרָה בְיָמֵינוּ.
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ,
בּוֹנֵה בְרַחֲמָיו יְרוּשָׁלָיִם. אָמֵן.

Let Jerusalem, the holy city, be renewed in our time.
We praise You, Adonai, in compassion You rebuild Jerusalem. Amen.

הָרַחֲמָן, הוּא יִמְלוֹךְ עָלֵינוּ
לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

Merciful One, be our God for ever.

הָרַחֲמָן, הוּא יִתְבָּרַךְ
בַּשָּׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ.

Merciful One, heaven and earth alike are blessed by Your presence.

הָרַחֲמָן, הוּא יִשְׁלַח בְּרָכָה מְרֻבָּה
בַּבַּיִת הַזֶּה,
וְעַל שֻׁלְחָן זֶה שֶׁאָכַלְנוּ עָלָיו.

Merciful One, bless this house and this table at which we have eaten.

ON SHABBAT

הָרַחֲמָן, הוּא יִשְׁלַח לָנוּ
אֶת אֵלִיָּהוּ הַנָּבִיא, זָכוּר לַטּוֹב,
וִיבַשֶּׂר־לָנוּ בְּשׂוֹרוֹת טוֹבוֹת,
יְשׁוּעוֹת וְנֶחָמוֹת.

Merciful One, send us tidings of Elijah, glimpses of good to come,
redemption and consolation.

הָרַחֲמָן, הוּא יַנְחִילֵנוּ יוֹם שֶׁכֻּלּוֹ
שַׁבָּת וּמְנוּחָה לְחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָמִים.

Merciful One, help us to see the coming of a time when all is Shabbat.

ON YOM TOV

הָרַחֲמָן, הוּא יַנְחִילֵנוּ
יוֹם שֶׁכֻּלּוֹ טוֹב.

Merciful One, help us to see the coming of a time when all is good.

ALL DAYS

עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם בִּמְרוֹמָיו,
הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם
עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל,
וְעַל כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֵל, וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן.

May the Source of peace grant peace
to us, to all Israel, and to all the world.

יְיָ עֹז לְעַמּוֹ יִתֵּן.
יְיָ יְבָרֵךְ אֶת־עַמּוֹ בַּשָּׁלוֹם.

May Adonai grant strength to our people.
May Adonai bless our people with peace.

עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם *Oseh shalom bimromav . . . May the Source of peace . . .* Job 25:2

יְיָ עֹז *Adonai oz . . . May Adonai grant . . .* Psalm 29:11

Keriat Shema al Hameeta – Bedtime Shema

"Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up[17]" (Deuteronomy 6:7).

We often recite the Shema in Synagogue, either at morning or evening services. There is also a tradition of reciting the Shema at night, before we go to bed, as the verse above states. Read through a sample version of the Bedtime Shema (next page) and then answer the following questions:

- What are we acknowledging by performing this ritual?

- How can saying this prayer at night make going to bed, an ordinary act, a holy act?

- What is the value of saying this blessing and performing this ritual?

- Is this ritual already is a part of your life at home? How or how not so?

- How might you adopt/adapt this blessing and ritual and incorporate into your life?

[17] Translation from Mishkan T'filah.

The Bedtime Shema - קריאת שמע על המיטה

הֲרֵינִי מוֹחֵל לְכָל מִי שֶׁהִכְעִיס וְהִקְנִיט אוֹתִי, אוֹ שֶׁחָטָא כְּנֶגְדִּי בֵּין בְּגוּפִי בֵּין בְּמָמוֹנִי בֵּין בִּכְבוֹדִי, וְלֹא יֵעָנֵשׁ שׁוּם אָדָם בְּסִבָּתִי. יִהְיוּ לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי פִי וְהֶגְיוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ, יְיָ צוּרִי וְגֹאֲלִי

I hereby forgive anyone who angered , annoyed or wronged me - myself, my possessions, or my honor. Let no one be punished on my account. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing to You, Adonai, my Rock and my Redeemer.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמַּפִּיל חֶבְלֵי שֵׁנָה עַל עֵינָי וּתְנוּמָה עַל עַפְעַפָּי. וִיהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהַי וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתַי, שֶׁתַּשְׁכִּיבֵנִי לְשָׁלוֹם וְתַעֲמִידֵנִי לְשָׁלוֹם, וְאַל יְבַהֲלוּנִי רַעְיוֹנַי וַחֲלוֹמוֹת רָעִים וְהַרְהוּרִים רָעִים, וּתְהֵא מִטָּתִי שְׁלֵמָה לְפָנֶיךָ, וְהָאֵר עֵינַי פֶּן אִישַׁן הַמָּוֶת, כִּי אַתָּה הַמֵּאִיר לְאִישׁוֹן בַּת עָיִן. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, הַמֵּאִיר לָעוֹלָם כֻּלּוֹ בִּכְבוֹדוֹ.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, bringing sleep to my eyes, slumber to my eyelids. May it be Your will, Adonai, my God and God of my ancestors, that I lie down in peace and arise in peace. Let my sleep by undisturbed by troubling thoughts, bad dreams and vicious schemes. May I have a night of tranquil slumber and awaken to the light of a new day, for it is Your light which enables me to see. Praised are You, Adonai, whose glory gives light to the entire world.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֶחָד׃

Hear, O Israel, Adonait is our God, Adonai is One!

בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

Blessed is God's glorious majesty forever and ever.

וְאָהַבְתָּ אֵת יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ, בְּכָל-לְבָבְךָ, וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ, וּבְכָל-מְאֹדֶךָ. וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיּוֹם, עַל-לְבָבֶךָ׃ וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ, וְדִבַּרְתָּ בָּם בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתֶךָ, וּבְלֶכְתְּךָ בַדֶּרֶךְ וּבְשָׁכְבְּךָ, וּבְקוּמֶךָ. וּקְשַׁרְתָּם לְאוֹת עַל-יָדֶךָ, וְהָיוּ לְטֹטָפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ, וּכְתַבְתָּם עַל מְזוּזֹת בֵּיתֶךָ וּבִשְׁעָרֶיךָ

You shall love Adonai your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. Take to heart these instructions which I charge you this day. Impress them upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign upon your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead; inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

הַשְׁכִּיבֵנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְשָׁלוֹם, וְהַעֲמִידֵנוּ מַלְכֵּנוּ לְחַיִּים. וּפְרוֹשׂ עָלֵינוּ סֻכַּת שְׁלוֹמֶךָ. וְתַקְּנֵנוּ בְּעֵצָה טוֹבָה מִלְּפָנֶיךָ. וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ. וְהָגֵן בַּעֲדֵנוּ, וְהָסֵר מֵעָלֵינוּ אוֹיֵב דֶּבֶר וְחֶרֶב וְרָעָב וְיָגוֹן. וְהָסֵר שָׂטָן מִלְּפָנֵינוּ וּמֵאַחֲרֵינוּ. וּבְצֵל כְּנָפֶיךָ תַּסְתִּירֵנוּ. כִּי אֵל שׁוֹמְרֵנוּ וּמַצִּילֵנוּ אָתָּה, כִּי אֵל מֶלֶךְ חַנּוּן וְרַחוּם אָתָּה. וּשְׁמוֹר צֵאתֵנוּ וּבוֹאֵנוּ לְחַיִּים וּלְשָׁלוֹם, מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם.

Grant, O God, that we lie down in peace, and raise us up, our Guardian, to life renewed. Spread over us the shelter of Your peace. Guides us with Your good counsel; for Your Name's sake, be our help. Shield and shelter us beneath the shadow of Your wings. Defend us against enemies, illness, war and famine and sorrow. Distance us from wrongdoing. For you, God, are gracious and merciful. Guard our going and coming, to life and to peace, evermore.

Nisim B'Chol Yom

There is a series of 15 *brachot* (blessings) that are said in during the morning service. They reflect that activities one does in the morning from waking up, arising, getting dressed, etc., to going about one's daily affairs. Read through the copies of the *brachot* (pp 36, 38 and 40 of Mishkan Tefillah) and then read through the alternative prayers (pp 37, 39 and 41 of Mishkan Tefillah). Then answer the following questions:

- In the beginning, these *brachot* were said at home, as one was preparing for the day in the morning. Try to come up with an action that you do in the morning that corresponds to each of the *brachot*.

- What are we acknowledging by saying these *brachot* in the morning?

- How can saying these *brachot* in the morning make getting ready for the day, an ordinary act, a holy act?

- What is the value of saying these *brachot* and performing this ritual in the morning?

- Are these *brachot* and this ritual already is a part of your life at home? How or how not so?

- How might you adopt/adapt these *brachot* and morning ritual and incorporate into your life?

נִסִּים בְּכָל יוֹם

NISIM B'CHOL YOM — FOR DAILY MIRACLES

For awakening

BARUCH atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
asher natan lasechvi vinah
l'havchin bein yom uvein lailah.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לַשֶּׂכְוִי בִינָה
לְהַבְחִין בֵּין יוֹם וּבֵין לָיְלָה.

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who has given the mind the ability to distinguish day from night.

For vision

Baruch atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
pokei-ach ivrim.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
פּוֹקֵחַ עִוְרִים.

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who opens the eyes of the blind.

For the ability to stretch

Baruch atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
matir asurim.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
מַתִּיר אֲסוּרִים.

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who frees the captive.

For rising to the new day

Baruch atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
zokeif k'fufim.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
זוֹקֵף כְּפוּפִים.

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who lifts up the fallen.

נִסִּים בְּכָל יוֹם *Nisim b'chol yom . . . For daily miracles . . .* These morning blessings evoke wonder at awakening to physical life: we open our eyes, clothe our bodies, and walk again with purpose; spiritual life also, we are created in God's image, are free human beings, and as Jews, celebrate the joy and destiny of our people, Israel.

Ashkenazi tradition places the "identity" blessings near the beginning; Maimonides puts them at the end.

Though they are intended literally, we may perceive each blessing spiritually.

Inspiration for blessings three to five comes from Psalm 146:7–8.

"MishKan T'fillah" CCAR Press.

נִסִּים בְּכָל יוֹם

NISIM B'CHOL YOM — FOR DAILY MIRACLES

For firm earth to stand upon

BARUCH atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
roka haaretz al hamayim.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
רוֹקַע הָאָרֶץ עַל הַמָּיִם.

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who stretches the earth over the waters.

For the gift of motion

Baruch atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
hameichin mitzadei gaver.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
הַמֵּכִין מִצְעֲדֵי גָבֶר.

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who strengthens our steps.

For clothing the body

Baruch atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
malbish arumim.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
מַלְבִּישׁ עֲרֻמִּים.

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who clothes the naked.

For renewed enthusiasm for life

Baruch atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
hanotein laya-eif ko-ach.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
הַנּוֹתֵן לַיָּעֵף כֹּחַ.

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who gives strength to the weary.

For reawakening

Baruch atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
hamaavir sheinah mei-einai,
ut'numah mei-afapai.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
הַמַּעֲבִיר שֵׁנָה מֵעֵינָי,
וּתְנוּמָה מֵעַפְעַפָּי.

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who removes sleep from the eyes, slumber from the eyelids.

נִסִּים בְּכָל יוֹם

NISIM B'CHOL YOM — FOR DAILY MIRACLES

BARUCH atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
she-asani b'tzelem Elohim.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁעָשַׂנִי בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים.

For being in the image of God

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who made me in the image of God.

Baruch atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
she-asani bein/bat chorin.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁעָשַׂנִי בֵּן/בַּת חוֹרִין.

For being a free person

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who has made me free.

Baruch atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
she-asani Yisrael.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁעָשַׂנִי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

For being a Jew

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who has made me a Jew.

Baruch atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
ozeir Yisrael big'vurah.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אוֹזֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל בִּגְבוּרָה.

For purpose

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who girds Israel with strength.

Baruch atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
oteir Yisrael b'tifarah.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
עוֹטֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתִפְאָרָה.

For harmony

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who crowns Israel with splendor.

שֶׁעָשַׂנִי יִשְׂרָאֵל *She-asani Yisrael . . . For being a Jew.* Israel was the name Jacob acquired after wrestling with the angel, and this name became that of our people; we are the Children of Israel. The name Israel implies wrestling with God; to be a Jew and have faith in God is an ongoing challenge, and we are encouraged to question and delve into the nature of a faithful life.

IN MY HALF-SLEEP, O God,
in my yawning confusion,
I thank you with a croaking voice.

How strange and spectacular
this body you have granted me
and fill with awareness each morning.

For tongue, tendon, teeth and skin,
for all the chemicals and connections
that make this collection of cells

into a being who can stand and sing,
who can seek Your love
and offer love in turn,

for the mechanisms and mysteries
You have implanted within me
I will thank You

and set about the task of being human
as the sun rises
and my eyes begin to clear.

BARUC
Eloheinu, K
asher natan
l'havchin b

Baruch atah,
Eloheinu, M
pokei-ach iv

Baruch atah,
Eloheinu, Me
matir asurim.

I

Baruch atah, A
Eloheinu, Mele
zokeif k'fufim.

P

נְשָׁמִים בְּכָל יוֹם
at awakening t
spiritual life als
joy and destiny

Ashkenazi tradi
the end.

Though they ar

Inspiration for bles

Religion embraces both faith and action.
The primary quality is action, for it lays the foundation for faith;
the more we do good, the more readily do we grasp the meaning of duty and life,
and the more readily do we believe in the Divine from which stems the good.

Leo Baeck

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AS I AWAKEN let this be my thought:
may my day be filled with acts of lovingkindness.
Let me be drawn to learning and discernment,
and may my actions be shaped by mitzvot.

Nisim B'chol Yom

Keep me from iniquity, disgrace and sin;
May I not be overwhelmed by temptation or despair.

Distance me from evil people and false friends.
Let me cultivate a life of goodness.

May my hands reach out in kindness,
and I will serve God through acts of righteousness.

Today and every day, may I merit Your mercy,
by living my life with compassion and love.

Holy One of Blessing, draw me to Your words;
teach me the art of sacred living.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ, הַמְלַמֵּד חֲסָדִים טוֹבִים לְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Baruch atah, Adonai, ham'lameid chasadim tovim l'amo Yisrael.

L'OLAM y'hei adam y'rei shamayim
baseiter uvagalui,
umodeh al ha-emet,
v'doveir emet bil'vavo.

לְעוֹלָם יְהֵא אָדָם יְרֵא שָׁמַיִם
בַּסֵּתֶר וּבַגָּלוּי,
וּמוֹדֶה עַל הָאֱמֶת,
וְדוֹבֵר אֱמֶת בִּלְבָבוֹ.

ALWAYS, may each person revere God
in private and in public,
acknowledge the truth aloud,
and speak it in one's heart.

Character is the architecture of the being. And once you go into inner being, you will find that everything you encompass, in any direction you choose, is your own. *Louise Nevelson*

לְעוֹלָם יְהֵא אָדָם *Le'olam y'hei adam . . . Always, may each person . . . Tanna D'vei Eliyahu Rabba, Ch. 21*

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I AM A JEW because
the faith of Israel demands no abdication of my mind.

I am a Jew because
the faith of Israel requires all the devotion of my heart.

I am a Jew because
in every place where suffering weeps, the Jew weeps.

I am a Jew because
at every time when despair cries out, the Jew hopes.

I am a Jew because
the word of Israel is the oldest and the newest.

I am a Jew because
Israel's promise is the universal promise.

I am a Jew because
for Israel, the world is not completed; we are completing it.

I am a Jew because
for Israel, humanity is not created; we are creating it.

I am a Jew because
Israel places humanity and its unity
above the nations and above Israel itself.

I am a Jew because, above humanity, image of the divine Unity,
Israel places the unity which is divine.

In prayer, "Israel" often refers to the Jewish people.

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"Blessed are You, Adonai our God..." but then conclude with a reference to whatever it is that elicits our praise. As early as the second century, these blessings were being composed, and over the centuries, more blessings were invented. The official list was compiled in the ninth and tenth centuries. Orthodox and Conservative Jews rely on that list and refrain from composing any new blessings; Reform and Reconstructionist Jews occasionally augment the traditional collection with novel formulations of praise for new phenomena that seem to beg for proper recognition.[1]

While it may seem at first strange to greet instances of the sacred by extracting a stock blessing out of a standardized list, there is actually a great deal of satisfaction in knowing that you have gone beyond the elementary response of thinking "Wow" and instead matched the event with an age-old blessing that reveals something special about the wonder for which the blessing is being recited. There are really two stages of appreciation, therefore. First, we are moved by the natural phenomenon itself: a thunderstorm, a blossoming tree, a rainbow, or an opportunity to perform the will of God through what Jews call a commandment. Second, by saying the proper blessing and thinking about its content, we are led to contemplate something deeper about the phenomenon that evokes the blessing in the first place.

Blessings at Mealtimes: When the Table Is an Altar

Take, for example, the blessing that precedes meals. Technically, a meal is considered any repast in which bread is consumed, so Jewish meals begin with the blessing over bread and then the sharing of bread together. The accompanying blessing is widely known to most Jews, who have heard it since childhood and who may even have memorized it just by having said it so often. Many Jews follow traditional Jewish precedent by beginning every meal this way; others reserve it for festive occasions like wedding banquets or holiday dinners. In any case, saying it accomplishes two things. First, it draws attention to the privilege of having food to eat. Second, the blessing's words connect an ordinary meal with a symbolic lesson about the end of time.

The words of the blessings are succinct and to the point: "Blessed are You, Adonai our God, ruler of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth."[2]

It is normal for blessings over food to refer to the means, or "delivery system," by which food comes to us. Apples, for instance, call forth the blessing "Blessed are You...who creates the fruit of the tree." Potatoes get "Blessed are You...who creates the fruit of the earth."[3] So referring to God as the One who "brings forth bread from the earth" is not altogether unexpected. But bread does not actually come from the earth, except in its raw form as grain—so the blessing ought to have referred to the grain, not to the finished product, bread. That, at least, is what the Rabbis imply in two laconic but insightful comments.

The first comes from a midrash called *B'reishit Rabbah*, part of a many-volume compilation of rabbinic comments covering several books of the Bible. In this one, a fifth-century collection of midrash to Genesis—*B'reishit* (pronounced b'-ray-SHEET) in Hebrew—we find a discussion of the various kinds of trees that must have existed in the Garden of Eden. God tells Adam and Eve that they may not eat from a particular tree, "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:18), otherwise identified as "the tree in the middle of the garden" (Genesis 3:3). But all the other trees were available for their pleasure, and the Rabbis musingly wonder what they were. This was Eden, after all—pure paradise. Surely Eden had trees that far excelled the ones we now know. Rabbi Z'ira thinks Eden was so perfect that it contained "bread trees as large as the cedars of Lebanon."[4] He draws his lesson from the fact that when Adam and Eve are expelled from the garden, God says, "Because you ate of the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall

by Lawrence Hoffman

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not eat of it'...by the sweat of your brow shall you get bread to eat." Rabbi Z'ira concludes that before the expulsion they must not have had to bake their own bread.

Today, most of us just walk into a bakery to buy bread, but Rabbi Z'ira knew how hard it is to make it. Everywhere in antiquity, and in much of the world still today, farmers first plough the earth by animal-drawn implements that are hard to use; then they sow the seed by hand. Thereafter, they anxiously wait and pray for rain, without which there will be no crops come spring. Even if the grain does grow and ripen, there is still the hard task of reaping it and sorting it so that inedible matter is removed. The grain must then be extracted from the husk by threshing. Then it is winnowed—that is, tossed into the air with a pitchfork so that the lightweight coverings of the kernels, called chaff, are blown away, leaving only the heavier kernels themselves that can be ground into flour. The flour now is sifted, again to separate out any foreign matter, then mixed with liquid and kneaded into dough. Only then can baking occur.

Keenly aware of the intensive labor that goes into bread, rabbinic imagination conjured up an Eden-like existence where fresh and finished loaves of bread actually do grow on trees. Already, then, we have the moral lesson against taking the bread we eat for granted. But there is more. The Rabbis perceived time as being divided into three eras: a mythical *time past*, when everything was perfect and Eden-like, and when bread growing on trees could be consumed without labor; the reality of *time now*, the era of historical time in which we live, when we get our bread with difficulty so that we are lucky to have any food at all; and a hoped-for *time to come*, a messianic age at the end of days when paradise would return just as in the days of the Garden of Eden.

Rabbi Nehemiah and the rabbinic majority disagreed about the benediction that we say over bread. Rabbi Nehemiah said, "The blessing that we say, 'Blessed are You...who brings forth bread from the earth,' refers to the fact that God brought it forth from the earth in the past." The rabbinic majority maintained, "The blessing refers to the fact that God will bring it forth from the earth in the future."[5]

Surprisingly, neither party holds that the blessing over bread refers to the actual bread that we hold in our hands at the time when the blessing is said. Rabbi Nehemiah's minority view is that our daily bread reminds us of time past, when bread trees grew from Eden's soil. The majority and therefore the official Jewish wisdom today, identifies the bread of the blessing as the bread of a messianic future. Our blessing is much more than a vote of thanks for our daily food. It constitutes also a statement of faith in a time to come when all will have enough to eat, free of the backbreaking work that is now required by most of the world's population just to put food on the table.

The blessing over bread converts the ordinary act of eating into a sacred act of hope by evoking the promise for a better time to come. That eschatological expectation can be seen also in the series of four blessings that follow the meal, the Grace After Meals (*Birkat Hamazon*, in Hebrew—pronounced beer-KAHT hah-mah ZOHN or, popularly, BEER-kaht hah-mah-ZOHN). In Jewish practice, blessings over specific foods precede the meal and formal thanks for it generally comes afterward. The first of the four blessings, known as the Blessing of Sustenance, celebrates God's universal feeding of the world's population by concluding, "Blessed are You who feeds everyone."[6]

Well, maybe. But if so, God doesn't feed us very well—not *all* of us, anyway. Tell the homeless or the victims of recurrent drought in Africa that God feeds them. And to make matters worse, the conclusion to the four blessings has the audacity to observe, "I have been young, and have now grown older, but I have not seen that

there are righteous people abandoned by God, with their children seeking bread."[7] If it is true that the righteous are never in want, the obvious implication is that people who *do* go hungry are simply not righteous and deserve what they get.

For good reason, then, Jews throughout history have had trouble saying this line. Some prayer books, including those attributed to exceptionally well-known rabbis of tradition (Rabbi Elijah of Vilna [1720–1797], for instance, otherwise known as the Vilna Gaon, possibly the greatest eastern European scholar of the last three centuries), include it in tiny type alone to remind worshipers that even though it is passed down as tradition, they may skip it—or at least, if they do say it, they should do so silently rather than embarrassingly out loud.[8] I confess that for years, the only way I could read it was to supply my own punctuation. Since classical Hebrew texts come unpunctuated, and supplying them with printed periods and commas is a modern innovation, it is sometimes possible to read lines differently from the way they appear in print. So I decided to read it as, "I have been young, and have now grown older, but I have not seen! There are righteous people abandoned by God, with their children seeking bread." It turns out, however, that there is also a traditional understanding of our troublesome line, perfectly in keeping with the utopian claim that God feeds everyone, and with the recognition that the blessing over bread refers to the ultimate messianic future rather than to our own world and time. The entire meal liturgy is eschatological. All of it, both before and after eating, should be said as an extended statement of what we hope for, not what we see already in existence. Indeed, David Abudarham, a Spanish commentator from the fourteenth century, adds that in Spain, when the difficult conclusion is recited, "Some people say, 'I lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of God' (Psalm 116:13), as a hint of the banquet that God will make in the world to come for the righteous. King David himself will bless the meal, by saying, 'I lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of God.'"[9] Neither Abudarham nor we need literally anticipate such a meal. But Judaism does insist on a better day when no one will go hungry. When we eat, we are obliged to remember the plight of those who do not have food, and dedicate ourselves to a better time when they will.

The mealtime benedictions illustrate the twofold spiritual benefit implicit in all blessings. By praying at specific occasions, we raise our consciousness of those occasions so that we do not take them for granted. By reciting a time-honored *specific* blessing over them, rather than making up something new on the spot, we access the Jewish wisdom of centuries regarding what the special event in question stands for. We see again that prayer is a combination of fixity *(keva)* and novelty *(kavanah)*. In this case, the *keva* is the fixed blessing that is said. The *kavanah* is the new meaning we see in it as we analyze the words we say. Without the fixed blessing, we would probably have thanked God for the food we eat, but it is doubtful that we would have arrived at any of the above interpretations. We gain spiritual wisdom by reciting words that our ancestors set many centuries ago, by thinking through the references buried deep within those texts, and then by finding new and satisfying meaning in them.

Blessings for Good and for Bad

A very common blessing that many Jews know by heart is called, popularly, *Shehecheyanu* (pronounced sheh-heh-kheh YAH-noo), meaning, "Who has given us life." The full blessing is "Blessed are You, Adonai our God, ruler of the universe, who has given us life, sustained us, and brought us to this time." It is recited upon being blessed with good things that recur seasonally, like an annual holiday coming round again, but also eating the first fruits of a new harvest, donning new clothes, receiving new housewares, and even seeing friends again after at least thirty days of their absence. But

Unit 3 Lesson 3 – The Temple

The purpose of this lesson is to expose the students to the first, fixed, sanctified space Jews (really the Israelites) built. This space was used for communicating with God and was seen as the ultimate holy space by the generations which lived during its existence. The space is holy because its construction was requested and sanctioned by God. Its dedication was marked by the insertion of holy ritual objects and the activities that took place within the Temple maintained its sanctity. The Temple also offers a paradigm of a space that was defiled and then re-purified.

Objectives – At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Explain what made the Temple a holy space and how its sanctity was maintained.
- Explain why there was a need for a central space to worship God.
- Evaluate what spaces serve as their sanctuaries and why sanctuaries are important.

Suggested Learning Activities

Text Study #1

Begin with reading Text #1 (Exodus 25:8) and explain that it is the foundation for the Israelites and Jews creating a building that would contain holiness activities that enabled Jews to communicate with God. Read texts #2 (1 Kings 8:1-14) and #3 (The Temple) in small groups.

Possible Discussion Questions:

- Who were the Temple's leaders?
- What was the purpose of the Temple?
- Why was it important to create a central place for all Israelites to worship God?
- How was the Temple dedicated?
- What ritual objects were placed in the Temple to sanctify the space?
- What kind of activities took place in the Temple?

Text Study #2 (to be attached)

In small groups, students will read I Maccabees Chapter 4:36-60, which tells the story of the Maccabees purifying the Temple (after it was defiled by the Greeks) and rededicating, which we celebrate every year through the holiday of Hanukkah.

Possible Discussion Questions:

- How was the Temple defiled?
- How was the Temple purified?
- How can the Maccabees actions offer us guidance as we purify our sacred spaces?
  We can remove items that lessen the sanctity of the space or that are damaging or hurtful, replace items that were used inappropriately, redecorate, create a dedication ceremony (like attaching a mezuzah to a house which was recently moved-in to)

Journaling

The Temple had many rooms and spaces, some of which were holier than others. One of the more holy/sacred spaces in the Temple was the sanctuary, which contained the altar and where the sacrifices took place. Today, a sanctuary can mean a place were we go for safety, to feel protected or to gain relief from a difficult situation.

Suggested writing prompts:

- What is your sanctuary? What makes this space a sanctuary? Are there any other spaces that can serve as a sanctuary for you?
- Besides your home, where else do you for shelter/comfort?
- If your home is your sanctuary, which part of the home is your sanctuary? What makes it a sacred space?
- Has your sanctuary ever become defiled? If so, how can you purify it?
- Why is it important to create sanctuaries for ourselves?
- How can the Maccabees actions offer us guidance as we purify our sacred spaces?

The Temple Sourcesheet

1. Exodus 25:8

“And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them.”

2. 1 Kings 8:1-14

1. Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the people of Israel, before king Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of Adonai from the city of David, which is Zion.
2. And all the men of Israel assembled themselves to king Solomon at the feast in the month Ethanim (Tishrei), which is the seventh month.
3. And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark.
4. And they brought up the ark of Adonai, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy utensils that were in the tabernacle, those did the priests and the Levites bring up.
5. And king Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel, who were assembled before him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen, that could not be told nor numbered for multitude.
6. And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of Adonai to his place, to the sanctuary of the house, to the most holy place, under the wings of the cherubim.
7. For the cherubim spread out their two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim covered the ark and its poles above.
8. And they drew out the poles, so that the ends of the poles were seen out in the holy place before the sanctuary, and they were not seen outside; and there they are to this day.
9. There was nothing in the ark save the two tablets of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when Adonai made a covenant with the people of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.
10. And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of Adonai,
11. And that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of Adonai had filled the house of Adonai.
12. Then spoke Solomon, Adonai said that he would dwell in the thick darkness.
13. I have surely built you a house to dwell in, a settled place for you to abide in forever.
14. And the king turned his face around, and blessed all the congregation of Israel; and all the congregation of Israel stood;

3. The Temple[18]

The Service in the Temple

In addition to the sacrificial worship, it was customary for the levites to sing to the accompaniment of "lyres with harps, and with cymbals". This singing constitutes something of an innovation, for the Torah makes no reference to it.

Primarily, however, the Temple was a place of assembly for the entire people for purposes of sacrifice, prayer, and thanksgiving. The people would come to the Temple to bring both sin and guilt offerings as well as burnt offerings and peace offerings and meal offerings with frankincense either in fulfillment of vows, as freewill offerings, or as peace offerings of thanksgiving. These sacrifices, which had to be eaten within a day or two of their slaughter, were apparently brought to the accompaniment of songs and in procession. Many psalms which call upon people to give thanks to God and to praise God, as well as others, were certainly associated with the bringing of these thanksgiving or freewill offerings. Individuals or the entire community after a war would bring objects set apart for sacred use for sacrifice.

Special importance was attached to public processions in celebration of the festivals. The people would come to the Temple to worship before God on Sabbaths and New Moons. Particularly at the appointed seasons and at the three pilgrim festivals, large numbers would stream to the Temple. They would come not only from Jerusalem but also from all of Judah and even from beyond. During these pilgrimages, Jerusalem was filled with a multitude of people and animals.

The Temple assumed special importance also on fast days. Then too large numbers would flock to it from Jerusalem and the border cities. These gatherings would usually be held "in the court of the Adonai's house", in the outer gate, and on these occasions the prophets would address the people.

The Ministers in the Temple

The right to serve in the Temple was assigned to the priests who were descended from Aaron (Moses' brother). The levites (descendants of Miriam and Moses), included the singers to the accompaniment of instruments, as well as the gatekeepers and those appointed to be "in charge of the treasuries of the house of God and the treasuries of the dedicated gifts." The levites also assisted the priests in various services.

The king also enjoyed a certain status of holiness in the Temple, but in contrast to the priests, he was not permitted to enter the *hekhal* (sanctuary) or to burn incense. Nevertheless, he had the right to draw up the plan for the building of the Temple, to determine the celebration of festivals, to consecrate the inner court when occasion demanded it, to alter the form and position of the altar, to add sacrifices for given purposes, and to designate the courses of the priests and the levites.

[18] Adapted from Encyclopaedia Judaica.

The Significance Of The Temple For The People

The Temple was regarded as a national center, and since it was, moreover, the abode of the ark, it was considered to be the site of the revelation of the Divine Presence and hence also the preferred place for prayer. To it, the individual Israelite would direct his supplications even from afar, in the belief that a person's prayer would reach it even from the most remote places. There the people would gather in times of distress, when the priests would weep "between the vestibule and the altar."

The growth of the Temple's importance as a religious center was bound up in large measure with the struggle against the high places, which appears to have become intensified in Judah with the political breach in the nation after the death of Solomon. During the reign of the dynasty of Omri the practice of idolatry gained ground in Israel, even as it did in Judah in the days of Athaliah. By the very nature of things, idolatrous practices were concentrated especially in localities not subject to official supervision, that is, at the local high places. This brought about a sharpening of the conflict, which, in turn, led to an increased emphasis upon the special significance of the Temple in Jerusalem, and, ultimately in the reign of Hezekiah and Josiah, to the prohibition of the use of the high places and to the centralization of worship in the Temple.

I Maccabees Chapter 4

[36] Then said Judas and his brothers, “Behold, our enemies are crushed; let us go up to
cleanse and dedicate the sanctuary.” [37] So all army assembled and they went up to Mount
Zion. [38] And when they saw the sanctuary desolate, the altar profaned, and the gates
burned. In the courts they saw bushes sprung up as in a thicket, or as on one of the
mountains. They saw also the chambers of the priests in ruins. [39] They rent their clothes,
and mourned with great lamentation, and sprinkled themselves with ashes. [40] They fell
face down on the ground, and sounded the signal on the trumpets, and cried out to
Heaven. [41] Then Judas appointed certain men to fight against those in the citadel, until he
had cleansed the sanctuary. [42] He chose blameless priests devoted to the law, [43] and they
cleansed the sanctuary and removed the defiled stones to an unclean place. [44] They
deliberated what to do about the altar of burnt offerings, which had been profaned. [45]
And they thought it best to tear it down, lest it should bring reproach upon them, for the
Gentiles had defiled it. So they tore down the altar, [46] and stored the stones in a
convenient place on the temple hill until there should come a prophet to tell what to do
with them. [47] Then they took whole stones, as the law directs, and built a new altar like
the former one. [48] They also rebuilt the sanctuary and the interior of the temple, and
consecrated the courts. [49] They made new holy vessels, and brought the lampstand, the
altar of incense, and the table into the Temple. [50] Then they burned incense on the altar
and lighted the lamps on the lampstand, and these gave light in the temple. [51] They
placed the bread on the table and hung up curtains. Thus they finished all the work they
had undertaken. [52] Early in the morning on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month,
which is called the month Kislev, in the one hundred and forty-eighth year, [53] they rose
and offered sacrifice, as the law directs, on the new altar of burnt offerings which they
had built. [54] At the very season and on the very day that the Gentiles had profaned it, it
was dedicated with songs, and harps, and lutes, and cymbals. [55] All the people fell on
their faces and worshipped and blessed Heaven, who had given them good success. [56] So
they celebrated the dedication of the altar for eight days, and offered burnt offerings with
gladness; they offered a sacrifice of deliverance and praise. [57] They decorated the front
of the temple with golden crowns and small shields; they restored the gates and the
chambers for the priests, and furnished them with doors. [58] There was very great
gladness among the people, and the reproach of the Gentiles was removed. [59] Then Judas
and his brothers and all the assembly of Israel determined that every year at that season
the days of dedication of the altar should be observed with gladness and joy for eight
days, beginning with the twenty-fifth day of the month of Kislev. [60] At that time they
fortified Mount Zion with high walls and strong towers round about, to keep the Gentiles
from coming and trampling them down as they had done before.

Unit 3 Lesson 4 – The Synagogue Part 1 - *Scripted Lesson*

This lesson is focused on the transition from the Temple to the Synagogue, physically (the space) and ritually (sacrifices to Torah study). The students will have an opportunity to explore how the Temple was replaced by the Synagogue and how the Temple is represented in the ritual objects of the Synagogue.

Objectives – At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Explain how the Synagogue replaced the Temple as the primary Jewish sacred space.
- Compare and contrast how the Synagogue is similar to and different from the Temple.
- Compose a description of their relationship to the Torah and Reform Judaism's relationship to the Torah as described by the Reform Platforms.

TIME	ACTIVITY
5 minutes	Set Induction
20 minutes	Torah Exploration
15 minutes	Whole Group Discussion
15 minutes	Reform Judaism and Torah
5 minutes	Closure

Set Induction

The lesson will begin with the teacher taking the students to the sanctuary of the Synagogue. Ask students, how does a room become a sanctuary? Depending on the students answers, explain that a room becomes a sanctuary when a holy text is brought into it, in the case of the Synagogue it is the Torah (the scroll and the printed editions). Explain that today the students will be learning about how the Torah became an important ritual object of the Synagogue.

Torah Exploration[19]

Students will look at the decorations of the Torah and the ark and analyze them using the accompanying worksheets[20]. If the Torah(s) in the ark of the synagogue are not "all dressed up," the students can use the pictures attached for analysis[21] (attached). When the students are finished exploring, review the images and motifs that they found that are adapted from the Priestly dress and the Temple and the ones that many have been adopted from somewhere else. Further questions for discussion:

- How does the Torah's presence change the sense of the space?

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[19] Alternatively, the lesson could utilize a Jewish museum, which usually will display various Torah decorations. The Council of American Jewish Museums has a directory of Jewish museums in the US. http://www2.jewishculture.org/cultural_services/museums/cajm/directory/ or (303) 871-3015.

[20] Adapted from materials created by the MUSE (Museum Utilization for Student Education) project of RHSOE and the Skirball museum, c. 1980. Artwork by Abby Kantor.

[21] Van Deem, Susan and Rabbi Marc Berkson. *The Synagogue: House of the Jewish People.* Springfield, NJ: Behrman House, 1999, pp 56-57.

The Torah gives us guidelines for how to behave and the Torah serves as a reminder of how we should behave in this space, we should speak modestly and relate with other individuals with respect, the space becomes holy and Jewish

- If the Torah(s) in the synagogue is not "all dressed up", why might the Torah in our synagogue not contain all or some of the decorations in the pictures?
  The synagogue did not want to relate the Torah to be seen as relating to the Temple, not enough money, not necessary to decorate the Torah

Whole Group Discussion

Explain to the students that in the previous lesson they learned about the Temple, the ultimate sacred space of the Israelites and Jews. Today, they will learn about the transition from the Temple to the Synagogue. Students will take turns reading the story of the rabbis and Yochanan ben Zakkai responding to the destruction of the Temple. (From *The History of the Jewish People: A Story of Tradition and Change* by Jonathan Krasner and Jonathan Sarna, Berhman House, pp. 43-44, 46, attached)

Discussion questions:

- How did the rabbis respond to the destruction of the Temple?
  Tried to be hopeful, created a new way for Jews to worship God, adopted new practices
- How is the synagogue similar to the Temple? How is it different?
  Similar – a communal worship space, rituals take/took place within both,
  Different – don't sacrifice animals in the synagogue, synagogues hold religious school and adult education programs, leaders of synagogue are rabbis but leaders of the Temple were priests, only one Temple but many Synagogues all over the world,
- If you were in the position of Yochanan ben Zakkai, how would you have responded to the destruction of the Temple? How might you have adapted Judaism to ensure its survival?

Reform Judaism and Torah

Explain that so far the students have learned about how the Torah is physically a ritual object of the Synagogue. Now the students will explore the words of the Torah, not as a physical ritual object but rather as a spiritual ritual object that can guide their lives. Students will reread and reexamine the 4 Reform Platforms as they relate to the Torah (part of an activity in Unit 1 Lesson 3) (sourcesheet attached). For each of the platforms, they will use the following questions to guide their analysis:

- How does the platform define "Torah"?
- Which parts of the Torah does the platform include? Exclude?
- Based on the platform's view of the Torah, what actions might we perform?

Questions for after reviewing all of the platforms (meant as a review and for deepening the conversation from Unit 1 Lesson 3):

- How are the platforms similar? How are they different?
- What might account for the development of the ideas?
- Which platform most closely represents your relationship with the Torah?
- How might you adapt one of these platforms to more closely represent your relationship with the Torah?

Wrap-Up

We cannot carry a Torah with us everywhere but what can we bring with us to create sacred space wherever we go?

Pocket Bible, mezuzah, excerpts from the Torah, jewelry like a necklace with Magen David (any of the ritual objects that students explored in the first lesson). We can behave in accordance to the Torah and our actions can make the space holy.

Torah Exploration

Many objects are used to decorate the Torah and the Ark (Aron Kodesh). Look closely at these objects, and make a list of the different images and motifs that appear on them.

Torah Exploration continued…

Now look at the sketch of the Temple and the High Priest, on the following pages. How many of the motifs and images that you found can be traced to the time of Solomon's Temple?

Why do you think that many of these images have been preserved as traditional Jewish symbols? What is the significance of the fact that the Torah is decorated with these symbols?

Now think about the images and motifs on your list that do not refer back to the Temple:

Which of these are familiar to you as universal symbols?

Which are familiar to you as Jewish national or cultural symbols?

Which images or motifs do not fall into any of the above categories?

How does decorating the Torah or the Ark with each of these symbols add to our concept of or appreciation for the Torah?

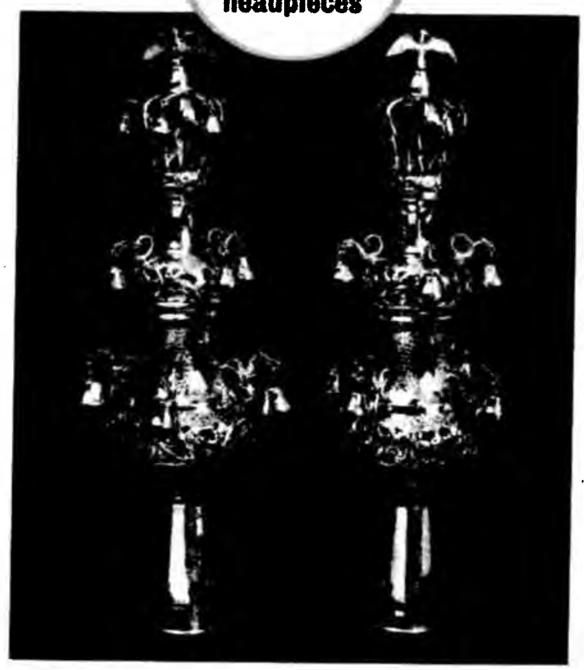
Are there any images or motifs that surprise you?

All Dressed Up

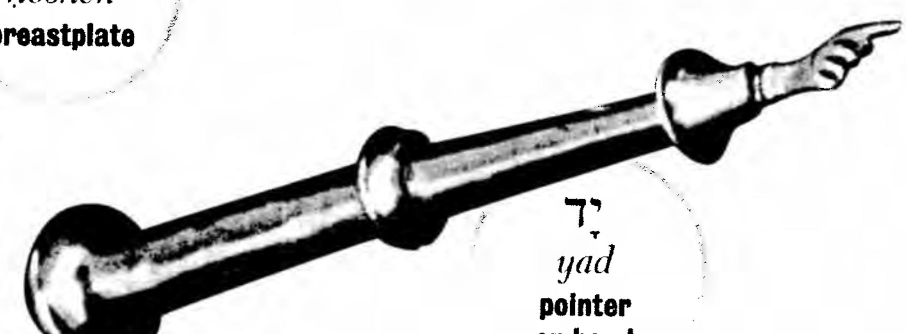
Here is what a well-dressed *Sefer Torah* wears.

כֶּתֶר
keter
crown

רִמוֹנִים
rimonim
headpieces



חֹשֶׁן
hoshen
breastplate



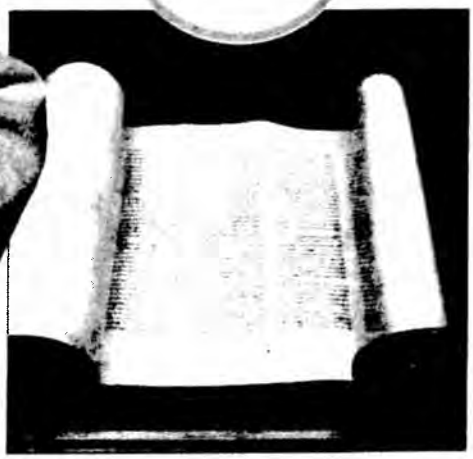
יָד
yad
pointer or hand

"The Synagogue: House of the Jewish People"
by Susan VanDeim Behrman House 135

חֲגוֹרָה
ḥagorah
binder, belt

מְעִיל
me'il
mantle

עֲצֵי-חַיִּים
atzei ḥayyim
trees of life, wooden rollers

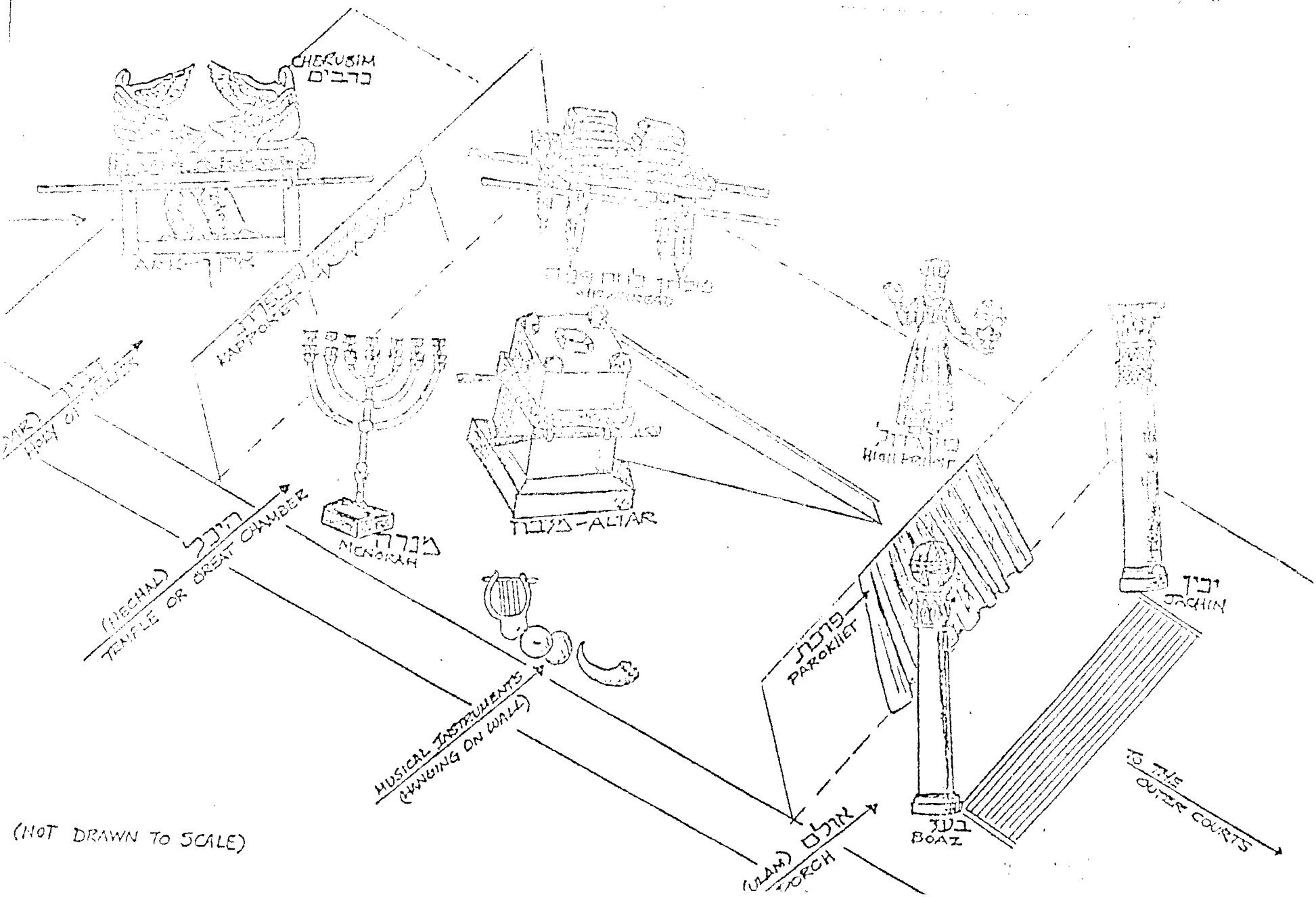


עשרת הדברות -10 COMMANDMENTS

THE ARK CONTAINED THE SECOND SET OF 10 COMMANDMENTS AND THE BROKEN PIECES OF THE FIRST SET.

WHAT SOLOMON'S TEMPLE MIGHT HAVE LOOKED LIKE—

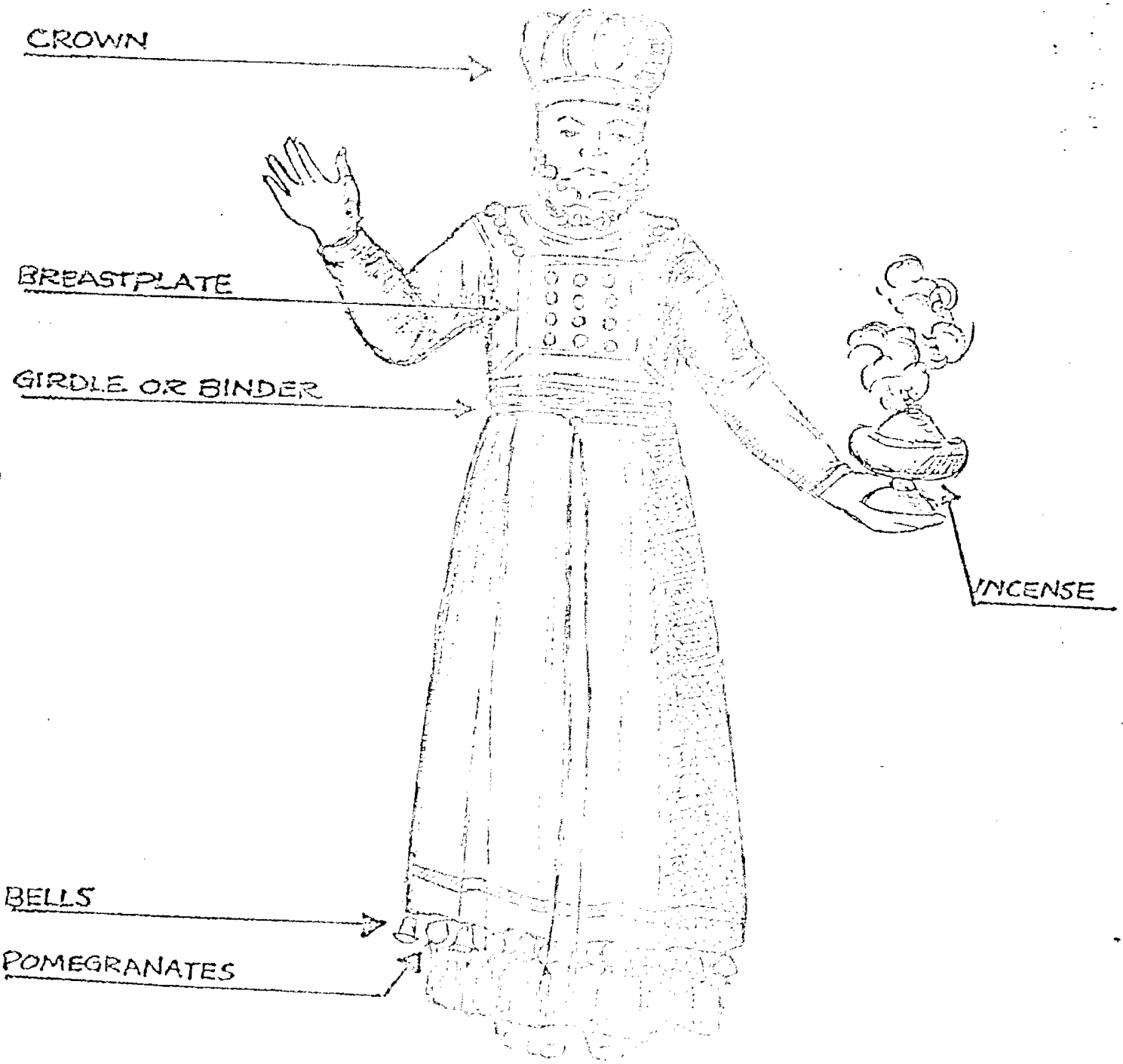
BASED ON A COMPILATION OF BIBLICAL SOURCES



(NOT DRAWN TO SCALE)

How the High Priest might have Dressed

(taken from Exodus 28-29)



High Priest כהן גדול

Some responded to their overwhelming grief by becoming **ascetics**. Ascetics live a simple life, giving up pleasures, such as tasty foods, beautiful clothing, and comfortable beds. The ascetics of Baruch's time devoted themselves completely to prayer and religious study. Some chose this path as a form of ***t'shuvah***, or repentance, for sins.

Why did Jews feel the need to repent? Many saw the destruction of the Temple as God's punishment. They reasoned that God was all-powerful and could not be defeated by Israel's enemies. Therefore, the only explanation for Rome's victory was that Israel must have sinned. Baruch agreed. He scolded the Jews for being disloyal to God and disregarding the wisdom of Torah. Had they followed God's teachings, he said, they would have lived in peace forever.

The Rabbis Respond

Most of the great scholars, or learned teachers, of the time were Pharisees or descendants of Pharisees. They called one another *rabbi*, meaning "my teacher." These rabbis agreed with Baruch that the Jews must accept some responsibility for the Temple's destruction. Instead of uniting, they had allowed hatred for one another to tear them apart. However, the rabbis discouraged the Jews from falling into deep despair.

Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai offered Jews a hopeful vision of the future, one that provided new ways to fulfill ancient traditions. One day, he and Rabbi Joshua were walking past the ruins of the Temple. "Woe unto us," Rabbi Joshua cried, "that this, the place where the sins of Israel were atoned for, is in ruins!"

Escape from Jerusalem

During the Roman siege of Jerusalem, Yohanan ben Zakkai realized that the city was doomed. Thousands of Jews were being killed, and thousands more were starving. Rabbi Yohanan wanted to leave Jerusalem so that he could save his people. But the Zealots, Jewish rebels who controlled the city gates, permitted no one to leave and surrender to the Romans. According to legend, Rabbi Yohanan pretended to be dead and had his students smuggle him out in a coffin. The Zealots had no choice but to let them out through the gates, for it was forbidden to bury the dead within the city walls.

While many of his friends remained in Jerusalem to fight to the bitter end, Rabbi Yohanan made practical plans for a future without the Temple.

Do you think Rabbi Yohanan was a coward or a hero for leaving Jerusalem? Why?

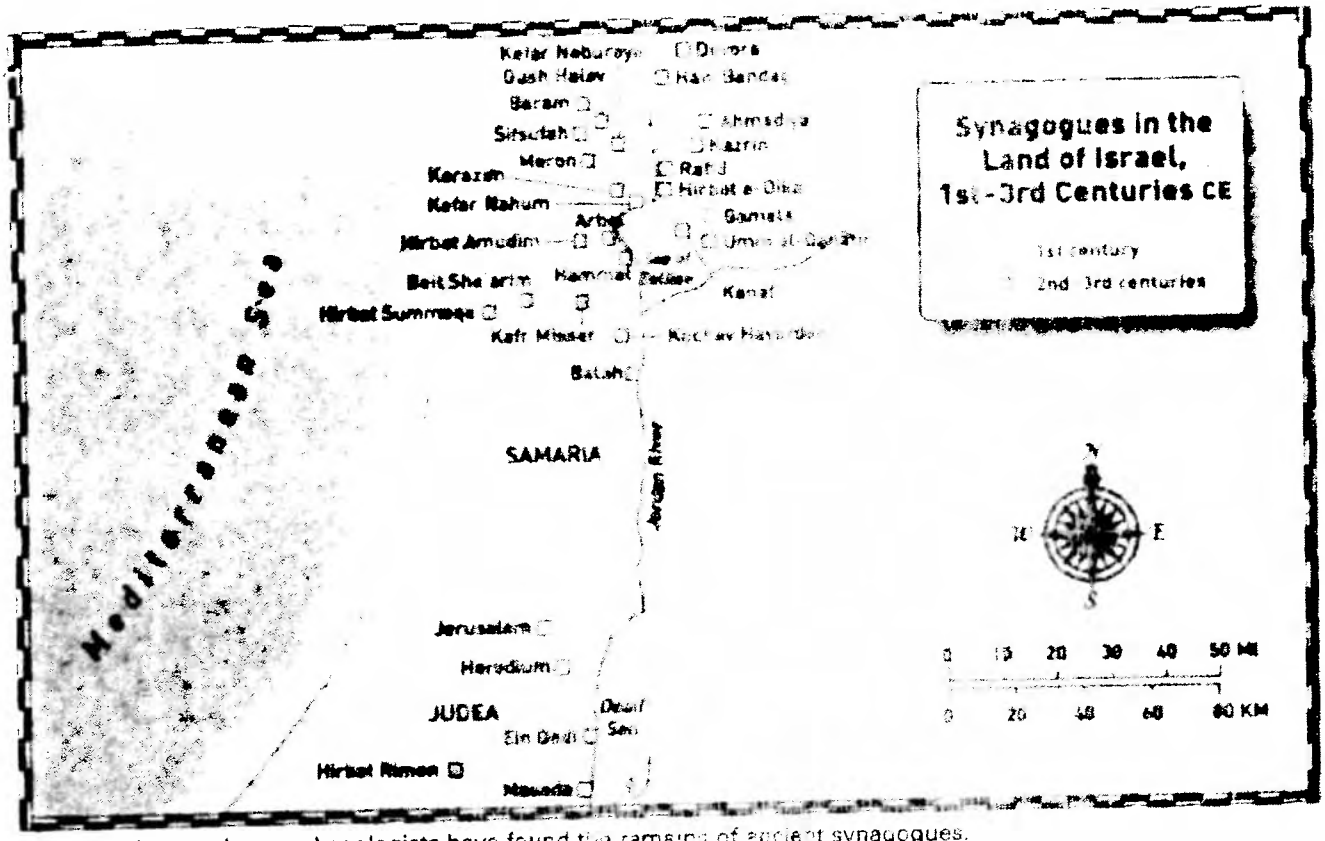
_____

_____

"My son," Rabbi Yohanan said to him, "do not be distressed. We can ask for forgiveness for our sins in another way that is as effective as Temple sacrifice. What is it? It is acts of loving-kindness. As the Bible says, 'God desires mercy, not sacrifice'" (*Avot de Rabbi Nathan* 6).

Yohanan ben Zakkai's response was almost shocking. Remember, many Jews believed that their ability to be close to God was destroyed with the Temple; it was only in the Temple that they were permitted to make sacrifices to God.

"History of the Jewish People", Behrman House
by Jonathan Kiasner and Jonathan Sarna



This map shows where archaeologists have found the remains of ancient synagogues.

But Rabbi Yoḥanan taught that Judaism was not tied to a particular building or to sacrifices. Instead, it was tied to the Torah, which the Jews still had and could take with them everywhere.

Yoḥanan ben Zakkai and other rabbis gathered in a town called **Yavneh,** where they set up a **religious court**. They also established an **academy,** where scholars and the best students could study, debate, and pass on Jewish teachings from one generation to the next. These rabbis never gave up their hope that the Holy Temple would be rebuilt and the rituals of sacrifice reestablished. But they also continued to develop Jewish law, or **halachah,** to meet the needs of the community. In fact, the ancient rabbis spent much of their time studying Torah, debating, and making Jewish law.

Yavneh quickly became known as the city of learned teachers and rabbis. After Yoḥanan ben Zakkai died, leadership passed to Hillel's great-grandson, Gamaliel II. Gamaliel was often addressed by the title *Rabban,* meaning "our teacher." Rabban Gamaliel and other rabbis created new prayer services for Jewish holidays, including parts of the Passover haggadah. The religious court officially decided which books would be included in the Bible, or *Tanach*. It also established official times for prayer. Rabban Gamaliel recognized that eventually prayer would become the main form of Jewish worship. Such wisdom helped Judaism survive and evolve into the religion we practice today.

Both in the Diaspora and in the Land of Israel, the role of the **synagogue** grew in

importance. *Synagogue* is a Greek word meaning "congregation." Many early synagogues were a combination of prayer house, Jewish community center, and guest house. Synagogues held communal prayers and Torah readings. Some also housed social activities, held classes for adults, and offered overnight accommodations for travelers.

Unlike today, in those days rabbis had no official roles in synagogues. Synagogues were under the control of local presidents, boards of directors, and prayer leaders. Some adopted practices that the rabbis would have opposed, including permitting women to serve as presidents of the congregation and decorating synagogue floors with signs of the zodiac and images of human beings and Greek gods. Scholars suggest that the Judaism practiced in these synagogues may have been quite different from the rabbis' religious teachings and rulings.

A Second Revolt

The Jewish people had shown remarkable determination and creativity. Both rabbis and synagogue leaders had succeeded in adapting Judaism to meet the needs of their changing circumstances. Yet many Jews refused to give up hope that the Temple would be rebuilt. And they still dreamed of independence from Roman authority.

In 117 CE, Hadrian became emperor of Rome. At first the Jews rejoiced because they thought he would let them rebuild their city. Instead, he announced plans to rebuild Jerusalem as a Greek-style city and he banned circumcision.

Soon after, Judea once again exploded into rebellion. Beginning in 132 CE, a leader named Simon ben Kozeva led a massive Jewish revolt. Some people, like Rabbi Akiva, believed ben Kozeva was the long-awaited Messiah. According to tradition, the coming of the Messiah would be announced by a bright star or comet, and so Ben Kozeva's supporters nicknamed him Bar Kochba, meaning "the son of a star." (Most people continued to call him Ben Kozeva—as he called himself. Yet, today, he is generally known as Bar Kochba.)

But not everyone saw Bar Kochba as a savior, nor were all Jews ready to serve in his army. Some viewed Bar Kochba as a bully and feared the consequences of his hopeless revolt. Bar Kochba responded harshly to such people, especially to those who sought safety in other towns. In a letter to the leaders of Ein Gedi, he said, "Concerning all the men of Tekoa who are found in your place—the houses in which they live shall be burned and you, too, shall be punished."

The Bar Kochba Revolt caught the Romans by surprise. Bar Kochba and his army had the same advantage the Maccabees had enjoyed—a detailed knowledge of Judea. They hid in underground caves, slipped out to perform daring raids on enemy positions, then vanished back into the countryside. Although the rebels never captured any cities, they established an independent Jewish government in the Judean hills.

Disastrous Results

Bar Kochba battled for three years. But his army was not strong enough to defeat the Romans, who had the most powerful military in the world. Hadrian sent his most experienced general to Judea, Julius Severus, and his army dealt mercilessly with the Jewish people. Countless villages were destroyed and many civilians were killed.

Bar Kochba and his men made their last stand in a village called **Beitar,** southwest of Jerusalem. The Romans successfully laid siege

3. TORAH

1885 — Pittsburgh Platform

We recognize in the Mosaic legislation a system of training the Jewish people for its mission during its national life in Palestine, and today we accept as binding only the moral laws and maintain only such ceremonies as elevate and sanctify our lives, but reject all such as are not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization.

1937 — Columbus

God reveals himself not only in the majesty and orderliness of nature, but also in the vision and moral striving of the human spirit. Revelation is a continuous process, confined to no one group and to no one age. Yet the people of Israel, through its prophets and sages, achieved unique insight in the realm of religious truth. The Torah, both written and oral, enshrines Israel's ever-growing consciousness of God and of the moral law. It preserves the historical precedents, sanctions and norms of Jewish life, and seeks to mould it in the patterns of goodness and holiness. Being products of historical processes, certain of its laws have lost their binding force with the passing of the conditions that called them forth. But as a depository of permanent spiritual ideals, the Torah remains the dynamic source of the life of Israel. Each age has the obligation to adapt the teachings of the Torah to its basic needs inconsonance with the genius of Judaism.

1976 — Centenary Perspective

Torah results from the relationship between God and the Jewish people. The records of our earliest confrontations are uniquely important to us. Lawgivers and prophets, historians and poets gave us a heritage whose study is a religious imperative and whose practice is our chief means to holiness. Rabbis and teachers, philosophers and mystics, gifted Jews in every age, amplified the Torah tradition.

1999 — Pittsburgh Principles

We affirm that Torah is the foundation of Jewish life. We cherish the truths revealed in Torah, God's ongoing revelation to our people and the record of our people's ongoing relationship with God. We affirm that Torah is a manifestation of אהבת עולם *(ahavat olam)*, God's eternal love for the Jewish people and for all humanity. We affirm the importance of studying Hebrew, the language of Torah and Jewish liturgy, that we may draw closer to our people's sacred texts. We are called by Torah to lifelong study in the home, in the synagogue and in every place where Jews gather to learn and teach. Through Torah study we are called to מצוות *(mitzvot)*, the means by which we make our lives holy. We are committed to the ongoing study of the whole array of מצוות *(mitzvot)* and to the fulfillment of those that address us as individuals and as a community. Some of these sacred obligations have long been observed by Reform Jews; others, both ancient and modern, demand renewed attention as the result of the unique context of our own times.

CCAR Platforms

Unit 3 Lesson 5 – The Synagogue Part 2

Previously, the students were exposed to history and background of how the Synagogue became a Jewish, holy space and the objects within it that make it as such. In this lesson, students will have the opportunity to explore how the sanctity of the Synagogue is maintained: through the activities that take place inside the Synagogue and the activities that are promoted by Synagogue but may take place outside of it.

Objectives – At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify the three functions of the Synagogue (*Beit Tefillah* – House of Prayer, *Beit Midrash* – House of Study, *Beit Knesset* – House of Assembly)
- Analyze which parts of their Synagogue fall into the categories of *Beit Tefillah, Beit Midrash* and *Beit Knesset*.
- Evaluate if their Synagogue fully functions as a *Beit Tefillah*, *Beit Midrash* and *Beit Knesset.*
- Compare and contrast the functions of the Synagogue to the functions of the Temple.

Suggested Learning Activity

Explain that since the destruction of the Temple, the Synagogue's functions have developed overtime. Present the three categories of *Beit Tefillah* – House of Prayer, *Beit Midrash* – House of Study, *Beit Knesset* – House of Assembly.

Students will be divided into 3 groups and each group will be assigned one function of the Synagogue. Each group will take a tour of their Synagogue, review the posters on the walls, flyers, pictures, the Synagogue bulletin and any other artifacts on the premises. Each group will analyze the resources and see how their function of the Synagogue is reflected in these Synagogue artifacts. They will identify ritual objects that fall into the particular function of the Synagogue. Then they will evaluate if their Synagogue fully reflects that function to the extent possible. If it does not, the group will propose ways to improve the Synagogue culture and programming so that it reflects that function of the Synagogue more fully. They can adapt activities/artifacts that already exist or adopt new ones.

The groups may use the same artifacts and/or ritual objects but that is fine as long as they can describe how that artifact/ritual object falls into that specific category.

Attached is a sample of how one Synagogue's practices reflect the three functions of a Synagogue.

Each group will present its findings to the rest of the group. The groups can submit in writing their proposals, of how to improve the Synagogue so that it reflects the 3 major functions, to the board of directors or one of the subcommittees of the Synagogue, depending on the Synagogue structure.

Possible Discussion Questions after the presentations (relating this lesson to lesson 3 of this unit):

- How are the functions of the modern synagogue similar and different to the functions of the Temple?

Three Major Functions of a Synagogue[22]

As a ***Bet Tefilah***, a house of prayer, Temple Judea serves as a spiritual beacon, welcoming us for our celebrations, consoling us at times of sadness, and allowing us to pause in our hectic lives for the moments of reflection that Shabbat and the holidays can bring.

As a ***Bet Midrash***, Temple Judea is truly a place for learning. We are a learning community through our fine schools which serve toddlers through high schoolers. We are also a learning community of adults, concerned about searching our tradition to finding meaning in our lives.

As a ***Bet Knesset***, a community center, we reach inward to ensure that we are meeting the social, spiritual and communal needs of our members. From our youth groups, to our active Havurot and senior programs, Temple Judea is always on the move! As members of the larger community, we turn outward and are involved with the issues of our city, our nation and our world.

[22] From Temple Judea, Tarzana, CA. http://www.templejudea.com/readmore.php?bridge_id=33&id=444

Unit 3 Lesson 6 – Mikvah

The space unit culminates in the exploration of the Mikvah, a holy space that the students are probably less familiar with. In this lesson, the students will explore what makes this a holy space, what activities maintain the holiness of the space and the traditional and contemporary reasons why someone might use the mikvah.

Objectives – At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Explain the traditional sources for ritual immersion in the mikvah.
- Explain how immersing in the mikvah can be a spiritual experience.
- Evaluate if they would adopt/adapt the ritual immersion in a mikvah and be able to create meditations/readings to accompany that immersion.

Suggested Learning Activities

Brainstorm

Ask students to think about the concept of water. On the board, make a list of all of the things students associate water with. Hopefully someone will mention "showering/bathing/cleaning". Explain that we often use water to clean our selves physically, but water can also be used to spiritually cleanse ourselves. Ask students to share stories of when they have interacted with water for a spiritual purpose, not for physical reasons. *Possible Examples: take a bath to relax one's mind, jump into a natural spring to feel refreshed, while scuba diving watching the multi-colored fish created a sense of awe.* Explain that today we will be learning about a Jewish ritual that involves using water to spiritually cleanse ourselves.

Small Groups

Provide students with excerpts of the chapter, "Mikvah" by Debra Nussbaum Cohen[23] pp 195-197 and Mikvah article from the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (attached). Students will read these excerpts and be able to answer the following questions:

- What makes a mikvah a holy space?
- What are some of the traditional uses for the mikvah?
- What are some of the contemporary uses of the mikvah?
- What are the requirements of a mikvah?
- Why might a person ritually immerse in the mikvah?

Review the answers to these questions as a whole group.

Main points :

- Traditional uses of the Mikvah: after touching dead body, women after menstruation or childbirth, bride/groom before a wedding, prior to conversion, men before Shabbat/Yom Kippur, new utensils
- Contemporary uses of the Mikvah: after a traumatic incident, after healing from an illness, for celebrating a joyous occasion such as getting a new job, before a bar or bat mitzvah, after a life transition such as divorce, ending a relationship, loosing a loved one.
- Requirements of the Mikvah: natural spring water, the dimensions, having an attendant "check" the person before immersion
- Immersion in the mikvah is not about physical cleanliness, but rather about spiritual purity. It is a way to use nature (water) to separate between different kinds of experiences. Water has a healing quality to it and immersion in the mikvah can help someone through the process of healing.

[23] in Olitzky, Rabbi Kerry M. and Rabbi Daniel Judson. *The Rituals & Practices of a Jewish Life: A Handbook for Personal Spiritual Renewal,* Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2002.

Same-Gender Groups
Divide the students into 2 groups, boys and girls. It would be helpful to have a teacher of both genders for this day and to guide each group. In each group, students will read a section of the chapter by Debra Nussbaum Cohen. Boys: "Men and Mikvah" pages 206-208, Girls: pages 197-203. Both groups will analyze the accounts of the immersion and discuss how the immersion was a source of spiritual cleansing. The students will then brainstorm other occasions that may warrant an immersion in the mikvah and discuss if they would adopt/adapt the ritual immersion into a mikvah. Then students will create meditations/readings/rituals to accompany the immersion in the mikvah (for an occasion they just brainstormed) to add meaning to the immersion.

Memorable Moment

Field Trip
If there is a mikvah in the area, arrange a field trip for the students to see an actual mikvah. The mikvah attendant can explain the process by which people get ready for their immersion and why people come to that mikvah for immersion.

"Mikvah" by Debra Cohen in The Rituals and Practices of a Jewish Life

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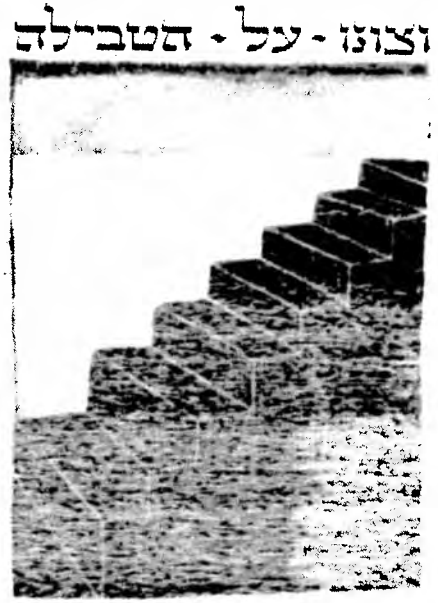

Mikvah

DEBRA NUSSBAUM COHEN

THE BASICS OF *MIKVAH*

Into the dangerous, cold swirling ocean waters Dianne plunged naked, one night shortly before she got married in her hometown on the New Jersey shore. She was accompanied by about a dozen close female friends; the two strongest swimmers joined her in the rough Atlantic water while the rest waited on shore. "There's something about the power and majesty of the ocean at night," says Dianne. "It was untamed and dangerous and exciting. It was very primal," as an experience tied into themes of birth, transition, and rebirth.

Dianne, a liberal Jew, immersed that night in the Atlantic as a *mikvah*, joining the long chain of generations of Jewish women who have immersed in a ritual bath. Her groom, Larry, was doing the same thing with a group of his friends farther down the beach. "I am definitely not a spiritual-type person," he said later, but he found that immersing himself in the ocean as a rite of transition was "very positive. It was purging and cleansing and purifying."

Observing *mikvah* refers to the act of fully submerging oneself in water, either in a ritual bath constructed to hold a combination of "living water" from rain or another natural source (like a stream) and tap water, or in a moving body of water (like the ocean or a river). Ritual immersion is a mitzvah, or obligation, for traditionally observant Jewish women and is discussed extensively in the Torah. Archaeologists have confirmed it as an important Jewish practice in ancient times, proven by the discovery of a number of *mikvaot* in the Old City of Jerusalem and atop the mountain of Masada.

Although some men participate in *mikvah*, before getting married or before holy days, the ritual is associated primarily with women. According to traditional Jewish law, married women enter a *mikvah* seven days after the end of their menstrual period. This twelve-day (or so) period is called *niddah*. They enter the *mikvah* in a state of "ritual impurity," *tumah*, and leave it in a state of "ritual purity," *taharah*. During the period of *tumah*, traditional women and their husbands do not touch in any way; after immersing they reconnect physically. As a result of the link to a woman's monthly cycle, *mikvah* is strongly tied to fertility and sexuality. Because Jewish tradition frames the time of a woman's menstrual period as one of "ritual impurity," some liberal Jews regard *mikvah* negatively.

At the same time, many liberal Jews are reclaiming this observance and reconceptualizing it as something consonant with their contemporary sensibilities. Some immerse in a *mikvah* to mark the transition into or out of a special or challenging time in their lives: marriage, divorce, the end of chemotherapy, the beginning of fertility treatments, recovery from rape. A smaller number of women are observing the mitzvah in a traditional way but reframing the separation of the sexes in a more egalitarian fashion. Some men, inspired by the mystical aspects of *mikvah*, immerse before each Shabbat and prior to the High Holidays. For them, as for women on a monthly basis, immersion can be a way to mark the passage and elevation from one spiritual state into another and sanctify the moment ahead. *Mikvah* is also used for men and women as the final step in their conversion to Judaism. This is a requirement of conversions under Orthodox and Conservative auspices and is being used increasingly under Reform.

The typical *mikvah* is a simple tiled square pool large enough for one person at a time. Steps lead down into it, and its water generally rises only about chest high. The attendant—a woman who is present only to make sure that the person immersing has done it completely (allowing water to cover the entire body) and to answer any questions—stands in the room but outside the *mikvah* pool.

MY FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH *MIKVAH*

The first time I went to the *mikvah* was exactly when most other Jewish women do—one evening shortly before my wedding. I went to the *mikvah* in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. I was taken by my soon-to-be mother-in-law, who is a member of the Lubavitch community there. The first time, I went to honor her and to honor Jewish tradition, by which I felt alternately attracted and repelled.

Today, eleven years later, I go each month. Now I do not go for the sake of my mother-in-law, nor for Jewish tradition, nor even for the sake of my husband or marriage. I go for myself. Over time, it has become a very meaningful, healing practice, one that I fully embrace both as a feminist-egalitarian Jew and as one who regards Jewish tradition as a precious inheritance.

Before my wedding, I also went to the *mikvah* out of curiosity. I'd read about the Crown Heights *mikvah* in Liz Harris's book *Holy Days*, an account of the traditional Jewish community that first appeared in the *New Yorker* magazine. Based on her description, I expected the *mikvah* to look something like a spa, all white tile and Spartan chic. I was wrong.

In its heyday the Crown Heights *mikvah* was something special—large and relatively spacious, and far more modern than anything the Hasidic community had previously enjoyed.

When I entered it in 1990, it looked much as it does today: a bit rundown, its wallpaper curling at the seams, with rather ordinary, worn fixtures in the preparation rooms. Upon entering, you are asked to pay $10 ($18 if you're a bride and going for the first time), then pick up a plastic comb and a small bar of motel-style wrapped soap. The attendant hands each woman a frayed but clean terrycloth robe and ushers her into an expanded bathroom where she bathes, shaves (if she usually does), and combs her hair as part of the pre-*mikvah* preparation. The *mikvah* is not used for personal hygiene, like a bath or shower. Its waters are meant to effect a spiritual cleansing rather than a physical one. Rigorous pre-use cleaning, including removing all nail polish and trimming long nails, is done so that the waters of the *mikvah* will touch the entire body in its pure form.

My mother-in-law handed me over to the *mikvah* attendant that first night, who showed me into the *kallah* room (bride's room), the bathroom given to brides because it's a little bit bigger than the others, and I prepared according to the list posted on the wall, which detailed the parts of my body that needed cleaning and checking, before I rang the intercom to tell the *mikvah* lady (the attendant) that I was ready.

After taking me into the room with the *mikvah* pool, the attendant asked me to remove my robe so that she could check my body for anything that might present an impediment to the *mikvah* water connecting with every inch of me. She looked me over in a way that seemed at once careful and impersonal. Although I was relieved when she was quickly done, she didn't make me feel like she was secretly calculating my percentage of body fat.

Then I walked into the tepid water, and, following her instructions for immersion, recited the blessing word-for-word after her, before immersing again. I had anticipated some charged spiritual experience under the water, but it just didn't happen. The whole thing felt like an anticlimax. So for a time after my wedding I didn't go back.

MY SECOND VISIT TO THE *MIKVAH*

Three years into my marriage, I had our first child. After an induced, painful, and failed labor, the baby was born by cesarean section. When he was placed on my chest and I looked into his eyes for the first time, I realized—I mean really felt—that there is a Creator. I'd never before really believed in God. Now, without premeditation or expectation, I saw. I understood that my husband and I could not have created this new life, this whole and unique human being, by ourselves. I saw firsthand the Talmud's teaching that three are three partners in creation: man, woman, and the Shekhinah.

A couple of months later, after postpartum bleeding had ended and my doctor had approved my full return back into the physical aspects of life, I was thinking about how dramatically life had changed since my son's birth.

Of course, now it was focused on formula and diapers, and like most new parents I was exhausted and exhilarated. Most of all, I was in awe of what had emerged from my body. He was of me and yet his own person, deeply connected to me and yet unequivocally separate.

Becoming a mother had been a profound experience—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. I wanted to mark the end of this transformative childbearing year in a way that felt significant and spiritual. After thinking about it, and despite the disappointment of my first immersion experience, I realized that the perfect thing to do was to go to *mikvah*.

This time it was to the Upper West Side *mikvah* in Manhattan. Apprehensive about going, I didn't remember the blessing and had forgotten what else was involved. I was so nervous that when the busy *mikvah* lady asked me rather tersely, "Shower or bath?" I just blurted out, "Shower." (Later I learned that if a woman thoroughly prepares at home, she can just shower before entering the *mikvah*, but when the full preparation is done at the *mikvah*, a bath is recommended.)

When I came up from the *mikvah*'s water and shared with her that I'd just had my first child, she offered an uninspired *mazal tov* and ushered me out. Like the first time, I had no great spiritual revelation

while underwater. I didn't feel God's presence while immersed any more or less than I did anywhere else. In fact, caught up in the concern about doing it right, my mind wasn't focused on the Creator at all.

Nevertheless, walking down Broadway in the warm spring night air, my body and hair still wet with the *mikvah*'s water, I felt something special. I felt happy and renewed. It felt good to have closed this incredible year of my life in a Jewish—and uniquely, inherently female—way.

SUBSEQUENT VISITS

In the months that followed, I went sometimes and skipped other times, when the demands of the day were too great. When we were ready to have another baby, however, I went every month, aware that the time of the month when women go to the *mikvah* is about the time that most women ovulate, the prime time to conceive. Going to *mikvah* also allowed me to keep focused on the holiness of our efforts.

It took a long time to get pregnant this time, and going to the *mikvah* helped me experience and move past my worry. Each month I would be disappointed when my period arrived. Each month, while preparing at the *mikvah*, I would lie back in the bathtub and indulge my sadness. When I walked out of the *mikvah* pool, I would be filled with hope and anticipation. I'd leave my sadness at the *mikvah* and return home feeling ready to begin a new cycle.

When I finally did get pregnant, it didn't last long. Miscarrying at the end of the first trimester, I hemorrhaged and was rushed to the hospital for an emergency procedure to stop the bleeding. It took me many days to feel physically right again, after the blood loss, the general anesthesia, and being engulfed in sadness and fear that we would not be able to have another child.

I dwelt in that place for two weeks. I mourned the loss of the pregnancy and my dashed hopes, and I let my body heal. When it was then time to go the *mikvah*, I felt oddly open and unusually vulnerable, both emotionally and physically.

While I lay in the bath preparing, I cried. When I went into the *mikvah* and was submerged in its water, I prayed to be able to move forward. When I emerged from the *mikvah*, I was ready to begin again, and I went home with my tears dried and my heart full with hope.

ACHIEVING A REGULAR RHYTHM OF RITUAL

Nine months later I gave birth to my first daughter. Feeling even more connected with *mikvah* now than before, I have gone each month since then. I am grateful for this ritual that belongs to me as a Jewish woman, although it is not without its intellectual and emotional challenges.

Some friends have expressed distaste when I've confided my *mikvah* observance to them. They see it as a tradition borne of the patriarchy that oppresses female sexuality. I've grappled with these issues, and I can't say that they're completely wrong. (See "Wrestling with Tradition," p. 208.)

I've also heard people say that it feels too much like Christian baptism for them. I remind them that Christianity adapted it from Jewish tradition.

Confronting and thinking through these objections has only deepened the feeling that *mikvah* belongs to me. As a Jewish woman, I own it, and its uniqueness in the canon of Jewish law makes it more dear to me.

THE UNIQUENESS OF *MIKVAH*

Mikvah is unique among the commandments. Three of the 613 commandments are considered special women's mitzvot: baking and separating challah, lighting Shabbat candles, and going to the *mikvah*. Certainly men can and do bake challah and light Shabbat candles, particularly when there is no woman present, but no man can immerse in a *mikvah* to sanctify fertility and the cycle of nature that only women experience. Its uniqueness, its woman-centricity in a tradition that often seems to banish women to the margins of religious

practice, makes it even more precious. Going to the *mikvah* has provided me with a way to give a Jewish structure to time and emotion. For me it is about separation and sanctification.

After my second daughter was born, I decided to treat myself to a visit to the new, beautiful, and lavishly decorated *mikvah* closer to my home, as a way to celebrate the end of the year spent bringing her into the world. There the walls are clothed in elegant wallpaper, and the solid cherry doors are adorned with cut-crystal knobs. The carpet is thick and the waiting room chairs and chaise are lavishly upholstered. The preparation rooms alone are worthy of a spread in *Architectural Digest*. Rosy pink marble floors and wall tile as well as gentle lighting provide a backdrop to top-of-the-line Italian and British porcelain fixtures with polished brass knobs. The sink has shapely sculpted legs, and the bathtub is luxuriously deep and long. The towels and robe provided are sparkling white and fluffy, and every imaginable amenity is laid out.

Still, it's the *mikvah* itself that is the centerpiece. The walls of the room are clad with Jerusalem stone, and the pool is lined in deep teal tile. Above it is a small dome set into the ceiling, which is surrounded by gold leaf and painted with airy, light clouds. The water is clear and warm. At this *mikvah*, immersion has become a sensual, luxurious experience.

At home, I have only a couple of minutes to shower at the start of each hectic day; often one of my children calls for me or comes into the bathroom unannounced. Preparing at the *mikvah*, I can take my time. No one is going to intrude, and I luxuriate in the reflective solitude. In the *mikvah* itself, the hectic world of my everyday life feels miles away, and I take as much time as I wish to meditate and immerse.

When I emerge to go home, I feel peaceful and renewed, ready to meet my husband with happiness and warmth no matter how sharp the argument or grueling our day may have been. It's not about sex; it's about separation—the separation between one interval of time and another, the separation between one mood and another. The truth is that my husband doesn't much care whether I go to the *mikvah*

or not. When he left the Hasidic community as a young man, he left behind the restrictions that he believes are embodied in its understanding of observance. So I go each month for myself.

WHY I GO TO THE *MIKVAH*

Some might argue that the solitude I enjoy at the *mikvah* could be experienced at a retreat or through prayer or meditation. Those are different types of experiences. Prayer mostly uses the head and, at its best, also engages the heart. *Mikvah* is a fully embodied experience of sanctification.

In the *mikvah* I am stripped bare, both literally and emotionally, before my Creator. I am suspended in the archetypal womb. I am at once both woman and child, a unique individual and a tiny part of all creation. Even as I am fully present in the moment, I am linked to all the generations of Jewish women before me who have immersed. It helps me to cultivate a consciousness of the Creator's presence in my life.

Although we can, and do, create new rituals that help to fill in the spaces where women's voices have been absent from Jewish religious life, *mikvah* has the added aspect of being rooted in tradition. *Mikvah* immersion is now, and has always been, a place for women to celebrate and sanctify that which makes us female.

HOW *MIKVAH* IS BEING UTILIZED

Religiously liberal Jews are meeting and embracing the idea of *mikvah* in growing numbers. Some women are creating a *simchat chakhmah*, or "celebration of wisdom" ritual to help them move from midlife to later life, often around the time of their sixtieth birthday. These rituals generally include learning Torah, creative readings, some blessings, and testimonials from friends and loved ones. Often there is singing and dancing as well. Some of these women have included in their celebration a visit to the *mikvah*, followed by a festive brunch with their closest women friends.

MEN AND *MIKVAH*

Although the *mikvah* is associated primarily with women, there are some traditional Jewish communities where men use the *mikvah* as part of regular spiritual practice. Some liberal Jewish men are now renewing this practice. Jerry Raik, a Hebrew school director, began going to the Lower East Side (of New York) *mikvah* in the 1970s, to keep his friend, the late writer Paul Cowan, company. Cowan went at the behest of a Hasidic rabbi with whom he was close. The first time, they went before Yom Kippur.

> There have been some years when I've gone way more often than just before Yom Kippur and other years when I haven't gone at all. We liked it and used to go, the two of us and sometimes some other people, on Friday afternoons.
>
> Men go in one at a time, with no *shomer* because there's no mitzvah. It's just a rite of purification, and its very dicey whether you have that sense of it or not. When I felt stuff, it would be, like, the day after. You either dunk once in every direction, or if you're from a certain group of Hasidim or other mystically inclined people, you might dunk four times in every direction.
>
> More recently when I've gone, it's been on the Upper West Side [of Manhattan]. At [Congregation] Ansche Chesed, I fitfully once or twice started something called the AC Men's *Mikvah* Club. A few of us went a few times, then nothing happened for a long time. Now I've been talking about it again and a few people are interested.
>
> For us it was a very strange thing to be doing, but at the same time it turned out to be quite comfortable. I feel it's like when I've been in synagogue [one day;] the next day I catch myself realizing that I'm praying differently than I usually do, with more of a heightened consciousness, with a greater focus.

A Man and His Stepson Experience the *Mikvah*

On a late Friday afternoon at Elat Chayyim, a Jewish retreat center in Woodstock, New York, fifteen men, my fourteen-year-old stepson (Elia), and myself gather together. As we sit in a circle, Rabbi Jeff Roth works his way through a Hasidic tale, using it as an invitation to us to let go of our preoccupations with the week that has passed and prepare for the potential for holiness that he suggests envelops us when we enter the *mikvah* waters.

We are all undressed and feel emotionally naked as well. We are a mix of body shapes and types, young and old, not much for the makings of a photo shoot. I am surprised about how comfortable Elia is among us. We break into groups of four for this end-of-the-week spiritual "tune up" as we make our way to the hot tub that doubles as our *mikvah*. Like traditional *mikvaot*, its waters flow from a nearby natural source. However, the natural setting and the familiarity of a Jacuzzi seems to offer a measure of comfort for these men, most of whom have never visited a *mikvah* before. So we immerse three times: once to cleanse our souls of what has transpired during the week just past; once to prepare us for the immediate experience; and once to help prepare us for Shabbat. Suddenly the distant ritual of the past has found an access point in the present.

Elia, two other men, and I occupy the water first, choosing to do all three immersions, one man at a time. While one may seem more comfortable than another in some part of this ritual activity, all of us feel somewhat awkward. For me, perhaps it is because I am experiencing such intimacy with Elia. It is he who helps me to understand the profundity of the sacred ritual we have undertaken together as he verbalizes what he feels with each immersion. I am overwhelmed by his honesty and stunned as he expresses the pressures that he feels from the world around him. So I stay in the tub a little longer than the others, mixing my tears with the warm swirling waters. When I rise slowly—the world feels new again—I am ready to now enter Shabbat.

RABBI SHAWN ISRAEL ZEVIT

Andy Immerses before His *Chuppah*

Andy was naked in front of ten of his closest male friends. He stood on the banks of the Potomac River at 6:00 A.M. the day of his wedding, and he did what most men do when encountered with unusual nakedness: he made jokes about it. Soon Andy started moving into the waters, and as the

joking stopped and the quietness of the still morning enveloped the group, he took a deep breath, immersed himself in the Potomac, said a blessing thanking God for having reached this moment in his life, and immersed once more. He came back to shore where his friends were singing wedding songs, picked up his clothes, and hightailed it back to the car before the early morning kayakers got a surprise.

RABBI DANIEL JUDSON

WRESTLING WITH TRADITION: CONCEPTS OF PURITY AND IMPURITY

Embracing the idea of *mikvah*, for a contemporary Jewish woman, can be intellectually challenging. Bound up with the idea of immersion are the concepts of *tumah* and *taharah* from Leviticus. The Bible appears unequivocal: "Do not come near a woman during her period of uncleanness to uncover her nakedness" (Lev. 18:19). "If a man lies with a woman in her infirmity and uncovers her nakedness, he has laid bare her flow and she has exposed her blood flow; both of them shall be cut off from among their people" (Lev. 20:18).

It was customary in ancient times for married Jews to abstain from sexual relations during the days that a woman was menstruating. Later the Rabbis of the Talmud extended the prohibition for a week after the period ended, and constructed layers of law around it by prohibiting all physical contact between husband and wife for that twelve- to fourteen-day interval.

Mikvah immersion is the apex of the complex set of Jewish laws called *taharat hamishpachah*, or "family purity," observed today primarily by Orthodox Jews. These laws dictate sexual interaction between married Jews. They forbid a husband and wife to sleep in the same bed, to sit close to each other, or even to pass a glass to each other lest they become overcome by desire and transgress the prohibition on sex at this time. I appreciate how distance can sharpen desire during the two weeks of separation, but I believe that we are able to keep our urges in check without such statutory control. From

my perspective, the practice of complete separation also brings with it the sense that a menstruating woman is tainted, that she is dangerously impure. It objectifies her into something from which a man must shrink back almost in fear.

Susan Handelman, in the book *Total Immersion*, writes: "The laws of *tumah* and *taharah* are suprarational, 'above' reason. And it is precisely because they are of such a high spiritual level, beyond what intellect can comprehend, that they affect an elevated part of the soul, a part of the soul that transcends reason entirely." She also writes: "If we strip the words 'pure' and 'unpure' of their physical connotations, and perceive their true spiritual meaning, we see that what they really signify is the presence or absence of holiness." I don't feel less capable of holiness when menstruating. However, I do understand menstruation on a spiritual level as the potential for life, and that it is a time of shedding and preparation for renewal, an autumn and a winter of the body's monthly cycle.

Rachel Adler is one of the few Jewish feminist theologians to have thoroughly confronted the concepts of ritual impurity and purity. In the *First Jewish Catalogue*, Adler, who then identified as an Orthodox Jew, wrote:

> *Tumah* is the result of our confrontation with the fact of our own mortality. It is the going down into darkness. *Taharah* is the result of our reaffirmation of our own mortality. It is the reentry into light. *Tumah* is evil or frightening only when there is no further life. Otherwise, *tumah* is simply part of the human cycle. To be *tameh* is not wrong or bad. Often it is necessary and sometimes it is mandatory.
>
> The *mikvah* simulates the original living water, the primal sea from which all life comes, the womb of the world, the amniotic tide on which the unborn child is rocked. To be reborn, one must reenter this womb and "drown" in living water. . . . We emerge from the *mikvah tahor*, having confronted and experienced our own death and resurrection. *Taharah* is the end beyond the end, which constitutes a beginning, just as the Messianic "end of days" is in actuality the beginning of days.

MIKVEH (Heb. מִקְוֶה; pl. *mikva'ot*; Hebrew for a "collection" or "gathering" [of water]), a pool or bath of clear water, immersion in which renders ritually clean a person who has become ritually unclean through contact with the dead (Num. 19) or any other defiling object, or through an unclean flux from the body (Lev. 15) and especially a menstruant or postpartum woman (see *Ablution; *Niddah; *Purity and Impurity; *Ritual; *Taharat ha-Mishpahah). It is similarly used for vessels (Num. 31:22–23). Today the chief use of the *mikveh* is for women, prior to marriage, following *niddut*, and following the birth of a child, since the laws of ritual impurity no longer apply after the destruction of the Temple. *Mikveh* immersion is also obligatory for proselytes, as part of the ceremony of conversion. In addition immersion in the *mikveh* is still practiced by various groups as an aid to spirituality, particularly on the eve of the Sabbath and festivals, especially the Day of Atonement (see *Ablution) and the custom still obtains, in accordance with Numbers 31: 22–23 to immerse new vessels and utensils purchased from non-Jews. At the beginning of the 21st century, *mikveh* immersion also frequently constituted a symbolic expression of a new spiritual beginning for both women and men, in all branches of Jewish practice. In addition to conversion to Judaism, rituals have developed incorporating *mikveh* immersion as part of bar mitzvah and bat mitzvah (coming of age); prior to marriage for men as well as women; in cases of miscarriage, infertility, and illness; and following divorce, sexual assault, or other life-altering events. An indication of the probable long-term impact of this trend is the increased construction of *mikva'ot* by non-Orthodox Jewish communities in North America.

It is emphasized that the purpose of immersion is not physical, but spiritual, cleanliness. Maimonides concludes his codification of the laws of the *mikveh* with the following statement: It is plain that the laws about immersion as a means of freeing oneself from uncleanness are decrees laid down by Scripture and not matters about which human understanding is capable of forming a judgment; for behold, they are included among the divine statutes. Now 'uncleanness' is not mud or filth which water can remove, but is a matter of scriptural decree and dependent on the intention of the heart. Therefore the Sages have said, 'If a man immerses himself, but without special intention, it is as though he has not immersed himself at all.'

Nevertheless we may find some indication [for the moral basis] of this: Just as one who sets his heart on becoming clean becomes clean as soon as he has immersed himself, although nothing new has befallen his body, so, too, one who sets his heart on cleansing himself from the uncleannesses that beset men's souls – namely, wrongful thoughts and false convictions – becomes clean as soon as he consents in his heart to shun those counsels and brings his soul into the waters of pure reason. Behold, Scriptures say, 'And I will sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean; from all your uncleannesses and from all your idols will I cleanse you [Ezek. 36: 25]' (Yad, Mikva'ot 11:12).

Although Maimonides in this passage states that lack of intention invalidates the act under all circumstances, a view which is found in the Tosefta (Hag. 3:2), the *halakhah*, as in fact codified by him (Yad, *ibid.* 1:8), is that the need for intention applies only for the purpose of eating holy things, such as *ma'aser and terumah. For a menstruant, and before eating ordinary food, though intention is desirable in the first instance, its lack does not invalidate the immersion. The importance of intention in the laws of ritual impurity is further illustrated by the fact that the rabbis permitted fig cakes which had been hidden in water – an action that would normally make the food susceptible to uncleanness – because they had been put there in order to hide them and not in order to wet them (Makhsh. 1:6). This stress on intention passed from Judaism into Islam. "Purity is the half of faith" is a saying attributed to Muhammad himself and in general the laws of uncleanness in Islam bear a striking resemblance to those of Judaism (*Encyclopedia of Islam*, s.v. *Tahara*).

According to biblical law any collection of water, drawn or otherwise, is suitable for a *mikveh* as long as it contains enough for a person to immerse himself (Yad, *ibid.* 4:1). The rabbis, however, enacted that only water which has not been drawn, i.e., has not been in a vessel or receptacle, may be used; and they further established that the minimum quantity for immersion is that which is contained in a square cubit to the height of three cubits. A *mikveh* containing less than this amount (which they estimated to be a volume of 40 *se'ah*, being between 250–1,000 liters according to various calculations) becomes invalid should three *log* of drawn water fall into it or be added. However, if the *mikveh* contains more than this amount it can never become invalid no matter how much drawn water is added. These laws are the basis for the various ways of constructing the *mikveh* (see below). To them a whole talmudic tractate, *Mikva'ot*, is devoted, and Maimonides assigns them a whole treatise of the same name. The laws can be conveniently divided into two parts, the construction of the *mikveh* itself, and the water which renders it valid or invalid.

The *mikveh* is valid, however built, providing that it has not been prefabricated and brought and installed on the site, since in that case it constitutes a "vessel" which renders the water in it "drawn water" ("*mayim she'uvim*"; Mik. 4:1). It may be hewn out of the rock or built in or put on the ground, and any material is suitable. It must be watertight, since leakage invalidates it. It must contain a minimum of 40 *se'ah* of valid water, and, although it was originally laid down that its height must be 47 in. (120 cm.) to enable a person standing in it to be completely immersed (Sifra 6:3), even though he has to bend his knees (Sifra 6:3) it was later laid down that providing there is the necessary minimum quantity of water, immersion is valid while lying down.

The Water

All natural spring water, providing it is clean and has not been discolored by any admixtures is valid for a *mikveh*. With re-

gard to rainwater, which is ideal for a *mikveh*, and melted snow and ice (even if manufactured from "drawn" water) which are also valid, care must be taken to ensure that the water flows freely and is not rendered invalid by the flow into it being stopped, thus turning it into "drawn water." In addition the water must not reach the *mikveh* through vessels made of metal or other materials which are susceptible to ritual uncleanness. This is avoided by attaching the pipes and other accessories to the ground, by virtue of which they cease to have the status of "vessels." Similarly the *mikveh* is emptied from above by hand, by vacuum, or by electric or automatic pumps. The emptying through a hole in the bottom is forbidden since the plug may be regarded as a "vessel" as well as giving rise to the possibility of a leakage.

There is, however, one regulation with regard to the *mikveh* which considerably eases the problems of assuring a supply of valid water. Once it possesses the minimum quantity of 40 *se'ah* of valid water even though "someone draws water in a jug and throws it into the *mikveh* all day long, all the water is valid." In addition "if there is an upper *mikveh* containing 40 *se'ah* of valid water, and someone puts drawn water in the upper *mikveh*, thus increasing its volume, and 40 *se'ah* of it flows into the lower pool, that lower pool is a valid *mikveh*" (Yad, Mikva'ot 4:6). It is thus possible to exploit limitless quantities of valid water.

Various Forms of Mikveh

The above regulations determine the various kinds of *mikveh* which are in use. In rare cases where there is a plentiful supply of valid water, spring or rain- (or sea-) water which can constantly replenish the *mikveh*, the only desiderata which have to be complied with are to ensure that the water does not become invalidated by the construction of the *mikveh*, rendering it a "vessel" or by going through metal pipes which are not sunk in the ground, as detailed above.

Since, however, *mikva'ot* are usually constructed in urban and other settlements where such supplies are not freely available, the technological and halakhic solution of the valid *mikveh* depends essentially upon constructing a *mikveh* with valid water and replenishing it with invalid water, taking advantage of the fact that the addition of this water to an originally valid one does not invalidate it.

The following are among the systems used:

1. The basic *mikveh* consists of the minimum valid amount of 40 *se'ah* of rainwater. To this rainwater, ordinary water may subsequently be added through a trough which is absorbent, dug in the ground, or one made of lean concrete at least three handbreadths (c. 30 cm.) long, and one wide. Through this device the added water is regarded as coming from the ground and not through a "vessel." The resultant mixture of both types of water passes into the *mikveh* through a hole in the dividing wall. Since the added water is regarded as "seeding" the original valid water, it is called the *ozar zeri'ah* ("store for seeding").

2. In a second system the added drawn water is not previously mixed with the rainwater, as in the previous case, but flows directly onto the basic rainwater *mikveh* through an aperture in the wall of the *mikveh*, the diameter of which must be "the size of the spout of a water bottle" (c. 2 in.; 5–6 cm., Mik. 6:7). This method is called *ozar hasnakah* ("the store produced by contact"). Both the above methods, though they answer the halakhic needs, have their disadvantages in operation and in maintenance, particularly through the exhaustion of the rainwater and the stagnation of the standing water. The other systems are aimed at overcoming these drawbacks.

3. The *"dut"* is a cistern or tank built into the ground to store rainwater. When changing the water in the *mikveh*, it is filled each time with at least 21 *se'ah* of rainwater from the cistern and water is then added from the "store for seeding" by conduction. The water in the *mikveh* is brought into contact with the "contact store" by the method mentioned above. Though indeed this method overcomes the many shortcomings and halakhic problems, it nevertheless requires an extensive area for the cistern, and large areas of roof and pipes for filling with considerable amounts of rainwater in the winter.

4. Both a "store for seeding" and a "contact store" are built on each side of the *mikveh*. Each store has an aperture connecting its water with that of the *mikveh*.

5. A single "store" consisting of both "seeding" and "contacting."

6. A "store" upon a "store." A "contact store" is built on two stories joined by an aperture with the diameter of "the spout of a bottle." The water of the *mikveh* is validated by means of the hole in the party wall between the *mikveh* and the upper "store."

7. A "contact store" under the floor of the *mikveh*, connected by means of a hole the size of "the spout of a water bottle."

The *mikva'ot* of Jerusalem as well as the oldest *mikva'ot* in other towns of Erez Israel are built in general by the method of the "contact store" as well as by the "store of seeding." In the new settlements and elsewhere the *mikva'ot* are built in the main only by the method of the "store of seeding" (a system approved by Rabbi A.I. Karelitz, the "Ḥazon Ish"). Latterly *mikva'ot* have been built by the method of two "stores."

In recent years vast improvements have been made in the hygienic and other aspects of the *mikveh*. An early enactment, attributed to Ezra, that a woman must wash her hair before immersing herself (BK 82a) may be provided for by the now universal custom of having baths as an adjunct to *mikva'ot*, the use of which is an essential preliminary to entering the *mikveh*, and especially in the United States they are provided with hairdressing salons and even beauty parlors.

The regulations for constructing the *mikveh* are complicated and its construction requires a considerable knowledge of technology combined with strict adherence to the *halakhah*, and it should be built only after consultation with, and under the supervision of, accepted rabbinic authorities. Nevertheless in order to increase the use of this essential requirement of traditional Judaism, a book has been published which con-

sists almost entirely of instructions for making a valid "Do it yourself" *mikveh* (see D. Miller in bibl.).

[David Kotlar / Judith Baskin (2nd ed.)]

History and Archaeology

During the Second Temple period (roughly from 100 B.C.E. to 70 C.E.), the Jewish population in Palestine had a very distinctive practice of purification within water installations known as *mikva'ot*. Large numbers of stepped-and-plastered *mikva'ot* have been found in excavations in Jerusalem, in outlying villages, as well as at various rural locations. Most of the installations in Jerusalem were in basements of private dwellings and therefore must have served the specific domestic needs of the city inhabitants. Numerous examples are known from the area of the "Upper City" of Second Temple period Jerusalem (the present-day Jewish Quarter and Mount Zion), with smaller numbers in the "City of David" and the "Bezetha Hill." A few slightly larger *mikva'ot* are known in the immediate area of the Temple Mount, but these installations could not have met the needs of tens of thousands of Jewish pilgrims from outside the city attending the festivities at the Temple on an annual basis. It would appear that the Bethesda and Siloam Pools – to the north and south of the Temple Mount – were designed at the time of Herod the Great to accommodate almost all of the ritual purification needs of the large numbers of Jewish pilgrims who flocked to Jerusalem for the festivals. In addition to this, those precluded from admission to the Temple, owing to disabilities and bodily defects, would have sought miraculous healing at these pools and this is the background for the healing accounts in the Gospel of John (5: 1–13; 9: 7, 11).

Although water purification is referred to in the Old Testament, in regard to rituals and the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem, with washing, sprinkling, and dipping in water, we do not hear of specific places or installations that people would constantly frequent for the purpose of ritually cleansing their flesh. The term *mikveh* was used in a very general sense in the Old Testament to refer to a body of water of indeterminate extent (cf. Gen. 1:10; Ex. 7:19), or more specifically to waters gathered from a spring or within a cistern (Lev. 11: 36) or waters designated for a large reservoir situated in Jerusalem (Isa. 22: 11). None of these places are mentioned as having been used for ritual purification in any way. Hence, the concept of the *mikveh* as a hewn cave or constructed purification pool attached to one's dwelling or place of work is undoubtedly a later one. A distinction must be made therefore between the purification practices as they are represented in biblical sources, with Jewish water immersion rituals of the Second Temple period, as well as with later customs of *mikva'ot* prevailing from medieval times and to the present day (see below).

The basis for our information about what was or was not permitted in regard to *mikva'ot* appears in rabbinic sources: the tractate Mikva'ot in the Mishnah and Tosefta. One must take into consideration, however, that this information might very well be idealized, at least in part, and that the reality of purification practices in Second Temple times may have been much more flexible than one would suppose from these sources. Josephus Flavius is silent in his writings about the purification installations of his time, and the few references in Dead Sea Scroll manuscripts are definitely not to be relied upon to generalize about the common Jewish purification practices current in Second Temple period Palestine. The Mishnah (Mik. 1:1–8, ed. Danby) indicates that there were at least six grades of *mikva'ot*, listed from the worst to the best: (1) ponds; (2) ponds during the rainy season; (3) immersion pools containing more than 40 *se'ah* of water; (4) wells with natural groundwater; (5) salty water from the sea and hot springs; and (6) natural flowing "living" waters from springs and in rivers. Clearly the ubiquitous stepped-and-plastered installation known to scholars from archaeological excavations since the 1960s and now commonly referred to as the *mikveh* (referred to under No. 3, above) was not the best or the worst of the six grades of *mikva'ot* as set forth in the Mishnah. It is referred to as follows: "More excellent is a pool of water containing forty *se'ah*; for in them men may immerse themselves and immerse other things [e.g., vessels]" (Mik. 1:7). The validity of *mikva'ot* was apparently one of the subjects occasionally debated in the "Chamber of Hewn Stone" in Jerusalem (Ed. 7:4).

Stringent religious regulations (*halakhot*) are referred to in regard to certain constructional details and how the installations were to be used. A *mikveh* had to be supplied with "pure" water derived from natural sources (rivers, springs or rain) throughout the year and even during the long dry season, and it had to contain a minimum of 40 *se'ah* of water (the equivalent of less than one cubic meter of water) so that a person might be properly immersed (if not standing, then lying down). Once the natural flow of water into a *mikveh* had been stopped, it became "drawn" water (*mayim she'uvim*). Water could not be added mechanically, but there was a possibility of increasing the volume by allowing drawn water to enter from an adjacent container, according to the sources, so long as the original amount of water did not decrease to below the minimum requirement of water. Hence, an additional body of water, known since medieval times as the *ozar* (the "treasury"), could be connected to the *mikveh*, and linked by pipe or channel. There was, of course, the problem of the water becoming dirty or stagnant (though not impure), but the *mikveh* was not used for daily ablutions for the purpose of keeping clean. Indeed, people appear to have washed themselves (or parts of their bodies, notably the feet and hands) before entering the ritual bath (Mik. 9:2). Basins for cleansing feet and legs have been found in front of the *mikva'ot* of Herodian dwellings in Jerusalem.

The *mikveh* was required, according to the rabbinical sources, to be sunk into the ground, either through construction or by the process of hewing into the rock, and into it natural water would flow derived from a spring or from surface rainwater in the winter seasons. There was, of course, the problem of silting (Mik. 2:6). The phenomenon of silts gathering within a *mikveh* was referred to quite clearly in rabbinic texts. For instance, in reference to the minimum quantity of water

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Unit 4 – Sanctifying Ourselves

Overview

The purpose of this unit is to enable the learners to think about and explore how they can sanctify themselves and their bodies. The learners have already explored sanctifying time and space and should be able to think about something more closer and personal to them. Although the activity of journaling is suggested only in lesson 3, it may be beneficial to include it in all of the lessons. This can give the learners an opportunity to reflect individually about their learning that day and how they might apply that learning to their lives.

Enduring Understandings:

- As Jews acculturate to living in America, Reform Jews renew their tenets and practices in an attempt to sanctify themselves and their bodies, expressing greater intellectual and psychological comfort with Jewish tradition.
- Engagement in an ongoing dialogue with the sources of our tradition about how we can sanctify ourselves and our bodies infuses our lives with קְדֻשָׁה (holiness).
- Ritual and Jewish sacred practices can enable us to infuse our lives with holiness and meaning.

Goals:

- To encourage students to reflect on one's Jewish identity.
- To teach the concept of being created *B'tzelem Elohim* (in the image of God).
- To demonstrate how being created in the image of God means that we need to take care of ourselves and our bodies.
- To inspire students to make choices based on Jewish values, when deciding how to clothe, eat and respond to drugs and alcohol.
- To convince students that it is important to take care of ourselves and our bodies.
- To teach Jewish perspectives on taking care of the body.

Essential Questions:

- What does it mean to be created *B'tzelem Elohim* (in the image of God)?
- How can I take care of myself and my body?
- Why is it important for me to take care of myself and my body?

Unit 4 Lesson 1 – Created in the Image of God

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce the concept of being created *B'tzelem Elohim* – in the image of God. Since we are created in the image of God, there is holiness and sanctity in the human body.[24] This concept can help us think about how we should treat ourselves and our bodies. The way we feel about ourselves and our actions concerning our bodies can make us feel more holy and connected to God. In the subsequent lessons of this unit, the learners will be able to explore rituals, Jewish practices and values which they will be able to adopt or adopt.

Objectives – At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Explain the concept of *B'tzelem Elohim*.
- Explain how human beings, who are created *B'tzelem Elohim*, are different from other creatures.
- Create verses to a song or a poem, describing their own understanding of *B'tzelem Elohim*.

Suggested Learning Activities

Text Study

As a whole class, students will study Genesis 1:26-18 using the attached sourcesheet[25]. Discuss questions 1-4. (Question 5 will be used at the end of the lesson.) Explain that human beings are created in the image of God while other creatures are not described as such. This implies that there is something special about human beings and that God can be manifested in the world through human beings. This is in sharp contrast to ancient Near East traditions where only kings represented the divine.[26]

Being Created in the Image of God through song.

The students may be familiar with the song *B'tzelem Elohim* by Dan Nichols. Attached is the songsheet for the song. If any of the students are guitar players, you can ask them to play it while the class sings along or you can play the song from *Be Strong* CD or an online website http://www.ruachcd.com/music/5761/btzelem_elohim.htm. After the students have listened and/or sang the song, compare the lyrics of the song to the verses in Genesis which they have previously studied. How do the lyrics reflect the ideas from Genesis 1:26-28? What new ideas does the song introduce about being created in the image of God?

> "I love the idea that each of us has something beautiful and divine inside of us, and when we share the very best part of ourselves with each other, that's when God happens." – Dan Nichols[27]

After the students have analyzed the song, invite them to write additional verses to this song or to compose their own song or poem about what they think it means to be created in the image of God. Students may work individually or in pairs.

Students may present their creations and/or share a brief summary and the work should be put on display in the classroom.

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[24] Dreskin, William and Kyla Epstein Schneider, "Whose Body is it, Anyway?" in *Teaching About God and Spirituality*. Denver, CO: ARE Publishing, Inc, 2002, pg 352.
[25] Adapted from Dreskin, William and Kyla Epstein Schneider, "Whose Body is it, Anyway?" in *Teaching About God and Spirituality*. Denver, CO: ARE Publishing, Inc, 2002, pg 352.
[26] Eskenazi, Tamara Cohn ed. *The Torah: A Women's Torah Commentary*. New York, NY: URJ Press, 2008. pg. 8.
[27] http://www.ruachcd.com/music/5761/btzelem_elohim.htm

Transition to the Rest of the Unit

Return to Question 5 from the Genesis text. Generate a list of answers on the board. Then read the text from Leviticus Rabbah which is attached. How does Hillel understand the concept of being created in the image of God?

Explain that in this unit, based on the concept that we are created in the image of God, students will be looking at different ways we can sanctify our bodies.

Created in the Image of God

Genesis 1:26-28

כו וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ וְיִרְדּוּ בִדְגַת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה
וּבְכָל־הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל־הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל־הָאָרֶץ׃ **כז** וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ **בְּצֶלֶם**
אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם׃ **כח** וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים
פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמִלְאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְכִבְשֻׁהָ וּרְדוּ בִּדְגַת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל־חַיָּה הָרֹמֶשֶׂת
עַל־הָאָרֶץ׃

God now said, “Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness; and let them hold sway over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky, over the beasts, over all the earth, over all that creeps upon the earth.” So God created the human beings, in [the divine] image, creating [them] **in the image of God**, creating them male and female. God then blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and tame it; hold sway over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky, and over every animal that creeps on the earth.”

1. What does it mean to be created in the image of God, *B’tzelem Elohim* ?

2. What is the image of God, *Tzelem Elohim*?

3. God speaks in the plural when referring to the creation of human beings: “our image”, “our likeness”. Why?

4. How is being created in the image/likeness of God different from the creation of other creatures? How are human beings different from other creatures?

5. What are the implications of being created *B’tzelem Elohim* (the image of God)?

Leviticus Rabbah 34:3

Once when the sage Hillel had finished a lesson with his pupils, he proceeded to walk along with them.
“Master,” they asked, “where are you going?”
“To perform a religious duty (a *mitzvah),*” he answered.
“Which duty is that?”
“To bath in the bathhouse.”
“Is that a religious duty?” they asked.
“Yes! Somebody, appointed to scour and was the statues of the king that stand in the theatres and circuses, is paid for the work, and is even associated with the nobility,” he answered. “Since that is so, how much more should I, who am created in the image and likeness of God, scour and wash myself? As it is written, “In the image of God, did God make humankind’” (Genesis 9:6).

B'TZELEM ELOHIM

Capo on 2: Play in G
G D9 C9 (4 times)

G D9 C9 G D9 C9
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah (4 times)
Em D/F# C9 G
We all got a life to live. We all got a gift to give.
Em D/F# C9
Just open your heart and let it out.
Em D/F# C9 G
We all got a peace to bring. We all got a song to sing.
Em D/F# C9 C9 D9
Just open your heart and let it out. Yeah...

G D9 C9 G D9 C9
When I reach out to you and you to me,
G D9 C9 G D9 C9
We become b'tzelem Elohim.
G D9 C9 G D9 C9
When we share our hopes and our dreams,
G D9 C9 G D9 C9
Each one of us, b'tzelem Elohim.

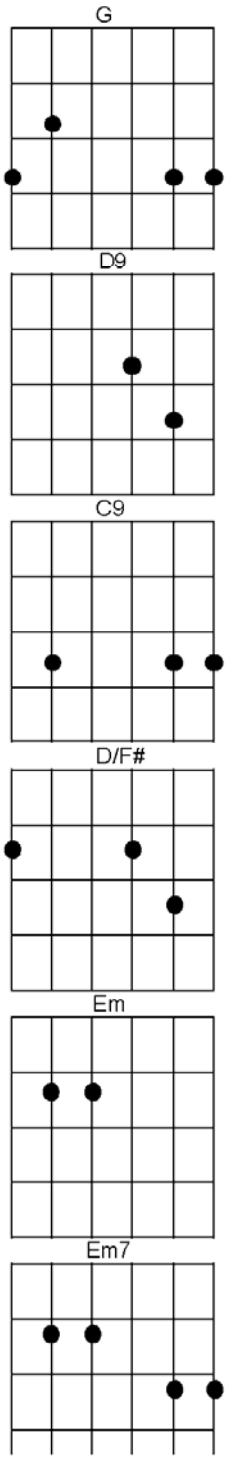
Em D/F# C9 G
We all got a tale to tell. We all want to speak it well.
Em D/F# C9
Just open your heart and let it out.
Em D/F# C9 G
We all got a mountain to climb. We all got a truth to find.
Em D/F# C9 C9 D9
Just open your heart and let it out. Yeah...

CHORUS

Em7 G C9 Em7 G C9
B'reishit ba-ra E- - -lo- - -him, (4X)
Em7 G C9
B'reishit bara Elohim, all our hopes, all our dreams,
Em7 G C9
B'reishit bara E-lo-him, each one of us, b'tzelem Elohim.
Em7 G C9
B'reishit bara Elohim, all our hopes, all our dreams,
Em7 G C9 D9 C9
B'reishit bara Elohim, each one of us, b'tzelem Elohim. Yeah...

CHORUS: 2 times
Repeat last line 3 times ("Each one of us, b'tzelem Elohim")

B'tzelem Elohim: In God's image
B'reishit bara Elohim: In the beginning God created



Unit 4 Lesson 2 – Sanctifying Ourselves by What We Wear

This lesson introduces the first way that we can sanctify our bodies: through our dress and appearance. The students will explore some traditional ways that Jews have looked at how the way someone dressed affects other people They will then be able to create their own lists of how we should dress, based upon the idea that we are created *B'tzelem Elohim* and based upon a particular setting.

Objectives – At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Explain the situations in which a man should not recite the Shema.
- Analyze what kinds of messages one's dress and appearance sends.
- Create their own "best dressed list", based upon the concept of being created *B'tzelem Elohim* and applicable to a particular setting.

Suggested Learning Activities

Text Study – How our dress may affect others

This text is the source of the traditional point of view that women must dress modestly (cover their knees and elbows), cover their hair and not sing during services so that men will not be distracted by their beauty and not be able to concentrate on their prayers. Often these restrictions have been applied to situations outside of prayer. This text study should be done as a whole group. At the end of the discussion, make a list on the board of the messages the students want to send to other people through their dress and appearance. (Different students may respond with messages that others might struggle with, such as "attracting attention". It is important to keep in mind that there are times and places for this and it depends on our own comfort levels.)

Big Ideas

- *The rabbis are worried about a man being distracted while reciting the Shema because the Shema requires special kavanah (intention). The rabbis are worried that the nakedness of a woman would distract the man from being able to pay attention to the words of the Shema, thus not fulfilling his obligation (mitzvah) of reciting it.*

Magazine Exploration

Give students a variety of modern magazines. Students will examine the magazines and analyze what kinds of messages the people are sending, based on the clothes they wear.

Jewish Best Dressed List[28]

In small groups, students will review the Jewish Best Dressed List by Maurice Lamm and answer the discussion questions. Then they will compose their own Jewish Best Dressed List, adapting or adopting from Lamm's list. Each small group will be given a different setting: school, home, at work, at the synagogue, on a date. Each group will present its list and explain how it embodies the concept of being created in the image of God.

[28] Adapted from Isaacson, Rachel. *Looks, Love and Life*. Curriculum Guide, Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles, 2007, p 59.

How Our Dress May Affect Others

Talmud Brachot 24a

The sages are discussing when the Shema may not be recited.

Rabbi Yithak said, "A handbreadth (width of a clenched fist) of exposed skin in a woman is considered nakedness." Regarding what? If you say that it is regarding gazing at a woman, this cannot be. For Rav Sheshet has said, "Why did scripture list the outer jewelry with the inner jewelry?" To teach that whoever even gazes at the little finger of a woman is like one who has gazed at her nakedness. Rather, it must be in reference to one's wife and the recital of the Shema.

Rav Chisda said, "The exposed thigh of a woman is considered nakedness, as it is stated, 'expose a thigh and cross rivers' (Isaiah 47:2) and it is written in the next verse, 'Your nakedness will be exposed and also your embarrassment will be seen.'"

Shmuel said, "The voice (referring to singing and not to speaking) of a woman is considered nakedness as it is stated, "for your voice is sweet and your appearance comely' (Song of Songs 2:14)."

Rav Sheshet said, "The hair of a woman is considered nakedness, as it is stated, 'your hair is like a flock of goats' (Song of Songs 4:1)."

Discussion Questions

1. What are the four situations in which a man should not recite the Shema?

2. What about each of these situations leads the rabbis to say that a man should not recite the Shema in these instances?

3. What are the rabbis worried about?

4. Since we are Reform Jews and we are egalitarian, how would we apply these four situations to men's dress and appearance when women are praying?

5. What messages do our dress and appearance send to other people?

6. What messages do we want to send to other people through our dress and appearance?

7. Given that we are created *B'tzelem Elohim* (in the image of God), how might this affect how we dress and present ourselves?

Jewish Best Dressed List[29]

By Maurice Lamm

1. *Dress with modesty*. Never dress to expose your body or to stimulate or arouse the opposite sex.
2. *Dress with dignity*. Be understated, not obstentatious.
3. *Dress discreetly.* Let your actions speak loudly than your clothes. Gaudy is not Godly.
4. *Dress appropriately*. Be guided by the place and the occasion, not merely by whim… honor special events with special clothing.
5. *Do not dress to make others feel inferior*. Be proud of what you wear, but not so proud ad to want to outshine others, especially the less fortunate.
6. *Do not dress shabbily*. There is no virtue in wearing the cheapest clothing you find. You are what you wear.
7. *Do not dress sloppily*. Recognize the difference between casual and sloppy.
8. *Never wear stained clothes*. Let everything you wear reflect the fact that you were created in the image of God.
9. *Follow religious guidelines*. Observe the traditions for covering the head. Do not wear leather shoes on Yom Kippur. Follow the prohibitions in the Torah against not wearing *sha'atnez*, fabrics that mix wool with linen.
10. *Remember Hukkat ha-Goy*. Do not dress to hide the fact that you are Jewish. You may dress stylishly, but not with the express purpose of looking like everyone else.

Discussion Questions

1. What is your reaction to this list?
2. Which of these ideas makes sense to you? Which of these ideas does not make sense to you? Why?
3. Which of these practices might you adopt into your personal dressing habits? Which of these practices might you adapt into your personal dressing habits, so they embody your values?

On the back of this page, write your own Jewish Best Dressed List for the setting that the teacher will give you. While you are crafting the list, think about the previous lesson on being created *B'tzelem Elohim* (in the image of God) and how our dress can sanctify our bodies.

[29] Lamm, Maurice. *Living Torah in America: Derekh haTov*. Springfield, NJ: Behrman House Publishing, 1993, pp. 24-25.

Unit 4 Lesson 3 – Sanctifying Ourselves Through What We Eat - *Scripted Lesson*

The purpose of this lesson is to explore how we can sanctify ourselves through the food that we eat. Traditionally, *Kashrut* entails laws about what is forbidden and what is permitted to eat. Today, we can extend the "laws" of *kashrut* to include what is healthy.

Objectives – At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Explain traditional and Reform practices of kashrut.
- Explain at least one reason for observing kashrut and eating healthy.
- Evaluate if they are satisfied with their current level of observance of *kashrut* and their current eating habits and suggest ways to adapt them or adopt new practices.

TIME	ACTIVITY
5 min	Set induction
20 min	Text Study – Kashrut
25 min	Text Study – Judaism and Health
10 min	Journaling

Set Induction

Ask students to brainstorm why we have laws or boundaries. Make a list on the board. Hopefully they will say something like, to keep us safe or to tell us what to do and not do, or to set limits. Explain that today they will explore a set of laws or boundaries called *kashrut*, which teaches us about what is permissible and not permissible to eat. The Jewish dietary laws distinguish Jews from other people and are also a way for Jews to sanctify what they put in their bodies, because these laws come from God.

Text Study - Kashrut

Students will read the article, "Kashrut: Reform Point of View[30]" in chevruta.
Guiding Questions:

- What are the traditional laws of *kashrut*?
- What are some Reform ways of observing *kashrut*?
- What are some of the reasons one would observe *kashrut*?
- Do you observe any of the laws of *kashrut*?
- If you do not observe all of the laws of *kashrut*, is there an aspect of *kashrut* that you might adopt or adapt?

Now that we have studied the traditional laws of *kashrut* and how some Reform Jews may observe *kashrut*, we will extend what *kashrut* means.

Text Study – Judaism and Health

The Judaism and Health sourcesheet (attached) consist of a variety of texts that describe attitudes toward healthy behavior. Post the texts all around the room. Pass out the worksheet with the questions and ask students to walk around the room on their own, read the texts and answer the questions. At the end ask students to share what surprised them about the texts, if they agreed or disagreed with any of the texts and what they learned from the texts.

[30] *Gates of Mitzvah: A Guide to the Jewish Life Cycle*. Ed. Simeon J. Maslin. New York, NY: CCAR Press, 1979, pp130-133.

Journaling

Students on their own will respond to the following prompt:

How do you currently observe *kashrut*, if at all? Are there any aspects of *kashrut* that you might adopt/adapt into your eating habits? How healthy do you think your current eating habits are? Based on the Jewish texts you studied today and your general knowledge of health, what practices might you adopt or adapt to make your eating habits more healthy?

Judaism sexual intercourse is most appropriate and most ethical in the context of *Kiddushin*—sacred matrimony.

The following are suggested for further study: Eugene Borowitz, *Choosing a Sex Ethic* (New York, 1969); Louis Epstein, *Sex Laws and Customs in Judaism* (New York, 1958); David Feldman, *Birth Control in Jewish Law* (New York, 1968); and Samuel Glasner, "Judaism and Sex," in Ellis and Abarbanel, *The Encyclopedia of Sexual Behavior* (New York, 1961).

* *

KASHRUT

A REFORM POINT OF VIEW

> Many Reform Jews observe certain traditional dietary disciplines as a part of their attempt to establish a Jewish home and life style. For some, traditional *kashrut* will enhance the sanctity of the home and be observed as a *mitzvah*; for some, a degree of *kashrut* . . . may be meaningful, and still others will find nothing of value in *kashrut*.
>
> "Marriage and the Jewish Home," *E-1*

No guide for Jewish living would be complete if it failed to address the issue of *kashrut*, i.e., the fitness of certain foods according to Jewish tradition. *Kashrut* has been a basic part of Judaism for too long to be ignored; its role in the life of the Jew and in Jewish history ought not be underestimated. The home in Jewish tradition is the *mikdash me-at* (small sanctuary) and the table is the *mizbei-ach* (altar);* it is reasonable, therefore, to ask the Reform Jew to study and consider *kashrut* so as to develop a valid personal position.

Judaism has always recognized a religious dimension to the consumption of food. Being a gift of God, food was never to be taken for granted. And if this was true of food generally, it was especially true of meat, fish,

* See "Marriage and the Jewish Home," *E-1* and *E-7*.

and fowl, which involve the taking of life. And so it is not surprising to find literally scores of passages in the Torah* and the later rabbinic literature specifying which foods are permitted, which forbidden, and how they are to be prepared.

Kashrut—generally translated as "the dietary laws"—involves a whole series of food disciplines which range from the avoidance of pork and shellfish to the eating of *matzah* on Pesach. (It should be noted that there is a wide gamut of Jewish dietary observance which is unrelated to *kashrut*, from the major prohibition against eating on Yom Kippur to such minor customs as eating *blintzes* on Shavuot, *hamantaschen* on Purim, and *latkes* on Chanukah.) Jewish tradition considered *kashrut* to be an especially important part of the code that set Israel apart as a "holy people." Maimonides viewed *kashrut* as a discipline. "It accustoms us to restrain both the growth of desire and the disposition to consider the pleasure of eating and drinking as the end of man's existence." For many centuries it was *kashrut* which most conspicuously separated the Jew from the Diaspora society in which he/she lived.

The Reform movement has, for the most part, ignored the question of the relevance of the dietary laws. W. Gunther Plaut writes of *kashrut*: "the almost total silence of Reform literature on this subject is witness to the fact that it no longer was of real concern to the liberal leadership."† The Reform position was set out in the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885: "We hold that all such Mosaic and Rabbinical laws as regulate diet, priestly purity, and dress originated in ages and under the influence of ideas altogether foreign to our present mental and spiritual state. They fail to impress the modern Jew with a spirit of priestly holiness; their observance in our days is apt rather to obstruct than to further modern spiritual elevation." Although this blanket rejection of the dietary laws as outmoded represented the "official" position of the Reform movement through most of a century, it did not prevent individual Reform Jews and Reform congregations from adopting certain of the dietary laws for a variety of reasons, including the desire not to offend traditional relatives or guests.

* The basic biblical passages on *kashrut* are Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14.

† W. Gunther Plaut, *The Growth of Reform Judaism*, p. 265.

The basic features of the traditional dietary laws are: (1) all fruits and vegetables are permitted and may be eaten with either dairy or meat dishes; (2) any type of fish that has fins and scales is permitted; (3) domestic fowl are permitted but birds of prey are prohibited; (4) all domestic animals which have both a split hoof and chew their cud are permitted; (5) meat and milk may not be eaten together, and the utensils used to prepare and serve meat or milk foods must be kept separate; and (6) fowl and animals which are permitted must be slaughtered and prepared for eating according to ritual law.

In attempting to evolve a personal position on *kashrut*, the Reform Jew or the Reform Jewish family should understand that there are several options, e.g., abstention from pork products and or shellfish, or perhaps adding to this abstention the separation of milk and meat; these practices might be observed in the home and not when eating out, or they might be observed all the time. Or one might opt to eat only kosher meat or even to adopt some form of vegetarianism so as to avoid the necessity of taking a life. (This would be in consonance with the principle of *tzaar baalei chayim*—prevention of pain or cruelty to animals.) The range of options available to the Reform Jew is from full observance of the biblical and rabbinic regulations to total nonobservance. Reform Judaism does not take an "all or nothing" approach.

In the Torah (Leviticus 11:44 and Deuteronomy 14:21) the Jewish people is commanded to observe the dietary laws as a means of making it *kadosh*—holy. Holiness has the dual sense of inner hallowing and outer separateness. The idea of sanctifying and imposing discipline on the most basic and unavoidable act of human behavior, eating, is one of the reasons that may lead a person to adopt some form of *kashrut*. Among the other reasons that one may find compelling are: (1) identification and solidarity with the worldwide Jewish community, (2) the ethical discipline of avoiding certain foods or limiting one's appetite because of the growing scarcity of food in parts of the world, (3) the avoidance of certain foods that are traditionally obnoxious to Jews, e.g., pork, which may provide a sense of identification with past generations and their struggle to remain Jews, (4) the authority of ancient biblical and rabbinic injunctions, and (5) the desire to have a home in which any Jew might feel free to eat.

One or more of these reasons as well as others might influence certain Reform Jews to adopt some of the dietary regulations as a *mitzvah*, while others may remain satisfied with the position articulated in the Pittsburgh Platform. However, the fact that *kashrut* was for so many centuries an essential part of Judaism, and that so many Jews gave their lives for it, should move Reform Jews to study it and to consider carefully whether or not it would add *kedushah* to their homes and their lives.

A BASIC LIBRARY

FOR THE JEWISH HOME

> In keeping with the *mitzvah* of *Talmud Torah* . . . a Jewish home should have a library, and time should be set aside for the study of Torah.
>
> "Marriage and the Jewish Home" . . .

It is admittedly presumptuous to select a few dozen titles from the . . . of thousands of volumes of Judaica produced by scholars . . . over the . . . turies and to present them as the basic library for the Jewish home. These suggestions are offered, however, recognizing that there are glaring omissions from the past and that worthier titles will appear in the future, because we could not recommend the collecting of a Jewish library without offering some guidance.

It would have been much easier to compile a list of one or two hundred titles than this list of thirty-odd. But we wanted to put together a list that a person could actually find, buy, and put on a shelf at modest cost. Another characteristic of this basic library is that all of the books have been published since the 1950s. Their modernity does not necessarily make them the best books available in their subject areas, but they are all readable, current, and authoritative. The person who reads through this library will understand how Judaism developed and what it stands for today.

One final word: this library was selected with a definite bias. Well over half the books were written by scholars identified with the Reform move-

Judaism and Health[31] - Texts

Text #1
If you find honey, eat only what you need. Otherwise, you'll overdo it, and throw it up.
Proverbs 25:16

Text #2
It is forbidden to live in a city that does not have a vegetable garden.
Palestinian Talmud, Kiddushin 4:12, 66d

Text #3
Rabbi Yose said, "People may not mortify themselves by fasting, lest they [fall ill and] become a charge on the community, which will then have to maintain them." Rabbi Judah said in the name of Rav, "What is Rabbi Yose's reason? Because in saying, 'And let man become a live soul' (Genesis 2:7), Scripture means: Keep alive the soul I gave you." *Babylonian Talmud, Ta'anit 22b, Tosafot Ta'anit 2:12*

Text #4
If a man would take care of his body as he takes care of the animal he rides on, he would be spared many serious ailments. For you will not find a man who would give too much hay to his animal, but he measures it according to its capacity. However, he himself will eat too much without measure and consideration. Man is very attentive to his animal's movement and fatigue in order that it should continue in a sate of health and not get sick, but he is not attentive to his own body…

We should eat only when justified by a feeling of hunger, when the stomach is clear and the mouth possesses sufficient saliva. Then we are really hungry. We must not drink water unless we are truly justified by thirst. This means that if we feel hungry or thirsty we should wait a little, as occasionally we are led to feel so by a deceptive hunger and deceptive thirst. *Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot De'ot 4.*

Text #5
If your custom is to take walks, you should intend it for the sake of heaven—in order to be healthy for the service of God. Your thought should be that you are exercising so that your mind will be relaxed and vigorous, so that you will see how to act in all your affairs as is proper. *Avodah ha-kodesh, Moreh b'Etzba, 3-123 as quoted by Yitzchak Buxbaum in Jewish Spiritual Practices, pg. 654)*

Text #6
Judaism does not despise the carnal. It does not urge us to desert the flesh but to control and to counsel it; to please the natural needs of the flesh so that the spirit should not be molested by unnatural frustrations… Judaism teaches us how even the gratification of animal needs can be an act of sanctification.
Abraham Joshua Heschel, Man Is Not Alone, pg 263.

[31] Adapted from Freeman, Susan. *Teaching Jewish Virtues: Sacred Sources and Arts Activities*. Denver, CO: ARE Publishing, 1999, pp 271-274 and Freeman, Susan. *Teaching Hot Topics: Jewish Values, Resources and Activities*. Denver, CO: ARE Publishing, 2003, p 90.

Judaism and Health[32] - Questions

Text #1

1. What specific warning is given regarding overdoing it?

2. What are the more general implications—that is, is there a greater principle hinted at?

3. What are other ways that we "overdo it" in our society today?

Text #2

1. What is the Jewish argument for eating your vegetables?

2. According to the Talmud, besides having a vegetable garden, the city in which you live should have a physician. What else do you think a city should have to be considered one that supports good health?

Text #3

1. What kinds of practices is Rabbi Yose warning against?

2. How could endangering your own health harm others as well?

3. What are some examples, besides excessive fasting?

4. How does God want us to treat our souls?

[32] Adapted from Freeman, Susan. *Teaching Jewish Virtues: Sacred Sources and Arts Activities*. Denver, CO: ARE Publishing, 1999, pp 271-274 and Freeman, Susan. *Teaching Hot Topics: Jewish Values, Resources and Activities*. Denver, CO: ARE Publishing, 2003, p 90.

Text #4

1. What insight does Maimonides bring to how we treat our animals and ourselves?

2. What danger is Maimonides warning us against?

3. What are some advantages and disadvantages of Maimonides' statement?

Text #5

1. What physical, mental, spiritual benefits are there to exercise?

2. Are you satisfied with your exercise habits?

3. Are there any adjustments you think you should make?

Text #6

1. What is the Jewish attitude toward the body?

2. Why might we "control" and "counsel" regarding our physical selves?

3. What might you "control" and "counsel" in the way that you treat your body?

Unit 4 Lesson 4 – Sanctifying Ourselves Through Our View on Drugs and Alcohol

The purpose of this lesson is to explore the connection between using drugs and alcohol, Judaism and sanctifying our bodies. Alcohol is very present in Jewish life. We make Kiddush on Shabbat, holidays and other festive occasions, drink 4 cups at the Seder, etc. But Jewish sources also warn us against excessive alcohol use and the consequences of those actions. Jewish tradition permits the use of drugs, for legitimate medical purposes but otherwise they are not permitted because they can injure our physical and mental health.[33] It may be beneficial to invite a Jewish social worker or psychologist to offer their opinions on this topic, professionally and as a Jew.

Objectives – At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Explain Judaism's view on drugs and alcohol, based on the sources learned.
- Identify the benefits and drawbacks of using alcohol and drugs (recreational and medicinal).
- Apply their knowledge of Judaism's view on drugs and alcohol to various scenarios.

Suggested Learning Activities

Self Evaluation

Students will answer the questions on the accompanying worksheet on their own. Then they will discuss their answers with one other person.

Text Study – Judaism, Drugs and Alcohol[34]

In small groups, students will study the accompanying sourcesheet which contains a variety of Jewish texts on the subject of drugs and alcohol. Students should answer the questions accompanying each text and the culminating questions after studying all of the texts regarding Judaism's position on drugs and alcohol. Each group may share their conclusions with the rest of the class.

Scenarios

Based on their knowledge of what Judaism says about drugs and alcohol from the previous activity, students will decide how to handle different situations in which a teenager is involved in self-destructive behavior. When students respond, ask them to highlight what is Jewish about their answers. This can be done as a whole group or the class can be divided into small groups, each one receiving a scenario and reporting back to the big group how they would handle the situation.

[33] Washofsky, Marc. *Jewish Living: A Guide to Contemporary Reform Practice*. New York, NY: UAHC Press, 2001, p 264.
[34] Adapted from Freeman, Susan. *Teaching Hot Topics: Jewish Values, Resources and Activities*. Denver, CO: ARE Publishing, 2003, p 89.

Self Evaluation[35]

On your own, answer yes or no to the following questions:

1. Jewish events should only include Kiddush wine.
2. Too much drinking shows a lack of self-discipline.
3. Synagogues should not serve alcohol at all.
4. Adults are being hypocritical when they forbid teenagers to use alcohol and other substances.
5. Prescription drugs are no different than illegal drugs.
6. Drugs like Ecstasy are only bad because they are illegal.
7. Using Marijuana eventually leads to the use of harder drugs.
8. It's okay to use drugs or alcohol to make you feel better.
9. Getting drunk is no big issue as long as you don't drive.
10. Drinking and substance abuse should be a matter of personal decision and not a question of law.

Share your answers with the person sitting next to you. What was similar and different about your answers? What principles or ideas guided the way that you answered the questions? Did anything surprise you as you answered the questions?

[35] Oliztky, Kerry M. and Grishaver, Joel Lurie. *Body Ethics: Drugs and Alcohol*. Los Angeles, CA: Torah Aura Productions, 2002, p.3. as seen in Isaacson, Rachel. *Looks, Love and Life*. Curriculum Guide, Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles, 2007, p 50.

Judaism, Drugs and Alcohol

1. When the wine goes in, intelligence takes its leave. Wherever there is wine, there is no intelligence. *Numbers Rabbah 10:8*.

2. A drunkard who has become as drunk as Lot- his judgment is like that on an idiot. *Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 1:8*.
   - What is a consequence of consuming alcohol?
   - Do you agree with these texts? Why or why not?
   - Have you ever experienced a similar situation in real life? If yes, please explain.

3. The benefits of wine are many if it is taken in the proper amount, as it keeps the body in a healthy condition and cures many illnesses. But the knowledge of its consumption is hidden from the masses. What they want is to get drunk, and drunkenness causes harm…
   The small amount that is useful must be taken after the food leaves the stomach. Young children should not come close to it because it hurts them and causes harm to their body and soul. *Maimonides, The Preservation of Youth*
   - What are the benefits and drawbacks of drinking wine?
   - Maimonides suggests that drinking alcohol should be done "in the proper amount". What might he mean by that?
   - Why might Maimonides make a distinction between what is acceptable for adults and children?

4. Rava said, "One is obligated to be so drunk on Purim so that he does not know the difference between the phrases "cursed is Haman" and "blessed is Mordechai." Rabbah and Rabbi Zeira had the Purim feast together. They got drunk. Rabbah arose and slew Rabbi Zeira. The next day, Rabbah prayed to God for mercy and Rabbi Zeira was revived. The following year, Rabbah asked Rabbi Zeira, "You should come so that we can have the Purim feast together." Rabbi Zeira answered, "Not every time does a miracle occur." *Babylonian Talmud, Megillah 7b*
   - What are the rabbis' attitudes toward drinking alcohol on Purim?
   - What are the dangers of excessive consumption of alcohol?
   - Have you ever experienced a similar situation in real life? If yes, please explain.

5. Do not take drugs because they demand periodic doses and your heart will crave them. You will also lose money. Even for medicinal purposes, do not take drugs if you can find a different medicine that will help. *Rashbam, commentary on Pesachim 113a*.
   - Why does Rashbam prohibit using drugs? What are some consequences of using drugs?
   - Is there a different between drugs used for medicine and drugs used for other purposes? Please explain.

6. Judaism does not condemn the use, in moderation, of alcoholic beverages. On the contrary: the Bible speaks in praise of wine as a substance that "gladdens the human heart" (Psalm 104:15). Wine has always played a visibly central role in Jewish religious culture. This is evident in the fact that the tradition ordains special blessings to be recited prior to and following its consumptions, just as it does for bread. The use of wine is required in such ritual practices as *Kiddush*, the "four cups" at the Passover Seder, and the celebration of weddings and *berit milah*…

   The tradition, as we have seen, permits the use of drugs as long as we do so in service of a legitimate medical purpose. We may administer even the most powerful chemical, provided that: the goal is to combat disease or to control pain; that the chemicals are prescribed by physicians following protocols established and accepted by the medical profession and by the law; and that the drugs are taken under careful supervision of qualified medical personnel. Outside of those strict limitations, the taking of drugs is forbidden because they are injurious to physical and mental health. Judaism does not countenance (tolerate) the use of drugs for recreation, nor does it recognize any religious value gained from the "expansion of consciousness" by chemical means. These substances should be avoided, and we should do our utmost to see to it that those addicted to them are given the assistance they need to break that dependency.
   Washofsky, Marc. *Jewish Living: A Guide to Contemporary Reform Practice*. New York, NY: UAHC Press, 2001, pp 263-264.
   - What role does alcohol play in Jewish rituals?
   - According to Marc Washofsky, what is Judaism's position on the use of drugs for medical purposes? For recreational purposes?

After looking at all of these texts, please answer the following questions:
- How would you summarize the "Jewish position" on drugs and alcohol?
- In what ways do the texts reflect a permissive viewpoint? A restrictive viewpoint?
- What are the "gray areas"?
- How are our attitude towards the use of drugs and alcohol related to our ability to sanctify our bodies?

Scenarios

Absolut Confrontation[36]

Joan is seventeen. She has a friend, Rob, sixteen, whom she believes has a serious drinking problem. She believes that he is drinking just about everyday and may be an alcoholic. Liquor is hidden all over his room, and he is always finding ways to buy more. Not only is he majorly drunk at every party, but often when they talk on the phone at night, it seems that he is drunk. Joan has talked to Rob about it, and he says, "Don't worry, I can handle my liquor." He says, "Just forget about it. It is not your problem—and there is no problem." She wants to know if she should do something more. What should Joan do?

Hebrew School Exile[37]

Sam is a 12-year-old who was arrested for selling his Ritalin as a recreational drug to friends at his private school. Other parents in the Hebrew school have argued that Sam is a bad influence and house not be allowed to remain in Hebrew school. His parents tell rabbi Shafer that a Torah education can change Sam's messed up values. Sam does not want to go to Hebrew school but will not have a bar mitzvah if he is removed from the school. He is not a pleasure to teach. Should Sam be removed from the school to protect the other students?

Older Brother[38]

The older brother of a student you know buys alcohol for a group of underage teens. On a couple of occasions recently, you have seen these teens driving around town, obviously while under the influence of alcohol. What should you do?

Party

You are at a high-school party with your very good friends and the parents of the host are out of town. You are having a great time talking and hanging out with your friends when someone approaches you and offers you a beer. Later someone offers you a shot of vodka. A few minutes later, someone invites you to smoke some marijuana. Your friends are thinking about consuming these substances and ask you to join them. What do you do?

[36] Grishaver, Joel Lurie. *You Be the Judge 3*. Los Angeles, CA: Torah Aura Productions, 2004, p. 44.
[37] Grishaver, Joel Lurie. *You Be the Judge 3*. Los Angeles, CA: Torah Aura Productions, 2004, p. 100.
[38] Freeman, Susan. *Teaching Hot Topics: Jewish Values, Resources and Activities*. Denver, CO: ARE Publishing, 2003, p 96.

Unit 5 – Culmination

Overview

This is the culminating unit of the curriculum guide. The students were introduced to the concept of ritual in the first unit. In this unit, they will explore this concept further, explore new and innovative rituals other Jews have developed and then create their own rituals. Throughout this curriculum guide the students have encountered many different Jewish texts, values, ritual and sacred practices. They have the tools now to evaluate rituals and to create their own based on previous knowledge and guidance from the teacher and other Jewish professionals in the congregation. It would be ideal for the students to present their new rituals to a real audience, such as parents, the whole school, community Jewish professionals, etc. This would make this project an authentic assessment with an authentic audience which could utilize these rituals as a way to add meaning and holiness to their lives.

Understandings:

- Political, social and intellectual changes in different Jewish communities prompt Jewish leaders to adapt and transform Judaism.
- As Jews acculturate to living in America, Reform Jews renew their tenets, practices, and the aesthetics of their worship, expressing greater intellectual and psychological comfort with Jewish tradition.
- Engagement in an ongoing dialogue with the sources of our tradition infuses our lives with קְדֻשָּׁה (holiness).
- Ritual and Jewish sacred practices can enable us to infuse our lives with holiness and meaning.

Goals:

- To teach the significance of a ritual in Judaism.
- To introduce students to new rituals which have been created relatively recently.
- To demonstrate how rituals can transform a seemingly mundane experience into a sacred and holy experience.
- To inspire students to create new rituals for situations which they think warrant them.
- To facilitate the students' design of a rubric for a ritual.

Essential Questions:

- What constitutes a ritual?
- How can a ritual add holiness and meaning to our lives?

Unit 5 Lesson 1 – What is a ritual? - *Scripted Lesson*

This lesson is the first lesson of concluding unit. The students have already explored a variety of rituals and Jewish sacred practices. In this lesson, they will unpack what a Jewish ritual or sacred practice consists of, in order to enable them to create their own rituals or sacred practices.

Objectives – At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Define the word ritual and explain its purpose.
- Analyze rituals that they are familiar with by identify its different components.
- Create a rubric for creating new rituals.

TIME	ACTIVITY
10 min	Set Induction
20 min	Components of Ritual
25 min	Creating a Rubric
5 min	Wrap-up

Learning Activities

Set Induction - What is a ritual?

Ask students to define the word "ritual". Their definitions may include things that they do routinely as a habit. If that is the case, ask them to think about ritual in the Jewish context and what role ritual plays in Jewish ceremonies, life cycle events and holiday observances. (Two articles are attached *Creating Jewish Ritual* [39] and *The Spirituality of Ritual*[40] as a resource and can be given to the students as a resource as well). Write all of the students' ideas on the board and explain that throughout the year they have been learning about different rituals and sacred practice but today they will explore what makes a ritual, a ritual.

Components of Ritual

In chevruta, students will receive 3 articles, *Afterword: How to Create a Ritual* by Debra Orenstein[41], *Planning a Ritual* by RitualWell.org and *Old Symbols, New Rituals: Adapting Traditional Symbols, Ceremonies and Blessings* by Marcia Cohn Spiegel. Students will read these articles and identify the major components a ritual should have. These can be based on ideas in the articles or additional criteria that the students think of. Then the students should pick a lifecycle event or a holiday observance and evaluate which components of a ritual that ritual/lifecycle event has and which it might be missing. Students will report their findings to the rest of the class.

Suggested Questions:

- What is the purpose of a ritual?
- What components should a ritual consist of? (according to the articles and based upon your opinion)
- Think of a holiday or lifecycle celebration. Which of the components of a ritual are present? Is anything missing? What might you add to the ceremony/celebration to enhance it?

[39] Karlin-Neumann, Patricia. "Creating Jewish Rituals" in *Teching Jewish Life Cycle: Traditions and Activities.* Denver, CO: ARE Publishing, Inc, 1997.

[40] Zwerkin, Rabbi Raymond A. "The Spirituality of Ritual" in *Teching Jewish Life Cycle: Traditions and Activities*. Denver, CO: ARE Publishing, Inc, 1997.

[41] Orenstein, Debra. "Afterword: How to Create a Ritual" in *Lifecycles: Jewish Women on Life Passages & Personal Milestones*. Edited by Rabbi Debra Orenstein. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1994, Vol 1, pp360-362.

Creating a Rubric for a new Ritual

Explain that the students will have an opportunity to create their own rituals. As a class brainstorm a rubric (set of standards or criteria) for creating a new ritual. Does it need to have food? When? Where? Who is involved? Frequency? In English, Hebrew or another language? Does the ritual include a Jewish text or a *brachah* (blessing) or a prayer? Does the ritual needs to have all of these components or only some of them? If only some, which ones are more important? Are some components more important than others? Are there any ritual objects that might be used? What is the purpose of the ritual? Etc. After the students have finalized their criteria, the rubric should be typed up and made available to the students for the rest of the unit.

> *The article, "About Ritual – Planning a Ritual", offers several criteria for creating a ritual, which might start as a jumping off point for a class rubric. A standard rubric is not included so that they class can develop one together as a group, although many suggestions are given in the accompanying articles.*

Wrap-Up

Explain that in the next class session students will be able to explore new rituals that have been created in the last century and then they will have an opportunity to create their own rituals.

APPENDIX 2

CREATING JEWISH RITUALS

Patricia Karlin-Neumann

Recent years have seen an explosion of new Jewish rituals. From mimeographed rituals to xeroxed rituals to desktop published rituals to rituals which have been performed but not recorded, the willingness to capture the large and small moments of our lives through ritual has become part of the landscape of Jewish life. Whereas once the creation of new ritual was both daring and rare, now the practice of creating new rituals with fragments of a tradition seems, if not commonplace, scarcely outrageous.

Why are so many Jews creating new rituals? Rabbi Laura Geller, one of the first women Rabbis, tells about her epiphany at Hebrew Union College when one of her teachers said, "There are no important moments in a Jew's life for which there is not a blessing," and, daydreaming, Laura started cataloguing all the moments in her life which had gone unmarked.

Rabbi Margaret Holub shares a story from the book *To Dance with God* by Gertrude Mueller Nelson about a two-year-old who had outgrown his crib. When he protested at the idea of giving it up, his mother devised a ritual for this transition. She made a special dinner; the whole family talked about his crib, how sad it would be to see it go, and how exciting it would be to move to the new stage of sleeping in a "big boy bed." They all lovingly took the crib apart, made the bed up with linens the boy had chosen, said his prayers, and tucked him in.

This description of a ritual moment, this acknowledgment of a moment of transition, touched Margaret deeply. "How different my childhood, indeed my adulthood would be, if people around me valued and marked the things that I think are important," she has written ("Ritual: The Next Phase," unpublished).

Rituals of the kitchen and bedroom variety and rituals of the religious variety are an integral part of human experience. For those who live in Jewish rhythms, the desire to mark those occasions of importance, of transition, with rituals which affirm both our individual and our communal life, has prompted us to invention.

Ritual and liturgy are analogous to sign language. One who is deaf has as much desire to communicate as one who hears, but often needs sign language to do so. Similarly, ritual and liturgy become tools for communicating meaning. For the language of ritual to serve the purpose of communication, there must be those who share and can use its tools and those who receive and understand the messages.

In doing Jewish ritual, we are attempting to etch Jewish meanings into the lives and souls and bodies of Jews. Ritual both gives people access to Judaism, and shapes their sense of themselves as Jews. In the atomized modern world in which we live, rituals place the individual in community, in continuity. Rituals create a place.

Few people have taught the Jewish community as much about valuing ritual and story as Barbara Myerhoff, *zichronah livrachah*, author of *Number Our Days,* a sensitive and profound study of the elderly Jews of Venice. She once said, "Ritual is the enactment of a wish. It is the display of a state of mind. And above all, it is a performative enterprise. It is made up of symbols, almost always that deal with ambiguities or paradoxes. Something irresolvable. Change, chaos, disruption. It handles these chaotic elements by being sensory and very concrete, and also by being rhetorical . . . Ritual subverts, undermines the cognitive and critical faculties . . . and glosses the contradictions and paradoxes. In ritual, it is the doing that is the believing. And the doer, being your own body, is singularly persuasive, because it is your own experience which finally persuades you.

"Ritual makes things sacred. It sets them apart. It sanctifies them by announcing and calling attention to their specialness. Ritual is formalized, stylized, artificial" ("Sanctifying Women's Lives through Ritual," unpublished).

We create ritual, then, to ennoble the everyday. Doing ritual is, at base, a Jewish enterprise, complementing the tradition of praising God with one hundred *brachot* a day, of noticing and calling attention to what is around us. Yet, having lost so much of daily practice, and living in the contemporary world, it becomes necessary to reconstruct or invent.

"Teaching Jewish Lifecycles"
ARE Publishing

How do we know when an occasion demands a ritual? Is every moment equally filled with possibility? If, as Barbara Myerhoff claims, rituals help us deal with chaos or change or ambiguities, any moment of liminality, of transition from one world to another, calls out to be marked. There are many ways to make this mark, to honor the transition. We might create a new ritual or use an old one in a new way. We might create a synagogue ceremony or a private meditation. We might write a new *brachah* or use traditional ones in ways they were not originally intended.

Modern rituals give us some sense of where people feel the blank spaces were in their lives: aging, marriage, separation, divorce, pregnancy, choices about childbirth, nursing, weaning, infertility, giving a baby up for adoption, pregnancy loss, menstruation, death, Rosh Chodesh, and holidays. Barbara Myerhoff suggests that rituals are necessary in those places where we usually suffer alone: surgery, menopause, retirement, empty nest, and loss. Esther Broner, author of *The Telling: A Weave of Women* and *Her Mothers,* and perhaps the most prolific creator of Jewish rituals, says that her best customers are people with broken hearts ("Sanctifying Women's Lives through Rituals" unpublished).

Rabbi Debra Orenstein adds to the list: completing a creative project, becoming a grandparent, forgiving yourself for a sin you have committed, celebrating a time of family closeness, first love, first sex, first apartment, planning a wedding, publishing a book, deciding to leave a lover, coming out as a lesbian or a gay man, acknowledging that someone you love is terminally ill, leaving a batterer, reconciling with someone from whom you have been estranged, making *aliyah,* recovering from an addiction, healing from sexual abuse, and cooking a special family dish with your bubbe's recipe *(Lifecycles: Jewish Women on Life Passages and Personal Milestones, Vol. 1).*

I offer this list because I am concerned that we sometimes limit creative rituals to the biological events, particularly in women's lives, which have not been marked. There is a paradox in women creating ritual for biological moments. Women bristle at being tied only to biology; yet, there is a need to sanctify in a Jewish way what our bodies experience. Rachel Adler cautions that "Creating religious metaphors solely out of our biological experience will tend to make us womanists rather than Jews" (*Face to Face,* Spring, 1981).

Women have been the primary initiators of creative ritual. As people who have felt, like Barbara Myerhoff, an inevitable sense of exclusion, women have found a connection back to the tradition in large measure, by invention. Because women have not traditionally lived our lives in the public Jewish sphere, women have honored the private realm by sharing it with others through ritual.

Yet, in contrast to T. S. Eliot who wrote, "Birth, copulation and death, that's all, that's all, that's all," not only those marginal, but those enfranchised also experience a great deal of contemporary life which the tradition does not address. As Rabbi Debra Orenstein suggests, "Women's perspectives will call attention to forgotten or neglected issues, broaden Jewish thinking and practice, re-open basic questions from a new vantage point. When we ask, 'What does it mean for a woman . . . to wrestle with aspects of the tradition from which she is alienated?,' we eventually apply the same quesiton to men, and then to Jews, and still further down the line we get to core questions about God and learning and a holy tradition that has been both shaped and muddled by human hands" ("Women and Jewish Lifecycle: Bridging 'Real Life,' Academics and Popular Literature," unpublished).

When my mother died, I began asking all my observant women friends, "How do Jewish women mourn their mothers?" I was answered with the silence of the tradition. Whatever rituals had been performed hadn't been passed down. My dear friend and teacher, playwright Merle Feld, told me to be idiosyncratic. She gave me permission to create a ritual for this moment of transition.

My mother was an expert knitter. Before she died, I brought knitting needles and yarn to her in the hospital so that she could knit a baby bunting for the child we had not yet conceived. She died unable to knit the bunting. I began to think about my mother's knitting, of her having taught me to knit — part of her Torah — and I decided to knit the baby bunting I had urged on her and say *"Kaddish D'Rabbanan,"* originally said following Torah study in someone's honor, each morning. As I knit with yarn, I knit memory, and during that year I came to make peace with who my mother was, and what her legacy is. I also came to know that life is finite, and realized that it was time to become a mother myself. At our daughter's *Brit*

Bat (Covenant of the Daughter ceremony) I gave her the completed bunting, a gift of the journey from death to life.

As a Jewish ritual, this was idiosyncratic, healing, innovative, and traditional. The form was determined by the tradition. The content was determined by the needs which the tradition didn't address.

I became a mother the same week I became an orphan. Being the link between the generation before me and the generation after me has had a profound impact on how I experience Judaism. It has given me an urgent desire that the stream which flows through and nourishes the next generation will be watered by previous ones. This makes me a conservative innovator. I want the Judaism which I share with my children to be recognizable to my parents.

Rituals which resonate with the tradition allow us to enter into a timeless stream. They invite us into the eternal. Sheryl Robbin wrote an essay entitled "Hands," in which she describes the considerable and solitary preparations she makes for Shabbat late Thursday night in her kitchen. While she makes dishes her foremothers would not have known and uses her Cuisinart to create them, she feels "an eternity beyond time as strong as the ageless communion we invoke when engrossed in prayer." She invites the women before her into her kitchen with her work, work which she understands as *avodah*, "the sacrifice that women have offered through the centuries" (*Tikkun*, July/August, 1991).

These kitchen rituals are also part of our repertoire, the rituals of placing ourselves in Jewish time, of living by Jewish rhythms, of using Jewish language to sanctify the experience of the moment. For ritual to be Jewish, it needs to partake of our rhythms, our language, to tie the participants more fully to a stream of tradition, to a community of memory, which belongs to all of us.

Esther Broner reminds us that "the words ritual and rite and rhythm and arithmetic all have the same root. And Jews always ask the same question regarding roots, 'Are they Jewish?'" ("Sanctifying Women's Lives through Ritual," unpublished). Rabbi Debra Orenstein insists on grappling with the tradition in creating Jewish rituals, and, even in the case of what I call "protest rituals," the very process ties one more fully to Judaism. "It is important to engage the tradition in a real dialogue . . . I would not want to see new rituals without also seeing a thorough and profound consideration of traditional sources, lacunae in those sources, new visions and understanding of the tradition, the process of struggling with the tradition, the use of old texts in new ways, the creation of new texts that is somehow in keeping with ancient themes and methods . . . It is crucial to develop an understanding of the tradition on its own terms. At the same time, it is vital to explicate and model the methods by which we may choose to interpret it anew and/or to transform it" ("Issues to Consider in the Creation of Effective and Convincing Ritual," unpublished).

For a ritual to work, it needs to resonate, to draw on, and allude to traditional texts, symbols, and stories, but, as Rabbi Orenstein cautions, it should not "explain itself to death." Good rituals tread a fine line between being particular and being general. Rituals should be grounded in the personal experience and thoughts of its creators, but should be meaningful to those outside the circle where they originated.

Anthropologists identity three stages of ritual: a stage of separation from one's previous status, a stage of transition, and a stage of re-embodiment and incorporation. A ritual which works creates a sense of this transformation. Effective rituals transform the community as well as the individual. As Rabbi Orenstein writes, "Lifecycle events and categories define both personal and communal status . . . What event is more private and more public than a funeral? Effective ritual should never ignore the communal in pursuing the personal. Convincing ritual asserts the integrity of individual and communal life by reflecting forward and backward. Thus we name children after relatives who have died, and at the same time pray for their arrival at the chuppah, and, implicitly, the arrival of still the next generation" ("Issues to Consider in the Creation of Effective and Convincing Ritual" unpublished). Convincing ritual draws on the senses, addresses a multiplicity of concerns, and grounds the participants in the sacred.

Many Rabbis have an instinctual sense of how to create ritual which works. So do many lay people, who are sometimes less encumbered by the do's and don'ts of Jewish tradition. They are sometimes able to bridge the personal and communal with less self consciousness than Rabbis. At times, it is the

laity's very yearning to enter the stream of tradition which gives power to ritual.

However, we must always be aware that rituals can be discreet moments with fleeting transformations. While rituals are powerful, they take most fully when the participants are rooted in community, in a tradition of meaning. Creating a ritual is not as simple as following a recipe and taking the finished product out of the oven.

Barbara Myerhoff teaches that a "ritual is an occasion when one takes the chaos within the world and within oneself and pours it into a vessel that gives it shape and gives it order and power and form. A meaning-making activity. Ritual makes authoritative and sacred and axiomatic that which it treats . . ." ("Sanctifying Women's Lifes through Ritual," unpublished).

This can be a breathtaking power, literally the power to make Jews. We who are grounded in Judaism, who live with the power of its reach in our lives, who have the symbols, the texts, the language and the strength of the tradition in our marrow have a central place in the energy and excitement of Jews claiming Judaism for their own. May we celebrate our place and rejoice in our time.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF RITUAL

Rabbi Raymond A. Zwerin

Of all the behaviors available to us humans, religious ritual is certainly among our most spiritual acts. Ritual is an odd subject because, until very recently it was thought to be such a private matter — a topic for the home and the religious institution. Rarely was it a topic for public discussion, much less the subject of intellectual scrutiny. Those who engage in ritual behavior rarely give what they do much thought — they just do it. Those who do not engage in ritual behavior also rarely give it much thought — they just avoid doing it.

In a study published by the Center for Family Research of George Washington University, St. Louis, Steven Wolin and Linda Bennett made some interesting findings. They noted that families which use rituals of whatever kind as a means of passing on rules of behavior, expectations, and family history create children who are likely to be more resilient as adults.

They studied 240 students entering college and 70 of their parents and found that "the more meaningful that family rituals were thought to be, the more positive that student's sense of self, and the better able the freshman is at adapting to the stresses of college."

Incredibly, in families of alcoholics where there was some ongoing daily ritual as a family, the offspring were found to be less likely, by a dramatic margin, to become alcoholics.

And, in individuals, rituals viewed as being important are shown to lower levels of anxiety dramatically and to lessen chronic stress. Therefore, the researchers were quick to point out, how sad it is to see that such core family rituals as dinner together and bedtime reading and family outings are disappearing because of the time demands of jobs, the increase in single parent families where one parent hasn't the energy at day's end to fully engage the children, and, of course, the shrinking paycheck.

What is ritual; what do we mean by the term? That's not an easy question, because ritual is a fairly elusive concept. There is, of course, a great difference between *actual ritual* and merely *ritualized actions*. Ritualized actions are behavioral mannerism, tension relievers, or superstitious quirks which we all have — avoiding black cats and leaning ladders, or knocking on wood or saying "*kee ain eyin hara*." Ritualized actions are the sort of thing a baseball player does when coming to bat — a tug on the cap, knocking dirt out of cleats, or grabbing the bat at both ends and rolling it back over the head. Such mannerisms are transitory or they are habits much as lighting up after dinner or checking hair and lipstick in a mirror for the umpteenth time. Such ritualized actions neither elevate nor transcend; they neither mark a particularly memorable moment nor do they connect us with one another.

Actual rituals, however, have a certain power all their own. Authentic rituals communicate values. So, when before a ball game or a session of Congress or in a schoolroom or at a public meeting we stand for the "Pledge of Allegiance" or the "National Anthem" we are saying that the principles of our country are important to us.

Rituals also foster identity. So, when we look forward to fireworks or a picnic on the 4th of July, or when we share a Thanksgiving day turkey with family and friends, or when we plan a last few days of vacation together on Labor Day weekend, we say a lot about who we are in relation to the country in which we live.

Some rituals can promote health and healing. Physical exercise, a few moments of meditation, prayers before sleep and during difficult times in one's life . . . are certainly beneficial to body and mind.

Ritual can relieve tensions between people. Socially agreed upon behaviors — rituals — can take the guesswork out of what is expected and what is not acceptable. Proof, if such is needed, was the simple matter of the handshake in 1993 between Rabin and Arafat — old enemies standing side-by-side on the White House lawn. That ritual gesture was as important to the moment as the signing of the papers. Such ritualized proprieties can relieve

social anxieties and serve as "safety valves" for potential flash points in interpersonal relationships. That's why people from different cultures can have such a difficult time relating to one another at first — they don't know each other's ritualized mores.

Some rituals can promote family and group bonds or even establish household traffic patterns. So, when family traditions develop around the celebration of birthdays and anniversaries, they serve to bond us. And perhaps less dramatic, but just as significant, is the morning "do-si-do" of family members scurrying from bed to bath to breakfast to bye-bye out the door. Then there is the controlled pandemonium of getting children ready for bedtime, or of getting everyone ready for an outing or a party or for company or for a holiday or a life cycle celebration — household members act and maneuver in a sort of expected and anticipated symphony . . . within defined patterns and behavioral parameters . . . which, in time, are set and, over time, are ritualized — rehearsed again and again.

Some rituals are merely symbolic — public expressions of life passages. We don't really benefit from graduation exercises; the diploma could more easily be sent by mail. But still, the ritual persists. International diplomacy is suffused with ritual and so are initiations into clubs, fraternities, or sororities. Being introduced to one another, testifying in court, and being inducted into military service or into public office are all well known and well rehearsed rituals. Even asking for one's hand in marriage is ritualized in the ideal — kneeling, asking, and presenting the ring.

The research shows that families and members of those families with a *low* commitment to meaningful and appropriate rituals have certain traits in common:

- they tend to be oriented solely in the present;
- they tend to have less precise generational boundaries so that the parent-child hierarchy is out of kilter;
- they tend to have less attachment to ethnic or religious or community groups;
- they tend to see their small nuclear family group as the sum total of what family is all about;
- they tend to feel that there is no power behind the few rituals they do share so that, in time, all their rituals fade away;
- and, perhaps even more revealing, individuals raised in such families tend to have a minimal sense of identity with their family group — especially if there are crises — then they tend to disconnect and simply go their separate ways.

Typical comments by such family members comes from a mother of five who said: "I don't think we've done anything together as a family except sleep under the same roof," and "I don't really even know these people." Therefore, families without ritual in their home tend to be if not dysfunctional, at least disconnected and isolated and dispassionate about one another.

The research done by Wolin and Bennett is truly ground breaking. Households without a sense of ritual . . . without shared activities that give structure to the values, the celebrations, and the routines of daily life tend, in time, to disintegrate! Families (including even two people households in which there are no children) without definite, structured, defined ritual tend to fall apart. In the context of what we see in society today, which families do survive intact, and which do not? Which families have a sense of inter-generational structure, and which do not? Astoundingly, the implication is, that even for a couple without children, a lack of meaningful ritual in their relationship tends to put the relationship at risk.

For thousands of years, the Jewish family has been the prototype, the model, the paradigm of what family is all about. Even in this day and age of fragmentation and family dissipation, non-Jews still express amazement at how close-knit Jewish families seem to be and how close-knit we are as a people. This positive stereotype, while a bit tarnished, is still true today in comparison to society in general. We Jews, of course, take it all for granted. We rationalize or we assume that our family stability is a result of centuries of persecution, or of ghettoization and/or of isolation, or of a guilt-producing gene found especially in Jewish mothers.

The more we reflect on what in the past has enabled Jews to create strong family bonds, the more reasonable it is to deduce that it has little to do with isolation and guilt and much to do with our commitment to Jewish ritual. I know of no other

people, no other heritage, no other religion that puts such emphasis on rituals performed in the home. But not just ritual for the purpose of random activity — ritual that elevates and ennobles and teaches values along the way. And we Jews sort of take for granted what we have done as a matter of course for milenia.

But just because our tradition encourages and allows and proffers rituals in abundance . . . if we don't accept them and incorporate them into our lives, it is as if they never existed at all. For a lost treasure or an unappreciated treasure is, in reality, no treasure at all.

Jewish ritual has power — spiritual power. It feeds the subconscious mind and prepares us to meet the world with optimism. It connects us to this world and protects us against a sense of existential loneliness and uncertainty so prevalent in society today. It opens us to possibilities beyond the mundane, enabling us to see that there is more to life than buying and selling, working and playing. And Jewish ritual transmits the shared beliefs of family members across generational lines. It enables us to celebrate time and space — something that can't be done without ritual and, something that without doing, makes being a Jew somewhat irrelevant.

In general, observing rituals tends to put life in perspective; it slows us down; it enables us to appreciate life; it connects us to ourselves. Observing certain ritual behaviors, such as meditation or prayer tends to lower levels of anxiety. Studies conducted years ago showed that those who attended worship services regularly had fewer signs of stress, were less likely to suffer from severe headaches, and lived longer. The studies seem to show that ritual observances tend to evoke a sense of stability in life; they serve as a dependable anchor amidst a sea of change.

Now, at this point, I could simply affirm the message that ritual is good for all of us and encourage all to . . . go do it! But that would hardly satisfy the thrust of this paper. Instead, let me take the research a step further and apply it to Jewish life. If research shows that ritual is beneficial, then Jewish ritual "*Al achat kamah v'chamah*" — "is even more so!" And as if to emphasise the point, I would like to suggest that there are at least five gifts that Jewish rituals bestow upon Jewish families and upon individual Jews who bring them into their homes and into their lives. And that the benefits derived from such rituals are spiritual in nature.

First of all, unlike any other forms of ritual, Jewish ritual serves as a bridge enabling us to connect our present . . . our here and now . . . to both the past and to the future of our people.

Think about it. When we sit with Haggadah in hand at the Seder table, we remember that we were once slaves in a strange land, and we were redeemed from that terrible time and place. As we rehearse that simple story and embellish it with song and blessings and readings, we cannot help but be transformed. At that moment, we become those Jews in Egypt departing for the Sinai Desert. And as our "now" and that "then" become one, we also realize that we will not be slaves again. That value has become a part of our collective psyche. That value informed us to get our people out of the former USSR and out of Ethiopia, and out of Syria, and Yemen, and Iran. Slaves no more to no one! The message of the Seder pulses in us because we have ritualized it — we have rehearsed it again and again in our homes and in our hearts.

Through Jewish ritual, present, and future unite. When grandparents of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah are called to the Torah they stand next to their grandchild and recite words of blessing — it is a moment of poignant transcendence. And when the Sandak holds his eight day old grandson at the *brit milah* while his son, the new father, recites the blessing, it is not just three generations present, but dozens and hundreds of generations standing together in that place at that moment.

Jewish ritual opens us to possibilities we could not otherwise experience. For implied at the *Brit Milah* ceremony, as he is at each Seder, is Elijah the Prophet with his hidden whisper-promise that this new infant could redeem humankind. No other people has as its prime religious goal a world of peace for all humanity. But, we Jews take that for granted, as if it is a little thing . . . nothing really, just a commonplace thought — the redemption of all peoples everywhere. But we should not be so casual — it is not to be taken for granted.

That the welfare of men and women everywhere is in our prayers and in our hearts . . . that is the stuff of grandeur and nobility. That is what makes our heritage unique and uniquely spiritual.

Second, Jewish ritual enables us to celebrate time.

Celebrate time — that's what we are commanded to do. We are enjoined to put time into perspective — to distinguish between time which is for work, *mundane time*, and time which is significant, *time made holy.*

Jewish life is all about time. To be a Jew is to make time sacred. That's what we do when we celebrate Rosh HaShanah or Yom Kippur or the first and last days of the Festivals or each and every Shabbat — we sanctify that time. Sacred time is time without tools, time without labor, time for re-creating the mind and the spirit, time without enslavement, time in which ritual becomes preeminent. No other religion does this. It is a concept totally foreign to others. For non-Jews, a holiday might begin or end in a house of worship, but the after-worship hours are no different from any other hours in the year. Aside from its religious content, Christmas has the same holiness as a birthday or as Labor Day or as Martin Luther King day. It's a national observance, a paid holiday, but it is not sacred time.

Non-Jewish holidays have with rare exception no observance strictures. Like any other day, non-Jewish holidays are an opportunity to drive, play football, smoke, carry on in any and every way just as if it was any other time of the year — except for whatever worship one may participate in, of course.

To many of our non-Jewish neighbors, a holiday, *as a period of time*, is simply a day off; it is not sacred time. It's vacation, not vocation. And that's why non-Jews can be understandably insensitive to Jewish holidays — it's not a matter of anti-Semitism so much as it is unintelligible to them. They simply have no parallel in their religion. They have no way of understanding the basic concept of sacred time. So what if soccer tournaments or high school proms are held on Friday nights, or exams or airport dedications are scheduled on Yom Kippur!

Time without boundaries is like a train without stations — a journey without markings along the way. Without boundaries we cannot fully appreciate the journey — we cannot put time in perspective. If we cannot appreciate time, we cannot live fully in it, nor reverence it, nor celebrate it. Jewish ritual helps us to establish the boundaries. To forget to make times sacred is to give up one of the principal spiritual gifts of our tradition. Judaism offers us the sacredness of time. It is ours alone to enjoy and to savor . . . holy days and Sabbaths . . . whole periods of time . . . entire days . . . to make special . . . to turn into spiritual moments.

Third, Jewish ritual connects us to our place in the world. It teaches us to make space holy.

One cannot read the prayer book or study Torah without knowing beyond a shadow of a doubt that we belong in this world! In Torah, we are taught 39 times, be kind to the stranger because you were once strangers in Egypt. Once upon a time, yes . . . but no longer . . . not now you aren't strangers . . . no longer will you be strangers . . . never again will you be strangers . . . no siree. We are not strangers . . . others are. We are the ultimate non-strangers in this world of ours! We of all peoples belong here.

Every blessing we recite reinforces the fact that a Jew belongs to this world. Before reading Torah we say: ". . . Blessed are You, *Adonai* our God, who has called us from among all other peoples and has given us Your Torah . . ." We are *mitzvah* doers. No one else, just Jews, because we are the only people to accept Torah as the basis of ethical and religious laws. Without Torah there are no *mitzvot.* Do not misunderstand. A non-Jew can be a wonderful, kind, caring, even saintly-type person without Torah. A non-Jew can do wonderful, noble, caring, generous things without Torah. But, by definition, a non-Jew cannot not be a doer of *mitzvot* because he or she did not receive Torah, therefore, he or she was not elected to be . . . was not commanded to be . . . a *mitzvah* doer.

We belong here because we're the *mitzvah* people. Regardless of how many of us or how few of us there are in this world of ours, we're absolutely necessary to this world. In fact, the world can't exist without us. A government that gets rid of its Jews, dies. It's as simple as that. It's a historical fact. It has happened to each and every country in history. And a country which is open to Jews prospers. Don't ask

me why, ask God. Read the history books; maybe it's because of our rituals . . . and the doing of *mitzvot*?! Torah implies it; the prophets say it directly; the Talmud doesn't doubt it. So, who am I to argue?

We Jews tend to take Jewish rituals, even simple rituals, such as blessing food for granted. And yet simple blessings tell us again and again how much we belong here: "Blessed are You, *Adonai* our God . . . who brings forth bread for us to eat . . . wine for us to drink . . . light for us to enjoy . . ." Even in the simple blessings the message is clear — this is God's world and ours . . . and we are to enjoy it and partake of its bounty . . . and we absolutely belong here.

Even our doorposts bear the symbol of God's presence in our homes. So each time we enter or leave our homes, to kiss the *mezuzah* is to reaffirm that we as a people are . . . as if . . . God's *mezuzah* on the doorposts of the world. And one need not read too far in Torah before coming upon the divine promise to give us a land flowing with milk and honey . . . it shall be yours forever so long as you keep and renew my Covenant . . . it is your eternal inheritance, regardless of who shares it with you. Another affirmation of our place in the world. Can you imagine how much mental illness could be avoided if all peoples everywhere knew without a doubt that they belonged in this world of ours . . . that they were necessary to this world?

To be a Jew is to celebrate space. That is our faith statement. We believe in sanctifying space. Think about it for a moment. Most churches are faith oriented. Yes, they may for sure have a social action agenda . . . a good works component . . . but, by and large, for most, *belief* is their path to divine rewards. Their path to heaven is in the mind. And if that is what they choose to espouse, that's fine with me. I would be the last to tell non-Jews how to think, feel, or pray. But within the context of Judaism that concept simply makes no sense. Why should God care a wit what one believes or what one thinks? People have little control over many of the thoughts that blink in and out. Are we to be morally responsible for every random mental synapse? And if belief and thought were the keys to the kingdom, so to speak, why create the body altogether? For what do we need hands and feet and senses if belief and thought were all that mattered? Just create us as minds perched on plastic poles — "brainsicles" — and wait to see what we think and believe!?

Instead, we Jews are a deed oriented people; we maintain that we are judged by our acts not our thoughts. In the context of Jewish thought, one can not sin in the mind. We can't even begin to understand what Jimmy Carter meant when he confessed to "lusting in his heart." That is a foreign concept . . . out of the realm of Jewish thought. But we can be judged remiss if we act improperly or if . . . even worse, we don't act at all. And that is supremely, uniquely Jewish. We are enjoined not to stand idly by the blood of our neighbor. We are not a folded arms people. In fact, folded arms are immoral. We aren't even allowed to walk by an animal in pain, much less a person. Even if the animal belongs to our worst enemy, we are enjoined to help it to its feet . . . even if it means removing its load and then packing it again.

And so we create spaces in which to celebrate what we are about . . . to celebrate what we cherish . . . to celebrate the seasons of the year and the times of our life. And so a *sukkah* . . . to remind us not to take the harvest for granted — or the ecosystem . . . or our personal successes . . . or, whatever we might mean by the metaphor we call harvest — because our harvests are as fragile as the *sukkah,* as delicate as the temporary space in which it is celebrated; and so a *chupah* . . . to remind us that marriage is a special, sacred relationship confined to just these two people under this *tallit,* this *chupah,* and that it can be a beautiful and solid relationship of the mind and the soul or it can be as ephemeral as this canopy; and so the *Aron HaKodesh* . . . to remind us that what we value must be prominent and foremost in our thoughts and in our sight; and so Jerusalem . . . *Ir HaKodesh*, the city which can be holy, the ideal, the dream, the city of cities, place of places, center of our focus, core of our hopes for the future. Each space is an ideal made holy and sacred for a moment of transcendence . . . so that we, in turn, may transcend the moment in our thoughts and through our deeds!

Fourth, while rituals in general tend to foster personal identity and identification with family or group, Jewish rituals are at the core of a sound Jewish identity.

One who is born to a U.S. citizen can be registered as a U.S. citizen. And no matter where in the world he/she was born or resides, so long as a passport is renewed in timely fashion, that citizenship is lifelong. One needn't make a commitment to the country or have primary residence here or swear allegiance or speak English or know the Constitution or have any knowledge of our customs or mores and, yet, by definition, that person is still a U.S. citizen.

Likewise, one who is born a Jew is always a Jew. That's what the world calls you; that's what your people call you. The act or accident of birth makes one a Jew. But a Jew who does not live the part, who does not participate, who does not celebrate, who undertakes no Jewish ritual . . . is like a citizen who stays away! We count him or her in the census, but with little enthusiasm.

Now, one who is born a Jew, regardless of how tenuous the connection, probably has that identity encrypted on the subconscious. Somewhere, perhaps in the recesses of the mind, there is a claim check for his or her identity. And someday, perhaps, he or she will find it and reclaim the heritage.

But for one who is not born a Jew, there is no such subconscious claim check, there is no subliminal identity. For the Jew who is new to Judaism, ritual is not an optional activity; it is a vital, crucial, necessary aspect of being a Jew. For the Jew-by-Choice, religious identity is validated again and again through ritual . . . and not annual ritual, not once a year ritual, but monthly, weekly, daily ritual, great, heaping, helpings of ritual . . . holiday ritual, blessings ritual, worship ritual . . . supplemented, of course, by Jewish cultural opportunities and study and Jewish communal activities.

And, likewise, for newly constituted and blended families, Jewish ritual can set the tone for a new household and enable smoother transitions from one house to another. It can even act as a comforting constant for children who spend time in several different parenting situations.

But ritual needs to have integrity . . . otherwise, it's hollow. We have all attended the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service of a child who has little if any connection with the synagogue. The family never attends and never brings the child to services. For that child, a Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony could be a very empty ritual. Empty because the purpose of Bar/Bat Mitzvah is for a child to show that he/she is ready to take his or her place as an adult in the congregation — ready to conduct and participate in the worship service. But if he/she never comes to the synagogue to worship and to participate along with the community . . . what's the point of becoming a Bar/BatMitzvah? Ritual without integrity is empty, meaningless, emotionally bankrupt, hardly worth the effort.

Likewise, Jewish ritual needs to be Jewishly authentic. It's just fine to invent new customs, but unless they are invested with history and connected to traditions that transcend the present, from a Jewish perspective, they are just nice, cute, funky, fun, and little more. Just because a Jew does it doesn't mean it's authentic — doesn't mean it's Jewish.

When Jewish ritual connects us to the greater family of Jews around the world, to *Klal Yisrael*, it's authentic. A few years ago, I had the incredible experience of conducting worship services in Barcelona for about 125 Jews. Now, my Spanish is barely better than my nonexistent knowledge of Catalan — which is the language of Barcelona, so how, pray tell, did I manage to conduct services?

It was easy because Jewish ritual connects us with Jews all over the world. The president of this new liberal congregation was fluent in Catalan and Spanish and he understood English, but couldn't speak it very well. However, since he had spent many years in Israel, his Hebrew was excellent. So, I led the Hebrew parts of the service and everyone there joined with me in the readings; he led the responsive readings in Catalan, and he led the singing because the melodies were unusual; and I gave a sermon in English and *un poco de Español*. My English he translated into Catalan. When he didn't understand a word or phrase, I translated it into Hebrew for him. My Spanish, he translated into English much to the amusement of everyone.

There were 20 children present that night. They all came up to sing Kiddush. They knew the service intimately and participated from beginning to end with such love and such joy it brought tears to my eyes. I was a Rabbi from America, but for them the accent was on Rabbi. That was all they cared

about. I was Rabbi and we were all Jews, and together we prayed as our ancestors had. Through ritual we were united. That was a spiritual experience.

And I will say with no fear whatsoever of contradiction, that the tens of thousands of Russian Jews who have found their way to these shores of late will never become part of this Jewish community or of any Jewish community except through Jewish ritual and except through Jewish worship. And we could assign volunteers and we could overwhelm them with social workers and we could buy them apartments and cars and find them jobs, but they will never be a part of us, never connect with this Jewish community, until and unless they connect through ritual and worship. And language is no barrier — Russian, Spanish, English, Hebrew, Catalan — unless we or they choose to make it so.

Rabbi Wayne Dosick tells the story of a woman in an airport with a three-year-old child by her side. A policeman approached the lady and said," I know it may seem strange to you, but we have a report of a missing child — about the age description of this child. Can you prove that this is your daughter?"

"Preposterous," the woman exclaimed!

"Even so, Madam, I'll need to ask the child some questions. Tell me, dear, what is your name?"

"Melissa."

"What's your last name?" Silence.

"Well, where do you live?"

"At home."

"Do you know the name of your city?"

"Nope."

"What's your daddy's name?"

"Daddy."

"What does he do?"

"He goes to work."

Since the officer wasn't getting anywhere, he turned back to the woman. "Do you have any pictures of this child or of your husband that the child might recognize?"

"I didn't bring any pictures with me."

"Well, let me see your plane tickets."

"We don't have any tickets, yet. We're on standby."

"Mommy, Mommy, what does the man want from us?" the child cried. Hearing that, the officer, smiled, tipped his hat, and walked away.

A bit frightening, isn't it? So how would you prove that the child was yours, the Rabbi asks? And he answers: "I would have turned to my two-year-old and said, tell the officer what we say before we eat. And he would have recited *HaMotzi*. And I would have turned to my four-year-old and said: Tell the officer what we say before going to sleep. And he would have recited the *Shema*. And the officer would have darn well known that these were my children.

But perhaps the most wonderful story having to do with ritual and identity comes from my congregation. When Sophia Singer was just an infant, her mother Stacy brought her to Temple quite often. The entire staff dropped everything to play with Sophia; we enjoyed her immensely. The baby smiled constantly. In fact for many weeks, we never saw her unhappy or even on the verge of tears. Then one day . . . as we were gooing and gaaing together . . . a pout . . . a brief *kretz* . . . and then tears galore — great lungs!

"Oh, she's hungry, it's lunchtime," said Mother. And with that Stacy held her daughter straight in front of her . . . eyes to eyes . . . and began to sing softly: "*Baruch Atah Adonai* . . ." The tears stopped; "*Elohaynu Melech HaOlam* . . ." The baby's feet begin to kick; "*HaMotzi Lechem* . . ." Sophia's face is now a smile from ear to ear; "*Min HaAretz* . . ." The baby is now kicking and smiling, she's giggling aloud, her tongue is darting in and out, and she's beginning to make swallowing sounds; "*Ah-ah-men.*" And in this lovely way a little child already associates a mother's love and compassion and joy and food and blessing and Judaism and identity . . . months and months before she's ready to walk or talk. That's the power of authentic Jewish ritual.

Fifth, while the function of most Jewish ritual is to connect us to our heritage, to our people here and abroad, and to authenticate and actuate our own Jewish identities, Jewish ritual can also connect us to a spiritual dimension.

Spirituality is a strange expression because it usually comes with no precise definition. Ask a group of people what it means and all sorts of answers pour forth. It's the feeling you get when you hear a great piece of music or see great art. It's how you feel when you see a beautiful sunset or when you're in the mountains or on the sea. It's like

when you survive a dangerous moment; it's like love; it's like being one with the universe.

For a Roman Catholic, a spiritual moment might be seeing the Pope or standing in St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome. For a Muslim, it might be walking around the Ka'abah — the black stone in Mecca — and becoming a Hajji. For Jews, a spiritual moment might be the first time one stands before the Western Wall in Jerusalem. Each of those moments are spiritual because they connect a person with the core of his or her oldest traditions.

Judaism is a non-sacramental religion. We don't have sacraments that must be administered by priests. Even our rites of passage can be conducted by any learned Jew; Rabbis are not a necessity in the practice of Judaism. Since we don't have to rely on the administration of rites by those in power or authority, it is up to each Jew to become knowledgeable enough to come to terms with the potential inherent in Judaism. To learn and to teach and to celebrate — that's what we as a religious heritage are all about.

Our holidays are all value laden — by celebrating we connect with our values. A people blesses what it believes to be eternal. Ritual, therefore, connects us with what we as a people believe to be lasting, everlasting, of profound significance, at the root and core of being. Implied in every Jewish celebration are rituals . . . and implied in every ritual act is a connection with that which transcends us.

It's easy to be Jewish. It's like a feeling. I feel Jewish — see how easy that is?! Unfortunately, that is about as valuable as saying that seeing a beautiful sunset is a spiritual moment. That kind of spirituality takes no effort at all — it's poignant entertainment.

A musician can have a spiritual moment through music; an artist can have a spiritual moment through art; a mountain climber can have a spiritual moment on a jagged cliff . . . a Jew has a spiritual moment within the context of performing a Jewish act. And only acts count — for Jews, acts alone define us. But every act that celebrates life, every act that acknowledges our place in this universe, every act that affirms our identity as a Jew, every act that strengthens our bonds to family and community, every act that sanctifies time, every act that implies a connectedness to that which urges us toward *mitzvot* . . . toward blessings . . . *is a ritual.* And within every Jewish ritual lies the seed, the potential, for achieving renewal . . . and wholeness — which, in the final analysis, is what spirituality is all about.

[1] From *Moments of Transcendence* by Dov Peretz Elkins. Jason Aronson Inc., Northvale, NJ, 1992, pp. 124ff.

Do not feel wedded to this structure, however. You are engaging in a creative process and must do what it takes for *your* creative juices to flow.

Sometimes, rituals, like poetry or melodies, come suddenly and easily, by inspiration. If you wake up in the middle of the night and rush to your desk to write out a ritual you literally dreamed up, chances are it is an excellent one. You may then want to use some of my questions and suggestions as a check, but you will not need them to *create* a ritual. When the muse does not strike immediately, however, it may be useful to have a system for organizing your thinking.

Step One: What Is a Ritual—And Do I Need One?

The terms blessing, prayer, ceremony, and ritual are generally used loosely, if not interchangeably. Technically, however, they refer to different genres, one of which is probably more suitable than the others for marking a particular passage or milestone.

Blessings in the Jewish tradition follow a strict formula, beginning with the words *barukh attah adonai* (blessed are You, *Adonai*) and often continuing with *eloheinu melekh ha'olam* (our God, Ruler/King of the universe) and still further with *asher kiddeshanu bemitzvotav vetzivvanu* (who has sanctified us with Your commandments and commanded us...). There are a variety of modern adaptations to the traditional formulation, most of which use either gender neutral or feminine God language, and many of which eliminate the notion of sovereignty altogether, in favor of the image of God as creator. Whatever formulation is used, blessings usually consist of just one line. They can accompany a specific behavior (e.g. ritual washing of the hands), occasion (e.g. wearing a suit for the first time), time (e.g. beginning of Sabbath), or natural phenomenon (e.g. rainbow or earthquake). They may also serve as the *petihah* (opening) or *hatimah* (seal or closure) of a prayer. Prayers, longer liturgical expressions with a still wider array of applications, may or may not include a *berakhah* (blessing). Both blessings and prayers feature prominently in rituals and ceremonies. They are fitting for these public, communal occasions, but may also (or instead) be said privately.

In recent years, the terms "ritual" and "ceremony" have been applied increasingly broadly. Psychologists Evan Imber-Black and Janine Roberts name five purposes of rituals: (1) To shape, express and maintain relationships; (2) to make and mark transitions; (3) to heal from betrayal, trauma, or loss; (4) to voice beliefs and create meaning; and (5) to honor and celebrate individuals and life, generally.[2] In classical anthropological understanding, the second task named is highly emphasized, and is divided between ritual, which makes the transitions, and ceremony, which marks them. Ceremonies are said to celebrate an existing status, while rituals ideally help to effect a transition and transformation from one status to another. Thus, miscarriage "rituals" are technically ceremonies because they mark a status already established, but the circumcision "ceremony" is actually a ritual, because it changes the child's status, physically, spiritually, and socially. Even according to these strict (and admittedly artificial) definitions, the line between ritual and ceremony is not always so clearly drawn. In the days of arranged marriages, weddings were pure ritual, transforming single persons into married ones. Today, they are also part ceremony, acknowledging and celebrating a change that has already taken place in the status of a couple's relationship and commitment.

Ceremonies and rituals both make use of symbols and physical behaviors to concretize their messages. However, rituals need and tend to do this more strongly and reliably, since they endeavor to create a noticeable change, a "before-and-after" picture, that will be meaningful to both individual and community. Along the way, between "before" and "after," there is a transitional, liminal state, discussed in this volume by Rabbis Geller and Holub. At that point, one is, to return to our wedding example, neither married nor unmarried, but somewhere in an ambiguous, even dangerous interim. It is dangerous because the end result has not yet been established, but the status quo has already been abandoned. Yet this volatility offers the opportunity for identification with both past and future, and the benefit of encouraging keen and inquisitive focus on the actors in the ritual drama. The "after" stage does not usher in an utterly new status, unconnected with the old, but rather represents a re-embodiment and a re-incorporation of a transformed self.

Many anthropologists and liturgists now reject strict divisions between ritual and ceremony and argue that there has been an

"afterword: How to create a ritual" by Debra Orenstein in "Lifecycles: Jewish Women on Life Passages & Personal Milestones"

over-emphasis on the liminal—as if becoming were somehow more important than being. I like to stress the liminal, however, and believe that what is over-stressed, especially in the Jewish context, is the "after" stage, the reaggregation and coming to a new status quo. Liminality, which is sometimes called the threshold stage, is especially important for women, who as Marge Piercy writes in *The Sabbath of Mutual Respect* are "the doorways of life." The body of a woman was a physical threshold that each of us crossed in entering the world.[3] Traditionally, women have spent a great deal of their lives standing on thresholds and helping children and men across—by preparing children for rites of passage, orchestrating other lifecycle and holiday celebrations, and serving as the women "behind" men's transformations in status.

Victor Turner associated liminality with a time of intense egalitarianism and comradeship, as well as minimized sex role distinctions, due to the shared experience of *communitas* and the lack of structure and hierarchy during transition.[4] One of the reasons that feminists have taken so to ritual and seek out liminality is that these are precisely the qualities that we value. From a social activist point of view, it is in leaving behind our structured, hierarchical society and entering a fluid, inchoate state that we allow for the possibility of transforming gender roles.

If it is clear to you that you want to create for yourself or someone else a transformation in status, witnessed and honored in community, then it is probably indeed a ritual that is required. In any case, many of the "how-to" steps which follow will apply to all forms of liturgical expression.

Step Two: What Resources Are Already Available? (or, Avoid Reinventing the Wheel)

You will want to ascertain what other rituals and liturgies already exist. Consult traditional Jewish sources, either directly or via secondary readings. You can begin with those listed in the bibliography and/or ask your local rabbi and Judaica librarian for suggestions. Organizations and resource centers that deal with women and Jewish lifecycle can be helpful, as well.[5] Be sure to investigate aspects of the tradition with which you may be unfamiliar, including Sephardic, Ethiopian, Hasidic, and mystical texts and customs.

If relevant traditional or modern rituals are available, you will want to trace these to their most original source and adapt them, as necessary, in line with the suggestions on creating ritual, below.

Step Three: Creating a Ritual from the Ground Up

If you have few or no models and wish to create an entirely new ritual, I recommend that you ask and answer two questions to clarify your purpose in preparation for writing. First, what is the transformation you wish to effect? Second, if you conceive of your ritual in three stages—(1) before/status quo, (2) during/liminality, and (3) after/new state—what are the main characteristics of each stage, in your particular case? Once you have addressed these questions, engage in a "Jewish brainstorming" session. What are your Jewish associations to the transformation and to each stage? What Jewish heroes, texts, historical movements, symbols, ritual objects, songs, do they call to mind? Do not hesitate to ask rabbis and other Jewishly knowledgeable friends for their input.

As in any brainstorming session, simply let the ideas flow without judging them. You will be able to reject, use, alter, or combine them later on. First, just get them on paper. You will also generate associations from other sources and disciplines, such as women's studies, ethnography, and your own life story and imagination. This is all to the good. The list you create will contain within it the raw materials of a ritual.

If you wanted to create a ritual for taking on a new name, for example, you might end up with these lists—or something like them—before you:

> *Transformation I wish to effect*: I wish to change my name and my spirit.
>
> *Associations*: Abram becomes Abraham; Sarai becomes Sarah; Jacob becomes Israel; Asher Zvi Ginsberg becomes the Zionist thinker *Ahad Ha'am* (literally, one of the people); a good name is a significant acquisition in this life (Mishnah *Avot* 2:8); the crown of a good name is superior to the crowns of Torah, priesthood, and royalty (Mishnah *Avot* 4:17); to gossip is to be *motzi shem ra* (giving out a bad name); God's name can be desecrated or honored; God has many names, including The

About ritual[42] - Planning a Ritual

Art by Betsy Platkin Teutsch

Ritualwell.org is all about Jewish ritual innovations for holidays and lifecycles as well as new expressions of time-honored Jewish customs. We want to encourage you to be creative in making or adapting rituals that meet your own personal, religious, and aesthetic requirements.

Making a ritual your own can involve many dedicated hours of research, writing and compiling, or it can involve spending just a little bit of time personalizing something that already exists. But regardless of how much time you want to (or can) spend working on your ritual, it is helpful to ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the purpose of the ritual?
- Is it to make and mark a transition?
- To honor and celebrate?
- To enable healing?
- To strengthen and solidify relationship?
- To remember?
- To state beliefs and express hope for the future?

Your ritual is probably going to accomplish a combination of these purposes. Thinking clearly about which of these is most important to you should help you end up with something that achieves your desired outcome.

How to Start

In LIFECYCLES: Jewish Women on Life Passages & Personal Milestones, Volume 1 (Jewish Lights), Rabbi Debra Orenstein suggests thinking about a ritual in three stages—a beginning, middle, and end. In the course of the ritual, the person moves out of his or her old stage of life, through a transition, and into an after stage. For example, a couple getting married moves from their separate single lives (marked in the ceremony by their separation before the wedding/separate *tisches* (ceremonial tables)/separate entrance/*mikveh*), to joining together in marriage (*kiddushin*/exchange of rings), to celebrating their new status as a married couple (seven blessings, wedding feast).

While all rituals might not divide so neatly, it is useful to think about the moment of transition.

- What will happen?
- Who will witness it?
- How will they know that it that has happened?
- What change is taking place?

[42] http://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/planningaritual/.

- What will be different after the ritual?

In my experience, the strongest rituals are those in which something actually happens—for example, an exchange of rings, the giving of a name, immersion in a *mikveh*.

That "something" can be effected in words; it does not have to be a physical act, though the physical act can make it more tangible. Often we are acting out something that has already occurred, play-acting as it were—the couple was already a couple before they got married, the baby's name was already chosen.

Ceremony makes the event official before assembled friends and family and indirectly, before the greater community of Israel. If we invest belief in the power of ritual, the ritual itself effects a change in our status (by, for example, creating a new family in the people Israel or by entering a baby into the covenant).

Ritual Checklist

Spend some time reminding yourself of your past experience with ritual.

- Think about rituals you love and rituals you don't like at all.
- Think about what both works for you about ritual and what doesn't.
- Think both in terms of Jewish ritual and more secular ritual.
- What kind of birthday parties do you like?
- What is it about Shabbat that makes you feel good and what about it pushes you away?
- Notice if patterns emerge.
- Are there certain settings you find more spiritual?
- Are you a person who likes taking charge and being the center of attention, or not?
- Is music important to you?
- What size group feels comfortable and appropriate for the ritual you are contemplating?

An incomplete list of factors to consider (some of these may seem very important and others less so):

Setting – Inside/outside, home/synagogue, sitting on floor/pillows/folding chairs, around a table like a seder.

Language – Hebrew/English/other; Who does the talking?; Do you use traditional God-language or alternative language?

Participants – Usually it is the act of witnessing by a community of friends and or family that gives a ritual potency. Who is present (or absent) and how big or small a group you gather will affect the nature of the ritual and how it will feel for you. Consider the advantages and disadvantages of your different options. Consider also how you invite those present to participate (e.g., offering blessings, carrying the baby, even saying amen).

Time – Both when in the day and year to hold it and for how long.

Documents – Do you want to create a document you will take away from this ceremony like a ketubah (wedding contract) or a get (divorce agreement)? Do you want the participants to take something home with them?

Tzedakah – One way in which our personal joy or sadness can be shared with the community is through the giving of tzedakah (charity). There are many creative ways to do this—wedding guests can be invited to donate to a cause of the couple's choosing; toys can be collected at a babynaming to give to a children's hospital.

Music/Song – Some kind of music, singing, or chanting is an essential aspect of most ritual. This can be done with or without instruments, in any language, or with no words at all.

Food – Almost every Jewish ritual has food associated with it. Sometimes there are prescribed foods (e.g., matzah for Passover, challah for Shabbat, eggs for a funeral) and sometimes just the very sharing of a meal is a way in which the community comes together.

Ritual Symbols – As was indicated above, there are myriad Jewish ritual items that you might want to incorporate into your ritual in traditional and non-traditional ways. These elements include different kinds of candles, symbolic foods, ritual clothing, and other objects. Use ritualwell's Symbols Tapestry as your toolbox for creating your own ceremony.

Pitfalls to Avoid

Less is more. It is tempting to include every good idea you have in your ritual. This can make for an overly long ceremony. Giving the elements you have chosen the time they deserve is more important than including everything that could be included. Think about which elements are central; think about the movement of the ceremony (the beginning, middle, and end), and keep it short and meaningful.

Avoid over-explanation. A successful ritual should be relatively self-explanatory, like a work of art. While some explanation is probably necessary, think about when and how you explain things. You might want to introduce the ritual and explain what you will do before you begin and then go through the ritual without interrupting the flow. More explanation could be included at the end or handed out in a written program. In general, you will need to strike a balance between helping people understand the ritual and letting the ritual flow and speak, as it were, for itself.

Balance the personal and the communal. A successful ritual is both. If it is too personal it may be opaque to the participants and probably others won't be able to reuse it. (This may not matter to you). The personal, however, makes the ritual more meaningful for everyone. The personal is what brought you here and is at the heart of the matter. So find a balance between your own words and experiences and words of the tradition and the community.

Don't do it alone! Your ritual will be enhanced by planning and talking about it with others. You can get help from a rabbi, a teacher, a Jewish librarian, a person or clergy member of another faith, or a friend—anyone who has a good sense of these things. The very act of talking it through with someone else will help you clarify what it is you are trying to do. Others can also help you figure out if your ritual rings true, if it makes sense, if it accomplishes what you hope to—in short, if it works.

Check the ritualwell.org bibliography, which lists both general sources on ritual as well as books and links unique to the ritual you are planning.

Have fun! Be your own wizard! Don't be afraid to make "mistakes"—the people you gathered are there to support you. And remember: ritual is one of the most powerful tools we have for facing the chaos and joy of life. Use it!

Old Symbols, New Rituals: Adapting Traditional Symbols, Ceremonies and Blessings

By Marcia Cohn Spiegel

Note: *This article was originally published in 1994.*

In the last ten years, there has been a growing awareness among women of the importance of life-cycle rituals, special celebrations and ceremonies marking important moments in our lives. We have moved from creating *bat mitzvah* rituals and baby-naming ceremonies for our daughters, to celebrating special birthdays (30, 40, 50, 60), as well as weaning, menopause, croning and *Rosh Hodesh*. As we have become more comfortable with our ability to create these special moments, some of us have gone on to conceive ceremonies for mourning, for healing of pain from disease, divorce or separation, for recovery from rape, incest or physical abuse.[1]

We have invented new ceremonies, created new music and songs, new ways to celebrate. It has been important for many of us to make these new observances resonate with a sense of the tradition from which they are drawn. We have adapted traditional rituals and infused them with new meaning. We have expanded the meaning of traditional blessings. We have dared to write new prayers. We are in truth re-creating, re-newing, re-vitalizing our lives.

In this article I will present some ideas to help us make a new ceremony fit the special occasion in our lives while still retaining a sense of our heritage as Jewish women and our connection to tradition.

1. Create a Sacred Space

In the wilderness the Jewish people built a *mishkan*, a portable sanctuary. Both men and women participated in its creation, by weaving fine cloth, making ritual vessels, beautifying the holy place. Before we begin our ceremony we must create our own mishkan. Whether at home, in a backyard, a beach or a forest, consider how to make the space holy for the time you will be using it. You may want to physically create sacred space by forming a circle, delineating the boundaries with ribbons or flowers, drape fabric or *tallit* around to define the area or have women in the circle hold or braid ribbons together. Some groups have indicated that the space was holy by washing the feet of guests as they entered barefoot, an act that is reminiscent of Abraham washing the feet of the angels. Some groups call up the spirits of our foremothers, Sarah, Rebecca, Leah and Rachel, as they face in each direction and create a spiritual circle. Flowers, fabrics. music, scents (be careful of people's allergies) are all tools to create your mishkan.

2. Create a Mood

Take the time to make the transition from the outside world to this special moment. Silence or subdued background music are helpful. Begin with a song chosen to set the mood you want to create—solemn, joyous, exuberant. It is wise to explain at the outset what is about to take place in order to alleviate any discomfort that your guests may have in this unfamiliar setting.

Your ceremony will have at least three parts: the opening, the body of the ritual, and the closing. They may be parts of a whole that flow naturally one into the next or totally separate units, connected by transitions of music or prayer. You may choose to follow a format similar to a traditional service, *Havdalah*, or even a *seder*. Consider the amount of time your ceremony will take; the comfort zone seems to lie between half an hour or less for a simple ritual to as long as an hour and a half.

3. Select Components for the Ritual

The components of your service should be familiar, although you may choose to reinterpret them, present them in a new sequence, or create new prayers. The following list includes many familiar aspects drawn from ceremonies and services.

-Candle lighting
-*Kiddush*, blessing wine or grape juice. Remember guests who may be alcoholic, allergic or on special diets and provide an alternative drink for them.
-*Challah*, blessing bread. Find new ways of braiding or decorating it for this event
-Spices, for their sweet scent, as part of a service of separation based on Havdalah.
-Hand-washing, as we do at a seder.
-Foot-washing, as Abraham did for the angels.
-Planting a tree, a fruit tree or flowering tree, for the future generations particularly appropriate for births, birthdays, weddings, healing.
-Blessing special foods: first fruit of season, ceremonial foods i.e. Passover foods, Tu B'Shvat seder
-Giving a gift of charity.
-Making a vow of service or good deeds to the community.
-Changing a name as Avram and Sarai did when they became Abraham and Sarah.
-Donning a special garment such as a tallit or changing a garment from one dress to another, i.e. putting on a *kittel*, a white coat given to men for their marriage and worn on Yom Kippur, Passover and later used as a shroud (this is very moving in a croning ceremony).
-Cutting. Tradition says that we "cut a covenant" (the brit or circumcision is such a cutting); some people make a vow and cut an apple which when cut across contains a star.
-Reading, studying and interpreting a text from Torah, classical texts,
from poetry, literature, women's journals, etc.
-Chanting from the Torah or other classic text. Try chanting in English as well as Hebrew.
-Storytelling, one person tells a story, or one person starts the story
and each person adds a piece to the story.
-Exchanging gifts or giving gifts
-Creating amulets
-Singing, learning new songs
-Dancing. Remember some of your guests may not be able to dance.
-Prayers and blessings, both familiar and newly created. Have close friends or family create blessings.
-*Mikveh*, immersion in water—hot tub, hot springs, pool, particularly
useful for any healing ceremony, particularly from abuse, addiction, divorce. In nontraditional settings, friends may surround the woman being immersed, hold her, float her, support her.
-Anointing, use of water or oil —i.e. put some on eyelids, say "I bless your eyes that you may see visions of peace," on ears, "I bless your ears that they may hear the sounds of music and of joy," etc. This has been very succeccful blessing a woman approaching marriage or childbirth.
-Guided meditation or guided visualization
-Silence. Don't be afraid to use silence. It can be very powerful.

4. Addressing Anger, Pain and Sorrow

Each Jewish holiday has its own special symbols which can be used or adapted. While these ritual acts can be used in your ritual, they may prove to be particularly useful for women who are dealing with pain from death of a loved one, illness, broken relationships or from emotional, physical or sexual abuse. Some women may have bottled up their anger and hurt, fearful of the depth of emotions that they are feeling. A simple ceremony which will allow them an opportunity to vent these feelings in a safe, controlled setting,

with the close emotional support of a few good friends may be the tool that allows them to begin the healing process. I describe just a few possibilities, you will think of others.

- When the Torah is read, it is customary to say a *misheberach*, a prayer of healing.
- During the month of *Elul*, preceding the High Holidays, we become introspective and look at how we may have offended our friends or family and ask their forgiveness.
- At Rosh Hashonah we symbolically empty our pockets of our sins and cast the debris into the water, as we cleanse ourselves for the new year.
- At the beginning of year we eat apples and honey for their sweetness.
  Before the High Holy days we can perform another symbolic act to rid ourselves of our sins as we *shlog kaporis*. As a child my grandfather would swing a rooster over his head as he recited the prayers; we were each given a dime to use instead.
- During Sukkot we build booths to live in for the week. We welcome our friends and historic visitors from the past to share the season.
  On Chanukah we bring light into the darkest season by lighting candles.
- As we read the story of Esther at Purim, we use noisemakers to drown out the name of the evil Haman. Some communities write the name of Haman on their shoes and dance and stomp out his name.
- Preparation for Passover includes a thorough house cleaning, when *hametz* (food forbidden during the holiday) is burned.
  At some Passover seders, drops of wine spilled to represent the plagues are collected and cast out. At others, the guests beat each other over the head with scallions. At still others, the participants walk around the dinner table, as if they were leaving the land of Egypt.
- At a funeral, the mourners rip their garments in grief. The tearing of cloth can be very effective.
- Before a wedding, a plate is broken; during the wedding the groom steps on a glass to break it.
- Keening, shouting, moaning may be an expression of anger or sorrow. Friends can be supportive by participating together.
- At the close of the Sabbath, Havdalah is performed to separate the holy from the routine. The use of spices, candle and wine is a fine way to separate one event from another.

These acts of burning, tearing, cleaning, casting out, breaking, stamping, cleansing, moving can allow us to do symbolically what we would like to do in our own lives.

5. Ceremonial Objects

The use of ritual objects, garments, or other treasures from family members or friends which have historic or nostalgic connections, can add a moving note to any ritual: grandmother's lace tablecloth, grandfather's tallit, kiddush cup, candlesticks, locket. Use a *huppa*, marriage canopy, to stand under for special blessings. Use a large tallit to wrap several people in for blessings. Create your own ritual object as part of the service: a bowl or cup that the participants can take home, a paper-cut, a blessing written on special paper. Just use your imagination.

6. Questions to Contemplate

For many rituals, it is appropriate to think of answering three questions (three is a good number, seven and four are also mystical numbers from tradition to use):

- What do you want to leave behind?
- What do you want to remember or take with you from the past?

- What do you want to create new for the future?

You may create new questions, or reframe these.

7. Putting it All Together

While this list appears to be extensive, it is only a beginning. You can use what seems right to you and to those with whom you will do your ritual. In the beginning it is probably best to do only what you are comfortable doing, but as you get some practice, you will be moved to stretch yourself and become more innovative. Think about dividing your ceremony into three parts, opening with music and blessing, moving into the main body of the ritual, closing with blessing and music. In addition to the prayer book, look to poetry, songs, and other creative services for your sources. Remember if you put together a written service to credit the names of your sources. Good luck.[2]

Resources and References
There are many new sources of information about creating rituals, so many it is almost impossible to keep up. These are the ones that I have on my shelves and to which I turn for help and ideas.

Adelman, Penina V. **Miriam's Well: Rituals for Jewish Women around the Year**, New York: Biblio, 1990

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Berrin, Susan, **Celebrating the New Moon: A Rosh Chodesh Anthology**, New Jersey, Jason Aronson, 1996

Falk, Marcia Lee, The Book of Blessings: A Feminist Jewish Reconstruction of Prayer, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco,, 1997.

Fine, Irene, *Midlife, A Rite of Passage* and *The Wise Woman, A Celebration*, San Diego: Woman's Institute for Continuing Jewish Education, 1988.

Gottlieb, Lynn, **She Who Dwells Within: A Feminist Vision of a Renewed Judaism**, Harper/San Francisco: 1995.

Imber-Black, Evan and Janine Roberts, **Rituals for Our Times: Celebrating, Healing and Changing our Lives and Our Relationships**, New York: Harper Collins, 1992.

Levine, Elizabeth Resnick. *A Ceremonies Sampler: New Rites, Celebrations,, and Observances of Jewish Women*. San Diego: Woman's Institute for Continuing Jewish Education. 1991.

Millgram, Abraham, **Jewish Worship**, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1959. This book describes traditional worship, services and home celebrations. You may choose to use such a source to ground your ritual in tradition. Prayer books and encyclopedias can be of help, as well as the Strassfeld and Waskow books listed here.

Orenstein, Debra, editor, **Lifecycles 1: Jewish Women on Life Passages and Personal Milestones**, Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights, 1994.

Siegel, Richard, Michael Strassfeld, Sharon Strassfeld, **The Jewish Catalog**, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1973.

Spiegel, Marcia Cohn and Deborah Lipton Kremsdof, *Women Speak to God: The Prayers and Poems of Jewish Women*, San Diego: Woman's Institute for Continuing Jewish Education, 1987.

Strassfeld, Michael, Sharon Strassfeld, **The Second Jewish Catalog**, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1976.

Strassfeld, Michael, **The Jewish Holidays: A Guide and Commentary**, New York: Harper and Row, 1985.

Teubal, Savina. *Simchat Hochmah* in **Four Centuries of Women's Spirituality**, edited by Ellen Umansky. Her service is also available on tape from SoundsWrite Productions , see information below.

Waskow, Arthur, **Seasons of our Joy: A Modern Guide to the Jewish Holidays**, Boston: Beacon Press,1990.

Also check: *New Menorah: The Journal of ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal*, 7318 Germantown Ave., Philadelphia, PA 1911999-1793 (215-247-9703) for other sources of texts and music.

Waterwheel, this quarterly newsletter from the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (a Catholic women's organization), presents a new ritual in each issue. While directed toward women, they are often non-gendered, and ecumenically inclusive. Jewish prayers, poetry, song and ritual are often included. 8035 13th St., Silver Spring, MD 20910-4803.

There is a wonderful selection of new music being written. I can't possible even begin to list the artists. One good source of such music is: Sounds Write Productions, 6685 Norman Lane, San Diego, CA 92120 (619-697-6120, fax 619-697-6124). Other sources include Tara Publications 1-800-TARA-400 and Kol Ami 1-800-393-4264.

Some of the musical artists include: Debbie Friedman, Shefa Gold,
Linda Hirschorn, Penina Adelman, Miraj, Hannah Tiferet Siegel.

[1]Adelman, Penina V. *Miriam's Well: Rituals for Jewish Women Around the Year.* 2nd edition. New York: Biblio Press. 1990.
Fine, Irene. Midlife: A Rite of Passage and *The Wise Woman: A Celebration.* San Diego: Woman's Institute for Continuing Jewish Education. 1988.
Levine, Elizabeth Resnick. *A Ceremonies Sampler: New Rites, Celebrations, and Observances of Jewish Women*. San Diego: Woman's Institute for Continuing Jewish Education. 1991.
Lilith: The Jewish Women's Magazine. Fall, 1988.
Orenstein, Debra. *Lifecycles: Jewish Women on Life Passages and Personal Milestones*. Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing. Three volumes. Volume 1 out in 1994.
[2]I have drawn these ideas from Irene Fine, Savina Teubal, T. Drorah Setel, Rabbi Sue Elwell, the Mikveh Ladies, Shabbat Shenit and B'not Eish and many other women who have dared to create new rituals.

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Unit 5 Lesson 2 – Exploring New Rituals

The purpose of this lesson to expose the students to new rituals created by Jews to respond to the modern situations in which they live in. These rituals can serve as examples, for when the students create their own rituals.

Objectives – At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify components of a ritual.
- Explain how a particular ritual celebrates/commemorates/responds to an event in an individual's life.
- Evaluate if a particular ritual can be effective.

Suggested Learning Activities

Attached are copies of 4 new rituals (courtesy of www.ritualwell.org) created for a variety of situations by a variety of Jews. Design a learning station activity in which the students will have a chance to explore each ritual and analyze it.

Possible Questions:

- What aspects of this ritual are new? What aspects of this ritual are not new? Did the author adapt an aspect of the ritual from somewhere else? Did the author adopt a completely new aspect of the ritual? *The students may need guidance from the teacher, rabbi, educator, depending on their own previous knowledge*.
- What kind of time/transition/occurrence is being marked by this ritual?
- Does the ritual move you in some way? How might the ritual move an individual undergoing this ritual?
- How does the person undergoing the ritual come out differently?
- What symbolism do you see in the ritual?
- What ritual objects are used during the ritual?
- According to the rubric created by the class, which components are present in this ritual? Which are missing?
- Is there anything that you would add to this ritual to make it more meaningful?

A Family Ritual for a New Driver by Rabbi Rona Shapiro

Undoubtedly, receiving one's first driver's license has become a major milestone on the road to adulthood. Usually, its means different things to the teenager and to the parents -- the teenager is filled with the excitement of her new independence and freedom and the recognition of her adult privileges; the parents are filled with trepidation -- is their child really ready for this momentous moment? Will they drive safely and exercise good judgement? A ritual for parents and children helps to integrate this mixture of feelings, enabling the parents to recognize the child's accomplishment while simultaneously offering words of caution and protection.

The Ritual

- On or close to the day on which the child receives her driver's license, prepare her favorite meal and plan to have everyone home to celebrate.
- Together, write a contract, in which parents and children spell out expectations around use of the car. A sample contract[1] might look like this:

Respecting the privilege of driving, I will:

- Wear a seatbelt and ask my passengers to do the same
- Drive at or under the posted speed limit
- Respect the rules of the road
- Drive with courtesy and caution
- Be home on time or call before I am late
- Take care of the car, reporting problems immediately
- Refuse to drink or use any drugs when driving

We will:

- Expect to be called if any problem with the car or passengers arise
- Come get you, no questions asked, when you need us
- Always take care of repairs needed on the car.

Both parties should sign the contract and keep it somewhere safe.

Parents and the new driver can then read tefilat haderech (prayer for the road) together. One can also find this prayer printed on a plastic keyring or a plastic version that hangs from the rear view mirror which would make an appropriate gift for the occasion. Also see the driver's prayer in the personal milestones section of ritualwell.org.

Tefilat Haderech (Traveller's Prayer)

Masculine:

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁתּוֹלִיכֵנוּ לְשָׁלוֹם,
וְתַצְעִידֵנוּ לְשָׁלוֹם, וְתַדְרִיכֵנוּ לְשָׁלוֹם, וְתַגִּיעֵנוּ לְמָחוֹז חֶפְצֵנוּ לְחַיִּים
וּלְשִׂמְחָה וּלְשָׁלוֹם וְתַצִּילֵנוּ מִכַּף כָּל אוֹיֵב וְאוֹרֵב (וְלִסְטִים וְחַיּוֹת רָעוֹת)
בַּדֶּרֶךְ, וּמִכָּל מִינֵי פֻּרְעָנֻיּוֹת הַמִּתְרַגְּשׁוֹת לָבוֹא לָעוֹלָם, וְתִשְׁלַח בְּרָכָה
בְּ(כָל) מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵינוּ, וְתִתְּנֵנוּ לְחֵן וּלְחֶסֶד וּלְרַחֲמִים בְּעֵינֶיךָ וּבְעֵינֵי כָל
רוֹאֵינוּ, וְתִשְׁמַע קוֹל תַּחֲנוּנֵינוּ, כִּי אֵל שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלָּה וְתַחֲנוּן אָתָּה. בָּרוּךְ
אַתָּה יהוה, שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלָּה.

Yehi ratzon milfanekha Adonai Eloheinu ve'Elohei avoteinu shetolikhenu l'shalom, v'tatzidenu l'shalom, v'tadrikhenu l'shalom, v'tagi'enu limchoz cheftzenu l'chayim ul'simchah ul'shalom v'tatzilenu mikaf kol oyev v'orev (v'listim v'chayot ra'ot) baderekh, umikol minei puranuyot hamitragshot lavo la-olam, v'tishlach brakhah be(khol) ma'aseh yadeinu, v'titnenu l'chen ul'chesed ul'rachamim b'einekha uv'einei khol ro'einu, v'tishma kol tachanuneinu, ki El shome'a t'filah v'tachanun attah. Barukh attah Adonai, shome'a t'filah.

Feminine:

תְּהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנַיִךְ יהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וֵאלֹהֵי אִמּוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁתּוֹלִיכֵנוּ לְשָׁלוֹם,
וְתַצְעִידֵנוּ לְשָׁלוֹם, וְתַדְרִיכֵנוּ לְשָׁלוֹם, וְתַגִּיעֵנוּ לְמָחוֹז חֶפְצֵנוּ לְחַיִּים
וּלְשִׂמְחָה וּלְשָׁלוֹם וְתַצִּילֵנוּ מִכַּף כָּל אוֹיֵב וְאוֹרֵב (וְלִסְטִים וְחַיּוֹת רָעוֹת)
בַּדֶּרֶךְ, וּמִכָּל מִינֵי פֻּרְעָנֻיּוֹת הַמִּתְרַגְּשׁוֹת לָבוֹא לָעוֹלָם, וְתִשְׁלְחִי בְּרָכָה
בְּ(כָל) מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵינוּ, וְתִתְּנִנוּ לְחֵן וּלְחֶסֶד וּלְרַחֲמִים בְּעֵינַיִךְ וּבְעֵינֵי כָל
רוֹאֵינוּ, וְתִשְׁמְעִי קוֹל תַּחֲנוּנֵינוּ, כִּי אֵל שׁוֹמַעַת תְּפִלָּה וְתַחֲנוּן אַת. בְּרוּכָה
אַת יָהּ, שׁוֹמַעַת תְּפִלָּה.

T'hi ratzon milfanayikh Adonai Eloheinu v'Elohei imoteinu shetolikhinu l'shalom, v'tatzi'dinu l'shalom, v'tadrikhinu l'shalom, v'tagi'inu limchoz cheftzenu l'chayim ul'simchah ul'shalom v'tatzilinu mikaf kol oyev v'orev (v'listim v'chayot ra'ot) baderekh, umikol minei puranuyot hamitragshot lavo la-olam, v'tishl'chi brakhah be(khol) ma'aseh yadeinu, v'titninu l'chen ul'chesed ul'rachamim b'einekha uv'einei khol ro'einu, v'tishmi kol tachanuneinu, ki El shoma'at t'filah v'tachanun at. B'rukhah at Yah, shoma'at t'filah.

May it be Your will, Lord our God and God our ancestors, that you lead us toward peace, place our footsteps toward peace, guide us toward peace, and make us reach our desired destination for life, gladness and peace and return us to our homes in peace. May You rescue us from the hand of every foe, ambush along the way and from all manner of punishments that assemble to come to earth. May You send blessing in our handiwork, and grant us grace, kindness, and mercy in Your eyes and in the eyes of all

who see us. May You hear the sound of our supplication, because You are God Who hears prayer and supplication. Blessed are You, God, Who hears prayer.

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1. Sample Contract taken from How to Bury a Goldfish...and 113 Other Family Rituals for Everyday Life by Virginia E. Lang and Louise B. Nayer (Daybreak Books, 2000).

Ritual for Returning Home

By Amy Loewenthal

Many of us work in stressful situations. Sometimes upon returning home, we discover that we are carrying with us feelings and experiences from the work day that we would rather not bring into our homes. Perhaps our day at work has triggered anger, but since the workplace is not an appropriate place to express anger, we return home pumped to react to something that has nothing to do with the life inside our homes. Or perhaps our work requires that we closely attend to others' needs and by the time we get home we feel drained and wonder how to summon up the energy to listen to the people we care about the most.

The following is a suggested ritual practice to help us separate between the "world of work" and the "world of home." This ritual should be simple enough to do habitually, but powerful enough to enable a shift in mood.

Kissing the *Mezuzah*

While standing outside your door- acknowledge that you are no longer at work. Set down anything you have in your hands and think about what you would like to leave behind from your workday. Say quietly, "I'm laying it down."

Put your hand on the mezuzah and close your eyes. For several breaths, become aware of your love for those who live inside the house. Kiss your hand as you open your eyes.

Enter your house and greet your loved ones with a smile and a kiss. Excuse yourself and proceed to change your clothing.

Removing Constricting Work Clothing

Notice how it feels to wear your work clothing. Does it require extra energy? Take off any clothes that you don't want to get dirty or wrinkled and hang them up. Remove any constricting clothing, such as a necktie or brassiere, and remove your wristwatch. Notice how your body feels. Take a deep breath, in and out.

Recite the following blessing:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, מַתִּיר אֲסוּרִים.

Baruch Atah Adonay Eloheynu Melech ha'olam, matir asurim.

Blessed are You, Adonay our G-d, Ruler of the World, who frees the bound.

Put on comfortable, soft, loose clothing. Close your eyes and take another deep breath. As you breathe in- notice areas in your body where you might still feel tension from your work day. As you breathe out – focus on releasing the tension. Scan your muscles. When no tension remains, take one last deep breath and say, "I am home now."

Washing Hands

Remove any rings. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water. Ritually wash your hands again and then recite the following blessing:

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

Baruch Atah Adonay, Eloheynu, Melech ha'olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu al n'tilat yadayim.

Blessed are You, Adonay our G-d, Ruler of the World, who makes us holy with your commandments, and commands us to wash our hands.

Place your clean hands over your heart, feel your heart beating. Know that you are loved simply because you exist. Acknowledge that you are loved by G-d and by your loved ones in your home.

Say or sing one of the following:

וְטַהֵר לִבֵּנוּ לְעָבְדְּךָ בֶּאֱמֶת.

V'taher libeynu l'ovdechah be'emet

Dear G-d, purify our hearts to serve You truly.

פְּתַח לִבִּי בְּתוֹרָתֶךָ, וּבְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ תִּרְדּוֹף נַפְשִׁי.

P'tach libi b'toratehah, u'v'mitzvotechah tirdof nafshi.

Dear G-d, open my heart to Your Torah and Your commandments for my soul to pursue them.

לֵב טָהוֹר בְּרָא־לִי אֱלֹהִים וְרוּחַ נָכוֹן חַדֵּשׁ בְּקִרְבִּי׃
אַל־תַּשְׁלִיכֵנִי מִלְּפָנֶיךָ וְרוּחַ קָדְשְׁךָ אַל־תִּקַּח מִמֶּנִּי׃

Lev tahor b'rah li Elohim v'ruach nachon hadesh b'kirbi. Al tashlicheni milfanechah, v'ruach kodsh'chah al t'kach mimeni.

Dear G-d, create for me a pure heart, renew in me a steadfast spirit. Don't cast me out of Your presence, or take Your holy spirit away from me.

Now that you are fully home rejoin your loved ones and look for G-d in the light of their eyes.

Hafradah: A Jewish Leavetaking Ritual

By Jane Litwoman

Introduction

I wrote this ritual as part of a course in life cycle liturgy offered at the Reconstructionict Rabbinical College in 1986. Although I was physically living in Philadelphia during that period of my life, my psychological center was on the west coast, where I had alwys lived, and which held my lover, family, social network, and career ties. I spent as much time in California as I could manage without doing irreparable damage to my academic standing, so for me, this period held one painful parting after another.

In the course of those years, I was struck by how difficult each single separation was, and how little traditional wisdom existed to guide me in easing the disruptive and depressing emotional after-effects of the visits and vacations across country. In addition, I realized that my final leave-taking in June, would bring not only the joy of returning home, but also its own loss of my East Coast friends and community. It became clear to me that I wanted a Jewish ritual process with which to deal with my feelings.

I searched Jewish sources for material on separation: stories; rites; philosophic statements, Biblical accounts: – Eve and Adam's expulsion from Eden; Abraham's separation from Lot; Jacob and Joseph's departures from their families; Orpah's withdrawal from Naomi; Moses' seclusion from the people of Israel. I looked over midrashic stories and Kabbalistic explanations of havdalah, the separation ceremony between Shabbat and the weekdays.

I wanted a model which was not fault-finding or blaming, which valued what had been and what was to be, while honoring the sadness of transtion and loss. The central activity of the ritual is drawn from the story of the parting of the Biblical and Midrashic material I was most drawn to the story of Jacob and Laban in Genesis 31. Much of the liturgical and symbolic material is drawn from kabbalistic (mystical) celebrations of havdalah. I decided to use this as the central part of the rite and to surround it with Kabbalistic meanings.

In this ancient Genesis story, God tells Jacob to leave Lavan's camp, in which he as lived for twenty years, and return with his women to the land of his parents, Rebecca and Isaac. Jacob and his household flee without properly saying farewell to Laban.

Laban pursues them and confronts Jacob. He asks, "Why did you flee in secrecy and mislead me and not tell me? I would have sent you off with music, with timbrel and lyre. You did not even let me kiss my sons and daughters good-bye. It was a foolish thing to do." Jacob explains that he was fearful of Laban's displeasure at his leaving. So they agree to make a pact and build a pillar of stones as a witness to their agreement.

It was to this mound of tone in the tale that I was particularly attracted. Stones seem an appropriately material symbol with which to concretize such an abstract thing as a relationship. The initial parting in the story was overly hasty and thus did not show proper respect for the emotional gravity of the situation. The pillar of stones served to lengthen and solidify the metaphoric time of the leave-taking, for the stone mound remained as a physical witness of the relationship after the people had departed, yet eventually even the stones would slowly dislodge from their mound and become separate entities.
I found that stones are a common religious symbol. Sacred rocks exist in virtually every human culture and spiritual system. In the course of this work I became much more aware of stones, their shapes, colors,

textures. I started picking them up at the beach and on hikes. Fortunately, I spent some time in Hawaii at this time, and noticed the folk practice of building small heaps of pebbles on heights overlooking the ocean. I was told that they serve as homes for wandering spirits.
Jewish tradition too tells of many sacred stones which serve as vessels for spiritual abstractions. The High Priest of the Temple in Jerusalem wore a breastplate decorated with twelve holy stones, each one a representation of one of the tribes of Israel. Ancient Jewish worship frequently occurred at stone altars, and some rocks became associated with important mythic events such as the near sacrifice of Isaac or the covenant at Shechem. Indeed, even God is referred to metaphorically as Tzor Yisrael , the rock of Israel.
I believe it is the very quality of materiality which allows stoned to serve as such excellent images of spiritual concepts. It is in their nature to be "grounded," and thus place boundaries on thoughts and feelings which might otherwise seem overwhelming. They are not physically representational and thus do not create stultifying images (containing, for example set notions of gender or age) in the course of providing boundaries and material solidity. They come in adequate variety to symbolically encase many moods and thoughts. A light blue stone may evoke the sky; a shiny black one may serve to bring up memories of a lover's hair or skin. I decided that the nucleus of this separation ritual would be to build a pillar as had Jacob and Laban, but in this pillar each rock would be allowed to become a spiritual vessel containing a single memory or feeling.
Thus the primary act of the rite is setting up a small cairn of rock/memories to serve as a witness to the enduring nature of the relationship even after separation. As each participant sets a stone into the mound, she/he tells a thought or feeling (what the Hawaiians might call a wandering spirit) and allows it to find a home in the stone. As in the Biblical story, the mound endures and therefore symbolically tells of the enduring nature of memories and relationships.
Having decided on the main movement of the ritual, I needed to orchestrate its minor motifs, particularly the introduction and conclusion. The initial section of the ritual allows the participants to prepare themselves, to focus their attention on the ritual process, and to attune themselves to its therapeutic symbols. This part consists of lighting a havdalah candle, and setting out the stones, herbs, apples, and raisin cakes, and wine.

The havdalah candle with its braided wicks represents that which is separate coming together into one flame, and then becoming individuated again when the flame is extinguished. Herbs and wine are traditionally healing and are part of the havdalah ritual. Apples and raisin cakes are a Kabbalistic reference to Song of Songs 2:5, which reads, "sustain me with ashishot , refresh me with apples." The Kabbalists recited this verse at havdalah and interpreted the Hebrew word, " ashishot " to mean either "raisin cakes," which is its traditional translation, or "multiple fires," describing the flame of the havdalah candle and thus proclaiming the curative powers of its light. I have included both possibilities to ensure the doubly restorative nature of this ritual.

The transition between the introductory section of the rite and its symbolic core is a song, as is the transition to the concluding segment. The songs were selected to mirror the general theme of the ritual, that is, changes. The final part of the ritual is designed to soften the emotional release of the rite's apogee, to actually provide restorative power through drinking wine and eating good food in the form of the apples and raisin cakes. It's purpose is to give healing, to summarize the intent of the ritual, and to establish closure. The summary is liturgically stated in a verse from Deuteronomy, "Blessed are you in your coming in and blessed are you in your going out." The end of the ritual, its closure, is marked by the participants kissing each other good-bye as Laban kissed his daughters, and as Orpah kissed Naomi. The kiss signals that the time for parting is indeed at hand, while the standing mound tells of the import of what is left, and the consumed food provides sustenance for the journey.

We bless the source of life, creator of the light of fire.

Sustains me with lights. (Song of Songs 2:5)

The participants set out the cakes, the apples, the herbs, and the stones on cloths.

Sing:

Changes
By Phil Ochs

Sit by my side, come as close as the air
Share in my memories of gray
Wander in my world
Dream about the pictures that I play of changes

Green leaves of summer turn red in the fall
To brown and to yellow they fade
Then the have to die
Trapped within the circle time parade of...

Scenes of my young years were warm in my mind
Visions of shadow that shine
Till one day I returned
And found they were the victims of the vines...

The world spinning madly it drifts through the dark
Swims through a hollow of haze
A trip around the stars
A journey through the universe ablaze with...

Movements of magic will glow in the night
All fears of the forest are gone
But when the morning breaks
They're swept away by golden drops of dawn...

Passions will part to a strange melody
As fires will sometimes burn cold
Like petals in the wind
We're puppets to the silver strings of soul of...

Your tears will be trembling now we're somewhere else
One last cup of wine I will pour
I'll kiss you one more time
And leave you on the rolling river shore of...

Pour the cup of wine.

Hafradah: A Separation Ritual

This ritual is designed for one to about ten celebrants. It is to pay respect and allow emotional release at the time of separations with beloveds. The ritual takes place outside at sunset. For the ritual you will need a havdalah candle, several sectioned apples, ten to thirty small pebbles chosen beforehand, some fragrant spices (sage is particularly good), a little wine, and enough raisin cakes or bread to feed the participants.

Participants gather and hum, chant, or sing niggunim outdoors as the sun sets and they prepare emotionally to enter sacred time.

The havdalah candle is lit and the participants say:
N'varekh m'kor chayim, borei m'orei ha-eish.
Samchuni ba-ashishot.
N'varekh m'kor chayim borei p'ri ha-gafen.
We bless the source of life, creator of the fruit of the vine.

One participant reads:

When Jacob and Laban parted they built a mound of stones to stand as a witness to their relationship and to their parting. We now make a mound of stones to be our witness.

Participants pick up several stones each. As the first person places her/his stone, she tells a memory or feeling about the relationship about to undergo separation. Each person does this until all the stones are placed and built into a mound and each person feels satisfied that her/his story has been sufficiently told. This part of the ritual should be given plenty of time for it gives the opportunity to establish continuity and express emotions.

After the mound is built each participant says:

Ha-gal ha-zeh eid beini u-veinkha ha-yom.
Ha-gal ha-zeh eid beini u-veinayich ha-yom.
This stone mound is a witness between me and you this day.
Yitzef Adonai beini u'veinekha ki nissatar ish meire'ei hu.
Yitzef Adonai beini u'veinayich ki nistarah ishah mei-re'eihah.
The Eternal will watch between me and you when we are absent from one another. (Gen 31:48-49).

Sing:

Turn, Turn,Turn
Lyrics by Book of Ecclesiastes (3:1-8)
Music by Pete Seeger
To everything turn, turn, turn
There is a season turn, turn, turn
And a time for ev'ry purpose under heaven.

A time to be born, a time to die
A time to plant, a time to reap
A time to kill, a time to heal
A time to laugh, a time to weep

A time to build up...to break down
...to dance,...mourn.
...cast away stones
a time to gather -- stones together.

...of war, ...of peace
...love...hate
...you may embrace
...to refrain -- from embracing.

...to gain, ...lose
...rend, ...sew
...love, ...hate
...peace, I swear, its' not too late.

Conclusion

At this writing, this ritual has been performed twice. Both times it went smoothly. I gathered the stones ahead of time and decided what to say with each one. However, I found that I had quite a lot of spontaneous outflow, as did the people with whom I celebrated. Tears also flowed freely.

However, as with any new creative ritual, this smooth flow was greatly facilitated by the fact that the ritual was celebrated by its author. Naturally, any other celebrant may modify it as she/he sees fit. It will be more meaningful the more the participants integrate their own needs and desires into its structure.

My thanks to Rabbi Linda Holtzman, my teacher, who guided this effort with unceasing patience, intelligence, sensitivity, and creativity.

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Winds of the People: A Songbook.

The Simchat Bat of Elana Shira

Elana Shira
Sunday, August 20, 2006
26 Av, 5766

1. Baby's entrance

Elana Shira is brought in by her grandfathers, Dr. Stanley Small and Dr. Yitzchok Zlochower.

Devorah: We greet Elana Shira with the words ברוכה הבאה; *Beruha HaBa'a.*

Yehoshua holds Elana Shira as Yehoshua and Samantha join Devorah on the *bima.*

Devorah: Elana Shira is wrapped in the tallit that was given to Samantha by Yehoshua at their wedding. The numerical value of ציצית, tzitzit, the fringes of the tallit is 600. Our Sages tell us that the 600 symbolized by the ציצית along with the 8 strands and 5 knots on each corner equal 613, the traditional number of mitzvoth or commandments. By wearing her mother's tallit, Elana Shira is wrapped in the 613 commandments, the covenantal bond between God and the Jewish people.

2. Candle lighting

Devorah: Samantha and Yehoshua now light two candles to welcome Elana Shira officially and in the presence of the community into their home.

Samantha lights one candle. Yehoshua and Samantha together light a second candle from the first candle.

Samantha and Yehoshua: When one candle lights another, its light is not diminished, rather, the light in the world increases. In this way, little girl, you have already added your light to the light of our family. May you continue to bless us and all those you touch with your light and your life.

Devorah: The book of Proverbs, *Mishle,* tells us כי נר מצוה ותורה אור – For the commandments are a candle and Torah is light. As the tallit symbolizes the commandments, the light of the candles stands for the illumination of Torah study, the sacred right and obligation of all Jews.

Yehoshua and Samantha: We stand in awe before the miracle of birth, the mystery and majesty of life, our own fragility and the power of God. We accept the responsibility of raising our daughter to maturity. We are overcome with a deep sense of love, joy and happiness. We are grateful to you, God, for all that has transpired and all that is yet to unfold.

3. שיר השירים - Song of Songs

Devorah: Jewish girls have been welcomed into their families and communities with words of Torah since early modern times. Sefardic and Italian Jews in the 17th century had a ceremony called a זבד הבת, *zeved ha'bat*, in which they officially entered their daughters into the Jewish community. As the baby girl was brought in she was greeted by verses from the Song of Songs, King Solomon's beautiful love poem to God. Samantha' sister, Gaby will recite the verses of שיר השירים from the זבד הבת.

Gaby:

יונתי בחגוי הסלע

Yonati bi'chagvei ha'selah
O, my dove in the rocky clefts
In the covert of terrace high

Let me see thy countenance
Let me hear thy voice
For sweet is thy voice
And thy countenance comely

4. נטילת ידים – Washing of the Hands

Devorah: As light is a central motif in Judaism so is water. Moshe is drawn from water, the Israelites cross the Red Sea in their exodus from Egypt but water has special significance for Biblical women. Rivka, our mother Rebecca enters the family of Abraham and when she draws water for Abraham's servant and his caravan of camels; her patient filling and refilling of the ewer demonstrating her compassion for both human an animal. Miriam watches baby Moshe in the water and later on, the midrash tells us, the Israelites in the desert get their water from a rock in Miriam's merit. And of course, Miriam leads the women in song and dance at the Red Sea after the Israelites' miraculous salvation.

We are reminded of the centrality of water to Jewish life and history as we perform the ritual act of hand washing, נטילת ידים – *netillat yadayim,* before eating bread and when we greet the day. As Yehoshua and Samantha usher their daughter into their family, into the Jewish community and into the line of Jewish women they wash her hands.

Yehoshua holds Elana Shira as Samantha washes the hands. Both recite the blessing.

Samantha and Yehoshua:

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על נטילת ידים

Barukh atah Ado-n-ai Elo-hei-nu Melekh ha'olam asher kidishanu bi'mitzvotav vi'tzivanu al netillat yadayim.

Blessed are You, *Ado-n-ai* our God who has sanctified us with His *mitzvot* and commanded us on the washing of the hands.

Samantha holds Elana Shira as both say:

We have washed your hands with the Water of Life with which You, God, have blessed heaven and earth.

You are now a daughter of the Covenant of the People Israel. You are a daughter of Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, of Miriam, Esther and Avigayil. You are a daughter of your great-grandmothers, Elsie, Gertrude, Sarah and Miriam. You are a daughter of your grandmothers, Amy and Marcia. You are a daughter of your wise, beautiful and strong mother, Sara Bracha. You are a daughter of all the strong, gentle and wise women of Israel.

5. קריאת שם – Naming the Baby

Devorah: I would like to call up the two grandmothers, Amy Small and Marcia Zlochower, to hold the baby for the naming ceremony.

As the grandmothers ascend the bima and receive the baby, Gaby recites the following verse.

Gaby:

מי זאת הנשקפה כמו שחר

Mi zot ha'nishkafa kemo shachar
Who is she who shines through the dawn, beautiful as the moon, radiant as the sun?

Devorah:

מי שברך שרה ורבקה רחל ולאה ומרים הנביאה ואביגיל, ואסתר המלכה בת אביחיל הוא יברך את הילדה הנעימה הזאת ונקרא שמה בישראל אלנה שירה ושרה ברכה בת הרב יהושע זנויל
במזל טוב ובשעת ברכה ויגדלה לתורה ולחפה ולמעשים טובים ונאמר אמן.

Mi she'berakh Sarah, Rivka, Rachel vi'Leah, u'Miriam ha'Nevia vi'Avigayil, i'Esther ha'Malka bat Avichayil Hu yivarekh et ha'yalda ha'neima ha'zot vi'nikra shemah bi'Yisrael: Elana Shira bat ha'Rav Yehoshua Zanvil vi'Sara Bracha
Bi'mazel tov uvi'shaat brakha vi'yigadlah li'Torah uli'huppa uli'maasim tovim vi'nomar Amen.

May the One who blessed our mothers, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, Miriam the Prophet, Avigail and Esther the Queen,
May God bless this beautiful girl called Elana Shira
daughter of Rav Yehoshua Zanvil and Sarah Bracha.
May they raise her for Torah, the *huppa* and good deeds and let us say Amen.

Elana Shira is named after her parents' maternal grandmothers, Elsie and Sarah. Their daughters, Elana's grandmothers, will share a few memories.

Amy and Marcia speak.

Devorah: Yehoshua and Samatha have chosen the name Elana Shira for their daughter. As we have heard Elana Shira is named for two great-grandmothers, Elsie and Sarah. Samantha and Yehoshua have chosen to memorialize their maternal grandmothers with two names Elana and Shira.

Elana is a tree, an oak tree, my brother tells me. Trees are a significant symbol in Judaism. Every time we return the Torah to the Aron we say עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה – *etz hayim hi la'mahazikim bah,* Torah is a living tree to those who uphold her.

Shira is a song, a poem, a beautiful melody. The Bible is full of songs of women, the song of Miriam, the song of Devorah and the song of Chana. Biblical songs have marked both national triumphs and personal glories. In fact, Torah itself is called a shira.

In combining these two names, Yehoshua and Samantha, you give Elana Shira a message of strength combined with beauty, of the significance of a tree that stands for many years along with the importance of a melody that remains in the air but a moment. Both are powerful expressions of what Jewish living can be. Jewish observance and ritual glorify the sacred moment, special occasions like today and they also sanctify each and every day. May Elana Shira grow strong, steadfast in her opinions and beliefs, with a lightness of spirit, an ease and comfort, knowing her place in the Jewish community.

The Talmud in *Taanit* 5b-6a relates the following story:

Rav Nahman and Rabbi Yitzhak were eating together. When the time came for them to part, Rav Nahman entreated Rabbi Yitzhak, "Bless me." Said Rabbi Yitzhak, "I will tell you a parable. To what may this be compared? To one who was journeying in the desert, hungry, weary and thirsty and came upon a tree the fruits of which were sweet, its shade pleasant, and a stream of water flowing beneath it. The wayfarer ate of its fruits, drank of the water, and rested under its shade. When he was about to continue his journey, he said: אילן אילן - Elan, Elan,Tree, O Tree, with what shall I bless thee? Shall I say to you, 'May your fruits be sweet'? They are sweet already. That your shade be pleasant? It is already pleasant. That a stream of water may flow beneath you? A stream of water flows already beneath you. So with this I bless you, "May it be God's will that all the shoots taken from you be like you."

"So also with you", said Rabbi Yitzhak to Rav Nahman, "with what shall I bless you? With Torah? You already possess it. With riches? You have riches already. With children? You have children already. May it be God's will that your offspring be like you."

Yehoshua and Samantha how shall we bless you? You possess so much, a love for each other, a commitment to caring for humanity, and a passion for Jewish life. In the words of Rabbi Yitzhak, may Elana Shira and Sammy, Gavriel Shmuel, grow to be like you, compassionate and caring, intelligent and inquiring, and committed to a Judaism that speaks to the soul as well as the mind.

6. Blessing over wine

The grandfathers now ascend the bima. A cup of wine is handed to Yehoshua and Samantha who recite the blessing.

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם בורא פרי הגפן.

Barukh ata Ado-n-ai Eloheinu Melekh ha'olam boreh peri hagafen.

Twice before we drank from this cup in times of joy, at our wedding, and upon welcoming our son, Gavriel Shmuel, into the covenant. We now drink again, celebrating the joy of another new life.

Yitzchak:

והיה כעץ שתול על פלגי מים אשר פריו יתן בעתו ועלהו לא יבול וכל אשר יעשה יצליח

Vi'haya ki'eitz shatul al palgei mayim asher piryo yiten bi'ito vi'alaihu lo yibol vi'khol asher yaaseh yatzliakh.

Elana Shira, may you grow to be like the tree by the riverside with strong roots who bears fruits of blessings, whose strength never wanes. May you find success in all you do.

שירו לה' שיר חדש שירו לה' כל הארץ.

Shiru la'Ado-n-ai shir hadash shiru la'Ado-n-ai kol ha'aretz.

May you sing a new song to God, a song that is yours. May you sing your song with joy and faith. May you bring blessings to your parents, to your family, to the world with your beautiful song.

Stanley:

May the *Shechina,* the Loving Presence of God, spread Her wings over you and protect you. May you know great joy and fulfillment in your life. May you walk with your people, Israel, in pride, and may you understand that to be a Jew is a source of joy and meaning, and an important responsibility.

May you go from strength to strength, yet always be able to accept your own weaknesses and those of others. May you judge yourself and others with compassion.

May your ears be filled with music of every imaginable kind, and may the rhythm be of your own making, Allow yourself to march at your own pace and dance to your own beat.

May you live in a world blessed with peace and harmony, and may your future be as bright and as hopeful as the world's first rainbow.
And let us say Amen.

7. ברכת הטוב והמטיב – *ha'Tov viha'Meitiv*

Devorah: There are moments in life that warrant a special blessing. The birth of a child is certainly one of them. The Mishnah, Berakhot 9:1 tells us that for good tidings we say הטוב והמטיב, blessing God who is good and causes good.

We now recite this blessing for the gift of a daughter.

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם הטוב והמיטב

Barukh ata Ado-n-ai Eloheinu Melekh ha'olam ha'tov viha'meitiv.

8. ברכת הורים – the parents' blessing

Devorah: Ever since Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, parents have blessed their children. Perhaps this is one way, we as parents, let our children know how blessed we are by their presence in our life. As we mark the end of this ceremony welcoming Elana Shira into the Jewish community and as we look forward to sharing in all her semakhot, Samantha and Yehoshua bestow their blessings upon their daughter.

יברכך ה' וישמרך יאר ה' פניו אליך ויחנך ישא ה' פניו אליך וישם לך שלום.
ישמך אלהים כאמותינו שרה רבקה רחל ולאה.

Yivarechicha Ado-n-ai vi'yishmirecha. Yaer Ado-n-ai panav eilecha vi'chuneka. Yisa Ado-n-ai panav eileicha vi'yasem licha shalom.

Yisimech Elohim ki'imoteinu Sara, Rivka, Rachel vi'Leah.

Mazel tov!!

Unit 5 Lessons 3 and 4 – Creating New Rituals

The purpose of these 2 lessons is to give the students an opportunity to create a new ritual. They will then present their new ritual to the rest of the class.

Objectives – At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Create a new ritual to respond to a particular situation in an individual's or a community's life.
- Explain how that ritual transforms that experience in a Jewish, meaningful way that adds holiness to one's life.

Suggested Learning Activities

Creating a New Ritual

Students can work in pairs or as individuals. Students will need to pick a situation for which they will create a ritual. They can adapt rituals that already exist or adopt completely new ones. The ritual should consist of components decided by the class in the "ritual rubric" from lesson 1. It may be helpful to have other Jewish professionals available, such as the Rabbi/Cantor/Director of Education, to help students find appropriate Jewish texts and/or help them create new blessings/liturgy. After the learners have completed their project, it would be ideal for the learners to present their rituals to members outside their class, such as parents, other students and synagogue leaders. This public presentation could be designed as a fair or students could present one at a time in front of the whole audience. Students can also submit their rituals to www.ritualwell.org, to be available for other Jews to use, or could be published on the synagogue's website or included in the synagogue bulletin.

Annotated Bibliography

Dreskin, William and Kyla Epstein Schneider, "Whose Body is it, Anyway?" in *Teaching About God and Spirituality*. Denver, CO: ARE Publishing, Inc, 2002, pg 352.

This unit is a resource for how to teach about the value of *shmirat haguf* (taking care of the body). It provides ideas for Jewish texts and activities to use with a high school audience.

Embracing Shabbat, URJ Press, 2007.

This guide was published in conjunction with the URJ Presidential Address by Rabbi Eric Yoffie, in which he invited the Reform Movement to consider increasing Shabbat observance. The guide provides rich resources for exploring Shabbat rituals and practices from a classical and contemporary perspective.

Eskenazi, Tamara Cohn and Andrea L. Weiss. Eds. *The Torah, A Women's Commentary*. New York, NY: URJ Press, 2008

This is the latest Torah commentary published by the Reform Movement. It includes Reform and Feminine perspectives on the Torah.

Freeman, Susan. *Teaching Jewish Virtues: Sacred Sources and Arts Activities*. Denver, CO: ARE Publishing, 1999

This resource provides an array of Jewish texts, from the Bible to the Modern Day, and accompanying questions and activities. These texts and activities are based upon Jewish values.

Freeman, Susan. *Teaching Hot Topics: Jewish Values, Resources and Activities*. Denver, CO: ARE Publishing, 2003

This resource offers a range of texts and activities on contemporary topics such as drugs, alcohol, smoking, etc…

Frishman, Elyse D. Ed. *Mishkan T'filah*. New York, NY: CCAR Press, 2007.

This is the newest prayerbook published by the Reform Movement. It provides numerous prayers, for weekday, Shabbat, Jewish festivals and holidays. This prayerbook's innovation is that it also contains poetry and alternative prayers.

Isaacson, Rachel. *Looks, Love and Life*. Curriculum Guide, Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles, 2007.

This curriculum guide is designed to help teenage girls make Jewish decisions about how to take care of their bodies. This curriculum guide informs Unit 4 of the curriculum guide.

Richard Levy, *A Vision of Holiness: The Future of Reform Judaism*. New York, NY: URJ Press, 2005, p. 140.

In this book Rabbi Richard Levy expands his vision for the future of Reform Judaism. His vision, of bringing holiness into our lives through the practice of *mitzvot* and Jewish ritual and sacred practices informs this curriculum guide.

http://ritualwell.org/

This website includes rituals that were created by Jews relatively recently. These rituals are for a variety of situations which may not have been anticipated previously. These rituals allow us to add meaning and holiness to events that otherwise might be seen as mundane.

Washofsky, Marc. *Jewish Living: A Guide to Contemporary Reform Practice*. New York, NY: UAHC Press, 2001.

This is the latest attempt to create a definitive guide for Reform Jewish practice. Mark Washofsky traces the development of Reform Jewish thinking on a variety on a range of Jewish living.