Igniting Souls:
Creating Meaningful Communal Worship
Through Spiritual Experimentation

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Ordination and for the Master of Arts in Jewish Nonprofit Management

Written and submitted by Samantha Orshan Kahn
Under the advisements of professors:
Richard Siegel and Rabbi Richard Levy

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
School of Rabbinic Studies
School of Jewish Nonprofit Management
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By: Samantha Orshan Kahn

Abstract

This thesis is written for individuals, clergy and lay leaders, interested in providing meaning and substance for the spiritual life of their community. The goal of prayer should not be to entertain congregants; but to move them, to teach them, to set their souls on fire with excitement and wonder. Enhancing communal worship requires an engagement with the soulful, the spiritual – that which can be felt and internalized.

This thesis provides an introduction to the history, practices, interest in and resources for Jewish spirituality. It strives to illustrate some of the recognized benefits of engaging in spiritual work. Though many spiritual exercises are deeply personal, this study discusses the importance of creating opportunities for both inward reflection and divine encounters within a communal framework. Together, these facets of building communal spirituality create an integrated narrative of how American Reform congregations can ignite the souls of their members through spiritually enriched communal worship.

The thesis contains six chapters: Introduction, Historical Overview of Jewish Spiritual Movements, Spirituality Today, Spirituality in Action, Suggested Practices and a Conclusion. The Suggested Practices section further breaks down into discussions on music, silence, meditation, participatory worship, the use of Psalms, Jewish yoga and recommended readings. There are also three appendices, including the survey questions from the original research, a suggested reading list from the Institute or Jewish Spirituality and an additional list of suggested readings on Jewish spirituality.

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One Friday evening at sunset, about 200 people gathered on a beach to welcome in Shabbat. While there were a few couples and individuals present, the vast majority of participants were families. The children's ages ranged from babies under a year old to high school students. The adults sat on blankets and beach chairs, talking and watching as the children played. Suddenly a guitar began strumming out a familiar song, and the crowd shifted their seats to face the water. In front of the water stood their two rabbis and a song leader. As seagulls flew above them and waves crashed behind them, they began their Friday night Shabbat service.

The Rabbi started by speaking about the ocean at his back and the problems existing elsewhere in America's waters.[1] He then spoke of the responsibility they had to try to help spiritually heal the earth, to send their prayers and energy toward the ocean. This would be the overarching theme of the evening, a cross between soulful emotion and ideas of social action, all focused on the ocean before them.

The service then proceeded from a yellow prayer packet scattered with quotes about the importance of heartfelt sincerity and soulful intention in prayer. The service itself, the prayers and tunes, was a typical Reform Erev-Shabbat family service. This changed slightly during the *Amidah*. After the opening blessings of the *Amidah*, there was a slightly prolonged opportunity for silent meditation, guided by a thoughtful prompt from the rabbi. When the time for meditation concluded, they sang *Sim Shalom* and ended the *Amidah*.

The next part of the service was a movement exercise. The Rabbi noted that he would speak, and then congregants should move or act in a way that brings the words he spoke to life. Though the children were the main actors, everyone present seemed to join in. He then

[1] This is a reference to the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010.

read a variety of poems about the beach or the ocean. The poems were filled with descriptive comments about seagulls flying, moonlight dancing on the waves, air moving in swirls and other active imagery. With each statement, the congregation moved their arms and legs, each acting out the words in his or her own way. Between each of the poems everyone repeated the statement, "The beach is God's creation, so am I." After the final poem, and the final repetition of this phrase, the rabbi spoke about the sacred responsibility to take care of God's creations. The service was then concluded with the mourner's *Kaddish*, and the community then proceeded to sing, talk, eat and hang out on the beach.

The community seemed to share a sense of pride and enjoyment over this unusual Shabbat service on the sand. The evening had not been advertised as a spiritual event, and yet it seemed this service was overflowing with spiritual experimentation. The setting itself, taking place outdoors on the beach instead of in a synagogue, contributed to a spiritual feel. The focus on nature and the ocean and the message of a responsibility from God to take care of these divine creations added another level of spiritual awareness to the evening. The guided meditation during the *Amidah* and the movement exercise each helped build a spiritual level of prayerfulness. The evening experience was of a spiritual, joyful and warm Shabbat service.

The crowd did not seem like a particularly unique group, the turnout was not from a special group of congregants who thought of themselves as spiritual seekers. This was a typical showing for a Friday night service. The only distinction about this crowd was the number of people who attended overall, large for a summer service, and particularly the number of children and families. For some reason, families were interested in attending a beach-side spiritual service, and they participated in the evening with enthusiasm. This

Shabbat service on a Southern California beach was modest in its trappings, and yet overflowing with laughter, song and soulful reflections. This was just one Friday night service for this particular congregation, but it represents the way in which Jewish religious services and Jewish communities can be enriched by integrating spiritual elements into communal worship.

This was just one community and one Shabbat evening. There are hundreds of spiritual evenings in dozens of congregations that could be observed and written about. Yet this one, Shabbat at the beach for Congregation Shir Ha-Ma'alot of Irvine California, was chosen specifically because it is not one of those California communities known for being particularly spiritual. It is not a congregation known for extreme experimentation or constantly putting spiritual practices at the forefront of its worship. On the contrary, though its services are often exceedingly beautiful, filled with well-chosen words and engaging songs, it is also a very typical Reform worship service. This is not an experimental community on the fringe; this is a modern Reform congregation. Still, they are led by a Rabbi who is hopeful that he can help his congregants engage in a deeply meaningful Judaism, and he draws on spiritual practices from time to time to enhance their communal worship and activities.

This thesis is written for individuals, clergy and lay leaders, who share a similar hope for creating an engaging Judaism for their own communities. Prayer should be meaningful. The goal should not simply be to entertain congregants; but to move them, to teach them, to set their souls on fire with excitement and wonder. Enhancing communal worship requires an engagement with the soulful, the spiritual – that which can be felt and internalized. Wanting to provide meaning and substance for the spiritual life of one's community does not require

massive amounts of work or cutting edge experimental methods. Some of the most fulfilling spiritual practices are small, quiet, or easy acts. While helping others to explore and cultivate awe, holiness and connection does take thoughtfulness, it can be achieved by interested communities wherever they may be.

It is true that the ocean itself elicits a certain awe of creation, but all of creation is wondrous - not just at the beach. Shabbat on the beach could easily be Shabbat on a mountain top, Shabbat in the park, Shabbat in the bayou, or any other beautiful setting near by. Every location, even inside old and problematic buildings, may become filled with the wonder of creation as the community breathes life into the setting. Prayer leaders have the ability to make choices that can help the building melt into the background as souls join together in song, joy and moments of sacred introspection.

This thesis provides an introduction to the history, practices, interest in and resources for Jewish spirituality. It strives to illustrate some of the incredible benefits of engaging in spiritual work. Though many spiritual exercises are deeply personal, this study discusses the importance of creating opportunities for both inward reflection and divine encounters within a communal framework. Together, these facets of building communal spirituality create an integrated narrative of how and why American Reform congregations can ignite the souls of their members through spiritually enriched communal worship.

An Historical Overview of Jewish Spiritual Movements

While it may seem that spirituality is a New Age buzzword, the concept of engaging in soulful practices is ancient in many religions, including Judaism. Just as people have come to understand how to use and care for their bodies, so too have people throughout time come to recognize a part of their being which is felt even though it is without form and that also needs to be exercised and cared for. It is a palpable part of a person, the essence of one's uniqueness, as real as one's eyes or hands. It is that within each individual, yet also beyond their physicality, that makes them feel and care and love. It is who they are in their essence. Some may call this a soul. The longing to evaluate and take care of one's soul and to learn to nurture it properly throughout life has always been a factor in Jewish history and practice. It is this striving and the practices used to understand, develop and nurture one's soul and its relationship to the Eternal Presence, which is the definition of spirituality for the purposes of this thesis. So much more than a buzzword, Jewish spirituality is an essential part of Judaism itself, for it is the cultivation of awareness, through religious practice, of the innermost parts of the self and its connection to the Divine. What could be more important than the soul's reaching out toward the Eternal and discovering ways to feel a return embrace?

Spirituality in Judaism is not simply about feeling good; it is about discovery, self-awareness and properly guiding one's choices and actions. Such Jewish spiritual traditions can be traced back to some of Judaism's earliest writings. Adin Steinsaltz explains:

> Although the term soul searching (*heshbon nefesh*) is relatively new in the lexicon of Jewish thought-its use dates only from the Middle Ages-the concept of a spiritual reckoning is as old as Jewish culture itself. The form of this reckoning and the issue it encompasses may have changed from generation to generation, but it has remained a principal element in the Jewish life and thought of all periods.[2]

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[2] Adin Steinsaltz, "Soul Searching," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought,* ed. Arthur A. Cohen and Paul Mendes-Flohr (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 897.

What takes place in the soul of the individual has always been a primary consideration in Jewish life. Steinsaltz continues his discussion, noting that biblical soul searching happens mostly on a communal level, but that such "spiritual introspection" in post biblical literature moves from the communal to the individual during the second temple period and beyond.[3]

With an eye to post-biblical work, one may find several discussions of spiritual and mystical experiences in the classical corpus of rabbinic writings. Early discussions seemed to center around seeking visions of the *merkavah*, referring to the vision from the prophet Ezekiel. In his contemporary commentary on the Zohar, the central text of Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism), scholar Daniel Chanan Matt explains:

> *Merkavah* designates a form of visionary mystical praxis that reaches back into the Hellenistic era but was still alive as late as tenth-century Babylonia. ... Those who "went down into the *merkavah*" sought visions that took them before the throne of God, allowing them to travel through the divine "palaces" (*heikhalot*), realms replete with angels and, at the height of ecstasy, to participate in or even lead the angelic chorus. The term *merkavah* (chariot) links this tradition to the opening vision of the prophet Ezekiel, which was seen as the great paradigm for all such visionary experiences and accounts. It is also connected to the *qedushah* formula ("Holy, holy, holy is YHVH of hosts; the whole earth is filled with His glory!") of Isaiah 6, since it is this refrain that most *Merkavah* voyagers recount hearing the angels sing as they stand with them in the heavenly heights.[4]

Discussions of famous sages engaging with the work of the *merkavah* are scattered throughout rabbinic literature. There is even a Talmudic statement that "the workings of the *merkavah* are the secrets of the Torah."[5] This adage presents these mystical practices as legitimate ways to unlock the inner meanings of the Torah, a great goal of our rabbinic sages. Traditions exist linking Rabbi Akiva and his disciples to these spiritual practices. It is

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[3] Ibid. 898-900

[4], Daniel Chanan Matt, *The Zohar, Vol. 2 (*Stanford: Stanford UP, 2004), 48.

[5] BT Hag. 11b-12a, as cited in Moshe Idel, "Mysticism," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought,* ed. Arthur A. Cohen and Paul Mendes-Flohr (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 645.

thought that through the study of Torah, they encountered spiritual experiences, such as seeing the *merkavah*, and were able to unlock previously hidden meaning in Torah text. [6]

There are also texts that warn against such mystical endeavors, such as the well-known Talmudic story of the four sages who entered *pardes*.[7] These texts that speak about the danger of spiritual endeavors discouraged such methods as meditations, "the recitation of magical-mystical hymns and secret names."[8]

While cautionary tales and warnings against spiritual practices certainly exist, Jewish tradition also presents a much more benign, mainstream way of approaching visions of the *merkavah*, one that comes from diligent study. The following passage from Midrash Mishle discusses not only the process, but the importance of experiencing the mystical as a result of studying Talmud. The passage, attributed to Rabbi Ishmael, states:

> If one appears, who possesses proficiency in the study of Talmud, the Holy One, Blessed be He, asks him, "My son, since you did occupy yourself with the study of the Talmud, did you gaze upon the *Merkavah*? For in my world there is no real pleasure except when sages are sitting occupied with the words of Torah and gaze and look, behold and meditate upon this: The Throne of Glory, where does it stand? ..." etc.[9]

This passage continues, furthering the idea that God wants Talmudic scholars to have meditated on the *merkavah* and to have sincerely contemplated the "throne of God." This

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[6] Midrash Hallel, in I. O. Eisenstein, Ozar ha-Midrashim, 131, as cited in Moshe Idel, "Mysticism," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought,* ed. Arthur A. Cohen and Paul Mendes-Flohr (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 644.

[7] BT Hag. 14b. This is a well known story found in the context of a discussion of mystical *merkavah* practices, in which four sages, namely Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, Elisha Ben Abuyah, and R. Akiva, all enter *pardes*. There is debate as to whether or not their entering *pardes* was an act of literally entering heaven, if it was simply a vision, or if they entered some mystical realm of theosophy. Regardless, the story becomes a warning against mystical practices because it says that one died, one went crazy, and one became an apostate; and only Rabbi Akiva entered and departed unhurt.

[8] Idel, 650

[9] Ibid., 648

and other such texts[10] advance the notion that the study of Torah and Talmud can lead to a spiritual encounter with the Eternal. In these mystical traditions, it appears that proficiency in scripture is a prerequisite for spiritual experiences, and that spiritual experiences are the proper goal of textual study.

During the medieval period, Jewish mystical tradition continued to develop, and different types of spiritual practices began to emerge. Kabbalah, the Jewish mystical tradition, which in a bastardized form now has made an appearance in American pop culture, first took root and developed different forms during these medieval times. Moshe Idel writes of the more ecstatic school of Kabbalah:

> It flourished during the second half of the thirteenth century, with Abraham Abulafia as its main spokesman. Its primary aim was to bring the practitioner to the "state of prophecy." The techniques used to achieve this ecstatic state do not involve the study of Torah per se; rather they involve the mystical permutation of divine names and musical vocalizations, together with other techniques such as body postures and controlled breathing.[11]

Such techniques are still used today by Jewish spiritual seekers. Yet a more cerebral form of Jewish mysticism developed as well. The classical form of Kabbalah came to be that which centered around the text of the Zohar. It understood there to be both hidden and revealed aspects of God in the world. God could be understood both as the infinite unknowable *Ein Sof* and also as the ten *sefirot*, the divine attributes which are revealed in our world today. The Kabbalistic tradition was developed and practiced by a number of important medieval *halakhic* authorities who believed that central to mystical experiences was the *halakhah.* Different than the *merkavah* mystics before them who saw the mystical experience as an

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[10] Another good example comes from Midrash Eliyahu Zuta, ch.1, on II Sam. 23:2, which states clearly that complete study of the tradition leads to the Holy Spirit coming upon the learner. (Idel, 646)

[11] Idel, 653

ultimate goal, this new form of Jewish mystic believed that one engaged in spiritual practice by pairing spiritual intentions with the fulfillment of *mitzvot*, commandments. This spiritual understanding of the role of the individual in affecting the world around him or her through mystical intentions and performance of *mitzvot* grew with the next stage of Jewish spirituality, that which developed in Safed.[12]

After the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492, Jewish spiritual practices, like much of Jewish life, were re-imagined as a result of this watershed historical event. Key figures of the development of this new school of spiritual practice include Moses Cordovero and Rabbi Isaac Luria. In his lecture titled "Isaac Luria and His School,"[13] Gershom Scholem, a leading 20th century authority on Jewish mysticism, compellingly claims that in the wake of the expulsion from Spain, Jewish mysticism underwent a dramatic transformation. Scholem asserts that Lurianic Kabbalah intertwined human events and divine processes and thus spoke to the emotional needs created by the exile from Spain through the novel concepts of *Tsimtsum, Shevirath Ha-Kelim, Tikkun, Kavanah*, and *the exile of the Shekinah.*[14]

Scholem also asserts that through these doctrines, Lurianic Kabbalah placed a new potential in the hands of the individual, intrinsically connecting Jewish history to the biography of God and creation. While he shows that Luria built his doctrines upon ideas that already existed in Jewish tradition, Scholem also argues that this new mystical tradition coming out of Safed contained drastically changed views on lived reality. He argues that Jewish life was now viewed as fragmentary, and Jewish mysticism attempted to address this

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[12] Safed, or Tsfat, is an ancient Jewish city in northern Israel which became home to great mystical thinkers and remains a city immersed in spiritual practice to this day.
[13] Gershom Scholem, "Lurianic Kabbalah," *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism (New York: Schocken, 1995).*
[14] These terms are defined later, as they come up throughout the discussion of Lurianic Kabbalah.

fragmentation.[15] Scholem viewed these changes as resulting directly from the Jewish expulsion from Spain. He writes:

> ...the sufferings of the Exile were linked up with the central Kabbalistic doctrines about God and man. The emotions aroused by these sufferings were not soothed and tranquilized, but stimulated and whipped up. The ambiguities and inconsistencies of "unredeemed" existence, which were reflected in the meditations of the Torah and the nature of prayer, led that generation to set up ultimate values which differed widely from those of the rationalist theology of the Middle Ages...[16]

Scholem asserts that this new *Kabbalistic* movement brought about dramatic changes in theology as a direct result of the experience of the Spanish expulsion.

As briefly mentioned earlier, Scholem discusses Lurianic doctrines containing symbols of exile and redemptive power. The idea of *Tsimtsum* centers on a theory of the Divine withdrawing into itself in order to make room for creation. This theory views creation as beginning with God's retreat. Scholem says, "...this idea of *Tsimtsum* is the deepest symbol of Exile that could be thought of."[17] *Shevirath Ha-Kelim,* or the Breaking of the Vessels, is also central to this discussion. Essential in Lurianic thought, Breaking of the Vessels leads directly to the need for *Tikkun,* which provides humans with the ability to affect the world and the Divine. Through the Breaking of the Vessels, elements of good mix in with elements considered not good. This allows not only for an explanation of why one encounters evil, sadness or destruction in the world, but also for an uplifting theology of how one can overcome such difficulties through a process of restoration or *Tikkun.* Through the idea of *Tikkun,* creation and redemption become connected, because redemption in this theology centers on restoration of the original intent of creation.

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[15] Scholem, 249
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., 261

The theory of *Tikkun* remains important today for the way these understandings involve individuals in the realm and reality of the Divine, in partnering with God in the perfection of the world. Scholem explains, "The process in which God conceives, brings forth and develops Himself does not reach its final conclusion in God. Certain parts of the process of restitution are allotted to man."[18] For many Jews today this notion motivates actions of social justice, efforts at repairing the world (Tikkun Olam). Such actions can be understood as spiritual work. In its time though, these teachings helped Jews to be motivated not to give up on a world filled with shards of pain, but to engage in spiritual efforts to help restore the world. Lurianic Kabbalah took a people who felt brokenhearted and first showed them that their situation mirrors the Divine experience and then empowered them by connecting their actions to Divine potential. This theological approach to history empowers human beings to manage their own destiny and take an active role in the purpose of existence. For Luria, *Tikkun* involved individuals in the process of redemption, and through this, a new world of Jewish spirituality was born.

The final Lurianic doctrine that Scholem ties into the historical importance of this mystical tradition is that of *Kawwanah,* or *Kavanah*, known in Lurianic Kabbalah as a mystical approach toward doing the work of *Tikkun*. Understood as mystical intention in prayer and meditation, *Kavanah* seeks to bring about Divine restoration. Again, this empowers individuals in the workings of history. For Luria, *Kavanah* also exists as a soul's means of reaching near to God. Prayer with *kavanah* therefore connects human action with the process of unifying and restoring the world to its true and best reality.

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[18] Ibid, 273

Lurianic Kabbalah has had great influence over many different expressions of Judaism and remains an influential source for Jewish spiritual endeavors to this day. Theologian George Robinson talks about the role of human action inspired by this new form of Jewish spirituality by noting:

> For the Jewish mystic from the medieval period on, the human endeavor of *imitatio dei/imitation of God* means being an actual spiritual partner with the Creator in the repair of the unredeemed world. One performs the mitzvoth in order to contribute to restoring the balance in the Godhead itself, something that God cannot do alone.[19]

This partnership and role of the *mitzvot* performed with mystical intention remains a distinct aspect of Jewish spiritual traditions.

The next significant development in Jewish spirituality was the emergence of the Hasidic movement. Robinson notes that this movement's success was a direct result of Lurianic Kabbalah's bringing spirituality to the forefront of Jewish life.[20] The Baal Shem Tov, known as the *Besht,* the founder of the Hasidic movement, is credited with igniting a thirst for the spiritual in daily Jewish life. Rabbi David A. Cooper discusses his influence and states, "In the eighteenth century, the Baal Shem Tov dramatically changed the character of Judaism by proposing that joy, prayer, and an ecstatic connection with God through physical action were as important, if not more so, than simply living an observant life as a Jew."[21] While the Hasidic movement has developed and changed over time, the lessons of the Baal Shem Tov - that a relationship with the Eternal was open to all Jews regardless of how versed they were in Talmudic thought -greatly impacted the process of the Jewish spiritual seeker.

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[19] George Robinson, *Essential Judaism* (New York: Pocket Books, 2000), 362.
[20] Ibid., 388
[21] David A Cooper, *God is a Verb: Kabbalah and The Practice of Mystical Judaism*, (New York: Riverhead Books, 1997), 6.

Many liberal synagogues today retell stories of the *Besht* and his disciples to children and congregants of all ages. The messages of these stories teach that it is a person's *kavannah*, meaning his or her intention and sincerity, much more so than the mastery of the set form of prayer, that God truly cares about. In this way, the Baal Shem Tov continues to influence the understandings of modern American Jews about how one can commune with God and what paths lead to Divine consciousness.

When the Hasidic movement began to flourish, it was challenged by those in opposition to it, who came to be known as the *Mitnagdim*. Though they disagreed over many things, both movements contained aspects of Jewish spirituality and were influenced by Lurianic Kabbalah.[22] One of the *Mitnagd* leaders developed a particular spiritual practice based on ethics and behaviors, known as Mussar, which has once again been brought to the forefront of Jewish spiritual practice today.

Mussar is a Jewish literature and spiritual practice dating back to the sixteenth century, whose purpose was to help humans strengthen their souls in their personal struggles against their own evil inclinations.[23] In his book *Everyday Holiness*, Alan Morinis, founder of the Mussar Institute, explains that the purpose of *Mussar* is "to help identify your spiritual curriculum, and then to give you the tools that will help you consciously and effectively engage with the inner work that lies before you."[24] While the spiritual curriculum might differ from person to person, the tools used to practice this spiritual work are applicable for all who hope to strengthen their spiritual practices for the purpose of better directing their own traits and inclinations.

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[22] Robinson, 388
[23] Rabbi Richard Levy, Class Lecture, *LIT 521-522: Mussar Literature* (Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Los Angeles, Ca) January 11, 2010.
[24] Alan Morinis, *Everyday Holiness* (Boston: Trumpeter Books, 2007), 249.

Mussar began as "an introspective practice undertaken by an individual seeker."[25] Rabbi Yisrael Salanter took this spiritual discipline and transformed it into a movement whose work was to strengthen the human heart.[26] Salanter, a proponent of the *Mitnagdic* positions, transformed this practice into a modern spiritual and ethical practice. Salanter's disciples worked to institutionalize *Mussar* practices, and created three schools of approaches. Alan Morinis summarizes the personalities and differences of these three schools as follows:

> Kelm Mussar is highly introspective, emphasizing the powers of the mind. The motto of Rabbi Simcha Zissel, the Alter of Kelm, was "Take time, be exact, unclutter the mind."
>
> Slabodka Mussar has been more behavioral, asking its students to internalize and then conduct themselves with the deportment of people who really believe that we are made in the image of God. The Slabodka approach is summed up in its slogan, "the majesty of man."
>
> Novarodok Mussar has been the more radical school, adopting a more aggressive methodology for inner change. The Alter of Novarodok taught that it was not enough to try to influence the soul, what is needed is to "storm the soul."[27]

The distinctions between these different schools of thought have faded somewhat because often *Mussar* practices and literature today utilize tools from all three approaches in the work for improvement of one's traits. These tools are presented in classical works of *Mussar,* to help readers better understand and navigate their own attributes. There is a basic approach such writings take, focusing on particular traits and grounding such explorations in Jewish texts. Still, there is a variety of ways to approach this practice of *Mussar*, even while approaching it from the scope of a particular school.

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[25] Ibid, 8
[26] Ibid, 9
[27] Ibid.

Two books of classic *Mussar* literature, which are available for spiritual seekers, are *Orchot Tzaddikim,* The Ways of the Righteous, and *Mesillat Yesharim,* The Path of the Just. In *Mesillat Yesharim*, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto explains that his book reminds people of what they already know: through continuous reading of it we can better understand how best to fear and serve the Eternal. The assumption here is that the essence of humanity is good, but that the way of the world leaves us prone to forget that which we know to be right and good. We therefore need to work to peel back the layers of confusion over our original understandings, to get back to what we already know.

Orchot Tzaddikim, on the other hand, seems to heighten the role of fear.[28] Though both books focus on the idea of perfecting personal traits to achieve spiritual betterment, the tone and emphasis roots *Orchot Tzaddikim* in Novarodok Mussar. They believed influencing the soul was not enough, study was not enough, but affecting drastic behavioral changes was sometimes necessary. This also seems to be the message and approach in *Orchot Tzaddikim.* The idea that we must know the value of our own traits in order to weigh and measure them appropriately and to rid ourselves of those negative aspects of ourselves - the evil traits that spoil all the good in us - lends itself to a more radical understanding of the work of *Mussar.* The book states: "And just as pain, distress and afflictions indicate bodily illness, so evil traits indicate sickness of the soul. ... Now how can the healing of the soul-sickness be achieved? Let them go to the wise, the healers of souls, who will heal them through their teachings until they are returned to the way of good."[29] In this approach to *Mussar* one may see a vast difference between *Orchot Tzaddikim's* approach to *Mussar* as the way to "heal"

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[28] Rabbi Gavriel Zaloshinsky, ed. *Orchot Tzaddikim* (Jerusalem: Feldheim Publishers, 1995), 11.
[29] Ibid, 11-13.

broken souls and the *Mesillat Yesharim* approach of *Mussar* as a way to remind us of what we already know and help us to better understand and serve God.

Both of these classic *Mussar* texts are useful tools in understanding the essence of Mussar, a lesser known Jewish spiritual tradition that seems to be experiencing a revival.[30] They teach us that while there are certain underlying principles of this literature, there are also various ways of engaging in the spiritual practice of *Mussar*. *Mussar* became a practice somewhat between that of the *Hasidim* and the *Mitnagdim*, in that it emphasized the ethical behaviors needed for spiritual fulfillment. In its understanding of spirituality as something to be achieved by proper behavior and following *mitzvot*, it followed the tradition of Jewish spiritual practices that came before it.

With the *Haskalah*, the Enlightenment, most forms of Judaism began to turn away from spiritual endeavors and to concentrate on presenting Judaism as a religion of reason. In the nineteenth century, with the rise of *Wissenchaft des Judentums* (the scientific study of Judaism), rationalism and reason became the focus of Jewish study, and most of the spiritual traditions of Judaism, such as *Kabbalah*, *Mussar* and *Hasidism*, were delegitimized by the liberal rationalist traditions of Judaism that were developing. For several generations, spiritual aspects of Judaism were not discussed or engaged in by mainstream Jewish scholars. American Judaism, as a consequence, developed largely without any sense of the rich spiritual tradition of Judaism, that is until American culture itself allowed for such traditions to become acceptable again.

The Sixties were a time of great change in America, and American Jewish spirituality was not untouched by the environment at large. Historian Jack Wertheimer explains:

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[30] This might be due to the "self-help" nature of this work, and the growing desires for self improvement practices in America today.

"Arising from a range of circumstances both endemic to the Jewish condition and generic to the American and even international mood at the end of the twentieth century, new movements reshaped the agenda of religious institutions and individual Jews. The convulsions of the 1960s transformed the mid-century contours of Jewish religious life."[31] Many of these new movements were of a political nature, and some also focused on the Jewish spiritual experience.

In the late 1960s, the *Havurah* movement began to take shape. It was a Jewish counterculture that embraced "sixties-era ideals, including egalitarianism, informality, cohesive community, active participatory prayer, group discussion, and unconventional forms of governance."[32] These Jewish communities also emphasized meaningful ritual and spirituality. They experimented with their worship, integrating the singing of *nigunnim* (wordless spiritual melodies), the reading of poetry, dance, meditation, and other practices that led to a revitalized, spiritual and participatory worship experience.

Though the *Havurah* movement was relatively small, its influence has been vast. Historian Hasia Diner explains "The havurah movement, broadly defined, unleashed a new kind of Jewish creativity. In a variety of media - music, dance, weaving and tapestry, photography, filmmaking, paper-cutting, calligraphy - the late 1960s saw the birth of explicitly Jewish arts, which derived much of their inspiration from traditional texts, from the tropes of the Jewish past, and from many other sources of world culture."[33] Through the arts, the *Havurah* movement helped Judaism to become more inventive and creative. But the

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[31] Jonathan Sarna, ed., *The American Jewish Experience* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1986), 330

[32] Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism* (New Haven, Yale UP 2004), 321.

[33] Hasia Diner, *The Jews of the United States* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2004), 347.

greatest influence of the *Havurah* movement on mainstream American Judaism came in the form of a book. Historian Jonathan Sarna explains:

> The ideals and values that the Jewish counterculture and the havurah movement embodied soon moved from margin to mainstream. The text responsible for this remarkable transformation was *The Jewish Catalog* (1973) ... that billed itself as a Jewish "do-it-yourself kit," a guide to how to become "*personally* involved in aspects of Jewish ritual life, customs, cooking, crafts, and creation." ... No book published by the Jewish Publication Society, except for the Bible, ever sold so many copies. Eventually expanded to three volumes, *The Jewish Catalog* served as a vehicle for transmitting the innovations pioneered by the creative young Jews of the havurah movement to Jews throughout North America and beyond. The widespread return to ritual that soon became evident across the spectrum of American Jewish life, the renewed interest throughout the community in neglected forms of Jewish music and art, the awakening of record numbers of Jews to the wellsprings of their tradition-these and other manifestations of Jewish religious revival in America all received significant impetus from *The Jewish Catalog*.[34]

Sarna depicts a book which knocked on the door to Jewish souls and held people's hands, guiding them back to the spirit and excitement of their religion. American Jews were longing for meaning, and this was a time for their spiritual awakening.

Through *The Jewish Catalog*, a wave of Jewish art and an excited and captivating communal worship, the *Havurah* movement, steeped in a search for meaningful Jewish experiences, greatly influenced American Judaism. Part of that influence came in the effects it had on prayer experiences even within the mainstream congregations. Reform and Conservative synagogues started to transition from a mainly performative service to a much more participatory prayer experience, which helped congregants to become more involved in their own spiritual work. Congregations also began to experiment with their use of music, the role of lay leaders, and in some cases even with dancing during the service. All of these innovations, which can be directly linked to the growing interest in communal spiritual

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[34] Sarna, *American Judaism*, 320-321.

practices, came as an outgrowth of the *Havurah* movement.[35] Author George Robinson summarizes the great influence of this movement by saying:

> What made the havurah movement significant was not only that it enabled potentially alienated young Jews to find an outlet for their spiritual needs within Judaism at a time when many were experimenting with Eastern religions, cult groups, and other spiritual disciplines, but equally important, it became a birthing ground for many prominent Jewish intellectuals who emerged from havurot in the late 1970s and the 1980s to preach newly revitalized Jewish spirituality.[36]

The *Havurah* movement created a newly inspired and open opportunity for the Jewish spiritual experimentation and creativity that ensued in the following years.

Another important group which has brought new light to spiritual Jewish endeavors is the Jewish Renewal movement. Jewish Renewal emerged out of a combination of the *Havurah* movement, political movements of the late 20th century, and the teachings of Rabbis Shlomo Carlebach and Zalman Schachter-Shalomi.[37] Jewish mystical traditions are found at the core of this movement, and in some ways it also draws on Eastern spiritual disciplines. Meditation and chanting are a large part of their worship experiences. They define themselves as a "worldwide, transdenominational movement grounded in Judaism's prophetic and mystical traditions." The definition continues by stating, "Jewish renewal seeks to bring creativity, relevance, joy, and an all embracing awareness to spiritual practice, as a path to healing our hearts and finding balance and wholeness—*tikkun halev*."[38]

Rabbi Chaim Seidler-Feller, while discussing the spiritual state of American Jews, recounts that upon hearing that 30 percent of American Buddhists are Jewish, Rabbi Zalman Shacter-Shalomi responded, "Jews are clearly a very spiritual people; the only problem is

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[35] Ibid, 324
[36] Robinson, 65
[37] ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal, HYPERLINK << https://www.aleph.org/faq.htm >>
[38] Ibid. HYPERLINK <<https://www.aleph.org/renewal.htm>>

that they can't find it in Judaism."[39] Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi has worked to create a movement that hopes to provide Jewish people with Jewish tools for spiritual soul searching. In the introduction of his book *Jewish with Feeling*, he states, "Our challenge today is to be Jewish in a way that fills our lives with meaning. We want to be Jewish with awareness, to 'do Jewish' in a way that satisfies our souls."[40] This appears to be the spiritual push of this movement. As George Robinson explains it, "What is different about Jewish Renewal is its commitment to an integrated program that unites diverse political concerns with overtly mystical beliefs in an explicitly Jewish way."[41] For this reason, this movement might continue to grow and influence American Judaism overtime.

It is clear that Jewish history contains a developing narrative of spirituality from its origins until the present day. Throughout the Jewish people's story, Jews have continually been engaged with the work of the soul and searching for the Divine, and there is every reason to expect this will continue. Jewish spiritual movements have created and adopted a number of different approaches to engaging in this work, and thus overtime Judaism has developed a vast resource of Jewish spiritual practices. The question that arises is how these historical movements and their treasury of resources manifest in Jewish observance today.

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[39] Chaim Seidler-Feller, *Jewish Spirituality in America,* Havruta: A Journal of Jewish Conversation. Vol. 2 No. 1 (Spring 2009), 10.
[40] Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, *Jewish with Feeling* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2005) xi
[41] Robinson, 399

Spirituality Today: Modern Approaches to Jewish Spiritual Experiences

Having explored various historical spiritual movements within Judaism, one may turn now to the present moment, when questions of and interest in spirituality permeate all denominations of American Jewish life. In a 2009 article titled *Jewish Spirituality in America*, a number of prominent contemporary Jewish thinkers discuss the spiritual situation in which we find ourselves. Sociologist Steven Cohen begins by asserting:

> Evidence for the growth of spirituality in American Jewish life can be seen in the Jewish Healing movement, the Kabbalah centers, the Institute for Jewish Spirituality, and books sold by the likes of Jewish Lights Publishing. ... The recent phenomenon has a lot to do with the shift toward the search for a personal meaning as a central way of being Jewish, ... personal meaning becomes the arbiter of if, when, how and why one will be Jewish.[42]

Cohen's observation helps illustrate two important points. First, that the growth of interest and activity in Jewish spirituality is reflected in a number of different expressions in American Judaism today. Secondly, he notes that as American culture at large continues to emphasize the "I" and the search for personal meaning, so too do Jewish Americans seek personal benefits from their religion today.

Cohen references his work with Arnold Eisen in their book, *The Jew Within*, and continues his observations by explaining, "Today's Jews, like their peers in other religious traditions, have turned inward in the search for meaning. They have moved away from the organizations, institutions, and causes that used to anchor identity and shape belief."[43] This trend can represent a serious problem for synagogues that are not responding to the interests of their congregants. However, if looked at from a different perspective, this potential problem could become a great opportunity for the mainstream Jewish community.

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[42] Steven M. Cohen, *Jewish Spirituality in America.* Havruta: A Journal of Jewish Conversation. Vol. 2 No. 1, Spring 2009. p. 6

[43] Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen, *The Jew Within* (2000). Quoted in *Jewish Spirituality in America.* Havruta: A Journal of Jewish Conversation. Vol. 2 No. 1, Spring 2009.

If Jews are spiritually minded and turning inward in quests for meaning, then congregations can create atmospheres and opportunities to allow for such explorations both within a Jewish context and within existing institutional frameworks. As Cohen explains, "...we need to carefully nurture forms of spirituality that can lay plausible claim to a Jewish authenticity...,"[44] and he proposes that, "the question is not whether Jews should be spiritual but what kinds of spirituality should they practice...."[45] This is not a simple question, but it is an important one to answer if congregational leaders hope to contribute creatively to the next chapter of Jewish life. Jewish spiritual endeavors promise to shape the next stage of Jewish spiritual movements, and because their influence and the interest in them is so widespread, whether they succeed or fail will help determine the future of American Judaism at-large.

The question remains: What forms of spiritual practice can claim Jewish authenticity and attract the spiritual seekers? As described in the previous section's discussion of Jewish spiritual movements throughout history, there is a long record of various spiritual practices that have been legitimate parts of Jewish community and practice. Such a list may include: spiritual introspection, meditation, chants, diligent study, mystical personification of the Divine name, body postures and movements, controlled breathing exercises, theological musings, social justice work, purposeful intentionality, performance of mitzvoth with intentionality, prayer, ethics, healing efforts, singing *niggunim* and Jewish Arts. While this is not a comprehensive list, certainly all of these practices have authentic Jewish historical and traditional foundations and thus may be considered valuable and legitimate tools in the search for contemporary Jewish spiritual expression.

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[44] Cohen, *Jewish Spirituality in America.* Havruta: A Journal of Jewish Conversation. Vol. 2 No. 1, Spring 2009. P. 8

[45] Ibid., 9

Still, there are those who say that many of these practices, regardless of their use throughout Jewish history, are still not inherently Jewish activities. To some extent, these critics might be correct. Rabbi Jordan Bendat-Appell, a faculty member of the Institute for Jewish Spirituality, explains[46] that meditation is not an inherently Jewish practice – it is a human one. It is no more a Jewish activity than eating. Both are universal ways of providing nourishment, used by Jews and non-Jews alike. Still, by making thoughtful choices about what we eat (kashrut) and by using well-chosen words of blessing (motzi and birchat ha mazon), we can transform the human experience of eating into a Jewish practice. So it is with meditation as well. By making thoughtful decisions and incorporating Jewish language, one can transform universal spiritual practices into Jewish ones. In this sense the question is not what forms of spirituality Jews should participate in, but rather how can congregations provide Jewish foundation, form and language for the spiritual practices congregants find most meaningful?

There is no single answer, no comprehensive approach to the problem of uninspiring communal worship. That which most moves and inspires the soul of one congregant may be the very thing that disrupts the prayer flow of another. It therefore becomes the responsibility of rabbis and lay leaders to get to know their communities and to offer a large enough variety of encounter points to allow different congregants to enter into Jewish spiritual engagement through those practices which are most meaningful to them. In order to accomplish this, these congregational leaders must first be aware of and understand the various spiritual and worship practices at their disposal.

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[46] While speaking at the IJS Lay Retreat, January, 2011

One way of beginning to develop a fuller understanding of Jewish spiritual practice is by reading some of the multitude of books on the topic. The number of books on Jewish spirituality has grown vastly in recent years. Jewish Light Publishing, a relatively new and prominent Jewish publishing company, currently features on their website 26 different categories of books arranged by topic or theme. Out of the 26 categories, eight of them relate to spiritual topics - that is just over 30%.[47] Why does this Jewish publishing company break down its books into categories such as "Spirituality in the Workplace," "Spirituality & Wellness," and "Kabbalah, Mysticism & Enneagram?" They create these categories because it is what a significant number of Jewish readers are searching for. When it comes to Jewish spiritual books, there are a lot of choices. Some people are looking for theology, wanting in-depth philosophical studies. Others seek nuggets of wisdom, brief encounters with the spiritual, or "how to" guides for introducing spiritual practices into their lives. All of these options are currently available. While a more complete list of suggestions for further reading may be found in Appendix II and Appendix III, there are a few important books worth mentioning here.

The intellectual seeker may begin by exploring one or more of the following significant books of Jewish spirituality: *Man's Quest for God* by Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Thirteen Petalled Rose* by Adin Steinsaltz, *Radical Judaism* by Arthur Green, and *Your Word is Fire* by Arthur Green and Barry Holtz. There are also a number of extremely well-written and important books that serve less as a presentation of theology and more as a guide for the individual spiritual seeker. Some of these spiritual practice guidebooks are *Jewish Meditation* by Aryeh Kaplan, *Jewish with Feeling* by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi,

[47] Site accessed January 30, 2011 <<http://jewishlights.com/page/category/bl>>

Everyday Holiness by Alan Morinis, *The Busy Soul* by Terry Bookman and *Making Prayer Real* by Mike Comins.

Every one of these books provides an excellent introduction into Jewish spirituality, and these are simply a few of the vast number of books on the topic. So why haven't these works translated directly into more inventive and meaningful communal prayer experiences? Out of the multitude of books exploring Jewish spiritual practice, very few concentrate on the communal side of Jewish spirituality. Most are geared towards the individual seeker. While a few of these books are meant to be congregational spiritual resources, such as *Teaching About God and Spirituality* by Roberta Louis Goodman and Sherry H. Blumberg, such books focus more on educational resources than on worship resources. So while an individual seeker has many tools at his or her disposal, a congregational leader might find it more difficult to adapt these teachings and practices to a communal setting. Fortunately, there is now research and studies of congregational success that go beyond what the available books offer. Therefore this thesis will now explore some of the research into congregational tools for infusing meaning into communal worship, including a case study of one Reform Los Angeles synagogue.

Spirituality in Action

Jewish congregations want to provide worship that is meaningful for their congregants. Yet the methods for successfully accomplishing this goal, which is central to a synagogue's mission, remain elusive. Even those congregations whose worship succeeds in moving their active participants need to ask themselves where the rest of their congregants are, because most are not in the sanctuary praying. Large numbers of Americans are seeking spiritual fulfillment – so why are they not finding it in their synagogues or temples? Editor of Contact Magazine, Eli Valley, describes this congregational crisis, writing:

> For nearly 2000 years, the synagogue has been one of the most emblematic and recognizable institutions in Jewish life. ... But in the past two centuries, the synagogue has lost much of its resonance for non-observant Jews, particularly among young people. Reasons for this vary from disaffection with the traditional liturgy to discomfort with a prayer structure that, in the 19th century, borrowed much from the hierarchical rituals of the Church. To be sure, many still associate the synagogue experience with prayer, community, contemplation and reflection. But too many Jews associate it with stultifying boredom, moralistic sermonizing, rote repetition and uninspired ritual. [48]

He writes this analysis not as a prophetic warning of doom ahead, but rather as a call to action for synagogue communities to evaluate and revitalize their worship experiences. He is not alone; through initiatives such as STAR: Synagogue Transformation and Renewal, Synagogue 2000, and S3K Synagogue Studies Institute, the field of congregational studies is growing and hoping to discover new ways for congregations to reinvigorate themselves.

This study is part of this research, which looks closely at communal prayer experiences for understanding and uncovering tools congregations everywhere can use for infusing greater meaning into congregational worship. A number of overarching questions guided this research. These questions include:

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[48] CONTACT: The Journal of Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation. Autumn 2004/Cheshvan 5765, Volume 7, number 1, p.2

- How can our congregations provide spiritual sustenance to our members?
- What are the Jewish spiritual traditions and practices that could enrich our communal worship?
- How can our congregations create atmospheres and opportunities to encourage individual spiritual growth?
- What types of spiritual experiences are our congregants interested in?
- How can our congregations provide Jewish foundation, form and language for the spiritual practices our congregants find most meaningful?

To address these questions, a variety of Jewish books, studies and spiritual movements were assessed; Shabbat worship was observed at a variety of Los Angeles area congregations; a survey was conducted at Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills, the Reform congregation which was the focus of an in-depth Case Study; and follow-up interviews were conducted with select respondents and clergy from this congregation.

The survey, as part of the larger Case Study, was designed to have congregants of this mainstream Reform synagogue assess their interest and participation in spiritual practices. It assessed their feelings towards spirituality in a variety of different ways, revealing important findings about the needed place of spirituality in a synagogue. Participants were asked[49] questions about service attendance, participation in temple activities, personal Jewish observance, personal spiritual endeavors, and interest in spiritual elements or programs being added to the temple's services and calendar. They were also asked to define for themselves what it means to be a religious or spiritual person and then, based on their own definitions, to assess how religious and how spiritual they were. Finally, they were asked to evaluate the extent to which their temple succeeds in meeting their spiritual needs. It was sent in an email blast to the congregation, circulated via email by clergy and board members, and promoted with sign-up sheets and computers for immediate participation outside of each service and

[49] Complete list of questions may be found in Appendix I

major congregational program for over a month, during November and December 2010. Approximately 25%[50] of the congregation filled out the survey.

The over-all research[51] yielded several interesting findings. Some of the most significant results were:

1. There is a rich tradition of Jewish spirituality, which can be accessed and made enriching for modern life.
2. There are a distinct number of Jewish individuals, within the normative synagogue institution, who are seeking spirituality in their lives.
3. It would be beneficial for congregations to enable such explorations to occur within the framework of the congregation, in order to be a spiritual home for the Jewish spiritual seekers within their congregations.
4. Many individuals who do not identify themselves as spiritual seekers appreciate and respond positively to "spiritual" elements added to regular prayer services, finding that such aspects of the service make it a more meaningful prayer experience.
5. It would be beneficial for congregations to incorporate spiritual practices into their normative worship experiences in order to offer more engaging and meaningful worship to this group of "hide and go seekers" who are moved by spiritual elements in prayer, even though they do not self-identify as spiritual seekers and would not be interested in separate spiritual programming.
6. Spiritual experimentation in the synagogue may appeal to larger numbers of congregants if the term "spirituality" is avoided. Though the term is welcoming to seekers, the word itself may be a barrier to others.

Breaking down each of these findings provides an indication of ways for congregations to provide meaningful experiences that meet their congregants' varied spiritual needs.

The first finding has been discussed in previous sections. There is a rich tradition of Jewish spirituality, which can be accessed and made enriching for modern life. Jewish history and tradition provide a multitude of paths for engaging the soul and infusing meaning into religious practice. As noted in the historical overview of Jewish spirituality, there are a lot of precedents to draw from and a vast number of spiritual resources from Jewish tradition.

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[50] 174 people

[51] From the Case Study along with the totality of research previously mentioned

Congregations seeking to explore these practices must first determine what their community needs, and then they can begin to create opportunities for spiritual practice.

The second finding was that there are a distinct number of Jewish individuals, within the normative synagogue institution, who are actively and consciously seeking spirituality in their lives. As congregations work to serve a variety of different communal interests through interest-groups and programs, spiritual seekers should be thought of as a discrete subgroup in the community. These individuals do not come from a single demographic. In the example of Temple Emanuel, nearly 27% of those surveyed identified themselves as "very spiritual." Respondents between the ages of 30 to 65 were the most likely to consider themselves "very spiritual," but there were individuals from every age range in this category. Furthermore, there seems to be no correlation to annual family income, gender, or political affiliation. At least for Temple Emanuel, there are a number of spiritually minded members from every age, gender, income bracket and political affiliation. This is a Reform congregation in Beverly Hills whose membership consists of individuals from a large variety of fields, backgrounds and income levels. It is reasonable to extrapolate that the findings from this normative liberal community would apply to other liberal, urban American congregations and that a similar percentage of their congregants can be expected to be self-identified spiritual seekers.

This leads directly to the third finding. It would be beneficial for synagogues to enable these spiritual explorations to occur within the framework of the congregation. Currently, only 35% of those who identified as "very spiritual" believe that Temple Emanuel meets their spiritual needs. This means that 65% of the self-identified spiritual seekers are not finding their needs met within the synagogue and are apt to look elsewhere. This should be the easiest group to satisfy by a religious institution. If congregations wish to be a home

for the Jewish spiritual seekers within their communities, they need to offer programs and prayer experiences specifically targeted to them. When asked the extent to which they would be interested in "spiritual" programs and services offered by the Temple, answers aligned with the respondent's own personal definition of themselves as spiritual. The majority (53%) of those who identify as "very spiritual" also indicated that they are "extremely interested" in more spiritual programs and services being offered by the Temple. By contrast, the vast majority of those who said they are "not at all spiritual" also said they are "not at all interested" in such programs (75%). Therefore it is important to see spiritual seekers as a subgroup with a distinct interest which the congregation can satisfy and thereby serve as an important resource in fostering their spiritual life.

One option for these individuals could be to offer an alternative experience on Friday nights or Saturday mornings at the same time as the regularly offered service, in a different location.[52] This experience may be structured in a variety of ways, such as: an hour of meditation and chanting that ends with a Sh'ma, a yoga experience set to the language of the Shabbat liturgy, or an interactive "skeptic's service" which goes through the liturgy asking questions and discussing the language and ideas for God and faith used within it. Other options may be to offer adult education classes that foster spiritual development, such as courses on Kabbalah or Mussar, meditation seminars, yoga classes, a spiritually-minded

[52] I first encountered this idea of an alternative prayer experience simultaneous with regular worship during a talk with Rabbi Arthur Green at Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills on January 15, 2011.

weekly Torah study group[53], opportunities for Spiritual Direction, free-flow writing exercises or social action opportunities.

These are simply a few suggestions from what should be understood as a vast pool of possibilities. The important thing to note is that such programs do not have to be targeted to the entire congregation, but rather they are specifically designed for the spiritual seekers within the congregation. Just as there are Israel programs for those engaged by Israel and Adult B'nai Mitzvah classes, and programs for members in their twenties and thirties, so too should the spiritual seekers in the community be thought of as a group with a particular interest for whom the congregation can offer opportunities and connections.

Beyond this particular community of individuals deeply engaged in and motivated by spiritual experiences, there is also an opportunity to provide meaningful spiritual prayer elements for the rest of the congregation. This is the fourth finding mentioned above, that many individuals who do not identify themselves as spiritual seekers still appreciate "spiritual" elements added to regular prayer services. The survey results indicate that they find such moments of sacred introspection make the prayer experience more meaningful.

Even though these respondents showed very little interest in separate spiritual programming being offered by the temple, when asked the extent to which they would be interested in regular prayer services incorporating more spiritual practices, 40% showed high levels of interests.[54] Many of those who do not consider themselves spiritual still

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[53] Examples of great books that would be useful for this type of program are Sparks Beneath the Surface: A Spiritual Commentary on the Torah by Lawrence Kushner and Kerry Olitzky and The Language of Truth by Arthur Green.

[54] According to the survey, of those congregants who do not consider themselves spiritual, when asked if they were interested in regular prayer services incorporating more spiritual practices, 37% responded with interest in more opportunities for individual Shabbat candle lighting, 26% responded with interest in more movement exercises, 27% responded with

consistently responded that they were very interested in these spiritual practices being more incorporated in regular services. In the survey, 44% of those congregants who do not consider themselves spiritual responded with interest in more guided meditations, 47% responded with interest in more singing of *niggunim* and other spiritual music, and as many as 59% responded with interest in outdoor prayer opportunities. This indicates that a significant number of congregants who do not openly or actively seek spiritual opportunities are still interested in such experiences when they are incorporated in regular communal worship. Though they may not go out of their way to seek spiritual opportunities, they seem to appreciate when they encounter spiritual elements during their regular prayer experiences. It would therefore be beneficial for congregations to incorporate more spiritual elements into their typical worship experiences in order to offer more engaging and meaningful worship to this group of "hide and go seekers" who are moved by spiritual elements incorporated throughout the prayer service, even though they are not interested in seeking out separate spiritual programming.[55]

The final finding of the research is the difficulties with the use of the word "spiritual." Given that many congregants who seem averse to identifying as spiritual seekers are still very interested in soulful experiences, opportunities for spiritual experimentation in the synagogue may appeal to larger crowds if the terms "spiritual" and "spirituality" are avoided. Though the terms are useful to seekers, they are a barrier to others. One respondent wrote as a definition for spirituality, "If I define spirituality as having a connection to God, I would

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interest in more dancing, 34% responded with interest in having more opportunities to give and receive blessings, and 42% responded with interest in more time for silent personal reflections.

[55] A variety of suggestions for spiritual elements that can enrich communal worship may be found in the following section, "Suggested Communal Spiritual Practices."

define myself as deeply spiritual. However, *spirituality* is not a word I use much, because it seems to have meanings in today's parlance that don't describe my religious experience." This answer echoes many other write-in responses and verbal explanations given by congregants, and leads me to refer to them as "hide and go seekers." As noted above, they often respond positively to spiritual elements, as long as they are not identified as such. Their spirituality is hidden behind different words and language. Nonetheless, it exists.

The term spirituality carries negative connotations for some of these respondents. As one congregant explained, he does not consider himself spiritual because he is a successful attorney in Beverly Hills and not a "barefoot hippie dancing on the beach."[56] Many "hide and go seekers" seemed to equate the term spirituality with disorderliness, a breakdown of composure and a lack of intellect. As successful "straight" individuals, they do not self identify with a label of whimsy and "flakiness." It might therefore be beneficial for congregations to avoid the term spirituality, or at least to carefully consider when and how to use it, even though they embrace spiritual endeavors.

Instead of using the terms spiritual or spirituality, it might be helpful to use euphemisms such as mindfulness, attunement, cultivating wonder, holiness, contemplative practices, expanded consciousness, pursuing the divine, or seeking goodness. Congregations might also try turning to Hebrew words for soul and spirituality, such as ruach or ruchaniyut, nefesh or neshamah. Marketing and branding experts tell us that the ways we label our programs matter; it's not what we say, but what people hear that matters. Therefore congregational leaders should spend time considering the language they use in labeling their efforts to enrich the souls and lives of their congregants.

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[56] During a follow up interview from his survey response, on Dec. 14, 2010

All six of these findings, once understood, can greatly help congregations better tend to the spiritual needs of their community. Still, congregational leaders might be looking for concrete suggestions for how to begin to work spiritual elements and programs into their communal framework. The next section looks specifically at some suggested practices for enriching congregational experiences with mindfulness and meaning.

Suggested Communal Spiritual Practices

An underlying question throughout the research was: What is Jewish spirituality today and what does it mean to create a sense of Jewish spiritual awareness in worship? Rabbi Rachel Cowan, Director of the Jewish Spirituality Institute, offers a personal definition, saying "...a spiritual practice connects me with a sense of deeper meaning in my life, connects me with God. Above all, it connects me to something transcendent, something that stands for a set of values and ethics. Spirituality helps me see that I'm not the whole story here, that I'm just part of something much bigger."[57] Rabbi Cowan's definition, though personal, represents a larger community of understanding. Out of the 132 survey respondents who wrote their own personal definitions of the term spirituality, 46 individuals, approximately 35%, defined spirituality using the language of connections in the way Rabbi Cowan does. They spoke of connection to God, community, and the Oneness of the universe. For many respondents, spirituality is the label given for an awareness of and connection to something transcendent.

On the other hand, 21 respondents, approximately 16%, defined spirituality with the language of solitude. For these individuals, spirituality is a label for understanding their internal and personal explorations of self and what exists at the core of who they are. Their spiritual journeys are about the health and intelligence of their own character.

These are just two of the attitudes that appeared in the varied responses. Maybe it is about connection; maybe it is a personal, internal, journey; maybe it is about awareness, discovering happiness, engaging with tradition or living an integrated life. The reality remains that different people understand spirituality in different ways, so when attempting to

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[57] Steven M. Cohen & Lawrence A. Hoffman, *How Spiritual Are America's Jews?* (S3K Report: A publication of the S3K Synagogue Studies Institute, March 2009, Number 4) p. 2

bring it in to a worship experience, a variety of approaches is warranted. Possibilities for these approaches, though, exist within Jewish tradition, and can be considered and tested out.

Music

One common approach to enriching worship with spiritual practices today is through musically infused prayer experiences. Ayala Fader and Mark Kligman describe the scene at a progressive synagogue well known for its embrace of spirituality, music and emotional expression. They write:

> Long lines to get into a Friday night Shabbat service; congregants standing up during the service to dance through the aisles; newcomers weeping without understanding the Hebrew liturgy; a cantor who plays the electric keyboard along with drumming; rabbis and Middle Eastern musical ensembles; congregants swaying, humming or loudly joining in the singing; liberal Jews who claim they can "feel God's presence" in the sanctuary. These are all part of what has made B'nai Jeshurun, a progressive, Conservative-style synagogue on Manhattan's Upper West Side, a laboratory for those concerned with dwindling membership at North American synagogues.[58]

This unique prayer experience is very engaging, even for congregants who are not self-described spiritual seekers. Through song, emphasis on *kavanah*, expressive language and a joyful atmosphere, B'nai Jeshurun has created an engaging and meaningful form of Jewish spirituality that is very successful in satisfying a wide range of congregants.

B'nai Jeshurun is not on the farther end of the spectrum of spiritual engagement. This synagogue (unlike communities such as IKAR and Nashuva in Los Angeles and Romemu in New York) is in many respects a conventional congregation that has fully embraced an uncommon form of worship. Though they are very effective, their methods might not be

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[58] Steven M. Cohen & Lawrence A. Hoffman,*Spirituality at B'nai Jeshurun: Reflections of Two Scholars and Three Rabbis* (S3K Report: A publication of the S3K Synagogue Studies Institute, November 2009, Number 7) p. 2

equally successful everywhere. There are, however, other examples of successful spiritually infused services at more normative congregations.

An example of one such prayer experience is Shabbat Unplugged at Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills. It too seeks spiritual engagement through musically driven worship. This service though does not call on congregants to dance through the aisles; rather it brings calmness and emotional quietude to participants. It too offers the opportunity for congregants, regardless of their spiritual self-definitions, to connect to the sacred and divine moments, gaining awareness and engaging in *heshbon nefesh*, an accounting of their souls. The congregational response to this service is extraordinary. Approximately 80% of respondents who have attended Shabbat Unplugged found it to be "a meaningful worship experience."[59] Through beautiful and well chosen liturgical music, thoughtful *iyunim* (an elucidation of a prayer's essence), and time for personal reflection, Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills creates its own experience with musically driven Jewish spiritual worship, one which is accessible for the normative Reform congregation.

Silence

Another common tool for creating spiritual experiences during prayer is attention to the breath. Just as B'nai Jeshurun and Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills achieve spiritual engagement through song, so too does Nashuva (a Los Angeles Jewish community deeply rooted in spirituality and social justice). However, song is not what makes this community

[59] It should be noted that the difference between the "seekers" and the "hide and go seekers" for this particular service is minimal. 80% of those who identify as spiritual responded that they found this service meaningful, compared with 74% of those who do not identify as spiritual individuals. This shows that congregants from both categories were moved by this prayer experience.

unique. Nashuva's Erev Shabbat worship reaches its climactic moment of prayer[60] through a silent meditation in the dark, which eventually leads into the Sh'ma. After *Ahavat Olam*, the lights are turned off completely and, in the dark, soft words from Rabbi Naomi Levy guide service attendees into meditation. Then the room sits together in moments of silence and deep breathes. After a few minutes of this silence, the congregation begins to sing and then together recites a strikingly beautiful Sh'ma. After this, the lights come on, the service continues and fairly quickly concludes.

The Sh'ma was the centerpiece of the evening, the single prayer in the service that seemed to bring forth complete involvement from the participants. Its impact came as a result of the silent prelude to the prayer. Though the complete darkness might feel a little strange at first, it also had some clear benefits. At the oneg after the service, a first time Nashuva attendee shared that being in the dark removed barriers of discomfort and self judgment for him that normally accompany moments in prayer when clergy asks him to close his eyes. Nashuva, through its music, clergy and, most importantly, its meditative rhythm and moments of silence, succeeds in creating another model of successful congregational worship infused with spiritual practices.

Many congregations offer opportunities for silent meditation or personal reflection, but what elevates such moments to true spiritual experiences is the way they are framed by the clergy and the length of silent time given. The silence was given respect, it was given time, it was given a physical stage for its success with the dimming of the lights. It therefore became a true element of the prayer service. It was not simply a pause or a gap in prayer - but the silence was an act of prayer itself. Creating opportunities for meditation and personal

[60] Observations of Nashuva's prayer experience based on their Jan. 7, 2011 service.

reflection is an effective way to construct moments of mindfulness and awe in congregational worship. Congregations seeking to enhance their services may therefore choose to experiment with silence in meaningful ways during their prayer service.

Many congregations have a practice of taking time on Friday evenings for service participants to reflect silently on the previous week. This is actually a traditional Hasidic spiritual practice called *hazarat ha-shavuah* (Review of the Week, where each day was reviewed just prior to the corresponding Psalm in the Kabbalat Shabbat service).The service leader gives some guiding words, and then everyone is given an opportunity to review who they were and what they experienced since the previous Shabbat. This may be a good way to begin experimenting with silence in a communal service, because of its traditional foundations.

Practices of offering moments of reflection towards the beginning of a service can also be very beneficial in setting a tone of mindfulness for the rest of the service. The key is not to be afraid of the silence, not to rush it. The silence should linger for a few minutes, to let congregants settle into it. Some congregations may decide to have soft music playing in the background from a piano, flute or whatever their instrument of choice may be. It is important that the clergy themselves also sit down and close their eyes, modeling and signaling to the community that they are taking this reflection seriously.

Meditation

Another step in experimenting with moments of quietude in prayer is guided meditation. Such meditations may draw on general Jewish themes; they can utilize language and messages from the weekly torah portion; or they can relate to the yearly holiday cycle.

For example, it might be meaningful to lead a guided meditation on *teshuva,* repentance or return, during the month of Elul.

A number of examples of such meditations have been created for individual use and may be found in books previously mentioned and in the bibliographies that follow. These can be easily adapted by clergy, for communal use. Clergy members may also choose to write their own, based on a single Jewish text on the topic. Rabbi Goldie Milgram noted that one text she chose for a "teshuva walk." a walking meditation she practices between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, is the following quote by Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz: "Time flows in one direction; it is impossible to undo or even to alter an action after it has occurred and become an 'event', an objective fact. However, even though the past is 'fixed', repentance allows one to rise above it, to change its significance for the present and the future ... It is the potential for something else."[61]

Another option is to create meditations based on themes in the liturgy, and then to offer them once in a while in place of the prayer that inspired them. Below are several examples of this possibility. For example, by looking at the language of the prayer, one may easily create a guided meditation to use in place of *Yotzer Or,* a prayer that reflects on creation and light. The following guided meditation[62] begins with descriptive words to set the stage, incorporates breathing in and out deeply throughout to model breath awareness, offers long pauses of silence with words scattered to help trigger the congregants' internal imagery and ends with the prayer's *chatima* (a concluding line of the prayer which contains its essence). It reads:

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[61] Rabbi Goldie Milgram, *Reclaiming Judaism as a Spiritual Practice: Holy Days and Shabbat (*Jewish Lights, 2004).
[62] Written by Samantha Kahn, October 2010

The darkness of the night is beginning to fade.
The sun emerges.
A peaceful calm embraces all things.
(pause, staying silent for about 30 seconds before each of the following words)
Illumination
Goodness
Renewal
Warmth
Radiance
Baruch Atah Adonai, Yotzer Ha-m'orot

These do not have to be elaborate meditations. By looking at the words of the prayer itself, one can easily create a poetic rendering that allows for images and feelings to arise in the listener, which are connected to the prayers meaning. Clergy and lay leaders could have a significant influence on their congregations by creating their own guided meditations. This may be demonstrated further by the following examples, showing the ease and variety of such creations.

The next example was written[63] as a guided meditation in place of *Maariv Aravim* (a prayer in the evening service after the *Barchu*). It was used in a small chapel service at a Los Angeles Reform synagogue on a Friday night. The lights were dimmed, and the meditation began:

As we take a moment now for reflection, I invite you to close your eyes.
Adjust your body in your seat so that you are completely at rest.
Direct your attention to your breath. Notice how each intake of breath lifts your chest, and how each exhale allows you to sink more comfortably into your seat.
Breathe in and out the darkness of night, which has begun peeking its face into the world.
(take two deep breaths in and out)
Breathe in and out, and imagine the earth and sky blending into one,
(take two deep breaths in and out)
Breathe in and out
(take one deep breath in and out)
Follow your breath out of your body. Ride the current of air as it spirals into the room, and eventually outside flowing into the night sky.
(take one deep breath in and out)

[63] Also written by author, Samantha Kahn, January 2011

Let the swirling breaths we take dance with the stars painted in the sky above.
(take one deep breath in and out)
Let our breath's whirling in the starlight remind us that even in darkness, one may find sources of light.
(take two deep breaths in and out)
Baruch Atah Adonai. Ha Ma'ariv Aravim
I fall to my knees in awe of the vastness of creation, and for the gifts that evening brings.

Guided meditations can be written for almost every prayer. The next example was written by rabbinic student, Rebekah Stern, and is included here with her permission. Her meditation precedes the prayer thanking God for the gift of the Torah:

> Close your eyes.
> Allow yourself to be totally comfortable.
> Now pay attention to your breathing.
> On your next inhale, draw your breath from your chest into your extremities, bringing warmth and relaxation to your limbs, moving from your core out to your fingertips and down to your toes.
> Recognize that this breath, and the one that came before it, and the one that will come after it, and all the breaths you have taken since your very first breath, is a miracle. It is a sign of the eternity of the Divine. It is the connection, in every moment, between you and your Creator.
> Follow your next exhalation as it joins with the breath of the people sitting to your right and to your left. Let this communal breath wrap around you, like an unfurling Torah scroll might.
> See the floating letters dance gently around you. Notice how the words they form support your body as you stand upright and as you lie down, resting your head upon them. Reach out with your fingers and touch the sacred text as it stretches from your own hand backwards into the past and forward into the future. See how it passes through generation before generation of the House of Israel. Trace the familiar contours of your own face in the faces of those who came before you, and those who will come after you, all *b'nai Yisrael* who also rest their bodies on the words of this infinite Torah.
> Join hands with these distant cousins, sisters, and brothers. Feel your body awaken. Rejoice in the power of connectedness—to your miraculous breath, to the sacred words of Torah, and to the ancient House of Israel.
> *Baruch Atah Adonai, oheiv amo Yisrael.*

Meditations used in services do not have to stem from specific prayers. Rabbinic student Ethan Bair compiled and edited a prayerful meditation which may be used in communal worship settings. This different form of guided meditation is called "Purification Breaths" or

"Elemental Breathing," based on the meditations by Hazraat Inayat Khan, a Sufi teacher. The purification breaths introduce each of the five elements, with imagery to cleanse the body of impurities and send this energy back to the Earth, as we also replenish our positive energy from the Earth. It is presented with his permission:

> Stand in a comfortable, rooted stance, spine tall. Five breaths on each of the five elements:
> The first breath is the "Earth breath." Stand with the palms of the hands parallel to the ground, and imagine that one is breathing through the soles of the feet and the palms of the hands, breathing in the Earth's "grounded," life-sustaining energy, and on the exhale, releasing toxins from your body back to the Earth. The Earth breath is in through the nose and out through the nose. 5 X.
> The second breath is the water breath. For this breath, we will inhale through the nose, and exhale through the mouth. Relax the hands by your side. On the inhale, imagine your breath as water rushing through your body through the crown of the head like a waterfall and up through the feet and legs like a tree trunk. Allow the water to mix throughout your body, dissolving all impurities, and release the breath as raindrops through the fingertips. 5 X.
> The third breath is the fire breath. In through the mouth and out through the nose. As you breathe in, suck the air in quickly, lips small as if breathing through a straw, and breathe into the solar plexes of the belly like there's a fire there. Imagine that fire to be consuming your body's impurities and negative energy including fear, rage, frustration, etc. Release the breath through the nose, imagining the breath to be emenating from the heart as light and love energy back to the world, as a fire gives off heat and light.
> The fourth breath is the air breath, in and out through the mouth. Imagine that every pore on your body is breathing in and out, like a leaf on a tree. The air breath is the breath of new ideas.
> The final breath is that of the fifth element, ether. It is the most refined of all the breaths. Imagine you are breathing through the third eye: a silent inhalation and exhalation, mouth closed, so in and out through the nose. This is the most focused and most subtle of the breaths.
> *Beloved Lord, Almighty God,*
> *Through the rays of the sun, through the waves of the air,*
> *Through Thy all-pervading life on Earth,*
> *Purify and revivify me,*
> *And I pray, Heal my Body, Heart, and Soul.*
> *Amen.*

As these different examples of meditations illustrate, there are a number of ways to experiment with leading guided meditations for a community. There are meditations from

other cultures and traditions that can be utilized; there is material in the Jewish calendar, life cycle, and weekly *parshiot* which can serve as sources for meditative topics; and there is also a variety of ways to create meditations based on the liturgy.

Congregant Participation

Some congregations have created spiritual moments through allowing for more congregational interaction and participation in their services. This may stem from music, which is familiar and becomes participatory. It may also be from language choices that allow congregants to feel more personally connected to the language of prayer. As discussed in the history section, this technique is influenced by the havurah movement. Even in mainstream communities though, there is now an expectation and enjoyment over some level of participatory prayer experience, helping congregants engage more fully in their own spiritual work.

Along with musical and reading choices, there are ways congregants can be invited to be active in prayer. Two examples of practices which offer the opportunity for congregants to participate more in communal worship are to create opportunities for individuals to give and receive blessings with one another, and creating the space and time for congregants to light their own Shabbat candles in an Erev Shabbat service. Both take a bit more coordination than simply doing it at the front of the room, but they also have the added benefit of empowering participants to be active in their prayer experiences.

Psalms - Tools for Bringing Comfort, Attunement and Wonder

One traditional Jewish method for awakening the heart to the moment is the recitation of psalms. Psalms offer rich and descriptive language that can inspire, encourage and challenge congregations engaging in spiritual journeys. In his book *Meditation and the Bible,* Aryeh Kaplan writes:

> It would...be of some interest to make an etymological analysis of the Hebrew name for the Psalms, which is *Tehillim.* This comes from the root *Halal*, which is normally translated as "to praise". The Psalms are therefore most often simply viewed as nothing more than a series of praises to God. The root *Halal,* however, has two other meanings which are very significant. The first is that of brightness and shining... . The second connotation is that of madness, as in the noun *Holelut*, referring to the demented state in many places in the Bible. This would therefore indicate that the word *Halal* **denotes a state where one leaves his normal state of consciousness, and at the same time, perceives spiritual Light**. It is distinguished from the many other Hebrew terms for praise, since *Halal* is praise designated for attaining enlightenment through a state of oblivion. ... All this indicates that *Halal* denotes negation of the senses and ego in the quest of enlightenment. The Psalms were therefore called *Tehillim* because they were especially designed to help one attain this exalted state. This philological analysis might not be conclusive if it were not backed up by a solid tradition. In the Talmudic tradition there is a clear indication that the Psalms were used to attain the state of enlightenment called *Ruach HaKodesh.* (138)

This understanding of psalms is one that relates to understandings of spirituality from outside of Judaism as well. While there are psalms for different types of circumstances, the following is a list of suggested psalms for times of celebration, for moments in need of comfort, and for times of struggle.

Psalms for times of Celebration

- **Psalm 47** - This psalm could be particularly useful in times of communal celebration. Not only does the psalm exclaim God's power and glory, but it also calls upon others to join in the claps and songs of praise and celebration.

- **Psalm 84** – This psalm reads like a love poem to God. 84:3b speaks of this love coming from the heart and the flesh. This imagery, along with the entire psalm's tone of praise, makes it appropriate to be recited in times of celebration and joy.
- **Psalm 96** – This psalm invites the world around the speaker, both other people and nature itself, to join the speaker in praise. Because of the longing expressed for others to share in the speaker's joy, this is another psalm that would be appropriate for communal celebrations.
- **Psalm 117** - Though it is short, it is powerful. It contains a universal tone not often found in psalms that lends itself to being appropriate for use in interfaith celebrations and communities with diverse memberships. While it clearly contains this communal call, its length could allow it to be used for congregational meditative contemplation in times of celebration.

Psalms to express comfort during sad times

- **Psalm 27** – This is a beautiful psalm for bringing comfort during difficult times. It asserts that even if one's world is dark, God can bring light. The certainty of God's ability to help as presented by the psalmist is one that could bring comfort to those who are searching and hoping for assistance to come.
- **Psalm 42** – With its heart-wrenching longing for God's help in the face of suffering and its admirable strivings to keep faith, this poetic psalm creates a place where trust and despair simultaneously live together. This makes it relevant in the realm of illness and recovery, because sometimes a sense of hopelessness and a longing for faith do in

fact strike at the same time. This psalm manages to fully capture both the pain and the trust of this experience.

The language of this psalm may also be moving for individuals with a terminal illness or near the end of life, because it does not seem to be asking for protection or for their life to be saved, something that is requested in other psalms. Rather, Psalm 42 asks that the speaker may feel God's presence and therefore be rescued from the emotional pain he or she feels. It is possible to understand the third verse's question, *When will I come to appear before you*? as an individual who is ready to leave this life and meet his or her creator. Furthermore, the language of this psalm clearly portrays a great deal of suffering. There are moments of life that are so painful that death may come as an answer to an individual or loved one's prayer, and this psalm expresses that longing to be with God and leave the suffering, the tears, and the betrayal of bones and body behind. It may therefore be powerful in healing services, to help acknowledge that sometimes the only healing that may come is through a peaceful ending.

- **Psalm 62** – This psalm gives voice to the belief that in God one may find quietness and a strength that cannot be found anywhere else in life. For this reason, it seems appropriate to offer during communal worship – encouraging anyone present who is in pain to engage in heartfelt prayer as an effort to experience God's strength and kindness, allowing their sadness to be quenched.
- **Psalm 116** - This psalm speaks of a God who performs miracles: one who can answer prayers, save lives and bring calm. For one who prays deeply for God's help during trying times, this psalm can bring comfort as it teaches that answers can come.

Psalms during times of struggle

- **Psalm 25** – This psalm paints an image of a suffering individual who is struggling to be rescued and who is begging God for guidance and help. Its language does not speak solely to outside dangers, but rather it speaks to struggles within. For this reason, it could be a powerful psalm for healing services or for bringing in moments of prayer and healing to any service, helping individuals who struggle with a variety of internal troubles, such as mood disorders, addictions, and other such battles that are waged within.
- **Psalm 41** – Psalm 41 speaks to the human reaction of sometimes feeling that the entire world is one's enemy. It proclaims that God can sustain you, no matter how the rest of the world sees you, and even if you yourself are not sure you are worth saving. This is a powerful and important message, especially for young people. It may be well used in a youth or teen service, speaking to those who are struggling with the world in which they find themselves. This psalm offers the hope that regardless of what else may be happening, God remains on their side and can help protect them and ease their pain.
- **Psalm 86** – This is a psalm asking God to help guide the speaker through a difficult time. Verse 7 states that this speaker calls to God in times of trouble, and therefore this can be a helpful conversation for others who are struggling. This is another psalm that may be particularly useful for evoking messages and feelings of healing within communal worship.

Putting Psalms into prayer creatively:

Along with these psalms that are useful for a variety of different moments, synagogues can choose to transform any given psalm and incorporate it into communal worship. One psalm that could be a useful addition is Psalm 91. While the new Reform prayer book, Mishkan T'filah, does contain *p'sukei d'zimrah* (literally verses of praise, this is a section at the beginning of the morning service intended to help prepare prayers for the prayer service ahead) for Shabbat morning, it does not contain Psalm 91. It does have psalm 92 though, so this could be occasionally inserted before, or in place of, Psalm 92.

Psalm 91 can serve a particular purpose that is sometimes craved by congregants, that is having a chance to pray for one's own healing and protection. While we traditionally try to avoid *bakashot,* prayers of requests, on Shabbat, it seems the *Mi Sheberach l'holim*, a prayer for blessing the sick, has become a very important moment for many congregants to pour out their souls in hope of God's help. While the prayer's intention is to ask for healing of others, often we find congregants internalizing it for themselves. This makes it evident that Psalm 91 can serve to fill an important need, creating a chance to not only praise the Eternal, but to ask for God's protection.

Psalm 91 contains beautiful language that poetically speaks of God's protection in our lives. Robert Alter notes:

> The Israeli scholar Yair Hoffman, noting its eloquent expression of God's unflagging providential protection, has interestingly characterized the poem as an "amulet psalm," with the idea that its recitation might help a person attain or perhaps simply feel God's guarding power. (Alter, 321)

This describes the power that reading this psalm may have. Why not incorporate it into our service and allow our congregants to feel the power of putting on this amulet? Hoffman is not

alone in understanding this psalm as a way to invoke protection. The ArtScroll Siddur *Ohel Sarah* notes that "...one who recites it with faith in God will be helped by Him in time of danger." (364) A beautiful sentiment, that true or not, may be worth offering to our communities as a possibility.

Another spiritual aspect of the book of Psalms is the connections to specific days and intentions for daily recitation. Congregations may encourage members to get to know these daily psalms and transform them with movement patterns from yoga.

Jewish Yoga

There is a growing field of resources and exercises that create movement practices based in spiritual traditions from both yoga and Judaism. Jewish yoga is a quickly expanding field. There is a large number of websites and an increasing number of books put out by URJ Press, Jewish Lights and many other publishing companies on the subject of Jewish yoga. These materials continue to develop and expand. There are also a growing number of opportunities to find instructors offering Jewish yoga experiences in yoga studios, synagogue multipurpose rooms and spiritual retreats throughout the greater Los Angeles area.

Some of these approaches utilize Jewish mystical traditions to offer language for typical yoga movements, while others create movements to go along with Jewish liturgy. One approach to creating a regular morning practice born of both yoga and Judaism can be found in Sandra Safadirazieli and Shulamit Wise Fairman's CD, *Moving with Morning Blessings: A Guided Yoga Practice with Jewish Song and Prayer.* Currently there are also efforts at creating Friday night yoga classes based completely on the Erev Shabbat service, such as the *Om Shalom Yoga* program created by Zack Lodmer and recently submitted for

the Jewish Federation of Los Angeles's Next Big Jewish Idea competition. These two efforts are of particular interest to congregations because they offer the potential of alternative prayer experiences in which yoga is used to encounter the essence of Jewish liturgy.

One example may be to go back to the discussions on Music, Psalms and Meditations and to see if other practices can be easily set to movement exercises. Such experiences can be taught in the synagogue and then performed at home, or they can be used in the congregational setting either in specific yoga classes or as methods of beginning other educational and worship opportunities with prayerful movement exercises. For example, those who practice yoga strive to leave their normal state of consciousness while simultaneously perceiving light, this is similar to the discussion about Psalms in the beginning of the section on their usage. There are also practices in yoga of connecting motions not only to breath, but sometimes to mantras (sounds or words spoken to help create spiritual awareness and transformation). Seeing as how well these two independent spiritual practices fit together (i.e. the recitation of Psalms and the practice of yoga), there are a number of spiritual-seeking Jews who might find more meaning in the recitation of the Days of the Week psalms if they were connected to movements and purposeful breaths, similar to what might be found in yoga. By intertwining words of Psalms with yoga practices, one may elevate the worshiper to a different state and in doing so bring the worshiper closer to achieving the true purpose of psalms as described by Kaplan above.

Psalm 24, the Sunday Psalm, could serve as an example for teaching congregants the benefits of beginning our weeks by rising and moving to the words of our tradition. While there are many ways this could be worked out and it might be beneficial for different communities to create their own movement flows, below is one possibility for using this

psalm in this manner. In the classic Jewish tradition of psalm usage, one may choose to focus on just a few verses of this biblical poetry.

Psalm 24 begins by declaring in verse one: *The Eternal is the earth and all it holds, the universe and all that dwell in it.* Later, verses 6 and 7 declare that we are a generation seeking to connect with the Eternal; petitioning for the Eternal presence to come and open up the barriers that separate us from higher consciousness. These verses from our tradition, from our Sunday psalm, can be connected to the spiritual components of yoga and be naturally paired with a Vinyasa flow, or breath-synchronized movement. An example of such a psalm and yoga combination is:

Begin by standing with feet together, and palms together at the chest. Inhale, reaching arms up and into a slight back bend. Exhale, open arms, and as you swan dive forward bending over legs, say L'*Adonai ha'aretz umeloah, tevel v'yoshvei vah.* (Ps. 24:1) Place hands on the floor next to feet. Inhale and raise torso up into flat back. Hold for a moment; exhale forward, repeating *The Eternal is the earth and all it holds, the universe and all that dwell in it* (Ps. 24:1 in English), while placing hands on either side of feet. Gently step back into *plank position*, then *chaturanga*. Inhale, pulling torso forward and up into *upward facing dog*. Then back to plank, exhale and recite *This is the generation who seeks Adonai, petitioners of your presence, Jacob.* (Ps. 24:6) while raising hips and torso and moving into *downward facing dog*. Inhale, bend knees, and bring feet back to your hands. Straighten your legs, while keeping hands on the floor at first, then inhale into a reverse swan dive, ending with fingers skyward and with slight back bend. Exhale and say: *Lift up your heads, O gates, be lifted, everlasting doors, that Melech Ha'Kavod may enter.* (Ps. 24:6-7) Repeat entire sequence two more times, then end in a standing position either with hands by the side or at your heart center, exhaling while your heart is out and open.

Recommended Reading

While most of the previous sections are creations based on observations from Los Angeles based spiritual initiatives, they also are rooted in the language, ideas and guidance of books which have guided the writing of this thesis and which could provide guidance to all those beginning to explore spiritual experimentation. The books mentioned in previous

sections should be first on the spiritual reading list. They were: *Man's Quest for God* by Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Thirteen Petalled Rose* by Adin Steinsaltz, *Radical Judaism* by Arthur Green, *Your Word is Fire* by Arthur Green and Barry Holtz, *Jewish Meditation* by Aryeh Kaplan, *Jewish with Feeling* by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, *Everyday Holiness* by Alan Morinis, *The Busy Soul* by Terry Bookman, *Making Prayer Real* by Mike Comins, *Sparks Beneath the Surface* by Lawrence Kushner and Kerry Olitzky and *The Language of Truth* by Arthur Green. Along with these books, there are a large number of fantastic books that can help guide more in depth explorations of Jewish spirituality.

The Institute for Jewish Spirituality has created a comprehensive list of books they recommend. Their website[64] describes a variety of resources, including a list of books written by their faculty and also a PDF document of a bibliography of spiritual reading broken down by categories. The categories are: Jewish and general meditation; prayer; yoga; spirituality and social justice; Kabbalah and Hasidut; and education, adolescent development and the spiritual life. A copy of this list of suggested readings may be found in Appendix II.

Appendix III lists further suggestions of Jewish spiritual books. These books were consulted during the writing of this thesis and may be beneficial for congregational leadership- both professional and laity.

[64] ijs-online.org takes you to the homepage and http://ijs-online.org/resources_reading.php takes you directly to their reading recommendations

Conclusion

Prayer, though containing the potential to be profoundly meaningful, tends most often to be experienced by Reform American Jews as stale, alienating or boring. Different congregations try to address this in a multitude of ways. Often the solutions proposed are about marketing strategies or kitchy theme options. These generally do not prove effective in the long term. The focus needs to be on the quality and content of what is offered in the prayer service. As the great modern Jewish theologian Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel explains, "*Spiritual problems* cannot be solved by *administrative techniques*. The problem is not how to fill the buildings but how to inspire the hearts."[65]

It is this goal, to inspire the hearts of congregants, which has motivated this thesis. This goal is also what motivates rabbis and lay leaders from across the country to seek out ways of infusing meaning and wonder into their congregational worship. Jewish history and tradition are both rich with resources for infusing sacred meaning into our congregations. Utilizing Jewish spiritual traditions and introducing spiritual techniques may offer a wonderful way to accomplish this goal and infuse excitement, awareness and value into our services. It is important to remember that the research shows such spiritual engagement is not only meaningful to those individuals in every community who identify as spiritual seekers, but also to that larger group of hide-and-go seekers, the ones who hide from spiritual labels and programs but are deeply moved when such experiences find their way into their prayer services.

There is a large variety of ways to encounter Jewish spirituality in worship. Jewish meditation, reflection, teaching and singing of *nigunnim*, blessings of healing, movement and

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[65] Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity: Essays*. Ed. Susannah Heschel (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1996) 103

Jewish yoga, are all approaches that various communities have found successful. The ultimate lesson is for congregations to explore and experiment with the rich traditions and methods of spiritual engagement that are available to determine what are appropriate for their congregants. Communities should first set a goal for such spiritual experiences and then experiment with different methods based on the overall feeling they hope their worship service to achieve, because the potential is there. As Rabbi Marcia Prager explains:

> Through the power of words and melodies both ancient and new, we venture into realms of deep emotion and find longing, sorrow, joy, hope, wholeness, connection and peace. When guided by skilled leaders of prayer and ritual, our complacency is challenged. We break through outworn assumptions about God and ourselves, and emerge refreshed and inspired to meet the challenges our lives offer.[66]

Thoughtfully crafted prayer experiences can have enormous value for participants. Making a few attentive choices can transform the prayer experience. A large number of sources for well chosen ideas and methods which can be utilized in creating more meaningful prayer come from Jewish spiritual traditions.

Spiritual traditions have existed throughout the length of Jewish history. They have been influenced by their times and they then transformed those individuals of their times and schools of practice. In the modern American culture of spiritual engagement, these practices and traditions can once again be looked to for sources of meaning and guidance.

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[66] from the DLTI brochure, by Rabbi Marcia Prager and Shawn Israel Zevit, quoted in *The P'nai Or Siddur for Shabbat Morning* by Marcia Prager

1. Welcome!

Dear Temple Emanuel family,

For those of you who I have not yet had the privilege of meeting, my name is Samantha Orshan Kahn, and I am honored to be Temple Emanuel's Rabbinic Intern this year. I am in my fifth year of studies at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. As part of my studies, I am writing a thesis exploring the meaningfulness and impact, or lack thereof, of both congregational prayer experiences and individual spiritual endeavors. For this research, I am doing a case study of Temple Emanuel- which is why I need your help.

I would really appreciate if you could take a few minutes to fill out this survey. I will be the only one reading these responses, and all information will be kept confidential. Your time and honesty is greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions about the survey or my research in general, please feel free to call me at 310-288-3742 x 511 or email me at Samantha@tebh.org.

Your participation means a lot to me, and I thank you in advance for helping me with my research!

Sincerely,

Samantha

2. Default Section

1. My age is...

- ◯ under 18
- ◯ 18-29
- ◯ 30-45
- ◯ 46-65
- ◯ 66-85
- ◯ 86 and older

2. My Annual Family pre-tax income is...

- ◯ $0 - $25,000
- ◯ $25,001 - $50,000
- ◯ $50,001 - $75,000
- ◯ $75,001 - $100,000
- ◯ $100,001 - $250,000
- ◯ $250,001 - $500,000
- ◯ $500,000 and above
- ◯ I would rather not say

3. My gender is

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female

4. My American Political affiliation is...

- ◯ Democrat
- ◯ Republican
- ◯ Independent

Other (please specify)

5. What is your marital status?

- ◯ single
- ◯ unmarried partners
- ◯ married
- ◯ divorced
- ◯ widowed

6. Here are a few goals that some people have set for themselves in their lives. Which of the following do you think people in your social group think is MOST important...

- ◯ To get rich
- ◯ To be famous
- ◯ To help people who need help
- ◯ To be leaders in their community
- ◯ To become more spiritual
- ◯ None of these
- ◯ I Don't know

7. For all of the following Temple Emanuel activities which you have participated in over the past year, please designate the extent to which it was meaningful for you.

	Extremely meaningful	Somewhat meaningful	Interesting but not meaningful	A waste of time	I'm not sure	N/A
Attended a holiday event at Temple Emanuel	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Attended Shabbat B'yachad	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Attended Shabbat services in the Chapel	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Attended Shabbat Unplugged	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Attended the New Emanuel Minyan	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Sought guidance from a Temple Emanuel clergy member	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

8. For all of the following personal activities which you have participated in over the past year, please designate the extent to which it was meaningful for you.

	Extremely meaningful	Somewhat meaningful	Interesting but not meaningful	A waste of time	I'm not sure	N/A
Created my own Jewish rituals	○	○	○	○	○	○
Have read books of a Jewish & spiritual nature	○	○	○	○	○	○
Have read Jewish books	○	○	○	○	○	○
Have sought meaningful Jewish texts, prayers or readings to study and reflect on	○	○	○	○	○	○
Listened to Jewish music	○	○	○	○	○	○
Observed Jewish holidays in my own home	○	○	○	○	○	○
Observed Shabbat in my own home	○	○	○	○	○	○

9. For all of the following spiritual activities which you have participated in over the past year, please designate the extent to which it was meaningful for you.

	Extremely meaningful	Somewhat meaningful	Interesting but not meaningful	A waste of time	I'm not sure	N/A
Attended a yoga class	○	○	○	○	○	○
Created my own general spiritual practices	○	○	○	○	○	○
Have read non-Jewish books of a religious nature	○	○	○	○	○	○
Have read non-Jewish books of a spiritual nature	○	○	○	○	○	○
Listened to any music for emotional reasons	○	○	○	○	○	○
Meditated	○	○	○	○	○	○
Participated in a spiritual event or seminar	○	○	○	○	○	○
Participated in a spiritual retreat	○	○	○	○	○	○
Participated in acts of social justice	○	○	○	○	○	○
Participated in Spiritual Direction	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sought guidance from a personal religious or spiritual leader outside of Temple Emanuel	○	○	○	○	○	○
Spent time in Nature	○	○	○	○	○	○

10. To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person?

- ◯ Very religious
- ◯ Somewhat religious
- ◯ Not really religious
- ◯ Not religious at all

11. How do you personally define the term religious?

12. To what extent do you consider yourself a spiritual person?

- ◯ Very spiritual
- ◯ Somewhat spiritual
- ◯ Not really spiritual
- ◯ Not spiritual at all

13. How do you personally define the term spirituality?

14. Based on your own understanding of what spirituality is, to what extent would you be interested in "Spiritual" programs/services offered by the Temple?

- ◯ Very Interested
- ◯ Somewhat Interested
- ◯ Not sure
- ◯ Somewhat uninterested
- ◯ No Interest at all

15. To what extent do you believe Temple Emanuel meets your spiritual needs?

- ◯ Extremely well
- ◯ Well
- ◯ Not sure
- ◯ Not well
- ◯ Extremely poorly

16. If possible, could you briefly explain your answer to #15?

17. Do you turn to any other organization, outside of Temple Emanuel, to fulfill your spiritual needs?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

If yes, which organizations?

18. Generally, how would you say things are these days in your life?

- ◯ I'm very happy
- ◯ I'm pretty happy
- ◯ I'm not too happy
- ◯ I'm not Sure

19. Many members of our community experience turbulent or emotionally and spiritually challenging times on a regular basis. Based on how you personally felt while experiencing such a time, or on what you think you might feel if such a time were to come, how important would Temple Emanuel be in helping you through such difficult times?

- ◯ Very important
- ◯ Somewhat important
- ◯ Not Sure
- ◯ Not specifically important
- ◯ Not important at all

20. To what extent would you be interested in Temple Emanuel offering programs such as healing services, spiritual book clubs, prayerful hikes, meditation seminars, Jewish yoga, or classes on spiritual direction?

- ◯ Very interested
- ◯ Somewhat interested
- ◯ Not sure
- ◯ Depends, some sound interesting
- ◯ Somewhat uninterested
- ◯ No interest at all

21. To what extent would you be interested in regular prayer services incorporating more spiritual practices (than we already do)?

	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Not sure	Somewhat uninterested	No interest at all
guided meditations	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
singing of niggunim or other spiritual music	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
individual candle lighting on Shabbat	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
movement exercises	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
dancing	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
outdoor prayer opportunities	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
more interactive opportunities to give and/or receive blessings	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
more time for silent personal reflections	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

22. Thank you so much for taking this survey!

If you would be comfortable with a follow up interview, please write your name and contact information below.

Name:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

Appendix II –

IJS SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY[67]

The IJS faculty has compiled this bibliography with suggestions of books that help the reader contextualize and deepen his/her learning in the areas of meditation, prayer, yoga, education/adolescent development, spirituality and social justice, and/or Kabbalah and Hasidut. In many ways, these books reflect "where we are coming from," and what theie leaders have found meaningful. This selection of titles is by no means meant to be exhaustive. In addition to these recommended titles, there are many others which provide spiritual direction and inspiration.

JEWISH AND GENERAL MEDITATION

Boorstein, Sylvia. Don't Just Do Something, Sit There. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1996. This is a short and compact set of instructions for mindfulness practice. It is very similar to what is being taught at IJS. One of the clearest and briefest summaries of the instructions. It provides guidelines on having your own mindfulness retreat.

Boorstein, Sylvia. Pay Attention for Goodness' Sake. New York: Ballantine Books, 2002. While this book is written in the idiom of Buddhism, its author is a practicing Jew and had the cultivation of middot in mind as well in the presentation of the qualities of mind and heart that may be cultivated in meditation. There are excellent meditation exercises, stories and deep wisdom about applying one's practice in one's life.

Buxbaum, Yitzhak. Jewish Spiritual Practices. New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1990. This is an amazing book with a huge variety of material and a chapter on meditation in Jewish sources.

Davis, Avram, ed. Meditation From The Heart of Judaism. Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights, 1997. This is a compilation of essays by contemporary Jewish teachers of meditation. Shefa Gold, Sheila Weinberg and Jonathan Omer–Man all have essays included. This volume gives you an idea of the vari- ety of perspectives on current teachers and teachings of meditation in the Jewish world.

Eckstein, Menahem. Visions of a Compassionate World: Guided Imagery for Spiritual Growth and Social Transformation. Urim Publications, 2001. This is a recently translated work from the 1920s. For those interested in guided imagery it is valuable. Its context is more universal than Jewish although it was developed and used in the context of an observant Jewish community.

Kabat-Zinn, Myla and Jon. Everyday Blessings: The Inner World of Mindful Parenting. New York: Hyperion, 1997. This is a great book on the application of mindfulness practice to daily life and to the many issues that emerge in family life. It is filled with down-to-earth examples and also gives a won- derful explanation of the value of mindfulness and its practice. There is also a chapter on a classroom application.

Kabat-Zinn, Jon. Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life. New York: Hyperion Books, 1994. A readable, practical introduction to mindfulness practice.

Kaplan, Aryeh, Jewish Meditation. New York: Schocken Books, 1985. This could be called a classic compilation of Jewish sources on meditation, broadly defined. In many cases Kaplan reconstructs what might

[67] Taken directly from ijs-online.org

have been practices based on fragmentary sources. It is very well done and accessible. Kaplan has two other works on meditation that are more complex, one includes Biblical, and one, Kabbalistic material.

Slater, Jonathan, P. Mindful Jewish Living, Compassionate Practice. New York: Aviv Press, 2004. This is a brand new and very important book by a faculty and staff member of the Institute for Jewish Spirituality. This book weaves together mindfulness practice, Hassidic spirituality and profound wis- dom and guidance for living a meaningful Jewish spiritual life.

Verman, Mark, The History and Varieties of Jewish Meditation. New Jersey: Jason Aronson, 1996. This is the most scholarly volume on the list. It contains excellent sources from a wide range of Jewish lit- erature and is well researched and presented. It is a good overall view of the subject.

PRAYER

Brown, Steven M. Higher and Higher: Making Jewish Prayer Part of Us. United Synagogue of America, Dept. of Youth Activities, 1988. "Still an excellent volume of real programs and discussions to open teens up to the meaning and purpose of prayer." —Shelly Dorph

Green, Arthur and Holtz, Barry W. Your Word is Fire: The Hasidic Masters on Contemplative Prayer. Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1993. This book contains short but powerful excerpts of beautiful, early Hasidic teachings on prayer. Each selection can be read as a focus for devotion. It covers ideas such as emotion in prayer, the power of words, dissolving the ego, and concentration.

Hammer, Reuven. Entering Jewish Prayer: A Guide to Personal Devotion and the Worship Service. New York: Schocken Books, 1994. This book provides a fairly traditional, comprehensive overview of the history and meaning of Jewish prayer, including the major rubrics of the liturgy. It is smart and read- able, and one of the newest of its kind.

Heschel, Abraham Joshua. Quest for God: Studies in Prayer and Symbolism. New York: Crossroads, 1984. Anything Heschel writes about prayer is worth reading. For instance, several articles in Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity are extraordinary. However, this is Heschel's book-long reflection on the dynamics of prayer. The second chapter, "The Person and the Word" is exquisitely written and brilliantly explores the dialectic of "prayers of expression" and "prayers of empathy."

Hoffman, Rabbi Jeff, and Cohen-Keiner, Andrea. Karov L'Chol Korav—For All Who Call: A Manual for Enhancing the Teaching of Prayer. New York: Melton Reseach Center for Jewish Education, 2000. This is a lovely resource for teaching prayer in a creative, embodied, playful way. It provides well articulat- ed teaching ideas (including mini-scripts to help with process, tone, safety, etc.) to help adults and young people enter an experience of different prayers and their essential meanings. Includes a CD with guided meditations, chants and melodies. Very easy to use and easy to adapt.

Hoffman, Lawrence A. My People's Prayer Book: Traditional Prayers, Modern Commentaries. Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1998. This is an ambitious and largely successful series of books aiming to provide a modern commentary on the traditional liturgy, from a variety of perspec- tives. It focuses on each section of the liturgy (e.g. Shema, Amida, etc.), providing commentary from literary, historical, halachik, feminist and Hasidic points of view, prayer by prayer.

Jacobs, Louis. Hasidic Prayer. New York: Schocken Books, 1973. This is a fascinating look into the world of Hasidic prayer, from an academic (not a "how to") perspective. It contains much primary material in translation. The "academic" companion to the "devotional"or "inspirational" Your Word is Fire.

The Reconstructionist: A Journal of Contemporary Jewish Thought and Practice, New Thinking on Naming and Imaging God. Volume 59, Number 1, Spring 1994. While this issue of the Reconstructionist is not focused on prayer, per se, it is focused on God and new ways of thinking about God. Very accessible. Very creative.

YOGA

Bloomfield, Diane. Torah Yoga: Experiencing Jewish Wisdom Through Classic Postures San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004. Clear and rich teachings on yoga and Jewish themes presented as an integrated whole. Introduces Jewish themes reflected in yoga practice, and visa versa, and, clear instruction in yoga flows which embody those themes.

Birch, Beryl Bender. Power Yoga: the Total Strength and Flexibility Workout. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995. Based on the physically demanding Ashtanga yoga flow. This book provides clear instruction and photographs with attention to details of postures, and mindful awareness of the sub- tleties of the practice. Good resource for those drawn to Ashtanga system of yoga.

Choudhury, Bikram. Bikram's Beginning Yoga Class. New York: Jeremy Tarcher, 2000. Engaging and thorough instructions for the classic Bikram yoga sequence, with photographs and commentary to augment detailed instruction in this method of "hot yoga." Physically demanding and physically focused.

Farhi, Donna. Yoga Mind, Body and Spirit: A Return to Wholeness. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000. Excellent treatment of the core movement and energetic principles that underlie all forms of yoga practice. Detailed and creative approach to working in postures that provides a deepening of the work. Lots of posture examples, and underlying principles as well.

Farhi, Donna. Bringing Yoga to Life: the Everyday Practice of Enlightened Living. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2003. Teachings about how yoga can be about more than what happens on the mat. Spiritual principles and psychological applications integrating what we learn as we work with our bodies, into the rest of our lives.

Iyengar, B.K.S. Light on Yoga. New York: Schocken Books, 1979. Master teacher Iyengar guiding techni- cal points of many postures. A standard reference book for yoga practice.

Lasater, Judith Ph.D., PT. 30 Essential Yoga Poses: for Beginning Students and their Teachers. Berkeley, California: Rodmell Press, 2003. Elegant and clear presentation of core yoga postures with detailed, safe and careful alignment. I find this book helpful at all stages of yoga practice, and the tips for 'teachers' provide further information to refine stance of mind and body in the poses. Lasater brings Iyengar yoga's focus on detailed alignment together with compassion and simplicity to provide a strong resource for building a yoga practice.

Lasater, Judith, Ph.D., PT. Living your Yoga: Finding the Spiritual in Everyday Life. Berkeley, California: Rodmell Press, 2000. Teachings about how we work with ourselves in spiritual practice off the mat, based upon lessons learned from mindful practice during a yoga session. Spiritual qualities such as "Discipline," "Compassion," Attachment and Aversion" are discussed with clarity, wisdom and humor. An important reflection about bringing the sacred into all realms of what we do.

Schiffman, Eric. Yoga: The Spirit and Practice of Moving into Stillness. New York: Pocket Books, 1996. Strong posture fundamentals based upon Schiffman's focus on connecting to the inner life and cur- rents of energy and center. A deeply integrated, integrating approach to yoga practice and instruction.

Sell, Christina. Yoga from the Inside Out: Making Peace with Your Body Through Yoga. Prescott, Arizona: HOHM Press, 2003. Sell is an Anusara yoga teacher and works with women and men of all sizes and shapes. This book teaches the central Anusara approach about the spiritual power of yoga as an art form through which we can come to love and transform our relationship with our physical bodies and find beauty in each expression of every moment. A beautiful and healing book for any of us who have struggled with coming to terms, and peace, with our bodies. It does not teach postures but is a philosophy/reflection on this approach to working with our embodiment in an integrated and nonviolent way.

Yee, Rodney. Power Yoga Total Body DVD. GAIAM Americas. This DVD provides clear, deep posture flow

that combines strength, flexibility, and stamina challenges within a contemplative rhythm that allows for inner focus. Best suited for those with some prior yoga experience.

SPIRITUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Eisenberg, Evan. The Ecology of Eden: An Inquiry into the Dream of Paradise and a New Vision of Our Role in Nature. New York: Vintage Books, 1999.

Bernstein, Ellen and Dan Fink. Let the Earth Teach You Torah. Washington, D.C.: Shomrei Adamah. 1992.

Gottlieb, Roger S. Joining Hands: Politics and Religion Together for Social Change. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2004.

Heschel, Abraham Joshua. Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity: essays edited by Susannah Heschel. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996.

Horwitz, Claudia. A Stone's Throw: Living the Act of Faith. Social Transformation Through Faith and Spiritual Practice. Stone Circles, 1999; Penguin Books, 2002.

Lerner, Michael. Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation. New York: Perennial; A divi- sion of HarperCollins Publishers. 1995.

Meyer, Naomi, Marshall T., Jane Isay, ed. You Are My Witness: The Living Words of Rabbi Marshall T. Meyer. New York: St. Martin's Press. 2004.

Vorspan, Albert and David Saperstein. Jewish Dimensions of Social Justice: Tough Moral Choices of Our Time. New York: Urj Press. 1998.

Waskow, Arthur. Torah of the Earth: Exploring 4,000 Years of Ecology in Jewish Thought. Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2000.

KABBALAH & HASIDUT

Bokser, Ben Zion. Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook: The Lights of Penitance, Lights of Holiness: The Moral Principles, Essays, Letter and Poems. New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1978. A large collection of the writings of one of the most important Jewish mystics of the twentieth century. Rav Kook was born in Eastern Europe, but migrated to the land of Israel where he became the first chief rabbi of the Ashkenazi community.

Buber, Martin. Tales of the Hasidim: The Early and Late Masters. New York: Schocken Books, 1975. Buber's classic rendition of tales about the Hasidic masters, an indispensable part of any library on Hasidism.

Buber, Martin. The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism (Humanity Books: 1988); Hasidism and Modern Man (University of Pennsylvania Press: 1988). Two beautiful books by the most important expositor of Hasidism to the West in the pre-War period. In these essays, Buber describes the development of his own enchantment with Hasidism, and explores its spiritual meaning from his point of view. Buber brings Hasidism to life through explorations of what it means to him as a spiritual seeker.

Deutch, Nathaniel. The Maiden of Ludmir: A Jewish Holy Woman and Her World. University of California Press, 2003. When we think of Hasidism we tend to think mostly of a world of men. Where were the women? Nathaniel Deutch speaks to this question through an interesting, scholarly studyof the Maid of Ludmir, a somewhat mysterious nineteenth-century woman who aspired to be a leader of Hasidim! While this book doesn't answer all of our questions about women in Hasidism, it opens them up in interesting ways.

Green, Arthur. Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl—Upright Practices, Light of the Eyes. New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1982. An important translation of the homiletical (sermonic/midrashic) teachings of this early Hasidic master on the book of Bereshit.

Lamm, Norman. The Religious Thought of Hasidism: Text and Commentary. Yeshiva University Press, 1999. A voluminous collection of Hasidic texts, covering every important topic in Hasidic thought. While these translations are not as felicitious as Art Green's, it is an important collection of Hasidism in English.

Langer, Jiri. Nine Gates to the Chassidic Mysteries. Berhman House: 1976. Jiri Langer (1894-1943) was a Czech poet and author who, after having visited Palestine in 1913, decided to live among the Hasidim in Galicia, in the town of Belz. He lived among the Belzer Hasidim and the court of the Rokeah dynasty for some years, before returning to Prague. This gem of a book preserves anecdotes about Hasidic masters, as well as their teachings, all written in a beautifully simple and poetic manner. In my view, this is one of the most beautiful books ever written about Judaism, no less Hasidism.

Matt, Daniel C. The Essential Kabbalah. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995. A wonderful collec- tion of primary texts from the whole of Jewish mystical tradition, beautifully presented by the premier translator of mystical texts into English. (All of Matt's Zohar translations are also important and valu- able, including Zohar—The Book of Englightenment (Paulist Press), and Zohar: Pritzker Edition (Stanford), volumes 1-2 currently available.

Weiner, Herbert. 9 1/2 Mystics—The Kabbalah Today. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992. This superb book was originally published in 1969 and reissued in an updated edition several years ago. Written long before Kabbalah and Hasidism became household words, Weiner (a Reform rabbi!) takes his readers on a fascinating tour of importantpersonalities in modern Jewish mystical thought, including, for example, Gershom Scholem, Martin Buber, and Rav Kook. Written in a lyrical, inspiring way.

EDUCATION, ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT & THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

Elkind, David A. A Sympathetic Understanding of the Child-Birth to Sixteen, Third Edition, Allyn and Bacon, 1994. The best developmental volume I know on the physical, mental and psychological devel- opment of kids to the age of sixteen.

Fowler, James W. Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995. The classic on faith development with a full chapter on adolescent faith development which, on first reading sounds like we should give up. But, it sets the problem which require translation from adult patterns to teen development.

Gendler, Ruth J. The Book of Qualities. Perennial, 1988. A short booklet about middot and emotional qualities of person. Each quality of being is beautifully described and characterized. Allows us to raise questions of who we are with teens and their middot.

Kessler, Rachael. The Soul of Education: Helping Students Find Connection, Compassion, and Character at School. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), 2000. This is an excellent volume on working with teens and building trust so they can talk about their spiritual selves; includes both theory and practice. It's right on target.

Lanteri, Linda, ed. Schools with Spirit: Nurturing the Inner Lives of Children and Teachers. Boston: Beacon Press, 2001. An excellent collection of essays, especially the one by Parker Palmer, who is the outstanding proponent for spiritual growth of children and teens in public schools. Also contains a shorter version of the Kessler book in article form. Each chapter illustrates another entry point into the spiritual life of teens, and the role of personal growth of teachers in being able to foster this in teens.

Ochs, Carol, Olitzky, Kerry and Saltzman, Joshua. Paths of Faithfulness: Personal Essays on Jewish Spirituality. New Jersey: KTAV, 1997. What's nice about this is not especially the content, but the approach in telling one's own spiritual journey, which sometimes we need to—or ought to—do.

Appendix III – Additional Suggested Reading

Aaron, David. *Living a Joyous Life: the True Spirit of Jewish Practice*. Boston, MA: Trumpeter, 2007. Print.

Address, Richard F. *Caring for the Soul - R'fuat HaNefesh : A Mental Health Resource and Study Guide*. New York: UAHC, 2003. Print.

Berrin, Susan. *Celebrating the New Moon: a Rosh Chodesh Anthology*. Northvale, NJ: J. Aronson, 1996. Print.

Bookman, Terry. *A Soul's Journey: Meditations on the Five Stages of Spiritual Growth*. New York: IUniverse, 2005. Print.

Brener, Anne. *Mourning & Mitzvah: a Guided Journal for Walking the Mourner's Path through Grief to Healing*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Pub., 1993. Print.

Brown, Erica. *Spiritual Boredom Rediscovering the Wonder of Judaism*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publ., 2009. Print.

Cohen, Steven Martin., and Arnold M. Eisen. *The Jew Within*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2000. Print.

Cooper, David A. *God Is a Verb: Kabbalah and the Practice of Mystical Judaism*. New York: Riverhead, 1997. Print.

Elkins, Dov Peretz. *Jewish Guided Imagery: Background, Resources, and Scripts for Rabbis, Educators, and Group Leaders*. Springfield, NJ: Behrman House, 2010. Print.

Fisdel, Steven A. *The Practice of Kabbalah: Meditation in Judaism*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1996. Print.

Frankiel, Tamar, and Judy Greenfeld. *Minding the Temple of the Soul: Balancing Body, Mind and Spirit through Traditional Jewish Prayer, Movement and Meditation.* Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Pub., 1997. Print.

Heschel, Abraham Joshua. *I Asked for Wonder: a Spiritual Anthology*. Ed. Samuel H. Dresner. New York: Crossroad, 1986. Print.

Hoffman, Lawrence A., and Arnold Jacob. Wolf, eds. *Jewish Spiritual Journeys: 20 Essays Written to Honor the Occasion of the 70th Birthday of Eugene B. Borowitz*. West Orange, NJ: Behrman House, 1997. Print.

Kushner, Lawrence. *Eyes Remade for Wonder: a Lawrence Kushner Reader*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Pub., 1998. Print.

Levy, Naomi. *Talking to God: Personal Prayers for times of Joy, Sadness, Struggle, and Celebration*. New York: A.A. Knopf, 2002. Print.

Matlins, Stuart M. *The Jewish Lights Spirituality Handbook: a Guide to Understanding, Exploring & Living a Spiritual Life*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2001. Print.

Milgram, Goldie. *Reclaiming Judaism as a Spiritual Practice: Holy Days and Shabbat.* Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Pub., 2004. Print.

Morinis, Alan .. *Every Day, Holy Day: 365 Days of Teachings and Practices from the Jewish Tradition of Mussar*. Boston: Trumpeter, 2010. Print.

Morinis, E. Alan. *Everyday Holiness: the Jewish Spiritual Path of Mussar*. Boston: Trumpeter, 2007. Print.

Prager, Marcia. *The Path of Blessing: Experiencing the Energy and Abundance of the Divine.* Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Pub., 2003. Print.

Schachter-Shalomi, Zalman, and Joel Segel. *Jewish with Feeling: a Guide to Meaningful Jewish Practice*. New York: Riverhead, 2005. Print.

Schachter-Shalomi, Zalman M. *Gate to the Heart: an Evolving Process*. Philadelphia, 1993. Print.

Umansky, Ellen M., and Dianne Ashton. *Four Centuries of Jewish Women's Spirituality: a Sourcebook.* Waltham, MA: Brandeis UP ; Hanover : Published by UP of New England, 2009. Print.

Waskow, Arthur. *Godwrestling--round 2: Ancient Wisdom, Future Paths*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Pub., 1996. Print.