Fear and Faith:
Moses and the Burning Bush, Jonah, and Psalm 27
Explored through Commentary, Translation and Creative Arts Workshops

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Abstract

What does the *Tanach* have to teach us about Fear and Faith? For my rabbinic thesis I have studied three Jewish texts on Fear and Faith: Moses at the Burning Bush (Exodus 3:1-6, 3:11-15), Jonah's flight from God (Jonah 1:1-16), and Psalm 27. I have translated each of these texts into English. I have also compiled a commentaries section that includes both medieval and modern commentaries, including my own choreographic commentary, which highlights ways I might use this work in creating a dance piece. Finally, I have created a series of Arts Workshops, exploring these texts through movement and bibliodrama.

Acknowledgements

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I am thankful for my friends who listened to me gripe along the way, who gave me personal and professional advice, and when necessary, who reminded me of all the passion that led me here in the first place. Of course I am always grateful to my teachers, mentors and guides who have accompanied me throughout this journey, helping me to learn and grow and make sense of it all. Thank you Richard, Neil, Lisa, and Karyn and all those from whom I have learned in the Los Angeles Jewish Community and at HUC-JIR Los Angeles.

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Rabbinic Thesis

Introduction

As I began my fifth year of rabbinic school, and my seventh year of graduate school, feelings of fear began to creep into my consciousness. These past seven years of my life have been dedicated to study and professional growth and development, and they would soon come to a close. I must admit that the thought of finally reaching my goals and becoming a full-fledged rabbi is a bit overwhelming at times. Of course there are also many moments when I am incredibly excited and anxious to begin my rabbinic work. During this ongoing transitional year I had many conversations with my rabbinic mentors. In response to a conversation with a mentor with whom I shared my fears, she recommended that I use the first verses of Psalm 27 to refocus me when I was confronting my fear. The verse read, "Adonai is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear, Adonai is the stronghold of my life, from whom shall I be afraid?" Over the past year the verses of this Psalm have become a mantra to me. Out of this ongoing trope in my own life, I chose the theme of Fear and Faith around which to focus my rabbinic thesis. I hoped to learn about Fear and Faith from my three chosen texts. What does Jewish tradition have to say about Fear and Faith? And how can I apply these lessons to my

everyday life? These questions guided my research throughout the process of my studies and writing this thesis.

Moses, Jonah and the psalmist in Psalm 27 all have things to teach us about Fear and Faith. An in depth look at three texts on Fear and Faith: Exodus 3:1-6, 3:11-15, Jonah 1:1-16, and Psalm 27, expose us to different outlooks on Fear and Faith. The traditional commentators, Rashi, Redak, Midrash Rabbah and other modern sources highlight issues that open and expand the text for us. In Hebrew the word *yirah* can be translated as fear or awe. In Hebrew it is not uncommon to have a word that means two things that are opposites of each other. While Fear and Faith may not be total opposites, they are each extremes. One who is fearful is motivated to action in a very different perspective than one who is faithful. Out of fear we may make rash decisions, be jumpy or angry, or even withdraw. When we are in a state of faith, we often feel guided by God or a higher power and have a sense of security that things happen for a reason. My teacher Rabbi Richard Levy speaks of *yirah* using the metaphor of the Grand Canyon. He explains that *yirah* is that moment when you look down into the canyon and exclaim with awe how incredibly beautiful the sight is. Yet you also recognize that at the same moment if you were to fall into the depths below, you would be falling to your death. For Rabbi Levy that moment encompasses *yirah.* Not all moments of *yirah* include both fear and awe, but Rabbi Levy's example does. *Yirah* is a word that connotes either an emotional fear or an awe-filled reverence that is reserved for things that are divine and holy. In this way the Hebrew language links together the ideas of Fear and Faith. Both are universally common emotions or responses that one may experience during moments of lack of control. As a soon to be rabbi I often struggle with my own responses to both Fear

and Faith. I am fearful of the unknown that lies ahead. While at the same time I am attempting to feel supported by God as I wade through the looming questions to which as yet I have no answers. I also believe that as a rabbi it is my job to help others through moments of Fear and Faith.

I wanted to explore what three Jewish texts might teach us about these extremes of Fear and Faith. I began my studies by translating these three texts into English. This involved work with the Hebrew, use of lexicons, and a comparison of other translations. I then began to read through commentaries, ancient and modern, that spoke about these issues in the chosen texts. In this portion of my studies I began to unpack the complexities of the Hebrew and the different perspectives of many well-known scholars. I also added my voice to the commentators by writing a choreographic and bibliodrama commentary for each of the texts. This means that I added my creative voice to the mix of commentators, speaking about how I might interpret a verse using movement or bibliodrama. It was an elaborate creative exercise to explain the inner workings of my choreographic mind on paper in a way that could be understood by a non-dancer or actor.

In addition, in response I have created a series of three arts workshops that will explore Jewish texts that highlight Fear and Faith. The hope was that these workshops would expose the participants to new modes of interaction with Jewish text, increasing their area of comfort in exploring Judaism through movement and drama. Each of these modes invites the participants to relate to the text from an intellectual, personal and spiritual standpoint, thus bringing the participants' understanding to a new level, as they voice characters' feelings and

interpret poetic phrases through movement. It is my experience that although most people are reticent to engage in this creative form of Jewish learning, once they have had the experience they are open and interested in exploring this work further.

The following pages of my rabbinic thesis outline my translations of the texts, a compilation of commentaries, and my three workshops, including my own choreographic and bibliodramatic comments. The workshops have brief outlines, detailed descriptions, feedback from participants and notes of reflection written after my experience of executing them. I believe that Judaism longs for us to jump into our text and not only embody it through our life choices and values, but to physically and emotionally step into scenarios and relate to them from a visceral as well as intellectual point of view.

Moses and the Burning Bush: Exodus 3:1-6, 3:11-15

3:1 And Moses was shepherding the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian. He drove his flock into the wilderness. And he came to the mountain of God, in the direction of Horeb.

3:2 An angel of Adonai appeared to him in flaming fire, from within the bush. And he saw, here the bush is burning with fire and was not consumed.

3:3 Moses said, "let me turn aside now and I will see this great sight; why is the bush not burning up?"

3:4 When Adonai saw that he turned aside to see, Elohim called to him from within the bush saying "Moses, Moses." And Moses said "*hineni*", here I am.

3:5 He said "don't draw near here! Remove your shoes from upon your feet because this place upon which you stand upon is holy ground."

3:6 He said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God.

3:11 And Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should free

the children of Israel from Egypt?"

3:12 And he (God) said "because I will be with you. And this is for you a sign that I am sending you. When you bring the people out from Egypt you shall serve God on this mountain."

3:13 And Moses said to God, "Behold when I come to the children of Israel, and I say to them 'the God of your fathers sent me to you', they will say to me, 'what is his name?' What will I say to them?"

3:14 *Elohim* said to Moses, "*eheyeh asher eheyeh,"* He said, "Thus shall you say to the children of Israel: *eheyeh* sent me to you."

3:15 *Elohim* said further to Moses: "Thus say to the children of Israel: "Adonai the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob sent me to you. That is my name everlasting and this is my memory from generation to generation."

Fear & Faith Workshop #1

Opening: We will be exploring a text from Exodus 3: Moses and the Burning Bush 3:1-6, 3:11-15. We will first do some "traditional" learning and then we will apply our learning to more creative modes of expression. Through the use of movement and theater we will explore themes and ideas we find in our text. Expressing what we learn through physical and emotional means will help us to internalize the messages of the text in a visceral sense. It helps us to step into our Jewish texts, embody them and bring them to life. It also helps us to better relate to what can otherwise seem like archaic expressions of the Jewish faith. By exploring a text through other mediums in addition to intellectual pursuits, we can discover new meanings, expand our understandings and even add our own voices to the commentary that has been part of Jewish parlance for many centuries.

There is no need to be an artist, dancer or one who identifies as a creative person in order to participate. These workshops are designed to help anyone relate to Jewish texts in a new format, and to help others engage Jewishly through creative modes of expression. Relating to Jewish texts through a new format can help inspire others to continue their pursuit of Jewish education, where it may not have appeared as attractive before.

While I encourage and invite all to participate, I am equally understanding of those who choose to observe first. I invite all who find themselves having some sort of negative reaction

to turn their negativity into inquiry, and possibly try out something new while acknowledging it may feel uncomfortable at first. Together we give ourselves permission to play, to experiment and to try new things as we approach these new Jewish arts workshops.

These workshops are part of my rabbinic thesis, as I prepare to become ordained this May. I have chosen the theme of Fear & Faith since these two paradigms seem to be what most often enters a rabbi's office. I personally feel very connected to both sides of this spectrum. Standing at the precipice of my future I experience both the fear of what awaits and a great sense of faith that I will be guided toward my destiny. Like Moses we all have moments of Fear and Faith in our lives. I hope that together we can begin to explore Moses' experiences and have them help illuminate our own lives.

Text Study

Explain and discuss the concept of *yirah*

Briefly discuss the relationship between fear and faith

Break group up into *chevrutot*

Pass out biblical text

Ask each pair to read through the text, focusing on the moments in the text that may be examples of either fear and/or faith

Depending on the size of the group, help them to focus on the Hebrew as well, including pointing out where *Yirah*: fear/awe is used.

Yirah in Hebrew can be defined as either awe or fear. *Orchot Tzaddikim*[1], a book of Musar instruction written anonymously in the 1500's, includes a chapter on *Yirat Shamayim*-fear or awe of heaven. In the book the author suggests that there are three levels of *yirah.*

**Yirah* Level 1: People do good deeds, not out of reverence for God, but out of fear of people. They worry that if certain things are not done, others will scorn and distrust them. Although this behavior may appear to be *yirah*, in fact it is missing the true essence of *yirah.*

**Yirah* Level 2: *Yirah* is related to fearing God but focuses on the individual. At this level people are doing good deeds, primarily out of concern that God may punish them if they don't.

**Yirah* Level 3: This is the highest level. It is when one's whole being is filled with an awareness and an appreciation of God's greatness.

Ask each *chevruta* to discuss their definitions of Fear and Faith and apply it to the text.
Are your ideas of Fear and Faith connected, as we find in the meaning of the word *yirah*?
What questions do you have after reading the text?
Share reflections from the text study together as a large group.

[1] Margolis, Ari. Handout for Ordination Seminar, 2009.

Movement Exercises

Begin with The Dance Exchange's "Perpetual Prompt[2]" Exercise

Ask everyone to take a piece of paper and pen and spend three minutes continually writing. I am going to give you a verbal prompt, and you will write a series of sentences using this prompt and answering this question, based on the given text. This is an intuitive exercise so it is important not to over think your responses too much. For the purposes of this workshop we are going to start and stop this exercise a few different times. You will be answering in Moses' voice and in your voice.

I fear...

(Answer it in Moses' voice; keep writing until time is up)

I am in awe...

(Answer it in Moses' voice; keep writing until time is up)

I have faith...

(Answer it in Moses' voice)

Have the pairs read a few examples of what they wrote to each other. Then ask the larger group for any strong images that may have stood out in the exchanges.

[2] Lerman, Liz. Dance Exchange. 14 Feb. 2010 <http://www.danceexchange.org/>

"Spontaneous Gestures[3]" exercise from The Dance Exchange

(I will lead, give a time frame for storytelling of 3 minutes, and then create a movement phrase)

We will begin by doing the exercise as one large group. We have just spent some time with Moses and looking at his moments of Fear and Faith. Now we are going to look into our own lives and ask ourselves similar questions. I want you to take a few minutes to think about the ways we experience *yirah* in our lives today. Each person will share their response to this question aloud for the group to hear. While they are sharing, I will observe the physical movement of the person speaking when they respond to each of these. Then I will capture a movement or two and reflect their movements back to them. This will be repeated for each person. As we go we are building a movement phrase. Come back together as a group to share the movements that were generated. Next I will show the phrase and then we will all try the phrase together.

Part 3: Scaffolding Movement and Text

Invite the participants to go back to their pairs/*chevrutot*. Have them pick the most powerful movements created from the previous exercise and the most powerful phrases from their own writing. Then I encourage the groups to see what happens when you have one person move while the other is speaking. See what connections can be made from working in this way. Let's see what you discover as you connect movements from our stories and words from Moses' perspective. What happens with these combinations? Then I encourage the groups to go and play with these movements.

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[3] Lerman, Liz. Dance Exchange. 14 Feb. 2010 <http://www.danceexchange.org/>

Finally we all come back together as a group. Each group should choose one text and a movement or series of movements to put together and practice it a few times and share. Invite the pairs to show their work to each other. If the groups are comfortable it is always nice to have everyone share their work with the entire group. (If the number of participants is small, have each group show their movement phrase, then combine all the groups to make a new phrase.)

Closing: Moses feared, was in awe, and had faith in Exodus chapter 3. In our lives we too fear, are in awe and have faith. What image, word, or movement will stay with us as a result of this experience today?

Notes from Workshop:

In retrospect I realize it is important to add to the list of invitees people from Hebrew Union College who might be interested in attending these workshops, in order to increase participation and invite individuals from different communities. One overall critique I received was that I should allow more time for movement exercises and make the time for Torah study a bit shorter. A participant suggested that in the beginning of the workshop I should be clear on the goals I have for doing this work. While I understand why they made the comment I am not sure I need or want to provide this information at the beginning of one these arts workshops. Another critique suggested that I need to be clearer on my directions for the movement exercises section, especially since most people have not worked in this

way previously. It is important to note early on in the workshop that some of these activities may make people uncomfortable. If that is the case I should encourage the participants to be curious about that and try to approach it from a sense of inquiry. In order to help those who are not movement oriented people, it would be helpful to show clear examples of the activities that are being suggested by using another person, such as Andrea Hodos, my mentor, to model the work. I quickly learned after my first workshop to begin my advertising earlier in advance of two sessions so people can plan ahead and attend as many workshops as possible. It is also important to make personal phone calls, to e-mail invitations and to announce the class from the *bima* at the synagogue on a Friday night. Some of my participants had a difficult time understanding the layering of text and movement that I was asking them to create at the end of the workshop. I did not explain my reasoning for working in this manner. In retrospect, I think it would be helpful to explain why I chose to layer different text with varied movements, and why I chose not to work with movement and texts that were designed to go together.

Overall it was a very successful workshop. I learned that people want to understand my rationale and the reasons behind the choices that I made. Although I was able to hear this critique I am not sure that I would choose to follow this advice were I to repeat this exercise. I felt that the participants did not understand why I long for the choreography to be self-motivated. It might be important to explain to the group that this adds power to the movement and increases physical and emotional investment in the creative work on behalf of the participants. I believe that working in this manner is a communal process and must unfold cooperatively.

Midrashim on the Burning Bush Exodus 3:1-6, 3:11-15

Verse 3:1

Shemot Rabbah: uses the Hebrew word *achar.* This midrash highlights Moses as a caretaker, as he goes after a lamb to make sure he is okay.[4] This midrashic story is used a proof text for why Moses is chosen to lead the Jewish people.

Rashi: translates the word *achar* to mean "far into the wilderness." He explains the reason for going far was in order to distance the sheep from theft of grazing in others' fields[5]. This teaches us that Moses was highly ethical and wanted to distance himself and his sheep from doing any harm by grazing in fields that were not their own. This perhaps highlights Moses' conscientious nature. ***Har HaElohim:*** Rashi explains that the Torah calls this "the mountain of God" because of its role in the future, but at the time of the narrative it was not yet known as the mountain of God.

Choreographic Commentary: If this verse in the text is used for a dramatic or choreographic work, *achar* could be interpreted through moving across the stage with large expansive movements.

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[4] Lehrman, Dr. S.M. Exodus Midrash Rabbah. (London: The Soncino Press, 1961), 52.
[5] Scherman, Nosson. Rashi The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated. (New York: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 1999), 21.

Verse 3:2

Shemot Rabbah II 5: *Elav,* translated in English as "Unto Him." This midrash asks why the verse needs to specify *'unto him.'* If Moses was the only one present there would be no need to use the word *elav*[6]. The midrash shows that this is used to emphasize that others were with him, yet Moses alone saw this vision. (Pg. 53 Shemot Rabbah Soncino)

Choreographic Commentary: *Elav,* This scene could be physically represented with a group of people in a circle surrounding one area. Next the people melt down to the floor to reveal Moses' theophanic moment at the burning bush in the center, where the people were previously hiding.

Shemot Rabba II 5: *In a flame of fire:* to inspire him with courage, so that when he came to Sinai and saw the fires, he should not be afraid of them. Another interpretation of *In a flame (lebath) of fire* is that the fire was from both sides of the bush and upwards, just as the heart (*lev*) is placed between the upper part of both sides of man[7].

Shemot Rabbah II 5: *In a flame of fire:* At first an angel acted as intermediary and stood in the center of the fire, and afterwards the *Shechinah* descended and spoke with him from the midst of the thorn bush. This is based on the idea that first we are told an angel appeared and then the Lord himself. The angel came to set him at ease and prepared him for his first audience with God[8].

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[6] Lehrman, Dr. S.M. Exodus Midrash Rabbah. (London: The Soncino Press, 1961), 53.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.

Rashi: Teaches this Hebrew phrase is translated to read "in a flame of fire." Yet an alternative understanding of the phrase could be the heart of a fire. The heart can be used metaphorically with reference to inanimate objects[9].

Choreographic Commentary: Above there are many different interpretations that could color a choreographic choice for depiction of the burning bush. One would be to have a dancer be the center of the fire, representing the angel, while surrounding this person with other dancers' arms or legs acting as the surrounding flames. If we take into consideration the second comment from *Shemot Rabbah* that the angel comes to put Moses at ease before he will meet Adonai himself, it might mean we choose to depict the burning bush as a more fantastical but less frightening image. This idea of the center of the fire brings to question whether the fire should be a central image for fear or for faith. This would be a fruitful conversation to discuss during the study session of the workshop.

Shemot Rabbah II 5: *Out of the midst of the bush:* A heathen once asked R. Joshua b. Karhah, Why did God choose a thorn-bush from which to speak to Moses? He replied: ...To teach you that no place is devoid of God's presence, not even a thorn bush[10].

Rashi: *from within the thorn bush.* Rashi teaches that the angel was found in a thorn bush and not any other tree in order to reflect the idea conveyed in the verse that "I am with him in

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[9] Scherman, Nosson. Rashi The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated. (New York: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 1999), 21.

[10] Lehrman, Dr. S.M. Exodus Midrash Rabbah. (London: The Soncino Press, 1961), 53.

distress." In Psalms 91:15, the verse expresses the idea the God shares the distress of Israel. By revealing himself in a bush whose thorns inflict pain, God showed that he shares Israel's distress; that he too, is in pain (*tosafot hashalem mizrachi*) (Shemot Rabba 2:5, Tanchuma 14)[11].

Shemot Rabbah II 5: *And he looked, and behold the bush burned with fire:* From this they derived (Yoma 21a) that the heavenly fire shoots out branches upwards (heavenly fire leaps upward in palm branch shaped tongues of flames); it burns but does not consume, is black in color; whereas fire used here below does not branch upwards and is red and consumes but does not burn. This is in contrast to earthly fire that does consume and burn[12].

Choreographic Commentary: If depicting the burning bush through use of multiple dancers' bodies, based on this comment one might adjust the type of movement that is used to depict the bush itself.

Shemot Rabbah II 5: Asks why God showed Moses such a symbol? Because Moses had thought to himself that the Egyptians might consume Israel; hence did God show him a fire which burned but did not consume, saying to him: Just as the thorn bush is burning and is not consumed so the Egyptians will not be able to destroy Israel[13].

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[11] Scherman, Nosson. Rashi The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated. (New York: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 1999), 22.
[12] Lehrman, Dr. S.M. Exodus Midrash Rabbah. (London: The Soncino Press, 1961), 55.
[13] Ibid.

Verse 3:5

Lindy asks: Why did God tell Moses not to draw near? Was it dangerous? Perhaps God used strong language to elicit some fear from Moses?

Shemot Rabbah II 6: *put off thy shoes:* Wherever the *Shechinah* appears one must not go about with shoes on; and so we find in the case of Joshua: *put off thy shoe (Josh 5:15)* Hence the priests ministered in the Temple, barefooted[14].

Rashi: Often translated as "*take off*", Rashi teaches this also means slip off and remove[15].

Choreographic Commentary: If the movement piece should depict Moses removing his shoes, based on the comment from Shemot Rabbah, the movement used for his shoe removal might include a ceremonial type moment. The dancer would slowly focus as he removes the shoes, as if preparing for a sacred religious rite. Based on Rashi's comment the actual type of movement used for shoe removal should be slow and graceful, depicting the "slip off" that Rashi mentions.

Verse 3:6

Schocken Bible: Translates this verse as, "He was afraid to gaze upon God[16]."

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[14] Lehrman, Dr. S.M. Exodus Midrash Rabbah. (London: The Soncino Press, 1961), 57.
[15] Scherman, Nosson. Rashi The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated. (New York: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 1999), 22.
[16] Everett, Fox. The Five Books of Moses. (New York: Random House, Inc., 1995), 271.

Artscroll: Translates this as "Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to gaze toward God[17]."

Plaut Revised Edition & Women's Torah Commentary: translate this verse as "Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God[18]."

Hertz translates this in a similar manner "And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God." He adds a footnote "*hid his face, or covered his face"(*Jerusalem Targum) in reverence. In the presence of the All-holy, an instant and irresistible feeling of human nothingness overpowers him. In sacred awe before the majesty of the Godhead, he hides his face. No mortal eye is worthy of beholding God. Even the angels are not pure in His sight; and, therefore, in the vision of Isaiah 6:2, they are spoken of as covering their faces and bodies[19]."

Choreographic Commentary: Most of the commentators paint Moses as one who actively hides his face. Physically I would depict this with some sort of gesture including hands covering the face, perhaps a hunched over body language to connote the fear as well.

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[17] Scherman, Nosson. The Chumash, The Torah: Haftoros and Five Megillos With a Commentary Anthologized From the Rabbinic Writings. (New York: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 1998), 303.
[18] Plaut, Gunther. The Torah: A Modern Commentary Revised Edition. (New York: URJ Press, 1999), 351.
[19] Hertz, Dr. J.H. The Pentateuch and Haftorahs: Hebrew Text English Translation and Commentary. (London: Soncino Press, 1962), 214.

Verse 3:14

JPS Torah Commentary: "The meaning of this Hebrew is uncertain; variously translated: *"I am that I am"; "I am who I am"; "I will be what I will be.*[20]*"* The Women's Torah commentary mentions that this is a *hapax legomenon,* and is not found anywhere else in the Torah. Its first and third words derive from the Hebrew root *hey, yud, hey* (to be.) Thus the divine name suggests pure existence or being, a presence that cannot be seen or touched but which is most certainly there. Left in transliteration here, the expression sometimes has been translated as "I am that I am", or "I will be what I will be." The present tense verb may be explaining God's permanent name[21].

[20] JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999), 117.
[21] Eskenazi, Tamara. The Torah A Women's Commentary. (New York: URJ Press, 2008), 315.

Translation of Jonah Ch.1 1:1-1:16

1:1 The word of Adonai came to Jonah, son of Amitai, saying

1:2 "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city, and cry against it because their wickedness has come up before me."

1:3 And Jonah got up to flee to Tarshish away from Adonai. He went down to Yafo. He found a ship going to Tarshish. He paid the fare and went down into the ship, to come with them toward Tarshish away from Adonai.

1:4 Now Adonai hurled a great wind into the sea, and there was a great storm upon the sea, and the ship thought of breaking up.

1:5 The sailors feared. They shouted each man to his God. They hurled items that were in the ship into the sea to make it lighter for them. Meanwhile Jonah went down to the flank of the ship and he lay down and slept soundly.

1:6 The captain of the crew approached him and said to him "How are you sleeping soundly? Arise, call to your God. Maybe God will think of us and we will not be destroyed."

1:7 Each one said to his friend, "Go and let us cast lots and we will know why this evil thing has come to us." They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.

1:8 They said to him, "please tell us for whom has this evil thing come upon us? What is your work and from where do you come? What is your land? And from which people are you?"

1:9 He said to them, "I am a Hebrew and I fear Adonai the God of the heavens, who made the sea and dry land."

1:10 The men feared a great fear. They said to him, "What is this you did?" Because the men knew he fled from before Adonai, because he had told them.

1:11 They said to him, "What shall we do with you, that the sea might be calm for us?" For the sea was growing ever more stormy.

1:12 He said to them "lift me and hurl me into the sea, so the sea shall be calm unto you. Because I know it is because of me this great storm is upon you."

1:13 The men rowed hard to return to dry land. And they couldn't because the sea was growing ever more stormy upon them.

1:14 They called to Adonai and said, please Adonai, please let us not perish because of this man's life. Don't put upon us innocent blood, because as for you, Adonai, what you desire you do.

1:15 So they lifted Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging.

1:16 The men feared a great fear of Adonai. They sacrificed a sacrifice to Adonai. And they vowed vows.

Commentaries on Jonah Ch.1:1-16

Note to the reader that in the first part of the commentary section, I have written my own choreographic commentary, while the second part of my commentaries are written for bibliodrama, and were inspired from reflection after the workshop.

Vs. 1:1

The word of the Lord came. **JPS Commentary** writes: "The nature of the book is implicit in its opening. The story, which depicts one incident in the life of a prophet, begins directly with the first stage of the plot-the Lord's revelation to His prophet. The formula "the word of the Lord came to...saying" is fairly common in prophetic narratives, but except for this case it always comes in the body of the story and not at its beginning[22]." We are immediately told of the connection between Jonah and God. This highlights their relationship and may hint that issues of fear and faith are going to be part of the story, although one might question whether faith is required if one is a chosen prophet.

Vs. 1:2

Nineveh, that great city. **JPS Commentary** writes: "Nineveh was one of the oldest and largest cities in Mesopotamia and is so described in Gen. 10:11-12 The expression "that great city" is repeated later in the story, once with regard to its territory (3:3) and once with regard to its population (4:11). Here, however, it is part of the definition of the prophet's mission.

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[22] Simon, Uriel. The JPS Bible Commentary: Jonah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 3.

Nineveh's size is mentioned, not to emphasize the difficulty of the task, but to highlight its importance. As is the size of the city, so is the magnitude of its wickedness (compare this with Lot's entreaty, in Gen. 19:20, that God not destroy the city of Zoar, with the argument that, because it is small, its sins are of no great weight)[23]." Might the size of the city make Jonah's job that much more challenging? Perhaps one of the reasons for Jonah's fear was a result of the magnitude of the task that he was supposed to undertake.

And cry out against it. **JPS Commentary** writes: "Although Targum Jonathan renders both this verse and 3:2 as "prophesy against it," we ought to distinguish the verb q-r- "call/cry," followed by the preposition *al* from the same verb followed by the proposition *el*... The former denotes the proclamation of impending destruction. The other occurrences of the latter form in Jonah all refer to prayer. (1:6; 14; 2:3; 3:8)" This comment makes a link between Jonah and the importance of prayer, hence we have an answer to the previous question of whether faith is needed by a prophet who was chosen by God for this mission. Since Jonah prays we may use this as evidence that faith does play a role for him[24].

Their wickedness has come up before Me. **JPS Commentary** writes: "The clamor of the accumulated iniquity has reached Heaven and come before the Lord, as in "Let all their wrongdoing come before you." (Lam. 1:22)- Take notice of the evil they are doing. The subject, "their wickedness," echoes the language used about the generation of the Flood: "The Lord saw how great was man's wickedness on earth" (Gen. 6:5). The predicate "has

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[23] Simon, Uriel. The JPS Bible Commentary: Jonah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 4.
[24] Ibid.

come up before me" recapitulates God's words about Sodom: "I will go down to see whether they have acted altogether according to the outcry that has reached me" (Gen. 18:21). But unlike those two destructions, which were not preceded by a public warning, here Jonah is dispatched to inform the condemned of their imminent doom. Note that the reference is to "Nineveh, that great city," and not to the kingdom of Assyria. "Their wickedness" accordingly refers to the malefactions of its citizens toward one another (cf. 3:8), not to the imperialist crimes for which the prophet Nahum reproves the king of Assyria: "All who hear the news about you clap their hands over you. For who has not suffered from your constant malice?[25]" (Nah. 3:19)

Choreographic Commentary: The language in this part of the verse gives an image of rising, as it says "has come up before me." Again one might experiment with this in a choreographic piece based on this section. It would be interesting to analyze this section of the Jonah text and note how many times "up" or words associated with an upward/rising movement are used. There is also a strong distinction made here between the "going down" into the belly of the ship and the upward movement of the people's wickedness that meets God. Also Jonah is told to "arise and go to Nineveh," again highlighting the use of upward motions. It would be appropriate to play with these different levels of up and down when creating choreography for this piece.

[25] Ibid.

Vs. 1:3

Jonah, however, arose to flee. **JPS Commentary** writes: "Jeremiah speaks of his inability to hold in the word of the Lord: "I thought, "I will not mention Him, no more will I speak in His name"-but (His word) was like a raging fire in my heart, shut up in my bones; I could not hold it in, I was helpless" (Jer. 20:9). It is probably the intensity of the divine injunction that keeps Jonah from ignoring it and continuing his routine. Although he knows that there is no respite from the word of the Lord, he hopes that there may be some escape from it. The rebellion embodied by his diametrically contrary action is expressed by the partial coincidence between the phrasing of the divine injunction, "Arise and go to Nineveh," and that of its anti-fulfillment, "Jonah...arose to flee to Tarshish." Here we have another echo of the Elijah stories (this time inverted). The earlier prophet's utter obedience is expressed by the full linguistic coincidence of "Arise and go to Zarephath" and "he arose and went to Zarephath" (1 Kings 17:9-10). Jonah, by contrast, does indeed arise and set out-but in the opposite direction[26].

Choreographic Commentary: This comment highlights again the contradiction between God's direction to Jonah to "arise" and the prophet's desire to flee and literally "go down" as a form of escape. JPS believes that Jonah does "arise," yes he gets up, but goes in the opposite direction. I would say not only does Jonah "arise" but he also tries desperately to bury himself downward, into the belly of the ship. He doesn't just go in the opposite direction.

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[26] Simon, Uriel. The JPS Bible Commentary: Jonah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 5.

To flee to Tarshish. **Rashi** writes: "i.e. to a sea named Tarshish which is outside the Holy Land. He said "I will flee to the sea, for the Shechinah does not rest outside the Holy Land. Said the Holy one blessed be He, to him, "By your life, I have messengers like you to send after you and fetch you from there." Rashi also identifies Tarshish as a proper noun for sea, perhaps the Mediterranean. Targum Jonathan renders it as a generic term for "sea." Onkelos (Ex. 28:2) renders *tarshish* as the color of the sea, meaning a stone, which is the color of the sea, aquamarine. In Sanskrit, *tarshicha* means sea[27].

JPS Commentary writes: "Josephus identified Tarshish with "Thrassos in Cilicia," evidently on the basis of the phonetic resemblance of the biblical and Greek names. It seems more plausible, however, to identify it with the Phoenician colony of Tartessus, which seems to have been located in Southern Spain, west of the Straits of Gibraltar, in a region rich in silver and other metals. M. Eilat believes that other biblical references to Tarshish support this identification. The prophecies about "crown wearing Tyre" contain repeated references to the dependence of its merchants and sailors on "ships of Tarshish" (Isa. 23:1-14 Ezek. 27:25) and accentuate the import of "silver, iron, tin, and lead" from Tarshish (Ezek. 27:12; cf. Jer. 10:9) In three different passages (Isa. 60:6-9; Ezek. 38:13; Ps. 72:10), the full geographical extent of the known world is delimited by Tarshish at one end and Sheba at the other. Given that the latter lies in the east (in the southern Arabian peninsula), at the end of the overland caravan route, the other must lie in the far west, at the end of the maritime trade rout. Indeed, this location of Tarshish is the uttermost west (and not north of the Land of

[27] Rosenberg, A.J. Twelve Prophets: Volume One A New English Translation. (New York: The Judaica Press Inc., 1986), 181.

Israel, as Josephus would have it) accords with the threefold mention of Tarshish in this verse: first to denote Jonah's destination, second when he finds a ship that is sailing there, and a third time when he boards the vessel. This indicates that Jonah was not merely seeking to leave the Land of Israel by sea and flee to whatever destination the first ship might carry him, but in face was trying to sail to the farthest possible point from his assigned destination[28].

Choreographic Commentary: It might be fun to play with different interpretations of *Tarshish* based on these comments, creating different scenes of Jonah fleeing to *Tarshish.* For example one scene created through drama or movement could be Jonah being enveloped by the sea itself, composed of dancers who are lying on the floor in aquamarine colors of clothing and cloth. Another might be Jonah doing strong outside movements that involve a desire to escape or flee in every direction while the dancers/actors in the center of the stage act out some scenes that make it clear they were in the "Holy Land." Jonah's movements were a desire to escape that place. Perhaps each time he moves to the outward circle he gets pulled back into the center.

to flee...from the presence of the Lord. **JPS Commentary** writes: "Abraham Ibn Ezra distinguishes between flight *mi-pnei,* which connotes a distancing motivated by fear, and flight *mi-lifnei*, the form used here, which implies a rupture of contact and turning of one's back, as in "Cain left the presence *mi-lifnei* of the Lord." (Gen. 4:16) However, his assertion

[28] Simon, Uriel. The JPS Bible Commentary: Jonah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 5.

that this is the only place in the Bible where flight is not followed by *mi-pnei* (i.e. from) is not quite accurate: for example "the Arameans fled from (*mi-lifnei)* Israel." (1Chron. 19:18) Still the distinction itself is valid and can be supported by the use of the root *b-r-h* to denote a rapid departure that is not necessarily associated with the flight inspired by terror[29].

Choreographic Commentary: This is a very interesting comment in lieu of the focus of this thesis on Fear and Faith. We learn here of two different kinds of fleeing: one which happens out of extreme terror and fear, and the other a fleeing which is a break in contact, or a desire to physically distance oneself. I have always read fear in this text since Jonah to me seems afraid to hear his calling. This comment also helps connect with the text when Moses sees the Burning Bush. We read that he turns aside. It would be interesting to explore each of these moments with Jonah and Moses, in two different ways. First by creating two scenes for Moses. One where he sees the burning bush and turns aside due to fear; and a second where Moses sees the Burning Bush and turns aside as a break in contact or even awe. Then do the same sort of dual depiction with Jonah in his fleeing from the presence of the Lord. One scene would depict this out of fear and terror, the second out of a break in contact or even awe.

He paid the fare. **JPS Commentary** writes: "The feminine possessive attached to the word "fare" supports the homily of R. Johanan, "He paid the fare of the entire ship" (B. Nedarim 38a); In other words, he sought to expedite the ship's departure by ensuring that it would not

[29] Simon, Uriel. The JPS Bible Commentary: Jonah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 6.

have to wait for additional passengers. More plausible thematically, however is Abraham Ibn Ezra's demurral: "Not its entire fare, but only what he had to pay for his own share." Modern commentators continue to disagree on this point, but it is in any case clear that mention of this unimportant detail is intended to emphasize that to realize his escape Jonah was willing not only to leave his home but even to pay for his journey. This fare must have been quite high, given the duration of a coastal journey from one end of the Mediterranean to the other. According to the Mishnah (Baba Batra 3,2), in Roman times the journey to Spain could take a full year, evidently because of the need to restock provisions frequently at ports along the way, wait for favorable winds, and trade the cargo[30].

Rashi writes: "He paid its hire in advance; although it is not customary for those embarking upon the sea to pay the hire of the ship until they leave, he paid in advance[31].

Choreographic Commentary: It seems from each of these comments that Jonah was certainly anxious to get away quickly. Perhaps this might be translated in physical movement through quick stacatto gestures that again read as a desire to flee.

And went down into it. **JPS Commentary** writes: "This is the second descent in this verse: first he "went down" to Joppa, on the coast, and now he goes down into the ship. (c.f. Isa. 42:10) ("You who sail go down to the sea") Later there is a third descent, into the hold of the

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[30] Simon, Uriel. The JPS Bible Commentary: Jonah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 6.

[31] Rosenberg, A.J. Twelve Prophets: Volume One A New English Translation. (New York: The Judaica Press Inc., 1986), 181.

vessel (v. 5) Each of these descents makes perfect sense thematically, but not all are absolutely necessary for the story. We may accordingly see them as intentional repetition meant to accentuate the prophet's *vertical* flight from his God, who dwells on high. Later, when he is hurled into the sea, the extent of this vertical flight increases as a direct consequence of the failure of his *horizontal* flight westward. Texts in Amos 9:2-3, and Ps. 139: 8-9 refer to desperate flights in all directions[32].

Choreographic Commentary: This text again highlights the use of ascent and descent, which should certainly be played with when creating a physical form of expression from this text. I am unclear what the commentary means in reference to a "vertical flight from his God." If traditionally God is described as on high, then Jonah's fleeing would not only be an escape from this calling but also an escape from God. This seems clear from other commentaries and from the text itself. Again, for a movement exploration of this text we might play with levels, having dancers create movements that accentuate high and low, and then have some dancers who only move vertically. This would be an interesting exercise as part of the workshop exploring this text.

Away from the presence of the Lord. **JPS Commentary** writes: "This definition of the objective of Jonah's flight was already presented at the start of the verse. Evidently the narrator repeats it at the end of the verse in order to highlight the magnitude of Jonah's audacity and spur readers to wonder: Will the Lord frustrate Jonah's flight? Or will he ignore

[32] Ibid.

it and allow the prophet to slough off the task to which he is so vigorously opposed? Will the anguished protest be accepted and the mission itself cancelled[33]?

Vs. 1:4

Cast a mighty wind. **Rashi** writes: "It was as though He cast it from the dry land to the sea. They were, therefore, unable to return to the shore[34]. –(Ibn Ezra)

Cast a wind. **JPS** writes: "This is the only occurrence in Scripture of the expression "cast a wind." Evidently the narrator employed a nonstandard idiom in order to unify the entire sequence of events by means of a key word: the casting of the wind onto the sea whipped up the storm; the casting of the cargo into the sea was in vain (v.5) Jonah understood that only his being cast into the sea could calm it, because then the divine pursuit would attain its objective (v.12), and that is precisely what came to pass[35]. (v.15)

Choreographic Commentary: It might be interesting to play with the use of the phrase "cast a wind" through movement around the idea of "casting." The dancers might do an exercise using movement that reflects casting. We might try to play with using a pliable fabric in order to interpret the verse. It also might be interesting to dance with a large industrial fan in the space and play with movements that react to the strong wind.

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[33] Simon, Uriel. The JPS Bible Commentary Jonah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 7.
[34] Rosenberg, A.J. Twelve Prophets: Volume One A New English Translation. (New York: The Judaica Press Inc., 1986), 182.
[35] Simon, Uriel. The JPS Bible Commentary Jonah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 8.

And there was a mighty tempest in the sea. **Rashi:** "They had embarked one day's journey from shore, and a tempest rose upon them in the sea on their right and on their left. All around them, the sea was calm, and all other boats were passing by without difficulty, but the boat upon which Jonah had booked passage threatened to be broken[36]. (Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, Tanhuma)

Choreographic Commentary: If I were to stage this scene through dance I might attempt to show other boats as stable and steady, having a normal rocking motion, while the ship that Jonah was on would be rocking wildly.

Of breaking up. **JPS Commentary** writes: "Even in the open sea a ship can break up as the result of a strong wind (see Ezek. 27:26 and Ps. 48:8) As in all other verses that describe divine intervention in the course of events, this intervention is highlighted by an alliterative play on words: *hishevah le-hishaver.* This is a wordplay[37].

Threatened to be broken. **Rashi:** "it appears as though it would be broken. Literally the ship is thought to be broken; i.e. the occupants of the ship expected it to be broken. Or maybe the ship herself thought she would break[38].

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[36] Rosenberg, A.J. Twelve Prophets: Volume One A New English Translation. (New York: The Judaica Press Inc., 1986), 182.
[37] Simon, Uriel. The JPS Bible Commentary: Jonah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 8.
[38] Rosenberg, A.J. Twelve Prophets: Volume One A New English Translation. (New York: The Judaica Press Inc., 1986), 182.

Vs.1:5

Each to his own god. **JPS Commentary:** "The diverse origins of merchant-vessel crews are also attested to by Ezekiel[39]." (27:8-9)

Each one to his god. **Rashi:** "Each of the seventy nations of the heathens were there. Each one had his graven image in his hand… and they said, "Let us call out, each one to his god, and it shall be, that the god who answers and saves us is the true God," and they called out, each one to his god, but they did not avail[40]. (Pirke d'Rabbi Eliezer)

Cargo. **JPS Commentary:** "This is how we should understand the Hebrew word *kelim,* which generally means "tools," "implements" or "vessels"; see for example Exodus 22:6, where it means "portable property." When their prayers are not answered, the sailors endeavor to save their lives by giving up their property (lightening its burden raises a ship's waterline, a procedure believed to be helpful in this situation)[41].

Vs. 1:6

But Jonah, meanwhile, went down. **JPS Commentary:** "The word order in Hebrew, subject before a verb in the *pa'al* (perfect) expresses either the pluperfect-an action that preceded another one that has just been related, or an action simultaneous with and contrasted to the one that has just been recounted. Because Jonah's action is contrasted with that of the sailors,

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[39] Simon, Uriel. The JPS Bible Commentary: Jonah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 8.
[40] Rosenberg, A.J. Twelve Prophets: Volume One A New English Translation. (New York: The Judaica Press Inc., 1986), 182.
[41] Simon, Uriel. The JPS Bible Commentary: Jonah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 8.

it seems likely that he went down into the hold and fell asleep at the very same time as the sailors were struggling, through prayer and action, to save the ship. Jonah's willful refusal to consider the possible religious significance of the tempest is another expression of his flight from the Lord; his ability to sleep at such an hour is the first manifestation of his inclination to prefer death over life. In this yearning to escape from the prophetic function into the bosom of death, via sleep, he again resembles Elijah (1Kings 19:4-5)[42].

Choreographic Commentary: It seems there is a lot of up and down in this text. God is telling Jonah to arise and Jonah is continually going down, down into the ship, down to Tarshish. He is doing the opposite motion from what God is telling him to do. If this were to be staged I would play with levels in creating a piece of choreography.

Hold. **JPS Commentary:** "The Hebrew *yarketei* is the construct form of the *yarkatayim* (as in "And for the *rear* of the Tabernacle...for the corners of the Tabernacle at the *rear"*(Exod. 26:22-23) which is itself the dual of *yerekhah* (as in "his *flank* shall rest on Sidon" (Gen. 49:13). The basic meaning of the term is "the farthest end." For example "Now David and his men were sitting in the *back* of the cave." (1 Sam. 24:4)[43].

To the ship's hold. **Rashi:** "i.e. one of the ship's holds." Jonah, knowing that he had sinned before God, knew that He would not accept his prayer. He therefore, went down into the hold and fell asleep. Rabenu Bechaye in *Kad Haemach* explains that, on the contrary, Jonah accepted God's judgment, and was confident that He would save him. He, therefore, went

[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid

down into the hold and fell asleep. *Eliezer of Beaugency* states that he fell asleep out of exhaustion and frustration[44].

The vessel. **JPS Commentary:** "The Hebrew *sefinah* (borrowed from the Akkadian *sapinatu,* by the way of Aramaic, occurs only here in Scripture but it is found in Mishnaic Hebrew. Until now (vv. 4 and 5) the narrator has spoken of a "ship" (Heb. *oniyah);* here he uses instead a word derived from the root s-p-n, whose fundamental meaning is "cover" (as in "it was paneled above with cedar" (1Kings 7:3), to indicate that the ship had a full deck and a covered hold[45].

What is the matter with you, sleeper? **Rashi:** "What is the matter with you to be sound asleep? Now is no time to sleep. We are standing between life and death, and you sleep? (Pirke d'Rabbi Eliezer ch.10)[46].

Bibliodrama Commentary: This previous comment was very fruitful to explore in our bibliodrama. Many people felt that Jonah was depressed and felt a deep sense of remorse about what was happening. His only way to deal with the situation was to not deal and therefore hide himself in sleep. This was a wonderful insight that the bibliodrama workshop brought to my attention.

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[44] Rosenberg, A.J. Twelve Prophets: Volume One A New English Translation. (New York: The Judaica Press Inc., 1986), 182.
[45]Simon, Uriel. The JPS Bible Commentary: Jonah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 8.
[46] Rosenberg, A.J. Twelve Prophets: Volume One A New English Translation. (New York: The Judaica Press Inc., 1986), 183.

How can you. **JPS Commentary:** "In rhetorical questions, the Hebrew idiom *ma lekha* expresses vigorous reproof (c.f. "what then *is the good* of your going to Egypt?" (Jer. 2:18); *How dare you* crush my people?" (Isa. 3:15) "to the wicked, God said: "Who are you to recite my laws?[47]" (Ps. 50:16)

Arise and cry to your god. **JPS Commentary:** "He who refuses to rebuke Nineveh is himself rebuked. But the prophet who refuses to cry against Nineveh at the Lord's behest cannot cry to Him in prayer (as Elijah does on behalf of the widow's son, 1Kings 17:20-21) It is quite natural then, that Jonah does not comply with the captain's request and even closes his ears against this echo of the divine injunction that is clearly sounded from "Arise and go to Nineveh and cry against it" (vs.2)[48]."

Perhaps. **JPS:** "The captain expresses the cautious hope that a deity who has not yet been approached may help, while evincing comprehension of the nature of true prayer, which never presumes to impose itself magically on God (cf. "You have been guilty of a great sin. Yet I will now go up to the Lord; *perhaps* I may win forgiveness for your sin[49]" (Exod. 32:30); as well as Amos 5:15 and Lam. 3:29)

Bibliodrama Commentary: This comment made me wonder whether this would be something interesting to explore in a bibliodramatic exercise. I would like to question the captain about his thought process in making this statement and what his belief of prayer is.

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[47] Simon, Uriel. The JPS Bible Commentary: Jonah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 9.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.

While I attempted to explore the question of what the sailors and the captain believe in the bibliodrama workshop, I did not get to explore it at this level. This might be a really interesting opening for a conversation with the captain about his belief.

Vs. 1:7

The men said to one another. **JPS:** "The narrator does not tell us how Jonah dodged the captain's urgent request-by stubborn silence or an evasive explanation. This lacuna protracts Jonah's silence as far as the narrative is concerned. Readers are left to conclude from the sailor's consultations that Jonah neither prayed to his God nor told them why he could not do so[50]."

Bibliodrama Commentary: Again this would be a very interesting moment to explore using bibliodrama. If I had completed this section of the commentary before the workshop, I would have used this as another opening to understand Jonah's psyche a little more in depth.

Lots. **JPS Commentary:** "Here in the plural, but in the singular (the lot fell) at the end of the verse. The change seems to be not a stylistic variation but a distinction between the processes, which is phrased in the plural, and its result, phrased in the singular. We may assume that successive rounds of lots were cast, in a procedure similar to the multistage process used to discover the identity of the guilty party who had sequestered some of the proscribed property after the conquest of Jericho (Josh. 7:14-18) and of the person who had violated Saul's oath before the battle of Michmas (1Sam. 14:40-42). Lots were also used to

[50] Ibid.

help resolve disputes: "The lot puts an end to strife and separates those locked in dispute" (Prov. 18:18). No one challenged the validity of the method, because it was viewed as divinely guided: "Lots are cast into the lap; the decision depends on the Lord" (Prov. 16:33). The pebbles were generally thrown into a concealed spot, like the folds of one's cloak or a vessel, and then withdrawn (Num. 33:54) or lifted out (Lev. 16:9)[51]."

Bibliodrama Commentary: The question of lots was brought up in our bibliodrama exercise. One of the participants chose to voice lots as one of the characters. It added a fascinating piece to the bibliodrama to include lots and also allow fear to have a voice. This commentary would be interesting to use if developing lots as a character in some sort of dramatization of the text.

That we may know. **JPS Commentary:** "*In order that* we may know (the Hebrew *vav* of purpose). Unlike the prophet, who wishes to shut his eyes, the sailors want to know. They understand that all of their efforts have failed because they do not know the reason for the storm. Now they conduct a systematic inquiry based on the ethico-religious assumption that the ship is laboring under a burden of sin and only the discovery and purging of the guilt can prevent its destruction (c.f. Josh. 7:11-13 and 1Sam. 14:37-39)[52].

They cast lots. **JPS Commentary:** "There are three references to casting lots in the verse: once each for the planning, the execution, and the outcome. The slackening of the narrative

[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.

pace involves readers in the tension felt by the characters themselves: what will the lottery indicate[53]?

Because of whom. **Rashi:** "Hebrew *bshelmi,* because of the deeds of which one of us." Rabbenu Bechaye explains that Jonah went down into the hold and slept, confident that God would save them, as the Psalmist states: (34:20) "Many evils befall the righteous, but the Lord saves him from all of them." The captain approached him and spoke to him with great wisdom, "what is the matter with you, sleeper?" Is it time for you to sleep, when all of us are in dire peril, you included? If you rely upon your righteousness to be saved, you are obligated to supplicate and pray. "Arise, call out to your God." The captain let him know that, if someone suffers in this world or is in distress, he can extricate himself from there with prayer, as the Psalmist stated (34:18) "They cry out and the Lord hearkens, and from all their troubles, He saves them." The captain also reminds Jonah that God hearkens to anyone who is wronged by his fellowman, as in Exodus 22:26: "And it shall come to pass, if he cry out to me, that I will hearken for I am gracious." Then they decided to cast lots, suspecting that perhaps Jonah, who did not pray, was at fault for their predicament; and indeed, the lot fell on Jonah[54]."

Because of whom has this evil come upon us. **JPS:** "This clause is phrased identically to the question in verse 7, except that the particle *she-* has been supplanted by the relative pronoun *asher.* Because the outcome of the lottery has already fully answered the question, it is

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[53] Ibid.
[54] Rosenberg, A.J. Twelve Prophets: Volume One A New English Translation. (New York: The Judaica Press Inc., 1986), 183.

implausible that the sailors repeated it to Jonah. For this reason, David Kimhi was forced to explain the clause, not as a question, but as an indictment-"you are the one on whose account this distress has come upon us!" This is also the preference of Ehrlich, who suggests here that *mi* is not an interrogative but a normative pronoun. (as in "he who has sinned against me" (Exod. 32:33), so that *le-mi* is equivalent to a possessive: "tell us, (you) on *whose* account this evil has come upon us, what is your business?" Many, however, doubt the reliability of the Masoretic text, noting that these words are not found in two of the three major ancient manuscripts of the Septuagint (Vatican and Sinai) and from two medieval Hebrew manuscripts (de Rossi, vol.3, p.194). They conjecture that the clause is a marginal note originally written adjacent to the previous verse to gloss the strange word *be-shellemi.* But one cannot be sure that the agreement between the Septuagint and Hebrew manuscripts constitutes decisive proof of an ancient and authentic text, since it is possible that the omission is the result of an independent lapse by both the Greek and Hebrew copyists, whose eyes accidentally jumped from the first to the second *lanu*[55]."

Because of whom. **Rashi:** "Against whom did you sin, that you have caused this misfortune to fall upon us? If it concerns monetary injustice, it is possible to return the sum of money out of which you cheated him. If it involves personal insult, it is possible to placate him by offering him money[56]."

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[55] Simon, Uriel. The JPS Bible Commentary: Jonah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 11.
[56] Rosenberg, A.J. Twelve Prophets: Volume One A New English Translation. (New York: The Judaica Press Inc., 1986), 183.

Bibliodrama Commentary: Again these commentaries would be very useful to use in a second bibliodrama exercise to see how they might change the answers of Jonah and the sailors in a questioning sequence. It would be interesting if this would change the answers the sailors might have as to whether they believed that Jonah was to blame or not. Again I would only use commentary after an initial bibliodrama exercise occurred, so that the first reading allowed for more intuitive responses. Once commentary is included it very clearly can influence how someone will read the text.

Vs.1:8

What is your work? **Rashi:** "Perhaps you were negligent in your work. For what sin were you caught by the lot?[57]"

What is your work? **Redak:** "What is your work? Perhaps it is an occupation of deceit and injustice, for which you are guilty[58]."

What is your work? **Rabbenu Bechaye:** "Perhaps you are a sorcerer or a soothsayer, and you have brought this upon us through witchcraft[59]."

What is your work? **Mezudat David:** "Perhaps your work is an occupation of deceit and cheating, and you have cheated many people, so many that you do not know who they are, and to whom to return the money[60]."

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[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.

What is your business? **JPS Commentary:** "The sailors do not rashly act against the passenger who first made himself suspicious by refusing to pray and has now been incriminated by the lottery. In order for their response to appease the deity who has sent the storm, they must know who Jonah's God is and how he transgressed against Him. They shower him with basic questions about his identity, some of them overlapping (for multiple voices in collective speech, see Judg. 18:3, 9-10; 1Sam. 9:12-13), aimed at learning about his occupation, origins, and ethnic affiliation.

Bibliodrama Commentary: Again all of this commentary would be very useful and helpful in staging a bibliodramatic conversation between Jonah, the sailors and the captain. It would be very interesting to see how sailors might change their view of Jonah after reading some of these comments.

And whence do you come. **Rashi:** "Perhaps a decree has been issued upon the people of that place even if you are not there."

And whence do you come. **Redak:** "Perhaps you are fleeing because of a crime you have committed there."

And whence do you come. **Bechaye:** "Perhaps you are an emissary of sorcerers."

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[60] Ibid.

And whence do you come. **Mezudat David:** "Perhaps you come from a distant place, too far to go to return the amount you cheated them of[61]."

What is your land. **Redak:** "Perhaps the people of your land are wicked[62]."

What is your land. **Bechaye:** "Perhaps you come from a land that is hateful to God[63]."

What is your land. **Mezudat David:** "Perhaps you violated the customs of your land which constitutes a sin against the entire citizenry, and it is impossible to placate all of them[64]."

And from what people are you? **Rashi:** "Perhaps your people have sinned[65]."

And from what people are you? **Redak:** "Perhaps your people are hated by God[66]."

And from what people are you? **Mezudat David:** "Perhaps you violated the law of your God, and money is of no avail[67]."

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[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.

Vs. 1:9

And he said to them, "I am a Hebrew". **Redak:** "This answers their last two questions, "what is your land, and from what people are you[68]?"

I am a Hebrew. **JPS:** "Jonah begins with their last question, ignores the question "What is your business?" (perhaps because he was uneasy about describing himself as a prophet of the Lord), and provides a fuller than expected answer to the last two questions. The designation "Hebrew" is appropriate to his situation; it is used chiefly in contact with members of other nations. The Septuagint reading, "a servant of the Lord" instead of "a Hebrew," was evidently caused by the similarity in shape of the letters *resh* and *dalet,* plus understanding the letter *yud* as an abbreviation for the Divine name (thus *eVeDY* instead of *iVRY).* The translators may have also been influenced by the reference to Jonah as "the servant" of the Lord God of Israel in 2 Kings 14:25. The Greek text is implausible for two reasons, however: not only does it leave the question about Jonah's national affiliation unanswered, it seems rather far-fetched that a runaway servant would identify himself with reference to his master[69]."

Bibliodrama Commentary: Perhaps Jonah was trying to hide something by only answering the last question. This is a decision an actor playing Jonah might choose to make while dramatizing the character. It might be interesting to ask a person playing Jonah whether he

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[68] Ibid.
[69] Simon, Uriel. The JPS Bible Commentary Jonah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 11.

was uncomfortable with the title of Prophet of the Lord, and to follow it up with a question of explanation.

And I fear the Lord God of heaven. **Redak:** "Therefore, you should know that I am not engaged in any dishonest occupation, for I fear God and do not wrong anyone[70]."

I fear the Lord God of heaven. **JPS:** "More literally, "It is the Lord, the God of Heaven, that I fear." Had Jonah sought to obscure his responsibility for the tempest, he would have provided no more than bare factual responses concerning his national and religious affiliation and would not have focused attention on the attributes of his God by the unusual word order, which puts the object before the subject and verb. The elaboration he appends to the name of his God is mean to eliminate all doubt concerning that deity's absolute dominion over the entire universe. The epithet "the God of heavens" is found almost exclusively in books written during the Persian period (outside of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and 2 Chronicles, it appears on in Gen. 24:3 and 7 and in Ps. 136: 26). Like "a Hebrew," it is used mainly in contexts of interaction with gentiles, whether addressed to or spoken by them[71].

Bibliodrama Commentary: These comments give some insight into what the "fear of the Lord" means. It would be an interesting question to explore when discussing fear and faith and the surrounding issues for these arts workshops. For example, ask the participants when

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[70] Rosenberg, A.J. Twelve Prophets: Volume One A New English Translation. (New York: The Judaica Press Inc., 1986), 184.

[71] Simon, Uriel. The JPS Bible Commentary Jonah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 12.

you hear the phrase "fear of God," what does that mean to you? What do you picture when you hear this phrase? Is this something that you can relate to today?

I fear. **JPS Commentary:** "This is not an empty declaration that Jonah worships the Lord ("fear" or "awe" in the conventional meaning of fealty and obedience, as in "your servant *revered* the Lord," (2Kings 4:1). It is rather implicit acknowledgement of his personal responsibility for their predicament because he falls under the direct jurisdiction of the Lord (cf. "your children might prevent our children from *worshiping* the Lord" (Josh. 22:25), which refers to religious affiliation only) and punitive action-the storm-is clearly directed against him. The difference between *'anokhi* in the first clause and *'ani* in the second is merely a matter of stylistic variation; both mean simply "I" (Ben David)[72].

Bibliodrama Commentary: Again it would be interesting in a text study portion of the workshop to explore this idea. It would be fascinating to ask students to compare these two different uses of fear and ask them to tell us what they see as the difference between these two variations of the word. I would then invite them to read the commentaries and look back at the text and see how this affected the way they see the text. Then we might open up a conversation about the different kinds of fear that exist.

Vs. 1:10

The men feared greatly. **JPS Commentary:** "Literally "the men feared a great fear": The intensification of their emotion expressed by the internal accusative helps convey that fact

[72] Ibid.

that their initial fear of the storm (v.5) was magnified when they learned that they were in the power of a mighty Deity from whom there is no escape (cf. "If a man enters a hiding place, do I not see him?-says the Lord. For I fill both heaven and earth-declares the Lord" (Jer. 23:24); also Amos 9:2-4). The juxtaposition of the gentiles' "great fear" to Jonah's "I fear" is not meant to cast the fugitive prophet's fear of heaven in a ridiculous light (as many hold), but to define by contrast their respective positions at this moment: he recognizes the sovereignty of the Lord but is not afraid to disobey Him; whereas they fear His mighty hand but do not recognize His sovereignty[73]."

Bibliodrama Commentary: Here I might ask the participants to explain how they thought Jonah's fears and the sailors' fears might be different. What do they think each of them is afraid of? What might their fears have in common?

What is this that you have done. **Rashi:** "Why have you done this, to flee from before such a Ruler[74]?"

What is this that you have done. **Kara:** "How could you escape Him in the sea? It is written in your Bible: (Amos 9:3) "And if they hide from before my eyes in the land of the sea, from there I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them[75]."

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[73] Ibid.
[74] Rosenberg, A.J. Twelve Prophets: Volume One A New English Translation. (New York: The Judaica Press Inc., 1986), 185.
[75] Ibid.

What have you done! **JPS Commentary:** "Literally "What (is) this (that) you have done?!" Once again strong reproof overtakes the prophet who himself refuses to utter a reproof. The deictic *zot* in rebukes (e.g., Gen. 12:18 and 29:25; Judg. 2:2). The fact that the sailors say merely "have you done"-and not "have you done to us" (which is the usual practice of rebukers: e.g., Gen. 26:10; Exod. 14:11; Judg. 15:11)-adds another admirable trait to their collective image: they are not protesting the catastrophe he has brought upon them, but expressing their shock at the very act of running away from a God who cannot be escaped[76]!

For the men knew. **JPS Commentary:** "This explanatory note makes plain that their question is a rhetorical exclamation rather than a request for information. They do not expect an answer, because their desire to know (v.7) what action "caused" the storm has already been satisfied. The prolixity of the second half of the verse (an unusual string of three fleeing...*for* so he had told them") and the divergence from chronological order (the men's fear placed ahead of its cause) are unexpected. Some conjecture that "he had told them" is a marginal gloss that has found its way into the main text. This explanation assumes that Jonah had already made the sailors aware that he is fleeing from the Lord; since, however, this sequence is not certain-Jonah could be pursued on account of any transgression against God or man-the note was added to make plain that he had told them more than is reported to us. If, on the other hand, the clause is indeed authentic, it is difficult to explain why the narrator adopted such indirection instead of adding "and I am running away from Him" to Jonah's first speech to the sailors. With regard to the structure of this scene, the flashback satisfies the needs of the concentric patterns by opposing the "discovery of the culprit", which leads to

[76] Simon, Uriel. The JPS Bible Commentary: Jonah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 12.

"questions to determine the nature of his crime", with a "reproving question" that is explained by the flashback: "the crime is already known to them" in the second part (flashbacks of this sort can also be found in Est. 3:4 and Neh. 8:9). It may also be that the narrator prefers to focus on the sailors' consciousness rather than report Jonah's actual speech, so that their understanding of the gravity of the situation-"for the men knew"-can precede Jonah's own (incomplete) comprehension-"for I know[77]""

Vs. 1:11

What shall we do with you. **Ibn Ezra:** "i.e. advise us what to do with you so that the sea will calm down[78]."

What shall we do to you. **JPS Commentary:** "With the storm raging ever more fiercely, the sailors realize that they must do something to Jonah that will rescue them from the consequences of his action (v. 10), that is, from the death by drowning that is about to engulf both him and them at the hands of his God who is pursuing him. The fact that they consult with him indicates that they recoil from any rash or hasty action. Jonah, for his part, can see their question as a last chance to give up his flight[79]."

Bibliodrama Commentary: These comments add interesting insight into the sailors' character. I might be curious to ask the sailors how they felt about throwing Jonah overboard,

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[77] Ibid.
[78] Rosenberg, A.J. Twelve Prophets: Volume One A New English Translation. (New York: The Judaica Press Inc., 1986), 185.
[79] Simon, Uriel. The JPS Bible Commentary Jonah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 12.

and if they considered other options. These comments give us insight into how the sailors might be feeling about what Jonah is asking them to do.

For the sea is becoming stormier. **Redak:** "We have no hope that the sea will calm down[80]."

Vs. 1:12

Lift me and cast me into the sea. **JPS Commentary:** "Jonah submits to his Pursuer but persists in his rebellion. He chooses death-passive suicide (cf. Judg.9:54 and 16:30; 1 Sam. 31:4)-to abandoning his flight and prophesying against Nineveh. Being cast into the depths of the sea will be the fourth and evidently final descent in the course of his vertical flight[81]."

So that the sea may subside. **Mezudat David:** "If you cast me into the sea, I am certain that the sea will subside, for I know that this storm has come upon you because of me[82].

Because of me. **Redak:** "Because of my sin[83]."

On my account. **JPS Commentary:** "On account of my action[84]. (On the form of the Hebrew compound *be-shelli.*)

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[80] Rosenberg, A.J. Twelve Prophets: Volume One A New English Translation. (New York: The Judaica Press Inc., 1986), 185.
[81] Simon, Uriel. The JPS Bible Commentary: Jonah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 12.
[82] Rosenberg, A.J. Twelve Prophets: Volume One A New English Translation. (New York: The Judaica Press Inc., 1986), 185.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Simon, Uriel. The JPS Bible Commentary: Jonah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 14.

Vs. 1:13

And the men rowed vigorously. **Rashi:** "Hebrew *vayichteru*, they toiled and busied themselves like one who digs a tunnel[85].

The men rowed hard. **JPS Commentary:** "The other occurrences of the root *h-t-r* in the Bible refer to diffing in the ground ("If they *burrow down* to Sheol" (Amos 9:2) or piercing through walls ("if the thief is seized while tunneling (Exod. 22:1); "so I *broke through* the wall (Ezek. 8:8). Here it is perhaps being used metaphorically for the splitting of the water by the action of the oars. The sailors ignore Jonah's appalling advice (although its logic is undeniable) and redouble their attempts to escape by applying the techniques of their craft. But these are foredoomed to failure, since "the dry land" is no less under the dominion of Jonah's God than in the sea (v.9). Their utter failure and the augmented force of the storm compel them to return to their earlier conclusion that their identification with the fugitive makes them accomplices in his flight and subject to his punishment. Seeing that their pangs of conscience about throwing Jonah overboard are appreciated to their merit, they realize that there is no escaping the duty imposed on them to execute the divine sentence[86].

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[85] Rosenberg, A.J. Twelve Prophets: Volume One A New English Translation. (New York: The Judaica Press Inc., 1986), 185.
[86] Simon, Uriel. The JPS Bible Commentary: Jonah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 14.

Bibliodrama Commentary: These comments could lead to a very different interpretation of the sailors' reasoning behind their actions at this point in the story. This information would be interesting to use in a staged bibliodrama with two different sets of sailors, showing two sets of unique motivations.

To return. **Eliezer of Beaugency:** "i.e. to return Jonah to dry land so that he would no longer go with them and no longer flee from God. They thought that God would be placated thereby[87].

To return. **Redak:** "*Ibn Ezra* renders: And the men had rowed vigorously. i.e. they had already attempted to row to shore, but were unsuccessful[88]. (apparently *Ibn Ezra* believes that after Jonah offered to be cast into the sea, they would no longer attempt to row to shore.)

Vs. 1: 14

Then they called out to the Lord. **JPS Commentary:** "The contrast between the idolatrous sailors and the prophet of the Lord reaches its zenith: not only do they call upon the Lord his God when he himself refuses to pray, but in utter contrast to his stubborn rejection of his mission, they accept the burden of being the instruments of God's will. They pray that, since they are bowing to His purpose ("For You, O Lord, by Your will, have brought this about") and subordinating their fear of sin to the performance of His mission ("Do not hold us guilty

[87] Rosenberg, A.J. Twelve Prophets: Volume One A New English Translation. (New York: The Judaica Press Inc., 1986), 185.
[88] Ibid.

of killing an innocent person"), their taking the life of this man not be accounted as a criminal deed ("do not let us perish on account of this man's life")[89].

Bibliodrama Commentary: It might be interesting to ask the sailors during a bibliodrama what they were saying to God when they called out and what they were thinking.

Vs. 1:15

And they cast him into the sea. **Pirke d'Rabbi Eliezer:** "They first submerged his feet into the sea, and the sea became calm, but when they drew him up and brought him back to the ship, the storm commenced again. When they saw that, they cast his whole body into the sea, and the sea calmed down completely[90].

They lifted Jonah and cast him into the sea. **JPS Commentary:** "Echoing Jonah's instruction to them, "Lift me and cast me" (v.12). For the purpose of the plot, however, "they cast him into the sea" would have sufficed. The Midrash expands the superfluous words into an entire scene that portrays the sailors' reluctance to shed innocent blood by understanding "lifting" as meaning "out of the sea": "R. Shimon said: They cast him in as far as his ankles and the sea stopped raging. They lifted him back to them and the sea was wracked by storm. They cast him in as far as his neck (and the sea stopped raging. Again they lifted him back to them

[89] Simon, Uriel. The JPS Bible Commentary: Jonah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 14.

[90] Rosenberg, A.J. Twelve Prophets: Volume One A New English Translation. (New York: The Judaica Press Inc., 1986), 186.

and the sea was wracked by storm against them. They cast him in all the way and at once the sea stopped raging)" Yalkut Shimoni 2,550, completed from *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* 10)[91].

Bibliodrama Commentary: Here it would prove interesting to ask the sailors how they felt about this command that Jonah was presenting. It would be interesting to also ask Jonah how he felt about what he was asking them to do. What did Jonah want the sailors to do with him?

Vs. 1:16

And the men feared the Lord exceedingly. **Kara:** "And became proselytized for his sake[92]."

And the men feared the Lord exceedingly. **Abarbanel & Mezudath David:** "They witnessed God's providence and His omnipotence and feared Him[93]."

The men feared. **JPS Commentary:** "As soon as the sailors compiled with the dreadful will of Jonah's God and executed their mission under compulsion, the sea stopped raging, exactly as Jonah had predicted. Just as the towering waves had filled their hearts with "a great fear" (v.10), now the uncanny calm on the sea opened their hearts to "a great fear of the Lord[94]."

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[91] Simon, Uriel. The JPS Bible Commentary: Jonah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 14.
[92] Rosenberg, A.J. Twelve Prophets: Volume One A New English Translation. (New York: The Judaica Press Inc., 1986), 186.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Simon, Uriel. The JPS Bible Commentary: Jonah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 15.

And they made sacrifices. **Ibn Ezra:** "i.e. after they disembarked[95]."

And they made sacrifices. **Redak from Jonathan:** "They vowed to bring sacrifices[96]."

A sacrifice...vows. **JPS Commentary:** "Their sacrifice is to be understood not as a collective but as a genuine singular: to express their spontaneous thanks they sacrifice to the Lord, right there on the deck of the ship, one of the animals they had taken aboard for food. Their vows, however, are in the plural: to express their continuing gratitude and perhaps also to make it widely known, each of them vows to bring a sacrifice when he reaches his destination. Kaufmann notes that this does not mean that they abandoned their pagan creeds and adopted the faith of Israel; it is simply a magnification of the glory of the Lord among the nations, such as we find in the stories of Elijah (1 Kings 17:24) and Elisha (2 Kings 5:15-18; 6:12, 23; 8:7-15)[97].

And they made vows. **Rashi:** "that they would proselytize[98]."

And they made vows. **Redak:** "according to his explanation of the preceding clause, explains that they made other vows, such as to give charity to the poor[99]."

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[95] Rosenberg, A.J. Twelve Prophets: Volume One A New English Translation. (New York: The Judaica Press Inc., 1986), 186.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Simon, Uriel. The JPS Bible Commentary: Jonah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 15.

[98] Rosenberg, A.J. Twelve Prophets: Volume One A New English Translation. (New York: The Judaica Press Inc., 1986), 186.

And they made vows. **Pirke d'Rabbi Eliezer:** "explains that, when the sailors witnessed all the miracles that God had performed for Jonah; i.e. when they saw how the fish spewed him out onto the dry land, they immediately cast their idols into the sea, returned to Joppa, and made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. There they circumcised themselves, as it is stated: "And the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they made sacrifices to the Lord." Now did they make sacrifices? Do we accept sacrifices from heathens? Rather, this is the blood of the covenant, which is accounted as the blood of a sacrifice. (The question is difficult to understand, since sacrifices were indeed accepted from heathens, as in Lev. 22:25, *Radal* explains that the intention is that *zvachim*, usually referring to peace offerings, were not accepted. This follows the view that only burnt offerings were accepted from gentiles, and not peace-offerings. *Bayith Hagadol* explains that the expression in the Bible literally means that they themselves slaughtered the sacrifices, which is not permitted.)

Bibliodrama Commentary: If doing a bibliodramatic exercise with Jonah and the sailors, I would interview them and ask what things they did when they sacrificed, and what vows they were vowing at this point.

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[99] Ibid.

Fear & Faith Workshop #2

Jonah 1:1-16

This workshop was designed in two parts. Originally when the commentary was written I thought I would be creating a movement-based workshop. Later I decided that the narrative nature of the Jonah text lent itself nicely to bibliodrama. In the Jonah text there are many interesting characters to be discovered through bibliodrama and some juicy conflicts that can lead to interesting dramatic exploration. I knew that I wanted to have at least one of my three workshops deal with drama instead of dance/movement. Because of this I felt it was best to focus this workshop around bibliodrama. My personal comments that are part of the commentary section reflect this shift of ideas. The first half of my commentary includes choreographic notes and the second half is bibliodrama commentary. I wrote the bibliodrama commentary after already having completed the bibliodrama workshop.

Workshop Outline

Opening Introduction (5-10 minutes)

Explanation of Thesis & Themes

Bibliodrama

In the opening of the workshop I will always begin with a brief introduction in which I outline my rabbinic thesis project and my chosen theme of Fear and Faith. Early on, before I even explain my thesis it is important to underline the details of working in a creative manner. This helps to put people's fears at ease. I outline the different artistic processes we

will be using to explore the text at hand. I then explain that no one will be forced to participate, but I encourage everyone to stretch his or her comfort zone a little and see what can happen as a result. Then I go into a brief explanation of the theme of Fear and Faith, issues that I confront and struggle with often. Our Jewish tradition has a lot to say on these topics.

Next I discuss the word *Yirah* and it's dual meaning of both fear and awe. I will save the more detailed discussion on this for later on in the workshop. Finally I explain how bibliodrama can help us to get inside a text and grapple with issues that otherwise might seem simple. With this method we can explore the emotional world of the Torah's characters and find our own understandings of their motivations.

I say in the workshop "Today we are going to experiment with a few different kinds of exercises. Peter Pitzele teaches about bibliodrama using the metaphor of the Torah being created by both black and white fire. In the Torah, the black fire is the form and the written word on the page. The white fire is the surrounding space on the page. Peter Pitzele writes: *The black fire is fixed for all time; the white fire is forever kindled by fresh encounters between changing times and the unchanging words. The black fire establishes the canonized object we can all see before us; the white spaces represent the endless potential for the fresh interpretations of that object. Bibliodrama takes place in the open spaces of the text for which the black fire, the black letters, are the boundaries*[100]."

[100] Pitzele, Peter A. Scripture Windows: Toward a Practice of Bibliodrama. (Los Angeles: Torah Aura Productions, 1998.), 23.

Text Study (5-10 minutes max)

Text Study in Chevrutot, Read the text

Read the text together aloud with *chevruta*, identify the characters

Come back together, define the characters, share with the group

Review the basics of the story of Jonah

As a result of my learning from the first workshop, I realized that it is important to keep the text study a little shorter in order to allow proper time for exploration of the artistic methods. Because text study is the most comfortable method for the participants, it is easy to spend a lot of time in this section, but we then run out of time for the creative exploration. Also in this workshop I will be allowing for two different times for text study. In order to not over-think the first bibliodrama exercise and allow the students to make discoveries during the exercises themselves, as opposed to during studying, I will keep this first text study shorter.

I ask the students to focus on the basics of the Jonah story, and identify the characters, since they will later be asked to choose one to act out in our bibliodrama. When we come back together as a group we will review the basics of the story so that everyone understands the text. We will then name characters and put them up on the board in order to help people see their character choices. I will encourage the group to add to the list of characters objects or qualities that they may not traditionally include, such as the ship or fear.

Casting the Text (15 minutes)

Explain the Rules of Bibliodrama

Story takes place in present tense

Players take on voice of character in present tense

Answer questions in the present tense

The warm-up, the action, the review

In this section of the workshop we will begin to do some bibliodrama. But before the bibliodrama can begin we must ask everyone to choose one of the characters. I then invite everyone to choose a character from the list. Next I go around the circle and ask people to tell me their name, so we know which characters will be present in our bibliodrama. If there is an uneven representation, this is a good time to suggest that someone play a different character. For example, in this workshop I needed to suggest that someone play Jonah, and then others showed interest. It is great to have multiple people choose a particular character because then you get to see different sides of the character.

Next I explain the rules of the bibliodrama. It takes place in the present, which means we speak in the present tense. The players take on voices of their character and speak as that character, from their perspective. I will be the moderator and will ask questions of the characters. Sometimes I will ask you to clarify your responses or will push you to tell us more. Afterwards we will have time to reflect on this experience, but until we begin that process we will stay with the present moment in the bibliodrama.

In order to remind everyone which characters are participating in the bibliodrama, and to begin the actual dramatizing I say: "so we can get some perspective on what happened today on that ship, raise your hand when you know who you are. You can pass if you don't feel like doing this. Go around thecircle and tell us who you are."

(Ask each character 1-2 questions and what they see going on around them. Ask each person who wants to participate some of these questions.) Below are some sample questions that the interviewer may use for this workshop. These questions are purposefully simple and open-ended to allow the participants to create their character as they respond.

You are ... what do you believe?

What are you afraid of?

What do you believe?

Tell us what really happened on that ship?

How were you feeling?

What was your relationship to Jonah?

Why did you decide to cast lots?

How did you feel about throwing Jonah overboard?

What role did God play in all of this for you?

These questions are supposed to help the characters reveal their beliefs and highlight issues of Fear and Faith. Ideally they will also illumine how Fear and Faith affected Jonah and the rest of the cast of the story. If the bibliodrama is incredibly successful then eventually the characters may begin to communicate spontaneously with one another, instead of being

prompted by the facilitator. If not, the facilitator can help to bring about this sort of cross conversation. When I led this workshop the characters began to talk to each other spontaneously. In order to transition from the first part of the workshop to the second I would say something like "Now in order to further delve into Jonah's psyche, we will begin a different exercise where everyone gets to play Jonah. This exercise also helps to delve deeper into one particular character, allowing for new discoveries to emerge."

Group Characterization (10 minutes)

Everyone is Jonah

I will pose the questions, and occasionally help echo and lead our players farther

Anyone can answer... must be in the present

Invite participants with different interpretations to weigh in on discussions

This exercise will help open up different viewpoints or different possibilities for the same character. For example, one Jonah might discuss how fearful he/she was once upon the ship. Another Jonah may just say that he was depressed and decided to sleep it off. This exercise is helpful in exposing multiple perspectives of one character. It can really open up people's own perceptions of the story and the character. In leading this I say "what I would like to do at this point is see how many different possible Jonahs we can give voice to at this moment. In bibliodrama created by Peter Pitzele this is called "doubling." It can lead to a piling up of interpretations that can be quite inconsistent with each other[101]. That is o.k. Here is the verse that is our starting point." It is important to inform all the bibliodrama participants the exact

[101] Pitzele, Peter A. Scripture Windows: Toward a Practice of Bibliodrama. (Los Angeles: Torah Aura Productions, 1998.), 48.

moment in the text from which we begin to work. This helps to frame the conversation and questions that are asked of the characters. If this section is chosen well it can reveal very fascinating aspects into a character's psyche. The text below is the place in Jonah from which I would begin.

Text

1:1 Now the word of Adonai came to Jonah, son of Amitai, saying

1:2 Arise, go to Nineveh the great city, and cry against it because wickedness has come up before me.

1:3 And Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish away from Adonai.

I say to the participants after framing the text; "I'd like you to imagine that you are Jonah at this point in the story. Tell us, Jonah, what is this like for you?"

Once I remind everyone of the rules and let them know our starting point, I say; "I invite you to raise your hand in order to voice your Jonah. There is no right or wrong in your response." It is important to remember that these questions are purposefully vague. They leave room for the participants to fill in important details about the characters motivation, mind-set, and allow for open-ended responses. In general, the questions aim to reveal emotions, information, thoughts, relationships, and external details.

Jonah what is going through your mind right now?

Jonah how are you feeling?

Jonah what is your relationship with God like?

Jonah what was motivating your action here?

One final note: before anyone is done voicing their character Jonah it is nice to ask if he/she has any last thoughts they want to share with the group. This allows the participants to add anything they felt was important to the bibliodrama.

The encounter between Jonah & Sailors (8 minutes)

(This section of my workshop happened spontaneously and did not need to be formally created, which was wonderful.)

In order to start things off I might say; "So in our text Jonah goes onto this ship in an effort to flee from God and the task given to him. As a result a great storm threatens to break apart the ship on which these sailors work. I wonder how they feel about Jonah and what he was doing? I wonder what these sailors believed? In verse 1:5, right after the ship is breaking up the text tells us "The sailors feared, they shouted each man to their God." I wonder what Jonah and the sailors were feeling?

I wonder what Jonah and the sailors might say to each other in this moment...the ship is about to break apart and Jonah is down in the belly of the ship sleeping soundly. Anyone have any ideas?"

Next I invite everyone by saying; "Let's play a game and see.... The rules are anyone is allowed to participate. As you see we have two chairs in the middle (Jonah and sailors). At any time anyone can come up, tap one of the players on the shoulder which signals them to freeze, and then that person can take the position of that character. You can speak as Jonah, or as a sailor...

Once we are ready for more specific focusing questions, I select from the list below.

> Question for Sailors: How are you feeling right now? What do you fear? I see you just called out to God; can you tell me more about that? What do you believe in? Who is your God?
>
> Questions for Jonah: How are you feeling right now? What are you doing? Who is your God? Jonah what do you fear? What do you have faith in? What are you afraid of? What do you believe in?
>
> Maybe you want to talk to one another. Sailors, what do you have to tell Jonah right now? What can you tell Jonah about fear? What can you tell Jonah about faith and God?

Jonah what do you have to say to the sailors? What do you have to tell them about fear? What do you want to tell them about faith?

We are going to prepare to have you leave us now, but before you do is there any last thing you want to tell us? Thank you Jonah, thank you sailors. Goodbye.

For the sake of the workshop and in order to be prepared for spontaneous interviewing during the bibliodrama exercises, I have compiled lists of questions that can be used for each character. These questions can be useful in a variety of different bibliodrama exercises.

Questions for Jonah

- Why did you decide to run away Jonah?
- What did you think of what God told you?
- How did you feel about God talking to you?
- Do you really think you can run away from God Jonah?
- Jonah why did you go to sleep during the storm? What were you thinking?
- Why did you suggest being thrown into the sea, Jonah?
- What were you afraid of?
- Where did you find faith?
- Can you show us a movement that expresses how you felt?
    - When God spoke to you
    - When going down into the belly of the ship

- Before they threw you overboard
- When in the sea

Questions for God

- God, why did you pick Jonah?
- Did you know Jonah was going to run away?
- Why did you cause a storm and endanger other's lives, God?
- God what were your goals in this incident? Did you really just want to teach the people about fearing God?
- What were you afraid of?

Questions for Sailors

- Weren't you used to storms while at sea? Why did this one make you call out to your God? Was that normal protocol for you?
- What did you think of Jonah when he arrived on board?
- What did you think should be done with him after the lot fell on him?
- What would you like to say to God in response to the storm that was caused, which endangered all of you?
- How did you feel about hoisting Jonah into the sea?
- What did you learn from this experience?
- What were you afraid of?
- Where did you find faith?

Questions for the Sea

- How did you feel about God creating this storm from you?
- How did you feel about Jonah being tossed into you?
- What was your relationship with the sailors and their ship?
- What were you afraid of?
- Where did you find faith?

Personal Reflection Section

After the bibliodrama exercises we come back together as a class. In order to help my workshops have a spiritual lens I like to connect what we are learning with our own personal experiences and lives. This section is intended to help participants do this. I say: "Jonah received a direct call from Adonai, telling him what his task was. Out of fear, Jonah tried to run in the other direction from God, avoiding the task that God had directed him to follow. How many of us may have faced a similar situation in our lives?" Next I say: "I want to take a few minutes to break into study pairs (*chevrutot*). Take some time to reflect on this dilemma that Jonah faced and see if there are any parallels in your lives that you feel comfortable sharing. Then we will come back together as a group."

When we did this exercise people were comfortable sharing in the small groups but were not interested in reflecting in the larger group. This taught me that just doing this exercise in the small group was successful enough for them.

Text Study #2 (15 minutes)

This final section is supposed to help the participants find new insights in the text as a result of our learning experience together.

I might start by saying: "Now we have spent some time talking and hearing different perspectives on this story. We may have heard things with which we agree or disagree. Our idea of the text and the story may be shifting based on what we have heard or felt or said. We are going to now transition back to our text. Let's break back up (if the group of participants is small then we could do this processing all together) into *chevrutot* and look at the text again. Read through the text together, share with your partner whether something was affirmed or changed as a result of our work. What new insights do you see in the text after this experience?"

If we had more time or I were to develop further workshops on Jonah I might begin to introduce commentaries on Jonah with groups to look at for the second or other consecutive text study sessions. Since this was a one-time workshop I did not choose to introduce them because I felt it was too complicated to introduce at the end of the workshop. It might also be interesting to do a second bibliodrama after having studied the commentaries, and afterwards reflect on how that changed the comments people made during the bibliodrama.

Critical Response

This part of the workshop included the same process each time. Andrea Hodos would explain to the group how to conduct this kind of feedback session, and invite me to pose three questions on which I wanted feedback. She would then facilitate a conversation with the participants giving me constructive critical response to the work that they experienced firsthand. It became a truly invaluable teaching tool for each workshop. (For a more detailed description of the process see the Psalm 27 workshop.) For this workshop the three areas on which I wanted feedback were: 1) How did this kind of creative work affect your view of the Jewish text? 2) My facilitation skills-how did I handle the transitions? How were my directions for the different activities? What ability did I have in leading the different exercises? 3) I wanted to know what each individual would be taking away with them about Fear and Faith from this experience?

Reflections Post Workshop

In this workshop I forgot to include an explanation of the word *yirah* and its dual meaning in Hebrew. Luckily this came up later in the workshop and was discussed. But in retrospect it would be helpful, especially to first-time workshop participants to explain the dichotomy between Fear and Faith. An example of a few things to highlight about *yirah* include: In Hebrew *yirah* has a dual meaning of awe and fear. Each of these words can be understood in a variety of ways. The word y*irah* is often reserved to talk about a person's relationship with God. Each of the texts I have chosen uses the word *yirah* in Hebrew and includes some mention of Adonai in relation to the word.

In an effort to allow as much time as possible for the arts exploration of each workshop I did not spend a long time in the introduction section. But in retrospect I realize that the setup and closure of a session are just as important as the content of the workshop itself. A further exploration of the title: Fear and Faith, should be part of an introductory conversation. To me Fear and Faith are opposite sides of the same coin. One can choose to live in fear, in a sense of the unknown and worry, or one can choose to trust and have faith when faced with that same situation. Fear can be motivating to a point until it becomes paralyzing. Faith can help us to move forward when our fear almost immobilizes us. Fear can also be described as a lack of courage. Faith forces us to be courageous and move forward in the face of fear. Faith reminds us to draw on God as a resource. I also think it is important to dissect this dichotomy between Fear and Faith in my last workshop a little more explicitly. This came up almost intuitively in the Jonah workshop, reminding me of the importance of explaining why these texts were chosen and why this work interests me. I also feel that as part of a conclusion for the thesis work, I will explore what I have learned about Fear and Faith from conducting this study and these workshops.

Most of the feedback I received was very positive for this workshop. I myself was surprised at how successfully the bibliodrama activities seemed to function in this setting and with these groups of individuals. This workshop was successful in my eyes because the participants fully engaged in the bibliodrama. Many participants commented on how surprised they were that these activities were very meaningful and changed their understanding of the text. I felt confident in my abilities to lead the bibliodrama. Because all

of these pieces functioned so well, it was a very successful workshop. People felt really empowered by the bibliodrama exercises, since they allowed them to bring their own ideas to the text. I heard people telling me that they were surprised how much the text came to life as they gave voice to different characters and tried to get inside each character's psyche. I was told that working in both larger and smaller groups was helpful. I always like to work with multiple group settings. I was praised for my ability to lead the bibliodrama, which required me to help keep each person focused on their character, make sure they were speaking with the I, and not let participants talk over one another, only two talking at a time. I was very nervous about my ability to lead a bibliodrama, since this was really my first time leading such an activity. But I am now confident in my abilities and feel that I would like to do so again. Yet again, another participant commented on the emotional connection one makes with the text and the characters from working in this dramatic format. I was also surprised to hear that some people felt it was a very spiritual experience. This must have been because they were able to connect with our Jewish text in a way that they never had before. From the outset I did not think of this work as spiritual, but after leading it I understand how it can move in that direction.

One major critique I received is that a participant wished there had been more time at the end to help share and wrap up the workshop. Due to timing constraints, I didn't allow for us to share our new insights from the text. This was due to a desire to allow enough time for the critical response session.

I felt this was a very strong workshop. I will definitely continue to work with bibliodrama. People were more receptive to it than I had anticipated. The one piece I am left wondering about is the personal section where I asked people to reflect on their lives and times where they may have related to Jonah. People were not willing to share these stories in the large group, with the exception of one, which surprised me. But each person had a chance to share in small groups and it seemed that was enough for them. I think if this was an ongoing group they might be more willing to share this sort of information with the entire group. I think I would still include this piece as part of the workshop despite the hesitation at that particular moment. Luckily for me, the bibliodrama sections happened to flow naturally into each other. I did not need to stoke the fire and keep the drama going. It seemed to take on a life of its own. This was a huge blessing. I think partly this was due to my ability to lead. The other reason was based on the people who participated and their own interest and willingness to engage. This is intense work emotionally which I was not fully expecting. So I would not go any longer than two hours for the entire workshop. The length of time of the workshop seemed right.

In the future I might do some more staging with the bibiliodrama and bring in other activities. But this bibliodrama really took on a life of it's own and I didn't want to interrupt that in any way. I debated whether I should introduce commentary to the second text study that occurred at the end of the workshop. In the end I chose not to because I didn't think we would have proper time to fully explore them. If this workshop were part of a series of workshops on this one text, I would bring in commentaries in the second workshop and see how that changed people's perspective on the characters and drama. It might be interesting to

begin by studying the text again, using commentaries, then do a bibliodrama exercise, and then discuss the difference between this one and the previous workshop's bibliodrama that occurred without commentaries. Overall I was very happy with the results of this workshop. I don't think I would change much of the format.

Translation Psalm 27

27:1

Adonai, is my light and my salvation.

Whom shall I fear?

Adonai is the stronghold of my life

From whom shall I be afraid?

27:2

When evil-doers draw near to me

To devour my flesh

My foes and my enemies are they-

They trip and they fall.

27:3

If a camp should besiege against me

My heart shall not fear

If war were to rise against me

In this I trust.

27:4

One thing I have asked from Adonai

Only that do I seek

To dwell in the house of Adonai

All the days of my life

To behold the pleasantness of Adonai

And to meditate in his sanctuary.

27:5

For he will hide me in his booth

On an evil day

He will conceal me in the shelter of his tent

He will raise me high on a rock.

27:6

Now my head is raised high

Above my enemies surrounding me

I will sacrifice in his tent

Sacrifices with a joyous shout.

I will sing and praise Adonai.

27:7

Adonai, hear my voice when I call

Show me favor and answer me.

27:8

To you my heart has said

"seek my face"

Your face Adonai I seek.

27:9

Don't conceal your face from me

Don't turn your servant away in anger

You were my help

Don't cast me off and don't abandon me

My God, my salvation.

27:10

For my father and mother abandon me

Adonai will gather me in.

27:11

Teach me Adonai your way

Lead me on an upright path

Because of my adversaries.

27:12

Do not give me over

To the being of my foes

For false witnesses have risen up against me

Breathing violence.

27:13

Had I not believed that I would see

The goodness of Adonai

In the land of the living...

27:14

Hope for Adonai

Be strong and courageous of heart

Hope for Adonai

Commentaries on Psalm 27

Vs. 27:1

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear. **Midrash Tehillim:** "These words are to be considered in the light of the verse *And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame* (Isa. 10:17). In the world's use, when a man carries about the light of a lamp inside his house, can he say, "Such and such a man who is my friend is free to use the light of the lamp?" But the Holy One, blessed be He, can limit the use of His light. Since He created the light, in the age to come the wicked will not be able to see by His light, as is said *The light of the righteous rejoiceth; but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out*[102]. (Prov. 13:9)"

Scripture says elsewhere: *And God said: "Let there be light." And there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness* (Gen. 1:3-4). As to the meaning of the latter words, there is a difference of opinion. R. Judah bar R. Simon maintained that God divided the light for His own use, just like a king who, upon seeing a good portion says: "This portion shall be mine!" Even so, when the Holy One, blessed be He, created His universe and created the great light, He said: Except for Me, no creature shall be free to make us of this light. And thus Scripture says *The light dwelleth with Him* (Dan. 2:22). R. Abin the Levite said that the Holy One, blessed be He, took the light, and covered Himself with it as though it were a garment, and illumined His universe with it. Hence it is said *He covereth Himself with light as with a garment* (Ps. 104:2). But the Rabbis maintained

[102] Braude, William G. The Midrash on Psalms: The First of Two Volumes. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 365.

that God set aside the light for the righteous in the age-to-come, like a king who has a good portion and says: "This portion shall be for my son!" Thus Scripture says, *Light is sown for the righteous* (Ps. 97:11)[103].

What does Scripture say of the time when the Egyptians were pursuing the children of Israel? *And the pillar of cloud came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel, and there was the cloud and the darkness, yet gave it light* (Ex. 14:20). But if the pillar of cloud was there, how could darkness be there? Or if darkness was there, how could the pillar of cloud be there? R. Hoshaia explained that the pillar of cloud had two faces, a face of light for the children of Israel and a face of darkness for the Egyptians. And so David said: I shall sing a Psalm concerning God's light, as is said *A Psalm of David. The Lord is my light and my salvation*[104].

These words: *The Lord is my light and my salvation* are to be considered in light of the verse: *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path* (Ps. 119:105). With whom may the wicked be compared? With a man who was walking in the middle of the night in pitch darkness, so that when he came to a stone, he stumbled over it, and when he came to a pit, he fell into it. To such a man apply the words *The way of the wicked is in darkness; they know not at what they stumble* (Prov. 4:19). And with whom may the righteous be compared? With a man who was walking in the way, but who had a lighted lamp in his hand, so that when he

[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.

came to a stone, he took heed of it and did not stumble, and when he came to a pit, he took heed of it and did not fall into it[105].

Even so, David said: When I was about to profane the Sabbath, the Torah gave light to me, for it says: *Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy* (Ex. 20:8). When I was about to commit adultery, the Torah gave light to me, for it says: *Both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death* (Lev. 20:10). Hence David declared, *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path (Ps. 119:105)*[106].

Another comment on *The Lord is my light and my salvation:* R. Elezar interpreted the entire Psalm as referring to the children of Israel at the Red Sea. Thus *The Lord was my light* at the Red Sea, for it is said "The cloud...gave light by night there"(Ex. 14:20). *And my salvation* at the Red Sea, for it is said "Thus the Lord saved Israel that day" (Ex. 14:30). *Whom shall I fear?* At the Red Sea, Moses said unto the people: "Fear ye not" (Ex. 14:13). *The Lord is the strength of my life:* At the Red Sea, Israel sang "The Lord is my strength and song" (Ex. 15:2). *Of whom shall I be afraid?* "Fear and dread shall fall upon them" (Ex. 15:16) at the Red Sea. *When the wicked...came upon me* (Ps. 27:2): "Pharaoh came near" (Ex. 14:10A). *To eat up my flesh:* Pharaoh said, "I will pursue, I will over take...my lust shall be satisfied upon them" (Ex. 15:9)[107].

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[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.

The Rabbis interpreted the entire Psalm as referring to the New Year's Day and to the Day of Atonement. *The Lord is my light* on New Year's Day; since this is the day of judgment, it is said "He shall bring forth they righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon day" (Ps. 37:6). *The Lord is...my salvation* on the Day of Atonement when He saves us and forgives us all our sins. He is my salvation, *"when the wicked come upon me"* (Ps. 27:2): When the guardian angels of the nations of the (hostile) earth come upon me *to eat up my flesh.* For they come into the presence of the Holy One, blessed be He, to attack the children of Israel, saying, "The other nations of the earth worshipped idols, and the children of Israel also worshipped idols[108]."

Robert Alter writes; "This psalm is a supplication in which, as elsewhere, a speaker in great distress implores God to intervene on his behalf. The distinction of emphasis is that the poem begins with a confident affirmation of God as the source of help under all grave threats. This positive note is continued through verses 2 and 3, 5 and 6 and most extravagantly in verse 10. But this sense of trust, in a psalm that manifests powerful psychological verisimilitude, does not preclude a feeling of fearful urgency in the speaker's plea to God." [109] What Robert Alter is alluding to is the sense of faith that is the subtext to this psalm.

Faith seems to be the psalmist's answer to fear. This text uniquely highlights the importance of faith as an opposite to fear, which is partially where I have drawn this dichotomy for the thesis topic.

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[108] Ibid.

[109] Alter, Robert. The Book of Psalms. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), 91.

Choreographic Commentary: For this workshop it might be helpful to create two touchstone movements that would be returned to and manipulated repeatedly in a choreographic piece, one for fear and one for faith. What type of movements might be ideal for a poem that affirms God? According to these midrashim, light could be understood as an antidote to fear. It might be interesting to explore through movement the expression of light and fear. I might invite participants to create two separate movements, one for light and one for fear. Then I would see how we might create some sort of connection with the two movements, playing them off each other as opposites.

Rav S.R. Hirsch translates; "Adonoy is the source of my life's strength." Thus, David declares that God is the fount from which his life derives its power to resist all foes[110]."Again Hirsch's comment highlights the importance the role of faith plays in helping the author in times of difficulty. This psalm repeats over and over the idea that faith is the answer.

Choreographic Commentary: Once two simple movements are established, one for fear and one for faith, it would be interesting to have two dancers-each using a core movement, one for fear and one for faith, try to physically interact through struggle. This could be a way to represent the constant battle or dance that happens when fear and faith interact with each other.

[110] Davis, Avrohom. The Metsudah Tehillim. (Brooklyn: Metsudah Publications, 1983.), 46.

Vs. 27:2

To devour my flesh; **According to JPS** this could also mean; "to slander me" Daniel 3:8, 6:25[111]. JPS is just articulating another way of understanding the negative affect that foes can have on an individual. This is a force that our faith must help to combat.

Choreographic Commentary: If dancers were to interpret this line based on the translation *"to devour my flesh"* the movement would be much more violent. For example a dancer might pantomime being eaten by a wild animal, shaking and writhing on the floor. If instead the dancer was interpreting the verse according to the JPS comment they would depict a very different physical movement.

Vs. 27:3

Midrash Tehillim; "The people of Israel say: From now on, *though a host*-that is, the guardian angels of the nations of the earth-*should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise up against me, yet I will put my trust in this.* (Ps. 27:3)-in the Torah which is called "This," as in the verse "This is the Torah" (Lev. 7:37)[112].

R. Levi said: The word *This* refers to the body of ordinances (concerning the Day of Atonement) which Thou didst inscribe for me in Thy Torah, beginning with the verse, *With this shall Aaron come in to the holy place.* (Lev. 16:3).

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[111] JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.), 1441.
[112] Braude, William G. The Midrash on Psalms: The First of Two Volumes. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 368.

Metsudah Commentary; *"In this I trust"; explains that* "David says that he trusts in the declaration stated in the opening verse, "Adonoy is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" (Rashi, Radak[113]). Again this verse highlights trust, a central part of faith.

Choreographic Commentary: For this verse I would encourage the dancers to think about what trust means to them, and to share those definitions with each other. I would ask each of the dancers to create one movement based on their personal definition of trust. For example if the dancers defined trust as feeling safe, they might create a movement that involves wrapping themselves as if to create a safe cocoon, using arms and slow movements to surround themselves as they spin around, creating a spiral with their body and arms. After this it would be interesting to share the different movements for trust, asking each of the dancers to show their movement and then as a group talk about the experience and what they saw.

Vs. 27:4

One thing have I asked of the Lord...that I may sit in the house of the Lord. (Ps. 27:4)

Midrash Tehillim; "R. Abba bar Kahana said: These words mean that David asked kingship of the Lord. You will find that David asked one thing of the Lord, but that Solomon asked two things, for he said: *Two things have I asked of Thee...Remove far from me falsehood and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me; lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say: "Who is the Lord?" Or lest I be poor, and steal, and seize upon*

[113] Davis, Avrohom. The Metsudah Tehillim. (Brooklyn: Metsudah Publications, 1983.), 46.

(tafasti) the name of my God (Prov. 30:7-9). What is the literal meaning of *tafasti?* Like *aphenton,* the Greek for "loose," *tafasti* means "I might deal loosely with the name of God (by seizing upon it to swear falsely[114].)"

Which sin is more grievous: the first or the second? The second is more grievous. How do we know this? Because the Holy One, Blessed be He, overlooks sins of idolatry, unchastity, and bloodshed committed by a man in an hour of stress, but God does not overlook the profanation of His name, as is said *Thus saith the Lord God: Go ye, serve every one his idols...but My holy name shall ye no more profane.* (Ezek. 20:39)

Another comment on *One thing have I asked of the Lord.* The Holy One, Blessed Be He, said to David: "In the beginning, thou saidst *One thing have I asked of the Lord...that I may dwell in the house of the Lord.* Then thou didst return and say, *To behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple."* (Ps. 27:4) David replied "Master of the universe, shall not the servant be like his master? In the beginning, didst Thou not come to us with but one requirement, as is said *And now Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God* (Deut. 10:12). And after that, didst Thou not disclose to us many commandments, as is said *Take diligent heed...to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments, and to cleave unto Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul* (Josh. 22:5)? It is therefore quite proper that the servant be like his master[115]!"

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[114] Braude, William G. The Midrash on Psalms: The First of Two Volumes. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 369.

[115] Ibid.

One thing do I ask of the Lord; **Robert Alter** writes "In a casual glance, this verse may look like a non sequitur: the speaker, having expressed his firm confidence in God as his rescuer in distress, suddenly declares that his most cherished desire is to spend all his time in the temple. But, as we have seen in other psalms, the privilege of enjoying God's presence in the Jerusalem sanctuary is a consequence of having followed the ways that God dictates to man. And the temple itself, within the walled city, is repeatedly seen as a sanctuary in the political sense-a place of secure refuge from threatening foes. There is, then, a logical link between this verse and the next one, in which God provides a shelter and a safe hiding place[116]."

This comment makes it seem as if God only protects those who strictly follow God's laws. This leads me to believe that faith is somehow connected to our religious observance. I then might question whether we can have faith if we don't feel compelled to follow God's laws. I know plenty of people whom I think would confirm they have faith, but do not feel the need to be observant of Jewish law. I am challenged theologically by this explanation.

To dwell, **Metsudah Commentary** writes; "The literal translation of *shivti* is "my sitting." The Talmud states that "no man may "sit" in the courtyard of the temple except for the kings of the House of David." –*Sotah 40b*[117].

It seems clear that this verse is referring to a more metaphoric notion of being close to God throughout one's life. The importance lies in the expression of a desire always to be close to

[116] Alter, Robert. The Book of Psalms. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), 92.
[117] Davis, Avrohom. The Metsudah Tehillim. (Brooklyn: Metsudah Publications, 1983.), 47.

God and in relationship with God. This is an affirmation of faith, a desire to always have that connection with God.

Choreographic Commentary: This verse could be very rich to explore through movement. An interesting challenge to pose to a group of dancers would be to physically create a "House of the Lord." Ask the dancers how they envision a "House of the Lord," and what it might feel like inside. From that conversation encourage the dancers to try to create this house. I might envision the house as a place where it feels as if one is continually being embraced. I envision the house of the Lord as somewhere small and safe and comforting. As a result I might ask the dancers to choose one person to be the person who dwells there. The other dancers would be assigned to surround that dancer, all embracing him/her in some way. Then it would be nice to invite another dancer to be the choreographer and help create their vision of "The House of the Lord" with the dancers.

To gaze on. **Robert Alter writes;** "The precise meaning of the verb *baqer* is in dispute, but the cognate *biquoret,* used in Leviticus 19:20 in the sense of "observation," suggests it may mean here to take in with the eyes, to enjoy the sight of"[118].

Vs. 27:5

shelter...tent. **Robert Alter** writes; "The two nouns are drawn from the lexicon of nomadic habitation, but here they are used in the subtle metaphorical understatement as designations for a much more solid and imposing structure, as the third term in the sequence, "rock,"

[118] Alter, Robert. The Book of Psalms. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), 92.

suggests[119]." Alter's comment reminds us that God's protection is one that is solid and creates a sense of safety for the psalmist.

Choreographic Commentary: Ask the dancers to draw their interpretation of "He hides me in the recess of his tent." Ask the dancers the difference between a tent and a shelter. See if they might envision this differently based on which interpretation they chose.

Metsudah Commentary writes; "The Vilna Gaon comments that the commandment of *Succos* is implied in this verse and the next." This is a much more literal understanding of the tent. Yet Sukkot does offer many mystical and faith based explanations for the sukkah that is a dwelling place for the Jewish people during the eight day festival[120].

And now shall my head be lifted about mine enemies round about me; and I will offer in His Tabernacle sacrifices with trumpet-sound (Ps. 27:6). **Midrash Tehillim; "**R. Jacob interpreted this verse as alluding to Joshua: *Then Joshua built an altar unto the Lord God of Israel in Mount Ebal...and they offered thereon burnt-offerings in every place that thou seest* (Deut. 12:13), but at a time that sacrifices on high places were already banned, Elijah offered sacrifices every day on Mount Carmel. R. Simlai explained that the word of God commanded Elijah to do so, for in saying *I have done all these things at Thy word* (1 Kings 18:36), Elijah implied "At Thy word have I done this thing also[121]."

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[119] Ibid.

[120] Davis, Avrohom. The Metsudah Tehillim. (Brooklyn: Metsudah Publications, 1983.), 47.

[121] Braude, William G. The Midrash on Psalms: The First of Two Volumes. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 372.

And R. Johanah brought proof from the passage: *The same night...the Lord said unto* (Gideon): "*Take thy father's bullock, and the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the Asherah that is by it; and build an altar upon the top of this stronghold, in the orderly manner, and take the second bullock thou shalt cut down"* (Judg. 6:25-26) R. Abba bar Kahana commented that in the offering of Gideon's bullocks seven sins were committed: 1) wood of an Asherah was used; 2)hewn stones were used; 3) one bullock was set aside for idolatry; 4) the other bullock had, in fact, been worshipped already; 5) the sacrifice was offered at night, 6) by one who was not a priest, 7) and on a high-place, this being expressly forbidden. Nevertheless, because of the need of the hour, the offering was received[122]."

He raises me up. And now my head rises. **Robert Alter** writes; "The Hebrew plays on the same verbal stem in two different conjugations-*yeromemeini,* then *yarum-* and the translation seeks to approximate that effect[123].

Choreographic Commentary: It would be interesting to play with the contrast between being hidden in the recess of the tent and being raised up on a rock. This creates some nice contrast that leads to fascinating physical exploration. I envision one dancer moving backwards quickly (while still facing forwards) and bending forwards while their arms sweep around in them in a circular motion, to represent the "hidden recess of the tent" and the

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[122] Ibid.
[123] Alter, Robert. The Book of Psalms. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), 92.

protective nature of this place. Then for the second part of the verse "on a rock He raises me up" I envision an unfolding of the dancer's body, as their body becomes erect and their focus shifts skywards. It might also be interesting to ask the dancers to come up with their own interpretation of the dichotomy between the "recess of the tent" and the "raising up" on a rock.

Vs. 27:6

My head is raised high, above my enemies around me. **Metsudah Commentary** writes: "David declares "because I look up to God in every aspect of my existence, I am so exalted that no enemy can harm me[124]." Samson Raphael Hirsch.

Choreographic Commentary: This comment and the one above highlight the importance of focus in a choreographic piece that depicts this psalm. If choreographing an exploration of this psalm it would be vital to have the dancers pay special attention to the use of their visual focus, and to highlight upwards focus as well as movement. Again this highlights the contrast between high and low, which would be fun to play with throughout a choreographed piece exploring this psalm.

Vs. 27:7

Adonay hear my voice. **Metsudah Commentary** writes: "This verse alludes to Rosh Hashanah when we sound the shofar. The word "my voice (sound)" refers to the "voice" of

[124] Davis, Avrohom. The Metsudah Tehillim. (Brooklyn: Metsudah Publications, 1983.), 47.

the shofar. "When I call" refers to Yom Kippur, about which Isaiah (55:6) said, "call to Him when He is near[125]." –Siddur HaGra

Vs. 27:8

Do not hide your face from me. **Robert Alter** writes: "Face" suggests "presence," but the anthropomorphic concreteness of "face" is palpable. The speaker desperately seeks God's face (a privilege denied Moses). The practical manifestation of God's turning away His face would be abandoning the person to his enemies[126].

Choreographic Commentary: This verse highlights the importance of physical turning that might be present in a choreographic interpretation. So perhaps if an entire piece was created, not only would lifting be highlighted but also turning. We see this idea of turning the face also present in the burning bush text. If further workshops were developed to expand this series into a longer class unit, I might play with the intersection of the three texts I chose. We could compare and contrast the way light is used in all three texts, as well as looking at how fear and faith are present.

[125] Ibid.
[126] Alter, Robert. The Book of Psalms. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), 93.

Fear and Faith Workshop #3

Psalm 27

Opening and Introduction:

In the opening of the workshop I always begin with a brief introduction in which I outline my rabbinic thesis project, and my chosen theme: Fear and Faith. Before I even explain my thesis project I like to clarify some of the details of working in a creative manner. This helps to put peoples' fears at ease. I explain the different artistic processes we will be using to explore the text at hand. I then explain that no one will be forced to participate but I encourage everyone to stretch themselves a little and see what can happen as a result. Then I go into a brief explanation of the theme of Fear and Faith. I explain that I chose this theme because Fear and Faith are issues that I confront and struggle with often. Our Jewish tradition has a lot to say on these topics. I then discuss the word *Yirah* and its dual meaning of both fear and awe. I save the more detailed discussion on this for later on in the workshop. Next I explain that we will be working both with movement and other creative modes. These methods are being used to help explore the Jewish text in a new way. As we work I ask participants to notice how this kind of work may affect their understanding or relationship to the text. I invite them to play and be curious.

Because this workshop is focusing on a Psalm, I believe it is important to give the participants a brief explanation of this type of liturgy with which they may be less familiar. I explain that the word *Tanach* that Jews use for our sacred books, is not really a word but an

acronym. It was created by collecting the first letter of each of these three words, Torah, Neviim and Ketuvim. For my thesis I set out to choose texts that reflect the issues of Fear and Faith, one from *Torah* (Moses and the Burning Bush), one from *Neviim* (the prophets, Jonah), and one from *Ketuvim* (writings, Psalm 27). According to Robert Alter, Psalms are rooted in The Ancient Near Eastern world, dating back to the Bronze Age (1600-1200 BCE) They are a section of our texts that are often used by individuals for encouragement and comfort in moments of crisis and despair, or for inspiration in moments of celebration and joy. Alter teaches that both Jewish and Christian tradition have made the psalms part of daily and weekly worship. The writing of psalms was an activity that spanned many centuries. In Jewish and Christian tradition the Psalms are attributed to Davidic authorship, but that has little historical grounding. The psalms were conceived in the ancient period as a flexible form of poetry. Many, but not all of the psalms were composed as liturgies for use in the Temple, but could also be used to teach history, celebrate a king, or for personal reflection. Today we are going to explore Psalm 27, which is traditionally read twice a day during the month of Elul. This practice is evidently new in the past 200 years. You may ask, why this psalm? After we do some more study of it, I would like to hear your responses to this question. But many believe that it speaks of our relationship with God, which we are focusing on during the high holydays.

<u>Text Study:</u>

Break group up into *chevrutot* for text study of the Psalm, first reactions, images

Read through the psalm, share visceral reactions

Share in big group, images/actions, reactions

Movement Warm-ups, tracing and paint a globe

Creating movement for 4 chosen verses in *chevrutot* (two faith and two fear verses)

Share movements with entire group

Reflect on what psalm and movement had to teach about Fear and Faith

Critical Response

It is always important to begin the workshops by rooting our study in text. So we start by looking at the biblical text in English and in Hebrew. Once the *chevrutot* have read the text, I ask them to read and briefly share reactions to the text, paying close attention to the images and actions that stand out in the psalm. Then we will come back together after this section and quickly discuss what was interesting about this text and share the images that they found striking. Each person should choose four images that they find compelling: two that represent fear and two that represent faith. (8 minutes)

Next I invite each individual to return to the text. This time I ask them to reflect on the images in the Psalm, and if there is a particular image that stands out, to sketch it, draw it, or write about it. They could sketch what it would look like to them. They may write how this verse makes them feel or why it spoke to them. Originally I thought this exercise might be a way to include visual art in the workshop, but after reflection with Andrea Hodos, I decided to skip this step in order to allow the maximum time for movement exercises.

Next I say "Now we are going to play a little with movement. Not everyone thinks of themselves as a mover, or choreographer, but you are. We are all constantly telling stories

with our movements. I am going to give you a few simple tools that will allow you to create your own movement. Together we will do some fun exploration."

"We are going to pull the chairs out and play a little. I am going to put on some music and we are going to walk around the room. As you walk, notice how the floor feels beneath you. Notice the room. Try walking slower if you are walking fast; if you are already walking slowly try speeding up. Play with your speed a little and shift it. Now let's notice things around us, keep walking and take in the whole room. As you continue to walk, narrow your focus a little and notice specific patterns and objects in the room. Choose something that you find interesting and move towards it. Point to your object or pattern. Trace it with your finger. Now trace it in the air. Trace it bigger... and trace it smaller. Now try to trace it using a different body part[127]."

The following exercise is also helpful in encouraging people to warm up their bodies and to begin to see themselves as creators of movement. I would begin by saying, "Now we are going to imagine we are inside a humungous globe. We are going to paint the inside of the globe. Paint the inside of the globe using a big paintbrush in broad strokes. Make sure to cover all areas of the globe with your paint. Now we are going to change the quality of our brushstrokes. Let's imagine we are painting the globe using pointillism, creating images by making small dots. Next let's imagine we are Impressionist painters; show me how you would paint the inside of your globe. Now let's be Jackson Pollack as we paint the inside of our globe. Finally let's imagine we are Michelangelo painting an image or action from the

[127] Hodos, Andrea. These exercises are part of her repertoire that she uses when teaching movement. She has kindly shared them with me.

psalm on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel[128]." I ended up not using this exercise, but I am leaving it in because it is a wonderful tool to use while working in this way.

Instead, at Andrea's suggestion I led an exercise called "Equivalencies." For this exercise I tell the participants to walk around the room. I ask them to vary their pace, to walk faster and then slower, just warming up their bodies. As we move around the room, I invite everyone to notice items in the room and to pick one that is striking to them. Then I ask the participants to stand in front of that item and examine it: "Look at how the light bounces off the object. Notice what shapes and qualities the object possesses." Then I ask the participants to think about the object's function. Next I invite them to pick one of these things: the way the light bounces off the object, the shape, the quality of the object etc, and invite them to represent that in movement[129]. (I gave an example using a curtain in the room, so everyone understood what I was asking them to do.) Then I guided them through playing with the movement, making it bigger, smaller, slower, and using different qualities. I ask everyone to choose one movement they liked best and to share it with someone near them.

After leading the workshop I learned that the participants needed to hear a rationale for why we were doing each of these warm-up exercises. If I were to repeat this exercise my rationale would be the following: In order to both become more connected and comfortable using our bodies, and learn new ways of creating movement, we are going to do some exercises that will give us quick tools to enable us to become choreographers very quickly. I am going to

[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid.

lead you through a series of two exercises that you can use later on in the workshop to help you build a movement phrase connected to our psalm.

"Now you have some tools to use to help you create movement. If you get stuck, and find yourself unable to come up with movement, you can go back to any of these exercises: painting the inside of the globe, tracing a detail in the room and expanding it, 'equivalencies', or ask me for some help. Now we are going to split up into *chevrutot* pairs, and play a little more."

This part of the workshop involves a lot of stopping and starting, as I feed directions to the group and help them begin to create a movement phrase as they slowly build. At this point we are going to return to our four images/actions from the psalm, two that are representative of fear and two that represent faith. "You can refer to your text if you need help in refreshing your memory of some of the images/actions. Some examples in the psalm include 'to dwell in the house of Adonai all the days of my life,' 'grant me the protection of his tent, raise me high upon a rock,' or 'O Lord I seek thy face.' These images are rich with action and can lead to interesting physical interpretations. In your pairs you are going to continue to play with movement. What I would like each of you to do is to pick one image or action that you want to play with. Once you have that image or action, I want you to come up with two different movements for it and share with your partner. I will be circulating to offer help and guidance if you need any.

"You can choose whether to be literal or abstract as we move into this part of the work. You may even try to work both ways, literal and abstract. In your pairs choose one image or action to start with, and play around with one partner reading the words, while another moves in response to the words. (I share an example using Andrea and myself to give them an idea of what I am asking them to do.) Think about whether the image or action you are showing represents fear or faith and let that help guide your movement." It is important to remind the participants that there is no right or wrong in this work. It is all about play and that is what we are doing. Two important pieces of advice include "If you have a question in terms of directions assume the answer is yes, but I am circulating to offer help and guidance in any way possible." This advice empowers the participants to play and create in a way that works for them. It encourages creative freedom that allows people the space to be able to fully explore and engage in the work.

Next I invite the group to pick another of the phrases they chose earlier and create another two movements that go with the phrase. If the first verse they chose was more fear based, they should then try to pick one that represents fear and vice-versa. After they have tried being literal, they may try picking out one verb from the phrase, and representing that through movement. They should then switch and ask the other partner to be the reader while the first person creates a movement.

After I have given the group some time, I remind them when to switch and let the other partner be the mover. I allow them to play and experiment with at least two phrases, one for fear and one for faith. After this I encourage them to play with combining text and movement

together. The idea is to try both reading text and moving at the same time, or having one person read and one person move, or try playing with some combination of these ideas. I will remind them that they have choreographer's choice to combine in a way that feels really good to them.

Finally I stop the groups again and explain the idea of juxtaposition in Judaism. Our tradition is so rich because of its ability to hold different ideas about a particular text or story next to each other at the same time. For example, when reading the Torah we often look to rabbinic commentaries to help us understand or find new meaning in the text. These commentaries are a collection of different voices from different time periods gathered on a page. We read them all as if these different rabbis were in one room with each other explaining a text. Looking at the text through the lenses of these rabbis gives new meaning to it.

Now I am going to invite the participants to do this work with our psalm. "First know that you don't have to scrap any of the movement pieces that you just created. Now I am going to invite you to take one of those movement phrases, and if it speaks more about fear, to play and see what happens when you pair it with a text that speaks of faith. We are going to play with juxtaposition and see what happens-what discoveries we make while creating new combinations." I have found that if you take movement from one place and words from another and put them together, it can create new meaning. This kind of scaffolding of movement and text allows for things to reverberate off each other and allows for new discoveries and understandings. After allowing at least 20-30 minutes for this creative play,

invite the groups to choose a few creations that they will share with the larger group. Then we will come back together as a group and share some of the work we created.

As the final piece of the workshop I invite participants to share the original work that they created with the group. Each group chose which part of the many different movement phrases they wanted to share. It was incredibly interesting to see the different movement phrases that each group created and the variety of movements and phrases that were chosen by each individual. I was really struck by each group's ability to create powerful pieces of choreography, even though most of the participants would never consider themselves to be movers. I think this is the beauty of working in this collaborative manner, empowering the participants to create work that is meaningful to them. It enables the participants to see themselves as people who can create interesting pieces of movement. This work also gives each individual tools to use that can help them should they wish to explore or create movement in the future. Following this discussion I thank everyone for playing an important role in my rabbinic thesis and I bring them together for the "Critical Response" section of the workshop.

In a final discussion after the creative work I will ask the group: "What have we learned about Fear and Faith from reading Psalm 27 and movement in relation to the words?" I was fascinated by the responses of the participants to this question. One commented on how Fear and Faith are really closely connected, and she didn't realize this before. She only understood this through the exercise of creating movements and doing a movement phrase based on this subject. Another person mentioned how engaging in creating movement forced him to

translate the ideas of Fear and Faith from the psalm into real life situations. This made these concepts more important and closer to "real life" experiences for him. In response to this, a different participant commented that the movement work helped her understand the ideas of the psalm and relate to it differently, understanding the text better. It was interesting to hear from someone who was really reticent to participate in the beginning. He said he felt some minor discomfort and anger in response to the exercises in the first part of the workshop. He acknowledged that he was feeling fear. Then as he gave into the work, he said that he was able to overcome the fear and really enjoyed the experience. A different participant shared that the first part of the workshop was intellectual, and then once we translated the Psalm into movement it became hyper-real. He also mentioned how the words easily get in the way of us expressing ourselves, but movement makes him think. I think he was re-iterating the idea that working with movement forces us to connect emotionally. He also commented that doing the exercise where I encouraged participants to combine movement based around one word (fear), with words that focused on the other (faith) forced him to make connections that he wouldn't have previously seen. Finally, one additional participant shared about the intimacy of the ideas of Fear and Faith. He relished the opportunity to personally express himself through his body. Overall I learned that people's understandings of Fear and Faith are very personal and incredibly varied.

Critical Response

Andrea opens this section by giving a brief introduction of the process. She begins by saying "This is a process which allows a group to pay close attention to a piece of art, text or performance, and give constructive feedback on their experience, allowing the creator to evaluate what was created and understand whether they succeeded in reaching the goals that they had set for the work originally." She facilitates, but the responses are supposed to be directed at the creator (me). In the process a series of questions are posed to the group, one at a time, and each individual has a chance to respond and give feedback. This tool teaches the group the art of non-judgmental observation. The community as a whole benefits from the meaning making that occurs throughout the process. Liz Lerman developed this process to allow artists and audiences, teachers and students to interact and learn from one another. It was designed to help feedback and critique sessions to be more helpful for the artist/teacher. Her four-step process allows the artist to play an active role in the dialogue[130].

The first step is called "statements of meaning." In this section responders state what was meaningful, evocative, interesting, and striking in the workshop. This is a time to give feedback about things that people enjoyed. It is a wonderful way to start because it informs the artist or teacher about what worked and was successful in the eyes of the participants[131]. It is always nice to start with the positive. I received a lot of important feedback including the observation that I allowed the participants the freedom to do different things in the creative process and that I created a comfortable climate. I was intentionally trying to create this environment for all. People are often so reticent to do creative work, especially exercises

[130] Lerman, Liz. Dance Exchange. 14 Feb. 2010 <http://www.danceexchange.org/>
[131] Ibid.

using movement, the more comfortable the process the higher rate of success with participation. Some participants commented that I made an assumption that everyone would participate, and that made people want to participate more, without being coerced into it. After having learned from my previous two workshops, I also attempted to give more physical examples. People found this really helpful, especially for those who were less comfortable moving. It seemed to translate my words into understandable steps. The participants also enjoyed watching what others had created, since I built in time for this as well.

The second step of the process is called "artist as questioner." In this step the artist or teacher asks questions about her work. It is a chance for the artist/teacher to get feedback about specific things that she may have been working on or trying to get across to the class/audience. I used this part of the process to learn how to make myself more effective as a teacher and leader of these arts workshops. The rule about this section is that responders can express opinions only if they are directly related to the question asked; they may not suggest changes[132]. I found this section of the process to be really helpful because I got some important feedback. I asked the group to comment on the section of the workshop where I invited them to play with "juxtapositions," using a combination of movement from one part of the psalm and connecting it with different texts. I asked them to play with this in hopes that it would create some interesting combinations that were powerful in a new and interesting way. I found from my other workshops that this section was one of the most challenging to get people to engage in, because most people are most comfortable creating

[132] Ibid.

and using movement that is a literal translation of the text. In this workshop I believe that I helped people to be more comfortable trying this out. Overall, however, they were still a little reticent and didn't enjoy this section as much when they could be literal. So, here I asked how I could make this experience one that was more engaging and interesting. The responses shared included: "I needed to understand more of why we were being asked to do this, some sort of philosophical underpinning." Another person said "this work was attempting to move people from the intellectual to the feeling side; this is difficult for some people to move from one to the other." So I learned from this section to include more rationale, which I thought I had already done. I also learned people need more explanations and examples when we are asking them to do something that isn't intuitive.

The third section is called "neutral questions." This section we did once in the three workshops but were not able to get to in the other ones due to time constraints. It is one of the most difficult sections, because it requires the participants to pose questions in a manner that is not always the most natural way to speak. Neutral questions must not have any sort of judgment attached to them. For example if you are discussing a cake, instead of asking "why was the cake so dry?" you might ask "tell me about the consistency, what were you aiming for?" This keeps the question open ended and doesn't insert any opinions[133]. I think it is the trickiest section to handle really well, especially for those who are new at it. But if you have a group that is used to giving this kind of feedback this section could be incredibly informative and helpful. We didn't get to this section in this workshop because of time frame.

[133] Ibid.

The final and fourth step is called "opinion time." This is the section where responders get to state their own opinions, as long as they have permission from the artist. The way to couch this kind of comment might include "I have an opinion about ...would you like to hear it?" The artist has the option to decline the opinion for any reason. This allows the artist/teacher to protect oneself against unwanted feedback, suggestions or opinions that they may not find constructive or helpful. Unfortunately, though, as one who is participating in this process, you don't always know whether the feedback is going to be useful until after it is given. It really it protects an artist who has a section of work that s/he doesn't wish to change in any way[134]. I had no need to do this sort of editing during my sessions. We also didn't make it to this section because we ran out of time.

Overall I was very pleased with this workshop. I found it to be one of the most successful. I had learned from my first movement workshop and integrated those comments into this workshop, which I felt made it a more impactful experience. I really enjoyed helping people who consider themselves "non-dancers" learn to create choreography and use their bodies in new expressive ways. I was re-energized by this workshop, and it gave me a stronger desire to continue to do this kind of work. It felt good to take a room full of people who were skeptical at first about relating to a Jewish text through movement and help them feel the power of this work by the end. I would certainly do a workshop of this nature again.

[134] Ibid.

Conclusion

My exploration of Fear and Faith through a close study of Moses and The Burning Bush, Jonah and his flight from God, and Psalm 27, has given me new insight. I have learned that Fear and Faith are actually very closely related. Often one's own experience will dictate how we respond to the unknown, whether through fear or through faith. When we are faced with a frightening situation, we may feel both of these things in a short period of time. For example, one who is facing death could first fear for his life, and at another point, due to his faith turn to God for comfort. In this way Fear and Faith can be intrinsically linked. Often when we are in fearful situations and hope for guidance or comfort, we might lean on our faith. We understand that the word *yirah* can mean both fear and awe (of God). Moments of awe can offer proof to us of God and the divine workings in the universe. For me, awe filled experiences help foster my faith. They give me proof of God's existence in our world. Because of this I understand awe and faith as connected. In Hebrew, these two ideas are already connected and intrinsically linked.

Both fear and faith are related to the unknown. We feel fear, or rely on our faith for guidance when we cannot control a situation. For example, one who is waiting to find out the outcome of a job search may at different moments either be frightened or turn to their faith by using prayer, meditation or some connection with God in response to the unknown future that awaits them. This is just another example of how Fear and Faith are connected. But these ideas are primarily linked because they each are responses to the unknown.

I also learned that fear is often an immediate response to a situation, where faith may take some more time. Although some may believe that faith just exists, I feel that faith is something that we must work for. We must cultivate our faith through prayer, our relationship with God, and through our gathering in a spiritual community. I feel that faith is something that does not come naturally. One must continually develop one's faith in order to keep it strong and alive. Fear on the other hand seems to come as a visceral and immediate response to situations. Instead of needing to cultivate it, we need to control and manage it. Faith can help us to temper our fear and keep it at bay.

It does seem that faith came easily for some of our matriarchs and patriarchs, whose stories we read about in the Torah. Today we live in a different world where we must work hard to maintain strong connections with God. Moses was told, as he stood witnessing the burning bush, that he was upon holy ground. He didn't need to cultivate his faith: Instead, moments of divinity were created for him. His direct relationship with God may have made it unnecessary for him to work on his faith. God spoke to him and gave him instruction Later, however, we meet a Moses who is doubtful and in need of faith. He asks God for reassurance that people will listen to him. He also asks God's name, maybe out of a need for something concrete to offer others and maybe even for his own security. Maybe Moses is teaching us that all people could use help in developing their faith at different moments in their lives, even Moses. He was living a very different existence than we may experience today. His world is a world where angels of Adonai appear in burning bushes, and God meets you on smoking mountains while handing down the ten commandments to be brought to the Israelite people. Jonah also had a relationship where God spoke to him telling him what to do.

Perhaps Jonah didn't see this as a blessing, since he ran away. But I often wonder how I might feel in a similar situation, with God telling me what to do and when to do it? I sometimes think it would be nice to have God speaking to me directly and telling me what to do. If I lived in a world like Jonah's perhaps faith would not be needed because God would just talk to us when we need help or guidance. Although Jonah also is a character who needs support and assurance from God, a direct call for faith in his life. So like Moses, Jonah too needs to have faith in the task that God has outlined for him. Jonah and Moses equally might benefit from a boost in faith. Maybe we aren't that different after all from our ancestors whose stories we read in the Torah.

In leading these workshops I learned that fear, although universal, has many different faces. We can be afraid of things that are going to happen, or aren't going to happen. We can be frightened about the unknown. We can be frightened by monsters or other imaginary things. Everyone experiences fear in a different way and reacts to fear differently. Even if Moses was afraid of the burning bush, he still moved toward it. Moses' fear becomes more prevalent when he questions God, asking "Who am I to do this?" Moses' fear presents itself as doubt. Jonah, on the other hand, experiences God telling him exactly what to do, and he runs away, I assume out of fear. In the Jonah text the sailors also fear for their lives and fear Adonai. It is interesting that in this text fear is more explicitly described from the perspectives of the minor characters. But in the Jonah text, fear is represented in its multiple modes. Fear is used to describe both what one fears and what one has awe for. The psalmist in psalm 27 takes his/her fear and turns to faith. In each of the texts I explored, fear is dealt with in a different manner. This is representative of the multitude of reactions that individuals have to fear.

Faith can either be a reaction to one's experiences with the divine or it can come out of a longing for God's place in one's life. Moses doesn't seem to have to work hard in order to interact with God. But he also doesn't seem to be afraid in the Burning Bush text. Rather, he is more in awe. Others may find faith in response to a moment of fear. It may be that one of the roles of fear is to lead us toward faith. Out of fear, those who believe in God may turn to God for strength and help. In this way fear is a positive motivator, since it can lead us to seek God. In the Jewish tradition the notion of *yirat shamayim*, a fear/awe of heaven, may be encouraging us to connect with God either in the moment we are feeling fear or after fear has passed.

Faith does not have to be related to God, although in the texts I am looking at, it is related to the divine. Moses is compelled to look at the Burning Bush, and God even reminds Moses of the sacredness of this moment, when he tells him to remove his sandals for this is holy ground, thus confirming this experience as one of divine importance. But Moses requires God to continue to support his faith when he requests God tell him a name to use with the people as he moves forward in his next task.

Many people have faith in other things such as people, institutions, or principles. For example, some people may have faith in the U.S. government. Others may have faith in their doctor. Some people may have faith in themselves. But what is behind faith? Faith is a belief in something that we cannot see or discern. For those of us who gain strength from spiritual

activities, faith in God can be an anchor. But no matter what, in order to have faith, we must take the leap and believe in that which is unproven, or unquantifiable. Some people may have faith first and then be able to take risks, while others are comfortable taking a risk first and a positive outcome then supports their faith.

Faith is a way to filter our fear into something productive. Fear can very easily move one into a place of immobility. It can paralyze people so they are no longer able to act. Faith in response to fear gives an individual something to do with their desire to control. While we may not be able to control a fearful response to something, we can turn to faith to overcome fear. For example, one who is afraid of losing a job could dwell on that fear and perhaps only feed the fear. Or instead s/he could put energy into being a better employee and thus develop faith that s/he will keep the job. Through exercises of faith we can actively work towards more positive outcomes, enabling ourselves to channel our nervous energy in a good direction.

The Torah tells us that when Moses arrives at the burning bush he responds by turning aside to see this wondrous sight. If we assume this to be true, we could interpret Moses' actions as motivated by curiosity or interest, not fear. Although later he does express fear in completing his task and talking to Pharaoh in order to free the Israelites, at a moment of revelation he shows curiosity, or perhaps even reverence. I draw from this interpretation a lesson about Fear and Faith. Maybe Moses is trying to teach us to approach moments of fear with curiosity instead of dread. When we feel most fearful, if we responded with curiosity and a desire to explore that scares us, how might our fear be transformed? Moses' curiosity leads

God to inform him of the sacredness of this moment. So for Moses at the burning bush, fear led to curiosity that then led to an expression of awe at this sacred moment.

What does Jonah teach us about fear? Jonah seems to be motivated by fear as he attempts to run away from Adonai, and is not successful in his mission. It appears to me that his fear overcomes him and leads him into a deep dark place, which causes him to shut off completely, expressed in the moment that he lays down to sleep in the bottom of the ship. The lesson here is to not indulge our fears and act on them in the most visceral way. Jonah, completely afraid, gave his fear power by giving in to it. When we act out of fear we often react in a way that is different than if we were making decisions from a secure mindset. We may do things that are more irrational. We may make bad choices that can then affect our lives in a negative way, as opposed to acting from a positive place in our lives, when we are often more clear-headed about our decisions, are non-reactive and more thoughtful, and can influence things in the positive. Jonah was acting out of fear and as a result of his actions a number of bad things happened which affected Jonah and others around him. I wonder what might have happened if instead of running away, he had gone directly to Nineveh? Perhaps if like Moses, Jonah's fear had produced a moment of curiosity, he might have said, I don't think I want to do what God is asking of me because no one will listen to me. Then he would have identified exactly what about God's directions scared him most, and he could begin to work on the problem. How differently might Jonah's story have turned out if he was curious instead of giving into fear!

Psalm 27 highlights the struggle one may undergo as one vacillates between Fear and Faith. For me the first verse, "Adonai is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear, Adonai is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" is a firm statement of faith. For me the beauty of this psalm comes through with this strong statement of faith. I find this expression of faith quite refreshing. While I often yearn for such a strong sense of my own faith, just reading this psalm reminds me to lean on God in difficult times. Expressing faith can help us move through some very challenging times without feeling panicked by fear. It seems more productive instead to focus our energy toward expressing faith. The psalmist speaks of faith. A participant in one of my workshops pointed out that perhaps the words of the psalm may be motivated by fear. Even if this is true, I believe that the psalmist is using his faith to help anchor him instead of drowning in the fear. This is why Fear and Faith are so connected. We can turn to faith to help us through times when we feel out of control and overwhelmed. It gives us something active to do with these troubled feelings.

Moses, if fearful at all, turned it into inquiry. He became curious about the burning bush and was led toward a holy experience with God. Jonah, who was offered directions from God, chose not to run away. He learned through a series of challenging experiences for himself and for others, that having faith in himself and faith in God's guidance may have led him on an easier route. The psalmist in Psalm 27 advises the reader to lean on God in times of need. He teaches that God will guide us, protect us, shelter us, lift us up, and give us courage.

The use of light in the three texts is quite striking. In each text light is used to instill a moment of revelation, awe, or a faith filled expression. Moses experiences an angel of

Adonai speaking to him from inside the flame of the Burning Bush. He is told that it is holy ground he stands upon. The light from this fire is clearly divine. It must have been quite a fantastical sight to gaze upon a bush that was not burning up, while an angel speaks to him from inside the flame. Jonah buries himself in the deep dark belly of the ship, and goes to sleep. Both when Jonah descends into the ship and when he falls asleep he enters different levels of darkness. Only later does he emerge on deck, firmly requesting to be thrown overboard, with a clear sense of purpose that this is his destiny. This is when Jonah re-emerges into the light. Maybe Jonah was faithful at that moment that God would save him. He certainly acts with conviction as he tells the sailors to throw him overboard. I interpret this moment as one where Jonah has faith that this is the right thing for them to do. Finally, Psalm 27 begins with these words: "Adonai is my light and my salvation, from whom shall I fear." God is the light that guards and protects us, continually giving up faith to move forward. In later verses of the Psalm God hides us in his tent and raises us high on a rock. Again we have images of darkness or fear, and being hidden in the tent, contrasted with images filled with light and faith, as we are raised high on a rock. Fear and Faith may not be opposites, but instead may be extremes that are related to one another, much like the pillar of cloud and fire that lead and protect the Israelites as they wander through the wilderness. In this one image we find both darkness and light, protection and guidance. This cloud has two roles: to hide and protect the people from their enemies, and to guide them on their path. Fear often dictates to us when to withdraw and go into a space of darkness, and faith beckons us forth into the light.

When we examine these three texts in this order, Moses at the burning bush, Jonah and Psalm 27, we are taken on a journey of Fear and Faith. Moses may have initial fear, then experiences a sacred moment of awe, and then later is fearful again, only to have God reassure him. Jonah is fearful and completely lacking in faith. Psalm 27 reminds us to return to God when we are feeling most frightened, in order to lead us through any trials that we may confront. Our texts model for us different responses to fear: inquiry, flight, and faith. While I must admit that sometimes our personal response to fear cannot be controlled, I long to work towards a faithful response to fear.

The incredible richness of our Jewish texts offers us many different examples and models from which to learn. Our matriarchs and patriarchs do things that we think are horrible at times and at other times that we find enlightened and incredible. We are blessed to have a tradition that embraces the wholeness of the individual, who both makes mistakes and succeeds. We see Moses as a fallible human being. We know that siblings may not always treat each other with the ideal amount of respect, and sometimes they fight or steal the other's blessings. We read of jealousy and anger and fear. I have always felt this is the beauty of our texts. Our matriarchs and patriarchs faced challenges similar to what we face today. They were not perfect, far removed from our existence. With these texts on Fear and Faith, I have learned that they too struggle with fear. The fear of answering a call from God was debilitating to Jonah. I can relate to Jonah's struggles and this helps me to enter the text and explore it in more depth. Moses too had fear about his ability to be able to stand up to Pharaoh in order to lead the Jewish people. He even had God actively on his side, directing him to do this. So I am in good company as I feel my fear about stepping into my new role as

rabbi. Jonah, who was a prophet, was afraid too. The psalmist reminds me to call on my faith in these moments. He teaches us to use our faith constructively, to reach out for help, to do something with our fear instead of just dwelling in the difficult feelings.

Fear and Faith are two extreme responses to the unknown. Often they go hand in hand: we may feel one and then lean on the other going back and forth like a game of ping-pong. We see the psalmist vacillate back and forth throughout Psalm 27. But for me, faith is the more constructive place to put my energy. When I reach moments of utter fear, turning to God gives me something active to do, a way to release my fears, a way to let go. I pray that an in depth study of these texts has helped lead my students to their own understanding, intellectually and viscerally, to the relationship between Fear and Faith. The words of Psalm 27 will always be a part of me as I move forward in my life. When I am most afraid I recite the first verse. "Adonai is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" And in order to remind myself where to find strength I recite verse 8, " To you my heart has said, "seek my face", your face Adonai I seek."

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