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Supportive Effects of Sabbath Ritual Participation for a Diverse Group of Older Adults Residing in a Multicultural Neighborhood

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Strong One! Unite us. Count us all! Make us as one; together We will be a light. If even one is cut off, the light will fail us. Our song please receive it. Our song do accept it. Our song will bring us closer to You…to your Spirit.

Avraham Maimin (c.1550) *El Mistater: the God Who is Hidden*

It is only in the mirror of Divine unity in which we may behold the unity of all: Divine is a message that discloses unity where we see diversity, that discloses peace when we are involved in discord. God is He who holds our fitful lives together, who reveals to us that what is diverse in color, in interest, in creeds, race, classes, nations, is one in His eyes.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (1976) *Man is Not Alone*

Abstract

While the Sabbath observance beginning just before sundown on Friday is a Jewish observance, older adults from different religious, ethnic, and racial backgrounds come together to participate in a Jewish ritual celebration at the YM&YWHA (Young Men and Young Women's Hebrew Association, hereon referred to as "the Y") of Washington Heights and Inwood, NY. What is the connective thread that inspires and keeps individuals from different backgrounds coming together? What is the benefit of ritual for a heterogenous group of older adults, and why Sabbath? This Doctor of Ministry project brings together theological and psychological study to analyze the components of the weekly Jewish Sabbath ritual, including but not limited to songs, prayers, and Torah readings that are experienced each week by a group of older adults at the Y. From a group of 25 adults ages 62-100 who participate regularly, nineteen individuals participated in a survey about their perspectives on the *Shabbat in Conversation* program. The survey was designed to illuminate components of Shabbat that were important to group connection while exploring the role that ritual played in addressing individuals' psychosocial needs.

While the stated purpose of many Jewish rituals is religious, this study finds that group participation in the weekly *Shabbat in Conversation* program at the YM&YWHA served a crucial social function in mitigating loneliness, isolation, and poverty associated with poor mental and physical health among older adults. This ritual of the Sabbath, which entailed everyone doing the same thing, in the same way, at the same time, strengthened group cohesion around friendship despite—and because of—the diversity of the participants. Sharing in song amid the blessings and prayers embedded in the routine of the ritual offered reassurance and meaning, uplifting older adults to experience comfort and find relevance in their daily life. I call

these cumulative effects “therapeutic theology,” a term which refers to their connection to spiritual tradition while acknowledging the importance of their more-than-spiritual impacts.

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There are many who got me to the finish line as well as helped me across. My advisors, including Dr. James Holmes, helped make this thesis project manageable. Many old friends came to my aid as well: Alice, Robin, Craig, Jocelyn, Kristin, Lisas (2), and new friends Ross, Lindas (3), Harold, and Anne.

But there were those for whom the finish line was never even a question.

First to my dear family at the YM&YWHA of Washington Heights and Inwood. I was blessed to share so many *Shabbat in Conversation* Fridays with you. Our prayer leaders, songsters, and seekers and keepers of tradition, my love for you is boundless. But this is merely שלום חברים. It is with great sadness that one of our Holocaust survivors passed away in the final weeks of this research project. זיכרונם לברכה /zikhronam livarka.

Martin (Marty) Englisher recognized my commitment; his visionary leadership and dedication to Jewish values over the past 45 years contributed to this amazing sanctuary that has nourished this beautiful intergenerational and multiethnic community.

Rabbi and Pastoral Counselor Paulette Posner and the cantorial direction of Deborah Gross welcomed me into the Y as we sang our way through prayer.

Victoria Neznansky supported this project and aided me at every single step of the way. Her dedication to the suffering and injustice in our world is only matched by her activism and example. She has touched the lives of so many and has set such a high bar one can only dream about. I continue to look forward to her hugs and smiles as we move this project to a new stage.

Dr. Robert L. Berger has been a life-long cheerleader, navigator through rough waters, speaker of truth-to-power, and always a believer and source of courage.

On those wintery days that seemed dark and cloudy and those searing summer days that begged for shade, there were my grandchildren Owen and Benny whose smiles and warmth make everything A-Okay.

They were raised by my unbelievable children – my son Peter who not only provided "tech" support, but never let the project fall into the abyss, Regin who had endless listening time, and Matt who has uplifted so many with his Shabbat music.

Then there is history. For my great-grandfather for whom I am named, intrepid adventurer and Hasidic Rabbi; beloved grandfathers, Arthur and John; grandmothers Rose and Sophie; and greats Rose and Ben. I continue to hold their history in my heart and hands. זיכרונם לברכה /zikhronam livarka. May their memory be a blessing.

With enormous gratitude and respect, this project would have never existed in its fullest and deepest meaning without the guidance of Rabbi Seth Bernstein. He gave me a chance that paved the way, circling back to where it all began: to take my place among the wisdom and proud history of the Jewish people, to reclaim my tradition, and to continue without judgement to seek a personal closeness to God.

And with a heart about to explode, for my dearest husband Bernie, who lives in the knowledge that all God really wants for us is love, "and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" (John 4:16). For everything, every day.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction

Ritual is thought to strengthen the health and wellbeing of older adults by encouraging engagement in community.[1] However, less is known about the role of religious and social service institutions in fostering healthy aging, nor about what might be the most effective ways to respond to the unique social and spiritual needs of older adults.[2] In this Doctor of Ministry Demonstration Project (DMIN-DP), I explore how components of ritual in the *Shabbat in Conversation* program among members of the Young Men & Young Women's Hebrew Association of Washington Heights and Inwood (YM&YWHA, hereafter referred to as the Y) supports community and enhances aging among its multicultural membership.[3] In doing so, I draw connections among psychological opportunities for aging well with Jewish theology and community history in Washington Heights and Inwood, charting both present and future ways of living well together.

The *Shabbat in Conversation* program that I lead as a Coordinator of Programming for Older Adults is the centerpiece of this study and has become the largest and most consistently attended group at the Y. Organizationally, *Shabbat in Conversation* resides within the division of the Center for Adults Living Well (CALW), which serves adults who are 60 and older and live primarily in Washington Heights and Inwood.

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[1] *Ritual* is defined as an act or actions intentionally conducted by an individual or group employing one or more symbols in a repetitive, formal, precise and highly stylized fashion (Myerhoff, 1977).

[2] By spirituality, I refer to senses of connectedness, purpose, meaning, and "transcendence of life" (Nelson-Becker et al., 2015) that may or may not overlap with recognized or organized religion.

[3] Here and throughout, I use the common English translations "Shabbat" and "Sabbath" interchangeably.

Shabbat in Conversation is a Jewish-centered program. Its place in a community center rather than a synagogue is representative of a broader shift in participation in religion, spiritual activities, and/or belief, from public worship to congregating in private sectors (Malone & Dadswell, 2018). [4] Program staff are primarily either of Jewish descent or of non-Jewish, Hispanic heritage (and, like program constituents, are Spanish-speaking). In coordinating and leading the *Shabbat in Conversation* group, I have worked closely with our rabbi and pastoral counselor (senior staff members from the Y's Norman E. Alexander Center for Jewish Life [NEA-CJL]), as well as an LCSW trauma psychologist (Chief Development and Social Services Officer and Director of the Y's Holocaust Survivor's Program), who provided assistance and mentorship. We coordinated to design, deliver, and assess value-enriched programming that promotes wellness in aging.[5]

The CALW addresses the cultural diversity of the neighborhood by celebrating many, various traditions across linguistic and cultural divides. The *Shabbat in Conversation* program is a prime example; the group's membership mirrors the demographic profile of the neighborhood. Asian, Black, and Latino/Latina-Americans comprise nearly three-quarters of the cohort that

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[4] *Religion,* in its broadest definition, is an organized social structure. Members of a specific religion adhere to a prescribed set of beliefs, practices and often values. Religion is usually collective and communal (Shafranske, 2003). *Belief*, as a common part of ordinary living, may involve both religion and spirituality.

[5] *Wellness in Aging* or *Healthy Aging* is a continuous process of optimizing opportunities to maintain and improve physical and mental health, independence, and quality of life throughout the life course. Creating physical and social environments that enable people to do what is important to them despite losses in capacity (Fallon & Karlawish, 2019).

gathers weekly alongside the Jewish members to celebrate the Jewish Sabbath and explore Jewish values.[6]

Shabbat is the most symbolically important ritual observance in Judaism and the only ritual observance instituted in the Ten Commandments. Coming from the Hebrew root word *Shin-Bet-Tav*, meaning *to cease, end,* or *rest*, Shabbat is a weekly 25-hour observance, from just before sundown each Friday through the completion of nightfall on Saturday.

"The Sabbath is a day for walking softly through the world" (Strassfeld, 2006, p. 103). And as Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, theologian, philosopher, and 20th century activist described, "the seventh day is like a palace in time with a kingdom for all. It is not a day but an atmosphere" (Heschel, 1951, p. 8). Participants of *Shabbat in Conversation* at the Y actively create an environment of peace and joy together. Alongside and through that atmosphere, the Sabbath contributes to a myriad of positive psychosocial outcomes derived from their connection and participation. In this project, I consider the relationship between ritual—patterned behavior performed at specified times—and wellbeing in older age (Moore & Myerhoff, 1977; Turner, 1991; Scott & Marshall, 2009; Nelson-Becker et al., 2015). Specifically, I examine the aspects of ritual associated with the observance of the Sabbath.

Significance of the Study

A study of the impact of engaging in a communal, weekly ritual for older adults is important for many reasons. Many older adults in the U.S., and in Washington Heights and Inwood in particular, face the struggles of aging in the absence of nearby family and partners,

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[6] Community members at the Y describe their racial and ethnic backgrounds in a variety of ways. Here, I use language in keeping with the US Census Bureau's most recent update (US Census Bureau, 2024).

suggesting that social programs and attuned facilitators have an important role. In *Jewish Visions for the Aging*, Rabbi Dayle Friedman discusses how through warmth and friendship in community, aging adults can reduce "the isolation of their age-segregated ghettos and continue to engage with the future" (2008, p. 173). On a fundamental level, this study seeks to understand the complex struggle that aging poses and imagine holistic approaches toward living productively, actively, and with personal fulfillment (Malone & Dadswell, 2018).

In the group under study, individuals not only come together for companionship but also to find opportunities for continued personal growth while contributing to the broader intergenerational and intercultural programs offered at the Y. On the surface, the *Shabbat in Conversation* group seems to have formed solely around a weekly religious gathering and, thus, individual spiritual practice. However, the observance as it is practiced at the Y aligns with the elements that are evident in successful community engagement, rather than being centered around the fulfillment of a religious obligation. Although there is deep, textual, religious importance to Shabbat, as I discuss in Chapter Three, Jewish individuals also relate to Shabbat through habit, community-identification, and the joy of seeing those who are beloved. These are the elements of Shabbat among this group of older adults, I suggest, that seem to have not only psychological but also spiritual significance.

In the book and subsequent Oscar-winning film *Number Our Days,* anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff (1978; Littman, 2007) documented a group of elderly Jewish people living in Venice, California whose weekly engagement in the shared ritual of a Friday night Jewish Sabbath formed their connective foundation. The works portray a group of disadvantaged, but nevertheless independent and resilient, older adults who sustain their vivid cultural heritage in modern America amid poverty and loneliness. Myerhoff records the stories of a rich cultural

ritual that gives this cohort the vitality and strength to face enormous daily problems: neglect, poor health, inadequate housing, and physical danger.

Although the individuals under Myerhoff's study were culturally homogenous (a marked difference from the context of this project), the importance of their shared Friday night gathering fortified the resolve these older adults needed to deal with the problems they faced in their daily lives and is further evidence of the importance of their shared weekly ritual. It helped to provide the individual participants with a power that enabled them to cope with the hardships experienced in aging, while buttressing their mental and physical health.

Alongside inevitable physical and cognitive challenges of aging rest the often-unspoken issues of a spiritual nature at the later stages of life, the enormous undertaking of taking stock of one's history and its meanings while staying connected to one's present: seen, heard, and engaged (Peterson & Nelson, 1987). This research explores how sharing of spirit and the values embedded in the observance of the Jewish Sabbath ritual in particular—situated in love and wrapped within positive regard—remotivates and sustains older adults through the forging of a collective identity of their own design.

One inescapable aspect of this collective identity for our older adults lies in the sharedness of fear and discrimination. Especially for our older Jewish adults, antisemitism remains an unresolved trauma contributing to what, for many, has been a life-long fear of being unsafe and feeling unwanted. One of the functions of the Y, I suggest, is in recognizing this fear and responding by creating safe environments that, in a small but significant way, diminish distress and anxiety and restore a sense of peace.

Sabbath, as this research finds, offers a refuge and a safe space for Jewish and non-Jewish participants alike as they interface with elements of tradition through a joyful and playful

exercise, a familiar practice, and a meal together, Over the years, I cannot help but observe that the communal aspect of our Sabbath at the Y has, indeed, this transcendent quality: removing barriers, healing hearts, and welcoming all. Song, prayer, blessing, and Torah reading coalesce to create an experience that should be explored, shared, and replicated to wider worlds in these troubled times.

In unpacking the experience of *Shabbat in Conversation* among older adults, this project aims to identify benefits of ritual that may be applicable in communities that serve other diverse groups – whether they be older may not even prove to be important. At its essence, participants of *Shabbat in Conversation* are modeling diversity, inclusion, and openness as fundamental features of Jewish tradition, enacted through the celebration of the Sabbath. So, while I continue each week to referee when our Israeli career army captain and Holocaust refugee (age 100) and our longest attending prayer leader (age 78) bicker over whether we should say "Good Shabbos" (anglicized form of Yiddish) or "Shabbat Shalom" (modern Hebrew) as we move on our way to lunch, we all leave with a feeling that is hard to describe but waiting to be uncovered.

Background and History

I turn now to the broader context of the YM&YWHA of Washington Heights and Inwood (the Y) and the community of which it is a part. The histories of the Washington Heights and Inwood neighborhoods are key components of the individual life-histories of many of the study participants. It is also the context in which the Y developed, implemented, and evaluated its social programs (and continues to do so), which extend far beyond Jewish neighborhood residents. Indeed, the Y has been committed for over a century to the organization's original mission: improving lives and building community within an ever-evolving population. The organization has remained responsive to the needs of wave after wave of immigrants who

escaped wars, oppressive governments, discrimination, and abject poverty. Washington Heights and Inwood became "hot spots" for refugees seeking a better life for their families. The following section is divided into three subsections that focus on major demographic shifts and the evolving role of the Y in the community.

A Mission to Aid Immigrants: 1917-1950s

Established in 1917, the Y is northern Manhattan's premier Jewish social service center serving an ethnically and socio-economically diverse constituency. In the earliest part of the twentieth century, and during the Y's first years of operation, the organization's major focus was on the resettlement of WWI refugees who fled the Balkan wars and anti-Semitic pogroms. By and through the 1940s, still in the nascent stages of evolving plans to aid immigrants, the Y held fast to its mission by directing its attention to the resettlement of World War II refugees and survivors. In fact, the neighborhood became home to the most German refugees in the United States (Annual Report, 2023).

In the 1940s, Jewish refugees from Europe who settled in the Heights represented nearly 42% of the population. As they rebuilt their livelihoods in New York City, the Washington Heights neighborhood was regarded as a "starter neighborhood" rather than a permanent home. Yet, many families stayed in Washington Heights for longer periods of time, restricted by racist and anti-Semitic housing policies that limited their access to housing stock elsewhere. When the US Supreme Court declared restrictive real estate covenants illegal in 1948, Jewish families began a move to the suburbs and more affluent urban neighborhoods.

Decades of Turmoil: 1960s – 1970s

Residents in Washington Heights and Inwood remember the 1950s as an era in which the neighborhood felt separate from the rest of New York City, yet subject to very little crime or

conflict. This stability, however, was short-lived. By the early 1960s, the once-secure community's "zones of safety" were rocked by gang violence, proliferation of illicit drug markets, and ensuing ethnic tensions. Unrelenting crime forced the Y to relocate its headquarters three times within the neighborhood. The decade of the 1970s left residents in the Heights to cope with intensifying insecurity. For the first time since the beginning of the century, more individuals left than settled in the area. Job losses and a withering tax base contributed to devastation as abandoned buildings became shelters for crime. Bourgeoning illicit drug trade dominated the neighborhood; sidewalks became dangerous; kids no longer had safe places to play; and parents kept their children indoors (Snyder, 2015).

During this time, immigrants from the Dominican Republic who fled the country after the fall of the Rafael Trujillo military regime moved into Washington Heights and would soon define the neighborhood's identity. Arriving in the late 1970s, they found a neighborhood on the verge of ruin, wracked by crime, racial and ethnic tension, dirty streets, troubled public schools, and abandoned apartment buildings.

Martin (Marty) Englisher, the current CEO of the Y and longtime neighborhood resident, began his tenure in the early '80s. He remembers the Y as one of the few safe havens in the neighborhood. Under his leadership, the Y became a critical site for broad-based community action and cohesion. During the race riots, the Y fought for reconciliation between warring ethnic/racial factions in the neighborhood and the continuation of vital services aimed at returning the neighborhood residence to some semblance of a normal life. Seen as a "safe space," the halls of the Y were full of hopeful songs, newly registered voters, warm food, helping hands, and an aura of peaceful times yet to come.

Interfaith, Multicultural, and Interconnected: 1980s - present

After decades of turmoil, the number of Jewish people living in Washington Heights decreased from 16% in the 1960s to 8% in 1980 (*A Community in the Heights*, n.d.). Nevertheless, the Y became the de-facto meeting location for social activism and community unity as residents who had faced an uncertain future took the fate of the neighborhood into their own hands (*A Community in the Heights*, n.d.). Current community members at the Y remember the end of the 1980s as the inaugural moment in which the Y became the nucleus of wider-scale community gatherings that fostered social cohesion and resource sharing amidst governmental divestment and abandoned public infrastructure.

Dr. Ruth Westheimer, a Holocaust survivor who lived her entire adult life in Washington Heights, helped guide and lift the Y out of the troubles that befell the neighborhood. As Board President, she brought attention to the formerly "Young Men and Young Women" (of the YM&YWHA) who first moved to the neighborhood as refugees, now in their older years. Those who had moved to the neighborhood in the 1920s and 1930s had retired and desperately needed services that met their needs. Under her watch, the Y began programming for older adults, opening the first senior community center in New York City to be funded by the Department for the Aging.[7]

The Y's role in social leadership was concretized by the inauguration of a wide-scale interfaith network developed for community empowerment, of which the Y became a central hub. Taking a leading role, Rabbi Margaret Wenig, who served as the spiritual leader of a Reform synagogue in the neighborhood from 1985-2000, sought to "connect Jews, Christians,

[7] Dr. Ruth remained on the Y's Board serving as President Emeritus until her death July 2024.

and Dominicans in spheres from religion to politics" (Snyder, 2015, p. 6). Although the size of Rabbi Wenig's congregation was waning, they were still well acquainted with the pillars of *tikkun olam*;[8] what they lacked in size they made up with enthusiasm. An alliance spearheaded by Rabbi Wenig was shaped. Spiritual leaders from the Catholic Church of the Good Shepherd, Lutheran reverends from Our Savior's Atonement, Urdu-speaking Seventh Day Adventists, and major Dominican Pentecostal congregations shared in the Rabbi's vision to "repair" the Heights and formed into a coalition as a stabilizing force and, later, provider of social services. Dr. Robert Snyder, Manhattan Borough Historian and Rutgers professor of history relates "the work of the Reform Jewish community, like that of the YM&YWHA, showed that it was possible for the remaining Jewish population to be both proudly Jewish and at the same time concerned and engaged in the welfare of the entire community" (Snyder, 2015, p. 173).

While the Y touts a long record of serving Jewish people and non-Jews alike, demographic change in the neighborhood moved the organization to expand its reach, providing care and programming that served the large Dominican population while retaining connection to its Jewish identity.[9] Presently, there are abundant opportunities for participants to share their traditions through cultural, recreational, art, and educational activities as well as attend health and wellness classes. To best serve the community, programs are often conducted in two languages and/or languages other than English.

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[8] *Tikkun Olam* is currently translated as repairing or healing the world. During the 1st millennium CE.in the Talmud, the rabbis wrote about *mipnei tikkun ha-olam*, Hebrew for "for the sake of the betterment of society." In this context, tikkun olam justified rabbinic interventions designed to maintain the social order.

[9] As of 2022, the percentage of individuals identifying as "Hispanic" in Washington Heights/Inwood was 66.5% (The Furman Center, 2022).

Through the Norman E. Alexander Center for Jewish Life, the Y hosts events in recognition of major Jewish holidays, inviting members of all faiths and backgrounds, and bringing the entire community together. While throughout the year, the smaller Jewish constituency joins in with the entire Y membership to enjoy additional holiday and special seasonal events. The auditorium, which also serves as the lunchroom and dance floor, overflows with grace and kindness. The respect between and among these diverse communities is mutual. The Y and the individuals who make up the broader community at the Y continue to welcome new members, responding to the challenges of the times with one face, daring to dance together.

Chapter Two: Where is the Suffering?

In this chapter, I explore problems that affect individuals in older age in our community at the Y and in Washington Heights/Inwood, as well as in society at large. These include common health challenges associated with aging and problems of poverty—specifically, food insecurity and social stigma.

Health Challenges of Aging

Getting older is at a minimum not easy, sometimes painful, and often frightening. Physical challenges mark the later stages of life even for the most healthy and energetic. While physical health conditions appear outwardly, mental health conditions among older adults can go underrecognized and undertreated. Social isolation and loneliness, key risk factors for the development of mental health disorders in later life, are of epidemic proportions, and our neighborhood is not shielded (Teo et al., 2023). Many of the older adults in the Y's programs have a long history both with the neighborhood and the Y. As they raised families, many chose to stay in *their* neighborhood even as their children left for the suburbs. This has left many feeling abandoned, disconnected, and forgotten. These problems are compounded among many of the older adults who attend programs at the Y, who also experience reduced mobility and poverty. Yet they continue to claim the neighborhood as their own; even as it is ever-changing, they commit and prefer to remain in the Heights.

As such, the challenges of aging are recognized throughout the Jewish tradition: "In old age, all powers fail" (*Midrash, Tanhuma Miketz 10*). Most of the CALW membership is between the ages of 70-80, and we expect that the median age of the group will advance with this cohort. Adjacent programs within the CALW monitor the individual health of many of our participants and multiple programs exist to promote healthy lifestyles. Alongside these initiatives, our team

of clinical counselors and supervisors facilitates screening and monitoring for mental health concerns. As we move forward, there is ongoing need to be alert for and responsive to the inevitable stressful and often painful periods that dot the continuum from middle age to older adulthood at individual and population levels.

Food Insecurity

Adults 65 and older account for nearly 1/5 of the over 216,000 residents of Washington Heights and Inwood. Of that number, over 1/3 live in poverty (NYC Department for the Aging, 2023). Food insecurity disproportionally affects older adults. Due to escalating prices and inadequate access to grocery stores (the ratio of supermarkets to bodegas in the area is 1:18), many of our older adults lack the physical and financial resources to obtain sufficiently nutritious meals (NYC Food Policy Center, 2022). Those most susceptible to hunger may fall into one or more of the top four risk categories: they have a disability; are from a community of color; rent vs. own their homes; and are not married (Hake & Dawes, 2024). These risk factors are well-represented in the demographics of this cohort study, as many (1) are from a community of color (68%), (2) rent vs own their home (100%), and (3) are not married or partnered (96%).

To help address these challenges, the Y serves more than 1,500 older adults anually, with more than 125 individuals finding sustenance and community through daily lunches on site six days a week. While all our members can count on lunch, and every effort is made to provide transportation to the Y at no charge, these efforts can still fall short of meeting community needs. We suspect that many of our group members still experience a "meal gap," missing opportunities for nourishment because of poverty and disability. A long-standing group leader once gingerly approached me as I was cleaning up the room after the service, "Please don't shake the tablecloth and clean the crumbs off of it from the challah, we need them to put in our soup for dinner."

Since that time, I am careful to distribute additional challah rolls and Tupperware to each member on the way to lunch.

Spiritual and Psychological Insecurity

In the early 1960s, 54-year-old Polish-born Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, brought a heartbreaking message to Washington at the White House Council on the Aging. “I see them clustered together and alone, clinging to a hope for somebody’s affection that does not come to pass. I hear them pray for the release that comes with death. I see them deprived and forgotten, outcasts today” (Heschel quoted in Tweel, n.d.). Heschel summed up this problem as spiritual, psychological, and physical agony precipitating from rejection from family and society.

While progress in medical research and healthcare services has led to better support for the physical needs of an aging population, older adults are more than a compilation of symptomology. Rabbi Heschel’s comments reframe the need for the appreciation of older adults as fully “rounded individuals – rather than a series of health issues” (Malone & Dadswell, 2018, p. 1). Time poses a specific challenge to the aged, “Old age has the vicious tendency of depriving a person of the present. It does so because the aged thinks of himself as belonging to the past” (Neusner & Heschel, 1990, p. 189). It is precisely this openness to the present, Heschel argued, for which we must strive. This tendency must be balanced by attitudes and policies that offer older adults an opportunity to engage in matters of the present and continue lifelong projects of personal and spiritual growth.

In 2023, Dr. Vivek Murty, United States Surgeon General, released an advisory calling attention to a nation-wide public health crisis marked by loneliness, isolation, and lack of connection. He noted that approximately half of U.S. adults reported experiencing measurable levels of loneliness, factors that increase the risk of developing mental health disorders. He

warned that lack of connection is correlated with the risk for premature death at levels comparable to daily smoking (Murthy, 2023). In addition, approximately 1/3 of older adults who are not in care facilities live by themselves, with only occasional visits from family, and close to half of women over the age of 75 live alone (Profile of Older Americans, 2017).

Loneliness is a subjective feeling that one is lacking in needed social connections, whereas isolation refers to a physical state of separation: "I see them deprived and forgotten" (Heschel quoted in Tweel, n.d.). The reason to separate loneliness in the former sense from isolation in the latter is because loneliness can be linked to specific and identifiable forms of psychosocial pain (Murthy, 2020). Researchers have segmented loneliness into three areas clustered around the type of relationships that are missing: intimate or emotional loneliness (longing for a close bond); relational or social loneliness (yearning for quality friendship and support); and collective loneliness (desire for a network or community of people who have a shared sense of purpose and interest). Lack in any of the above domains can stimulate feelings of loneliness (Cacioppo et al., 2015).

In a pointed Hasidic tale, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812) was offered a blessing for long life. His response? "Only if it is not spiritually empty." I have seen – and I have experienced – what Heschel calls the "agony of psychological and spiritual insecurity, boredom, loneliness, and fear." Accompanying those emotions is the sense of being useless to family and society among the aged and aging. Group members of *Shabbat in Conversation* tell me that they care about being treated with consideration not merely because of their age and experience, but for their skills and abilities in the present. They want not to be discarded. They want to be acknowledged as being present. And they deserve response. As a group member once stated to me: "No matter what the outside world thinks, I know I haven't stopped growing or

caring. I have skills that I gained over a full life. I sang in the opera. I know all about music. I still travel and can share my experiences with others. How can you help me put those to use?"

Abraham Joshua Heshel Twerski, Orthodox Rabbi, psychiatrist, and author of over 80 books, saw synergy between his therapeutic orientation and the laws of Torah. He offered an alternative word in Psalm 71:9 (See Appendix 4), which is usually phrased in translation "Do not *cast* me off in time of old age," to "Do not *fling* me off" (Twerski, 2009). This slight movement away from *cast* and toward *fling* is sharp, an admonishment that underscores the agentive and violent marginalization of aging. Rabbi Twerski breaks down the attitudes toward aging into two domains: "the attitude of society toward the elderly and the attitude of the elderly to being old." And succinctly issues a strongly worded challenge: "reaching old age: victory or defeat?" This is a message both for older adults as well as for the people who love and care for and about them.

> But now what? What is my life for? Every human being has a need to feel needed. In what way am I needed? There is no greater anguish than emptiness and boredom. There are senior citizen centers that provide activities, but when we are younger, we live with a vision, and recreation is a poor substitute for vision. When we are younger, we live with dreams, but now all we have is memories.
>
> There are solutions, but these require a radical change of perspective. We must reject the prevalent cultural attitude toward the elderly. We must prepare ourselves for the golden years, and children must come to a Torah concept of relating to the elderly. (Twerski, 2009)

Indifference to Wisdom and Elder Status

The younger generation thinks it has all the answers. Sure, grandchildren can program the television for their computer-illiterate grandparents, but there is no substitute for the wisdom gathered in years. In the Jewish tradition, elders (*zakein* in Hebrew, 'he who has acquired') are important communal resources. They are holders of a repository of wisdom that has been gathered over the years and keepers of tradition, history, and life experience. In Deuteronomy, 32:7, Moses encourages the Israelites to remember and learn from their elders, "Remember the days of old; reflect upon the years of other generations. Ask your father, and he will tell you, your elders and they will inform you."

The Torah requires, "in the presence of an old person shall you rise, and you shall honor the presence of an elderly person" (Leviticus 19:32). But this assumes a passivity that is far from the experiences espoused by community members at the Y. They vehemently and vociferously refuse agentive diminishment because of their age. Reverence is passive; they are active and involved. In the afternoon session, where current events are passionately debated, respect is maintained and differences considered. As Psalm 92:15 claims "they will still bring forth fruit in old age; they will be lively and invigorated." The members of the CALW are lively, enthusiastic, and essential contributors to the Y's intergenerational programming. When they engage with our younger members, their interactions are consistent sources of learning and inspiration.

Chapter Three: Review of Related Research

In this chapter, I review previous scholarship in theology and psychology that informs this study's approach to ritual and psychosocial wellbeing. In the first section, *Ritual and Community in Judaism,* I review Jewish theological perspectives on weekly Shabbat observance from Martin Buber, Moses Maimonides, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heshel Twerski. Within these contexts, I comment on the role of prayer and song in spiritual practice. In the second section, *Ritual and Community for Psychosocial Wellbeing,* I outline a few basic functions of ritual participation for community and individual health. I then review foundational theories of psychosocial health in older adulthood through the work of Erik and Joan Erikson and Irving Yalom. I return to the topics of prayer and song in this section through the lens of their psychological benefit and function in group cohesion.

Ritual and Community in Judaism—a Theological Perspective

The Jewish Sabbath Ritual

In my experience, while Jewish people rarely agree on anything, most of us would likely agree that the Jewish Sabbath is definitively the most important, central observance across Jewish traditions (McPherson, 2017). A weekly ritual, beginning before sundown every Friday and ending with the appearance of the first three stars on Saturday night, the Sabbath is a day of rest and reflection. The practice arises from two interrelated commandments: *zachor*, to remember and *shamor,* to observe. Together, these commandments complete a frame for entering the peace of the Sabbath.

Fundamental to Jewish faith is the belief that God is encountered in three ways, through Creation, Revelation, and Redemption. Each represent a basic theological relationship within Judaism that is central to the understanding of the Sabbath. Creation is God's relationship to the

world. More than a memorial or remembrance, Sabbath is also a reenactment of Creation, of God's relationship with humanity. When Revelation is applied to Creation, the result will be Redemption, "the world in which God's will and humanity's will collide" (Sacks, 2019, 2023).

The Sabbath: A Reminder of Creation. Created in God's image, the Sabbath calls individuals to continue their work in the world for six days and emulate God by resting on the seventh (Heschel, 1951). In this way, the Sabbath reminds humankind of the reason for their existence: to be partners with God in the (ongoing) creation of the world (Strassfeld, 2006). The model of the Sabbath as God's rest from the work of Creation is first expressed in Genesis 2:1-3: "the heaven and earth were finished, in all their array. On the seventh day God finished the work which God had been doing, and God ceased and rested on the seventh day from all the work which God had done" (Tigay, n.d.). Rest from work is then repeated in Exodus 20:8-11:

> Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work… for in six days the Lord made the heavens and earth… but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Revelation: A Reminder of the Exodus. It is generally agreed that the Torah was given to the Jewish people on the Sabbath (correlating with text in *Talmud: Shabbat 86a-b*). For people of the Jewish faith, keeping the Sabbath is a command; it is neither a suggestion nor is it optional (Goldman, 2007). When Moses convened the entire community, he reiterated the commandment on Shabbat observance, calling the people into community:

> Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy as Adonai your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of Adonai your God. On it you shall not do any work… Remember that you were slaves in Egypt

> and that the Lord your God brought you out of there. Therefore, the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day. (Deuteronomy 5:11-15)

Martin Buber, prominent twentieth century religious thinker, political activist, educator, and philosopher, offered that the revelation at Sinai is the manifestation of an actual relationship between God and the people, predicated on their adherence to following God's commandment (Buber, 1958). "Now then, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples. Indeed, all the earth is Mine" (Exodus, 19:5). Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel echoes this understanding of Revelation, "The Sabbath is the presence of God in the world, open to the soul of man" (Heschel, 1951, p. 60). Revelation teaches that relationship is a responsibility on which moral order is built. The act of receiving the Torah therefore is a call to maintain relationship. It is a directive to stay in community with each other and with God.

Redemption: The Divine Promise. As a continuing call to heal a broken world, the Sabbath helps uplift those who are lonely and isolated by bringing them into community (Wolpe, n.d.). Every Sabbath, new ways to impart peace are uncovered, bringing comfort to those who experience despair. Many older adults at the Y express the feeling that they are living in a broken world. But rather than sit idle, they respond with acts of *tikkun olam*, both sacred and social, taking an active role in caring for their friends and neighbors. As we welcome everyone into Shabbat every Friday, the atmosphere of belonging and inclusion blooms, filling the room with "the heart of existence" (Heschel, 1951).

Foundational Theologians

While all other Jewish events and holidays are anchored either within the calendar or phases of the moon, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (1951) extols that the essence of the

Sabbath as one in being completely detached from the world; its day is not determined by any occurrence, but rather by the act of Creation:

> Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the Sabbath we try to become attended to holiness in time. It is a day to turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation, from the world of creation to the creation of the world…. God is not in things of space, but in moments of time. (Heschel, 1951, p. 10; see also Strassfeld, 2006)

In addition to facilitating rest, situating the Sabbath as a day apart grants an opportunity to bask in the light of the Divinity. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heshel Twerski harmonizes with Isaiah 58:13, "they shall rejoice in Your kingship, those who observe the Sabbath and call it a delight," (Twerski, 2006) instructing that *simchas* [joy] can be felt through the keeping of the Sabbath. Referring to the Sabbath as *me'ein olam haba,* (a taste of the world to come) he compares the elation derived from Sabbath observation to "the bliss of Paradise," where it is not only an appreciation of time but the key to happiness. The *Shabbat in Conversation* group programming attempts to recreate light and joy within and between participants.

While deeply situated in the Jewish faith, Sabbath is not an observance exclusive to the Jewish people, nor does it reflect a unitary vision for community. A revered rabbi and Jewish scholar of the Middle Ages, Moses Maimonides was influenced by the broader Islamic world in which he lived. Simultaneously honoring Jewish traditions while serving broader Muslim communities, he appears in this paper for his penetrating philosophy, theologically oriented psychology, and consideration of perspectives beyond the boundaries of Jewish law. Maimonides instructed, throughout his influential leadership, that the perseverance of the Jewish people, faith, and lifeways rely on instantiating forms of community that involved people other

than Jewish individuals alone. In his capacity as teacher, he instructed his pupils, "You should listen to the truth whoever may have said it" (Commentary on text *Mishnah, Tractate Nezquin*).

Centrality of Community in Judaism

The collective is an integral part of both Jewish faith and practice. Membership in a Jewish community has always included a sense of shared destiny. This is manifested in the obligation to care for other members of the community as well as the responsibility to share in the joy from taking part in the celebration of others (R. L. Jacobs, n.d.). Accordingly, a central story of Jewish history, the Exodus from Egypt, is retold every year. So, on that occasion, we might regard the Jewish people's encounter with The Divinity primarily as the formational moment of instilling shared responsibility. Gazing through this lens, community stands front and center, becoming at that very moment, the organizational rubric of Jewish life.

Similarly, Jewish texts treat participation in communal affairs as a religious obligation (R. J. Jacobs, n.d.). The Talmud teaches כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה – *Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh La Zeh*– that members of the Jewish community are responsible for each other (Shavuot 39a). This central tenant, which stresses the interconnection between people, is found throughout traditional Jewish literature (Bolts & Ives, 2016).

The study of teachings on community in writings might start with *Pirkei Avot* (Chapters of the Fathers), one of the best-known and most cited Jewish texts. Themes from the *Pirkei Avot* such as *If I am only for myself, who am I?* (1:14) and *Say little and do much* (1:15) are intertwined throughout Jewish scripture and reinforce the individual's communal obligations through spiritual connection and action. Moving through the *Pirkei Avot* (2:4), one is instructed not to separate oneself from the community and warned that doing so "counts among those practices that bar a person from gaining atonement" (Maimonides, *Laws of Repentance 4:2*).

Moses Maimonides further cautioned that "one who separates himself from the ways of the public, even if he did not commit any sins but simply distanced himself from society—such a person has no place in afterlife" (Bolts & Ives, 2016, p. 220).

A Jewish individual's communal obligations is noted in the Talmud, c. 500 C.E., which begin for a girl at 12 and for a boy at 13. The communal obligation of the Bar Mitzvah does not appear in text until the 14th century, C.E., at which point scripture addresses the beginning with a duty to be counted in a minyan. However, all older adults, men and women alike, are no different from their younger counterparts in that they are bound to the overall health of the community. Things are still expected of them, their actions continue to matter, and even as they age, they need to find ways to contribute. Heschel suggests that it is through this understanding of obligation that older adults can become motivated to seek avenues to fill what may be lacking in older age and as a result they will continue to experience life as full and meaningful (D. A. Friedman, 2008).

This state of obligation, taken from concept into practice, can provide older people with a "sense of significant being" to defray feelings of uselessness and boredom (D. A. Friedman, 2008, p. 18). The older adults in the Y's *Shabbat in Conversation* group wholeheartedly assume this commitment. They reach out and help their neighbors and friends, casting off limitations imposed by society's ideas of aging. This has implications that support not only their own mental health and overall wellbeing but also extends into their participation in the welfare of the broader community.

The Rhythm of the Sabbath: Prayer and Song

"The primary purpose of prayer is not to make requests. The primary purpose is to praise, sing, chant. Because the essence of prayer is song, man cannot live without song" (Abraham

Heschel, *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*). Jewish history is not so much read as it is sung (Sacks, 2019). There is the song of the Israelites in Egypt (Isaiah. 30:29) and the song of the Red Sea (Exodus 15) among the nine mentioned throughout text. Before Moses died, he imparted to The Children of Israel *Haazinu* (Listen/Lend Ear), a song recounting the blessings that God has bestowed on them while reminding them of their covenant with God (Deuteronomy 32:1–52). And for the first time since their departure from Egypt, the Israelites do something together, they sing (Greenfield, n.d.).

There are many ways that individuals and families personalize the Sabbath ritual. While at the Y we scaffold our ritual around more traditional Conservative Judaic lines, the *Shabbat in Conversation* group has made the experience their own. The interconnectedness between Jewish song and prayer is one that is deeply realized and has come to be the essence of the weekly observance.

Except for the Rabbi's Parashah (commentary on the weekly Torah portion), the Sabbath service at the Y has organically developed around music. As the group assembles, each participant reaches for their songbook. After the greetings, the group launches into singing *Hineh Mah Tov* הִנֵּה מַה טּוֹב וּמַה נָּעִים. Derived from Psalm 133:1 and arranged as a folk tune, the lyrics are simply translated: "Behold! How good and how pleasant it is for people to dwell together in unity!" *Hineh Mah Tov* is followed by *Shalom Aleichem*-- שָׁלוֹם עֲלֵיכֶם (*Peace be upon you*), which welcomes in the two angels who accompany us on our way home [from synagogue]. A member offers this explanation for singing every verse:

> I love this song because I feel protected, and I don't feel alone, and there is an angel that means love that comes in and out of the room, a good angel is right there ready to stand

> next to all of us and accompany [us] on our journey – even if it is down the stairs to lunch.

After the first two songs are sung, the group glides seamlessly through the service. Candles are lit, "wine" is sipped, and challah is distributed. As we move through each of the internal rituals, the momentum gains in intensity and the community draws closer. The songs, expressing equality and peace, are sung enthusiastically. The only spoken words come from the Y's resident Rabbi who delivers the Parashah. Singing resumes, accompanied by members who play simple instruments.

The Sabbath has its own melodies and rhythms. The lyrics are simple, the phrasing repetitive, the sounds soulful, and the tunes easy to sing and remember. The Talmud teaches that prayer and song are inextricably linked, "where there is song there is prayer -- and where there is prayer there is song" (*Talmud, tractate Berakhot 6a*). In the same way that Shabbat provides a rhythm of the week, Shabbat music encircles the group, condensing many voices into a unified whole. The mood drifts away from the pull of outside space and wordlessly orients the senses toward a warm and shared Sabbath embrace. For the next hour, this reliable, renewing, and revelatory gift is situated in the sacredness of time.

When I began leading the group, I realized only a small minority of the cohort were familiar with Hebrew. Even so, everyone sang, enthusiastically learning the songs by rote even when some had no understanding of the content. I produced the songbook *Hineh Mah Tov!* (Psalm 133:1, dwelling together in unity) with translation (and transliteration) to guide this multicultural community as they sing together through the ritual. As the lyrics are often short and the refrains repetitive, we often repeat the melodies in Spanish, the language native to most of our older adults. Singing twice, once in Hebrew and a second time in Spanish (their idea),

reaffirms the groups' commitment not only to Jewish tradition but, perhaps even more so, to honoring and including each other.

Music, a most invisible and fleeting artistic form, threads its way through a group, lacing each to the other. Singing forms the foundation that upholds the basic structure of our Sabbath celebration. In participating fully in song and prayer, we are refreshed and joyful. I find myself feeling, at times, even transcended. Sometimes, I accompany the group in song with my guitar or the old keyboard in the room though more often just a tambourine and a pair of shakers. I am unable to describe the joy I feel. I find it at the Y, and I long for it at times when I am alone at home. When I am accompanied by a real musician, and we play and sing these centuries-old tunes in unison, the feeling elevates to something indescribable. I can't help but imagine that aspects of this experience are shared by others present.

When fully immersed in the Sabbath ritual I will report for myself that one may experience being removed from the realm of space to float freely. The music of the Sabbath is liberating, igniting the power of the blessings and prayers to be experienced on a wholly different level as so many theologians and Sabbath observers attest to – the separateness of time. History is conjured in the room when century-old tunes are sung and strummed. For those of Jewish familial origin, these songs also stir personal life histories. Thus, we are commanded to pause on Friday for the advantages of rest and reflection on the vast expanses of tradition. The pause is God's gift. This gift, experienced in the pauses between the notes (called "rests" in music theory) corresponds purposefully and unsurprisingly to the obligations inherent in Sabbath observance where, and at least for me, lies the Divine.

Ritual and Community for Psychosocial Wellbeing— A Psychological Perspective

Ritual: "An Orienting Anchor"

Confronted in older age with losses— friends who have passed away, family members who have moved away, thinned social networks— re-introducing ritual offers opportunity to rally courage and defend against grief. Especially for older adults, rituals can provide comfort by their stability and dependability. In *Jewish Visions for Aging*, Rabbi Dayle Friedman echoed this theory, asserting that "in the midst of confusing, alienating losses, changes and stresses, ritual can serve as an orienting anchor" (2008, p. 164). Functioning as an integrating force within a community, ritual affords support in times of lifecycle transitions, providing emotional strength and assurance. By its very repetitive nature, ritual offers stability and loyalty through consistency and presence (D. A. Friedman, 2008; Nichols & Norgard, 1990). Anticipating and participating in a weekly ritual reinforces connection, enriches relationships, and deepens friendships (Goldberg, 1986; Speedling, 2019).

Community Enhancement through Group

Within some populations, what might be labeled as "the group approach" to therapy can be as effective as individual counseling. The positive effects of group engagement are particularly noted among older adults (Burlingame et al., 2004). Several psychological theories contend that participation in groups may in fact be valuable for older adults in many of the same ways that they are for adolescents as they address concerns that "relate to the developmental tasks of the lifespan" (Corey, 2016, p. 5).

Research has shown that the need to belong is a powerful, positive force for cognitive wellbeing (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). While older adults attempt to retain integrity and self-respect, the formation of friendships around communal activities can help individuals navigate

complex transitions (Nelson-Becker et al., 2015), working against loneliness, depression, and anxiety (Loewenthal & Dein, 2016). Group settings in particular can facilitate feelings of self-sufficiency and competence while giving older adults an opportunity to fill their time in a personally satisfying way. The consistency and repetitive nature of participation in group ritual organized around an on-going community activity can be motivating and self-sustaining (Diddams et al., 2004; Smith-Gabai & Ludwig, 2011).

While originally grounded in the delivery of therapeutic services, the group approach has expanded its reach. Many community agencies have followed the example set by the Y and are increasing group programming. The Y's Division of Social Services, in which services for older adults reside, continues to expand and innovate programming based on the evidence-based outcomes of what we continue to learn through group engagement.

Foundational Theories for Group Therapeutic Practice

Human Development: Erik H. Erikson, Joan Erikson. Erik Erikson maintained that personality develops in a predetermined order from infancy through old age via eight stages of psychosocial development. Each stage builds on the former and contains a conflict (which Erikson refers to as a "crisis") that has both positive and negative implications for moving forward. At each crisis point, an individual can pivot either toward a positive or negative resolution. The core of the crisis laid out by Erik H. Erikson in Stage 8 Integrity v. Despair (65+ years) centers around how individuals regard the past. While a positive resolution – *Integrity* – at this stage leads to feelings of having lived a worthwhile life, failure – *Despair* – often leads to feelings of despondency, hopelessness, guilt, resentment, and self-rejection, emotions already prevalent among older adults (Corey, 2016). The struggle played out in Stage 8 often leaves

older adults with the conclusion that it is too late for continued growth or development in this later phase of life (Bugajska, 2017).

According to Erik Erikson's (1982) developmental theory, each stage is associated with a strength that can be gleaned from the conflict an individual confronts at each level. Building on Erik Erikson's conceptualization of Stage 8, Joan Erikson contributes additional chapters to the 1998 edition of *The Life Cycle Completed,* which propose the addition of a ninth stage: Involvement v. Resignation. *Resignation*, the negative outcome of the Involvement v. Resignation conflict, implies that as one ages, there is no more utility in undertaking new activities or fostering personal growth (E. H. Erikson, 1998). *Involvement*, the positive resolution, affirms one's ability to make deliberate choices where continued "personal development [is] oriented toward universal values, ethical dimensions of social ethos, and acceptance of the changes that are the result of the [shared] aging process" (Bugajska, 2017, p. 1105).

Both Joan and Erik Erikson recognized that individuals in these later stages cannot be generalized into a demographic whole. Joan Erikson's theory offers a forward-thinking approach in which the inevitable struggles of Stages 8 and 9 can be optimistically addressed through group processes in which personal strengths are fostered (Brown & Lowis, 2003). Even in the previous edition, Erik Erikson (1994) exalted the diversity of experience in old age, drawing attention to the increase in older adults who bloom healthier and stronger during this period. Regardless of health status, it is often a shared hope that one remains, in Erik Erikson's words, "vitally involved" in their later years.

Overcoming these limitations requires a demonstratable amount of courage, courage to live within one's unique spirit in defiance of social conventions, to find and fulfill oneself, to

stand up to discrimination, and to change one's life in accordance with closely held values. Arising from the daily struggle between involvement and resignation, and in full recognition of a shortening time perspective, courage can be a welcome emotional support. It can be called upon to orient both individuals and groups toward the future despite the adversity that accompanies limitations in physical, mental, and social spheres. There is no shortage of courage in our older adults at the Y**.**

Group Therapy: Irvin Yalom. Irvin Yalom, a seminal figure in group psychotherapy and renowned author of *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy* (2008), asserts that even with many close friends "we are ultimately alone, and no relationship can eliminate the isolation one encounters." But he quickly offers a counterpoint to this proclamation, "however aloneness can be shared in such a way that love compensates for its pain" (Yalom & Leszcz, 2008, p. 291). Instructing on group formation and its efficacy, Yalom stresses that "it is within the group's ability to utilize and mobilize the power of Group to combat the inevitabilities of aging through the exercise of self-centering" (Yalom & Leszcz, 2008, p. 291). Applying his psychological theory to groups populated by active and engaged older adults, relevance and meaning can be found to flourish in securing and maintaining a connection with others.

Importantly, Yalom points directly to feelings associated with "acceptance" as primary mechanisms through which a group contributes positively to individual feelings of belonging and inclusion. Group members who come together often are more likely to support action-oriented behaviors helping to build and cement relationships, while simultaneously receiving the benefit of counteracting loneliness. Ultimately, Yalom's proposals for psychological wellbeing in older age echo the conflicts and triumphs of Erik and Joan Erikson's later stages by emphasizing that

individual psychological wellbeing in these years can be achieved and secured through group practices and connections.

Psychosocial Benefits of Prayer and Song

It is generally agreed that listening to music contributes to an overall feeling of wellbeing, regardless of age (Lehmberg & Fung, 2010; Creech et al., 2013). Moses Maimonides regarded music as a therapeutic antidote for depression: "…one who suffers with depression may improve his mood by listening to singing and all kinds of instrumental music … that liven the mind and dissipate gloomy moods" (Dein & Ives, 2016). Music and communal singing can lift a group into the exuberance of residing fully in the moment and contributing to melody. Among older adults especially, making music can offer belonging; a role in which one can feel included, needed, wanted in and through the achieving of melodic (and more-than-musical) coherence, melding into formation together.

In *Active Music Making: A Route to Enhanced Subjective Well-Being Among Older Adults*, Creech and colleagues (2013) explore how participation in making music enhances the social, emotional, and cognitive well-being of older adults. They compared self-reported data derived from psychological needs scales, ranked on autonomy, competence, relatedness, and self-realization among individuals engaged with song and music to those who participated in other group activities. The researchers concluded that the potential exists for music to enhance wellbeing in older adults through bolstering purpose (supporting an optimistic outlook on life); affirming social connections (helping to institute positive social relationships); and instilling a sense of accomplishment and competence (Creech et al., 2013). Thus, this research draws empirical connections between the psychological needs outlined in Erikson's theories of later stages of development and outcomes from group participation in music, suggesting an area for

intervention and improvement. Further research maintains that when singing is added to ritual group participation, it may not only promote social and personal well-being but also reduce anxiety and depression (Grape et al., 2002; Sandgren, 2009). These quantitative results point to a connection between and among music, ritual, and wellbeing. This research elucidates how that connection works by attuning to both quantitative survey results and participants' qualitative, experiential perspectives.

Chapter Four: Therapeutic Theology

In this chapter, I focus on the topic of ritual, first exploring its role as a therapeutic tool with implications for mental health and wellbeing. I then return to theology while examining the crossover between clinical theory and Jewish teaching through the works of Victor Frankl (Logotherapy) and Martin Seligman (Positive Psychology). In doing so, I situate this study at the nexus between spiritual teaching, therapeutic meaning-making, and Positive Psychology. I propose the term *Therapeutic Theology* to describe a form of group practice that is based in, but cumulatively more than, psychological intervention and religious ritual.

Religious/Spiritually based Ritual: A Therapeutic Tool

While engaging in ritual, the struggle to find the right words for challenging feelings can be set aside. In the article "Recapturing the Power of Ritual to Enhance Community in Aging" (2019), Nelson-Becker and Sangster discuss the relatively unexplored role that ritual can play as a therapeutic intervention within cohorts of older adults: "Rituals can be designed to build the power of community… in ways that strengthen both individuals and their community… The grounding and centering feature of [weekly] ritual roots individuals and community members" (Nelson-Becker & Sangster, 2019). While rituals mark rites of passage over the lifespan, older adults may have few ceremonies with which to commemorate later stages of life. With old age now possibly lasting three decades or even longer, lack of ritual acknowledgement ceases to validate experience. Indeed, Barbara Myerhoff decried the effect that a lack of rituals has on older adults: "Retirement and funerals are crude markers for the stark beginning and end of old age; in between there is a universe of differentiation that remains a cultural wasteland … without the aid of ritual" (Moore & Myerhoff, 1977, p. 225). Derived from her research among older

adults, Myerhoff proposes that a sense of connection results from and is heightened when religious ritual is introduced, thus proposing a new site for intervention among older adults.

Edwin Friedman (2011), rabbi and family therapist, also notes the role that religious/spiritually-based rituals can play in supporting transitions. He suggests that ceremonies and rituals shared in community are useful therapeutic tools that can provide a group stability while serving as a coping support for its individual members. As markers of personal and spiritual development, rituals therefore can be transformed into "a systemic intervention that spurs healing and growth, supporting individuals through the hinges of time" (E. H. Friedman, 2011, p. 164).

Jewish Sabbath Keeping: Implications for Mental Health

Researchers note the holistic health dimensions of the Sabbath ritual as a means of socialization that helps dampen loneliness by deepening relationships (Dorff, 2005; Shulevitz, 2010; Rosmarin et al., 2016). By assisting and supporting older individuals as they confront the often and sudden changes they encounter in cognitive and physical functioning, ritual plays a defining, remedial role (Dein & Ives, 2016; Diddams et al., 2004; Loewenthal & Dein, 2016; Speedling, 2019).

In his article "The Sabbath as Dialectic, Implications for Mental Health," Alan D. Goldberg highlighted the interconnected benefits that rest and reflection have on mental health, "… the Sabbath is a special day. Its observance is both part of a religious tradition and an example of psychological health… offering time to contemplate, withdraw, and rest from mundane concerns" (1986, p. 267). Goldberg suggests that the norms and parameters that govern traditional Sabbath observance provide an opportunity for participants to connect in embodied, psychological forms to an intimate, close-knit community through common worship. By

adhering to Sabbath guidelines, Goldberg believes individuals may be able "to find the security often sought from the therapeutic environment and to realize that there are others to whom one matters and with whom one can share the events and emotions of the week" (240).

Similarly, in "Bo: The Power of Community*"* (2017) and his commentary on the Torah portion, Exodus Chapter 10, Rabbi Richard Address explicates the connection between how developing trust within a group shapes and enriches community. He maintains that trust forms naturally if individuals have a sense of protection, connection, and respect. Further quoting Thomas Friedman in *Thank You for Being Late* (2016), Rabbi Address qualifies that for this trust to support the health of a community it must be "nurtured and inspired."

As a weekly occurrence, the *Shabbat in Conversation* group binds our older individuals to each other, strengthening them through togetherness initiated by the evolution of trust. As space recedes and time is set aside to reflect and exchange feelings and experiences, the restorative power of comfort through rest is at work. Engaging with the traditional Jewish Sabbath grants a license to step away from and out of ordinary life led during the week into a "palace in time whose architecture is built through a combination of intentional abstentions and acts of prayer, study, joyous meals, and interaction with loved ones…The Sabbath is not for the sake of the weekdays… It is not an interlude but the climax of living" (Heschel, 1951). Through this process, relationships are nurtured and friendships are reinforced. As the group lingers, discussions that are sparked generate noticeable positive mood shifts. A participant mentions the following as the group disperses:

> If I didn't come here every Friday to sit with you all well, there would be no break in my week. Each day would be just like the other. I would lose track of which day it was.

> Without the [Sabbath] day and time, every single thing is the same and nothing is special. And now, today, everything is special.

Clinical Theory and Jewish Teaching: Shared Ideas

Several sections of the Torah and Talmud describe the importance that positive emotions have on mental health. This theological concept finds its resonance in Logotherapy, the psychological theory founded by Viktor Frankl (2006) on the premise that the primary motivational force of individuals is to find meaning in life. Viktor Frankl was a psychiatrist, writer, and Holocaust survivor who maintained that a lack of purpose and meaning in life put an individual at risk for anxiety and depression. He proposed that to fend off disorders, seeking meaning in one's life through action, specifically "by showing courage in difficult times" was the crucial variable. He suggested that having meaning in life was the necessary and key element needed to cope with psychological stress at any age. Logotherapy asserts that "every aspect of our lives contains the potential for meaning," and as such "meaning leads to genuine happiness" (Dein & Ives, 2016, pp. 175, 179). In this vein, Frankl's theory aligns with Joan Erikson's basic principles for a positive outcome in the 9th stage; personal courage in every aspect of later life is needed to attain Involvement and vanquish Resignation. The ability to harness an internal attitude – to discover meaning though acting – allows adults across the lifespan, inclusive of those in later life, to face their situation and make optimistic choices (Frankl, 2006; Corey, 2016). Rabbi Abraham Heschel affirms Frankl's perspective and succinctly puts a period on this point, "Old age is an age of anguish. The only answer to an age of anguish is a sense of significant being" (Heschel, 1961, p. 41).

Similarly, Positive Psychology— the scientific study of human strength and virtues with the goal of improving human well-being— finds resonance with the far more ancient orientation

toward life promoted by Moses Maimonides and in Jewish scripture (Seligman, 2005; Dein & Ives, 2016). Frankl's and Maimonides' formulas for the attainment of emotional wellbeing are like-minded and many themes comfortably reside alongside Jewish teachings. Although living over seven centuries apart, Frankl and Maimonides were in harmony with what they believed to be the key ingredients needed for the optimization of mental health: positive attitudes, hopeful emotions, the need for meaning and purpose, and a sense of community.

Meanwhile, Martin Seligman (2005) famously inaugurated the ever-growing field of Positive Psychology on the basic principle that wellbeing is achieved through and constituted by positive subjective experiences: wellbeing and satisfaction (past); joy and happiness (present); and constructive cognitions about the future—optimism, hope, and faith. Way ahead of his time, and in step with this current definition and practice of Positive Psychology, Moses Maimonides believed that each person is capable "of his own free will, with the consent of his mind, [to] bend to any path he may desire to follow" (Shabtai et al., 2016, p. 138). He further offered that "turning back negative thoughts" is one of the most valuable attitudes to adopt as at any age it encourages one to strive for positive change. Seligman himself acknowledged that positive spiritual engagement contributed to a joyous mood (core Jewish underpinnings of being in community) and can be nurtured as it contributes to the individual's overall sense of wellbeing (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

The numinous and existential implications of fully experiencing the Sabbath do not fall neatly into categories. Building on the works of Frankl and Seligman, I instead propose that they should be viewed in broader terms that are always in the process of definition and re-definition by participants themselves. If Frankl suggests the route to emotional wellbeing is found in finding meaning and recovering relevance, then Judaic thought concurs. Beginning in

Deuteronomy, and continuing throughout sacred text, scripture asserts that every person has a unique purpose in life.

For Maimonides, the many character traits he believed as foundational to mental health and psychological wellbeing are found to be equally represented in and fundamental to the teachings of Jewish values. Reflecting on the roles of ritual and community through both a clinical/psychological and clinical/theological lens brings together overlapping treatment perspectives and therapeutic options. Combining Frankl's meaning-centered methods with Seligman's positive psychological posture offers a fresh approach when considering how to reinforce the courage needed to find meaning, relevance, and contentment within one's abilities in the 9th stage of life.

Hineh ma tov umah na'im, shevet achi gam yachad (Translation: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for people to dwell together in unity"). If, as Rabbi Abraham Heschel says, "prayer is a song that makes us worthy of God's protection" (1954, p. 107), is there any mystery as to why music touches an individual as powerfully as it does? As a therapeutic technique, it can activate a group member to access and express what might be too difficult to voice alone. Ritual (and specifically, the ritual prayer of Shabbat) offers an active group manifestation of what, without it, words may not be able to communicate, giving individuals the opportunity to reflect on how to improve themselves, their world, their relationships, and if desired, a connection to the Divine. For those who choose to engage with the lyrics of blessings, music can be a gateway, chaperone, and guide helping us to navigate the many challenges of prayer.

Chapter Five: Methods

Study Design Overview

This study relies on several sources of data to answer its research questions. To understand the psychosocial and religious/spiritual role that the Y has played since its inception, I conducted a review of the literature related to Judaic ritual, psychosocial well-being, healthy aging, and contemporary histories of Washington Heights, the results of which were presented in Chapters 1-4. Then, I distributed a survey among participants at *Shabbat in Conversation,* the results of which are presented in Chapters 6 and 7. The survey elicited participants' perspectives on the impact of programing on their mental and physical wellbeing, experiences of group cohesion, and most important aspects of ritual observance.

Qualitative description (participant comments) accompanied and supported quantitative survey data, providing depth of understanding. Together, the quantitative data supported with qualitative context illuminated personal and shared meanings of and connections among group cohesion, group participation in ritual, and the role of supportive engagement in older adulthood (Gioia & Dziadosz, 2008; Ostler et al., 2007).

To draw connections between these contextual aspects of the Y and the specific multicultural population of older adults who congregate there, I engaged in unstructured discussions (Burgess, 1989) with the Y's Chief Development and Social Services Director/LCSW; the Director of the Center for Adults Living Well; the Managing Director of the Center for Jewish Life; and the retired coordinating patrol officer of Police Precinct 34. These interviews complement the quantitative core of the project.

Finally, I conducted a free form discussion with *Shabbat in Conversation* participants who enthusiastically responded together to three pre-written questions (Agar & MacDonald,

1995; Krueger & Casey, 2015; Morgan, 1993). The lively and forthright contributions that were extemporaneously offered between participants helped bring the survey data to life. Specifically, the interpersonal and dynamic interaction offered opportunity to review the aspects of diversity and cohesion under study (Kitzinger, 1994).

Development of the Survey

This Doctor of Ministry project, "Supportive Effects of Sabbath Participation for a Diverse Group of Older Adults Residing in a Multicultural Neighborhood," was a multi-method study based principally on survey data from members of the *Shabbat in Conversation* group. The individual response components of the survey included Likert scale, closed-ended questions, and open-ended response opportunities, as well as options to provide additional information (Questions 1 – 12). Three questions (13, 14, 15) were posed to the cohort in a group setting and answered informally (See Appendix 1: Research Survey).

I began developing the survey as the final project for DMIN Research 771. My clinical advisor, Dr. James Holmes, made several specific revisions to the survey language which led to identifying specific benefits. My theological advisor, Rabbi Seth Bernstein, suggested revisions and additions to the Likert scales, lists, and open-ended response questions. After incorporating advisor comments, the survey was approved by Dr. Wynd Harris, Director of Research. Two members of the cohort reviewed the survey as a final check on clarity.

Procedures

The *Shabbat in Conversation* group had a keen interest in the project from its very beginning and since then have kept up with its progression. We decided that the best way for group members to participate in the project was to distribute the survey to group members during our gathering for them to take home and return. At the time of survey distribution, I explained

the purpose of the project to the group and emphasized that their participation was voluntary. Participants filled out the form with pen and paper. I made myself available to answer participants' questions.

To seek reactions to questions designed to elicit a spontaneous reaction, I invited group members to "shout out" responses at the end of a regularly scheduled *Shabbat in Conversation* gathering. I reminded participants of the purpose of the project and sought their consent again, emphasizing that participation was voluntary. In accordance with the YM&YWHA Social Service Division's policy, tape recording is not permitted within the agency. So, instead, I took anonymized notes on participant responses.

Throughout the process, I worked with the Chief Development and Social Services Director at the Y to ensure that the project protected participant confidentiality in accordance with procedures for research and with policies at the Y. To this end, I used handwritten, anonymized notes to collect data, rather than tape recording. I stored completed survey forms in a locked, private location and did not share de-anonymized results. I used aggregate reporting in my writing to further de-identify individual responses. Participants were given my contact information and contact information for the division's director. All participants signed their consent to participate in the research (see Appendix 2).

Ethnographic Approach to Participant Observation

Throughout the text (including previous chapters), I draw from my own experience. I will soon be starting another year as a facilitator of *Shabbat in Conversation* at the Y. I have served as a professor of counseling psychology at Manhattan College for more than a dozen years and worked in community education and mental health for over two decades. Even prior to the formal commencement of this project, I was already formulating understandings of the

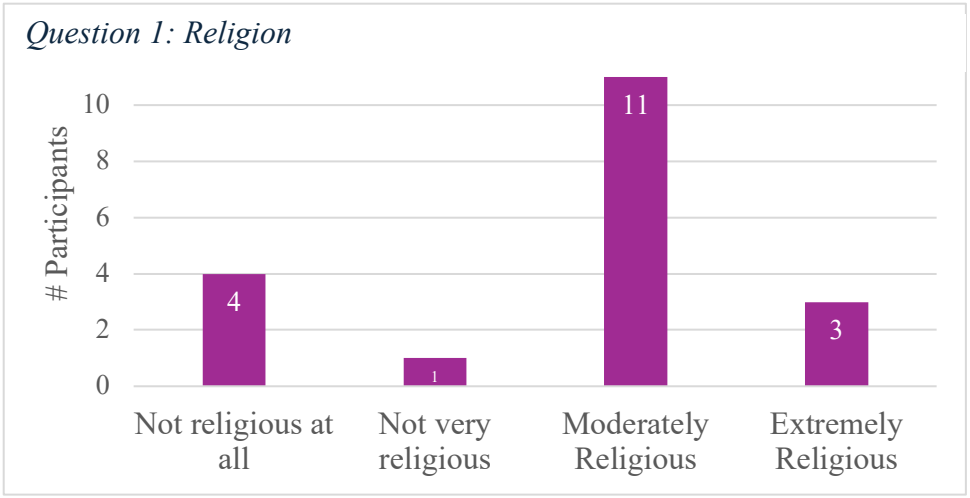
religious/spiritual and psychological aspects of the unique multiethnic community at the Y (Dewalt, 2011; much like the ethnographic approach to research-- see Gobo, 2008; Sahoo et al., 2023; and participant observation, see Skinner, 2020; Hume & Mulcock, 2004). Rather than "pretending" to start this research project with a totally blank slate, which would mean forgoing and forgetting my own familial and professional history, in this project, I draw on my experience of involvement in the neighborhood and at the Y, consisting in the many interactions with key community leaders, social workers, social justice advocates, and educators across the Heights and Inwood.

Many scholars have written about the pivotal and defining role of the researcher, especially when she has ties to the community under study (Behar, 1997; Naples, 2003). My engagement and deep roots in this community— formed when my grandparents first claimed the neighborhood as their own— cannot be dropped from memory. Therefore, attempts to be wholly objective in this project are not entirely possible, and the reader may be critical of what seems to be a sometimes-personal perspective. However, I find that highlighting, rather than masking, my position with thoughtfulness and care most effectively addresses my bias. I examine how all these experiences shape the project by transparently reflecting on how I am situated in the group and using narrative first-person voice in my writing (Briggs, 1970; Ruby, 1982, 2000).

Chapter Six: Results

Summary of Findings

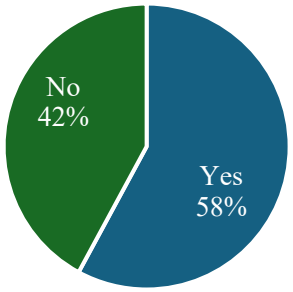
Nineteen members of the group filled out the survey. Group members ranged in age from 62 – 100. No questionnaires were disqualified, and all included enough information to be incorporated into the results. Participant self-reported religious identity is distributed as follows: Jewish (6); Catholic (5); Protestant (5); Muslim (1); Buddhist (1); and None (1). Thirteen of the participants attended *Shabbat in Conversation* and other programs at the Y for over 6 years. Most participants described themselves as moderately religious.



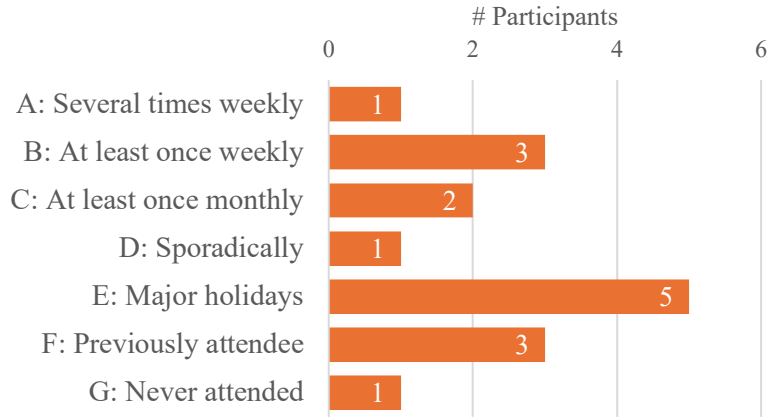
Of the nineteen participants, fifteen lived in Washington Heights or Inwood, while three lived further away. One participant's neighborhood was not reported. Every participant except for one lived alone in a rental property. Among those, three lived in designated low-income housing. Self-described descent is not recounted in detail to preserve anonymity but included a wide range of ethnic identities within the broader categories of European/Eastern European, Latin American, Afro-Latino/Latina, and Asian/Pacific Islander.

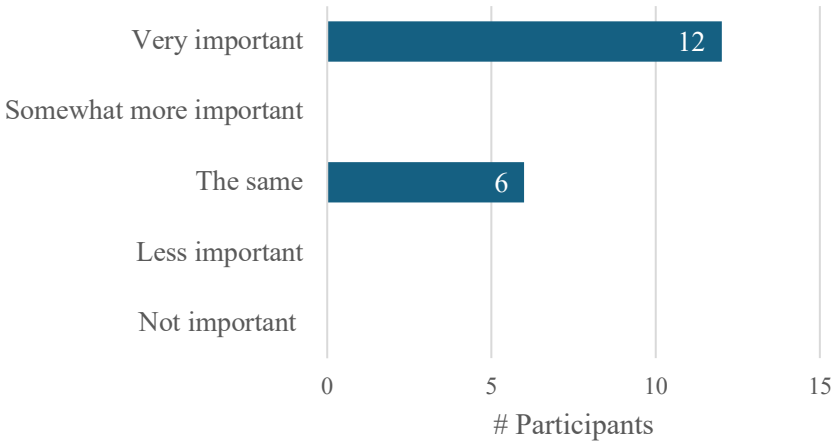
Thirteen of the participants attended *Shabbat in Conversation* and other programs at the Y for over 6 years. Most participants described themselves as moderately religious. Just over half of participants attended another religious or spiritual group. Among those who no longer attend, three added that they had difficulty attending their prior places of worship due to age-related changes in mobility and activity level. Most participants who actively attended services at another religious institution at the time of this survey went only for major holidays.

Question 2: Involved in another religious institution



Question 3: If yes, how often do you go?



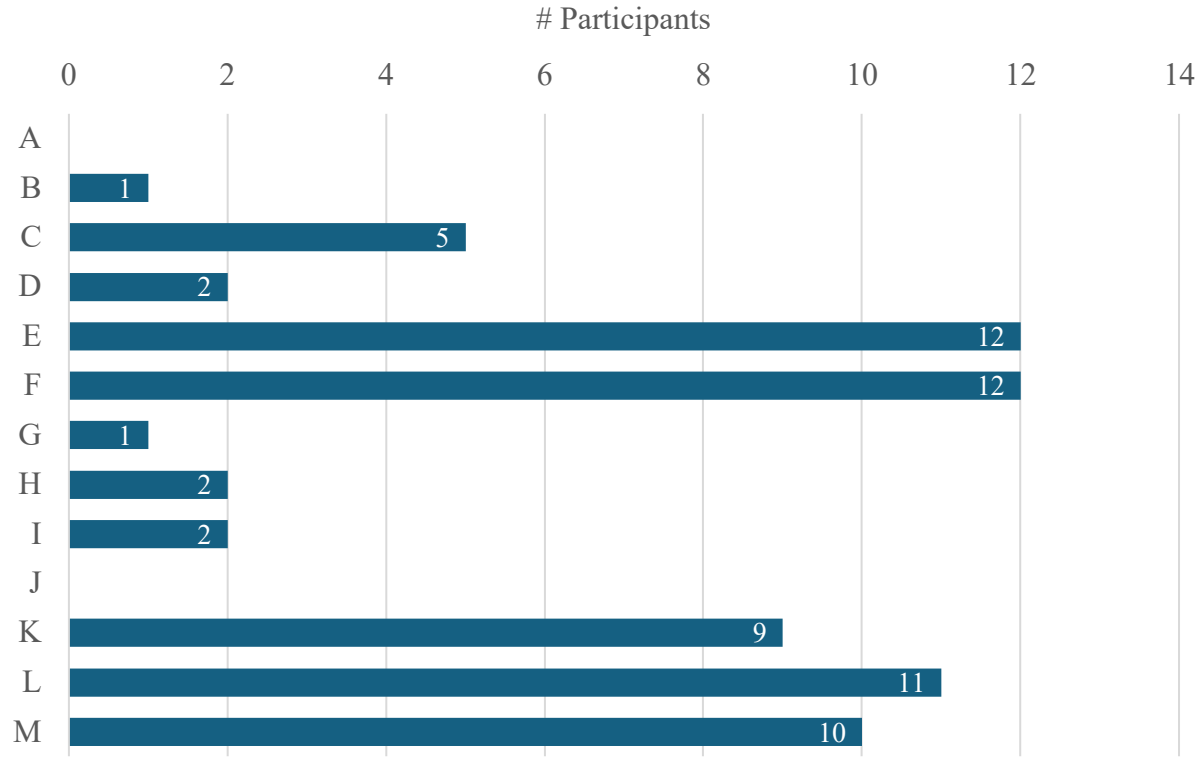


Question 4: Spiritual engagement with the Y community has become...

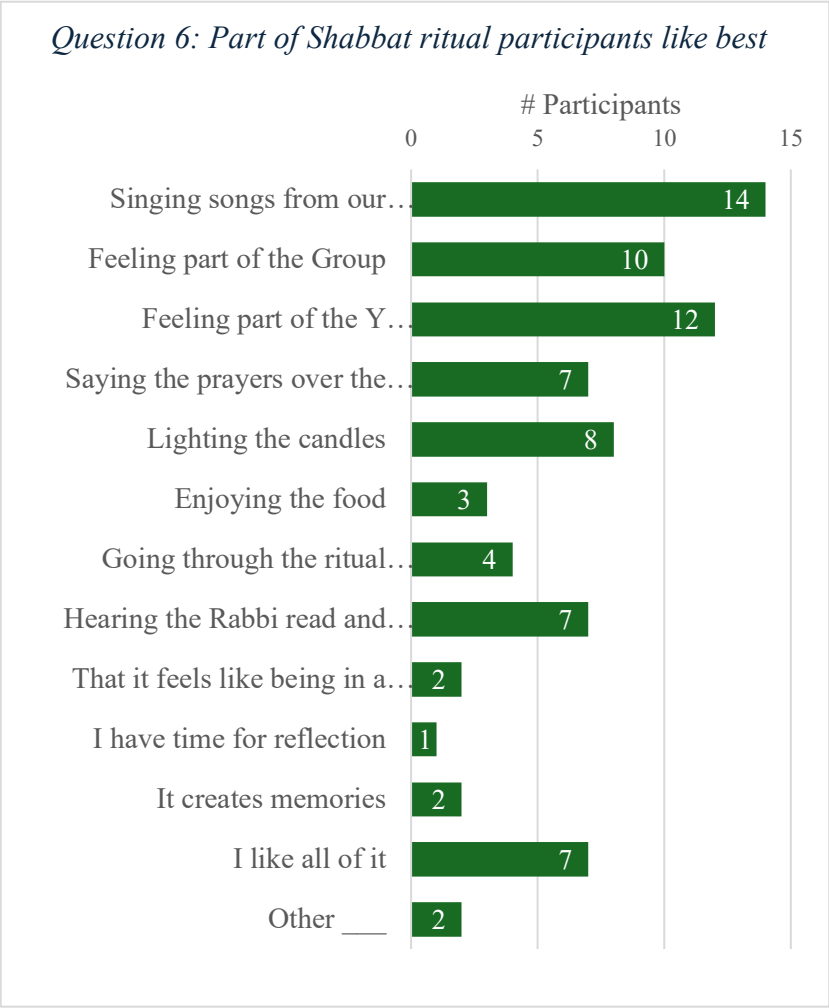
Participants reported spiritual engagement with the community clustered around two responses (i.e. was bimodal): *spiritual engagement with the Y community is the same* and *spiritual engagement with the Y community is very important.* One participant exclaimed, "I know I just started coming, but I felt included immediately!" Most participants who reported "the same" had been coming to the Y for a long time: "because I like to be here, and it can't get any better."

Participants named a wide range of reasons as to why spiritual and religious activities are becoming important to them with age. Most commonly, participants selected options that indicated that these activities had positive impacts on their physical and mental health, brought them closer to their friends/community/other people, and reminded them of their family of origin. A few participants also said that they were seeking something that was missing, that they don't know what happens after death and want to be a good person in their life. Two people indicated the role of service and helping others were an important part of their participation. One person indicated they wanted to re-engage with religion and one person mentioned wanting to sing. Another suggested that it brought them closer with God.

Question 5: As I am getting older, I think religion/spiritual activities will become a more important part of my life because...



A	*I will have more time for study.*
B	*I want to re-engage with my religion.*
C	*It will remind me of my family of origin.*
D	*I am seeking something that feels missing.*
E	*I think that being involved with religion will have a positive effect on my physical health.*
F	*I think that being involved with religion will have a positive effect on my mental health.*
G	*Engaging in religious activity will be a good way to help others.*
H	*I don't know what happens after I die so I want to be as good a person as I can and I think religion will lead me.*
I	*God would want me to.*
J	*It is important to pass on my legacy.*
K	*I want to be with other people.*
L	*I want to be with my friends. This community is important to me.*
M	*Other*



Participants considered many different aspects of Shabbat with positive regard. In descending order of frequency, they were: singing songs, feeling part of the Y community, feeling part of the group, lighting the candles, saying the prayers over wine and challah, hearing from the Rabbi, going through the ritual as a group, and enjoying the food. A few also mentioned that Shabbat feels like worship, creates memories, and offers time for reflection. Seven participants indicated that they liked all of it.

When asked about what they look forward to in coming to Shabbat at the Y, participants had a variety of answers. Some commented on the food in the lunchroom, their dress, and learning with and from others. Some commented on spiritual aspects of the Shabbat experience.

Most participants, however, named community and friendship. They described togetherness in and through diversity: "It is such a great feeling belonging with people from different backgrounds and religions as we are all coming together and believing in the concepts of kindness, peace, community, and friendship."

Question 7: I look forward to every Shabbat Friday at the Y because...

"It's the only time I eat all of the food in the lunchroom, and they put salt on it."
"I put on my Sunday clothes. I look pretty, and I get out of bed."
"It makes me feel the same way that I do when I go to church: surrounded and loved by God."
"I miss that sense of togetherness because my family is not all here."
"It is such a great feeling belonging with people from different backgrounds and religions as we are all coming together and believing in the concepts of kindness, peace, community, and friendship."
"It's good to feel a spiritual element somewhere, particularly at the Y-- I am here so much."
"It is the first time I feel so wanted and included there."
"We are together."
"I look forward to every Shabbat because it allows me the memory of observing Shabbat with my family."
"I learn different cultures and customs. I like to do arts and crafts."
"My friends. And, I love Shabbat."
"I look forward to Shabbat because of the ritual and connecting to God."
"Because of my friends and the lunch we share after."
"I don't look forward to Shabbat. I don't always come."
"I look forward to meeting up with my friends."

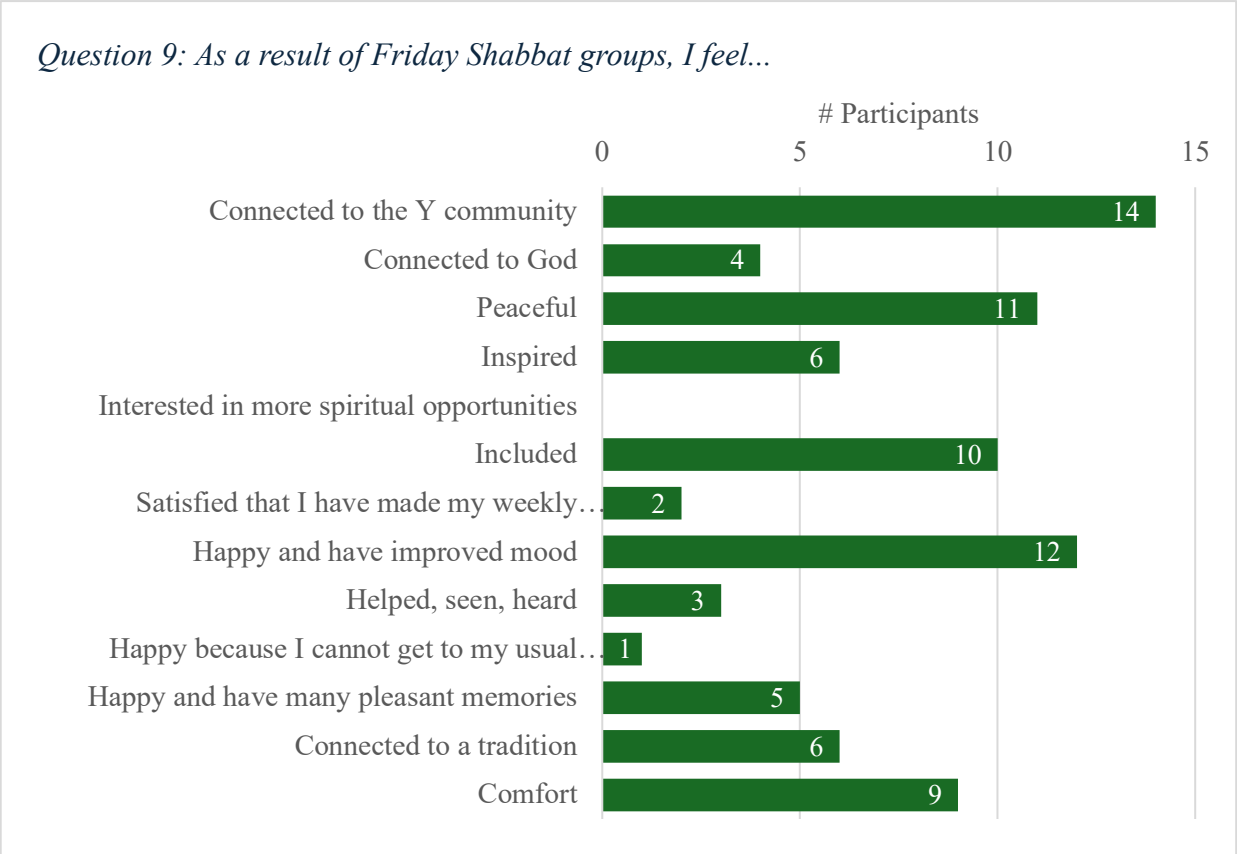
Reasons participants gave that they looked forward to Shabbat overlapped answers that participants gave for Question 8 (*What do you feel is the best part about Shabbat at the Y?*). They further elaborated the benefits of attendance that they perceived, such as being able to sing and speak in Hebrew, playing musical instruments, and enjoying fruits and special meals. Many re-emphasized togetherness, friendship, and community.

Question 8: The best part of Shabbat at the Y

"The best part of Shabbat at the Y is I love hearing Hebrew. I speak Hebrew and I love to hear all the songs in the language I know."
"Feeling so peaceful because it's a special time of the week, even though I know it's Friday, and not Sunday. Sometimes when you give me an extra coupon, some of my Black friends from the neighborhood who felt hungry join me for a special Sabbath meal. I know I shouldn't get seconds, but sometimes I get a little extra and put them in the Tupperware."
"Praising God during the week."
"Singing loudly together and I love greeting everybody as they come in the door. Even though I'm new, they have a smile on their face when they see me."
"The best part is definitely diversity. I am tired of walking only with people like me. I like connecting with people who are different and seeing that they are good and kind."
"I love when people come in and share their stories and clip their coupons."
"I have a chance to pray."
"I love to eat the fruit. Fruit is something we never had when we were growing up. Also, the singing. When you give me the tambourine to play, I love it. The message from the Rabbi is sometimes good, and I can take that home with me."
"We are together."
"Everybody welcomes me and it makes me feel good."
"It gives me the opportunity to be with my family and also to be with my friends."
"My friends and meeting with them."
"Michelle taught us to learn to sing in Hebrew, and just a few months ago, she brought in what is the meaning of all the prayers in English."
"If the wine were real, that would be it!"
"Singing in Hebrew and blessing over the challah."
"I like all of it and when I can attend."
"Lunch with my friends after Shabbat. Catching up with my friends."

Participants reported a wide range of benefits from participating in *Shabbat in Conversation* at the Y. In descending order of frequency, they were: feeling connected to the Y community, happy and with improved mood, peaceful, included, comforted, connected with

tradition, and inspired. Several participants also noted that they made pleasant memories, felt connected with God, felt helped, seen, and heard, satisfied, and met their spiritual obligations. One participant specified that they *only* come for friendship, and another specified that they like "all of it."



Not all participants indicated a desire to continue Sabbath traditions at home. Several enjoyed lighting candles, reading Torah portions, or singing prayers. Some preferred attending Sabbath services rather than honoring Sabbath at home. Some did not keep the Jewish tradition at home, whilst others mentioned restrictions in their residences.

Question 10: Sabbath traditions at home

"I will read my Bible more and pray. We only light candles in church, but maybe I will light a candle until all the hostages come home."
"We used to light Shabbat candles on Shabbat in [country of origin]. I will try that again and wish that we will all be united."
"No."
"I plan to light candles and read the weekly Torah portion and take some time to write to my family, some of whom are in Israel."
"I am beginning to light Friday night candles."
"I plan to take care of myself and I need and want to do that every day, but this is a good reminder."
"I will continue to say Kiddush every Friday night, but not with Jews. Real wine."
"Light candles for hostages and Gaza refugees."
"I keep attending weekly Sabbath services at my congregation to continue having a spiritual community in my life."
"I *don't* want to incorporate any traditions when I'm at home."
"I plan to pray."
"Not available."
"I seek more opportunities to ask questions, read, and interpret more passages. I read the whole Bible last year, and I light candles."
"My [redacted] helps me light candles."
"Yes, I plan to light candles for the hostages to come home and for Gaza."
"No."

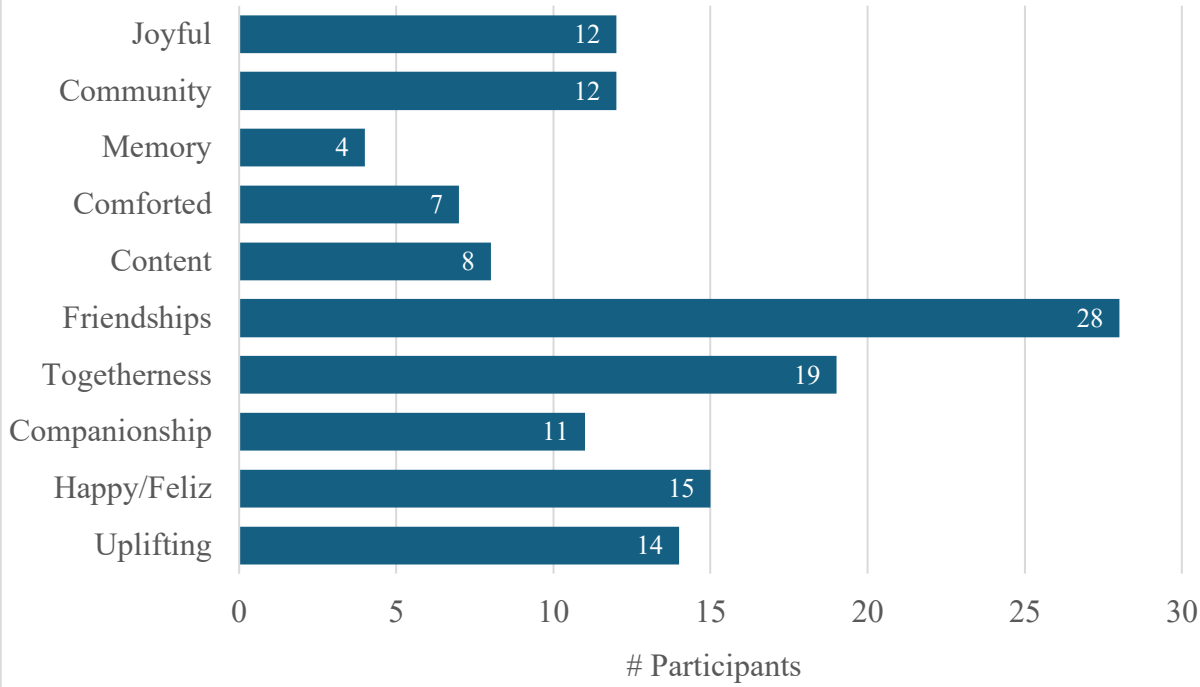
Shabbat supported participants' spirituality and religious beliefs in different ways. Participants who were Jewish reported feeling a sense of continuity between celebrating Shabbat at the Y and their identity, heritage, and family. Among those who were not Jewish, some felt that honoring the Sabbath was similar to their own practice, while others appreciated how engaging in Shabbat at the Y helped them understand and respect the religious beliefs of others. Others re-affirmed the benefit of being with the group; one participant said that it fortified their morality. Another explained that participating in Shabbat helped them to channel their creativity.

Question 11: Does celebrating Shabbat support your own religious beliefs/spirituality?
If Jewish:
"I believe in God, and that's the same thing, right? And I remember all of the rituals, especially the candles and prayers. But I get angry because I am afraid I might forget with matches.
"Create a feeling of spiritual connection, which somehow I lost along the way. I started keeping the traditions of Shabbat when I was 11. It gives me a feeling of continuity with my heritage and identity."
"We never really had Friday, but my mother and grandmother used to keep Kosher. That would have been interesting. I went along to many Jewish teen groups, but I like Shabbat more and more just as it is."
"It helps me to remind myself of the good parts of my religion."
"My mother lit candles every Friday night, and I miss that."
"As I mentioned earlier, I grew up in a family that celebrated Shabbat dinners. It goes with candle lighting, Kiddush, and challah."
"Makes me want to do more, learn more, and sing more, and see if I can go back timewise to my Jewish family."
"As a child and a young fellow, we followed tradition. My grandfathers were very religious. My father, not so much."
If not Jewish:
"I know the whole Jewish Bible even though I am a Christian. I help [the Rabbi] all the time… makes me feel good."
"I think more about Jesus in the Sabbath routine than I do in my own [Christian] church. Maybe because we're all different that Jesus comes and talks to me, and I can come share that with my Jewish friends."
"It makes me respect other people's beliefs, traditions, and I understand more about what I believe."
"Shabbat relates to my belief, which isn't religious. I need and would like to see more inclusion of people like me who don't fit in with the crowd, who are not in cliques. This is a truly welcoming place to be."
"If you read the Bible and learn you can pass it on to those who still don't know God, this gives you and me a sense of peace. It brings me comfort and a sense of peace."
"I'm not sure what my own beliefs were. I am here just connecting with friends/community."
If not religious:
"I like to go with the flow."

"Not sure-- I have no tradition. Shabbat helps me get away from my own religion growing up. I came here alone after the War. I have no family here at all, except my friends at the Y."
Something other (please explain if you can):
"As I told you, I don't have a religious belief. But this Shabbos group is a good blessing because it includes everyone, like me, and not just Jewish people. I think effective worship and prayer is the very same thing as life being led every day and doing the best you can and exercising your talent and ability and being proud of who you are. Isn't that true worship and prayer? Isn't that honoring God? Maybe I believe."
"An opportunity to understand other people's beliefs."
"Being with the group to celebrate Sabbath increases a sense of morality."
"Channels my creativity. I love universal nature phenomena where I connect to God."

Question 12 probed participants to share stories that they felt were relevant to survey topics. To maintain confidentiality of participants, these stories cannot be repeated individually. However, they can be described thematically as an aggregate. Group members recalled memories from their childhood in great depth, some with joy and others with pain. They described planting fruit trees, their baptisms, and the grief of the Holocaust. They described how much they longed to be with their families—both living and deceased. Others recalled how they always loved to sing.

Question 13: What words come to mind as you leave the Shabbat group?



Question 14: Words to describe mood after Shabbat group concludes

Relaxed
Peace
I feel things
Serenity
Quiet
Food
It's Sabbath
Not dull
Music
Weekend

Participants found several words in common to describe *Shabbat in Conversation* after convening together (in descending order): friendships, togetherness, happy/feliz, uplifting,

joyful, community, companionship, content, comforted, and memory. The words building, everybody, mine, community, food, and religion were also spoken out by members of the group but not tallied.

To this, participants added several words about their mood as they concluded the Shabbat ritual (Question 14) and a few notes on singing (Question 15). Notably, all participants regarded singing during Shabbat with positive feelings.

Question 15: How would it be if there were prayers but no singing?

Are you kidding
I love the music. It wouldn't be the same. It's about songs and the melody, but not the praying part.
I have no idea what I'm saying, but I love the singing.
I had no idea what these songs meant until we got this new songbook with English. I love it now.
It's the same songs we had on Friday nights. This is going back to the melodies I knew as a child.
I love the same songs and don't think that we can't learn new ones. We can learn how to sing a round.
I sang the same songs at Jewish camp.
I'm happy to know where all these songs came from, and now I'll try to sing Hebrew more.

Discussion

I turn to discussion of the research findings and relate them back to the research questions which motivated the survey: What is the connective thread that inspires and keeps individuals from different backgrounds coming together? What is the benefit of ritual for a heterogenous group of older adults, and why Sabbath? I draw from my study of theological scholarship and psychological research (presented in Chapters 2-4) to frame answers to these questions.

I organize this section by key findings. Summarized in order of appearance below, they are: (1) Ritual plays a role in maintaining group participation, functioning, and cohesion. (2) Community and belonging are strengthened through group connection and friendship. (3) Singing together is the element that adds most to group engagement and cohesion. (4) After singing, lighting candles was the specific ritual that was most valued by the group. (5) Participating in the Shabbat group is reported to have positive effects on mental and physical health. (6) Therapeutic and theological benefits overlap and align with positive group outcomes.

Ritual plays a role in maintaining group participation, functioning, and cohesion.

Throughout the survey data, participants emphasized the primacy of being together. As evident from the data, they described the enormous amount of respect with which the group operates: respect for each other, respect for the ritual, and respect for any “missteps” (i.e. mispronunciation of the Hebrew in the blessings, missing a music cue) that can occur along the way. While everyone in the group knows which members are Jewish, this seems to be of little or no concern: "It is such a great feeling belonging with people from different backgrounds and religions as we are all coming together and believing in the concepts of kindness, peace, community, and friendship" (Question 7). Religious and spiritual values are held quietly by some members while others identify as nonreligious (Question 3). Although each week a portion of the

Torah is read, discussions of the text turn toward application of the passage in daily life and to memory, and have rarely reflected any spiritual, religious, or belief system. Indeed, “feeling part of the group” was one of the most significant and appealing aspects of Shabbat reported by participants in Question 6.

I would maintain that the primary power of ritual as it is manifest in the *Shabbat in Conversation* group lies not within a traditional religious observance but rather is inherent in the social value of ritual. Ritual contributes to this community by creating a vehicle for advancing connections, which in turn promotes relevance and meaning (Question 9). Therefore, the role of ritual is realized not through religious adherence as “commanded” in Judaism, but rather through commitment to the group and the furthering of group identity.

A second role that ritual plays which supports group cohesion lies in its stability and dependability; the group meets reliably every Friday and has for decades. Once members join, they return week after week. I have not witnessed anyone dropping out of the group -- and instead we have outgrown our space. When asked about the continuing importance of engagement through ritual (Question 4), three-quarters of the cohort deemed it to be “very important.” One participant exclaimed, "I participate in many Y activities, but being [here] is the most important to me – I usually don’t miss a week.” Although the remaining participants reported “the same,” this does not negate the fact that it may have always been “very important” as expressed succinctly by another respondent “because I like to be here, and it can't get any better." Responses confirm that “[the ritual observance is] something I can look forward to every week.” A respondent offered a further comment:

> Why do we do this every Friday? Yes, well it is our habit. But there is something I can't tell you why. But something is there through every week just pulling us along. I know it's the same every week. But I don't know what I'd have to look forward to otherwise.

Community and belonging are strengthened through group connection and friendship.

I have observed how crucial participation in the Shabbat gathering is for strengthening community around our aging population. Of all the activities and programs that are offered to the Y's older adults, it is the weekly ritual, *Shabbat in Conversation*, which brings together the largest and most diverse community. The program begins by welcoming everyone to the table as equals. Against the unassuming backdrop of our simple cinderblock space, we lay our tablecloth, arrange origami flowers, place our candlesticks, and cover the challah. When we set our places, participants (including myself) feel pride derived from maintaining our independence and preserving our identities in both individual and collective senses.

While the stated purpose of many Jewish rituals is religious, in this case, a crucial social function – friendship – emerges as paramount (Questions 7, 8 [*I look forward to Shabbat; the best part of Shabbat]*): "My friends, and I love Shabbat;" "My friends and meeting with them;" "Because of my friends and the lunch we have afterward." These sentiments percolate from human connection looping each individual from one to the next, reinforcing bonds. From the review of literature (see Chapters 2—4), these forms of connection are essential not only to the spirit of Shabbat, but also to maintaining the psychological health of these older adult participants. Indeed, many participants explicitly noted the positive effects of ritual attendance on their physical and mental health (Question 5).

Surprisingly, religious practices had scant mention in the data, which itself is an interesting empirical finding, especially given that participants practice an "undiluted" version of

the Shabbat religious ritual. The terms religion, spirituality, and belief were used primarily as prompts in the research to assess the consequences of community. Instead, there was general agreement and support among participants that it was coming together as a group within a communal atmosphere that promoted inclusion, upheld respect for and appreciation of diversity, and fostered a sense of belonging and comfort that sustained engagement and continuity of attendance (Questions 5-9). What I believe the participants are telling us through their omissions is that the observance of Shabbat together—song, prayer, lighting candles—has a cumulative effect which is no longer described by terms such as "religion," "spirituality," or "belief." This is, as I suggest, the essence of therapeutic theological success. To some extent, this can be seen in continuity with historical, institutional features of the Y, such as its pivotal role in forming the interfaith and multicultural community in Washington Heights.

Singing together is the element that most adds to group engagement and cohesion.

Singing was mentioned as the top response in (Question 6) as the part of the ritual that was best enjoyed (by almost 80% of the group). Peace and friendship were the two most highly valued aspects of the music that the group enjoyed together.

At the close of one of our summer meetings, I considered presenting a song to the group that I had learned while living on a kibbutz. Yet, I hesitated for two reasons. First, the group had been singing the same songs every week for the past 6+ years. Second, it was a 3-part round, a more complex musical form. Was this too complicated for this group at this time?

Shame on me. Everyone relished learning a new song, even though it was in Hebrew. Without my help, they divided themselves into groups, pulled out the sheet music I tucked in the back of our songbooks, reviewed the words in English, and started to pronounce them in Hebrew. The song, *Shalom Chaverim*, in which wishes for peace are expressed, was first

released in the U.S. by the Weavers at Carnegie Hall in 1957, and is often sung as people bid each other farewell. However, *Shalom Chaverim,* is not only a song that advocates peace, but also seems to have the power to rally community, reminding us we are not alone in the world.

These findings recalled the day we learned *Shalom Chaverim* together for another reason. I posed a question to the group as we were saying our farewells that day: "Who remembers what the Rabbi talked about?" Blank stares... "Okay, no problem! Now, who can remember any of the words to *Shalom Chaverim* that we just learned?" Everyone began singing or humming bits and pieces... some in Hebrew and others in English. "Goodbye my dear friends, Stay safe my dear friends, Goodbye, Goodbye, Till we meet again, Till we meet again, Have peace. Have peace." Now, *Shalom Chaverim,* this musical affirmation of friendship, often rounds out our Sabbath ritual.

As the instigator of music, I believe in the ability of songs to spread joy. One member offered, "[I love] singing loudly and together and I love greeting everybody as they come in the door" (Question 8). However, the survey confirms an additional, more subtle contribution. Music adds to group unification and emotional wellbeing through its illusive though connective thread. When the question *How would you feel if there were only prayers with no singing?* (Question 14) was posed to the entire group there was a near mutiny, as if a call to "take up arms" were initiated.

It is worth repeating that we open weekly with *Hineh Ma Tov*, a song that provides comfort and engenders connections. At once, this melody blends us together. Now, through the creation and distribution of our songbook (see Appendix 3), the meanings of the lyrics are more accessible to all group members. In keeping with the inclusivity of the group, we now are assured that each member can experience the full warmth and presence of prayerful music.

After singing, lighting candles was the specific ritual that was most valued by the group.

The lighting of the Sabbath candles has had a big impact on the Group (see Questions 6, 10, 11). Along with the Sabbath candles, we light a Yahrzeit candle to remember everyone who has died since October 7th, and the Group has since come up with the idea of lighting a candle every week at home until all the hostages are released and the war ends.

We mark Yom HaShoah annually. This year, during the event, the entire community rose to their feet with candles as we remember the victims of the Holocaust and honor our Survivors. This included approximately 150 Dominican Americans and 25 Jewish participants, of which members of the *Shabbat in Conversation* group were a part. When our keynote speaker praised the Dominican people and the Dominican Republic for sheltering and welcoming refugees, the auditorium burst into cheers. The Survivors burst into tears. And the candles flooded the room with light and were held high.

It is not surprising then that candles and candle-lighting received multiple mentions scattered throughout survey responses. Candles fell only behind singing and community as most important (Question 6) and were referenced by nearly half the cohort (Question 10).

While the Jewish Code of Law obligates both men and women to light Sabbath candles (Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah 12th c.*), the lighting of the candles that begin Shabbat is mostly associated with women (Shapiro, 2016). At *Shabbat in Conversation*, we follow this tradition when one of our most longstanding group members commences our candle lighting ritual (Question 5):

> I light the candles [here] every week. It's just my job. We used to make do with only candle stumps. Then [Michelle brought] a box of 144. I say the prayer. Sometimes for me it ends with Shabbos – like we said in my family. But for our Hebrew-speaking

members, I say Shabbat! And [s/he] smiles! Everyone joins in and says "Ahh- men." It has memories for me, but this has been my place for… many years.

When asked of the group if they wanted to continue (or already continued) Sabbath traditions at home (Question 10), eight of fourteen answers mentioned "candles" in their response. Some respondents were Jewish members who offered candles as a pleasant memory of Shabbat as it once had been celebrated among family, "We used to light Shabbat candles in [country of origin]. I will try that again and wish that we will be united;" "I plan to light candles...;" "I am beginning (again) to light Friday night candles;" "My friend helps me light candles (but I usually blow them out)." Like singing, candle-lighting is a part of many faith traditions. Therefore, candles may have had religious referents for participants across different backgrounds. This is especially noted among non-Jewish participants whose religious-origin service included candles, "I read the whole Bible last year and I light candles;" "I used to light candles in church."

Participating in the Shabbat group is reported to have positive effects on mental and physical health.

Survey responses reflect that deriving both "mental and physical health" are equal benefits and the two most important reason members gave for continued program attendance (Question 6). Open-ended responses (Question 8-- *the best part of Shabbat*) reflect similar sentiments: "Everybody welcomes me, and it makes me feel good;" "I feel special because it's a special time of the week;" and "I seek opportunities to learn." Participating in other activities at the Y, many cohort members interface with a support network that provides several opportunities for social-emotional support and physical health and well-being, such as exercise programs and cooking classes. To further understand how the Jewish Sabbath ritual touched individual members, the assembled group was asked to identify words that come to mind when they attend

Shabbat in Conversation (Question 13). Aggregating their answers, they were: togetherness (14); friendships (14); joyful (12); community (12); companionship (11); content (8); comforted (7); happy (7); uplifting (7); everybody (4); memory (4); feliz (4).

In a similar exercise, the group was asked to name words that described their mood after Shabbat (Question 14). The words and phrases offered were: relaxed, peace, I feel things, serenity, quiet, food, it's Sabbath, music, special, and weekend. In all instances, the sentiments which spilled out from top-of-mind inquiry were reflective of pleasant emotions, demonstrating psychological benefit. Research on the fundamentals of Group Therapy and Positive Psychology (see Chapter 3) suggest that people who find connection in a communal activity rooted in a religious/spiritual subtext can experience an enhancement of their emotional lives and physical health. In this study, participants describe these effects in their own words (Lim & Putnam, 2010).

Therapeutic and theological benefits overlap and align with positive group outcomes.

When participating in the Shabbat ritual, group members were open, accepting, and nonjudgmental, comporting themselves with compassion. When a need is identified among group members, there is generally a collective response. Given that there is such a wide range of ages, abilities, and ethnicities, this feels extraordinary, even miraculous – and a mark of the therapeutic power that the group has organized for and around itself. In the survey, cohort members expressed this therapeutic effect in multiple instances (Questions 7 and 8): “It is such a great feeling belonging with people from different backgrounds and religions as we are all coming together and believing in kindness, peace, community and friendship;” “I feel so peaceful ... holding your hand when you sit next to me.”

One cannot help but witness how the therapeutic power of Group (and here I refer to the psychological theoretical goals expounded by Irvin Yalom), when overlayed with the theological elements that comprise the celebration, encourages reflection, inclusion, and respect. In their reflections on group participation (Question 9), cohort members responded that by being in this group they felt: connection to the community (14); to have a “happy and improved mood” (12); peaceful (11); included (10); comfort (9); inspired (6); and “happy with pleasant memories” (5).

In almost every instance, it was Christian members who spoke of God, the Bible, or referred to spirituality in their survey responses. Jewish members reflected on memories and mention family, tradition, and the Sabbath ritual. It is impossible to get into the spiritual space of any one member of the cohort, however the responses to Questions 7 and 9 point to a marked split as to why individuals look forward to participating. For the non-Jewish members, I cannot discern if they were being brought closer to their own faith or if they were also considering their relationship with each other, with Judaism, or with the Divine. However, comments such as "Since I can no longer (make it to my own church/place of worship) I feel this is where I need to be;" "I now go to the Rabbi's Roundtable[10] where we discuss the Bible;” "I remember how important it is to be kind – that was always the message in church;" "I want to go home and read (re-read) my Bible;" and “It makes me feel the same way that I did when I went to church, surrounded and loved by God,” all suggest an alignment with faith.

Among Jewish members, group participation evoked memories: “...it allows me the memory of observing Shabbat with my family;” and “I miss that sense of togetherness... my family is not here.” Overall, as much as I try to get at the concept of "spirituality," there seemed

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[10] Rabbi’s Roundtable meets on two Wednesday afternoons a month where we take up a topic that the Rabbi and I decide would be of interest. A popular topic was the Book of Ruth.

to be no "takers." Rather than being empty of spiritual significance, participating in the Sabbath ritual created something more when practiced together among this group of older adults. While not explicitly spiritual in nature, *Shabbat in Conversati*on is connected to Jewish tradition because it honors the collective.

Limitations and Need for Further Research

While adding to research at the interface of therapeutic and theological scholarship, this project has several limitations worthy of consideration. First, while it describes the group under study, the specific identities of the participants and of the context of *Shabbat in Conversation* may create problems with generalization or implementing similar programs in other settings. As explained in Chapter One, the history of programming at the Y and the participants of the group are unique. However, it is precisely because of these unique attributes that make research among this group valuable in times of great social division and political conflict.

Second, there are several conceptual limitations. Creating precise definitions for terms used in the questionnaire, most particularly *spirituality*, was problematic. After an examination of multiple sources of research on the topic, I found that these terms are used in a widely disparate and inconsistent manner. It is not possible to tease out how respondents are differentiating their spirituality from religiosity, faith, or identity.

Until the late 1970s little has been written or researched on the effects of integrating spirituality or religion into the practice of group counseling. Furthermore, in undertaking this project, I noticed scant information on the linkage of group participation and ritual. Almost no research exists as to what effect a religiously based ritual has on members who do not all share the same faith. There is some research on the supportive effects of participation in ritual on wellbeing. There is also some research on the impact of Sabbath worship, whether it be on an

individual or in a group. However, these were conducted among communities where the Sabbath ritual is intrinsic to the religion, Orthodox Jewish communities and Seventh-day Adventists, which does not describe the Group at the Y (Loewenthal & Dein, 2016; Superville et al., 2014; Speedling, 2019). Furthermore, I was unable to find research directly related to the positive contributions of Sabbath ritual participation for a multicultural and aging population.

Multiple opportunities exist for further research and creative programming. The power of a traditional ritual, creatively extended to and expressed by a multicultural population, offers enormous opportunities for exploration.

The lifespan of older adults is expanding; the term "older adults" is no longer a one-size-fits-all category. The need to segment "old age" is essential for investigating rituals that strengthen resilience, provide hope, counteract loneliness, and support community as individuals age.

Furthermore, there is a need to not only incorporate ancient rituals, but to honor Creation with new rituals, creatively designed and strategically targeted, that support relevance and meaning for the broad range of adults between the ages of 60 and 100+.

So, I offer Therapeutic Theology. The components of ritual, most importantly songful prayer, seemingly hold a key to several psychosocial benefits expressed in community.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions

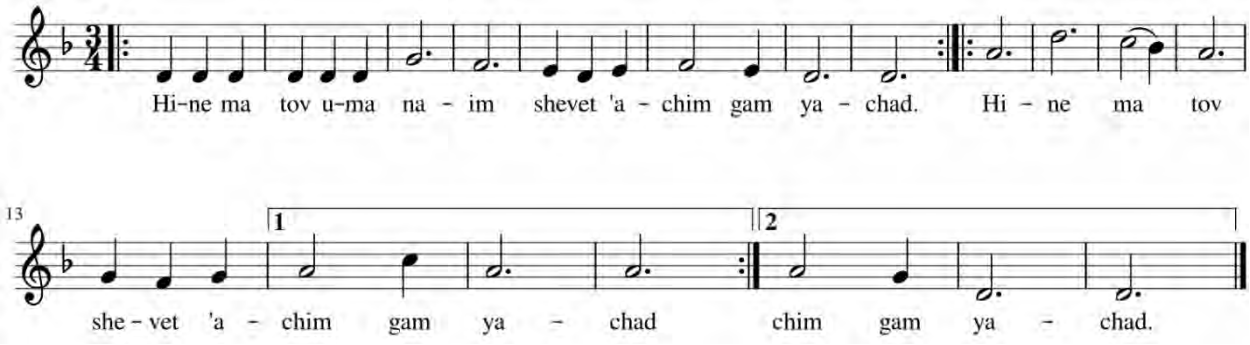
How our older adults connect with the Jewish Shabbat ritual is seemingly more about (1) connection, (2) community, (3) inclusivity, (4) belonging, and (5) diversity rather than religious obligation, affiliation, or expression. Open-ended responses such as "[Shabbat] is the first time I feel so wanted and included;" "It is so great feeling belonging with people from different backgrounds coming together believing in kindness, peace, and friendship;" "The best part is diversity;" and "Everyone has a smile on their face when they see me," support this conclusion. As evidenced by these words, engagement with Shabbat among this group extends beyond the boundaries of religion and spirituality. These attributes exist through the anticipation that they will be together every Friday; they exist in the friendships they have created; they exist in their deep respect for diversity. For all of us, they exist in the Sabbath songs of love and peace that fill our hearts and souls as we share our space together.

Ritual, if carefully orchestrated, delivers meaning, respect, and assuredness which in turn finds a home in a culture of interdependency, inclusion, and social responsibility. In community with each other, older adults are not shut out of life. Rather, we recapture respect by respecting each other, energized to live out our values fully in the present.

In *I and Thou* (Ich-und-Du), Martin Buber (2008) suggests the path to God is to be found in what lies between 'I and Thou,' in the hyphen (Ich-und-Du) or the interstitial space between us. In the most profound, though simplest and purest sense, we find God in the fullness of our human relationships -- when we discover each other. God is brought into presence when we reach closer to other people; we may feel this presence, even though God may remain hidden or difficult to express. And maybe, if we have not begun looking for God, or have yet to find a pathway toward God, maybe...just maybe, God has found us.

We no longer sing from rote, or out of habit, mouthing words for which we have no meaning. The lyrics reference instead the collectivity that sings them aloud. So, I offer this blessing: What we cannot express alone, let us find the courage to face in this time of life together. Let us all continue to sing, bringing new meaning each Shabbat to centuries old words. Let the music stir our hearts and souls. Let us be comforted now and whenever the music rises within us. And through our singing help us experience *oneg* (joy) and *kedusha* (holiness) alongside the peaceful strength of *menucha* (rest and reflection). And let us continue to reach out to one another and share these experiences often.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for people to dwell together in unity! (Psalm 133:1)



Reference: Traditional Israel. N.D.

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Appendix 1: Research Survey

This is a study that will look at the components of the shared rituals and group participation in the weekly *Shabbat in Conservation* program at the Young Men and Young Women's Hebrew Association of Washington Heights & Inwood (the Y). The purpose of the study is for completion of my Doctor of Ministry (DMIN) program at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. The study will consist of a survey of 12 individual and 3 group questions. If at any time you decide you don't want to answer a question, or would like not to participate any further, that is fine. Your responses to the survey will be confidential.

How long have you been participating in *Shabbat in Conversation*? _____

How long have you been coming to programs at the Y's *Center for Adults Aging Well*?

What other activities do you participate in at the Y?

1. How religious would you say you are? (Please circle if one applies)

Not religious at all Not very religious Moderately Religious Extremely Religious

I never thought about how I would describe myself in religious terms

2. Do you go to a synagogue or church or temple or another religious/spiritual group?

Yes, I attend a _____

No

3. If yes, how frequently do you go?

a) I go to _____ several times a week.

b) I attend _____ at least once a week.

c) I go at least once a month.

d) I go sporadically.

e) I go for major holidays.

f) I went to _____ before coming to the Y, but not anymore.

g) I never went.

4. On a Scale of 1-5 Spiritual engagement with the community has become:

Not important Less important The same Somewhat more important Very important

5. As I am getting older, I think religion/spiritual activities will become a more important part of my life because: (please circle as many as you want).

a) I will have more time for study.

b) I want to re-engage with my religion.

c) It will remind me of my family of origin.

d) I am seeking something that feels missing.

e) I think that being involved with religion will have a positive effect on my mental health.

f) I think that being involved with religion will have a positive effect on my physical health.

g) Engaging in religious activity will be a good way to help others.

h) I don't know what happens after I die so I want to be as good a person as I can and I think religion will lead me.

i) God would want me to.

j) It is important to pass on my legacy.

k) I want to be with other people.

l) I want to be with my friends. This community is important to me.

Other reasons you may have _____

6. What part of the Shabbat ritual do you like best?

Singing songs from our songbook

Feeling part of the Group

Feeling part of the Y community

Saying the prayers over the wine and the challah

Lighting the candles

Enjoying the food

Going through the ritual together with the group

Hearing the Rabbi read and talk about the weekly passage

That it feels like being in a worship community

I have time for reflection

It creates memories

I like all of it

Other _____

7. I look forward to every Shabbat Friday at the Y because:

8. What do you feel is the best part of Shabbat at the Y?

9. As a result of Friday Shabbat groups, I feel (please circle as many as you want)

Connected to the Y community

Connected to God

Peaceful

Inspired

Hungry

Interested in more spiritual opportunities

Included

Satisfied that I have made my weekly religious obligations

Happy and have improved mood

Helped, seen, heard

Happy because I cannot get to my usual house of worship anymore

Happy and have many pleasant memories

Connected to a tradition

Comforted

10. I want to/I continue to incorporate Sabbath traditions when I am at home. I plan to:

11. Does celebrating Sabbat support your own religious beliefs/spirituality? If yes, how?

(a) IF JEWISH: How does the Friday Sabbath align with your upbringing and tradition?

(b) IF NOT JEWISH: having been brought up in another tradition, how does Friday Shabbat relate to your own religious beliefs?

(c) IF NOT RELIGIOUS: How does Friday Shabbat relate to your own sense of spirituality?

(d) SOMETHING OTHER: (please explain if you can)

12. Is there a story you might want to share? Feel free to write on the back.

Three Questions Posed to the Group

13. What is the first word that comes to mind as to why you attend *Shabbat in Conversation?*
14. What word(s) would you use to describe your mood as you conclude the Shabbat ritual?
15. How would it be for you if there were prayers but no singing?

Demographic Information

Name:

Neighborhood resides in:

My age is:	I am of the following descent (please check all that apply)
Under 62	White or European
62 – 73	Asian or Asian American
74 – 85	African Descent
86 – 97	Latino/Latina
98 +	Middle Eastern or North African

I consider myself to be _____

Appendix 2: Consent documents

Group Preparation Discussion

Before the consent forms were distributed, meetings with the individuals who will asked to participate in the survey have been held. While there is a core group that attends on most weeks, explanations of the intended research have been offered over a few weeks. These meetings had the following purposes so that the individuals in the group understand: 1) The purpose of the study and how the study might benefit current and future programs; 2) What the *Consent to Participate* document says; 3) What signing the document means; 4) There is time to think about whether or not they want to participate; and (5) At any time, participants can talk with me and/or with the other group members about the study. Additionally it was reinforced that:

- Participation in the study is totally voluntary.
- Members of the group can answer as many questions as they want.
- Individual members can decide not to participate at all.
- Even if members agree to participate, they can decide at any time to drop out.
- All survey responses are confidential.

Consent to Participate

This is a study that will look at the components of the rituals of the weekly *Shabbat in Conservation* group at the YM&YWHA (the "Y") of Washington Heights & Inwood. This study will explore the elements of the Sabbath program at the Y's Center for Adults Living Well (CALW). The purpose of the study is for completion of my DMIN program at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

The study will consist of a 12-question survey that you can fill out. If at any time you decide you don't want to answer a question, or would like not to participate any further, that is fine. Your responses to the survey are confidential. And all the questionnaires and personal information will be removed. If you would like to talk with me or email me something you want to say that is important to you, please let me know. Additionally, Victoria (Vicki) Neznansky and I will sit down with you at any time, and we will review any of your questions or concerns. Should you have any questions when I am not at the Y, you can reach out to me via my email or contact Vicki at 212. 569. 6200 x 204. Her office is in Wien House.

You acknowledge your consent to participate in this study and receipt of a copy of this agreement by signing below. I hope this research will help us to provide the best programs at the Y as well as shape new ones. I look forward to my next year together with you. Thank you so much for helping me with my project and for the warm welcome I get from all of you each week.

Name _____ Signature _____Date _____

Michelle.Carr@HUC.edu

Appendix 3: Songs and Prayers for *Shabbat in Conversation*

Hineh Mah Tov!

הִנֵּה מַה טּוֹב

Hineh Mah tov umah na'im
shevet achim gam yachad.

הִנֵּה מַה טּוֹב וּמַה נָּעִים שֶׁבֶת אַחִים
גַּם יָחַד.

"Behold how good and pleasing it is for people to dwell together in unity"

Being together as a community is amazing, joyful, and spectacular!

Part 1: Opening Songs
"We Welcome Everyone in As Equals"

Hineh Mah Tov

- **What do the Hebrew words mean?** *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for people to dwell together in unity!*
- **Where does this song come from?** *Psalm 133:1*

Shalom Aleichem - A song welcomes 2 angels who accompany individuals as they welcome in the Sabbath. A blessing for peace.

- **What do the Hebrew words mean?** *Peace be upon you!*
- **Where does this song come from?** It was a folksong that was probably written between the late 16th and early 17th century

Peace be with you, O ministering angels, messengers of the Most High, sent by the king, King of Kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He.

As you approach to peace, *O messengers of peace, messengers of the Most High, sent by the King of Kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He,*
bless me with peace, *O messengers of peace, messengers of the Most High, sent by the king, King of Kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He.*

As you relax in peace, *O messengers of peace, messengers of the Most High, sent by the king, King of Kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He,*
bless me with peace, *O messengers of peace, messengers of the Most High, sent by the king, King of Kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He.*

As you depart to peace, *O messengers of peace, messengers of the Most High, sent by the king, King of Kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He,*
bless me with peace, *O messengers of peace, messengers of the Most High, sent by the king, King of Kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He.*

Part 2: The Blessings

Lighting the Sabbath Candles

Translation

Blessed are You, Eternal our God, Sovereign of time and space.

You hallow us with Your mitzvot and command us to kindle the lights of Shabbat.

Transliteration

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech haolam
Asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'zivanu l'hadlik ner shel Shabbat

Kiddush - Blessing Over the Wine

Translation

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

Transliteration

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam borei p'ri hagafen

HaMotzi - Blessing Over the Challah

Translation

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who brings forth bread from the earth.

Transliteration

Baruch Atah, Adonai Eloheinu melech haolam, hamotzi lechem min haaretz.

Part 3: Our Songs

Shabbat at the Y

We welcome everyone as equals

הִנֵּה מַה טּוֹב וּמַה נָּעִים - שֶׁבֶת אַחִים גַּם יָחַד.

***Hinneh** mah Tov umah na'iym - sheveth aḥiym gam yaḥadh*

Blessing Over The Candles: we mark this time & space as special

***Barukh** ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu L'hadlik ner shel **Shabbat**.*	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹקינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל שַׁבָּת:

We praise You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has commanded us with *mitzvot* to light the lights of Shabbat.

Shalom Aleichem: we invite everyone into this space for a peaceful Shabbat

Shalom Alichem *malachei hash-sharet, malachei Elyon, mim-melech malachei ham-melachim, haq-qadosh Baruch Hu.*	שָׁלוֹם עֲלֵיכֶם, מַלְאֲכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת, מַלְאֲכֵי עֶלְיוֹן, מִמֶּלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמְּלָכִים, הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא:
Bo'achem L'shalom *malachei ha-shalom, malachei Elyon, mim-melech malachei ham-melachim, haq-qadosh Baruch Hu.*	בּוֹאֲכֶם לְשָׁלוֹם, מַלְאֲכֵי הַשָּׁלוֹם, מַלְאֲכֵי עֶלְיוֹן, מִמֶּלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמְּלָכִים, הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא:
Bar'chuni L'shalom *malachei ha-shalom, malachei Elyon, mim-melech malachei ham-melachim, haq-qadosh Baruch Hu.*	בָּרְכוּנִי לְשָׁלוֹם, מַלְאֲכֵי הַשָּׁלוֹם, מַלְאֲכֵי עֶלְיוֹן, מִמֶּלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמְּלָכִים, הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא:
Tzeit'chem L'shalom *malachei ha-shalom, malachei Elyon, mim-melech malachei ham-melachim, haq-qadosh Baruch Hu.*	צֵאתְכֶם לְשָׁלוֹם, מַלְאֲכֵי הַשָּׁלוֹם, מַלְאֲכֵי עֶלְיוֹן, מִמֶּלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמְּלָכִים, הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא:

Kiddush: we honor the act of creating and the act of pausing

Leader whispers: *Va'yihi erev va'y'hi voker:*

וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר:

Leader: ***Yom ha'shishi.*** *Va'yihulu ha'shamayim v'haaretz v'hol tzva'am. Va'yihal Elohim ba'yom ha'shvi'i milahto asher asah, va'yishbot ba'yom ha'shvi'i mikolmlahto asher asah. Va'yivareh Elohim et yom ha'shvi'i, va'yikadeish oto, ki vo shavat mikol milahto, asher bara Elohim la'asot. Savri chaveri:* ***L'chaim!***

יום הַשִּׁשִּׁי. וַיְכֻלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל צְבָאָם. וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה. וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה. וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹקִים אֶת יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי, וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אתו, כִּי בו שָׁבַת מִכָּל מְלַאכְתּוֹ, אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹקִים לַעֲשׂוֹת.
סַבְרִי חבֵרי: לחיים!

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Haolam, borei p'ri hagafen.
Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'ratzah vanu, v'Shabbat kodsho, b'ahavah uv'ratzon, hinchilanu, zikaron l'maaseih v'reishit. Ki hu yom t'chilah, l'mikra-ei kodesh, zecher litziat Mitzrayim. Ki vanu, vacharta, v'otanu kidashta, mikol ha'amim. V'Shabbat kodsh'cha, b'ahavah uv'ratzon hinchaltanu. ***Baruch atah Adonai, m'kadeish HaShabbat.***

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹקינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן.
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹקינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם. אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְרָצָה בָנוּ. וְשַׁבַּת קָדְשׁו בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרָצון הִנְחִילָנוּ. זִכָּרון לְמַעֲשֵׂה בְרֵאשִׁית. כִּי הוּא יום תְּחִלָּה לְמִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ זֵכֶר לִיצִיאַת מִצְרָיִם. כִּי בָנוּ בָחַרְתָּ, וְאותָנוּ קִדַּשְׁתָּ, מִכָּל הָעַמִּים וְשַׁבַּת קָדְשְׁךָ בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרָצון הִנְחַלְתָּנוּ: **בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', מְקַדֵּשׁ הַשַּׁבָּת:**

[Evening became morning]: The sixth day. And the heavens and the earth and all that filled them were complete. And on the seventh day God completed the work, and God refrained on the seventh day from all the labor. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, for God then refrained from all labor - from the act of creation.

With your permission, my friends: TO LIFE!

Blessed are You, the Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine. (Amen)

Praise to You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who finding favor with us, sanctified us with mitzvot. In love and favor, You made the holy Shabbat our heritage as a reminder of the work of Creation. As first among our sacred days, it recalls the Exodus from Egypt. You chose us and set us apart from the peoples. In love and favor You have given us Your holy Shabbat as an inheritance. **Praise to You, Adonai, who sanctifies Shabbat.** (Amen)

Motzi: we recognize and give thanks for all nurishment

Baruch atah Adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam, hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz.	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' , אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמּוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

Song 1: Jerusalem of Gold

Avir harim tsalul k'yayin, Vereiyach oranim. *Nissah beru'ach ha'arbayim, Im kol pa'amonim.* *U'vtardemat ilan va'even, Shvuyah bachalomah.* *Ha'ir asher badad yoshevet, Uvelibah - chomah.* *Yerushalayim shel zahav Veshel nechoshet veshel or, Halo lechol shirayich Ani kinor. x2*	אויר הרים צלול כיין וריח אורנים נישא ברוח הערביים עם קול פעמונים ובתרדמת אילן ואבן שבויה בחלומה העיר אשר בדד יושבת ובליבה חומה ירושלים של זהב ושל נחושת ושל אור הלא לכל שירייך אני כינור

Song 2: Adon Olam

אֲדוֹן עוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר מָלַךְ	***Adon olam,*** *asher malach,*
בְּטֶרֶם כָּל יְצִיר נִבְרָא	*beterem kol yetzir nivra.*
לְעֵת נַעֲשָׂה בְחֶפְצוֹ כֹּל	*Le'et na'asah vecheftzo kol,*
אֲזַי מֶלֶךְ שְׁמוֹ נִקְרָא	*azai melech sh'mo nikra.*
וְאַחֲרֵי כִּכְלוֹת הַכֹּל	***V'acharey*** *kichlot hakol,*
לְבַדּוֹ יִמְלֹךְ נוֹרָא	*levado yim'loch nora.*
וְהוּא הָיָה וְהוּא הֹוֶה	*V'hu haya, v'hu hoveh,*
וְהוּא יִהְיֶה בְּתִפְאָרָה	*v'hu yih'yeh b'tifara.*
וְהוּא אֶחָד וְאֵין שֵׁנִי	***V'hu echad,*** *v'eyn sheni*
לְהַמְשִׁיל לוֹ וּלְהַחְבִּירָה	*l'hamshil lo, l'hachbira.*
בְּלִי רֵאשִׁית בְּלִי תַכְלִית	*B'li reishit, b'li tachlit,*
וְלוֹ הָעֹז וְהַמִּשְׂרָה	*v'lo ha'oz v'hamisrah.*
וְהוּא אֵלִי וְחַי גּוֹאֲלִי	***V'hu Eli,*** *v'chai go'ali,*
וְצוּר חֶבְלִי בְּיוֹם צָרָה	*v'tzur chevli b'et tzarah.*
וְהוּא נִסִּי וּמָנוֹסִי	*V'hu nisi umanos li,*
מְנָת כּוֹסִי בְּיוֹם אֶקְרָא	*m'nat kosi b'yom ekra.*
בְּיָדוֹ אַפְקִיד רוּחִי	***B'yado*** *afkid ruchi*
בְּעֵת אִישַׁן וְאָעִירָה	*b'et ishan v'a'irah.*
וְעִם רוּחִי גְּוִיָּתִי	*V'im ruchi g'viyati,*
אֲדֹנָי לִי וְלֹא אִירָא	*Adonai li v'lo ira.*

Song 3: Kol Ha'Olam Kulo

כל העולם כלו, גשר צר מאד, והעקר לא לפחד כלל
Kol ha'olam kulo, Gesher tzar me'od, Veha'ikar lo lifached k'lal.

Song 4: Ivdu et Hashem

עבדו את-ה בשמחה, בואו לפניו ברננה
Ivdu et Hashem be-simchah, bo'u lefanav bir'nana.

Song 5: Eili, Eili

אלי אלי שלא יגמר לעולם, החול והים, רשרוש של המים, ברק השמים, תפילת האדם
Eili Eili shelo yigameir l'olam, Hachol v'hayam, rishrush shel hamayim, B'rak hashamayim, t'filat ha-Adam

Song 6: Lo Yisa Goy

לא ישא גוי אל גוי חרב, לא ילמדו עוד מלחמה
Lo yisa goy el goy cherev, Lo yilm'du od milchama

Song 7: Oseh Shalom

עושה שלום במרומיו, הוא יעשה שלום עלינו, ועל כל ישראל, ואמרו אמן
Oseh shalom bimromav, Hu ya-aseh shalom aleinu, V'al kol yisrael, v'imru amein

Song 8: Romemu

רוֹמְמוּ ה' אֱלֹקינוּ וְהִשְׁתַּחֲווּ לְהַר קָדְשׁוֹ, כִּי־קָדוֹשׁ ה' אֱלֹקינוּ
Romemu Adonai Eloheinu, v'hishtachavu l'har kodsho. Ki kadosh Adonai Eloheinu

Song 9: Shalom/Saalam

Od yavo' shalom aleinu, Ve al kulam
Salaam (Salaam), Aleinu ve al kol ha olam, Salaam, Salaam

Song 10: Heiveinu Shalom!

הבאנו שלום עליכם!
Heiveinu shalom aleichem!

Song 11: Yigdal

Yigdal Elohim chai ve'yishtabach, nimtza v'ein et el metsiuto. **Echad** V'ein yachid keyichudo, ne'elam v'gam ein sof l'achduto.	יִגְדַּל אֱלֹקִים חַי וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח, נִמְצָא וְאֵין עֵת אֶל מְצִיאוּתו. אֶחָד וְאֵין יָחִיד כְּיִחוּדו, נֶעְלָם וְגַם אֵין סוֹף לְאַחְדוּתו.
Ein lo d'mut haguf v'eino guf, lo na'aroch eilav kedushato. **Kadmon** l'chol davar asher nivra, rishon v'ein reishit l'reishito. **Hino** adon olam l'chol notsar, yoreh g'dulato umalchuto. **Shefa** n'vuato netano, el anshei s'gulato v'tif'arto. **Lo** kam b'Yisrael k'Moshe od navi umabeet et temunato. **Torat** emet natan le'amo el, al yad neveeo ne'eman beito. **Lo** yachalif ha'el ve'lo yamir dato, le'olamim, lezulato. **Tsofeh** v'yodea setareinu, mabeet l'sof davar B'kadmato. **Gomel** l'ish chesed k'mif'alo, notel l'rasha ra kerish'ato. **Yishlach** l'ketz yamin meshicheinu, lifdot m'chakei ketz yeshuato. **Metim** y'chayeh El b'rov chasdo, baruch adei ad shem t'hilato.	אֵין לו דְמוּת הַגּוף וְאֵינו גוּף, לא נַעֲרֹךְ אֵלָיו קְדֻשָּׁתו. קַדְמון לְכָל דָּבָר אֲשֶׁר נִבְרָא, רִאשון וְאֵין רֵאשִׁית לְרֵאשִׁיתו. הִנּו אֲדון עולָם לְכָל נוצָר, יורֶה גְּדֻלָּתו וּמַלְכוּתו. שֶׁפַע נְבוּאָתו נָתַנו, אֶל אַנְשֵׁי סְגֻלָּתו וְתִפְאַרְתו. לא קָם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּמשֶׁה עוד, נָבִיא וּמַבִּיט אֶת תְּמונָתו. תּורַת אֱמֶת נָתַן לְעַמו אֵל, עַל יַד נְבִיאו נֶאֱמַן בֵּיתו. לא יַחֲלִיף הָאֵל וְלא יָמִיר דָּתו, לְעולָמִים לְזולָתו. צופֶה וְיודֵעַ סְתָרֵינו, מַבִּיט לְסוף דָּבָר בְּקַדְמָתו. גומֵל לְאִישׁ חֶסֶד כְּמִפְעָלו, נותֵן לָרָשָׁע רַע כְּרִשְׁעָתו. יְשַׁלַּח לְקֵץ הַיָּמִין מְשִׁיחֵנו, לִפְדות מְחַכֵּי קֵץ יְשׁוּעָתו. מֵתִים יְחַיֶּה אֵל בְּרב חַסְדו, בָּרוּךְ עֲדֵי עַד שֵׁם תְּהִלָּתו:

Song 12: Lecha Dodi

Shamor v'zachor b'dibur echad, Hishmi'anu el ha'meyuchad. Adonai echad u'shmo echad; L'shem ul'tiferet v'l'tehila. **Lecha dodi likrat kala, p'nei Shabbat n'kabelah!** Likrat Shabbat l'chu v'nelcha, Ki hi m'kor ha'bracha. Me'rosh mi'kedem n'sucha; Sof ma'aseh b'mach'shava t'chila. **Lecha dodi ...** Mikdash melech, ir m'lucha, Kumi, tze'i mi'toch ha'hafecha. Rav lach shevet b'emek ha'bacha; V'hu yachmol alai'yich chemla. **Lecha dodi ...** Hitna'ari me'afar kumi, Livshi bigdei tifartech ami. Al yad ben Yishai beit haLachmi; Karva el nafshi g'ala.	שָׁמוֹר וְזָכוֹר בְּדִבּוּר אֶחָד. הִשְׁמִיעָנוּ אֵל הַמְיֻחָד. ה' אֶחָד וּשְׁמוֹ אֶחָד. לְשֵׁם וּלְתִפְאֶרֶת וְלִתְהִלָּה. **לְכָה דוֹדִי לִקְרַאת כַּלָּה. פְּנֵי שַׁבָּת נְקַבְּלָה.** לִקְרַאת שַׁבָּת לְכוּ וְנֵלְכָה. כִּי הִיא מְקוֹר הַבְּרָכָה. מֵרֹאשׁ מִקֶּדֶם נְסוּכָה. סוֹף מַעֲשֶׂה בְּמַחֲשָׁבָה תְּחִלָּה. **לְכָה דוֹדִי ...** מִקְדַּשׁ מֶלֶךְ עִיר מְלוּכָה. קוּמִי צְאִי מִתּוֹךְ הַהֲפֵכָה. רַב לָךְ שֶׁבֶת בְּעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא. וְהוּא יַחְמוֹל עָלַיִךְ חֶמְלָה. **לְכָה דוֹדִי ...** הִתְנַעֲרִי מֵעָפָר קוּמִי. לִבְשִׁי בִּגְדֵי תִפְאַרְתֵּךְ עַמִּי. עַל יַד בֶּן יִשַׁי בֵּית הַלַּחְמִי. קָרְבָה אֶל נַפְשִׁי גְּאָלָהּ. **לְכָה דוֹדִי ...** הִתְעוֹרְרִי הִתְעוֹרְרִי. כִּי בָא אוֹרֵךְ קוּמִי אוֹרִי. עוּרִי עוּרִי שִׁיר דַּבֵּרִי. כְּבוֹד ה' עָלַיִךְ נִגְלָה. **לְכָה דוֹדִי ...**
Lecha dodi ... Hit'oreri, hit'oreri, Ki va orech, kumi uri. Uri, uri, shir daberi; K'vod Adonai alai'yich nigla. **Lecha dodi ...** Lo tevoshi v'lo tikalmi, Mah tishtochachi uma tehemi. Bach yechesu ani'yei ami; V'niv'neta ir al tila. **Lecha dodi...** V'hayu lim'shisa sosai'yich, V'rachaku kol m'vaj ai'yich. Yasis alai'yich Elohai'yich; Kimsos chatan al kala. **Lecha dodi...** Yamin u'smol tifrotzi, V'et Adonai ta'aritzi. Al yad ish ben Partzi; V'nism'cha v'nagila! **Lecha dodi ...** Bo'i v'shalom, ateret ba'ala, Gam b'simcha uv' tzhala. Toch emunei am segula; Bo'i chala, bo'i chala. **Lecha dodi likrat kala, p'nei Shabbat n'kabelah!**	לֹא תֵבוֹשִׁי וְלֹא תִכָּלְמִי. מַה תִּשְׁתּוֹחֲחִי וּמַה תֶּהֱמִי. בָּךְ יֶחֱסוּ עֲנִיֵּי עַמִּי. וְנִבְנְתָה עִיר עַל תִּלָּהּ. **לְכָה דוֹדִי ...** וְהָיוּ לִמְשִׁסָּה שֹׁאסָיִךְ. וְרָחֲקוּ כָּל מְבַלְּעָיִךְ. יָשִׂישׂ עָלַיִךְ אֱלֹהָיִךְ. כִּמְשׂוֹשׂ חָתָן עַל כַּלָּה. **לְכָה דוֹדִי ...** יָמִין וּשְׂמֹאל תִּפְרוֹצִי. וְאֶת ה' תַּעֲרִיצִי. עַל יַד אִישׁ בֶּן פַּרְצִי. וְנִשְׂמְחָה וְנָגִילָה. **לְכָה דוֹדִי ...** בּוֹאִי בְשָׁלוֹם עֲטֶרֶת בַּעְלָהּ. גַּם בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְצָהֳלָה. תּוֹךְ אֲמוּנֵי עַם סְגֻלָּה. בּוֹאִי כַלָּה. בּוֹאִי כַלָּה. **לְכָה דוֹדִי...**

Part 4: Let's Sing! Here's What the Words Mean

Jerusalem of Gold: A modern song from the 1960's

The mountain air is clear as wine
And the scent of pines
Is carried on the breeze of twilight
With the sound of bells.

And in the slumber of tree and stone
Captive in her dream
The city that sits solitary
And in its midst is a wall.

Chorus:
Jerusalem of gold
And of copper, and of light
Behold I am a violin for all your songs.

Adon Olam: a poem written by Solomon ibn Gabirol (1021–1058 CE)

Lord of the universe, who reigned before everything as created, at the time when by His will all things were made, then was His name proclaimed King, and after all things shall cease to be, the Awesome One Will reign alone. He was, he is and He shall be in glory. He is One and there is no other to compare to Him, to consort with Him. Without beginning without end, power and dominion belong to Him. He is My God and my ever-living redeemer. The strength of my lot in time of distress. He is my banner and my refuge, my portion on the day I call. Into His band I entrust my spirit, when I sleep and when I awake. With my soul, my body too, the Lord is with me, I shall not fear.

Eili Eili: written by Hannah Szenes a WWII Resistance Fighter (1942)

O Lord my God

I pray that these things never end

The sand and the sea

The rush of the waters

The crash of the heavens

The prayer of the heart

Lo Yisa Goy: from Isaiah 2:4

May no nation rise up in war against another nation! They shall study war no more!

Oseh Shalom Bimromav: *Maker of Peace in the Heavens* from Job 25:2

May the One who creates peace in the heavens bring peace to us and to all of Israel. And may we say: Amen

Romemu: *Open Hearted*

Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at His holy hill; for the LORD our God is holy.

Heiveinu Shalom Aleichem: Hasidic folk song to greet three friends!

We bring peace upon you (x 3)

Yigdal: hymn based on Maimonides 13 Articles of Faith (1138-1204)

1. Magnified and praised be the living God: he is, and there is no limit in time unto his being.

2. He is One, and there is no unity like unto his unity; inconceivableable is he, and unending is his unity.

3. He hath neither bodily form nor substance: we can compare nought unto him in his holiness.

4. He was before anything that hath been created--even the first: but his existence had no beginning.

5. Behold he is the Lord of the universe: to every creature he teaches his greatness and his sovereignty.

6. The rich gift of his prophecy he gave unto the men of his choice, in whom he gloried.

7. There hath never yet arisen in Israel a prophet like unto Moses, one who hath beheld his similitudee,

8. The Law of truth God gave unto his people by the hand of his prophet who was faithful in his house.

9. God will not alter nor change his Law to everlasting for any other.

10. He watched and knows our secret thoughts: He behold the end of a thing before it existed.

11. He bestowed loving kindness upon a man according to his work; he giveth to the wicked evil according to his wickedness.

12. He will send our anointed at the end of days, to redeem them that wait for the end—his salvation.

13. In the abundance of his loving kindness God will quicken the dead. Blessed for evermore be his glorious name.

Lecha Dodi: Mystical hymn from Song of Songs 7:12 (1550-1580)

Come, my friend, to meet the bride; let us welcome the Sabbath.
"Observe" and "Remember," in a single command, the One God announced to us. The Lord is One, and his name is One, for fame, for glory and for praise. Lecha dodi...

Come, my friend, to meet the bride; let us welcome the Sabbath.

Come, let us go to meet the Sabbath, for it is a source of blessing. From the very beginning it was ordained; last in creation, first in God's plan. Lecha dodi...

Shrine of the King, royal city, arise! Come forth from thy ruins. Long enough have you dwelt in the vale of tears! He will show you abundant mercy. Lecha dodi...

Shake off your dust, arise! Put on your glorious garments, my people, and pray: "Be near to my soul, and redeem it through the son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite." Lecha dodi...

Bestir yourself, bestir yourself, for your light has come; arise and shine! Awake, awake, utter a song; the Lord's glory is revealed upon you. Lecha dodi....

Be not ashamed nor confounded. Why are you downcast? Why do you moan? The afflicted of my people will be sheltered within you; the city shall be rebuilt on its ancient site. Lecha dodi...

Those who despoiled you shall become a spoil, and all who would devour you shall be far away. Your God will rejoice over you as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride. Lecha dodi ...

Come, my friend, to meet the bride; let us welcome the Sabbath.
You shall extend to the right and to the left, and you shall revere the Lord. Through the advent of a descendant of Perez we shall rejoice and exult. Lecha dodi...

Come in peace, crown of God, come with joy and cheerfulness;
amidst the faithful of the chosen people come O bride; come, O bride.

Lecha dodi ... Come, my friend, to meet the bride; let us welcome the Sabbath.

Chai

Shim'u echai, ani od chai
Ushtei einai od nisa'ot la'or
Rabim chochai, ach gam p'rachai
U'l'fanai shanim rabot misfor
Ani sho'el umitpalel
Tov shelo avda od hatikvah

Over mizmor, midor l'dor
K'ma'ayan mei'az v'ad olam
Ani sho'el umitpalel
Tov shelo avda od hatikva!

(Chorus:)
Chai, chai, chai - Ken, ani od chai!
Ze hashir shesaba
Shar etmol l'aba -
V'hayom ani.
Ani od chai, chai, chai
Am Yisrael chai
Ze hashir shesaba
Shar etmol l'aba
V'hayom ani.

Homim yamai v'leilotai
U'v'shamai amud ha'esh od kam
Ashir b'li dai [chai chai]
Efros yadai [chai chai]
L'y'didai asher mei'eiver yam
Ani sho'e1 umitpalel
Tov shelo avda od hatikva

Chorus - Chai , chai , chai .....

Shim'u echai, ani od chai
Ushtei einai od nisa'ot la'or
Az ko lechai, l'chawl orchai
Ul'vanai hamevakshim lachzor
Ani sho'el umitpalel
Tov shelo avda od hatikva

Chorus - Chai, chai, chai .....

Alive

Listen, my brothers, I'm still alive
And my two eyes are still raised to the light
Many are my thorns, but also my flowers
And ahead of me are years too numerous to count
I ask and I pray
It's good that hope was not yet lost

A psalm passes from generation to generation
Like a spring from long ago, and on to eternity
I ask and I pray
It's good that hope was not yet lost

Chorus:
Alive, alive, alive - Yes, I'm still alive!
This is the song which grandfather
Sang yesterday to father
And today I [sing]
I'm still alive, alive, alive
The people of Israel live
This is the song which grandfather
Sang yesterday to father
And today I [sing]!

My days and nights are full of life,
And in my sky the pillar of fire still rises*
I will sing endlessly
I'll spread out my hands
To my friends across the sea.
I ask and I pray
It's good that hope was not yet lost

(Chorus)

Listen my brothers, I'm still alive
And my two eyes are still raised to the light
So here's to life! To all my guests,
And to my children who seek to return
I ask and I pray
It's good that hope was not yet lost

וואָלט איך געהאַט כּוח

וואָלט איך געלאָפֿן אין די גאַסן

און געשריגן שבת

שבת, שבת, שבת!

Volt ich ge'hat koyech, volt ich geluf'n in di gas'n
Un geshrig'n "Shabbos" - Shabbos, Shabbos, shabbos!

If only I had the strength, I'd be running out into the streets,
And screaming "shabbos!" - "shabbos, shabbos, shabbos!!"

Appendix 4: Psalm 71

א בְּךָ־יְהוָה חָסִיתִי אַל־אֵבוֹשָׁה לְעוֹלָם:	1In You, O Lord, have I taken refuge; let me never be ashamed.
ב בְּצִדְקָתְךָ תַּצִּילֵנִי וּתְפַלְּטֵנִי הַטֵּה־ אֵלַי אָזְנְךָ וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנִי:	2With Your charity, You shall save me and rescue me; extend Your ear to me and save me.
ג הֱיֵה לִי | לְצוּר מָעוֹן לָבוֹא תָמִיד צִוִּיתָ לְהוֹשִׁיעֵנִי כִּי־סַלְעִי וּמְצוּדָתִי אָתָּה:	3Be for me a sheltering rock in which to enter continually; You commanded [others] to save me because You are my rock and my fortress.
ד אֱלֹהַי פַּלְּטֵנִי מִיַּד־רָשָׁע מִכַּף מְעַוֵּל וְחוֹמֵץ:	4My God, rescue me from the hands of the wicked, from the palm of him who treats unjustly and robs.
ה כִּי־אַתָּה תִקְוָתִי אֲדֹנָי יֱהוִה מִבְטַחִי מִנְּעוּרָי:	5For You are my hope, O Lord God, my trust since my youth.
ו עָלֶיךָ | נִסְמַכְתִּי מִבֶּטֶן מִמְּעֵי אִמִּי אַתָּה גוֹזִי בְּךָ תְהִלָּתִי תָמִיד:	6I relied on You from birth; from my mother's womb You drew me; my praise is always in You.
ז כְּמוֹפֵת הָיִיתִי לְרַבִּים וְאַתָּה מַחֲסִי־ עֹז:	7I was an example for the multitude, but You were my strong shelter.
ח יִמָּלֵא פִי תְהִלָּתֶךָ כָּל־הַיּוֹם תִּפְאַרְתֶּךָ:	8My mouth will be filled with Your praise, all the days with Your glory.
ט אַל־תַּשְׁלִיכֵנִי לְעֵת זִקְנָה כִּכְלוֹת כֹּחִי אַל־תַּעַזְבֵנִי:	9Do not fling me off at the time of old age; when my strength fails, do not forsake me.

יכִּי־אָמְרוּ אוֹיְבַי לִי וְשֹׁמְרֵי נַפְשִׁי נוֹעֲצוּ יַחְדָּו׃

10For my enemies said of me, and those who watch for my soul took counsel together,

יאלֵאמֹר אֱלֹהִים עֲזָבוֹ רִדְפוּ וְתִפְשׂוּהוּ כִּי־אֵין מַצִּיל׃

11Saying, "God has forsaken him; pursue and seize him, for there is no rescuer."

יבאֱלֹהִים אַל־תִּרְחַק מִמֶּנִּי אֱלֹהַי לְעֶזְרָתִי חוּשָׁה (כתיב חישָׁה) ׃

12O God, do not distance Yourself from me; my God, hasten to my assistance.

יגיֵבֹשׁוּ יִכְלוּ שֹׂטְנֵי נַפְשִׁי יַעְטוּ חֶרְפָּה וּכְלִמָּה מְבַקְשֵׁי רָעָתִי׃

13The adversaries of my soul will be shamed and will perish; enwrapped in humiliation and disgrace will be those who seek to harm me.

ידוַאֲנִי תָּמִיד אְיַחֵל וְהוֹסַפְתִּי עַל־כָּל־תְּהִלָּתֶךָ׃

14As for me, I shall constantly hope, and I shall add to all Your praise.

טופִּי | יְסַפֵּר צִדְקָתֶךָ כָּל־הַיּוֹם תְּשׁוּעָתֶךָ כִּי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי סְפֹרוֹת׃

15My mouth will recite Your righteousness, all the days Your salvation, for I do not know their number.

טזאָבוֹא בִּגְבֻרוֹת אֲדֹנָי יֱהוִה אַזְכִּיר צִדְקָתְךָ לְבַדֶּךָ׃

16I shall come with the mighty deeds of the Lord God; I shall mention Your righteousness alone.

יזאֱלֹהִים לִמַּדְתַּנִי מִנְּעוּרָי וְעַד־הֵנָּה אַגִּיד נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ׃

17O God, You have taught me since my youth, and until now I shall recite your wonders.

יחוְגַם עַד־זִקְנָה | וְשֵׂיבָה אֱלֹהִים אַל־תַּעַזְבֵנִי עַד־אַגִּיד זְרוֹעֲךָ לְדוֹר לְכָל־יָבוֹא גְּבוּרָתֶךָ׃

18And even until old age and hoary hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I tell [of] Your strength

to the generation, to everyone who comes-Your might

יטוְצִדְקָתְךָ אֱלֹהִים עַד־מָרוֹם אֲשֶׁר־
עָשִׂיתָ גְדֹלוֹת אֱלֹהִים מִי כָמוֹךָ׃

19And Your charity, O God, [which is] up to the heights, for You do great things. O God, who is like You?

כאֲשֶׁר הִרְאִיתַנִי | (כתיב הִרְאִיתַנּוּ) צָרוֹת
רַבּוֹת וְרָעוֹת תָּשׁוּב תְּחַיֵּינִי (כתיב
תְּחַיֵּינוּ) וּמִתְּהוֹמוֹת הָאָרֶץ תָּשׁוּב
תַּעֲלֵנִי׃

20That You showed me great and evil troubles, You will revive me again, and from the depths of the earth You will again raise me up.

כאתָּרֶב | גְּדֻלָּתִי וְתִסֹּב תְּנַחֲמֵנִי׃

21You will increase my greatness, and You will turn and comfort me.

כבגַּם־אֲנִי | אוֹדְךָ בִכְלִי־נֵבֶל אֲמִתְּךָ
אֱלֹהָי אֲזַמְּרָה לְךָ בְכִנּוֹר קְדוֹשׁ
יִשְׂרָאֵל׃

22I too shall thank You with a stringed instrument for Your truth, my God; I shall play music to You with a harp, O Holy One of Israel.

כגתְּרַנֵּנָה שְׂפָתַי כִּי אֲזַמְּרָה־לָּךְ וְנַפְשִׁי
אֲשֶׁר פָּדִיתָ׃

23My lips will sing praises when I play music to You, and my soul, which You redeemed.

כדגַּם־לְשׁוֹנִי כָּל־הַיּוֹם תֶּהְגֶּה צִדְקָתֶךָ
כִּי־בֹשׁוּ כִּי־חָפְרוּ מְבַקְשֵׁי רָעָתִי׃

24Also my tongue will utter Your righteousness all the days, for those who seek my harm are shamed, yea, for they are disgraced.