INSTRUCTIONS FROM AUTHOR TO LIBRARY FOR THESES AND PRIZE ESSAYS

AUTHOR James Moss Brandt

TITLE Building on Tradition:
~~Toward a Handbook for~~ The Design and Fashioning of Sacred Jewish Place

TYPE OF THESIS: Ph.D. [ ] D.H.L. [ ] Rabbinic [✓]

Master's [ ] Prize Essay [ ]

1. May circulate [ ]) Not necessary
2. Is restricted [✓] for 5 years.) for Ph.D. thesis

Note: The Library shall respect restrictions placed on theses or prize essays for a period of no more than ten years.

I understand that the Library may make a photocopy of my thesis for security purposes.

3. The Library may sell photocopies of my thesis. yes / no

March 17, 1998
Date

Signature of Author

Library Record

Microfilmed 8 October 1998
Date

Allan D. Sater
Signature of Library Staff Member

BUILDING ON TRADITION

The Design and Fashioning of Sacred Jewish Place

James Moss Brandt

BUILDING ON TRADITION

The Design and Fashioning of Sacred Jewish Place

James Moss Brandt

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion

1998 - 5758

Referee: Rabbi Samuel Joseph

copyright 1998 by James Moss Brandt

for my teacher,

Jesse Reichek

The relationship between God and Israel can be compared to a king who had only one daughter. When one of the princes took her as a wife and would take her to his country, the king pleaded with his son-in-law: "As she is my only daughter, I cannot part with her forever; as she is now your wife, I cannot prevent her from going with you. Thus I have but one request of you. Wherever you make your home, reserve a small room for me where I could occasionally retire to be near my beloved daughter." This is what God said to Israel: "I have given you the *Torah*. Take it away from you, I cannot; part with it I cannot. Thus wherever you are on earth, construct for Me a house wherein my presence may dwell." Hence the command:

"Let them make unto Me a sanctuary"

-- Exodus Rabba

Think not to settle down in any truth
but use it as a tent in which to spend a summer's night;
build no house for it, or it will become your tomb.

- Belle Vallerie Grant and George Thevelyan

Digest

In the thesis' introduction, I open by posing the question of sacred Jewish place and by examining the relationship between sacred time and sacred space in the Jewish tradition. The process of place-making and, specifically, the design and fashioning sacred Jewish place, is presented as an activity that can be informed by the spirit of Judaism and a rediscovered Jewish artistic consciousness.

In Chapter One, I analyze criteria of sacred place that is grounded in Jewish theology, philosophy, and history. The Creation story in Genesis One is presented as the archetype of the creative and artistic process. *Shabbat* is presented as a primary example of the *Torah's* preference for sacred time over sacred space. The role and meaning of *place*, the realm in which space and time meet, is then analyzed in the context of Judaism.

In Chapter Two, the focus of the research is on an analysis of the places recorded in the Bible where Israel acknowledged the presence of God. The Tabernacle is presented as the archetype for sacred communal Jewish place. Its architecture is presented as an inspired model for a Hebraic concept of form-making. Emphasis is placed on the Tabernacle's role in Israelite tribal culture. The chapter concludes with a comparison between Israel's role in the design and building of the Tabernacle and God's role in the creation of the world.

In Chapter Three, the focus of the research is on an analysis of the role that sacred Jewish place plays in the activation of memory. The Temple is presented as an architecture that was built to serve as a national and religious

center, and also to preserve the memory of the Sinaitic experience. The Temple is presented as an enduring religious symbol. Its permanent architecture is contrasted with models of temporary Jewish architecture: the Tabernacle and the *Sukkah*.

In Chapter Four, the second commandment and Judaism's polemic against idolatry is analyzed. The nature of the Hebraic God as an imageless God is presented as an inspiration for the design of sacred Jewish place. While a distinction is made between idolatry and iconography, the Jewish concept of holiness is presented as one that resists the static image and instead sanctifies word and action.

In Chapter Five, the focus of the research is on the synagogue as a model for sacred Jewish place. The analysis includes the origins and early development of the synagogue and the social, political, and economic factors which shaped the synagogue architecture through history. Current trends in synagogue architecture are presented in the context of the influences of Historicism and Modernism.

In Chapter Six, the research documented in chapters one through five is interpreted into a list of specific *"midot"*, or aspects, for the design and fashioning of sacred Jewish place. Some of the aspects apply to the design of any sacred Jewish place, while others are clearly exclusive to the synagogue or the sanctuary reserved for Jewish worship. The aim of this chapter is to provide architects, designers, building committees, and Jewish communities with a tool to endow sacred places with the spirit of Jewish history and tradition.

Contents

Preface

This thesis aims to help Jewish artists, architects, and congregations to rediscover a Hebraic concept of form-making and to infuse sacred places with the spirit of Judaism. It is a project that began over a decade ago.

While studying architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, I had the opportunity to design a house of worship and study - a "tabernacle" - for the Newton Centre Shabbat Minyan. The research that went into that project sparked a spiritual journey which infused my life with the histories and traditions of our People. The project initiated a series of involvements that eventually brought me to the Rabbinate. I am indebted to Rabbi Daniel Shevitz and Maurice Smith who helped to guide me on the beginning of this journey. As the representative of the congregational client, Rabbi Shevitz challenged me both as an architect and as a Jew. Maurice Smith, the advisor for my graduate design thesis, helped me to understand the nature of built-form and to develop a set of principles for architectural composition and the definition of space.

While practicing architecture in Boston, I was blessed to be commissioned by Temple Beth Shalom of Cambridge to restore and renovate the congregation's early 20th century synagogue and to design a home for the Alef Bet Childcare Center. My role as the synagogue's architect led to a position as the congregation's first administrator and a two-year rejuvenation program in which the community's need for architectural and community development were merged into a single vision. I am indebted to the congregation of Temple

Beth Shalom of Cambridge for providing me an opportunity to explore solutions for sacred Jewish space in the congregational setting.

Throughout my years at Hebrew Union College I have been blessed with many fine teachers. While I am indebted to each one of them, I would like to acknowledge Rabbis Lee Bycel, Rueven Firestone, and Wolli Kaelter. Their teachings have helped to shape the priorities and the principles of my rabbinate. Outside the classroom, Rabbis Sue Elwell, Marvin Gross, Kenneth Kanter, and Jeffrey Marx have served as mentors and role models.

This thesis was influenced greatly by the guidance of Rabbi Samuel Joseph. As a trusted advisor, he provided valuable insight and critique. I am deeply indebted to my colleague, W. David Nelson. His skilled editing has touched virtually every paragraph which follows. Moreover, his scholarship and commitment to Jewish learning continues to enrich my life and work. The friendship and the brotherhood which David shared with me during my years in Cincinnati have been among my greatest blessings.

This work is dedicated to my mentor, friend, and teacher, Jesse Reichek. From Jesse I learned that the problem of architecture can not be solved on the drawingboard or in the studio. The examples of his life and work are a testament to our awesome responsibility as caretakers of God's earth. His teachings remain at the foundation of my hopes and dreams.

Above all, Lauren, my wife and life partner, has endured long nights, edited first drafts, and nurtured me every step of the way. She is my love and my life.

James Moss Brandt
Lag Ba'Omer 5758

Introduction: Sacred Jewish Time/Sacred Jewish Space

Like all human activity, events through which individuals and religious communities strive for nearness to the Divine are localized in time and space. At times, the space/time -- the *place* -- in which humanity acknowledges the presence of God is set apart, and sanctified. The Hebraic archetypes of sacred place are recorded in biblical narrative. At the site of Jacob's dream, the burning bush, and the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, sacred time was initiated by Diety and acknowledged by humankind. In the Tabernacle and Temple, man consecrated sacred space and God acquiesced. The places sanctified by God are distinctive in that these sites are hallowed by a particular event or set of events. Places sanctified by humankind are sites set apart for the purpose of composing religious meaning and accommodating rituals of faith. In these sacred places, the realm of time sanctifies the realm of space.

While it is the human acknowledgment of the Divine presence that consecrates place as sacred, it is important to note that not all places in which God and man meet are sanctified. Isaac was accustomed to praying out in an open field, but the biblical text does not even hint that the site of his prayer was sacred. On occasion, congregations plan *Shabbatonim* and wilderness retreats, and conduct worship services on a beach, in a campsite, or a meadow. On *Rosh Hashanah*, synagogue communities congregate at water's edge to discard sins of the past year. The spaces in which we conduct these rituals are made sacred by the event, but no mark

is left. In these cases, the sacred is localized in time, and is fleeting; holiness is confined to the moment; the space is not permanently hallowed. In the Hebraic view, space, by itself, is never sacred. When it is set apart, and sanctified, its purpose -- like the object -- is to lend holiness to time. Jewish prayer and ritual are performed at fixed times. The place of the occurrence is inconsequential. The Ten Commandments assert: "Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy."[1] While legislating a holiness in time, there is no mention of a sanctity in space. At the conclusion of the giving of the Law, holiness in time is further emphasized. God tells Moses: "Every place where I cause My Name to be mentioned, I will come to you and bless you."[2] The Hebraic notion of holiness in time is celebrated each *Shabbat.* A period of time is set aside and sanctified. *Shabbat's* seven-day cycle is completely detached from the world of space. It is a cycle of time imposed upon space, a declaration of a holiness exclusive to the realm of time.

At every turn, the Hebraic view asserts the triumph of time over space. In Judaism, space is the servant of time. Its importance is only acknowledged in time. Even so, the role of the lesser partner should not be underestimated. After all, ritual is localized not only in time, but also in space. Eventually, the *Torah* succumbs to the human weakness for things of space. In the place where he encounters the Divine, Jacob builds an altar to God. In doing so, he marks holy ground. He associates the site with the occurrence, and defines the place as sacred. God consecrates *Shabbat*; Israel consecrates Tabernacle and Temple. God acknowledges humanity's need for holiness in space, and endows the architect, Bezalel, with Divine

inspiration. When, in the days of Herod, the people faced the task of rebuilding God's sanctuary, the Talmud reminds us that rain fell only at night: "In the morning, the wind blew the clouds away and the sun shone so that the people were able to perform their task, and they knew that they were engaged in sacred work."[3] When the Temple was destroyed again, at once faith was fractured and democratized. The sacrificial cult which had been established in the Temple was replaced by prayer, by service of the heart. The synagogue was dedicated as the outpost of the holy.

Today, our places of worship are less temporary than Isaac's or even Jacob's. Bound by religious culture and history, we have become transformed from a tribe of faithful individuals to a community of faith. The communal character of our faith demands that we designate space for the activities of community: for prayer, study, celebration, and commemoration. Humanity requires enclosure; community demands architecture. For the religious community this means an architecture that brings people to God, a place that opens us to ourselves and to each other. It means a sanctified place that is set apart from those of the secular; a place that promotes searching, fellowship, and reflection; a place that invites the presence of God to dwell among the congregation. Religious architecture aims at places that are sanctified through use; spaces which, over time, will become endowed with the sacred.

Thomas Barrie, historian of sacred place and place-making, defines sacred space as "a locality set aside for the religious ritual to be enacted at the set-

time."[4] In Barrie's view, sacrality is associated specifically with ritual; holiness is confined to the sanctuary. In the consideration of sacred Jewish space, this definition is too limited. In Judaism, the distinction between the "secular" and the "sacred" is an artificial one. In the words of Nahum Glatzer, "Judaism is understood to be a way of life which elevates every action to a striving, to a relationship with God."[5] It follows that Jewish space cannot be limited to a sanctuary set aside for worship. The dedicated sanctuary is sacred. Its programmatic requirements, both spiritual and practical, are unique. But in Judaism, classroom, boardroom, dining room, and bedroom are also sacred. The talmudic rabbi, Bar Qappara explained: "What is the brief text upon which all the major parts of the *Torah* depend? It is Proverbs 3:6: 'In all your ways acknowledge God, and God will make straight your paths.'"[6] In Judaism, a tradition which aims to elevate every action to holiness, the careful consideration of sacred space is an invariable.

The *Torah* teaches that "you shall love *Adonai*, your God, with all your heart."[7] This means that every action has the potential to bring the Jew closer to God. We can interpret this verse to mean that we should love God with all our inclinations, with every aspect of our life, with all of our being. We can express our love for God through prayer and study, and also through poetry, drama, music, art, and architecture. According to *Pirke Avot*, the Ethics of the Fathers, the world stands on three things: *Talmud Torah* (study); *Gimilut hasadim* (ethical action); and *Avodah*. Eugene Mihaly interprets *Avodah* to be worship of the heart, and Torah's term for artistic

expression.[8] Abraham Joshua Heschel argues that all artistic expression must strive to acknowledge and glorify God. He explains the reciprocal relationship of religion and art: The artist needs religion, and religion needs art. He states that, "the right hand of the artist withers when he forgets the sovereignty of God, and the heart of the religious man has often become dreary without the daring skill of the artist." Furthermore, he asserts that "art seemed to be the only revelation in the face of Deity's vast silence."[9] In 1971, Rev. Henry Gratz opened a symposium on the role of art and architecture for religious communities with a question addressing the issue of sacred space: "Is it a structure that is symbolic of the glory of God, a monument to faith, or is it a visual expression of the symbol of community, of faith, and of family?" This question has no enduring answer. Indeed, it is one which has been addressed by generations of architects and artists, theologians and religious communities.

One of the greatest endeavors of religious communities is to design and build sacred space. The product of this process provides the community with a place to conduct the business of the congregation, to learn and teach, to celebrate and mourn, and to conduct communal worship. Sacred space provides the stage for fellowship and discovery. It is here that the religious community seeks to know their God. Moreover, the sacred architecture of the religious community be it a sanctuary, classroom, or consecrated chapel in a clearing in the woods, is a reflection of the ideals of the community, perhaps even is a symbol of shared beliefs and values. Frank Lloyd Wright presented architecture as "life itself, taking form and therefore is the truest

record of life as it was lived in the world of yesterday, as it is being lived in today, or ever will be lived." For Wright:

> Architecture is that great creative spirit which from generation to generation, from age to age, proceeds, persists, creates, according to the nature of man, and his circumstances as they both change.[10]

Place-making is a programmed art. It is fashioned to fulfill a specific set of human needs. Architecture responds to a purpose, as Louis Sullivan stated: "Form follows function".[11] Architecture, when successful, fulfills the parameters of a program of use. Even the most sacred space must be responsive to the physical needs of this program. How many people will attend worship services? Where will we store the books, and the cars? How will people and light and air get in, and out? How much will this cost, and how much of it can we afford? These are questions that religious communities -- congregations, schools, camps, mortuaries -- address when building new space, or when planning a renovation or addition.

The program for religious architecture -- the considerations which guide the design and fashioning of sacred communal space -- demand that we ask questions of use, and also questions of history, philosophy, and theology. Beside a catalogue of the physical needs of the community, the program of use, religious architecture is fashioned by a program of spirit. If we aim to design sacred Jewish space, we must seek to understand our tradition's concept of sacred space. If we aim to design a place to conduct the affairs of

the Jewish community, we must be clear in our vision of the character and the scope of Jewish communal activity. If we aim to fashion a place in which we will seek the presence of God, we must address ourselves to our tradition's understanding of that search. To fashion sacred communal space, Jewish communities must develop programs of use which respond to the physical needs of the community. They also must develop a program of spirit which reflect the ideals of Judaism, the history of the Jewish People, and aims to rediscover a Hebraic tradition of place-making.

The goal of this study is to lay the foundation for a model handbook which will help Jewish communities to design and fashion sacred communal space which both fulfills the communities' physical requirements, and reflects a "spiritual/historical program of place-making" -- an interpretation of the ideals of our tradition and the history of our People.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

[1] Exodus 20:8

[2] Exodus 20:21b

[3] TB *Ta'anit* 23a

[4] Thomas Barrie, *Spiritual Path, Sacred Place: Myth Ritual and Meaning in Architecture* (Boston: Shambhala, 1996), pg. 1.

[5] Nahum N. Glatzer, *Hillel the Elder: The Emergence of Classical Judaism*, (New York: B'nai Brith Foundation, 1957), pg. 87.

[6] TB *Brachot* 63a

[7] Deuteronomy 6:4

[8] cf. Eugene Mihaly, "The Architect as Liturgist" (*Faith and Form: Journal of the Guild for Religious Architecture*, vol. 7; Fall, 1974).

[9] Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Quest For God: Studies in Prayer and Symbolism* (New York: Crossroads, 1954), pg. 118.

[10] Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Future of Architecture* (New York: Bramhall House, 1953), pg. 288.

[11] cf. Louis Sullivan, *Autobiography of an Idea* (New York: American Institute of Architects, 1924).

1. *Toward a Concept of Sacred Jewish Place*

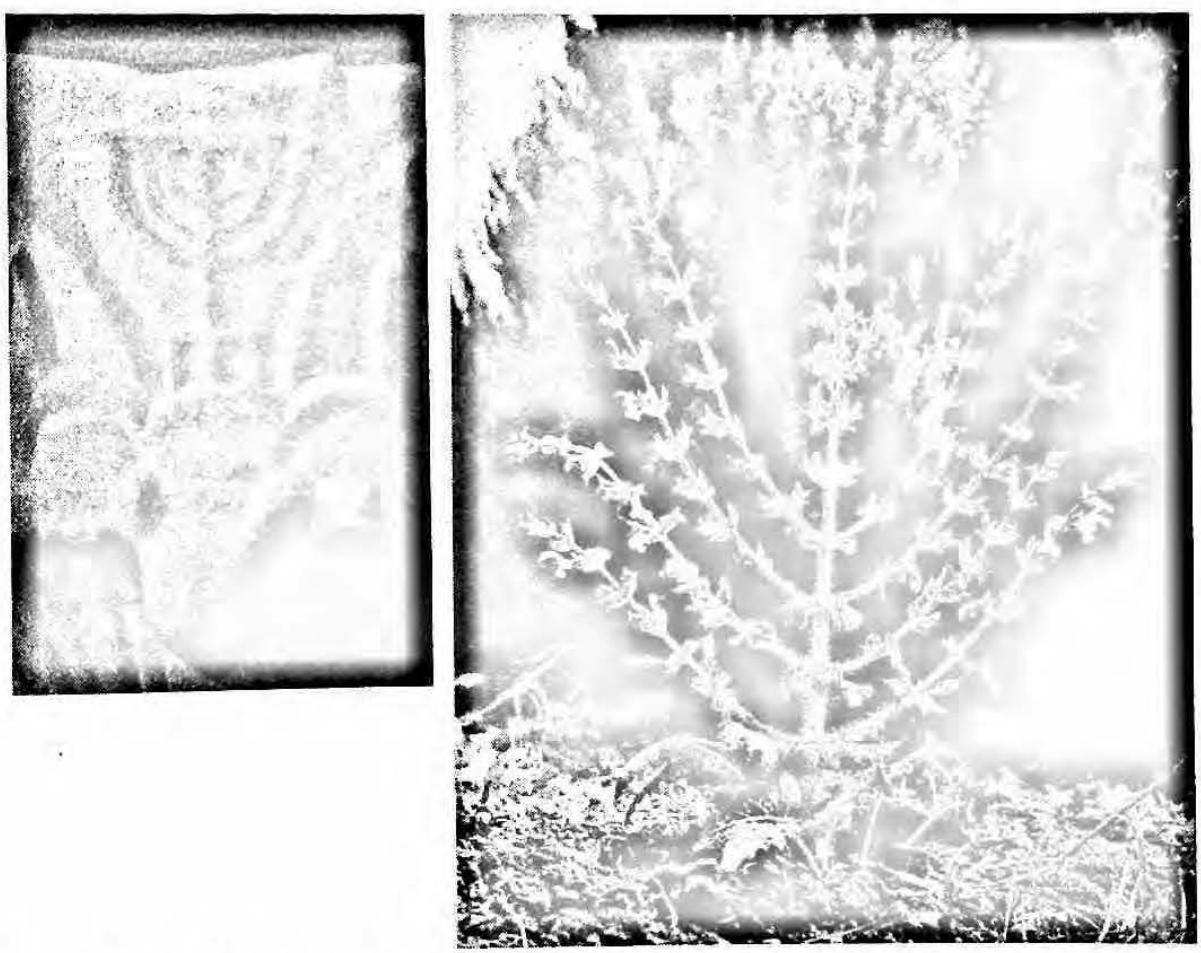
THE CREATION STORY: ARCHETYPE FOR THE DESIGN PROCESS

Space is defined both by natural phenomenon and by human intervention. The clearing in the woods, the sea shore, and the dam built by a family of beavers are examples of natural form, that is, form that is a result of the natural order. The ritual hut, home on the range, and urban skyscraper are examples of built form, form designed and fashioned by man. Models for both natural and built form are presented in the biblical Creation story, in Genesis, Chapter 1. The text describes the origins of the universe and the beginnings of humanity, it also presents Creation as a continuing process. God's creative act is understood as the foundation of the world and as an empowering and enabling force. When God ceases work on the seventh day, Creation, nonetheless continues to function on its own accord; Creation continues independent of Diety.

The continuation of Creation is commanded; it is programmed into the natural order. Rather than creating vegetation *ex nihilo,* God commands the earth "to bring forth vegetation."[1] Waters bring forth sea creatures;[2] the waters withdraw to bring forth land.[3] Grass, herb-yielding seed, and fruit trees are created along with the seed "after its kind."[4] In this way, the creative force is programmed into Creation itself. God blesses natural form with the commandment: "Be fruitful and multiply: fill the waters of the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth."[5] The commandment is

fulfilled. Creation acts upon its ability to continue creation. The result is the ongoing production of natural form.

Humankind is given similar commandments, and yet more: the responsibility for the continuation of Creation. God commands humanity to "be fruitful and multiply:" To act upon our genetic ability and desire to produce offspring. Further, humankind is commanded to "subdue the earth



On the left, an engraving of the *menorah* candelabra used in Tabernacle, and later Temple worship, probably used as an amulet in an early synagogue. On the Right, the Israel Moriah (salvia palastina benth.), which provided inspiration for the menorah's shape. An example of natural form providing a model for built form. Source: Neil Folberg, *And I Shall Dwell Among Them: The Historic Synagogues of the World*, title page (left). Nogah Hareuveni, *Nature in Our Biblical Heritage*, pg. 136.

and to have dominion over it."[6] Humankind's role is fulfilled not only by continuing the species through procreation, but also by organizing and ordering the entirety of Creation through the creative process. Humankind continues Creation by employing the products of natural form as the raw materials for designs fashioned by man. It is a process initiated by God through specific acts of creation and continued by humanity through acts of differentiation and combinations. It is the process by which natural form, transformed by man, becomes built form.

God's creative action is itself a process of differentiation. Light is created and divided from the darkness.[7] Heaven and Earth are created by the act of dividing existing matter, as well as by creating matter itself.[8] The creation of space is created within space, by dividing space. Eric Elnes recognizes

Creation was a process of differentiation. God retracted to allow space for the universe. Light was divided from darkness. The waters were gathered to form dry land. Source: Photograph by James Brandt.

Creation "as a process by which the cosmos is differentiated into interdependent, relational entities which themselves provide the basis for further differentiation and interdependence."[9] It is significant to note that Creation did not occur instantaneously, but as an extended, dynamic process. Elnes points out that the verb "*badal*/to divide" appears five times in the creation story, further emphasizing creation as a process of differentiation.[10]

The act of creation brought forth the universe, and also reveals the creative act as a process. Genesis 1:1 might be translated as, "In the beginning, God initiated the process of creation", to reflect a fuller understanding of the nature of the creative act. Taking note that creation took place over time, as a process of differentiation, we can further characterize the process as one defined by a repetitive series of intention, action, and reflection. To examine the nature of this process, we analyze the creation of light:

"And God said, 'Let there be light',
And there was light.
And God saw the light, that it was good,
And God divided the light from the darkness."[11]

Each creative act begins with a statement of Divine intention. God sets out to create by stating that a portion of creation is to be enacted. God announces that which God intends to create: "And God said, 'Let there be light." The statement of intention is immediately followed by action. In the Divine creative process, the action is the spontaneous fruition of the spoken intention: *"And there was light."* Following the action, God reflects upon

and evaluates the product of the intention: *"And God saw the light, that it was good."* God does not refrain from reflection and evaluation until the completion of Creation on the seventh day, but does so at every stage of the process, for a total of seven times.[12] Finally, we note that light was not created ex nihilo, but from within darkness. The ultimate act by which light was brought into being was an act of differentiation: *"And God divided the light from the darkness."* This is a repetitive process of intention, action, and reflection occurring in time. Thus, Creation can be understood as the Divine process through which the universe was created and its creative force was initiated. Humanity is given dominion over, and responsibility

This medieval illuminated manuscript interprets the Creation story literally, depicting God as the architect of the universe. Source: *Bible Moralisee*, an anonymous medieval illuminated manuscript.

for, Creation. We are empowered to continue the perfection of Creation through the creative process of differentiation, a process which, itself, is a Divine invention.

SHABBAT: THE SANCTIFICATION OF TIME

In the Bible, the realm of space and the realm of time are inextricably connected. The verse, "You shall keep my Sabbath and venerate My sanctuary,"[13] is just one example of a parenthetical insertion in which space and time are juxtaposed. Creation functions within space, as the differentiation of space. Creation also functions within time. God began the process of creation at a moment in time: "*bereshit*/in the beginning." The text stresses the passage of time throughout the process. The creation of space is localized in time; the work of Creation takes place over six days. At the completion of each portion of Creation, the passage of time is indicated: "And there was evening and there was morning, the first (second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth) day."[14] The repetition is significant as a metaphorical indication of time's passage. The completion of Creation is marked, as well: "And the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them."[15] As Creation is completed, once again the day is announced: "And on the seventh day God finished the work which God had made."[16] Creation is presented as a process fixed and ordered in time.

As we have discussed, Creation is characterized by a process of intention, action, and reflection. Each time God creates, God announces, acts, and evaluates. The verse: "*vayareh Elohim ki tov*/And God saw that it was good," seals each step of the process. At the completion of Creation, God reflects

upon and seals the totality: "And God saw everything that God had made, and, behold, it was very good."[17] The completed Creation is declared not merely "good," but "very good." It reaches a harmonious state with nothing lacking.[18] While God declares approval at each stage of the creative process, it is not until the creation of *Shabbat* that God sanctifies a portion of Creation: "And God blessed the seventh day and hollowed it, in it God rested from all God's work which in creating God had made."[19] Here, the verb, "*kadosh*/to sanctify" is used for the first time. The spatial, material objects of creation are merely approved; that is, declared *"tov"*. Only *Shabbat*, a period of time is declared holy.

Eventually the biblical text does ordain holiness in space with the consecration of the Tabernacle. Even so, the declaration of the holiness of the seventh day as *Shabbat* -- a holiness in time -- comes first. Holiness in space, comes later, and only after humanity demonstrates a weakness for the world of space -- for the material world -- by praying to the golden calf. Even then, sanctity in space is declared, not by God, but by Moses. Time, the Sabbath day, is hallowed by first by God and then by humankind In the consecration of space, the Tabernacle, Israel takes the initiative. Abraham Joshua Heschel understands Judaism as "a religion of time aiming at the sanctification of time." Heschel interprets the Bible as being more concerned with time than with space. In his view, the Bible, "sees the world in the dimension of time," paying "more attention to generations and events than to countries, to things."[20]

Central to Heschel's view of Judaism as a time-centered tradition is his view of the Sabbath, which he refers to as a "cathedral in time." For Heschel, *Shabbat* is a cornerstone of the Hebraic concept of holiness. Its purpose is "to celebrate time rather than space. Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on *Shabbat* we try to become attuned to holiness in time. It is a day on which we are called upon to share in what is eternal in time, to turn from the result of creation to the mystery of creation; from the world of Creation to the creation of the world."[21]

The biblical perspective which sanctifies time over space frames the Hebraic understanding of space; particularly that of sacred space. For the Jew, the sacred is marked by the seventh day; the moon's waxing and waning announce festival observance, the rising and setting sun determine time for prayer and thanksgiving. While Tabernacle, Temple, and synagogue frame the historical development of sacred Jewish space, the relationship between God and Israel is bound by time, and, for the most part, is independent of space. In the words of Arthur Green, "Any place where the glory of God appears, in however a transient manner, is to be considered as God's holy temple."[22] Even at the dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem, the grandest of sacred Jewish spaces, Solomon recognized the spatial inability to contain God's presence. He declared, "But in truth, will God dwell on earth? Behold heaven, and the heaven of heaven can not contain You, how much less this house which I have built."[23]

The lawn of a suburban college provides an example of place sanctified momentarily by the reading of the *Torah*. Source: Photograph by James Brandt.

Historian and theologian, Mircea Eliade explains the Hebraic concept of a time-bound notion of the sacred, by way of cultural comparison, "The Achipa's pole, Eliade describes, is stuck in the ground to make the center of the world and form the cosmos around it. As tribesmen go in their wanderings they take their center - their cosmology - with them. When they pause and settle down, they stick the pole in the ground, and the minute the pole is proclaimed, the world is totalized and made sacred. In contrast to that, the wandering stick of the Jew is never stuck into place. The stick that indicates settlement is always doubled by another stick, around which a parchment is rolled. The latter stick indicates the essential wandering - even when being in place, it is stuck in the book, in the idea."[24] Holocaust-era Protestant philosopher, Paul Tillich, understood the Hebraic emphasis on sacred time not as a limitation, but as a theo-cultural

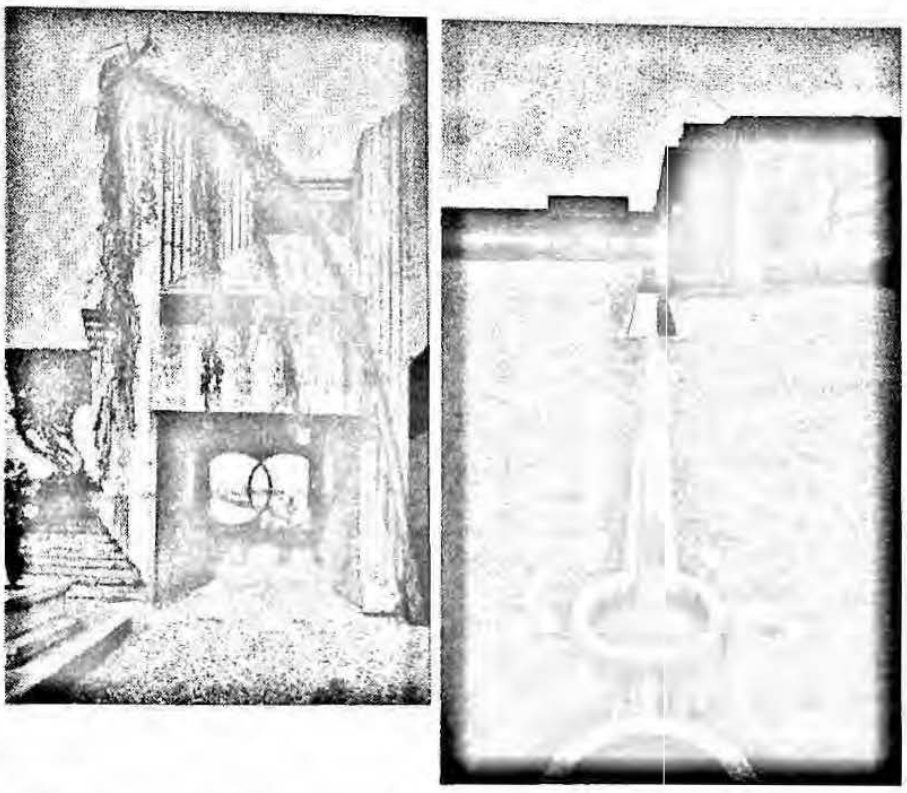
outlook which enabled Jewish survival. For Tillich, the Jewish nation "represents the permanent struggle between time and space going through all times. It can exist in spite of its space again and again, from the time of the great prophets, up to our days. It has a tragic fate when considered as a nation of space like every other nation, but as a nation of time, it is beyond tragedy. It is beyond tragedy because it is beyond the circle of life and death."[25]

As we turn to an examination of the architectural models in the Bible -- Noah's ark, the Tabernacle, Solomon's Temple, the Temple envisioned by Ezekiel -- we will see that each successive architecture has a greater potential for permanence. The ark is least permanent. It is tossed about by the waves and the wind. Its direction of travel is out of human control. The Tabernacle is more permanent. It, too, is a "moving" architecture, but its travel is determined by Moses and Aaron. Still more permanent is the Temple. It is fixed to a permanent site, built of heavy materials, and protected by geography and military apparatus. None of these architectures endured, for each was located in space. Noah's ark and the Tabernacle seemingly have vanished. Only the most solid biblical architecture, the walls of the Temple's foundation, remain as a ruin. So much more permanent is Ezekiel's vision of the Temple is yet to be. As a vision of the architecture of the redemptive age, it endures because it exists, not in space, but in time. It is an architecture of time. As such, it will survive so long as the Jew looks toward the future.

SACRED PLACE: AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GOD'S PRESENCE

In the Hebraic view, space is the servant of time. Even so, the importance of the role of sacred Jewish space should not be underestimated. After all, time and space are inextricably bound. Both our lives and our memories are anchored in the realm of space. When the realm of time is joined with the realm of space, the product is place. In place, moment and locale compose the "frame" in which all human experience occurs. The realm of space endows place with physical form -- both the natural form of Creation and the built form, the architectural form, of human expression. The house is built of materials which, themselves, have physical properties. Places are anchored in space. We leave home for the day, expecting to find things relatively as we left them. The realm of time lends a dynamic quality to a place. Upon returning home, we find that time has changed the place. The lawn is slightly thicker, the front porch is dark and chilly, the smell of the morning coffee is long gone. Architect and urban planner, Kevin Lynch, reminds us that environments change over time. "A sudden disaster may destroy a city, farms will be made from wilderness, a loved place is abandoned, or a new settlement built on an obscure frontier. Slower natural processes may transform an ancient landscape, or social shifts cause bizarre dislocations. In the midst of these events, people remember the past and imagine the future."[26] Anchored to the physical but subject to the fluidity of time, we live our lives: We sustain ourselves; we replenish the world; we take a turn at adding to Creation; we turn to worship God -- in prayer, song, movement, poetry, and architecture. On the stage of space and in the dance of time, we seek a nearness to God. In that seeking -- perhaps inspired by

moments of discovery -- we long for space to contain moments of holiness.



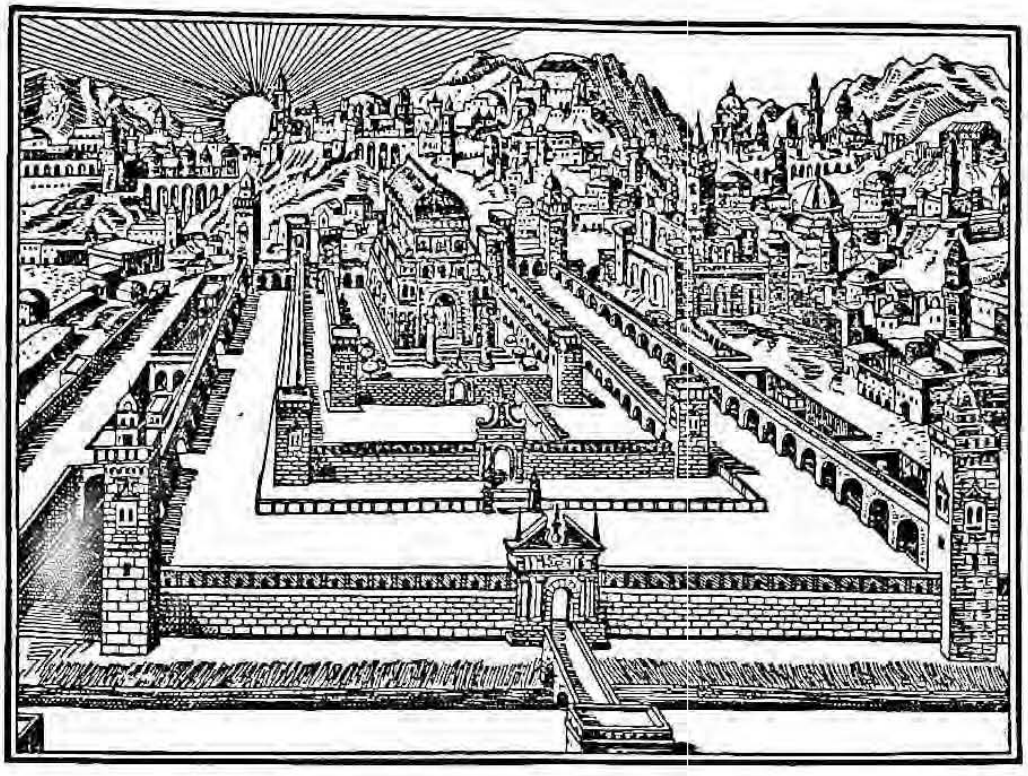
In the design of the Brion family cemetery in S. Vito d'Altivole, Italy, architect Carlo Scarpa combined natural and built form to record the passage of time in architecture. The cemetery's entrance is marked by a tree trained into a curved half-arch. The water from the site's spring is channeled across the landscape. The water represents purity and renewal. It adds movement to the place and highlights the temporal.
Source: *Carlo Scarpa, An Architecture and Urbanism Extra Edition*, pgs. 139, 141.

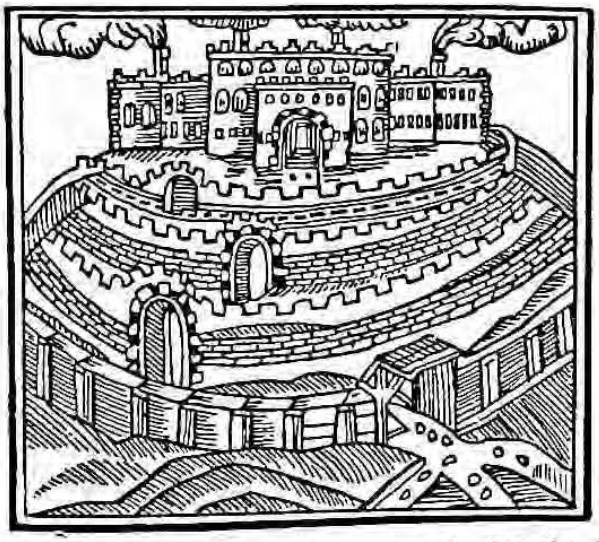
Thomas Barrie characterizes sacred places by the formal method which the place employs to compose meaning.[27] He classifies sacred site and sacred architecture in three categories: Those which employ an overt representation, such as a picture or a symbol, to express a belief or world view; those which express meaning on a deeper, abstract level in the composition of the form; and, those which express meaning through ritual supported by physical -- natural or built -- form. The synagogue murals at Bet Alpha are an example of the first category. Biblical history and religious

The mosaic floor in the sixth century synagogue at Bet Alpha provides an overt representation of the community's world view. The floor is divided into three sections surrounded by an elaborate border. The top section depicts the ark flanked by *menorahs*, lions, and birds. The middle section depicts the ring of the zodiac. The bottom section depicts the sacrifice of Isaac. Source: H. A. Meek, *The Synagogue*, pg. 81.

symbols are recorded pictorially on the sanctuary's mosaic tile floor, recording an overt expression of the architect's world view. The plan of Solomon's Temple, an example of the second category, is composed of a series of contained courtyards, each more restricted and on a successively higher level of holiness. The diagram of the Temple is an expression of a hierarchical religious perspective. The courtyard of the Tabernacle is an example of the third category. It is difficult to glean religious meaning from

the simple enclosure of the Tent of Meeting. The story of the people's relationship with their tribal God is made clear, however, by the ritual sacrifices and offerings conducted within its fabric walls.





These 17th century drawings depict the Temple surrounded by a succession of courtyards, an architectural expression of a hierarchical world view. Source: Above: From a Passover Haggadah printed in Amsterdam, in 1629. Below: *"Yosifon"*, a Yiddish version of the works of Josephus, printed in Basil. Both reprinted in: Zev Vilnay, *The Holy Land in Old Prints and Maps*, pg. 88.

Barrie's classifications are an attempt to classify the composition of meaning. Each is based on the premise that it is possible for the place to be endowed with God's presence. Place is declared as sacred when an individual or a community acknowledges that God is present, or when a specific place is dedicated to the purpose of seeking and serving the Divine. The first example of sacred Jewish place is the site of Jacob's dream.

This late 18th century illustration of Jacob's dream depicts winged angels ascending and descending a ladder-stair. The rays of light emanating from the sky suggest the location of heaven's open gate. Note that Jacob's head rests on the stone which he will raise to mark the sanctity of the site. Source: "Jacob's Dream" engraving by John Milton, London, 1794-97. Reprinted in Naomi Landa Gross, *Art and Architecture of the Synagogue*, pg. 10.

Humankind had acknowledged God's presence before this: Adam and Eve responded to God's call by hiding, Abraham responded by revealing himself, but Jacob acknowledged that God was present in time and space. Running away from home, Jacob became exhausted and stopped to spend the night. He took a stone, and used it as a pillow. Jacob slept. He dreamt of a ladder that connected heaven and earth. Angels danced along its rungs. Arising in the morning, Jacob acknowledged that the presence of God had been in the place. He named it: "*Beth El*/House of God," declaring, "Surely God was in this place, and I did not know it."[28] Jacob marked the site as sacred. He erected a column. Venerating his stone-pillow as a symbol of the event, he placed it atop the column, and poured oil over it.[29]

The *Torah* records another story of an individual acknowledgment of God's presence. "When Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, drove the flock into the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. *Adonai's* angel appeared to him in a blazing fire out of a bush. He gazed, and there was a bush all aflame. And Moses said, 'I must turn aside to look at this marvelous sight. Why doesn't the bush burn up?'"[30] A simple act: to take a second look at a beautiful, curious sight; to pause and reflect, perhaps to consider the Divine force behind creation. In doing so, Moses realized that God was present in that place. He heard God's voice. Knowing that he walked on holy ground -- that the place before him was sacred -- Moses removed his shoes. Elizabeth Barrett Browning comments:

Earth's crammed with heaven
and every bush afire with God;
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes--
the rest sit around it, and pluck blackberries.

When Moses experiences the presence of God in the burning bush he removes his sandals in acknowledgment of the sanctity of the place.
Source: Offenberg Haggadah, Germany, 1960. Reprinted in: Abram Kahof, *Jewish Symbolic Art*, fig. 75.

The model set forth for sacred place in these experiences of theophany does not depend solely upon God's appearance. Also necessary is the human acknowledgment of God's presence. In each of these meetings, the acknowledgment of God's presence, and the sanctification of the place, required human initiative. It is from the examples of encounters such as these that the notion of the designating sacred space enters the Judeo-Christian consciousness. Here begins a religious tradition, and our ability

as worshipper and builder to claim a place as sacred, to build upon it, to endow it with experience and memory, and within it, to strive for divinity and divine inspiration.

Most of us learn about the Hebraic concept of an omnipresent God at a young age. Even children in a second grade religious school class can tell you that God is everywhere. Jacob and Moses realized something more. They took note that, though God may be everywhere, God is not dispersed evenly throughout the universe. God is more present in some places than in others. Through their actions, Jacob and Moses sanctified the site where God appeared, and took first steps toward the design and fashioning of sacred Jewish place. From their example, we learn that we have the ability to sense the presence of God, and even to summon God's presence to a place through our actions.

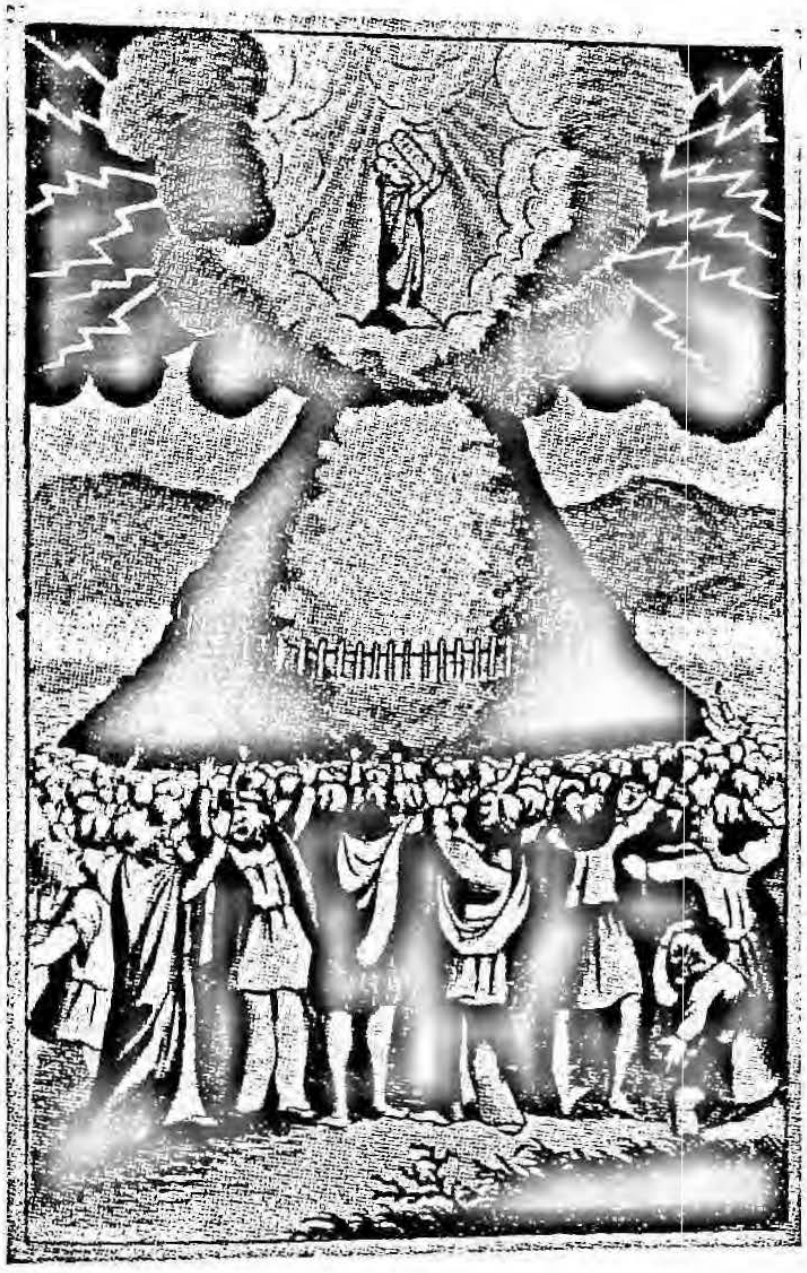
Jacob's dream and Moses' comprehension of the burning bush were transformative moments of faith and discovery. But even more powerful than these was the acknowledgment of God's presence at Sinai. At the base of the mountain, all Israel assembled on the desert floor. The entire tribe witnessed the event; and acknowledged the Divine presence in a communal act:

> All the People witnessed the thunder and lightening, the blare of the horn, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they fell back and stood at a distance.[31]

Here again, it is not merely the presence of God that is important. The event and the place of Sinai -- as a moment in space and time -- was sanctified by a religious leaders calling our to the divine, and the communal acknowledgment of God's presence in the place.

The two biblical accounts of the Sinaitic theophany underscore the central importance of human acknowledgment of the sacred. In the first account, God comes down from Sinai so that each person might sense God's presence. "Adonai came down upon Mount Sinai."[32] In the second account, God remained in heaven. It was only God's word which came down. "I have talked to you from heaven."[33] Heschel explains that these two verses are not contradictory. Each refers to a separate experience: The first describes the experience of humankind, and the second describes the experience of God. In Heschel's words: "A voice came out of heaven, Israel heard it out of Sinai."[34] The covenant is accepted with the words: "*na'aseh, v'nishma*/we will do and we will harken." Each person spoke the response themselves. In doing so, every individual accepted responsibility for their own actions, and also for those of the community. Even so, the response was an act of community.

The Sinaitic model that couples individual experience and communal acknowledgment of the Divine forms the foundation for the design and fashioning of sacred Jewish place. According to Jewish tradition, every individual -- all souls, born and unborn -- were present at Sinai; all of Israel shared the experience and sanctified the moment and the place. At Sinai,



1.10

This drawing depicts the Israelites assembled as a community around the mountain as Moses receives the tablets of law on Mount Sinai. The face of the agonized man holding his head in the foreground is an individual expression of the awe of the experience. Source: A copper engraving made by Joseph Hertz, 1826. Reprinted in: Zev Vilnay, *The Holy Land in Old Prints and Maps*, pgs. 294.

the commual emphasis of Judaism is born, and sacred Jewish place is forever transformed to become public, communal place. This experience which stresses the dual importance of communal gathering and individual experience is the archetype for Jewish worship. It is the Biblical event upon which the foundation for Jewish worship is built. In time, both Tabernacle and Temple will provide for tribal ritual and worship, and also for congregation and community activities. The synagogue will emerge as the place in which the Jewish People will address God, individually and as a community. It will also become the sanctified place in which we will seek each other.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

[1] Genesis 1:11

[2] Genesis 1:20

[3] Genesis 1:24

[4] Genesis 1:12

[5] Genesis 1:22

[6] Genesis 1:26, 9:1,7

[7] cf. Genesis 1:4

[8] cf. Genesis 1:7

[9] Eric Elnes, "Creation and Tabernacle: The Priestly Writer's Environmentalism" (*Horizons in Biblical Theology*, vol. 16, no. 2, Dec. 1994), pg. 146.

[10] Eric Elnes, "Creation and Tabernacle: The Priestly Writer's Environmentalism" pg. 144.

[11] Genesis 1:3-4

[12] Genesis 1:4a, 10b, 12b, 18b, 21b, 25b, 31a

[13] Leviticus 19:30 and 26:2

[14] Genesis 1:5b, 8b, 13, 19, 23, 31b

[15] Genesis 2:1

[16] Genesis 2:2

[17] Genesis 1:31b

[18] cf. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino Press, 1963), pg. 5.

[19] Genesis 2:3, also Exodus 16:22-26

[20] Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: It's Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1951), pgs. 6-8.

[21] Ibid., pg. 10.

[22] David Zisenwine, *Sabbath: Time and Existence* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1982), pg. 34.

[23] I Kings 8:27

[24] Zali Gurevits, "Never in Place: Eliade and Judaic Sacred Space" (*Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions*, no. 39, July - Sept. 1994) pg. 137.

[25] David Zisenwine, *Sabbath: Time and Existence*, pg. 8.

[26] Kevin Lynch, *What Time Is This Place?* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972), pg. 3.

[27] Thomas Barrie, *Spiritual Path, Sacred Place: Myth, Ritual, and Meaning in Architecture* (Boston: Shambhala, 1996), pg. 5.

[28] Genesis 28:16

[29] see Genesis 28:10

[30] Exodus 3:1-4

[31] Exodus 20:15

[32] Exodus 19:20

[33] Exodus 20:22

[34] Abraham Joshua Heschel, *I Asked For Wonder* (New York: Crossroads, 1984), pg. 80.

2. *Sacred Jewish Place: Meeting Place for God and Israel*

Israel remained encamped at the base of Mount Sinai for over a year. The place was endowed with the memory of the theophany, and served as a potent symbol for God's presence among the people. But the tribe could not remain at Sinai; time could not stand still. The journey toward the promised land had to continue; redemption had to be completed. Yet, the meaning of Sinai could not be left behind. The mountain could not be transported, and a new symbol was required. The people could not stay with God; hence God would move with the people. The people would build a dwelling place for the Divine spirit, a symbol of their faith and a continuance of the Sinaitic experience. Thus the Hebraic tradition of designing and fashioning sacred place, a meeting place for God and Israel was born.

In response to the need for the sacred communal place, fabricated and consecrated by humanity, a new model of holiness was added to Jewish consciousness. While holiness in time would remain preeminent, a locative model of the sacred also emerged: a holiness fixed in space. In the model of human *being*, time and space are bound together as place; one can not exist without the other. Even so, sacred space would remained linked and subservient to sacred time. For the Jew, sacred space is the physical location at which sacred time is spent. The talmudic author confirms the binding together of space and time by placing rules for behavior in the

Temple court and the guidelines for verbal liturgy side by side in the text.[1] Contemporary biblical scholar, Baruch Bokser points out that the juxtaposition of laws related to space and laws related to time tie together models of locative and temporal holiness.[2] Though sacred Jewish place remains dependent on temporal sanctity, the sanctuary -- a built form -- replaces Sinai as the ever-present symbol of God. It is carried through Jewish history and recreated in the Tabernacle, Temple, and synagogue. Still, outside of time, the symbol is meaningless. Its potential remains dormant until it is entered, until the time of prayer and ritual.

In the design and fashioning of sacred place, the Jewish architect/artist faces the task of deriving inspiration for sacred built form from biblical models of holiness. The study and the synthesis of these models is not based in an attempt to copy the forms of the past, but to discover new architectural forms gleaned from reinterpreting structures of Jewish consciousness. In an attempt to invigorate the Jewish artistic tradition and to rediscover a Hebraic concept of place-making, we turn to an analysis of the archetypes of the *Torah*.

ARCHETYPE FOR SACRED JEWISH PLACE

The Tabernacle was the first sanctified built form of the Jewish People. It was the first sacred Hebraic architecture. It provided a place for tribal worship and assembly during the forty years of desert wandering. It can be conceived as a transitional structure. Through its use, the Children of Israel were transformed from an enslaved tribe to a free nation. It

The map, "A Pisgah-Sight of Palestine" records the Israelites' route through Sinai. The circuitous track demonstrates that expedient arrival in Canaan was not important. The trip was deliberately extended for the sake of establishing the spiritual journey as a wandering in placelessness. Source: Drawn by Thomas Fuller, 1650. Reprinted in: Zev Vilnay, *The Holy Land in Old Prints and Maps*, pg. 277.

functioned as the meeting place of God and Israel for over half a century until the dedication of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem in 950 BCE.[3] The Tabernacle is the primary archetype for sacred Jewish space. The Italian scholar, Umberto Cassuto recognized its fabric walls and protected inner Sanctuary as an architecture which replaced Mount Sinai as the symbol for an ever-present God.[4] The Tabernacle was a portable structure designed for

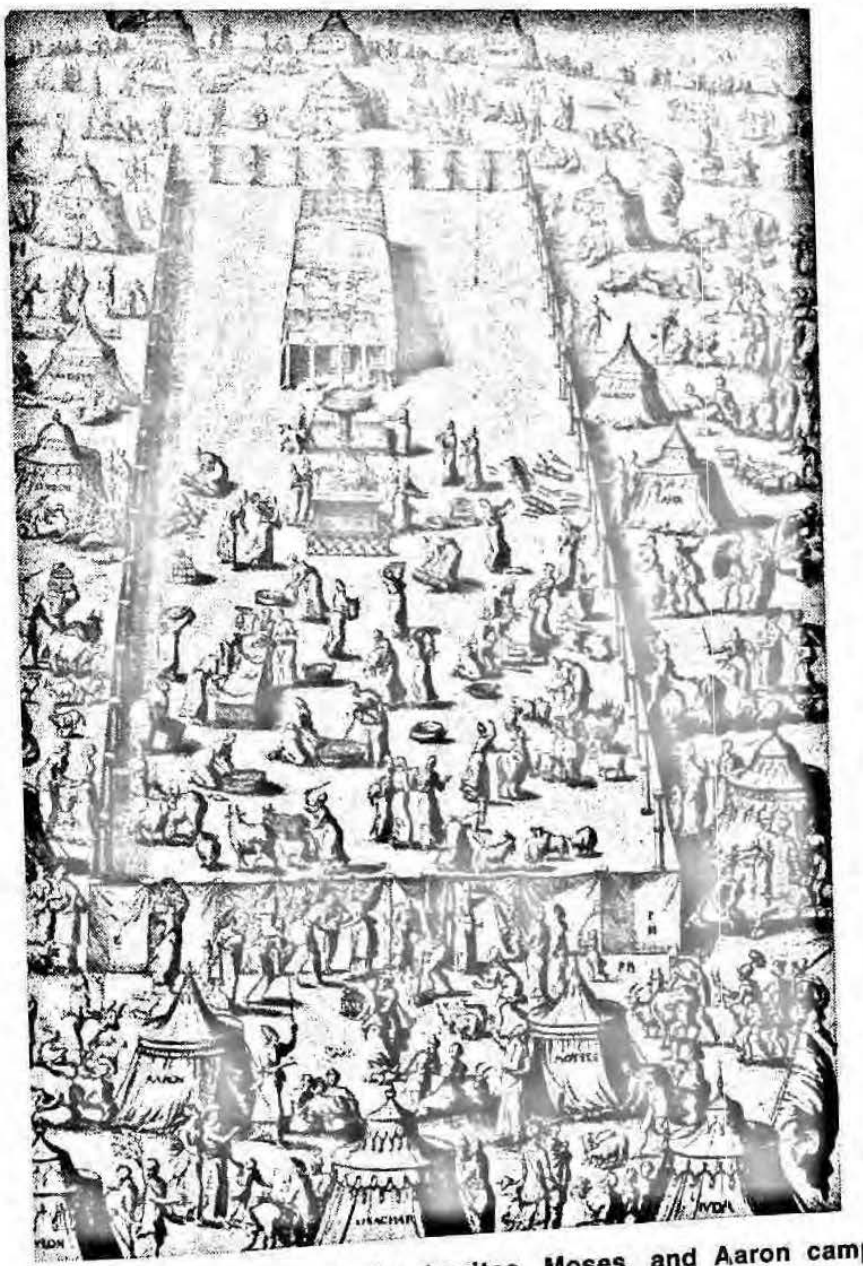
the specific needs of a nomadic tribe. The Israelites carried the temporary structure with them through the wilderness. The Tabernacle's building process continued through the years of desert wandering. It was an architecture dependent on time, an architecture "in motion." "Whenever the cloud was taken up from over the Tabernacle, the Children of Israel went onward..."[5] Throughout the journey, the Tabernacle was continually assembled and disassembled. Its parts were loaded onto wagons and pulled through the desert. There was no marker to record sacred inhabitation, nor was there a permanently sanctified site. The Tabernacle did provide a home for holiness, but it was always a temporary home. For forty years, the Israelites wandered in placelessness. Former sites of temporal sanctity were departed without a trace. To this day, even the location of Sinai remains uncertain.

The Tabernacle was erected in the center of Israelite encampment. The clan of the Levites encamped adjacent to each of its sides and along its rear wall. Moses, Aaron, and Aaron's sons camped in front of its entrance. Surrounding these camps, the twelve Israelite tribes erected their tents, three on each side, forming the outer ring of the encampment. The perimeter of the Tabernacle was made by a series of fine linen curtains which hung from sixty acacia wood columns. The columns were set into bronze bases. At their pinnacle, silver collars served as hangers for the rods from which the curtains were suspended. The columns were braced with ropes, fastened to the desert floor with bronze pegs. The curtain wall enclosed an open-air space, one hundred cubits long and fifty cubits[6] wide --

a double square. The wall was ten cubits high. On the east end, an opening in the wall served as an entrance. A screen raised in front of the opening was displaced from the wall, permitting entry on each side. The screen provided a degree of privacy by restricting the view both into and out of the Tabernacle. Like the curtains which served as the Tabernacle's walls, the entry screen was fashioned of fine linen. It was more decorative than the wall curtains, and embroidered with blue, purple, and scarlet thread.

The front portion of the Tabernacle's enclosure was used for assembly sacrificial worship. A bronze wash basin for ritual cleansing and an alter upon which sacrifices were burned were placed in the center of the forward section of the courtyard. The Tabernacle's Sanctuary was erected in the center of the courtyard's rear section. The Sanctuary was an enclosed structure made of gold-plated acacia wood frames fitted into silver footings. Holding the assemblage together and providing lateral bracing, gold plated wooden rods passed through gold rings fastened to each of the wood members. The Sanctuary was thirty cubits long, ten cubits high, and ten cubits wide. It was assembled from twenty wood members on each of its side walls. Eight members completed the wall at the rear. The Sanctuary's roof was fashioned from fourteen layers of fabric supported on a gold-plated, wooden frame. The inner-most fabric was made of fine linen and embroidered with images of winged *cherubim*, the mythical figures which guarded the Sanctuary and represented God's presence. The outer layer, made of dolphin skin, provided protection against the elements. At the

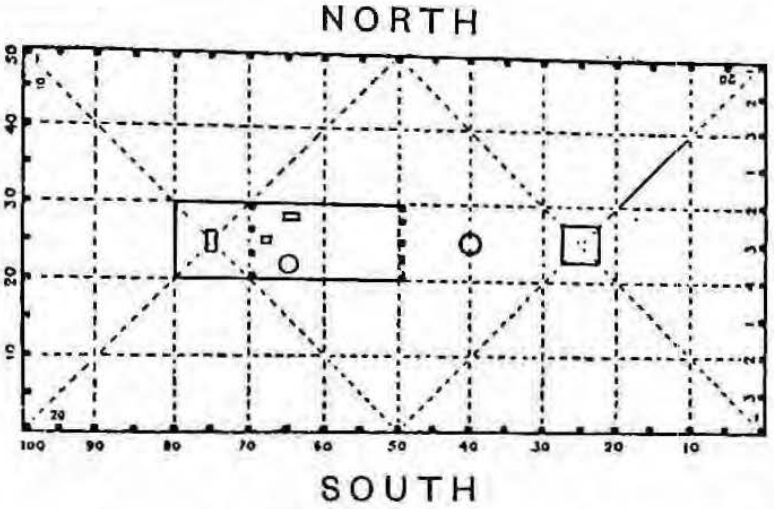
Sanctuary's front wall, another curtain marked the entrance and concealed the sacred interior. Inside, a veil divided the space into two rooms. The front room contained an alter for burning incense; a golden menorah, the seven-branched candelabrum; and the "Table of the Presence," an alter used for burning the meal offering. The inner room had the dimensions of a



This drawing portrays the Levites, Moses, and Aaron camped around the Tabernacle. The tents of the twelve tribes of Israel form the outer ring.

Source: Engraving by Benedictus Arias Montanus, In *Exemplar Siue de Sacris Fabricis Liber*, 1572. Reprinted in: H. A. Meek, *The Synagogue*, pg. 30.

perfect cube. Here, in the *Holy of Holies*, was placed the Ark containing the tablets of law. This room represented "holiness in emptiness." It was a hallowed chamber reserved as dwelling place for a Diety without form. It was only entered by the High Priests, and even then, only on *Yom Kippur*, the most sacred day of the year.



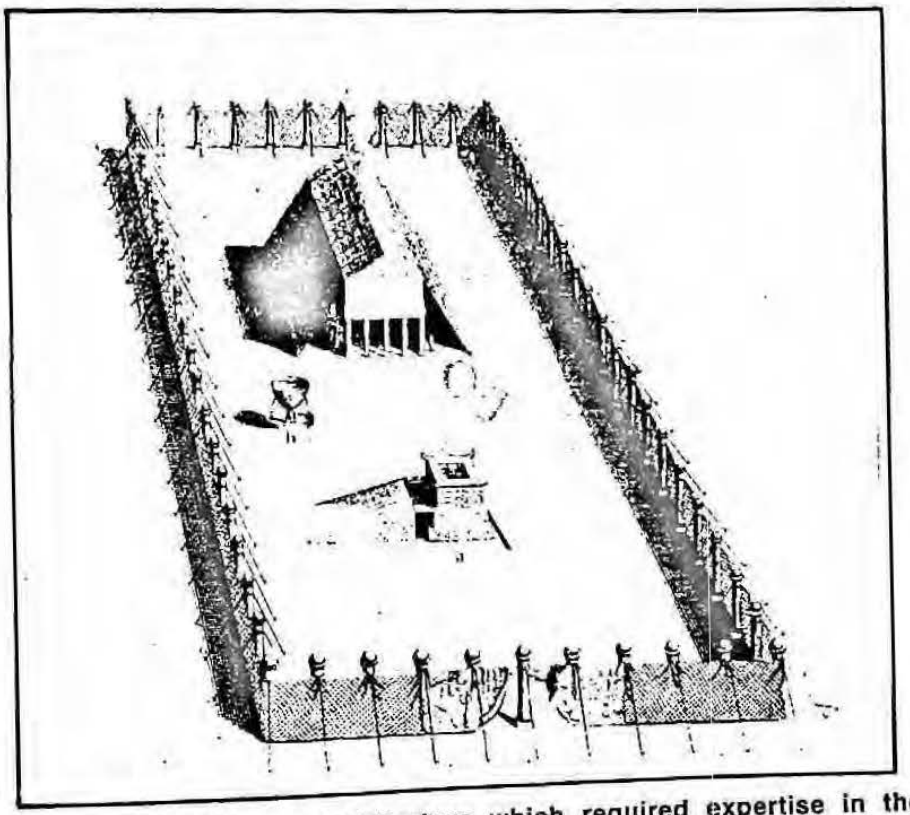
This measured drawing of the Tabernacle demonstrates the architecture's design as being composed of a double square. The Ark of the Covenent rests in the center of one; the sacrificial alter is placed in the center of the other. Source: James Hastings, Dictionary of the Bible, 1902. Reprinted in Emily Lyle, *Sacred Architecture in the Traditions of India, China, Judaism, and Islam*, pg. 136.

With the Israelites' departure from Mount Sinai, the visual presence of God's mountain was replaced by the words which God spoke to Moses. In time, the word of God would be recorded; the People of the Land would become the People of the Book. At the center of the Tabernacle, in the Holy of Holies, the Ark of the Covenent contained the tablets of Law. The Tabernacle was, in Joshua Berman's words, "a potent symbol of the unique relationship between God and the Jewish People."[7] But in time, the symbol

would fade from view and only the word at its center would endure. Contemporary Reform Rabbi Kenneth Seeskin points out that the sacred place is important not as a vessel for God, but rather as "a place where people can express their devotion to God."[8] It is the symbol for God's presence and depository for God's word. The Tabernacle's reluctance to become fixed in space allows for the triumph of time over space, and its lack of physical form enabled the triumph of word over vision.

Both *Torah* and history acknowledge the significance of the Tabernacle. It was endowed with blessing in a way that no other Hebraic architecture has been. Joseph Guttman notes that when Hiram, the Phoenician architect, prepared to fashion the Temple in Jerusalem, God "filled him with wisdom, intelligence, and knowledge to work in bronze."[9] In comparison, God fills Bezalel, the architect of the Tabernacle, "with *Ruach Elohim*, with the spirit of God, in wisdom, intelligence, and knowledge of all craftsmanship; to devise artistic designs; to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft."[10] God's role in the fashioning of the Tabernacle clearly surpasses that of the Temple. Whereas Bezalel is endowed with the spirit of God and given talents to work in virtually every medium, Hiram is provided no direct Divine inspiration, and his God-given talent is limited to working with bronze.[11] The beauty of the Tabernacle is even recognized by Israel's enemies. When the Moabite King, Balak, sends the Mesopotamian soothsayer, Balaam, to curse the Israelites in the wilderness, Balaam travels to the site of the Israelite encampment. Standing on a hilltop overlooking

the camp, Balaam gazes down at the Israelite tents encircling the Tabernacle and prepares to utter his curse. At the last moment, his curse is turned to blessing. He declares, "How beautiful are your tents O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel."[12] Some commentators interpret the text literally and believe that God's will forced Balaam's tongue. Others argue that the power of the place and the Israelites' devotion to God, symbolized by the Tabernacle, caused Balaam to have a change of heart.



The Tabernacle, an architecture which required expertise in the fashioning of wood, silver, gold, and fabric, was built by an architect endowed with talents of virtually every medium. Source: An etching by Bernard Lamy from his *De Tabernaculo Foederis, De Sancta Civitate Jerusalem, et de Templo eius Libri Septem*, Paris, 1720. Reprinted in William Alexander McClung, *Architecture of Paradise*, pg. 66.

The Tabernacle was an ingenious solution to a set of complex architectural problems. Its mobility reflected the Hebraic model of temporal holiness and made the Tabernacle responsive to the needs of a nomadic people. It served as a reminder of the theophany at Mount Sinai and as a symbol of God's presence. The Tabernacle accomplished all this without, itself, becoming an object of worship. After the Israelites arrived in Canaan and tribal wandering was completed, the Tabernacle was permanently assembled in Shiloh, a central location in the territory of the tribe of Ephraim. Almost four centuries passed before the Tabernacle was superseded by the Temple. This reluctance to build a more permanent place for worship demonstrates the architectural significance of the Tabernacle. It is a symbol of the power of the fragile.

The Tabernacle succeeded as a sacred place, in part, because it provided a clear separation between the sanctified and secular realms. The space enclosed by the Tabernacle's fabric walls was defined and set apart. It was differentiated from the unconsecrated desert floor. The Tabernacle's enclosure protected the uninitiated from entering, and provided containment for the sacred. Though temporary and portable, the Tabernacle fulfilled a basic requirement of sacred place, articulated by Thomas Barrie: Sacred place is "a place apart, separated from the profane world. It communicates shared symbolic meaning and provides a place where God or gods are worshipped and rituals enacted."[13] In the words of Mircea Eliade: Sacred place is "an irruption of the sacred that results in detaching a territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it qualitatively different."[14] This

basic requirement for sacred place was acknowledged at Sinai. The Israelites were commanded to: "Set bounds around the mountain and consecrate it."[15]

This drawing of the Israelites gathered at the base of Mount Sinai depicts the mountain surrounded by a fence, the artist's interpretation of the Torah's injunction: "You shall set bounds for the people round about, saying: 'Beware of going up the mountain or touching the border of it." Exodus 19:20. Source: From a *Haggadah* for *Shavuot* printed in Prague, 1854. Reprinted in Zev Vilnay, *The Holy Land in Old Prints and Maps*, pg. 295.

Naturally, the boundaries of the sacred must allow for humankind to enter. At Sinai, Moses climbed the sacred mountain, making pilgrimage on behalf of all assembled. When the Israelites were freed from bondage, they "crossed over" into freedom by traveling through a passageway with walls of water. Crossing the sea signified transition and change of status. The entry into the Tabernacle's courtyard was also a distinct experience. The linen panel at the Tabernacle's entrance was set back from the opening in the wall. To enter the enclosure, one had to navigate around the panel, turning first to one side, and then to the other. This turning broke the visitor's cadence and signified transition and new reality. Entry to both Sinai and Tabernacle required a deliberate act of separation. Each was experiential and symbolic of transformation. To cross the sea was to enter into freedom; to cross the Tabernacle's threshold was to enter the holy. In the Tabernacle, as in the Temple, the Holy of Holies was found at the protected core. To reach the center, one had to pass through a succession of spaces, each assigned a higher level of sanctity. The sequence of spaces and the rituals attached to progression made the approach to the sacred place into a journey -- a pilgrimage. The act of entry became the rite of preparation. Historian and theologian, Mircea Eliade explains: "The sacred is always dangerous to anyone who comes into contact with it unprepared, without having gone through the 'gestures of approach' that every religious act demands."[16] Before approaching the burning bush, Moses takes off his shoes. Before entering the sanctuary, the priests wash their hands and feet, an act of spiritual purification. Today, we mark our thresholds with the *mezuzah*. In doing so, we ritualize the event of entry and fulfill the

commandment to place words of *Torah*, "on the doorposts of our houses, and upon our gates."[17]

While the place enclosed by the Tabernacle's fabric walls was set apart as sacred, the Tabernacle's presence in the center of the Israelite camp qualitatively affected the status of the entire encampment. The biblical text questions the notion that the Tabernacle's wall provided boundaries for the sacred, by stating that: "The entire camp is holy for God dwells in it."[18] The camp was further viewed as holy by requiring that certain things must be done outside the camp.[19] Baruch Bokser points out that the Essenes, the ascetic sect credited with writing the Dead Sea Scrolls, believed that the holiness of the Tabernacle spread beyond its walls and argued for a similar model of holiness in their day. Their hope was to purify Jerusalem and make it, "an equivalent of the wilderness camp."[20] From this evidence, we understand that the Tabernacle was not the exclusive container for holiness, but an architectural symbol of Israel's commitment to worship God and to live by God's law. As daily life became tied to the communal effort to maintain the sacred place of communal worship, the mundane chores necessary for desert survival became endowed with sanctity. This binding together of the sacred and the mundane reflects the Jewish view that attempts to raise every action into a relationship with God.

In the Hebraic view, which abhors idolatry and avoids objectification, it is the purpose of a place and not the material of a place that makes holiness possible. The Tabernacle is holy not because it is a monument to human

achievement, but a living symbol of God's glory. It is a sacred architecture that exists for a greater purpose than merely providing protection from the elements. For the worshipper, It raises individual status by providing each person with a place to seek God's presence. For the community, it symbolizes God's unique relationship with Israel. The Rabbis later taught that building a structure dedicated to God would also raise human dignity. They taught that "if a man exalts the glory of God and diminishes his own glory, God's glory will be exalted and his own too. But if he attempts to diminish God's glory and exalt his own, then God's glory remains what it was, but the man's glory is diminished."[21] For the Rabbis, this teaching is embraced by the builders of the Tabernacle and discarded by the builders of Babel. The Tabernacle, a structure dedicated to God, is blessed with the Divine presence: "For over the Tabernacle a cloud of *Adonai* rested by day, and fire would appear in it by night, in the view of all of the House of Israel throughout their journeys."[22] Conversely, God destroyed the Tower of Babel precisely because God had been removed from it. The builders of Babel declared, "Let *us* make bricks, let *us* bake them hard. We shall make a name for *ourselves*." They failed to recognize sacred architecture as built form dedicated to Divine service. As the Rabbis reflected, their attempt to raise a tower for the purpose of self-aggrandizement was foiled. Its ruin serves as a warning against egocentricity. It is an example of a project, that while possibly worthy of platonic beauty, was built upon misplaced intention.

The biblical account describing the details for the assembly of the Tabernacle is found in Exodus 25 - 31 and Exodus 35 - 40. Between the

two descriptions, the text chronicles the event of the golden calf, Israel's fall to idolatry and worship of an object -- a thing of space. Next to the story of idolatry is the account of the giving of the Ten Commandments. The text links each of these events to the Tabernacle, demonstrating that the Tabernacle is both a visual symbol of God's presence and a concession to the human need for association with material. Like the calf, the Tabernacle is covered in gold, but its product is void, not object. The Tabernacle's center is empty, reserved for Divine inhabitation. Its purpose is to be residence for a God without form. Its design allows for an expression of physical beauty, while ensuring that the architecture -- the object -- would not become an end in itself. The place made by the Tabernacle's enclosure is not itself sacred, only the effort of the people toward the space is holy. Even the Tabernacle's purpose as a residence for God is only metaphorical. God does not actually dwell in the Sanctuary, but rather the building of the Sanctuary brings God's presence to the tribe. Contemporary biblical commentator, Pinchas Peli explains that the Tabernacle is not a dwelling place for God, but a communal structure which will "convert the people from passive participants in their relationship with God, as recipients of God's gifts, into active partners."[23]

A SANCTUARY FOR THE PEOPLE

The Tabernacle's assembly required that every individual participate in its functions, yet the Torah's description of construction states: "Make Me a sanctuary, that I might dwell among them."[24] This verse raises a significant question for the commentators: Is this sacred place built for God or for

Israel? How is it that a God with no form, who can not be contained in the universe, could inhabit a small, cubicle -- the Holy of Holies? Isaiah recognized the incompatibility of a boundless God and physical containment. He prophesied: "*Adonai* said, the heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool; where could you build a house for Me, what place could serve as My abode?"[25] In his commentary of the Pentateuch, J. H. Hertz responds to this problem by pointing out that "the *Torah* does not state that: 'I may dwell *in it*' (the Tabernacle), but *'among them'*, i.e. in the midst of the people. "The Sanctuary," Hertz asserts, "was not the dwelling place of God[26], it was the symbol of that holiness which was to be the rule of life if God was to abide with the community."[27] Responding to the same problem, contemporary American Rabbi, David Whiman juxtaposes a *midrash*, a rabbinic story, with the biblical text. He envisions a conversation between the lines of Torah:

> God said, "Build Me a sanctuary, that I might dwell among you."
>
> Moses responded, "Lord of the universe, the highest heaven of heaven can not hold Your glory. What need do You have for a sanctuary? I don't understand."
>
> God explained, "The Tabernacle, the Sanctuary, is not for Me, its for you. I don't expect you to serve me in the full measure of my greatness. But you make the gesture and -- as it were, I will shrink my presence, concentrate my essence, and come to dwell among you. In the place you build, there heaven and earth will kiss, and you I will embrace."[28]

Israel initiated the covenental relationship with God. The text reminds us that at the base of Mount Sinai: "As Moses spoke, God answered him in

thunder."[29] The laws were related to Israel, not as a statement but as an answer to Moses' questioning. Though built so that "God might dwell among the people," the Tabernacle was initiated by Israel and dedicated as sacred place for tribal ritual and communal gathering. God's indwelling was dependent upon and occurred as a result of Israel's action. The Tabernacle's purpose was not to house God, but to transform the people. A sage wrote, "Enter the sanctuary so that the Holy One may enter you. Then return to the world to share the knowledge of the One who dwells within."[30]

In response to Israel's request for a *place* of worship, God delivered the instructions for the Tabernacle's construction. As in all biblical prescriptions for built form, the text does not describe the architecture's objective "photographic" appearance. The *Torah* only provides instructions for fashioning the parts and constructing the structure: "And you shall make the boards for the Tabernacle of acacia wood, standing up. Ten cubits shall be the length of a board...[31] And make their rings of gold for holders for the bars, and you shall overlay the bars with gold."[32] "And you shall make a veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twinned linen..."[33] The description of the making of the object places emphasis on the building process. This teaches that in the making of sacred Hebraic place, the beauty of the product has limited consideration. More important are the hollowing of materials and the integrity of the process. The Tabernacle's extended building process made it necessary that every tribe and each individual participate in the ritual life of the community. The building process was a communal process in the broadest sense and also a form of

worship. It was a process that transformed Israel into a tribe of cultural builders -- to a People with a sacred purpose. Each time the Tabernacle was assembled, the Israelites assembled for worship and animal sacrifice. Sacred communal place provided each member of the tribal community with the opportunity for a direct relationship with God. In the Sinai wilderness, communal participation was legislated. God commands Moses: "Tell the Israelite people to bring Me gifts; you shall accept gifts for Me from every person whose heart so moves him."[34] It was expected that every person contribute their share toward the construction of the Tabernacle.

AN ARCHITECTURE TO CONTINUE CREATION

As discussed in Chapter One, the design and fashioning of form and place is a process which continues Creation. By initiating the process of designing and fashioning sacred commual place, the Israelites became creators themselves. They fulfilled the spiritual potential of being created in God's image. With the Tabernacle's completion and the dedication of its Sanctuary, the relationship between God and Israel became reciprocal. God created the world for human inhabitation; humanity responded by consecrating place as sacred so that "God may dwell among the People." It is noteworthy that the dedication of the first sacred Hebraic architecture occurs on the first day of the first month. This temporal designation signaled the beginning of a new era and a new relationship between tribal People and tribal God. It demonstrated a maturing of faith. The day of dedication coincided with the anniversary of Creation's first day. Hence, a temporal connection was made between the creative energy which guided

the fashioning of the Tabernacle and the Divine force that brought forth the universe.[35] The textual parallels between Creation and the Tabernacle continue. In Genesis, the world is created in six days; on the seventh day, God rested. In Exodus, God's glory covered Mount Sinai for six days; on the seventh day, God revealed the plans of the Tabernacle.[36] The instructions for the Tabernacle's design are divided into seven segments. Each begins with the formula: "And God Spoke to Moses." The first six commandments are prescriptions for building, for continuing Creation. The seventh commands the observance of the Sabbath as a day of rest and reflection.

We framed Creation as a process of intention, action, and reflection. This model provides an additional parallel between God's act of creation and humankind's design and fashioning of sacred place. In the Creation narrative, God places humanity at the center of the world as caretaker of its inhabitants. God's intention is to create a dwelling place for humanity. In fashioning the Tabernacle, Israel's intention is to make a sanctuary, "so that God will dwell among them." In the Creation narrative, the action is the spontaneous "coming into being" of each part of the universe through differentiation. In the human model, the action is the fashioning and assembly of the Tabernacle. Upon completing Creation and Tabernacle, God and Israel evaluate their work: Looking over Creation in all its array, "God found that it was very good."[37] When the Tabernacle is completed, Moses surveys the work of the people. Seeing "that they had performed all of the tasks, as *Adonai* had commanded, so they had done -- Moses blessed them."[38]

	INTENTION	ACTION	REFLECTION
CREATION (God)	dwelling place for humankind	spontaneous creation/ differentiation	evaluation by God
SACRED ARCHITECTURE (Israel)	place to encounter Diety	design and fashioning of Tabernacle	evaluation by Moses

Each creative act is a continuation of the creative process initiated at the beginning of Creation's. While this is true of all human creation -- prose, poetry, baking, music, painting, and sculpture -- it is even more true for architecture. For it is only in the design and fashioning of place that we provide for inhabitation, thus furthering not only Creation's beauty, but also Creation's purpose. For the architect endowed with consciousness of sacred purpose, the process of designing built form for the purpose of inhabitation is a sacred act in which God plays a role. Bezalel, the architect of the Tabernacle, followed a Divinely-inspired plan in fashioning a place for assembly and worship. He fashioned a transformative, revolutionary structure. His work was a paramount act in the continuation of Creation. The rabbinic authority, who founded the academy in Babylon understood Bezalel's genius as his ability to re-configure natural form -- the material of Creation -- into containment for specific inhabitation. He stated that, "Bezalel knew how to design the letters by which heaven and earth were created."[39] Bezalel designed something entirely new. Something new, yes, but something compatible with the laws of the universe and consistent with Creation itself. Professor of Bible and Rabbinic Literature, Eugene Mihaly

comments that Bezalel's creation was "at peace with and shared in an ongoing process of transforming chaos into cosmos."[40] Bezalel's ability to further the purpose of Creation through the architectural process is even more significant because Bezalel makes a connection to the Divine through the creative act. The text reveals that God endowed the architect "with a Divine spirit of skill, ability, and knowledge of every kind of craft."[41] God's Spirit, the *Ruach Elohim*, fills Bezalel and functions as what Eric Elnes calls a "super-creative" element -- an "enabling power" through which the architect is able to work with the people of Israel and enable them to participate in the creative process. So important is our potential to continue Creation through the design and fashioning of place, that one Talmudic sage comments that Bezalel's ability to interpret God's instructions, even surpasses Moses':[42]

> Twice Moses ascended Mount Sinai to receive instructions from God, and twice he forgot the instructions as he descended. The third time, God took a *menorah* of fire and showed him every detail of it and still Moses could not conceptualize the *menorah*. So God showed Bezalel, and Bezalel built it at once. Since Bezalel had no trouble at all in fashioning it, Moses cried out, "It was shown to me so many times by the Holy One but I found that it was too hard to make. You who did not see it created it out of your own mind! Surely, you must have been standing in the shadow of God when the Holy one was showing me how to make it."[43]

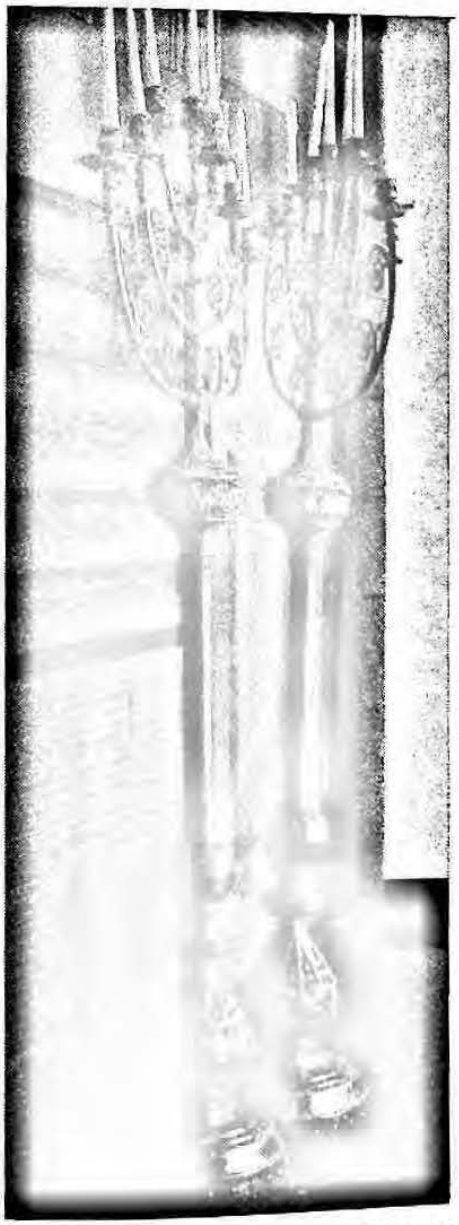
The point of this commentary is not to raise the status of Bezalel or to lower that of Moses, but to teach that the process of designing and building

architecture provides humanity with the potential to be fully human -- to fulfill the role for which we were created. The Bible views human creativity which acknowledges God's glory as a continuation of the creative process initiated by God. To quote *midrash*, it is an endeavor that places each of us, "in the shadow of God."

It is not only the process of designing and building that link sacred place to Creation. The materials of Creation, when used with integrity -- according to their nature -- are hallowed by their use. When employed in the creative process, these materials are endowed with additional meaning. They have the power to enrich our lives by providing connections to the past/future, the continuum of Creation. In the Tabernacle "a pillar of fire appeared in the view of all the House of Israel throughout their journeys."[44] In the Temple, a flame burned continuously. Today, the eternal light burning in our synagogues shows honor for the Law as our eternal heritage. All are signs of God's presence. All harken back to the light which initiated Creation, the one which was lit when God began the process of creation by stating, "Let there be light."[45]

The design of the Tabernacle intentionally linked sacred communal place to the creation of the universe. British historian, H. A. Meeks notes Philo's comment that, "these materials (of the Tabernacle) were made of things grown from the Earth; the purple color is like that of water; the blue resembles the sky; and the scarlet is like fire. Together, the materials and colors represent the four elements."[46] Analogous representation was

heightened in the design of the Temple. A commentary in Numbers Rabbah links the Temple to the world: "The court surrounds the Temple, just as the sea surrounds the world."[47] Rabbinic commentaries on the Temple furnishings make reference to Creation at every turn: The square alter made of brass represents the four corners of the world. The seven lights on the *menorah* represents the light experienced from the seven planets in our



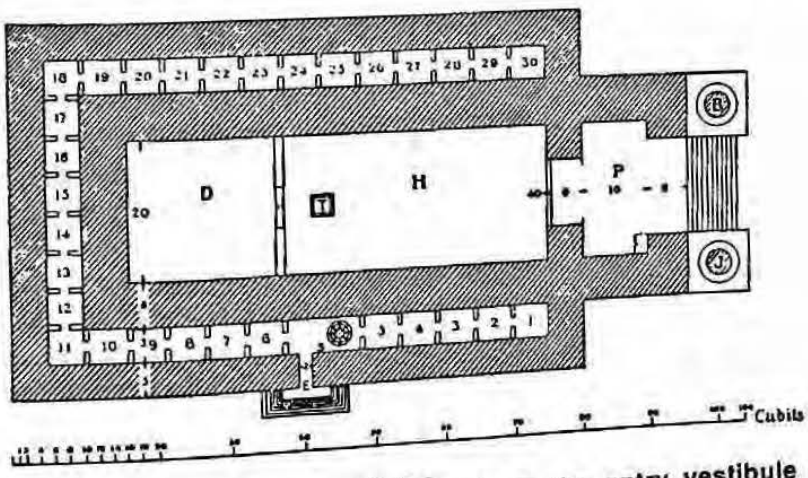
The lights of the *menorah* facilitate remembrance of Creation by representing the light which God created on the first day. Their seven branches represent the seven metaphorical days over which Creation took place. Source: Photograph by James Brandt.

solar system. The Temple's entrance is flanked by columns: the column on the right, *Jachin*, represents the moon. The one on the left, *Boaz*, represents the sun. The sanctuary was oriented as a solar temple. It's entrance faced to the east. The Temple was sited so that on the two days of the solar equinox the morning light would shine through its outer chambers and directly into the Holy of Holies.[48] The alter in the Holy of Holies symbolizes the soul of humanity. Each element in the Temple's design is based on a particular aspect of Creation. The metaphor is powerful in each case. When the singular representations are brought together in an assembly of sacred place, the result is a place that represents the entirety of Creation -- in its meaning and in its purpose.

This etching depicts the columns of Jachin and Boaz flanking the Temple's entry. Sincethe columns are detached from the building, it is clear that they serve no structural function. Their role is to symbolize the gathering of Creation. Source: Etching form the Estienne Bible, Paris, 1540. Reprinted in: H. A. Meek, *The Synagogue*, pg. 39.

At the center of the Temple in Jerusalem, the Temple's Sanctuary served as a permanent depository for the tablets of Law, as did the Sanctuary of the Tabernacle. The Sanctuary was situated in the Temple's courtyard which, like that of the Tabernacle, was reserved for sacrificial rites and assembly. Whereas the Tabernacle's sanctuary had two rooms, the Temple's had three. The Temple's additional room was a vestibule, called the *Ulam*, which separated the *Hekel*, the room reserved for priestly sacrificial worship, from the Sanctuary's entrance. Though biblical and historical sources are unclear regarding the purpose of this additional room, most scholars agree that it served as a place for spiritual transition before entering the place of worship.

The plan of the Temple is reminiscent of the Tabernacle, but its permanence and carved stone structures represent a significant departure from the temporary, fabric-covered structure of the wilderness. The



In this plan of the Temple, the *Ulam*, the entry vestibule is the room on the far right. The vestibule provided a place for spiritual reflection and preparation before entering the Sanctuary's inner chambers. Source: James Hastings, Dictionary of the Bible, 1902. Reprinted in Emily Lyle, *Sacred Architecture in the Traditions of India, China, Judaism, and Islam*, pg. 136.

architectural design and structural features of the Temple reflected both Egyptian and Phoenician Sacred Architecture. Hiram, the architect of the Temple, was in fact the court artist of Phoenicia.[49] Historian Peter Richardson notes the significant similarities between the Temple and the Temple of Dushara at Petra, including the buildings' massing, the disposition of spaces, and the proportions used for both structures' sacred cores.[50] At a time in which the only Hebraic model for sacred communal place was a temporary, nomadic architecture was deemed insufficient as the religious and national center of an increasingly powerful monarchy. The designers of the Temple looked to neighboring shrines for architectural inspiration. They also inherited from their neighbors a polytheistic view of sacred place: A miniature cosmos established on the holy mountain at the center of the world. In this model, the Temple is the Hebraic version of the *"axis mundi,"* the sacred place where heaven and earth are joined.

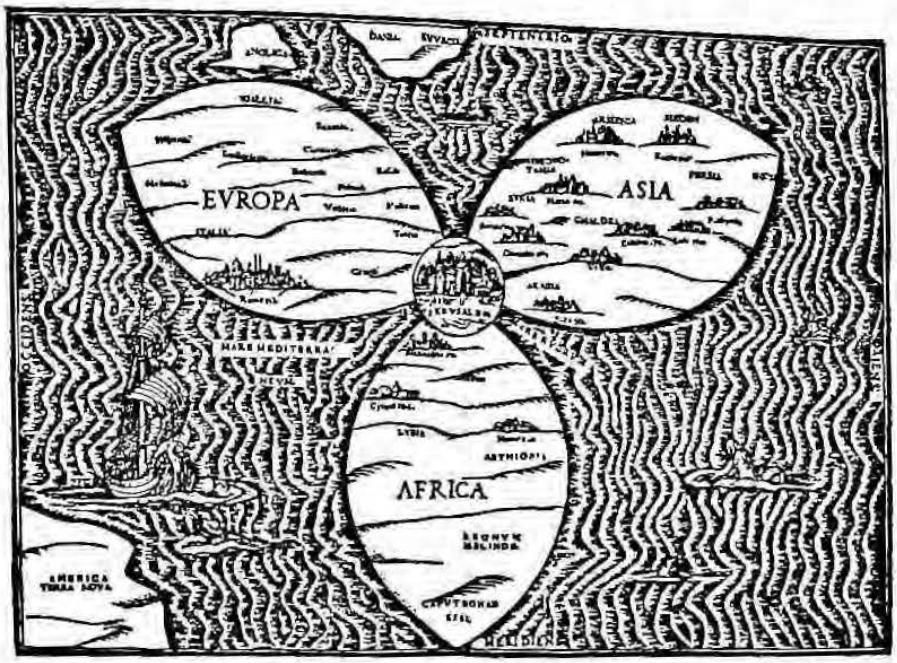
This harkens back to the image of the ladder which connected earth and heaven in Jacob's dream. Jacob declared the site to be both God's earthly dwelling place and the portal to God's heavenly abode. Waking from his dream, he declared, "This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven."[51] In addition to being viewed as a portal to heaven, the Temple was also understood as the earthly counterpart of the heavenly Temple in which God resides. Supporting this view, Josephus Flavius, the Roman scribe of Jewish extraction, wrote that the furnishing of the Temple served as material representations of the accessories that fill the Sanctuary on high.[52] Eugene Mihaly quotes a third century *midrash* that views each part of the Tabernacle as a reflection of God's residence in heaven:

> If you make the sanctuary below to correspond with the one above, 'which was shown to you,'[53] I, *Adonai*, will leave My celestial court and descend and contract My Presence to dwell among you below. Just as *seraphim* stand at attention, upright in My heavenly retinue, so do the upright 'planks of acacia wood' in the terrestrial Tabernacle.[54] Just as there are stars above, so there are 'gold fasteners' below.[55]

The site of the Temple is further connected to Creation by the view that it is a religious shrine built over the foundation stone of the world. In a sharp departure from the biblical insistence on temporal sanctity, the Talmud assigns significant locative significance to the Temple:

> As the navel is set up in the middle of a person, so is the Land of Israel the navel of the world. Jerusalem is the center of the Land of Israel, the Temple is the center of Jerusalem, the Holy of Holies is in the center of the Temple, In the front of the Holy of Holies is the *evan shetiyah*, the foundation stone from which the world was created.[56]

Following this view, Maimonides refers to the alter in Jerusalem as the place where man receives a connection to God, and further, as the place of Creation.[57]



In this medieval map, Jerusalem is depicted as the center of the world.

Source: Zev Vilnay, *The Holy Land in Old Prints and Maps*, title page.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

[1] TB *Brachot* 9:5

[2] cf. Baruch M. Bokser, "Approaching Sacred Space" (*Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 78, no. 1, Jan. 1985).

[3] The Temple was consecrated in the 11th year of Solomon's reign.

[4] quoted by H. A. Meek, *The Synagogue* (London: Phaidon Press, 1995), pg. 28.

[5] Exodus 40:38a

[6] A cubit is approximately 18" - 20".

[7] Joshua Berman, *The Temple: Its Symbolism and Meaning Then and Now* (London: Jason Aronson, 1995), pg. 76.

[8] Kenneth Seeskin, *No Other Gods: The Modern Struggle Against Idolatry* (New Jersey: Behrman House, 1995), pg. 53.

[9] I Kings 14:7

[10] Exodus 31:3

[11] cf. Joseph Guttman, *Sacred Images: Studies in Jewish Art from Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (Great Britain: Variorum Reprints, 1989), pg. 166.

[12] Numbers 24:5

[13] Thomas Barrie, *Spiritual Path, Sacred Place: Myth, Ritual, and Meaning in Architecture* (Boston: Shambhala, 1996), pg. 52.

[14] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1957), pg. 27.

[15] Exodus 19:23

[16] Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1958), pg. 370.

[17] Deuteronomy 6:9

[18] Numbers 5:1-4

[19] cf. Leviticus 15:31, Deuteronomy 23

[20] cf. Baruch M. Bokser "Approaching Sacred Space," pgs. 282-284.

[21] Numbers Rabba 4:20

[22] Exodus 40:38

[23] Pinchas Pelli, *Torah Today, A Renewed Encounter With Scripture* (Washington DC: B'nai Brith Books, 1987), pg. 82.

[24] Exodus 25:8

[25] Isaiah 66:1

[26] see I Kings 8:27

[27] J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs,* (London: Soncino Press, 1963), pg. 327.

[28] David A. Whiman, "Make Me a Sanctuary," (*Faith and Form, Journal of the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art, and Architecture,* vol. 28, Fall 1995), pg. 92.

[29] Exodus 19:19

[30] David A. Whiman, "Make Me a Sanctuary," (*Faith and Form, Journal of the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art, and Architecture,* vol. 28, Fall 1995), pg. 93.

[31] Exodus 26:15-16

[32] Exodus 26:29

[33] Exodus 26:31

[34] Exodus 25:2

[35] see Eric N. Elnes, "Creation and Tabernacle: The Priestly Writer's Environmentalism" (*Horizons in Biblical Theology,* vol. 16, no. 2, Dec. 1994), pg. 149.

[36] Exodus 24:15-18

[37] Genesis 1:31

[38] Exodus 39:43

[39] Eugene Mihaly, "The Architect as Liturgist" (*Faith and Form: Journal of the Guild for Religious Architecture,* vol. 7: Fall, 1974), pg. 36.

[40] Ibid., pg. 37.

[41] Exodus 35:31

[42] cf. TB *Brachot* 55a (Text comments on Exodus 25:31-40, in which Moses does not understand the prescription for the Tabernacle's *menorah*).

[43] Numbers Rabba 15:40 (on Exodus 35:30).

[44] Exodus 40:38

[45] Genesis 1:3

[46] H. A. Meek, *The Synagogue,* pg. 32.

[47] Numbers Rabba 13:19

[48] cf. Peter Blake, *An American Synagogue for Today and Tomorrow* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1954), pg. 15.

[49] cf. I Kings 7:14

[50] Peter Richardson, "Law and Piety in Herod's Architecture" (*Studies in Religion/ Sciences Religieuses*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1986), pg. 24.

[51] Genesis 18:17

[52] cf. Martin Jaffee, *Early Judaism*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997), pg. 166.

[53] Exodus 25:9

[54] Exodus 26:15

[55] Eugene Mihaly, "The Architect as Liturgist," pg. 37.

[56] TB *Sanhedrin* 37a

[57] Rambam, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Beit HaBehira* 2:2

3. *Sacred Jewish Place: An Architecture to Activate Memory*

THE ETERNAL PRESENT: THE SANCTIFICATION OF MEMORY

The role that memory plays in Jewish tradition hardly can be overestimated. The first commandment of *Torah* -- "Be fruitful and multiply!" -- demands nothing less than the continuation of human existence. The very next commandment -- "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy!" -- legislates remembrance and links memory with sanctification. The daily prayerbook reminds us: "The sages have ordained that each person should remember six things every day: The going out from Egypt, the Sabbath day, standing at Mount Sinai, the way our parents tried God in the wilderness, Miriam, and to blot out the memory of Amalek."[1] Over the entrance to *Yad v'Shem*, Israel's national Holocaust museum in Jerusalem, the words of the Baal Shem Tov are engraved in stone: "Exile comes from forgetting. Memory is the source of redemption."[2] Virtually every Jewish festival and holy day is based on the commemoration of a historical event or period: Each week, *Shabbat* renews the cycle of Creation. *Sukkot* recalls the Israelites' days of desert wandering. *Pesach* recounts the exodus from Egypt. *Shavuot* commemorates the giving of the *Torah* at Sinai. *Chanukah* celebrates an ancient military victory. On *Tu'b'Shevat*, we remember the trees at a time when they appear to be dormant. On *Yom Kippur*, we search our memories, reviewing our deeds of the past year.

Judaism is a way of life that revives the past and applies timeless values to the questions that arise in every age. Through active remembrance, Judaism

is a religion that strives to attain an eternal present, in which transformative historical events transcend history, and memory transcends time. Each generation is linked together as an eternal people, making the Jewish continuum ever more important than Jewish continuity. At the Passover *Seder*, the ritual meal which retells the story of the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt, each generation teaches their children that we celebrate Passover, "because of what *Adonay* did for me, when I came out of Egypt."[3] The language is deliberate. We retell the story of the Exodus at the Seder not on account of what God did for "my people," but because of what God did for "me." The event is viewed as eternal, and each one of us was -- and is -- redeemed from slavery. The point of the story is not the Israelites' redemption from an historical Egypt, but that each one of us is continually redeemed from a trans-historical Egypt, from *Mitzrayim* -- the narrow places -- of each moment. A *midrash* teaches that all Jewish souls, born and unborn, were present at Sinai, and that each and every Jew received the *Torah*. To put it another way, revelation is an ongoing event, a process through which each generation stands at the base of the mountain and themselves receive Jewish tradition. When Jewish memory is activated, *Torah* is eternalized and internalized. Jacob dreams of heaven every night. Israel continues to wrestle with God. Every Jew who remembers becomes a freed slave, a desert traveler, a vessel for *Torah*.

In his 19th century treatise *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, John Ruskin stressed the importance of the role that built form plays in preserving memory. Ruskin wrote: "Architecture is to be regarded by us with the most

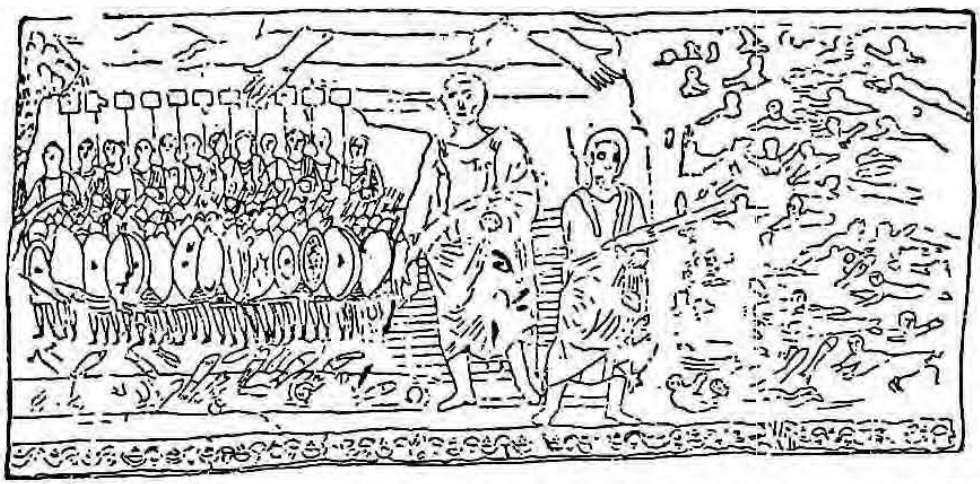
serious thought. We may live without her and worship without her, but we cannot remember without her."[4] He recognized that architecture is both inhabitation for humanity and container for art, poetry, and music. As such, architecture is uniquely capable of activating memory. In Ruskin's view, when architecture endures, memories are preserved with it. In his essay, "The Lamp of Memory," he argues that memory lives -- and dies -- in architecture:

> Watch an old building with anxious care; guard it as best you may, and at *any* cost from every influence of dilapidation. Count its stones as you would jewels of a crown; set watches about it as if at the gates of a besieged city; bind it together with iron where it loosens; stay it with timber where it declines; do not care about the unsightliness of the aid; better a crutch than a lost limb; and do this tenderly, and reverently and continually, and many a generation will still be born and pass away beneath its shadow.[5]

Ruskin's vision is realized in the models of sacred Jewish architecture that are based in an Hebraic model of form making. Sacred Jewish architecture is an architecture of remembrance, an architecture that is born from biblical archetypes and Jewish consciousness, and seeks to forge an unbroken chain of tribal history. The Tabernacle and Temple both recall Creation and Revelation -- Eden and Sinai. At every turn, architecture conjures association with the past. Rashi points out that the purpose of the Tabernacle's meal offering was to activate tribal memory through the performance of ritual. Each tribe was commanded to bring the meal offering

in two silver bowls.[6] The first bowl weighs 130 shekels, corresponding to Adam's age at the birth of his first child. The second bowl weighs 70 shekels, corresponding to the number of nations that issued from Noah. The Hebrew phrase for silver bowl, *"ka'arat kesef,"* has a numerical value of 930, the number of years in Adam's life.[7] In the Temple, the columns at the sanctuary's entrance commemorate the creation of sun and moon. Inside the Holy of Holies, the ark is a reminder of Sinai and the Tabernacle. The mythic foundation stone at the base of the Ark of the Covenent is a reminder of the origins of the universe.

The early synagogues at Bet Alpha and Dura-Europas activate memory by embellishing sacred architecture with historic images. The symbols represented in mosaic at the Bet Alpha synagogue and in wall paintings at



This wall painting in the ancient synagogue at Dura-Europas records the Israelites' exodus from Egypt and preserves tribal memory. The right panel depicts the Egyptian troops drowning in the Red Sea. The left panel depicts the Tribes of Israel, carrying shields and banners, marching in ranks across the dry river bed. The outstretched hands at the top of the panel represent the Divine presence. Source: Zev Vilnay, *The Holy Land in Old Prints and Maps*, pg. 283.

Dura-Europas represent, in the words of Martin Jaffe, "All that is important in Israel."[8] The scenes include the enormous spaces of the universe, scenes of the exodus and desert wandering, the architecture of the Temple, and visions of Israel's restoration. In the synagogues in Israel and throughout the Diaspora, Jewish sanctuaries are endowed with ancient symbols and holy assembly and illuminated by the eternal light of memory.

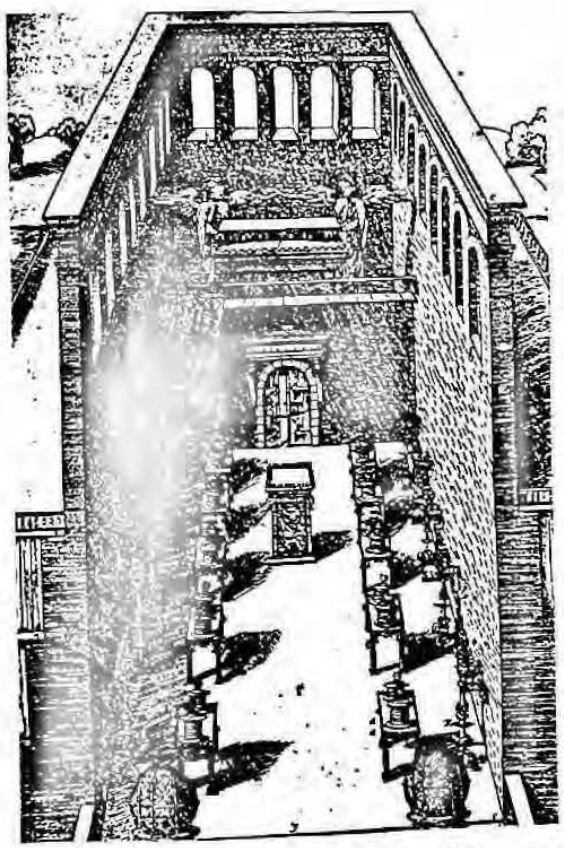
THE TEMPLE: AN ARCHITECTURE OF REMEMBRANCE

The construction of the Temple in Jerusalem heralded a new era in Jewish history. In the words of Julius Morgenstern:

> The Temple was an altogether new type of structure in Israel, differing radically in size, appearance, and symbolism from the ancient, simple tent-sanctuary. It typified the new order of things and the new religion. It was erected by a people now far more powerful politically, far wealthier and stronger commercially, and culturally far more advanced, than it had ever been before...[9]

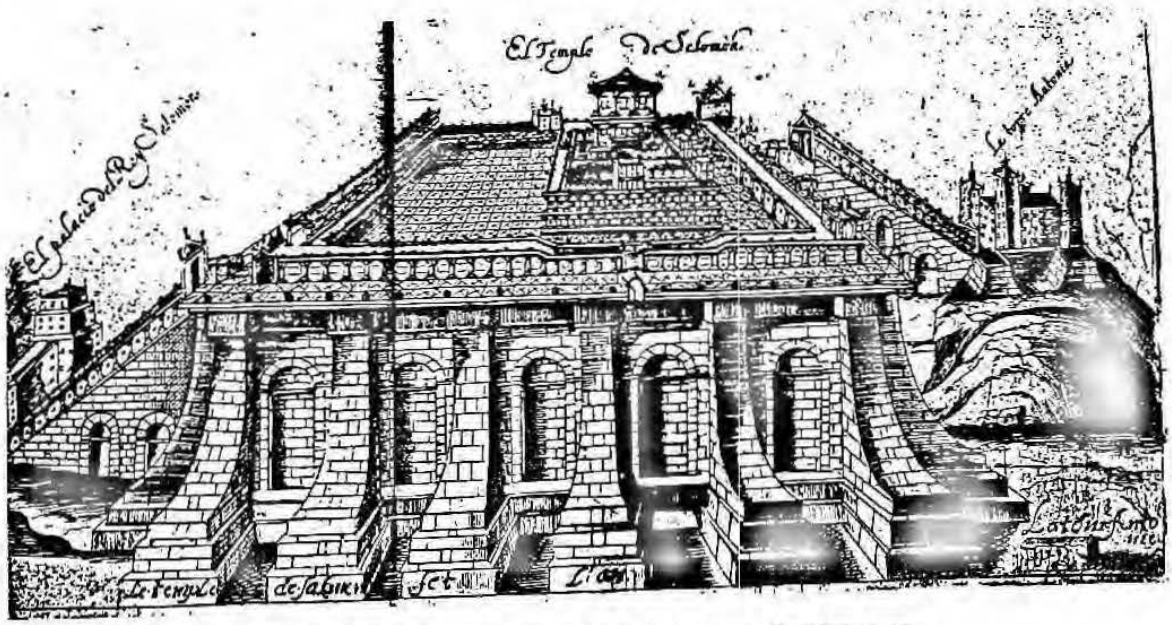
In the Tabernacle's Sanctuary, the *cherubim* sat perched on top of the Ark of the Covenant. When the Tabernacle was relocated, God's footstool moved with it. God's presence in any single place was temporary. God traveled with the People. In the Temple, the *cherubim* sat on the floor. They remained in the Sanctuary, in which the Ark was also permanently deposited. The Temple was called: *"Makom Ha'Shekenah,"* the place of God's presence. In contrast with the Tabernacle's *"ohel,"* its tent, the Temple was seen as God's *"bayit,"* God's house and permanent dwelling.

The Temple served as symbol of the perfected Hebraic society in the Land of Israel. Through it, God maintained a relationship with the people and an association with the land and monarch. As a permanent shrine, the Temple usurped the time-bound sanctity of the Tabernacle. The stone structure, gleaned from the grandest architectures of Egypt and Phoenicia, presented a new-found holiness in space. The Temple became a national symbol. It was the seat of the monarch and the Diety, a permanent site for sacrificial worship, and a singular destination for the Jewish pilgrim. Stability had its price. As mythical site of Creation's origin and permanent



This etching of the interior of the Temple's Sanctuary depicts the *cherubim* standing on the floor of the Holy of Holies, flanking the Ark of the Covenant. The vessels on the tables in the Sanctuary's outer chamber contain the meal offering. Note the parochet curtain drawn to the left of the Holy of Holies' entrance. Source: Estienne Bible, published in Paris, 1540. Reprinted in: H. A. Meek, *The Synagogue*, pg. 38.

residence of tribal God, the Temple challenged the Hebraic reluctance to sanctify space outside of time. Still, as a permanent architecture and steadfast symbol, the Temple preserved memory in a way that the Tabernacle could not. As the Israelites became rooted in place, there was no longer a need for the Tabernacle's continual assembly and disassembly. Temple worship and pilgrimage replaced the spiritual journey and the cultural building process that occurred at each temporary encampment. Memory was activated by the Temple's sacrificial cult. Architecture was interpreted as a symbol of the past. A particular site was endowed with memory. The Temple was built to activate memory through its various symbols, and was presented not only as the location of Creation's origin, but also as the site upon which Adam, Cain, Abel, and Noah brought sacrifices.[10]



The Temple, interpreted here with massive concave buttresses, provided a permanent site of worship and a symbol of holiness. Source: Jacob Judah Leon, *Retrato del Templo de Selomoh*, published in Middleburg, Holland in 1642. Reprinted in: H. A. Meek, *The Synagogue*, pg. 36.

The adoption of a model of permanent sacred place changed the nature of the spiritual journey. In the days of the Tabernacle, the religious center traveled with the people. With the advent of the Temple, the people traveled to the site that represented God's presence. The wilderness journey to Israel had been completed. As the Israelites spread out and became rooted in the land, the mission of Sinai was replicated by pilgrimage to the Temple. The Temple's locative sanctity changed the nature of the spiritual journey. Sinai's placeless wandering, in which even architecture was temporary, was replaced by a pilgrimage to a sanctified center. It was a new era, indeed. The nomadic tribe was transformed into a sovereign nation. A steadfast monument served as universal shrine and symbol of national might. Locative holiness entered Hebraic consciousness. Even so, during the years when the Temple functioned pilgrimage remained time-bound. Although Jerusalem became both national center and spiritual destination, festival observance remained the primary reason for the journey. It is interesting to note that since the Temple's destruction in 70 CE, festival pilgrimage has largely shifted to Temple pilgrimage.

Today, Jews travel to the *Kotel*, the sanctified western wall of the Temple Mount, not to observe a particular festival (though this practice does still occur), but to pray at the holy site and to experience the holiness of the place. Pilgrims deposit prayers and words of thanksgiving into the cracks between the wall's weathered stones, hoping that they somehow will be brought to the attention of the Divine. Jewish prayer is almost universally directed toward the Temple's ruin in Jerusalem, further endowing the site

with locative holiness.[11] Niches were added to synagogues to provide a container for the ark, and also to indicate the direction toward Jerusalem. The *Tosefta* directs:

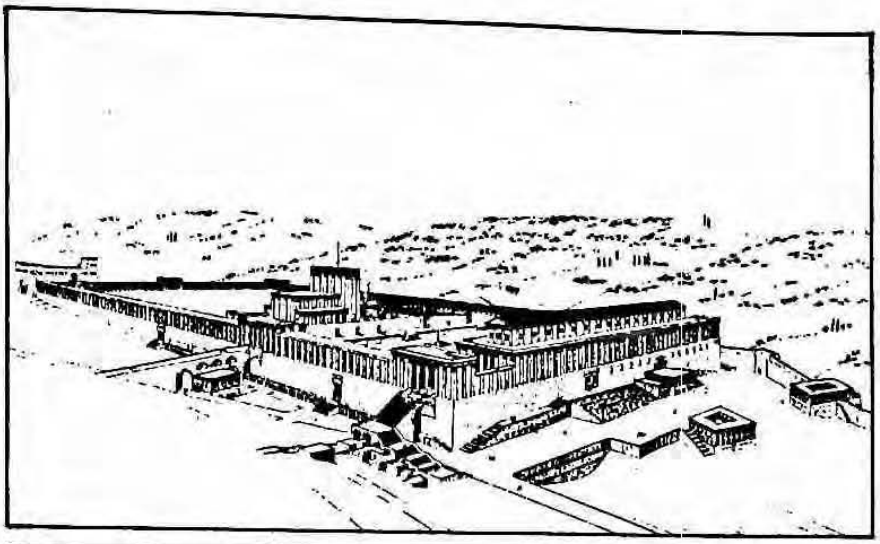
> Those standing outside the Land of Israel shall direct their hearts toward the Land of Israel and pray, for it is written: 'and pray unto *Adonay* in their land.' Those standing in the Land of Israel shall direct their hearts toward Jerusalem and pray, for it is written: 'And they shall pray toward this city.' Those standing in Jerusalem shall direct their hearts towards the Sanctuary and pray, for it is written: 'And they shall pray toward this place.'[12]

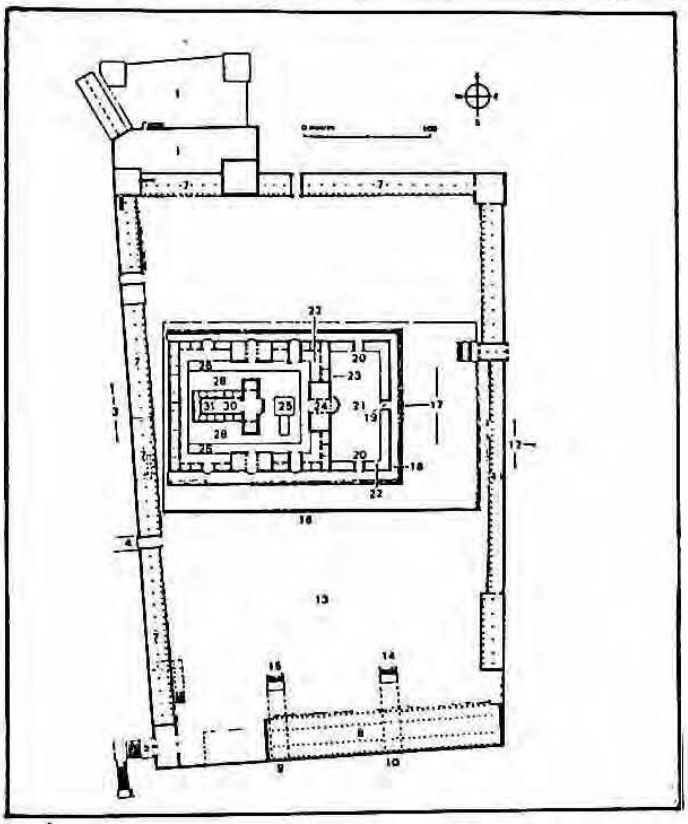
Prayers and thanksgivings deposited by pilgrims in cracks of the Western Wall of the Temple mount endow the place with memory and meaning. Source: Photograph by James Brandt.

The ruin, itself, has been declared holy, and a permanent, sanctified monument has been added to Jewish consciousness. The *Kotel* stands as a symbol of history, a remembrance of national sovereignty, and as a Hebraic model of locative holiness.

The Temple was conceived as an architecture that would serve as a remembrance of Sinai. On the Festivals, the pilgrims assembled in the Temple's court, as their ancestors did before the holy mountain. Just as their forefathers had brought gifts for the Tabernacle's construction, the *malamadot*, the representatives who made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem on behalf of their tribesman, brought animals for sacrificial worship and donations to finance the Temple's functioning. In his book *The Temple: It's Symbolism and Meaning, Then and Now*, Joshua Berman points out the connection between Temple pilgrimage and Sinaitic revelation. He highlights the similarities between the biblical verses which describe both."[13] The first recounts revelation at Sinai: "Face to face, God spoke with you on the Mount, from amid the fire." The second prescribes pilgrimage as required spiritual journey: "Be seen before the face of *Adonay*."[14] For Berman, the similar language is instructive. He concludes that: "When the Children of Israel are commanded to appear before God at the Temple, it is to renew the sense of direct, collective encounter between God and the Jewish People."[15]

In 586 BCE, when Jerusalem was conquered by Nebuchadnezzer, the Temple was destroyed and Jews were exiled to Babylon. But the Temple's





Above, a perspective drawing by Leon Ritmeyer of the Temple Mount and Herod's Temple viewed from the southwest. Below, floor plan of Herod's Temple with courtyards. Key: 9-10: Hulda Gates; 13: Gentile Court; 21: Woman's Court; 24: Nikanor Gate; 25: Outer Alter; 26: Israelite Court; 28: Priests' Court; 30: Outer chamber of Sanctuary; 31: Holy of Holies. Source: Martin Jaffee, *Early Judaism*, pgs. 166 and 169.

central role could not be extinguished by the victor's flames. In 538 BCE, Cyrus the Great conquered the Babylonian Empire and the Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem. The Temple's rebuilding commenced immediately. The Temple was reconstructed according to its original plan. At first it must have been a modest reconstruction. In time, as the Jews recovered from exile and succeeded economically, it was embellished and refortified. In 63 BCE, Roman legions conquered Judea and captured Jerusalem. Judea became an extension of the Roman kingdom and Herod I was installed as its ruler. Under Herod's direction the Second Temple was enlarged and beautified. The area of the Temple Mount was doubled in size. Tremendous buttress walls were built to serve as the court's perimeter foundation. Collumned porticos were added to the edges of the Temple's outer court to provide places for both Jews and non-Jews to gather.

The Temple's success was great. It unified Israel's bickering tribes. It brought the monarchy both national unity and international renown. With Herod's addition, it provided a meeting place not only for the religious pilgrim, but also for the foreign visitor as well. Perhaps the Temple became too influential. After its destruction, remembrance of the Sinaitic revelation was largely replaced by remembrance of the Temple. While the festival of *Shavuot* endured as a commemoration of the theophany at Sinai, almost every aspect of Jewish life changed to incorporate the memory of the Temple. The Talmudic sages incorporated various rituals into Jewish religious practice specifically for the purpose of remembering the Temple. In the time of the Temple, the *lulav* was waved in the Temple's courtyard on

each of the seven days of *Sukkot*. Elsewhere, it was waved only on the first day. After the Temple's destruction, the lulav was waved for seven days to fulfill the Talmudic precept: *"zecher la-mikdash"*, in remembrance of the Temple.[16] The Passover *Seder* activates memory through the performance of rituals and the eating of symbolic foods. The *Seder* also incorporates rituals in remembrance of the Temple. The ceremonial eating of the Hillel sandwich -- a combination of ground horseradish and the nut and fruit *charoset* mixture held together between two pieces of *matzah* -- commemorates the eating of the *pascal* lamb -- the meat which remained after the burning of the Passover sacrifice -- in the days of the Temple.[17] A shank bone and a roasted egg are included in the symbols of the *Seder* in remembrance of the sacrificial worship that was practiced as a central part of the Temple cult.[18]

Another set of religious practices performed in remembrance of the Temple fall under the classification of *"zecher la churban"*. These rites specifically "remember the Temple's destruction, and the shattering of Israel as a perfected society at the pinnacle of its religious mission. They symbolize a spiritual incompleteness and aim at perpetuating a sense of loss."[19] At the conclusion of every Jewish wedding, at the most joyous of ritual moments, a glass is broken to recall the Temple's destruction. At the festive meal, a small dish is omitted from the menu. A small accessory is left off even the fanciest formal attire. Jewish architecture has also remained incomplete in commemoration of the Temple's destruction. In the Talmud, Rabbi Joshua states:

> My sons, come and let me tell you. To abstain from mourning is impossible, for this evil decree has indeed befallen us. Yet we cannot mourn excessively either, for we do not enact a decree that people cannot tolerate.... Rather, the sages have stated, 'Let a man build his house, yet let him leave a portion unfinished.'[20]

Both the strength and the weakness of the Temple lie in its form. For the pilgrim, it represents a locative model of holiness and obscures the Hebraic view that hallows time over space. Jewish rituals are prescribed which seemingly commemorate the destruction of a sacred religious site.[21] The temporal holiness which is at the foundation of an Hebraic tradition of form-making has been effectively obscured from the Jewish artist's view. Still, the hallowed place served as a container for Jewish memory. The Temple's ruin has helped us to remember and to recall a time in which Israel, under David and Solomon, lived up to their covenental calling. The *Kotel's* weathered stone face and its paper mortar stand as a monument to a time of Israel's glory, and as a two-thousand year longing for a homeland. The Temple has injected a potent model of spatial holiness into the collective consciousness of the Jewish People. It has tempered the influence of the Hebraic insistence on a holiness in time. Even so, perhaps the purpose of the Temple never was to endure as a religious shrine. Today, as sacred ruin, the Temple has returned to its beginnings: It stands as monument to the passage of time.

The *Kotel* endures as a site of pilgrimage. As a sacred ruin, it is a monument to the Hebraic concept of temporal holiness. Source: A painting by W. Tipping in R. Trail's edition of Josephus, *The Jewish Wars*, 1851. Reprinted in: Zev Vilnay, *The Holy Land in Old Prints and Maps*, pg. 99.

THE SUKKAH: PRIMORDIAL MODEL OF TEMPORAL SANCTITY

The Tabernacle's portable structure has vanished from history without a trace, and even the hewn stones of the Temple were carried off generations ago. Today, the Dome of the Rock and the Al Aksa mosque sit over the site of the world's mythic origin. Only a short section of the Temple's foundation wall endures as a reminder of what once stood in its place. Today, the architectural forms of the Bible reside only in collective memory,

but the tradition of building a residence to welcome the Divine presence continues. In remembrance of the Tabernacle, Scripture prescribes the annual building of a temporary architecture:

> You shall dwell in huts seven days; all the citizens of Israel shall live in huts, in order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people to live in huts when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.[22]

Hence, each year, shortly after *Yom Kippur*, a ritualized building process is initiated in the construction of the *Sukkah*, a temporary structure which resembles a hut or booth. The *Sukkah* typically has four walls, often made of fabric or another light-weight material. Its roof is partially covered with vegetation harvested from the earth. In Hebrew, the vegetation used to make this partial roof is called "*schach*." In a properly constructed *Sukkah*, the *schach* must be distributed liberally enough to provide shade for the *Sukkah's* guests. Yet the *schach* must not be so thick as to obstruct the view to the stars. The goal is a delicate balance of protection and vulnerability. Building and dwelling in the *Sukkah* during the annual *Sukkot* festival each Autumn activates memories of the years of desert wandering and a return to a time of placelessness. In the Sinai wilderness, God provided the Israelites shade from the sun's rays, protection from the dangers of the desert, and nutrition necessary for sustenance. The *Sukkah* recalls this time in which God provided for all personal and tribal needs. It is an architecture of remembrance and an expression of what Thomas Barrie calls a "nostalgia for paradise." As with all sacred architecture, the *Sukkah* symbolizes a primordial place of spiritual redemption and peace.[23] The

Sukkah is a reminder of the Tabernacle, the first Hebraic architecture and enduring archetype for primordial shelter. As in the assembly of the Tabernacle, the annual construction of the ritual *Sukkah* booth represents the continuation of creation. Each morning, the daily observant Jew petitions: "Spread over us the *Sukkah* of Your peace." The activity of building summons God's presence to the fragile hut, serving as a reminder of humankind's plea which caused God to come down off the mountain and dwell among the People.

An etching of *sukkot* of different styles. Source: Johann Christian Bodenschatz, *Kirchiiche Verefssung der Heutigen Juden.* Reprinted in: Abram Kahoff, *Jewish Symbolic Art,* figure 39.

In his 1753, *Essai sur l'architecture,* Marc-Antoine Laugier, wrote about the important role that primordial shelters play in the development of a culture. He recounted:

> Man wants a dwelling (and so) some branches broken off in the forest are material to his purpose. He chooses four of the strongest, and raises them perpendicularly to the ground, to form a square. On these

> he supports four others laid across them; above these he lays some which incline to both sides, and come to a point in the middle. This kind of roof is covered with leaves thick enough to keep out both the sun and rain: and now man is lodged.[24]

The *Sukkah* is the primordial shelter brought into present day through an annual cycle of ritual building. It provides modest, temporary shelter for its human inhabitants. More importantly, the *Sukkah* is a recurring structure that endures in continuum. It reappears each year at an appointed time -- an architecture that houses memory.

The talmudic rabbis disagree about what the *Sukkah* represents.[25] Rabbi Eliezer interpreted the *Sukkah* to represent the booths in which the Israelites dwelled during their forty-year trek through the Sinai wilderness. For Rabbi Akiba, the *Sukkah* represents the "Clouds of Glory" which surrounded the Israelites on all sides and led them through the desert. Contemporary scholar, Jeffrey Rubenstein, sides with Akiba, envisioning the *Sukkah* as "analogous to 'arms of God' embracing the people, representing God's love, protection, and presence."[26] Whether the *Sukkah* represents desert dwelling or Divine presence,[27] the *Sukkah's* essence is its ability to activate memory of primordial shelter and to continue the ritual building process that began with the Tabernacle. Because the *Sukkah* is reminiscent of desert shelter, it is important that the *Sukkah* provide shade. Rashi points out that the *Sukkah's* name is derived from it's ability to shade, because it represents the shade which provided the Israelites shelter, in Hebrew, *mesukkah*, from the desert sun.

The *Sukkah's schach* covering, while activating the memory of Sinai, also teaches a politic. Its temporary, fragile architecture is a symbol of our own frailty and mortality. It serves as a reminder that protection is not gained by locking ourselves in our houses, but by being open to the world; by inviting both God and neighbor to dine at our table. For the prophet Zechariah, dwelling in the *Sukkah* represents the time of redemption, when all the nations would come and celebrate together with the Jewish People. He saw the *Sukkah* as a symbol of universal harmony and fellowship:

> And it shall come to pass that everyone that is left of all the nations who come against Jerusalem, shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the feasts of booths.[28]

The Sukkah is a temporal architecture in the greatest sense. Its construction is called for at an appointed time. It is a symbol of the past, a time when God provided for the needs of an emerging people. It is also a symbol of the future, a time of redemption when all humanity will be at peace. The Sukkah is born in the moment and lives for but a week each year. Yet its boundaries are vast. The Sukkah resides in the temporal past-future, it stretches back to redemption from slavery and ahead to a messianic age.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

[1] Lawrence Kushner, *The Book of Words: Talking Spiritual Life, Living Spiritual Talk.* (Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1993), pg. 87.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Exodus 13:8

[4] John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1984, (first edition published: 1849), pg. 169.

[5] John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, pg. 186.

[6] cf. Numbers 7:19

[7] for additional commentary on numerological associations see: Yochanan Zweig, "The Dedication of the Temple" (*Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought*, vol. 25, no. 1, Fall 1989).

[8] Martin S. Jaffee, *Early Judaism* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997), pg. 182.

[9] Peter Blake, *An American Synagogue For Today and Tomorrow* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1954), pg. 15.

[10] cf. *Targum Yerushalmi* on Genesis 8:20

[11] Following the tradition that Daniel prayed toward Jerusalem. (cf. Daniel 6:11, also I Kings 8:44, 48)

[12] *Tosefta Brachot*, Chapter 3 (commenting on 2 Chronicles 6:34 ff.)

[13] Deuteronomy 5:4

[14] Exodus 23:17, 34:23; Deuteronomy 16:16

[15] Joshua Berman, *The Temple: Its Symbolism and Meaning Then and Now* (London: Jason Aronson, 1995), pg. 53.

[16] TB *Sukkot* 41a

[17] TB *Pesachim* 115a

[18] TB *Pesachim* 114b

[19] These customs are based on Psalm 137: 5-6 ("If I forget you, O'Jerusalem, let my right hand wither; let my tongue stick to my palate if I cease to think of you, if I do not keep Jerusalem in my memory in even my most joyful hour.").

[20] cf. Joseph Caro, *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim*, 560

[21] For a detailed discussion of these rituals, see Joshua Berman, *The Temple: Its Symbolism and Meaning Then and Now*, pgs. 179 - 196.

[22] Leviticus 23:42, 43

[23] Thomas Barrie, *Spiritual Path, Sacred Place: Myth, Ritual, and Meaning in Architecture* (Boston: Shambhala, 1996), pg. 66.

[24] Ibid.

[25] cf. TB *Sukkot* 11b and *Sifra 'Emor* 17:11

[26] Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, "The Symbolism of the Sukkah" (*Judaism*, vol. 43, no. 4, Fall 1994), pg. 376.

[27] This tradition generally follows Akiba's view that the *Sukkah* represents the clouds of Glory. The verse, "His left hand under my head," is interpreted to be a reference to the clouds of Glory as represented by the *Sukkah*. (cf. *Shir haShirim Rabba* 2:6)

[28] Zechariah 14:16

4. *The Idol and the Image*

A POLEMIC AGAINST IDOLATRY

In the pagan cultures of the ancient Near East, diety was thought to reside in built form. The god, or gods, inhabited idols made from earthly material. The icon fashioned by man was endowed with the power and the reality of the god. The idol itself was understood as a living being through which worshipper and diety related to each other. Hence, the material that represented holiness was treated as if it was alive. The idol was routinely dressed, fed, and put to bed. It was carried to battle to protect the troops and to guard against defeat. The idol's capture was seen as a disastrous event, and would be avoided at all cost. In the fifteenth century BCE, the goddess Istar of Nineveh was carried ceremoniously from Mesopotamia to Egypt because the goddess's physical presence was needed to bestow blessing on the land.[1] Such practices were common and reflect the pagan model of locative holiness. Diety was quantified and objectified in space. The object was sanctified; hence, proximity was fundamental.

One of the most significant innovations, if not the single greatest theological contribution of the Hebrew Bible, is its rejection of idol worship and the locative model of holiness required for a God that lives in space. The Hebraic polemic against idolatry was a radical departure from the religious cultures of the ancient Near East. It would prove to be a theological development that would change the course of western religious thought. In the Hebraic view, God's presence could not be contained in material form. Even in the Temple in Jerusalem, the sanctified center of the Jewish

This collection of idols from pagan shrines on the Greek Island of Dellos provides numerous examples of idols from the various cultures of the ancient Near East. Source: Photograph by James Brandt.

world, pilgrimage was determined by the calendar. Sacrificial worship was brought at appointed moments endowed with holiness.

The Bible frames idolatry not as the veneration of God through a vessel, but as raising the image above diety. Biblical narrative points to the human propensity toward idolatry and addresses the problem with a clear and repetitive commandment. It is not enough for the Jew to worship the God of Israel that has no image. The worship must be accompanied by a rejection of idolatry. Lawrence Kushner interprets idolatry not as only as "the worship of carved or molded fetishes in the image of God," but also as "the dangerous, ubiquitous, and seductive fantasy that God can have any image at all."[2] Religious philosopher, Will Herberg interprets the Hebraic view of

idolatry as ultimately the "worship of the self projected and objectified." In Herberg's view, "all idolization is self idolization, individual or collective." Explaining the link between idolatry and egocentricity, he writes:

> In exalting the natural vitalities of life, we exalt and lose ourselves in the vitalities of our own nature. In absolutizing the collectivities or movements of which we form a part, we all but absolutize ourselves writ large. In proclaiming as ultimate the ideas and programs to which we are devoted, we are but proclaiming the work of our mind to be the final truth of love. In the last analysis, the choice is only between love of God and love of self, between a God-centered and a self-centered existence. So is egocentricity as against theocentricity. It is, in effect. denying God and making oneself in direct or indirect form, the god of one's universe.[3]

The central importance of the biblical polemic against the worship of form is evident from the placement of the commandment prohibiting idolatry at the beginning of the Ten Commandments. These commandments provide the basis of the relationship between God and the community of Israel. Their revelation remains the singular event in which God reveals the Divine presence to the totality of the Jewish People. According to tradition, the totality of the written and the oral law was given to Moses, who then related it to the Israelites. The Ten Commandments, recorded in stone, provided the basis for the totality of *Torah*. In preparation for theophany, the people purified themselves for three days. They then assembled at the foot of Mount Sinai. The mountain was engulfed in smoke. The Divine presence appeared in fire. God spoke to the Israelites through Moses, who reported the words which God commanded:

> God spoke these words, saying: I am *Adonai* your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods beside Me. You shall not make for yourself a sculpted image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I, *Adonai*, am an impassioned God, visiting the guilt of the parents upon their children, upon the third and fourth generation of those who reject Me, but showing kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and keep My commandments.[4]

The Ten Commandments begin with an identification of the Divine and an establishment of the historical/theological relationship. Following this foundational statement, the second commandment immediately turns to the prohibition of idolatry and the forbidden graven image. The second commandment is not followed immediately by the third. A fierce, yet compassionate, warning is spliced into the text, separating the second commandment from the eight which follow in sequence without elaboration or commentary. The first two commandments are placed together as a literary set, for they are really two sides of the same coin; a single commandment restated for emphasis. The first commandment, to acknowledge God as the supreme being, cannot be fulfilled if the second commandment, prohibiting idolatrous worship, is broken. The second commandment's prohibition against idolatry is restated in Exodus 20:20: "You shall not make with Me, gods of silver or gods of gold; you shall not make these for yourselves." Nachmanides interprets this repetition as a

prohibition against both the fashioning and the worshipping of idols. The Talmud expands the restriction to include the veneration of an image, even if the intention is not one of worship.[5] In *midrash*, the human tendency toward idolatry is understood to be so powerful that the person who avoids the worship of false idol is credited with the worship of God:

> Seeing that there is no reality in idols, why does Scripture apply the term "deity" to them? Rabbi Pinchas ben Hama said: In order to assign a reward to anyone who turns away from idolatry. God said: "Although there is no reality in it, yet as soon as a person turns away from it, I account it to that person as if he or she were worshipping the One who really is (divine) and as if that person came to Me."[6]

It is fitting that such emphasis be placed on the Hebraic rejection of idolatry. Its practice is a violation of the foundation of the Covenant itself and an affront to foundation of Jewish tradition in which only the singular, imageless God is worshipped.[7] The prominence of the polemic against idolatry was a response to the religious reality of its age, and certainly was justified by humanity's tendency to revert to idolatry over the course of history. In the biblical period, the Israelites were reluctant to relinquish idolatrous practices, and were tempted by the platonic beauty of their neighbors' gods. The idolatrous cults of the Canaanites were popular in Israel. Idols of Baal, Asherah, and Ashtaroth were worshipped beside the God of Israel.[8] It was not uncommon for the Temple pilgrim to carry personal idols with them on sacred pilgrimage.[9] Several of the Israelite queens were known to have fostered idolatry in the royal palace.[10] The calf-idol was worshipped in the cult centers of Beth El and Dan, and even at the

base of Sinai.[11]

Idolatry has survived in various forms throughout history, and remains a central problem of our age. In his book *No Other Gods: The Modern Struggle Against Idolatry*, Kenneth Seeskin calls it a "universal phenomenon." In his contemporary definition of idolatry, Seeskin includes not only the worship of an image of God fashioned from wood or stone, but also the moral error of turning away from God to idolize wealth, beauty, fame, or power. He points to the widespread rejection of the first and second commandments:

> Almost every country in the world has military parades that glorify power, advertisements that glorify beauty or sexual fulfillment, books that extol wealth or influence, and cults that deify movie stars and sports figures.[12]

Today, idolatry is pervasive. Both the physical nature of our world, and our culture of materialism and consumption, provide potential idols at every turn. Our world is filled with objects of great power, enormous might, and graceful beauty. Judaism asserts that none of them serves as a fitting substitute, or even representation, for the Creator of the universe. In the Hebraic view, the world is divided into two realms. God exists in one and all else exists in the other. There is nothing that exists in both. There can be no worldly container for the Divine; no material can suffice to represent the boundless God.

A GOD WITH NO IMAGE

The Hebraic concept of Diety was no less an innovation than the biblical polemic against idolatry. The Bible prohibited the worship of idols as false gods. Even the image of the idol was considered a degradation of *Adonai*, the God without image or form. Whereas the multitude of tribal gods in the ancient Near East were given physical form and endowed with earthly existence, the Hebraic God existed as "other," transcending the physical realm. Such a God could not be represented in any form whatsoever, and was revealed only through divine will and action. The Bible explicitly presents the Creator as a God without image or icon: "Now you are to take exceeding care for yourselves -- for you did not see any form on the day that *Adonai* spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire."[13] In rabbinic literature, "*Makom*," the Hebrew word for "place", is used as a name for God. This frames God not as a thing, but as a position, locating Diety outside of the world of space and the boundaries of the cosmos. In the words of the religious philosopher Zali Gurevitz, "God is essentially unplaceable."[14] For Sigmond Freud, the Hebraic concept of God as an ultimate being outside of the realm of space and without image:

> Signified subordinating sense to an abstract idea; it was a triumph of spirituality over the senses; more precisely, an instructional renunciation accompanied by its psychologically necessary consequences.[15]

The first two commandments defined an entirely new vision of Diety, and revolutionized the human-divine relationship. Both the cosmos and the role

of humankind within it were reconceived.

The placeless God also changed the place of worship. Unlike the pagan shrines of the ancient Near East which were conceived as physical homes for material Gods, in the sanctuaries of the Tabernacle and the Temple the throne of the Hebraic God was empty. It was the sanctuaries' emptiness that allowed for the possibility of God's presence. The Ark of the Covenant, flanked by the golden *cherubim*, served as God's footstool and was associated with the Divine presence.[16] When the Ark was taken up and returned to its place, Moses called out the Israelite God to arise and return with it.[17] Still, God never occupied the throne in physical form. A pillar of fire and smoke which descended to the area in front of the sanctuary's door was the only visible feature of God's presence.[18] Even this was not an image of God, but a fleeting phenomenon that signaled an extraordinary occurrence. The separation between God and the symbol of the Divine presence maintained the notion of an anticonic God; a Diety without image.

The empty throne in the Tabernacle and Temple inspired the design of the "seat of Moses" in the early synagogues. This was an empty seat prominently placed adjacent to the ark or the reader's platform. The seat of Moses continued the Hebraic tradition of leaving an empty place in which the Divine presence could dwell symbolically. In time, the seat of Moses was used to hold the scrolls of Law during the *Torah* service, linking Divine presence and Divine word.[19] Today the tradition of the empty throne is maintained by an empty chair representing the presence of the prophet

Elijah at every *Brit*, the ritual through which children are brought ceremoniously into the covenant of Israel.

HOLINESS IN THE WORD

The Babylonian epic poem, *Enuma Elish*, recounts the birth of the Babylonian gods, and the creation of the world and its human inhabitants. In *Enuma Elish*, the world is born from a violent act. The gods, Marduk and Tiamat fight for sovereignty of the universe, and Marduk emerges as the victor. He proves his strength by killing his opponent. Marduk casts the deceased Tiamat to the ground, and creates a new universe from her body. From her head, he creates the Earth. In comparison, the biblical Creation story is ordered and peaceful. The Hebraic God creates the world in an act of love. Whereas the Babylonian gods were envisioned as physical manifestations with human attributes, the Hebraic concept of God provided no image to venerate. Instead of a notion of holiness associated with physical form, sanctity was placed in God's word and in God's name. The action by which Creation occurs is God's speech. God speaks, and Creation responds; it comes into being. In *Enuma Elish*, the gods live within a universe fashioned from a divine corpse. In the Bible, God is outside -- other than -- the universe.

The theophany on Mount Sinai provides another example of sanctified word and illusive image. *Adonai* speaks to Moses out of the midst of the fire. Moses hears the sound of God's words but sees no form.[20] When the Temple is built in Jerusalem, the text reemphasizes the holiness of the Divine

name. The *Torah* proclaims the Temple as a sacred architecture because God will "place His name there."[21] It is predestined as the place where God "will choose to cause His name to dwell."[22]

In this etching of Moses receiving the tablets of law on Mount Sinai God's presence is represented by smoke and rays of light. Source: *"Sefer Ha'Minhagim" - The Book of Customs*, printed in Amsterdam, 1723. Reprinted in: Zev Vilnay, *The Holy Land in Old Prints and Maps,* pgs. 293.

In the absence of an icon to embody the Divine, the most precious objects in the sanctuary were the stone tablets received on Mount Sinai. These were hallowed as a record of God's word and a revelation of Divine will. When the tablets themselves were lost, the words written upon them endured and retained holiness. According to Jewish tradition, Moses returned from the mountain with stories and laws spoken to him by God, and with the stone tablets upon which God had engraved the Ten Commandments. The Tablets of Law were deposited in the Ark of the Covenant which was placed in the

Holy of Holies, first in the Tabernacle and later in the first and second Temples in Jerusalem. When the second Temple was destroyed, the Ark of the Covenant was carried out of the Temple's sanctuary and brought to Rome as a spoil of war. The tablets of Law disappeared into the pages of history. But the words engraved on the tablets, as well as those spoken by Moses, were orally transmitted to the Israelites and recorded in the hearts of the People. In time, God's words were written and codified as enduring Law. Orthodox Jews consider the *Tanach* -- the Five Books of Moses, the Prophets, and the Writings -- as well as the teachings of the Talmud to be the word of God transmitted and received through the written and oral traditions of Jewish Law. Some progressive and Reform Jews follow this understanding, but for most the Sinaitic moment is not taken literally. Even those who do not accept the written and oral Law to be the literal word of God, do consider the *Torah* to be a sacred teaching from which truth can be gleaned. The gathering of the Jewish People at Mount Sinai is a potent and transformational metaphor for virtually every Jew, regardless of theology or affiliation.

With the emergence of the synagogue, the ritual reading and study of the *Torah* replaced sacrificial worship as the communal religious activity. The *Torah* was recorded on parchment scrolls and placed in a cabinet at the front of the synagogue. The cabinet was called the *aron hakodesh*, the holy ark. Like the Ark of the Covenant, the *aron hakodesh* is not itself holy, but is sanctified by the presence of God's word recorded on the scrolls within. Adjacent to the ark, the *ner tamid*, the eternal light, burns continuously

whenever a *Sefer Torah*, the scroll of Law, is present as a sign of respect and an acknowledgment of the *Torah's* sanctity. The *ner tamid* is also reminiscent of the flame that burned in the sanctuary of the Tabernacle and the Temple whenever the Ark resided in the Holy of Holies.

The scrolls of Law in the ark of the synagogue in Saluzzo, Italy.
Source: Neil Folberg, *And I Shall Dwell Among Them: Historic Synagogues of the World*, pg. 28.

Some of the earliest synagogues show no evidence of such a container. In these cases, it is probable that the scrolls of Law were placed in a portable container reminiscent of the Ark of the Covenant and carried into synagogue for the public reading of the Law. In the synagogue, the sanctification of God's word became the central communal religious activity. The animal sacrifice of the Temple was replaced with an offering of words. Cycles and

rituals for the reading of the Law were established. In time, prayers were added to the service to embellish the reading and to praise and petition the God to whom the law was attributed.

The Hebraic notion that holiness resides in God's word has greatly affected Jewish thought and Jewish art. Because each word in the Bible is considered to be holy, each generation has examined the intricate meaning behind each sentence, each word, even each letter of the Bible. Rabbinic numerologists assign numerical values to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. By determining the sum value of biblical words, verses, and passages, they strive to the uncover the word's hidden meanings and prophecies. In his book *The Book of Words, Talking Spiritual Life, Living Spiritual Talk*, Lawrence Kushner points out that words are not only "the instrument of Creation, in Judaism they are the primary reality itself."[23] In *"The Jewish Catalogue,"* the Jewish renewal movement's handbook for Jewish living, the authors included an explanation of the power of the Hebrew word:

> The letter is the spiritual substance of the thing. The world is made up of thirty-two pathways. i.e., twenty-two letters of the alphabet, and ten *sefirot* (emanations of God). Their combinations produce all things, make up the heart of the thing. The Hebrew language knows this. Each word, a family of letters. Each word, its physiognomy. The letters of the word, in their unique combinations, are its essence. To pronounce a letter is to invoke its essence. Although a source of potential chaos, letters have staying powers: They hold a thing together.[24]

Hebrew words provide significant inspiration for the artist who seeks to fashion form gleaned from Hebraic tradition. The genius of Bezalel, the first Jewish artist, was his ability to combine the letters in innovative ways, forming the words into a program for architecture and art. In reality, the only representations that we have for the Jewish God are the words by which God is called: *Adonai, Elohim, Makom, Shadai, haKodesh Barechu.* The *Torah's* words are caligraphed. On its own, each one is a work of art. Assembled in the prescribed order, the letters form words. The words combine to form verses, becoming a sacred living tradition and a pathway to all that is holy. In the *Torah,* words are embellished with crowns, each one a king, a queen. Throughout Jewish history, sacred texts were illuminated by scribal artists. During eras in which the Rabbis' stringent interpretation of the second commandment all but halted the work of Jewish artists, holy words danced on the page, an unregulated expression of the artistic spirit. For generations, words of *Torah* have been rolled in *mezuzot,* small cases affixed to the door posts of Jewish homes and synagogues. Inside the home, the *Ketubah,* the couple's marriage contract, often hangs on the wall embellished with color and elaborate borders. In every age, Jewish communities have carved their ideals in stone and embellished facade and pediment with verses of sacred text.

The central architectural features of the Jewish sanctuary, the *aron hakodesh,* the holy ark in which the scrolls of Law are deposited, and the *bimah,* the reader's platform from which Scripture is read and interpreted, are also a tribute to the sanctity of God's word. The ark is often the most

The emphasis on the Hebrew word in the Hebraic artistic tradition is demonstrated by this prayer written out in the figure of a man wearing a crown. Source: 13th -14th century Hebrew prayerbook published in France or Germany. Reprinted in: Zev ben Shimon Halevi, *Kabbalah: Tradition of Hidden Knowledge.* pg. 93.

elaborate object in the sanctuary. It represents the centrality of the Law, and is a sign post directing the spiritual seeker that the paths towards truth are paved with the words of *Torah.* The *Bimah* is symbolic of the congregation's commitment to the rituals of *Torah,* and to the study of its words.

HUMANITY: GOD'S LIVING IMAGE

While the Hebraic God has no image, the *Torah* asserts that humankind were created in the image of God. Chapter One of Genesis relates: "God created man in God's own image, in the image of God; God created humankind; male and female God created them."[25] In addition, the text

presents God in human terms: Noah walks with God.[26] Moses speaks to God "face to face."[27] Even the absence of a Divine image is framed in terms of humankind: "I will take away My hand and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen."[28] While it is tempting to interpret these passages in a literal way, the *Torah's* presentation of the relationship between God and the human image is a metaphor. Joseph Guttman explains that by conceiving of God in human terms, the nomadic Israelites were able to transport God with them on their travels.[29] The human images are only a metaphor for a God with no image. Beside God's word, the acts of humanity serve as testimony to God's existence. Heschel envisions human deeds as "a pyramid that no one could see but God."[30] On the relationship between God and humankind, Heschel wrote:

> The Bible speaks of man as having been created in the likeness of God, establishing the principle of *an analogy of being.* In his very being, man has something in common with God. Beyond the analogy of being, the Bible teaches the principle of *an analogy of acts.* Man may act in the likeness of God. It is this likeness of acts - "to walk in God's ways" - that is the link by which man may come close to God. To live in such likeness is the essence of imitation of the Divine.[31]

The rabbinic view of temporal sacredness is based on the notion that human action has the potential to enact Divine will. God's paramount deed, in human terms, must be the actions by which Creation was initiated. The human - Divine relationship is therefore particularly evident in activities which continue the process of creation, activities which modify natural form

and fashion the raw materials of creation into built form, into forms fashioned by humanity.

THE IMAGE IN HEBRAIC THOUGHT

The second commandment places two prohibitions side by side. In it, both idolatry and figurative representation are forbidden. The commandment forbids idol worship and places an emphasis on God's word over God's image. At face value, the second commandment is also a rejection of visual art. Jewish artist and architect must conquer this misunderstanding by considering prohibited idolatry and restricted iconography each within their own frame. While idol and image are closely related, a separate understanding of each is necessary if we are to interpret the second commandment in such a way as to guide the design and fashioning of sacred Jewish place.

The rabbinic interpretation of the second commandment as a rejection of visual art may be understood historically as a strategy to further separate the Jew from the idolatrous Greek culture that worshipped both idol and platonic beauty. Joseph Guttman explained this strict interpretation as "an inherent conservatism calculated to preserve Jewish identity in a variety of places and circumstances."[32] By prohibiting the import of foreign images, the rabbis hoped to hold back the influences of foreign cultures and to preserve the spiritually-based community. The Torah provides considerable support for the second commandment's prohibition against images.[33] The polemic can be traced back to Hosea in the 8th century BCE, who linked

icon and idol by describing the image as a god made by humankind.[34] But the Torah is seldom single-minded and the case of the graven image is no exception. Leviticus opens by restating the second commandment: "You shall not make idols for yourselves, or set up for yourselves carved images or pillars, or place figured stones in your land to worship upon, for I am *Adonai*, your God."[35] The restated commandment does not prohibit all images, only those that are considered to be set up as gods. Here, the text makes a distinction between restricted idolatry and legitimate iconolatry, and shifts attention from action to intention.

The literal interpretation of the biblical restriction of image-making is also called to question by the inherent contradiction between the second commandment and the work of Bezalel. At one moment, the *Torah* prohibits form-making. At the next, the text recounts God commissioning the Tabernacle and endowing its architect with far-reaching artistic skill. Bezalel's Tabernacle was not stark a container, but an enclosure fashioned from decorative, bright-colored fabric and golden columns. Images of winged figures, the *cherubim*, were embroidered in the Tabernacle's, and later the Temple's, *parochet,* the woven curtain that hung at the entrance of the Holy of Holies.[36] Golden *cherubim* sat in the throne room of both the Tabernacle and Temple.[37] These cast figurines differed from the idols of the ancient Near East only by their function. In Egyptian, Phoenician, and Canaanite religious traditions similar icons were considered to be gods. For the Israelites, the statues were merely a decorative application on the footstool of a God without form. They symbolized the Divine presence, but were not set

up as gods themselves.

While the rabbis closely adhered to the prohibition against idolatry, the restriction placed on form-making varied greatly. A talmudic blessing attributed to Rabbi Judah demonstrates the rabbinic appreciation for natural form:

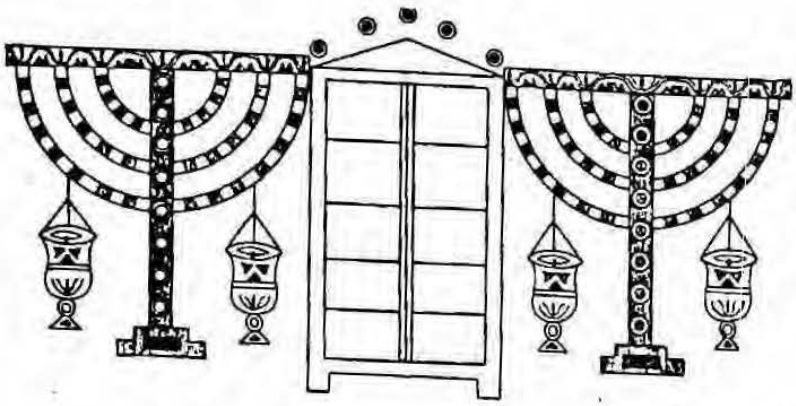
> You abound in blessing, You have made Your world lacking nothing, but have created in it good creatures and good trees in order to give pleasure to humanity.[38]

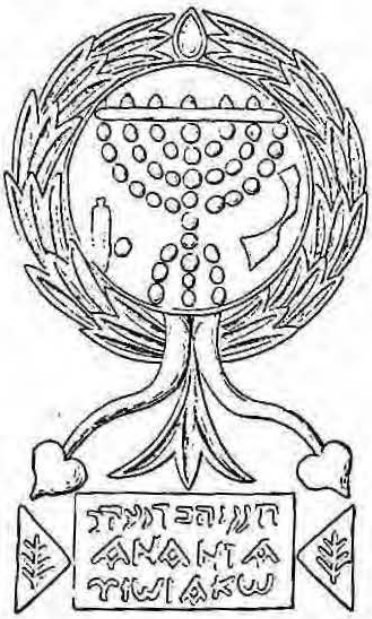
While image-making was problematic for the rabbis, it was not always prohibited. Italian historian and biblical scholar, Umberto Cassuto reflected that the application of the biblical prohibition of graven images was largely dependent on the character of the image. In his view, images which represented actual things were prohibited, whereas imaginary figures, such as the *cherubim*, were permitted.[39] Abbaye, a Babylonian *Amora* and head of the academy in Pumbedita, had a liberal interpretation of the second commandment. He saw it as merely a prohibition against fashioning "the likeness of the four faces together,[40] and, thus felt that the fashioning of a human face alone should be permitted."[41]

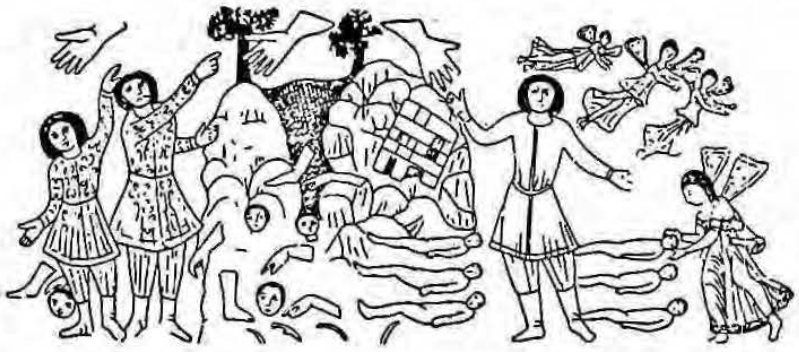
To a large extent, the rabbinic view of iconography followed a historical trend. A liberal interpretation of the second commandment prevailed through the third century. Rabbi Gamaliel, Hillel's grandson and head of the *Sanhedrin*, tolerated, and may have even owned, works of art.[42] The interior of the synagogue at Dura Europas, built in 245 CE, was decorated

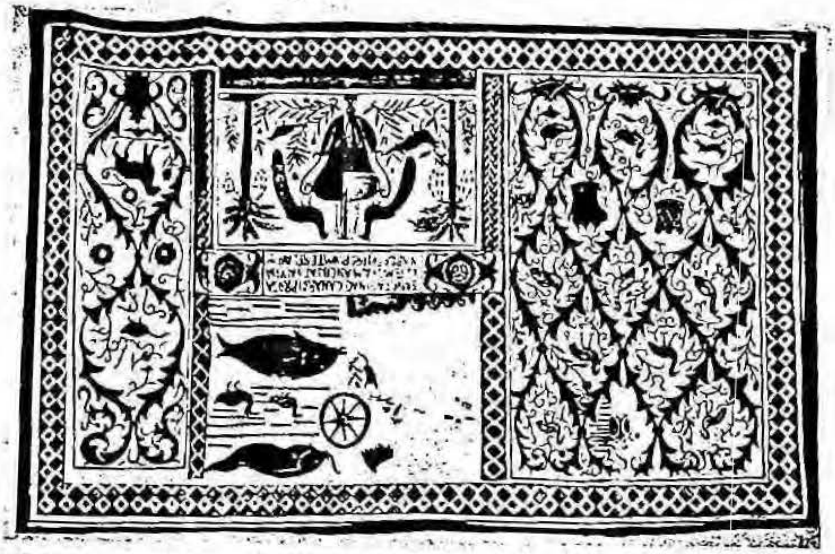
with murals depicting biblical figures, animals, and landscapes. It was typical of the synagogues of the period which were decorated with frescos, mosaics, and even sculpture. These forms of artistic expression were not banned until the end of the third century, when the rabbis of the iconoclastic movement not only prohibited the creation of visual art, but also defaced existing figures of living beings. The liberal interpretation resurfaced in the fourth century and continued through the seventh century. Hebraic art flourished throughout this period. Synagogues were embellished with symbols of the zodiac. Arks were flanked with menorah candelabras, lions, and even bulls. Biblical scenes expressed the communal hope for redemption. In the synagogue at Na'aran, Daniel was depicted surrounded by lions. At Bet Alpha, the hand of God saved Isaac from sacrifice. At Gerasa, Noah and the animals rode out the flood in an ark designed by God.[43] From the seventh century onward, the rabbinic authorities returned to a conservative interpretation.

The Jewish medieval rabbis viewed the distinction between the permitted and the forbidden iconography to be fundamentally arbitrary. Images which were prescribed by the biblical text, along with those which entered the canon of Jewish tradition through accepted *minhag* became accepted. Others, which were not commanded by Scripture or adopted as normative by Jewish communities, were prohibited.[44] Specific restrictions on the artistic representation were tempered by the emergence of the concept of "*hiddur mitzvah*," the beautification of the commandments. Based upon the verse: "This is my God and I will beautify Him,"[45] the tradition of *hiddur mitzvah*









These examples of synagogue art provide examples of permitted iconography. Above left, a detail of mosaic floor of the 5th century synagogue at Na'aran which depicts an ark flanked by *menorahs*. Above right, a *menorah* engraved on a stone in the ancient synagogue at Gaza. Middle: A detail of the frescos at the 3rd century synagogue at Dura-Europas depicts Ezekiel's vision of the valley of the dried bones. Below, the mosaic floor of the late 4th / early 5th century synagogue at Naro (near Tunis) includes animals, fish, and agricultural elements. Note that the inscription is flanked by decorative lozenges, each of which encloses a *menorah*. Source: Cecil Roth, *Jewish Art: An Illustrated History*, cols. 200, 215, 238.

carried the Hebraic artistic tradition through even the most restrictive years, endowing Jewish worship place and ritual object with artistic expression and plastic beauty.

The tradition of *"hiddur mitzvah"* was often expressed by drawings in sacred texts and illuminated manuscripts. This example is a detail of an engraved frontispiece of *Mishat Shai* , Published in Mantua in 1742. The engraving depicts Ezekiel's vision of the Divine presence in the valley of the dried bones. Source: Cecil Roth, *Jewish Art: An Illustrated History*, col. 25.

For the artist faced with the problem of designing and fashioning sacred place for Jewish worship, study, and assembly, the artistic vision presented in *Torah* and realized in the Tabernacle, Temple, and *sukkah*, and the rabbinical interpretations of the second commandment, provide inspiration and guidance. Perhaps the balancing of these inherently contradictory forces may be integrated into Jewish artistic consciousness by facing the

challenge of the imageless God of Israel. The Hebraic view of Diety places God beyond the realm of the physical. As God has no image and is sought by the interpretation of God's word and human action, the relationship between God and humankind is a dynamic, evolving process. Hence, sacred Jewish place, the meeting place of God and Israel, must be an architecture in evolution, one that accepts new occupations and new truths. As ritual is localized not only in time, but also in space, the open design -- one that is constantly in process and unfinished -- is an invariable. Sacred Jewish place must also acknowledge the Hebraic concept of the Divine by extending the process in realm and in time. Sacred Jewish place must avoid itself becoming a symbol by replacing static icon with dynamic action; by replacing image with imagination. In the words of art theorist, Ernest Namenyi's, Hebraic art and architecture represent and sponsor "a presence that cannot be subjected to mere forms but must achieve its fruition in (God's) will."[46] Sacred Jewish place can not be visited merely as a site of pilgrimage. It must be the paramount example of religious architecture truly inhabited. Such inhabitation is not merely dwelling, but a rich experiential living that requires communication with external reality, a continuity of interpreted tradition, a responding to history, and finally, a continuation of building.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

[1] For a detailed account of this journey and its meaning, see Hugo Winkler, *The Tel El Amarna Letters* (Berlin: 1896).

[2] Lawrence Kushner, *The Book of Words: Talking Spiritual Life, Living Spiritual Talk.* (Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1993) pg. 56.

[3] Will Herberg, *Judaism and Modern Man* (New York: Meridian Books, 1959), pg. 96.

[4] Exodus 20:1 - 6

[5] TB *Sanhedrin* 61b

[6] *Devarim Rabba* II. 18, quoted in Lawrence Kushner, *The Book of Words: Talking Spiritual Life, Living Spiritual Talk*, pg. 56.

[7] cf. Deuteronomy 31:16; Jeremiah 11:10

[8] cf. Judges 2:11; 3:7; 8:33; 10:10; I Samuel 12:10

[9] Confirmed by archeological finds in the old city of Jerusalem. Artifacts housed in the Wohl Museum, Jerusalem.

[10] These include Maach, Jezebel, and her daughter, Athaliah.

[11] cf. Exodus 32:1 - 8; I Kings 12: 28; II Kings 10:29; Psalm 106:13ff.

[12] Kenneth Seeskin, *No Other Gods: The Modern Struggle Against Idolatry* (New Jersey: Behrman House, 1995), pgs. 17 - 18.

[13] Deuteronomy 4:15 (Horeb is the term the E and D biblical authors used for Mount Sinai.)

[14] Zali Gurevits, "Never in Place: Eliade and Judaic Sacred Space" (*Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions*, no. 39, July - Sept. 1994), pg. 139.

[15] Sigmond Freud, *Moses and Monotheism* (Katherine Jones, trans. New York: Random House, 1938), pg. 56.

[16] Psalms 99:5; 132:7; I Chronicles 28:2

[17] cf. Numbers 10:35 - 36; Samuel 4:6 - 7

[18] cf. Exodus 33:9

[19] cf. *Tosephta Megilla* 4:21

[20] cf. Exodus 3:1 - 12

[21] Deuteronomy 12:5

[22] Deuteronomy 12:11

[23] Lawrence Kushner, *The Book of Words: Talking Spiritual Life, Living Spiritual Talk*, pg. 11.

[24] Richard Siegal, Michael and Sharon Strassfeld, *The Jewish Catalogue* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973), pg. 186.

[25] Genesis 1:27

[26] Genesis 6:9

[27] Exodus 33:11

[28] Exodus 24:10

[29] cf. Joseph Guttman, *Sacred Images: Studies in Jewish Art from Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (Great Britain: Variorum Reprints, 1989), pg. 162.

[30] Abraham Joshua Heschel , *I Asked For Wonder: A Spiritual Anthology* (Samuel H. Dresner, ed. New York: Crossroad, 1984), pg. 104 - 105.

[31] Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1976), pg. 289.

[32] Gutmann, Joseph, *Sacred Images: Studies in Jewish Art from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, pg. 161.

[33] cf. Exodus 20:3-6; 22-23; Leviticus 19:4; 26:1; Deuteronomy 5:7-10; 27:15

[34] Hosea 13:2; 14:4; Deuteronomy 4:28; 31:29

[35] Leviticus 26: 1

[36] embroidered *cherubim* in Tabernacle: cf. Exodus 26:31; 36:35; embroidered *cherubim* in Temple: cf. 2 Chronicles 3:14

[37] golden *cherubim* in Tabernacle: cf. Exodus 25:18-22; 37:7-9; golden *cherubim* in Temple: cf. 1 Kings 6:23-28; 8:6-7; 2 Chronicles 3:10-13

[38] TB *Berakot* 43b

[39]U. Sassuto, *Perush al Sefer Shemot*, (1952), pg. 285. Cited in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, (1972 ed., s. v. "Idolatry") vol. 8, pg. 1229.

[40] a reference to the mythic creature emerging from the great northern cloud which was said to have four faces: that of a man, lion, eagle, and an ox, (cf. Ezekiel 1:10).

[41] TB *Avodah Zarah* 43a, also see TB *Rosh Hashanna* 24b

[42] Ernest Namenyi, *The Essence of Jewish Art* (Edouard Roditi, trans. London: Thomas Yoseloff, 1960), pg. 22.

[43]see Avi-Yonah, Michael. "Synagogue Architecture in the Classical Period" (Cecil Roth, ed., *Jewish Art: An Illustrated History*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1961), pg. 186.

[44] see *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1972 ed., s. v. "Idolatry"), vol. 8, pg. 1231.

[45] Exodus 15:2

[46] Ernest Namenyi, *The Essence of Jewish Art*, pg. 22.

5. *The Synagogue*

AN EXPRESSION OF SACRED JEWISH PLACE

Sacred Jewish place is defined as those places set aside for communal worship, religious education and fellowship, and the enactment of cultural ideals. The definition is necessarily broad, as Judaism aims to turn every action into a communion with God. Any place where the Jew strives to speak to God, learn from the traditions of our People, or to bring to life words of *Torah* is considered -- in those particular moments -- to be sacred. The clearing in the woods that becomes the setting for *Shabbat* meditation, the Jewish home in which ancient traditions are rekindled and passed from one generation to the next, the *huppah* under which bride and groom promise loving commitment one to another, and the *sukkah* built to be

Medzhibozh, the Baal Shem Tov's simple mid-eighteenth century one-room synagogue and house of study is an example of a place hallowed by use. Source: Carol Herselle Krinsky, *Synagogues of Europe: Architecture, History, Meaning*, pg. 14.

vulnerable to both God and curious neighbor are all sanctified by use and through action. All are examples of sacred Jewish place and should be acknowledged as such by architect and user.

Still, when we speak about sacred Jewish place, our thoughts rightfully turn to the synagogue. Since the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in the first century, the synagogue has become the most significant sacred Jewish architecture and the primary model of sacred Jewish place. Unlike the Jewish home, the synagogue is a public architecture dedicated for community use. It is a sanctuary that is -- or should be -- open to every member of the Jewish People. A Greek inscription in Jerusalem in the first century BCE records a declaration of Theodotus, priest and head of the synagogue. The record proudly states that his community built a synagogue "for the purposes of reciting the *Torah* and studying the commandments, and as a hotel with chambers and water installations to provide for the needs of itinerants from abroad..."[1] Unlike random places of worship and learning endowed with temporary moments of holiness, the synagogue is consecrated with permanent sanctity. It is a place set aside as a house of worship, learning, and fellowship: hence its three-fold identity as *Bet haTefilah*, *Bet haMidrash*, and *Bet haKenesset*. The synagogue has also been called a *"mikdash me'at"*, a miniature model of the Temple in Jerusalem, because it has replaced the Temple as the religious, cultural, and spiritual center for Jewish communal life.[2]

This lithograph of the interior of "Santa Maria la Blanca" built in Toledo in the thirteenth century shows a group of travelers taking refuge in a corner of the synagogue. Source: Carol Herselle Krinsky, *Synagogues of Europe: Architecture, History, Meaning*, pg. 14.

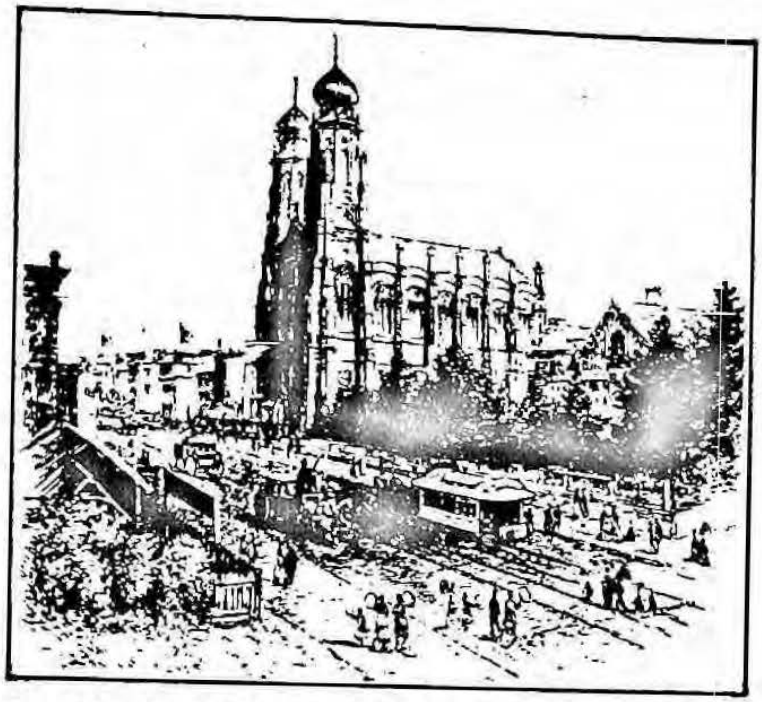
The *sukkah* in which we dwell for a week each autumn is an architecture of memory. It is a structure that harkens back to a time of dependence when God provided for the physical needs of the Israelites. It is an architecture of memory, an architecture of the past. Ezekiel's vision of the rebuilt Temple is a symbol of redemption.[3] It is an architecture of hope, an architecture of the future. The design and building of the synagogue represent a continuation of Creation. It is an architecture that facilitates religious action and continuing revelation. The synagogue is an architecture of the present. At the Union of American Hebrew Congregation's Biennial Convention in 1997, Rabbi Eric Yoffe reflected on the importance of the synagogue. He asserted that:

> The synagogue is the best and only hope for North American Jewry. When we enter the synagogue, we are transported back to biblical times and forward to a messianic future...The synagogue has become our sacred space, our fragment of Jerusalem, our spiritual home.[4]

Rabbi Yoffee continued, articulating a dream that "every Reform synagogue will become a fortress of holiness and a beacon of *Torah*." Yoffee is not the first to point to the central role of the synagogue. Isaiah prophesied that the synagogue "shall be called a house of prayer of all people."[5] In 1918, on the seventy-fifth anniversary of Temple Ohabei Shalom in Boston, the words written by Rabbi Abraham Daniels endure as a powerful subscript in the evolving story of how Jewish communities seek to find expression in stone for the timeless ideals of a four-thousand year tradition:

> Years rolled on; increasing members
> Prayed for heavenly help to build
> The Lord is ever with His servants
> Who fulfill His holy will.
> Each successive generation
> Has its synagogue outgrown,
> Each aspired to place the Torah,
> Upon a more exalted throne.[6]

This expression reflects how Jewish communities in each generation seek to design and build synagogues which respond to their communal needs and also endure as a record of how their generation envisioned their place in Jewish history.



In 1866, the Jewish community of San Francisco commissioned architect William Patton to design Temple Emanuel. The synagogue's towers, topped with golden globes, along with its grand facade are expressions of the Oriental Revival, and a record of a fascination with the Far East. Source: Rachel Wischnitzer, *Synagogue Architecture in the United States: History and Interpretation*, pg. 68.

ORIGINS AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT

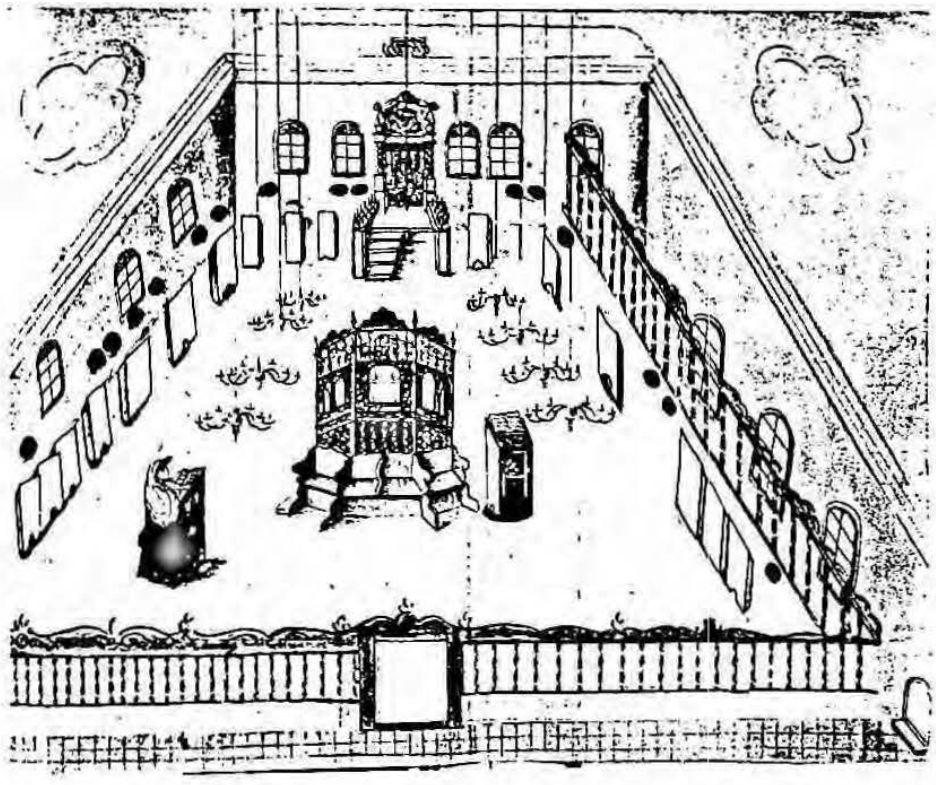
In the Tabernacle's Holy of Holies, the Deity's imageless presence resided and rested on the Ark of the Covenent. When Solomon's Temple was built in Jerusalem, the presence of God was transferred to the Holy of Holies in the Temple, a permanent room centered over the mythic foundation stone of the universe. The Tabernacle and Temple functioned as the singular sanctified site of sacrificial worship. Each was considered the *"Makom haShechenah,"* the place in which God's presence dwelled. The innovation of the synagogue as a place of worship separate from the sanctified central

worship site occurred gradually over time. During the days in the wilderness, the entire tribe encamped adjacent to the Tabernacle. Virtually all worship was conducted within its walls. When the Israelites arrived in Canaan, the tribes settled in distinct areas, spreading out so to facilitate agriculture and the raising of livestock. For many of the tribes, the Tabernacle was no longer convenient as a place of sacrificial worship. During this period, the sacrificial cult continued to function in the Tabernacle. In addition, sacrifices were offered *in "Heter Bamot,"* private sanctuaries which were built in response to the new geographical reality.[7] While *Heter Bamot* may be considered as the precursor to the first synagogues, with the erection of the Temple, worship was further centralized and the private sanctuaries were banned.

As the nation continued to grow, the problem of access to the religious center and site of sacrificial worship intensified. Communities solved this problem in two ways: First, by sending representatives, *"mishmarot,"* to Jerusalem to conduct the Temple service and represent their district before God. And second, by establishing a *"bet am,"*[8] a house of the people, which served as a place for prayer and communion in their district. The early names for the synagogue reflect the unique role which they played. The word, "synagogue" comes from the Greek, *"synago,"* meaning "to congregate, or gather." A Greek inscription over a synagogue built in the third century BCE calls it a *"proseuche,"* a "prayer place." Other terms that Greek-speaking Jews used to refer to their synagogues included: *"semneion,"* meaning "sanctuary;" *"didaskaleion,"* meaning "place of instruction;" and

"sabbateion," meaning "Sabbath place."[9]

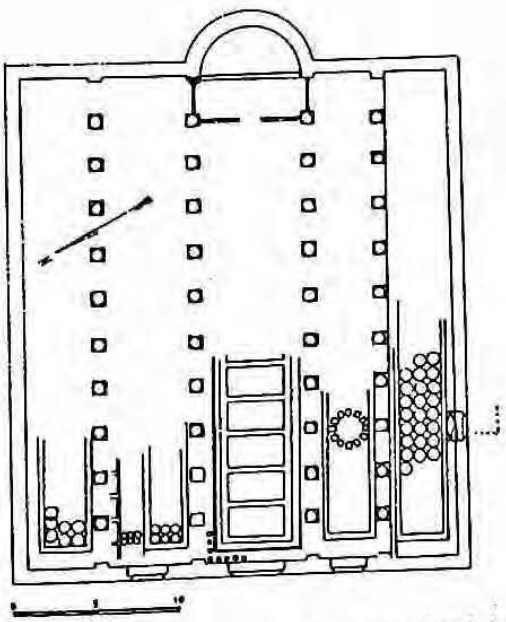
In 586 BCE, when the Temple was destroyed by the armies of Nebuchadnezzer, the Jews were dispersed into Babylonian exile and synagogues spread through the Persian Empire and the Hellenistic kingdoms. Because the sacrificial cult was prohibited outside the Temple, sacrificial worship was replaced by prayer in the synagogues of the Diaspora. Just five decades later, the Babylonian Empire was conquered by Cyrus the Great of Persia. Judea became a part of the Persian Empire and



This drawing of the synagogue in Endingen, Switzerland emphasizes the architectural elements central to Jewish worship: the *aron hakodesh*, *bimah*, and individual reading tables. Note the detail of the open prayer books on the reading tables. Drawn by Johann Caspar Ulrich, 1754.
Source: Carole Herselle Krinsky, *Synagogues of Europe: Architecture, History, Meaning,* pg. 281.

some 40,000 Jews returned to Jerusalem. The Temple was rebuilt and the sacrificial cult was restored. But the ritual service of the synagogue had penetrated the hearts of the Jewish People. The synagogues of Israel were rededicated beside the Temple. By the time that the Second Temple fell, there were approximately one hundred synagogues in Israel.

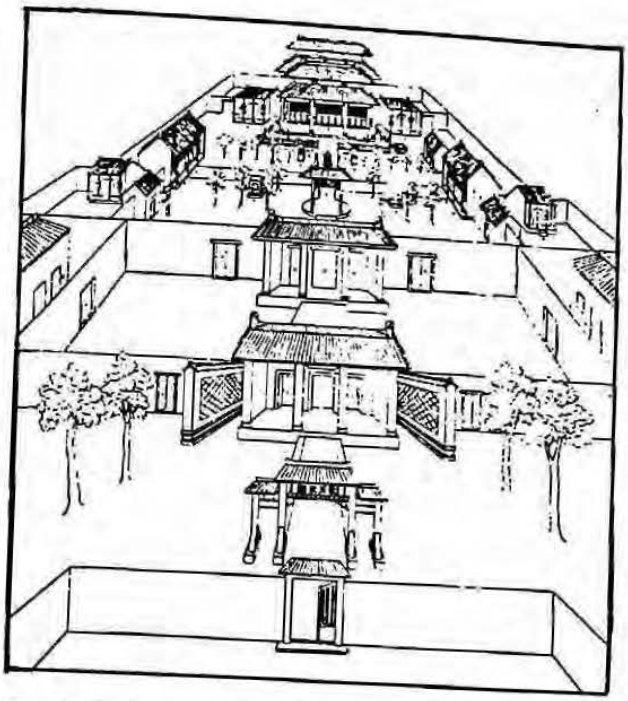
The earliest examples of the synagogue were adaptations of the Greek basilica[10] and broadhouse[11] plans. They were simple, one-room buildings. Many were so non-descript that archeological identification was difficult and sometimes impossible. Martin Jaffee points out that the "diversity of synagogue function may explain why neither the Temple nor the Greco-Roman temple plans provided architectural models for synagogue builders."[12]

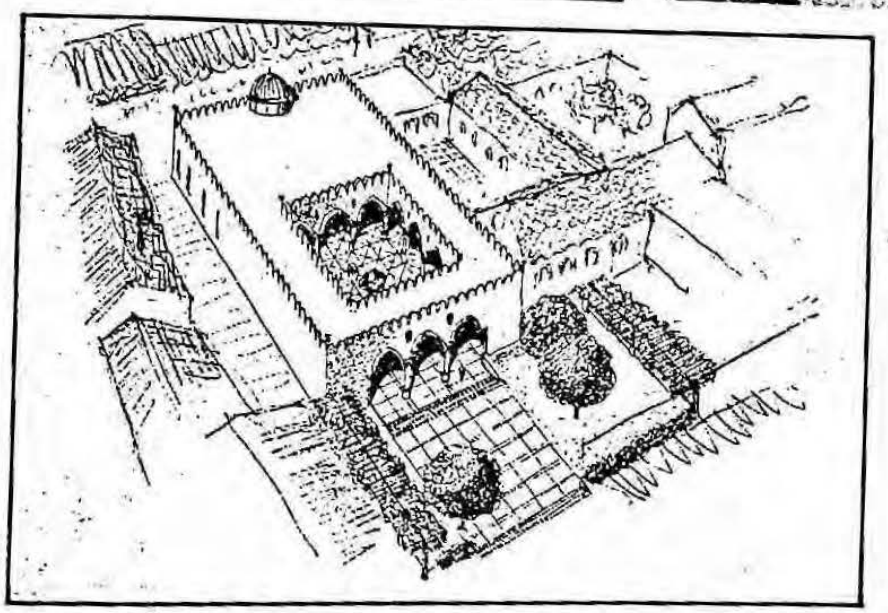


The basilica plan is characterized by a rectangular plan divided by rows of columns. The entrance is on one of the short walls; the focus of worship is on the other. In this example, an apse is placed on the front wall. Source: Israel Exploration Society, Jerusalem. Reproduced in: Martin Jaffee, *Early Judaism*, pg. 180.

The architectural programs of the early synagogues were straight forward. From the exterior, the synagogue resembled the institutional vernacular styles of their Greco-Roman neighbors. Their interiors were simple, as focus was placed on prayer and contemplation of the Law.

Art was incorporated into the synagogue's interior from the beginning. Amulets thought to bring good fortune and ward off evil were drawn on the walls, as were biblical scenes, religious symbols, and charts of the zodiac. The earliest synagogues were decorated with sculptural relief, though by the sixth century CE most of these works were replaced with frescos and mosaics. Structural support was typically provided by two rows of columns which formed a colonnade on each side of the interior. In some examples, a third row of columns ran parallel to the front facade. The earliest synagogues were usually single-room buildings which were almost square in plan. Some synagogue designs included stone ledges built into the building's interior walls. These served as seats for worshipers, perhaps for elders or distinguished members. Many synagogues also incorporated an elaborately ornamented Seat of Moses into the architectural design, recalling the symbolic presence of the patriarch. The earliest synagogues did not have a built-in ark, causing archeologists to speculate that early arks were moveable wooden shrines inspired by the Ark of the Covenant.
The courtyard is perhaps one of the synagogue's earliest programmatic features. Even modest synagogue buildings had at least a porch adjacent to the building's entrance. In the courtyard, the synagogue's congregants gathered to transact business or to share the news of the community. The





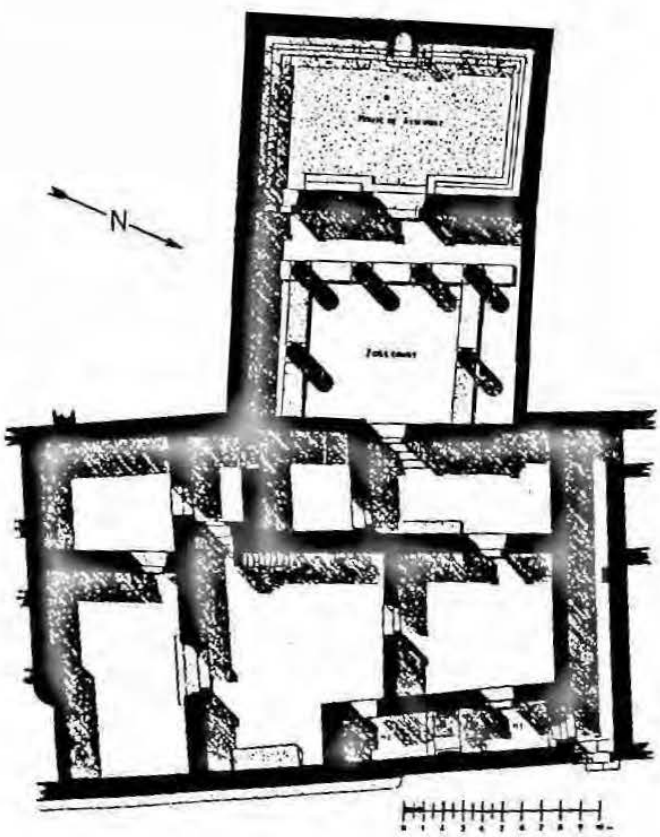
Three examples of courtyards integrated into synagogue design. Above left, a perspective drawing showing the succession of courtyards at the synagogue at Kai-Feng-Fu, China. Above right, the synagogue in Aleppo, Syria is designed for outdoor worship. The raised structure on the right is a covered *bimah*. Below, an idealized reconstruction of the thirteenth century synagogue at Palermo. Source: Above: Cecil Roth, *Jewish Art: An Illustrated History*, col. 299. Below: Drawing by David Cassuto in *Ariel, The Israel Review of Arts and Letters*, no. 105, pg. 38.

synagogue courtyard was reminiscent of the succession of courtyards which were built around Herod's Temple. The Talmud may have inspired the popularity of the synagogue courtyard by referring to the practice of establishing separate places to worship in the summer and the winter.[13]

Starting with the earliest examples, synagogues were oriented toward the Temple in Jerusalem. Beginning in the sixth century CE, the synagogue's front wall where the Ark is sited faced Jerusalem, so that the worshipper facing the ark would also face the direction of the Temple. Prior to this, synagogues acknowledged Jerusalem by siting the building's front facade toward the Holy City.[14] Some scholars speculate that worshippers may have turned around and faced in the direction of Jerusalem and the rear of the sanctuary during the portions of liturgy which acknowledged the Temple. Unlike early Christian basilicas, the synagogues of the Greco-Roman period had no apse to hold the physical presence of God. The absence of this feature was perhaps the most significant theological statement of early synagogue architecture, demonstrating the Hebraic view of an imageless God that resides outside of space.[15]

Though the earliest synagogues were simple, one-room buildings, these examples provided inspiration for an architectural model for the emerging central institution of Jewish community life. As Jewish communities grew in scope and number, synagogues expanded to meet the evolving communal needs. Rooms were added for study and to house visitors and the poor. One of the earliest examples, the synagogue at Dura Europas in present-day

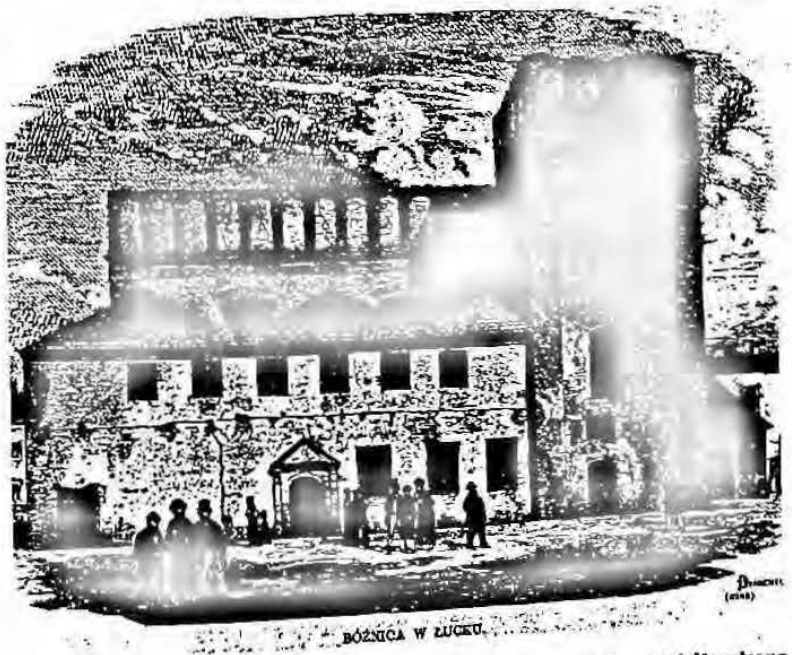
Syria, was expanded to include a school room, a raised reader's platform, and a niche to house the ark.[16] The architecture of the early synagogue represented a revolutionary departure from the hierarchical model of the Temple. As the priestly cult no longer functioned, the hierarchy lost its meaning and sacred Jewish place became democratized. In the synagogue, the theological foundations represented by the Temple continued to be celebrated and Israel's commitment to Hebraic tradition was cast in stone.



This plan of the synagogue at Dura Europas shows a central courtyard dividing the worship space and an addition designed for a variety of communal and educational activities. The sanctuary (at the top of the drawing) is designed in the broadhouse plan. The entry and the focus of worship are on the long walls. Note the apse in the front wall, as well as built-in bench seating along the walls. Source: C. Kraeling, *The Excavations at Dura Europas, Vol. VIII: The Synagogue.* Reproduced in: Martin Jaffee, *Early Judaism,* pg. 181.

VERNACULAR INFLUENCES AND LIMITATIONS

The complexities of the Hebraic tradition, and contradictory rabbinic interpretations of the prohibition against fashioning graven images, make the fashioning of sacred Jewish space a difficult undertaking. Indeed, it would have been an interesting study for both theologian and historian, if there had been an attempt throughout history, to interpret these complex social and theological forces into architectural form. But no distinct Hebraic concept of built form, no Jewish architectural style emerged in history. The institution of the synagogue did not exist for more than a few hundred years before the Jewish commonwealth was destroyed and the Jewish people began an exile which lasted until the twentieth century. From the beginning, the architecture of Diaspora synagogues reflected the vernacular



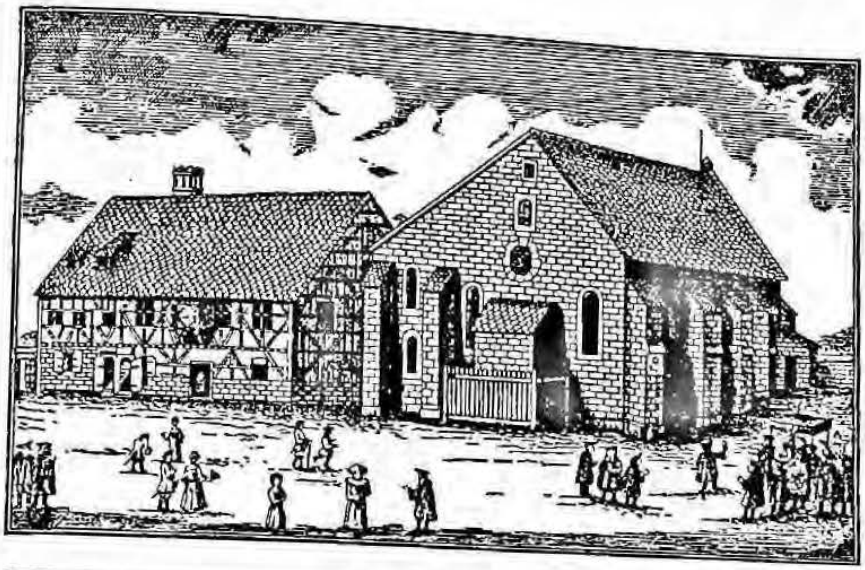
The external societal influences on Jewish architecture is evident in the Jewish school building in Lutsk, Poland built in 1626. The gun-loops around the building's perimeter as well as the maintenance of a garrison at the congregation's expense was a condition of the license to build.

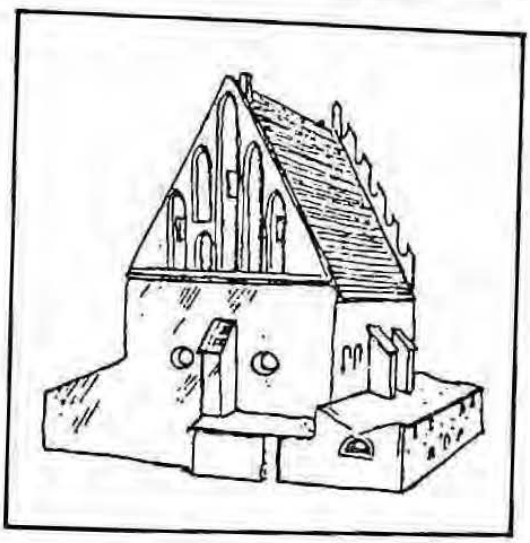
Source: H. A. Meek, *The Synagogue*, pg. 156.

building styles of the host culture. Much more than an interpretation of the religious life and theological understandings of Jewish communities, the historical development of the synagogue is a reflection of the political relationship between the Jewish community and the host culture that supported, and in many cases tolerated, their existence.[17]

Medieval synagogues borrowed their designs from secular town halls and refectories. These architectural models must have seemed more appropriate to the Jewish community/client that recognized the synagogue as a wholly different institution than the churches of their neighbors. After all, the synagogue played not only a religious function. It was a single institution, often a single room, which facilitated prayer, education, meeting, and business.[18] In many localities, synagogue design was more than anything else, a response to political restrictions and limitations. An example of this is the Altneuschul, the "old-new synagogue" in Prague, built at the end of the fourteenth century. The synagogue's architect solved the problem of strict building height restrictions which were placed on synagogues by locating the level of the floor several meters below grade.

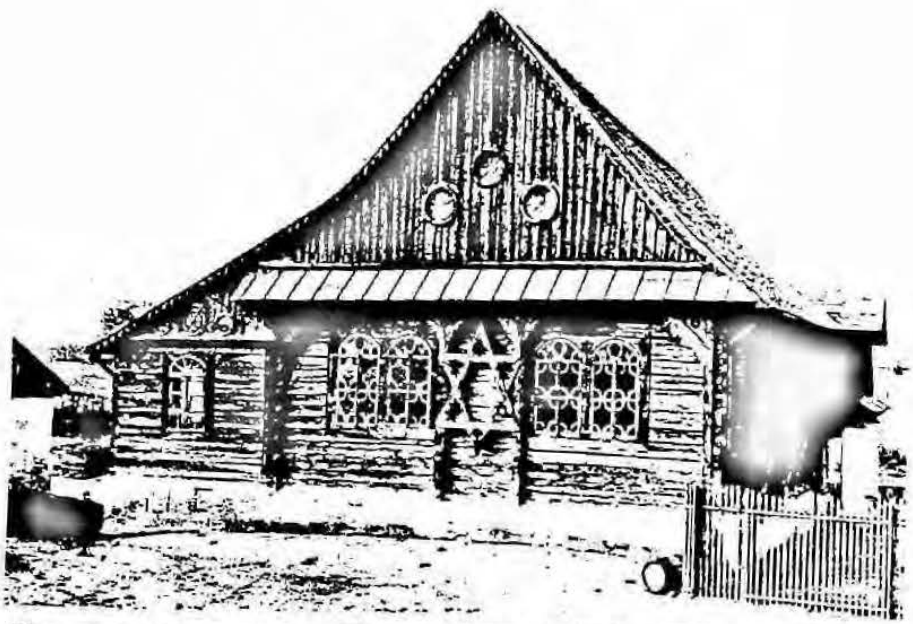
Even in places in which the architecture of the Jewish community was not restricted, the synagogue hardly broke from vernacular influence. In many cases persecution led to the continual uprooting of Jewish communities, demanding immediate relocation to locations with different physical and cultural realities. This lack of geographic stability, coupled with the rabbinic intolerance for the plastic arts, largely discouraged both architects





On the top, the synagogues in Furth near Nuremberg built in 1615-16 (on right) and 1697 (on left) were built in a style similar to the Christian buildings of the region. On the Bottom, the architect of the Altneuschul Synagogue in Prague responded to the height restrictions placed on Jewish architecture by locating the sanctuary's floor level below grade. Source: Top: Carole Herselle Krinsky, *Synagogues of Europe: Architecture, History, Meaning*, pg. 294. Bottom: Amiram Harlap, *Synagogues in Israel: From the Ancient to the Modern*, pg. 14.

and congregations from exploring the development of a unique architectural model specific to the function and the meaning of the synagogue. Some Diaspora communities preferred a synagogue that reflected the institutional vernacular. They wanted an architecture that presented the Jewish community as an integral part of the host culture and stressed the distinction between religion and nationality.



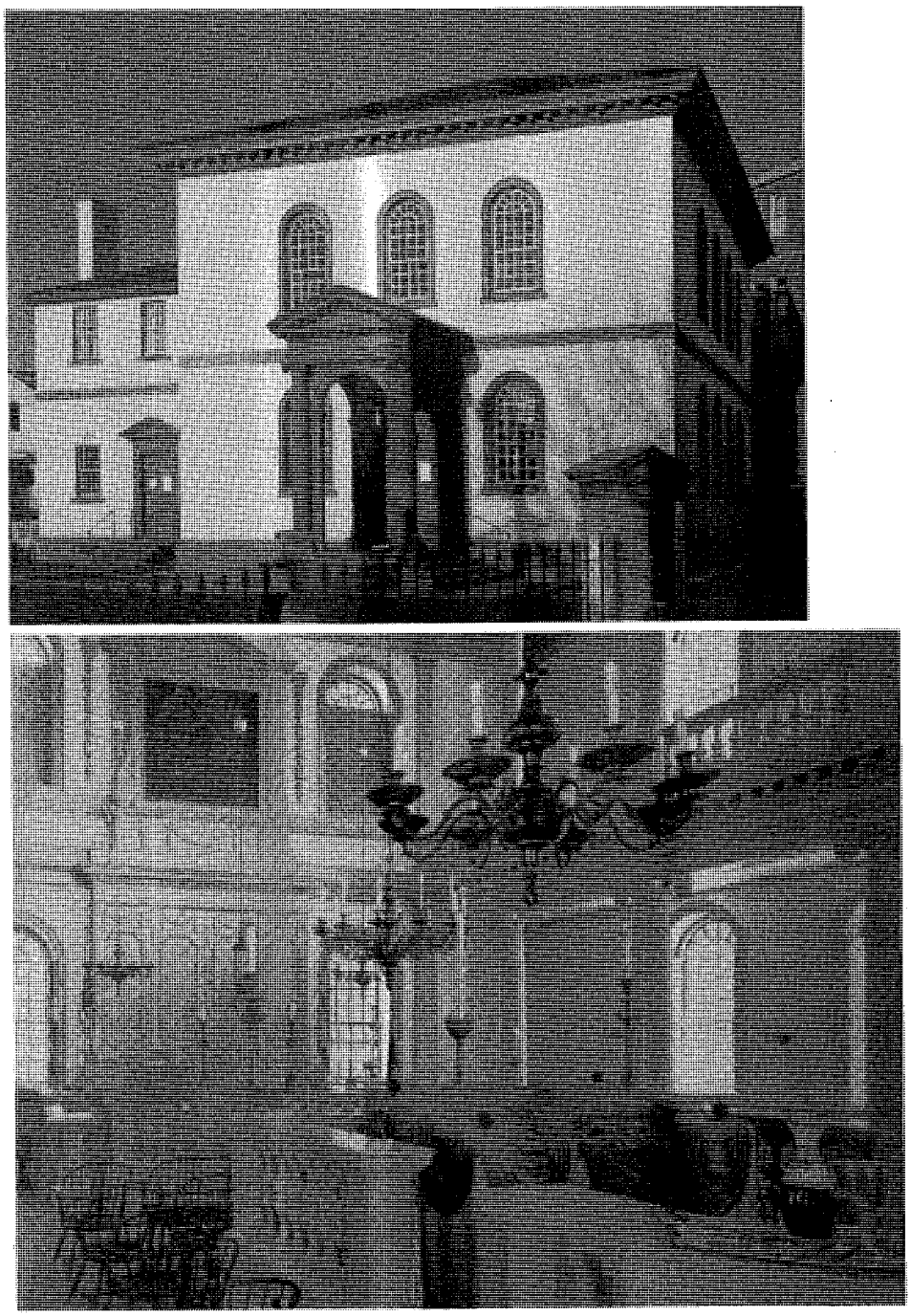
The synagogue at Przedborg, Poland built in 1760 reflects the style of vernacular Polish farmhouses. The building's elaborate fenestration and the large Jewish star on the front facade identify the building as a house of worship. Source: Abram Kahof, *Jewish Symbolic Art*, fig. 100

When Jews began to settle in America, in the seventeenth century, they found a degree of religious freedom that they had not known on the European continent. Adapting to their new landscape and political reality, American Jews might have taken this as an opportunity to explore an architectural model that reflected the heritage of Israel. Instead, these early American Jews chose to build in a way which celebrated their new national

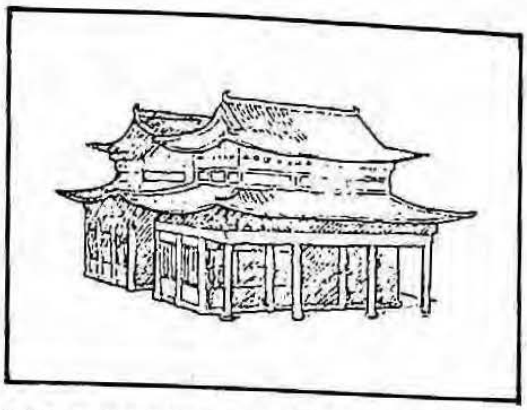
identity. The colonial Jews found inspiration from their present rather than their past, adopting the vernacular Georgian and Colonial American styles for the synagogues of the New World. As the new-found national pride brought Colonial and Georgian styles high regard, these variations of the National style remained in vogue for nearly a century. The National style was chosen for the Touro Synagogue, one of the earliest American synagogues, built in 1763 in Newport, Rhode Island. In 1827, when Bnai Jeshurun Congregation erected their fashionable synagogue in New York City, this was still the style of choice.

The vernacular influence upon synagogue seems to have been a global phenomenon. In 1163, the Jewish community of Kai-Feng-Fu, China chose the local pagoda style for their synagogue. The synagogue's adherence to the vernacular expression of its cultural setting was not so much a refusal to find artistic inspiration from Jewish heritage as it was an expression of the Jew's desire to feel rooted in their physical home. This position was explained by the words of Dutch painter, Isaac Israels at the beginning of the twentieth century:

> Every man is a product of both his present and of his past, which makes its influence made in the present. Holland, that is my present; I live it, I love it; but all things Jewish are my past, in which I have my roots, that great past to which I owe my allegiance. It is the two together which make me into a harmonious identity.[19]



The Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island was built in the National style expressing the Colonial Jewish community's desire to integrate into the emerging culture of the New World. Source: Neil Folberg, *And I Shall Dwell Among Them: Historic Synagogues of the World*, pgs. 92 and 93.



The synagogue at Kai-Feng-Fu, China was designed in the vernacular pagoda style. Source: Amiram Harlap, *Synagogues in Israel: From the Ancient to the Modern*, pg. 14.

EXPERIMENTATION WITH STYLE

In the middle of the nineteenth century, emancipation brought down the walls of the ghetto and the political and social restrictions which had greatly influenced the development of synagogue architecture. At last, a style reflecting the values and the heritage of the Jewish people might emerge in the emancipated interpretations of European synagogue architecture. European synagogue designs realized in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century reflected the new political reality and the open society in which Jewish communities found themselves. Synagogues were no longer designed to bend into the urban fabric, or to be hidden, half-buried in the earth of the ghetto. Synagogue architects celebrated the icons of Israel, painting the *Mogen David*, the six-pointed Jewish star, on stained-glass facade and fashioning menorah-shaped grounds lighting. Still, a formal solution reflecting the unique architectural requirements of the synagogue -- a uniquely Hebraic concept of form -- was not yet born. For with the political and social advances of emancipation came the stylistic

retreat into romantic notions of historicism. As politician, economist, and philosopher looked toward the future, artist, poet, and architect found comfort in the past. They drafted manifestos calling for a return to a "great golden age" to which perfect and enduring beauty was attributed. While the return to High Gothic style was reserved, with some exceptions, for the architecture of the church, synagogues freely adopted the other styles of the Historical Movement, fashioning designs in the Byzantine, Classical, Moorish, and Venetian Gothic traditions.[20] The search for a style to befit the synagogue quickly spread to America, and is typified by the work of the

The synagogue in Florence, Italy built in 1874-1880 by Italian architects Mariano Falcini, Vincente Micheli, and Marco Treves was designed in the Moorish style and incorporated Islamic influences. Source: Photograph by James Brandt

renowned late nineteenth century architect, Arnold Brenner. His commissions were subject to the baseless stylistic preferences of his congregation/clients. He built synagogues in the styles of the Romanesque,[21] Roman Revival,[22] Greek Revival,[23] and the Neo-Baroque.[24]

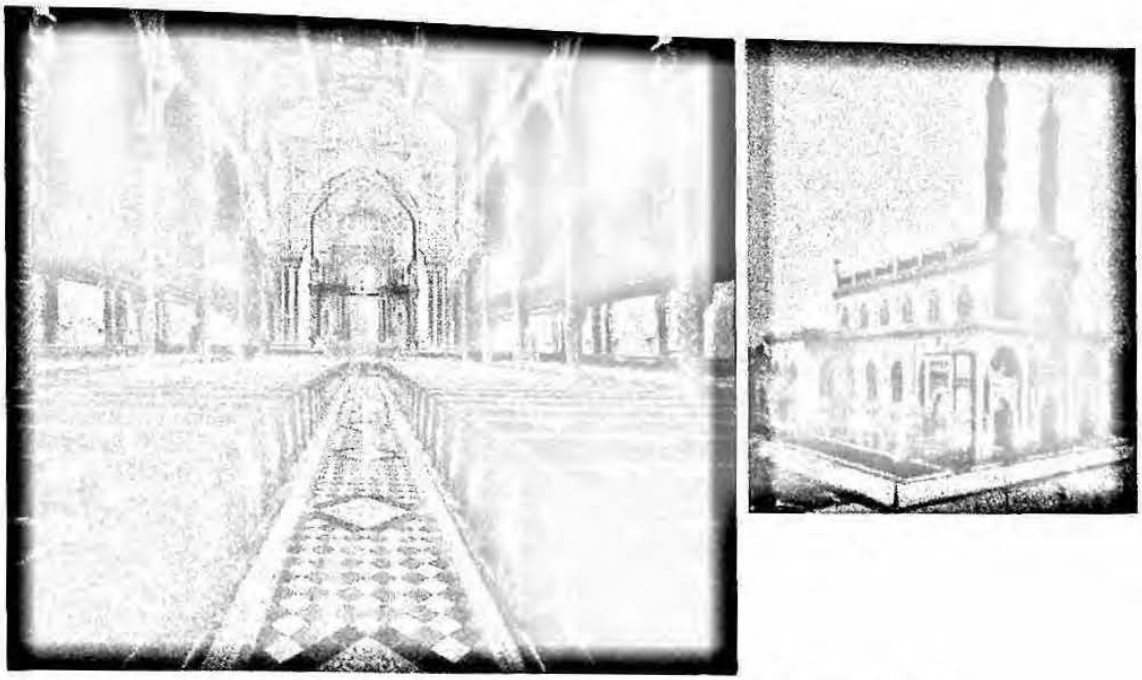
When archeologists digging in the Galilee un-earthed synagogues built in the Greco-Roman style, the American synagogue architect's short attention span turned from one holy land to another. Hellenism replaced American Nationalism. The Ionic and the Doric became the orders of the day and were added to the list of accepted styles for synagogue architecture. Rockdale Avenue Temple, built in Cincinnati in 1836, and Beth Elohim, built in Charleston in 1840, lead the movement as the first Classical Revival synagogues. Sinai Temple in Chicago, Adas Israel in St. Louis, and a host of smaller congregations scattered across the American south, provided early twentieth century examples of Classical expression.

Other American synagogue architects found their inspiration from the eastern influences of Islamic architecture. Though an oddity for many a historian, this affinity is often explained as an attempt to find a wholly un-Christian style for the American synagogue. In 1866, Isaac Wise erected his Plum Street Synagogue, reflecting the grand splendor of the Byzantine-Moorish tradition with thirteen domes and two tall, slender minarets piercing Cincinnati's urban skyline. In 1929, Temple Emanuel in New York City dedicated a four million dollar Jewish cathedral with a monolithic facade and detailing, reflecting the architecture of the early Italian

Romanesque. The addition of these two buildings to the American urban landscape further established nineteenth and early twentieth century synagogue architecture as an eclectic mix of styles. The stylistic experimentation of the late Historic period which spanned from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century, should be evaluated within its greater cultural and artistic context. Still, in *"An American Synagogue for Today and Tomorrow,"* the Reform movement's guide book for synagogue design and construction written in 1954, Rabbi Peter Blake viewed the random application of style to a synagogue to be wholly inappropriate:

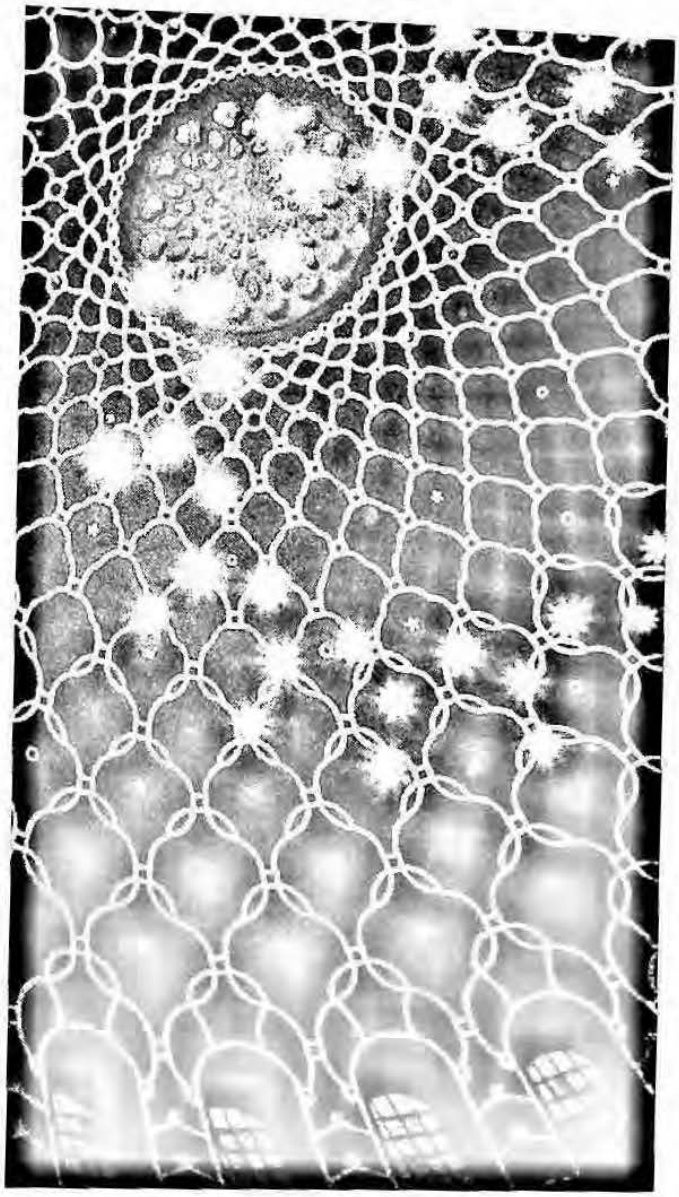
> A minaret on a synagogue is no less incongruous an appendage than a belfry. Both are functionally out of place. And the synagogue having the appearance of a Moorish mosque is no more appropriate than one that looks like a Greek temple. Architecture must somehow express the spirit: It must be the embodiment of an idea as well as the outgrowth of a function.[25]

Though there is not a unified stylistic direction in American synagogues designed during the Historic period, a study of the floor plans of these synagogues reflects a trend that is unique to synagogue design. Throughout the period there is an increasing preference for the domed roof and the rotund, square interior space which finds its architectural inspiration from Palladio's Villa Rotunda, built in 1566 in Vincenza. In many examples, synagogue domes were painted as an imagined sky; sometimes, even dotted with constellations. The dome represented unity between heaven and earth and the gathering of Creation. The square plan was a deliberate departure from the cruciform plan. In contrast to a long hall of pews, the dome



Cincinnati's Plum Street Synagogue was designed for Congregation B'nai Jeshrum by architect James Key Wilson. While the building's mass was an expression of Gothic architecture, its details were taken from the pattern books of the Moorish style. Such seemingly random stylistic applications for the architecture of the synagogue has been termed to be "meshugothic." by Modern historians. Source: H. A. Meek, *The Synagogue*, pgs. 194 and 195.

brought the entire congregation together in a single, unified place. The plan resulted in a return to the approximate proportions of the ancient synagogues built according to the basilica plan and an expression of democratized space, perhaps a spatial interpretation of this cornerstone of Judaic thought.

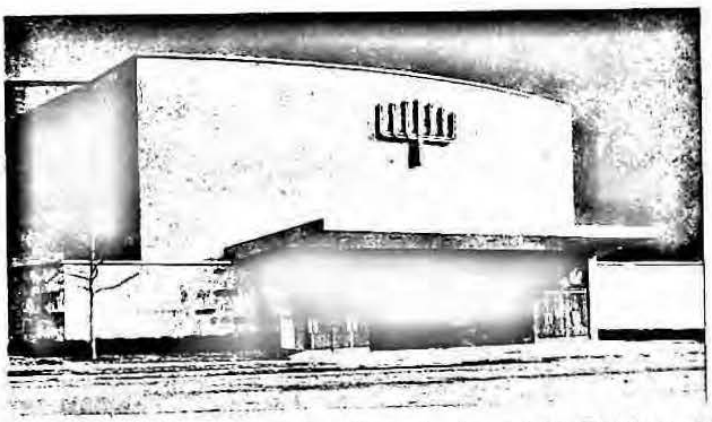


The lights that dot the dome of the synagogue in Augsburg, Germany are reminiscent of the stars in a clear night's sky. Source: Neil Folberg, *And I Shall Dwell Among Them: Historic Synagogues of the World*, pg. 121.

THE MODERN SYNAGOGUE IN AMERICA

Even before the turn of the twentieth century, the aesthetic of the industrial revolution began to seep into the minds and hearts of American architects. The utilitarian principles that began on the factory floor became a new vision that celebrated purpose and disdained excess. For the Modernist, the

building -- and even the city -- was nothing more than a machine that supported the life and the lifestyles of their inhabitants. The Modern aesthetic which striped off all "unnecessary" decoration was well suited to the large-scale industrial projects demanded by an increasingly industrialized society. In short time, factories became as streamlined as the products that were produced on their assembly lines. In the urban core of American cities, skyscrapers shot to the edge of the skyline. The new construction materials that made Modernism possible -- forged steel, sheet glass, concrete, and glass block -- were celebrated by the new aesthetic.



The sanctuary added to Temple Israel in Dayton, Ohio in 1953 is an example of a Modern facade stripped of unnecessary decoration. In contrast to the buildings stark front, the large *menorah* serves as an emblematic icon. Source: Photograph from Temple Israel's Dedication Booklet.

In the eyes of the Modernist, the styles of Historicism were archaic and meaningless. As second-rate copies of styles of another day, they were, at best, archeological reconstructions that did not respond to the demands of the present age. Erich Mendelsohn (1887 - 1953), one of the greatest of the Modern architects, described Modernism as "a change from the position of

the past when the architectural expression which an architecturally uncreative century borrowed from past history."[26] Mendelsohn espoused a new position in which form followed the demands of function and decorations were stripped from interior and facade. By the 1920's, the new aesthetic born in the designs of factory, department store, and skyscraper was applied to the synagogue. In Baltimore's Congregation Oheb Shalom, architect Walter Gropius (1883 - 1969) merged the forms of turbine and *Torah*, bringing together the sacred symbols of Judaism and Modernism.[27] Searching for fresh interpretations for the synagogue, the Modernists rejected the Historical movement as a misguided "attempt to express Jewish ideals in foreign terms."[28] The synagogues which were designed in the historic styles of disconnected ages and cultures were termed by some modernists to be related to nothing and belonging to a style all their own: "the Meshugothic." For the Modernist, Historicism did not reflect either the essence or the values of Judaism. The movement's philosophers theorized that the emancipated Jewish communities copied from the architectural models of history because there was no style to maintain, and insufficient creativity to bring forth a new style that was truly "Jewish."[29]

The era following World War II brought sweeping changes to the American synagogue. While the Modern movement heralded a fresh, functional aesthetic and architectural forms born out of function and necessity, the programmatic needs of the American synagogue changed significantly from those of just decades before. As American Jews moved in great numbers to the suburbs, they required conveniently located synagogues that would fulfill

the needs of their changing lifestyles. As Modernism revised the facade of the synagogue, suburbanization altered the congregation's architectural program.

While noteworthy examples can be found, the pre-war synagogues were largely based on a standard program and a single arrangement of space. Though the synagogue addressed the educational and social needs of the congregation, the primary function of the synagogue was perceived as prayerful worship: to provide a space to "bring God into His holy Temple." Toward this end, the sanctuary was the singular most important place in the building. The rooms reserved for other functions were given little, if any, formal consideration. The pre- World War II synagogue had been largely an urban phenomenon. The facade that faced the street was designed to present an impressive public front to the city. If space was available and affordable, the synagogue was set back from the street to allow for a courtyard, a programmatic feature that added presence and dignity to the building's facade and was reminiscent of the courtyards of the Temple in Jerusalem. The sanctuary occupied virtually the entire main floor of the synagogue which was typically a half-level above the street. In traditional congregations, the narrow lobby at the building's front housed stairways that carried women members to the balcony seating that was reserved for their use. The balcony, or women's gallery, became such a standard feature of synagogue architecture that even Reform congregations that abolished separate seating for men and women retained the balcony as an architectural feature.

The above-grade sanctuary afforded a second level below street grade. The main room on this level was called the vestry. It was here that the other functions of the congregation took place. Receptions, business meetings, education, and sometimes even daily prayer, were conducted in the vestry. Often times, religious education was held in a separate building, adjacent or not far from the synagogue. When this luxury was not possible, the vestry might be divided into classrooms. Because most of the congregational business was handled by members of the congregation, little or no office space was included in the synagogue. Business meetings, when not held on a table in the vestry, spilled into member's homes or the halls of their social clubs. Though the vestry was de-emphasized by both its basement location and a lack of ornament and aesthetic consideration, its role in congregational life was considerable and increased over the years.

In suburbia, American Jews were confronted with professional and recreational activities which placed new demands on their time. As the American landscape spread out, additional time was spent simply getting from place to place. Suburbia offered the possibility for country club membership, athletic leagues for the children, garden clubs, and new opportunities for social engagement. In addition, large numbers of Jews, who had moved from ethnic urban neighborhoods, found themselves living among non-Jews for the first time. All these factors had a considerable impact on the nature of Jewish life, and thus upon the architectural programs which guided the building of the post-World War II, suburban synagogue. The synagogue's role as social center became more important.

Because Jews no longer were surrounded by other Jews, they sought out synagogue programs that would bring them together with their co-religionists. The synagogue brotherhood and sisterhood emerged as important social activities. Religious schools continued to teach Jewish history and the Hebrew language. In addition, the religious school became the place for Jewish children to experience Judaism and to meet Jewish children their own age. Architecturally, these changes necessitated meeting-rooms, lounges, industrial kitchens, large, well-appointed social halls, and religious school wings that reflected the expanded role of the school. As the scope of the synagogue widened, the administrative functions of the congregation were professionalized. Congregations hired administrative personnel to see to the daily running of the synagogue. Large, centralized offices were added to the synagogue's architectural program. In addition to religious leader, teacher, and advisor, the rabbi became the manager of the synagogue's professional staff. This new role was expressed in the post-war synagogue by large, well appointed rabbinic offices, expressions of professionalism and status.

The suburban synagogue no longer had a public facade that addressed the city street. In many cases, these new centers of Jewish life were set back a considerable distance from the closest street. Sometimes the view of the synagogue's facade was obscured by trees or other features in the landscape. Instead of the city street, the suburban synagogue faced a large, paved parking lot necessitated by the automobiles which carried families to synagogue programs and religious school. For the Modern architect, the site

conditions of the suburbs could not have been better. The large undeveloped sites meant that the architecture of the synagogue did not have to respond to the strict restrictions associated with the urban site. The automobile-filled parking lot served as a fitting backdrop for the machine-inspired aesthetic of the day. Centered on cleared and graded sites, the Modern suburban synagogue often appeared like a space ships from other worlds that had touched down on asphalt landing pads.

The architects of the Modern movement largely succeeded in designing synagogues that responded to the needs of their congregation-clients. They broke the habit of employing decorative application without meaning or context. Still, the architectural solutions of the Modern movement reflected function alone. An attempt to rediscover a tradition of form-making that grew from Jewish experience and the Hebraic artistic consciousness was conspicuously absent. The modern synagogues did not look to Jewish history for inspiration, nor did it look to its surroundings. A popular criticism of the buildings of the Modern movement is that they did not relate to their environment. In the Modern synagogue this short-coming was exacerbated, the result was a religious architecture that did not acknowledge the sanctity of Creation.

The design innovation most particular to the modern, suburban synagogue is the expandable sanctuary. First used by architect Cecil Moore in Tucson, Arizona in 1945,[30] this feature responded to the conflicting needs of sparse *Shabbat* and widespread High Holy Day attendance. Rather than design a

large sanctuary which would sit unused or virtually empty for most of the year, Moore found a practical, wholly modern solution: A single sanctuary that could be expanded and contracted to respond to the needs of the season. The idea was popularized by architect, Eric Mendelsohn, who facilitated sanctuary expansion by linking the sanctuary with the synagogue's social hall and placing a retractable wall between the spaces. Mendelsohn saw the link of social hall and sanctuary as a functional solution and as an architectural expression of Judaism as a both a religion and a "way of life."[31] The expandable sanctuary and adjacent social hall have characterized the spatial arrangement of synagogues for over five decades and have taken on many forms and variations. Both Congregation Sinai, built in the late 1960's on Los Angeles' fashionable Wilshire corridor and the recently dedicated Congregation Micah in Nashville, Tennessee, designed by architect Michael Landau, combine sanctuary and social hall through the use of mechanized walls that raise into the ceiling. A variation of the strategy that combines space for High Holy Day observance is to surround the sanctuary with classrooms. This solution was employed at Congregation Olam Tivah, in Fairfield, Virginia (built in 1972), and Congregation Kerem Shalom, in Concord, Massachusetts (built in 1994). On the High Holy Days in both synagogues, the adjoining walls swing open and classroom furnishings are replaced with sanctuary seating. If the fenestration in adjoining walls is handled correctly, an added feature of this solution is that classroom learning happens with a view of the *Torah* scrolls deposited in the sanctuary's ark.

At Congregation Micah in Nashville, Tennessee the panels on the sanctuary's rear wall lift up to incorporate the social hall into the worship place. Source: Booklet for Shabbat Service of Dedication, Congregation Micah, 17 May 1997.

The expandable sanctuary has long been praised for economizing space and as a celebration of "form following function." Still, the success and the economy of the expandable sanctuary must be balanced with the spatial and aesthetic integrity that is compromised when a space has no single size, and thus no basis for scale or proportion. Phillip Johnson, the architect of an expandable sanctuary at Kneses Tifereth Israel Synagogue in 1954 in Port Chester, New York, asserted that "a space is either great small or great large, but it can hardly act like an accordion and be great small and large."[32] While the expandable sanctuary provided a novel and economic solution to fluctuating synagogue attendance, there clearly are formal problems inherent in a space that is at once expandable at whim and sanctified for worship and reflection.

In the sanctuary of Kneses Tifereth Israel Synagogue in Port Chester, New York the rear wall opens to enlarge the worship place for overflow High Holy Day crowds. The sanctuary's long walls incorporate Modern construction techniques and materials. The walls are made from five courses of stone slabs, laid in a staggered bond with glazed gaps between the verticals. Source: H. A. Meek, *The Synagogue*, pg. 220.

Responding to the contradiction of formal integrity and expandability, in recent years many congregations have added small, intimate chapels to their existing synagogues. In 1993, both Temple Beth Israel in Portland, Oregon, and Temple Beth El in Charlotte, North Carolina, added small chapels to provide an intimate setting for *Shabbat* worship. In 1988, when Baltimore's Temple Oheb Shalom added a chapel to their Modern synagogue designed by Walter Gropius, the chapel's architect, Mark Levin, envisioned the new prayer space as "having to do with neighborhood, community, with people coming together." In the architect's words: "The space is scaled to the human being, to intimacy."[33] In 1994, Temple Israel in Dayton, Ohio, moved from an urban neighborhood two miles from the center city to a newly designed facility even closer to downtown. The building committee asked

their architect, Malcolm Holzman, to design a sanctuary that would expand to accommodate High Holy Day crowds. Holzman refused, explaining that even with the innovation of accordion doors a single sanctuary could not be appropriate for both 200 and 2000. Instead, he designed a sanctuary appropriate to the congregation's *Shabbat* attendance and proposed a novel strategy to accommodate High Holy Day crowds. High Holy Day services are held in the synagogue's hanger-like social hall which Holzman calls "the great hall." During most of the year, an ark, reader's platform, eternal light, and ritual candelabras are stored in a room-sized trunk on one end of the hall. In preparations for High Holy Day worship, the trunk is opened to reveal its contents. (The doors are so heavy that at least three people are required to open them.) The trunk's hand-fashioned, wood-paneled interior remains open throughout the High Holy Day season, providing an appropriate backdrop for worship services. While limitations and difficulties of this solution may become revealed over time, Temple Israel's solution to the problem of swelling High Holy Day crowds may be viewed by many as a welcome departure from the Modernist's expandable sanctuary.

In the Post-War era, the rise of the Modern movement, and suburbanization its benefactor, changed the face of synagogue architecture. Questions that were never asked before are now being asked and asked again by each generation of Jew and architect. Along the way, monuments were realized and, as always, there were stumblings. In 1954, Peter Blake recorded the implications that the Modern Movement has for the architecture of the synagogue. These are no clearer today than they were fifty eight years ago:

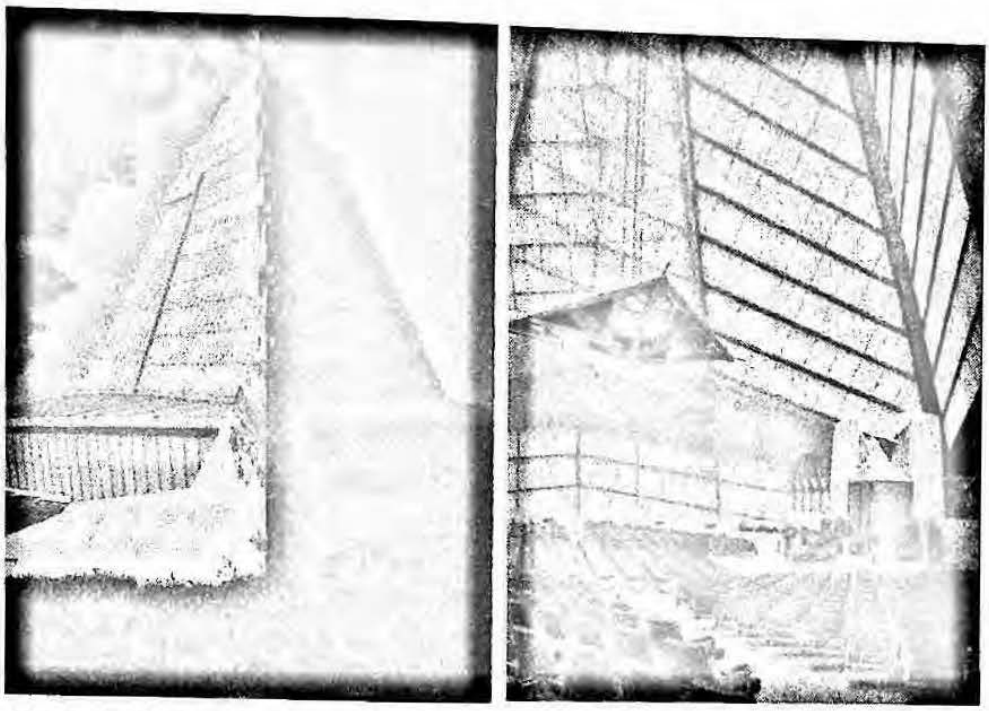
> We have seen the emergence in contemporary America of a new spirit in religious architecture, the final definition of which lies somewhere in the future.[34]

A SEARCH FOR MEANING IN FORM

As the architects of the post-war era rejected historicism in favor of the unencumbered Modern aesthetic, their work presented a new view of the architecture in which, in the words of Frank Lloyd Wright, "the solution to every problem is contained within itself."[35] Modernism demanded that design must never be driven by an arbitrary decision of "style." If form truly is to follow function, as Wright's mentor Louis Sullivan asserted, the site, the building materials, and the building's purpose are the factors which must shape the design. For the architect who tackled the complex problem of synagogue design, the application of the Modern manifesto was a revolutionary and awesome task. Regardless how history will critique the architectural products of Modern synagogue design, the Modernists will be duly credited with finally posing a question which had never before been asked by theologian, philosopher, or architect: Which architectural form or forms, not which styles, are appropriate to express and fulfill the functions of the synagogue?

This question was asked by the Modernist time after time, and was interpreted into a diverse set of architectural solutions. While no two were the same, formal trends did develop by which the movement can be classified. Several Modern solutions adapted the domed space of Historicism, and presented this "democratic" interpretation of space in the

language of Modernism. Responding to the materials, the structural capabilities, and the aesthetic of the machine, the cylinder became the dome of the Modern movement and the roof form of many post-World War II synagogue sanctuaries. The cylinder was seen as an improvement over the dome because its open top brings light into the space, and was incorporated into many synagogue designs of the 1950s and 1960s. Temple Brith Kodesh, by Pietro Bulluschi, and Temple B'nai Jushrun in Short Hills, New Jersey, by Marcel Breuer, provide two examples of the cylinder used as a roof-form for sanctuary. In Temple Emanuel in East Meadow, New York, the entire sanctuary is enclosed by a giant cylinder. Both roof and walls are screened, bathing the sanctuary in soft light. At Congregation Sons of Israel in New Jersey designed by Davis, Brody, and Wisniewsky, the sanctuary's roof is not a cylinder, but a truncated geodesic dome, borrowed from a design by R. Buckminister Fuller. Other formal solutions attempted to reflect both religious philosophy and tribal history. The tent became a popular architectural form of the Modern synagogue. Sinai Reform Temple, in Bay Shore, New York, and Temple Emanuel of West Essex, New Jersey, both employed the tent-form to recall the years of the Israelites' desert wanderings. When Frank Lloyd Wright was commissioned to design a synagogue for Congregation Beth Shalom in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, the congregation's building committee supplied the architect with a metaphor to guide the design their synagogue. They asked Wright to envision their building as a "traveling Mount Sinai."[36]



The metaphor of a "moveable" Mount Sinai Frank guided Frank Lloyd Wright's design of Congregation Beth Shalom in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania. Source: H. A. Meek, *The Synagogue*, pg. 223.

The interior of Young Israel Congregation in Brookline, Massachusetts designed by architect Graham Gund in 1997 has already received praise from congregant and reviewer. But Gund modeled the synagogue's main facade on an imaginary construction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. An artist's rendering became architecture: a speculation cast in stone. Architectural historian Robert Campbell recognizes the building's formal shortcoming:

> The problem is that Gund has modeled his main facade on someone's imaginary construction of a long-vanished landmark....It's an arbitrary choice, and it creates an unintended metaphor. If you haven't seen a picture of the Second Temple, you're more likely to think Gund's facade is copied from a radio console of the 1940's. With its table-top cornice and speaker-like wall, it has the scale of furniture, not architecture.[37]

In a design for Congregation Young Israel in Brookline, Massachusetts, architect Graham Gund modeled the synagogue's main facade on an imaginary reconstruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. Source: Boston Globe, 2 August 1997.

Each of these solutions began by asking the right question: "What form should a synagogue be?" But success was limited because each relied on a symbol to answer the question. A cylinder may be a symbol of democracy to some; it is also the form of a missile silo. A tent-like form may recall a romantic journey toward freedom, but is it appropriate for a permanent building on a purchased plot of land? When an attempt to honor the community's historical heritage means duplicating the imagined forms of biblical architectures, both synagogue and history are reduced to false image. Even a symbolic Mount Sinai, a representation of the site of the theophany, is inappropriate as a singular, symbolic form. What it does it mean to be inside of the mountain? Is Moses part of the metaphor as well? A fiddler

on the roof? Though Wright accepted the building committee's metaphor for the design of Congregation Beth Shalom, he later criticized his own work, writing that, "the least successful synagogues are the ones which allow or depend on symbolism to determine the plan of the structure. Symbol falsifies form, as form must conform to the symbol."[38]

Image-making does not necessarily lead to idolatry. Judaism needs not only buildings to house prayer and study, but also architecture and art that is expressive of our heritage and aspirations. Eugene Mihaly understands artistic expression as a necessary tool that helps the worshiper to experience the God who exists outside of space and time. He asserted that:

> Artistic genius communicated as paradoxical realities of experience what reason and the syllogistic process can describe only in nonsensical contradictions: The invisible is "seen," the temporal is timeless, the infinite is the finite, and "God is in His holy temple."[39]

This means an architecture that is not itself an image, but allows for new meanings and understandings. Sacred Jewish place must be conceived as a container for meaning and action. It may represent an idea, a metaphor, but must not be a symbol, itself. Like the biblical manifestations of the Divine presence -- fire, cloud, wind -- God is ever-changing. Sacred Jewish space must allow for this. There is a difference between using symbols to tell a story, as in the murals of the Bet Alpha synagogue, and the fashioning of a Jewish institution or residence as singular architectural symbol. Sacred Jewish place must allow for multiplicity in both form and meaning.

Architect Richard Meier pointed out that "to emphasize symbolic devices in the plan of the building is to attach a false theological importance to their presence at the expense of the architecture."[40]

If there must be a symbol, and perhaps there must if we are to represent the concepts of God and *Torah* that are beyond our comprehension, let the symbol be the community and not the container. For the architecture is static, and can symbolize only the moment; but the community is history in action, the future coming to be. It represents continuity and eternity. When architecture successfully avoids the symbol, the actions of the community are emphasized. The container transcends the bound of physical object and becomes experiential. Thomas Barrie explains:

> Architectural experience is not static experience, such as the viewing of art, nor a passive one such as listening to the retelling of a folktale, but a dynamic experience in which the participant, moving through the architecture, apprehends its messages both spatially and temporally. It is the inexpressible expressed three-dimensionally and experienced totally.[41]

Scattered across the American landscape, there are a growing number of synagogue buildings that are endowed with formal meaning and succeed in avoiding monumental symbolism. These architectural examples are inspired by the philosophy of the Modern movement which demands that architectural form be born out of function, but their success does not end here. Their architects strive toward a rediscovery of artistic sensibilities which are inspired by the tradition of *Torah* and the spirit of Judaism.

These are buildings which begin with a program of use, and then consider the historic reflections, aspirations, and even the dreams of the congregation. Many are appropriately respectful of their sites, and recognize Creation as sanctified. Some even transcend their bounds by disappearing behind the activities that they sponsor. These architectures owe a debt to history and to modernity; to Modernist, environmentalist, and visionary. Perhaps the greatest contribution to the rediscovery of Hebraic form-making principles has been made by mid-twentieth century architect Percival Goodman. Goodman was one of the most accomplished synagogue architects of the Modern movement. He designed over fifty synagogues, was the founder and the long-time president of the Society of Synagogue Architects, and wrote extensively on the subject of synagogue architecture. His work is characterized by spacious interiors and a deliberate avoidance of a monumental facade. While avoiding designs in which the building itself would become a symbol, Goodman celebrated the ark as a conspicuous feature which he brought to the building's exterior. He collaborated greatly with Jewish artists and filled his commissions with applied art. Some critics asserted that his designs over-emphasized application, and demoted architecture to containers which, by themselves, had no meaning. In truth, this was Goodman's greatest success. Though his formal assertions and his conspicuous ark did not become a universal model for the Modern synagogue, as the steeple is for church or the minaret is for the mosque, his designs did inspire imitations, and more importantly a continuing search for the architectural forms that might reflect the essence of the synagogue and a concept of form-making rooted in Jewish tradition.

Today, Goodman's work is being continued by a new generation of architects. Norman Jaffe's Gates of Grove synagogue in West Hampton, New York, is reminiscent of the wooden synagogues of Poland. The building's scale is residential and is respectful of its site and surroundings. Jaffe says that he was inspired by the *hupah*, the *tallit*, and the angular form of Hebrew

Gates of Grove synagogue in West Hampton, New York is reminiscent of the wooden synagogues of Poland. Skylights in the sanctuary's ceiling bathe the congregation in natural light. Source: H. A. Meek, *The Synagogue*, pgs. 226 and 227.

letters. There are symbols throughout the building, but they are not emblematic. You find them only if you look for them. The architecture does not copy, but evokes the past in an interpretive manner. In Temple Israel, in Dayton, Ohio, and in Congregation Micah, in Nashville, Tennessee, the needs of each area of the synagogue were considered separately. Each space was designed according to its specific needs and spirit of the activities which would take place within. The result in each synagogue is a building that feels a bit like a small village: a variety of places, each with their own character, brought together in a seemingly organic framework. Both synagogues are filled with nooks to discover and opportunities for space to become endowed with history.

In the sanctuary of Congregation Sons of Israel at Briarcliff Manor, New York, congregants sit along both sides of the synagogue in crescent-shaped pews. They face the central *bimah*, and the congregants seated on sanctuary's opposite side. The design aims for a domestic scale and a familiar aesthetic. Church-like building materials were avoided. Every-day materials were used instead. The sanctuary's glass side walls are motorized. They lift up to incorporate the adjacent porches into the worship space. The glass side walls provide a virtual continuity with the landscape. On warm days, they are raised to open the synagogue to the weather. The sanctuary's ability to respond to seasonal change is reminiscent of worship practices in Talmudic times, when separate prayer places were used in summer and in winter.[42] The synagogue's architecture successfully avoids pretense and singularity. Instead, it is an architecture built for action and

adaptation; a formal expression in which "spirituality is fashioned of ready-mades."[43]

These are but a few examples of the on-going search for the formal solutions for synagogue architecture. They represent the striving of Jewish community and Jewish artist to continue in our age the creative process endowed by God at the beginning of time. This search to continue the values and aspirations represented by the Tabernacle and Temple, renewed each autumn in the *Sukkah*, are worthy of our sincere efforts. For our synagogues have the potential to beautify our tradition, serve as meaningful depositories for *Torah*, and serve the Jewish People as the stage upon which we become a holy community and strive toward God.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

[1] Eric M. Meyers, Anchor Bible Dictionary, vol. VI, pg. 252. Quoted in Martin Jaffee, *Early Judaism* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997), pg. 191.

[2] Ezekiel 11:16

[3] Ezekiel 40 - 42

[4] excerpt from Rabbi Eric Yoffe's presidential address at Union of American Hebrew Congregation's Biennial Convention, Dallas Texas, October, 1997.

[5] Isaiah 56:7

[6] published in the booklet for the ceremony of rededication on the seventy-fifth anniversary of Temple Ohabei Shalom, Boston, 26 February 1918.

[7] for examples of sacrifices made outside of the Sanctuary, see: Judges 13:19; Samuel 9: 12; I Kings 3: 2; II Chronicles 1:3.

[8] name used for early synagogues in the Talmud, see TB *Shabbat* 32a.

[9] Martin S. Jaffee, *Early Judaism* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997), pg. 176.

[10] The synagogue at Capernaum and Chorazim are examples.

[11] The synagogue at Dura Europas is an example.

[12] Martin S. Jaffee, *Early Judaism*, pg. 181.

[13] TB *Brachot* 8.

[14] Michael Avi-Yonah, "Synagogue Architecture in the Classical Period" (Cecil Roth, ed., *Jewish Art: An Illustrated History*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1961), pg. 165.

[15] For an in-depth description of the early development of the synagogue, see Michael Avi-Yonah, "Synagogue Architecture in the Classical Period" pgs. 161 - 174.

[16] Ibid., pg 173.

[17] cf. Cecil Roth, *Jewish Art: An Illustrated History*, pg. 259.

[18] Ibid.

[19] A quote attributed to turn of the century Dutch painter, Isaac Israels, in response to a question regarding the artist's dual loyalty posed by Queen Wilhelmia of Holland. Quoted by Myron E. Schoen. "Form Follows Function." (*Faith and Form: Journal of the Guild for Religious Architecture*, vol. 1: Jan. 1968) Pg. 36.

[20] see Peter Blake, *An American Synagogue for Today and Tomorrow*, pg. 7.

[21] Beth El, New York (1891); Sha'aray Tefila, New York (1894); Mishkan Israel, New Haven (1897).

[22] Shearith Israel, New York (1897).

[23] Sephardic Congregation of New York, Crosby Street Synagogue (1834).

[24] Sephardic Congregation of New York, 19th Street Synagogue (1860) . For a detailed overview of the search for an architectural style appropriate to the synagogue, see Rachel Wischnitzer, *Synagogue Architecture in the United States: History and Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1955).

[25] Peter Blake, *An American Synagogue for Today and Tomorrow*, pg. 43.

[26] see Richard Meier, *Recent American Synagogue Architecture*, pg. 7.

[27] see Lance Sussman, *Post-War Synagogue Architecture*, pg. 40.

[28] Peter Blake, *An American Synagogue for Today and Tomorrow*, pg. 43.

[29] Ibid.

[30] cf. Lance Sussman, *Post-War Synagogue Architecture*, pg. 40.

[31] cf. H. A. Meek, *The Synagogue*, pg. 28.

[32] cf. Richard Meier, *Recent American Synagogue Architecture*, pg. 22.

[33] Erika Rosenfeld, *The New Intimate Sanctuary.*

[34] Peter Blake, *An American Synagogue for Today and Tomorrow*, pg. 7.

[35] Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Future of Architecture* (New York: Bramhall House, 1953), pg. 34

[36] from an oral history with Melvin Bricker, former member of the Building Committee at Temple Beth Shalom, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, conducted by George Goodwin.

[37] The Boston Globe, August 2, 1997.

[38] see Richard Meier, *Recent American Synagogue Architecture* (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1963), pg. 8.

[39] Eugene Mihaly, "The Architect as Liturgist" (*Faith and Form: Journal of the Guild for Religious Architecture*, vol. 7: Fall, 1974).

[40] Meier, Richard, *Recent American Synagogue Architecture*, pg. 10.

[41] Thomas Barrie, *Spiritual Path, Sacred Place: Myth, Ritual, and Meaning in Architecture* (Boston: Shambhala, 1996), pg. 16.

[42] see TB *Baba Batra* 3b

[43] Rossant, James, "The Open Synagogue: Architectonic vs. Ready-made" (*Faith and Form: Journal of the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art, and Architecture*, Fall 1994), pg 7.

6. *Midot: Aspects for the Design and Fashioning of Sacred Jewish Place*

To build a synagogue -- a place for prayer, for study, and for assembly -- is a complicated task. Synagogue architecture should reflect the history, faith, and tenants of Judaism. It should respond to the aspirations and ideals of its community. It should acknowledge both the particular features of its site and its birthplace in Israel. By nature, the community of Israel is ever-changing. Hence, the synagogue must be responsive and adaptable. It must be open to new occupations and new truths. The architectural program for the Jewish house of worship is complex and even contradictory. A synagogue is at once a house of God and a house of the People. Unlike the gods of the Greco-Roman world who are fashioned of stone and reside in temples designed perfectly to accept their occupation, the God of Israel has no physical form, cannot be seen by human being, and is boundless in both time and space. This is the dialectic of the synagogue: it is a necessarily enclosed place, responsive to a program of use and limited by site and financial resource. At the same time, it is a house for a God that has no bounds, which is ever-changing.

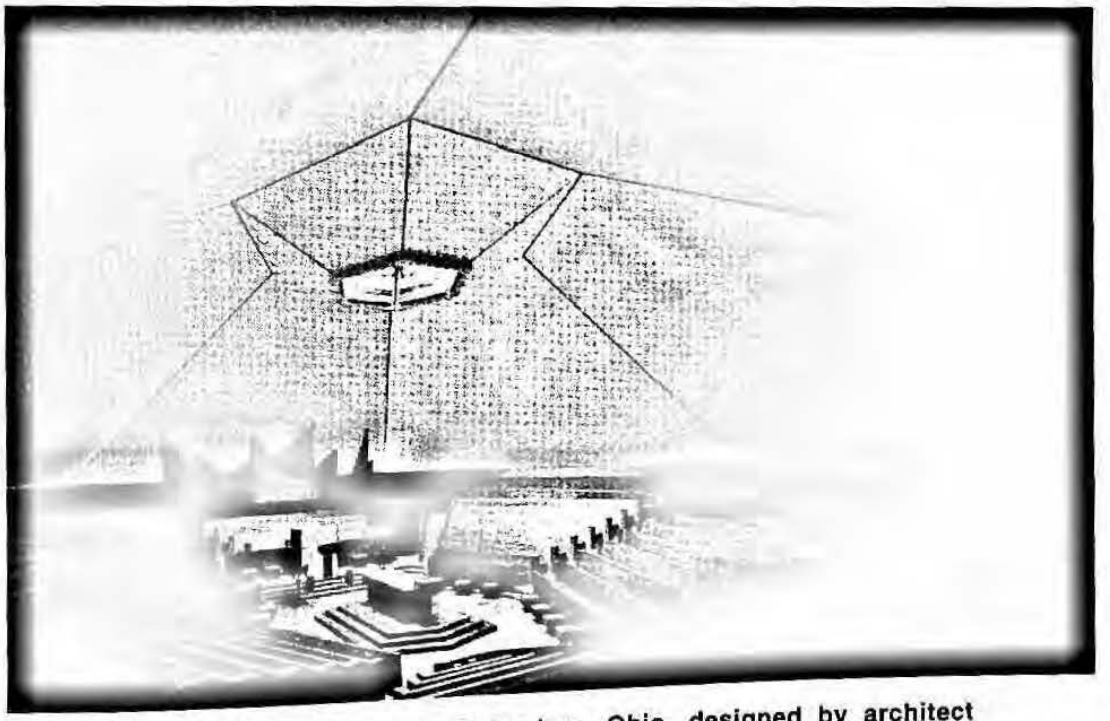
In this chapter, the research of chapters one through five has been interpreted into *"midot"*, or aspects, for the design and fashioning of sacred Jewish place. Some of the aspects apply to the design of any sacred Jewish place, while others are clearly exclusive to the synagogue or the sanctuary reserved for Jewish worship. The aim of this chapter is to provide

architects, designers, building committees, and Jewish communities with a tool to endow sacred places with the spirit of Jewish history and tradition.

ASPECTS FOR CHAPTER 1

Bimah In The Center

By placing the *bimah* in the center of the sanctuary, the congregation surrounds the action of worship. This placement recalls the position of the Israelites who surrounded Mount Sinai and helps to avoid the theatrical tendencies of the frontal sanctuary.



The North Christian Church in Columbus, Ohio, designed by architect Eero Saarinen, provides a provocative example of the service in the round. The sanctuary accommodates 615 worshippers with surprising intimacy. Source: Commercial photograph by McGrew Color Graphics.

Devices For Self-Reflection

One purpose of prayer is to provide the worshipper and the community with opportunities for self-reflection. This metaphor can be expressed literally be providing opportunities for visual reflection. One way to accomplish this is to incorporate mirrors into the design. A mirror on the sanctuary door means that the last thing that a worshiper sees before entering the sanctuary is themselves. Incorporating water into the design of the synagogue is another way to provide for visual reflection. The fluidity of the water adds an additional dynamic component to the reflected image. At

In the chapel of Temple Israel in Dayton, Ohio, the ark doors are faced with smoked glass. As the ark is opened, the worshipper sees himself and an moment later, the *Torah*. Source: Photograph by James Brandt.

Temple Beth El in New Rochelle, New York, a reflecting pool was incorporated into the design of the lobby.[1] At Congregation Micah in Nashville, Tennessee, the sanctuary's front wall is composed of structural wall panels set in glass. During day-time services, congregants look out to a green rolling field. At night, the glass reflects back into the room, and roaming eyes meet friends and neighbors.

A Place That Holds Everyone

As Jewish worship recalls the Sinaitic moment in which all of Israel was assembled as a unified People, it is imperative that the synagogue provides the congregation a sanctified place in which the entire community can assemble for worship and community activity. If the congregation is so large that Holy Day services must be held in multiple satellite locations or divided in time, this value is subverted.

Places For Private Prayer

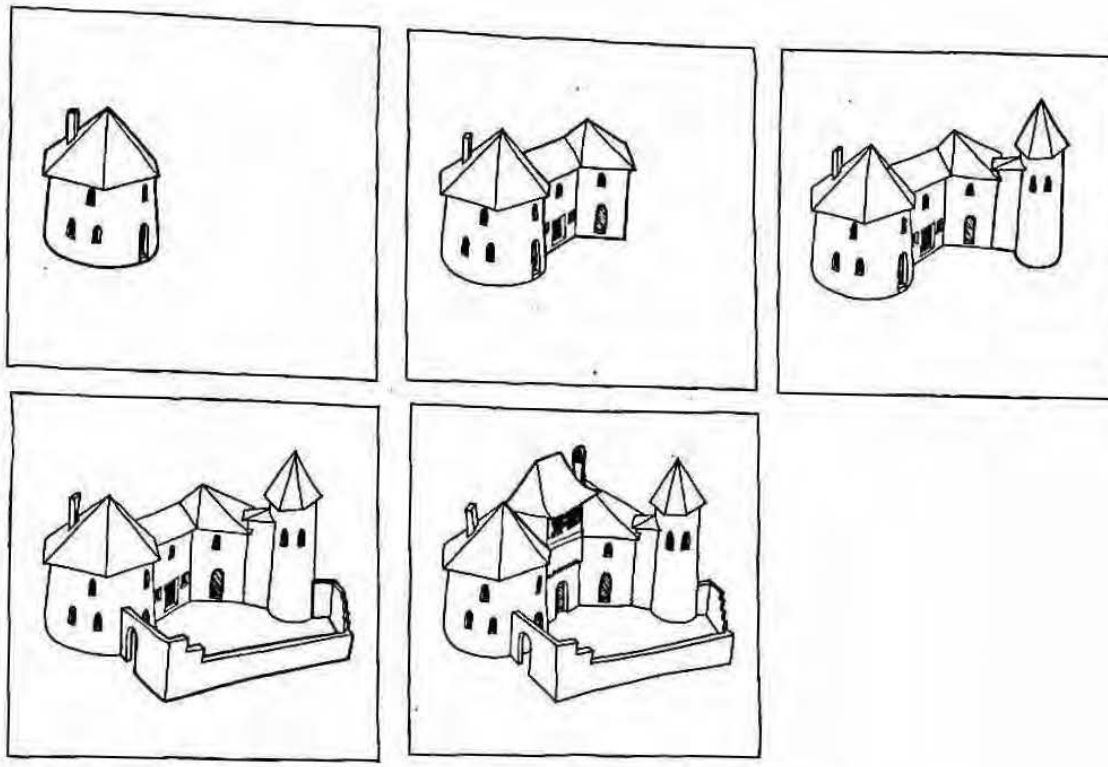
Though Jewish worship is based on a model of communal worship and requires a community, the focus of prayer remains the individual striving for a relationship with the Divine. Judaism understands that each person has a unique experience of God. Sacred Jewish place should acknowledge this emphasis on the individual by providing for personal comfort and places for private reflection. Time and again, the text responds to the human need for privacy. Even Noah's ark, the *Torah's* most restricted architectural program, provides for privacy: God directs Noah to: "Make it an ark with compartments..."[2] Worship places should provide places which allow for a

range of individual experience. Niches along the sanctuary's edge might provide a place for those who wish to retreat into meditation. Seats at the front will be filled by those longing to be near the *Torah* and the action of worship. Protected areas may provide comfort for the shy and uncertain. Architect Louis Kahn suggested:

> In understanding the nature of the chapel, I said first you have a sanctuary and the sanctuary is for those who want to kneel. Around the sanctuary, is an ambulatory and the ambulatory is for those who want to be near. Outside is a court for those who want to feel the presence of the chapel. And the court has a wall. Those who pass the wall can just wink at it.[3]

A Process Extended In Time

Creation may be modeled as a repetitive process of intention, action, and reflection. It was a process that occurred over time. Reflection and evaluation followed every action. The process of Creation should inform the process for the design of sacred Jewish place. The architecture would greatly benefit from evaluation at every stage of design. This means that substantial master-planning should be avoided. Instead, build or renovate a portion of the synagogue, just as much is absolutely needed. Then live in the place, worship in it. Allow the new place to inform future needs.



The house that Carl Jung built for himself at Bollingen took Jung four decades to compete. It provides an example of an architectural process extended in time, one that follows the repeated pattern of intention, action, and reflection. It started as a primitive one-room dwelling, a round structure with a hearth in the center and bunks along the wall. After some time, Jung thought the house to be too primitive. A dwelling tower was added. When that was thought insufficient, a central structure with a tower-like annex was added. The annex was later extended to provide a place for spiritual concentration. Wanting a place open to the sky and nature, Jung enclosed a courtyard and loggia. Jung built his house, incorporating new parts to it as he outgrew its limits and meanings. He wrote: "Words and paper, however, did not seem real enough to me...I had to make a confession of faith in stone..." Source: Glenn Robert Lym, *A Psychology of Building: How We Shape and Experience Our Structured Spaces*, pgs. 36 - 39.

The Public Sanctuary

The ritual reading of the Law in our synagogues is meant to recall, if not recreate the giving of the *Torah* at Sinai. The sanctuary is an interpretation of the desert floor upon which the Israelite nation stood when they received the tablets of law. The activity requires a "public" - a quorum of ten Jewish adults, and also a public space. While our sanctuaries should provide for a range of participation and comfort levels for visitors, its architecture should be public in scale and aesthetic. Designs that encourage intimacy are acceptable, but those that aim at imitations of domestic space should be avoided.

The Raised *Bimah* /Ark Platform

"*Aliyah,*" the Hebrew word used to call a worshipper to read from the Torah, means to "go up." This teaches that worship entails a deliberate departure from the plain of normal life and a change in spiritual status. The raised *bimah* and/or ark platform adds the dimension of vertical movement to the worship experience. Such movement is reminiscent of the holy journey: climbing the steps of the Temple or ascending the holy mountain. In solutions which incorporate a raised *bimah* and/or ark platform, care should be taken to provide accessibility for those with physical disabilities.

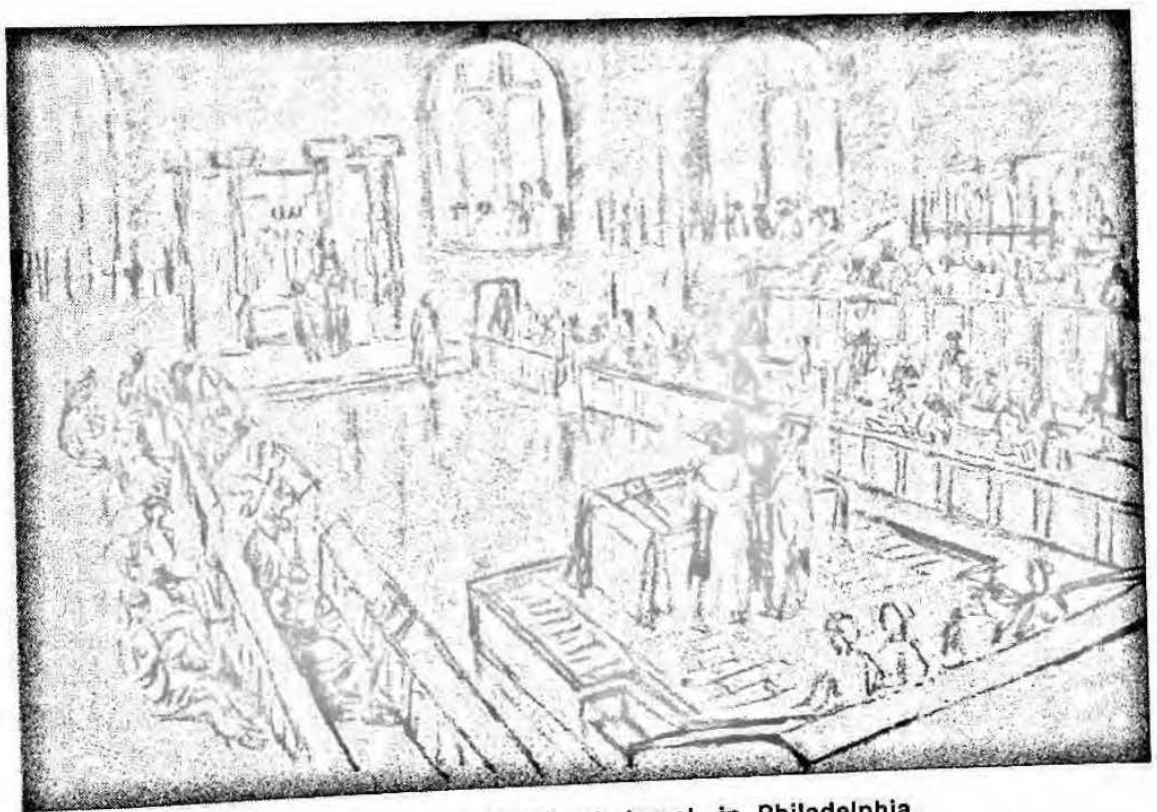
In the chapel at Temple Beth El in Charlotte, North Carolina, by architect Michael Landau, the bimah is placed on a raised platform. The historic ark, is raised even higher. The horizontal plain is broken and the possibility of vertical movement is incorporated into the design. Unfortunately, the ark is not accessible to the disabled. Source: Erika Rosenfeld, "The New Intimate Sanctuary," *Reform Judaism*, Fall 1994, pg. 40.

Unbroken Worship Plain

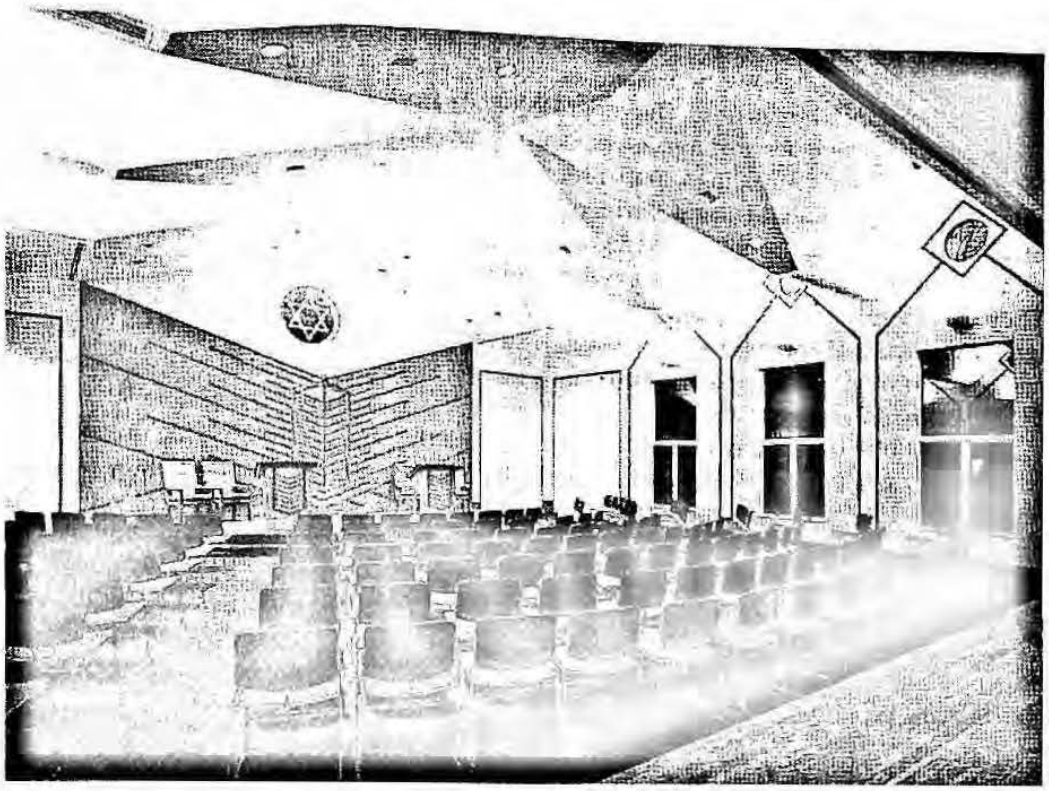
At Sinai, the Israelites assembled on the desert floor. The worship plain was flat and unbroken. The people were united on a single level. The unbroken worship plain provides a model of non-hierarchical space. It also enables wheelchair-bound congregants and those who have difficulty with steps to sit virtually anywhere in the sanctuary, rather than be limited to specific areas designated for the "disabled."

Worship In The Round

At Sinai, the Israelites encircled the base of the mountain, encountered God. As the assembly followed the curve of the mountain, each person could also see the faces of their co-religionists and experience the power of the assembly. By arranging seats for worship in arching rows or designing the sanctuary so that groups of seats face each other, worshippers are provided views of both the action and each other. As both worship and assembly are witnessed, the experience is enriched and more intimate.



In his design for the sanctuary of Mikveh Israel, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, architect Louis Kahn, sets a long isle between ark and *bimah*. The congregants, face the center and each other, rather than the front. Source: Richard Meier, *Recent American Synagogue Design*, title page.



In the sanctuary of Temple Beth David in Westwood, Massachusetts, flexible seating is organized into arching rows, enabling the worshipper to experience more of the congregation. Source: Daniel Freelander, "Why Temples Look the Way They Do," *Reform Judaism*, Fall 1994, pg. 37.

ASPECTS FOR CHAPTER 2

An Architecture Scaled To Humanity

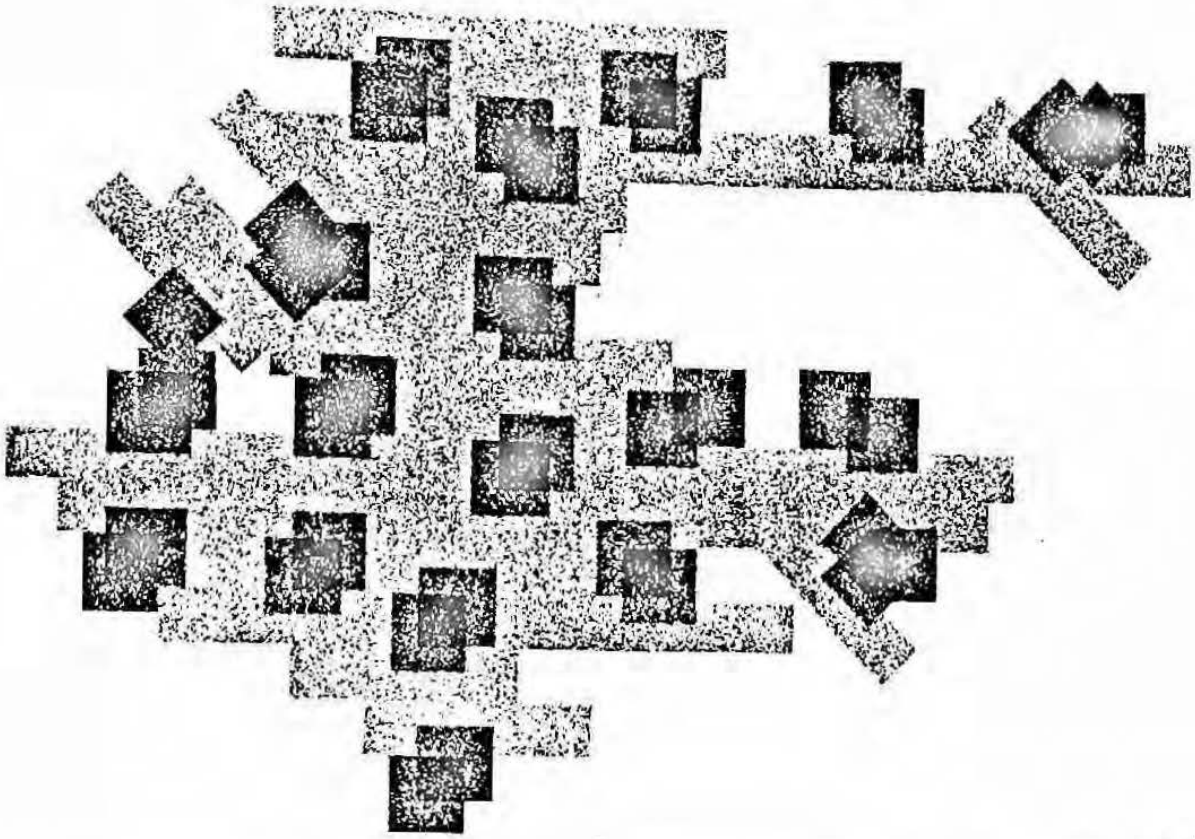
The cubit, the measurement of the *Torah*, is based on human form. It is determined by the distance from the tip of the middle finger to the point of the elbow. This teaches that Hebraic architecture should be scaled to humanity. The door should be large enough to enter and no larger. The hall should be of a width so that people can pass and perhaps sit along its edge. Room sizes and proportions should be built to contain human activity and facilitate action. Architectural historian, Norris Kelly Smith noted that:

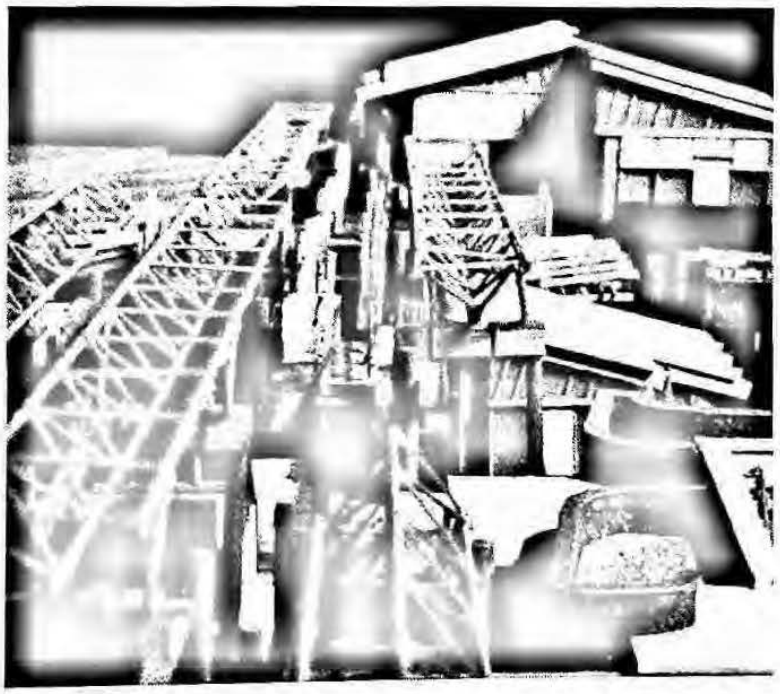
> The key to (Frank Lloyd) Wright's thought and perhaps to Romanticism in general is to be found in a characteristically biblical and anti-Hellenic emphasis on the dynamics of personal being; as against the static and objective being-of-things.[4]

Sacred Jewish architecture should be scaled to the person and related to social content in every element. As a system of people, not things, part of the purpose of Hebraic form is to desecrate the building as a symbolic entity of power, as an absolute value. It should be an architecture based on a social idea, not a figurative idea; an architecture that shifts attention to the spiritual life that is its purpose to sponsor.

An "Assembled" Architecture

The Tabernacle was an architecture composed of assembled pieces. As the pieces were discrete decipherable units, the assembled architecture revealed the system of its construction. Inspired by the Tabernacle, sacred Jewish architecture might be conceived as an assemblage. Its additive form may help the community to avoid interpreting the building as a single symbolic entity. An assembled architecture emphasizes the record of its building and fulfills Jeremiah's assertion that attention should not be placed upon architecture objectified: In the words of the prophet: "Don't put your trust in illusions and say: 'The Temple of *Adonay*, the Temple of *Adonay*, the Temple of *Adonay* are these (buildings).'"[5]



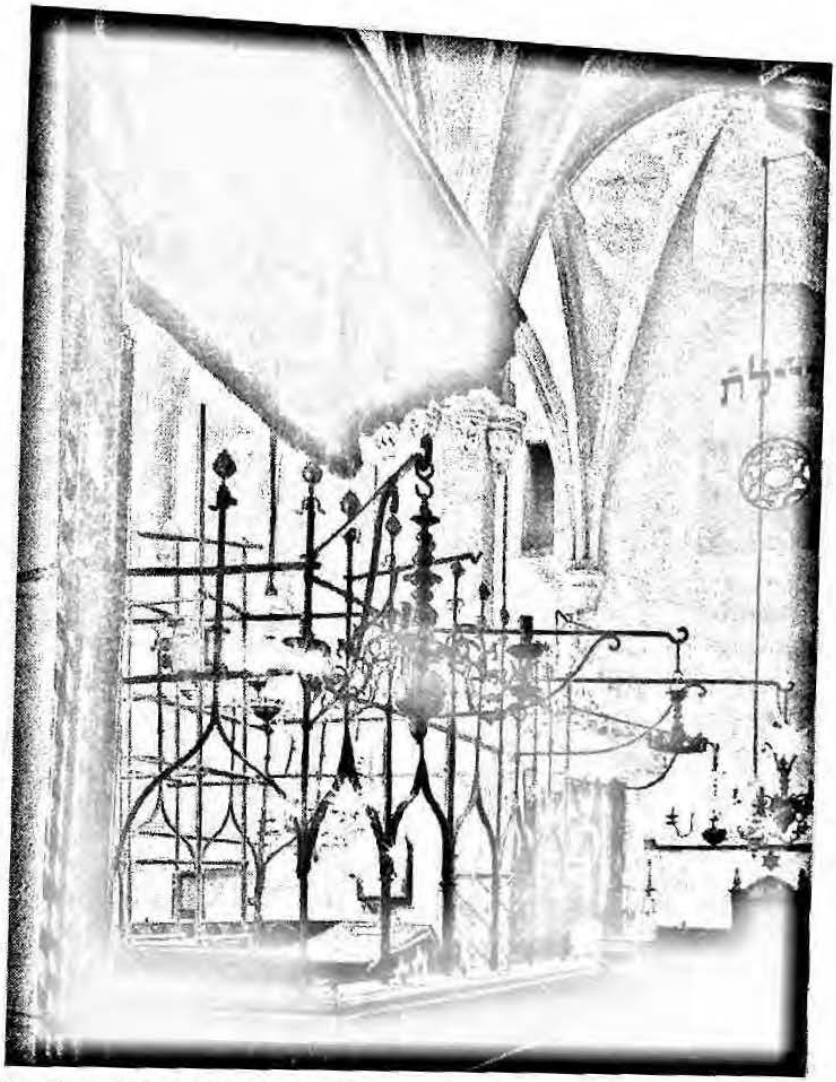


6.7, 6.8, 6.9

The design for a synagogue for the Newton Centre Minyan, in Newton, Massachusetts, stresses the importance of additive form in sacred Jewish place. Above: The synagogue's plan was generated by an additive system. As the plan follows an ordered diagram, the design is easily expanded (or retracted) to respond to community needs. Below left: The pavilions which compose the building's plan are assembled from an additive system of wall and glass panels. Below right: Trusses assembled from steel members support the synagogue's roof. (model is shown with the roof removed) Source: Drawing and model by James Brandt.

Boundaries For The Holy

At Sinai, boundaries were placed about the mountain in order to mark the holy. In the Tabernacle, a fabric wall provided a boundary for sanctified place. Inspired by these models, synagogue designers have employed walls, screens, and fences as architectural elements that mark sacred place. Such elements may be incorporated into sanctuary design, intensifying the ark, *bimah*, or entry. In religious architecture, there can not be a boundary without meaning. Even outside the sanctuary, the potential spiritual meaning of courtyard and landscape fences should be carefully considered.



In the Altneuschul, in Prague, Czechoslovakia, the *bimah* stands between two columns on the synagogue's central axis. The metal framework enclosing the bimah is an attempt to define a containment for sacred action. Source: Meek, *The Synagogue*, pg. 88.

Congregant As Designer / Congregant As Builder

In commanding the community building process, the text stipulates that the Israelites should bring gifts for the construction of the Tabernacle. Gifts from every person are to be accepted.[6] This teaches that sacred communal places should be conceived in a manner so that every member of the community will have an opportunity to contribute their talents and

perspectives to the process of design and building. The design process may include a solicitation for funds. It must include a solicitation for ideas. Parts of the building may be built or assembled by the congregants themselves. The congregant's artistic expressions should be incorporated into the architecture, perhaps recorded in ceramic tile and stained glass. At Congregation Micah in Nashville, Tennessee, the congregants prayers and dreams were recorded on paper and mixed into the cement that was poured to become the ark's foundation. At Temple Beth Shalom in Cambridge, Massachusetts, drawings of local Jewish artists were recorded on ceramic tile and embedded into garden walls to record the stories of city's Jewish institutions.

These images express the important role that the congregation plays in the design and building of sacred communal architecture. On the left, an illustration depicts craftsmen constructing Solomon's Temple. On the right, congregants at Temple Israel in Dayton, Ohio, volunteer to build an ark for use on the High Holy Days. Source: Left: Detail of an illustration by Jean Fouquet from the 15th century manuscript of *Jewish Antiquities* by Josephus Flavius. Reprinted in: Nachman Ran, *Tracks to the Promised Land,* pg. 29. Right: Photograph from Temple Israel's Dedication Booklet.

Curtain Covering Ark / Curtain At Sanctuary's Entrance

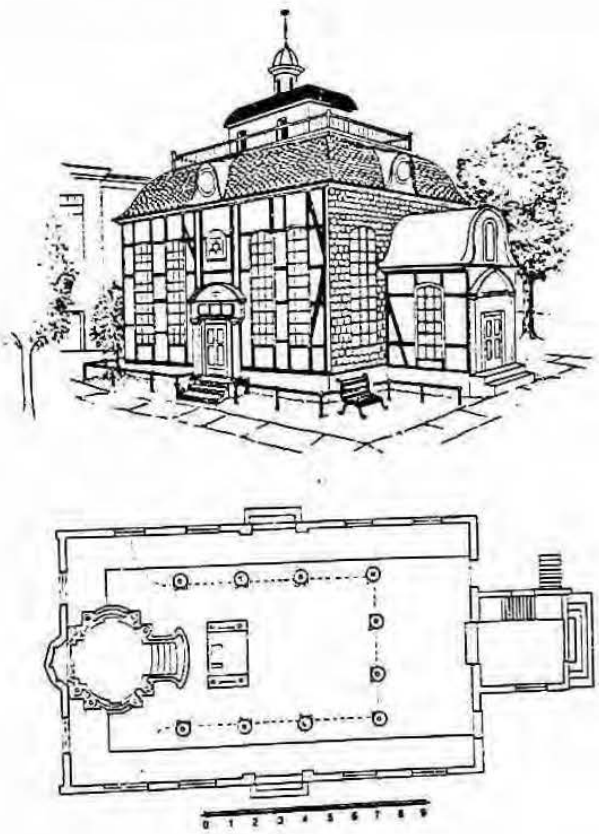
Incorporating a curtain into the design of an ark recalls the *parochet*, the fabric curtain embroidered with blue, purple, and scarlet which hung at the entry to the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and Temple. As this curtain was symbolic of entry into a sanctified place, a curtain might be used symbolically at the sanctuary's entrance, as well.

In the synagogue at Biella, Italy, the ark has both a curtain and a set of doors which protect the *Torah* scrolls and reflect their sanctity. Note the rail at the base of the ark's opening. Source: Neil Folberg, *And I Shall Dwell Among Them: Historic Synagogues of the World,* pg. 29.

At Temple Israel, in Dayton, Ohio, the Tabernacle's fabric *parochet* inspired ark doors fashioned from woven metals. Source: Photograph from Temple Israel's Dedication Booklet.

Entry Vestibule

In the design of the Temple's sanctuary, a vestibule, the *Ulam*, provided a place for the transition to the holy. The vestibule outside the sanctuary, sometimes programaticly combined with the functions of the lobby has become a standard feature of sanctuary design. Synagogue designs may reclaim the purpose of the *Ulam* and increase the sanctuary's sanctity by incorporating places exclusively dedicated to the transition between the mundane and the sanctified.



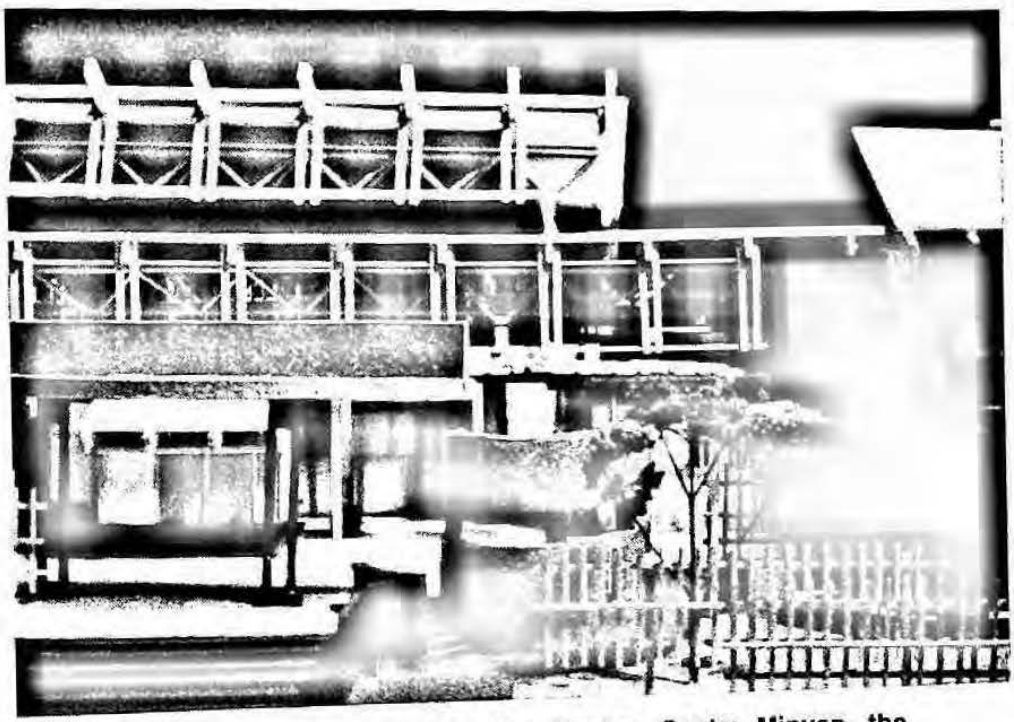
In the Jacobson School Synagogue, built in Seesen, Germany, in 1805, the sanctuary's vestibule is a prominent feature of the building's architecture. Source: Carole Krinsky, *Synagogues of Europe: Architecture, History, Meaning*, pg. 316.

Oil-Burning *Ner Tamid*

An oil-burning *ner tamid*, the light which burns continuously in the presence of the *Torah*, is reminiscent of the ceremonial oil lights which provided light in the chambers of the Tabernacle and the Temple. Oil lights need more attention and care than electric lights and provide for more opportunities for communal action. At Temple Emanuel, in Denver, Colorado, the sanctuary's *ner tamid* is a candle which burns continuously. It is maintained by the student's in the conformation class.

A "Portable" Architecture

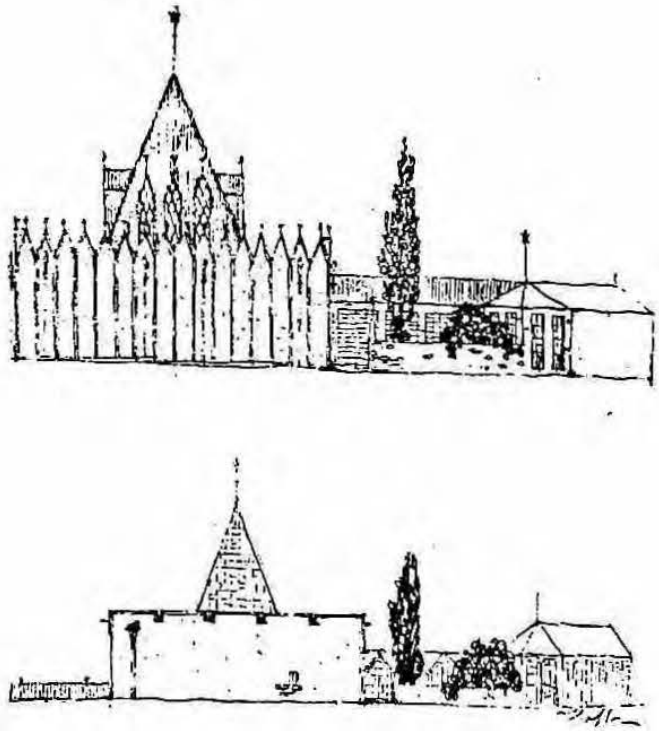
Though synagogues are typically built as permanent structures anchored to a specific site, their architecture might interpret the physical movement through Sinai into a principle of movement expressed formally. This means an architecture that is formally dynamic, "in motion", and reminiscent of the temporary, nomadic architecture of the Sinai wilderness.



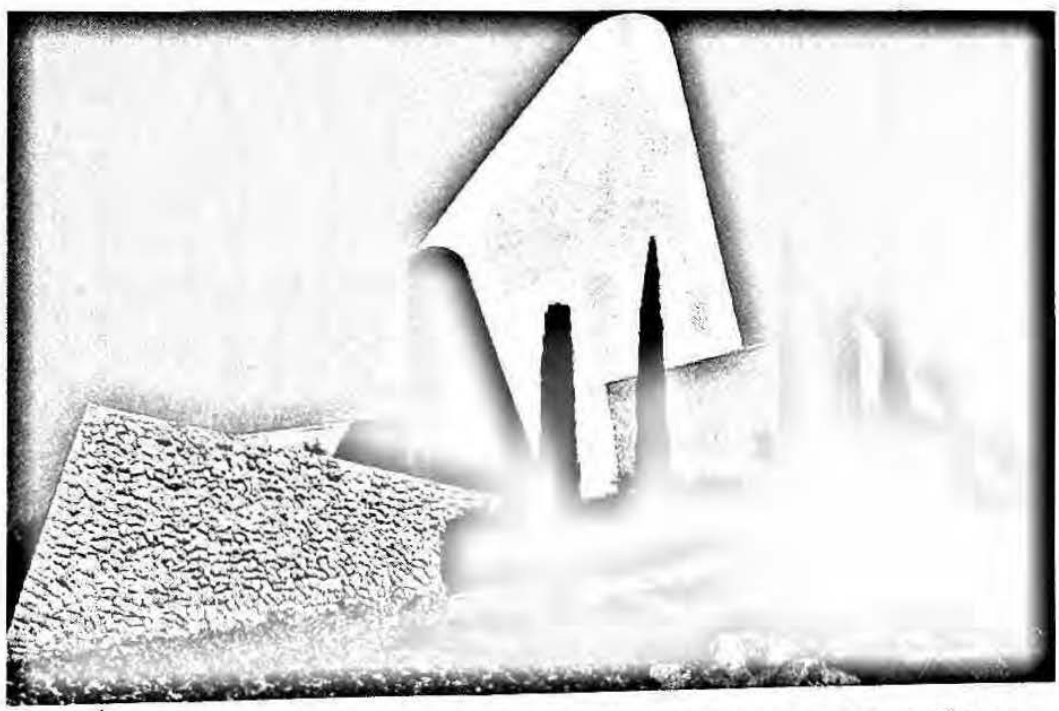
In the design of a synagogue for the Newton Centre Minyan, the building's overlapping systems aim at an architecture in which physical movement of Sinai is reinterpreted into formal movement. Source: Model by James Brandt.

The Tensile Sanctuary

Tensile structures or designs that resemble portable structures are reminiscent of the years that the Israelites spent in the Sinai wilderness, a period characterized by a wandering in placelessness.



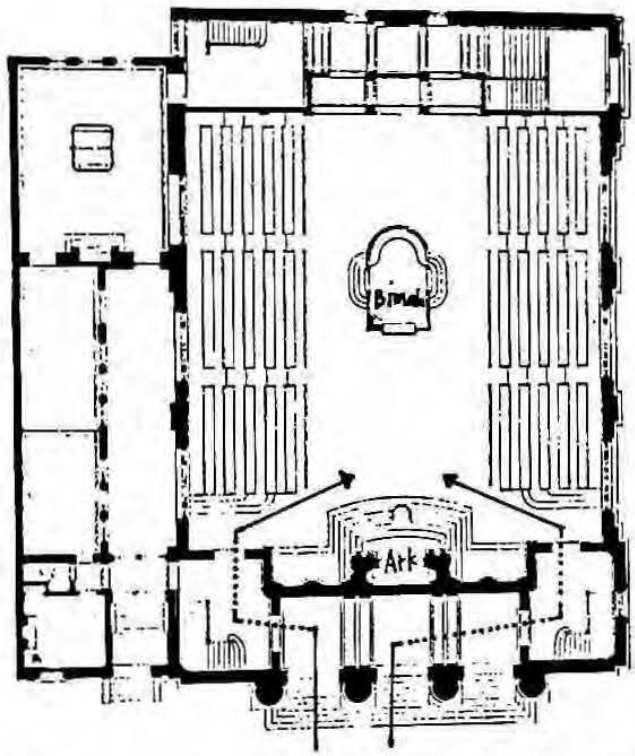
In his proposal for the synagogue in Vienna-Heitzing in 1928, modernist, Joseph Hoffman proposed a synagogue with a tent-like roof reminiscent of the nomadic architecture of Sinai. Source: Carole Krinsky, *Synagogues of Europe: Architecture, History, Meaning*, pg. 308.



Temple Mount Sinai in El Paso, Texas, built in 1962, by architect Sidney Eisenstat, reflects the tensile structures of Sinai. Source: Brian de Breffny, *The Synagogue*, pg. 181.

Turning As You Enter

The placement of the curtain which marked the Tabernacle's entrance demanded that the worshipper turn first in one direction and then the other before entering the sanctified courtyard. An entry that necessitates a similar turning recalls the Tabernacle's entry sequence. Upon entering, the worshipper is asked to break their stride and reorient their position toward sacred.



At Congregation Shearith Israel, built in New York City in the early 20th century, the entry is designed so that the worshipper turns in both directions before entering the sanctuary. The movement is reminiscent of the Tabernacle's entrance. Note that the ark is located on the wall adjacent of the lobby, a feature novel to architecture of this period, but typical of the ancient synagogue. Source: Rachel Wischnitzer, *Synagogue Architecture in the United States: History and Interpretation*, pg. 100.

The "Walk-in" Ark

An ark that is inhabitable is reminiscent of the Holy of Holies in which the Ark of the Covenant was deposited in the Tabernacle and Temple. The "walk-in" ark provides congregants honored collecting *Torah* from the ark with the opportunity to enter, if barely and for a moment, into the sacred place in which the scrolls of Law reside.

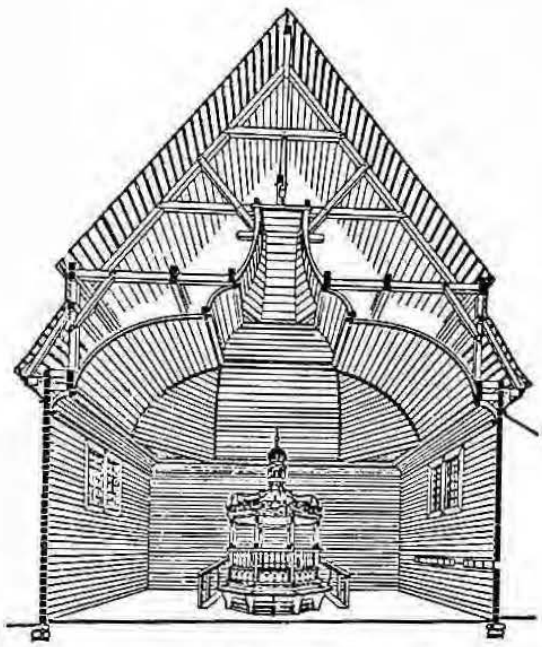
ASPECTS FOR CHAPTER 3

Building With Biblical Materials

Using materials that recall those used in biblical architecture is one way to endow sacred Jewish place with an acknowledgment of history. Over the years, many synagogues have been designed with gold-colored bricks to recall the walls of Jerusalem. In some cases, Jerusalem stone has even been imported for use in special designated areas. At Congregation Micah in Nashville, Tennessee, the bricks which cover the synagogue's walls are laid in a pattern which suggests the oversized stones of the Temple mount. Incorporating woods similar to those employed in biblical architecture or the colors used in the design of the Tabernacle into the design of sacred Jewish place are other possibilities. If the climate permits, biblical plants can be incorporated into landscape designs.

Ceiling Lowered Over *Bimah* Or Ark

A lowered ceiling over the *bimah* or ark makes these areas more intimate. The change in roof plane distinguishes these places from other areas of the sanctuary. The lowered ceiling is also reminiscent of the Holy of Holies in the Temple which had a lower roof than the Sanctuary's outer chamber.



The *bimah* of the Gwozdziec Synagogue was fashioned as an octagonal kiosk. Its self-contained roof is considerably lower than the roof of the synagogue's interior. It is reminiscent of the lowered roof in the Holy of Holies. The synagogue was built in 1682. Source: Carole Herselle Krinsky, *Synagogues of Europe: Architecture, History, Meaning*, pg. 48.

Depository For Prayers

The tradition of stuffing prayers recorded on paper into the cracks of the *Kotel*, endow the place with memory and meaning. Allowances for similar practices might accomplish the same for sacred Jewish places. Adding *mezuzot* to doorposts endows the place with words of *Torah* and fulfills a traditional religious obligation. In Congregation Micah in Nashville, Tennessee, congregants' prayers and dreams were added to the concrete which were used for the ark's foundation.

The Gift Shop Store-Front

Synagogue gift shops often stock a wide variety of ritual objects and Judaic art. Gift shops that are incorporate display cases modeled after store fronts beautify synagogue halls and lobbies by presenting a ever-changing display to visitors of the congregation.

The Lit *Menorah*

Incorporating *menorah* candelabras into synagogue design, especially ones that operate as ceremonial light fixtures, recalls the ritual lights which burned in the Temple.

A Permanent *Sukkah* Frame

While the *sukkah* is designed to be a temporary architecture assembled each year for use on the festival of *Sukkot*, many congregations build permanent *sukkah* frames which become part of the synagogue's site. Each year at *Sukkot*, these frames are covered with *shcach* and fabric walls are added to

make enclosure. During the rest of the year, the *sukkah's* frame adorns the landscape and serves as a reminder of the autumn harvest festival. At North Shore Congregation Israel in Glencoe, Illinois, the heavy timber frame of the congregation's *sukkah* is used as a setting for evening worship services during late spring and summer.

A Place For Remembrance

In many synagogues, memorial wall plaques are engraved with the names of deceased congregants and loved ones. Electric lights are often incorporated into these plaques and are lit to mark the *yaurzeit*, the anniversary of death. This custom endows the synagogue with a record of history and encourages communal remembrance. Some synagogues hang these memorial plaques in a special room reserved for the purpose of remembrance. These rooms, such as the ones at Temple Beth Am in Los Angeles, California and Congregation Ohabai Shalom in Nashville, Tennessee, provide a retreat for the mourner and a sanctified place for reflection and remembrance.

An Unfinished Architecture

In remembrance of the Temple, many synagogue buildings are symbolically left unfinished. In orthodox communities, the tradition to leave the synagogue unfinished is typically followed by omitting a brick from the building's facade or leaving a corner of the sanctuary unpainted. The concept of an unfinished architecture can be incorporated into the design of sacred Jewish place in a more dynamic way, by aiming for designs which record occupancy and are formally, not physically, incomplete. In 1979, in

a lecture at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, architectural historian, Bruno Zevi explained that such an unfinished architecture is one that is: "Organic, as Einstein defined it, that is anti-classic, living, opposed to all kinds of absolute axioms, relativistic and creative." He asserted that all architecture, and especially one that has its foundation in a Hebraic concept of form-making, should be designed through a "logical system of thought in a state of evolution."[7]

The famous American architect, Frank Lloyd Wright asserted that all architecture should be unfinished, not to remember the Temple, but merely to be reasonable. He vowed to produce an organic architecture, a "living" architecture endowed with the "order of change." Wright referred to architecture as a living spirit stating that, "It continues to bestow the years with forms designed to change and to be strange to men yet to come."[8]

The sand floor of the Shaar HaShamayim Synagogue in Kingston, Jamaica, West Indies is an example of an architecture that is left unfinished. The congregants' movements are recorded in the sand, a feature that is reminiscent of the experience at Sinai. Source: Neil Folberg, *And I Shall Dwell Among Them: Historic Synagogues of the World*, pg. 74.

Walls That Accept Meaning

Architecture can be effectively endowed with memories providing places for momentos, books, and artifacts. If the walls are flat and well-lit, they can be enriched by photographs and written histories. When niches, shelves, and display cases are incorporated into the design, they can be filled over time with objects endowed with historical significance.

In the design of a synagogue for the Newton Centre Minyan some of the walls are designed to be embellished over time with ceramic tiles that tell the story of the congregation's unfolding history. Source: Model by James Brandt.

Worship Facing Jerusalem

It has become a widespread custom to site Jewish sanctuaries so that the congregation faces in the direction of Jerusalem during prayer.

This detail of the ark in the Ari Ashkenazi Synagogue demonstrates the use of symbols in synagogue decoration. The oval on the bottom left frames a *Mizrach*, a diagram which identifies the east-facing wall.

Source: Neil Folberg, *And I Shall Dwell Among Them: Historic Synagogues of the World*, pg. 157.

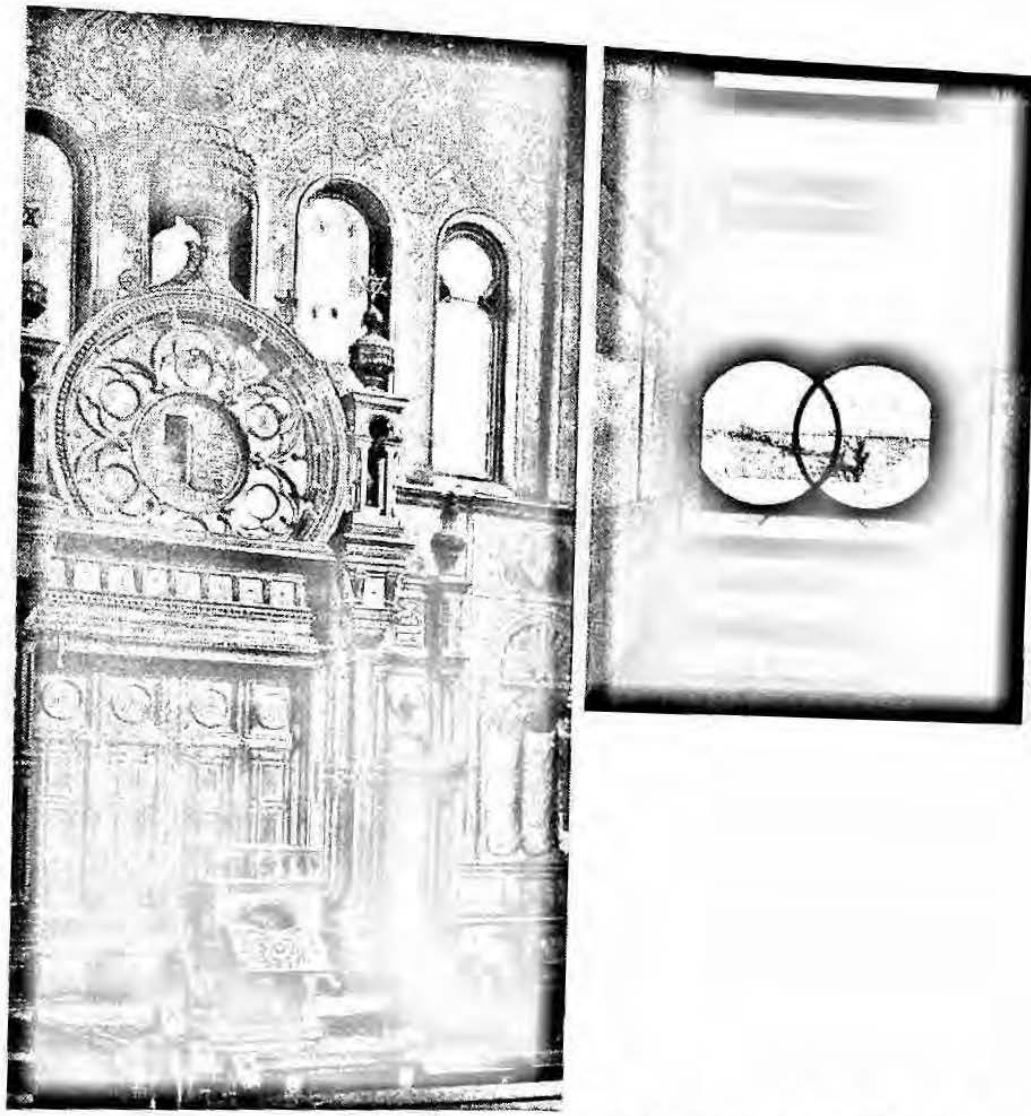
ASPECTS FOR CHAPTER 4

Adaptable Place

Since the Hebraic God is dynamic and evolving and has no physical form, sacred Jewish architecture must be able to accommodate the community's changing notion of God and the evolution of worship, education, and human expression. In sacred Jewish place, an open design, one that is highly adaptable and capable of accepting new meanings and new inhabitations, is an invariable.

Applied Art And Symbol

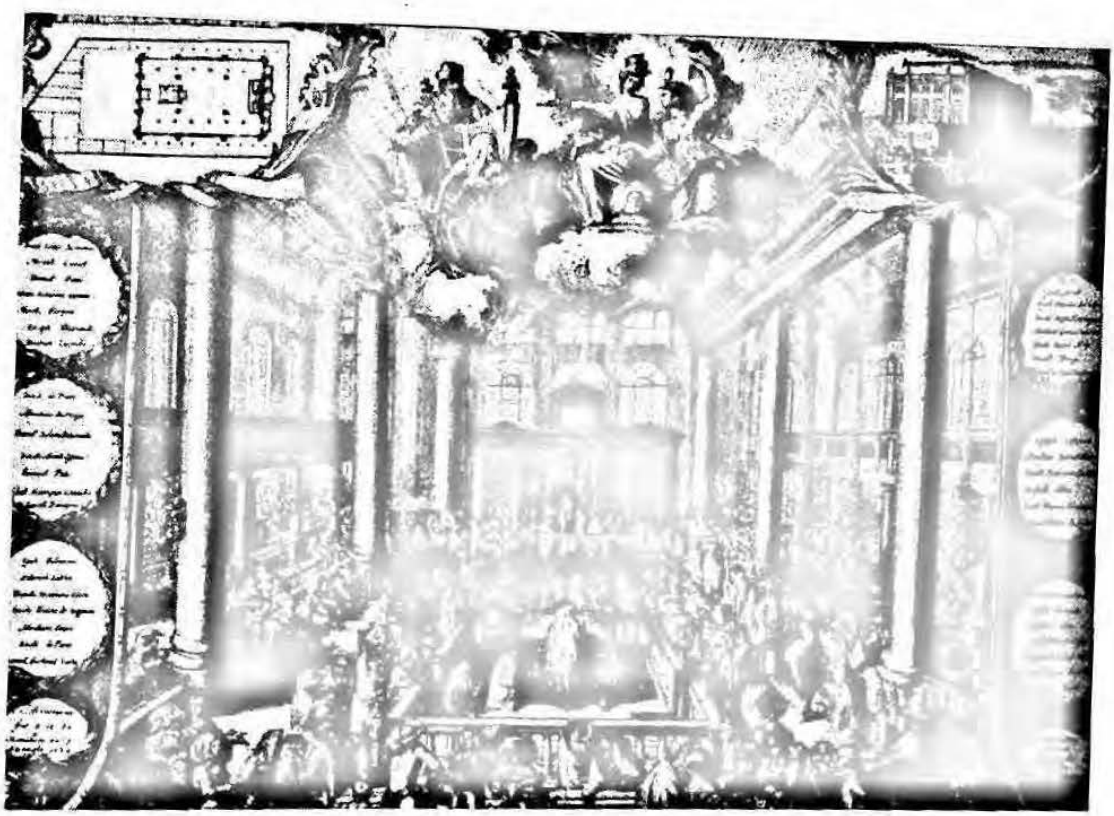
One way to endow a place with meaning is to apply symbols and artistic representations to the architecture. When sacred Jewish place is endowed with religious iconography and pictorial symbolism, the architecture has the potential to become a container of action and also of memory. By recalling history in visual scripture and by recording communal aspirations and dreams, sacred Jewish architecture transcends the moment and aids the worshipper in making connections to the eternal past-future.



Two examples of architecture endowed with meaning: On the left, the front facade of the Eldridge Street Synagogue includes hand-painted niches holding *Torah* scrolls. The ark is flanked by six-pointed Jewish stars. The Ten Commandments painted on wood are centered above. On the right, architect Carlo Scarpa used two inter-locking circles representing eternity and continuity as an entrance. Source: Left: Neil Folberg, *And I Shall Dwell Among Them: Historic Synagogues of the World*, pg. 94. Right: *Carlo Scarpa, An Architecture and Urbanism Extra Edition*, pgs. 139, 141.

A Place For God

In the Tabernacle and Temple, the Holy of Holies provided a place for the Divine presence to dwell. The room contained an empty throne flanked by the *cherubim*. The chair of Elijah the Prophet present at every *Brit* and occasionally incorporated into synagogue design is reminiscent of God's empty throne in the Holy of Holies.[9] Sacred Jewish place might encourage contemplation of the Divine by providing empty places to be filled by spirit and imagination.



On the day of its dedication, 2 August 1675, Amsterdam's Portuguese Synagogue is filled to capacity. Note that the synagogue's high ceiling leaves room for spiritual guests who join the worshippers below. Source: Engraving by Romeyn deHooghe. Reprinted in: H. A. Meek, *The Synagogue*, pg. 136.

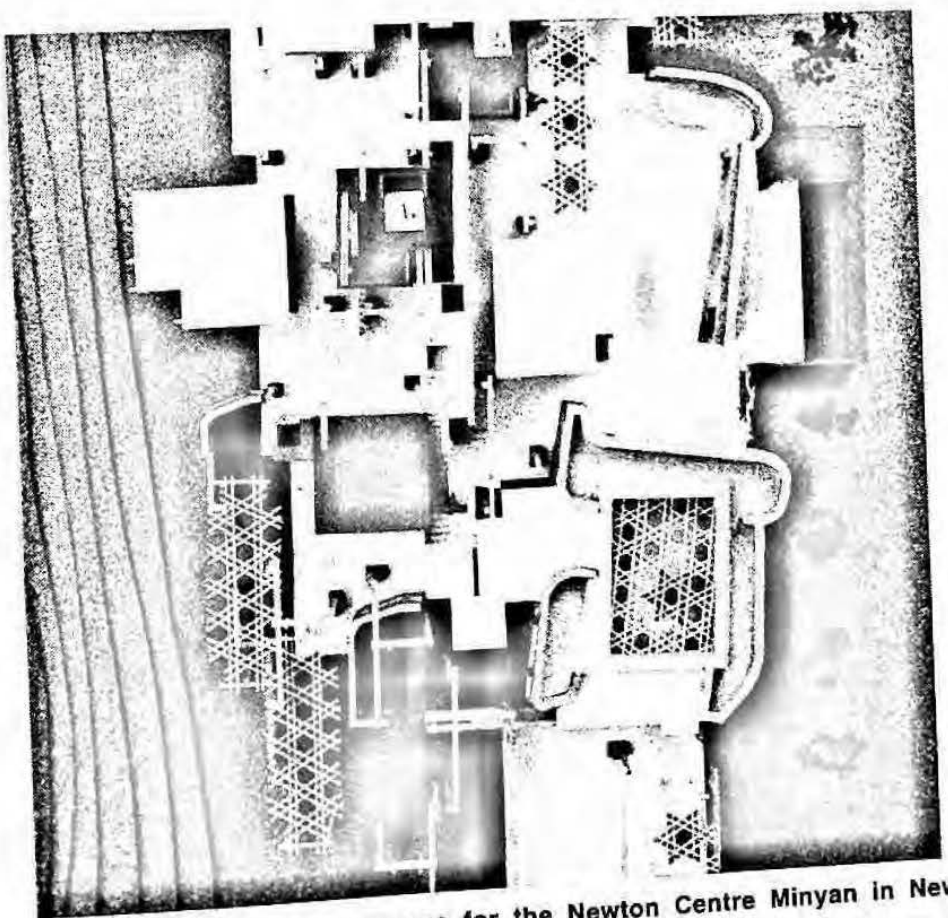
The Humble Ark

Essentially the *Torah* is not in the ark. *Torah* is a process brought to life when holy Scripture is read, interpreted, and becomes the inspiration for action. Though the container should acknowledge the sanctity of the scroll itself, the ark should not be so grand so as to contribute to the temptation to idolize the tablets. In the words of Eugene Mihaly: "An Ark, yes, but not an idol."[10]

The ark at Temple Israel in Dayton, Ohio is designed to be integrated into the sanctuary's wall. Its facade de-emphasizes the ark as an object. Source: Photograph by James Brandt.

Inscribed Verse

In the Hebraic concept of the Divine, God's image is replaced by God's word. Every letter, every word, every verse of *Torah* is holy and endowed with meaning. Beginning with the earliest synagogues, words of *Torah* were etched into stonework as inscriptions that oriented the worshiper and provided symbols of the place's sanctity. Throughout the history of synagogue design, it has become a universal practice to embellish sacred Jewish architecture with Hebrew letters, symbolic words, and verses of *Torah*.

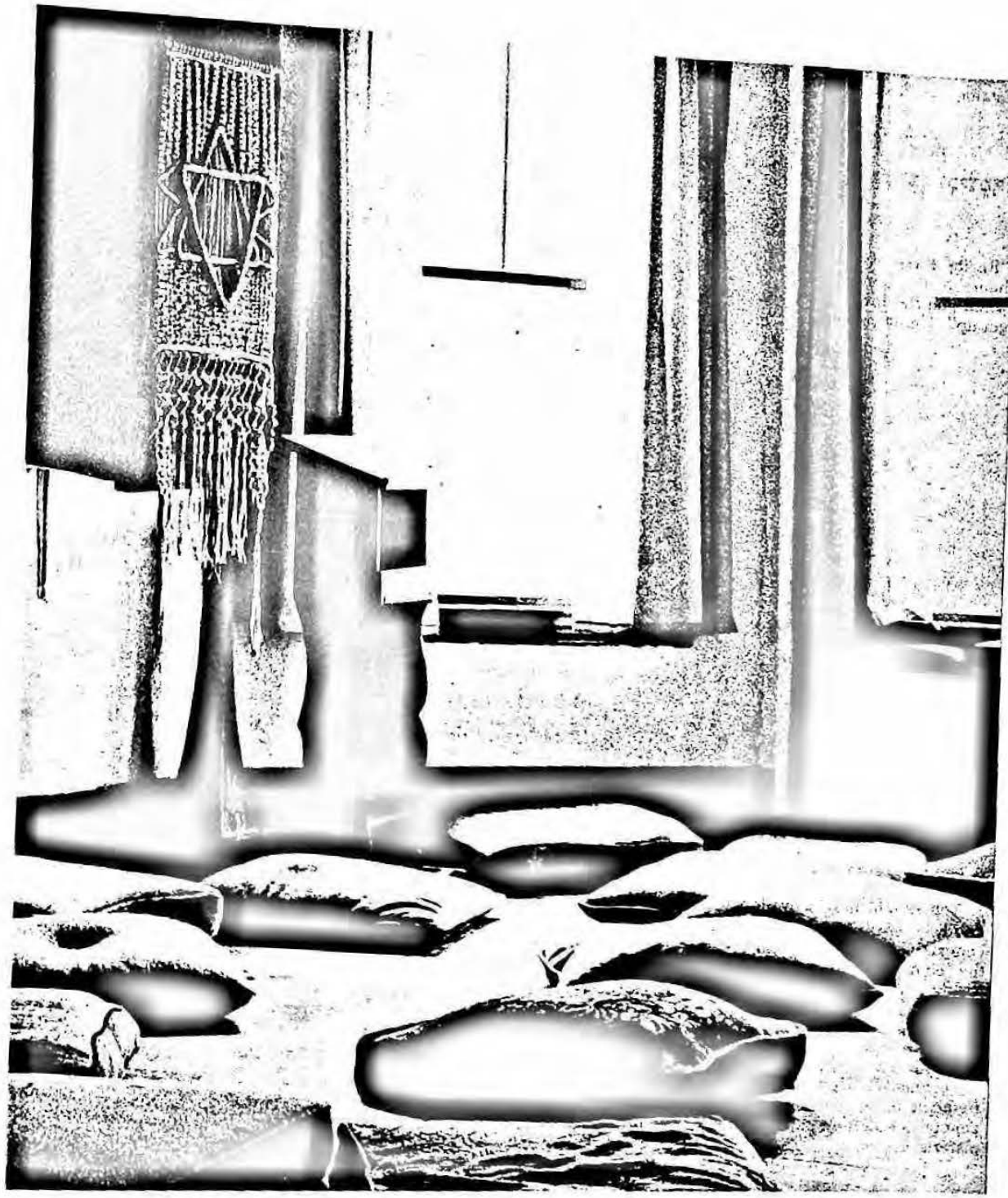


In the design of a synagogue for the Newton Centre Minyan in Newton, Massachusetts, Hebrew letters inspired architectural form. The entryway to the synagogue's courtyard was fashioned in the shape of the letter, *"Vav."* The sanctuary was made from a room-sized letter *"Hey."* Source: Model by James Brandt.

Two examples of inscribed verse used in synagogue architecture. Above, a biblical verse inscribed above the entrance of Temple Israel in Dayton, Ohio. Below, blessings framed above the *bimah* in the Altneuschul Synagogue in Prague. Note the Hebrew inscription embroidered on the ark's *parochet* behind the *bimah*. Source: Photographs by James Brandt.

Moveable Seating

As a place designated for worshipping a dynamic, ever-changing God, the Jewish sanctuary must remain responsive to a wide variety of worship styles and experiences. It should be a dynamic place that is open to new truths and occupations. The architecture should empower the worshipper by providing the widest possible range of options for reflection and expression. For these reasons, sanctuary seats should be moveable and designed for single occupancy. If possible, the seats should be stackable and storable so the sanctuary can be used as an open area.



At Havurat Shalom, a religious fellowship in Somerville, Massachusetts, worshippers sit on pillows which are piled in a corner and taken out only as needed. When the pillows are left in place, they leave a record of worship. Source: Richard Segal, Michael and Sharon Strassfeld, *The Jewish Catalogue*, pg. 6.

The "Open" Classroom

Learning and interpreting *Torah*, discovering life's lessons gleaned from Jewish experience, and finding expressions for our understanding of our ancient traditions is not possible in a single-dimensioned, frontal model of education. The classroom in which Jewish tradition and consciousness is shared should be designed to accommodate a wide variety of educational activities. Jewish education requires place for reading sacred texts and commentaries, a place to sing, draw, paint, build, and dance. The classroom, like the sanctuary, must allow for flexibility and a wide range of human experience. It should be connected with the environment and provide for the observation of time's passing. The classroom should be as open as possible: open to new experiences, new possibilities, and new understandings.

Translucent Meaning

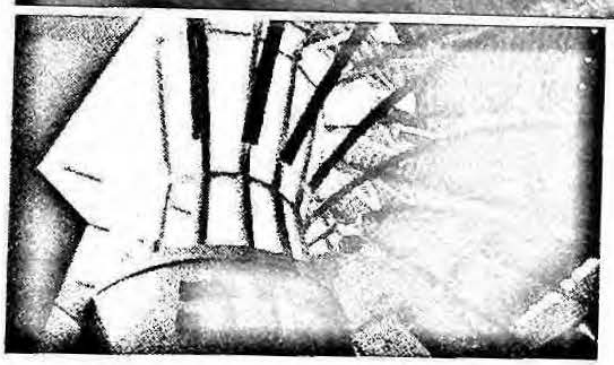
According to Jewish law, the synagogue sanctuary must have at least one window. This commandment to allow natural light into the place of worship has often been beautified by incorporating translucent and color-stained glass designs to the synagogue's windows. Such artistic glass work interprets the light of Creation into historical and theological expressions and further endows the sanctuary with meaning and beauty. The glass which is fluid and often interpreted as frozen motion seems to be a perfect medium for the Jewish artist. In applications in which the window is installed on an exterior wall, the artwork records and beautifies the passage of time, as it records the light of the sun and moon.

This detail of a stained-glass windows in the chapel at Hadassah Hospital at Ein Karim, Jerusalem provides an example of "translucent meaning" added to sacred Jewish place. The twelve windows, representing the twelve tribes of Israel, were designed by Marc Chagall. Source: Brian De Breffny, *The Synagogue*, pg. 184.

ASPECTS FOR CHAPTER 5

Aron HaKodesh As Structure / *Bimah* As Structure

The ark which holds the scrolls of Law and the reader's platform upon which the Law is read are the central features of the Jewish sanctuary. Rather than treating the *aron* and *bimah* and as mere furnishings, their importance might be acknowledged by integrating them into the sanctuary's architecture. This may be done decoratively, by repeating the *aron* and *bimah's* patterns or forms in other elements of the sanctuary. The role of the *aron* and the *bimah* can be further emphasized by incorporating them as architectural elements which are part of the building's structure. In this way, the sanctuary's structure may be employed not only as a means to hold up the roof, but also as an expression of the building's sacred purpose.



Above, In the synagogue in Mad, Hungary the central bimah is defined by the central columns which support the sanctuary's arched ceiling. A similar arch is inscribed in the wall on the sides of the sanctuary's ark. Below, trusses which support the roof at Congregation Micah in Nashville, Tennessee are supported by steel columns which seeming grow from the sanctuary's cylindrical ark. Architect Michael Landau envisioned the trusses as the metaphorical branches of a "tree of life" that has its roots in *Torah*. Source: Above: Neil Folberg, *And I Shall Dwell Among Them: Historic Synagogues of the World*, pg. 134. Below: Booklet for Shabbat Service of Dedication, Congregation Micah, 17 May 1997.

Aron HaKodesh As Facade Element

Designing an ark that is a visible feature on the outside of the sanctuary is one way to identify the building as a synagogue. The ark's presence on the facade helps to orient visitors and passersby.

Domes And Cylinders

Domes and cylinders might be considered as possible forms for use in Jewish sanctuaries. These forms are reminiscent both of the domed synagogues of the Historic movement and the vernacular architecture of Jerusalem.

The dome of the synagogue in Szeged, Hungary. Source: Neil Folberg, *And I Shall Dwell Among Them: Historic Synagogues of the World*, pg. 142.

The Expandable Sanctuary

One way to respond to large High Holy Day crowds is to design a sanctuary that can be combined with adjacent rooms to make a larger temporary worship place. Such solutions are common in contemporary synagogues in which sanctuaries open to adjoining social halls or religious school classrooms.

Outdoor Prayer Place

Providing a place for outdoor prayer provides the congregation with the opportunity to fully experience the natural environment during communal worship. The outdoor prayer place is reminiscent of the biblical accounts of outdoor worship and theophany, as well as the courtyards of the Tabernacle and the Temple.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 6

[1] cf. Stanley Batkin, *Let Them Make Me a Sanctuary: A Contemporary American Synagogue Inspired by the Art of Ancient Israel.*

[2] Genesis 6:14

[3] John Lobell, *Between Silence and Light*, pg. 47.

[4] Norris Kelly Smith, *Frank Lloyd Wright: A Study in Architectural Content* (New York: American Life Foundation and Study Institute, 1979), pg. 175.

[5] Jeremiah 7:4

[6] cf. Exodus 25:2

[7] Bruno Zevi, "Architecture and Einstein's Space-Time" Public lecture at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, December 19, 1979.

[8] Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Future of Architecture*, pg. 52.

[9] In the synagogue at Carpentras, an empty throne-like chair reserved for 'Elijah was placed in a niche designed especially for this purpose.

[10] cf. Eugene Mihaly, "The Architect as Liturgist" (*Faith and Form: Journal of the Guild for Religious Architecture*, vol. 7: Fall, 1974).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS AND ARTICLES

Alt, Lalbrecht. *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion.* New York: Doubleday, 1967.

Alexander, Philip S. "Pre-Emptive Exegesis: Genesis Rabba's Reading of the Story of Creation." Geza Vermes, ed., *Journal of Jewish Studies,* Vol. XLIII, No. 2, Autumn, 1992.

Anderson, Zane; Copur, Ulker. "A Design Studio: The Spiritual in Architecture." *Faith and Form: Journal of the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art, and Architecture,* Vol. 26: Spring, 1993.

Avi-Yonah, Michael. *Art in Ancient Palestine: Selected Studies.* Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1981.

_____. "Synagogue Architecture in the Classical Period." Cecil Roth, ed., *Jewish Art: An Illustrated History.* New York: McGraw Hill, 1961.

Babylonian Talmud. Isadore Epstein, ed. London: The Socino Press, 1935 - 1959.

Barrie, Thomas. "Concerning the Spiritual in Architecture." *Faith and Form: Journal of the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art, and Architecture,* vol. 38, Fall 1996.

_____. *Spiritual Path, Sacred Place: Myth, Ritual, and Meaning in Architecture.* Boston: Shambhala, 1996.

Batkin, Stanley Irving. *Let Them Make Me a Sanctuary: A Contemporary American Synagogue Inspired by the Art of Ancient Israel.* New York: Behrman House, 1978.

Ben-Zion. *Reflections on Symbolism and the Abstract: Two Essays.* Tel Aviv: Eked Publishing, 1982.

Berman, Joshua. *The Temple: Its Symbolism and Meaning Then and Now.* London: Jason Aronson, 1995.

Biran, A. *Temples and High Places in Ancient Israel.* Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1977.

Blake, Peter. *An American Synagogue For Today and Tomorrow.* New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1954.

Boman, Thorleif. *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek.* Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960.

Bokser, Baruch M. "Approaching Sacred Space." *Harvard Theological Review,* vol. 78, no. 1, Jan. 1985.

Brinkman, Johan. *The Perception of Space in the Old Testament.* Kampen, The Netherlands: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1992.

Butler, Richard J. "The Molding of Worship - The Impact of Space." *Faith and Form: Journal of the Guild for Religious Architecture,* vol. 10, Spring 1977.

Butterworth, E. *The Tree at the Center of the Earth.* Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1970.

Campbell, Joseph. *The Mythic Image.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1974.

Cassuto, David. "Jewish and Moslem Places of Worship: Mutual Influences." *Ariel, The Israel Review of Arts and Letters,* no. 105, Autumn 1997.

Chill, Abraham. *The Minhagim, the Customs and Ceremonies of Judaism, Their Origins and Rationale.* New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1979.

De Breffny, Brian. *The Synagogue.* New York: Macmillan,1978.

Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1957.

_____. *Patterns in Comparative Religion.* London: Sheed, and Ward, 1958.

Elnes, Eric N. "Creation and Tabernacle: The Priestly Writer's Environmentalism." *Horizons in Biblical Theology,* vol. 16, no. 2, Dec. 1994.

Encyclopedia Judaica, 1972 ed., s.v. "Idolatry"

_____. 1972 ed., s.v. "Sukkah."

_____. 1972 ed., s.v. "Synagogue."

_____. 1972 ed., s.v. "Tabernacle."

_____. 1972 ed., s.v. "Temple."

Falk, Randell M. "The Congregation-Unique in Jewish Life." *Faith and Form: Journal of the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art, and Architecture,* vol. 11, Spring 1978.

Fawcett, Thomas. *The Symbolic Language of Religion.* Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1971.

Firth, Raymond. *Symbols: Public and Private.* New York: Cornell University Press, 1973.

Folberg, Neil. *And I Shall Dwell Among Them: Historic Synagogues of the World.* New York: Aperture Foundation, 1995.

Friedman, Irving. "The Sacred Space of Judaism." *Parabola,* no. 1, 1978.

Freelander, Daniel Hillel. "Why Temples Look the Way They Do" *Reform Judaism,* vol. 23, no. 1, Fall 1994.

Freud, Sigmond. *Moses and Monotheism.* Katherine Jones, trans. New York: Random House, 1938.

Fuerst, Wesley J. "Space and Place in the Old Testament." *Dialogue,* no. 19, Summer 1980.

Gieselman, Reinhard. *Contemporary Church Architecture.* London: Thames and Hudson, 1972.

Goldenberg, Robert. "The Synagogue as Sacred Space." *Conservative Judaism,* vol. 38, no. 2, Winter 1985-6.

Goodenough, Erwin R. "The Evaluation of Symbols Recurrent in Time As Illustrated in Judaism." *Eranos-Jahrbuch* XX. Zurich: Rhein-Verlag, 1952.

Green, Arthur. "Sabbath as Temple." *Go and Study: Essays and Studies in Honor of Alfred Jospe.* Raphael Jospe, Z. Fishman, eds. Washington DC: B'nai Brith Hillel Foundation, 1980.

Greenberg, Moshe. "The Design and Themes of Ezekiel's Program of Restoration." *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology,* vol. 38, no. 2, April 1984.

Gross, Naomi Landa. *Art and Architecture of the Synagogue.* South Yarra: Jewish Museum of Australia. 1982.

Gurevits, Zali. "Never in Place: Eliade and Judaic Sacred Space." *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions,* no. 39, July - Sept. 1994.

Gutmann, Joseph. "Is There a Place For Art in the Synagogue?" *Central Conference of American Rabbis Journal.* New York: Marstin Press, October 1965.

_____. *The Jewish Sanctuary.* Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1983.

_____. *Sacred Images: Studies in Jewish Art from Antiquity to the Middle Ages.* Great Britain: Variorum Reprints, 1989.

_____. "The Second Commandment and the Image in Judaism." *Hebrew Union College Annual,* No. 32, 1961.

_____. "What Can Jewish History Learn From Jewish Art?" Paper delivered at the City University of the State of New York. Nov. 28, 1988.

Hachlili, Rachel. *Ancient Synagogues in Israel: 3rd - 7th Century C. E.* Oxford: Bar, 1989.

Handelman, Don. *Models and Mirrors: Towards an Anthropology of Public Events.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Hertz, J. H., *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs.* London: Soncino Press, 1963.

Heschel, Abraham Joshua. *God in Search of Man.* New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1976.

_____. *I Asked For Wonder: A Spiritual Anthology.* Samuel H. Dresner, ed. New York: Crossroad, 1984.

_____. *Quest for God: Studies in Prayer and Symbolism.* New York: Crossroads, 1954.

_____. *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man.* New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1951.

Herberg, Will. *Judaism and Modern Man.* New York: Meridian Books, 1959.

Hoffman, Lawrence A. *The Art of Public Prayer: Not for Clergy Only.* Washington D. C.: The Pastoral Press, 1988.

_____. "In Search of a Spiritual Home." *Reform Judaism,* vol. 23, no. 1, Fall 1994.

Jaffee, Martin S. *Early Judaism.* New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997.

The Jerusalem Bible: The Holy Scriptures. Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 1992.

Jones, Paul D. "The Role of Sacred Space." *Faith and Form: Journal of the Guild for Religious Architecture,* vol. 7, Spring 1984.

Jung, Carl G. *Man and His Symbols.* London: Aldus Books, 1964.

_____. *Memories, Dreams, and Reflections.* New York: Random House, 1961.

Kahof, Abram. *Jewish Symbolic Art.* Jerusalem: Gefen, 1990.

Kashtan, Aharon. "Synagogue Architecture of the Medieval and Pre-Emancipation Periods." Cecil Roth, ed., *Jewish Art: An Illustrated History.* New York: McGraw Hill, 1961.

Kayser, Stephen S. "Defining Jewish Art." *Mordechai M. Kaplan Jubilee Volume.* New York: 1953.

Klein, Issac. *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice.* New York: Ktav, 1979.

Krinsky, Carol Herselle. "Gates of Grove Synagogue: Space Encloses the Past, Present, and Future." *Faith and Form: Journal of the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art, and Architecture*, vol. 23, Winter 1989-90.

Kushner, Lawrence. *The Book of Words: Talking Spiritual Life, Living Spiritual Talk.* Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1993.

_____. *Synagogues of Europe: Architecture, History, and Meaning.* New York: The Architectural History Foundation. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1985.

Levine, Moshe. *The Tabernacle: Its Structure and Utensils.* London: Soncino Press, 1969.

Lynch, Kevin. *What Time Is This Place?* Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1972.

Maimonides. *Mishneh Torah: Hilchos Bais HaBechirah* (The Laws of God's Chosen House).

McClung, William Alexander. *The Architecture of Paradise: Survivals of Eden and Jerusalem.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.

Meek, H. A. *The Synagogue.* London: Phaidon Press, 1995.

Meier, Richard. *Recent American Synagogue Architecture.* New York: The Jewish Museum, 1963.

Meyer, Ben. "The Temple: Symbol Central to Biblical Theology." *Gregorianum*, no. 2, 1993.

Mettinger, Tryggve. "The Veto on Images and the Aniconic God in Ancient Israel." *Religious Symbols and their Functions*, Harold Biezais, ed. Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1979.

Meyers, Carole L. *The Tabernacle Menorah: A Synthetic Study of a Symbol from the Biblical Cult.* Montana: Scholars Press, 1976.

Michael, Don. "From Chaos to Cosmos: Sacred Space in Genesis." *Zeitschrift fur die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, vol. 108, no. 2, 1996.

Mihaly, Eugene. "The Architect as Liturgist." *Faith and Form: Journal of the Guild for Religious Architecture*, vol. 7: Fall, 1974.

Miller, Arnold H. *The Origin and Early Architectural Development of the Synagogue*. Rabbinic Thesis, Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institue of Religion, 1965.

Moore, Albert C. *Iconography of Religions*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977.

Namenyi, Ernest. *The Essence of Jewish Art*. Edouard Roditi, trans. London: Thomas Yoseloff, 1960.

Neuser, Jacob. *The Evidence of the Mishnah*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

_____. *Symbol and Theology in Early Judaism*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.

Neutra, Richard. *Survival Through Design*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1954.

Olyan, Saul. "Why an Alter of Unfinished Stones: Some Thoughts on Exodus 20:25 and Deuteronomy 27:5 - 6." *Zeitschrift fur die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* vol. 108, no. 2, 1996.

Ovadiah, Ruth and Asher. *Mosaic Pavements in Israel*. Rome: L'erma di Bretschneider, 1987.

Pelli, Pinchas. *Torah Today, A Renewed Encounter With Scripture*. Washington DC: B'nai Brith Books, 1987.

Plotkin, Albert. "Is There a True Role for Art in the Religious Community?" *Faith and Form: Journal of the Guild for Religious Architecture*, vol. 8: Fall 1975.

Quinn, Patrick J. "Sacred Space: Parameters and Poetics." *Faith and Form: Journal of the Guild for Religious Architecture*, vol. 7, Fall 1974.

Richardson, Peter. "Law and Piety in Herod's Architecture." *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1986.

_____. "Religion, Architecture, and Ethics: Some First Century Case Studies." *Horizons in Biblical Theology*, vol. 10, no. 2, Dec. 1988.

Rosenfeld, Erika. "The New Intimate Sanctuary." *Reform Judaism*, vol. 23, no. 1, Fall 1994.

Rossant, James. "The Open Synagogue: Architectonic vs. Readymade." *Faith and Form: Journal of the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art, and Architecture*, Fall 1994.

Rothman, Walter E. *The Location, Architecture, and Function of the Synagogue in Talmudic Times.* Rabbinic Thesis, Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, 1923.

Rubenstein, Jeffrey L. "The Symbolism of the Sukkah." *Judaism*, vol. 43, no. 4, Fall 1994.

Ruskin, John. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture.* New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1848, (first edition published: 1849).

Seeskin, Kenneth. *No Other Gods: The Modern Struggle Against Idolatry.* New Jersey: Behrman House, 1995.

Sekler, Eduard F. "Architecture and the Flow of Time." *Faith and Form: Journal of the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art, and Architecture*, vol. 21: Spring 1988.

Schoen, Myron E. "Form vs. Function." *Faith and Form: Journal of the Guild for Religious Architecture*, vol. 1: Jan.1968.

Sefer Ha-agadah: Legends from the Talmud and Midrash. ed. Bialik, Hayim / Ravnitzky, Yehoshua. Tel Aviv: Dvir Publishers, 1987.

Siegel, Martin. *Ancient Jewish Religious Architecture.* Rabbinic Thesis, Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, 1960.

Siegal, Richard; Strassfeld, Michael; Strassfeld, Sharon. *"The Jewish Catalogue."* Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973.

Smith, Norris Kelly. *Frank Lloyd Wright: A Study in Architectural Content.* New York: American Life Foundation and Study Institute, 1979.

Sobel, Sharon L. "Community as Sacred Space." *Ecumenism*, no. 123, Sept. 1996.

Sovik, Edward A. "What Is Religious Architecture?" *Faith and Form: Journal of the Guild for Religious Architecture*, vol. 1: Jan. 1968.

Sussman, Lance. "The Suburbanization of American Judaism as Reflected in Synagogue Building and Architecture, 1945 - 1975." *American Jewish History*, Vol. LXXV, No. 1, Sept. 1985.

Taylor, Michelle Taillon. "The Evolution of Mikveh Israel and Louis Kahn's Vision of Sacred Space." *Faith and Form: Journal of the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art, and Architecture*, vol. 22: Winter 1988-9.

Tosefta. ed. Sol Lieberman. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1962.

Vilnay, Zev. *The Holy Land in Old Prints and Maps.* Jerusalem: Ruben Mass, 1963.

Whiman, David A. "Make Me a Sanctuary." *Faith and Form: Journal of the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art and Architecture*, vol. 28, Fall 1995.

White, James. "Litergy and the Language of Space." *Worship*, no. 52, Jan. 1978.

Willey, Diane. "The Many Shapes of Sacred Space." *Ecumenism*, no. 123, 1996.

Williams, Peter W. "Religious Architecture and Landscape." *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience: Studies of Traditions and Movements.* Charles Lippy and Peter Williams, eds. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988.

Wilson, Marc. "Concretizing Spirituality: Reflections on Building the New Temple Israel." *Faith and Form: Journal of the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art, and Architecture*, vol. 14, Fall 1990.

Winkler, Hugo. *The Tel El Amarna Letters.* Berlin: 1896.

Wischnitzer, Rachel. *Synagogue Architecture in the United States.* Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1955.

Wolf-Prusan, Reretz. *Beauty and the Rabbis.* Rabbinic Thesis, Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, 1990.

Wright, Frank Lloyd. *The Future of Architecture.* New York: Bramhall House, 1953.

Zevi, Bruno. "Architecture and Einstein's Space-Time." Public lecture delivered at the Tel Aviv Museum, 19 Dec. 1979.

_____. *Towards an Organic Architecture.* London: Faber and Faber, 1950.

Zisenwine, David. *Sabbath: Time and Existence.* Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1982.

Zweig, Yochanan. "The Dedication of the Temple." *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought*, vol. 25, no. 1, Fall 1989.

HISTORICAL MATERIALS

Cincinnati Jewish Community. Letter from the Jews of Cincinnati to the Elders of the Jewish Congregation in Charleston, South Carolina asking for financial help to erect a synagogue. 1825.

Congregation Bene Israel, Cincinnati, Ohio. "Service for the dedication of a new synagogue. Sept. 14 and15, 1906.

Congregation Bene Israel, Cincinnati, Ohio. "Resume of the Steps Leading to the Construction of a New Temple and Sabbath School Building." by Alfred M. Cohen. April 6, 1905.

Congregation Beth Ahabah, Richmond, Virginia. "To Honor the Past...To Build the Future." Booklet in Honor of the 200th Anniversary of the Congregation. 1989.

Congregation Beth Israel, Dayton, Ohio. Dedication booklet for a new synagogue. 1995.

Congregation Micah, Nashville, Tennessee. Shabbat service for the dedication of a new synagogue. May 17, 1997.

Congregation Mickve Israel, Savannah, Georgia. Sermon delivered on the congregation's charter day, relating the congregation's early history and focusing on the planning and building of the synagogue. by Rabbi Saul J. Rubin. November 30, 1975.

Lloyd Street Synagogue, Baltimore, Maryland. "The Story Behind the Synagogue's Restoration." by Louis Cahn. 1966.

Lloyd Street Synagogue, Baltimore, Maryland "Little Known Facts of the Lloyd Street Synagogue." Address by Wm. Harvey Hunter, Jr. April 26, 1963.

Temple Beth El, Springfield, Massachusetts. Oral history interview with Sidney Queen and Leon Kruger concerning the architecture of the synagogue. Interview conducted by Percival Goodman.

Temple Beth Shalom, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania. Oral history interview with Melvin Bricker concerning Frank Lloyd Wright and the architecture of the synagogue. Interview conducted by George Goodwin.

375487