

**BIBLICAL FEASTING: EATING THE BIBLE ONE SCRIPTURAL BITE AT A TIME**  
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**Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of  
Requirements for Doctor of Ministry Degree**

**Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion  
Graduate Studies Program  
New York, NY**

**February 18, 2010**  
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## ***Chapter I:***

This project deals with the challenge that is reflected both theologically and psychologically in the disconnect, distress and suffering that we experience with our relationship to food and our unmet needs to make this relationship more meaningful. With this challenge in front of us, the project is designed to provide an instrument for reexamining and reconnecting to Rabbi Jesus's understanding rooted in the Jewish tradition that eating, ingesting with joy, and experiencing the senses will pave the way to God.

Kabbalah has intrigued Western scholars and theologians for many centuries. Cloaked in mystery, concealed by secret societies, buried under layers of arcane symbols and impenetrable language, it has been a source of fascination for seekers of spiritual truth in every generation of the last thousand years. Even today it continues to have a strange charisma. Yet, when asked what Kabbalah is, who invented it, or how it originated, even the most accomplished student is hard pressed to provide a definitive answer.

Kabbalah is not a system, rather it is an outlook, a way of perceiving the nature of reality. Judaism devised the word Kabbalah. The word comes from the Hebrew root *kbl*, which means to grasp and reflects the intellectual adherence to a master's visionary experience. In essence, Kabbalah is founded upon mystical concepts regarding life, death, creation, and creator. It teaches us about the mysteries of life, how the creation works, where we are going, and how we get there. In Judaism where mishnah denoted a rabbi's public teaching which a disciple learned in order to propagate it on, Kabbalah

could refer to a technique of altering one's consciousness to enter Paradise. This technique would also be passed from rabbi to student.

This paper is a two prong approach to the challenge that is reflected in the disconnect, both theologically as Christians and psychologically ,in the distress and suffering that we experience with our relationship to food and our unmet needs to make this relationship more meaningful.

Theologically the paper looks to Jesus's original Kabbalah to his disciples which include the fusion of food, scriptural experience, memory, imagination, and eating ,to attain the Kingdom of God. A Kabbala of the five senses around food and fellowship that would galvanize disciples, Jews, gentiles, and godfearers alike with the understanding that eating, sacrificing, ingesting with joy the food of the earth would pave the way to God. In this discussion is a suggestion that this message was altered significantly by the Christian interpretation of the Letter to the Hebrews, altering for centuries the concept of sacrifice, joy and food in the Hebraic tradition and replacing it with a construct that says sacrifice, is suffering and eating and feasting are no longer the way to God.

Psychologically, the paper steers away from traditional pastoral counseling approaches that broad brush disordered eating as a complex of many intrapsychic processes, but rather chooses to focus specifically on disordered eating as suffering or masochism.

The refinement of this two prong approach would suggest that if Christian pastors and lay leaders do not understand the Jewish roots around food issues in the Bible, then

they cannot understand the food metaphors that Jesus revolutionized as a means of becoming one with God. If on the other hand, they did have the understanding of the Kabbalah, or teaching stressing the fusion of food, scriptural experience, memory, imagination, and eating ,a theology of God talk would be considered normal whenever food was present. Nourishment imagery then used by Jesus would be a teaching tool, as a metaphor to enhance the understanding of the flow of divine blessings from God. Psychologically then our youth in the church may be able to begin equating the spirituality of food with enjoyment and as a spiritual practice that reflects the love and forgiveness of God.

Taken a little further, if this Kabbalah or teaching of Jesus is truly modeled, absorbed, and understood, no Church today would allow its kitchen to remain fallow and unused. No church would suggest a potluck Wednesday evening and serve turkey infused with preservatives that are toxic to the body, or serve canned cranberries when fresh are available. No church would allow its after service fellowship hour to serve cookies and cakes loaded with high fructose corn syrup. No church would serve stale Wonder bread during communion service and perhaps most telling, no church would presume to serve canned goods to those needing nourishment when fresh fruits and vegetables are in season. In short, the Christian message from the pulpits across denominational lines would be a clarion call back to basics, back to the Kabbalah of Jesus that said the way to God is through the senses and food, nourishing food, not fast food. Attractive earth food not something consumed standing over a kitchen sink or counter with no nutritional value. Food that is fresh, wholesome that has not been sitting

around for months in plastic bags or wrappers. Food that is prepared with soul, with attentiveness, and with the conscious love of God.

I plan to minister to hungry souls through a Kabbalah stimulating the senses around food and table fellowship. I plan to explore in depth a concept of Biblical Feasting that gives purpose to how we live our lives in the Christian context. I plan to explore those times when we have had a transformative experience around food, food preparation, and food consumption that has transported us to another space, a spiritual space that has relevance for us our entire life and one that can be shared with others. An experience that paves the way to God that has relevance for the Christian in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The relevance of this project on a larger scale gives the Christian church an evangelistic role in saving souls, but with a message that takes boldness and verve to deliver. The message is a personal one. The teachings of Jesus were sense based and centered around food and food fellowship. The way to God is through the foods of the earth, a spiritual and sensual enjoyment that speaks a theology, or God talk, of how we live our lives or not. This message, if promoted church to church, can be a galvanizing call to action in our country and can make the church a leader once again with a message that says the way to God, the way to spirit, the way to wholeness, is through the food of the earth and how we spiritually eat the gifts of God.

### ***Chapter 11: Principles that Guide and Inform:***

The Targum of Isaiah confirms that literary history of the Targum only commenced after the burning of the temple in 70 CE but that there are verbal, contextual and thematic associations between exegetical traditions within the Targum and teachings of Jesus. I think it then appropriate for us to begin our study with the call of the Prophet Isaiah 55: 1-3 where health and well being through religious commitment is front and center. Sustenance and well being through religious commitment is the promise that God offers in these words of Isaiah, and the food metaphors sensualize the covenantal relationship and salvation that God promises to those who turn to God.

***Ho, all who are thirsty,  
Come for water,  
Even if you have no money;  
come, buy food without money,  
Wine and milk without cost.  
Why do you spend money for what is not bread,  
Your earnings for what does not satisfy?  
Give heed to Me,  
And you shall eat choice food  
And enjoy the richest viands.  
Incline your ear and come to Me;  
Hearken, and you shall be revived.  
And I will make with you  
an everlasting covenant.***

Food then is the covenantal relationship and salvation that God promises to those who turn to God. This message has a long history but it is my contention that contemporary Christian America tends to see meals as either pseudo religious or secular and in the process totally ignores the Hebraic biblical message that religious expression belonged to every meal. For the Christian, to ignore this history, is in effect to ignore the Jewishness

of Jesus and prevents an understanding of Jesus' meals in the Kingdom. In order then to understand the meals of the Kingdom it is important to understand the religious meaning of food, eating and eating metaphors in Israelite and Jewish history. This is what presents the backdrop for the kabbalah or teaching of Jesus in relation to eating, drinking, and celebrating sacrifice in relation to religious expression belonging to every meal.

***In the Beginning was the Meal:***

It could be said that God began working with food issues very early. In his first communication with Adam, God says "of every tree in the garden you are free to eat; but as for the tree of knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat of it; for as soon as you eat of it you shall die. (Genesis 2: 16-17) . After refusing to obey the rules of God in eating the acceptable food Adam and Eve's punishment is also expressed partly through food and food production. Genesis 3: versus 17-20 says "cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

After the next destruction and recreation of the world, God tells Noah in Genesis 9: versus 3 and 4 "Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything. But you must not eat meat, that has its lifeblood still in it."

This teaching is further reiterated at the time of God's redemption of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage through the consumption of foods, the unleavened bread and the

paschal offering. In the wilderness it is the spiritual nature of the foods that separate or truly differentiate one kind of food from another.

In the Israelites wanderings, God provides a variety of foods and nourishment in direct response to the prayer of Moses, but again God punishes when the rules around food and eating are broken. In one instance the people had complained about the lack of leeks and garlic and of their intense longing for meat; God responds by sending quail and also a message

**“Now a wind went out from the Lord and drove quail in from the sea. It brought them down all around the camp to about three feet above the ground, as far as a day’s walk in any direction. All that day and night and all the next day the people went out and gathered quail. No one gathered less than ten homers. Then they spread them out all around the camp. But while the meat was still between their teeth and before it could be consumed, the anger of the Lord burned against the people, and he struck them with a severe plague. Therefore the place was named Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had craved other food.” (Numbers 11: 31-34).**

The reading implies that God provides both food to the constant complaints of the Israelites but also provides destruction to the gluttons among them.

God’s promise to feed the Israelites is further revealed by the manna that would ultimately sustain the ancient Hebrews through their forty year exile in the wilderness. Again, however there would be rules, and precise apportioning for each person according to need.. This would seem to be an added reminder and incentive that God and food go



hand in hand serving as God's commitment to Abraham's descendants. It can also be viewed as a test of the Israelites to determine if they will uphold their side of the covenantal agreement.

### ***Covenantal Meals:***

One of the repetitive features in the biblical narratives is the covenantal meal, a meal that brings groups together to establish political agreements, confer blessings, or produce oracular pronouncements. These meals can be read throughout the books of Genesis, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Proverbs. The structure for the covenantal meal is the sacrificial offering given to God. For the Mesopotamians, a sacrifice was understood as a meal offered to God.(Roland de Vaux, 1997) Central to the covenantal meal was actual food shared by humans as well as the spiritual and symbolic understanding when food was burned on the altar(Lieber,1998) Perhaps for our purposes the most compelling covenantal meal is Exodus 24:

“Early in the morning he (Moses) set up an altar at the foot of the mountain, with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. He designated some young men among the Israelites and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed bulls as offerings of well-being to the Lord...Then he took the record of the covenant and read it aloud to the people. And they said “All that the Lord has spoken we will faithfully do!” Moses took the blood and dashed it on the people and said “This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord now makes with you concerning all these commands.” Then Moses and Aaron, Nadav and Avihu, and seventy elders of Israel ascended: and they saw the God of Israel; under his feet there was the likeness of pavement of sapphire, like the very sky for purity. Yet he

did not raise his hand against the leaders of the Israelites; they beheld God, and they ate and drank.” (Exodus 24: 4-5, 7-11),

The Israelites ate and drank sealing the covenant with God..

This type of sealing of covenant is seen in a variety of biblical passages. (Rogers, 2000). In Kings 18:41, Elijah has completed his successful showdown with the priests of Baal; they have been executed, and he commands Ahab to ascend the mountain and to eat and drink in order to renew the covenant. When Josiah purges the kingdom of the idolatrous cults, he reinstates the Passover, a festival in which the meal is central (2 Kings: 23). In the same vein when Hezekiah invokes his reforms and condemns the backsliding of the people, he also recreates the Passover (2 Chronicles : 30-32) . Kathryn Roberts has written that “ritual eating and drinking not only seals the covenant but also legitimates the enthronement of the human king and confers divine approval.” To affirm Saul’s sovereignty over Israel, Samuel offers a sacrifice and sacred meal followed by the anointing of the new king (1 Samuel: 9). Similarly when David brings the ark onto the holy mountain in Jerusalem, he offers sacrifices and distributes portions to the people (2 Samuel 6-7). In all of these sacrifices scholarship tends to agree with enjoying life, living to the fullest with a confirmation of leadership and renewal of covenant.

Hebraic meals in addition to covenantal relationships have also provided celebratory experiences, conferral of blessings, God given oracles and have culminated political agreements To highlight a few of the scriptural passages we can read blessings in the pact of Isaac and Avimelek which was sealed with a covenantal meal (Genesis 26: 24-31) “ Isaac then made a feast for them, and they ate and drank.. Early the next

morning the men swore an oath to each other. In (Genesis 18: 1-9) we read that Abraham and Sarah provide a meal under the trees of Mamre for the three visitors, and following the meal the visitors announce the blessing of Sarah's pregnancy. Jacob prepares a meal for Laban in another example of a meal that creates feelings of friendship and mutual acceptability. Genesis 31:54 reads, "He offered a sacrifice, there in the hill country and invited his relatives to a meal. After they had eaten, they spent the night there."

Feasts of celebration and commemoration include the passages (Genesis 21:8) where after Isaac is weaned, Abraham throws a big feast. The book of Leviticus (chapter 8) relates the ceremony of the ordination of the priests highlighting both sacrifices to God and a meal eaten by priests. Leviticus 8 verse 18-21 explains the sacrifice, "He then presented the ram for the burnt offering and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head. Then Moses slaughtered the ram and sprinkled the blood against the altar on all sides. He cut the ram into pieces and burned the head, the pieces and the fat. He washed the inner parts and the legs with water and burned the whole ram on the altar as a burnt offering, a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the Lord by fire, as the Lord commanded Moses."

Further examples of celebration and commemoration are read with the arrival of the Ark of the Covenant in the city of David which is marked by distribution of "a loaf of bread, a cake made in a pan and a raisin cake." The Levites are then asked to praise the Lord, God of Israel (1 Chronicles 16). After the first public reading of the Torah after returning from the Babylonian conquest, the Levites declare a holiday and instruct the people to "eat choice foods and drink sweet drinks and send portions to whoever has

nothing prepared, for the day is holy to our Lord...then all the people went to eat and drink and send portions and make great merriment, for they understood the things they were told" (Nehemiah 8: 9-12).

Finally we end this portion with (Isaiah 25: 6-8) in which the celebratory banquet brings the past, present and future into focus. "On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine-the best of meats and the finest of wines. On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The Lord has spoken."

### ***Human Consumption of Sacrificial Offering:***

When we begin to understand sacrifice as a sacred meal in which people and deity join we begin to see a deep common pattern within religion. Sacrificial activity involves taking foods that are of the highest standards and bringing them to the deity for divine and human enjoyment. Standards of purity differed widely, the pig for example loved by Zeus was revolting to Jews. The offering of Moses as he himself said in Exodus 8: 25-28 ,was abominable to the Egyptians and the camel sacrifice of the Arabs aroused the horror of British ethnographers during the nineteenth century. The underlying principle however to all the sacrificial offerings was when individuals or a people collectively shared their best with deity, that was considered a pure offering. That is sacrifice, pure and simple, the best of the best to share with God.

To delve into sacrifice a little deeper it can be said that although sacrificial offerings were presented to God there was, in fact, an exchange going on in that often the offerings

were consumed by the participants at the site. Scholarly research shows that of the sacrificial offerings, only the shalamim offering was generally available to the wider society, beyond the priestly elite. There are three different subtypes of the shalamim offering: *todah* (thanksgiving sacrifice) *neder* (vowed sacrifice) and *nedavah* (free will offering) (Leviticus 7: 11-18). The *pesah* (Passover offering) and *miluim* (supplement offering) had to be eaten on the day they were offered, separating them from the other shalamim offerings. The reason given for the difference is that the former offerings are obligatory, where most shalamim are not ordained. Moreover, the requirement to eat within one day points to a higher level of slaughtering meat for private consumption.(Anderson 1992,p.879) In addition the shalamim offering plays an important role in the national festivals of Israel not unconnected to covenant renewal as read in the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua. For our purpose however, it is fitting to look at perhaps the most prominent feature of the shalamim which is to fulfill the command to celebrate. Gregory Anderson in his text *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance: The Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion* is most concise in his explanation.

“In Deuteronomy the commandment to rejoice is found in very specific liturgical contexts, but the link between eating sacrificial food and rejoicing before the Lord is unmistakable. The specific occasions for joyous feasting include consumption of the tithe (14:26), the feast of weeks (16:11), the feast of Sukkot (16: 14-15), consumption of first fruits (26:11) and inauguration of the first cultic site in the promised land (27:7)...This performative aspect of the term “joy” is most evident in the biblical expression *yom simhah* which means “feast day”. The association of joy with the activity

of eating at seasonal festivals is so strong that the preferable translation in these settings may be “to celebrate”. (Anderson 1991, p.20)

What is interesting here, and paramount to our Christian readers is that it is not eating and drinking that lead to joy, but rather eating and drinking are the self expression of joy and oneness with God. Eating and drinking is sacrificial language.

### ***Celebrating Passover:***

Biblical scholarship highlights the presence of two separate festivals woven together in the Book of Exodus chapter 12. The first is the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which according to (Hecker 2005) emphasizes the experience of haste (Exodus 12: 17-20,29). The second festival is the festival of the Passover offering, commemorating the historic deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt (Exodus 12: 13, 23-27) All biblical references to the evening rite revolve around sacrifice. The lambs slaughtered for this sacrificial feast symbolized not only escape from Egypt, but also deliverance from death. The word, Passover, *pesach* in Hebrew means “limping”, “or skipping” as some scholars choose to translate, and referred originally to the limping of the spring lamb, hobbled prior to being ritually slaughtered, sacrificed and eaten. But, the memory of deliverance from Egypt gave this nomadic ritual a totally new meaning (Exodus 12: 5-13) The lamb at Passover in the Bible is a true sacrifice, offered to honor God and to join with God in celebration, because he did not kill the firstborn of the Israelites as he did of the Egyptians at the time of the Exodus (12: 29). As we have seen in most sacrificial offerings, those individuals who worshiped at Pesach enjoyed the mutuality of the sacrifice with God with joy, and with good food.

In the book of Joshua, the Israelites continue the sacrifice of the Passover, circumcising themselves, eating the sacrificial offering, and as written in verse eleven, “the day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land; unleavened bread and roasted grain. The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land: there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate of the produce of Canaan.” Joshua’s observance of the holiday marks the shift from supernatural food and existence to a more daily form of living expressed in the consumption of local natural food and the ritualization of the Passover experience. After the building of the Temple, the Passover holiday becomes associated with pilgrimage, sacrifice, joy, festivity and a national holiday. This idea of feasting, sacrifice and joy is then maintained throughout the Bible.(Joshua 5: 10-11, 2Kings 23: 21-24; Ezra 6: 19-22: 2 Chronicles 30:1-27, 35: 1-19)

***Food Regulation Among the Pharisees:***

Morton Smith in his article “*The Dead Sea Sect in Relation to Ancient Judaism*” (1961,p.347-61) writes the following about the Second Temple period: Differences as to the interpretation of the purity laws and especially regarding the consequent question of table fellowship were among the principal causes of the separation of Christianity from the rest of Judaism and the early fragmentation of Christianity itself. The same thing holds for the Cambrian community and, within Pharisaic traditions, the *haburah*. They are essentially groups whose members observe the same interpretation of the purity rules and therefore can have table fellowship with each other. It is no accident that the essential act of communion in all these groups is participation in common meals.

Recent scholarship of Dennis Smith and Hal Tausig has broadened the discussion by considering ideology such as purity as only part of the broader discussion of meal customs in the ancient Greco-Roman Near East. Both scholars believe that the Greco Roman style of banquet with all of its rules and conventions cut across all ethnic and class lines and served as a social institution in the ancient world. (Smith 2003) Every day meals, funerary banquets, sacrificial meals, Christian Eucharist and Christian agape all drew from a common banquet tradition. Each of the traditions developed its own set of customs, ideology, and social codes. The social codes were seen as distinct in that they represented subtle ways in which social values were communicated in a banquet setting. Smith postulates that the Greco Roman banquet concept lead to “meals...having an integrative function in ancient society in which they combine the sacred and the secular into one ritual event. It would appear then that in such a context the term “sacred meal “would lose its identity. Smith outlines the following categories for his own analysis, but other scholars , Hal Tausig, for example have picked them up for further analysis. Smith's format includes the idealized model of a banquet, social boundaries, social bonding, social obligation, social stratification, social equality, festive joy (euphrosyne), and banquet entertainment ranging from party games to philosophical conversation. The most important aspect of this model is that there is the implication that the sacred and the secular merged in the meal with the aura of the divine present. Every meal then was a divine event.

The Pharisees on the other hand, developed their “*haburah* (fellowship program)” as part of an understanding or a vision for renewed Judaism (Saldarini, 1988) This



program emphasized the observance of ritual purity by non priests, a call for strict tithing, and distinctive practices on Shabbat and holidays. These practices however did not necessarily indicate a social separation from the larger society. The focus on tithing and other food rules was an expression of first century Pharisees who were in constant contact with the larger society and who were vigilant about the dangers of that contact. The Pharisees defined their fellowship in relation to *amei haarez*, meaning literally the people of the land. Scholarship seems to imply that there is no consensus as to whether "*amei haarez*" is a technical term or how broadly it is applied; however a series of rules set out in the mishnaic and toseftan tractates of *Demai* deal primarily with tithing, with accepting what one eats and with accepting the hospitality of an *am ha-arez* (Saldarini 1988)

It is written in ( m.*Demai* 2:2-3) that, "one who undertakes to become reliable must tithe what he eats, and what he sells, and what he buys, and he may not stay as a guest with an *am ha'arez*. Rabbi Judah says, "Even if he does stay as a guest with an *am ha'arez*, he is still reliable." They said to him, "He is not reliable regarding himself, how can he be relied upon concerning what belongs to others!" One who undertakes to be a *haver* may not sell to an *am ha'arez* either wet or dry produce, and may not stay as a guest with an *am ha'arez*, and may not have him as a guest in his garments.

This understanding of fellowship allowed the members of the *havurah* to eat together trusting in the tithing and the purity practices of the other members of the association. By restricting associations it has been suggested that these practices may have fueled hostility among Jews. (Baumgarten 1998)

Jacob Neusner has estimated that " approximately 67 percent of all legal Pharisaic

periscope deal with dietary laws, ritual purity for meals and agricultural rules governing fitness of food for Pharisaic consumption.”(Neusner 1971) In making the argument that the Pharisaic format was to extend priestly behavior beyond the Temple confines , Neusner says, “the Pharisees held that even outside of the Temple in one's own home, the laws of ritual purity were to be followed in the only circumstance in which they might apply, namely to the table.” Therefore Neusner contends that one must eat secular food (ordinary every day meals) in a state of ritual purity as if one were a temple priest. For the Christian a passage from the Gospel of Mark in which Jesus defends his disciples eating with defiled hands would seem to support this view: “For the Pharisees, and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands, observing the tradition of the elders; and when they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they purify themselves.”(Mark 7:4). What is interesting here is that this method of purifying is not mentioned in any biblical, rabbinic, apocryphal or pseudepigraphic source, suggesting that this practice probably arose out of concern for incurring impurity through accidental contact, such as bumping into a non Pharisee in the marketplace.(Baumgarten 1998).

Others have argued that Pharisees were not trying to live like priests and extend purity laws to themselves; rather they were concerned for the purity of holy food - the second tithe, sacrifices, heave offerings -not of ordinary food.(Sanders, 1990) From the readings, however it would seem that even if the Pharisees did not regard themselves quite as priests, they did “ strive for holiness above and beyond what the Torah prescribed for lay Israelites.”(Harrington 1995) In spite of mixed scholarship related to the Pharisee motives, there does seem to be a general consensus that this group may be regarded as a

reformist sect, or that type of group that would preserve and promote the mainstream back to what they considered a correct practice.

***Rabbinic Development of Eating Practices:***

In the biblical narrative, manna is a food that descends from a heavenly source demonstrating God's power and wisdom. In the Second Temple period religious figures highlight manna into a food source that, if not actually divine is intimately connected to Divinity. Philo writes in reference to the biblical statement, "I will rain down bread for you from the sky" (Exodus 16:4) "Of what food can he rightly say that it is rained from heaven, save of heavenly wisdom which is sent from above on souls which yearn for virtue" (*De Mut. Nom.* 259-60). In a different but not unrelated approach in the Gospel of John the apostles begin complaining for a miracle and Jesus answers them " Truly, truly I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live forever and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh" (John 6: 47-51) In this example the manna metaphor stands for divine presence which is a life giving force..

The rabbis also seem to follow this line of interpretation representing the manna not solely as basic food for nourishment but as a transformative food source. The midrash *Mekhilta* helps to explain Exodus 13: 17 where it is written, "The Holy One, blessed be He, did not bring them by the direct way to the Land of Israel, but by way of the wilderness. He said "If I bring Israel now to the Land, straightway one will attack

himself to his field, the other to his vineyard and they will neglect the Torah. But, I will cause them to go about in the wilderness for forty years so that they may eat the manna and drink the water of the well, and the Torah will be assimilated into their bodies.”(Lauterback 1949)

It could be interpreted that the Jews as a whole internalize God’s Torah which is achieved through eating the miraculous manna and well water.(Wolfson 1976)

Scholarship in the past had been inclined to view this kind of rabbinic exegesis as allegorical, but scholarship in midrash has been gradually inserting the mythical qualities of rabbinic literature.(Fishbane 1998) It has been suggested that one might read such a passage as indicating a psychological internalization of the Torah, one that I find most compelling and supportive of the overall idea of ingrained feasting, but others prefer a more literal approach.

Many scholars have felt that the line between the material and spiritual words fascinates and attracts the rabbis in their reading and assessment of the nourishment provided by manna and even more mundane foods. If God is responsible for the Jew’s food sources, and the Torah is the means, statements about food can be reread metaphorically to refer to spiritual sustenance. One finds for example, identifying bread with wisdom. Rabbi Joshua (b.Hananiah) teaches,”the bread is the Torah, as it is written :Eat of my bread” (Proverbs 9:5) The following passage from *Shemot Rabah* explains Moses’ remarkable abstinence from all food and drink for forty days through comparing the Torah to bread: “He did neither eat bread’ eating only the bread of the torah; ‘nor dink water,’ drinking only of the water of the Torah. He learnt Torah by day and dilated upon

it by himself at night. Why did he do thus? In order to teach Israel to toil in the Torah both by day and night.”(Lehrman 1939) In another passage of the same collection it is written “Another explanation: Whence did he derive his nourishment? From the Torah, as it says ‘Mortal, eat what is offered you; eat this scroll’..I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey to me (Ezekiel 3: 1-3) Why so? Because the Torah is as sweet as honey, for it says’[the judgments of the Lord are] sweeter than honey, than drippings of the comb’(Psalm 19:11) Another explanation is that he ate the bread of the Torah, for it is written ‘Come eat my bread (*Shemot Rabah* 47:5) Not only nourishment but sensual delight are attained through the consumption of the Torah. One cannot help but think that these rabbinical teachings are certainly food for thought for the 21<sup>st</sup> century Christian who strives for an understanding of the words of Jesus, “I am the bread of Life.”

An earlier passage from *Shemot Rabah* highlights the divinity of the nourishment; “Another explanation of ‘And he was there with the Lord. He did neither eat bread, nor drink water,’that is in this world; but in the world to come he will eat of the bread of the Torah and drink of its waters. For this reason ‘He did neither eat bread, etc.’Whence did he derive his nourishment? From the luster of God’s presence. Lest this seem surprising...remember that the celestial creatures who bear the Divine Throne are also nourished from the splendor of the *Shekhinah* ”(47:5 540-41) In the midrash his experience is compared to that of those who are promoted to the world to come, with the torah providing nourishment purely on a spiritual level.

### ***Dietary Laws:***

One of the most powerful and lasting contributions of the rabbis to Jewish religious practice has been the development of the Jewish dietary practices called kashrut, literally “fitness for consumption.”(Forst 1994) There is an enormous amount of scholarly literature and legislation developed around eating practices, but for our purposes I think it fair to remind our readers that Jesus kept kosher; that is he kept the dietary requirements established in Torah .( Leviticus 11:3) and( Deut. 14: 4-8 ) both of which are explicit about what animals are permitted for human consumption.

I think, for our purposes here perhaps the most prudent would be to discuss a few of the central aspects of kashrut; the separation of meat and milk, the laws of forbidden mixtures, the *kashering* (making fit) of cooking vessels, and foods prohibited by rabbinic decree. Perhaps the most outwardly noticeable aspect of the ikashrut system is the separation of meat and milk cooking utensils and meals. In the beginning the format was rather basic. The first indication of this restriction seems to be in a mishnah tractate *Hullin*: “It is forbidden to cook any flesh with milk, with the exception of the flesh of fish and grasshoppers, and it is forbidden to bring it upon the table with cheese, with the exception of the flesh of fish and grasshoppers” (8:1) In the Talmud, however, the justification for the law and its expansion are much lengthier. There are for example, three locations for the verse “Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother’s milk” (Exodus 23:19, 34:26; and Deuteronomy 14: 21. In order to understand the duplicity it was in the rabbinic formula that biblical redundancies lent themselves to legislation and meaning. In this case the rabbis developed three separate prohibitions from the citation; to cook meat and mild together, to eat such a mixture, and to derive any benefit from such a

mixture. (*B Hullin* 113a-116b)

The rabbis further pursued the variety of definitions of what constitutes cooking. The ramifications and permutations created discussions around the idea, at what point is there a transfer of taste. At what point do meat and milk in a pot over the fire become cooked such that taste is transferred? Generally the minimum temperature for the transfer of taste is to be the amount of heat from which the hand recoils for fear of being burnt.(Forst 1994)

There is considerable legal literature discussing forbidden mixtures and the consequences of unkosher food falling into a mixture of kosher food. The fundamental is a principle called “the taste is like the essence” The primary statement of this principle is found in the tractate *Avodah Zarah* 67a “Rabbi Abahu said in the name of Rabbi Yohanan that any food which has taste and content[that are forbidden] is forbidden and one receives lashes. Any food which has[forbidden] taste but not[forbidden] content is prohibited but one does not receive lashes.(*b.Avodah Zarah* 67a) Again Talmudic logic attempts to delineate the categories of food and types of mixtures that do not adhere to the restrictions. If for example small pieces of similar-tasting dry food become mixed together, and if the majority of the pieces are kosher, the entire group is determined to be acceptable. But, if one piece of unkosher meat falls into a group of two other equally indistinguishable pieces of kosher meat, all three would be technically permissible, according to the rabbinic understanding of biblical law.(*b.Gitten* 54b) The laws continue as well as the discussions, but throughout all these laws, there are specifications of the volume eaten and the speed with which it must be consumed in order to constitute a

violation of the *halakhah*. One may neither eat a *ke-zayit* (the volume of an olive) nor drink a *revi'it* (about three ounces) of a forbidden mixture. Further, to incur an infraction one must have eaten or drunk the forbidden amount of food in the normal time that it would take to eat food of that size.

In addition to the usual boiling, roasting, baking the rabbis considered soaking in water to be cooking as well. (*b Hullin* 97b) The thought process behind this is that if one were to soak meat that had not been salted and rinsed to remove its blood, after twenty-four hours the blood would be deemed to have fully pervaded the meat, making it inedible-as if it were cooked.

In addition to concern for the kashrut of the food itself, all pots and pans used for cooking and eating had to be maintained in a proper state of fitness. Pots had to be separated according to meat or dairy and had to be protected from contact with prohibited foods.

In reading the scholarly voluminous studies of kashrut it become apparent that the rabbis banned foods and food sources as a measure to prevent excessive contact with non-Jews. The legislation and level of restrictions designed by the rabbis virtually ensured that food and food law created barriers that did not reach beyond the Jewish community. For the Christian, realizing that Jesus as a Jew was kosher and knew intimately of these laws and restrictions is an important factor in the kabbalah of the Kingdom of God.

### ***Jesus Eating, Drinking, Celebrating Sacrifice:***

We have spent some time creating a framework for the kabbalah of food and its



relation to God in the layers of Jewish tradition understanding of course that we have barely scratched the surface. But, I think it is now appropriate to work within this framework and begin to understand the teachings of Jesus in relation to his food ministry and the Kingdom of God. In order to do this we must look at teachings, Jesus' involvement in the temple in relation to purity issues and sacrifice and finally begin to try and understand from a theological perspective how sacrifice, food and the divinity lost the aspect of joy and worship in the Christian tradition.

### ***Jesus's Meals of the Kingdom***

Eucharist is an explicitly social discipline. The term "Eucharist" from *eukharistia* in Greek, *todah* in Hebrew, *todta* in Aramaic refers to thanksgiving. In Jesus' case to the thanksgiving his followers were to offer at meals for the approach of God's kingdom. Jesus joined with his disciples and interested followers in Galilee and Judea in meals which were designed to anticipate the coming of God's kingdom. The meals were characterized by a readiness to accept the hospitality and the produce of Israel. A willingness to provide for the meals to join in the fellowship, to forgive, and to be forgiven was seen by Jesus as a sufficient condition for eating his company and for entry into the kingdom

Familiar passages from the Gospel highlight Eucharistic themes of gathering into the kingdom and of the centrality of forgiveness. The idea that God would offer joy and festivity for all peoples on his holy mountain was a key feature in the expectations of Judaism during the first century and Jesus shared that hope as may be seen in a saying from the source of teaching known as Q. "Q" abbreviates the German term *Quelle*, which

means source. Chilton suggests that Jesus' saying in a form similar to Q probably circulated orally from around the year 35 C.E. "...many shall come from east and west and feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of God (Mathew 8:11, Luke 13: 28,29) (Chilton 1994)

For Jesus, as a practicing Jew eating was a way of enacting the Kingdom of God, of practicing the generous rule of the divine king. Jesus did however, avoid exclusive practices which divided the people of God from one another, he was more willing to accept as companions people such as tax agents, and other individuals that would normally be seen as suspect.

The practice of accepting all fellowship at meals caused opposition from those whose understanding of Israel was more exclusive. To them he seemed profligate, willing to eat and drink with anyone in direct opposition to the purity laws. As Jesus himself observed in a saying from Q "a man came eating and drinking and they complain; look a glutton and a drunkard, a fellow of tax agents and sinners (Math: 11: 19/Luke 7: 34)

As we have see earlier in this paper, Jesus' opponents saw the purity of Israel as something which could be guarded only by separating from others as in the meals of Pharisaic fellowships. Jesus' view of purity was different. He held that a son or daughter of Israel by virtue of being Israel could approach his table or even worship in the Temple. Where necessary repentance beforehand could be demanded and Jesus taught his followers to pray for forgiveness daily, but his understanding was that Israelites as such were pure and were fit to offer purely of their own tithing the sacrificial worship of Israel.

Bruce Chilton has remarked many times that Jesus' view of purity was distinctive- and no doubt lax- in the estimation of many contemporary rabbis. By moving from community to community and having his disciples do so, Jesus enacted his view of the generic purity of Israel. Provided one was willing to receive the forgiveness which Jesus' meals conveyed, the sanctity of the kingdom could be welcomed in fellowship. This was Rabbi Jesus' distinctive practice of purity, one which held purity still intact but certainly differed from the mainstream purity laws of the time.

Based on our study and writings to date, I think it is fair to say that at the very basic level Jesus typifies the Judaism of his period; there was a clear fit between his practice of fellowship at meals and his theory of what was clean. Meals appear to have been primary marks of social grouping within the first century Palestine. Commensal institutions (typified by sharing meals at a single table) formal or not were plentiful. These meals included the hierarchical banquets of Cambrian, but also local and national events throughout the country. Any patron who held a banquet would appropriately expect the meal to reflect his or her own views of purity, and the guests would not be in a particularly strong position to argue (Tausig 2009). The important aspect to remember in this discussion is that the meals did not have to be on a grand scale to be seen as important, and much more modest events were held to the very same standard. A household might welcome a feast or Sabbath with a cup of sanctification (the Kiddush) and bless bread as a prelude to a significant family affair (*berakhah*). In addition, collegial meals, shared within fellowships (*haburoth*) at which like minded individuals (*haberim*) would share the foods and the company they considered pure would define a

distinct social group. A meal might also be an occasion for particular thanksgiving(todah), but in each of these meals the idea of purity, local foods, and celebration were considered a constant continuum.

Jesus practice coincided to some extent with that of a *haburah*, but his concept of purity was different, one might say more organic. Given the prominence of wine in his meals, we might describe the basic type of his meals the practice of purity in anticipation of the kingdom as a Kiddush of the kingdom. His meals, however were not limited to households. His meals were eaten outside with his disciples not always within earshot of a town. It is my contention that around these fires Jesus specifically devoted time and energy developing what he considered as the Kingdom of God centered around food and food fellowship. Direct comparison with the meals at Cambrian would seem to be a little farfetched, although the feedings of the five thousand and the four thousand may originally have been intended as massive banquets designed to promote Jesus' theory of purity and his expectations of the Kingdom. Still, Jesus certainly did not limit his fellowship to a fixed group as in Cambrian. Thanksgiving for the kingdom, the distinctive feature of Jesus' meals of today created its own constituency within the generic purity of Israel.

There is then, practically no meal in Judaism with which Jesus' meals do not offer some sort of analogy, since all such meals were symbols and celebrations of purity, and Jesus was concerned with what was pure. But, it was both the nature of his concern and the character of his meals that were inclusive that highlighted the kabbalah of purity in the Jesus mind. For Jesus, Israel as forgiven, and willing to provide of its own produce,

was the occasion of the kingdom, certainly reminiscent of earlier biblical passages. This was the basic premise in the development of the Eucharist and this very well might have been what ultimately would send Jesus to the cross.

It has been suggested by some New Testament scholars that it was Jesus who brought about the final crises of his career. The argument follows the lines that his teaching in regard to the kingdom and its purity, including his parables, might have continued for a lifetime outside of Jerusalem. It is true that sporadic local controversy was involved, but it is clear from the Gospels that Jesus and his disciples, in their travel from place to place, were able to find enough of a welcome to keep their movement going. But Jesus wanted to make more of an impact and he sought to influence practice in the Temple where the purity of Israel was extremely rigid and where the feast of all nations promised by the prophets was to occur. What happened in the Temple in the course of a controversy between Jesus and the authorities determined the future development of theologies of Eucharist as surely as it sealed Jesus' fate on Golgotha. Unfortunately critical scholarship has not been able to offer a clear understanding of that final controversy. I am sure that suggesting that Jesus' life was ended in suffering on the cross because of seemingly radical issues around food and food issues would raise a few eyebrows as would the idea that it was the features of Jesus' meals after his occupation of the Temple which prompted the Judas "betrayal".

I think it is fair to say that critical discussion of Jesus all the way through the modern period has been plagued by a crucial historic question. Anyone who has read the Gospels knows that Jesus was a skilled teacher, a rabbi in the sense of a local teacher

expert in his own Kabbalah of God's ways. He skillfully wove a portrait of God as a divine ruler (the Kingdom of God in his favorite phrase) but it is plain that Jesus appeared to be a threat both to the Jewish and the Roman authorities in Jerusalem. So much so in fact that he was crucified.

The growth of Christianity involved a rapid transition from culture to culture and within each culture from subculture to subculture. A basic requisite for understanding the Gospels therefore, is to try and define the cultural context.

The Synoptic Gospels were composed by one group of teachers after another during the period between Jesus' death and the end of the first century CE. There is a reasonable amount of consensus that Mark was the first of the Gospels to be written, around 71 CE in the environs of Rome. Matthew was subsequently composed around 80 CE, perhaps in Damascus or elsewhere in Syria while Luke came later maybe 90 CE, perhaps in Antioch. John's Gospel was composed in Ephesus around 100 CE and is a reflection upon the significance of Jesus for Christians who had the benefit of the teaching which the Synoptic Gospels represent.

Food, food issues, and sacrifice as evidenced earlier in this study in the Jewish teachings carried a vast amount of weight in everyday living. It may be suggested that Jesus' action in the temple was specifically designed to prevent the sacrifice of animals which were acquired on the site as a purity issue, and was further developed, and evolved into a meal practice that in some minds became a rival altar in its adherence to Jesus' purity issues around the Kingdom of God and food.

The reader is reminded that Israel was understood as a people elected to serve

God by producing pure offerings at the Temple, which those designated priests prepared and sacrificed. The people, the offerings, and the priests were all to be pure. The purity of Israel as a whole was not to be confused with that of priests in particular, and not every animal needed to be as perfect as an offering, but there was a continuum linking the purity of beasts globally and sacrifices specifically, and the purity of Israel globally and priests specifically. For that reason, a priest defined the purity he embodied by what he ate, and with whom, as did any Israelite.

The purpose of Jesus activity makes good sense within the context of what is written of the activities of other early Rabbinic teachers. Hillel was an older contemporary of Jesus who taught (according to the Babylonian Talmud, Shabbath 31a) a form of what is known in Christian circles as the Golden Rule taught by Jesus, that we should do to others as we would have them do to us. Hillel is also reported to have taught that offerings brought to the Temple should have hands laid on them by their owners, and then be given over to priests for slaughter. Recent studies of anthropology of sacrifice show why such stipulations were held to be important. Hillel was insisting that when the people of Israel came to worship, they should offer of their own property, in effect they should know the quality of what they were offering to God. In a sense the wholeness and organics of the offering. Putting one's hands on the animal which was about to be sacrificed was a statement of ownership (Chilton 1992) and an acknowledgment of the purity.

Perhaps this teaching is made more clear by the followers of Rabbi Shammai. This group is typically depicted in Rabbinic literature as resisting the teachings of Hillel.

They insisted that the animals for sacrifice might be given directly to priest for slaughter eliminating any need to know from where the animal came or its history. Hillel's requirement of laying hands on the sacrifice was held to be dispensable. It is interesting to read, however that one of Shammai's followers was so struck by the seemingly moral aspect of this part of Hillel's teaching that he had some three thousand animals brought into the Temple and gave them away to those who were willing to lay hands on them in advance of sacrifice ( Babylonian Talmud, *Bezah* 20a, b; *Tosephta Hagigah* 2.11; Jerusalem Talmud, *Hagigah* 2.3 and *Bezah* 2.4).

In one sense the tradition concerning Hillel highlights the opposite movement from what is represented in the tradition concerning Jesus, animals are driven into the Temple rather than their traders expelled. Yet, the purpose of the action by Hillel's supporter, like Jesus' action is to enforce a view of the importance of ownership in sacrificial offering. This concern is in line with the ancients teaching of sacrifice in the anthropological literature. Hillel's teaching, in effect, insists upon participation by the giver by virtue of his ownership of what is offered, while most of the followers of Shammai are portrayed as sanctioning sacrifice more as a self-contained priestly action.

Jesus' occupation of the Temple is best seen along lines similar to those involved in the provision of animals to support Hillel's position-as an attempt to insist that the givers actual ownership of what is offered is a vital aspect of sacrifice. Neither Hillel nor Jesus needs to be understood as acting upon any symbolic agenda other than his conception of acceptable sacrifice, nor as appearing to his contemporaries as anything other than a typical Pharisee, concerned with purity in the Temple to the point of



intervention. Neither of their positions may be understood as a concern with the physical acceptability of the animals at issue; in each case, the question is one of purity . What is to be done with what is taken to be clean (Chilton 1994)

Jesus then shared with Hillel the concern that what was offered by Israel in the Temple should truly belong to Israel. There was a deep commitment to the idea that Israel was pure and should offer of its own. Eating and feasting was a way to God in the context of purity and all its implications.

After the occupation of the Temple, Jesus had a new interpretation of his fellowship meals. Jesus continued to celebrate fellowship at table as a foretaste of the kingdom just as he had before. As before, the promise of drinking new wine in the Kingdom of God, joined his followers in an anticipatory celebration of the Kingdom (Matt. 26:29, Mark 14:25, and Luke 22:18) ,but he also added a new and scandalous dimension of meaning. His occupation of the Temple having failed ,Jesus said over the wine, "This is my blood" and over the bread, "This is my flesh" (Matt. 26:26-28, Mark 14: 22-24, Luke 22: 19-20, 1 Cor. 11: 24-35, Justin Apology: 1: 66:3)

This concept would make sense in the overall discussion of purity for the Land of Israel enjoyed all the advantages of the vine friendly climate. Genesis 49: 11 says of Judah ,“ He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes.” It is understood from these references that the territory of the Tribe of Judah was prime grape-growing country, and that the vines would be so strong that a beast of burden could be tied to them, and wine would be so plentiful that there would be no need of water to wash clothing.

Further issues of purity could be seen in the process of wine making. Wine production is basically a simple process requiring two elements, grapes and yeast. The yeast occurs naturally in the skin of the grape, and when the skin is broken when as grapes are trodden, the yeast begins to act, converting the sugar of the grape juice into alcohol. The generating of wine then was Israel's alone and purity of grape and production was one of knowing the product and the land.

Like all other agricultural elements, the great joy of the successful harvest was translated into thanksgiving to God for making it possible. In fact, an abundance of wine, among other products was the proof that the Children of Israel had fulfilled the will of God (Deut. 7:12) Wine was therefore, one of the offerings to be brought daily to the altar (Ex. 29:38) as well as on holidays (Lev. 23:13) and upon fulfillment of special vows, (Num. 15: 10).

Bread was the "stay" and "staff" of human existence as noted poetically in some translations of Isaiah 3:1 and Ezekiel 4:16 It was the food of kings (2 Kings 25:29), farmers fare in the field (Ruth 2:14) ,and to be eaten while on a journey or away from home (Mark 6:8) According to Psalm 4:7 and numerous other references, one of the people's greatest joys is when "grain and new wine abound." Naturally, therefore, grain was one of the offerings acceptable on the alter in thanksgiving for a plentiful harvest. The grain offering could be finely ground wheat (Lev. 2:1, Chron, 21:23, Ezek 43:13 ) or barley (Ezek. 13). Toasted, crushed whole grain was the acceptable First Fruits offering (Lev. 2:12, Num: 15:21, Neh. 10:37). Olive oil another of the Seven Species and other important fruit of the land was often poured over the flour.

In Jesus' context, then, his confrontation with the authorities of the Temple, and his subsequent words can have, according to Bruce Chilton, only one meaning. Chilton says that he cannot have meant, "Here is my personal body and blood;" that is an interpretation which only makes sense at a later stage in the development of Christianity. Jesus' point was rather that in the absence of a Temple, which permitted his view of purity to be practiced wine was his blood of sacrifice and bread was his flesh of sacrifice. In Aramaic blood (*d'ma*) and flesh (*bisra*) which can also be translated as body, can carry such a sacrificial meaning and in Jesus' context that would seem to be the most natural meaning.

The meaning of the "last supper" then actually evolved over a series of meals after Jesus' occupation of the temple contrary to what Hollywood would have us believe in the last momentous meal. During that period Jesus claimed that wine and bread were a better sacrifice than what was offered in the Temple, a foretaste of new wine in the kingdom of God. At least wine and bread were Israel's own, not tokens of priestly dominance. In effect Jesus made his meals into a rival altar, and that scandalized many of his followers (John 6:66-71).

According to Chilton, that final gesture of assuring purity in relation to food and the enjoyment of the purity of Israel was the final gesture of protest that gave Caiaphas what he needed. Jesus could be charged with blasphemy before those with an interest in the Temple. The issue now was not simply Jesus' opposition to the sitting venders of animals but his creation of an alternative cultus. He had blasphemed the law of Moses.

It would seem then that, at the end of his life, Jesus discovered in his own meals

the public center of the kingdom, the point from which the light of God's rule would radiate. His initial intention was that the Temple would conform to his vision of the purity of the kingdom, that all Israel would be invited there, forgiven and forgiving, to offer of their own divine fellowship in the confidence that what they produced was pure. The innovation of Caiaphas of introducing trade into the temple prevented that by erecting what Jesus, as well as other rabbis, saw as an unacceptable barrier between Israel and what Israel offered.

The last public act of Jesus before his crucifixion was to declare that his meals were the center of the Kingdom. What was local and pure, wine and bread was now understood as a clear manifestation of God's rule. Jesus had denied the offering coopted by priests as acceptable sacrifices. It is no coincidence then that the typical setting of appearance of the risen Jesus is while disciples were taking meals together, eating the local produce, and sharing the purity of the land together. The conviction that the light of the kingdom radiated from that practice went hand in hand with the conviction that the true master of the table, the rabbi who began it all remained within their fellowship. a Kabbalah based on Hebraic teachings and well formulated scripture with a decidedly creative twist.

Jesus' response, then, to the controversy he caused in the Temple involved creating a liturgy for the practice of his communal meals with his followers which had been part of his movement since the time of its origins in Galilee. As he shared meals after his final occupation of the Temple he said to his disciples "do this for my remembrance "(1 Corinthians 11: 24-25, Luke 23:39). This phrasing in Aramaic has

many layers far beyond just a request to be remembered each time bread and wine was offered in hospitality. Rather, the phrase refers to the tradition in Judaism to the remembrance before God that a sacrifice brings for all who participate. Every time they eat the sacrificial meal he taught them, they bring his remembrance before God, even as they prepare themselves to follow his example. In effect, all the teachings of sacrifice, the joyous meal, the covenants, the purity issues are brought front and center with the term, “do this in remembrance of me.”

Sacrifice, then, was not seen as an exotic or remote or primitive activity. Whenever human beings share the products of their own labor with an awareness that this sharing occurs with divine approval, that is considered a sacrificial act. Sharing the bread, sharing the wine, sharing the olives of Israel, all pure, all products of the land, this was a sacrifice to be shared in joy and anticipation of God’s wonderful works. The Catholic mass, the offering at the end of Ramadan, the Seder at Passover, formal meals to gather support for a common cause, or to mourn a loved one passing, are all linked to the human impulse to offer and share our food in anticipation of the good that is to come. The dynamic of this activity is determined by a community’s discernment of what should be shared with whom, where, why, and when and by its understanding of the divine truth—be it God or God’s, or a principle or ideal that measures the basic ethical concerns and establish shared values, when and how they decide to sacrifice on religious or other grounds.

We have taken, admittedly, a very broad brush approach to setting the stage for sacrifice as bringing the best to God’s table as a form of joyous worship, asking one to be

aware of the quality and sourcing of what is actually sacrificed. In this context, sacrifice is an acceptance and understanding that all the senses are activated in worshiping God. It can be argued that this framework of sacrifice ,even with radical and creative forms that Jesus promoted was still within a rabbis' interpretation of the purity and kashrut, or dietary codes of the day. The question may be asked, with an understanding that there is certainly no simple answer, How then have Christians become so removed from the idea of sacrifice as a pleasurable way to God's Kingdom? How has the idea of food and fork, sharing with God, enjoying the food, activating the senses become so removed from the Christian way of thinking? How has eating become so secular?

***Epistle to the Hebrews:***

The Epistle to the Hebrews, 95 CE, produced a focused yet sweeping vision of Jesus and his significance that consolidated earlier theologies and included a universal requirement of sacrifice. The writing was called an epistle rather than a letter because it was considered a formal theological treatise not an occasional message. Hebrews explicitly portrays Jesus' death for the Church as a whole as a sacrifice, borrowing not from the sacrifice or idea of Jesus' as a purity issue but rather the model of Abraham and Isaac . That gruesome sacrificial theology has been with Christianity in one form or another ever since.

In Hebrews, the sacrifice of Jesus was unlike any sacrifice previously known, whether of an animal in ritual or of a human being in sacrifice. The thought was that Jesus was God's Son, his death a divine offering from God to God and therefore the only perfect sacrifice untainted by mortal weakness. It was considered the ultimate sacrifice

and with it came suffering. The sacrifice of the divine son became the fulcrum of Christianity, balancing human actions on one side and divine action on the other.

Contrary to the long history of God and his people, sacrifice, and temple purity, Jesus' death on the cross, in the presentation of Hebrews supposedly accomplished everything that the ritual sacrifice of animals had tried to achieve but could not, because the only offering God has truly desired was his own Son. Following this line of reasoning, the author of Hebrews argued that since Jesus had transcended sacrifice, ritual was a thing of the past. This seemingly modern theme of the transcendence of sacrifice was not accompanied, however, by a reduction in the suggestion of martyrdom or human sacrifice. Hebrews made willingness to become a martyr a requirement, not only during periods of persecution, but for as long as the life of faith endured under any conditions. In other words, suffering became the accepted way of dealing with faith. It is strange to rationalize theologically that by eliminating ritual the role of suffering would be heightened. Sacrifice was now suffering, it was no longer the joyous expectation of participating in the feast of God. Certainly with this type of teaching, the idea of food and fork, enjoyment, and activation of the senses would be the farthest from any human thought, for every time eating would be a reminder of the gruesome time spent on the cross at Golgotha. Eating then would manifest in suffering over issues like, others not having enough to eat, or simply feeling guilty about eating too much. The possibilities for suffering and guilt are endless around this type of theology.

In a famous summary of its message, Hebrews proclaims that the reality of Jesus as the Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (13:8), signaling a crucial

development that made Christianity a religion distinct from and autonomous of Judaism. By insisting upon Jesus as the embodiment of a divine and eternal principle rather than simply as an important prophet in history, early Christians began to measure all the institutions of Judaism in the light of Christ instead of the reverse. Christ became an enduring standard of all revelation in every age and Hebrews presented his crucifixion as the moment in time that disclosed him as the one and only sacrifice that God has always wanted. No document in the New Testament voices this perspective as clearly as Hebrews.

By establishing Jesus' eternal identity in his sacrifice as a martyr, Hebrews also made the imperative of becoming a martyr central to Christianity. The meaning of sacrifice that Jesus had promoted and taught became transfixed as martyrdom, and this was considered the very substance of faith (Hebrews 11:1-38). Believers gave proof of their own commitment to Christ not in celebrating feasts together and enjoying the gifts that God had to give, but rather framing their lives so that they were ready for the call to martyrdom. Framing their lives for eternal suffering, certainly a far cry from what Jesus as a Jew taught and expected of his disciples in all his food and fork meals.

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews wrote in Paul's name, but around thirty one years after Paul's death. Everything about the structure and content of Hebrews shows what the most pressing issue for the author was. With the temple now lying in ruins after the Roman campaign against Jerusalem and the fire that followed the final siege, this author needed to answer the pressing question. What was the meaning of sacrifice and of all the ritual set out in the Scriptures of Israel if they could no longer be



put into action because of the destruction of the Temple; did the end of the temple mean God's abandonment of his people since the time of Abraham? These, are admittedly overwhelming concerns for a people used to ritual and not welcoming of change.

Because Paul was the greatest covenantal thinker in the Christian tradition, the author of Hebrews naturally looked to Paul's theology applied in a radically new context to deal with what Hebrews presents as the most critical problem of its time. The Epistle to the Hebrews addressed the problem by insisting that Jesus as the Son of God was the willing, innocent sacrifice that took the place of all other sacrifices. Each move in Jesus' journey to the cross fulfilled the prescriptions of ritual in the temple so completely, so that no further offering in the Temple could please God. In fact, according to Hebrews, all the rituals of ancient Israel pointed forward to the crucifixion, the one moment of sacrifice that God really desired. The offering was his own son.

The Eucharist which commemorated that moment and joined believers in Jesus' offering of his eternally valuable sacrifice, replaced the animal sacrifice of the Old Testament with the one form of worship God had desired from all eternity. Gone was the mutuality of divine enjoyment in celebratory activity, of feasting in community. The Epistle to the Hebrews proclaims Christianity an eternal religion independent of Judaism, and lays out the Christian claim to understand the mind and heart of God..

Within this view, Jesus, in his death on the cross, takes the place of any value that other forms of sacrifice in the history of Israel once seemed to have possessed. As far as the author of Hebrews was concerned, Jesus as the Son of God not only emerged as the standard by which every major institution of Judaism was to be measured, but Jesus

actually replaced those institutions. Subsumed then was the Law given by Moses, high priesthood as well as sacrifice. On this view Jesus gave all humanity a new and better covenant (Hebrews 8:6-13) compared to the covenant with the patriarchs and with Moses. The author of Hebrews needs to insist that Jesus died without cause and in line with sacrificial procedures to make this argument praising Jesus and challenging the authorities who condemned him.

Jesus then is portrayed as perfect and sinless in Hebrews. Contrary then to the original teachings of Jesus in relation to the divinity issue when human beings other than the divine Son offer sacrifice ,according to Hebrews ,their action is one of self interest, for they know very well that they are sin and suffering, and that they anticipate the benefits of forgiveness from performing the ritual act. That means that conventional priests, ministers, pastors wind up perpetuating sin, and suffering when they offer sacrifice, because the memory of wrongdoing is seeded at the same time an offering is brought. Eating and enjoying food, therefore, would be considered as suffering, for how would one be able to enjoy food knowing of the sacrifice of Christ. I would venture to say that this line of thinking is far removed from the original Jewish teachings of Jesus. The consciousness of suffering ,carefully wound with ritual sacrifice, demonstrates that innocent death has transcended all ritual. Enjoyment is out and suffering has readily taken its place.

The Epistle to the Hebrews way of thinking has contributed directly to how sacrifice has been conceived in the West over the centuries, whether within or outside the Church. Typically the ritual of offering an animal is assumed to acknowledge guilt for

the purpose of acquiring forgiveness for wrongdoing; The celebratory feast, which had been dominant in the ancient conception of sacrifice has been eclipsed in the thinking by the West of suffering in connection to sacrifice. This represents a revolutionary development which permitted the author of Hebrews to portray the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans as proof that it belonged to a passing imperfect age. The author marginalized the ritual of sacrifice that had been the apex within Judaism and, arguably, one of the cornerstones of the teachings of Jesus within the realm of purity.

By claiming that Jesus transcended sacrifice, Christianity minimized ritual sacrifice as a marginal activity that was not a life sustaining form of worship at all but just a faulty remedy for suffering. According to Hebrews, and the line of thinking it set in motion, ritual makes people feel forever guilty and prone to suffering in their attempts to rid themselves of sin by means of ceremonies that only exacerbate the consciousness of sin. Eating and feasting are primary examples of this thought process. Eating and feasting are no longer forms of worship that are a way to attain the Kingdom of God. In fact, some Christian educators don't even want to use the term feast, for to them it implies gluttony, another form of suffering. This age old ritual of feasting would then only serve to bring to consciousness the idea of suffering of self, and suffering of others. The path had been set to secularize eating and divorce it totally from any form of worship.

Although Hebrews dismissal of ritual sacrifice has become an axiom of Western culture , that is only one step, and a fairly straightforward step, toward the goal of its argument. The second step is more radical and original. For Hebrews ,God only takes pleasure in what is perfect ,and that perfect offering is not anything a conventional

priesthood could offer, but only God's only son. Apart from that perfection more ritual and more sacrifice just amounts to more suffering. That is why Hebrews is the center of the theological claim still embraced by many Christians, although disputed by others, and rejected by many non Christian thinkers that Jesus was in all ways perfect. The author even risks making Jesus seem not quite human when he describes Jesus as the unique high priest tempted in every way in our likeness apart from sin. (Hebrews 4:15) For Hebrews, Jesus was not merely divine but he also had to be faultless to be accepted by God as a human sacrifice for human suffering. In other words, the vestiges of purity and sacrifice within the Jewish tradition remain, but twisted in such a way that makes the original teachings hard to find.

The question can very sincerely be asked , why this fixation on suffering and its projection onto the whole system of Israelite sacrifice? The idea between suffering and sacrifice is today so strong that many people cannot imagine sacrifice as a celebration, and cannot think of suffering as anything but an irremovable shame, endemic to all humans (except for Jesus in the view of those who agree with Hebrews). When the Epistle to the Hebrews identifies ritual with suffering it does so in order to argue that Jesus takes the place of what the Temple priest once tried and failed to do. The author, or authors, desire to prove that Christ fulfills and transcends ritual requirements, puts a straightjacket on the idea of sacrifice. There is only one meaning, sacrifice becomes an offering for suffering. The argument presents a choice to the reader of the Epistle; either feel more and more guilty by means of conventional ritual, or finally wipe suffering away on the basis of Jesus as the ideal sacrifice.

Although Hebrews portrayal of Jesus as the ideal high priest is not accepted universally even within Christianity, Hebrews did succeed over the long term with considerable help from other Christian authors, in portraying sacrifice as full of suffering and backward. When sacrifice was practiced in antiquity, the joy and sharing that was the dominant mood shines through countless texts, across cultures as well as the images of food and festivity on the walls of ancient temples.

The burden of guilt and suffering is unique in the Christian tradition. Understanding how this has happened in the West helps explain the current feelings toward ritual, sacrifice, suffering and related issues. The duality between suffering and sacrifice, and the eventual addition of sexuality to that duality was set in motion by this Epistle and has shaped behavior, taste and culture until the twenty first century. It is my contention that it has perhaps helped shape our secular relationship with food and the lack of enjoyment of food and food fellowship to the point where in spite of the original teachings of Jesus and all that went before, we have a disordered perception of eating and enjoyment in relation to God and to the worship of God. In fact, I might be so bold as to say that if we don't understand the Jewishness of Jesus and what his teachings actually had to offer we miss the pathway to the Kingdom of God, which according to Jesus was through food, enjoyment of food, and sacrifice as a joint experience acknowledging God's everlasting love and faithfulness.

***Relevance:***

It is my belief that the theological issues surrounding food and faith have not been adequately addressed by seminaries or other educating bodies which provide pastoral

leadership to countless pulpits across the United States. Truly seeing Jesus as a Jew with regard to both belief and practice would, I believe, develop a much deeper appreciation for the teachings of the church and go a long way to dealing with the food crises in our lives that have become manifest in disordered eating.

Today Jesus's words are too familiar, too domesticated, too stripped of their initial edginess and urgency. It is only when heard through first-century Jewish ears that their original edginess and urgency can be recovered. Consequently, to understand the man from Nazareth, it is necessary to understand Judaism. It is necessary, for example, to begin to understand our distorted relation with food, to return to scripture, and understand how joyful food, food from land, local produce, organic materials and activation of the senses are in relation to our spiritual well being and that of our children. Working theologically with purity issues, but reframing for twenty first century ears could perhaps go a long way towards dealing with our rampant health issues that revolve around food and our individual food choices.

The Christian pulpit then has, in my mind, a tremendous opportunity to become a relevant force once again in their communities. Farmers markets can be developed; drop off sites for food can be envisioned; local farmers can become part of the discussion; and underlying the entire framework is the fabric of interfaith conversations that strive to understand how food and food issues have impacted our lives in similar manners. The opportunity for dialogue around food and the sharing of food is one that I think can galvanize individuals into action, faith action that allows both compromise and discussion.

The opportunities in the faith community are wide and broad but the premise remains the same. Individuals must take the time to theologically understand Jesus as a Jew and in doing so it is my hope that his Kabbalah or teachings of the Kingdom of God in relation to food and food issues translates to enjoyment of both food and faith at the table.

## ***Chapter II B: Clinical Principles:***

In the most recent edition of the magazine Bon Appetite there is a spread advertising Stuttgart, Germany as a destination for Christmas travel. Having been born in Stuttgart I was pulled into the travelogue and read “Stuttgart’s sexiest food shop is a veritable pilgrimage site for lovers of good merchandising. Organic vegetables tumble forth from straw baskets. Magnums of Veuve Clicquot, the best of Champagne, festoon the cash register and tantalizing warm buns sing cinnamon hymns from the mile long bakery case.” As a chef and theologian I was sold right away. I was sold because I could see, hear, taste feel and smell in my soul the market place. There was an excitement of the senses. I could feel the texture of the organic vegetables. I could see amid the colors of the vegetables the freshly baked bun. I could smell the cinnamon and taste the sweetness on my tongue. I could see myself eating the bun. I was ready to buy the ticket for Christmas in Stuttgart. I was too ready to let my soul sing in the sexiest food shop in Stuttgart. I was ready to have a love affair of food and faith in Stuttgart the place of my birth. As I fantasized about the trip the magazine inadvertently closed with the front cover showing. When I looked back at the magazine I saw the cover of Bon Appetite: it read ***Eat Well...Savor Life***, and showed a huge slice of peppermint meringue cake with chocolate butter cream and suddenly my fantasizing stopped, and I found myself, the chef and theologian of the previous moment thinking, “I can’t possibly eat that”. Thinking how funny the words read ***Eat Well...Savor Life***, but I couldn’t possibly eat that piece of peppermint meringue cake with chocolate butter cream. Why? I could see, hear, smell, taste, see the cinnamon bun, but for some reason I couldn’t make myself see, hear, taste,



or smell the cake. All I could hear, see, taste, smell, or see was calories. I could hear that little voice in my head saying, too many calories...too much fat...too rich...you can't go there. But surprisingly in the same instance I could see myself feeding bits and pieces of this cake to my lover. I could see myself eating this cake with enjoyment and love sharing with a lover, but somehow I could not see myself eating and enjoying this cake alone.

The more I thought about the dichotomy of this situation the more I came to realize that this could be said to be disordered eating. The more I thought, the more I realized that through the image of the cake, and through the image of the cinnamon bun I heard what the objective psyche wanted to say to me. Through the image of the cake and the bun I was wrestling with a problem certainly not as severe as the DSM IV eating disorder diagnosis which polarizes eating disorders into two rather large categories but rather I seemed to fall in that middle ground that middle America approach that says that we have a disordered approach to our food, our food sources and food consumption. That silent disordered way of thinking that says we can enjoy some of our food but not all of our food. In short we can only enjoy part of our life, that part that the psyche says is ok. The rest of it, well I suppose we could say that we suffer over the lost part.

### ***Disordered Eating:***

Some years ago I read Kitchen Table Wisdom by Rachel Naomi Remin who asked us as reader to pioneer with her in the mind, body, and health field. She specifically asked us to address the spiritual issues of suffering in our lives and the lives of others. She began by asking the reader to reflect on the following parable:

Shiva and Shakti ,the Divine Couple in Hinduism were in their heavenly abode watching over the earth. They were definitely touched by the challenges of human life, the complexity of human reactions, and the ever present place of suffering in the human experience. As they watched the suffering, pain ,and malaise of the human condition Shiva saw a miserably poor man walking down a road. His clothes were shabby and his sandals were tied together with rope. Shakti's heart was full of compassion for the man. Touched by his goodness and his struggle Shakti turned to her divine husband and begged him to give this man some gold. Shiva looked at the man for a long moment. My dearest wife he said I cannot do that. Shakti was astounded. Why, what do you mean husband she said, you are Lord of the universe. Why can't you do this simple thing.

Shiva looked long and hard at his wife, and slowly said to her I cannot give this to him because he is not ready to receive it he replied. His wife became very angry. Do you mean to say that you cannot drop a bag of gold in his path. Ooh surely I can Shiva replied but that is quite another thing. Please husband do it said Shakti, and Shiva dropped a bag of gold in the man's path just like his wife wanted him to do. The man meanwhile was walking along thinking to himself . He thought, I wonder if I will find dinner tonight, or shall I go hungry again. Turning a bend in the road he saw something on the path in his way. Aha...he said look, there a large rock. How fortunate that I have seen it. I might have torn these poor sandals of mine even further, and carefully stepping over the bag of gold he went on his way, wondering what to do for dinner.

Let us propose, for the balance of this paper to acknowledge that the bag of gold that God has placed in front of all of us, no matter what race or creed, is the ability to

have a love affair with food and faith. In the bag in front of us on our path in life are the spiritual riches of the senses that allow us the ability to sustain our soul on wholesome healthy food and a spiritual balance with that food that makes our soul whole and free from suffering, It is my contention that we as individuals, as community, as nation have on the whole decided, for whatever reason to continue to suffer with disordered eating rather than stop and look into the bag that God has put right in our path asking us to stop and reflect, look and see that the inner spirituality and the external food go hand in hand. The caveat here, however, is that the reader must acknowledge and understand that disordered eating is a complex of many intrapsychic processes. Our task here is specifically to focus on disordered eating as suffering or masochism.

Disordered eating comes in many shapes and sizes. We live in a society obsessed with size, weight, and image.. This is more than apparent by the number of diet plans, weight loss programs, spas, fat jokes, plastic surgeries, but at the vortex of this narcissistic rat race is the quest for the perfect appearance, figure and life style. The jokes are endless. Just the other night I saw a movie preview where a group is looking at a photo and remarking about the appearance of one of the women who is present and is also looking at the photo. The conversation went something along the lines of “.your looking a little puffy in this picture,” and the woman obviously caught off guard, says,” I was eating my bad thoughts”, and the other fellow without a second thought and full faced grin says, well...you must have had an awful lot of bad thoughts, to the uproarious laughter of the rest of the room. A fat joke...a disordered eating experience that in effect says I was unhappy inside and I tried to eat my unhappiness away. This sad but true

example of disordered eating is given visibility on main stream television as something to be laughed at and minimalized as an acceptable female coping strategy. This coping strategy is further played out in fast food joints, reduced size package dinners, and over eating. In fact, I would suggest that if we truly looked at our eating habits, we would find that our eating reflects our life situation. We are not only what we eat; we are also how we eat. Food is so embedded in our every day experience that we can easily remain unconscious about the beliefs, values and practices in which we are engaged. In fact I believe it would be more than shocking, actually one of disbelief, if the assertion were made, that we have as a society actually perpetuated the idea of suffering around food. In the midst of all the cooking shows, the rows and rows of cookbooks at Barnes and Noble extolling the virtues of food, sex, and success, the questions may seriously be asked, who is the market, who is buying the books, and watching the shows?" I would suggest none other than the vast numbers of Americans who actually suffer around food. The question then, directed to the world of depth psychology, to the world of religion, and to the millions of Americans that are programmed to suffer. "Why all the suffering? " Perhaps even more specifically" Why refuse relief from pain." If one does not accept relief from pain isn't this masochistic. Doesn't that mean that our relationship with food is not pleasurable as the magazines and cooking shows would allow you to believe, but rather, is a seesaw between pleasure and pain?

### ***Disordered Eating as Masochism:***

In 1995 Kathryn Zerb, M.D. wrote a ground breaking text *The Body Betrayed*. Her book was designed to give the readers a deeper understanding of women, eating

disorders, and treatment. In the text she briefly mentions how disordered eating expresses aspects of body hatred and masochism. She says that the disorder comes to embody the quest for pleasure in pain (masochism), while the individual consciously denies this aspect of the disorder. In her subsequent, text written in 2008, there is no mention of masochism. In fact, when reviewing texts dealing with disordered eating as a whole, the discussion of masochistic behavior is sporadic and not consistent in discussions, or for that matter, treatment plans. It would lead one to believe that there is not a true understanding of suffering in relation to a war with one's body in disordered eating .(transference-counter transference) or, for that matter, a comprehensive way of treating suffering in the context of disordered eating. Perhaps a starting point would be to acknowledge that there is suffering both real and imagined around disordered eating, but in the same breath one might ask how did we get to the point of suffering.

In 1942 Karl Menninger, a twentieth century American psychiatrist wrote, "being given food is the first expression of love which a child understands; it is his introduction to love." The symbolic value of being fed remains high throughout life in the unconscious, food equals love. On the one hand, Western culture is mesmerized by food and its value to engage our appetites but if we really wanted to dig deep and understand why it would perhaps be that we are trying to recapture an early experience of that first meal we had so long ago. The prevailing thought is that this meal is the one to which one can never fully return because we grow we separate, and individuate or so we think we do. Yet the elusive power of that first feeding remains a source of profound comfort and psychological nourishment throughout our lives, usually unconsciously

(Boverman ,2000) The desire to recapture the nourishment of our babyhood works like a magnet in our minds to draw us back for a symbolical return, a psychological truth .

More than 40 years ago the psychiatrist Rene Spitz studied a group of infants who had been separated since birth from their imprisoned mothers. The babies were kept at a prison nursery . All their physical needs (feeding, cleaning, changing were methodically met, but having contact, fondling, caressing, rocking bullying, soothing, were totally absent. Despite the adequacy of their physical care the children became depressed withdrawn and immobile. Their systems failed and many of them died. They showed every evidence of having given up hope until Spitz brought back the mothers encouraging them to hold the infants while feeding them, instead of propping bottles up on pillows, and to start touching and holding them- in effect loving them. When treated this way the children reversed their pattern of hopelessness and once again thrived. They required the somatic infusion of bodily tenderness, an activation of their senses to reawaken their infant psyches with life sustaining hope and love.

The developmental voyage begins with the early interaction of psyche and soma under the care of the parent. At the preverbal time all communication occurs through the body without the code of language (McDougall 1989) A developing child gradually learns to have a clear representation of her own body image, as distinct from that of her mother, as the child develops the verbal skills to communicate with her. It is not then surprising that the early development process can go astray, and damage to the psyche and soma occur, for the strength of the developing child is dependent on the strength of the mother figure. The malfunctions that can occur lead to the disunity and internal

battles, early in life, that have no vent in words.

Masochism is defined as the tendency to derive pleasure from one's own suffering or humiliation. Surprisingly enough it was named after Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, an Austrian novelist in the eighteenth century, who described it in his novel *Venus in Furs*, in which a masochistic relationship developed between a dreamer and dilettante and a beautiful free spirited widow to whom he became a slave. The concept of masochism was further developed by Dr. Richard von Krafft-Ebing whose work *Psychopathia Sexualis* was written before Freud's *Three Essays* and the *Theory of Sexuality*.

It would appear from current clinical publications that equating masochism with the suffering issues around food does not seem to be a mainstream focus. This became evident when I read a 1998 *Clinical Social Work Journal* article by Carol Tosone who wrote on masochism. Dr. Tosone told the reader that masochism was an enigmatic concept and clinical entity that has long posed one of the most difficult therapeutic challenges. She continued by saying that clinical observation supports the view that both men and women can exhibit masochistic traits, however by virtue of their gender specific developmental paths, men and women may differ in their respective masochistic manifestations. Female patients often report a tendency to inhibit aggression which can lead to its somatic expression. Women also tend to be more prone to certain types of self defeating behaviors and effective states, such as disordered eating, depression and victimization. Factors contributing to the development of masochism in women include the influence of preoedipal and oedipal relations with parents, narcissistic needs and the internalization of societal attitudes towards women. Certainly one can see the broad

brush approach in all the clinical terms but the specificity of one of the major issues that transforms these clinical terms, food, is missing. It would appear that no real attempt is being made to look specifically at this issue.

Perhaps the easiest way to begin to understand the concept of masochism is to look briefly at the psychoanalytic theories of masochism. The study of psychoanalytical theory offers basically three approaches to what is called masochism. Masochism contrary to popular belief is not something we do; not sexual deviancy as popularized by the Marquis de Sade, but rather it is a suffering. The root of masochistic conflict probably stems from the earliest time in development when the establishment of a body self is disrupted.

The first of the three approaches to masochism sees it as a manifestation of the death instinct, the second as a defensive strategy of the ego, and the third as a means of hiding a missing piece of ourselves and a reflection of our need to acknowledge something transcendent beyond ourselves.

The first approach may be credited to Freud and shared by Melanie Klein; and it is perhaps most suitable to our construct of disordered eating and suffering around food and food issues. They distinguish among an erotogenic masochism, where pleasure is mixed with pain; a feminine masochism, where aggression is directed inward; and moral masochism in which we submit our ego to a sadistically critical superego as our ruling moral authority. (Freud 1955) In this frame of mind we accept most anything of which we are accused; we take unconscious pleasure in confessing sins to others,, definitely a form of martyrdom; and we submit to an inner punitive voice that says in effect that we



are no good, that we are never enough, and that we are bad. The ego cooperates and develops chronic low self esteem, a habit of excessive self-criticism, and timid behavior.

The second way to approach the suffering of masochism moves from instinct to defense of the ego, to strategies we develop to protect ourselves. We use masochistic attitudes and actions to protect our ego from the threat of being annihilated. Psychologists Horney, Berliner and Menaker represent this view. In these theories we relinquish our self to avoid anxious conflict with the person usually a parent or a parent figure, on whom our life depends. We accept suffering from the hands of the other as if it were love. We confuse love and hate. Masochism here is an adaptation of the ego into chronic and exaggerated self-critical, self abasing behavior because we are terrified of being abandoned by someone on whom we depend, without whom we feel we cannot survive. And so we demean ourselves by appeasing and placating the other whom we need so much. We are even willing to give up a center of awareness in ourselves, our place of willing, our capacity to grow independently and use our energy for creative self expression in the world in order to preserve our dependent bond on this other before whom we feel so helpless. We will even distort the reality of what we perceive to preserve this bond, confusing unkind and cruel actions of the other with affection and support. We in effect collude in denying our own value as a person. We take into ourselves the disparaging attitude toward us of the other and identify with it. That keeps us mired and stuck in frustrating repetitious behavior. The only sound we hear inside us is a same harsh critical voice. Our egos then cannot develop new and different perceptions of ourselves as achieving, willing and creative (Menaker 1979) Our ego,

stuck in the repeated experiences of feeling small, unable, and unworthy, is passively dependent on the other. We conclude we can never accomplish anything. We will accuse ourselves of everything to maintain the illusion of connection to the idealized other. We refuse to recognize the other's flaws and problems.

Interestingly enough though is ,that in the fog of the defeat we feel the unkindness and cruelty of the other. We get angry and want to use our aggression to strike back, but we have no weapons of self assertion or verbal aggression with which to fight or argue our case. Instead of responding positively to the aggression we are afraid and feel guilty . We even feel we deserve punishment for our hostile feelings. Our masochistic self belittlement increases. We give our power away to those who make us angry. Secretly, we hope this maneuver, forcing them into a superior position over us, will also prove a means of obliging them to continue taking care of us.

In this masochistic adaptation of ego toward other, we are trying to go back to a time when no conflict existed between us. We are trying to reinstate the unambivalent pre Oedipal time when we were young enough so that it was appropriate to depend on others to take care of us, when everything seemed sunny and good. We do not want to rebel and are trapped in an age that is too young to fashion relationship with others. We always fear they will leave us. Unconsciously then, we device schemes to control others to stay in protective parenting relationships with us. We fasten on to one fantasy version of ourselves as humble, weak, meek and totally devoted to others who hold all the power. In this way we protect ourselves from the anxiety and dreaded reality of abandonment. To preserve a false security the ego sacrifices its whole independent development.

The third approach of masochism is a combination of theories by Masud Khan and Carl Jung. Here masochism is not an instinct nor really a defensive strategy of the ego. Rather, it is a place of protection where we are hiding something that we cannot quite bring ourselves to find, and venerating something that is not big enough for our devotion. We are hiding something painful that happened to us before our egos were developed, before we had developed a real object relation, that is sturdy relation to another (Khan) What is hidden is a part of our true self, something of great value to us and our religious devotion. Such masochism involves chronic low self esteem and accompanying action of self- abasement. These become routines, whether attitudes or actions, and hold us compulsively. We are afraid to let go, fearing what might happen to us. We become addicted to these routines, having rerouted pleasure into them, having constructed in them elaborate defense system hiding within them precious pieces of self that we have lost or never even found. Our masochistic habits both express and mask ,try and fail to manage some pain inflicted, some suffering endured and remembered in action rather than words, in behavior rather than idea. Our perversions such as they are tell the story of our suffering in the only way we can tell it, through enactments of repetitious self- abasement.

Jung writes of a religious instinct an inherent impetus to be conscious of relationship, to a Deity (Jung 1953) If we do not find a way to live with this religious instinct, it will trouble us just as much as hunger or sexual instincts which are denied. We fall prey to internal disorders of the spirit as costly to us as the external eating disorders or disordered eating. We swell with spiritual repression at least as upsetting as

sexual repression. Or we suffer religious perversions, such as masochism, if we cannot find a way to live with our urge to submit and channel our energies into this love.

It has been suggested that in masochistic rituals and attitudes of self humiliation hides an unlived religious impulse to venerate (Gordon 1987) We have fixed the impulse on the wrong object, giving to another what properly belongs to God. We have smothered the impulse to devotion, mixing it with pain and degradation. We are caught in covert ways of control, of self, of other, of the religious impulse itself, refusing to give over to the source and power of being. Instead, we try to regulate the power, change the purpose of this instinct.

Jung looks at this disorder symbolically asking what meaning the suffering of masochism bears toward us. We find in masochism a compensatory movement to the cultural picture in Western society of the ego as striving, mastering. (Cowan).

Masochistic tendencies pull us down into our unconscious psyche, where we do not understand but only suffer. We are in the passive mode, where we feel ashamed to be caught in actions and attitudes we cannot understand, master or change. Masochism pulls us into what Jung calls our shadow, where is to be found all that we would like to repudiate, recover from, or improve upon. We feel sick, humiliated and stuck. But it may be just here that meaning waits to greet us. Through the shadow we may be put in touch with forces which could, and should, live through us if we could consent to them. Here we find archetypal energies and images that ask for relationship. The suffering of masochism hides the passion of the psyche to give over the central place of the ego to conscious relationship, to power as the source of being.

The question may fairly be asked at this point, Is there really a connection between disordered eating and masochism, and if so, how does it relate to the soul or the spiritual realm? This question addresses mainstream America in relation to our lost agrarian roots, our disordered eating, our seemingly lack of concern with foods that have been preserved for longer shelf life but are in effect affecting our health and wellbeing, and, perhaps most importantly of all our spiritual life. Could it be said that our disordered eating habits are as prevalent and widespread as the dissolution of our spiritual life, our relationship to God? Could it be said that the disordered eating and masochism has so blunted our senses that we have in this sense lost this pathway to God? Have we made disordered eating our God. These questions are not easily answered for they strike at the heart of depth psychology and religious or spiritual faith. One is hard pressed to separate psyche from soul, or sickness from health; to say "Yes, I am buying and eating carrots from Canada, out of season that have sat in a warehouse for weeks and have been shipped across two continents", but "No, I do not have disordered eating, I am not suffering", when the flip of this scenario is seen in fresh bright orange carrots sweet from the soil that nourish both body and soul, a pleasure to eat. This correlation with masochism, with suffering is a little harder for individuals to relate. Perhaps it is that they do not consider this form of behavior as suffering since it is so mainstream.

This personal realization of suffering in relation to food and food choices is the murky area between the disciplines of depth psychology and religious faith . Perhaps some of it becomes a lack of understanding of our religious heritage based on a love affair of food and faith, which has become usurped by societal trappings and long

ingrained ideas of suffering and sacrifice. Admittedly this is not an easy separation, the psyche from soul, or sickness from health in relation to disordered eating. Perhaps then, the best way to navigate the question between disordered eating and masochism and its relation to soul, is to try understanding by using what I am going to call trigger words. The trigger words are, morality, dependency, denial, sacrifice, pain and love. For the reader then the idea would be morality and masochism, dependency and masochism and so forth. In this way I think that the correlation can be made between the psychological realm and the spiritual, with the constant override of food or, for our purposes, disordered eating with a twenty first century context as the guide.

### ***Moral Masochism:***

When we are caught in the pull of moral masochism we suffer the chronic feelings of inadequacy. The feelings of self abasement and inferiority are in direct contrast to the experiences of pleasure and love. These feelings of inadequacy are played out in food all the time. It begins in a rather benign mode; one hears in the conversations, for example, “I love brownies,” but what is not being expressed is the fact that this individual could not stop eating the brownies the night before. For that individual the result after about the fifth brownie is usually one of suffering around the lack of resolve to eat only one. With that lack of resolve comes added pounds, feelings of inadequacy and general malaise.

This is however, only the beginning, for that belief of inadequacy around an eating disorder does not go away and the expectation that food will fill that void becomes a never ending battle. The weight increases, and with the overweight comes all of the

societal blame, If you are fat, you are stupid and lazy; you simply are not as good as the next person who is thinner, brighter, and more well adjusted. We do not love ourselves and we cannot truly be loved by others.

If we expand this thought process to our spiritual lives we have trouble feeling an acceptance of an overriding experience of God's love for us, and we cannot seem to love ourselves enough to realize that we are loveable to others. We have in effect become a martyr, suffering silently, and expecting food to fill that void. What is so ironic here is that the whole ministry of Jesus of love, acceptance, and forgiveness revolved around the love of food, local food, and the best that the land had to offer.

***Dependency:***

It has been pointed out to me that our capacity for self denial may be our strongest defense. When we are caught in a masochistic undertow, our ego denies any perceptions of what others are doing to us that is unkind or negative. We deny the painful perception because we cannot readily give up on others. We depend on them for our very survival. We fear abandonment a spiritual void that is hard to explain but has been given expression in void, darkness, abyss, feelings of nothingness. Kathleen Norris is fond of explaining this type of feeling theologically as *acedia*, a form of malais that strikes and manifests itself as spiritual dryness.

If we take the psychological ideas of dependency and lack of self assertion with a broad brush we can admit to ourselves in relation to food, that we have, as a nation become dependent on government food sourcing. We deny in that we do not really acknowledge from where our food comes or what we are really eating. We do not want to

hear, for example, that our government, through the subsidies and support of large corporations, is poisoning us. We do not want to hear that suffering, disease, and wasteful death for so called domesticated animals is a large part of the cost of our eating habits and food production system. We just, by and large, choose to ignore, unless we consciously think about it, that we have basically abandoned the long standard practices of animal husbandry in favor of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFO) which have led to the emergence of new epidemics such as BSE (mad cow disease) which is communicable to humans.

This is disordered eating and by and large we as a society are silent about it. We continue to buy the products at the stores with the bucolic stamp showing a cow in a field or a pig in an outside pen. We are choosing in effect to purchase food that is poisoning us, and in doing so we are ignoring the spiritual teachings that say, in effect, eat local, eat from the land, and you will be in covenant with God.

***Sacrifice:***

When masochism catches us, we disown our negative feelings and make others miserable. The masochist sacrifices an independent ego in order to stay passively dependent on another without the conflict of ambivalent feelings. Caught in this dilemma we give up our own development for a presumed safety. We disown our aggression, leaving it untamed and floating free so it seeps into others.

In a church setting for example, let's say a bible study experience, a group of women, perhaps four or five, where two of the five are obviously obese are gathered ready for study. The group leader begins the discussion by asking how everyone is. It is



a very simple overture, and one of the obese women begins.”oh not so good” and the litany begins of how the diets don’t work, the diabetes is out of control and on and on. The group leader begins to feel guilty, something along the lines that it is our fault that others feel poorly about themselves. We are made to feel guilty that we cannot make them thin without dieting, and then we feel guilt for the rage that their manipulations engender in us. Instead of being truthful about the weight and the real issues, we placate and defend against our own aggression, stuffing our own feelings about fat, weight and issues around food.

***Pain:***

The fourth contrast centers on pain. When masochism fills our soul we see pain as an end in itself. The details of pain preoccupy us, even as they concern the minutest changes in bodily symptoms, moods. We are caught in bondage to suffering. We repetitiously rehearse misery. We are held fast in self loathing and degrading ritual. To be enmeshed in any kind of addiction brings great humiliation. The punishing attitude or action repeats itself countless times with no meaning shining through. There is nothing redeeming through the ritual; it simply grinds us down.

Perhaps here we could look at the ritual of late night eating where we really are not hungry but we compulsively and mindlessly eat in front of the television or while watching any number of movies on DVD. Let’s say for example, we begin the habit or ritual of eating ice cream late at night, or chips, or some other fast food that is great in quantity and lackluster at best in nutritional value. What often happens in the ritualistic behavior is that the eating does not stop after the first bowl of chips; rather it continues

despite the fact that the taste buds have become numb, and no taste of the food equals the first mouthful of whatever item is being consumed. This doesn't seem to matter ,for we continue to try and replicate the first taste. It becomes compulsive behavior and at the end of the exercise we have done our bodies no favors, we have not really enjoyed the food, but instead have enacted the addictive behavior of one who suffers. We are caught in the bondage of suffering which in reality manifests itself in the constant discussion of weight and weight issues that we can never seem to get under control.

Or , perhaps a more readily digestible example of pain and masochism is the constant yo -yo of dieting and dieting regimes. In this bondage of suffering, one looks to the panacea of diets to become the end all and be all of the perfect self disregarding totally any idea of spiritual acceptance in the face of God. Here the diet, or the restriction of life in one form or another becomes an overriding thought, and food becomes the vehicle around which one constantly suffers. There truthfully is nothing redeeming about constantly worrying about weight and weight issues as it plays out in not really enjoying food, or the hospitality that is generated around food. In short, the constant dieting is a form of spiritual death, for it denies one of the basic covenants with God that says "Taste of the earth and see that it is good."

When pulled by these masochistic impulses one is not free and does not feel whole. The constant refrain is to look for what is missing in ourselves, the part without which we cannot be whole, that part that continues to push us to eat late at night. We continue to look for that missing part each evening and we repeat and repeat the rituals in which the missing part is hiding. This missing part becomes essential to our

every day existence ,and as a result we end up substituting rituals of concealment for the whole of ourselves and of others. We are not free to feel a spiritual connection to food, rather we are a slave to repetition and compulsion. It is almost as if we are looking for a relationship with what depth psychologists call a whole object, or a true other, instead of looking for a missing part of ourselves.

***Love:***

Our masochistic experience around food produces suffering in ourselves and those around us. Subconsciously full of regret and trapped in our own feelings of inadequacy, we act like a magnet, attracting and inflaming aggrieved feeling in ourselves and others. We examine every slight, real or imagined, as proof of our inferiority or others neglect. Our pain causes pain in others, and we feel that we are not free to love ourselves or others. We manipulate and control others, make them feel responsible, helpless to help us, and guilty because they fail. Masochism leaves us stalled . We do not live the life given us. Sadness clings to us, the sorrow of unlived life. Our disordered eating has become our life, our religion. We are keenly aware how much that costs us and we suffer. We refuse to accept the power that is available to us and we refuse to ever accept ourselves as complete. With this lack of acceptance we truthfully have no capacity to love and in turn cannot possibly acknowledge a religion that has as one of its basic covenants, “Taste and see that the Lord is good,” or perhaps more to the point:

*Ho, all who are thirsty,  
Come for water,  
Even if you have no money,  
Wine and milk without cost.  
Why do you spend money for what is not bread,  
Your earnings for what does not satisfy?*

*Give heed to Me,  
And you shall eat choice food  
And enjoy the richest viands.  
Incline your ear and come to Me;  
Hearken, and you shall be revived.  
And I will make with you an everlasting covenant.*  
**Isaiah: 55: 1-3**

***An Experience:***

We have asked the question about the connection between disordered eating, masochism or suffering and its relation to the spiritual or the soul, and we have given credence to psychological theories embedded in these connections. I think, though, for a sense of clarity, or a dose of realism it would be useful to look at an actual experience that revolved around the spirituality of food and food issues.

As a chef at a Presbyterian conference center with a specialty in Biblical Feasting I often promote programs and cooking sessions that highlight this specialty. This Biblical Feasting, a week long event was advertised as “Biblical Feasting, Exploring the Food and Hospitality of the Bible. The promotional material talked about a creative ministry of eating the word one scriptural bite at a time and keeping the feast. It was promoted as a traveling, feasting ministry designed to highlight the Hudson valley and its local produce and revisit with passion and energy ,table fellowship. Activating all senses, enjoying life and eating local produce was a major goal for the week long event.

The event was attended by a clergy couple, the pastor who had just retired from over thirty ears of pulpit life, and his wife, who had been a supportive spouse in the spiritual trenches. On the first night, when introductions were made, and the schedule of events was discussed it became readily apparent that neither the pastor or his wife really

understood the practical aspects of Biblical Feasting, of enjoying the bounty of God's gifts in food and activation of the senses in relation to the land, and how it relates spiritually to what we eat on our plates.

The week began with trips to a soup kitchen, a food bank, eating with the homeless, and making a meal out of garden produce and food bank donations. You could almost see the pastor and his wife go into overdrive when the traditional church related food issues were involved. For example, they engaged the homeless and helped prepare the food in the soup kitchen with relative ease, but it became more problematic when we traveled distances to visit farms and walk with farm animals in the fields. This was definitely out of the comfort zone, and relating those animals to what we were cooking at night and eating from the garden became an exercise in surprise and enjoyment.

What became apparent however, as the week went on is the pastor continually wanted to explore feast and famine, and feast and fasting. In other words, it seemed the more he enjoyed himself outside, eating good food, preparing good food he felt a need to suffer around his enjoyment. As a Presbyterian pastor with the luxury of all the theological training there seemed to be a huge gap in the knowledge and understanding of Jesus as a Jew. There seemed to be no Hebraic understanding of food and the covenant with God as to purity issues and sacrifice in the enjoyment of food in relation to divinity. The pastor even admitted half way through the week that he expected that Biblical Feasting to be a week secluded in a house studying scripture related to food. There seemed to be no knowledge of the pilgrimage language, or laying on of hands of produce, or gleaning from the fields. It was almost as if any previous spiritual or religious

overtones in relation to food had been prepackaged and left to sit on the shelf. It became apparent to me that food and spirituality, and food as worship, were not thought of as one in the same, rather eating and food were secular events standing on their own and mired in feelings of inadequacy, guilt and suffering.

On the last day of our week together we had spent the morning visiting a farm producing cheese, had a cheese tasting, had lunch in a local Hudson Valley restaurant had taken a river cruise where we enjoyed the sun, water and leaves as we slowly made our way up and down the Hudson river. On our drive home we stopped at a farm stand and vineyard buying food and drink for a feasting dinner.

Dinner was prepared, local grass feed beef, fresh vegetables, a fresh dessert, and we drank wine. The pastor and I ate with our fingers, enjoyed our food, drank our wine and enjoyed the dinner, the day and the table fellowship. The wife, on the other hand, who had enjoyed the day could not seem to quite get into the feasting mode. She could not, for example, eat with her fingers or pick the beef chunks up with her hands; rather she felt the need to chide her husband for doing so. She did enjoy her meal, but felt the need to call her daughter in the middle of the meal to ask some question about a place she and her husband had eaten some time ago. It was almost as if the husband's enjoyment was too much for her and she needed some grounding; she was suffering around some issue and it was manifesting itself around the food and the table fellowship.

Over the months that have followed this experience, I have reflected much. It has slowly dawned on me that pastors as a whole have little relationship to food and food issues as they are reflected scripturally in the Jewish context, rather they have taken on

the mantle of promoting the concept of suffering around food. It is not that they are consciously espousing the issues of disordered eating, but by the mere fact that they are not scripturally literate to start, they cannot relate healthy eating habits to their congregations. Unconsciously they are imparting concepts of suffering around food when they speak of fasting, and famine and sacrifice with no relation to scriptural interpretation of purity, sacrifice, land and land practices. It is almost as if the adage, “Show me what you cook, and I will tell you who you,” are comes to fruition in the pulpit.

## ***Biblical Feasting:***

### ***Chapter III: Method of Carrying out Project:***

Biblical Feasting is a metaphor for a way to experience God through food and faith. It is an opportunity to find a path to wholeness by activating all the senses in a food and fork experience that allows enjoyment, hospitality and good food to invade the soul

The group to experience Biblical Feasting in Community was comprised of church leaders all within the same church. They were asked to prepare a multicourse meal and serve that meal to one another in a banquet type setting. They would be provided recipes on the night of the cooking experience and asked to work in teams preparing foods that would in effect take them out of their comfort zone. After preparing the dishes and plating, they would enjoy the feast in community.

The Biblical Feasting evening will begin with the group, in this case ministerial leaders from Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City. They will be asked to arrive around 5:00 p.m ready for an introductory worship experience around scripture and a preaching moment. They will then be handed a packet which will include the menu and an explanation of how they will break into teams of two and prepare the menu items that they have been given.

After choosing recipes the group is then ushered into the prep area where they will be asked to prepare their dishes under the supervision of a Chef who is there solely to provide trouble shooting and to make sure that all complete the recipes so that a communal dinner will in fact take place.

What becomes immediately apparent in this type of exercise is that everyone is



working with fresh produce, and they must help one another to get through the food preparation in order to enjoy their dinner together.

When all menu items have been prepared the large table is reset by the guests and they are all asked to sit and enjoy the dinner, the hospitality and the beauty of what they have prepared.

I have included in this section the scriptural piece that initiated the group in worship as well as the menus that were provided for them.

**Menu and Preaching Moment:**

Team: 1 Unleavened Griddle Bread: Tilapia with Artichokes and Olives

Team: 2: Grilled Quail with Lentil Stew: Bitter Herb Salad

Team 3: Lamb with Garlic & Herbs: Dilled Cucumbers with Olives & Goat Cheese

Team 4: Goat, Squash & Olive Stew: Squash with Capers and Mint.

Team 5: Cumin Laced Garbanzo Bean Spread: Figs with Thyme and Honey

Team 6: Ghriba with Walnuts: Spinach Salad: Algerian Style Fennel with Olive Spread.

Preaching: Genesis 18: 1-13

Tonight we are on a spiritual pilgrimage, a pilgrimage of the senses that leads us through Sephardic feasting, a pilgrimage that by its very nature gives us license to examine, search and develop through midrash, that reading between the scriptural lines...the mitzvah of hospitality. Tonight we interpret the gaps, give fresh insight and allow ourselves to get out of our sometimes obsessive self absorption. Tonight we visit and experience that elusive state where we have forgotten ourselves and become absorbed in someone or something outside of ourselves. We trust with our senses tonight and

experience radical hospitality.

This evening we are visiting Abraham, the shared ancestor of Judaism, Christianity and Islam and his wife Sarah, but we are visiting Abraham and Sarah in their vulnerability. We are visiting Abraham and Sarah as they experience first hand what it means to be humble, what it means to experience and receive radical hospitality, and perhaps most important what it means to give up the I..me..mine mentality in exchange for the wisdom of learning what it truly means to feed one another. What it truly means to be authoritative as opposed to authoritarian.

The Torah tells us that the great oaks at Mamre were heavy with heat and Abraham, old Abraham was heavy with heat himself. It was hot, no it wasn't hot it was stifling. There was not a breeze. No one wanted to move in this heat. Even Sarah who always kept the four sides of her tent opened and her hearth embers burning for the weary traveler could not keep her eyes open, and Abraham? Well, he wasn't far behind her. His eyelids were drooping and he would doze in and out of half sleep. But, today he was dreaming, you know those hazy dreams, and he was part of the dream. He could see three men motioning to him, it seemed as if they wanted him to come closer, so he walked toward them or maybe in his dream state he floated toward them. He really didn't know, but when he was closer he was aware that they were saying to him that they wanted to show him hospitality. Oh, but I know all about that said Abraham. The three men ignored him and motioned for Abraham to follow them into a room. The room was filled with famished desperate people sitting around a large open fire. In the center of the fire rested an enormous pot of stew more than enough for everyone. Abraham could smell the

delicious stew and it made his mouth water. It was silent in the room except for one person, one very authoritarian person showing all the others how to feed themselves. Each sullen diner at the fireside held a very long handled spoon, long enough to reach the pot and scoop up a spoonful of stew, but too long to get the food into one's mouth. No one was allowed to talk, or make a suggestion, but to just do as he or she was told. The need for order and control was heavy and obsessive in the room. Abraham saw immediately the suffering and bowed his head in compassion. He stood watching as the stew fell off the spoons. One of the three men leaned to Abraham and said "I wonder what you would call this? Before Abraham could respond the man said come, now I will show you hospitality and loving kindness. They entered another room, identical to the first, same fire, same enormous pot of stew, same long handled spoons, yet the atmosphere here was so different. It smelled better, everyone appeared well nourished, they were smiling. Abraham could not understand and looked to the three strangers, it is simple they said, but it requires a certain skill, it requires an authoritative style that allows exercise of control but in a warm and responsive, encouraging way. You see the people in this room have learned to feed one another. But, I don't get it said Abraham. Why? But, before he could ask any questions, his eyes opened and there in front of him stood the three men. Was this a vision? Was the dream a vision? Could it be the same three men as in his dream standing in front of him looking at his tents. Truthfully, as Abraham struggled to get to his feet there was a moment of panic, for welcoming the stranger was a major ethical value in the Jewish tradition. One was not to be caught in the middle of the day sleeping while the guests stood at your tents, vision or not. Abraham suddenly felt

out of control, out of sorts, maybe it was that he had not fully understood the dream, and dreams were often messages from the divine. Or, maybe it was the mitzvah, the divine commandment, the bringing of guests, that was a major element of the giving of loving kindness, and he at this moment was too self absorbed to be loving and kind to any guest. So, Abraham struggled to regain his composure, but what he was really struggling with was the anger that he felt. An anger that said you should have been aware, you should have been ready. Maybe then it was with somewhat of a sharp tone that he said to the strangers, let a little water be brought and then you may all wash your feet, for there was certainly no one around to bring any water. And, maybe it was for this reason that Abraham before any water could be brought, before he truly regained his composure said to the strangers, in maybe too loud a voice, in much too authoritarian a tone, let me get you something to eat. Abraham felt something was wrong as soon as the words had left his mouth, for they had not come out with a sense of humility, let me serve you. Rather, it was more like the dream in the first room, I am going to do it my way, and you are going to follow my lead no matter what the consequences. It felt worse when the three strangers just stared at him and finally after a long silence and some knowing looks shared between them did they say to him “very well” do as you say. Almost, to say, we don’t believe you, we know you can’t do it alone. It is to be done in community if it is to be done at all. Abraham was a mess, for he realized at that moment that the three strangers were actually considering going on their way without allowing any hospitality. Abraham in a panic turned quickly almost running to Sarah’s tent, so preoccupied was he with his own discomfort that without any discussion, without any collaboration, without

any hesitation he just ordered his wife.”Get three seahs of fine flour and knead it and bake some bread” Well, Sarah didn’t move. In her mind she thought, what? You want me to get 28 cups of flour, what for? Instead, she just quietly asked, how many quests are there. Three. Abraham sputtered. Sarah thought, three declarations of God’s holiness...kadosh,...kadosh..kadosh...Abraham was looking around wildly. At this point he could have cared less what Sarah was thinking. All he wanted her to do was move, and he again repeated that same authoritarian tone, but perhaps with a little more hostility this time. “Quickly now, bake some bread.” Sarah didn’t move, she just stared at him and then just stared at her dead embers, and then she just looked outside of the tent at the three strangers who were still standing with no water for their feet and no water to drink. She wanted to tell Abraham that she had heard him tell the three strangers that he was going to get them something to eat “let me” he had said. Me, myself and I, and she wondered why he hadn’t said , we will get you something to eat. We will offer support, reassurance, suggestions, insights for you on your journey We will prepare a feast for you to go on your way. We will feed one another. We will give and receive, radical hospitality.

Well, Sarah in all her wisdom, for you and I both know that her came comes from the Hebrew root word meaning “to command.” Well Sarah in all her wisdom, in all her humility, in a warm and confidently authoritative tone said gently to Abraham,”we will prepare a feat, you and I will feed our guests. It will be nothing like you have seen. Now go,Abraham, go to the herd and selct a choice tender calf and give it to one of the servants to prepare. Then go and gather some quail, some vegetables, eggplant,

tomatoes, dandelion leaves, some fruit, dates, figs, grapes, and see if we can find a duck, and maybe we can make a stew, a pot of stew. We will offer our guests such radical hospitality, a hospitality that will allow us all to give and receive.

Abraham just stared at Sarah with his mouth open. A stew, he thought, a stew, didn't he just dream of a stew. What was she talking about, a stew. Suddenly he relaxed, suddenly healed, he was suddenly outside of his anger, outside of himself. Wise old Sarah .

Abraham turned to look out of the tent at the three strangers, they were smiling for they had heard what Sarah had said, and they knew. They sang Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh, and they looked knowingly at Abraham. Suddenly it became clear in Abraham's mind. He had to forget himself. He had to look out for the next person. He had to get out of the me, myself and I. He had to change himself in order to effect the change in others. He was not fixing the meal, he was not standing alone giving orders, rather he was asking gently for help and support. It was to be all giving and receiving in this feast. It was like the second room around the fire. The healthy room, where all were feeding one another, in a most creative way.

Well my friends, this Sephardic feast has a very happy ending. For, true to form while the guests were experiencing radical hospitality, that openness that said all are welcome at this table, that sharing, that blurring of boundaries that says that we are all one in the eyes of Adonai. As more and more food came to the table, and more and more giving and receiving took place, the ultimate gift was given to both Abraham and Sarah. The sharing of loving kindness. No more and no less than what Abraham and Sarah had shared. No more or less than what you already have shared with your table. For

remember, my friends, the gift was not just given to Abraham. The gift was not just given to Sarah. All shared the graciousness and hospitality that was offered that day and it was then that Abraham and Sarah certainly heard, “I will surely return to you about this time next year and Sarah your wife will have a son.” God Bless and Amen.

**B: *Methods used for assessing outcomes:***

Assessing outcomes in food preparation becomes a multilayered experience. Initially one is looking for enjoyment with the initial feasting exercise. I would be specifically looking for what I call an “arc of behavior”. There is in the beginning, for those who are not familiar with working around food, a certain amount of trepidation and expectation of what is going to happen next. When working with food and new menus with an expectation of having your food shared with the rest of the group does, for some, create a certain amount of anxiety. This anxiety is translated into being almost anal with a recipe, measuring out salt to the n<sup>th</sup> degree for example, forgetting totally that the cooking experience, by and large, is a creative endeavor. What the chef in the Biblical feasting experience is looking for is a settling of spirit during this phase of the cooking; an understanding of what is required in the recipe and how to get there using God given creativity in the process. What is observed during the kitchen phase is the ability to handle stress in a small kitchen with an understanding that the organized chaos will be channeled into a beautiful meal in the end.

The first method of assessing the outcome is to successfully enable the group to complete their dishes for presentation. The second method of assessing outcome is to ask

each team to explain their dishes to the rest of the group. What the leader, or in this case the chef, is looking for is an understanding of the methods, spices and foods combined to create the feast. In the explanation; if the individual has really been engaged in the process you can hear and see the pride that has been taken to not only explain the dish but to present the dish to the rest of the group,

The third method of assessing is to listen to the dialogue around the table to see if there is any mention of spirituality, activation of the senses or mention of God, feasting or some effect that would lead one to believe that enjoyment of the food and of the hospitality is taking place.

I believe the last form of assesment would be to see how Biblical Feasting affected the group organically. By this I mean how did the group internally process the experience and how was the experience related to others in a church setting or not.

#### **Chapter IV: Results:**

I have quickly come to realize that assessing outcomes in this type of project can be very subjective. By this I mean that in this project there is not only the theological component, that of understanding the scripture and the basis behind the scripture, but the concept of activating the senses and preparing food that all would want to eat. The key, here is that culinary training is not all the same, and the Culinary Institute of America is very demanding both in presentation and production. I found myself in the assessment process expecting my group to produce as if they were serious about cooking and eating.

*Did the group complete their dishes for presentation:*

The entire group completed all the dishes, twelve in all. There was the expected arc of



behavior in the kitchen, some showing more anxiety in preparation than others; but as the dishes began to be plated all of the ministers began helping one another so that the feast table could be set. Those individuals who felt more comfortable around the food found themselves being a little more creative in their uses of spices and plating. Those individuals who were less confident, perhaps in themselves, followed the recipe exactly and did not stray from someone else's creative endeavor.

*How were the completed dishes explained to the group:*

This method of assessment is driven in my mind by ego and self esteem issues. The fact that a novice can effectively prepare a meal in short order, have it look presentable, and be able to describe the dish to others so that really others are going to want to try the dish speaks to me of self esteem and self worth. Because there were twelve dishes, everyone had a chance to explain what they had made. Some explanations were very brief, when in fact the dish was rather difficult to prepare, and others even though the dish was relatively simple would wax and wane about the dish and presentation. The adage mentioned earlier in this paper, "Show me what you cook and I will tell you who you are," became a little more real. Some in the group were able to critically analyze how they could make their dish more tasty, or more presentable, in short more pleasing to the rest of their peers. In my mind the wanting to please aspect of the food preparation exercise was interesting to hear.

*What was the dialogue around the feasting table:*

This part of the assessment was perhaps one of the more productive, for in this sequence I, as the leader of the group, became somewhat scarce as I did not share the entire meal

with them. What this enabled me to do was gracefully change my role into one of making sure that they had everything they needed on the table. What this allowed me to do was hear the table conversation and watch and evaluate body language of those folks around the table eating the food that they had prepared. The group as a whole enjoyed the food, tried all the dishes, congratulated one another sincerely on the preparation, and, as the meal went on became more spiritual in the conversation. They talked for example about memories and how food brought back those memories. In my mind this type of conversation couldn't get any more spiritual or any more God like, for they were essentially thwarting death and bringing those folks back to life in a gospel that said ...”this is my body...do this in remembrance of me.” The group sat around the table talking, eating, and feasting for a long time. They seemed to genuinely enjoy the food, the atmosphere and their company together.

*Did the Biblical Feasting exercise affect the group organically; How did they process*

A week after this group went back to their home church, one of the members of the group called me to tell me that the Biblical Feasting became part of their worship service the next Sunday. This totally unexpected preaching opportunity allowed the experience of the Biblical Feasting to be shared by the entire congregation. In addition, the group signed up for a second Biblical Feasting experience which in my mind expressed a desire to not only validate their own ministry, but to validate the ministry of Jesus, one of eating and feasting as a way to the Kingdom of God.

**B: Developments not anticipated in your original proposal that figured prominently**

**into the shape of your execution and final outcome.**

Biblical Feasting has now become a traveling ministry that provides food, theological content, and feasting to the wider church community. Since the inception of this proposal I have traveled to denominational conferences, churches, farms, held farm to fork dinners and have used this format to spread the gospel of Christ that says, "Believe in me and I will provide."

Perhaps even more important is my appreciation for the Jewish traditions around food, sacrifice and feasting. The question now is how best to package this knowledge both theological and psychological in order to help lead the people of God to the Kingdom of God.

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