

MOVEMENT IN PRAYER

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"(She) who would learn to fly one day must first learn to stand and walk and run and climb and dance"

Nietzsche

Can't Sit Still

A personal statement on the role of the body in prayer

As a Cantorial student, a Shelichat Tzibur, (the one who lifts the prayers of the congregation to God), I am supposed to be concerned with worship, yet I have all but ceased attending daily services in the chapel at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. Most days, I find prayer there to be a strait-jacketing experience. I am not the only one who feels this way. Last month, a female rabbinical student gave a sermon on improvisation in prayer, and the need to take our timbrels in our hands, and dance and sing as Miriam did by the shores of the Red Sea... but alas, she and I are in the minority. Weighed down by pounds of books and repeating words by rote, I find it impossible to pray what is in my heart. I want prayer to liberate me, not chain me to my chair.

A more typical senior sermon, given this week, focused on the importance of wrestling with text, correction, the necessity to wrestle with words. This definition of text was too narrow for me. Can't the text be my body? Can't I use my body as a means of communication? My thesis is not negating the importance of words. It is affirming the need to use the body in prayer. I want prayer to be a healthy balance between music, movement and text.

Why have we stopped moving? Why have we pray-ers checked our bodies at the door? Fear is one reason. Rabbi Richard Jacobs says his congregants generally head for the wall when asked to find their own space in the room in which to pray their own thoughts. It's scary. I led a service at HUC-JIR in which I asked people to prepare for the Barchu by walking in the narrow space just around the ark. They were asked to disregard those around them using the time to think, breathe and walk. I asked them to stop when I began the Barchu and turn to face the ark, regardless of where they stood. I felt I had prepared them. Yet this experiment met with genuine fear, and nervous laughter. It was new and it was scary. We have grown accustomed to sitting or standing still, or some of us have. To me sitting still is spiritually deadening.

In his book, Liturgical Dance, Davies asks, "How do you unfreeze members of a congregation and --how do you develop mobility in worship?" In Jewish worship as in Christian worship movement already exists. We stand and sit, bow and kiss the Torah as it passes by. These can be embellished. But I want to take the process even further by saying that we can reshape liturgy by using the body as a tool.

If the prayer says that I clap my hands and stomp my feet to show God that I am happy to be alive, then to say that while sitting down seems a contradiction in terms. The movements can express what the prayer says, through dance.

Yet, I am not interested in dancing the Shema just to illustrate or enhance the words. No, I would like to gain more insight, through the body, that God is one.

Narrative dance is probably the most non-threatening kind of dance because it illustrates text. It is most accessible. It may be easier for a congregant to identify with Miriam at the shores of the sea if they see her portrayed through dance.

But movement can also be non-narrative, a kinetic flow of energy or like a wave as described by Isadora Duncan. It can ask questions and provide fresh insights to tired ideas.

Prayer is communication. It is a dialogue between members of the community. It is simultaneously communication with (their) God. Before I began to dance, I was moving my hands in sign language. Communicating with the body, through the body is a language I understand. Words can take on different meanings when they are relayed via the hands. For example, the line in Psalm 23 "my cup runneth over" becomes even more powerful when signed. Sign Language is another form of Communication, as prayer is.

The synagogue should be a place in which prayer is a real, truthful expression of its participants; it should be a place where congregants are uninhibited and pray unfettered, with their whole selves.

My ideal prayer model is a "jam session". The players are always finding fresh combinations, altering rhythms, adding harmonies. Some groups are more tightly structured, others thrive on more improvisation. Some prayer services rely solely on text and seldom deviate. Others rely on improvising on themes. All jazz groups incorporate improvisation. I see structured improvisation as a necessary element in prayer because we don't always walk into synagogue feeling the same way. Each day our lives change, our concerns differ and this needs to be reflected in the text we pray. Perhaps this could take the form of a time within the service designated to speaking what is on our minds, or bringing in our own prayers.

Like the music in a jam session, many moods can be contained in one service. Prayer can be playful as well as serious. A horn can wail one minute and the next minute there can be a lilting line on the alto sax. There should be a sense of humor and a sense of wonder present in prayer. If the worship experience is only serious or only carefree then it is not expressing the reality of its participants. Not only should there be a balance of moods, there should also be a balance between tension and resolution.

I can improvise with my body as well as with words. The sanctuary as well as a jam session is a place for improvisation. Prayers are expressed not just through the music, or words, but a beautiful wedding of the wordless niggun, silence, breathing, and movement. Why move? My

definition of prayer would be incomplete without movement. In a session, the players sway, and move and sweat as they explore the music. If a jam session or a prayer service moves me, then as a participant, I can't sit still.

We read it every Shabbat, "David sang- Barchi Nafshi- all my limbs shall praise you Adonoi..." Merely sitting still in the synagogue disconnects me from my spirit. It hampers my body, disregards it in fact by focusing exclusively on my brain. I am not suggesting we abandon the brain entirely, just temper it with feelings. We must integrate body prayer with brain prayer. Sitting still does not address my needs nor my experience.

We all have bodies. We all have playful energy that connects us to the world and each other. By denying this when we enter a synagogue, by becoming disembodied, we inhibit our ability to pray. I am fairly comfortable with my body. I like it. Doug Adams, Professor of Christianity and the Arts at the Pacific School of Religion sums up my sentiments when he says,

"Pretending that we do not have pelvises in worship does not reduce eroticism but only heightens it by suggesting dualism ie that something other than God created and rules over parts of our body. Putting pelvises in their proper place is acceptable by having them praise God".

A problem with dance in worship is that it can resolve into 'Peaches and cream', white flowing costumes, angelic movements, un-lifelike. This is a constant danger. If prayer is like life, and for me it is, then it should also reflect our uglier sides, possess energy and a range of emotions.

Movement-prayers need to address the dark sides of our personalities.

My litmus test of an inspiring T'filla is when I can't sit still. Then I know I am really praying. I must be challenged to sing and stomp. In my ideal service, no one in the community sits still but rather each finds a way to jam and add their unique melody line.

Movement has the ability to transform us. I am more likely to be transformed by an event I participate in than one that I witness. That is how I feel about movement in prayer. As a Jew I feel part of a moving tradition that is standing still. There is a time for a set text and a time to improvise, a time to dance, and that time is now.

Dance in Contemporary Christian Worship

Introduction

The material found in this chapter is culled from Liturgical Dance by J.G. Davies, the Cadbury professor of Theology at University of Birmingham, England. In his introduction he states that the book's purpose is to explore neglected areas of liturgical dance, as well as correct certain historical inaccuracies. It is divided into three sections; historical, theological and practical application. This introduction draws on the historical section.

Every Sunday, dances are being performed within Protestant churches around the country. Dance is re-emerging as a religious art form. It is not only being created but written about and studied. Why is there so much more dance being performed in a Christian context than in a Jewish one? There is a historical basis for dancing in prayer. There was also the desire to disassociate oneself from it, because it was considered an activity aligned with Jewish worship.

A dualism of body and soul based on a Platonic model arose which caused asceticism to emerge in the church. The body was viewed as sinful by leaders such as Plotinus (205-70) and the spontaneity

of the body needed to be subdued and punished. Church fathers sought to restrain the use of dance because they recognized the power of freedom in dance. But the Jews were dancing.

The proof comes in the response of the church fathers who denounced and banned dance as an activity. John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople (c. 350-407) banned dancing at Christian weddings, saying "where there is dancing there is the devil". (pg 20) Anything associated with Judaism was considered unfavorable. The Church adapted some practices aimed at making distinctions more obvious, including fasting on certain days of the week and the rejection of dancing. The Jews were dancing. Especially the women and specifically on Shabbat (pg 26). Augustine singled out Jewish women saying: "It were better for their wives to spin wool on the sabbath day than to dance shamelessly the entire day as if they were Maenads" (followers of Dionysus) (pg 26)

In contrast, there are also examples of other groups basing their dancing on the text and practice of Jews. In the mid-fourth century in Mesopotamia, a group called the Euchites based their dancing on Miriam dancing at the Red Sea, but Epiphanius (c. 314-403) opposed them because they mixed sexes while dancing, and he felt this promoted promiscuity. But at other periods in history, such as during the Reformation, dance was defended as well as criticized. In 1531, Sir Thomas Elyot urged scholars not to simply repeat the verdicts of the past but to entertain the idea that dance could be a healthy form of exercise and recreation provided the motions were not too "unclean". Martin Luther saw nothing wrong providing decorum was preserved, but, John Calvin wasn't as

progressive in his beliefs. He banned it as lewd, and saw any attempt to revive dance based on Biblical references Judaizing.

The Shakers, a group known for movement in prayer founded by Ann Lee who died in 1784 base many of their dances on the bible. Thomas Brown says;

"All who are conversant with sacred writings know that dancing was practiced by the people of God in ancient times; and in this way they returned thanks for mercies and blessings received."
(pg 65)

American Roman Catholic Bishops in the twentieth century wrote "Liturgy is total, and therefore it must be much more than merely rational or intellectual exercise." And, "the liturgical celebration of the faith community involves the whole person...they are human experiences calling on all human faculties: body, mind, senses, imagination, emotions, memory..." (pg 137). This is a modern way of saying what Roman polymath Marcus Terentius Varro (116-27 B.C.) said centuries ago,

"The meaning of dancing at religious rites is that our ancestors felt that no part of the body should be debarred from religious experience." (pg 137)

The creed of Christianity is the word made flesh. If Plotinus said the body was bad, dancers within Christian and Protestant churches are loudly disagreeing. Carla De Sola, in residence at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Marcia Bain, Nikolais dancer and free lance performer, and choreographer, Judith Rock-dancer in residence at the Middle Collegiate Church in the East Village have extremely different vantage points on the question of movement in prayer, but they are each creating pieces to function in religious

settings. De Sola represents of 'the body as a tool of praising God'. Rock and Bain take the opposite tact and are interested in the body as a source of revelation, a vehicle to teach us what we do not know.

Carla De Sola

Carla De Sola is a pioneer of liturgical dance, and is the artistic director of the Omega liturgical dance company in residence at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. De Sola founded "Omega" in 1974, and their purpose is "to express the spiritual, social, and healing dimensions of dance, and to bring dance into contemporary religious celebration". A well known workshop leader, teacher of liturgical dance and author of the book The Spirit Moves, De Sola's language is dance. Dance provides her with the means of authentic communication.

De Sola begins her book with a prayer:

"I pray that everyone, sitting cramped inside a pew, body lifeless, spine sagging and suffering, weary with weight and deadness, will be given space in which to breathe and move, will be wooed to worship with beauty and stillness, song and dance—dance charged with life, dance that lifts up both body and spirit, and we will be a holy, dancing, loving, praying and praising people."

The Spirit Moves is a prayer manual, with choreographed movements for each prayer, song and liturgical event. A good portion of the book seems mechanical to me. A gesture corresponding to each phrase becomes too literal, although the book tells us, "Prayer isn't just solemn, it is joyous and full encompassing a range of emotions. It shouldn't be so literal, nor acrobatic."

De Sola is an important figure in the sacred dance community. Her work is filled with flowing, gracefully executed movements.

This flowing quality sets up liturgical dance as an activity far removed from everyday life.

"Our common, everyday rhythm could be described as a walking tempo. The slower, more sustained rhythms of the rites and the gestures of the liturgy, when done with the consciousness of the power of their slowness, can by their contrast lead us into the sacred nature of time."

For De Sola then, prayer does not reflect life, cannot be ugly, and does not reflect our darker side. It is pretty, slower, and more deliberate than "everyday movement".

Carla De Sola is a great facilitator of movement in prayer. Janet Walton, author of Art and Worship, and formerly worship coordinator at of the Union Theological Seminary has seen no one better at getting people out of their chairs and moving. De Sola says the congregation must be prepared for this. One way of getting the congregation ready is to "clarify how greatly the church is already involved in the dance through our very rituals." She cites specific examples of dance in the church—the priest bows, blesses by raising his hands, and lifts the bread plate and wine cup (and in the scriptures Jesus also raises his hands to bless.)

The blessing of the animals December 19 at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine is an example of Carla De Sola and her company as facilitators. There were seven thousand people present (including animals). The Omega dancers taught the crowd gestures to be used in the procession of the animals as they moved together simply and effectively. In this way the dancers served as facilitators of prayer.

I interviewed Carla De Sola in her office/studio at St. John the Divine in October. Small, slight, and ethereal, De Sola's extraordinary physical presence and her ability to show me (demonstrate) what she says made the interview worthwhile.

K) "Can you give me an example of a time you worked in a Jewish context?"

C) "A Reform Synagogue in Yonkers asked Omega to dance the prayer 'May the Words'

K) "Isn't dancing that prayer a contradiction in terms as it is a prayer about words?"

C) "No, not really. The dancers sat in a semicircle and each spoke a word of the prayer and executed a gesture thereby lifting up the prayers. The words only went so far and the body did the rest. There is enormous mystery in the words, it is not a simple passage."

K) "How do you create dances?"

C) "I read the chapter or verses I am working with, glean a few visual images and then begin to move. I don't preplan it. I just improvise to the music."

K) "How did you get your start in liturgical dance?"

C) "I began dancing in the church in 1968. I was born a Jew; but adopted Christianity as my religion while involved with the Catholic workers in New York City in the 1960's."

K) "Who had the most influence on you at your early stages?"

C) "I was influenced by a man I met in a soup kitchen while volunteering for the Catholic Workers. He was not a trained dancer (she is, at Julliard) but loved to dance, in the streets, on rooftops. He was a kind of pilgrim who prayed for hours and moved while holding the scripture."

Carla De Sola is a deeply spiritual person. This comes across in her conversation, and even more so in her dance. She employs the body as a tool for praising God and is a gifted facilitator of

"movement prayers" and gestures executed by a congregation. For De Sola, movement in the sanctuary must differ from reality. It must be slower, more deliberate and filled with a sense of the divine. In this she is at the opposite end of the spectrum from Judith Rock. Her movements though flowing and beautiful can become mechanical. Even though I disagree with her approach, I find De Sola very intriguing.

A Meeting With Marcia Bain

Marcia Bain is a professional dancer with the Nikolais/Louis company, based in New York City. Bain is also a liturgical dancer, performing in and choreographing for worship spaces. A workshop consultant/leader, a solo performer in churches around the country, and a member of the "Vine Dance Theatre" (a professional liturgical dance company), Bain collaborates with sculptors, painters, musicians and fellow dancers to give a "voice" to worship spaces. Through leading workshops, Marcia brings her theory of dance to dancers and non-dancers alike, exposing dance as a form of communication, in order that lay people and clergy realize the potential role of artists in the worship experience. Workshop examples include (none of which I have seen):

MOVIN ON UP!-an introduction to the use of movement to express spirituality. Emphasis on the movement communication skills that everyone shares-dancer and non-dancer alike!

THE GOD WITHIN-the journey of movement as personal prayer, from simple breathing techniques to Tai Chi forms.

THE GREAT COVER UP- a historical look at how society and religion have dealt with God's greatest creation- the human body. An exploration, through movement, of self-acceptance.

And Bain's pieces which she and others perform are also filled with "moving visual images" (her term) from scripture. A few repertory examples include:

THEREFORE I HOPE- (15 minutes) 1988-A dance with readings commemorating the millennium of the Russian orthodox Church, its history of persecution and hope.

BAKERWOMAN GOD (4 minutes), 1985-Based on a poem by the same name, this improvisational dance is an exciting meditation on the image of god as a nurturing, healing, kneading-bread woman.

MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE- (2 minutes), 1988- A rhythmic clapping, stomping, speaking version of Psalm 100 used frequently as a Call to Worship.

Often universal in tone, much of Bain's work is concerned with social justice. One example is a seven minute dance piece called, "In Defense of Creation." The dance was a result of a bishops' pastoral letter on Nuclear Disarmament. The piece is set to the jazz song, "The Creator has a Master Plan" and has been performed in several churches on the East Coast by the Vine Dance Theatre.

"Everyone expresses faith in a different way, I express myself through dance." (Bain)

I interviewed Marcia Bain over lunch, in Manhattan, in January.

K) "Why should we move in prayer?"

M) "The most profound moments in life, the most intense moments are enacted through the body- a kiss, a hug. It is only logical to move in prayer as there we experience some of our most intense and profound moments. I want to make movement in prayer a reality to people."

K) "How can artists help facilitate prayer?"

M) "Artists can create worship experiences, create events. Nikolais and Louis concentrate on visual spectacle. They express the abstract. I want to employ the abstract. Media expresses the abstract. It is a means to express spirituality, express self. Artists can create worship environments and leave the interpretation to the congregant. The congregation needs to allow their senses to be assaulted (not in the negative sense)."

FINNEAVE BOND

K) "What about participation vs. observation?"

M) "I advocate participation- Engaging a congregation in making things during a service, art projects, splitting up and moving to different areas in the room, an event where they can get their hands dirty and add to creation. I saw a Yoko Ono sculpture in Boston. Two planks form a kind of cross. Each viewer is allowed to take a hammer and nail and hammer it into the existing structure. It is doing something for yourself, it directly relates to your life. This act of hammering a nail is adding to creation. This interaction is the artwork."

K) "Is this improvisation?"

M) "Hammering into Yoko's creation is improvisation. In dance terms improvisation is instant choreography and instant performance occurring simultaneously."

K) "What does improvisation mean in dance terms?"

M) "Murray Louis, co-director of the company and my mentor, describes Improvisation in terms of the conscious mind and the subconscious mind. The latter is genetically programmed and links us to our lineage, humankind.. In order to improvise we need to let go of our conscious mind and get out of the way. We need to have faith that our bodies contain more knowledge than our conscious mind has. Then the Godlike quality of creation is possible. Improvisation is not just chaos. It has to have a structure, premise and point of view. In other words it must have a focus and a goal."

K) "What about lighting a service? Isn't it artificial to a prayerful experience?"

M) "No. Lighting is the focus for theater. It defines the function in the multimedia project. Lighting is not only an art form in and of itself but it serves the other art forms by focusing the audiences' attention to specific areas at specific moments. "Let there be light" Light is an inherent part of any production. Any media forms you add must be integrated into the service as a whole or they will detract from the experience."

K) "Do you tell stories through your dancing?"

M) "Every art form has a point of view. I want to be abstract. I am not interested in telling stories. Yet, it can't be so abstract that people get lost. We (the artists) need to direct people when we send them on a journey."

K) "But, isn't that manipulating people?"

M) No, because when I say direct them, I mean direct their minds to move in a certain direction. The ideas must be broad enough so that people can move freely within the given idea instead of being told not to think.

Bain usually chooses several images from the text to work with. She described two dances she had choreographed that had been inspired by scriptural images. The first, the text from the Book of Ephesians, called "Groans that words cannot express", is a dance about the loss of words. The organist improvised on the very low pitched pedals. Groans came from the organ as Bain's mouth hung wide to speak but nothing came out but these low groans. Bain also employed much silence in this piece. The second piece which Bain described was one inspired by the characters of Mary and Martha of the New Testament. These two women of great strength, well defined, eventually become entwined. It is a women's piece, sensual yet mournful, a duet about sorrow and gladness, restriction and freedom. The two women wear identical costumes which embody the idea of moving from bound to unbound. The costume, a narrow tube of fabric, reveals the shoulder neck and part of the chest area- alot of skin. It covers the breasts and extends to the feet. But as the dance proceeds the costume gets pulled up to reveal legs.

At 27, Marcia Bain has danced with the Nikolais/Louis company for six years. Today, however, She plans to concentrate her energies solely on liturgical dance. What makes Bain's work unique is that it is informed by her training as a singer, signer, and actress. By her own admission Bain is a "liturgical artist" who gives voices to worship spaces.

"Miriam" at the Union Theological Seminary.

When she heard what my thesis topic was, Susan Blain, worship coordinator at the Union Theological Seminary, invited me to attend a noon prayer service on September 28. The focus of the service was a dance piece about Miriam at the Red Sea.

As I entered St. James Chapel at the Union Theological Seminary, I was handed a handcrafted instrument to shake, in the form of a juice can filled with coffee beans and finished with red and yellow streamers. People greeted each other warmly as they filtered into the chapel. There was a community wide anticipation of this event. I took my seat in the front row of circularly arranged chairs. I studied the room, old and new at the same time-dotted with plants and bathed in light. I sat, not weighted down by a prayerbook, but with a single, red prayersheet in my hand. There was a blue piece of material draped from the platforms (medium boxes placed beneath the stage to increase the dancing space) to the floor. There was no podium, only two music stands on the platform where the prayer leader and the narrator stood side by side.

The dance was the centerpiece of the twenty minute service which began with a call to worship. This call to worship introduced Miriam as a prophet of God, not just Moses' sister. The narrators told Miriam's story, her story at the water; those "life giving, death dealing waters", as the dancer danced her story. The integration of movement and song in the prayer experience was not forced. The words and music seemed to flow easily into one another.

The dance/narrative was split into four parts which spilled from one to the other broken only by two hymns- "Let everything that hath breath praise, the Lord", and "Wade in the Water" a traditional spiritual. A few members of the congregation stood up and spoke about oppression near the waters where they were born; Hanoi, Ireland, South Africa. A small choir of singers then began to sing "Wade in the Water", and the preceding moments made the words more meaningful. The song was infectious. Soon everyone was on their feet singing and shaking their noisemakers, inspired by the dancer's movements and caught up in the power of prayer. Other members of the choir took the blue pieces of material from the platform and parted them, like the sea, allowing Kent to make her way down the center aisle with the outstretched piece of material.

Linda Kent, faculty member at the Julliard school, and formerly a principal dancer with Alvin Ailey, and Paul Taylor Dance Companies, danced Miriam with energy and intensity. It felt very much like a celebration of the silenced woman now allowed to tell her story. With two women speaking and one dancing it was a statement of feminine presence/power.

Though Kent danced Miriam with strong technical skill and spirit, her movements followed the text closely. Her movement did not stand independent of the text. For example, when the text said she "went to fetch a nursing woman from among the Hebrews," that is what she did. She ran off.

I spoke with both Susan Blain, the worship coordinator at Union Theological Seminary and dancer Linda Kent immediately following the worship service.

K) "Susan, why create a piece on Miriam now, in September? What was the impetus for the service?"

S) "There happens to be a nondenominational conference on the theology of the future going on here at this moment. Telling Miriam's story will encourage the idea that other voices besides the white, male, patriarchal voices need to be heard. Miriam represents the future."

K) "How did you execute a service like this, what are forces involved?"

S) "For each service there is a different committee and they put together each of the different aspects of the service."

K) "Are services always like this?"

S) "Every day there is something new, that way the spectrum of faiths at Union are all represented."

K) "Linda, what was your intent as you danced Miriam?"

L) "I did not want to illustrate the words but rather to interpret them, make them suggestive not definitive. (not lift her right hand when the script said Miriam lifts her right hand)"

K) "What in your background led you to dance Miriam?"

L) "I grew up in a church that had a movement choir and my connection to sacred dance began there. I see this piece on Miriam as a chance for text and movement to work together."

K) "When you are dancing, do you feel as if you are praying?"

L) "I feel the dancing is a form of communication."

K) "When you dance, is God a part of what you are doing?"

L) "I don't believe in God. I believe in a divine aspect."

UNWEAVE BOND

An extremely well paced experience, I felt very much a part of and moved by it. I clapped and sang and for that half hour I was a part of that community. Sadly enough, I was more drawn to the power of that prayer service than to most I see at HUC-JIR because I felt the whole congregation open and ready for new ideas and challenges, responsive, caring and willing to dance with Miriam as difficult as that sometimes is.

Performing Artist/Choreographer, Judith Rock

Judith Rock was an ordained Presbyterian minister. She left the ordained ministry and is now an Episcopal lay person. Fifteen years ago, Rock decided that her calling was not to be a minister but rather an artist, so she gave up her the ordination. She has just come from the West Coast, where she spent the last ten years as a member of a dance company, freelancing and giving workshops. Presently, she is "dancer in residence" at Middle Collegiate Church, combining the secular and the religious.

Rock is unique among the artists I interviewed because she defines the three components of a worship setting as: Prayer, Proclamation and Eucharist. Her work focuses on the latter two and not on prayer. Proclamation is more open-ended, more concerned with raising questions than finding answers. Rock claims that she understands very little about prayer. If she understands it at all it is as a private person in a corporate setting, and not as an artist.

She is less interested in religious icons and dramas than she is in dance which sheds new light on what we intuit, what we are afraid of, and that which can lead us to religious insights. For example, we can experience 'Moses at the burning bush' as an event from the past which becomes for us a focus of devotion; or we can take a new look at the original experience and feel what it is like

to be Moses and see the bush. What else can we find out about it? Rock does not use the body as merely a tool of praise, but rather as a source of Revelation, a kinetic tool for doing theology. She is concerned about basic theological questions such as, "why are we here?" Her work is concerned with showing us our humanity.

I interviewed Judith Rock at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in November.

K) "How can dance function in a worship setting?"

J) "I think some dance in worship denies the physicality of dance and is theologically weak. What I mean is, if we set out to dance and then cover up the body in yards of fabric, using the body from the knees down and shoulders out, than that is not likely to be strong kinetic dance. If the art form is used in a tentative, timid way, then it can only articulate tentative, timid theology. If we are going to dance in a worship service, we need to let dance be dance, and we need to bring the same choreographic possibilities and judgments which operate in the theater setting into the worship setting

K) "Is performing in a concert setting different than praying in a religious setting?"

J) "When I dance in a religious setting I don't think of it as prayer, I am performing. Performing is communicating. In both theatrical and religious settings, I am trying to communicate."

K) "What is prayer?"

J) "I don't know. It has something to do with making connections and opening oneself to the force of questions. Prayer is about connections made person to person."

K) "What about God?"

J) "If you are an artist and a religious person then you believe that there is some personality inherent in everything, that created you and that you are responsible to."

K) "How does the attitude toward the body effect dance in worship?"

J) "When people walk into a worship setting, bodies often tend to tighten and shrink up. Most of us suffer from some confusion about the relative worth of body and spirit. Western culture underscores the confusion. Then, when we try to grapple with a completely physical art form we don't know what to do (for reasons which are equally religious and secular). A friend, a Dean of a Cathedral, in a private conversation expressed his regret that so much liturgical dance is as he put it, 'tight assed'."

K) "Will progress in the women's movement affect dance in prayer?"

J) "There is a connection. Body art is bound up in the "feminine" and "masculine". Progress in the women's movement has, and will make a new situation for arts in a religious setting. One of the reasons the church has been wary about arts, and especially dance, is that art in the Western World tends to be identified with the "feminine". In the church we value, in spite of the liturgy, the more "masculine" aspects of religious tradition such as preaching and systematic theology. The "feminine" is more identified with those things about ourselves about which we have less understanding and that which is potentially more threatening. In truth, it is not a question of one being more valuable than the other, it is only that the church has tended toward the "masculine", so the art stuff got shoved to the dark side of moon."

Judith believes that the educating of congregants needs to be done at the adult education level. She explained the education process to me through examples, inviting me to try everything she talked about. Slowly through non-threatening workshop experiences she invites people into uncharted territory.

K) "What is so important about a workshop experience."

J) "Community is built in the workshop through a series of kinetic encounters and experiences. One of the tools used is contact improvisation. Each pair creates an improvisation. I ask the other workshop participants to look at what they have created through the lens of a particular image, let's say 'Jacob wrestling with the angel'. The combination of the familiar image and the unfamiliar movement can give the watcher a fresh insight of that biblical story. What can art tell us that we don't already know? That is what fascinates me. The performers didn't think about the image, they simply let their bodies lead."

K) "How can we learn to let our bodies lead?"

J) "Congregations can learn to work this way through ongoing experiments with movement, repeated workshops. Through these kinds of experiences people are more open to gaining a new sense - a theological sense of their bodies. At least being able to integrate more of this into their concepts about worship. The excitement can bubble through a congregation when you gain access in this way. I can invite them to create a whole new theology of the body in this way."

K) "Describe what you want from people."

J) "I don't want gestures. People tend to use only the upper halves of their bodies- upper body gestures tend to be connected to verbal ways of thinking. Dancing to words tends to be our first idea in religious settings. I want to wed intellectual and intuitive feeling, integrate the two. If we pray using only our minds then we deprive ourselves of our other halves. I want people to use what they are not most likely and ready to use. I want the movement to come from the gut, to get out of the gut. I want whole bodies moving in space, claps, taps, raised hands- using all the space around them not a stiff-kneed people."

And we did a mirror exercise, and rolled on the floor and tried some improvisation. Judith took me by the hand and taught me. And I jumped, and clapped and tapped. She taught me a chant "Gathered here in the mystery of the hour, Gathered here in one strong body, Gathered here in the struggle and the power". Our movements were clear, strong, and centered.

In summary, both Rock and I agree that movement whether in the theater or the sanctuary must reflect reality. That is to say that moving for the sake of praising God, or illustrating a known text using the body as a tool is not necessarily going to shed light on things we do not know. Women who are floating in robes making wavy gestures do not reflect Rock's theology. Technically strong, clear, movement which asks questions about the human condition and allows revelation to unfold is the dance that Rock pursues.

Performer as Priest and Prophet- Judith Rock.

In her book, Performer as Priest and Prophet, dancer and former priest, Judith Rock formulates a theology of the body. Can the body express as words express? Rock thinks so, and believes we need "a clearing of silence in the forest of liturgical language." This means using our bodies instead of words to create liturgy. Dance is its own language. It can fulfill the same function as spoken language. Writing on the need of dance as liturgy, Rock says,

"If through dance people are enlivened as givers of thanks for beauty, affirmed as capable decision makers, challenged to love, helped to laugh, moved to concern for a neighbor, 'dance has a place' (pg 97).

Rock sees the connection between human sexuality and movement as an organic one. This is perhaps what makes it so threatening to people. If people feel anxious about their bodies, they will bring these inhibitions into prayer.

"Movement exists within the realm of the sensual and the sexual and therefore makes it very dangerous in prayer, people are afraid of it. Afterall, it addresses the intuitive, the open-ended and therefore is more difficult to grasp.

Praying with the body brings us into contact with those we pray with. Contact improvisation is a unique vehicle for bodies to dialogue. Improvisation consists of a combination of spontaneous movement, structured movement, weight shifts, and exemplifies the dialogue Rock spoke about between two bodies. We have a physical connection to one another just as we have a spiritual connection,

but the former is much less talked about. We possess what Rock calls "kinesthetic identification". She gives the example of when we witness someone falling in the street. We may move suddenly with a jerky motion to reassure ourselves that we are not falling. This is the depth of our physical connection to each other.

Not only does improvisation promote dialogue with other people, it provides a framework for a dialogue with God. Rock calls improvisation in prayer "partnering with God", that is- "being spontaneously creative with our bodies in a worship structure can not only demonstrate but deepen our covenant with God. In fact the only way we know God is through the body, the mind, the spirit and the senses." (pg 31)

Relationships are a key component in Rocks' model of prayer.

"Relationships are not built on the rational alone, and how much more so does our relationship with God stem from the intuitive parts of ourselves. When we communicate kinetically we are not communicating rationally or logically, we are reaching beyond this. Dance is an intuitive dialogue, not just with our creator, but with each other."

The way we view our bodies has a lot to do with the way we use our bodies in prayer. I have seen people literally sit on their hands in a worship service because of the atmosphere of decorum presented. Language is not our only mode of expression. But because we have been cut off from our bodies in Western Culture it does not follow logically to use the body in prayer. Our bodies can teach us what words cannot. Rock sums it up by saying,

"If as children we are taught to sit still in a worship space, hands in our laps, not to talk, laugh or sing too loudly, then how can we be expected as grown adults to feel free to use our bodies in prayer." (pg 103)

Sunday 16 December-Middle Collegiate Church
"Going Home"

I visited the Middle Collegiate Church in the East Village to see Judith Rock's dance/theatre piece choreographed especially for Advent. The penitential season of Advent includes the four Sundays before Christmas during which Christians prepare for the Coming of Christ.

The piece combined ideas about literally going home for Christmas and figuratively going home to Christ while continuously weaving a theme based on a text about Bethlehem. I learned a lot about the church from the cover of its prayer bulletin, "Middle Collegiate Church: An Historic Protestant Church with a Contemporary Ministry of Worship, Music, Caring, Community Involvement and a Celebration of the Arts." From this description, I knew the structure of the worship service could allow for risk-taking and even encourage it.

The mood and flow of the entire service, of which "Going Home" was a small part, made it worthwhile to come out on that frigid Sunday morning. The preacher asked us to pray silently, but quickly added that it is impossible to do this. As he made his way down from the dais and out into the congregation he said,

"there are sounds everywhere. It is never really silent. There are not only the streetsounds and the hissing of the heating system, but the sound of your own heartbeat, and breathing. Silence brings up the deep things in us. So let us pray together, spend a few moments in silence."

I admired the way the preacher, Gordon Dragt, moved comfortably through the space, confident in his stride. He was not afraid to touch people or be touched. I noticed this especially in "Passing the Peace".

I know that in most churches there is a "Passing of the Peace", but he and others were particularly warm to strangers. During this moment one turns to a neighbor in the pew and literally passes the peace, "Peace be with you" and the response is, "Peace be with you". It is a very physical activity because it involves shaking hands and looking directly into the eyes of a stranger. During the recitation of the "Lord's Prayer", the congregation rose and held hands, yet another example of choreographed movement within the service.

The Liturgical Dance/Theatre piece functioned well in the environment described above. The stage seemed set for it. The piece began with the pianist improvising a few chords. The dancers sitting in the congregation during the service, rose from their pews, and waved to each other, slowly, deliberately. They wore berets and carried suitcases, ready to travel as the pianist continued improvising underneath. A dancer began to chant/sing, a capella, the phrase, "Going home, going strong, going back where I belong." This became the dance's theme. The dancers waved their berets, as they skipped, thumbs in the air, twirling and sliding across the carpeted floor. These movements are repeated in different combinations. Joyously they wove their way to each other and to the front of the congregation. The energy of the dance grew from the previous contact they had while sitting with the congregation. Soon, all the dancers were singing "Going home going strong... As they assembled

one of them handed a camera to a spectator/congregant, and the dancers struck a Watteau pose.

"Yes", says one of the dancers, "take our pictures", click." "Oh, take another one". This section of the piece represented the "family album" aspect of being part of a family.

The camera going off was a surprise to everyone, but in its shock value it was also delightful. There were smaller reunions of duets and trios. Tensions resolve as dancers dissolved in hugs and kisses. Finally, the whole group reformed and bantered about "Going home". Then Judith brought the main idea back into the piece by extracting the word "house" from the original text, "Oh little town of Bethlehem, little ordinary dwelling for human families, where God built a house for us." She said the word house in many different languages thus bridging the cultural gaps for us. She concluded with the hebrew words bayit (house) and lechem (bread).

"Bet Lechem, house of bread, Bet Lechem, Bethlehem, a place to be nourished. Bayit Lechem, bet lechem, going home to a nurturing place." The operative idea here being house of bread, a place and a family that nourishes and provides for our needs. :

The piece ended with dancers and subsequently the entire congregation singing a rousing version of "Going home, going strong". The dancers then said their goodbyes and exited, one remaining behind to light the three advent candles as the pianist improvised before officially ending the piece. (Each candle represented a week before Christmas.) The stillness after the dance ended provided a moment in which to reflect.

The congregation applauded. Though the piece was worthy of response, I found applause in a worship setting extremely disconcerting. I agree with the point Judith makes in her book, Performer as Priest and Prophet when she says that perhaps there are other ways of responding to dance liturgy besides applause, though as a performer she personally loves it. A congregation needs to respond to a piece such as "Going home" but there may be innovative ways to show appreciation. It was a somewhat sentimental piece, though what made it successful is it was real in its sentiment. Members of the congregation were teary eyed as I looked around and this meant the piece moved people.

It was the last in a series of three pieces over three weeks. One piece for each advent candle. Each dance was a leg on the journey homeward. Judith physicalized the space between the candles. By creating three specific dances, one for each candle, she was able to show with movement, the anxiety and joy of going home to Christmas, getting back to Jesus Christ. She made the journey evident, and now this congregation and every Christian congregation was ready to light the green candle (not traditionally green, the Christ candle is usually white which Dragt feels does not work in an interracial congregation like theirs), the God candle and go home to Christmas.

Following the dance and moments of silence, Dragt gave a sermon on sacred space making reference to the piece. The moment was not lost but capitalized on. It was important to recognize the power of the visual image, the spiritual impact that dance can produce in a service. It also shows how the rubrics in a service can help each other.

Directly following the service I spoke with Judith. I suggested that it wasn't always so easy or so pleasant to "Go Home". Indeed we came to the conclusion that one can't always go home even if this is the desired goal. In the second dance of the trilogy she had touched on this aspect of trying to go home as scary and difficult, fraught with pain.. The trilogy in its entirety probably reflected this, but by the time the last piece was performed it reflected the acceptance and preparation involved in "going home."

Introduction-Movement in Jewish Prayer.

Jews are dancing in prayer! In the contemporary Jewish community, liturgical dancers are few in number; nevertheless, they are making a significant impact in modern Jewish prayer. I hear of isolated cases such as Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb in Albuquerque, New Mexico, who invites the congregation to dance before Kabbalat Shabbat. This custom can be traced to the Jews of Safed who went out into the fields, dressed in white, to dance and welcome the Sabbath Queen. Another example is of a retired dancer in North Carolina who leads her congregation in dance on special occasions.

Included in the "Dance in Jewish Worship" section are chapters on Chasidic dance, an example of a prayerbook with notes on choreography, related articles by Rueven Kimelman and Mark Kronisch and interviews with Joanne Tucker, Rabbi Richard Jacobs and Fanchon Shur including examples of their work. These chapters will lead to a description of my own work, an adaptation of the Avodah service of Yom Kippur afternoon which I will perform at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion on April 4, 1990.

Movement is inherent in Jewish tradition, yet it has been eclipsed by the growing importance of a set text, the pronounced distance--physical and spiritual--between clergy and laity, and

the divorce from our bodies we feel in modern society. Each dancer/choreographer/prayerleader has his/her unique approach to these problems. We have become passive to the point of stunting our spiritual growth. It is time to follow the example set by the few. It is time to leave our seats and realign ourselves with a moving tradition.

Biblical Sources for Movement in Jewish Prayer

Psalm 149.3- "Let them praise His name in dance;
with timbrel and lyre let them chant his praises."

Exodus 15:20- "Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her in a dance with timbrels"

I Samuel 18:6- "When the [troops] came home [and] David returned from killing the Philistine, the women of all the towns of Israel came out singing and dancing to greet King Saul with timbrels, shouting and sistrums."

Lamentations 5:15- "Gone is the joy of our hearts;
Our dancing is turned into mourning."

The Bible contains eleven verb roots for dance movements. The root word for dance appears nine times alone: Ecclesiastes 3:4, Psalms 29:6 and 114:4 and 6, Nahum 3:2, Isaiah 13:21, Joel 2:5, Job 21:11.

There were ecstatic dances by early prophets recorded in the book of Samuel, who moved in bands and communicated with God

through singing and dancing. When King David danced before God he, "whirled with all his might" (II Samuel 6:14) מְדַבֵּר בְּכָל כֹּחַ

He went "leaping and whirling before the Lord" מְדַבֵּר וּמְדַבֵּר

(II Samuel 6:16) and he went leaping and dancing"

(I Chronicles 15:29)

מְדַבֵּר וּמְדַבֵּר

There are at least nine verb roots for dance found in the

Tanakh:

leap, skip-

דָּבַח

, whirl-

דָּבַח

, leap-

מָנַח

, also leap-

מְדַבֵּר

skipped, danced-

קָדַח

, jumped-

קָדַח

, limping-

מָנַח

to dance- *ססו*, to turn- *ססן*.

Dance in ancient Israel as recorded in the Bible was regarded as an expression of great joy and religious fervor. It was an integral part of the communal and religious life of the Jewish people.

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Movement in Ritual in the Mishnah

The references which follow demonstrate distinct prayer choreography in the Temple. The bringing of the first fruits included many prescribed movements. Actions, gestures and music accompanied prayer. The movements often fit the words. The Temple was the center of prayer and the Levites accompanied the prayers and processions with their voices.

FIRST FRUITS

Mishnah Bikkurim 3:3-Descriptions of the Actions and Incantations of the first fruits

A. How do they bring the first fruits up to the "Temple"
 B. Those who come from nearby bring figs and grapes. Those who come from afar bring dried figs and raisins, an ox with a gold garland on its horns, a wreath of olive leaves on its head. A flutist plays before them until they arrive in Jerusalem. Once they arrived near Jerusalem, they sent a messenger ahead of them (to announce their arrival) and they decorated their first fruits. When the high officers came to meet them, they lined up by hierarchy.

Mishnah Bikkurim 3:4

At the Temple Mount- Agrippa the King puts baskets of first fruits on his shoulder, and enters, goes fourth until he reaches the Temple Court. Once he reached the Temple court, the Levites sang the song, "I will extol thee, O Lord, for thou hast drawn me up, and hast not let my foes rejoice over me" (psalm 30:1). Pigeons were burned as offerings-given as a gift to the priests.

Mishnah Bikkurim 3:5

A. The Priest, while basket still on his shoulder, recites (the entire confession of the first fruits)- "I declare this day to the Lord your God" with words- "A wandering Aramean was my father" and takes the basket down from his shoulder and holds it by the rim. The priest puts his hand underneath

the basket and waves it before the Altar. The Israelite repeats the action- with confession and action, Bows and departs.

These movements are as programmed as our saying "we therefore raise the cup in thanksgiving" when we raise the Kiddush cup on Friday night. This description of bringing the first fruits indicates many verbal cues for movement.

BOWING AND PROSTRATING

B'rachot 31a

"When R. Akiba prayed with the congregation, he used to cut it short and finish in order not to inconvenience the congregation, but when he prayed by himself, a man would leave him in one corner and find him later in another, on account of his bowing and prostrations"

Mishnah Yoma 6:2-

"And when the priests and the people which stood in the Temple Court heard the Expressed Name (of God) come forth from the mouth of the High Priest, they used to kneel and bow themselves and fall down on their faces and say, "Blessed be the name of the glory of his kingdom forever and ever"

Ta'anith 9b (Talmud)

"R Shimi b. Ashi was wont to frequent [the discourses] of R. Papa and used to annoy him very much with question. One day he observed that R. Papa fell on his face (in prayer) and he heard him saying, 'May God preserve me from the insolence of Shimi.' The latter thereupon vowed silence and annoyed him no more [with questions].

Talmud Ta'anith (12b-13a)

"And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the Law of the Lord their God a fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed and prostrated themselves before the Lord their God."

Mishnah Shekalim 6:1

"There were Shofar-chests, thirteen tables, and thirteen prostrations in the Temple (with the face touching the ground). They of the House of Gamliel and of the House of R. Hanina the Prefect of the Priests used to make fourteen prostrations. And where was the added one? Opposite the

wood-store, for thus was the tradition among them from their forefathers, that there the Ark lay hidden."

Talmud

Sukkah 53a

"It was taught: They said of R. Simeon b. Gamliel that when he rejoiced at the Rejoicing at the place of the Water-Drawing, he used to take eight lighted torches [and throw them in the air] and catch one and throw one and they did not touch one another; and when he prostrated himself, he used to dig his two thumbs into the ground, bend down, kiss the ground, and draw himself up again, a feat which no other man could do, and this is what is meant by Kidah.

We still bow and prostrate during certain prayer moment. One is on Yom Kippur when we fall korim (prostrate ourselves as the high priest did)

BOWING DURING T'FILLA

Tractate B'rachot- Babylonian Talmud

12a) Raba b. Hinena the elder also said in the name of Rab; In saying the T'filla, when one bows, one should bow at (the word) "Blessed" and when returning to the upright position one should return at (the mention of) the Divine name. Samuel said: What is Rab's reason for this? Because it is written: The Lord raiseth up them that are bowed down.

Brachot 34a

"Our rabbis taught: These are the benedictions in saying which one bows (in the T'filla): The benediction of the Patriarchs, beginning and end, and the Thanksgiving, beginning and end. If one wants to bow down at the end of each benediction and at the beginning to each benediction he is instructed not to do so."

Brachot 28b

"R. Tanhum also said in the name of R. Joshua b. of Levi: In saying the T'filla one should bow down [at the appropriate places] until all the vertebrae in the spinal column are loosened. Ulla says: Until an issar of flesh is visible opposite the heart."

Yoma 53b

"R. alexandri said in the name of R. Joshua b. Levi: One who prays (the Amidah) should go three steps backwards, and then recite 'peace'... And if he did not do so, it would have been better for him not to have prayed at all. In the name of R. Shemaya they said: He should pronounce 'peace'

towards the right, then towards the left, as it is said: At His right hand was a fiery law unto them, and it is also said: A thousand may fall at thy side and ten thousand at thy right hand.

Mishnah Berachot 2:4

"Craftsman may recite the Shema on top of a tree or on the top of a course of stones, which they may not do when they say the T'filla"

Brachot 28b demonstrates the Rabbi's concern for. One should come up one vertebrae at a time. This is very insightful, almost modern of them. Perhaps the heart is more physically connected to prayer than we realize.

In B'rachot 2:4, it seems that one gets lost in the T'filla, lost in thought, outside the conscious. The Rabbis felt that the Shema is controlled, still, whereas the T'filla can produce a trance and therefore the man on the scaffolding might fall.

TEMPLE SACRIFICES

Yoma, Yom Kippur (Mishnah)

The first part of the passage describes that for 7 days the priest tosses the blood, offers up the incense, brings the lamb and offers his head... Blood is sprinkled and the ashes of the sacrifice are cleared. There is much washing and purifying to be done on the day of atonement. ..

According to the next passage in 2:3 and 6:2 people walked up a different ramp on the day of Atonement, up and down the middle ramp.

DANCING ON ALL OCCASIONS

Mishnah Ta'anith 4:8

"R Simeon B. Gamliel said; there never were in Israel greater days of joy than the fifteenth of Av and the day of Atonement. On these days the daughters of Jerusalem used to walk out in white garments...The daughters of Jerusalem came out and danced in the vineyards exclaiming at the same time.

POSTURE IN PRAYER

B'rachot 10 b-

"R. Jose son of R Hanina also said in the name of R. Eliezer b. Jacob: When one prays, he should place his feet in proper position, as it says, 'And their feet were straight feet' (Ezekiel 1:7)

A citation such as this one points out how much the rabbi were noticing the body in prayer.

THE POWER OF THE BODY

11a Some say, "A man's own limbs testify against him, as it is said, (Ye are my witnesses says the Lord)

This quote shows respect for the power of the body and implies that we are God's witness with every limb of our bodies.

Chasidic Dance

"The purest form of ecstasy is that in which the whole body serves the aroused soul and in which each of the soul's risings and bendings create a visible symbol-the dance"
--Martin Buber.

Dance is closely associated with Rites of Passage. There is dancing at a Chasidic wedding. This is an expression of joy. A moving body is a vital expression of life. This is why the Chasidism also dance at funerals.

In the 18th century the father of Chasidism, The Baal Shem Tov, danced to attain religious enthusiasm and communion with God-devekut. He said "Dances of the Jew before the creator are prayers." He quoted the psalmist, "All my bones shall say: Lord, who is like unto thee?" (Ps. 35:10)

"The Baal Shem Tov was the first Rebbe to turn dance into ritual. Watching him sway and turn, the son of the Great Maggid of Meseritch exclaimed, 'your dancing counts for more than my prayers.'" (E.J. X p.320)

The frenzy the Chasidim attain, seems to be based on the Biblical model of King David's ecstatic dance with the ark. (pg 1268) This frenzy is still evident at the Tisch (Shabbos at the rabbi's table). The Tisch is davening without the text. It is music and dance. I spoke to Chasid Pinchas Horowitz, son of the Bostoner Rebbe, who lives in Brooklyn, about this subject. He views dance as integral to every Shabbos, specifically the Tisch, and every service through the davening.

K) "Why move in prayer?"

P) "It uplifts a group. And as it says in the Nishmat-with all parts of the body will I praise you." Thus, for the Chasid, dance functions as praise and as a community binding event.

K) "We also praise God through prayer. Is there a difference between dancing at the Tisch and davening? in attitude?"

P) "They come from different sources. Davening, the rocking back and forth is like trembling. In the Shulchan Aruckh (book of codes of Jewish law) it says Jews' trembled at Mt. Sinai while praying to God. And when you daven this way, concentrating, it is as if you are talking to HaShem."

K) "Can't praise and trembling go hand in hand?"

P) "Yes, Bilu b'radah, one can be happy and filled with awe at the same time. They are two opposite emotions, but we can combine them according to tradition. We have both love for and fear of HaShem. When a man marries off a daughter and she walks down the aisle, he sheds tears of joy and feels both happiness and trepidation. When we shake in prayer, it is from awe and happiness.

K) "Can you describe the shaking to me?"

P) "There are laws in the Shulchan Aruckh how to rock back and fourth. It is preferable and more humble to rock back and fourth. Moving from side to side a person may seem self satisfied, omnipotent, haughty. It is frowned upon, but people do it anyway."

K) "What is your opinion?"

P) "I think either way is O.K., but trembling is more a backward and forward movement."

The Chasidim reintroduced the qualities of joy and spontaneity to Judaism. Chasidic dances are always circular for "every one is equal- a link in a chain which has no beginning or end". There are melodies for every dance. A good example of this would be dancing

at the Tisch which begins calmly with precision, each step deliberate. Then as the music gets faster, the dancers speed up, eventually leaping, jumping with extended arms, reaching a spiritual ecstasy. Dancing plays a role similar to community singing.

K) "Tell me about a Tisch."

P) "There is alot of dancing by the Tisch. If there is no room to dance because it is so crowded then we dance in place."

K) "How do you dance?"

P) "We hold hands and sway back and fourth."

K) "In unison?"

P) "Yes. We do similar movements as we circle around the table. Everybody wants to dance. Dance is praise, not only singing is praise."

R. Nachman of Bratslav taught that the way to set the heart on fire for God is by motion, since rapid motion generates warmth. Nachman of Bratslav carried on his great grandfather's ways but took them even further saying, "to dance is a sacred command". He even composed a prayer he recited before he danced. He called for dancing at both solemn and festive occasions. Rosh Hashanah, even Tisha B'Av and Yom Kippur.

The power of prayer through dance is demonstrated through stories such as,

"News was brought to Rabbi Moshe Leib that his friend the rabbi of Berdichev had fallen ill. On the sabbath 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 hosts join his dance."

(Tales of the Chasidim, Buber, pg 90)

Some prayed with vigorous, exaggerated movements during prayer, such as the Rabbis of Kalisk and Amdur who turned somersaults in their prayers, while others stood still but felt as if they had moved.

- a) "Do not Laugh at one who moves his body even violently during prayer. If a man is drowning in a river, he makes all kinds of motions to try to save himself, this is not a time for others to laugh!" (Your Word is Fire, pg. 96)
- b) "To one who moved his body violently in prayer-it was told -A candle wick may be made of cotton or flax. With one sort of wick the candle makes a great deal of noise as it burns, while the other sort of candle burns in silence. Does the silent candle give off less light? The slightest movement of your little toe, if it is done with truth, is sufficient." (ibid pg. 104)
- c) "R. Dov Baer would stand immobile in prayer for as long as three hours at a time and at the end of his prayer his hat and shirt would be soaked in perspiration." (Kallah pamphlet)

The text says Dov Baer didn't move. Yet he did move because the text described him as physically drained. He thought movement and it was as if he moved. The other texts talk about those who move their bodies violently during prayer vs. those who make only simple gestures. The kind of movement does not seem to matter much; what is crucial is the commitment to the movement body and soul. As the Chasidic tale says, "When you utter a word before God, then enter into that word with every one of your limbs."

Joanne Tucker and the Avodah Dance Company

Joanne Tucker is the founder of the Avodah dance company. The Company describes itself in literature as a "dynamic modern dance company with repertory developed from Jewish themes." I have only seen them in concert, not in the synagogue. Therefore, I cannot present an accurate description of how they function in a worship setting, but I can comment on a few of the works I've seen.

Both "Hannah" and "Binding" presented at Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of religion last December, are based on biblical texts. The story of Hannah is found in the book of Samuel, and the Akedah in Genesis. Either could easily function in the sermon slot as a 'sermon in dance'. The first was very much a woman's piece, exploring the issue of barrenness through the lens of Hannah's experience, and the second a male piece re-enacting Abraham's test of faith. Cantor Benji-Ellen Schiller composed the music for Hannah and was well integrated into the piece, moving with the dancers. Live music played a major role in "Binding" as well. Mark Childs played the bells, drums and also danced the role of Isaac. Tucker's interest in torah trope is evident here as well as in "Sisters", (a dance of biblical characters Leah and Rachel). The examples cited above, and all of her work within the last two years, has been concerned with text. Jumping off the text, getting inside the text, and gaining a new perspective on the text.

Tucker combines professional training from the Julliard School and the Martha Graham Studio with a Phd in theatre from the University of Wisconsin. She hopes to devote her full energies to "Avodah", which has performed in secular and religious settings throughout the United States

K) "How did the Avodah Dance Company get its start?"

J) "It began in 1972 in Tallahassee, Florida. I was a member of a congregation there. I had a discussion with a fellow artist and temple member. In that discussion we exchanged our views about God and prayer, and our discomfort with the service. Out of that discussion grew a collaboration. He composed the music and I created the choreography. Together we began to investigate, explore the service through our respective art forms. The result of our collaboration was the piece "In Praise". As the title suggests, it is a piece concerning praise and included were the prayers: Barchu, Shema and May the Words and an Alenu. It was performed by lay people for the dedication of a local temple. Each piece was performed in the location in the liturgy in which those prayers occurred."

Tucker says that the process of creating is like birthing. Just as human beings grow and develop, so has she grown as an artist, and her work has changed. She is uncomfortable with "In Praise" now. Her goals have shifted considerably since 1972.

"Slichot Suite", which contained V'al Kulam and Hashivenu was commissioned by Temple Beth El in Jersey City, New Jersey in 1987. It has also evolved. "The Suite" was presented as part of a Slichot service this past year at Stephen Wise Synagogue in New York and it has changed considerably. Ha N'shama Lach, the opening prayer in the Slichot liturgy, was inspired by several things among them the book "Zen and the Art of Archery". It incorporates Zen philosophy in terms of total concentration and intent. The dancers process into the sanctuary, sparsely to Ha n'shama Lach as if they are entering the metaphoric gates of the entire High Holiday season.

K) "What is your source of inspiration?"

J) "One source are the dancers themselves. Another source might be actual ritual movements drawn from the liturgy. Yet another might be a key word or a personal experience."

K) "How do you work?"

J) "A piece can begin anywhere- with a gesture or fascinating music, a picture or a movement phrase. Then we improvise on the idea, on the kernel of movement."

K) "Are your dances sermons and prayers?"

J) "The pieces do not replace prayers. If I choreograph a Mi Chamocha, it is performed after or before the Mi Chamocha is sung or spoken. Many people disagree with me on this. But my dance reinforces the prayer, augments it but does not replace it. The congregation has a right to pray the prayer. If someone came to say a mourner's Kaddish I don't want to take that away from them. The dance can become a sermon like "The Binding of Isaac", a non-verbal rendering of that text."

K) "Do these performance pieces include congregants?"

J) "No, my pieces don't. But within a service there are two potential experiences for congregants. They can move in prayer themselves with an outstanding facilitator like Carla De Sola or sit still and be inspired by a prayer which is well constructed and harmoniously presented. I am concerned with the latter. I have been in situations that have included congregants but I am not comfortable as a facilitator. There is so much potential to foster unity in even the bowing and bending in the Alenu, in davening, in walking forward and backward. Swaying to the music is prayerful."

K) "You've given me some history of the company. Where is the Avodah Dance Company now?"

J) "Avodah continues to refine its approach to liturgy, and develop and collaborate on interfaith and cross cultural projects. Avodah is also developing a technique called "dance midrash". This is a way to get the lay person involved in moving with us. We are exploring the experiential route now, as we teach "dance midrash" in workshops."

K) "What do you look for in a dancer?"

J) "Good clean technique, and not too much mannerism or ego. I look for a centered person with finely tuned body because that is their instrument. They don't have to be Jewish to be part of the

service or the company; only that they identify with the material, bring themselves to it. Different viewpoints are enriching. The Black History Project (a dance created for Black History Month) explores common concerns between the black and Jewish community on the experience of slavery and freedom. I want artists who care about humanity and care about communicating in my company."

Joanne Tucker is aware of the problems that exist in our current Reform Jewish worship service (in some synagogues) "Avodah" is her personal response to the plight of inaccessible prayers. Tucker is interested in taking liturgy which already exists and finding new dimensions in it, reclaiming it not replacing it.

Rabbi Richard Jacobs

Rabbi Richard Jacobs, Reform Rabbi and spiritual leader of the Brooklyn Heights Synagogue, formerly a member of the Avodah Dance Company and presently working on a dissertation in Movement in Prayer through New York University, objects to using the word dance when referring to worship; Jacobs says the word can be "offputting". He prefers the word movement.

"Movement is contained in the activity of prayer. We simply need to find it, shape it and establish the ground rules. You need to give people permission not to do things, and to recognize that they may be open to the experience, even though they are not directly participating in it. People get anxious when you ask them to be aware of their bodies and use them. Every leader/facilitator needs to be sensitive to this".

Jacobs is sensitive to this while realizing that movement can make prayers more accessible. He created a service without words for a group of Bar and Bat Mitzvah students --published in Compass Magazine--to teach prayer. Each prayer had its unique possibilities. For example, for the Kaddish the students were asked to stand in a tight grouping in no particular order, and establish a pulse to sway to, their own pulse, until eventually the whole group adopted one pulse. Thus their prayer experience culminated in the gentle swaying of the group. This was unusual for Jacobs who does not usually create a service using only

movement. This experiment proved that one does not have to be supplied with a text in order to pray.

Jacobs believes that there are many more choices in the Jewish Worship service than we realize. "Sitting still for two hours is a choice". There are obvious places in the service where Rick tries to use movement such as bowing in the Barchu and the T'filla. Here he can "play with traditional forms".

"Why should we succumb to mindless knee jerks? Can we not give them a more expressive quality? If the bows are meant to acknowledge God's presence and the presence of those around us, we can use long bows. We can make a bow deliberate and prayerful, give it new meaning. We can also make those small steps in the T'filla before Oseh Shalom a little less mindless. A little less the T'fillah shuffle, and a little more trying to walk into a totally new place."

Jacobs is also aware of the the contrast between moving and staying still. Non-movement also sends a message. While praying the Shema, Jacobs remains completely still. This is a conscious choice.

"I move alot when I pray, so during the Shema I want to just be aware of what is around me. We do alot of standing and sitting in the service. Why? Different stances send different messages. A traditional Jew sits for the Shema. While in Reform we stand."

Rick pointed out that he thought REFORM MOVEMENT was an oxymoron.

"for we do so little moving really. The reformers

wanted a more rational, controlled type of service and for them the Shema is the watchword of our faith, a bold theological statement and that is why we stand. Standing for the Shema and the T'filla are also body attitudes."

In comparing the Shema and the T'filla, Jacobs cited Mishnah Berachot 2:4 "Workmen may recite [the Shema] on top of a tree or the top of scaffolding, a thing they are not allowed to do in the case of T'filla" Why? I asked. "Because", said Jacobs, "the Shema is said in stillness, and with the T'fillah we lose all sense of spatial awareness. With loss of spatial awareness it is simple to lose balance and fall and get hurt". The quick, choppy thrusts of the body forward and backward always looked to him to be the trappings of Orthodoxy, not free and creative but unenlightened, until he discovered that in Haitian ritual those trying to induce a trance used the exact same movement, quick back and forward movements.

"Gentle, flowing movements do not free up the mind and heart enough so that the conscious mind can leave this world, it is the forward and back again and again until it becomes rote that produces the desired effect. It is the movement here that is primary, not the words of the prayer. Movement is paving the way for the prayer experience".

This seemed like a major breakthrough to Jacobs and certainly opposes the traditional notion that movement stems from the words.

"Posture and activity are intimately connected. Sitting with a book in our laps may be a natural

posture we use at home while standing immediately indicates something special is going to happen. A transformation is taking place. Another point of transformation is welcoming the Torah into the community with the Hakafah (processing with the Torah during a Torah service.)"

Jacobs cannot pass up an opportunity for movement, especially if one is built in already.

"The Hakafah is a perfect opportunity for movement not only because of its placement in the service, but for its function as well. A Hakafah can erupt into something more than a contained parade with the Torah. After sitting for an hour people need to move around. The music animates the movement and there are no choreographed steps. Congregants can add head and arm movements freely, try different movements with less self-consciousness. Swaying with feet firmly planted on the ground, and localized movements of hands and eyes can give way to a frenzy of the Torah being carried and touched."

Jacobs has done a lot of fieldwork in conjunction with the dissertation, including synagogue visits, where he notates movement. By observing posture in prayer Jacobs can read underlying messages.

"The movements can be codified. At Temple Emanuel there is control regimentation. What does the body posture suggest? How does it assist or reinforce the language of prayer? The language of Emanuel is classical-Western. It is defined by Western Drama. It had its roots in the Greek amphitheatre. Here the clergy order their steps precisely. They know how many steps it to the ark, they move with decorum, never deviating. Movement is helping to shape this experience."

This mode of ordered steps seems diametrically opposed to the environment that Jacobs tries to foster at the Brooklyn Heights Synagogue. As a prayer leader he encourages diversity and autonomy among the congregants

within a service. He recalled a particular service during a closing song where he noticed the intensity of the physical connections people were making.

"There are many possibilities for moments when congregants can touch each other in the framework of the service. For example, linking arms for Oseh Shalom at the end of a service seems perfectly acceptable and is even becoming a tradition. The "Motzi" at the Oneg Shabbat where everyone touches the bread or touches someone who is touching the bread. These moments have made their way into mainstream American synagogue life via the youth movements".

When I asked if his congregants were ready to move in prayer he said he feels that people are feeling physically isolated. "They need to touch. They need interactive physical experiences. They are hungry to embody prayer".

Yet, when Jacobs asks people to go and find their own space during the T'filla to pray their personal prayers, most people head straight for the wall. "The wall represents the safety of enclosure. It makes them less self-conscious".

"Congregants are hungry to move in the same way they are hungry to sing, to participate. There is active participation and there is passive participation. In much the same way that it is possible to listen to the beauty of the voice of the Cantor and be moved by it without actually singing. People can be inhibited. Rabbi Akiba, when he prayed at home alone would daven so vigorously and unconsciously that he would open his eyes to find himself on the other side of the room. In public he had to be much more subdued. He didn't want to draw so much attention to himself".

Jacobs also points out it is difficult to "encourage everyone to his/her own thing when the norm is to

pray in unison. With a unison prayer structure if one person is shuckling at his/her own pace it could ultimately be embarrassing. Thus, he feels we need to foster an environment where congregants can get "off the track."

As clergy, we need to encourage people to move at their own pace (which may not necessarily be our pace) and to bow in deliberate rather than mechanical ways. Jacobs cites Berachot 12a,b, "...R. Sheshet, when he bowed, used to go over like a reed and come up like a snake". Jacobs says the description is so striking because it seems to be informed by modern sensibilities.

"In modern dance, a dancer will bend over freely letting the head lead, being pulled down by the weight, in a whoosh. The coming up is done slowly, uncurling one vertebrae at a time, feeling the length of the spine. The movement shapes the prayer. The bow leaves us a bit light-headed and fully balanced in time for the word Adonoi. Bless, Baruch, Berech- can also be physically understood.

Many times a physical understanding of a text can change our cognitive understanding of one. Jacobs performed the role of Abraham in a piece involving the biblical characters Abraham, Sara and Hagar with the Avodah dance company. Dancing the piece led Rick to a deeper, different interpretation of the character Abraham. He empathized with Abraham's situation more through dancing the role than he had from studying the text. Rick believes this transfers to a prayer as well. We can alter our opinion of a prayer, or simply discover another layer through dancing it.

"Prayer movement does not need to accompany a prayer. It is prayer" says Rick. Joanne Tucker, founder and choreographer of Avodah and holds an opposing viewpoint on this topic. Jacobs and Tucker have had a "lovers quarrel" on this point for a long time. Tucker believes that a prayer must be spoken or sung and then danced. She asserts that "movement doesn't replace the prayer. And dancers cannot pray the prayer for the congregant."

Jacobs says that "Judaism is not just concerned with time" (as Abraham Joshua Heschel writes) it is also very much concerned with space (as Dr. Lawrence Hoffman writes). Prayerers have the ability to transform an ordinary place into a holy place. Jewish texts are filled with movement. They are filled with the rhythm of life. The rivers clap hands in Isaiah, and the mountains skip like rams. Why then must we Jews sit still? If the whole natural world is moving- rivers flow, snow drifts are blown by wind, the sun in the sky, then sitting still seems to run counter to the flow of the universe." I could not agree more.

Rick Jacobs has a unique vantage point on the question of movement in prayer as he can study it in books and do field work on the job. I agree with his assessment of the

hungry yet ambiguous worshiper. They do not feel safe moving while everyone else around them is standing still. His ideas of prayer as dance are probably very different from those of his congregants yet he believes in gentle education. I am not sure how much Rick puts his theories of dance into actual practice.

The Work of Choreographer Fanchon Shur.

Fanchon bat Lillian Shur describes herself as a choreographer, poet, performer, and movement therapist. She lives and creates in Cincinnati, Ohio. During the past thirty years, she has been the director of four dance companies in Los Angeles, Seattle, and Cincinnati. Through her choreography she connects the audience to the roots of dance as ceremonial movement and transforms them into a sacred community. Fanchon creates ceremonies. These seek to redefine women's role in religion by exploring the silences in the traditional texts. The pieces also struggle with the immensity of the human condition.

Fanchon creates through dance as a response to the alienation effect that prayer has had on her. Dance serves as her vehicle of prayer. Prayer must be experienced and felt, not just read and thought. She claims that congregants have been numbed. They have been cut off from their physical selves. When a person is cut off from their physical self according to Fanchon they are cut off from their spiritual selves and this has the numbing effect. When this situation occurs they have lost their spontaneity.

"Reading words draws focus to ideas and away from experience or interaction. For some, words can give a sense of security against the "danger" of spontaneity...with its power to help us experience the process of becoming. By disregarding human movement we disregard our process of becoming."

Fanchon brings her experience as a woman, feeling she has been doubly alienated by history and traditional Jewish texts and liturgy. As a movement therapist, she is concerned with people trusting and

healing their bodies. As a liturgical artist she brings this spirit to the prayer, healing spirits through movement. She works with female clients to bridge the detachment of body from mind which results from sexual and emotional abuse. Fanchon talks about changing matter through embodiment. This notion of embodiment seems to be missing in any "patriarchal, word based religious system" such as Judaism. For Fanchon, male dominant God figures are distant and detached. She says, "I am aware of the way in which a male God image must reflect the way males experience insemination of their sperm, followed by detachment, stepping back and judging." (pg. 11 article)

As a result of this detached, male God figure, Fanchon feels alienated and seeks to find female models based on her own experience. She has created dances which express her pain, such as "Jewess of the Renaissance."

The piece functions as a sermon anthem in dance and was inspired by a woman in a Rubens painting. Fanchon's entrance from the back of the congregation to the Bimah is dramatic as her long flowing cape billows behind. "The heart is a place where we face our shame" says Fanchon. This Jewess of the Renaissance wears magical badges of shame which are transformed into a red heart of compassion through connection with the congregation.. "I, the Pope, hereby decree that Jews are not allowed to..." booms a male voice reading the papal edicts revealing the ways Jews have become excluded from daily life as Fanchon bears her badges. A heart love duet ends the dance. The congregation is drawn into the piece as she gives them a gesture and they pass it back to her. This is repeated until each side of the room is catching a movement and throwing it back again; catching and

throwing an energetic rhythm. Finally, when she is sure of their empathy and sure that she has ignited them sufficiently, she takes leave.

Fanchon seeks new metaphors for God that model her experience as a woman. The feminine God presence is labeled as Shechinah in a dance called "Womonkind". The dance, employs God/ess images to affirm maternal archetypes. The message of "Womonkind" is that femininity and Jewishness can coexist, and the concept of Shechinah links the two. The dance draws on women's rituals from all over the world. The five sections of the dance are:

I-Birth Rite which depicts the primitive beginnings of birth, and the power of the birthing scene;

II-Dominion which explores animal energy by physicalizing the fierceness with which the mother protects her young,

III-Rape and Shame which continues and eventually destroys the motif found in the previous section by showing the destruction of female rule under masculine violence and aggression;

IV-Survival Game in which "white gloves emphasize the motions of biding time, while the soundtrack recalls the mumbled words oppressed women have uttered for centuries under their breath.." Fabric becomes rope and gags as the underside of the white gloves are revealed as blood red; and

V-With the Shechinah in which women return to the Sacred Cave "and give birth to each other from their heightened consciousness," made possible through their relationship with the Shechinah.

In an unpublished article by Ellen Umansky (in a soon to be published book entitled Piety, Persuasion and Friendship),

commissioned by the Rabbinic Organization of Women at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati Ohio, entitled "My Dance Work as a Reflection of a Jewish Woman's Spirituality" Fanchon reflects on several of her works. Included among these is a ritual for Chanukah, "A child's journey into light". The piece focuses on the light in the experience of a child. It was performed by 11 children of the faculty at HUC-JIR in Cincinnati in 1974. "They danced the lightening of birth, the glow of parental security in the dark of nightmares, and the heat and light of unconsciousness rising to conscious maturity." The dance leads each child to the Menorah where they bless its lights.

K) "You, as a choreographer often choreograph dances concerned with universal/earth themes. What then makes the dances Jewish?"

F) "Prayer, talking to God is a fundamental part of my Jewishness. Listening to the earth and communicating with God is Jewish. Calling each other by name as my two giggling kids did on the soundtrack of "Tallit", that is Jewish."

K) "Are you interested in working with specific prayers?"

F) "No. Ten or fifteen years ago I stop being concerned with prayers. God the King, the male warrior God was too creatively wounding for me. I was and still am bitter. I am estranged from praying in the Movement. I won't support the oppressiveness of praying to a Male God. Giving my body in that kind of prayer feels like rape to me. Dancing is giving. It is healthy and nourishing and can't exist in the services I see."

(Fanchon did encourage me to re-imagine the divine and to try to find or create a service in which I could dance.)

K) "What is liturgy? Is it words or movement?"

F) "Liturgy is a communal movement experience. Words help it focus. The community, through its movement and words, goes through transformation. Words and movement support each other in liturgy. Like lovers words

don't exist independently of movement. Words need to be wedded to movement."

Fanchon is more interested in the essence of what is being said, than in the actual words. This is the opposite view held by Joanne Tucker of the Avodah Dance Company. Tuckers' dances, inspired by the text, stick closely to the words. "Avodah" interprets words through dance. Fanchon calls Tucker "traditional" in this way, (a term Tucker would agree with). Fanchon is concerned not with performing and explicating text, but rather illustrating an idea. The dichotomy between the two women and their dance styles reflect a crucial split in the liturgical dance community between dancing the word and dancing the idea.

An example of the latter is Fanchon's "Sarah Speaks". It was choreographed for Slichot (the midnight service which ushers in the High Holidays). It is part sermon/part dance and is co-performed with her husband Bonia Shur. Bonia begins chanting the Akedah in Hebrew and English and Fanchon breaks in, as the character Sara, saying, "Who am I? What has happened to my son? God, my God is different." Sara grabs the knife out of Abraham's hand and declares "The angel of God is a woman." "Do not touch him" she chants, three times. The dance begins with rageful power but resolves in tenderness, as Sara goes through a transformation. Within minutes the committed woman warrior is transformed into a breathtakingly, sensual woman, hips rocking back and forth, recalling African dance. This transition makes "Sara Speaks" powerful. There is drum accompaniment (the drum is hung across her womb) as Fanchon sings "Mother of God is a woman, humor is a woman, conscience is a woman."

This piece sounds as if it would work very well. It is confrontational. It has shock value. It is a midrash (a creative interpretation of the text) on the Akedah text. The piece presents us with an extremely different approach to either Tucker's "Binding" in which Sara is silent or "Slichot", the piece she choreographed for Beth El in Jersey City and has now been presented elsewhere in New York. I like the female aspect of God being labeled, yet I am uncomfortable with the term mother of God. It feels very Christian to me. The transformation that Sara undergoes may be a little too drastic for me. Fanchon said that she has since changed the ending to include, "The names of God are changing. The signs of God are changing. History is changing us. Power within is changing us. Power between is changing us. The angel of God is a woman." The mother of God line has been dropped and the ending elongated. Fanchon's work has changed as she changes.

"Essential creative impulses are not bound by words, are not bound into a rigid system. Raw vulnerability is where beauty, sensuality and spirit come from" according to Fanchon. She speaks with the passion of an artist. She says she dances with the raw courage of an artist and with every cell of her being.

"TALLIT"--Prayershawl.

Choreographer Fanchon Shur uses the medium of dance as prayer itself. Her most well known work, 'Tallit'-- a work which I watched on videotape--is a "movement prayer", (my title), an event involving the entire congregation. Fanchon extends the traditional Jewish concept of the prayershawl, by choreographing the dance specifically for female dancers. Fanchon's dance allows women and men to wrap themselves in, dance under, and roll their personal messages into the fringed garment. The dance, two hours in length, involves a 40 foot long prayer shawl. The piece's evolution has taken 20 years.

"From stage to sanctuary, from audience to community"..., the speaker on the videotape tells us that this dance transforms people who partake in it. I say partake, because it is obvious that one cannot just be audience for this work. It relies for its power upon the interaction of the participants with the tallit. I believe that is what makes "Tallit" a sacred dance, (interacting with sacred symbols through movement.) "Tallit" redefines a religious symbol and through this symbol engages an entire community in nothing less than a group prayer.

The cloth becomes a vehicle for a dialogue with God and connections people make with one another. The dancers move in and out of the cloth, making shapes, wrapping and unwrapping themselves. The tallit becomes the bridge for rites of passage. Through it a baby is born, and swaddled, and wedding canopy raised. The tallit has life giving energy and life passages are made holy through it.

According to Jewish tradition, the tallit was worn by the male. Men are commanded to pray thrice daily. The tallit is a symbol of prayer. It has been presented as a gift at a boy's Bar Mitzvah, to be used for davening until the day he dies and is buried in it. Fanchon widens the symbol of the tallit so it can include women. She goes beyond this in making the tallit feminine, very feminine. "Tallit" is a sensual dance. As the fabric of the tallit stretches, so do our imaginations as we see it transformed in times of gentleness to a flowing garment, and feel its coarseness during times of rage and death. For those who have never encountered a tallit before, the dance provides a chance to touch the tallit. Tactile experiences in prayer are essential.

'Tallit' takes us on a journey through the life of a community, drawing on Jewish as well as non-Jewish sources. The dance is organized chronologically moving from the ritual of prehistoric woman-centered culture, through European Jewish culture to today. The opening

ritual before the dance is an immersion ceremony. The dancers, bring us back to a time before organized religion, technology and machines, to a time when we were connected to the rhythms of the earth. Through the use of breath and bowls of water, the congregation is transported back into the womb, the birthing space. An article by Trudelle Thomas in "New Directions for Women" describes the ritual before the dance as a rinsing clean of the women. Fanchon corrects her in an editorial stating that the immersion section is identified

"with living womb waters, into which we immerse ourselves at the end of each menstrual flow as a way of sanctifying our shedding unfertilized life and making room for new life. When one hears 'cleansing' and 'impure' one thinks of 'dirty'. This is not the point at all. 'Tallit' celebrates the sacredness of the woman's body."

Toward the end of the dance, the tallit becomes a wedding canopy where members of the community all marry each other, and the water theme returns this time as an ocean. The group gathers around the outstretched tallit and by shaking the material produces waves. In the final section of the dance the tallit becomes a living Torah into which the community's deepest yearnings and dreams are placed and rolled up.

The dance involves the participant's body, spirit and creativity. Fanchon has led workshops connected with "Tallit" to allow people to explore its depth and the process by which it was created. One participant commented- "I liked focusing right away on the body and not talking about it, but pushing on to the next experience: integrating movement, tradition, ritual." Another said, "It was a chance to let go, to move my body openly- to think again about the concrete, to touch symbols of the Jewish tradition, to be with people who are excited about exploring personal, spiritual, social justice issues." Yet another said, "I am grateful for this rare chance to embody and interact with water and earth-symbols linking nature and women's mysteries. As a man it let me shed layers of defenses and jealousy!"

"Tallit" has been performed in many different environments for many different audiences. It has functioned not only as a theatre/dance piece, a centralized image for a worship experience, but also as the focus of an anthropological study. Dr. Catherine Keller of Drew University describes it as a

"Radically relational piece...The silken cloth is a tangible facilitator bringing the participant into touch with those silenced places that keep us broken within and estranged from each other. As the cloth comes to be a snake, womb, umbilical cord... we, too, uncoil our own energy blockages and transform them and ourselves into something wiser."

Although "Tallit" has a universal appeal, feminists have employed the piece for their own purposes. Fanchon led a retreat on feminist spirituality and 'Tallit' was a key component and in her words,

"Once women's eyes have been opened by feminist analysis, the traditional religious forms, with their message of female inferiority, become sources of pain rather than healing. But when women attempt to make a fresh start by creating new symbols and rituals, they discover that one cannot make rituals out of whole cloth. To work, to speak our deepest selves, symbols and rituals must resonate with shared meanings and memories. In 'Tallit' I attempted to bring together a ritual, acknowledging the spiritual power of women, the physical life rhythms that move us into living worship, and the power of long, wordless experiences."

The score by Fanchon's collaborator/husband Bonia Shur integrates the sounds of children's voices, waves, classical symphonic sounds, and traditional chanting. It seems to me that the music and the dance happen because of each other.

"Tallit" is a dance of great joy, a celebration of community. It is also a dance of great pain as it expresses the sacred history of the Jew. Most of all it is a reclaiming of the tallit for all Jews and a rediscovery of its power.

Active Davening

Or Chadash is the new prayerbook of P'nai Or, a Jewish spiritual community based in Philadelphia, led by Rabbi Zalmon Schacter-Shalomi. It is a looseleaf guidebook to davening (praying) the Shabbat Morning service. Among its many unique contributions to liturgy is the mentioning of the word "body" many times throughout the introduction and the body of the prayerbook. The way the body moves in prayer is as important as the prayers themselves. The body is referred to as a Merkavah (a chariot). Marc Kronisch and Rueven Kimelman would agree the body is a chariot and to incorporate it in prayer is a holy exercise.

The introduction to the prayerbook states that "new ways, (not just new words) are needed to express our sense of God."- namely, moving in prayer.

"This siddur embodies God: Jewish prayer has always included swaying, bowing, turning, as a kind of dance. With this siddur, we use our bodies more, and more fluidly, through gestures and dance that arise more in the moment, as the spirit moves us."

The members of P'nai Or found it necessary to change the words of the siddur (prayerbook) and reacquaint the congregant to the notion that he/she should feel free to move, dance, celebrate as part of a Jewish worship service. Section E of the Desiderata of the new siddur states its goals:

"This siddur is "a reintroduction of the body into the prayer process. We have learned from Chasidim, Yoga, Feldenkreis (a modern dance form) and the Alexander technique and other techniques that we must reintegrate body and soul so that they are organically in harmony."

Schacter-Shalomi then outlines the concept that the service deals with the living person as a quadrinity: body, emotions, intellect and spiritual-divine essence. All of these need to be acknowledged and addressed in a worship service. He says that both the "knowing and the feeling center are to be roused during prayer." The Yod-Hey-Vav-Hey configuration that is drawn on the page almost looks like a body to me. (see enclosed example)

The Birkot Ha-Shachar (The Morning Blessings) is a time "we get into our bodies" says Schacter-Shalomi. It's perfection with it's ducts and passages, we attend to our breathing, our posture, and our stance." The object of this section of the service is to focus on our bodies.

In P'sukey d'Zimra (verses in song), the goal is to sing a 'new song.' It is the largest section of the prayerbook, open to lots of creativity. The point is not to lose the body focus gained in the Birkot Ha-Shachar section but to maintain it, by gaining a deeper awareness of movement as the service continues.

During the Shema and Its Blessings we enter a new intellectual level while maintaining the sensory and affective level. Finally during the Amidah all of the different parts merge and we have a combination of body, heart, and mind. Schacter-Shalomi ends his introduction by saying that the congregant needs to encounter God with the whole body with "all your heart, all your mind, and all your soul".

Prayers are listed in one column and their accompanying movements listed in the other. See for example, "Return Again" (enclosed example). This song which is presented as an alternative to an opening prayer corresponds directly to the goal of endowing each song with physical movement. On the words "Return Again" the prayerer is to draw his/her hands together as in the action of gathering, then place the right fist into the left palm. This movement is repeated as the word is repeated. Each gesture is explained so as to create a glossary of gestures to be employed throughout the song. In this song the movements are confined to the hands, inspired by sign language. Other songs and prayers introduce more complex movement, kicking the right leg, taking two steps, etc. Even traditional movements such as dawning a tallit (prayer shawl) are included.

There is a movement illustration page which I have enclosed suggesting when a congregant can rise and be seated (traditional icons) as well as times for dyads, praying together as pairs and triads, as triplets. Please note the word "suggested" and also "only if a person is able to rise," indicating the knowledge that not everyone who attends the service has the same range of mobility. "Doing", (moving through a prayer), has the added advantage of teaching a beginner who is just becoming familiar with the service another method of approaching the prayer.

This siddur is not davenen made easy, it is davenen made different. It states, "Prayer leaders may ask you to rise and move

your body to the rhythms. We encourage you to move in any way that gets you into the swing of the davenen." Then it adds that "you don't have to if you don't want to". This siddur is like a cookbook, the recipes need to be tested and adapted.

There are two articles that I read which relate to the prayerbook I just described. Marc Kronisch wrote an article for the P'nai Or journal (Second series: Number 7) entitled "Active Davening" and the other is by Reuven Kimelman.

Kronisch teaches Creative Movement in Mansfield, Connecticut. His davening used to compete for time with his morning workouts, until he realized he could combine them. According to a Chasidic story a man must wait to pray until all his bones are awake. Only then can he say, "Lord, who is like you", with all his bones. What better way to wake up the bones than "Prayerobics". Kronisch was exposed to "Prayerobics" (creating a workout based on specific morning blessings) as a participant on a retreat. It is a workout that is both physically energizing and spiritually uplifting.

"Real Davening needs to be an integration of our entire being in all four realms of our experience; the physical world of Assiyah-doing or action; the emotional world of Yetzirah-feeling; the mental world of Beriyah-knowing; and the spiritual world of Atzilut-being"

This is the identical theology, and these are the same phrases seen in Or Chadash. Each exercise is assigned a movement (see enclosed illustration)

Reuven Kimelman of Brandeis University says, "Prayer moves us so little, because we move so little in prayer." Kimelman goes further than Kronisch does in advocating high energy prayer and greater body awareness. He concludes by saying, "Uttering a blessing makes us more keenly aware of living in God's world, but concretizing a blessing makes it that much holier."

I think the siddur is indeed a New Light (its hebrew translation) because it recognizes the importance of the body in prayer. It is revolutionary in that it really does what it says it will. Body is mentioned countless times in the introduction, and in the prayerbook itself much movements is choreographed. While I find the approach refreshing, the creators' may have gone a little to far in adding movement. The prayerbook has a mechanical feel to it. Lift the right leg on this word, lower it and step backward... This removes spontaneity from the prayer.

Kronisch's 'Active Davening' also does this by choreographing the blessings. There is something to be said for repeating a familiar pattern, whether it be words or movement, yet when given the choice I usually choose Kavannah (intention) over Keva (fixed). (The most effective prayer contains aspects of both).

The analogy I can think of to best describe my feeling might be that before the prayerbook was set down by Rabbi Gamliel, each Jewish Community prayed their prayers for peace and the well being of the government. When they became fixed I imagine some pray-ers

must have felt the structure was too rigid for their individual thoughts and feelings. While I applaud the reintroduction of the body to prayer I have a problem with having my prayers choreographed to the letter.

LINWEAVE BOND

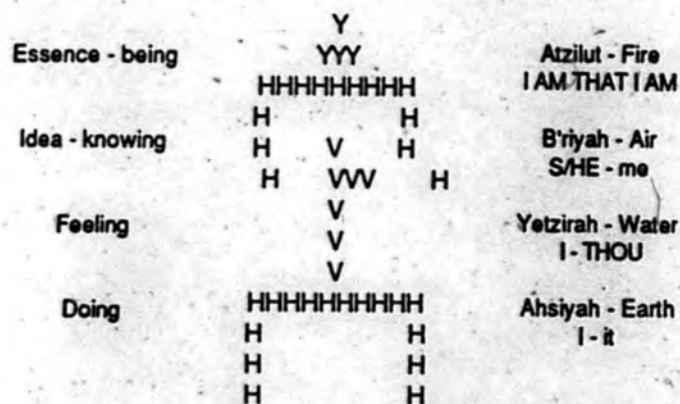
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Or Chadash

אור חדש

feeling both the power and the glory of being of Israel, wrestling with God, free, in the Divine Image, renewed in strength and awakened for this day.

For the Kabbalist, the four letters of the name of God: *Yod-Heh-Vav-Heh* together symbolize a gestalt in which each letter represents an entire universe.



The last *Heh* is where we live with our bodies; it is **THIS WORLD**. Here live the sensible, concrete facts and their data. The laws of nature as we observe them operate here. This is also the focus of our traditional morning service opening — the *Birkot Ha-Shachar*. We get into our bodies, its passages and ducts, we attend to our breathing, our posture and our stance. It is mostly the world of Buber's I-IT, the element of Earth, the world of the divine accusative. Here we are the objects of creation.

The *Vav* of the Holy Name represents the world of the vital feelings, where affect works in the imaginal realm. This means much more than just visualization. It includes the proprioceptive and

אור חדש

Or Chadash

RETURN AGAIN

♩ Sing "Return Again"
by Shlomo Carlebach and Rafi Katz
(tape 3, side A)

Movement: Sing Language
Inspiration: Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb

(Illustrations for movements to be inserted here)

Song

Return
again

Drawing hands in as if
gathering
Right fist into left palm

Return
again

Drawing hands in as if
gathering
Right fist into left palm

Return to
the home

Gathering gesture
Draw outline of a house with
fingers

of your soul

Left palm open and up - right
hand flutters up and away

(Repeat in full)

(Repeat in full)

Return
to who
you

Gathering gesture
Right finger around the
mouth
Point to someone, make eye
contact

are

Index and middle finger cross
of right hand - move from
lips out

אור חדש

Or Chadash

Suggested Movements and Modes



© 1988 David Cooper

* Several suggestions for dyads.
Which symbol do you prefer?

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MARC K. F.

4. Sheh asani Yisrael
You made me a Jew.

QUADRICEPS STRETCH: Lie on back with knee up and leg pulled into side. Other leg is extended. Slowly lower knee. Be cautious if you have any knee problems.



Figure 4

5. Pokayach ivrim

You open the eyes of the blind.

BACK - FLOW YOGA POSE: Lie on back. Slowly bring legs over head. Use hands for balance either on your back or flat on the floor. Be cautious if you have any back problems.



Figure 5

6. Malbiysh arumim

You clothe the naked.

ABDOMEN AND CHEST - COBRA POSE: lie on your stomach. Push the upper torso back with the arms. Push head back.

8. Zakeif K'fufim

You lift up the fallen
FACING DOWN POSE: Place hands and feet flat on floor, you bottom high in the air. Lean forward slowly onto your toes.



Figure 8

9. Rokah ha aretz al ha mayim

You spread the earth above the waters.

THE LUNGE: Lean forward onto one foot, placing it under the knee. Place your hands onto the floor next to the foot. Other leg is extended behind you. Switch.



Figure 9

10. Sheh asa li kol tzarki

You provide for my needs

HALF SPINAL TWIST: Sit with one leg extended. Cross leg over above the knee and place it flat on the floor. Hold foot down with hand. Place other hand back and behind you flat on the floor. Slowly twist your body in that direction. Switch.

Introduction to the Avodah Section

The final section of the thesis contains: 1) an analysis of the Avodah service in Gates of Repentance, its structure and content--2) a comparison between the G.O.R and the traditional Avodah of Birnbaum with regards to form, theology and mood--3) my proposed text of the service with explanation, videotape and program notes.

I chose to present the Avodah service for several reasons. Firstly, because it is the group identity story of the Jewish people. This highlights my description of prayer as a community event. Secondly, I feel that movement can say what the words say just as effectively if not more so. My goal in presenting this service is to demonstrate that the words of a service can be greatly reduced while preserving, even enhancing its message.

Analysis of Avodah Service-Gates of Repentance

The Avodah service found in the Gates of Repentance includes biblical verses, integrated with modern poetry and prose. The material falls into three categories "Narrative"- the story, "commentary"- editor's response, and "congregational response"

I

Ata Konanta
Ochila L'eil

Narrative

Commentary

Cong Response

II

B'resheet, in the beginning
For countless ages
Vayomer Elohim
Then God said
Creatures were born

Psalm 104 (praise)
Y'hi Kvod (praise)

III

Every living creature (intro)

Vayomer Elohim
Then God Said

We were unlike other

Psalm 8 (praise)

IV

you gave us (intro)

Vayyar Elohim
And the Lord saw

How long shall the curse of Cain
Though our deeds (affirmation)

V

Long ago, but we remember it well (intro)

Vayomer Adonoi

Then the Lord said to Abram

Many generations later

When God revealed Torah

Text of 10 Commandments (quoting God in context of narrative)

VI

Thus pledged to play a (transition and intro.)

But no city is eternal

Nachamu (quoting God in context of the narrative)

Take Comfort

VII

How like a dream (dedicate Temple)

The Ritual begins at dawn

How glorious he is

Three times the white robed Priest recites

ANA KAPER NA

O Lord, pardon the sins (quoting the priest in context of narrative) So too
do we confess
(petition)
So may we too
(petition)

Now the High Priest

ANA KAPER NA (quoting the priest)

O LORD, pardon the sins

Like the High
priest of old
(petition)

Now the High Priest
of Israel

ANA KAPER NA

O Lord, pardon the sins

When the priests and the people

BARUCH K'VOD ADONAI

Blessed is His glorious kingdom (quoting the people)

We, too, pray
Some have strayed

For all these sins
(petition)

VIII

The Second Temple (intro)

Mah Tovv (quoting the people...)

If you wish to know the
fortress

Look back, look

If you would know all this
If God's spirit still breathes
Look back, look

This says the Lord God
You are my witness
Behold my servants
They shall not weaken
God chose us

They had not outward grace
(Isaiah 53)

God's witnesses

The earth's crust is

Now, therefore.
(affirmation, petition)

Eleh Ezkera
These things do I remember
(declaration)

Eli Tzion
For Zion
I have taken an
oath

In the time of Hadrian Shimon ben Gamliel

These things I
remember

In the days of the Crusades
Akiba had defied

These things I
remember

The Romans had forbidden
The ten included

These things I
remember

In the days of the Crusades
So it was for us

Kol b'ramah
A voice is heard

Av Harachamim
merciful God (petition)

Even now

Page

Missing

Kol Zot

All this has come
(affirmation)

We walk in a world of
Slaughter

Lord our God
Without Jews (challenge)

Now the lifeless skulls
Who will dream You (challenge)

Silence

Perhaps some of the blame
We hid our true feelings

Mimamakim (petition)
Out of the depths

For the sin of silence

IX

And yet even in the inferno (intro)
Who can measure

Let the Righteous (affirmation)

Is not a flower

When Leo Baeck

May the Lord look
We need our teachers
the blessing that shone

X

After the suffering (intro)

May God look upon us (petition)
Zog Nit Keynmol (affirmation)

Lord, teach us (petition)
Ozi V'zimrat (affirmation)
The Lord is my (affirmation)

Lord, teach us
Ozi V'zimrat
The Lord is my

In one land

Ezekiel 37

V'Yihuda L'olam (affirmation)
Jerusalem is the (affirmation)

XI

It is too small a task (intro)
The storm will end, a rain

Today let us remember

This is the vision

Lord today we turn
Lord make us whole
use us (petition)

Elohenu-M'loch
Our God and God of

All the world (affirmation)

A Critique of G.O.R.

From "Creation to Redemption" is the story of the Jewish People. It is a story of collective identity. It consists of a narrative that flows in sequential order, but is punctuated by commentary and congregational response. It is a radical departure from the traditional Avodah service both structurally and theologically. Its climax is not a confession but rather the song "All the World" at the end of the service. Its shape is a line which continues upward. Yet I would recommend specific changes and will incorporate these into my presentation of the Avodah service.

I have chosen to extract the image of the rainbow, representing the covenant that the children of Israel have with God as the main symbol of the service. The service is verbose. I will follow the rubrics of the service yet introduce movement and music as not only as transition, and punctuation but as text.

The chanting of B'resheet (in the beginning) marks the official beginning of the Avodah service in the Gates of Repentance. The narrative continues through Psalm 104, which functions as a response by the listeners to the story of Creation. Y'hi K'vod provides closure for the Psalm.

Section I focuses on the creation of Human Beings. Psalm 8 reflects the listeners' response to this miraculous event. Therefore, its structure should parallel Psalm 104, but doesn't because there is no Y'hi K'vod. This is only one example of inconsistencies within the text.

In section IV, the potential- for- human- sin concept needs to be expanded. The transition from Cain and Abel to Abram is much too abrupt. I will introduce more Biblical characters to create a more natural flow of the timeline. I will weave midrashim of Cain and Abel with Noah (to introduce the rainbow theme) through movement. Already the situation between Cain and Abel brings up questions, "Why is this happening?" The reading which begins, "Though our deeds are stained with blood is trite and unnecessary. The idea that human beings possess the inclination for evil is introduced here and recapitulated throughout the text.

The next major concept to be introduced is the notion that Jews are priests and a holy nation. This section includes the 10 commandments and the building and destruction of the First Temple through the priests' ritual and modern confession. There needs to be more of a transition from Abram to Sinai and the movement midrashim will make that transition smoother. The transition from Sinai to the Temple is also abrupt. The Temple is built and destroyed in one line. I believe one reason for the Temple's destruction is that it propelled history forward. Exile occurred in order for us to return. The text provides no rational answer for the destruction of the Temples' and the exile. There is also no answer provided for the question of why the Shoah (holocaust) except perhaps that we are God's witnesses and we have suffered and continue to suffer. Yet the state of Israel is born out of the ashes just as the synagogue was born from the ashes of the Temple. Nachamu, is a crucial statement made by God that God will take care of the people. I will highlight this by singing an original setting of this piece by Cantor/Composer Joseph Ness.

The confession of the High Priest follows a pattern.

However, I disagree with the juxtaposition of modern responses for the congregation to an otherwise ancient ritual. If the service proceeds sequentially, then the editors have interrupted its continuity by making this choice. Better to have the congregation add their voices to the voice of the leadership, invite them to respond musically to Ana Kaper Na, by adding a harmonic line than to interrupt the flow of the text by bouncing back and forth in time. Baruch K'vod is an appropriate way to end the section. Yet is the congregants are to echo the behavior and actions of the ancient Israelites, they should fall on their faces, not rise for Baruch Shem K'vod. Whispering this phrase while a handful of dancers fall prostrate would be more effective.

"The Second Temple, like the first came to an end" continues the narrative. This section on exile needs more of a transition. The birth of the synagogue and hope for the future is juxtaposed with the fact that we are God's suffering servants. I question the placement of Mah Tov, and have moved it in my presentation.

The description of the synagogue which follows is not pure narrative. They tell the reader to examine the "battered house of prayer" for therein lies the secret to Jewish survival. They ask, if the Jews are the servants of God, why have they suffered so? God then responds by reminding Jews that they are a "covenanted people and a light to the nations". This section becomes a dialogue between God and the children of Israel.

By the time we reach section X, the listener has undergone a profound theological change and proclaims, "I am God's servant"

and accepts this role. This section continues the dialogue between God and the people Israel. The apologetic here is unnecessary. Each people has its martyrs, yet embedded in the universal martyr section the text says; "And especially do we remember the suffering of the House of Israel". Much of the verbiage which follows this passage is also unnecessary and weakens the section.

Eleh Ezkera is a striking declaration, and functions as the Shlonsky poem does in another section of the service because it is very specific to the Jewish people, to our martyrs. The ten martyrs section is structured for the congregation to respond. The response remains the same despite changes in the story. Perhaps these responses are best sung. There are several readings in which material has been misplaced. One such example is "All this has come upon us..." This reading should follow the english paragraph beginning "Merciful God enthroned on high" because they relate to each other and one follows logically from the other. The dialogue material between God and the children of Israel needs to be grouped together for greater clarity, (but the concept of it is wonderful) and the prayer Mimamaakim is totally misplaced along with other Shoah material. It should come much earlier in the suffering sections. We have stopped dwelling on the suffering by that point therefore it makes no sense to cry out from the depths. I particularly like the prose, "Who will dream You?" questioning and deepening the relationship between God and God's people, and the acknowledgment that we create God. Without us there is no God.

Section IX which focuses on Rebirth begins with the meditation of a flower and its mystery. In the meditation which

follows, Leo Baeck functions as modern day high priest who emerges from the people as they emerge from the depths of despair. Baeck is a leader who asks forgiveness for, suffers with and finally blesses his people with peace. According to a time sequence, Zog Nit Keynmol should precede the description of Leo Baeck.

"Jerusalem is the joy of all the world!" becomes another unnecessary Reform apologetic.

There is no introduction to the last section entitled Redemption. "Lord, today we turn to you is redundant here because it elaborates on material which is found much earlier in the service. We have already confessed our sins and asked for forgiveness by this point. Now we are in a much more hopeful mood, building for the future. We understand that other nations have suffered, and that their suffering matches ours. As the narrative has progressed we have learned about ourselves, our relationship with God and the rest of the world. We don't end by asking forgiveness. We end by looking toward the future, or I should say we never end the narrative. The entire story points to this section and yet it is one of the weaker sections. The world is yet unredeemed and the Jewish people were saved for this purpose: to be a light to all nations and join together to create Tikun Olam (wholeness).

A Comparison.

CONTENT

Birnbaum
 Creation of the World
 Creation of creatures
 " human being
 Adam and Eve
 Cain and Abel
 Noah-Flood
 Abraham-Akedah

Levi to minster to H.P.
 V'Hakohanim
 confession
 household
 sons of Aaron
 all Israel
 Temple destroyed because of Israel's sin
 Ten Martyrs

Confession

Form-Birnbaum

GOR
 Creation of the World
 " creatures
 " human being

Abram-Lech L'cha

Mount Sinai
 10 Commandments
 First Temple built
 First Temple destroyed
 Exiles return
 Second Temple
 Description of High Priest
 V'Hakohanim
 confession
 household
 sons of Aaron
 all Israel

Modern Confession
 Second Temple destroyed
 Birth of Synagogue
 Ten Martyrs
 Shoah
 Israel
 Future redemption of humankind

Though it is interspersed with poetry, prose, responsive readings, and commentary, the traditional Avodah service found in the Birnbaum Machzor is primarily narrative. This liturgy is premodern, therefore it has not been updated to make reference to Israel.

Theology-Birnbaum

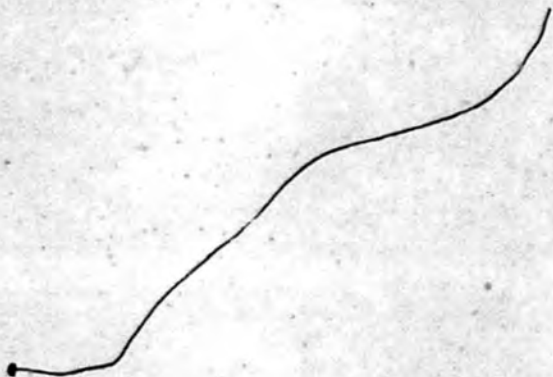
The focus in Birnbaum is on the High Priest and the sacrifices. There are detailed descriptions of the priest washing, bathing, and cutting the bullock. The reader is atoning for sins. The worshiper is bad and plagued with not only his own sins, but the sins of his fathers. He wants to gain God's favor again, be pardoned. The concept of redemption is operative here, but it translates as a rebuilding of the Temple. It is redemption for the Jewish people only not for all humankind. If one were to draw a picture of the service it might look like this:



Mood-Birnbaum

Until the Confession, the mood of the traditional Avodah is cool and formal. A style akin to that of a reporter relaying events. After the confession the mood shifts becoming heavier and darker. The mood of the Avodah in GOR varies, but generally more personal and involving and certainly more hopeful.

In Gates of Repentance the worshiper is also concerned with sin but it does not become the focus of the entire service. We suffer. Suffering is a part of who we are as Jews. We are partners with God in creation. We are in a covenanted relationship with God. We are witnesses. The Temples were not destroyed as a result of our sins but rather by the organic process of time. Civilizations rise and fall. Temples are built and destroyed and synagogues are born out of their ashes. We also recognize the suffering of other nations. We must work together with them to build a better world. We question God, dialogue with God. Our history does not stop with the destruction of the Temple. If one were to draw a picture of the service it might look like this:

A hand-drawn line graph on a piece of paper. The line starts at a point on the left, moves slightly to the right and down, then curves upwards in a series of steps, ending at a higher point on the right. The line is drawn with a dark ink or pencil.

AVODAH

(needed; 10 functionaries, 5 large strips of material)

Congregants walk into a dimly lit sanctuary. They are handed small homemade instruments to be used in the Sinai section.

Ochilah L'eil-Pickett

There are 10 Bodies spread out in the sanctuary, lying on the floor, underneath large pieces of fabric. The lights come up as Karen chants

B'resheet

Lights continue to come up slowly as the bodies begin to twitch and come alive
Lights at full-

K) "A flood of light burst forth
to shape innumerable forms of life
in an endless variety of living species."

Psalm 104-is signed and spoken by Nancy Wiener and repeated in sign by the Kahal.

"Praise Adonoi my God. You are very great.
You wrap yourself in light as in a garment.
The winds are your messengers;
You cause streams to run between the mountains,
birds to sing among the leaves,
the moon to mark the seasons,
and the sun to set.
How wondrous are Your works, Adonoi
In wisdom You have made them all; the earth in its fullness is Yours.

The creation of human beings is shown by pairing up the 10 functionaries. One central pair does a mirror exercise where one partner imitates the movements of the other. This demonstrates how we nurture each other and are partners in creation and how the God's presence is found in relationships.

Psalm 8-Pam Siskin setting

Cain and Abel; one pair will run and frolic, chasing each other through the field, begin to fight violently until one kills the other. This is all shown through movement. (Use the cloth)

Noah and the Flood; with the pieces of material show the billowing waters and raise the material one strip overlapping another for the rainbow.

Abraham; The words "Lech L'cha" are spoken. The fabric is unrolled like a carpet for Abe to walk on, others follow.

Show through movement the hard labor in Egypt. Make a machine goes faster and slower. Then cross the Red Sea into a new land dance and sing. (live improvised music).

The instruments handed out at the start of the service will be played by the Kahal until they are deafening and then total silence (will need to be conducted). Then each functionary says his or her commandment with a gesture, (fist in palm and then sign nice) which becomes a canon and then a cacophony as we say the 10 commandments to each other. God's voice is heard through saying the commandment to someone else.

The ten functionaries build a Temple by each bringing an object, (a broom, a hat, a mug) and placing it in such a way so that it builds a structure. Then destroy the structure.

Kahal sings "By the Waters of Babylon" in a round.

Karen chants Nachamu-(traditional Haftarah trope)

Improvised musical interlude on piano as the cloth is draped on Karen by the functionaries to represent the the garments worn by the High Priest for the Confession section.

Ana Kaper Na- chanted by Karen. Functionaries lead either simple harmony line or chantlike Ana, ana, ana- so that the Kahal can join in adding their voices. Prostrating type movements by functionaries-bends. Baruch K'vod-meaty melody line, big and choral.

Build exact replica for second Temple and destroy it. Send the functionaries to different parts of room, take their objects with them and in small group build a little structure. The center is still Jerusalem and each strip of fabric is like one spoke on a wheel jutting out from the center.

Sing Braun Mah Tov

Through movement show persecution, pogroms, suffering.

Ten Martyrs

ten functionaries use red and gold fabric create the fire. "I am Shimon ben Gamliel I was the first to die." "I am Rabbi Ishmael, I will trust in you even though you slay me." (etc) Each functionary is assigned a martyr. The line "These things I remember" functions as a refrain between each line and is spoken by the Kahal. As each functionary finishes, he/she turn their backs on Kahal.

Musical interlude to Shoah

Functionaries form a workline for the Shoah-Joyce plays dirge underneath. The dancers fold like dominoes.

Kol B'Ramah- composed by Joseph Ness, danced by Marcia Bain, sung by Karen

#1 "I mourn the exile of God's servants, makers of sweet melody, their blood poured out like Zion's streams is read and then sing:
Eli Tzion- Congregational tune, .

all functionaries: I have taken an oath to remember it all

Eleh Eskera-English setting by Pickett

10 Functionaries together say, "Look back and wonder: What is this people?
What is the meaning of its life?"

Mimamaakim- Karen chants. Setting by Vinnaver, arr. Avery.

1: "I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness, and taken you by the hand and kept you;

2: I have made you a covenant people;
a light to the nations.

3: You are my witnesses, and my servant whom I have chosen.

all: "Adonai our God, we have testified to Your presence in heaven and earth. But in our day Your presence has been an absence. Your call a silence. Long ago it was written in Your name: If you are My witnesses, I am the Lord, and if you are not My witnesses, I am not the Lord."

Folksong-Doug Mishkin about silence-"a bubbemeiser"

#4: "And now, survivors stammer: their words are haunted. Behind their words; silence. Behind the silence, a witness to the sin of silence."

Kitty Genovese-universal and abbreviated text

#5 For more than a half hour, thirty eight respectable, law abiding citizens in Queens watched a killer stalk and stab (twenty eight year old) Kitty Genovese.

#6 "I opened my window and yelled, leave that girl alone!"

#7 "Then you closed the light and went back to bed"

#8 "My husband and I thought it was a lovers quarrel"

#9 "We heard the screams but the bedroom light made it difficult to see. I put the light out and we were able to see better."

#7 "I saw, I was tired, I went back to bed."

#5 At 4: 25 a.m., an ambulance arrived to take the body of Miss Genovese. Then the people came out.

10 "Perhaps some of the blame falls on me,
Because I kept silent, uttered no cry.

1 My clear voice was choked and dumb."

SILENCE

Karen says, functionaries repeat with Kahal:

"For the sin of silence,
For the sin of indifference,
For the secret complicity of the neutral,
For the closing of borders,
For the washing of hands,
For all that was done,
For all that was not done,
Let there be forgiveness."

#2 "When Leo Baeck came out of the black midnight of the concentration camp, he looked about at the world and at his neighbors. Many averted their eyes. They had been silent. Yet, in the darkness of the camps, Leo Baeck had not despaired. He taught and comforted and continued to teach and comfort his people. They say that when Baeck lifted his hands in the priestly benediction the congregation felt very close to the Divine Presence."

Y'varechecha- Karen sings by Fromm, acapella.

Pioneer, building Israel song on piano

Ozi V'zimrat Ya- Ronni with Tof

(Dry Bones)

The ten bodies resume their positions on the floor twitching with new life as in Creation and saying:

#3 Adonoi put me down in the valley of dry bones

#4 Can these bones live?

all: Yes. God can breathe breath back into these bones

#6 breathe deep

V'yhuda L'olam Teshev- Folk tune, Kahal with strong accompaniment
hopeful music.

abrupt change, mood broken by shattered glass.

#7 "The earth's crust is soaked with the tears of the innocent. The blood of every race cries out from the ground. Which is the people without its martyrs?"

list of martyrs read by single voices as a yartzheit list as you read walk into a line so that a line is formed

- Steven Biko, Soujourner Truth, Harvey Milk, Joe Hill, Sacco and Vanzetti, Dr. Martin Luther King Junior, Hannah Senesh, Antonio Machado, John Brown

together all ten: "Use us, Adonoi to speed the day when our wealth is used to feed the hungry and heal the sick; when we cherish the world and hold it in trust for our children's children; when the weak become strong, and the strong compassionate; (when we can let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream.)

(Functionaries create the same rainbow as was created in the Noah section

during this line from Isaiah)

All the World- Schiller arrangement.

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