

“Let Them Praise God’s Name in Dance,” (Psalms 149:3):
The History, Development, and Current Practices of
Movement and Dance in Jewish Worship

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Abstract:

This master's thesis will examine the evolution, history, and current applications of Jewish dance, movement, and music associated with prayer, ritual, and Jewish life cycles. Through this exploration, some of the questions I will address include: When did Jewish dance and movement become less prevalent within sacred setting and what factors contributed to this separation? What factors have contributed to the rise in movement and dance within synagogues presently?

The first part of my thesis (chapters 1 and 2) begins by studying dance and movement in biblical times through an examination of dance and movement in passages throughout the *Tanakh* in association with sacred ritual. Additionally, I include historical research beyond the biblical texts in the form of secondary and primary sources. I will then discuss when dance and movement in sacred settings became less prevalent. In particular, I am interested in how gender norms and gender restrictions have played a role in the reduction of movement associated with prayer and ritual. In this section, I explore sacred choreography and embedded movement within the liturgy. I also touch on the contrasting practices of the Hasidic communities of Eastern Europe in the 1700s, who included dance as an integral part of prayer, holidays and life cycle events. This section also examines the development and application of Israeli dance in the Jewish community.

The second part of my thesis (chapters 3 and 4) addresses the evolution of the return of dance and movement in association with ritual, prayer, and the synagogue. The third chapter explores current applications of movement and dance, while the fourth chapter looks at the development and preponderance of Jewish yoga. This section

employs information gathered from interviews and a survey that I conducted in 2016.

This section also briefly looks at movement in non-ritual Jewish settings such as the uses of movement to teach modern Hebrew taught in Hebrew schools. Through the knowledge gathered in this thesis and through the understanding of the history and development of movement and dance in Jewish worship, it is my hope to inspire a deeper appreciation for and encouragement of further use of embodied Jewish practices.

Introduction

Praise God with the timbrel and dance; praise God with stringed instruments and the pipe. Praise God with loud-sounding cymbals; Praise God with the clanging cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise Adonai. (Psalm 150).

ד הללוהו, בַּתֵּף וּמַחֹל; הללוהו, בְּמִנִּים וְעִגָּב

ה הללוהו בְּצִלְצָלִי-שָׁמַע; הללוהו, בְּצִלְצָלִי תְרוּעָה.

ו כל הַנְּשָׁמָה, תְּהַלֵּל יְהוָה: הללו-יְהוָה.

Let all who breathe praise God. Psalm 150 reminds us that the breath is the basis for our praise. Our breath is the force of life, and it supports our praise by allowing us to sing and enabling us to dance our praise to God. This psalm reminds us that each person has a different instrument for praise: some use pipe, while others cymbals and others still, through dance. In this thesis, I will study the power of movement and dance used in Jewish sacred settings. This thesis will examine the history, development and current applications of Jewish dance, movement, and music associated with prayer, ritual, and Jewish life cycles. Through this exploration, I will touch upon questions about the reciprocal relation between Jewish identity, dance, and movement. Some of the issues I will address will be the following: When did Jewish dance and movement become less prevalent within sacred setting and what factors contributed to this separation? What factors have contributed to the rise in movement and dance within synagogues presently?

The first part of my thesis will begin with an in-depth study of dance and movement in biblical times through the examination of dance and movement in the Torah,

in association with sacred ritual. I explore the places where dance and movement appear in the *Tanakh* to understand the history of Jewish movement in sacred settings.

Additionally, I look to this historical understanding as inspiration to develop further ways to use dance and movement today. This section starts with a chapter analyzing the places where Hebrew verbs discussing movement appear in the Torah as well as understanding their context. It also includes an appendix that comprises of the passages from the *Tanakh* contain the eleven verbs within the *Tanakh* used to describe music and dance.

Moreover, I also examine historical research beyond the biblical texts in the form of secondary and primary sources. Through these sources, I looked at how the Jewish diaspora, the *Haskalah*, the Jewish Enlightenment, played a role in the decrease of use of dance and movement in Jewish ritual and worship settings. In particular, I am interested in how gender norms and gender restrictions have played a role in the reduction of movement associated with prayer and ritual. I also touch on the contrasting practices of the Hasidic communities of Eastern Europe in the 1700s, who included dance as an integral part of prayer, holidays and life cycle events. I also explore the Hasidic movement and how their incorporation of movement and dance affected many sects within Judaism and also contributed to the development of Israeli dance. In this post-biblical chapter, I will also look at the sacred choreography and embedded movement in the service that was added by *halakha* and *minhag*.

The second part of my thesis, the last two chapters, address the evolution of the development of dance and movement in association with ritual, prayer, and the synagogue, which has led to the preponderance of yoga minyanim, Jewish movement classes, and the use of movement and dance in religious school settings. In this section, I

explore the use of movement in non-ritual Jewish contexts, including practices like Israeli dance, modern Hebrew taught at Hebrew schools through movement, and others.

With the knowledge compiled in this thesis, I hope to strengthen my Jewish practice and to inspire others to do so through the incorporation of more embodied Jewish practices. Through this research, I am also able to combine different passions that I have been exploring and developing from a young age. I began walking early in life. I was nine months old when I started taking my first steps independently. My mom says it is because I was so excited to start dancing. Expressing myself through movement and dance began from a young age. I started dances classes at two-and-a-half-year-old, taking ballet and tap classes. I continued dances class throughout my childhood taking classes in ballet, jazz, tap, belly dance, modern, African dance and Yoga. In high school, I also started teaching ballet and jazz classes. When I went to college, I continued my training, minoring in dance at San Diego State University. There, I took classes in ballet, modern, improvisation, and choreography. I was also a member of the San Diego State Dance company.

For many years, I was deeply rooted in my dance and my Jewish practice independently. I had taken Israeli dance classes throughout my childhood and participated in Israeli dance workshops and dance marathons. I had always been moved when we danced in services. I have a memory of participating in my first women's Pesach Seder in San Diego, California. The many voices of the community joined together, creating one exuberant voice singing praises as a group of women started dancing around the room. One by one more and more women began to dance. We danced and weaved back and forth through the seated women. This movement sprang forth out

of the joy and connection of the moment. It was such a time of coming together created through our movement and our joy and praise for God. Finally, it was a time of asserting our identity—women dancing together living out the legacy of Miriam who led women in song and dance after crossing the Sea of Reeds. Over the next few years as I deepened my Jewish knowledge and practice and started cantorial school, I continued to look for ways to combine my love for movement and Judaism and to connect more deeply to both practices.

In cantorial school, as I led services and classes, I increasingly began using movement and dance to help teach and to help connect congregants in services. Later, while in cantorial school, I took a workshop called “Shira Yoga” designed by Myriam Klotz and taught by Rabbi Shelia Peltz Weinberg, Rabbi Shuli Passow, and Dan Nadel. This workshop combined Yoga practice with Jewish concepts and the singing of *piyyutim*, Jewish liturgical poems. It was a powerful workshop, and it showed me a way of combining my Jewish practice, yoga, movement, meditation, and singing in a way I had not done before. I was inspired and wanted to become a certified Yoga teacher so that I could share this embodied Jewish practices with the communities I led. That summer I was asked to teach yoga at our school’s retreat, I had practiced yoga for years but had never formally taught it. The following summer I took an intensive summer program and became a 200-hour certified Vinyasa yoga instructor at Sonic Yoga in New York City. The next year, I started as a cantorial intern at a new pulpit and began leading a monthly Yoga minyanim. I also began incorporating movement into services and my teaching, both in the religious school and adult education classes.

Survey

As a part of my research, I created and dispersed a twenty-four-question survey about the current uses of movement and dance in synagogue settings among liberal synagogues throughout the United States. The Survey was entitled “Movement and Dance Synagogue Survey ‘לִיְזַמְרוּ לִיהִלָּלוּ שְׁמוֹ בְּמִחֹר, בְּתִף וְכִנּוֹר - לוֹ’” Let them praise His name in dance; with timbrel and lyre let them chant His praises.’ ” The survey asked questions about the use of movement and dance in services, and religious school, and also asked whether Jewish Yoga was a part of the synagogue’s programming. I formulated questions about Jewish Yoga classes synagogues—did they provide them? If so, did they have Jewish content? For a full list of the questions of the survey please refer to Appendix A. I sent the survey through the American Conference of Cantors’s Yammer page, which is a social networking platform that is used for private communication within a particular organization. Additionally, the American Conference of Cantors also had an article advertising the survey and encouraging people to fill it out, in their newsletter entitled, “Chadashot: An Update from the American Conference of Cantors.” I also posted the survey in *Jewish Prayerground*, a private Facebook group for prayer leaders.

In total, I received seventeen completed responses to the survey. Due to the number of survey responses I will not be able to draw final conclusions about greater trends of movement and dance in liberal synagogues. However, I can use the information to learn about how some synagogues incorporate movement into services, programming and teaching. I was also able to compile resources and names of people in the field who are interested in or currently facilitating movement and dance in their communities. I

received complete surveys from seventeen surveys around the country, all from Reform or Conservative synagogues.

Through analyzing the results of the survey, I found a mix of attitudes towards movement. Some synagogues included movement and dance in many parts of their community gatherings, such as in services, in the religious school and classes and at retreats. Other synagogues just include movement and dance as a part of their religious school, and some did not do any movement or dance. Synagogues in which the clergy themselves were trained and interested in movement, dance, yoga, or mindfulness made this a priority in their communities and made it accessible to the congregants. One cantor who filled out her survey said that they offered a twice-a-week Yoga class and that they had had motions to prayers and dancing in services on Simchat Torah and during religious school services. Additionally, they offered Israeli dance as a special class once a month to each grade. When asked in the survey if they incorporated movement in any other way, she stated? “It [movement/dance] is not part of the culture of the synagogue.” I found this striking as she just listed a whole list of ways that movement and dance were a part of the synagogue. In chapters 4 and 5, you will find an extended discussion of survey material.

Chapter 1: Movement and Dance in Biblical Sources

The utilization of dance and movement documented throughout the *Tanakh* highlights the centrality of dance as a form of expression in the life of the Israelites. Dance and movement were employed to demonstrate praise and therefore was pivotal in the development of the identity of the Israelites.

Based on evidence appearing throughout the *Tanakh*, the Israelites danced as a form of religious expression. This is seen in instances of agricultural celebrations, military victory dances, ecstatic dances praising God, and dances to express joy. Within the *Tanakh* we see examples of women dancing alone as well as men and women dancing together. Investigating the uses of dance and movement, specifically associated to times of praise, helps to get an understanding of the development and history of Jewish dance. An in-depth analysis of these passages allows us to see the centrality of dance as a form of expression in the life of ancient Israelites as well as the Jewish people throughout history. With this background my hope is that we are able to both better understand current practices of dance and movement in the context of worship as well as to create new forms.

There are eleven verbs to describe dancing in different parts of the text of the *Tanakh* that I will be analyzing. This list of eleven verb forms are found in the innovative work, *The Sacred Dance* by theologian W.O.E. Oesterley (1923). It was also utilized by choreographer and dance scholar Dvora Lapson in her many works as well as by bible scholar Mayer I. Gruber in his article, “Ten Dance-Derived Expressions in the Hebrew Bible” (Lapson 1963; Lapson and Shiloah, 2007; Gruber 1981). These eleven verb forms are found in the following chart:

פסח	פזז	חול	כרכר	חגג	דלג
Pasach	Pazez	Chool	Karker	Chagag	Daleg
To hop, skip over or dance	To bound, to be agile	To twist or whirl, dance.	To dance or whirl	To celebrate, hold a feast, or dance.	To leap or spring.
	שחק	רקד	קפץ	צלע	סבב
	Sachak	Rakad	Kafatz	Tzala	Savav
	To laugh, play, dance	To skip, dance, leap.	To jump with both feet	To Limp.	To turn or turn about, to encircle

חול

חול (chool), which translated to dance, to whirl or to twist is the verb root for dance that occurs the most within the *Tanakh*. I will also look at examples of words stemming from the noun מחלה (machalah) and מחל (Machol), which both derive from חול. Additionally, because it is the most prevalent root word in the Tanakh it is the most discussed verb by scholars. Originally, מחל was used to refer to a specific kind of dance associated with joyous occasions and then eventually developed to mean joy. מחלה (machalah) can be found in the Tanakh nine times; each of the nine times that it occurs it is directly related to dance and movement. Additionally, it shows the Israelites dancing

within different settings and for various occasions. The first time that מחלה is found in the *Tanakh* is a well-known example of dance in Exodus 15:20-21—when Miriam, the prophetess and sister of the Kohen, Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand and danced with the women.

Exodus 15:20-21

כ וַתִּקַּח מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיאָה אֶחָדָה אֶהָרֹן, אֶת-הַתֵּף--בְּיָדָהּ; וַתִּצְאֶן כָּל-הַנָּשִׁים אַחֲרֶיהָ, בְּתִפְכִּים וּבַמְּחֹלָת.

In this well-known example of dance, it is important to note that this is a scenario in which solely women are dancing. We see these women utilize dance to express joy and praise and therefore this act also becomes a unifying force to bring women together. We see women's bodies collaborating as a social body. Furthermore, this act highlights Miriam's leadership among the Israelite people. In Exodus 15:21 it reads "V'ta'an lahem Miraim shiru l'adonai. This is often translated as "And Miriam sang to them." The word v'ta'an means to answer so, it more directly translates to "Miriam answered them with song." Miriam answered the needs of the Israelites in a time of great emotion by leading them in song and dance.

The next example in which מחלה shows up is in Exodus 32:19. In this part of the Torah, Moses is descending from Mount Sinai to find that the Israelites had convinced Aaron to build them a golden calf to worship. The verse is as follows:

Exodus 32:19

יט וַיְהִי, כִּאֲשֶׁר קָרַב אֶל-הַמַּחֲנֶה, וַיֵּרָא אֶת-הָעֵגֹל, וּמַחֲלֹת; וַיַּסֵּר-אֶף מִשָּׁה, וַיִּשְׂלֶךְ מִיָּדוֹ אֶת-

הלחצת, וישבר אתם, תחת הקר.

“19 And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing; and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and broke them beneath the mount.

This example further solidifies the fact that Israelites used dance as a form of worship since we see the Israelites worshipping the golden calf through dance. We see that Moses is angered since they are worshiping a false God by singing and dancing. As such, the previous two examples are ones in which dance occurred in time of praise and joy, or even times of misguided praise. The next two places that the word מחלה shows up in the Torah are places in which the word is used in association with war. Dancing often accompanied by drums or timbrels is connected to the celebration of battle victories as well as the return of military heroes. This is seen throughout the *Tanakh*, specifically in Judges 11:34 and Samuel 18:6. Additionally, there is a description of a victory parade in Judith 15:12-13. Gender plays a role in these victory dances as the men are described as the military heroes while the women lead the dances and welcome the soldiers home.

In the centuries that followed, while the Israelites lived in *Eretz Yisrael*, dancing played an integral part of both social and communal festivals. According to , Dvora Lapson's article, “Jewish Dances of Eastern and Central Europe”: “Every vineyard had an area reserved for dancing, and used exclusively for women” (Lapson 1963, 58). We see an example of women dancing in a vineyard in Judges 21:21.

Judges 21:21

כא וראיתם, והנה אם יצאו בנות-שילו לחול במחלות, ויצאתם מן-הכרמים, וחטפתם לקם איש אשתו מבנות שילו; והלקתם, ארץ בנימן.

And see, and, behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in the dances, then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin.

The verb root חוּל has many meanings, ranging from to twist, to whirl, and to dance, while also meaning to writhe, to fear, to tremble, to travail, to be in anguish and to be pained. This root occurs sixty times within the Tanakh. Often when the root חוּל occurs it is not related to dance or movement, however, in the verse listed above Judges 21:21 we see an explicit connection to dance when the daughters are dancing within the vineyard. In this verse, we see there are two different uses for dance, one being the verb חוּל and the other מחלה the noun deriving from the verb, חוּל. Both are used in this verse to articulate the dancing that took place in the vineyards. According to, the *Brown Driver Briggs Hebrew English Lexicon*, מחלה means dance, and since we dance in acts of praise מחלה has been to describe an act of praise. We also see that there were all women sections found in Israelite vineyards that were reserved for dancing. These sections of the vineyard allowed women to articulate praise and build community during the festivals and transitions of the seasons.

There are numerous references to dance and prayers for God using the entirety of the body in the Book of Psalms. This is shown in the Book of Psalms when the noun from the root מָחַל, based on the verb חוּל, is used in the form of *machol* (or “dance”). An example of this is in Psalms 149:3 when the psalmist encourages people to, “Praise God's name in *dance*”: יְהַלְלוּ שְׁמוֹ בַּמַּחֹל; בְּתֹף וְכִנּוֹר, יִזְמְרוּ-לוֹ. This is also seen in Psalms

150:4, when it says “Praise Him with timbrels and *dance*. בְּתִפְּתִי וְכִנּוֹר, יְהַלְלוּ שְׁמוֹ בַּמַּחֲוֶל; יִזְמְרוּ-וּ.

כרכר

The verb כרכר (karker) occurs twice in the *Tanakh* and is translated as “to whirl.”

The verb is used in an example of dance employed as a means of praising God. The interpretation of כרכר as meaning “whirling dance” is based primarily on the idea that karker is an intensive of the word כרר (karar) meaning to rotate. In “Dancing Biblical Data,” E.G. Hirsch claims that kirkeir is “most likely the turning around and round upon the heels on one spot, as practiced by the dervishes.” However, in Numbers Rabbah 4:20, an anonymous suggestion is presented that claims Kirker means pirouette.

The verb כרכר occurs twice when King David dances before the Ark, which holds the scrolls. It first occurs in II Samuel 6:14 where כרכר is used in the form מְכַרְכֵּר to describe David dancing before the lord with all his might:

יָד וְדוֹד מְכַרְכֵּר בְּכָל-עֹז, לִפְנֵי יְהוָה; וְדוֹד, חָגוּר אֶפֶוד בָּד.

David whirled with all his might before the LORD; David was girt with a linen ephod.

The second time כרכר appears is in II Samuel 6:16 the verse reads:

וַיְהִי אַרְוֶן יְהוָה, בָּא עִיר דָּוִד; וּמִיכָל בַּת-שָׁאוּל נִשְׁקָפָה בְּעֵד הַחֲלוֹן, וַתֵּרָא אֶת-הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד מְכַרְכֵּר לִפְנֵי יְהוָה, וַתִּבֹּז וְ, בְּלִבָּהּ.

16 And it was so, as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looked out at the window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart.

Here we see the same form of the verb is used מְכַרְכֵּר as in the previous verse, verse 14. These two verses are the only two times that this word appears in the whole Tanakh and highlights this very important event in David's life in which he brings the ark up to the city of Jerusalem. There are three other verbs used—four different words total—to describe the dance and movement King David employs in praise as described in II Samuel 6 and also in Chronicles 15:29. These words include וַיִּשְׁחָק play or dance, מְכַרְכֵּר to dance or whirl, מְפִיז, to jump, and מְרַקֵּד, skip or leap. This is the first recorded moment in which Israelites dance before the scrolls. This is the seed that established the tradition of dancing with the Torah to express praise. This practice is seen up until today with the dancing and singing practiced on *Simchat Torah*. There are also communities today that encourage dancing during the *hakafot*, the circling around with the Torah, during the Torah service.

חג

The idea that religious dance was central to every festival celebrated by the Israelites is demonstrated in the development of the word for festival, חג. Over time, the word חג came to be known as festival, often specifically referring to one of the three pilgrimage festivals—*Sukkot*, *Pesach*, and *Shavuot*. However, originally the connotation of the word was a procession around the altar or shrine. (Gruber 1981). This procession was executed in a particular halting rhythm. According to , Mayer I. Gruber in his article,

“Ten Dance-Derived Expression in the Hebrew Bible,” the verb **ללן** occurs sixteen times in the Tanakh. In thirteen of the sixteen times, the verb **ללן** appears it is used to describe the celebration of a festival (Gruber 1981). The simple meaning of the word **ללן** is to dance in a circle, however, by looking at different examples we see that through the use of **ללן** throughout the Tanakh and by looking at the context, **ללן** often means to celebrate a prescribed festival, whereas three times we see that dance is used within a prescribed setting to celebrate a specific festival.

I showed that the most important criterion for determining when a particular verb or expression is employed literally to refer to a body movement is its being juxtaposed with other expressions denoting physical acts while the most important criterion for determining when a particular expression is employed symbolically is its being juxtaposed with other abstract expressions. (Gruber 1981, 329)

There are three examples in which one can suggest the word **ללן** is associated with movement or dance, and they are in Psalms 107:27, 1 Samuel 30:16 and Psalms 42:5. Research from Oesterley’s book, *The Sacred Dance* and Gruber’s article, “Ten Dance-Derived Expression In the Hebrew Bible,” shows how using the etymological relationships between words in different texts can show us how the word **ללן** in Psalms 107:27 can be associated with movement (Oesterley, 1923, 4; Gruber 1981, 330). Additionally, in Psalms 107:27, the word **ללן** is juxtaposed to the verb root **ננע** Nuah, (meaning to quiver, stagger or make move) and they are both used to describe the behavior of drunks. Furthermore, using the assumed etymological connection between the verb **ללן** in Psalms 107:27 and the verb “**ללן**” (to draw a circle) attested in Job 26:10, the conclusion can be drawn that Psalms 107:27 means “they shall move about going in

circles like a drunk. Based on this, one can make a hypothesis that in 1 Samuel 30:16 and Psalms 42:5, which are the only other two times that *ללך* does not mean to celebrate, *ללך* may mean “to dance in a circle” (Gruber 1981, 331).

The Jewish Publication Society translates the passage as: Psalm 42:5,

הָמוֹן חֲגֻגָּה; בְּקוֹל רִנָּה וְתוֹדָה; “with the voice of joy and praise, a multitude keeping holiday” (JPS, 1917). Gruber offers that it could be translated as “The multitude dances in circle to the tune of a song of thanksgiving” (Gruber 1981, 330). Additionally, in I Samuel 30:16, in which the verb **לָלַךְ** appears beside the verbs, to eat, drink, and scatter, Gruber suggests that the phrase should be translated to: “So he led him (King David) down, and there they were scattered all over the ground eating and drinking, and dancing in a circle in commemoration of the vast spoil they had taken from Philistia and Judah” (Gruber 1981, 330).

There is also a clear example of the noun מִנְיָן used to reference a circle dance or processional dance about an alter in Psalms 118:27.

כז אֵל, יְהוָה--וַיֹּאֲר-לָנוּ: אֶסְרוּ-חַג בַּעֲבָתִים--עַד קִרְנוֹת, הַמִּזְבֵּחַ.

The LORD is God; He has given us light; bind the festal offering to the horns of the altar with cords.

סבב

סבב (Savav) is a verb that describes movement and is translated as “to turn about or to encircle.” This word is found within the Tanakh one hundred and fifty-seven times and is the most prevalent dance and movement word found within the Tanakh. An

example in which סבב is used in the Tanakh describing the relationship between dance and worship can be found in Psalms 26:6. This verse is translated to: “I wash my hands in innocence, and walk around Your altar, O LORD.” In this passage, סבב refers to the same ritual as when the word הִגֵּג is used to describe the ritual in 1 Samuel 30 (Gruber 1981, 331).

The verb סבב is used in the Tanakh in military settings to stake claim or ownership of a territory. This is seen in Joshua Chapter 6, in which the verb סבב appears six times. In this chapter סבב is used when describing a ceremonial processional dance around the wall of Jericho. This dance is enacted to symbolically stake ownership to the territory within the encirclement, Jericho.

It is interesting to consider the idea of movement and specifically how encircling is used to stake ownership of a physical territory. See the section on movement in dance in modernity to explore the idea of using movement to claim ownership of the liturgy and even the space in which we pray.

Psalms 114:3-5 are additional verses in which the word סבב is used to highlight dance enacted for worship.

הַיָּם רָאָה, וַיָּנֹס; הַיַּרְדֵּן, יָסָב לָאָחוֹר
הַהָרִים, רָקְדּוּ כְּאֵילִים; גְּבְעוֹת, כְּכִנִּי-צֹאן
מִה-לֶּךָ הַיָּם, כִּי תָנוּס; הַיַּרְדֵּן, תָּסָב לָאָחוֹר.

These three verses are translated to: “The sea saw them and fled, Jordan ran backward, mountains skipped like rams, hills like sheep. What alarmed you, O sea, that you fled, Jordan, that you ran backward.” In these three verses the word סבב is utilized in

verse 114:3 and 114:5 while the root word רקד, discussed below, is used in Psalms 114:4.

In these verses, three images unfold. The first is the primordial battle between the Lord and the sea. This image occurs through the *Tanakh*, for example in Isaiah 51:10. The second image is the parting of the Sea of Reeds and the Jordan River to allow the Israelites to come to dry land. Finally, the third image is of dance as a form of praise and worship towards God. This is displayed through the personified mountains, which are said to dance, using the verb רקד, and the Sea of Reeds and Jordan are said to have danced the circle dance.

In Jeremiah 31:22 the word סבב is used to describe a movement ritual that is performed in weddings today. In this verse, סבב is used to describe the circling of the wedding couple. The verse is translated to, “How long will you waver, O rebellious daughter? (For the LORD has created something new on earth: A woman courts a man).” Here the word סבב is translated as “to court,” and it is through the circling that the courting takes place.

The last example of סבב that I will investigate in this paper is an example found in Ecclesiastes 12:5. Upon further examination of this verb in this verse, one can make the claim that this is the only example of dance in association with mourning rituals. Despite the lack of explicit examples of dancing during mourning rituals in the *Tanakh*, scholars Oesterley and Gruber both argue that this does not mean that they did not exist (Oesterley 1923; Gruber 1981). In fact, Oesterley and Gruber claim that there is a strong reason to believe that dancing as part of mourning did exist among the Israelites. In *The Sacred Dance*, Oesterley claims that: “The strongest reason for believing that this custom

was in vogue among the ancient Israelites is that it exists at the present day. Such things as mourning and burial customs are never innovations; modifications may arise” (Oesterley 1923, 197). The ritual that Oesterley refers to in the present day is the circling of the bier seven times, which is part of the Sephardic funeral custom. Additionally, although dance in the typical sense is not traditionally seen in Ashkenazi Jewish mourning rituals the practice of circling the block after a shiva is still practice today and probably stems from this biblical practice.

Ecclesiastes 12:5 reads:

כי-הלך האדם אל-בית עולמו, וסבבו בשוק הסופדים

“But man sets out for his eternal abode, with mourners all around in the street.”

Here we see that the root word סבב is given the meaning that the mourners are congregating together in an act of shared grief. We have seen throughout the Tanakh the words חגג and סבב are used to refer to circumambulation, or moving around a sacred object. Gruber therefore suggests that the verse Ecclesiastes 12:5 can be translated as: “When a person goes to his eternal home, the mourners in the streets participate in the circumambulations” (Gruber 1981, 35). Gruber’s translation of the text suggests that in this context of mourning סבב is not describing the people in the street moving around the mourner and an unorganized way. Rather Gruber argues that וסבבו “describes a specific organized movement of circumambulation that the mourners participate in as part of the mourning ritual,” (Gruber, 1981, 335).

רקד

In his book *World History of the Dance*, musicologist Curt Sachs argues that skip dances, which are movements in which either foot is used, should be distinguished from jump dances. Sachs describes that the real jump dance the dances leaves the ground with both feet at the same time. (Sachs 1963). In the previous quote, Sachs is articulating the difference between a *rikud*, “the skip dance” and a “jump dance,” which is described using two roots דלג and קפץ. In the next section, I will discuss the latter two verbs. This differentiation between skip dances and jump dances is also discussed within the Talmud. The Jerusalem Talmud, Beza 5:1 states: “In kapatz one removes his two feet from the ground simultaneously, but in רקד, one removes one foot from the ground while placing the other foot upon the ground.” רקד, meaning to skip, or to dance, or to leap, and it appears in the *Tanakh* nine times.

This differentiation makes sense when brought together with the idea that for the Israelites רקד was a dance that imitated the skipping and romping of rams, sheep, calves or goats. In Psalms 114:4 and 6, רקד is used to describe the activities of rams while in Psalms 29:6 the verb is used as a simile “dance like a calf” and finally in Isaiah 13:21 the verb is used in a simile describing the dance of a he-goat (Gruber, 1981, 337). In Chronicles 15: 29, מְרַקֵּד is one of the two words used to articulate David’s dancing before the ark.

Within the *Tanakh*, רקד is understood to be a dance of joy, similar to the examples of the verb *mahol* in Lamentations 5:15 and Psalms 30:12. רקד may have been a dance derived through expressions of joy as well. For instance, in Job 21:11, the root

רקד is used to describe the happiness and prosperity of the wicked, who dance a dance that imitates sheep and goats: “They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance.” (JPS 1917). The next verse, Job 21:12 reads: “They sing to the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the pipe,” (JPS,1917).

יא יִשְׁלְחוּ כִצְאוֹן, עֲוִילֵיהֶם; וְיִלְדִּיהֶם, יִרְקְדוּן.

יב יִשְׂאוּ, כְּתֹף וְכִנּוּר; וְיִשְׁמְחוּ, לְקוֹל עוּגָב.

קפץ and דלג

The verbs דלג and קפץ are synonyms, meaning to jump, or alluding to a distinct kind of jumping dance. דלג appears in the Tanakh five times, while kafatz appears eight times. There is only one example of kafatz in the Tanakh, in which the meaning is to jump, and it is not used in an explicit dancing context. More commonly, the word means to draw together, to close, or to shut. The one place in which it means to jump is in Song of Songs 2:8:

Song of Songs 2:8:

ח קוֹל דּוֹדִי, הִנֵּה-יָהּ בָּא; מְדַלֵּג, עַל-הַהָרִים--מִמְּצָנַי, עַל-הַגְּבָעוֹת.

“Hark! My beloved! There he comes, leaping over mountains, Bounding over hills.”

In this passage, דלג and קפץ are used as synonyms to mean jump. The two

Hebrew words meaning jump are dance derived expressions used to describe the women's lover's joy. The one time that **לָלַךְ** is used within a dancing context is in Isaiah 35:6: "Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb shall shout aloud; For waters shall burst forth in the desert, Streams in the wilderness." Here **רָקַד**, to leap or dance and *shir*, to sing, are parallels to each other, reinforcing the association between music and dance. Additionally, the prophet, generally said to be Second Isaiah, tells the reader that once Israel is redeemed by God, all will be able to sing and dance, emphasizing that the desired form of worship is to sing and dance to praise God.

פָּזַז

The word **פָּזַז**, *pazaz*, to skip, occurs in the *Tanakh* twice, but in only one instance is it a reference to a dancing step. This example is found when describing David dancing in Samuel 6:16, which is a very similar passage to the account in Chronicles 15:29. The rare verb **פָּזַז** is used instead of the common word **רָקַד** that is used in the Chronicles verse.

Samuel 6:16:

וַיְהִי אֲרוֹן יְהוָה, בָּא עִיר דָּוִד; וּמִיכָל בֵּת-שָׁאוּל נִשְׁקָפָה בְּעֵד הַחֲלוֹן, וַתֵּרָא אֶת-הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד מִפָּזִז וּמִכִּרְכָּר לִפְנֵי יְהוָה, וַתִּבֹּז אוֹ, בְּלִבָּהּ.

"And it was so, as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looked out at the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart."

It is interesting to note that by using the unique verb, **פָּזַז**, this passage emphasizes the

importance of this event in which David dances in praise of the ark and God as they pass through Jerusalem.

פסח

The fact that dance is a central aspect of the celebration of festivals practiced by the Israelites is shown through the development of the words translated to or associated with the festivals. This was true in the previous sections when analyzing the word חג, and it is further proven by considering the development of the meaning and connotation of the word פסח, pasach. The word פסח is found eight times in the *Tanakh*. In J.B Segal's, *Hebrew Passover from the Earliest Times to A.D. 70*, Segal suggests that the festival of Pesach originally derived its name from the limping dance performed on this festival in hoary antiquity (Segal 1963). The basis for this assumption is in the presumed derivation of the noun Pesach from the verb פסח, meaning to limp (Gruber 1981). Many of the places the root פסח shows up reference the pilgrimage festival or a context in which it is used to mean "to pass over." There is one instant in the *Tanakh* in which a "limping dance" is referenced, and it is found in I Kings 18:26. In this verse, the behavior of the priests of Baal are competing with Elijah, and it is described as the following:

כו וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת-הַפָּר אֲשֶׁר-נָתַן לָהֶם, וַיַּעֲשׂוּ, וַיִּקְרְאוּ בְּשֵׁם-הַבַּעַל מִבֹּקֶר וְעַד-הַצֶּהֳרָיִם לֵאמֹר
הַבַּעַל עֲנֵנוּ, וְאֵין קוֹל וְאֵין עֲנָה; וַיַּפְסְחוּ, עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה.

And they took the bullock, which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying: 'O Baal, answer us.' But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they danced in halting wise, (וַיַּפְסְחוּ limping dance) about the altar, which was made.

It is interesting to note that According to, Gruber this limping dance found in the *Tanakh*

has been compared to the way Muslims on pilgrimage to Mecca circle the sacred Ka'aba shrine (Gruber 1981). Scholar J. Robinson has an antiquated way of describing the movement in his book, *The First Book of Kings*, in which he writes about the limping dance saying that it is executed “with a peculiar limping walk, dragging on foot behind the other” (Robinson 1971, 209).

There are also scholars who have suggested that Elijah refers to the limping dance in I Kings 18:21. This verse reads:

כא וַיִּגַּשׁ אֶלְיָהוּ אֶל-כָּל-הָעָם, וַיֹּאמֶר עַד-מָתַי אַתֶּם פֹּסְחִים עַל-שְׁתֵּי הַסַּעֲפִים--אִם-יְהוָה הָאֱלֹהִים לְכוּ אַחֲרָיו, וְאִם-הַבַּעַל לְכוּ אַחֲרָיו; וְלֹא-עֲנוּ הָעָם אֹתוֹ, דָּבָר.

Often the word פֹּסְחִים is translated as “hopping,” meaning hopping between opinions, or going back and forth between two opinions. The verse would translate to: “Elijah approached all the people and said, ‘How long will you keep hopping between two opinions?’ If the LORD is God, follow Him; and if Baal, follow him! But the people answered him not a word.” However, per A. Ehrlich, the Hebrew word הַסַּעֲפִים, which usually means opinions, and considers it a biform of sippim meaning thresholds (of temples) (Ehrlich 1969, 314). Furthermore, he argues that Elijah’s remarks are in reference to people who have been worshiping both Baal and Adonai through the form of the limping dance (Ehrlich 1969). E. Ehrlich continues to assert that Elijah is thereby asking that people perform the limping dance to one god or the other, not to both (Ehrlich 1969). Gruber continues by saying that some scholars disagree that the appearance of פֹּסַח in verse 21 is coincidental and is not referring to the dance form, and some claim that the limping dance was only done to Baal and not to Adonai (Gruber 1981, 341). Either way, According to, Oesterley in *The Sacred Dance*, there are no other

references to limping dance in the *Tanakh*. (Oesterley 1923, 44).

שחק

שחק is translated as “to laugh, to play, or to mock” (in reference to instrumental music, singing or dancing). This root appears in the *Tanakh* thirty-six times. In most of the cases the *piel* form of the verb שחק is not referring specifically to dance but often means to play. It is interesting to think about this intersection of the idea of dance and play. There are examples of שחק used within a specific dancing context. For example, in Second Samuel 6: 21, David answered Michal: “It was before Adonai who chose me instead of your father and all his family and appointed me ruler over the Adonai’s people Israel! I will dance before Adonai.” Here King David tells Michal, “I will dance before Adonai”: וְשִׁחֲקֵתִי, לִפְנֵי יְהוָה.

While in II Samuel 6:14, King David is described as מְכַרְכֵּר בְּכָל-עֹז, or “whirling with all his strength.” In II Samuel 6:21, David is telling Michal that he intends to do more of what he did (in reference to the whirling in verse 14). There are two places within the *Tanakh* in which David is described as dancing before the scrolls in I Chronicles 15:29, which we discussed previously, and II Samuel 6:16. In Chronicles 15:29 the verb פָּזַז is used.

הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד מְפָזֵז וּמְכַרְכֵּר, David was skipping and whirling”. We noted that it was unusual to employ the verb פָּזַז in this context. We see here in II Samuel 6:16, that the verb פָּזַז changed to use a more common verb root, “מָרְקֹד וּמִשְׁחָק” (David) was skipping and dancing.” In some translations of this verse the word וּמִשְׁחָק is translated as

merry making; however, based on previous descriptions of this scene found in Samuel and other uses of the word, **דָּוִיד מְרַקֵּד וּמִשְׁחָק**, more accurately translates to Michal saw: King David leaping and dancing.”

Another example of **שָׁחָק** used to mean dancing is found in I Chronicles 13:8, and this verse also seems to be a parallel to II Samuel 6:14 where King David danced with all his strength.

וְדָוִיד וְכָל-יִשְׂרָאֵל, מִשְׁתַּחֲוִים לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים

“David and all Israel Danced before God with all their might.”

צִלַּע

The verb root **צִלַּע** occurs four times in the *Tanakh*. It is translated to mean “to limp or to be lame.” This verb is used to describe a ritual dance, similar to the word **פִּסָּח**, which is discussed previously. In Genesis 32 verses 31 and 32, Jacob is described as passing over Penuel “limped upon his thigh.” In this verse, the root **צִלַּע** is used and it is in this occurrence only that it has this meaning. However, Oesterley points out that there is a place named **רְצִלָּע** which is mentioned in II Samuel 21:14 and that this is the ancestral home of Saul. Furthermore, it is possible that this was an ancient sanctuary where this special kind of limping dance was performed (Oesterley 1923).

Dance and movement play an integral role in prophecy, as seen in the book of Samuel. A passage from Samuel describes how Saul goes into the hill of God where he meets a group prophesizing while they are in motion and accompanied by instruments.

ה אחר כן, תבוא גבעת האלהים, אשר-שם, נצבי פלשתים; ויהי כבאך שם העיר, ופגעת חבל נבאים ירדים מהבמה, ולפניהם גל ותף וחרליל וכנור, והמה מתנבאים.

5 After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines; and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a band of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a timbrel, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they will be prophesying.

ו וצלחה עליך רוח יהוה, והתנבית עמם; ונהפכת, לאיש אחר.

6 And the spirit of the LORD will come mightily upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.

The three Pilgrimage Festivals, Passover, Shavuout, and Sukkot, in which practitioners made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem bringing gifts to sacrifice at the Temple, were celebrated with dancing and rejoicing. We see this in the following text from the Mishnah, Seder Mo'ed Sukkah V.4: "While the Levites made music with lyre and harp and cymbals and trumpets and countless other instruments (Lapson 1963, 58).

As stated in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*'s section on dance, none of the references to dance within the Torah or the rabbinic literature refer to the specific ways in which the dancers actually moved (Lapson and Shiloah 2007). Additionally, since the Jewish tradition prohibits the making of sculptured images, for many years there was thought to be no pictorial records of how Jews danced (ibid.). In addition to the written examples of movement and dance found in the *Tanakh* and the rabbinic literature, there is also evidence of dancing found in more tangible, material artifacts.

Archeological discoveries in Megiddo, Lachish, and the Negev, to name a few, have brought to light iconographic features (Lapson and Shiloah 2007). For example, various cylinder seals from the second millennium BCE show lines of dancers with their

arms on each other's shoulders. Furthermore, figures on a cylinder seal from the late Bronze Age found in Lachish have been interpreted as participants in a ritual or battle dance. This dance is similar to the Arab folk dance called "dabek" which is still danced today (ibid). According to, A. Mazar in his article, "Ritual Dancing in the Iron Age" from Near Eastern Archeology," this posture is typical of seals showing dancers from various sites in Israel," (Mazar 2003, 66). According to, , T. Ilan in his study "Dance and Gender in Ancient Jewish Sources," dance represented in ancient iconography as an activity in which the two genders have specific roles (Ilan 2003, 135-36). Gender also played a role in all women's dance spaces in vineyards described in the Tanakh. Additionally, gender plays a role in restrictions the rabbis put on dancing. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Through the deep study of the different books of the *Tanakh* and other historical artifacts including cylinder seals, we can see that movement and dance has been a significant tool of communication and praise of the Jewish people for thousands of years. With this study, we are better able to understand movement and dance as a form of expression and identity for the Israelites. Through this foundational understanding we are better able to understand the place movement and dance plays in today's Jewish worship services as well as potential uses.

Chapter 2: Development of Movement and Dance in Jewish Worship in the Post-Biblical Period

During the Diaspora, starting in 586 BCE, the landscape of Jewish dance, especially within sacred settings, was dramatically transformed. According to, , Dvora Lapson and Amnon Shiloah, “During the dispersion, the dancing associated with the normal activities of a nation in its country ceased” (Lapsion and Shiloah 2007, 2). Additionally, the rabbinic authorities often prohibited dancing in public. There are many discussions of dance within rabbinic literature, and the opinions and rulings about dance range widely from lukewarm compromise to outright enmity. Additionally, at weddings, bridal feasts, on Shabbat, and specifically on Simchat Torah, Purim and Lag Ba’omer, dancing continued, but it took a different form.

In Dvora Lapson’s article, “Jewish Dances of Eastern and Central Europe,” she brings into focus the idea that the Middle Ages brought movement out of sacred settings and into non-ritualized social contexts (Lapson 1963). As Jews were forced to leave *Eretz Yisrael*, their lifestyles changed from one of an agricultural focus to one confined to the indoors, which was more characteristic of city and town living. Restricted to cities, Jewish celebrations and functions were brought indoors to the *tanzhaus*—an institution founded in every ghetto in Europe and a place for weddings and major festivities, as well as recreation on Shabbat (ibid., 58). There are a variety of Jewish dances associated with these celebrations, and lifecycle events developed in association with the *tanzhaus*. Due to the *mitzvah*, or commandment, to celebrate a bride, group dancing at Jewish weddings bridges the sacred and secular world. There are a variety of dances with differing names and purposes used within this important lifecycle event.

As previously stated, a certain amount of separation between movement and prayer had already begun in the Medieval period, as Jews moved away from agrarian societies and into cities. I also speculate that the Enlightenment sparked a more intellectual approach to Jewish practice, which led to a further disembodiment of prayer and other rituals, and thereby resulted in less movement and dance in a sacred setting.

The Enlightenment and Movement in Prayer

The *Haskalah*, also known as the Jewish Enlightenment, was an intellectual movement started by the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe in the 18th century. The primary goal of the movement was modernization in alignment with the rationalistic and liberal ideals prevalent in the 18th and 19th century (Schoenberg, 2017). Members of this movement sought to integrate Jews into the larger society through acquainting them with European culture and having them adopt the vernacular language of the country they resided within.

In the early nineteenth century, German ideas of the Enlightenment came into the Jewish religious discourse and sparked transformation that would eventually inspire the establishment of the Jewish Reform movement. The ideas of eighteenth century philosopher, Moses Mendelssohn, are attributed as the foundational works of the Jewish enlightenment, (Schoenberg, 2017). After Moses Mendelssohn became sick, he became dedicated to bringing the Jewish people closer to “culture” specifically the dominant culture of the land, the German culture. He set out to do this by publishing a German translation of the *Tanakh*. Additionally, in the 1820s and 1830s, philosophers such as Solomon Steinheim brought German idealism into the Jewish religious conversation.

German idealism reconciled Christian faith and modern sensibilities, and people like Solomon Steinheim imported this idea so as to be employed in Jewish practice.

Another movement that was controversial and led to the modernization of the Jews was the “Science of Judaism” or “Wissenschaft des Judentums.” Wissenschaft des Judentums was a nineteenth-century movement that developed on the premise of using scientific methods to analyze the origins of Jewish traditions through the critical investigation of Jewish literature and culture, including rabbinic literature (Meyer 1995). Proponents of this movement vacillated between whether this critical analysis should be applied to Jewish practice and the modernization of the Jewish people. Opinions ranged widely, and for example, Orthodox writer Azriel Hildesheimer subjugated research to the predetermined sanctity of the text, refusing the practical implications of these methods. In *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism*, Michael Meyer writes that the Positive-Historical Zecharias Frankel, did not deny Wissenschaft a role, however only in deference to tradition (1995). Abraham Geiger, on the other hand, rejected any limitations on the objective research of Judaism or its application (ibid.). Abraham Geiger is considered the founding father of Reform Judaism.

As we can see with the Jewish Enlightenment, the development of a more intellectual approach to Judaism came to prominence. Furthermore, with the development of Reform Judaism in nineteenth century Germany came drastic changes to the Jewish worship service. The reformers hoped to modernize services and wanted to relate to their protestant neighbors. They removed much of the choreography that was inherent in the service. For example, bowing, especially full prostrations no longer were practiced. Shucking also left mainstream Reform practice.

Liz Lerman a Jewish dancer and choreographer has worked for many years to bring dance into synagogues. During an interview with Ms. Lerman she said that she encountered a mentality that is pervasive in the Jewish community: if you lose a little control of your body and release into movement there is a fear that they will lose their mind.¹ I would argue that this mentality, still prevalent today, finds its origins in the Enlightenment. The Jewish people worked hard to be able to balance their Jewish practice with modern culture and to be accepted within mainstream culture, and part of this was achieved through an embrace of rational thinking.

Gender is an issue intertwined with the topic of movement and dance within a Jewish sacred context. As previously described, there were vineyards in ancient Israel where only women were permitted. In these vineyards women danced in association with the harvests and the change in seasons. Additionally, there are examples of men's ecstatic dancing found throughout the Torah, an example of this shown by King David dancing before the ark. In the Torah, women are described as dancing during war victories. Jewish laws of *tzniut* (modesty) forbid men and women from dancing together. Gender separations play an important role in movement and dance becoming more dislocated from Jewish rituals and prayer.

Movement and Choreography in Prayer

Jewish prayer is very connected to our bodies. Many of the prayers and blessings directly speak about our bodies. There are prayers and texts that use body metaphors to describe our praise, and there are movements done simultaneously with our prayers.

¹ Liz Lerman Telephone, recording, interview by author. April 28, 2016.

There are a variety of movements that have inherently become a part of the service whether through Jewish law, *halakhah*, or Jewish tradition, *minhag*. Within the worship services, these movements include shuckling, bowing, full prostration, going on one's toes, covering one's eyes, kissing the fringes of one's tallit, shaking a *lulav* and *etrog*, and taking three steps forward and back. These prescribed movements help the person praying to focus and find greater meaning in the prayers. These movements create a body memory that allows the body, mind, and spirit to join into one prayer voice.

Prayers that Speak of the Body

Throughout Jewish liturgy and texts, we are able to see how the Jewish people are concerned with their bodies and minds. The morning prayer service starts with prayers that express thankfulness for one's body in "Asher Yatzar" and breath in, "Elohai Neshma." There is so much significant to the fact that our prayer services start by grounding ourselves in and being thankful for our body.

The Nissim B'chol Yom

The "Nissim B'chol Yom" translated in English in the Mishkhan T'filah as "Daily Miracles" (Frishman 2007, 36), are a series of blessings that are part of the *Birchot Hashachar* (Morning blessings) of the *Shacharit* (morning) services. Originally, the "Nissim B'chol Yom" was a series of blessings said at home. These blessings were recited in connection to movements associated with waking up. Each of these blessings start with the standard prescribed blessings formula "*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melch Ha'olam*," (Blessed are you God sovereign of the universe). After this formulaic

beginning, the blessing continues with reasons to give praise. For example, *Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu melech Ha'olam Zokeif k'fufim*, (Blessed are you God Sovereign of the universe who lifts up the fallen). By reciting these blessings, we are reminded that these daily occurrences, such as opening our eyes, clothing our bodies, and walking, to name a few, are in fact daily miracles, occurrences worth blessing. In a footnote in the *Mishkhan T'filah: A Reform Siddur* it says, “Though the blessings are intended literally, we may perceive each blessing spiritually” (ibid., 98). This act of blessing allows us to slow down and take account of the state of our body and mind. Today, in many liberal synagogues, these blessing have been brought into the synagogue to be done together as a community during services. This part of the services is a wonderful opportunity for us to draw on the origin of the blessings to gather inspiration to use movement within the services. Look to chapter 4 where I speak of learning and creating translations of the Nissim B'chol Yom in American Sign Language.

Looking at written Jewish Law we are able to see the concern for awareness of one's body in prayer. This is evident in *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, written by Shlomo Ganzfried, which is an abridged version of Joseph Caro's *Shulchan Aruch*. The *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* outlines Jewish law to make it easier for Jews to understand and follow the laws, and it is often studied by children. According to, , halakhah, “The Shema may be read either sitting or standing” (Newman 1999). However, the Shema is to be recited either sitting or standing According to, the person praying's prior stance. The *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* goes on to say, “If one was sitting, it is forbidden to be strict (to say the Shema while standing) and rise” (ibid.). Rather, if the worshiper is seated when they come to the Shema, the worshiper should stay seated (ibid.).

Another example of a detailed explanation of the use of body in prayer in the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* is found in reference to the Amidah. The Amidah is the central prayer of the service and it therefore makes sense that there is so much description of the laws about how this prayer should be prayed. There is a lot description on how the person praying the Amidah should prepare themselves for prayer: “The one praying needs to be aware that the Divine Presence is before one, as it is said in Lamentations 2:9: ‘Pour out your heart like water in the presences of God.’ One should arouse the concentration and remove all thoughts interring one, until one's thoughts and one's concentration are purified for one's prayer” (Lamentations 18:3). The *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* says that the person praying should stand with their feet together. In the explanation, it refers to Ezekiel 1:7 “And their feet were like a straight foot,” which implies that it should appear as though the person praying has one foot. The *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* says that one should their head slightly and lower their eyes on the prayer book so they are not distracted by anything.

During the Rabbinic Period, the rabbis advocated for bowing at the beginning and end of the Eighteen Benedictions, and this too became the standard practice and is practiced today (Ber. 31a). Tradition teaches us that we are to bow four times during the Amidah, at the beginning and end of the first benediction, *Avot* and at the beginning and end of *Modim*. (Newman 1999, 18:10).

The *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* says that a person in prayer should bend one’s knees when they say the word *Baruch* “blessed” and, when the prayer says the word *Atah* “you” they “[s]hould bow to the extent that the vertebrae of the spine protrude,” (Newman 1999, 18:11). Furthermore, the person should slowly rise when they say the word God for it is

said, “God lifts up the bowed.” It also says that if one bends down too much so that your head is in line with your waist, it is considered to be showing off and is therefore prohibited. I find this to be important as it emphasizes that movement is not to show off, but rather to enhance one’s prayer experience and to humble oneself to God.

Finally, the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* goes into detailed description of the steps taken forward and back at the beginning and the end of the Amidah. It says that before one recites, “He who makes peace,” one is to bow and step backwards three steps “like a servant who departs from his master” (citation). Furthermore, while bowing to the left one should turn his or her face to the left, and says “he who makes peace in his high heavens.” Then bowing and looking to the right one says, “May He make peace for us.” And then one bows directly in front of oneself and says “for all Israel, and say you Amen,” (18:12). The *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* gives a reason for why one should step back first with their left foot when ending the Amidah. The reason is that normally people walk first with their right foot, therefore as a sign of showing one’s difficulty departing from the presence of God, the person in prayer is to step back with their left foot (18:12).

Bowing

Bowing plays a prominent role in the Jewish worship service. Bowing has a variety of significances: it shows one’s humility, one’s servitude, and one’s praise for God and a sense of gratefulness. The word *Bartech* and *Baruch* means “praise” or “bless” and the root for this word is בָּרַךְ. The word *Birchayim*, knees, is a noun that comes from this same root. In Jewish tradition, we bow when we say Barechu or Baruch and we are showing our praise and blessing through the physical bowing of our knees.

It is said of Rabbi Akivah, a rabbi of the second century, that he would shorten his prayers in public, but in private he would bow and prostrate himself to begin his prayer at one corner of the room and finish at the other. This statement about Akivah is often quoted by Hasidim as support for their acts of gesture within prayer. For example, this statement about Akivah is quoted by Maggid of Mezeritch, R. Shmelke of Nikolsburg (Jacobs 1972).

Additionally, there are proof texts in both the Torah and Talmud that show that bowing and prostrating were a part of the tradition since ancient times. For example, in the *Tanakh*, in the book of Isaiah chapter 43 verse 23, it says: כִּי-לִי תִכְרַע כָּל-בָּרֶךְ, תִּשָּׁבַע כָּל-לִשׁוֹן. Which translates to “To me every knee shall bend and every tongue shall swear.” Additionally, in the Talmud it says, “In saying the Tefillah [the Amidah] one should bow down (at the appropriate places) until all the vertebrae in the spinal column are loosened.” (BT Berachot 28b). The prevalence of prostration in the tradition is found within many Jewish texts as well. It is not as common in a modern setting. It is still done during *V'hacohanim* and the Great Aleinu. Some Reform synagogues today have brought back this tradition and will participate in a full prostration during the High Holidays during the Great Aleinu. There are many examples in the *Tanakh* of people “fall[ing] on their face,” or prostrating, before God. One example is Genesis 42:12:

וַיֹּצֵא יוֹסֵף אֹתָם מֵעַם בְּרִכְיָו וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ לְאַפְּיוֹ אֶרֶצָה

This passage translates to: “Joseph then removed them from his knees, and bowed low with his face to the ground.”

Shuckling, or shokeling

Shuckling, or shokeling comes from the Yiddish word *shokel*, meaning “to shake.” It refers to the habit of swaying the body during study and prayer. There are a variety of explanations for the development of this practice, ranging from practical to mystical reasons. Dr. Simon Brainin’s rational explanation for shuckling is that it was intended to allow the person praying to exercise their body during study and prayer, which took up a large portion of many Jews’ time (Brainin 1883, 126). Others have said that it is easier on the feet to sway to and fro during long periods of standing in prayer. Others claim that it enhances concentration because as you sway, your surroundings blur and you are therefore less likely to be distracted by the environment around you and better able to focus on the prayer book before you.

In the article entitled, “The Meaning of Shokeling” by Eliezer Segal, the author states that the picture of the Jew swaying in prayer is one that has a long history throughout the Jewish world and is often noted by outsiders as a peculiarity of Jewish worship (Segal 1989). In the *Zohar*, R. Jose asks R Abba: “Why is it that among all nations the Jews alone have the habit of swaying the body when they study the Law?” R. Abba answers: “It illustrates the excellence of their souls. The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord ' [Prov. xx. 27] refers to them. The light of that candle flickers and wavers in unison with the light of the Torah. The Gentiles have not the light of the Torah, and burn up like straw” (Zohar, Pinehas, 118b, 119a). As these two examples illustrate, the practice of shuckling in Jewish worship has been understood in both positive and potentially negative light. Shulamit Saltzman writes in *The Second Jewish Catalog*, “The

remnants of Jewish choreography are so clear in our ritual. They await our rediscovery; they await our need to dance them again.”

Prayers uses Body Metaphors

There are also examples in our liturgy of beautiful metaphoric writing that uses the body to express one’s praise for God. This is evident in the prayer “Ilu finu,” found within “Nishmat Kol Chai,” in the morning service of Shabbat.

As seen in the previous chapter, the Israelites often used the body to express prayer through movement and dance. In this prayer, we see an attempt to use body imagery to express praise for God and that ultimately, even this would be insufficient to praise God.

<p>Ilu finu maleh shirah ka-yam, u-l’shoneinu rinah ka-hamon galav, v’siftoteinu shevah k’merhavei raki·a, v’eineinu m’irot ka-shemesh v’kha- yarei·ah, v’yadeinu f’rusot k’nishrei shamayim, v’ragleinu kallot ka-ayalot, ein anahnu maspikim l’hodot l’kha . . .</p>	<p>Even if our mouths could fill with song as water fills the sea, and joy would move our tongues like countless waves, and our lips could utter praise as limitless as the sky, and our eyes could fill with light like the sun and the moon, and our arms spread like eagles’ wings, and our legs run as fleet as gazelles’, we could never sufficiently express our thanks.</p>
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Dance and Jewish Lifecycles Events

A person's life from birth to death is full of important lifecycle events, including brit/bat milah, bar/bat mitzvahs, and weddings, many of which are celebrated with song and dance. There are many ceremonies around birth and circumcision in the Sephardic tradition. For example, in Morocco, Jews perform what is called a *Tachdid* ceremony. In this ceremony, a sword is brandished the night before the circumcision to banish evil spirits. The sword is waved in all corners of the house and specifically around the bed of the mother and baby, all the while a selection of biblical verse and appropriate psalms are chanted. In Persia, the father would hire professional dancers for the night before the circumcision. The Sephardi Jews of North Africa use the tray of Elijah in the circumcision rite. It is carried in a procession with song, dance, and candles, from its last place of use to the home of the newborn to be circumcised. In both Syria and Lebanon, on arrival of the tray of Elijah, seven guests would be called to dance with the tray. In Kurdistan, the chair of Elijah would be brought to the ceremony in a procession from the synagogue, and the guest would circle and dance with it. Finally, in Aden the guests of the ceremony would dance with the Chair of Elijah as if it was a person. These examples show among many traditions employed dance in the celebration of birth and the ceremony of coming into the covenant.

History of Hasidic Movement

The beginning of the eighteenth century saw the development of the Hasidic movement. The founder and leader, Israel Baal Shem Tov, a mystic, is said to have emerged from the Carpathian Mountains where he had spent many years as a recluse in the middle of the eighteenth century. The Hasidic movement came about to serve as

opposition to the idea that the only way to connect to God was through text study and intellect. Thereby, movement became a way of demonstrating that there were different ways to connect to God and that singing and movement and ecstatic dance were all legitimate ways of doing so. There were people who opposed the rise and spread of Hasidic Judaism, and they became known as *mitnagdim* meaning "opponents" because they opposed the Hasidic movement and its philosophies.

With the development of Hasidism came "the spread of a unique form of dance performed by the many Jews who joined the Hasidic movement—an attempt to create joy out of misery" (Lapson 1963, 59). Most of the Baal Shem Tov's followers were illiterate workers, who were thereby unable to read prayers (Lapson, 1963). The Baal Shem Tov taught that dance and song in worship could bring one closer to God. Lapson states that the "[Baal Shem Tov] called upon his followers to use the movement of the body in prayer" (ibid., 60). The Grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, Nahman of Bratzlav taught: believed that dance in prayer was a sacred command, and he composed a prayer that he recited before dancing, (Lapson and Shiloah, 2006). Nahman of Bratzlav taught: "There is a special rhythm in the movement of the whole body, which matches the rhythm of the melody. As melody brings out the beauty in poetry, the dance brings it to its highest expression" (Lapson 1963, 60). Nahman also claimed that the way to send the heart on fire for God is by motion, since rapid motion generates heat (ibid.).

Traditionally, Hasidic dances are performed only by men and are completely improvised. The dances are often danced in a circle, and smaller concentric circles may form. Hasidic dances are often done in a circle, which is symbolic of the Hasidic philosophy that "everyone is equal, and each one being a link in the chain, the circle

having no front or rear, no beginning or end” (Lapson and Shiloah, 2006). Often the dances start out slowly, like the music accompanying them, and will gradually pick up the speed and sense of joyousness. The music also reflects this journey as they often ascend in key as the song continues to grow. Hasidic rabbis have composed both songs and dances that have become part of their tradition and performed by their followers. There are dances that have been created for specific times in the Jewish calendar. Lapson writes: “There are special dances for the Sabbath feast, performed around the banquet table of the rabbi, to welcome the Sabbath on Friday night with joy and enthusiasm” (Lapson 1963, 60). On the other hand, the dances that were created for the end of the Shabbat were filled with mystics and sadness reflecting the hesitancy felt with the end of Shabbat. On Simchat Torah, the usual procession and ritual were enhanced by the rabbis dancing with the Sefrei Torah, a practice still done today in many communities.

In Martin Buber's book, *Tales of the Hasidim*, there is a story of healing prayer enacted through dance. This story serves as a way of showing how dance was used within the Hasidic community. The story is as follows:

News was brought to Rabbi Moshe Leib that his friend the Rabbi of Berditchev had fallen ill. On the Shabbat he said his name over and over and prayed for his recovery. Then he put on new shoes made of Morocco leather, laced them up tight, and danced. A Tzaddik who was present said: "Power flowed forth from his dancing. Every step was a powerful mystery. An unfamiliar light suffused the house, and everyone watching saw the heavenly host join in his dance (Buber 1991, 90).

Additionally, Israeli folk dances find inspiration in the dances of the Hasidic rabbis and followers. Furthermore, this influence has also spread to other movements of

Judaism. The use of Hasidic *niggunim* is prevalent today throughout various dominations of Judaism.

Israeli Dance

Israeli folk dance, or in Hebrew עם ריקודי “Dance of the People” is a form of dance that is choreographed to songs in Hebrew or other songs which have been popular in Israel. As previously discussed in other chapters, the Jewish people have a long history of movement and dance, and there are thirty terms for dance found within the *Tanakh*, (Kadman 1952, 27). Since ancient times, the Jewish people have migrated across the world in Diaspora, however, beginning in the late 1800s an Israeli nationalistic movement called Zionism began to develop under the leadership of Theodor Herzl. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, Jews from around the world made *aliyah* (literally “ascent”). These immigrants realized that to create an independent nation they would also have to create a unifying culture. They began to create a new Israeli culture drawing on influences from the immigrant’s countries of origins. The national language, Hebrew, was revived, new music was composed and Israeli dance was created. These immigrants mostly came from a multitude of European counties, and with them they brought the dances of these countries, which they then adapted to the new way of life, in a new land.

In 1944, Gurit Kadman, considered the mother of Israeli folk dance, established a folk-dance festival that took place on Kibbutz Dalia, which is located in the Jezreel Valley (Spiegel 2013). This was a pivotal event in the establishment of Israeli dance. As historian Nina S. Spiegel argues: “By nationalizing and institutionalizing the Israeli folk

dance movement, the festival was a watershed event that solidified a space for this form in the emerging nation” (Spiegel 2013, 133). The people then living in Mandatory Palestine came from diverse cultures and countries of origins, and this was the first time in which they shared and performed the dances from their countries of origin (Strassfeld 1976). This event spurred a group of folk dance leaders and teachers to begin choreographing and creating new dances. Additionally, this festival also rooted Israeli Folk Dance as an artistic and cultural form, as well as provided a way for these dances to spread throughout Israel, establishing important dance institutions, including the Israel Folk Dance Committee in 1945.

The Israeli Folk Dance Festival also led to a period of extensive dance activity and organization, as well as a second folk dance festival that was held at the Kibbutz in 1947 also organized by Gurit Kadman. Following these two festivals, during the British Mandate era, there were three additional Dalia Festivals that occurred after the establishment of the state of Israel, occurring in 1951, 1958, and 1968. Siegel brings up an interesting point that the development of Israeli dance has influenced the understanding of Israeli folk dance: “The creation of both a national folk dance form and festival highlights the paradoxes and dilemmas intrinsic to this process. Because folk dance generally refers to movement that develops organically over time, the notion of construction new original ‘folk’ dances contains an inherent contradiction,” (Spiegel 2013, 134).

Israel’s culture like much of its landscape is like an archaeological *tel* (תל), an archeological mound created by humans repeated occupation and abandonment of specific site over many centuries. A tel has many layers and gives evidence of different

aspects of social and cultural life. Similar to Israel's broader culture, Israeli folk dance also has many influences and different types of dances. Israeli dance includes dancing in circles, lines, partners, and individual dances. The *Second Jewish Catalog* categorizes Israeli folk dances into five different categories (Strassfeld 1976). These five groupings are as follows: sabra dances, romantic dances, Hasidic dances, Debkas, and Yemenite dances (ibid.).

Sabra dances are shown through the dances of the Karmon troupe from Israel. These dances are said to be vibrant, free, and fast. These dances are dances done most by recreational groups. Some choreographers that exemplify this style are Ashriel, Karmon, and Rivka Surman. Romantic Dances on the other hand were created to fulfill the need for ballroom and dances that were also loosely based on tango. An example of this is the dance danced to "Dodi Li." Hasidic Dances are dances influenced by the Hasidic movement, and find their roots in Eastern European shtetls. Strassfield, editor of *The Second Jewish Catalog* state that when the Hasidim dance, it was to express, a closeness to God" (Strassfeld 1976). Some examples of these dances are, Nigun Bialik, Bechatzar Harabbi, and Yeverechecha. Debkas are dances created by Israeli's neighbors, the Arabs. (Silverstein, 2012). There are many Israeli dances that are influenced by debkas or are borrowed in whole from this neighboring culture. "The movements are quick, sure, and sharp; the technique is to step on the feet, and then bounce thus shaking the whole body. A dramatic visual effect is created." Some examples of the debkas style include "Debka Druz," "Debka Halel," "Hein Yerunan," "Hahelech," and "Mishal." A choreographer that is known for this style is Moshiko Halevy who has spent many years studying Arab dance. Finally, we have the category of Yemenite dances. Israeli dance has been highly

influenced by Yemenite culture, and many Yemenite steps have been brought into the Israeli dance lexicon.

Yemenite and Israeli dance

Yemen, which is located in the southern end of the Arabian Peninsula in Western Asia, became the homeland of a group of Jews who are said to have arrived there after the destruction of the second Temple (Strassfeld 1976). For thousands of years, this group of people lived within Islamic society, maintaining aspects of their Jewish culture and religion. In 1950, Operation “Magic Carpet,” known widely by its nickname “Operation on Wings of Eagles” (נשרים כנפי), brought 49,000 Yemenite Jews to Israel.

Israeli dance has been profoundly influenced by Yemenite culture, and many Yemenite steps have been brought into Israeli dances. Israeli’s of Yemenite origins, like composer and choreographer, Sarah Levi Tanai, שרה לוי-תנאי, choreographed dances incorporating her Yemenite roots. She is known for contributing significantly to the cultural life of Israel through the creation of her songs and dances. Levi Tanai was born in Jerusalem 1910 or 1911 and died at age 95 on October 3, 2005. She herself was not exactly sure of her own birth date. Sarah was born to Yemenite parents, and during a typhus epidemic during World War I, her entire family died except for her and her father. They were extremely poor, and her father was not able to care for her so she was put into an orphanage, and eventually was placed in a children’s home. The home was run by Ashkenazi immigrants, and she and the other children were exposed to European music and art there, (Toledano 2005).

As an adolescent, Sarah Levi Tanai began producing small plays and later became a kindergarten teacher, utilizing her music and dance skills to compose songs and dances for her students. Later, during World War II, while her husband was in the army in the Jewish Brigade, she moved to Kibbutz Ramat Hakovesh. In her new home on Kibbutz Ramat Hakovesh, she was introduced to many of the leading women of the Israeli folk dance movement. Another factor that contributed to the formation of her artistic identity was that after the influx of Yemeni Jews to Israel during 1948 through 1950. During these years, Sarah Levi Tanai began to seek out her own roots, incorporating Mizrahi and Sephardi culture into both her music and dance.

In 1949, Levi Tanai founded the Inbal Dance Theater, which she directed until the 1990s. The Inbal Dance Company was primarily Yemenite in choreography and style, and it was a very successful performing troupe that caught the attention of many choreographers, including Jerome Robbins. According to, Gila Toledano, Sarah originally had “no intention of establishing a folklore group, Levi-Tanai instead used elements of Yemenite Jewish folklore as the building blocks for creating a new language of movement,” (Toledano 2005). In 1973 she received the Israel Prize in Art, Music, and Dance.

“El Ginat Egoz” is an Israeli folk song and dance composed and choreographed by Sarah Levi Tanai in 1951. The song’s lyrics are a compilation of excerpts from *Shir Hashirim, The Song of Songs*. The dance choreographed for “El Ginat Egoz” is traditionally a partner dance. However, the song does not accompany the dance nor does the dance accompany the song, but rather they are a duet adding meaning and beauty to

each other. They work together as two art forms that Sarah Levi Tanai used to express herself, her culture, and her life growing up in Israel in the 20th century.

As previously discussed, the music and dance of “El Ginat Egoz” are complementary. As a unit, the music and dance make the text of *Song of Songs* come alive. This song is one of love, and the second verse opens: “Come, my beloved, let us go to the fields.” This sentiment is reflected in the dance, through the fact that it is a couple’s dance. Swinging leg movements portray a couple of young lovers frolicking in the nut tree groves.

Folk dance archivist Dick Oakes has compiled an array of folk dances on his website entitled, “Phantom Ranch” <http://www.phantomranch.net>. In this archive, there is a section dedicated to “El Ginat Egoz,” where Oakes states that he learned this dance from Dani Dassa. I have taken Israeli folk dance lessons from Dani Dassa while living in Los Angeles. He is a prominent Israeli folk dance teacher and performer. Oakes adds that Dani Dassa “presented it at the 1961 Santa Barbara Folk Dance Conference.” He continues:

Sara Levi, of the Israeli government-sponsored dance troupe *INBAL*, choreographed the dance, incorporating authentic Yemenite steps. Dvora Lapson presented the dance at the 1952 College of the Pacific Folk Dance Camp (now Stockton Folk Dance Camp). Moshe Eskayo taught the dance at the 1972 Stockton Folk Dance Camp. Albert S. Pill taught it at the 1959 Santa Barbara Folk Dance Conference,” It is so interesting to see through these resource notes how this dance was taught and travel through the years, (Oakes, 2012.)

Following is the notes for the dance itself:

“Formation” Cpls anywhere on the floor, W in front and slightly to the L of M, M facing same dir, R hands joined. L hands are free with first finger and thumb touching and other three fingers extended (as if holding an acorn). L hand of M may be above, but not touching the L shoulder of the W. “Steps/Style” Ftwk is

the same for M and W throughout the entire dance. The meter changes throughout the tune, so the dance is written in phrases instead of measures.” (Oakes 2012)

The song itself, like many folk songs, has been interpreted in many ways. There are faster versions and more lyrical version. There are arrangements with voice and a single instrument and arrangements for a whole band. I also found many recordings for vocal duets. The duet is very appropriate in expressing the words as this is a love song. Through a discussion of Sarah Levi-Tannai’s life, we see that she herself was influenced by many things and incorporated these cultural experiences into both her music and dances. Many of the dances today showcase aspects from more than one of these categories.

Within in the Jewish community, Israeli dance connects the Jewish practices inside and outside of the sanctuary. There are many Israeli dances choreographed to music whose lyrics stem from sacred texts from the books of the *Tanakh* or liturgy. An example of this is “Mah Navu,” translated to “How Pleasant. The Dance is choreographed by Raya Spivak and the music is by Josef Spivak with words originating in Isaiah 52:7. The piece was choreographed in 1975 and was created to be a circle dance.

The words of the song are below:

Mah navu al heharim raglei hamevaser. (2x)	How pleasant on the mountains are the feet of the messenger of good tidings?
Mashmia yeshua, mashmia shalom. (2x)	Proclaiming salvation, proclaiming peace.

As previously stated the words are taken from Isaiah 52:7
The entire verse is:

ז מה-נְאוּוּ עַל-הַהָרִים רַגְלֵי מְבַשֵּׁר, מְשַׁמֵּיעַ שְׁלוֹם מְבַשֵּׁר טוֹב
--מְשַׁמֵּיעַ יְשׁוּעָה; אָמַר לְצִיּוֹן, מֶלֶךְ אֱלֹהֶיךָ.

How pleasant on the mountains are the feet of the messenger of good tidings,
proclaiming peace, proclaiming good, proclaiming salvation;
saying to Zion, your God reigns.

Below is the dance as seen in notated by Fred Berk:

M1: Point R fwd; hold AND; point R sdw; hold and;
M2: R bwd; on And L bwd; R fwd; hold AND;
M3: L bwd; hold and; R fwd; closed L to R hold AND;
M4: Lbwd; on AND R fwd; closed L to R; hold AND
M 5-8: Reverse M 1-4
M 9: Yem R; on AND take ¼ turn on R to right side; Face CCW
M 10: 3 steps fwd LRL; on AND take ¼ turn to left side; Face circle center
M 11-16: Repeat 9-10 three more times.

(Berk, 1962, 7).

Folk Dance in the United States:

Starting in the early days of the Zionist movement in the United States, dance played a pivotal part of the youth education programs in the late 19th century early 20th centuries. These young American Jews danced the same European dances that were popular in Mandatory Palestine at the time, and they also used Hebrew songs to create dances with their own unique American flavor. They did this by adding elements of dance popular in the United States at the time such as swing dancing. Some of these dances include *The Double Hora*, *the Dundai*, *Paam achat Bachur Yatza*.

With the popularization of Israeli culture, the export of its music and dance became prevalent throughout Europe and the United States. This is seen with the

establishment of Israeli music into festivals seen with the exported of Israeli music into Eurovision.

Furthermore, the *Jewish Catalog* notes that one important reason that Israeli dance is so popular within the United States is: “The strong identification of American youth with Israel; it is a feeling of closeness that gives these dances their special appeal” (Strassfeld 1976, 340).

At the time in which the *Second Jewish Catalog* was written in 1976, Israeli folk dance was very popular within the United States (Strassfeld 1976). Israeli folk dance had a place in the folk-dance tradition, outside the Jewish community. Today, Israeli folk dance is still danced within Jewish communities and within the folk-dance world. There has been a decline in popularity of Israeli dance within Jewish communities. This is partially due to a decline in the popularity of folk dances in mainstream society as well as the decline in popularity of Israeli culture within the Jewish diaspora.

Israeli dance is a form of dance that serves as a bridge connecting the sacred and secular within the Jewish community. There are many Israeli dances that are danced to music whose lyrics stem from sacred texts, from the books of the *Tanakh*. Israeli dance was originally done outside of the synagogue, however, there are many Israeli dance classes, and events within Reform synagogues in the United States today. Furthermore, Israeli dance has found its way into worship. I have participated in services in which people have gotten up and danced, employing Israeli folk dance steps, during *Kabbalat Shabbat* and the *Mi Chamocha* prayer.

Today, there are still many congregations that use Israeli dance in different parts of synagogue life. Synagogues offer Israeli dance classes for congregants on regular basis

or for special occasions. Often synagogues incorporate Israeli dance into the religious school curriculum either as a separate class or as a part of the regular curriculum. For example, Congregation Gates of Heaven in Schenectady, NY where I serve as the student cantor, has Israeli dance classes for all grades in their weekly religious school. Of the seventeen synagogues that completed my survey about movement and dance within synagogue life nine synagogues have Israeli dance classes offered either for the congregants or offered as an elective in the religious school (See Appendix B).

There is a rich history of movement and dance in Jewish worship and synagogue life post biblical times. Through an investigation of Jewish liturgy, it is clear that the body is a central focus of Jewish practice and prayer. Our morning liturgy begins with prayers about the body with “Asher Yatzar,” and “Elohai Neshama,” and there are many prayers in our liturgy that speaks of the body expressing joy through movement. There are also many movements and sacred choreography that have been added to prayer through law or minhag. These include bowing, shuckling, going on one’s toes, stepping forward and back. Through a deeper understanding of these movements and sacred choreography, the liturgy prayers have the potential to connect more deeply to their prayers. Furthermore, the Hasidic movement encouraged a dancing as a form of praise for God and influenced many sects of Judaism. Israeli dance has had an influential role adding movement in services as well as to the development of a national identity. Through a look at the historical context and development of these different forms of movement and dance in Jewish worship and synagogue life it is my hope that the community understands what a deep history there is and uses this knowledge as fuel to create more connections between movement and dance and Jewish liturgy.

Chapter 3: Movement and Dance in Synagogues Today

In a time in which we are constantly bombarded with information inviting us to pay attention to our body, being present is such an important and vital component of a spiritually fulfilling experience. Our brains are constantly wandering into the past and the future, but our bodies are fully in the present. This wandering of our mind can be helpful in that it allows us to connect to our past and be inspired to move forward into our future. It also gets in our way, leading to anxiety, unruly judgments and the inability to be grateful for what is right in front of us. Scholar Jay Michelson in his book entitled, *God in your Body*, articulates that our bodies are and can only be in the present (Michelson 2007, xi). Therefore, connecting to our bodies connects us to the present and allows us to fully be present to pray, and to be grateful.

The Hasidic movement and their use of dance as a form of praise has had an influence on the uses of movement and dance in Jewish worship and helps us to further understand the potential uses in contemporary worship today. Jacob writes in his book entitled, *Hasidic Prayer*: “With reservations here and there, the Hasidim favored violent movements in prayer, believing these to be an aid to concentration as well as enabling man to put the whole of himself into his worship” (Jacob 1973, 55.). I argue that this is one of the reasons that Jewish movement has again taken a more prominent role in Jewish practices.

Today, there are a variety of ways that dance and movement are incorporated into prayer services, holidays, lifecycle, and study. Through my own experiences as a leader in Jewish communities, a survey that I distributed throughout the Jewish community, as well as interviews, I have learned more about current practices of movement, dance and

yoga within synagogues. It is with this information that I hope to better serve the Jewish people and the communities I serve by utilizing practices that fully integrate the mind body and spirit. With this integration, it is my hope that people are able to connect to Judaism, their communities, and themselves more fully.

Jewish Yoga classes are now being offered within communities in addition to *tefilah* (worship) or as an alternative to prayer service. Also, aspects of movement and Jewish yoga are being incorporated into prayer services themselves. Jewish movement classes are offered throughout the Jewish community at workshops and at synagogues. Jewish movement-based learning has been incorporated into some religious school curriculums.

Through a brief understanding of the development and innovations within Jewish worship beginning in the middle of the twentieth century, we can gain a greater understanding of why movement and dance has found some prevalence within Jewish communities today. From the mid-twentieth century to the present, many innovations within Jewish worship have occurred. These innovations result from a variety of reasons, some of which are the response to the formality and intellectualism brought about with classical reform of the late 19th to middle of the 20th. Additionally, these changes in worship come in response to a changing political and social backdrop fueled by individualism and exploration of one's identity.

Reform synagogues have worked to make their prayer services more accessible and intimate and often less formal. This manifests itself through the spaces in which we pray as well as the music and liturgy. The architecture of the synagogue itself and the space in which we pray has changed due to changes in the Reform movement.

Synagogues are turning away from big elaborate sanctuaries with immovable pews and a high *bimah* and now favor sanctuaries with lowered or no *bimah* to create a sense of intimacy. These sanctuaries often include moveable seats that are set up in a semicircle. This set up facilitates worshippers to be able to face and interact with community members during the service, (Hoffman, 2004). The music of the service also changed. Music that fosters congregational participation became a central focus of services. Additionally, the music was utilized to create this sense of intimacy and individualism that speaks to the current times. Jewish musicians such as Debbie Friedman and Cantor Jeff Klepper, who were inspired by the American folk music movement, wrote Jewish music that spoke to Jews of the time and encouraged congregational participation, (Friedmann, 2009).

Sign Language

One of the ways in which movement is incorporated into worship services is through the use of Sign Language. Sign language is a language, a form of communication, and a way for people to further connect to the prayers. I spent two session meetings working with Barbara Webb an American Sign Language interpreter who lives in the Capital District of New York State^{2,3} She taught me about the language itself, and then we worked together to make translations of seven of the blessings from the Nissim B'chol Yom, *the Morning Blessings*, in American Sign Language. This process of

² Webb, Barbara. Conversation with author, December 3, 2016.

³ Webb, Barbara. Conversation with author, December 10, 2016.

translating together caused me to have a deep appreciation for the language; it helped me to connect to the Morning Blessing in a new way, and it also helped me to understand how using ASL in a service can be a meaningful experience for people with and without hearing impairment. Sign language is a conceptual language, and when translating, a person translated concepts and ideas rather than providing a word-by-word translation. As Webb told me, translations will change depending on the context and the time.⁴ Since it is a visual language, it is not written down and therefore is harder to canonize and therefore different people will sing the same thing in different ways.

There are a few ways that I have noticed how sign language allows people to connect to prayers in new and deeper ways. By engaging in the prayer in a new language the person praying is encouraged to pay closer attention the meaning of the prayer. Additionally, sign language is a physical and visual language that allows people of different learning styles to connect with the prayer. The act of embodying the prayer can bring a connection between your mind and body, allowing the person praying to connect more fully to the meaning.

Liz Lerman

Through a phone interview with Liz Lerman and Fanchon Shur, I was able to learn more about these artists and learn from their many years of experience.⁵ They are both dancers, artists, teachers, and leaders in the field of bringing movement into the

⁴ ibid

⁵ Lerman, Liz. Telephone interview by author. April 28, 2016. Fanchon Shur. Telephone interview by author. September 16, 2016 and November 6, 2016.

Jewish communities through performances of pieces with Jewish context, workshops, and incorporating movement into Jewish worship.

Liz Lerman is a choreographer, performer, writer, educator and speaker. She is the founder of the Dance Exchange, which is an innovative, intergenerational dance company that creates dances as well as engages people in making art. Liz Lerman is known for her work with senior citizens and started when she wanted to create a piece using seniors. This work with the elderly community led her to working at children's hospitals, where she spent time utilizing movement and dance as a form of healing and creation.

In 2002, Liz Lerman received the MacArthur "Genius" Grant. This award is given for "exceptional merit and promise" in the area of creative work. Jewish ideas have been an integral part of her creations over many decades. This is shown in works such as, "The Good Jew" and "Miss Galaxy and Her Three Raps with God." Lerman believes all her works are Jewish, whether they have explicit Jewish content or not because she says, "she is Jewish all the time, she is not Jewish just when she is talking about Jewish things."⁶ The piece "The Good Jew," which she choreographed in 1991, looks at the challenges of Jewish identity and as well as the possibilities of living in both the secular and Jewish world. Another well-known piece that incorporates Jewish concepts is her piece entitled "Miss Galaxy and her Three Raps with God." In this performance Lerman wrestled with questions of what it means to be a Jew in the late 20th century. According to, , the *Forward*, this work, "featured Lerman's trademark large cast of multigenerational

⁶ Lerman, Liz. Telephone, interviewed by author April 28, 2016

performers—some professionally trained dancers, others rehearsed amateurs.”⁷

Additionally, in this piece, Lerman set out to wrestle with God using the medium of both spoken monologue and dance.

In addition to Judaism and Jewish issues being an integral part of her choreographic work, it has also been a prominent part of her educational work. Lerman has worked hard at incorporating guided movement into Jewish worship and synagogue life. The Jewish people have often been referred to as the “People of the Book.” Lerman believes the Jewish people are the “People of the Body,” and it is through this frame that she guides her work in Jewish movement. For more than a decade,⁸ Lerman has cultivated and embraced a relationship with Micah Synagogue in Washington D.C., where she explores Jewish movement and dance with the support of the clergy. She facilitates movement within services and has offered Jewish movement classes. She was first invited guest to create movement with the community as a form of healing after the assassination of the Israeli Prime minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Through a phone interview I conducted with Liz Lerman on April 28, 2016, I spoke to Lerman about her development as an artist and her work bringing movement into Jewish communal and spiritual life. Through this interview I gained a further understanding of her ideas about why bringing movement in Jewish settings has faced resistance, and why, and how, it is starting to become more prevalent. Additionally, I learned from her vast experience and gathered ideas of ways to incorporate movement into Jewish worship. Finally, she shared ideas about how to create a safe environment

⁷ Lisa Traiger, “Separating the Dancer from the Dance Exchange,” Forward, 2011.

⁸Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective*. Suny Press, 1992

that encourages movement exploration and is inviting to people of all levels of comfort. In our interview, she started by grounding our conversation historically and culturally. Lerman articulated how over the last one hundred years there has been a development of specialization, and this is found in all areas. She stated that when people and communities develop specialization beauty occurs, she said, “in these distinctions fantastic things can happen.”⁹ She also speaks about how it can lead to a sense of disconnection and fragmentation. Lerman says “I have a big embrace” and she claims art, specifically dance, belongs in all places—in healing work, teaching, and spiritual work.¹⁰

In our interview, I asked Lerman about her thoughts on why movement has become more prevalent recently in Jewish synagogue settings. I offered my thoughts in that during a time of intensive technology use connecting to our bodies allows us to connect to the present. I also offered that movement allows people of all learning and physical abilities to connect to Judaism. She agreed whole heartily with these assessments and added a few of her own observations. Lerman said that she has believed for years that the thing that will bring people out of their computers and virtual worlds is the sacred. Furthermore, for Liz, movement in worship becomes the most sacred, and it is special since we do not do it all the time. As she told me: “The second things that she always said was that the only thing that is going to last in our universities is anything with a body a laboratory, and dirt and everything else will go online.”¹¹

Connecting to one’s body and doing movement in a sacred communal setting can make one feel very vulnerable, and this vulnerability can lead to further connection to

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ *ibid.*

oneself, community, and God. “There is something about including your whole selves that brings you closer to connection, to however they see their God and to each other.”¹²

This vulnerability can also be scary. Liz Lerman says movement done in a sacred setting opens emotional space, connective space, and that it is a place that leads to the opening of memories and can potentially cause people to be out of control. This vulnerability and fear of losing control can cause resistance to develop.

Connection between the sacred and the physical has been contested for hundreds of years.¹³ Within many traditions, the body has been seen as profane. Lerman articulated that this resistance was also prevalent in other religions as well, but she spoke to me mainly about working within the Jewish community. Lerman said she has faced resistance for years in her work of bring movement into Jewish communities. She said that over the years that she has come to understand three main reasons for resistance towards the utilization of movement and dance within Jewish communal settings: The first is the ideas that movement is anti-intellectual. The ways she counters this idea is to help Jewish participants see the rigor in dance and movement. She also said she works hard to show them that they “need their minds to be a part of [movement and dance work].”¹⁴ She also teaches “that [dance and movement] is a kind of intense learning.”¹⁵

The second thing that she has noticed leads to a resistance towards movement and dance in the Jewish world is that people within the Jewish world are highly specialized. Therefore, to “ask them to return to a moment where they aren’t skilled and find the joy

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵ *ibid*

in learning is sometimes hard for them.”¹⁶ The third reason applies to the older generation—the generation that she has worked with the most throughout the years. She says that Jewish knowledge about dance is connected to classical dance, and so participants believe that their dancing needs to be excellent, and if they are not excellent, they do not want to participate. Lerman told me in our interview that she finds it interesting that many people who resist movement and dance in Jewish settings go to the gym regularly, and that movement is a part of their daily life. For these people, perfecting and crafting their body in a way that is in their control is something they connect to, and they have been told over and over that it is good for their health. The challenges arise in bringing together these different worlds and introducing movement that is less controlled and less specialized.

Lerman says that she has developed sound bites over the years to help articulate her ideas and encourage people to comfortably explore movement. She says, “I think dancing is a birthright, and as you know birthrights get stolen.”¹⁷ Her work is to reclaim movement as a birthright for Jewish communities. Lerman does this in a variety of ways firstly she demonstrates that movement is natural and therefore starts with gesture and then makes it into a dance by adding meaning and music. Additionally, she works hard to create a welcoming and safe space that invites and encourages exploration.

As previously stated, movement has faced a lot of resistance and that it can be emotional and venerable work for which it is vital to create a safe space for participants. Lerman says, “I think sometimes Jewish people are afraid to get in their bodies because

¹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁷ *ibid*

they think if they get into their bodies they will lose their minds.”¹⁸ She says that there is a reason for this thought process because many sacred dance traditions are about losing one’s mind—Sufi dance rituals for example. She says that in her work with Jewish movement and dance this is not her aim. Instead, “she believes in a partnership between the mind and body.”¹⁹ Lerman speaks about how we cannot have one without the other—mind without body or the body without the mind—and that this connection between the two is what she articulates to participants that they will be exploring.”²⁰ Additionally, she said that she finds it vital to share the rigor and discipline movement and dance can take.

Liz Lerman also always gives rules for participation when helping to facilitate movement. These rules include: 1) “You are in charge of your own body, so stop when you do not want to do it anymore.”²¹ She said she finds it quite beautiful when some people are moving and some people decide to stop. This idea is counter to classical reform Judaism in which we worship in unison. The ground rules that she sets for people who stop moving are 2) “You have to keep breathing so that you take a moment to enjoy your incredible body and the gifts it brings you.”²² If people choose to stop moving, she encourages them to turn their discomfort into inquiry and to explore why they wanted to stop. She encourages them to ask themselves 3) “Who would be surprised that I am not participating?” “Who would applaud me?”²³ Finally, 4) she says that if people decide to stop, she asks them to keep a pleasant countenance on their face—that way the people around them can enjoy the experience.

¹⁸ *ibid*

¹⁹ *ibid*

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ *ibid*

²² *ibid*

²³ *ibid*

Lerman voiced her opinion that the problem when people say *no* to something is that they feel they need to tear the house down the house to show that they are correct in saying *no*. When this happens, she says, “this is a fantastic community and that everyone does not have to do the same thing at the same time, and to just enjoy what you see around you.”²⁴ She emphasized the importance in always giving people something to do when they opt out so you can keep people in the room. She also speaks of adapting movement so that everyone can feel good about participating and the movement they are doing. She said that by adapting movement you are not pitying anyone, but bringing them to their best. She said the other thing is to challenge people, people do not like to be treated simply they want to be challenged.

Lerman said she was surprised that her work with movement at Temple Micah led mostly to movement within worship. Lerman was initially surprised at the openness towards having movement and dance in worship. She thought that movement and dance would more often be separate from worship and would be encouraged to be a part of the school or in a separate workshop. However, she said that most of the interest and curiosity on the part of the rabbi was about movement within the context of worship.

She said she did lead a group called *The Dancing Debeks* for a couple of years, which met once a month. It was similar to a contemporary dance class with improvisation but oriented for a Jewish context. Lerman said that during the Synagogue 2000 movement she visited many synagogues as artists and residences. At these workshops, she would give a sermon in the Friday night service on creativity and art, and on Saturday she would often bring movement into the service and meet with a study group. She

²⁴ *ibid*

always took the opportunity to reach out to young people who were dancers to have a special class together to show the younger generations that they could bring different aspects of themselves together in the merging of Judaism and dance. Lerman also taught for a semester at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) once a week. She said that she taught at HUC-JIR during a period when there was so much resistance. She also said that most of the people who were in her class were very interested in the work and had her as an artist in residence at their synagogues once they graduated from HUC-JIR.

Fanchon Shur

In an interview, Fanchon Shur said, “The body teaches the mind and the spirit.”²⁵ Fanchon Shur is a movement artist, movement scientist, movement therapist, poet, and orator. In 1978, she founded and has directed Growth in Motion Inc, which is an organization that uses performance, workshops, classes, and therapy “impart the skills needed to deepen understanding of the body – its ability to heal, and its power to build community and transform our experiences into a shared movement celebration” (<http://www.growthinmotion.org>). Fanchon Shur also founded the Ceremonial Dance Theater in 1974. She refers to her works as choreographic ceremonies and these include “Tallit: Prayer Shawl,” and Purses, Pockets and Family Secrets.” These works have been performed throughout the United States. For her “ground-breaking” work in the Arts and Humanities, she was inducted into the Ohio Women’s Hall of Fame in 1990, and has been the recipient of numerous grants from Ohio’s Joint Council of Arts and Humanities

²⁵ Fanchon Shur. Telephone. Interview by author, September 16, 2016.

and the Ohio Arts Council. Additionally, Fanchon Shur is a certified Laban/Bartenieff Movement Analyst, registered Movement Therapist and Educator (ISMETA), and a certified practitioner of Brennan Healing Science. Fanchon has been a private movement therapist since 1983.

She is also works in education that includes the whole child with her work on her “Curriculum in Motion” in Los Angeles in 1967. She collaborated extensively with her late husband, renowned Jewish composer Bonia Shur. They were married and worked together for 56 years. Many of her creations and her experiences working within the Jewish community came out of collaborations with her husband and his connections to the Jewish community. She said this first started when Bonia was musical director at Camps Swig and continued when he was musical director at a synagogue in Seattle as well as at HUC-JIR Cincinnati.

Since she was nine years old, Judaism has played a role in her dance and artist creations. In our interview, she said as a child she took lesson in the Jewish Community Center where she learned with Nathan Vishonsky, who was a part of Eastern European Yiddish folk dance movement and was the foremost in this subject in the United States.²⁶. She said the he taught creative movement in the Jewish Community Center and creative expressivity tied to Jewish stories. She went on to say that she created a dance for Tu Bishvat when she was ten, and she remembers dancing in front of the whole assembly at the summer camp. When she was done, she says that she felt ashamed since she gave so much and there was no way to be judged. She said she “did not have a family support system for the creative identity I had chosen so all I had was shame, I was naked and I

²⁶ *ibid.*

did not have to words for it.”²⁷

In our interview she told me about the creation of one of her seminal works “Tallit:Prayer Shawl.” She told me that Bonia Shur was a musical director at Camp Swig and that she ran the dance program. She said that she collaborated with a woman named Shwarts who was a fabric artist at the camp. They took 150 feet of white canvas and created a 35-foot by 40-foot cloth. They cut holes in it so the dancers head could come through. She said “Their bodies were like mountains and valleys... the dancers made these shapes.”²⁸ A photographer photographed pictures of the faces of the dancers, and they projected these pictures on the canvas during the show. They also recorded Cantor William Sharlin’s *Sabbath Service* with kids at the camp as the congregation. This multimedia creation utilized the campers in many ways and connected art and their everyday lives to the sacred. She said that the kids went wild and that she knew that she had hit a jackpot—this moment influenced everything thereafter. She also said it took twenty-five years to get to final version of “Tallit:Prayer Shawl.”

Fanchon Shur also has a way of creating a “sacred container” when beginning movement work in Jewish settings. She says that when she is working in sacred environments she tries not to lecture, so instead she says:

I know you each have a different imagination and set of feelings around what God means to you, and probably has changed from the time you heard the words first to now. I am curious to ask you if I could awaken your genius and imagining by asking you one question. First to ask the question you have to close your eyes and notice your breathing, that is all you have to do, you don’t have to tell me, just close your eyes and notice your breath without changing anything and then when you open your eyes I will ask the question.²⁹

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ *ibid.*

Once they open their eye she asks:

“Do you know what Hashem means?” “I say *The name*, and why it is never said is because it can’t be said because it is what you are just doing, the four letters are breath sounds *yud, hay, vav, hey*. Then, when I work with them and allow the expressivity of their own breath and honoring that is the sacred experience,”³⁰

She says that by establishing the foundations of movement, our breath is connected to the sacred and that this takes so away the burden of speaking of the connection between movement and dance and the sacred. Fanchon Shur says that this is one of the reasons why people attend her training because: “When I am invited to teach nobody feels left out and the movement is a part of them.”³¹

When asked how she has faced resistance towards dance and movement in Jewish communities and what she does to set up a safe environment, she was not able to name an example but shared an experience in which she brought movement to a class at HUC-JIR Cincinnati. She brought four different videos of movement, including one of people praying at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. When she got to the final video of “bottle dancing” like in *Fiddler on the Roof*, she said that she did not set or teach, she just danced and invited people to join her. She says her energy created by the dancing was contagious. She asked them to dance with prayer books on top of their head and then to open the prayer book, find a prayer, meditate on it and then put the prayer book back on their head and dance to the Chassidic music. She said that she was allowing them to dance the liturgy and that once they had a prayer in their mind then every movement made was then relation to prayer they did not translate the prayer word by word but it “legitimized their

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ *ibid.*

aliveness in the consciousness of the prayer.”³²

She shared words of encouragement from ideas that she has gathered from her many years of working in the field. She said: “The body is not separate nothing we can do can be separate if we are going to survive we must realize that the body is the climate, it is all of us.”³³ Additionally, she spoke of challenges and said that, “Even in the most raging failures there is healing and depth and opening.”³⁴ She told me she I hope that, that sentence would stay with me and be my “perennial, eternal fire.”³⁵

Movement in Services

There are a variety of ways movement has and can be brought into services. First, there is the sacred and embodied choreography that I discussed in a previous chapter, including, bowing stepping and more. Liz Lerman brings movement into services by asking the congregant to tell a story that connects to the meaning of the prayer they are about to chant. While telling their story or memory, Lerman observes participants for natural gestures that develop. From there, these gestures develop into movements that are then accompanied by the singing the prayer. Sign language and other hand motions are another form of movement often brought into services.

On the other hand, Fanchon Shur often takes a less structured more spontaneous approach inspired others to participate through her on passionate dance. As previously stated by Liz Lerman, no matter what form of dance or movement being employed, it is always important to set ground rules and create an environment where the participants

³² *ibid.*

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ *ibid*

feel safe and encouraged to move. Rabbi Adam Scheldt of Temple Beth Zion of Buffalo, New York supports this in one of his responses in my survey. Here Rabbi Adam Scheldt advises with the right boundaries and environment the use of different forms of movement in services can be received positively.

The greater the movement etc., the more important it is to communicate possible expectations in advance so everyone feels comfortable. Movement also needs to be couched in the idea of invitations to move, so that those who aren't comfortable don't feel 'less-than.' When people feel safe and connected (regardless of their ability) feedback has always been positive. (Survey submitted by Rabbi Adam Scheldt)

An example of a way in which I have incorporated and encouraged movement in services is to bring out biblical references to movement and reflect on them while moving through the motions. For example, the following passage discusses how I incorporate ideas and uses of the word “savav” in contemporary Jewish worship:

This week’s Torah portion is full of goings. Abraham is told to *Lech lecha*. Also, in this week’s Torah Portion we read Gen. 13:17:

יז קוים הַתְּהַלֵּךְ בָּאָרֶץ, לְאַרְכָּהּ וּלְרֵחְבָּהּ: כִּי לְךָ, אֶתְּנֶנָּה.

Arise walk about the land, through its length and breadth for I give it to you, (Genesis: 13:17). “During biblical times to walk the length of something was to attain it, to stake one’s claim. We see this idea in other parts of the Tanakh, The verb root סבב (Savav) is a verb that describes movement and is translated as “to turn about or to encircle.” This word is found within the Tanakh one hundred and fifty-seven times and is the most prevalent dance and movement word found within the Tanakh. Specifically, סבב is used in the Tanakh in military settings to stake claim or ownership of a territory. This is seen in Joshua Chapter 6, in which the verb סבב appears six times. In this chapter סבב is used when describing a ceremonial processional dance around the wall of Jericho. This dance is enacted to symbolically stake ownership to the territory within the encirclement, Jericho. Also, we see this later in Midrash Bereshit rabbah when it says, If one walks in a field whether along its length or its breadth, one acquires it. It is through the act of doing, through the act of walking, through being present that one acquires the land in which we walk.

What does Savav and this idea of claiming something by encircling it have to contribute to our prayer? In preparation for the Amidah prayer we take three steps forward and back to ready ourselves, to enter into sacred space to face ourselves and God, and then at the end we again take steps back to enter back into our regular prayer space. Rabbi Shefa Gold offers “In accepting upon ourselves the covenant, the agreement to walk with God in simplicity and open heartedness, we also take on the mitzvah of the circumcision of our heart.”

Rabbi Shefa Gold reminds us that in order to walk with God, in order to fully acquire our prayers we must cut through and shed the layers of judgment and distortion that act as a barrier between us and the depth of our prayer and the beauty of the present moment.

Today we would like to create more space to allow us to really prepare for our most seminal prayer, with a walking meditation. We invite you to walk the length and breadth of this space in which we prayer to acquire the mental space to journey inward to be present and mindful, to your prayer, to allow yourself to fully acquire and take a hold of your prayer. To allow you to more fully connect with the meaning and purpose of your prayer. As Liz Lerman, Jewish dancer, choreographer and teacher say, “Movement can be used to help us understand and rediscover what the prayers mean to us today, not yesterday but today.” We invite you to notice what it is you need to prepare yourself to stand before God and take this time walking to let your steps guide this mental and physical preparation, and when you feel ready we invite you to step out of the circle and begin your silent Amidah.

Movement can also be an important part of religious school curriculum to engage people with different forms of learning and physical abilities in Jewish learning contexts. Jewish movement-based learning has been incorporated into some religious school curriculums around the country. This is seen in teaching the Jewish holidays through yoga, “Hebrew through Movement,” and Israeli folk dance classes. In the “Hebrew through movement,” curriculum students are taught modern Hebrew vocabulary by doing the actions of the words. For example, the teacher says “Lashevet” while sitting down, and the students follow her simultaneously saying the word and performing the action.

Additionally, many religious school programs incorporate movement of different kinds in to their general religious school curriculum or offer a separate class yoga or in

Israeli dance. Of the seventeen synagogues that participated in filling out my survey thirteen incorporate movement into their religious school either through Hebrew through movement, movements done with prayers in religious school *tefilah* , yoga, or Israeli dance.

The *Second Jewish Catalog* describes dance as a:

beautiful way to focus feelings and show emotions that words alone might strangle It is a wordless pathway to a mystical union in special moments of ecstasy—a method of opening to yourself and to the other people. It is a participation in universal rhythm, a cosmic mystery. Dance is a very human express that combines the body and spirit of the dancer.” (Strassfeld 1976, 337).

Jewish movement and dance helps us to connect more fully our mind and body and therefore helps us more thoroughly connect to the sacred. Movement and dance help us to connect to the present moment, and this allows us to feel alive. It is this longing to feel alive that is one of the things we strive for in Jewish prayer.

Chapter 4: Jewish Yoga

Jewish Yoga is a spiritual practice that has grown out of people's desires to connect more fully to Jewish practice by engaging one's body as well as one's mind and soul in Jewish practice. According to, Rothenberg, in her article, "Jewish Yoga Experiencing Flexible, Sacred, and Jewish Bodies," in the past twenty-five years, a variety of different forms of Jewish Yoga have become popular in North America, Europe and in Israel (Rothenberg, 2006).

This increased interest in Jewish Yoga can be seen as an outgrowth of the spiritual practices stemming from alternative renewal ideologies from the 1960s. The American countercultural movement of the 1960s as well as the spiritual reconnection that was popularized sparked the development of the Jewish Renewal Movement. (Rothenberg 2006). The development and growth of Jewish Yoga can be seen as part of the history and growth of the Jewish Renewal Movement, which is a movement that began in the United States in the 1970s. The Jewish Renewal Movement's goal was to "reinvigorate and reinterpret 'traditional Judaism' in innovative and often controversial ways" (Rothenberg 2006, 58). Zalman Schachter Shalomi is attributed as the founder of the Jewish Renewal Movement, and the philosophy of the movement is best expressed in his theological writings and as well the writings of Arthur Waskow and Michael Lerner. The Jewish Renewal Movement, as previously stated, developed out of the counterculture movements of 1960s America, and it also finds inspiration in the Hasidic movement. The Jewish Renewal Movement often refers to itself as a neo-Hasidic movement of Judaism. The Hasidic movement and the Jewish Renewal movement both put stress on experiencing a connection with God, through music, dance and prayer over study or

revealed wisdom. The feminine divine presence, Shekhinah, is also a concept that is emphasized in Jewish Renewal Movement. Finally, Jewish Renewal Movement encourages the use and exploration of embodied spiritual practices. Although Jewish Yoga stemmed from ideas and theology brought forth in the renewal movement, there are also many Jews outside the renewal movement that practice and teach Jewish Yoga. Similar to the way that the Hasidic movement influenced Jewish Renewal Movement there are many practices rooted in the Jewish Renewal movement that have influenced other denominations of Judaism.

Jewish Yoga is a broad term Rothenberg uses in her article that “delineates and explores three distinctive, although often overlapping forms of ‘Jewish yoga’: Judaicized yoga, Hebrew yoga, and Torah yoga” (Rothenberg 2006, 58). Rothenberg continues in her article by articulating how these different forms relate saying: “Each of these forms of Jewish yoga is an evolving system of mental, spiritual, and physical experiences based both on yogic practices and on a variety of Jewish teachings as interpreted by different Jewish yoga teachers” (ibid.). Rothenberg argues that Judaicized yoga is the broadest of the three types of Jewish yoga, and she goes on to say Judaicized yoga classes generally center around yoga poses and workout attained by doing these poses, while at the same time lightly blending in Jewish words, concepts, or images as a framework for the yoga postures. Rothenberg describes “Hebrew yoga” to include the practices of Ophanim and Alef Bet yoga. These practices have different philosophies, however, share the use of the shapes Hebrew letters as inspiration for movements and postures. Shoshana Weinstein began as a student of Kabbalah and developed Ophanim in the 1960s. Ophanim teachers can now be found in Israel, the United States, and Canada.

Torah Yoga's most renowned teacher is Diana Bloomfield, respected for her book entitled, *Torah Yoga: Experiencing Jewish Wisdom Through Classic Postures* (2004). She describes Torah Yoga, saying it: "Offers an experience of Jewish wisdom through Iyengar yoga instruction together with the study of traditional mystical Jewish texts," (Bloomfield 2004). Myriam Koltz and Diana Bloomfield, founders of Torah Yoga approach, are key people in the development and spread of Jewish Yoga. Additionally, organizations like the Jewish Yoga Network, formerly Yoga Mosaic, bring resources to the Jewish Yoga community and Jewish Yoga teachers together. According to, the website, they promote Jewish Yoga, stating: "Yoga network is a community of teachers and students who explore their roots in yoga, meditation and Jewish wisdom" (citation of website information)

Rabbi Myriam Klotz is a prominent figure in the Jewish Yoga world and one of the first people to show how the practice of Judaism and yoga could intersect. Rabbi Klotz was the former Director of Yoga and Embodied Practices at the Institute of Jewish Spirituality. Klotz now serves as Director of the Spirituality Initiative at HUC-JIR New York. Klotz said that the connection between her Jewish practice and her yoga practice came very naturally and that her skill to teach came from many years of exploration and development.³⁶ This personal yearning has made it possible for many people in the Jewish world to learn from this integration of Judaism and yoga. Klotz was raised in an assimilated Reform Jewish home; however, in her teens, she said it was the embodied practices and rituals of Orthodox Judaism that she became drawn to. Klotz says she was always deeply connected to her body and embodied practice and rituals. It was not until

³⁶ Myriam Klotz, conversation, with author, June 6, 2014.

the 1980s that she stumbled upon a yoga class did she fully develop this connection. Yoga was the coming together of the mind, body and soul through dedication and commitment that she felt was missing from her practice of Judaism. In Reform Judaism, she felt there was a lack of commitment to embodied practices, and she could not fully connect to the theology of Orthodox Judaism. Yoga became this middle ground, which allowed her to find commitment, an embodied practice, and still maintain a connection to a theology to which she related. She first taught yoga in the early 1990s when she offered to teach Kabbalah and Yoga at a Jewish community center, and she furthered her own Jewish practice by becoming a rabbi through the Reconstructionist Rabbinic College. (Green, 2015).

While in rabbinical school, Klotz created *Torat HaGuf, Torah of the Body*. She now teaches a course at the RRC titled, “Torat HaGuf.” The description of the class reads:

This course seeks to foster the integration of body-based ways of knowing—through yoga practices that include postures, breathing exercises and meditations—into the rhythm of the Jewish year cycle of Torah reading...Over time, students will become adept at sensing how the body and yoga practice can help illuminate the teachings of the text in one’s personal experience and how the text can be used as a framework for deepening mindful appreciation of the body and yoga, (Green, 2015).

Klotz also teamed up with *Piyut America*, an organization created by B’nai Jeshurun of Manhattan and Hazmanah Piyut of Israel, who strive to bring *piyutim*, Jewish liturgical poems set to music, from Israel to America through programs, music, yoga meditation. They developed “Shirah Yoga: which combined *piyuutim* and yoga and offered classes and an intensive workshop at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

Additionally, Klotz and I currently teach Jewish Yoga at Congregation Beth Elohim in Brooklyn, New York.

Torah Yoga

Diana Bloom began teaching Torah Yoga in 1991, and in 2005, she established the online Torah Yoga Association (<http://torahyoga.org>). Before Torah Yoga, Bloomfield studied Orthodox Judaism, which she continues to practice and study today. Diana Bloomfield, a good friend of Rabbi Myriam Klotz's, was inspired by her integration of her Jewish and Yoga practices. Bloomfield is a dancer and was always very connected to her body, however it was not until her connections with Rabbi Klotz that she connected movement to her practice of Judaism. Bloomfield was so impacted by this integration that she created a Torah Yoga curriculum that has been developing since 1990.

In 2004 she published a book entitled, *Torah Yoga: Experiencing Jewish Wisdom Through Classic Postures*. Bloomfield says that "With the Torah Yoga approach you can learn and grow holistically. By studying with your whole self, you acquire wisdom that can inspire and guide your whole life. Also, found in her book Torah Yoga, writes, "It is not the external form of the posture that relates to the Torah concept. It is the consciousness and wisdom inside of you that relates to the Torah concept" (Bloomfield 2004, xv). Now, Bloomfield lives in Israel and teaches throughout Israel, West Europe and North America. Through the Torah Yoga approach, her teachings, and the book she has inspired many people to explore an embodied approach to Judaism.

Bloomfield and Klotz easily found a connection between their yoga practices and Judaism. Both women use these practices to enhance each other, and through their own

intersection of their practices they have through their teaching inspired many people to explore deepening both their Yoga and Jewish practices by engaging in Jewish Yoga practices.

Om Shalom Yoga:

Through a movement and dance survey, I learned about Om Shalom Yoga, created by Zach Lodmer. “Om Shalom Yoga is an experience which celebrates Jewish prayer through the moving meditation of a Vinyasa flow yoga class. Weaving Jewish text and philosophies with yogic wisdom, this moving prayer gives participants a spiritual way to deepen their experience” (source). Founder Jack Lodmer takes Jewish prayers and creates modern, electronica arrangements composed and recorded specifically for Om Shalom Yoga classes. Furthermore, leader Zack Lodmer plays songs, prayers and other musical meditations throughout the class on his instrument, clarinet. Zach Lodmer leads monthly Shabbat services at a Yoga studio in Los Angeles. Cantor Tifani Coyot, Cantor at Temple Isaiah in Los Angeles reported in the survey that Zach Lodmer is a congregant at Temple Isaiah, and that he offers Om Shalom Yoga at family retreats and special *Shabbatot*. When asked to describe the Jewish content of the Yoga offered at her synagogue Cantor Coyot writes, “The flow is set to the arc of a prayer service, [and] the music is prayer melodies”³⁷

My own journey in Jewish Yoga has been developing over many years. I have been studying yoga and meditation for many years. I have taken courses on Jewish

³⁷ Lilah E Sugarman , “*Movement and Dance Synagogue Survey* ‘לִי-לִי, וְכִנּוֹר קָתֵף-לִי’ *Let them praise His name in dance; with timbrel and lyre let them chant His praises.*’ ”, November 14, 2016, Survey.

meditation and workshops on Jewish movement. I had participated in many services that incorporated aspects of movement or yoga. In the summer of 2013, I took a week-long workshop with Rabbi Myriam Klotz, entitled “Shira Yoga,” which allowed me to see how these practices could be fully integrated. As Koltz describes, Shira Yoga integrates two authentic pathways: yoga and the global Jewish music of piyyutim. Since then, I have been bringing movement into services and my religious school classes for years. I have also taught informal Jewish yoga classes. In the summer of 2014, I became a certified yoga instructor and have been facilitating Jewish Yoga classes and worship regularly within the Jewish community. In these practices, I infuse Jewish study, Jewish music, and yoga. Below is an example of a yoga minyan I facilitated at my student pulpit Congregation Gates of Heaven in Schenectady, New York on Saturday, May 14, 2016.

Yoga Minyan, Gates of Heaven, Schenectady, NY

Outside, it was a sunny yet cool spring afternoon nearing towards the end of Shabbat. The leaves outside were lush and seem heavy with nutrients and the birds and squirrels were busy collecting food and exploring. Inside, the room was also cool, and I could not figure out how to turn off the air conditioner. This may seem like a minor detail, but when moving and stretching your body you want your muscles to be warm to prevent injury. I prepared the Sister Hatkoff room for the Yoga Minyan I teach at Congregation Gates of Heaven, the Reform synagogue, in Schenectady, NY where I serve as the student Cantor.

The Yoga Minyan is held once a month at 4pm on Saturdays. The minyan goes for about an hour, and we conclude with Havdalah. In this monthly practice, we blend ancient Jewish Spiritual practices of Kabbalah (mystical Judaism) and Musar (ethical Judaism), Jewish music, and text study with Yoga to connect the mind, the body, and the soul. This class is open to adults, B'nai Mitzvah age and older, and all levels of Yoga experience are welcome. The people who participate are typically in their late forties to mid-sixties, however I have also had people in their seventies and eighties participate.

Typically, I have had between five and ten people participating in the Yoga Minyan. We take off our shoes; I dim the lights and we put out our yoga mats, placing them so that they all face the arc at the front of the Sister Hatkoff room. The layout changes based on how many people are present, and the themes of the Torah portion that I am trying to bring forward. For example, in parasha Ki Tavo the Israelites are said to go to mountain and yell out the blessings and curses that will happen to the Israelites in relation to the covenant. In this class I invited everyone to have their mats facing each other to mirror the image of the Israelites atop opposing mountains. Also, within the theme of the Torah portion, and the holiday cycle, this class occurred right before the new year, so I had people share with each other something they were working on this coming year and then offer a blessing to each other, also mirroring the Israelites shouting blessing on the mountains.

I begin by asking people to get in a comfortable seated position; I ask them to close their eyes and bring their attention to their body. We scan our bodies inhaling our breath to a spot and exhaling to release tension. Then, I said:

This weeks Torah portion is Parashat K'doshim. Leviticus in the middle book of the Torah and K'doshim is the middle of Leviticus. This portion is the holiness code.

*The portion begins with God offering Moses a lofty goal: the Israelite people shall be "holy" (kedoshim), "as" (ki) God is holy (Leviticus 19:1). The word "Ki" can either mean "because" or "as." The Eternal spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the whole Israelite community and say to them: You shall be holy, **for** I, the Eternal your God, am holy. (Leviticus 19:1-2). Or you should be holy **as** I the eternal your God, am holy.*

*You shall be holy because God is holy.
Either way this week we are encouraged to be holy and the Torah lays out a whole list of ways we can practice this.*

I invite you right now to set a goal, think about one way you can be holy this coming week? set an intention.

Throughout the class we will look at three of the law that are laid out in the holiness code and through movement and contemplation we will see how they relate to our own lives.

After the opening meditation, and teaching we sang, "V'asu li mikdash/Lord Prepare Me." This melody is based on a shaker hymn, and the Hebrew words come from parashat Trumah. I felt that they related to the work we were doing in this class on practicing acts of holiness.

*V'asu li mikdash, v'shachanti b'tocham
Va'anachnu n'vareich Yah, mei'ata v'ad olam.*

*Lord prepare me to be a sanctuary, pure and holy, tried and true
With thanksgiving, I'll be a living sanctuary.*

In terms of the movement this class was a heart opening class. I felt it was important to have an open heart to be able to then do the actions within the holiness code and in order to show our love for God, for ourselves and those in our community. In yoga, heart-opening classes often include lots of backbends and twists, so throughout my class I incorporated backbends in standing, seated, and lying down postures.

As I mentioned in the opening, I incorporated three of the laws or practices that are listed in Kedoshim within the class. After the opening meditation and warm up movements, I had the participants stand in Tadasana, mountain pose, which is standing tall with one's feet hip distance apart. I then had them interlace their fingers behind their back and to slowly bring their hands away from their back. This allows the shoulders to stretch and the chest to open. While in this posture, I invited them to think about how in this Torah portion and within our daily liturgy we are told that God loves us and we are shown this love through the Torah and the *mitzvot* and that we can show our love for God, ourselves and our community through action and the fulfillment of the *mitzvot*. One of the laws states, *love your neighbors like yourself*. I asked them to think about the last week, getting them to think about one way that they have loved their neighbor like themselves and also, how, in this coming week, their actions could reflect loving their neighbor like themselves.

Later in the class, while in wide-angle forward fold, I had the participants look at another one of these laws. The participant's feet were parallel to each other and much wider than hip distance apart with their torso folded over. While in this posture, I had them look into the law of welcoming the stranger for you were once a stranger in the land of Egypt. We first talked about how in stretches we may feel things that are foreign to us

or feel muscles that we have not felt before, and as long as you are not in sharp pain breathe through and welcome these new feelings. Additionally, I asked the participants to think about how they could welcome the strangers in their own lives through their actions. Finally, in tree pose, I asked them to think of the final of the three laws that we looked at during this class. Tree pose is a balancing pose in which you balance on one leg and the other leg is bent and the foot is placed on the standing leg. While in tree pose I asked the participants to think about the law that tells us “not to harvest the corners of your field.” I invited them to think about a way in which we could metaphorically leave the corners of the field unharvested, given that most of us do not have fields. .

After *shavasana* the room is so still. Everyone moves slowly and seems as though they are in a calm haze. I asked anyone if they wanted to share anything they thought of when we meditated on the three laws throughout the class. Then, we concluded with *Havdalah*, talking about something that we are looking forward to in the coming week, and we sang Debbie Friedman’s melody for the blessings.

Outline of Yoga Minyan movements

<u>Warm up:</u> Seated arms up Cradle neck forward Twist forward fold Side stretch Child’s pose Thread the needle Cat cow Stretch leg back Leg arm balance Hold arm leg Sun A	Standing interlace fingers behind back and open heart <i>-love your neighbors like yourself</i> Forward fold Lunge Down dog Forward fold Down dog Wide angle Forward fold <i>-welcome the stranger</i>
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Forwards fold Flat back Chataranga Open heart Down dog Walk feet to hands Flat back Forward fold Tadasana.	<u>Peak Pose:</u> Tree - don't harvest the corners of your field <u>Cool down:</u> Janushar shasana Bridge Supine twist Shavasana Alternate Nostril breathing
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In some congregations, Jewish Yoga classes are being offered within communities as an alternative prayer service. Also, aspects of movement and Jewish Yoga are being incorporated into *tefillah* (worship) services themselves. For this chapter on Jewish Yoga, I gathered information by conducting a survey on if and how synagogues were incorporating yoga into their synagogue. Of the seventeen complete surveys, I received twelve in which the synagogues incorporate yoga practice into synagogue life in some way. Nine synagogues offer regular classes or alternative services, ranging in regularity being between twice a week and monthly. There is one synagogue that said the rabbi incorporates yoga into their monthly Tot Shabbat services. There were two synagogues among the twelve that ran yoga classes at retreats or other special programming. Not all synagogues that offer yoga have any Jewish content in their yoga class offerings.

Jewish Renewal has not always been well received, and some people have found their ideas of reinvigorating Judaism to be too drastic. Additionally, there are also people

who are not welcome to the evolution of Jewish Yoga. Rabbi Yitchak Ginsburgh, of the Gal Einai Institute of Israel is one of these people. He wrote in, “Is Alternative Healing ‘Kosher’?” *The Inner Dimension: A Gateway to the Wisdom of Kabbalah and Chassidut*,” “All wisdom must derive from the Torah. Yoga has negative energy which is connected to *Avodah Zarah*, idol worship, and is thus unacceptable, even if the person practicing does not have these negative thoughts.”³⁸ Here Rabbi Ginsburgh is referring to yoga’s roots in Hinduism. Others like writer Anita Diamant, known for her bestselling novel, *The Red Tent*, has less harsh views of Jewish Yoga and does not feel it is something for her. She wrote a blog post on August 4, 2010 about how she intentionally keeps her Jewish and yoga practices separate.³⁹ In the article, she speaks of a time when a young rabbi asked if her yoga influenced her Jewish practice. She responded, “No. Yoga is for emptying my head. The Jewish stuff is about filling it up. I try to keep them separate.”⁴⁰

I disagree with the premise that yoga is purely for emptying one’s head and that Judaism is primarily for filling it. In response to Diamant, Myriam Koltz wrote an article entitled, “Asanas in Service of Adonai,” in which she articulates a different view of Jewish Yoga. She supports my view when she writes, “I believe it is inaccurate to suggest or imply that yoga itself is devoid of intellectual content. In fact, to do yoga safely and effectively, one’s mind is or should be very much engaged.”⁴¹

³⁸ Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh, “Is Alternative Healing ‘Kosher’?” *The Inner Dimension: A Gateway to the Wisdom of Kabbalah and Chassidut*, www.inner.org/responsa/leter1/resp49.htm. Accessed 12 January 2017.

³⁹ Anita Diamant, “A Happily Bifurcated Yoga Jew: Why I Keep My Asanas and My ‘Adonais’ Separate,” *The Huffington Post*, 2010.

⁴⁰ *ibid*

⁴¹ Myriam Klotz, “Asanas in Service of Adonai,” *The Huffington Post*, 2010.

Based on personal experience with Jewish Yoga, my yoga practice has deepened my Jewish practice, and my Jewish practices has deepened my yoga practice and connection to my body. Klotz says in the article that she agrees with Diamant when she articulate her yoga experience, and how it engages her fully which allows her to feel satisfied and present. Klotz suggests that this is exactly why Jewish Yoga sessions are so nourishing because, “When we can hear sacred Jewish phrases or teachings offered just at those moments when we are most alive and attuned to the deeper strata of our cells and our souls, we can be stirred towards spiritual growth and transformation” (Klotz 2010). The combination of Jewish practice and yoga is not for all. However, the growing presence and interest in Jewish Yoga shows us that Jewish yoga has nourished many people, and the combination of Jewish prayer and yoga practice has filled a great need for many people. As Rabbi Brener stated in a panel on Jewish Yoga, “Yoga is healing not only our bodies, but our tradition,” (Brener, 2014). For many people, Jewish Yoga has enlivened their Jewish practice bring them closer to themselves, their community, and to God.

Conclusion:

Movement is an inherent part of Judaism from biblical times until today dance, and movement has played an important role in Jewish worship, rituals, and study.

Through an exploration of the eleven words in the *Tanakh* that are used to describe movement and dance we are able to gather a historical context and understanding for movement and dance in biblical times. From this historical background, we are able to see how central dance and movement was in the Israelite's life. We are able to see how practices today developed, and can use this information to create new and meaningful ways of using movement and dance that strive to reinvigorating our Jewish practice while also staying rooted in tradition. Sacred choreography and embodied movements connect us to our ancestors while also allowing us to focus more intently on our prayers. A further exploration of movement and dance post-biblical times allowed for a deeper understanding of where current practices stemmed from and also shows why movement and dance has been often separated from sacred settings.

The use of movement and dance in Jewish worship settings makes it possible to move from the realm of purely intellectual, technology-based, or place of disembodiment to a place of wholeness—a place where we can embrace the often-disconnected parts of who we are. Movement and dance allow us to bring together our intellect and a connection to our bodies. Here, in this place of connection, we can speak to our community and to God. In this place of connection, we can more thoroughly connect ourselves and our Judaism. More and more, people are striving for this sense of connection, turning to embodied Jewish practices as a vehicle for connection. Over the past twenty-five years we have seen an upsurge in embodied Jewish practices, including

Jewish yoga, Jewish movement and mediation practices, as well as the use of movement and dance in religious schools.

This project provides a unique perspective on Jewish dance and movement in sacred and synagogue settings. The majority of available research has been done by a researcher who is either a clergy person or directly from a dance and movement background. I came to this project both as a cantor-in-training and a trained dancer and yogi with professional and teaching experience in these areas. This has allowed me to apply the research gathered directly to my work in the Jewish world. I feel grateful to be living in a time in which there are congregants and clergy who are eager to incorporate movement and dance into Jewish worship and practice. It will continue to be a long and at times challenging journey to bring movement and dance into synagogue settings.

Movement and dance in sacred settings is not a practice welcomed by everyone, and yet with it is my hope that with guidance and safe spaces the exploration of new practices can emerge. Liz Lerman argues that due to the development of professional and personal “specializations” in work and life, we are becoming more and more compartmentalized.⁴² I am grateful to have found ways to have a greater bodily and intellectual expansiveness to find fusions between movement, dance and my Jewish practice. I think this de-compartmentalizing can be healthy for individuals and communities as it allows for connection and the embrace of a sense of wholeness. Through the information I have gathered and the ideas developed in this project I hope to be a cantor who can better serve the Jewish community by continuing to develop and incorporate embodied Jewish practices that bring together the body mind and spirit.

⁴² *ibid*

Through the utilization of movement and dance in Jewish practices, people are able to connect more fully to themselves, their community, and with God. Therefore, the incorporation of embodied practice can be seen be a form of Tikkun Olam, repairing fractured people, fractured communities, and the hope to eventually repair a fractured world.

Appendix A: Dancing Texts in Torah

עלץ **ALATS** *verb* to jump for joy / to be joyful / to rejoice / to triumph.

Occurs eight times in the *Tanakh*

Translation: Jewish Publication Society (JPS) 1985.

1 Samuel 2.1

א וַתִּתְפַּלֵּל חַנָּה, וַתֹּאמֶר, עֲלֹץ לִבִּי בַיהוָה, רָמָה קִרְנִי בַיהוָה; רָחַב פִּי עַל-אֹיְבֵי, כִּי שָׁמַחְתִּי בַישׁוּעָתָהּ.

1 And Hannah prayed: My heart exults in the LORD; I have triumphed through the LORD. I gloat over my enemies; I rejoice in Your deliverance.

1 Chronicles 16:32

לב יִרְעֵם הַיָּם, וּמְלוֹאוֹ-- {ר} { יַעֲלֹץ הַשָּׂדֶה, וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ. } ס{

32 Let the sea and all within it thunder, the fields and everything in them exult;

Psalms 5:12

יב וַיִּשְׁמְחוּ כָל-חֹסֵי בָךְ, לְעוֹלָם יִרְגְּנוּ-- וְתִסָּדַף עָלֵימוֹ; וַיַּעֲלֹצוּ בָךְ, אֲהַבֵּי שְׁמֶךָ

12 .But let all who take refuge in You rejoice, ever jubilant as You shelter them; and let those who love Your name exult in You.

Psalms 9:3

ג אֲשַׁמְחָה וְאֶעֱלֹצָה בָךְ; אֲזַמְרָה שְׁמֶךָ עֲלִיוֹן

3 I will rejoice and exult in You, singing a hymn to Your name, O Most High.

Psalms 25:2

ב אֱלֹהֵי--בָךְ בָּטַחְתִּי, אֶל-אֲבוֹשָׁה; אֶל-יַעֲלֹצוּ אֹיְבֵי לִי.

2 My God, in You I trust; may I not be disappointed, may my enemies not exult over me.

Psalms 68.4

ד וַצְדִּיקִים--יִשְׁמְחוּ יַעֲלֹצוּ, לִפְנֵי אֱלֹהִים; וַיִּשְׁיִשׁוּ בְשִׁמְחָה

4 But the righteous shall rejoice; they shall exult in the presence of God; they shall be exceedingly joyful..

Proverbs 11:10

י בְּטוֹב צְדִיקִים, תִּעְלֶז קְרִיָּה; וּבְאֵבֶד רָשָׁעִים רָנָה.

10 When the righteous prosper the city exults; When the wicked perish there are shouts of joy.

Proverbs 28:12

יב בְּעֶלְז צְדִיקִים, רַבָּה תִפְאָרֶת; וּבְקוֹם רָשָׁעִים, יִחַפֵּשׂ אָדָם

12 When the righteous exult there is great glory, But when the wicked rise up men make themselves scarce.

גִּיל GIYL - to spin round under the influence of emotion (usually rejoice)

- Occurs forty-five times within the *Tanakh* and I have include only examples that pertain to movement and dance.
- Translation: (JPS, 1985).

1 Chronicles 16:31

לא יִשְׁמְחוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם, וְתִגְלַל הָאָרֶץ-- } ר { וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם, יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ. } ס {

31 Let the heavens rejoice and the earth exult; let them declare among the nations, "The LORD is King!"

Psalms 9:15

טו לְמַעַן אֲסַפְּרָה, כָּל-תְּהִלָּתֶיךָ: בְּשַׁעְרֵי בַת-צִיּוֹן-- בִּישׁוּעָתְךָ.

15 So that in the gates of Fair Zion I might tell all Your praise, I might exult in Your deliverance.

דלג, DALEG to leap or spring.

- Occurs five times in the *Tanakh*
Translation: JPS, 1917

II Samuel 22:30

ל כי בקה, ארוץ גדוד; {ס} באלהי, אדלג-שור. {ר}

30 For by Thee I run upon a troop; by my God do I scale a wall.

Isaiah 35:6

ו אז ידלג כאיל פסח, ותרו לשון אלם: כי-נבקעו במדבר מים, ונחלים בערבבה.

6 Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb shall shout aloud; For waters shall burst forth in the desert, Streams in the wilderness..

Zephaniah 1:9

ט ופקדתי, על כל-הדולג על-המפתן--ביום ההוא: הממלאים בית אדניהם, חמס ומרמה.

9 In the same day also will I punish all those that leap over the threshold, that fill their master's house with violence and deceit.

Psalms 18:30

ל כי-בה, ארוץ גדוד; ובאלהי, אדלג-שור.

30 For by Thee I run upon a troop; and by my God do I scale a wall.

Song of Songs 2:8

ח קול דודי, הנה-זה בא; מדלג, על-ההרים--ממפץ, על-הגבעות.

8 Hark! my beloved! behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.

חגג **CHAGAG** – to hold a feast, to hold a festival, to make pilgrimage, to keep pilgrimage festival, celebrate, dance, stagger.

- Chagag occurs sixteen times in the *Tanakh*. According to, Mayer Bruber in his article, “Ten Dance-derived expression in the Hebrew Bible,” thirteen of the sixteen times the verb Chagag means to celebrate a prescribed festival.
- Translation: JPS, 1917

Exodus 5:1

א ואחר, באו משה ואהרן, ויאמרו, אל-פרעה: כה-אמר יהוה, אלהי ישראל, שלח את-עמי, ויחגו לי במדבר.

1 And afterward Moses and Aaron came, and said unto Pharaoh: 'Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel: Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness.'

Exodus 12:14

- Occurs twice in this verse

יד ויהי היום הזה לכם לזכרון, וסגתם אתו חג ליהוה: לדורותיכם, חקת עולם תחגגו.

14 And this day shall be unto you for a memorial, and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.

Exodus 23:14

יד שלש רגלים, תחג לי בשנה.

14 Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto Me in the year.

Leviticus: 23:41

- Occurs twice in this verse

מא וסגתם אתו חג ליהוה, שבועת ימים בשנה: חקת עולם לדורותיכם, בחדש השביעי תחגו אתו.

41 And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year; it is a statute for ever in your generations; ye shall keep it in the seventh month.

Numbers 29:12

יב ובחמשה עשר יום לחודש השביעי, מקרא-קדש יהיה לכם--כל-מלאכת עבודה, לא תעשו; ותגתם סג ליהוה, שבועת ימים.

12 And on the fifteenth day of the seventh month ye shall have a holy convocation: ye shall do no manner of servile work, and ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days;

Deuteronomy 16:15

טו שבועת ימים, תחג ליהוה אלהיך, במקום, אשר-יבחר יהוה: כי יברכך יהוה אלהיך, בכל תבואתך ובכל מעשה ידך, והיית, אף שמח.

15 Seven days shalt thou keep a feast unto the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD shall choose; because the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the work of thy hands, and thou shalt be altogether joyful.

1 Samuel 30:16

טז וירדהו, והנה נטשים על-פני כל-הארץ; אכלים ושתים, וחגגים, בכל השלל הגדול, אשר לקחו מארץ פלשתים ומארץ יהודה.

16 And when he had brought him down, behold, they were spread abroad over all the ground, eating and drinking, and feasting, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah.

Nahum 2:1

א הנה על-ההרים רגלי מבשר, משמיע שלום--תגן יהודה סגיד, שלמי נדרים: כי לא יוסיף עוד לעבור-לעבר-(בך בליעל, כלה נקרת).

1 Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that announceth peace! Keep thy feasts, O Judah, perform thy vows; for the wicked one shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.

Zechariah 14:16

טז והיה, כל-הנותר מכל-הגוים, הבאים, על-ירושלם; ועלו מדי שנה בשנה, להשתחוות למלך יהוה צבאות, ולחג, את-תג הסכות.

16 And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations that came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.

Zechariah 14:18

יח ואם-משפחת מצרים לא-תעלה ולא באה, ולא עליהם; תהיה המגפה, אשר יגף יהוה את-הגוים, אשר לא יעלו, לחג את-חג הסוכות.

18 And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, they shall have no overflow; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the nations that go not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

Zechariah 14:19

יט זאת תהיה, חטאת מצרים; וחטאת, כל-הגוים, אשר לא יעלו, לחג את-חג הסוכות.

19 This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations that go not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

Psalms 42:5

ה אלה אונכרה, ואשפכה עלי נפשי--
כי אעבר בסף, אדדם עד-בית אלהים:
בקול-רנה ותודה; המון חוגג.

5 These things I remember, and pour out my soul within me, {N}
how I passed on with the throng, and led them to the house of God, {N}
with the voice of joy and praise, a multitude keeping holyday.

Psalms 107:27

כז | יחוגו ויניעו, כשכור; וכל-הקמתם, תתבלע.

27 They reeled to and fro, and staggered like a drunken man, and all their wisdom was swallowed up—

KARAR - to dance or whirl.

- Occurs two times in the Tanakh.
- Translation: JPS, 1985.

II Samuel 6:14

יד וְדָוִד מְכַרְכֵּר בְּכָל-עֹז, לִפְנֵי יְהוָה; וְדָוִד, חָגוּר אֶפֹּד בָּד.

14 David whirled with all his might before the LORD; David was girt with a linen ephod.

II Samuel 6:16

טז וְהָיָה אֲרוֹן יְהוָה, בָּא עִיר דָּוִד; וּמִיִּכָּל בֵּת-שָׁאוּל נִשְׁקָפָה בְּעֵד הַחֲלוּן, וַתֵּרָא אֶת-הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד מִפְּנֵי וּמְכַרְכֵּר לִפְנֵי יְהוָה, וַתִּבֹּז לוֹ, בְּלִבָּהּ.

16 As the Ark of the LORD entered the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and whirling before the LORD; and she despised him for it.

Chool חול-

- to twist or whirl, dance, writhe, fear, tremble, travail, be in anguish, be in pain.

- Occurs sixty times in the Tanakh I have included the verses in which the word is related to movement or dance.
- Translation: JPS, 1917

Psalms 114:7

ז מִלִּפְנֵי אֲדֹנָי, חוּלֵי אֶרֶץ; מִלִּפְנֵי, אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

7 Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob;

Judges 21:21

כא וּרְאִיתֶם, וְהָיָה אִם-יֵצְאוּ בָנוֹת-שִׁילֹה לַחֲוֹל בַּמַּחֲלוֹת, וַיִּצְאֲתָם מִן-הַכְּרָמִים, וַחֲטַפְתֶּם לָכֶם אִישׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ מִבָּנוֹת שִׁילֹה; וְהִלַּכְתֶּם, אֶרֶץ בִּנְיָמִן.

21 and see, and, behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in the dances, then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin.

MACHALAH מחלה - dancing, dance

- Occurs eight times in the *Tanakh*
- Translation: JPS, 1917
- Noun derived from חול

Exodus 15:20-

כ ותקח מרים הנביאה אחות אהרן, את-התוף--בְּיָדָהּ; ומִצָּאן כָּל-הַנָּשִׁים אֲחֵרֶיהָ, בְּתַפִּים וּבַמַּחֲלֹת.

20 And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.

Exodus 32:19-

יט ויהי, כִּאֲשֶׁר קָרַב אֶל-הַמִּטְנֶה, וַיֵּרָא אֶת-הָעֵגֹל, וּמַחֲלֹת; וַיִּסַּר-אַף מֹשֶׁה, וַיִּשְׁלֹךְ מִיָּדוֹ אֶת-הַלֶּחֶת, וַיִּשְׁבֵּר אֹתָם, תַּחַת הָהָר.

19 And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing; and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and broke them beneath the mount.

Judges 11:34-

לד וַיָּבֹא וַיִּפְתַּח הַמַּצְפָּה, אֶל-בֵּיתוֹ, וַהֲגִה בְּתוֹ יֵצֵאת לִקְרָאתוֹ, בְּתַפִּים וּבַמַּחֲלֹת: וְרַק הִיא יְחִידָה, אֵין-לּוֹ מִמֶּנּוּ בֶן אוֹ-בַת.

34 And Jephthah came to Mizpah unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances; and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.

Judges 21:21-

כא וַיֵּרְאוּם, וַהֲגִה אִם-יֵצְאוּ בָנוֹת-שִׁילֹה לְחֹל בַּמַּחֲלֹת, וַיֵּצְאוּ מִן-הַכְּרָמִים, וַחֲטִפְתָּם לָכֶם אִישׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ מִבָּנוֹת שִׁילֹה; וַהֲלַכְתֶּם, אַרְצָ בִּנְיָמִן.

21 and see, and, behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in the dances, then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin.

1 Samuel 18:6 –

ו וַיְהִי כְּבוֹאָם, כְּשׁוּב דָּוִד מִהַכּוֹת אֶת-הַפִּלִּשְׁתִּי, וַתֵּצֵאנָה הַנָּשִׁים מְכַל-עָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְשׁוֹר (וַתִּמְחַלּוּת, לְקִרְאֵת שְׂאוּל הַמֶּלֶךְ--בְּתַפִּים בְּשִׁמְחָה, וּבְשִׁלְשִׁים.

6 And it came to pass as they came, when David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with timbrels, with joy, and with three-stringed instruments.

1 Samuel 21:12-

יב וַיֹּאמְרוּ עַבְדֵי אַכִּישׁ, אֵלָיו, הֲלוֹא-זֶה דָּוִד, מֶלֶךְ הָעָרִץ; הֲלוֹא לָזָה, יֵצְנוּ בַּמִּחְלּוֹת לֵאמֹר, הִכָּה שְׂאוּל בְּאֶלְפֹו, וְדָוִד בְּרֶבֶבְתּוֹ.

12 And the servants of Achish said unto him: 'Is not this David the king of the land? Did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying: Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?'

1 Samuel 29:5-

ה הֲלוֹא-זֶה דָּוִד, אֲשֶׁר יֵצְנוּ-לוֹ בַּמִּחְלּוֹת לֵאמֹר: הִכָּה שְׂאוּל בְּאֶלְפָיו, וְדָוִד בְּרֶבֶבְתּוֹ. {ס}

5 Is not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances, saying: Saul hath slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands?'

Song of Songs 7:1 -

א שׁוּבִי שׁוּבִי הַשּׁוּלַמִּית, שׁוּבִי שׁוּבִי וְנִחֲזָה-בָּךְ; מִה-תִּחַזְוִי, בַּשּׁוּלַמִּית, בַּמִּחְלָת, הַמְחֻנָּים.

7 Return, return, O Shulammite; Return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulammite? As it were a dance of two companies.

מחל MACHOL – dance, dancing, A (round) dance

- Occurs six times in the *Tanakh*.

- Noun derived from חול
- Translation: JPS 1985

Jeremiah 31:4

ג עוד אֶבְנֶה וְנִבְנִית, בְּתוֹלַת יִשְׂרָאֵל: עוֹד תַּעֲדִי תַפִּיד, וְיִצְאָת בַּמִּחּוֹל מִשְׁחָקִים.

4 I will build you firmly again, O Maiden Israel! Again you shall take up your timbrels
And go forth to the rhythm of the dancers.

Jeremiah 31:13

יב אז תשמח בתולה במחול, ובחורים וזקנים יחדו; והפכתי אבלם לששון ונחמתיים, ושמחתים מיגונם.

13 Then shall maidens dance gaily, Young men and old alike. I will turn their mourning
to joy, I will comfort them and cheer them in their grief.

Psalms 30:12

יב הפכת מספדי, למחול לי: פתחת שקי; ותאזרני שמחה.

12 You turned my lament into dancing, you undid my sackcloth and girded me with joy,

Psalms 149:3

ג יהללו שמו במחול; בתף וכנור, וזמרו-לו.

3 Let them praise His name in dance; with timbrel and lyre let them chant His praises.

Psalms 150:4

ד הללוהו, בתף ומחול; הללוהו, במנים ועגב.

4 Praise Him with timbrel and dance; praise Him with lute and pipe.

Lamentations 5:15

טו שבת משוב לבנו, נהפך לאבל מחלנו.

15 Gone is the joy of our hearts; Our dancing is turned into mourning.

Savav- סבב to turn, turn about or around or aside or back or towards, go about
or around, surround, encircle, change directions

- Occurs one hundred and fifty-seven times in the *Tanakh*
- Translation: JPS, 1985

Joshua 6:4

ד וּשְׁבַעַה כֹּהֲנִים יִשָּׂאוּ שְׁבַעַה שׁוֹפְרוֹת הַיּוֹבְלִים, לִפְנֵי הָאָרוֹן, וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי, תִּסְבּוּ אֶת-הָעִיר שְׁבַע פְּעָמִים; וְהַכֹּהֲנִים, יִתְקְעוּ בַשּׁוֹפְרוֹת.

4 with seven priests carrying seven ram's horns preceding the Ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the horns.

Jeremiah 31:22

כא עַד-מָתִי תִתְמַקֵּין, הַבַּת הַשׁוֹבְבָה: כִּי-בָרָא יְהוָה חֲדָשָׁה בְּאֶרֶץ, וְנָקְבָה תִסְוֹבֵב גִּבּוֹר. {ס}

22 How long will you waver, O rebellious daughter? (For the LORD has created something new on earth: A woman courts a man.)

Psalms 26:6

ו אֶרְחֹץ בְּנִקְיוֹן כַּפִּי; וְאֶסְבֶּבָה אֶת-מִזְבִּיחַךָ יְהוָה.

6 I wash my hands in innocence, and walk around Your altar, O LORD,

Psalms 114: 3

ג הַיָּם רָאָה, וַיָּנֹס; הַיַּרְדֵּן, יָפַב לְאַחֹר.

3 The sea saw them and fled, Jordan ran backward,

Psalms 114:5

ה מַה-לָּךְ הַיָּם, כִּי תִנּוֹס; הַיַּרְדֵּן, תִּפַּב לְאַחֹר.

5 What alarmed you, O sea, that you fled, Jordan, that you ran backward,

Ecclesiastes 12:5

ה גַּם מִגִּבְהַ יִרְאוּ, וְחִתְּמֹתַיִם בְּדֶרֶךְ, וַיִּגְאֹץ הַשֶּׁקֶד וַיִּסְתַּבֵּל הַחֲגָב, וְתִפְרַר הָאֲבִיוֹנָה: כִּי-הִלָּךְ הָאָדָם אֶל-בֵּית עוֹלָמוֹ, וְסִבְבוּ בַשּׁוּק הַסּוֹפְדִים.

5 When one is afraid of heights And there is terror on the road.— For the almond tree

may blossom, The grasshopper be burdened, And the caper bush may bud again; But man sets out for his eternal abode, With mourners all around in the street.—

פסח PASACH - to hop / skip over / to dance.

- Occurs eight times in the *Tanakh*
- Translation: JPS,1985

Exodus 12:13- will pass over

יג וְהָיָה הַדָּם לָכֶם לְאֵת, עַל הַבָּתִּים אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם שָׁם, וְרָאִיתִי אֶת-הַדָּם, וּפָסַחְתִּי עֲלֵכֶם; וְלֹא-יְהִיָּה כָכֶם נֹגֵף לְמִשְׁחִית, בְּהַלְתִּי בָאָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם.

13 And the blood on the houses where you are staying shall be a sign for you: when I see the blood I will pass over you, so that no plague will destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

Exodus 12:23 - will pass over

כג וְעָבַר יְהוָה, לַנֹּגֵף אֶת-מִצְרַיִם, וְרָאָה אֶת-הַדָּם עַל-הַמַּשְׁקוּף, וְעַל שְׁתֵּי הַמְּזוּזוֹת; וּפָסַח יְהוָה, עַל-הַפֶּתַח, וְלֹא יָתֵן הַמִּשְׁחִית, לְבֹא אֶל-בְּתִיכֶם לַנֹּגֵף.

23 For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side-posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.

Exodus 12:27- He passed over

כז וְאַמְרַתֶּם זָבַח-פֶּסַח הוּא לַיהוָה, אֲשֶׁר פָּסַח עַל-בְּתֵי בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִצְרַיִם, בְּנֹגְפוֹ אֶת-מִצְרַיִם, וְאֶת-בְּתֵינִי הָצִיל; וַיִּקַּד הָעָם, וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ.

27 that ye shall say: It is the sacrifice of the LORD'S Passover, for that He passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses.' And the people bowed the head and worshipped.

II Samuel 4:4

ד וְלִיהוֹנָתָן, בֶּן-שָׁאוּל, בֶּן, נָכָה רַגְלִים; בֶּן-חֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים הָיָה בְּבֹא שְׁמֵעַת שָׁאוּל וַיהוֹנָתָן מִיִּזְרְעֵאל, וַתִּשְׁאַלְהוּ אִמָּתּוֹ וַתֵּגֵס, וַיְהִי בַחֲפָזָה לָגוֹס וַיִּפֹּל וַיִּפְסַח, וַיִּשְׁמוּ מִפִּיבִשְׁתּוֹ.

4 Now Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son that was lame of his feet. He was five years old

when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, and fled; and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.

II Samuel 5:6

ו וַיֵּלֶךְ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֶנְשָׁיו יְרוּשָׁלַם, אֶל-הַיְבֹסִי יוֹשֵׁב הָאָרֶץ; וַיֹּאמֶר לְדָוִד לֵאמֹר, לֹא-תָבוֹא הַנָּה, כִּי אִם-הִסִּירָךְ הַעֲנָרִים וְהַפְּסָחִים לֵאמֹר, לֹא-יָבוֹא דָוִד הַנָּה.

6 The king and his men set out for Jerusalem against the Jebusites who inhabited the region. David was told, “You will never get in here! Even the blind and the lame will turn you back.” (They meant: David will never enter here.)

I Kings 18:21

כא וַיִּגַּשׁ אֵלָיו אֵל-כָּל-הָעָם, וַיֹּאמֶר עַד-מָתִי אַתֶּם פֹּסְחִים עַל-שְׁתֵּי הַסַּעֲפִים--אִם-יְהוָה הָאֱלֹהִים לָכֵן אֶחָרָיו, וְאִם-הַבַּעַל לָכֵן אֶחָרָיו; וְלֹא-עָנּוּ הָעָם אֹתוֹ, דָּבָר.

21 Elijah approached all the people and said, “How long will you keep hopping between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; and if Baal, follow him!” But the people answered him not a word.

1 Kings 18:26

כו וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת-הַפָּר אֲשֶׁר-נָתַן לָהֶם, וַיַּעֲשׂוּ, וַיִּקְרְאוּ בְּשֵׁם-הַבַּעַל מִבֹּקֶר וְעַד-הַצֹּהָרִים לֵאמֹר הַבַּעַל עֲנֵנוּ, וְאִין קוֹל וְאִין עֲנָה; וַיַּפְסְחוּ, עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה.

26 And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying: 'O Baal, answer us.' But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they danced in halting wise about the altar which was made.

Isaiah 31:5 –he passed over

ה כַּצִּפֹּרִים עֹפֹת--כֵּן יִגֵּן יְהוָה צָבָאוֹת, עַל-יְרוּשָׁלַם; גִּבּוֹן וְהִצִּיל, פֶּסַח וְהִמְלִיט.

5 As birds hovering, so will the LORD of hosts protect Jerusalem; He will deliver it as He protecteth it, He will rescue it as He passeth over.

פזז PAZAZ – to bound, be agile, be supple

1.a) (kal) to be nimble

1.b.) (piel) to leap, show agility

- Occurs two times in the *Tanakh*
- Translation: JPS, 1985

Genesis 49:24

כד ותשב באיתן קשתו, ונפזו זרעי ידיו; מידי אביר יעקב, משם רעה אבן ישראל.

24 But his bow abode firm, and the arms of his hands were made supple, by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob, from thence, from the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel,

II Samuel 6:16

טז והיה ארון יהוה, בא עיר דוד; ומיכל בת-שאול נשקפה בַּעַד הַחִלּוֹן, וַתֵּרָא אֶת-הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד מִפְּנֵי וּמִכְרַכְרֵי לִפְנֵי יְהוָה, וַתִּבֹּז לוֹ, בְּלִבָּהּ.

16 And it was so, as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looked out at the window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart.

Tzala-limp צלע

Genesis 32:32

לב וַיִּזְרַח-לוֹ הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ, כְּאֲשֶׁר עָבַר אֶת-פְּנוּאֵל; וְהוּא צִלְעַ, עַל-יָרְכוֹ.

The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping on his hip.

Micah 4:6

ו בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא נֶאֱמַר-יְהוָה, אֶסְפֶּה הַצִּלְעָה, וְהַגְדִּיקָהּ, אֶקְבֹּצָהּ; וְאֲשֶׁר, הִרְעֵתִי.

In that day —declares the LORD— I will assemble the lame [sheep] And will gather the outcast And those I have treated harshly;

Micah 4:7

ז וְשִׁמְתִי אֶת-הַצִּלְעָה לְשֹׂאֲרֵיתָּהּ, וְהִנֵּה לְגוֹי עָצוּם; וּמִלֵּךְ יִהְיֶה עָלֵיהֶם בְּהָר צִיּוֹן, מִעַתָּה וְעַד-עוֹלָם. {פ}

And I will turn the lame into a remnant And the expelled into a populous nation. And the LORD will reign over them on Mount Zion Now and for evermore.

Zephaniah 3:19

יט הִנְנִי עוֹשֶׂה אֶת-כָּל-מַעֲנִיךָ, בָּעֵת הַהִיא; וְהוֹשַׁעְתִּי אֶת-הַצִּלְעָה, וְהִנֵּדְתָּה אֶקְבָּץ, וְשִׁמְתִים לְתִהְלָה וּלְשֵׁם, בְּכָל-הָאָרֶץ בְּשֵׁתָם.

At that time I will make [an end] Of all who afflicted you. And I will rescue the lame [sheep] And gather the strayed; And I will exchange their disgrace For fame and renown in all the earth.

קפץ **Kafatz** -jumped with both feet

- Occurs eight times in the *Tanakh*
- Translation: JPS, 1985
Deuteronomy 15:7

ז כִּי-יִהְיֶה בְּךָ אֲבִיּוֹן מֵאֲסֹד אֲסִיד, בְּאֲסֹד שְׁעָרֶיךָ, בְּאֲרָצְךָ, אֲשֶׁר-יִהְיֶה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נֹתֵן לְךָ--לֹא תִאֲמַץ אֶת-לִבְּךָ, וְלֹא תִקְפֹּץ אֶת-נֶדְךָ, מֵאֲחִיד, הָאֲבִיּוֹן.

7 If, however, there is a needy person among you, one of your kinsmen in any of your settlements in the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not harden your heart and shut your hand against your needy kinsman.

Isaiah 52:15

טו כֹּן יִזְהוּ גוֹיִם רַבִּים, עָלָיו יִקְפְּצוּ מְלָכִים פִּיָּהֶם: 15 כִּי אֲשֶׁר לֹא-סָפַר לָהֶם, יֵאוּ, וְאֲשֶׁר לֹא-שָׁמְעוּ, הִתְבּוֹנְנוּ. {ס} 15 Just so he shall startle many nations. Kings shall be silenced because of him, For they shall see what has not been told them, Shall behold what they never have heard.”

Psalms 77:10

י הֲשִׁכַח חַנּוּת אֱלֹהִים; אִם-קִפֹּץ בָּאָר, רַחֲמָיו סָלָה.

10 Has God forgotten how to pity? Has He in anger stifled His compassion?” Selah.

Psalms 107:42

מב יִרְאוּ יִשְׁרָיִם וַיִּשְׁמְחוּ; וְכָל-עוֹלָה, קִפְצָה פִּיהָ.

42 The upright see it and rejoice; the mouth of all wrongdoers is stopped.

Job 5:16

טז וַתְּהִי לְדֹל תִּקְוָה; וְעַלְתָּה, קִפְצָה פִּיהָ.

16 So there is hope for the wretched; The mouth of wrongdoing is stopped.

Job 24:24

כד רוֹמוּ מֵעַט, וְאֵינָנוּ, וְהִמְכוּ, כָּל יִקְפְּצוֹן;

וּכְרָאשׁ שִׁבְלֹת יִמְלוּ.

24 Exalted for a while, let them be gone; Be brought low, and shrivel like mallows, And wither like the heads of grain.

Song of Song 2:8

ח קוֹל דּוֹדִי, הִנֵּה-נָה בָּא; מְדַלֵּג, עַל-הַהָרִים--מִקְפֹּץ, עַל-הַגְּבָעוֹת.

Hark! My beloved! There he comes, Leaping over mountains, Bounding over hills.

רקד RAKAD – 1.) to skip about

1.a) (Kal)to skip about

1.b) (piel) to dance, leap

- Occurs nine times in the *Tanakh*
- Translation: JPS, 1985
-

Isaiah 13:21

כא וַרְבְּצוּ-שָׁם צִיִּים, וּמָלְאוּ בְּתִיקָם אֲחִים; וְשָׁכְנוּ שָׁם בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה, וַיִּשְׁעִירוּם יִרְקְדוּ-שָׁם.

21 But wild-cats shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of ferrets; and ostriches shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there.

Joel 2:5

ה כקול מרכבות, על-ראשי הַהָרִים יִרְקְדוּן--כקול להב אש, אכלה קש; כעם עצום, ערוף מלחמה.

5 Like the noise of chariots, on the tops of the mountains do they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a mighty people set in battle array.

Nah 3:2

ב קול שוט, וקול רעש אוֹפֹן; וסוס דהר, ומרכבה מִרְקְדָה.

Crack of whip And rattle of wheel, Galloping steed And bounding chariot!

1 Chronicles 15:29

כט ויהי, ארון ברית יהוה, בא, עד-עיר דָּוִיד; ומיכל בת-שאול נשקפה בעד החלון, ותרא את-המִלֵּךְ דָּוִיד מִרְקְדִּים ומשחק, ותבז לו, בלבה. {פ}

29 As the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD arrived at the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing, and she despised him for it.

Psalms 29.6

ו וַיִּרְקְדוּם כְּמו־עֵגֶל; לִבְנוֹן וְשִׁירִיֹן, כְּמוֹ בֶן-רְאֵמִים.

6 He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild-ox.

Psalms 114.4

ד הַהָרִים, רָקְדוּ כְּאֵילִים; גְּבְעוֹת, כְּבָנֵי-צֹאן

4 The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like young sheep.

Psalms 114:6

ו הָהָרִים, תִּרְקְדוּ כְּאֵילִים; גְּבָעוֹת, כְּבָנִי-צֹאן.

6 Ye mountains, that ye skip like rams; ye hills, like young sheep?

Job 21:11

יֵא יִשְׁלְחוּ כִצְאוֹ, עֹוִלֵיהֶם; וְיִלְדֵיהֶם, יִרְמְדוּ.

11 They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance.

Ecclesiastes 3:4

ד עֵת לִבְכוֹת וְעֵת לִשְׂחֹק,
וְעֵת רִקְדּוֹד עֵת סִפּוֹד

4. S} A time to weep, {S} and a time to laugh; {N}
{S} a time to mourn, {S} and a time to dance; {N}

Sachak שַׁחַק:

- To laugh, play, mock
- To play (including instrumental music, singing or dancing.
- Occurs thirty-six times in the *Tanakh*, I have included only examples pertinent to movement and dance.
- Translation: JPS, 1985

I Samuel 18:7

ז וַתַּעֲנִינָה הַנָּשִׁים הַמְשַׁחֲקוֹת, וַתֹּאמְרֶנָּה: הִכָּה שָׁאוּל בָּאַלְפּוֹ, וְדָוִד בִּרְבֹבָתָיו.

The women sang as they danced, and they chanted: Saul has slain his thousands; David, his tens of thousands!

II Samuel 6:21

כֹּא וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד, אֶל-מִיכָל, לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר-בִּי מֵאֲבִיךָ וּמִכָּל-בֵּיתוֹ, לְצִוּת אֹתִי נָגִיד עַל-עַם יְהוָה עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל; וְשַׁחֲקֵתִי, לִפְנֵי יְהוָה.

David answered Michal, “It was before the LORD who chose me instead of your father and all his family and appointed me ruler over the LORD’s people Israel! I will dance before the LORD

Jerimiah 31:4

עוד אֶבְנֶנָּךְ וְנִבְנִית, בְּתוּלַת יִשְׂרָאֵל: עוֹד תַּעֲדִי תַפִּיד, וְיִצְאָת בְּמַחֹל מִשְׁחָקִים.

4 I will build you firmly again, O Maiden Israel! Again you shall take up your timbrels
And go forth to the rhythm of the dancers.

I Chronicles 13:8

ח וְדָוִיד וְכָל-יִשְׂרָאֵל, מִשְׁחָקִים לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים--בְּכָל-עֹז; וּבַשִּׁירִים וּבַכְנֹרֹת וּבַנְּבָלִים וּבַתְּפִלִּים, וּבַמְּצִלְתִּים וּבַחֲצָצְרוֹת.

8 And David and all Israel danced before God with all their might—with songs, lyres, harps, timbrels, cymbals, and trumpets.

1 Chronicles 15:29

כט וַיְהִי, אֲרוֹן בְּרִית יְהוָה, בָּא, עַד-עִיר דָּוִיד; וּמִיכָל בַּת-שָׁאוּל נִשְׁקָפָה בְּעַד הַחֲלוֹן, וַתֵּרָא אֶת-הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִיד מְרַקֵּד וּמִשְׁחָק, וַתִּבֹּז לוֹ, בְּלִבָּהּ. {פ}

29 As the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD arrived at the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing, and she despised him for it.

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Appendix B: Survey

[SURVEY PREVIEW MODE] Movement and Dance Synagogue Survey"תָּמְרוּ לוֹ שְׁמוֹ בְּמַחֲוֹל; בְּתִפְּתִי וּבְכִנּוֹר, יִתְמַרוּ לוֹ" ...s name in dance; with timbrel and lyre let them chant His praises. " 1/23/17, 1:51PM

Movement and Dance Synagogue Survey

"יְהִלְלוּ שְׁמוֹ בְּמַחֲוֹל; בְּתִפְּתִי וּבְכִנּוֹר, יִתְמַרוּ לוֹ."

Let them praise His name in dance; with timbrel and lyre let them chant His praises."

1. Demographic Information

1. Name of Synagogue

2. Location

3. Number of member families

4. Name and title of the person filling out the survey

5. Contact Information

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/?sm-ws_28uR_28_28R9uN8wtOtLX9UeKt4LfgDfRF3i5rhfz_2FzVno_3D

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Movement and Dance Synagogue Survey

"יְהִלְלוּ שְׁמוֹ בְּמַחֲוֹל; בְּתִפְּתִי וּבְכִנּוֹר, יִזְמְרוּ-לוֹ."

Let them praise His name in dance; with timbrel and lyre let them chant His praises."

2. Jewish Yoga

7. Do you offer yoga classes at your synagogue? If so, how often are they offered?

8. How many people attend these classes (on average)?

9. Who leads the yoga classes (if you can provide a name and contact information, that would be much appreciated)?

10. Are the yoga class participants regular members of the congregation? If not, how do they hear about the class?

11. Is the yoga class free or is a fee charged for the class?

12. When did the synagogue begin offering yoga classes?

13. How was this idea implemented?

14. Is there Jewish content taught within the Yoga class?

15. If yes, can you give an example?

16. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the yoga classes at your synagogue?

Prev

Next

Movement and Dance Synagogue Survey

"יהללו שמו במחול; בתף וכנור, יזמרו-לו."

Let them praise His name in dance; with timbrel and lyre let them chant His praises."

3. Dance and Movement

17. Do you ever incorporate movement or dance into services? An example, dancing during Hakafah or Mi Chamocha.

18. If yes, please provide examples.

19. Have you gotten feedback about the incorporation of movement and dance and if so what was it?

20. Is movement or dance incorporated into synagogue life in another way? An example would be offering Israeli dance classes or dance programs.

21. Do you incorporate movement or dance into the religious school curriculum?

21. Do you incorporate movement or dance into the religious school curriculum?

22. If yes, is it a specific class or incorporated into other classes or the religious school services?

23. If yes, who teaches the dance classes? If possible please provide name and contact information of the teacher.

24. Is there anything else you would like to share about movement and dance at your synagogue?

Prev

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