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Report on the Rabbinic Dissertation Submitted by

Gregory Wolfe

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Ordination

Praying Toward Jerusalem
The Next Best Thing to Being There

Lawrence A. Hoffman

That the rabbis who formulated the central conception of the universe for Jewish tradition believed in sacred space is, by now, a truism. Indeed, the basic binary opposite in the rabbinic cultural system is the dichotomy between sacred and profane, so that space, like time, persons, and things, must be either sacred or its opposite -- though not necessarily the same degree of one or the other. Mishnah Kelim, moreover, details the sanctity of space, by telling us that the center of the universe itself is the most sacred of all spaces, the Holy of Holies, and that concentric-circle-like, we can determine lesser and lesser degrees of sanctity as we move outward from that central point. Beyond the Holy of Holies, there is the Temple Mount, and beyond that, finally, the Land of Israel itself. Given this perception of things, it is no surprise to find Jews praying toward Jerusalem, or better, toward the Holy of Holies. But when did this requirement arise? Why are the Mishnah and Tosefta, as well as the two Talmuds relatively silent on the subject? And above all, why does archeological evidence indicate that the orientation for prayer which we take for granted was anything but universally assumed in the formative years when the earliest synagogues whose remains we have were being constructed?

These are among the questions that prompted Greg Wolfe to take on the subject of prayer orientation as his thesis topic. Unlike some subjects, his data bank is not simply the literature of the rabbis, but the "texts" of archeological remains, so he begins by contrasting the official rabbinic view of Zion -- as represented in midrashic lore, primarily -- with the actual construction of synagogues as archaeologists have uncovered them. These two chapters alone make fascinating, if not altogether novel, reading. On the one hand, the rabbis are adamant about the center of their universe. On the other, whoever built and prayed in early synagogues were not. Wolfe aptly sums up research from the earliest speculations by Sukenik and others to the more recent discoveries and theories of Meyers and Chiat, demonstrating that there is no single and simple scheme that will explain synagogue building. We can no longer draw one line of chronological development, as if Jews moved robot-like from one kind of building

to another, even though there are abundant mediate theories that may be used to support bits and pieces of a puzzle that has yet to find its focus. One wonders how invested the rabbis were in this synagogue institution that seemingly disobeyed the rabbinic view of sacred space.

But how serious were they about applying the theory of sacred territory to prayer? To answer that question, Wolfe looks closely at the few relevant halakhot we have in tannaitic literature. From the Mishnah, he discovers at least two diverse underlying theories for orientation. On the one hand, the purpose of facing the Temple precinct was so that others observing the worshipper would know to whom the worshipper was addressing prayer; on the other hand, a benefit accrued to the worshipper, namely, the internal kavvanah afforded by the itense concentration on correct orientation to the One God of Israel.

The tosefta is clearer still. It differentiates what Wolfe call the orientation of prayer from the focus of prayer. Orientation is an external thing; focus is internal. In sum worshippers were to attend externally by orienting their prayer direction to the temple, but only so that their internal focus would remain God alone. He summarizes his material by suggesting that at issue was a growing diaspora and the fear of Jewish falling away from the faith, indeed, the gradual demise of the Jewish people itself. Hence the concern for a single orientation grows with the diaspora, so as to differentiate Jews from non-Jews, and to preserve the Jewish sense of loyalty to a God who spoke in Zion, proclaiming Zion as the divine home and the land of sacrality for Israel.

The rest of this thesis takes the primary texts, few though they are, in the tannaitic strata, and follows them though the Talmuds and the code literature. A number of intertwining concerns become apparent, although there is no single strand of thought unifying all texts in all ages. The reader is invited to read through any or all of the passages that are analyzed here to get a sense of the particular concerns that motivated any rabbi or group of rabbis at any given time and place.

This thesis's strength is its closely analyzed and cited texts. Since the corpus of relevant data is manageable, the author is able to include every given in the original language (Hebrew or Aramaic) and then translated and discussed. The thesis runs over 200 pages, as the author proceeds text by text, building his evidence slowly but methodically, In the end, the reader may be disappointed to find that there is no single concern that explains every text. But the overriding centrality of Jerusalem is there for all to see: or, as the author tells us in his colorful title that sums up the rabbis' view very nicely -- orienting one's worship to Jerusalem is "the next best thing to being there."

PRAYING TOWARDS JERUSALEM: THE NEXT BEST THING TO BEING THERE

Gregory Alan Wolfe

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Ordination

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The road to a completed thesis is a long journey, not without its fair share of intellectual and emotional highs and lows, plenty of stops, starts, and detours, and even a few moments of revelation. But most of all, the thesis road, often a lonely trek, was paved with wonderful discoveries, insightful guidance, and an amazing abundance of support and encouragement, without which I could never have seen my way to the end. Or is it just another beginning?

Though it is not possible to thank everyone by name who shared of him/herself with me during my work on the thesis, thus enriching the process tremendously, I do want to express special appreciation to Dr. Lawrence Hoffman, my advisor. It was Dr. Hoffman's exciting teaching that sparked the inspiration for this thesis and it was his gentle and insightful guidance that was responsible for me being able to complete it.

So many friends also made special efforts to insure that I did not fall into the thesis "black hole" by calling regularly to offer words of good cheer and support. I owe them all my mental health and I thank them a million times over.

I would like to dedicate this thesis in honor of my parents, Rhoda and Sheldon, who have always been my role models and are responsible, in so many ways, for my love of Judaism; and to the memory of Harold Sherman, whose death during the final month of the thesis has been a constant reminder of why I wanted to be a rabbi in the first place.

CHAPTER ONE: THE RABBINIC VIEW OF ZION

The Land of Israel, Zion, to be more precise, has long been a powerful symbol among the Jewish people; one that inspired and continues to inspire the imagination of the Jewish soul. Zion has eternally been a source of hope and renewal for Jews in the Diaspora, an omnipresent reminder of their national aspirations, and the focus of traditional Jewish prayer for more than 2,000 years. Why has Zion cast such a captivating spell on the Jewish people, their faith and culture? While the magic and holiness of Zion has its roots deep in the history of the Jewish people, it is clear that Zion has played a central role in the lives and dreams of the Jewish people.

The central task of this thesis is to probe one of the perpetual manifestations of this amazing and continuous relationship between a people and her land: The halachik requirement that all Jews, no matter where they are, orient their prayers towards the Land of Zion, Jerusalem. More specifically, this study will explore the development of the rabbinic perception of these laws, which regulated the orientation of Jewish prayer. Why did the rabbis believe that such a worship orientation was so essential? What purpose did it serve in their eyes? And what does this reveal about the nature of the relationship between the Jews and their land?

If we are to understand the rabbinic rationale for requiring Jews to pray towards Jerusalem, however, we must first establish what it was that Zion meant to the rabbis themselves. The focus

of this chapter, therefore, will be on the rabbinic vision of Zion; the place Zion held in their world; and the symbolic value that they ascribed to that place, as suggested by their midrashim. Thus, this chapter will provide the necessary framework of knowledge that will enable us to more fully understand how the rabbis perceived the role of a clearly defined prayer orientation towards Jerusalem.

To accomplish this end, we will focus on three particular themes concerning Zion that dominated the midrashim that I examined, primarily collected from the Talmud, Tanhuma, Leviticus Rabbah, the Zohar, Pesikta Rabbati, Pesikta DeRav Kahana, and Midrash Tehillim. I have labeled these themes that captured the rabbinic imagination: Zion as Center of the World, Zion as God's Dwelling Place, and Zion as the Source of All Blessing and Suffering. Though there are certainly many other Rabbinic images of Zion that might have been discussed, such as another popular depiction of Zion as a barren woman or God's bride, I have chosen these three in the hopes that they will provide a significant glimpse into the Rabbinic attitude towards Zion, as well as into the world in which the rabbis lived.

It is clear that the rabbis were not operating in a vacuum when they began to fashion a particular vision of Zion. As a matter of fact, they had a very rich tradition to draw upon, one which certainly had a tremendous impact upon how they perceived Zion. It only seems natural, therefore, if we are to understand the rabbinic conception of Zion, that we begin with a brief and somewhat circumscribed examination of the biblical view of Zion,

its origins and how it developed.

One of the preeminent themes in the Bible regarding Zion is that Zion is holy, and connected to this holiness is strength, beauty, and inviolability. The sacrality of this particular mountain top of rather modest dimensions, however, is not inherent, but derives from the presence of the divine on that peak, which confers these other attributes as well.[1] Mount Zion's holiness is inextricably linked to that fact that God was perceived to have chosen that spot as the divine abode.[2] Why and how the Jewish God came to be associated with that particular mountain has a history of its own, of which I will only try to highlight a few factors.

In order to understand God's connection to Zion, one must have some information regarding the nature of the earliest Israelite society during the settlement period, an awareness of the mythologies that were operative in the Ancient Near East concerning mountains, and some knowledge of the various political developments that occurred as Israel became more and more established in the region and needed to centralize its power.

Scholars have argued that, while the Zion tradition exalting the glories of that city have been attested to in pre-monarchical sources, the climax of this tradition must be located during the period of the monarchy that began with David establishing Jerusalem as his capital. According to J.J.M. Roberts,

> The Davidic-Solomonic era...provides the most logical setting for the glorification of Jerusalem as Yahweh's abode, a central theme in the Zion tradition. After David captured Jerusalem and made it his capital, he transferred to it the

> central cultic object of the old Israelite league, the ancient ark of the covenant. This was obviously part of David's plan to make Jerusalem both the religious and political center of the nation.[3]

We shall return to this notion, but to fully understand the power of Zion we must first go even further back into the history of Israel, back to the conquest and settlement of the land, and the compelling relationship that the people had with the mountains in the area and the mythology of mountains that prevailed. This will help us to understand some of the traditions that came to be associated with Mt. Zion and that are clearly reflected in the biblical literature, and subsequently picked up by the rabbis in the midrash.

When the Israelites first settled the land of Canaan, they were primarily a hill dwelling people because the superior might of the indigenous population, who lived in the plains, prevented them from settling anywhere else until they could overcome them. And even after the lowlands were conquered, the heights maintained a positive value in that they offered a military and strategic advantage in protecting Israelite settlements.[4]

The mountains in the area were also very fertile and produced a significant portion of the Israelites' produce. But at the same time, the Israelites still maintained their settlements on the hillsides in order to preserve the precious arable land for farming.

Even from this very sketchy picture, we can already begin to discern the important role that mountains played in the life of the Israelites, offering security and fertility.[5]

Furthermore, mountains, according to religious mythologies, had long been associated with a dimension of indwelling sanctity because they appeared to bridge the gap between heaven and earth.[6] Even before the Israelites arrived on the scene, the Canaanites and others had associated mountains with the dwelling places of their gods. Baal and El were both gods who were perceived to have chosen mountains as their primary place of residence. It is only logical then, if the Israelites wanted to demonstrate the supremacy of their God, that "the Israelites had Yahweh absorb some of the mythological traits and functions of Baal, as well as those of El."[7] Consequently, the Israelite God, too, was installed onto a mountain top.

There were several mountain peaks that were holy places before Zion, however, such as Hermon, Carmel, Ebal, Tabor, and Sinai.[8] It was not really until the time of David and Solomon that Mount Zion became the definitive home of the Israelite God.

Before the monarchy, there was no real center, geographical or cultic, in Israelite life. Instead, there was a multiplicity of centers; each group or clan establishing their own center, at which they constructed a shrine. Some examples would be Schechem, Gilgal, and Beth El in the center of the country; Dan in the north; and Hebron and Beer Sheva in the south.[9] David, out of political necessity, ended this centerlessness by decreeing Jerusalem his capital and setting up the Holy Ark on Mt. Zion. This was a very important move on David's part because he was ruling over a diverse population that was spread out over a wide area. He required a central place that could serve as a

rallying point that would unify his new kingdom.

This move, however, demanded an appropriate justification because up until that time Jerusalem had had no tradition to support these new religious claims, indeed, God had previously been seen to inhabit the whole of Palestine.[10] "The answer to this problem apparently came in the form of a prophetic oracle (Ps. 132:13-14). It laid the foundation for the belief that Yahweh had chosen Mt. Zion for His dwelling place just as He had chosen David for His king."[11]

As the united monarchy grew and prospered, so, too, did the belief that God ruled from Zion, culminating, of course, in the building of the Temple by Solomon. By the time of Solomon's death, the traditions connecting Zion and the Lord were firmly ensconced, "for when Jeroboam revolted, he could not set up a counter cult without provoking a negative reaction among some of his political supporters (1 Kings 14:1-18)."[12]

There are other elements in the biblical tradition that come to reinforce this notion of Zion's sanctity as the dwelling place of God. We find this notion frequently expressed in the Psalms and in parts of Isaiah, particularly those passages that respond to the miraculous salvation of Jerusalem from the siege of Sennacherib in 701 b.c.e.. (I might add that I Isaiah's view of Jerusalem is not surprising as it has often been pointed out that Isaiah had a strong affinity with the Davidic monarchy.) This sudden and unexplained retreat of Sennacherib's army was interpreted as a sure sign that Zion was indeed the inviolate abode of God and that God would reign forever from Jerusalem.

There were intermittent periods, however, in which the centrality of Jerusalem was challenged by different Jewish groups, who continued to set up shrines for worship at various locations throughout the Land, due in large part to the influence of the Assyrian Empire that began to control the region with the fall of Israel in 722 B.C.E.. But contemporaneously with the rise of Josiah to the throne in 640 B.C.E., Assyria began to lose her grip on her empire and Judah found herself independent once again. Along with this new-found independence, Josiah instituted a sweeping reform. As a result of this reform, there was a purge of foreign cults and practices, the Temple was repaired, and the various cults around the country were abolished. But Josiah's crowning achievement was that he once again centralized all public worship in Jerusalem.[13]

The biblical images that we have been discussing so far were developed prior to the exile and reflect a particular world view at a time when Zion enjoyed good fortune, stability, and relative security (having been miraculously saved). But the rabbis who authored the midrashim did not know this Jerusalem. The Jerusalem of their day lay in ruins and her people were dispersed. Yet the rabbis inherited a traditional view of Zion that they could not just ignore. Instead the rabbis had to find new ways to bring meaning to these images of Zion. The midrashim examined illustrate how the rabbis took these themes found in the Bible and gave them new interpretations so as to create their own perception of Zion that would serve their own purposes.

The first set of midrash we will examine belong to the theme of Zion as the Center of the World.[14] While biblical Zion became

the central locus of political and religious power under David's dominion, the rabbis extended this notion of centrality in the midrashim to the point where Zion was perceived as the center of the world itself. And even more than that, Zion was imagined as the actual place from where the creation of the world began.

The midrash in Tanhuma HaNidpas, kedoshim 10, (#2) is a wonderful illustration of the rabbinic perception of Zion's centrality. This midrash compares the Land of Israel to the navel of a person, and in a striking analogy remarks that just as the navel is the central point of a human being, so too is the Land of Israel the center of the world.

Moshe Idel notes that the motif of Israel as the "'omphalos' or the anatomical center of the universe" was wide spread.[15] Indeed, Shalom Rosenberg asserts that the notion of Israel being the "Center of the World" was not merely a geographical concept but a cosmological one. Citing Nachmanides, who said, "The Land of Israel is the center of the inhabited earth and God's own inheritance," [16] Rosenberg notes that because of Israel's central location it also possessed a special relationship with God. "The essence of various peoples is said to follow from the influence of their respective angel or planet.... But as the center of habitation, the Land of Israel transcends planetary rule.... Its law is not merely an emanation of a specific planet, but the revelation of God Himself." [17]

The image of the navel is a particularly apt metaphor for the rabbinic notion of Jerusalem and can be understood on a few different levels. In addition to being a central point, the

rabbis must have been aware that the human embryo also begins developing at the navel--the point of origin for human life, just as Israel was seen as the point of origin for life on the most cosmic level. Furthermore, the navel is the point from which the developing child is nourished. We shall see that Zion, too, came to be understood as a source of great nourishment. This theme finds expression in the Zohar as well, 186a (#1), which speaks of Zion as the central point of the universe, the spot where faith culminates in it full perfection, from which the whole world is nourished. This concept is further elaborated in the next section, which deals with Zion as a source of all blessing and goodness.

The midrash further delineates this notion of centrality, by breaking it down into a hierarchy of "centeredness." A clear connection is also drawn between centrality and holiness. We remember from our earlier discussion that holiness is closely associated with God's presence. Thus, in the midrashim, the center of the world, the place from which the world was fashioned, is also the place where God's presence resides, which, in the rabbinic mind, is the Holy Ark. Therefore, as one moves closer to the center one is progressing closer to God and thus to holiness.

We begin, then, with Eretz Israel as being holy in the most general sense. However, as we advance inwards towards the center of the world, we attain more and more specified stages of holiness; moving through Jerusalem, and then the Beit Ha'Mikdash, and then the Heichal, each successive point considered the center

of the previous place, until we finally reach the holy ark--God's traditional dwelling place since biblical times--that stands before Even Ha'Shtiyah, the foundation stone of the entire world. Thus holiness, creation, and centrality are all demonstrated to be linked together at this special stone.

Even Ha'Shtiyah as Foundation Stone is itself a midrash, the claim being that it is called that because the world was founded (hushtah) there. This point is elaborated by a midrash in Yoma 54b (#3) that explains very clearly why this stone is called Even Ha'Shtiyah.

There is a Mishnah in Kelim 1:6-9 (#11)[18] that is structured very similarly to the end of the midrash in Tanhuma HaNidpas, Kedoshim 10. This mishnah discusses the ten different degrees of holiness in the world, beginning with the Land of Israel, which is holier than all other lands, and culminating at the Holy of Holies. While the divisions are a little bit different, the basic notion remains the same: Holiness is increased as one moves inward towards the center. This mishnah also links holiness with a kind of exclusivity; that is to say, as one moves in towards the center and the holy, fewer and fewer people are allowed to enter that area, until you reach the Holy of Holies, into which only the High Priest is permitted to go, and only on Yom Kippur. The holier the place the more restricted it is.

As the embodiment of centrality, Zion was linked with much more than just the center and point of origin of the world. This is established by a midrash to Psalm 50 (#4), which begins by

first proving how we know that Zion is in fact the place out of which the world was called into being. The midrash proves this through morphological means by comparing the use of the word "perfecting," which is used in the psalm, "Out of Zion, the perfecting of beauty," (Ps. 50:2) and also in a verse on creation, "The heaven and earth were perfected and all the host of them" (Gen. 2:1). Thus, we have established the fact that the term "perfecting" must be related to creation, and therefore the verse from the psalm, "Out of Zion, perfecting of beauty" is to be understood as a statement concerning the origin of the world, which began out of Zion. Just as Zion is the point of creation of the world, however, so, too, the midrash continues, will the destruction of the world begin at Zion as well as its final renewal in the end of days. Through this midrash, Zion becomes linked not only with birth and creation, but also destruction and resurrection. Zion's centrality is all encompassing--everything is contained there, even Gehenna itself, which is also mythologically associated with the center of the earth (#5).

One further notion of centrality is emphasized by the rabbis. This is the idea of Zion being the central gathering point for Jews when the Messiah arrives. In Pesikta De-Rav Kahana, Piska 20 (#12), R. Elazar ben Azariah and R. Eleazar the Modiite are discussing the time when Jerusalem will once again be the throne of the Lord, as it was when the Temple stood and God dwelled there. Ben Azariah indicates that Messianic times will result in the return of Zion's scattered population. He is puzzled, however, by how Jerusalem will be able to accommodate

this great influx of people. R. Eleazar the Modiite explains to him that God will cause Jerusalem to extend herself and spread out her boarders, all the way to Damascus, in order to make room for this incredible ingathering! Again Zion is the all encompassing center that can contain all. This theme is echoed in Pesikta Rabbati Piska 42 as well (#6), which describes Zion to be the meeting place for the entire world at the time of divine redemption, when the shofar will be blown signalling the arrival of the Messiah.

Clearly these last two midrashim in particular (and I believe the others do as well) understand that Zion no longer reigns as the geo-political core of Jewish life as it once did and therefore they reinterpret the notion of Zion as center by projecting it into some future date--when all will be perfected--at which time Zion will once again resume its rightful place at the center of the Jewish world. In the meantime, however, the rabbis' midrashim present us with an idealized and hyperbolic notion of Zion as the center of the entire world. We will analyze the function of these midrashim and the message the rabbis may have been trying to communicate in the last section of this chapter.

Our second category is the theme of Zion as Source of Blessing and Goodness on one hand and Suffering and Destruction on the other. There is definitely a relationship between this notion of Zion and the belief that Zion is the center of the world and the source of creation. For the rabbis, center and source are intimately related, as we saw above, particularly in

the analogy between Zion and the human navel. This analogy made a strong connection between centers, points of origins, and sources of nourishment. Zion and navels were seen to share all of these characteristics. Furthermore, if Zion was already associated with the source of the entire world it does not require a large stretch of the imagination to then perceive Zion as the source for everything in that world. Hence a dominant theme in the midrashim is that Zion is the source of all boons, blessings, and goodness.

A number of midrashim contain lists of things that are seen as originating in Zion. The major idea does not seem to depend upon what the list includes since there is a range as to what was recorded in each. Rather the essence of the lists seems to be the fact that all of the things come to support the general notion that was propounded by R. Levi, to whom all of these lists are attributed, that "all boons, blessings, and consolations that the Holy One, Blessed be He, will in the future bestow upon Israel will come only from Zion." It is significant to note, however, that each list contains seven items, the quintessential Jewish number for perfection and completeness.

The three midrashim that contain these lists are Leviticus Rabbah, Kedoshim, 24:4 (#8); Midrash Tehillim 14:6 (#9); and Pesikta Rabbati, Piska 42 (#6). The common themes are salvation, Torah, blessing, and life. All of these point to a redemptive hope that is associated with Zion. Redemption is something else, then, that will have its origins in Zion as is made clear by these midrashim.

We have seen that both creation and redemption are to be centered in Zion. Lest one think, however, that only goodness is connected to the source, we also learn that the fact that Zion is at the center also has its down side, because all of the bad things will begin there as well. This point is made in a midrash from The Legends of the Jews (citing Jeremiah 25:15-17), which points out, in a discussion about Jeremiah's mission concerning the administration of the cup of God's wrath to the nations, that Jerusalem, the head of all earthly nations, will be the first to drink its bitter waters.

The destruction of Jerusalem, however, does not bode well for other nations, and should be seen by them as a clear warning of the severe punishment that is soon to be visited upon them. We find this sentiment expressed in the midrash to Psalm 48:1-2(#10). In this midrash the rabbis try and make sense of the scriptural quote that says, "The Lord is great in Zion; and He is high above all the peoples." (Ps. 99:2) What could this possibly mean at a time when Zion has been destroyed and God is clearly not great in Zion. The rabbis interpret this verse as meaning that "if He has done such a thing to His city, how much more will He do to the peoples of the earth." But even in utter destruction, the rabbis still glorify Zion's beauty, as it says in the Midrash Tehillim 48:2, "all people admit her beauty: Even when she lay in ruins."

Creation, destruction, and redemption in Zion all find themselves linked together by a midrash in Pesikta De-Rav Kahana, Piska 21 (#7), which quotes R. Hiyya as saying that "at the very

beginning of the earth's creation the Holy One envisioned [in Zion] the Temple built, destroyed, and rebuilt." We can feel a sense of cosmic wholeness rooted in a Zion that will undergo the full cycle of experience from creation to destruction to redemption, all beginning in Zion. This idea finds its parallel in the midrash to Psalm 50 that we have already discussed above. And again we can see a link formed between Jerusalem as center and source of the entire spectrum of experience.

This brings us to our third theme: Zion as the abode of God, which we have noted previously is directly related to the holiness ascribed to Zion and can not be seen as separate from Zion as center and source, because if Zion had not been seen as God's chosen dwelling place then none of the other themes would have developed. Consequently, Zion as the abode of God can be seen as the lynch pin holding this tripartite theme together. There was nothing special at all about Jerusalem until God singled Zion out from all other places. This again emphasizes the notion that Zion's holiness is not inherent, but due to God's choice to abide there.

There are a number of midrashim that play on this theme. One such midrash is the midrash to Psalm 132 (#15), which comments on the verse from the psalm that says, "For the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation." (Ps. 132:13) The general notion is that any place is viable for encountering God's presence until God chooses a specific place with which to be associated.

Three different levels are dealt with in the midrash, in a

manner somewhat similar to what we observed in the midrashim that dealt with the ascending levels of holiness. On the most general level, the midrash points out that all lands had been suitable for divine revelation, but once God chose Israel then other lands ceased to be suitable. Next, getting more specific, the midrash elaborates that anywhere in the Land had been suitable at one time for sacrifices, but as soon as God chose Jerusalem all other places were declared off-limits. And lastly, the whole of Jerusalem had been available for divine presence until the "eternal habitation" was chosen, which then became the sole place where the divine presence could be accessed. In ever narrowing circles, the locus of God's presence was delimited to a specific place. And, if we remember the midrashim from above, this place was considered the holiest of them all.

The midrash in Tanhuma HaNidpas, Aharei Mot, 10 (#13) generates a similar understanding vis a vis Zion using a parable. Accordingto this parable, a king who had no wife used to tell his servants, whenever they brought him things, to take them to a storehouse somewhere else because he had not really established a house yet. However, as soon as the king was married he said to his servants that from now on they were only to bring everything to the house. This is similar to the way it was with God before Moses established the Tabernacle. Previously, sacrifices could be brought anywhere, but afterwards they were only to be brought to the place where God chose. And where is this place? Zion, since it says "for God chose Zion, a footstool to his throne." (Ps. 132:13) We see again that the

holiness of a place is determined by God's choosing it.

The holiness and importance of Zion as a center of Jewish life and the throne of God had been sanctioned by the tremendous weight of tradition over many years; a tradition and heritage that could not be ignored nor easily forsaken, for it was so deeply ingrained in the Jewish consciousness. It was a tradition, however, that arose out of a particular context and for particular reasons. But the rabbis were living in a different era, how could they claim in their midrashim that Zion was the center of the entire world, let alone the Jewish world, which had been shaken from its home land and scattered to the four corners, suffering a serious threat to Jewish unity? How could the rabbis justify their claim that the Zion of their times, a heap of rubble, would prove to be a source of tremendous blessing? Given Zion's situation, could the rabbis really believe that God would reign forever from Zion?

We can best answer these questions by trying to understand what it was that compelled the rabbis to create the kinds of midrashim that they did, and by trying to assess the purpose that these midrashim might have served.

In the wake of the destruction of Jerusalem, Zion could hardly be viewed as the inviolate abode of God as it once had been. And in fact if Jerusalem could be destroyed then where was God? And if God was no longer in His holy Temple, then what was it that would continue to make Zion holy as Jewish tradition had always perceived it?

With the loss of Jerusalem, Judaism was on the verge of

losing one its most potent religious symbols; a city that always had been a rallying point for creating Jewish unity because it was perceived as the home of the Jewish God. The Jewish people and the Jewish world faced the threat of collapse, as they became dispersed around the world with no focus or unifying force.

But now come the rabbis, armed with midrashim with a message. Fully cognizant of the danger that the chaos and disorder of the Jewish world posed to Judaism, we can understand their midrashim about Zion as a way of reestablishing a much needed center and focus for a centerless people. Jerusalem the reality may have ceased to function for the people as a unifying force, but that did not stop the rabbis from elevating Jerusalem to the level of an ideal, an idyllic Jerusalem that would serve the same vital purpose that the real Jerusalem once did during the reign of David. The midrashim made sure that the importance of Jerusalem would not be forgotten by the Jews; thus, they described its significance using hyperbolic and symbolic language that communicated the long-standing centrality of Zion in Jewishlife, which might not have been evident if one were to rely solely on the present reality. This ideal Zion, however,. could create a shared vision and hope that could bind Jews around the world together and towards which all could strive in their prayers and dreams. Perhaps this was the best way the rabbis found to preserve a sense of unity among a dispersed people.

While the rabbis described Zion as the center of the world, it should be noted that this was not a notion that originated with the Jews. The perception of a holy place as being the

center of the world was common among many cultures, particularly among the Greek. W. H. Roscher demonstrated that major Greek oracle sanctuaries such as Miletus and Delphi were considered to be the navel of the known world. The Greek term for such a place that stood at the center of the world is *Omphalus*, which means navel.[19] It is very interesting to note that the rabbis themselves used the image of a navel for Zion in their midrashim. It seems very plausible to me that the rabbis might have learned about this notion from the Greeks and then applied it to their own purposes.

Once the Jews were separated from their land, it is perfectly normal to expect them to begin idealizing what had once been a much simpler reality. Idealizing something that you can't have is one of the most common of human reactions. It is interesting that there is evidence of the exact same reaction among the Palestinians living in the West Bank today towards what they consider to be their home land.

There are stories that tell of young Palestinian children, who have never been to Jaffa,their family's ancestral home, who nonetheless recount to one another how much sweeter the water is there and how much finer the produce. So it was among the Jews who were removed from their ancestral land. This idealization of Zion can be seen in many of the midrashim, especially those that speak of Jerusalem's incredible size and height, and those that speak of the special powers of the city to make all Israel brothers (see Midrash Tehillim 122:4 [#14]), for example, or the perception of Jerusalem as a place in which people only ate,

drank and were merry. (see Pesikta Rabbati, Piska 42, [#6]).

Certainly these midrashim did not reflect a reality, but rather a hope and a dream. So too the many midrashim that foresaw the wonderful boons and blessings that would eventually come forth out of Zion. Such a notion would be sure to attract the attention of Jew's who were eagerly awaiting their redemption. If Jerusalem would be the first to be redeemed, them it would behoove all Jews to maintain their connection with Zion. This notion of Zion as the site for future redemption must have also served as a consolation for having to have suffered the bitter pill of destruction, and forcing a reconceptualization of what Zion was to mean to a Jew.

Within this chapter, we have encountered many of the ways the rabbis have envisioned and idealized Jerusalem and the Land of Israel, in light of the reality of destruction to which they bore witness. Many of these same themes will reappear throughout the other rabbinic texts we will examine. Thus, this chapter provides us with an important lens through which we will be able to examine the rabbis' understanding of a Jerusalem-focused prayer orientation, in an attempt to discern the extent to which the rabbinic view of prayer orientation depends upon, reflects, reshapes, or, perhaps, undermines this idealized notion of Jerusalem.

CHAPTER TWO: THE ORIENTATION OF ANCIENT SYNAGOGUES

If one is to fully understand both the concept of sacred direction in Jewish prayer--what influenced it and how it developed--as well as how it was actually practiced by the people, a manifestation of which can be witnessed in the architecture of ancient Jewish synagogues, one must become acquainted with the sources available. These sources are of two varieties: the physical and the written.

The first of these sources is the Jewish literary remains; comprising the Mishnah, the Talmuds, and other rabbinic literature. The other principle source that must be considered is the physical remains of ancient synagogues, unearthed in both Palestine and the Diaspora, and dated to a period spanning nearly 700 years; anywhere from the 2nd-Temple period up until the beginning of the 8th centuruy C.E., which is considered to be the end of the ancient synagogue period.[1]

Many have predicated their comprehension of the Jewish attitude towards orientation and prayer solely upon evidence derived from the Jewish literary tradition. While the texts of the Jewish tradition offer a valuable and critical perspective on this issue of sacred directions, surely such an understanding is severely circumscribed if it does not take into account the other available sources.

Prior to the destruction of the 2nd Temple, there is a great deal of literature that a historian can draw upon to reconstruct history--the later books of the Bible, Philo, Josephus, the New Testament, and the Dead Sea Scrolls--but for the following centuries we are far more centrally dependent on rabbinic literature.[2] These rabbinic texts represent the overwhelming bulk of the written evidence concerning Jewish practices for almost 1,000 years after the destruction of the second Temple.[3] Consequently, if one were to rely solely upon the perspective that they provide, a rather narrow, tendentious, and somewhat distorted picture of the nature of ancient Jewish life would emerge.

The rabbis may provide the only written testimony to what Jews were doing during the post-destruction period; but their reports of what was practiced and how may, in fact, not be representative of what really was happening among the people.

This caveat, of course, in no way reduces the importance and value of the literary remains as a witness to this period of history. The rabbinic literature provides one specific perspective on Jewish practices, which becomes all the more significant over time since it is these texts that will eventually shape the subsequent development of Jewish life and practice right up to our age. Indeed, it will be these literary remains that will serve as the focus of this thesis, enabling us to

understand not only what was observed when it came to sacred directions and prayer, but also perhaps, why it was done and how this practice was perceived and understood in its own time.

A more balanced picture of what ancient Jewish praxis might have been like, however, is available if we also take note of the evidence from the material world that continually comes to light; especially since 1967 in Israel, when a new flurry of interest in and access to ancient synagogue sites developed. Professor Eric Meyers noted the importance of this approach when he commented that "there is indeed much to be done in bringing those literary sources into dialogue with the monuments of material culture. Sometimes the result will be significant, sometimes the archaeological record will merely supplement the literary record, and vice versa."[4] Whether archaeology provides a radically new way of viewing the Jewish past or substantiates previously held positions, archaeology is a vital source of information that cannot be ignored.

Furthermore, these archaeological discoveries provide an important context for understanding the literary remains, and may, ultimately, be extremely helpful in challenging us to rethink notions about the nature of ancient Jewish life and how it was lived that had heretofore been formulated solely on the basis of rabbinic texts.

But there are also limitations to what the archaelogical evidence can bring to bear on this issue. Not only is it difficult to reconstruct and interpret the findings, but the archaeological exploration of ancient synagogues is a fairly recent field that is continually being reshaped and refined by the most recent discoveries. In addition, because the scholars are not of one mind concerning the meaning of the evidence that has been discovered--including the dating and classification of synagogues, the nature of the building's orientation, nor even whether the building was in fact a synagogue--we are still left with only an incomplete picture of how Jews might have oriented their worshipped. Moreover, archaeology offers us merely the remains of a once vital culture. It is still unclear to what degree this, too, actually correlates with what the people really did.

While clearly recognizing the limits of the literary and material sources, both of these sources also have valuable contributions to make towards comprehending the issues of sacred direction and have proved to be enlightening in understanding the complexities involved in the question of how Jews oriented themselves during prayer and how they structured their edifices for the purpose of prayer. Each provides only one piece of the puzzle; but when examined in tandem, the literary and material evidence can interact with each other so that a more accurate picture of ancient Jewish practices regarding

matters of orientation in the synagogue can fully develop.

I begin this study, therefore, with a survey of the archaeological evidence and the scholarly evaluation of it, concerning ancient Jewish practices of orientation in the synagogue, in the hopes of providing a context and awareness that will be helpful in understanding the literary remains that will occupy the bulk of this thesis.

ORIENTATION AS REFLECTED IN THE ARCHITECTURE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS OF ANCIENT SYNAGOGUES

The earliest research of ancient synagogues initially concluded that these synagogues were of three types or categories, and were linked to one another as a part of a developmental and chronological sequence.[5] This view is still maintained by many, though with certain caveats.

This initial research further suggested that these ancient synagogues were clearly oriented towards Jerusalem; a "fact," according to these scholars, that could be determined by the architectural layout of the synagogue, discerned through archaeological excavation. However, archaeologists later showed that there was not always one universal way of orienting a synagogue, even if the focal point, Jerusalem, remained the same. There were, in fact, two different methods of orienting a synagogue towards Jerusalem: one via the portals of the synagogue and the other in which the sacred direction was

indicated by the wall which housed the Torah. But the confusion over how synagogues were to be oriented and towards what, as will become evident below, has become even further complicated recently; for even the conclusion that the synagogues were oriented towards Jerusalem at all is currently a matter of debate.

The earliest type of synagogue, located primarily in the Galilee and Golan, is called the "Early," "Galilean,"or "Basilica" synagogue, some of the best examples of which can be found at Capernum and Bar'am.[6] These were originally thought to be the oldest synagogues existing and were judged to be from the 2nd to 3rd century C.E. The researchers who support this theory[7] note that the basic structural characteristic, which defines these synagogues, is that they are built on the model of a basilica. The principal entrance is built into a "sumptuous facade containing three entrances facing in the direction of Jerusalem"[8] and there is "an assembly hall with colonnades around three sides only, not across the entrance wall--presumably to emphasize the Jerusalem orientation."[9] "Worship is said to have been directed towards the Holy City, through the open doors and windows of the facade."[10]

In addition, excavations indicate that there was no permanent place for storing the Torah in this "Early" type of synagogue. Instead, the Torah would be carried in and out as needed.[11]

The "Later," "Byzantine" or "Apsidal" model of synagogue was considered to be the final stage of development in synagogue structure[12], emerging around the 5th or 6th century C.E. The best represent-ation of this type of synagogue can be found at Beit Alpha, known for its mosaic floor, which is also characteristic of this type; a change from the previously more common flagstone floors.

Another common structural element of this style of synagogue was the development of a permanent repository for the Torah, known as an apse, which was typically placed on the wall that faced Jerusalem. Built on the Basilica model, these synagogues were "long halls divided into nave and aisles by two rows of columns, ending in a semi-circular apse pointing towards Jerusalem." [13]

Further structural distinctions between these two types can also be seen in the placement of the principal entrance, which, in the Byzantine model, was moved to the wall opposite the Torah, away from Jerusalem.[14] In this synagogue type, it now appears that it was to be the Torah and not the main portal that was to indicate the sacred direction, namely Jerusalem. Clearly, a different method of orientation seems to be attested by this archaeological evidence.

The third synagogue model, first suggested by Michael Avi-Yonah, was thought to be a kind of transitional stage between the first and second style, which Avi-Yonah

believed resulted from "'a period of experimentation' with various arrangements in an attempt to accommodate a permanent Torah repository."[15] In this group of synagogues, of which there are the fewest examples extant and the greatest variety, the entrance and the direction of prayer are not oriented in the same way. Generally, this type has a "broadhouse" structure, where the Torah niche is located in the long wall opposite Jerusalem and the entrance is in one of the short walls. An example of this type of synagogue can be seen in Eshtemoa.

This third type is really much more of an ecclectic grouping of those synagogues that don't fit into model one or two than an actual synagogue style. "Almost every broadhouse-plan synagogue is unique. Just about the only characteristic shared by the broadhouse-plan synagogues is their basic shape--they are broader than they are long.... Diversity is the essential quality of broadhouse-plan synagogues."[16] This amorphous group of synagogues is also not confined to one particular area and is found in many regions, including the north and south of Israel and in the Diaspora, as well.

Until somewhat recently, the broadhouse-plan synagogue had continued to be seen as a transitional type, but now the consensus seems to be moving away from a rigid developmental or chronological approach towards a much more fluid and non-linear progression. The reason for this change in attitude is linked to the bewildering

variety that exists among the "transitional" types, which makes it difficult to continue asserting that there is evidence of a chronological development.[17] This shift in attitude had even been affirmed by the principal proponent of the "transitional" theory, Avi-Yonah, before his death in 1974. What this means, then, is that various different styles of synagogue architecture, complete with different methods of orientation and perhaps even different orientations, may have existed contemporaneously.

This shift away from a strict linear progression in ancient synagogue architecture has significant implications for the question of orientation and suggests an amorphous period in which the generally agreed upon earlier and later methods of orientation overlapped. This new position seems to provide evidence that not all of the Jewish communities were practicing the same customs, with regard to orientation, during this time period. Such a non-linear approach would seem to imply that while there might have been consensus on which direction one faced during prayer (and even this has not been fully achieved) there was a transition period during which different communities faced the sacred direction in different ways. The picture of Jewish practice regarding orientation during prayer that emerges from the archaeological discoveries is one that is by no means uniform or clearly defined.

There are even those scholars now who are hotly

contesting the earlier claims that these ancient synagogues were in fact oriented towards Jerusalem, as we shall see as we consider specific examples of orientaion in ancient synagogues.

ORIENTATION OF SPECIFIC ANCIENT SYNAGOGUES

In the following examples of specific synagogue remains, we will consider synagogues from a variety of time periods and styles, synagogues utilizing various means of indicating the sacred direction, and even synagogues oriented in different directions. It should be clear at the end of this cursory survey that, contrary to earlier scholarly opinion, the manner in which ancient synagogues were oriented follows no single pattern.

There was a time when the general scholarly opinion concurred that the earliest synagogue remains still existing in Israel could be dated no earlier than 200 C.E..[18] "It has been presumed that synagogues may have existed in the country prior to this date, but were destroyed during the two Jewish revolts and their ruins were no longer identifiable."[19] However, the Israeli archaeologist, Gideon Foerster, argues that there is a "well-defined group of synagogues dated to the 2nd Temple period."[20]

Foerster has based his conclusions on the archaeological excavations conducted at five different

sites within Palestine: Masada, Herodium, Gamla, Migdal, and Chorozain. At these various sites, Foerster discovered five buildings that shared certain architectural characteristics, which, he argues, indicate that they were synagogues. One of these characteristics is directly related to our issue of orientation. Foerster noted that all of the structures, except the one at Gamla, had their main entrance facing east.[21] This feature of an eastern orientation of the synagogues' gates, rooted in a Tosefta text that called for a synagogue to have its gates facing east,[22] was vital to Foerster's theory that these buildings functioned as synagogues.

Foerster has added a new factor into the orientation equation. Up until now, the discussion revolved around synagogues oriented towards Jerusalem, either by portal or Torah apse, but now there is a third element to take into consideration: the orientation of the synagogue in a new direction, not towards Jerusalem but the east, whereby the orientation is signified by the gates.

The synagogue discovered at Masada, by the archaeological team headed by Yigal Yadin, was the first physical example of its kind dating to the 2nd Temple period.[23] Avi-Yonah has noted that the synagogue was built "in the western wall of the fortress, and facing Jerusalem."[24] Hershel Shanks also concurs with Foerster's estimation of the Masada synagogue's orientation, yet notes that it is not without its problems.

> The orientation of the building [at Masada] may support its identification as a synagogue but at the same time raises problems. The building is in one sense oriented toward Jerusalem. Someone who entered the building from the east and faced the back of the building would be looking generally toward Jerusalem [!?].... The problem is that before there was a permanent niche for the Torah Ark, the front facade of the building customarily faced Jerusalem.[25]

There are two important concerns raised by Shanks in his comments. The first issue addressed is towards what is the synagogue oriented. Though Shanks states that the synagogue is oriented "generally toward Jerusalem," one would be very hard pressed to agree with him. A worshipper, upon entering the synagogue at Masada, would clearly be facing in a westerly direction; yet Jerusalem is most definitely to the north. Even allowing for a certain degree of imprecision, an orientation towards Jerusalem would still be ambiguous at best.

The second issue that Shanks raises concerns the part of the synagogue which should point the way to Jerusalem. Noting that there was no permanent receptacle for the Torah, Shanks indicates that under such circumstances it is the synagogue portals that usually face Jerusalem. We must therefore ponder why, then, if this is true, the gates of the synagogue are opened towards the east; clearly not the direction of Jerusalem. Taking careful consideration of both accounts, the status of the synagogue's Jerusalem orientation appears dubious.[26]

Foerster himself recognized the problems inherent in arguing that the Masada synagogue was oriented towards Jerusalem. Perhaps, he suggested, the synagogue was oriented not towards Jerusalem at all but had built its gates so that they faced east, in keeping with the dictum of Tosefta Megillah.[27]

The possibility of an eastern orientation would certainly be a plausible solution, especially since Foerster had noted that this particular orientation was a characteristic shared with three of the other four synagogues he had examined. However, even his assertion that the majority of these synagogues had their gates on the east has been called into question.

Marilyn Chiat challenges Foerster's supposition that the zealots, in remodeling the synagogue at Masada, purposely designed their synagogue in such a way as to meet particularly established criteria of orientation which demanded that the gates open to the east. In fact, she notes that the gate of the synagogue was actually on the south-east and states that it also seemed as if this particular location was not a conscious decision of orientation, but simply the most practical position for the facade and entrance.[28] Furthermore, she adds that there is also no evidence to support a claim that it was even because of the hall's easterly entrance that it was chosen by the Zealots as their place of assembly.[29]

Subsequently, in reviewing Foerster's conclusions in

general, Chiat charges that, of the five synagogues examined by Foerster, only one truly has its facade and main entrance on the east: Herodium.[30] Moreover, Chiat goes one step further in bringing her point home by suggesting that Herodium has its gates on the east purely by chance. "Judging by the building's position within the palace complex, it would appear that its orientation was fortuitous. The hall's western corner and adjoining room abut the fortress's circular enclosure wall, and the remainder of the building, except for its facade, is surrounded by rooms."[31]

The one exception to his theory that Foerster himself notes is the case of Gamla, a Jewish village in the Galilee that was destroyed by the Romans in their fight against the Zealots. One might expect that the synagogue of Gamla, a contemporary of that at Masada and Herodium, should certainly be oriented in the same direction; according to the rabbinic ruling concerning "eastern gates." However, excavation has shown that the building's main entrance was not towards the east, but on the south-west, facing Jerusalem, and that there is no evidence of remodeling!![32]

How can we explain such discrepancies in orientation? We have been presented with five different synagogues from roughly the same period of history. The entrances of two of the buildings, at Chorozain and Migdal, are only conjectured to be on the east. The evidence in these

cases is not conclusive.[33] With regard to the other three, two appear to have an easterly orientation (the intentionality of this particular direction still unproven) and one seems to have a clear orientation towards Jerusalem. There seems to be no overall structure that is guiding the orientation of these early synagogues. Scholars suggest that a uniform practice regarding synagogue orientation--method and direction--was lacking until the emergence of the Byzantine synagogue, some time in the 5th or 6th century C.E., when the Torah apse appears to have become the standard indicator of the sacred direction of Jerusalem.[34] The only possible conclusion is that either different rules were in operation for different communities or that no particular attention was paid to the issue of orientation at this early date.

At best, prior to this time, the sacred direction might have been Jerusalem, and even if so, the practice of how to indicate the sacred direction was not at all standardized. At least, that appears to be all we can say regarding pre-70 C.E. synagogues in Palestine itself.

But what of the Diaspora? Both Rachel Wischnitzer and Andrew Seager have studied ancient synagogues of the Diaspora. Their research indicates a clear orientation towards Jerusalem at an early date, perhaps even earlier than in Palestine.

Wischnitzer's work presents an examination of six

Diaspora synagogues, four of which have permanent Torah shrines oriented in the direction of Jerusalem.[35] Seager provides a detailed study of two these Diaspora synagogues in particular: Dura Europos (2nd century C.E. to 256), in Syria, and Sardis (2nd/3rd century C.E. to 616), in Turkey. He notes that the styles, location, and architecture of these two synagogues are quite different, yet they both are distinctly oriented towards Jerusalem.

In the Dura synagogue, the Torah niche is on the wall nearest to Jerusalem. "This arrangement allowed the worshippers to face the niche with its scrolls and to face Jerusalem simultaneously (approximately, but not exactly)."[36] The orientation of the synagogue at Sardis appears, at first glance, to be the reverse of what is expected because there is an apse at the end of the hall pointing directly away from Jerusalem. However, Saeger's study reveals that the niche was most likely not used to house a Torah scroll, but served instead as seats for the elders. The Torah was probably stored in the shrines on either side of the main entrance, which was, in fact, on the east wall facing Jerusalem.[37]

We can now turn to post-70 synagogues in Palestine itself, and see if they follow any rules similar to those typified by Wischnitzer's and Seager's diaspora plans. While there is some evidence of a Jerusalem orientation here, we find also the same confusion that marked the pre-70 building schemes for Palestinian synagogues

An example of this diversity can be seen when the Capernaum synagogue, the best preserved basilica-plan synagogue, is compared with a contemporary synagogue discovered in what is commonly known as "David's Tomb." Though there is some dispute over the dating of the Capernaum synagogue, Israeli archaeologists generally agree that this synagogue, whose three-doored facade looks out towards Jerusalem, was built between the 2nd and 3rd century C.E..[38] The apse of a synagogue located in "David's Tomb" has also been dated to the same late Roman period. An apse for the Torah was discovered behind David's sarcophagus and it was determined that it pointed exactly in the direction of the Temple Mount.[39] Here are two contemporaneous synagogues that are oriented by totally opposite means.

There are also some synagogues which seem to combine two different practices. Perhaps they are, in fact, part of some transitional stage, as originally suggested by Avi-Yonah. The synagogue of Eshtemoa and Susya in Judea are good examples. Each is oriented in the holy direction towards Jerusalem, indicated by the niche which held the Torah, and each also has the main portal on the east side; thus fulfilling two different orientation standards at once. Such examples are not only limited to one geographical area. The synagogue of Yafa in the Galilee is also built in the above manner.[40] Perhaps these synagogues reflect a time when both criteria were

operational. At least they face Jerusalem, albeit in different ways.

But other synagogues, from very different time periods, seem to conform with Foerster's suggested notion of orientation--namely, that the gates should face east--whether or not that is the direction of Jerusalem. The synagogues of 'Esfia and Khirbeth Semmaka at Mt. Carmel, and Irbid in the Galilee, all lie north of Jerusalem and have their sacred direction vested in the portal of the synagogue (characteristic of the early style). Given this fact, one would expect the portals to face south, but they are on the east!![41]

Similarly, the synagogue of Hamath-by-Gadara in Transjordan, a later structure which has its holiness attached to the wall containing the Torah, lies north of Jerusalem. In this case, one would expect the entrance to be on the north, but, in fact, it is on the east.[42] Which laws are determining the orientation of these synagogues? It is just not clear at this point in time and scholars continue to search for evidence that will support their point of view.[43]

However, the evidence presented thus far bears out the following conclusions:

1. Synagogues in Palestine, before 70 C.E.: Lacked a uniform directional rule.

2. Synagogues in Palestine, after 70 C.E.: Some were oriented towards Jerusalem in one way or another, and

some faced east, seemingly in accordance with the ruling in Tosefta Megillah.

3. Synagogues in Diaspora, after 70 C.E.: Torah wall oriented towards Jerusalem.

While periods in which a lack of consensus over the manner and direction of synagogue orientation are attested, there are also synagogue remains extant that clearly testify to the fact that there was some kind of change in attitude towards the matter of orientation that took place. In these synagogues there is evidence that the direction the synagogue faced was altered at some point in time, seemingly to conform to new standards of orientation. The two best Palestinian examples of this change can be seen in the synagogues of Beit She'arim and Ein Gedi. In the earliest version of each of these synagogues the entrance faced Jerusalem, but this portal was replaced by a Torah shrine in the later rendition and the entrance was moved to the opposite wall.

This transference of holiness from the portal to the Torah shrine suggests two things. First, that the earlier method of indicating the sacred direction seems to have been via the gate, and only later transferred to the wall which housed the Torah. Second, if there was a time, as material evidence seems to suggest, when orientation of the synagogue was less structured and controlled, then there also came a time when the manner of orientation became of such great importance that it necessitated the

restructuring and remodeling of an existing synagogue.

EXPLAINING THE CHANGE IN ORIENTATION

How do we understand the various practices that are associated with the orientation of ancient synagogues? How can we create some sort of pattern and order out of the diversity that continually presented itself throughout the archaeological remains? There are those who argue that the issue of orientation was not really of any importance in the structuring of Jewish sacred space, in this case, the synagogue. Upon surveying the building plans of ancient synagogues, Eric Meyers concludes,

> It is not surprising that individual houses of worship exhibit special characteristics which are not particularly well-known or well-attested. From our perspective, such a state of affairs corroborates what is most obvious about the synagogue: that it is what transpires within its walls that is most important rather than the walls themselves.[44]

Though it is true that many synagogues do exhibit a great deal of individuality, Meyers may have overstated the case by presuming that this lack of concern was everywhere and always the norm. There was not complete Jewish disinterest in the walls of the synagogue, and, by implication, a synagogue's orientation. The archaeological evidence showe different rules, not just no rule, at least in the Diaspora, and even in post 70 C.E. Palestine. Moreover, the rabbinic literary evidence too demonstrates some concern for the rules governing orientation, which at

least some post 70 C.E. synagogues followed.

Consequently, there is a need to develop a more meaningful and coherent way of making sense of the archaeological evidence at hand. Let us begin by asking: what can we extract from the archaeological evidence presented thus far? First, there appears to be general consensus that a shift took place in the presence and accommodation of the Torah in the synagogue architecture. It is considered to be true that the earliest synagogues had no permanent place to store the Torah scrolls and that they were carried in whenever they were to be used.

It is also considered to be true that the later synagogues developed an apse along one wall of the synagogue to house the Scrolls permanently.[45] "But in between there was a great deal of overlap. There were some very early Torah shrines (Ostia and Sardis), but other later synagogues were built without Torah shrines and were used in this way long after structural Torah shrines became the general rule."[46] Thus, it would be a mistake to argue that the development of the Torah shrine was linear. At best, we can say that there was a general movement from one plan to the other, with a great deal of flux in between.

Second, most scholars would also agree that there occurred not only a transference in sacred direction from the portals to the wall opposite, which contained the Torah apse, but also a deepening concern for matters of orientation. Seager argues that the earlier Galilean type

of synagogues do not reflect a "strong directional thrust." In these synagogues, where there is typically colonnades around three sides of the building with some emphasis on the entrance wall, "attention is largely directed inward to the central space."[47] On the other hand, the later, Byzantine type of synagogue can be identified by another feature which is characteristic but not universal: "the strengthening of architectural directionality."[48]

Two questions, however, remain: why did this change in orientatin occur and what was the time frame for this switch? And what role, if any, did the Torah play in this shift? In answer to the first question, Landsberger suggests a general time frame for placing the change in orientation and distinguishes between the synagogues in Palestine and those in the Diaspora. He reports that "in Palestine, the transfer of the sacred direction from the entrance to the opposite wall is reflected in architectural remains not earlier than the 5th or 6th century of our era."[49] See for example the synagogues at Na'an near Jericho, Hammath by Tiberias, and Beit Alpha. Landsberger also suggests that this transfer occurred earlier in the Orient; by the middle of the 3rd century at Dura Europos on the Euphrates.[50] His findings are consonant with the summary arrived at here. (see p. 39)

As to the rationale behind the change in the method of orientation, many scholars claim that it has much to do

with the fact that at a certain point in time the Torah was no longer transported in and out of the synagogue, but became a permanent fixture in the synagogue architecture. This development came to pass, according to some scholars, as "the Torah apparently is given an increasingly prominent setting in the synagogue as Scripture becomes more important to the community."[51]

Four synagogues in the Diaspora--Sardis, Priene, Ostia, and Dura--also provide strong architectural evidence that Scripture had become central to the religious life of the community. In Priene, in Asia Minor, only the Torah niche stands out in an otherwise plain room.[52] In the Italian synagogue in Ostia, the "visitor is bracketed between the bemah on the west wall and the monumental Torah shrine on the east."[53] The synagogue of Dura Europos is famous for its spectacular Torah shrine and accompanying paintings,[54] and the Torah scrolls of the Sardis synagogue, located in Turkey, were kept in large chambers on either side of the main entrance.[55]

Once the Torah was introduced as a permanent fixture, according to some scholars, it is suggested that it would have been awkward to have the Torah on the same wall as the main entrance since this would have necessitated people coming in and immediately turning around in order to face the Torah, so as not to show disrespect.[56] (Such a circumstance can be seen in transitional periods as exemplified by the situation in Sardis that is discussed

above.) Consequently, the Torah was placed on the wall opposite the entrance and the Torah wall became the indicator of the holy direction towards Jerusalem so that the worshippers could face the Torah and Jerusalem at the same time.

It has been suggested by a few scholars,[57] however, that there was resistance in certain communities to the establishment of the Torah as a permanent fixture, perhaps becuase it was perceived as a substitution or imitation of the sanctuary in the destroyed Temple. Such a position would help explain why the Torah is not found as a permanent fixture in many synagogues in the north of Israel. "The synagogues of Galilee and the Golan may represent a conservative tradition, which adopts a Torah centered worship (or at least the architectural expression of it) only at a relatively late date, if at all."[58]

Having now discussed the impact of the Torah on shaping the manner in which the orientation of the synagogue was established, we are left with one issue that is still a matter of contention among the scholars: towards what were the ancient synagogues actually oriented? Recently, there have been a number of scholars who have been questioning whether there exists sufficient, valid evidence for claiming that these early synagogues were, in fact, oriented towards Jerusalem, as the majority of scholars have long been purporting in their oft cited and generally uncritically accepted three-tiered theory of

synagogue typology.

ORIENTATION TOWARDS JERUSALEM CALLED INTO QUESTION

The above mentioned theory makes a claim that the external sacred point of reference, towards which the synagogue would be oriented, either by portal or Torah, was the city of Jerusalem. "Recent researches on the subject of ancient synagogues have produced a kind of new flexibility with respect to longheld scholarly positions."[59] The current challenge raised by scholars[60] reflect this new attitude. Their claim is that the previously held position regarding ancient synagogues' orientation is facile and not particularly well supported by the archaeological facts.

It is pointed out that at least one-third of the existing synagogue remains in Israel, whose orientation can still be determined with a comfortable degree of confidence, are, at best, ambiguous in their orientation as to the direction of Jerusalem.[61] According to the diagram,[62] indicating the orientation of 13 ancient synagogues (including those at Masada and Herodium, thought by many to be the earliest examples extant) it is very doubtful that they are facing in the direction of Jerusalem.

After a careful review of the evidence, Seager concludes that "I see no way to avoid the conclusion that

more than one tradition regarding orientation was in operation."[63] (See chart, Appendix B)

Adding a new dimension to the discussion, Seager raises a further problem with the old theory. He questions whether we can conclude a direct correlation between the orientation of a building and the actual direction in which people prayed. Just because the building was situated in such a way does not necessarily prove that people faced that direction when they prayed. Having examined the archaeological findings he concluded, "It is not just a question of which way the building faced. Inescapably, either prayer was not always directed toward Jerusalem, or, the direction of prayer could be quite independent of the building orientation."[64]

Further attacking the hypothesis that particular structural plans of a synagogue reflect a particular orientation, Seager argues, "There is no clear correlation between orientation and building type. Whether a synagogue is oriented to Jerusalem or not seems to be largely unrelated to the kind of plan it has."[65] The archaeological evidence has indicated that some of the "Early" type synagogues are oriented towards Jerusalem and some are not, while some "Later" models are not oriented towards Jerusalem and others are.

Other expressions of this diversity of orientation can be witnessed in the unorthodoxy reflected in the Dura synagogue, and confirmed by discoveries at Ostia and

Sardis. These findings indicate that the Dura and the other synagogues should "be seen as one of several synagogues known both in Palestine and in the Diaspora which do not conform to the established classifications."[66]

The archaeological evidence has raised another important issue: the influence of outside factors.

> The archaeological evidence reviewed here suggest that the most important factors shaping a Diaspora synagogue building are local; location, size, decoration, architectural features and even symbolism depend in large part on the forces at work and the patterns available in a particular gentile city or town.[67]

Eric Meyers concurs and further develops this insight into regional influence, which is helpful in understanding the reasons why the old typology has failed to yield satisfactory answers. According to Meyers, the synagogue typologies cannot possibly account for the tremendous deviations from the norm which have been observed; therefore, new solutions must be sought.:

> The site [of the synagogue at Gush Halav] provides us with a unique basilica which further contributes to the shattering of older theories about the typological development of Palestinian synagogues and offers us the possibility for understanding local or regional variations within familiar categories. If local traditions may be seen to influence the more or less dominant Roman type of building pattern and styles, it is suggestive to think that individual peculiarities of site such as topography, availability of artisans, cultural orientation, wealth, regional factors, etc. further contributed to the emergence of synagogue types that heretofore might have been considered to be

aberrant and eccentric."[68]

On a very different level, the newest theory also argues that up until now research has been overly dependent upon Jewish literary sources, such as Biblical, Mishnaic and Talmudic texts, which do not necessarily depict an accurate portrait of what was actually done and observed, as seems to be attested by the archaeological evidence. Recent scholars, such as Seager and Chiat, note that such dependence on the rabbinic canon tends to create an oversimplified view and understanding of the issue of synagogue orientation and they urge scholars to take a new and broader look at other factors that may have played a role in the physical orientation of a synagogue.

Seager contends that "the assumption that Rabbinic authority was reflected in a canonical synagogue architecture, implicit in most versions of the traditional typology, is no longer tenable."[69]

Kraabel supports this new development away from an overdependence upon the perspective of traditional texts and contends that "the archaeological evidence which has become available in the last half century provides a counter-balance [to the picture painted by the rabbinic texts]. For the Diaspora, at least, it argues for diversity, symbolized in the various shapes and sizes of building on the plans."[70] "It seems now to be true not only for the Diaspora but for the Holy Land as well."[71]

The impact of local culture has been suggested as one

explanation for the discrepancies in orientation. Seager suggests another, based on his research at Sardis. What we might be witnessing, he proposes, is an example of not a single focus but multiple foci coming into play. Seager noted that in the Sardis synagogue one focus was provided by the large marble table and sculpted lions in front, on the western side, away from Jerusalem. Another focal point seemed to be directed at the center of the hall where there were four marble slabs that perhaps supported a bemah. And still another focus was provided by the location of the Torah niche on the back wall, the side facing Jerusalem.[72]

Seager posits a creative resolution to the problem posed by these many foci. He suggests that the hall had a number of different functions and that each focus may have been associated with a different purpose. That is to say, perhaps the worshippers faced east, the discourses were delivered from the center, and the benches on the west served as the focal point for the tribunal, where the elders sat.[73]

In conclusion, Eric Meyers, as he reflects upon the impact of recent evidence gathered from many newly-discovered and newly-excavated synagogues in Eretz Israel proper, especially in both Galilees and the Golan, provides a very helpful summary of the new scholarly consensus concerning the emergent field of ancient synagogues. Here is his summary of this new accord, which

he admittedly characterizes as an American consensus:

1) The development of the synagogue as a distinct architectural entity did not emerge within the constraints of a fixed typology of Basilica, Broadhouse, and Byzantine;

2) Local and regional influences may be seen to have created a situation of great architectural variety;

3) Stylistic continuity may be observed in some synagogues but apparently religious constraints such as sacred orientation, the location of the scriptural reading or place for Scripture (Torah shrine) could be realized in a great variety of ways;

4) The criteria for dating synagogues and their furnishings are primarily archaeological, as opposed to those historical, social, literary, or religious in nature.

CHAPTER THREE: EARLY LITERARY REMAINS

The current archaeological evidence has indicated that the orientation of Jewish worship was not particularly uniform or consistent until perhaps the 5th or 6th century C.E.. The rabbis of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, however, appear to articulate a clear and unequivocable position regarding the proper orientation for prayer. Having completed our study of the archaeological material, we need now to better understand this rabbinic view of prayer orientation and consider why it is that the rabbis present such a conflicting picture of Jewish orientation customs. Therefore, we now direct our investigation towards the legacy of textual material, beginning with texts originating in the early rabbinic period.

These early literary remains, comprising two texts from the Mishnah and two selections from the Tosefta, present not only the first critical insight into the rabbis' worldview; but more specifically, indicate the possible rabbinic rationale(s) for establishing a particular direction for prayer. In this regard, the texts have an advantage over the synagogue ruins: they speak and can communicate, explicitly or implicitly, the reasons behind the regulation of synagogue and worship orientation. While, the words of the rabbis can be stepping stones to a greater understanding of Jewish prayer orientation customs, they can also be obstacles since they are often of a polemic nature, and cannot merely be taken at face value. Consequently, the rabbinic texts, like the ancient synagogues, must be carefully "excavated" in

order to unearth their treasures, which in turn must be carefully analyzed in order to understand their meaning.

It cannot be denied that the number of available texts from this early rabbinic period, which touch on this topic, is far from overwhelming. Our four texts, which address both matters of personal and communal orientation during prayer, as well as one text on the orientation of the synagogue, are also quite succinct. We shall see that the rabbis were much more concerned with the prayer orientation of people than with that of buildings; though the orientation of synagogues was undeniably a critical issue, as the texts will demonstrate.

However, this dearth of material is not to suggest that what these texts do reveal is disappointing. Despite the fact that the texts are few in number, they offer an insightful perspective on the issue of orientation during Tannaitic times and provide a profound glimpse into the world of the rabbis.

One might interpret the limited attention to prayer direction in the rabbinic texts as a lack of rabbinic concern for the orientation of worship in general. We begin this investigation, however, under the assumption that the direction of worship was, indeed, a significant matter for the rabbis. There are a number of factors that suggest that such an assumption is accurate.

First, if the rabbis did not deem the matter of prayer orientation of significant value they would not have addressed the issue in the first place, even in a circumscribed manner.

Second, while the Temple stood, sacrifice had been the individual's principle way of establishing a relationship with God. In the subsequent post-destruction era, however, when these rabbinic texts were recorded, prayer had replaced sacrifices as the primary means of communicating with the divine, and had become an activity of ultimate religious significance. Consequently, the orientation of prayer was not a matter to be left to chance or personal whim, and it demanded rabbinic regulation and standardization in some way, as the texts will bear out.

Furthermore, even a cursory examination of the rabbinic texts concerned with the orientation of worship, clearly indicates that the rabbis were not only interested in the direction of prayer in general, but advocated a particular prayer focus: The Temple in Jerusalem.

Consequently, the most critical questions yet to be fully explored are not: Was the direction of prayer important to the rabbis? Or even, Which direction of prayer did the rabbis advocate? Rather they are: Why were the rabbis so concerned with orienting prayers towards Jerusalem? What were the rabbis' rationales for instituting a uniform worship orientation and to what ends? And, How did the various rabbis understand, over time, the practice of praying in the direction of Jerusalem? These questions, therefore, will become the central focus of this thesis, which will attempt to expose the richness of the ancient tradition of praying towards Jerusalem.

Given the laconic style of the rabbinic texts, however, revealing the core rabbinic concerns is not an easy task . The rabbis devoted precious little time and space to discussing the reasons for their rulings, and concentrated, instead, on required practices. Thus, deduction and inference will be invaluable tools for revealing the rabbinic reasons underlying their regulation of the proper orientation of prayer. And through a careful analysis of these rabbinic texts a portrait will emerge of the role Jerusalem-focused worship played in the view of the rabbis and the development of the rabbinic perception of this practice. In addition, a picture of the critical issues challenging the rabbis of each era, which may have had a tremendous influence on the development of this practice, will become clearer.

CHAPTER FOUR: A BIBLICAL BACKGROUND TO ORIENTATION?

Before actually analyzing the early rabbinic literature, it is necessary to introduce three biblical passages that figure largely in the later rabbinic discussions: I Kings 8:44-48; II Chronicles 6:34-38; and Daniel 6:11. There are certainly other texts that the rabbis quote to support their positions[1], but these three are distinguished by the fact that they also expressly state an opinion concerning the orientation of prayer.

In their admittedly abbreviated handling of the issue, the rabbis quote extensively from these three texts because they serve as the foundation upon which the rabbis ultimately build their case for Jerusalem-oriented worship. They are therefore presented as if they are the source of the ruling that Jerusalem be the focal point of prayer.

Consequently, it is necessary to determine when these biblical texts were written. This assessment will insure that we properly understand the message of these texts in their appropriate historical context; and will subsequently aid us in attaining a fuller appreciation of the rabbinic material and how the rabbis used these texts to their own ends.

I Kings 8:44-48

44 כִּי־יֵצֵא עַמְּךָ לַמִּלְחָמָה עַל־אֹיְבוֹ בַּדֶּרֶךְ
אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁלָחֵם וְהִתְפַּלְלוּ אֶל־יְהוָה דֶּרֶךְ הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר
מה בָּחַרְתָּ בָּהּ וְהַבַּיִת אֲשֶׁר־בָּנִיתִי לִשְׁמֶךָ: וְשָׁמַעְתָּ הַשָּׁמַיִם
46 אֶת־תְּפִלָּתָם וְאֶת־תְּחִנָּתָם וְעָשִׂיתָ מִשְׁפָּטָם: כִּי יֶחֱטְאוּ
לָךְ כִּי אֵין אָדָם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יֶחֱטָא וְאָנַפְתָּ בָּם וְנָתַתָּם לִפְנֵי
אוֹיֵב וְשָׁבוּם שֹׁבֵיהֶם אֶל־אֶרֶץ הָאוֹיֵב רְחוֹקָה אוֹ קְרוֹבָה:
47 וְהֵשִׁיבוּ אֶל־לִבָּם בָּאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבּוּ־שָׁם וְשָׁבוּ וְהִתְחַנְּנוּ
אֵלֶיךָ בְּאֶרֶץ שֹׁבֵיהֶם לֵאמֹר חָטָאנוּ וְהֶעֱוִינוּ רָשָׁעְנוּ:
48 וְשָׁבוּ אֵלֶיךָ בְּכָל־לִבָּם וּבְכָל־נַפְשָׁם בְּאֶרֶץ אֹיְבֵיהֶם
אֲשֶׁר־שָׁבוּ אֹתָם וְהִתְפַּלְלוּ אֵלֶיךָ דֶּרֶךְ אַרְצָם אֲשֶׁר־
נָתַתָּה לַאֲבוֹתָם הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר בָּחַרְתָּ וְהַבַּיִת אֲשֶׁר־בָּנִיתִי
לִשְׁמֶךָ:

44. "When Your people take the field against their enemy by whatever way You send them, and they pray to the Lord in the direction of the city which You have chosen, and of the house which I have built to Your name. 45. Oh, hear in heaven their prayer and supplication and uphold their cause. 46. "When they sin against You--for there is no man who does not sin--and You are angry with them and deliver them to the enemy, and their captors carry them off to an enemy land, near or far; 47. And then they take it to heart in the land to which they have been carried off, and they repent and make supplication to You in the land of their captors, saying: 'we have sinned, we have acted perversely, we have acted wickedly,' 48. And they turn back to You with all their heart and soul, in the land of the enemies who have carried them off, and they pray to You in the direction of their land which You gave to their fathers, of the city which You have chosen, and of the house which I have built to Your name..."[2]

This passage is ostensibly part of the great dedicatory speech made by King Solomon to the people of Israel upon the completion of the First Temple in approximately the year 1000 B.C.E.. At this point in the solemn address, Solomon stands facing the altar, hands raised, appealing to God to protect and hearken to those who worship in or towards the Temple.

The author of this passage would have us believe that the

origin of directing one's prayers towards Jerusalem was intimately connected to the construction of the First Temple itself. Furthermore, the author presents none other than King Solomon as the revered ancestor who first legislated that worship should be oriented "in the direction of their land which You gave to their fathers, of the city which You have chosen, and of the house which I have built to Your name..." The ultimate destination of the prayers is made increasingly clear as the verse proceeds: It is not simply the Land of Israel, or even Jerusalem, but the Temple itself. The focus and the final destination of the prayer is fixed and unchanging.

This particular pericope, however, is generally agreed upon by scholars to be a much later extension of the text. And, in fact, modern criticism is unanimous in attributing the two verses that are most critical to the issue of orientation, vv 44 and 48, to the Deuteronomic redactor, since these verses reflect the concerns of the Josianic Reform: A renewed emphasis on the centrality of the Temple cult and a vigorous attempt to abolish Bamot, which competed with the Temple as sites of sacrifice and worship. Both verses are viewed as expansions of the original theme, adding a call for God's support of Israel in foreign war and God's compassion for Israel in foreign captivity.[3]

In addition to the Deuteronomic theology reflected in the textual expansions, there are other new concerns injected into the passage that were of particular interest to those who had suffered exile at the hands of foreign conquerors, in all

likelihood the Babylonians. These further additions suggest to scholars the hand of an exilic editor as well.

"The passage, which is preoccupied with defeat in war and deportation, might of itself no more visualize the Babylonian Exile than the reference to deportation in v 34, [which is considered original to the text]. The prominence now given to the subject, however, rather suggests the great Exile."[4] But there are additional reasons to propose a further exilic redaction.

It has been claimed that the structure of vv 44-45 does "not follow the same grammatical construction as the previous section, and [the verses] are to be regarded as secondary. In content, too, they are suspect, for they return to the themes of war and deportation already covered in vv 33-34, and they omit all reference to 'Israel,' which appears consistently in vv 31-43."[5] This omission of 'Israel' is significant in that it suggests a world in which 'Israel,' as an autonomous, political entity, no longer exists, as was the case during the Babylonian Exile.

It is argued that vv 46-53 are the work of the exilic redactor as well. These verses "clearly reveal an exilic background, with the covenant people far from their land."[6] The progression of the passage supports this notion of exile as it moves from the people sinning, to God getting angry and delivering them over to their captors, who subsequently carry them off to lands "near or far." "Unmistakably the situation described is in the exile, to which a more pointed reference is

made in these verses than anywhere else in this chapter."[7]

It is, therefore, suggested by biblical scholars that the Babylonian redactor (the P source) had originally lived in the Land of Israel where he had been influenced by the Deuteronomic Reform. Later, this editor carried the theological underpinnings of the Reform into exile where these two themes--the centrality of the Temple and the concerns of those in exile--were woven together into a pre-existing text.

All evidence, consequently, seems to clearly place the date of authorship of this particular passage long after the actual dedication of the Temple by Solomon, implied by the biblical text. Instead, scholars concur that the additions, which make specific reference to prayer towards Jerusalem, were initially written some time during the Deuteronomic redaction, the first draft of which was completed in 598 B.C.E., and then further edited just after the first deportation from Judah in 597 B.C.E.[8]

After reading this passage from I Kings, there is not much room for doubt over the direction in which the author believed Jewish prayers were to be offered. A certain hierarchy also emerges with regard to this direction. The outermost level of holiness was attached to the Land of Israel, while the next level of holiness was ascribed to the city of Jerusalem, but it was the Temple itself that stood at the core of this matrix of holiness. And it was towards the Temple, "the House for God's Name," that people should ultimately direct their prayers.

Furthermore, there is a strong conditional relationship

intimated in this passage between the orientation of one's prayers and their efficacy. The text says: "When...they pray to the Lord in the direction of the city [and] the House...built to Your name, oh, hear in heaven their prayer and supplication and uphold their cause." (v 44-5) This suggests that if one's prayers were not directed expressly towards the Temple then it was questionable whether God would hearken to the people's prayers and supplications at all. Such a relationship was also noted by Rashi, who, in commenting on the meaning of verse 44, suggests that the people "should pray facing Jerusalem and facing the Temple so that the Holy One will hear their prayers and supplications."

It should be fairly evident how this text functioned for the rabbis' purposes. First of all, it clearly established a precedent for facing Jerusalem during prayer.

Second, not only does this passage indicate the direction in which prayer should be offered, but it links the orientation of prayer with its fulfillment. This adds a new level of significance to the rabbis' claim for the importance of praying towards Jerusalem, and certainly provides additional leverage when it comes to convincing the people to observe this practice. It is interesting, though, that the rabbis never expressly state that God only hears or responds to prayers directed towards Jerusalem. However, as we shall see, this belief persists beneath the surface of the rabbbinic texts.

Lastly, and of no mean significance, the ability of the

rabbis to link a prayer orientation towards Jerusalem to such an ancient and esteemed event, the dedication of the First Temple by King Solomon, creates an aura of sanctity and authenticity around the custom.

While we may not assume that the rabbis were aware of the fact that their prooftext in I Kings was not original to the passage, we certainly are. It can no longer be claimed that such an orientation was established back at the time of the First Temple. Rather, the practice of orienting one's prayers towards Jerusalem and the Temple appears, at this point, to have had its origin sometime during the Babylonian Exile, or at the earliest, sometime during the Deuteronomic reformation, when the Bamot outside of Jerusalem were denied licit status. Despite this later dating, which may have tarnished the luster of this prooftext's reputation, the text itself does not cease to function as an important rabbinic precedent for Jerusalem-oriented prayer, since the Babylonian Exile was still centuries prior to the rabbinic period.

II CHRONICLES 6:34-38

34 כִּי־יֵצֵא עַמְּךָ לַמִּלְחָמָה עַל־אֹיְבָיו בַּדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר
תִּשְׁלָחֵם וְהִתְפַּלְלוּ אֵלֶיךָ דֶּרֶךְ הָעִיר הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר בָּחַרְתָּ
בָּהּ וְהַבַּיִת אֲשֶׁר־בָּנִיתִי לִשְׁמֶךָ׃ וְשָׁמַעְתָּ מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם לה
אֶת־תְּפִלָּתָם וְאֶת־תְּחִנָּתָם וְעָשִׂיתָ מִשְׁפָּטָם׃ כִּי יֶחֶטְאוּ 36
לָךְ כִּי אֵין אָדָם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יֶחֱטָא וְאָנַפְתָּ בָּם וּנְתַתָּם לִפְנֵי
אוֹיֵב וְשָׁבוּם שׁוֹבֵיהֶם אֶל־אֶרֶץ רְחוֹקָה אוֹ קְרוֹבָה׃
וְהֵשִׁיבוּ אֶל־לִבָּם בָּאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבּוּ־שָׁם וְשָׁבוּ וְהִתְחַנְּנוּ 37
אֵלֶיךָ בְּאֶרֶץ שׁבְיָם לֵאמֹר חָטָאנוּ הֶעֱוִינוּ וְרָשָׁעְנוּ׃ וְשָׁבוּ 38
אֵלֶיךָ בְּכָל־לִבָּם וּבְכָל־נַפְשָׁם בְּאֶרֶץ שׁבְיָם אֲשֶׁר־שָׁבוּ
אֹתָם וְהִתְפַּלְלוּ דֶּרֶךְ אַרְצָם אֲשֶׁר־נָתַתָּה לַאֲבוֹתָם וְהָעִיר
אֲשֶׁר בָּחַרְתָּ וְלַבַּיִת אֲשֶׁר־בָּנִיתִי לִשְׁמֶךָ׃

34. "When Your people take the field against their enemies in a campaign on which You send them, and they pray to You in the direction of the city which you have chosen, and the house which I have built to Your name. 35. May You hear in heaven their prayer and supplication and uphold their cause. 36. "When they sin against You--for there is no person who does not sin--and You are angry with them and deliver them to the enemy, and their captors carry them off to an enemy land, near or far; 37. And they take it to heart in the land to which they have been carried off, and repent and make supplication to You in the land of their captivity, saying: 'we have sinned, we have acted perversely, we have acted wickedly,' 38. And they turn back to You with all their heart and soul, in the land of their captivity where they were carried off, and pray in the direction of their land which You gave to their fathers, and the city which You have chosen, and toward the house which I have built for Your name..."

Chapters 1-9 in II Chronicles is devoted to the activities of Solomon, and, as can be seen from this selection, it follows its source, the passage from I Kings analyzed above, almost verbatim.

No certain date can be established for when II Chronicles was actually recorded, though general scholarly consensus places its final compilation sometime in the early years of the fourth century B.C.E. "Though it has sometimes been argued that the Chronicler's work dates from the time after Alexander, it seems more probable that the favorable attitude to the Persian rulers and the absence of any allusion to Greek rule point to a date around 350 B.C. for the completion of the main body of the work.",

While this passage is also cited repeatedly by the rabbis to support the practice of praying in the direction of Jerusalem, an

analysis of this text would be redundant and would not yield any more useful information, since it is well-accepted that this text is merely a recapitulation of 1 Kings.

Daniel 6:11

11 וְדָנִיֵּאל כְּדִי יְדַע דִּי־רְשִׁים כְּתָבָא עַל לְבֵיתֵהּ
וְכַוִּין פְּתִיחָן לֵהּ בְּעִלִּיתֵהּ נֶגֶד יְרוּשְׁלֶם וְזִמְנִין תְּלָתָה
בְּיוֹמָא הוּא׀ בָּרֵךְ עַל־בִּרְכּוֹהִי וּמְצַלֵּא וּמוֹדֵא קֳדָם
אֱלָהֵהּ כָּל־קְבֵל דִּי־הֲוָא עָבֵד מִן־קַדְמַת דְּנָה׃

WHEN DANIEL LEARNED THAT IT HAD BEEN PUT IN WRITING, HE WENT TO HIS HOUSE, IN WHOSE UPPER CHAMBER HE HAD HAD WINDOWS MADE FACING JERUSALEM, AND THREE TIMES A DAY HE KNELT DOWN, PRAYED, AND MADE CONFESSION TO HIS GOD, AS HE HAD ALWAYS DONE.

The Book of Daniel, from which this passage is quoted, is a loose collection of ten separate chapters, each of which could exist independently from the others. It is generally believed that Daniel was not written by a single author, but was pieced together over time. "The book seems to be a collection of once isolated mini-works brought together by some unknown editor or redactor who, despite his work as compiler, could hardly claim the title of author of the whole book."[10]

The sixth chapter of the Book of Daniel, with which we are concerned, is probably the most famous of the Daniel passages; it relates Daniel's miraculous escape from the lion's den. Daniel had been placed among the lions because he had refused to stop praying to God, despite the threat of death for continuing to do so. But he did not just continue to pray secretly. Daniel was defiant and proud about his religious practices. As soon as he learned of the prohibition, he went right to the window of his house and continued to pray as he had always done, <u>in the direction of Jerusalem</u>. Consequently, Daniel's faithfulness to the Lord is rewarded: he is rescued from certain death by God, and those who sought his demise met the fate planned for Daniel.

The rabbis observed in this text another affirmation of the practice of establishing a particular orientation during prayer, illustrated by Daniel's custom of praying in front of a window facing Jerusalem. Clearly, their ability to cite such a text lends credence to any claim that this is an old and revered custom. The character of Daniel added further weight to the rabbis' position, given that he was not just an ordinary Jew, but was particularly devout and one of the religiously courageous.

Saadia Gaon suggests that the reason that Daniel faced Jerusalem when he prayed was similar to that implied in the two earlier passages, namely, that Daniel prayed towards Jerusalem so that his prayers would be heard, since he had directed his heart towards the Temple.[11]

Just how old this custom of praying towards Jerusalem is and when it began still cannot easily be determined. Furthermore, the dating of a Jerusalem-focused worship cannot simply be predicated on the facts provided by the story, but the historical origins of this text do provide some insight. This particular passage from the Book of Daniel, according to the text itself, took place during the 7th or 6th centuries B.C.E., but scholarly opinion concurs that this story was incorporated into the Book of Daniel long after that time.

The time of the Maccabean Revolt and the persecution of the Jews by Antiochus IV Epiphanes seems to be when the scholars believe that the story of Daniel was written into a book, "apparently because of its moral that God comes to the rescue of

His faithful ones in times of persecution."[12] However, a further distinction must be made between when a story originated and when it came to be recorded.

Despite the Maccabean dating of the Book of Daniel, the folktales in chapters 1-6, most likely, even in written form, "antedate the vicious persecution of the Jews by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and in oral form these stories may go back to the Persian period, though hardly to the 7th and 6th centuries"[13] suggested by the Daniel stories themselves.

There are a few clues in the text that indicate when it may actually have been written. "In view of the Persian loan words in its Aramaic and of its knowledge of Persian law and customs, its origin is most likely to be placed in the eastern Diaspora of the Jews during the period of the Persian Empire."[14] While the "Aramaic of chapters 2-6 is of a later stage than that of the Elephantine Papyri (end of the fifth century B.C.),...the Greek names for the musical instruments in 3:5 probably do not antedate the reign of Alexander the Great. (336-323 B.C.)"[15] Scholars admit that it is difficult to pinpoint with any certainty when these narratives were composed, "but the opinion that these stories were written some time in the 3rd century B.C. seems highly probable."[16]

Taking the three of our biblical texts together, the oldest of which is the passage from I Kings and the latest being the citation from Daniel, the practice of prayer oriented towards Jerusalem, and more specifically the Temple there, seems to have

been established (to some extent) by the Babylonian Exile, as early as 597 B.C.E. Whether such a custom was observed prior to this date, we cannot deduce based on these texts; nor can we determine how widely accepted this practice was or at which time it became the norm.

It can also be inferred from the texts that the reason for such a practice was to insure that one's prayers were heard. Two of the three texts (I Kings and II Chronicles) also attempt to define more clearly the true focal point of the prayers by highlighting the Temple as the ultimate goal. Apparently, prayers were directed towards Jerusalem only insofar as that city was home to the "House of God."

Now that we have examined these biblical texts, which serve as the lynch pins for most of the rabbis' arguments for determining the proper orientation in prayer, we shall proceed to examine the earliest literary remains from the rabbinic period.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE MISHNAH

This early rabbinic material provides a significant gateway of understanding into the rabbis' motivations for promulgating a law that dictates a particular prayer orientation. One simplistic response will not be forthcoming, however. The answers reside, instead, in an intricate configuration of rabbinic values, concerns, and ways of perceiving the world; each of which plays a role in shaping rabbinic attitudes towards the direction of prayer. The analysis below will strive, therefore, to highlight the major themes that appear to have influenced the rabbis' thinking about prayer orientation.

MISHNAH SUKKOT 5:4 FACING THE TEMPLE JUXTAPOSED TO FACING EAST

הִגִּיעוּ לְשַׁעַר הַיּוֹצֵא
לַמִּזְרָח, הָפְכוּ פְּנֵיהֶן לַמַּעֲרָב, וְאָמְרוּ: אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁהָיוּ בַּמָּקוֹם
הַזֶּה ״אֲחֹרֵיהֶם אֶל הֵיכַל ה׳ וּפְנֵיהֶם קֵדְמָה, וְהֵמָּה מִשְׁתַּחֲוִים
קֵדְמָה לַשֶּׁמֶשׁ״; וְאָנוּ לְיָהּ עֵינֵינוּ. רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אוֹמֵר: הָיוּ שׁוֹנִין
וְאוֹמְרִין ״אָנוּ לְיָהּ, וּלְיָהּ עֵינֵינוּ״.

When they arrived at the gate that opened to the east, they turned their faces to the west and said: "Our ancestors who were in this place 'had their backs to the Temple and their faces towards the east, and they prostrated themselves to the east towards the sun;' (Ezek. 8:16) but as for us our eyes are turned to the Eternal." R. Judah says, "They used to repeat the words, 'we are for the Eternal and to the Eternal our eyes are turned.'"

This passage contains two very important recollections about how prayers were oriented at the Temple in Jerusalem. The first, preserved by the prophet Ezekiel, recalls an earlier practice of "our ancestors," who faced away from the Temple, towards the east and the sun, when they prayed. The second memory, recorded by the rabbis themselves, describes how the people of Second-Temple times came to the Temple for the Sukkot festival and prayed, in clear contradistinction to the practice of the "ancestors," towards the west and the Temple. How are we to understand these two contradictory traditions? Did the latter evolve from the former or had they always been at odds?

At the very least, we have evidence of a Jewish prayer orientation that was not Temple-focused. This discovery of a divergent worship practice is surprising in itself, since the rabbis were so intent on conveying the message that Jews have prayed towards Jerusalem and the Temple since the time of King Solomon, as was indicated in the analysis of the biblical prooftexts.

Initially, this passage might lead us to presume that there has been an evolution in the custom of prayer direction: In the early days "our ancestors" prayed to the east, but now we scorn the practice of old and pray to the west. However, the text provides a few clues that indicate that this previous custom of praying eastward had never really been an accepted and sanctioned Jewish practice, even during the "ancestors" time.

The text makes it clear that what is at stake is not whether people prayed to the east or west, but whether they were praying towards the Temple or not. This is evident from the rabbis' statement that the ancestors prostrated themselves towards the sun, while those of a later age turned their eyes towards God. The significance of a Jewish prayer direction, then, can only be understood in this context. Namely, east and west have meaning only insofar as they are linked to the object of worship or something that symbolized what was being worshipped. Just as the Temple represented the "Eternal," praying towards the Temple communicated religious loyalties to God. Therefore, praying in a direction opposite from the Temple gave the appearance that one

had rejected God.

An examination of the historical context of Ezekiel 8:16, the source that records the existence of this alternative prayer orientation, provides additional credence for the belief that praying away from the Temple was not a generally accepted practice even during the time of the "ancestors."

Ezekiel was taken captive to Babylon in the first of two waves of exile, prior to the actual destruction of the First Temple, in the year 598 B.C.E.. There he lived and prophesied to the Babylonian Jews who had come with him from the Land of Israel. During these early years of the exile, the "ancestors" still lived and worshipped at the First Temple in Jerusalem. In this biblical passage, cited by the rabbis in the Mishnah, God takes the prophet from place to place, in a vision, in order to show him how far the people had transgressed the divine laws and had defiled the House of God. Ezekiel witnesses the quintessential example of the people's abominations in the inner-court of the Temple in Jerusalem, where the Jews who have remained behind--not just simple folk, but the elders--are worshipping with their backs to the Temple, praying towards the east.[1]

This wayward orientation (from the prophet's perspective) to the east was not considered by Ezekiel to be merely a transgression of ritual convention, but a sin of the greatest theological proportions. The people who prayed with their backs to the Temple communicated a distinct belief about God: "The

Lord does not see us; the Lord has abandoned the country." (Ezek. 8:12) However, there were also others at this time who "moaned and groaned" about the travesties committed in the Temple; these people were considered loyal to God.[2] Consequently, we can see that the orientation customs of the "ancestors" were by no means universally accepted. It was more than likely, in fact, that no uniform orienation practice had been established firmly by that time. Such a conclusion is corroborated by the archaeological evidence, which suggests that it would be centuries before a standard prayer direction was instituted and observed.

While our analysis of the biblical material, in the section above, clearly indicated that the practice of orienting worship towards Jerusalem developed contemporaneously with Ezekiel, sometime just before or just after the first wave of exiles were taken into captivity, the development of the "proper" prayer orientation was still in its nascent stage in Ezekiel's time. We can imagine, then, during these early years when orientation practices were still in flux, how a Jerusalem-oriented worship might have met with opposition and been contested by some groups. Ezekiel was probably one of the early advocates of a Jerusalem-focused orientation who perceived, in the direction of prayer, an indication of one's theological commitments and beliefs.

The rabbis, too, call into question the loyalties of the "ancestors" when they decry their practices in this Mishnah. With the prayer orientation advocated by the rabbis there could be no doubt about where a person's religious loyalties lay: "We

are for the Eternal and to the Eternal our eyes are turned." As for the "ancestors," their allegiances were at best suspect and at worst outright heretical.

In conclusion, the message the rabbis were communicating with this text was that prayer needed to be directed towards the Temple for theological reasons because, like Ezekiel, they perceived the direction of worship to reflect one's religious loyalties. Only if the Jews directed their prayers towards the Temple would it be immediately apprarent that that person was an adherent of the "Eternal's." In this sense, prayer direction served primarily an external purpose: Personal and internal beliefs were communicated outward to those observing a person's worship.

One must wonder why the rabbis took such a vehement stance towards a practice that was once performed by "ancestors" long before. What purpose did it serve to recall this ancient custom? Why were the rabbis so concerned with sending external messages? And to whom were they interested in sending this message? We can only surmise the background of this text.

Certainly, the tradition of focusing prayer towards the Temple was quite well-known by the time of the rabbis. However, they lived at a time when their world was frought with a high level of competing theologies, religions, and deities. It was very important, therefore, for the Jews as a group to clearly define themselves, as well as distinguish themselves from the other religious sects.

Thus, we can understand prayer orientation to be a real boundary issue; and boundary issues demand that clear and strict lines be drawn. If one prayed in one direction one identified with one group; a different orientation demonstrated a different religious affilliation. Becuase prayer orientation had become an integral aspect of religious definition, the rabbis perceived it as a practice to be carefully regulated. Any worship orientation that diverged from the norm was liable to equate one with another religious group, therefore, non-Temple-focused worship could not be tolerated. This firm rabbinic stand was a particularly powerful message, as well, to Jews who might consider experimenting with one of the other religious groups that proliferated at the time.

MISHNAH BERAKHOT 4:5 FACING JERUSALEM PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY

רַבָּן גַּמְלִיאֵל אוֹמֵר: בְּכָל יוֹם מִתְפַּלֵּל אָדָם שְׁמוֹנֶה עֶשְׂרֵה.
הָיָה רוֹכֵב עַל הַחֲמוֹר, יֵרֵד; וְאִם אֵינוֹ יָכוֹל לֵירֵד, יַחֲזִיר אֶת פָּנָיו; וְאִם אֵינוֹ יָכוֹל לְהַחֲזִיר אֶת פָּנָיו, יְכַוֵּן אֶת לִבּוֹ כְּנֶגֶד בֵּית קָדְשֵׁי הַקָּדָשִׁים.
הָיָה יוֹשֵׁב בַּסְּפִינָה, אוֹ בַּקָּרוֹן אוֹ בָּאַסְדָּא – יְכַוֵּן אֶת לִבּוֹ כְּנֶגֶד בֵּית קָדְשֵׁי הַקָּדָשִׁים.

Rabban Gamaliel says: "Every day a man should say the 'Eighteen Benedictions'... If he is riding on an ass he dismounts and prays. If he is unable to dismount he should turn his face and if he is not able to turn his face he should direct his heart towards the Holy of Holies. If he is traveling on a boat or a wagon or a raft he should turn his heart towards the Holy of Holies."

This Mishnah is part of a discussion concerning the importance of praying the Tefilah on a daily basis. In the

course of the discussion, a number of eventualities are raised that might prohibit one from praying in the proper way. One of these possibilities is liable to occur when a person is out riding. This Mishnah delineates the proper procedure for fulfilling one's prayer obligations under such circumstances and, in so doing, also provides valuable insight into the matter of orientation during prayer.

The Mishnah above suggests that the optimum situation is to stand during prayer and physically turn towards Jerusalem; what is assumed to be the standard prayer orientation. Precluding the possibility of dismounting, the text implies that the next best thing would be to remain on the animal but still pray while facing in the direction of Jerusalem. Although the text does not explicitly say that one should face Jerusalem, the terse phrase "turn and face" (yachzir et panav), is understood by all the commentators to refer to facing Jerusalem. But, if even facing Jerusalem is not an option, for whatever reason, then the final remaining possibility, and seemingly the least desirable choice, is to direct one's heart towards the Holy of Holies, in order to at least minimally observe a Jerusalem orientation during prayer.

The hierarchy of preference expressed by the rabbis in this Mishnah appears clearly to favor physically facing Jerusalem during prayer. However, it is of some considerable significance that this text introduces the possibility of facing Jerusalem in a very internal manner under certain circumstances. According to the text, mentally turning one's heart towards the Holy of

Holies, in other words concentrating on the inner-most part of the Temple in Jerusalem, is also an acceptable way of meeting the requirements of a Jerusalem-focused prayer orientation. Can this be interpreted as a flexibility in the rabbis' stance on prayer orientation? Is physically facing Jerusalem during prayer really not that critical? And what could be the reason for allowing this kind of substitution?

On the most superficial level, this ruling, which allows for an internal orientation during prayer, acknowledges certain realities that might prevent someone from physically being able to face Jerusalem during prayer, and makes contingency arrangements. In fact, riding in a boat or on a wagon are specific examples, provided by the Mishnah, of very real situations in which it would be difficult or dangerous to turn and face Jersualem in order to pray.

From a very different perspective, however, we might consider another explanation for allowing an internal orientation; one that strikes closer to the heart of the issue. Let us assume instead that the internal orientation is allowed to substitute for the external one, not because it is "the next best thing," but because, in fact, a concentration of the heart towards Jerusalem is actually the end for which a physical orientation is the means. That is to say, the underlying purpose to facing Jerusalem during worship is an enhanced ability to focus one's prayers towards the Temple there.

Why would it be so important to the rabbis that prayers were

focused towards the Temple? The rabbis believed that prayer was the primary means of communicating with God after the destruction of the Temple. Consequently, in their eyes, the goal of worship was to have God hear one's prayers and accept them. This ability to address God could best be accomplished, of course, if one were to focus one's prayers, as specifically as possible, towards the place most intimately associated with the divine presence. That place, for the rabbis, was Jerusalem, and more specifically, the Holy of Holies.[3] Therefore, the Holy of Holies became a focal point for prayer as a means of gaining access to God. This rabbinic understanding of prayer orientation continues to reflect the biblical notion that the direction of prayer is inextricably linked to the prayer's efficacy.

I would like to propose, therefore, that the real goal of prayer orientation is not to physically turn towards Jerusalem, as one might suspect upon first reading this Mishnah, but a heightened level of internal concentration on the dwelling place of God. Such concentration and the proper emotional involvement, however, is not easily attainable; therefore, the rabbis incorporated a physical gesture--facing Jerusalem--into prayer in order to help create the proper environment for such high levels of concentration and attention. Naturally, if one were prevented from utilizing this physical "helping" mechanism, an internal orientation towards the Holy of Holies would still be required, since this was the ultimate goal in the first place.

This observance of physical acts, in order to stimulate an

internal reaction, attitude, or emotion, is not an isolated incident in Jewish practice; in fact, it is quite prevalent in rabbinic thinking. Other examples, seen in relationship to particular holidays, can further elucidate such a phenomenon. Passover, for instance, is a time when we eat the symbols of slavery and freedom (something physical) in order to experience every year the abstract notions of oppression and liberty (something internal/mental). It is the physical act that helps the emotional/internal appreciation come about.

Sukkot is another illustration of this point. It is not sufficient, the rabbis believed, to simply talk about our ancestors having to have lived in huts or the fragility of our world. Therefore, the rabbis instituted the laws of living in the sukkah, because we have to live in it in order to truly understand the meaning of the sukkah. This emphasis on the physical experience is part of the Jewish way of insuring that the proper emotions are induced. One could argue that, in fact, the entire mitzvah system is based on the relationship between physical acts and their internal counterparts.

Consequently, in summing up the importance of this Mishnah text concerning a physical orientation towards Jerusalem, we can conclude that the physical orientation during prayer was indeed very important to the rabbis; not in and of itself, but because of the desired internal responses that it inspired in the worshipper.

Two very different rabbinic concerns have emerged thus far

through our analysis of the early literary remains dealing with matters of orientation: communicating loyalty to God and attaining a sufficient level of concentration on God. Each of the Mishnah texts has also highlighted a different function for the laws regulating the direction in which one prays. The first text emphasized the external impact of praying in the direction of Jerusalem, while the internal effect of Jerusalem-oriented prayer was stressed in the second passage.

Yet despite the different emphases and concerns, there is a common link between these two texts. Each asserts that the underlying purpose of prayer orientation is theological in nature: To serve as a physical reminder of the One to whom the prayers are addressed. In the first Mishnah the message was an external reminder to others, those observing the worship practices, that it was the Eternal who was being worshipped, and not some other deity. The other Mishnah stressed, instead, the internal message of orientation; a powerful and physical reminder to the worshipper Who it is that one is worshipping. This internal message helped the worshipper define and distinguish him/herself from the other religious groups in the society.

Furthermore, there is no reason to presume that each rationale for a Temple-focused worship could not be operating simultaneously. Both the internal and the external messages were vital to the self-definition and -preservation of the Jewish people in a highly factionalized world of competing allegiances. Consequently, out of our analysis thus far, there emerges a dual

need for a firmly established and uniform prayer orientation.

CHAPTER SIX: THE TOSEFTA

We turn now to two significant texts from the Tosefta. Each reveals a very different approach towards the purpose of orientation, and reflects the evolution of prayer orientation at two different stages. We will begin the analysis with what appears to be the later tradition because it provides the necessary framework for understanding the context of the earlier tradition. By seeing where the tradition is going, it is easier to then step back and see how the earlier custom served as an intermediary step along the way.

TOSEFTA BERACHOT 3:14-16

14. סומה ומי שאינו יכול לכוין את הרוחות, מכוונין את לבם כנגד אביהם שבשמים ומתפללין, שנ' ויתפללו אל ה' אליכם וגו'. 15. העומדים בחוצה לארץ מכוונין את לבם כנגד ארץ ישראל, שנ' ויתפללו דרך ארצם. העומדים בארץ ישראל מכוונין את לבם כנגד ירושלם ומתפללין, שנ' ויתפללו אל העיר הזאת. 16. העומדים בירושלם מכוונין את לבם כנגד בית המקדש, שנ' והתפללו אל הבית הזה. העומדים במקדש מכוונין את לבם כנגד בית קדשי הקדשים ומתפללין, שנ' ויתפללו אל המקום הזה. נמצאו עומדין בצפון פניהם לדרום, בדרום פניהם לצפון, במזרח פניהם למערב, במערב פניהם למזרח. נמצאו כל ישראל מתפללין למקום אחד.

14. The blind person and the one who is not able to determine directions: these people should direct their hearts towards their Father in heaven and pray, as it says, "And they pray towards Adonai their God etc." (I Kings 8:44) 15. Those who are outside of the Land of Israel should direct their hearts towards the Land of Israel, as it says, "And they pray towards their land etc."[1] (II Chron. 6:38) Those who are in the Land of Israel should direct their hearts towards Jerusalem and pray, as it says, "And they pray towards this city etc." (II Chron. 6:34 or I Kings 8:44)[2] 16. Those who are in Jerusalem should direct their hearts towards the Temple, as it says, "And they pray towards this House." (II Chron. 6:32) Those who are at the Temple should direct their hearts towards the Holy of Holies and pray, as it says, "And they pray towards this place." (I Kings 8:30) Consequently, those standing in the north should face south [when praying], those in the south should face north, those in the east should face west, and those in the west should face east. Thus, all Israel will be praying towards one place.

This Tosefta breaks new ground in our examination of rabbinic perspectives on the function prayer orientation served.

Yet, while a different schema to express the proper orientation for prayer develops, the overarching themes and ideas articulated by the rabbis are, in fact, quite consonant with what we know so far about the rabbinic perspective on worship orientation.

Our attention is immediately drawn to a distinguishing feature of the passage. Up until this point, the rabbis have concentrated their discussion essentially around the need to orient one's prayers physically in the direction of Jerusalem or the Temple. Now, however, the primary stress is explicitly on the internal orientation of the heart towards the Temple during prayer as opposed to the external orientation of the body.[3]

We note, too, that the exact prayer focus changes and becomes more specific as one moves from outside the Land of Israel towards the inner-sanctum of the Temple. Whereas previously the worshipper was instructed to direct his eyes towards the Temple or face Jerusalem when praying--more general and external orientations--the rabbis now indicate very clearly that the intent of prayer orientation should be an internal concentration of the heart towards very precise locations.

In this hierarchical rabbinic matrix of orientation, an orientation towards Jerusalem is distinguished from an orientation towards the Temple, which is further distinguished from an orientation towards the Holy of Holies. Each particular prayer orientation is reserved for a unique situation. Thus the rabbis perceive, not a single external prayer focus ("face the Temple"), but a worship that demands a multi-leveled, variable,

and internalized orientation, which becomes more and more specific the closer one moves towards the Holy of Holies in the Temple.

The rabbis construct their framework of prayer orientation around two of the biblical prooftexts that we discussed above, I Kings 8 and II Chronicles 6. This is the first time biblical verses are brought in by the rabbis to support their arguments--a literary style in keeping with the Tosefta. We will now examine how the rabbis re-read these biblical texts, through their own eyes, in order to give them new meaning for their purposes.

The rabbinic view of prayer orientation, as articulated in this Tosefta, is derived through a classic rabbinic interpretation of the biblical text. The rabbis believed that each word of the Bible served a particular function and had its own unique message to communicate; nothing was superfluous. Therefore, when the Kings and Chronicles passages introduce the notion of prayer orientation as not only directed towards the Land, but the City, and ultimately towards the House of God, the rabbis interpret this verse to mean that each locus of orientation--Land, City, House--must be refering to a particular situation requiring a distinct prayer focus.

As a result of this inferred distinction, the rabbis needed to determine what the particular situation was that required each prayer orientation. Consequently, they asked themselves, When would the "Land of Israel" be an appropriate prayer focus? The answer they deduced: Only if one were outside of the Land, since

it would not make sense to focus on the Land if one were already in it. Therefore, Jerusalem can only be an appropriate prayer focus when one is outside of Jerusalem, but in the Land; and so on. Similarly, if one were in the Diaspora, the rabbis apparently concluded, it would be impractical as well as illogical to expect people to be able to focus their attention adequately on the Holy of Holies from so far away; better to provide a focal point that is more accessible, hence, the Land.

The rabbis consequently derived the following principle from the biblical text to guide the prayer orientation of Jews who, by their time, lived in many places: From far away, prayer orientation should be general because it is more difficult to be too focused in one's concentration on something very specific, and, as one moves closer to the ultimate target of prayer (the Holy of Holies), the orientation should become specific since it is easier to be more focused under these circumstances. Therefore, the rabbis ruled that there needed to be a graded and variable prayer orientation dependent upon one's geographical relationship to the Holy of Holies.

On a theoretical and theological level, the rabbis maintain the Holy of Holies as the ultimate address for prayers; however, in practice the focus is no longer fixed. This development injects a new level of complexity into the way prayer orientation functions. By distinguishing the focus of prayer from the destination of prayer, the rabbis have succeeded in breaking down the orientation of prayer into more readily graspable focal

points.

It appears that this stratified approach to orientation was developed for practical reasons, since it is clear that such an arrangement makes focusing one's prayers much easier, even though all prayers were still directed towards God, irrespective of where one was located.

The rabbinic notion that emerges again is that the purpose of a prayer orientation is to assist in one's ability to focus during worship. As we also discussed in the Mishnah chapter, focusing directly on God was too abstract and, now, even the Temple was not concrete enough for a Jew in the Diaspora. Furthermore, this Tosefta also teaches that a prayer focus must be specific and attainable in order to provide the worshipper with a concrete action necessary to stimulate the desired internal level of concentration.

This variable approach to prayer orientation was particularly relevant during the rabbis' time for another practical reason. Given the reality that many Jews were now living in Diaspora and were not centrally located anymore, new means of addressing the prayer needs of these Jews, who were no longer directly connected to the Land or the Temple, had to be developed.

This text demonstrates particular sensitivity to those Jews living outside of the Land. The Diaspora community could easily feel alienated from the rest of the Jewish world, but this text includes them in the larger framework of the Jewish people as a

whole and their peculiar circumstances are not ignored. Indeed, their situation is validated by this Tosefta in that it allows them to perceive themselves as a part of the larger Jewish prayer pattern; the same one utilized by those Jews living in the Land of Israel. This ability for Diaspora Jews to maintain their connection with the Jewish faith and the Jewish people as a whole was crucial in the rabbis' eyes; for to fail in this task meant the dissolution of both the faith and the people.

In addition, this new structure provides Diaspora Jews with a clear and concrete method for orienting their worship that also allays very real fears. Now separated from the land of their people and their God, the Jews in the Diaspora must have experienced a high level of anxiety about their ability to pray effectively. Does God hear the prayers of those in Diaspora? Such a concern, we know, is clearly not new--it was expressed in the biblical passages, similarly reflecting the fears of the Jews in the first exile. However, after the destruction of the Second Temple, there is a new generation of exiles. It should not be surprising to see these same concerns bubble to the surface at each new dislocation from the Land. Thus, this rabbinically established orientation structure for prayer powerfully reassures Jews that their prayers will continue to be efficacious, even in distant lands.

The rabbis also add a further twist to the biblical notion of how a specific prayer orientation was to be observed. When the biblical text states that the people "will pray towards...,"

the rabbis interpret this ambiguous phrase to mean, not physically, as one might suspect, but mentally, by directing their hearts "towards" the Land, the City, and the Temple.

At this point, a uniquely rabbinic approach to prayer orientation is evolving; one that is quite distinct from the those expressed in the Bible in two ways. The rabbinic perception of prayer orientation is more structured and stratified than in the Bible; and prayer focus is no longer static, but has become flexible depending upon one's geographical proximity to the Temple. Additionally, the rabbis have now explicitly internalized the process of prayer orientation in this particular text, which was not evident in the biblical texts nor even clear in the mishnaic texts.

These developments in how prayer orientation was to be performed and understood is also an important reflection of how the rabbis perceived their own world. The highly structured nature of prayer orientation, as it is described in the Tosefta, is particularly representative of early rabbinic literature[4], which "tells us something about how things were. But everything about how a small group of men wanted things to be."[5]

The rabbis lived in an age following the catastrophic destruction of the Second Temple, and in a world that was chaotic, adrift without a center or anchor. The emotional, psychological effects of this religio-political dislocation and disorientation would take a long time to pass. The rabbis concern, therefore, with a clear and well-defined ritual

structure for prayer orientation mirrors the rabbinic need to "reshape reality, regain a system, [and] reestablish an order upon which a trustworthy existence can be built."[6]

The Tosefta's stress on internal orientation is not entirely new; though its expression has become more prominent. We have observed in this Tosefta, as well as in the Mishnah chapter, that an internal focus consistently has been the goal of prayer orientation. However, the Mishnah preferred to simply imply the importance of an internal orientaion, while the Tosefta tends to highlight explicitly the ultimate significance of an internal orientation.

This more explicit spiritualization represents a move away from the physical and the concrete. With a clearly stated internal goal to prayer orientation, one can sense a more distant attitude towards the Temple and the Land. The connection is an idealized bond in the mind rather than one of physical reality. This should not be surprising; after all, the Temple had already been in ruins for many years. The physical reality of the Temple as a place where people went to communicate with God could no longer function in the same way. Therefore, the Temple needed to be replaced by something else or reimaged in some way so that it could continue to operate as the nexus for divine and human interaction. Eventually what emerged was the Temple as metaphor: a symbolic focal point of prayer that continued to serve as a conduit to God because it was the eternal House of God.

Not only did the significance of the Temple become

spiritualized, but the primary function of the Temple--to serve as a physical point of contact with the divine--was now also transformed into something internal. Avodah she'ba'lev, prayer, had come to take sacrifice's place, yet the Temple remained a constant. As it was the central place for sacrifices, it continued to function as a central focus for the "sacrifice of the heart."

Through their emphasis on the Temple as a focus of prayer, the rabbis breathed new life and purpose into an otherwise defunct institution. In fact, "after 70 C.E. the Tannaitic policy of preserving the memory of the Temple, and keeping alive some of its symbols, was characteristic of most of Judaism."[7] The Temple, as a Jewish institution, could not be allowed to fade peacefully away into the collective Jewish memory after it physically ceased to exist. It was too important as a concrete reminder of the Jews' covenantal relationship with God as an independent people. The Temple signified both autonomy and a unique divine relationship. If Jews were to allow these critical, defining features of Judaism to wither, they would cease to be Jews.

Jacob Neusner indicates the pervasive nature of the Temple-symbol during Tannaitic times, in a discussion on the use of pictures of cult and Temple items on ancient synagogue walls, and offers an insightful perspective on the ways the Temple, as a symbol, was manifest in the years after its destruction.

> Before us is a continuum of symbolic choices and structures, all resting on the symbolism of cult and

> Temple.... The liturgy of the synagogue depends upon the Temple's mode of worship, and...the framers of the Mishnah...construct a totally Temple-oriented system of law for Judaism..., then we should hardly be surprised to find people resorting to precisely that same corpus of symbols for use on synagogue walls.[8]

Based on Neusner's work, we can draw some parallel conclusions in order to better understand the context in which a Temple-focused prayer orientation developed. If in fact the imagery of the Temple was so powerful, its migration and transformation into other modes of expression, such as prayer orientation, should be expected. Consequently, we see the imagery of the Temple appear as a focal point in worship--all prayer is to be directed towards it.

Neusner lends additional support to the theory above when he further notes that symbols are not restricted to one form. They may appear in many different media but continue to possess a similar symbolic meaning whether in print, in picture, or elsewhere.[9] On the basis of Neusner's observations, we can explain the important role that the Temple played in the orientation of worship as intimately linked to a much broader use of the Temple as a vital and captivating Jewish symbol in a variety of media. Thus it should not be surprising to see the Temple develop as a central image for worship considering its widespread use in other areas during that time.

The work of Kraabel contributes an additional perspective on how the Temple was translated from a physical reality, laying in ruins, into a vibrant and motivating symbol; not just for Jews living in the Land but for the Diaspora Jews in particular.

Kraabel links this transformation of the Temple, from reality to symbol, to the developing relationship of the Diaspora community with Jerusalem and their evolving attitude towards the "Holy" city.

He acknowledges the tremendous influence and significance of the Temple and Jerusalem in the theology of the Bible and post-biblical times; yet he notes that eventually there was a certain detachment and distance between the Diaspora Jews and the realities of what was taking place in the Land of Israel.

In support of this position he cites the fact that the Jewish community in the Diaspora did not come to the aid

> of Jerusalem and the Temple when they were in grave danger in the first century, during the first revolt.... The outcome of the second revolt appears to have convinced most Jews that the Temple would not soon--if ever--be rebuilt. Yet the symbolic power of the Temple did not die out in the Diaspora.... These facts suggest that by the first century Diaspora Jews under Rome had learned to separate the symbols of Temple and Jerusalem from the physical building and geographical location...thus they did not aid in the revolts--and that this spiritualization is a concomitant of their sense of being at home in the Diaspora.[10]

Our earlier hypothesis that this internalizaion of prayer orientation functioned to address the specific needs of the Diaspora community is buttressed by Kraabel's conclusion. And, precisely because Jews are beginning to feel more comfortable in the Diaspora, it becomes all the more urgent for the rabbis to anchor them firmly in the Jewish world lest they drift away altogether.

We turn our attention now to a new matter: those who are exempted from following the prescribed pattern of prayer orientation. As we shall observe throughout this study, those who don't fit the primary mold are placed in a special category with different rules. But instead of posing a problem, these exceptions to the rule hold an important key to properly understanding the ultimate purpose of an established and uniform prayer orientation. In this Tosefta, the exceptions to the general orientation rules are the blind and those who are unable to discern the cardinal direction points.

The key to comprehending the true function of a uniform prayer orientation towards Jerusalem rests in our ability to determine why these particular people are placed in a separate category. What these two groups of people share in common is an inability to easily locate the direction of Jerusalem; therefore, in lieu of directing their hearts towards the Land or some other physical manifestation of God's presence, such as the Temple, they are instructed to concentrate their hearts directly on God in heaven.

This stipulation for the blind and disoriented is rather problematic at first. What is its purpose? Were the text to proceed to discuss a person's physical requirement to face Jerusalem during prayer, we could understand why special guidelines would be needed for those who cannot locate the direction of Jerusalem on their own. However, even a blind person with no sense of direction should be able to direct his or

her heart towards Jerusalem, since this is an entirely internal process! From this we must conclude that even an internal orientation towards the Holy of Holies, as we might have initially suspected, cannot be the ultimate goal of prayer orientation; or else these anomalous persons also would have been assigned an internal prayer orientation towards a place, a task they are capable of performing. There must be a higher purpose.

A clue to this hidden significance of prayer orientation can be observed in a further distinction made by the text between the normal orientation practice and that of the exceptions. The general rule directs people's attention towards a specific place; those in the special category are given no place to concentrate on but, instead, are told to focus on God.

Therefore, it is not the place that is the essential focus but God. The place is simply an expression of the divine immanence. From this relationship between place and God we can now conclude that, just as a physical orientation towards Jerusalem inspired an internal orientation, an internal orientation is, in itself, a means to an even higher end: A concentration on God during prayer. Therefore, the fundamental and essential purpose of prayer orientation, internal or external, is to assist people to direct their prayers towards God.

An analysis of the exception to the rule has further revealed an underlying motivation for a Temple-focused prayer orientation. While we have noted it before, this text has only

made the association between God and Temple that much stronger. In this Tosefta, the general populace is given a means--internally orienting oneself towards a specific place associated with God--to attain a specific end--intense concentration on God. If, however, the means become obstacles to the fullfilment of the goal, as place-focused worship would simply distract one with no sense of place, they are discarded and one is directed straight to the ultimate end: God. Again we see the importance of having a concrete representation--the Temple or Holy of Holies--of something abstract--God--in order to more fully experience it.

A similar notion was also expressed above in Mishnah Sukkot (p. 68ff). There it was communicated that if one were not facing the Temple then one was not focusing on God, and, in fact, one was most likely praying to some other god. There is a significant difference as well. Allegiance to God appears to have been the central concern of this Mishnah text, while the greater flexibility reflected in this text (one needn't even face the Temple under certain circumstances) indicates that this issue was not so pressing. Instead, one of the main concerns manifested here is how to maximize one's ability for truly directing one's prayers to God. While these two concerns appear to serve completely different ends, they are actually very closely related in purpose, as will be seen below.

There are two conclusions stated as a result of the above discussion on the need for an internal orientation ultimately directed towards the Holy of Holies. The former is concerned

with external prayer orientation and is directly linked to the preceding discussion; while the latter conclusion, that all Israel pray towards one place, follows directly from the first.

This is the first time that the rabbis have articulated any kind of rationale for their rulings. Consequently, a thorough examination of these explanations will be important in order to discover what they reveal, and what they obscure, concerning the purposes of an established uniform prayer direction. We will first treat the two texts separately and then assess their relationship.

The first conclusion that the rabbis draw in this text is a need to physically pray towards Jerusalem. At first this appears confusing: Why, after spending the bulk of the passage discussing internal orientation, do the rabbis express their conclusion in terms of a physical, external orientation, "those in the north face south, those in the south face north, etc."?

This conclusion provides the final proof needed to justify the hypothesis that external actions are legislated in order to produce particular internal responses. The rabbinic logic is quite clear. Having delineated the various internal orientations required for a prayer experience with the proper focus on God, the rabbis still needed to institute a means for insuring that the necessary internal focus would be achieved.

The rabbis recognized the difficulty in legislating emotions and were predisposed to regulating behavior instead. Consequently, they established a religious action that was more

easily controlled. What was that physical act? The rabbis make it perfectly clear when they conclude: "those in the north face south, those in the south face north, etc." A physical orientation towards Jerusalem is thus instituted in order to stimulate the proper and desired internal concentration on God during prayer; the stated goal in the opening verses of the text. This conclusion regarding the direction one faces in prayer can only be understood as a means for achieving the ultimate ends.

The second conclusion reached is the need for all Israel to pray towards one place. On the most basic level this is simply the result of everyone praying towards Jerusalem. A tautology: if every one prays towards Jerusalem then every one will be praying towards one place. Such a statement appears superfluous.

Taking a more sophisticated approach towards this conclusion, however, yields much more interesting results. We must ask, why did the rabbis feel the need to expressly state that "all Israel will pray towards one place." Clearly this must have been an important notion for them or they would not have mentioned it; but they do not explain why. However, what the rabbis refrain from explaining can still provide another window into the underlying purposes the rabbis attributed to the need for a unified physical prayer orientation. Namely: <u>Why</u> this concept of all Jews praying towards one place is so significant.

As with the first conclusion, we are presented solely with the physical means required to achieve the rabbis' ultimate ends. Thus we must analyze the information that we do have in order to

formulate a reasonable hypothesis.

Through an examination of this last conclusion, a new issue of rabbinic concern is revealed. Up until this point, we have discussed the influence of internal and external orientations as they relate to one's ability to connect with God and how others might perceive this relationship. This statement introduces a national concern: The survival of the Jewish people, physically and spiritually, in a Jewish world on the brink of extinction, because the glue that had once held it together--political autonomy in the Land and a centralized religious cult in the Temple--had been destroyed.

The rabbis saw their task as providing a new order and a new structure for a Jewish world that was threatening to fall apart at the seams.[11] There was no longer anything holding the Jewish people, many of whom now lived in exile, together; except memories of a world that once was. But these would soon fade and they could not continue to inspire the Jewish imagination nor bind the people together for long. Therefore, the rabbis needed to reimage Judaism in order to preserve it. By instituting Jerusalem and the Temple as the focal point of prayer, the rabbis, in one sense, created a new center and, in another sense, were simply maintaining the old center in a new way.

If all Jews, wherever they found themselves in the world, were to pray in the direction of Jerusalem a sense of unity and collectivity in a disparate and fragmented Jewish society would be created. In this way, every time a Jew prayed s/he would

experience a powerful emotional bond to the Jewish people, who were all linked together through the agency of the Temple.

Furthermore, an added level of cohesion is experienced because the real message to the worshipper is not: all Jews are praying to the same place, but all Jews, wherever they are, are still praying to the same God; the God that distinguishes and sustains the Jewish people.

Once again, as we saw in our examination of the Mishnah texts above, physical prayer orientation serves a pivotal function on two levels: the external and the internal. Here, in this Tosefta, too, it is the means for achieving both the proper internal orientation towards God and also results in an external framework for uniting the Jewish people.

TOSEFTA MEGILLAH 3:21-22

כיצד
היו זקנים יושבין, פניהם כלפי העם ואחריהן כלפי קודש. כשמניחין את התיבה פניה כלפי העם ואחריה כלפי קודש. כשהכהנים נושאין כפיהן, פניהם כלפי העם ואחריהם כלפי קדש, חזן הכנסת פניו כלפי קודש, וכל העם פניהם כלפי קדש, שנ' ותקהל העדה אל פתח אהל מועד. 22. אין פותחין פתחי בתי כנסיות [א]לא למזרח, שכן מצינו בהיכל שהיה פתוח למזרח, שנ' והחונים לפני המשכן קדמה לפני אוהל מועד מזרחה.

21. How did the elders sit [in the synagogue]? Facing the people and with their backs towards the Temple [Kodesh]. How did the ark sit [in the synagogue] when they brought it in? Its front was towards the people and its back towards the Temple. The Kohanim when they raised their hands [to bestow the priestly benediction]? Their faces towards the people and their backs towards the Temple. The leader of the service? His face was towards the Temple. And all the people had their faces towards the Temple, as it says, "And when the community was assembled at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting..."(Lev. 8:4) 22. One should only place the gates of a synagogue on the east, as we found at the Tabernacle, which opened to the east, as it says, "And they encamped before the Tabernacle on the east, before the Tent of Meeting to the east." (Num. 3:38)

Up until now, these early rabbinic texts have focused solely on the orientation of the worshippers, whether physically or mentally. This Tosefta is the first text to address the issue of the physical synagogue layout and orientation, combining matters of both a personal and structural nature.

The first verse in this text maps a precise picture of how the various components of the synagogue, human or otherwise, are situated: Where the elders are supposed to sit; where the Torah is placed when it is brought in; which way the leader of the service and the congregation face; even the orientation of those performing special prayers, like the Kohanim, is addressed.

The second verse delineates the actual structural

requirements of the synagogue itself. The primary issue in this case is where the gates of the synagogue should be located. This is the only issue concerning the orientation of the synagogue building mentioned in any of the early rabbinic texts.

Bringing both of the verses together, the picture of the synagogue that emerges is one in which the gates open to the east, the Torah is placed on the Jerusalem oriented wall, the congregation and prayer leader face both the Torah and Jerusalem, and the elders of the community face the congregation.

The general concern with the physical layout in the synagogue appears to be choreographed with an eye towards facilitating the proper orientation of the worshipper; namely towards the Temple. The first verse makes it quite obvious that the essential point of reference for worship is the Temple; every orientation within the synagogue is described in relation to it.

This prayer orientation towards the Temple, as described in the Tosefta, is almost perfectly compatible with the general rabbinic dictum that all prayer should be directed towards the Temple. There is, however, one problem concerning the placement of the elders in this configuration. If the elders were to face the congregation, looking away from Jerusalem, this would seem to contradict the prevailing custom that all people should face Jerusalem when they pray. The only possible resolution to this tension that I can think to suggest assumes that when the elders take these seats it is not for the purpose of prayer but in their capacity as judges. This solution is prompted by Saeger's theory

that synagogues were not only used for worship but served multiple purposes, one of which was as a court.[12]

However, simply because the actual orientation of the synagogue is in line with the basic principle of Temple-focused worship, we have not demonstrated that the reasons behind the decision for this particular orientation are equivalent. In fact, the justification for praying towards the Temple according to this text is very different from the rationale asserted for a Temple-focused worship in the previous Tosefta.

In the first Tosefta we examined, the orientation towards the Temple was instituted to inspire a high level of concentration on God. In this Tosefta, however, a new rabbinic rationale is presented. To support a Temple orientation this time, the rabbis cite, as the basis for this ruling, a biblical text describing how the Israelites assembled and faced the Tent of Meeting while in the desert.

The Tent of Meeting is a perfectly logical choice for a structure upon which to model worship orientation in the synagogue, since it was the prototype for the Temple itself. Because the Israelites assembled at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, presumably facing it, the rabbis interpreted this to mean that whenever Jews "assemble," specifically in prayer, they should also face the Temple, which had been modeled on the Tent of Meeting.

This appeal to what the rabbis present as an "original" custom--facing the tent of meeting--suggests a realistic fear

that God's presence may no longer have been immanent nor accessible through the Temple site after it was destroyed. Consequently, if the centrality of the Temple was to be retained as the focus of worship, the rabbis, in response to this apprehension, were compelled to formulate a new orientation rationale to justify the continuance of a Temple-focused worship, since the original reason for facing the Temple--God's indwelling presence--was no longer functionable.

The fact that this text is operating under a very different presumption about the nature of the Temple and its connection to God is clearly indicated in two ways by the text. First, no comment is made about internal orientation. The concern is just with physically facing the temple. Clearly, if God's presence was not presumed at the Temple then there would be no need for an internal orientation towards it, since this was the reason for an internal orientation in the first place.

Second, the Temple is the only focal point mentioned. There is no distinction made between an orientation towards the Temple and one towards Jerusalem, nor between the Temple and the Holy of Holies. The reason for this is that the theological and spiritual aspirations, which we observed operating in the other text, are just not an issue here.

The second verse of the Tosefta deals with the actual physical structure of the synagogue itself. The model for the placement of the synagogue gates is also the Tent of Meeting, whose gates were on the east, as the rabbis infer from the

biblical text, "And they encamped before the Tabernacle on the east." (Num. 3:38) Because the biblical text determines that the front of the Tabernacle, where the main gate must have been, was on the eastern side, the rabbis interpret this to mean that the synagogues should also open to the east.

Landsberger asserts that this model reflects the belief by some that the temple, after its destruction, would not be rebuilt and should no longer be the focus of prayer. Therefore, a new paradigm for synagogue orientation needed to be developed. "Attention may accordingly have been directed to the older sanctuary, the tent of meeting. And this may have been chosen not to define any sacred direction but to serve as a model for synagogue building."[13]

It is not so strange to model the synagogue, which was patterned after the Temple, on the Tent of Meeting since the First Temple was in fact constructed after the Tabernacle in the first place. "When the Tabernacle was erected by Moses in the wilderness...the divine command 'And they shall make Me a sanctuary so that I may dwell in their midst' (ex. 25:8) had been complied with.... But the whole range of the commandment attained its fulfilment only in the construction of the Holy Temple by King Solomon."[14]

We have now observed two different Tosefta texts which offer two radically different rationales for praying towards the Temple: 1) To stimulate a concentration on God and 2) To imitate the "original" orientation custom practiced at the Tent of

Meeting.

The first Tosefta reflects the transformation of the physical reality of the Temple into a symbol so that it could continue functioning as a powerful force in people's lives as a conduit between God and the Jews. This process of altering how the Temple was viewed, however, could not take place over night; it must have taken some time for such a perspective to become firmly established in the people's minds.

Therefore, it seems most likely to suggest that the model of the Tent of Meeting may have actually functioned shortly after the destruction of the Temple and before the spiritualization of the Temple was fully developed, as a sort of intermediary "stop gap" measure that allowed the Temple to remain the focus of prayer. The rabbis were not prepared to forfeit the Temple as a focus of worship; perhaps because, on the one hand, they deeply believed that it would soon be rebuilt, and, on the other, they recognized the Temple's tremendous capability to bond the Jewish people together.

Certainly, the Tent of Meeting model was, of necessity, a temporary solution. As a precursor to the Temple, it was an auspicious model and was also a place where people had access to the divine presence; but it just didn't have the captivating symbolic power in the people's imagination to really take hold and provide the focal point around which the Jewish people could rally. It was only a matter of time before the notion of the Temple as God's dwelling place was resurrected.[18]

Archaeological evidence further supports the position that this Tosefta reflects an interim stage in the development of synagogue structure and orientation.

First, the text tells us that the Torah was not a permanent fixture. The stipulation for orienting the ark, "when they placed the ark...," suggests that the ark was still brought in to the synagogue only when needed. Scholars of ancient synagogues have determined that the portable Torah is a characteristic sign of a synagogue from the early period.

Second, the text indicates a concern with the orientation of the gates. In the early synagogues, the placement of the gates was very important because it was the portals which indicated the sacred direction. However, in this case the orientation of the gate is mentioned in conjunction with an orientation towards Jerusalem by way of the placement of the Torah, which is indicative of a later development. Furthermore, the fact that the synagogue gates are not oriented towards Jerusalem suggests that this model presented in the Tosefta does not belong to the earliest synagogue styles, which had their gates oriented towards Jerusalem.[16]

Third, a number of ancient synagogues do fit the synagogue model described in the Tosefta, with the Torah on the Jerusalem oriented wall and the gates on the east. Such a synagogue fits the plan of the broadhouse synagogue, viewed by archaeologists to represent a wide-ranging transition stage between an early type with gates facing Jerusalem and the later type in which the Torah

was placed on the Jerusalem wall and the gates were opposite the Torah.

The comingling of these two different synagogue features--eastern gates and Torah on the Jerusalem wall--is a strong indication that, at the time of this Tosefta, the orientation of a synagogue probably had not completely resolved itself and become fully articulated in its final form. Or, to be more precise, this Tosefta reflects a particular phase in the evolution of a uniform worship orientation, which occurred in response to the loss of the Second Temple.

This stage of development in the rabbinic approach to synagogue orientation suggests a certain parallel to the period of flux in prayer orientation attested to by the remains of ancient synagogues.

We have now completed our analysis of the early literary remains. The development of the rabbinic rationales for prayer orientation can best be understood and reviewed according to the following chronology:

1) While the texts we have studied do not clearly reveal whether there had been an established prayer direction towards Jerusalem while the Second Temple was standing, the Mishnah Sukkot text does seem to suggest that this was the case.[17] Certainly the use of Ezekiel 8:16 and other biblical prooftexts indicates that there was a movement afoot to establish a physically Temple-focused worship, even if it had not been completely accepted. Sources appear to indicate that a Temple

orientation, at this time, is somehow linked to the presence of God in the Temple.

2) The Mishnah texts continue the prior practice of orienting prayer towards the Temple, with the emphasis on physical orientation, and perhaps even consolidate and confirm the custom. The hope that the Temple would soon be rebuilt, as it eventually was after the First Exile, allowed the earlier rationale that God was still connected to the holy site of the Temple to continue functioning.

3) The Tosefta Megillah text reflects a challenge to the established prayer pattern and questions whether the divine presence can still be linked to the Temple after it is in ruins; though the Temple continues a focus of worship. However, as a result of the questionable divine presence, this text suggests a new rationale for praying towards the Temple based on the earlier model of the Tent of Meeting.

4) Finally, the Tosefta Berachot text reestablishes the eternal indwelling of God's presence in the Temple as the rationale for facing the Temple during prayer. However, by this time, the orientation has become internalized, reflecting the reinterpreted symbolic, spiritual nature of the Temple.

Even more important, though, than this evolution of prayer orientation rationales, a new layer of meaning has emerged which links the various attitudes towards prayer orientation into a unified framework. Behind all of the competing forces shaping the evolution of a uniform prayer orientation towards Jerusalem,

stands the single most primal and basic of instincts: self-preservation. Like a picture slowly materializing, the analysis thus far suggests that all of the concerns expressed in the texts--aspirations for national unity, attempts to distinguish Jewish worship from that of other religious groups, and the desire to instill an intimate relationship with God--can now be understood simply as a variety of means for securing one end: The survival of the Jewish people in a world frought with so many challenges and obstacles to its continued existence.

If either one of these defining elements of the Jewish people were to wither away so, too, would the Jewish people. To survive in a world over which they could exert very little control, the Jewish people's need to preserve a sense of peoplehood and national unity; to maintain their unique and historic relationship with God; and to continue to distinguish themselves from the other peoples and cultures surrounding them became that much more important. A distinctly Jewish prayer orientation was a vital component in the pursuit of this goal because it functioned on all three of these levels.

Consequently, prayer orientation, like other ritual practices, has transcended the more superficial meanings generally associated with it and reflects the deepest and most urgent concerns of the Jewish people.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE PALESTINIAN TALMUD

"Praying Towards Jerusalem"

BERACHOT, Tefillat HaShachar, CH. 4, 1

יכול יהא מתפלל לכל רוח שירצה. ת"ל
וכוין פתיחין ליה בעליתה נגד ירושלם:

One might think that a person could pray in any direction that s/he wanted, [but] Scripture says, "And the windows in his upper chambers were open towards Jerusalem." (Dan. 6:11)

With this very succinct statement, the rabbis of the Palestinian Talmud establish a clearly defined practice concerning the orientation of prayer: Prayers are to be offered in the direction of Jerusalem. This passage appears to maintain the general tenor of the early rabbinic literature with respect to prayer orientation; but there are actually two subtle changes evident in this citation, which differentiate this expression of prayer orientation from the others examined thus far.

The first distinguishing characteristic, an emphasis on the physical nature of the orientation, is not really a new development; rather, it is a return to an earlier form. Except for the latest Tosefta text, Berachot 3:14-16, which had demonstrated a preoccupation with an internal orientation, the other early texts highlighted an external orientation. This primary concern with the physical act, and lack of interest in the internal, has moved to the fore once again. But why this change has occurred is not yet apparent.

This second deviation from the earlier models reveals an explicit focus on Jerusalem, rather than the Temple, which had

previously been the norm. This text, in fact, makes the first explicit mention of an orientation towards Jerusalem; except for in Tosefta Berachot.[1] A Jerusalem-focused prayer orientation, however, may not pose any contradiction at all, and may be perfectly in line with the teaching of Tosefta Berachot, which also mentions a specific Jerusalem orientation.

The Palestinian Talmud was produced, after all, by rabbis living in the Galilee during the first half of the fifth century,[2] and, most likely, written for Jews in the same geographical area. Therefore, Tosefta Berachot would clearly dictate a Jerusalem prayer orientation for that community of people, living in the Land but outside of Jerusalem. Surely the rabbis knew of this Tosefta, and their familiarity with this earlier teaching may explain why the focus is on Jerusalem rather than on the Temple. But did the rabbis of the Talmud attribute the same purpose to a Jerusalem prayer orientation as the earlier rabbis attached to a Temple focus? Certainly the worlds that they lived in were quite similar--both lived in northern Palestine under foreign domination--which might prompt us to conclude that they embraced the same rationale; however, it is still too early to jump to conclusions.

The institution of such a Jerusalem-oriented prayer custom, like other rules and regulations governing behavior, may have originated as a response to a particular reality. This was clearly the case in our analysis of earlier texts. What the specifics of this reality were which led rabbis to assert a

uniform direction for prayer here we can only surmise; yet the wording of the text--"One might think a person can pray in any direction"--suggests three possibilities.

On the simplest level, this phraseology may not reflect anything more than a literary device used to demonstrate how the Bible is the source of all religious customs and practice. Indeed, this is a common expression in the Talmudic material. However, even if this is a familiar rhetorical style, I am not convinced that it can be understood solely on this level. The juxtaposition of what people think and what the proper action is suggests a tension; that there are actually people who are not doing the correct thing. The other two possibilities conjecture why people were not orienting their prayers correctly.

The formula, "You might think..." X but really it is Y, suggests that either there was a great deal of confusion among the Jews over which way to face during prayer because they did not know the proper practice, and the rabbis felt a need to clear the matter up; or the rabbis were living in a world in which there were divergent practices being performed by Jews with regard to prayer orientation, which the rabbis found unacceptable, and felt compelled to counter. The former suggests the purpose was primarily educational, while the latter posits that this rabbinic law was of a more polemical nature.

Is it possible that the Jews really did not know that they were supposed to direct their prayers towards Jerusalem? This doesn't seem plausible since we know from our analysis of the

biblical texts that such a custom was certainly familiar by the first exilic period, long before the time of the rabbis, conservatively placed at the 3rd century B.C.E.. And the other texts used by the rabbis to support this practice of directing prayers towards Jerusalem, from I Kings and II Chronicles, suggest that the origins of the practice were even earlier.

At the very least, the custom of facing Jerusalem during prayer seems to have been in existence, with some prevalence, for some 600 years by the time of these rabbis; yet our text suggests that facing Jerusalem had not yet become the standardized and universal practice that was to develop later, since the rabbis appear to be dispelling a perceived confusion. Consequently, while the proper direction of prayer may still have been disputed, it appears highly unlikely that the rabbis were telling the people something that they did not already know when they informed them that prayers should be directed towards Jerusalem. This leads us to consider the second possibility.

It is much more reasonable to assume that the rabbis were responding to a position which stood in opposition to theirs. In fact, the use of the opening phrase, "One might think," suggests that there might have been people who actually were arguing that there was no real Jewish basis for establishing a prayer orientation towards Jerusalem, thus providing an opportunity for Jews to adopt new or different practices when it came to prayer orientation.

The rabbis quickly counter this presumed claim, however,

with a quote from Daniel to demonstrate that there is in fact a precedent, and that the Jewish practice of praying towards Jerusalem is a venerated and established custom that has clearly been the "norm" for many years.

The belief that the rabbis were countering alternative suggestions to a Jerusalem-focused prayer orientation is further supported by a theory expressed in the scholarly world, which we considered in the previous chapter. Franz Landsberger asserted that the catastrophic destruction of the Second Temple so radically altered the nature of the Jewish world that a change in the orientation of prayer was also necessitated. Since the Temple had been rendered non-functional, Landsberger believes that there were some Jews who sought to abandon the notion of prayer as a Temple-focused endeavor and advocated instead a new model around "either the omnipresent Shechinah or some assimilation to the Tent of Meeting."[4] Certainly, these counter proposals could have found supporters even during the time of the Palestinian Amoraim, especially since the archaeological evidence demonstrates that this period is just prior to the clear and definite establishment of a fixed orientation towards Jerusalem.

If the operative rationale is the same as before, the text rejects these alternatives because their adoption would undermine the rabbinic belief that a clearly defined focus of prayer towards Jerusalem promoted a sense of Jewish unity, nationally and spiritually, necessary for the continued survival of the Jewish people. We have no indication that a new rationale has

developed and the old one makes perfect sense in this situation.

Indeed, we might better understand our text in the context of these challenges. Had a Jew claimed that the Shechinah was everywhere, the rabbis might have responded to the claim that this might lead one to believe that one may consequently pray in any direction one desires, but Daniel teaches us otherwise: One must direct one's prayers towards Jerusalem. As for an assimilation to the Tent of Meeting, Landsberger, himself, notes that "this may have been chosen not to define any sacred direction but to serve as a model for synagogue building."[5] Consequently, such a model would also leave prayer, not to mention the people, centerless; again an unacceptable possibility in the eyes of the rabbis.

The possibility that Jewish groups may have advocated alternative prayer orientations after the fall of Jerusalem seems more than likely. In fact, other rabbinic texts that we will examine, particularly the next passage from the Palestinian Talmud,[6] validate at least the very real concern over how the Temple could continue to function as a focus of prayer in its destroyed state. Clearly this is an issue that the rabbis were forced to address.[7] However, while Landsberger's hypothesis may very well be true, the final evolution of the laws of orientation indicate that such opposing views on the proper direction of prayer were a minority opinion that were eventually suppressed by the rabbis and their supporters.

The rabbis' desire to oppose divergent practices regarding

prayer orientation is a recurring theme that can be inferred in many of our texts, though the rabbis rarely make their polemics very obvious or explicit. We have already touched upon this issue in the discussion of Mishnah Sukkot 5:4 above and there will be other opportunities (and much better ones than this particular text provides) for perceiving this tension between the rabbis' "establishment" view of orientation and the opinions of other groups.

So whether this text was addressed to Jews who might be lured into other religious groups who claimed that their prayer orientation did not conflict with Judaism's or to Jews seeking an alternative focus for prayer, the rabbis of the Palestinian Talmud were intent on making two things clear: a) the direction in which prayer is offered is very important and b) there is a proper direction: Jerusalem.

Why the rabbis of the Talmud, however, were such staunch advocates of prayer focused in a particular direction, and how the role of Jerusalem was viewed, is still not perfectly clear, though we have offered some conjectures, and will continue to be the subject of our analysis.

BERACHOT, Tefillat HaShakhar, CH. 4, 5[8]

A man should pray the "Eighteen Benedictions" every day... Mishnah: If he is riding on an ass he dismounts [and prays]. If he is unable to dismount he turns his face [towards Jerusalem[9] and prays]. And if he is unable to turn his face [towards Jerusalem], he directs his heart towards the Holy of Holies. [If he was sitting in a boat or on a raft he directs his heart towards the Holy of Holies.][10]

We have previously discussed the Mishnah, therefore, we will

The observance of such a prayer orientation in Babylon would be a clear contravention of what appears to have been the standard rabbinic policy. We are left with two alternatives: either R. Bar Aha advocated a radical position or his statement was corrupted in transmission over the years.

While the former is always a possibility, there is little other evidence to suggest that such an attitude was held. It is more than likely, however, that Bar Aha's statement is probably a misquote. The Talmudic commentary, P'nei Moshe, reports that he searched for the Baraita in question and could not locate it anywhere. P'nei Moshe concludes that there was a mistake in copying down the text and suggests that Bar Aha was probably referring to the Mishnah in Sukkot 5:4, which he understood to require a prayer orientation in which, "They face all the directions except for the east." However, this was mistakenly transcribed into the Talmud as, "They do not face any direction except for the east." This scribal error could occur very easily by hen (they) simply being misread as ein (they don't).

R. Avun, however, accepts R. Bar Aha's statement at face value, and counters his position with one of his own, but not before he discredits R. Bar Aha's claim that prayers are only directed to the east. R. Avun accomplishes this by reminding the readers that facing east during prayer was the old custom, now no longer practiced, as was learned in Mishnah Sukkot 5:4. This explains why R. Avun opens, "In the beginning, 'they had their backs to the Sanctuary...'" He wanted to reinforce the notion

that praying to the east has since been replaced. By what model? This will be the subject of the next section.

FOCUSING THE DIRECTION OF PRAYER

תני סומא ומי שאינו יכול לכוין את הרוחו' הרי אילו מתפללין כלפי למעלן שנ' והתפללו אל ה': העומדים ומתפללין בחוצה לארץ הופכין את פניהן כלפי ארץ ישראל. ומה טעם והתפללו אליך דרך ארצם אשר נתת לאבותם: העומדין ומתפללין בארץ ישראל הופכין את פניהן כלפי ירושלים. ומה טעם והתפללו אליך דרך העיר אשר בחרת בה. העומדים ומתפללין בירושלים הופכין פניהן כלפי הר הבית. שנאמ' והבית אשר בניתי לשמך. העומדי' ומתפללין בהר הבית הופכין פניהן כלפי בית קדשי הקדשים. ומה טעם והתפללו אל המקום הזה ואתה תשמע אל מכון שבתך אל השמים ושמעת וסלחת. נמצאו העומדין בצפון פניהן לדרום. העומדין לדרום פניה' לצפון. העומדי' במזרח פניהן למערב. למערב פניהן למזרח. נמצאו כל ישראל מתפללין אל מקום אחד. הה"ד כי ביתי בית תפלה יקרא לכל העמים: אמר ר'יבל הוא ההיכל לפני לפנים. היכל שכל הפנים פונין לו.

SECTION II: It is taught in a Tannaitic source, "A blind man and one who is unable to discern directions, behold these [people] pray upwards, as Scripture says, 'And they pray towards God.'" (I Kings 8:44) Those who pray outside the Land of Israel turn and face towards the Land of Israel. And what is the Scriptural basis for this? "And they pray to You towards their land which You gave to their ancestors." (I Kings 8:48) Those who pray within the Land of Israel turn and face towards Jerusalem. And what is the Scriptural basis for this? "And they pray to You towards the city which You have chosen." (I Kings 8:48) Those who pray in Jerusalem turn and face towards the Temple Mount, as Scripture says, "And the House which I have built to Your name." Those who pray on the Temple Mount turn and face towards the Holy of Holies. And what is the Scriptural basis for this? "And when they pray towards this place, give heed in Your heavenly abode--give heed and pardon." (II Chron. 6:21) Consequently, those who are in the north face south, those in the south face north, those in the east face west, and those in the west face east [when they are praying]. Consequently, all Israel is praying towards one place. As it is written in Scripture, "For My House shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." (Is. 56:7) R. Joshua Ben Levi said, [the Scriptural basis is] "The front part of the Temple..."(I Kings 6:17) [namely] to the face (l'fanim) of the Temple since all of the faces [of the people] turn towards it.

At first glance, this passage seems remarkably similar to the Tosefta passage which we previously examined; both are crafted around the same biblical texts, from I Kings and II

Chronicles, which serve as the basis for establishing a rabbinic schema of prayer orientation that becomes more specific the closer one gets to the Temple in Jerusalem, and both explicitly state that the purpose of this uniform orientation, centered on the Temple, is to insure that all Israel is praying towards one place.

But upon closer inspection, there are a few very significant differences between this Talmudic text and the parallel one in Tosefta Berachot 3:14-16. One major change is that, here, each phrase from the biblical verses is used to support a more and more focused physical turning towards the Temple, whereas in the earlier Tosefta the text only speaks of a mental turning until its very conclusion.

Even those exceptions to the rule who are instructed to pray towards God, the blind and those lacking a sense of direction, are provided with an unambiguous physical orientation: upwards. We remember from the example in the Tosefta that the exceptions offer valuable insight into the purpose of the general rule. Consequently, this text has made the emphasis on a physical orientation very clear. While this stress on physical orientation is the complete opposite from the Tosefta parallel, it does conform perfectly to the emphasis observed in the first Palestinian Talmud text. A general trend favoring physical over mental orientation is already emerging.

The critical question now becomes: Why did the rabbis of the Palestinian Talmud express basically the same message as the

Tosefta, yet choose to do so in terms of physical orientation rather than internal orientation?

There are three possibilities to consider which could explain this shift in emphasis: 1) The talmudic rabbis were simply familiar with a different tradition, which emphaisized physical orientation; 2) The rabbis stressed an external mode of orientation because they were ultimately concerned with legislating actions not feelings; or 3) The rabbis were countering the earlier trend to over-internalize and spiritualize the physical. We will now explore these options one by one.

1) It is certainly possible that the rabbis had received a variant of the tradition, with a shift in emphasis; but the texts are so similar to one another that the likelihood of this happening is highly suspect. The Talmud even quotes the Tannaitic origin of the text, though some of the prooftexts vary slightly. This close of a parallel with such minor alterations bears the mark, instead, of a conscious effort to change the aspect of orientation to be emphasized. Therefore we must continue to pursue the reasons motivating this switch.

2) This possibility suggests that this shift in emphasis was done on purpose, for specific reasons. The change was not due to the rabbis' lack of understanding of the importance of an internal orientation or its relationship to a physical one; namely, that the physical orientation was a means to an internal end. Rather, it indicates a growing rabbinic concern with the

bottom line actions, which were observable and could be regulated, and a waning interest in the purpose or reasons behind them.

Thus, the rabbis of the Palestinian Talmud might very well have understood the purpose of prayer orientation to be the stimulation of an internal concentration on God during worship, but decided to emphasize what they had greater control over. Furthermore, they felt no need to address the importance of internal orientation since this could be achieved by simply dictating a person's external orientation for prayer.

While it may, in fact, be true that the rabbis were more concerned with physical actions, this does not seem to be sufficient motivation for deleting all mention of internal orientation, if in fact were still of importance. The Tosefta text certainly communicated a significant concern with actions, even though internal orientation was stressed. Consequently, we must begin to suspect that internal orientation may no longer have been the ultimate goal of prayer orientation. And this brings us to our third possible solution.

3) This scenario suggests that this rabbinic concentration on physical orientation, and the complete lack of attention paid to internal orientation, reflects a backlash to what the rabbis in the earlier literature had achieved. What had at one time been instituted to help the Temple to continue to function in the hearts and minds of the people in the years subsequent to its destruction and to address the needs of Jews in the Diaspora had

gone to the extreme; the Temple and Jerusalem began to function solely as symbol and came to overshadow the Land as a physical reality.

As a result of the Land becoming over-internalized and -spiritualized, the rabbis, still living in the Land, wanted to counter that trend and communicate a clear message that the reality of the Land of Israel should not be ignored, and cannot be talked about simply in symbolic terms. Therefore, they instituted a renewed emphasis on the concrete action of turning towards Jerusalem.

This third possibility presents the most compelling reasons for why the rabbis shied away from discussing the internal nature of orientation. Moreover, now that the physical orientation towards Jerusalem is firmly established, whether the internal response is desired or not it will be stimulated.

Another difference between the two texts can be observed in the way that they conclude. While they both reach the same conclusion--that the ultimate goal of a Temple-centered worship is to insure that all Israel is praying towards the same place--the Palestinian Talmud provides two prooftexts to support its claim.

The first is a quote from Isaiah that speaks of the ingathering of the exiles, and thus serves to complement and reinforce the notion of Jerusalem as a place that unites all the people. Again there appears to be a conscious effort to highlight the notion of a Jerusalem rooted in a reality--sometime

in history--in which the Jewish people will actually be reunited. The message the rabbis communicate is that there will come a day when the Jewish people will no longer have to depend on the powerful symbols of prayer to bind them together; rather all the exiles will be physically gathered once again within the borders of Holy Jerusalem.

The second prooftext comes from I Kings and is a clever reading of the text showing that all people pray towards the Temple. To prove that, in fact, all Jews pray towards the Temple, Joshua b. Levi cites a biblical verse that uses the strange construction, Ha'Heichal Lifnai.

The plain sense of the phrase appears to be the "front part of the Temple," but Joshua b. Levi interprets it midrashically by noting that Ha'Heichal Lifnai contains the same root as the word panim (faces). Thus the term Ha'Heichal Lifnai is not used because it refers to the "front of the House" but because it is the House towards which all "faces" turn.

This prooftext also reinforces a physical orientation towards the Temple, explicitly stressing that it is one's face and not one's heart that should be turned towards the Temple.

A distinction is made in the text, however, between establishing that the custom of facing the Temple was observed while it was standing and proving that this practice continued after the Temple was in ruins. These prooftexts above were assumed by the rabbis only to apply to the former. An entirely separate section below is devoted just to showing that, even

after its destruction, the Temple continued to function as the focus of prayer.

THE TEMPLE IN RUINS AS A FOCUS OF PRAYER

עד
כרן בביניהו. בחורבנו מניין. אמר רבי אבון בנוי לתלפיות.
תל שכל הפיות מתפללין עליו. בברכה בקריה שמע. ובתפילה.
בברכה. בונה ירושלם. בתפילה. אלהי דוד ובונה ירושלם. בקריה
שמע. פורש סוכת שלום עלינו ועל עמו ישראל ועל ירושלם:

SECTION III: The above applies to when the Temple stood. What is the proof that this [praying towards the Temple] is so after its destruction? R. Avun said, "Built with turrets," (Banui l'talpiyyot) (Song of Songs 4:4) means the mount (tel) for which all mouths (piyyot) pray[11], in blessing[12], in the recitation of Shema, and in the "Eighteen Blessings." How in a blessing [do people pray for Jerusalem]? "Builder of Jerusalem."[13] How in the "Eighteen Benedictions?" "The God of David and Builder of Jerusalem." How in the Shema? "Who spreads the shelter of peace over us and on His people Israel and on Jerusalem."

Having proved that worshippers should face the Temple in prayer when it was standing, a new set of circumstances arise once the Temple is destroyed. How do we know that it is still proper to pray in that direction? This section sets out to establish that this practice is indeed to be continued because the rebuilding of Jerusalem is a recurring theme in the prayers of Israel.

Here, the rabbis have introduced another subtle shift; that is, after its destruction, the Temple is not the place "towards" which all pray--the previous criterion--rather, now, the rabbis interpret this to imply that the Temple is the place "for" which all Israel prays.

In a verse from Song of Songs, which is interpreted by the rabbis through a marvelous word play, they demonstrate that people continue to pray for Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple after its destruction by focusing on the word talpiyot. The rabbis read this one word as two, tel ("a mound of ruins")

and piyyot ("mouths"). Therfore, the Temple is understood as the "mound of ruins" for which all "mouths" pray.

To further support their claim that people continue to pray for Jerusalem after the destruction of the Temple, the rabbis also cite various prayers and blessings that express this concern.

THE ASSOCIATION OF THE DIVINE WITH THE DESTROYED TEMPLE

כתוב אחד אומר אלך ואשובה אל מקומי. וכתוב אחד אומר והיו עיני ולבי שם כל הימים. הא כיצד פניו למעלה ועיניו ולבו למטה.

SECTION IV: One place in Scripture it says, "I will return to My abode" (Hosea 5:15)[14] and in another place it says, "And My eyes and My heart shall be there all the days."[15] "All the days" ? How could this be?[16] God's "face" (Divine Presence) is above[17] while God's eyes and heart are below.[18]

Indeed, we have already discussed in previous chapters how the Temple continued to function on a symbolic level, long after its destruction, as a unifying force in a fragmented and disparate Jewish world. But why did the centrality of the Temple as a prayer focus have to be maintained?

The physical reality of the Temple had always signified the presence of the divine on earth. Consequently, an orientation towards the Temple was more than just a geographical rallying point around which the Jewish people could create a sense of unity. The orientation towards the Temple was a spiritual and religious focal point to rally Israel around their one and singular God.

Furthermore, a prayer orientation towards the Temple communicated a sense of loyalty and devotion to God, whose

presence had long been associated with that place. Were God's presence no longer to be connected to the Temple, not only would the entire Temple-focused system of prayer have crumbled with the Temple, but so too would have Judaism, because the Jews would have lost the primary vehicle linking them to their God. Consequently, maintaining the Temple as the focal point of prayer orientation reinforces the eternal relationship between God and people and thereby vouchsafes the existence of Israel.

However, to insure that the Temple remains the center, it was critical for the rabbis to demonstrate that God's relationship with the Temple continued to exist in some way after the destruction. How this bond is retained is the subject of this section.

The previous section just demonstrated that people continued to pray for the Temple after it was destroyed. As a result, a new but related and critical issue was raised. If the people were praying for Jerusalem, what was the reason? How were people to know that God's presence still resided there? The Temple was built as a House to God's name, but if the House was no longer standing where could God be located? Obviously these questions posed pressing theological and very real challenges for the rabbis that demanded to be addressed.

The rabbis could not say that God's presence simply continued to reside among the ruins. In addition to being unseemly to think that the divine presence could or would dwell in such a ruinous state, there is a theological problem as well:

How could God let the House of God be destroyed, especially assuming that God dwelled there eternally? This, too, was unthinkable and necessitated a degree of distance between God and the Temple.

On the other hand, to consider the possibility that God's connection with the Temple had been severed completely is also untenable because theologically this communicates a sense of abandonment to the people. Furthermore, this raises the problem once again that if God is not in the Holy Temple, or at least linked to it in some way, then why should all of Israel pray towards it. This talmudic passage proposes a compromise that allows for both distance and relationship at the same time.

When God says, in one place in Scripture, "I will return to My abode," this is interpreted to refer to the departure of God's presence. However, elsewhere it is noted that God also says, "My eyes and My heart shall be there all the days," which implies that, even though God's most intimate presence may no longer dwell directly in the confines of the Temple, God will eternally be concerned about and watch over the Temple site. This is comforting and establishes an important link between the Temple and God, without insisting that God dwelled in the ruins in exactly the same way as when the Temple stood in all its glory.

GOD ABOVE AND BELOW: A STIMULUS TO ORIENTATION CONFUSION

ואם לאו יכוין את לבו כנגד בית קדש הקדשים:
לאי זה בית קדש הקדשים. רבי חייא רבא כנגד קדשי הקדשים
של מעלן: רבי שמעון בן חלפתא אמר כנגד בית קדש הקדשי
שלמטן: אמר רבי פינחס לא פליגין בית קדשי הקדשים שלמטן
מכוון כנגד בית קדש הקדשים שלמעלן. מכון לשבתך. מכוון
כנגד שכתך:

SECTION V: "If one can't [face Jerusalem physically]" one should direct one's heart towards the Holy of Holies. [But] to which Holy of Holies? R. Hiyya Ruba said: "Towards the Holy of Holies above" and R. Shimon Ben Halafta said: "Towards the Holy of Holies down below."[19] R. Pinhas said, "These two statements are not in conflict. The Holy of Holies down below corresponds to (mechuvan) the Holy of Holies of above. "Your heavenly abode"[20] (machon l'shivtecha) (I Kings 8:49) corresponds to (mechuvan) Your dwelling place, shivtecha. [i.e., the Temple on earth, the House to Your Name].

This section of the Talmud abruptly changes its focus of prayer orientation. Up until now, the talmudic material has stressed a physical orientation towards the Temple. All of a sudden, the rabbis raise the possibility that there are some people who may have a difficulty facing the Temple physically, and posits that the solution to this dilemma is that they should orient themselves internally towards the Temple.

This question concerning those who cannot face Jerusalem with ease appears to arise out of nowhere, however, if we look back to the beginning of the text we realize that the rabbis are in fact referring to and commenting on the Mishnah text attached to this passage, which dictates the proper procedure when one cannot physically face Jerusalem.

However, the rabbis' resolution of this problem at this juncture deviates from what has thus far been stated as the

talmudic norm for this situation--facing upwards--and has reverted back to the practice of the Mishnah: directing one's heart towards the Holy of Holies. This is the first and only mention in this passage of a desire for an internal orientation towards the Temple. Thus, this discrepancy is best explained as an inadvertant copying of the Mishnah's terminology rather than a conscious wish to once again stress the need for an internal orientation.

Having cleared up an orientation confusion on one level, by establishing the proper orientation for those who cannot face Jerusalem (their hearts towards the Holy of Holies), the rabbis now further complicate the issue of orientation.

The preceding section had determined that God is present both above, in heaven, and below, at the Temple. If this is the case then God must have some kind of Temple or dwelling place in heaven that corresponds to the one below.

This possibility of two sites for the Holy of Holies raises a distressing problem when it comes to the quesion of prayer orientation, as the text indicates: towards which Holy of Holies is one to direct one's heart, the one above or the one below?

If God is both above and below, and we know that the goal of prayer is to address God, why shouldn't everyone just focus directly on God in the Temple above instead of bothering with the Temple below. The rabbis resolve the problem by stating that there really is no conflict because both of the Temples are really the same thing; so perfectly do they correspond to one

another that they are one. That is to say, by concentrating on the Temple below, one is in fact concentrating on God in the Temple above.

Rabbi Pinchas proves his point by citing a biblical verse that refers to God's abode in heaven as, machon l'shivtecha. Utilizing a play on words between machon and mechuvan, which share the same Hebrew root, R. Pinchas suggests that God's place (machon) in heaven corresponds to (mechuvan) the place that symbolizes God's presence on earth, the Temple.

Here, too, we see the powerful connection between the physical (the Temple below) and the abstract (the Temple above). The first is a necessary means to get to the Temple above, the ultimate goal.

THE ETERNALITY OF THE TEMPLE

הר המוריה ר' חייא רובא ורבי יניי חד אמר
שמשם הוריה יצאה לעולם. וחרנה אמר שמשם יראה יוצאה
לעולם: ארון ר' חייא רובא ור' ינאי חד אמר שמשם אורה
יוצאה לעולם. וחרנה אמר שמשם ארירה יוצאה לעולם: דביר
ר' חייא ור' ינאי חד אמר שמשם דבר יוצא לעולם. וחרנה
שמשם דיברות יוצאות לעולם:[21]

SECTION VI: Har Moriah: [Why is it called thus?] R. Hiyya Ruba and R. Yanai [held differing opinions]. One said, "From there, its teaching goes out eternally," and the other said, "Fear goes out eternally."[21] Aron: [Why is it called thus?] R. Hiyya Ruba and R. Yanai [held differing opinions]. One said, "From there, its light goes out eternally," and the other said, "its curse goes out eternally."[22] Devir: [Why is it called thus?] R. Hiyya Ruba and R. Yanai [held differing opinions]. One said, "From there, a plague goes forth eternally," and the other said, "the commandments go forth eternally."[23]

This concluding section rounds out the overarching

discussion, carried on throughout this text, of why it is necessary to orient prayer towards the Temple, even after its been destroyed, by punctuating its closing argument with an exclamation of perhaps the most critical point: The eternality of the Temple!

R. Hiyya and R. Yanai accomplish their task of demonstrating the timeless power of the Temple, its location, and all that it contains by analyzing various places associated with the Temple. One of the rabbis always stresses a positive thing that issues forth implicitly to the faithful, and the other counters with a negative effect eternally going forth, here implied to the heretics.

We might have expected the conclusion of this rather lengthy talmudic passage to have ended with the eternal nature of God's presence at the Temple, the ultimate reason for praying towards the Temple. This certainly would have been the case in the earlier rabbinic literature. But, here, very much in line with the general tenor of the Palestinian Talmud, with an emphasis on the physical, the text returns once again, not to abstract concepts but to the everlasting nature of the physical manifestations of God's reality in the Temple--the mountain its built on, the ark, and the Holy of Holies.

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE BABYLONIAN TALMUD

We will now examine the latest of the literary remains from the rabbinic period; texts from the Babylonian Talmud. This Talmud comprises the largest body of textual material relevant to our topic. There are nine different texts that have been organized and analyzed according to the particular theme expressed. These themes range from the familiar notion of an internal and an external focus on the Temple; to the more radical belief that prayers can be offered in any direction; to a frequent discussion of a new requirement, not walking behind a synagogue while the congregation is praying, which reflects some standard rabbinic attitudes.

The world of the Babylonian Amoraim is quite different from that of the rabbis of our earlier texts, a fact that is likely to have a significant impact on their perception of the role of prayer orientation and why it was considered important. However what this impact is and its extent can only be determined after the completion of our analysis.

The first critical element that may influence these rabbis is that they now view the Land of Israel from a very different perspective. These are the first rabbis that we have encountered who live outside of Palestine; therefore, we can assume that their relationship to the Land will be distinct from that of the earlier rabbis who were residents there.

Second, there is another level of influence associated with living outside the Land. This is not just a matter of distance;

the rabbis are now living in exile. An exilic mentality may also shape how the rabbis address the issue of prayer orientation.

The third significant factor to take into consideration before we analyze these texts is that the Babylonian world was one of tremendous religious diversity. Though a variety of religious groups had certainly proliferated in Palestine, it is possible that such range of religious alternatives in Babylon posed more of a threat, in the rabbis eyes, because the Jews were now foreigners and no longer on native soil. Being in such a situation, the rabbis may have felt less secure and, therefore, a greater pressure to preserve a sense of group identity and prevent assimilation into surrounding cultures.

PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY FACING JERUSALEM:

BERACHOT 30a:

ת"ר * סומא ומי שאינו יכול לכוין את הרוחות יכוין לבו כנגד אביו שבשמים שנא' °והתפללו אל ה' היה °עומד בח"ל יכוין את לבו כנגד ארץ ישראל שנא' °והתפללו אליך דרך ארצם היה עומד בארץ ישראל יכוין את לבו כנגד ירושלים שנאמר °והתפללו אל ה' דרך העיר אשר בחרת היה עומד בירושלים יכוין את לבו כנגד בית המקדש שנאמר °והתפללו אל הבית הזה היה עומד בבית המקדש יכוין את לבו כנגד בית קדשי הקדשים שנאמר °והתפללו אל המקום הזה היה עומד בבית קדשי הקדשים יכוין את לבו כנגד בית הכפורת °היה עומד אחורי בית הכפורת יראה עצמו כאילו לפני הכפורת נמצא עומד במזרח מחזיר פניו למערב במערב מחזיר פניו למזרח בדרום מחזיר פניו לצפון בצפון מחזיר פניו לדרום נמצאו כל ישראל מכוונין את לבם למקום אחד א"ר אבין ואיתימא ר' אבינא מאי קראה °כמגדל דויד צוארך בנוי התלפיות תל שבל פיות פונים בו :

Our rabbis taught: The blind person and the one who is not able to determine directions should direct their hearts towards their Father in heaven, as it says, "And they pray towards Adonai" (I Kings 8:44) Those who are outside of the Land of Israel should direct their hearts towards the Land of Israel, as it says, "And they pray to You towards their land " (I Kings 8:48) Those who are in the Land of Israel should direct their hearts towards Jerusalem, as it says, "And they pray to Adonai towards this city which You have chosen" (I Kings 8:44) Those who are in Jerusalem should direct their hearts towards the Temple, as it says, "And they pray towards this House." (II Chron. 6:32) Those who are at the Temple should direct their hearts towards the Holy of Holies, as it says, "And they pray towards this place." (I Kings 8:30) Those who are in the Holy of Holies should direct their hearts towards the mercy seat. Those who are standing behind the mercy-seat should imagine themselves as if they were in front of the mercy-seat. Consequently, the one in the east should face west [when praying], the one in the west should face east, the one in the south should face north, and the one in the north should face south. Thus, all Israel will be directing their hearts towards one place. R. Avin--and some say R. Avina--said: What text confirms this? "Your neck is like the tower of David built with turrets [talpiyyot]" (Song of Songs 4:4), the mount (tel) towards which all mouths (piyyot) turn.

We commence this chapter with a text that has become an old friend, having already seen two striking parallels; one in the Tosefta and one in the Palestinian Talmud. It is especially interesting and enlightening to begin our study of these talmudic texts with this passage in particular because the extremely close similarity puts any deviation from earlier versions in high relief.

There are a number of signs in this text that point to the fact that these later rabbis are writing out of an experience very different from that of the earlier rabbis. Nonetheless, many of the same issues and concerns continue to motivate them.

The first indication that the rabbis are in a different place is ever so casually, but with great consciousness, hinted at towards the end of the passage. It is precisely this subtlety

that makes this easily overlooked remark so revealing.

As the rabbis pronounce, at their conclusion, the proper direction a person is required to face when praying, they do not begin with "those in the north face south," as the other texts do but, rather with, "those in the east face west." We can understand this slight variation in the order of orientations as a reflection of a geographical priority, which was assigned by the rabbis, understandably, to the land in which they were residing, since that was their primary point of reference. Thus, each text begins subjectively with the direction the particular rabbi-authors, and those in their community, would have to turn in order to face Jerusalem. In the early texts, the rabbis were living in the Galilee, north of Jerusalem; thus, they begin with "those in the north." In contrast, the Babylonian rabbis were east of Jerusalem and so they started with "those in the east."

The most obvious difference in this text is the reversal that has taken place in terms of the type of orientation that is stressed. In this text, the rabbis have rejected the external terminology of the Palestinian Talmud in discussing prayer orientation and embraced the internal emphasis of the earlier Tosefta instead.

This rediscovered interest in internal prayer orientation signals a distinct change in the rabbis' relationship to the Land and the Temple. Whereas we noted that the rabbis of the Palestinian Talmud were intent on underscoring the physical reality of the land they were living in, the rabbis in Babylon

are now more distanced from the reality of Palestine than ever.

The physical Temple can be no more than a memory to the Babylonian rabbis, distanced by time and space; yet it has become firmly ensconced in the reality of their minds as a powerful symbol. Because Jerusalem and the Temple are all the more accessible as a symbol to Jews living in Diaspora, it is easy to understand why the rabbis would seek to stress, once again, an internal focus on the Temple, which has continued to serve as a conduit to the divine.

It is critical to note, however, that despite this internal emphasis the rabbis did not abandon the requirements for an external orientation towards the Temple, for they, too, understood that it is this physical action that helped a person achieve the very internal focus that was so greatly desired and necessary, and which allowed one to come into God's presence.

A further indication of the feeling of separation from God that the Jews were experiencing can be observed in the addition of two extra levels of penetration into the heart of the Temple. Unlike the previous two texts, which stopped at the Temple facing the Holy of Holies, this passage actually escorts us inside the deepest reaches of the inner-sanctum; seemingly into the very presence of the divine.

But why does the text bother considering the person who is standing <u>within</u> the Holy of Holies, let alone behind the mercy-seat?! After all, who could the text be addressing? The Holy of Holies was such a sacred and awesome place that no one was ever

permitted to enter there, save the High Priest, and even then, only once a year. Furthermore, it is plain that these last two levels are a later rabbinic addition introduced to serve a particular function, since they are unaccompanied by any textual support. The question arises, therefore: What were the rabbis attempting to communicate?

The message of the rabbis speaks to the desperate need of a people in exile to feel the intimacy of their God. The addition of these two new levels underscores the power of the mind to transport a person into the most intimate relationship with the divine, so much so that, even if one were as close as behind the very mercy-seat itself, one should still imagine oneself to be in front of it, and that much closer to the divine presence. The extra added internal levels reflects and compensates for the added distance and alienation that the people, and perhaps even the rabbis, were liable to be experiencing as a result of being in Babylon.

Again, preserving the unique relationship between Jews and their God was vital to the survival of the Jewish people. This theological aspect of the matter also continues to find its national expression in the final lines of the passage, which concludes with the hope for unity: "In this way all Israel will be turning their hearts towards one place."

The support for this conclusion here is drawn from a different source than it was in the Palestinian Talmud. However, though used for a slightly different purpose, this prooftext from

Song of Songs does appear in the other talmudic text. Consequently, without going into much detail, I will only mention that the Babli makes no distinction between "praying for" the Temple after its destruction and "praying towards" the Temple while it is still standing as was done in the other Talmud.

The core idea here is simply to justify praying towards Jerusalem, expressed in very spiritualized and metaphoric language, which is based on rendering the verse from Song of Songs as, "the mount (tel) towards which all mouths (piyyot) turn." The mouth now emerges as the important vehicle for carrying one's prayerful thoughts of the heart to their destination in Jerusalem, and as such is required to be oriented towards the Temple.

POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER:

BABA BATRA 25a--

רב ששת סבר
שכינה בכל מקום דא"ל רב ששת לשביעיה
לכל רוחתא אוקמן לבר מזירח ולאו מישום
דלית ביה שכינה אלא משום דמורו בה
מיני

(In a discussion of where the Shechina is located,) R. Sheshet also held that the Shechina is in all places, because [when desiring to pray] he used to say to his attendant[2]: "Set me facing any way except the east." And this was not because the Shechina is not there, but because the minim prescribe turning to the east.

On the surface, this passage seems to contradict everything that we have learned up until now about the rabbinic view of prayer orientation: that direction is important and that one should pray towards Jerusalem and the Temple. How can we

understand R. Sheshet's peculiar behavior regarding prayer orientation within the larger context of rabbinic attitudes on this matter? Does this text mean to imply that one need not necessarily pray towards Jerusalem? Or is R. Sheshet's approach sui generis?

As a matter of fact, R. Sheshet's attitude towards the direction of prayer does not present any problems at all and there is nothing out of the ordinary about his prayer orientation. The reason for this is that R. Sheshet is blind, and, according to the rabbis of the earlier texts, blind people are not obligated to observe any particular prayer orientation at all.[3] They can face any direction they so choose as long as they direct their hearts towards God in heaven. Consequently, the location of the Shechinah was probably irrelevant to the prayer orientation of R. Sheshet, but it was of importance to the rabbis of the Babli.

A careful reading of the text demonstrates that R. Sheshet, a second generation Babylonian Amora, never communicated a belief that he, himself, held that the Shechinah was everywhere; and whatever his belief about the location of the Shechinah, it probably had nothing to do with the direction of his prayers. Rather the concern expressed over the location of the Shechinah was most likely a later rabbinic misinterpretation of why R. Sheshet was not that particular about the direction he faced when he prayed. Thus, we can conclude that this text reflects two beliefs held by the Babylonian rabbis: a) that prayer orientation

is linked to the location of the Shechinah, and b) that the Shechinah was everywhere.

This emphasis on the Shechina's omnipresence is a clear indication of a Diaspora mindset. For the Jews living outside of Palestine, in Babylon in particular, it would have been vital to know that God was everywhere. How could Jews continue to survive if the only place to enjoy access to God was in the Land of Israel? Consequently, this rabbinic teaching that the Shechinah was everywhere reflects an attempt to address the specific needs that arose in the Babylonian Jewish community. The rabbis were able to base their claim on what appeared to be the unusual behavior of R. Sheshet.

The rabbis also had to explain R. Sheshet's personal aversion to praying towards the east. They could not allow that this was because the Shechinah was not there in the east, for this would undermine their previous assertion that God was everywhere. Therefore, they attributed his disdain for praying to the east as a concern for praying in the same direction as a Jewish sectarian, lest he be confused with them.

This rabbinic interpretation of R. Sheshet's behavior also mirrors the reality of the Babylonian world in which the rabbis found themselves living. Their reading of his one restriction in orienting his prayers reflects their own preoccupation with needing to differentiate themselves from those who deviated from the established Jewish norm. Appearances, thus, were very important in that they related to core issues of self-

identification. As we shall see, concern with appearances will be major theme in these talmudic texts.

Such a concern would be highly likely in a society as religiously diversified as Babylon's was, because one could easily be mistaken for a member in another group if one's practices were not well within the established limits of your own. Therefore, the rabbis were quick to stress the importance of exercising care in one's ritual practices if they were to maintain the integrity of the Jewish community.

According to this text, the rabbis believed that one's religious loyalties and affiliations were obviously reflected in the orientation of prayer. This notion is reminiscent of the sentiments communicated in Mishnah Sukkot 5:4 where allegiances and appearances were of prime importance, too. A further parallel can be seen, as well, in the common denigration of the practice of praying to the east.

THE NEED FOR WINDOWS AND ORIENTATION

BERACHOT 31a:

ת"ר *המתפלל צריך שיכוין את לבו לשמים אבא שאול אומר סימן לדבר °תכין לבם תקשיב אונך א"ר חייא בר אבא *לעולם יתפלל אדם בבית שיש בו חלונות שנאמר °וכורין פתיחן ליה וגו' *יכול יתפלל אדם כל היום כלו כבר מפורש על ידי דניאל °וזמנין תלתא וגו' יכול משבא לגולה הוחלה כבר נאמר °די הוא עבד מן קדמת דנא יכול יתפלל אדם לכל רוח שירצה ת"ל °(לקבל)[נגד] ירושלם-

Our rabbis taught: "When a person prays, one should direct one's heart to heaven." Abba Saul says: "A reminder of this is the text, 'You will direct their heart, You will cause Your ear to listen.'[4]" (Ps. 10:17).... R. Hiyya bar Abba said: "A person should always pray in a house that has windows, as it says in

Scripture, 'Now his window were open.' (Dan. 6:11).... One might say that a person may pray in any direction s/he wishes. Thus the Scripture says, "towards Jerusalem." (Dan. 6:11)

The general rabbinic rule for prayer orientation seems to be stated right up front in the beginning: a worshipper should direct one's heart towards heaven, irrespective of geographical location. Previous texts had led us to believe that only those incapable of facing the temple or Jerusalem physically were supposed to direct their hearts to heaven in such a straightforward manner. This statement, however, continues the Talmud's concern with an internal orientation and should be considered separately from matters regarding a person's physical orientation during prayer. Theoretically, one could face in any direction and still direct one's heart towards heaven.

I would posit, however, that both of the following verses on the need for windows and the requisite physical orientation towards Jerusalem during prayer are closely linked to the general rule governing prayer--with one's heart towards heaven; the implication, of course, being towards God. However, the connection remains only implicit at this point and we will have to wait and see if it is confirmed by other texts.

The next two rabbinic rulings in this passage are based on the Daniel passage that we examined earlier. The rabbis conduct a running interpretation of the biblical passage, addressing each issue as it arises. The first rule is a new idea, not yet encountered, concerning the need for windows in the place where one prays; and the second is basically a reiteration of the

position expressed above in the Palestinian Talmud, Berachot 4,1.

At this point, the rabbis still give the impression that the concept of windows and praying towards Jerusalem are two totally independent and unrelated notions. One might assume, however, that since both rulings are based on the same text and the same context--Daniel praying out the window towards Jerusalem--that the rabbis would attempt to link the two ideas together. The relationship between windows and Jerusalem is apparent in the Bible, but there is no further elaboration offered in the rabbinic text as to the purpose windows might serve with regard to praying towards Jerusalem. However, the relationship is strengthened in the next talmudic passage.

BERACHOT 34b:

*ואמר רבי חייא בר אבא אמר
רבי יוחנן °אל יתפלל אדם אלא בבית שיש שם חלונות שנאמר °יכוין פתיחן ליה בעליתיה (לקבל) [נגד] ירושלם ׃

R. Hiyya bar Abba said, R. Yohanan said: "A person should only pray in a house that has windows, as it says in Scripture: 'Now his windows were open in his upper chambers towards Jerusalem.'" (Dan. 6:11)

By examining this text, it appears quite clear that the reason one is instructed to pray in a house with windows is to be able to look towards Jerusalem. Or is it? It is very difficult to know whether this passage is attempting to say something new or is simply restating the ruling in the previous passage, but stringing the prooftext altogether, thus only linking the issue of windows and Jerusalem coincidentally. At the very least, we can say that a Jerusalem orientation was necessary and that

praying towards a window in that direction would certainly facilitate such an orientation.

Perhaps we can gain some insight into the rabbinic mindset by consulting Rashi. Rashi comments, "windows cause one to direct one's heart, for when one looks towards the heavens one's heart is humbled." Rashi is suggesting that the purpose of the window is not to look towards Jerusalem but towards the heavens, thereby encouraging the proper level of intention in prayer, kavanah.

This goal is remarkably similar to the ultimate aim of prayer orientation as perceived by the rabbis and expressed in many of the texts already discussed. That is to say, our analysis of the rabbinic material overall has led to the conclusion that an integral role of directing one's prayers in the direction, kivun, of Jerusalem was to stimulate the appropriate level of concentration on God.

Whether the purpose of the windows was to focus attention physically on a kivun or inspire a deeper sense of kavanah, they are really two means to the same end: a proper focus on God during prayer. The two notions are bound inextricably to one another, even to the point that they share the same root, thus creating further support for the hypothesis that, in the rabbinic mind, the direction towards which one prays, kivun, cannot function independently from the need to also direct the heart, thus attaining a particular kavana.

It is very instructive to note, as well, that the tosafot to

this passage, while written many generations later, offers some valuable insight. The tosafot state that "one should always take stock of oneself before praying. If one can concentrate one should pray and if not one should not." From the tosafists perspective, we can infer that the kivun is nothing if it does not generate the appropriate kavanah.

We cannot say with certainty that the rabbis would have concurred entirely with such a statement; however, this attitude only further reinforces the belief, which we have been discussing throughout the thesis, that the physical, external direction in which prayer is offered is established with the specific purpose of fostering the proper internal concentration and intention. Surely the rabbis understood and advocated, at the very least, this powerful relationship; even if they would not have gone so far as to say that one should not pray without the proper intention.

PRAYING AT THE REAR OF A SYNAGOGUE:

The following four texts all share a common theme related in some way to the rear of the synagogue. The various commentators on these passages unanimously agree that the term "praying at the rear" of the synagogue implies that one is standing outside of the synagogue, on the side containing the main entrance. Common sense might lead one to think that the side with the portals was, in fact, the front. But this was clearly not the case, as is indicated below by the rabbis' rationale for not praying at the rear of a synagogue. The reason that the rabbis consider the

portal-side of the synagogue to be its rear is most likely due to the fact that the congregation prayed away from the gates at that time, towards Jerusalem, and thus the gates were behind the congregation and towards the east.

While these texts address matters of worship orientation, they incidentally reveal important details about the orientation of the synagogues of that time as well. We can deduce from the information presented below that the gates were to be facing east and the congregation itself facing Jerusalem, which was towards the western wall opposite the entrance.

It is not at all clear, though, what it was that resulted in such a structuring of the Babylonian synagogues. It is possible that the synagogue orientation was constructed in compliance with the regulations established by Tosefta Megillah, which required a Jerusalem orientation with gates opened to the east. However, these synagogues simply may have been in accordance with the later, Byzantine style of synagogue architecture, common by the 5th or 6th centuries. This synagogue model also dictated an orientation towards Jerusalem and that the gates be placed opposite the Jerusalem wall; coincidentally placing the gates on the eastern wall in this case, as well. There is just insufficient data to determine which factor really held sway over the orientation of these Babylonian synagogues.

BERACHOT 6b--

דאמר רב הונא יכל המתפלל אחורי בית הכנסת נקרא רשע שנאמר °סביב
לכון אמר אביי לא אמרן אלא דלא מהדר אפיה לבי כנישתא אבל מהדר אפיה לבי כנישתא לית לן
ברא דקא *מצלי אחורי בי כנישתא ולא מהדר אפיה לבי כנישתא חלף *אליהו חויה אידמי ליה
קדו בר קיימת קמי מרך שלף ספסרא וקטליה ד

R. Huna[7] says: "Whoever prays at the rear of a synagogue[8] is called wicked. For it is said: 'The wicked walk round about.'"[9] (Ps. 12:9) Abaye says: "This only applies where he does not turn his face towards the synagogue, but if he does turn his face towards the synagogue there is no objection to it. There once was a man who prayed at the rear of a synagogue and did not turn his face towards the synagogue. Elijah passed by and appeared to him in the guise of an Arabian merchant. He said to him: 'Are you standing with your back to your Master?' and drew his sword and killed him."

Initially, the text gives the impression that what is under dispute is a matter of locale, namely: Where is it permissible to pray? This talmudic passage states very matter-of-factly that praying behind a synagogue is unacceptable. However, at this point, the rabbinic rationale behind such legislation is obscured.

Abaye's addendum establishes the "official" parameters of this ruling so that the crux of the matter is no longer a question of location but orientation.[10] The rabbis' problem with praying behind a synagogue develops only if someone does so without facing the synagogue. Therefore, according to Abaye's further explanation, there is absolutely nothing wrong with praying at the rear of a synagogue; so long as one maintains the communal prayer orientation by facing the synagogue and, hence, the same direction as all the other worshippers.

However, the rabbis are not just interested in uniformity

and creating a sense of community by demanding that everyone pray in the same direction. Their core concern is much more profound and far-reaching; yet it is only fully disclosed by the story cited at the end to support this particular rabbinic notion of prayer orientation.

The true indication of what was at stake, in the rabbis minds, if one were to pray with one's back towards the synagogue, is revealed by the words of the Arabian merchant: "Are you standing with your back to your Master?" Not only does such a posture require one to turn away from the Temple in Jerusalem, towards which the synagogue and every one else was oriented, but away from God so that it appears that this person is "an apostate to the the One to whom the rest of the congregation is praying."[11]

The concerns of this passage are distincly reminiscent of the issues and problems raised in the Mishnah from Sukkot discussed above. (See p.68 above) In that parallel case in the Mishnah, it was evident that the rabbis believed that one's beliefs about and loyalties to God are reflected in one's prayer orientation. Consequently, praying in a direction that diverges from the Jewish "norm" can be interpreted on a theological level as an acknowledgement of other "powers."[12] Therefore, the rabbis' concern was not so much over the unity of the people as it was the unity of God; though these two issues are deeply intertwined.

Since exilic times at least, and increasingly throughout the

Second Commonwealth period, one of the fundamental and defining characteristics of Judaism was its deep conviction that God was unique, singular, and indivisable; in otherwords, one. To dispute this principle of faith would place one outside the accepted bounds of the Jewish people. Indeed, even to give the appearance that one did not completely affirm the oneness of God, was a crime of tremendous severity, as communicated by the fateful end of the story.

There were, however, many other religious groups in Babylon, most notably the Zoroastrians, who took issue with the Jewish commitment to the oneness of God. The Zoroastrians, for instance, believed in the duality of God; that there were separate powers of good and evil.

In such a society, composed of a wide range of different religious groups, each advocating its own beliefs and gods, it was extremely important to know who was 'in' and who was 'out,' thus clearly distinguishing between 'us' and 'them.' Therefore, in this critical boundary issue concerning one's identification and affiliation with a community, even appearing to conform to another group's practices or beliefs was a great sin, lest one actually be confused with one of 'them.'

As we saw in an earlier chapter, these boundary issues require a rigorous stance, which would explain the extremely harsh punishment meted out to the violator in the Talmud's illustrative story.

Consequently, we can understand the Babylonian rabbis' deep

need to consolidate and unite the orientation of Jewish worship towards one place as a polemical response to those groups who professed theologies diametrically opposed to Judaism's. (And who probably prayed in a different direction, too.) Similarly, the establishment of this Jewish prayer orientation further served to distinguish the Jews from their neighbors and instill a greater sense of commitment to and faith in their own group; thus also insuring the future survival of the Jews.

ERUVIN 18b--

ולא אחורי בית הכנסת בשעה (ה) שמתפללין

And one should not [walk] behind a synagogue at the time [the congregation] is praying.

This ruling suggests an additional restriction to what can and cannot be done behind a synagogue. Now, not only is one not allowed to pray behind a synagogue, one may not even pass by the rear of a synagogue while the congregation is praying.

Though passing by a synagogue while people are worshipping is not directly related to matters of orientation, it is tangentially connected.

Again, however, a simple statement of law is opaque; floating aimlessly in the tradition without an anchor to root it to a particurlar reality. Therefore, this ruling, as it stands, reveals almost nothing about why it was instituted or its function. It is the restrictions and exemptions attached to a law that actually expose a law's character and provide the necessary insight into its reason for being. Consequently, this

passage must be viewed in the context of the next two texts, which address the issue of walking behind a synagogue while the congregation is praying, before we can understand what concerns underlie this regulation. Because the following two passages are so similar, however, we will examine them together, focusing primarily on Berachot 8b.

BERACHOT 8b--

אמר להו רבא לבניה
ואל תעברו אחורי בית הכנסת בשעה שהצבור מתפללין מסייע ליה לרבי יהושע בן לוי דאמר ר' יהושע בן לוי *אסור לו לאדם שיעבור אחורי בית הכנסת בשעה שהצבור מתפללין אמר אביי ולא אמרן אלא דליכא פתחא אחרינא אבל איכא פתחא אחרינא לית לן בה ולא אמרן אלא דליכא בי כנישתא אחרינא אבל איכא בי כנישתא אחרינא לית לן בה ולא אמרן אלא דלא דרי טונא ולא רהיט ולא מנח תפילין אבל איכא חד מהנך לית לן בה:

Raba said to his children: "...do not pass behind a synagogue when the congregation is praying." This supports the teaching of R. Joshua b. Levi. For R. Joshua b. Levi said: "It is not permitted for a man to pass behind a synagogue when the congregation is praying." Abaye said: "This applies only when there is no other door, but when there is another door, there is no objection. Furthermore, this applies only when there is no other synagogue, but when there is another synagogue, there is no objection. And furthermore, this applies only when he does not carry a burden, and does not run, and does not wear tefilin. But where one of these conditions is present there is no objection."

BERACHOT 61a--

א"ר יוחנן
*אחורי עכו"ם יולא אחורי בהכ"נ בשעה שהצבור מתפללין ולא אמרן אלא דלא דרי מידי ואי דרי מידי לית לן בה ולא אמרן אלא דליכא פתחא אחרינא ואי איכא פתחא אחרינא לית לן בה ולא אמרן אלא דלא רכיב חמרא אבל רכיב חמרא לית לן בה ולא אמרן אלא דלא מנח תפילין אבל מנח תפילין לית לן בה

R. Johanan said: "Better to go behind...an idol worshipper than behind a synagogue when the congregation is praying. This, however, is the case only when he is not carrying a load; if he is carrying a load, there is no objection. And also this is the case only when there is no other entrance; but if there is another entrance there is no objection. And again this is the case only when he is not riding on an ass, but if he is riding on an ass, there is no objection. And again this is the case only when he is not wearing tefillin; but if he is wearing tefillin there is no objection."

Just as we found in Berachot 6b, Abaye's[13] comments serve to clarify the initial statement of law and outline the particular circumstances under which one may, in fact, pass by a synagogue where the congregation is praying. Here, as previously, it is the exceptions that are allowed, and not the rule, that prove to be most interesting.

Rashi provides an important clue that helps us understand this general regulation in the context of its exceptions. He notes: If you pass the gate (i.e., the rear of the synagogue) during prayers it appears that you are avoiding your obligations and running away. Consequently, according to Rashi, there appears to be serious communal expectations that everyone will be at services, because this is perceived as a signigicant part of the general commitments and obligations of a Jew.

How then does this explain the exceptions? Namely, why would it be acceptable to pass the gate if there was another entrance? And, why would the existence of another synagogue in town permit a person ignore this rule? And, moreover, what do running, carrying a load, and wearing <u>tefillin</u> share in common that would allow the violation of the stated rule?

Here, once again, the critical issue is one of appearances; a frequent concern of the Babylonian rabbis. Their problem with passing the gate of a synagogue while worship is taking place is that by not entering one gives the impression that one has thrown off the yoke of the commandments and has contempt for the synagogue and what is transpiring there. However, if it is

obvious to a casual observer that one passes without entering for an acceptable reason, then there is no problem.

Hence, we can understand all of the rules that allow one to forego compliance with the law as examples of circumstances in which a person is either engaged in an activity that would prevent participation in the service or could clearly explain why the person is not entering the synagogue at that time.

Some of the exceptional situations allow the "passerby" to receive the benefit of the doubt. For instance, if there is another door to the synagogue, the "passerby" may enter through another gate. Likewise, if there is another synagogue in town, the "passerby" may be going to worship there. There is absolutely no concern indicated for what the actual reason for passing were; only how might this appear to others.

On the other hand, there are clearly situations in which it is apparent that the "passerby" is engaged in other matters and that it because of these things, such as carrying a load, riding a donkey or running (presumably with a destination and goal in mind), that a person does not enter and not out of a rejection of the synagogue, or the community itself, and what it stands for.

In a similar vein, if a person is wearing <u>tefillin</u> it is immediately obvious that this person's commitment to Judaism or the Jewish community is beyond suspicion, for he is engaged in a Jewish ritual. Consequently, this person, too, is exempt from this law.

Ultimately the purpose of the law seems to be to protect the

integrity of the community--its practices and its institutions, and all that these stand for. Anything that redounds negatively to the Jewish community is not to be allowed. Therefore, circumstances in which it appears that one is scorning or disparaging Judaism need to be avoided.

This law also underscores the tremendous importance the rabbis attached to participating in and supporting communal observances, such as worship, and communal institutions, such as synagogues. These regulations regarding one's behaviors, as they impact the community, are additional means to encourage and control a certain sense of communal involvement and obligation. As a result, both the individual and the community emerge the stronger.

All of these issues, as they relate to passing a synagogue in particular, only reinforce, on a more general level, how important these concerns were to the Babylonian rabbis, who lived in a highly competitive world of religious theologies and practices.

In communities with such diversity, particularly religious, it was that much easier to find oneself beyond the pale of one's own Jewish community. Therefore, the rabbis took all the precautions necessary to maintain the vitality and integrity of the Jewish community. As we have seen repeatedly, the institution of a fixed orientation of prayer reflects exactly these same concerns and, ultimately, was a means to serve the same ends.

YEBAMOT 105b:

דר' חייא
ור' שמעון בר רבי הוו יתבי פתח חד מיניהו
ואמר המתפלל צריך שיתן עיניו למטה
שנאמר °והיו עיני ולבי שם כל הימים:
(ה) וחד אמר עיניו למעלה שנאמר °נשא:
לבבנו אל כפים אדהכי (ו) אתא ר' ישמעאל
בר' יוסי לגבייהו אמר להו במאי עסקיתו
אמרו ליה בתפלה אמר להו כך אמר אבא
°המתפלל צריך שיתן עיניו למטה ולבו
למעלה כדי שיתקיימו שני מקראות הללו

R. Hiyya and R. Simon b. Rabi once sat together, when one of them began as follows: "A man who offers up his prayers must direct his eyes towards [the Temple] below, for it is said, 'And My eyes and My heart shall be there perpetually.'" (I Kings 9:3) The other said: "The eyes of him who offers up prayers shall be directed towards above, for it is said, 'Let us lift up our heart with our hand.'"[14] (Lam. 3:41) In the meanwhile they were joined by R. Ishmael son of R. Jose. "On what subject are you engaged," he asked them. "On the subject of prayer," they replied. "My father," he said to them, "ruled thus: A man who offers up his prayers must direct his eyes to the [sanctuary] below and his heart towards [the heavens] above so that these two Scriptural texts may be complied with."

This talmudic passage provides a wonderful synthesis of many of the Babylonian rabbis' discussions on the tension between two distinct focal points of prayer: The Temple and God. This is a common theme that appears frequently in the rabbinic texts. Every text which discusses the question of prayer orientation juxtaposes these two foci at some point. In general, the focus of prayer was indicated to be the Temple; however, we observed that there were also cases where certain groups of people were incapable of easily performing this task; consequently, they were instructed to focus, internally or physically, on God.

This distinction between an orientation towards God and an

orientation towards the Temple leads to the second point of contention: Is the orientation toward either of these points supposed to be observed physically or mentally? This need for both an external, physical orientation and an internal, emotional orientation for prayer is also a very common theme in the rabbinic literature and can be witnessed throughout.

We are presented with so many component parts to consider when thinking about the question of prayer orientation: eyes, heart, up, down, God, Temple. Which should be where? All of these practical details, however, can obscure the real issue, which has pervaded all of our discussions at some level: What really stands at the heart of prayer so that we should look there? Is it the Temple or God?

Throughout the Talmud, eyes (and facing) are signs of the human <u>need</u> for a physical prayer orientation and the heart is a sign of the human <u>desire</u> for an internal orientation, too. All along our thesis has been that the physical focus was instituted in order to enable a worshipper to achieve the proper internal focus. The text confirms this hypothesis as it responds beautifully to the question concerning the relationship between the two types of orientation by demonstrating that both are important and necessary; each is of a different nature yet both are intimately intertwined. As the eyes and heart, the physical manifestations of these two orientations, are joined in the human body, so, too, do we find them appearing together in the texts, representing two sides of the same coin.

Moreover, this particular resolution of the tension between the two forms of orientation also underscores the rabbinic belief that one cannot separate the physical act from the inevitable internal response, just as seeing causes the heart to feel.

Rabbi Ishmael makes these connections between God and Temple, eyes and heart when he cites a teaching in the name of his father, which legislates that one's heart should be directed towards God in heaven while one's eyes are oriented towards the Temple below.

The solution to the problem weaves the two prooftexts together, taking the idea of eyes towards the Temple from, "And My eyes...shall be there perpetually," (I Kings 9:3) and reading the notion of hearts towards God on the basis of the second text, "Let us lift up our heart with our hand."[15] (Lam. 3:41) Such a resolution of the tension communicates a belief that an orientation towards both places, God and Temple, and of both kinds, internal and external, are significant. In fact, as one cannot really separate the eyes and the heart from the larger body, neither can God be completely separated from the Temple. This conclusion is supported, as well, by Rashi, who says: "Eyes down towards the Land of Israel because the Shechinah is there."

The issues reflected in this text of God's relationship with the Temple, and how the people communicate their relationship with each of these through prayer orientation, find their parallel in the Palestinian Talmud, Berachot 4:5,[16] as the rabbis attempt to resolve the question of how God could continue

to dwell in the Temple in its ruined state.

While this passage from Yevamot creates an opportunity for a worshippedr to focus on ntwo places at once, by distinguishing between eyes and heart, the Berachot passage in the Palestinian Talmud, through a similar distinction, allows God's presence to be in heaven while the divine eyes and heart (signs of divine concern) remain below.

Consequently, if we take the message of these two passages together, we begin to understand that the rabbis, in both Palestine and Babyon, are communicating a fundamental belief essential to the role and purpose of prayer orientation: Physically facing the Temple is actually equivalent to facing God and focusing one's eyes on the Temple below is ultimately the same as focusing one's heart on God above, because the former always leads to the latter, which is required for true prayer to occur.

CHAPTER NINE: CODE LITERATURE

This concluding chapter represents the final stage in the development of the laws concerning the Jewish orientation of prayer. Since the inception of these regulations governing the direction of Jewish worship,[1] the evolution and interpretation of a Temple-focused prayer orientation has continually been shaped by the realities that infused the world in which this custom was practiced; whether they were the challenges posed by other religious groups or the need to provide the Jewish community in the Diaspora with the means to attain a closer relationship with their distant homeland.

Now, however, the Codes, representing a particular genre of Jewish legal literature, generally take a different approach to the laws. The overriding principle influencing this literature is the desire to make the observance of law more accessible to the common person. Thus the entire body of complex and convoluted rabbinic legal disputation, and its pertinent explanations in the Commentaries, is reduced by the Codes to simple, easy to follow rules of what to do when and how. While we certainly observed a parallel tendency in the rabbinic literature to emphasize the required actions, the Codes take this predilection to its extreme.

This is particularly true of two of the three codes selected here to represent this literature in general. Both the Mishnah Torah and the Shulchan Aruch are primarily halachically-centered Codes that uproot the practice of facing Jerusalem in prayer from

its organic context, out of which it grew in response to real needs of the community, and compress and distill it into its most concrete manifestation.

While Rambam may cite a biblical basis for a prayer orientation towards Jerusalem, he, like Karo, is decidedly disinterested in the rationale behind such worship customs. Only Jacob b. Asher's Tur stands apart from these other codes in its attempt to transmit a feel for the laws in their fullest sense. While the Tur is indeed a code like the others, it is far more comprehensive in its presentation; including not just a restatement of the law, but the reasons for observing it as well. Most often Jacob b. Asher culls the rationale for the laws not from the Talmud itself, but from other commentators, such as Rashi, and integrates it into his code as a part of a seamless whole.

Despite the fact that the Tur strives to preserve a sense of the purpose of prayer orientation, Jacob b. Asher is still primarily concerned with the transmission of a body of knowledge. The laws do not develop out of a response to his world in the same way that they did for the rabbis. Hence, the laws in the codes, in varying degrees, have become dislocated from their original milieu--frozen in a timeless "never-never land." Actions became the primary concern, and the purpose or intent of the law became of relatively lesser importance. Consequently, the Codes exhibit a tendency to excise discussions and illustrative stories interspersed in the mishnaic and talmudic

literature in an attempt to portray what these authors perceive to be the essence of the laws; characterized by the bottom-line, guiding principle: What is it that one must do in a particular situation? Even when the Tur states a rationale, it is done without much elaboration.

For the codifiers in general, and Jacob b. Asher to a lesser extent, the meaning and value of the law inheres in performing the deed, not necessarily in understanding it. Religious actions are preserved and continue to live on in the legal codes, but eventually, as a matter of course, the reasons for them will be lost, though new ones may be substituted, and the action gains a life and reality of its own. In fact, the reasons the Tur provides are selected from later sources and may actually reshape the original intent of the law.

One result of this preoccupation with the physical act is a serious possibility that actions, intended to be means, will be perceived as ends in and of themselves. Indeed, our analysis of the rabbinic texts revealed that the rabbis understood the value of a prayer orientation, qua prayer orientation, in its capacity to achieve some higher end.

Though we will examine three distinct sources in this chapter, we will analyze them according to the issues that they raise; thus the texts below have been organized as thematic categories. This will also allow us to compare more easily their respective treatment of the laws.

FACING JERUSALEM AND THE TEMPLE

ג נכח המקדש כיצד היה עומד בחוצה לארץ
מחזיר פניו נכח ארץ ישראל ומתפלל. היה עומד בארץ
מכוין את פניו כנגד ירושלים. היה עומד בירושלים
מכוין פניו כנגד המקדש. היה עומד במקדש מכוין
פניו כנגד בית קדש הקדשים. סומא ומי שלא יכול
לכוין את הרוחות והמהלך בספינה יכוין את לבו כנגד
השכינה ויתפלל:

Facing the Temple [in prayer]: How is this done? If one were outside the Land one should face the Land of Israel and pray. If one were in the Land one should face Jerusalem. If one were in Jerusalem one should face the Temple. If one were in the Temple one should face the Holy of Holies. A blind person and a person who can't discern the directions and a traveller on a ship should direct their hearts towards the shechinah and pray. (Maimonides, Mishnah Torah, Hilchot Tefilah, 5:3)

Rambam reveals the ultimate, "bottom-line" intent of his code in the opening line of this passage. He has followed his sources very carefully, here, retaining only the information that impacts on one's behavior. Such an approach is very much in line with the central concern with actions expressed in this literature in general, though not exclusively.

Despite the clear presence of a rabbinic interest in the internal orientation necessary for prayer, particularly in the Tosefta and Babylonian Talmud sources, Maimonides opts, in this text, to focus on the physical orientation necessary for prayer, as formulated in the conclusions of his sources: PT Berachot 4,5; Tosefta Berachot 3:14-16; and BT Berachot 30a. The only allowance for an internal prayer focus is retained for those who cannot physically face these particular directions.

The rabbinic texts were structured in such a way as to distinguish between the first section, which outlined what the purpose was--to orient yourself towards these various places, either mentally or physically--and the concluding section, which instructed the reader how this aim was to be accomplished;

namely, "those in the north face south, etc."

This text, however, is simply concerned with, as it says, "How is this done?" The action is the goal and that is all that is preserved in this codification of the law. Therefore, if one were only to read this text it would be impossible to understand why, what for, or to what end the law was instituted and maintained.

While it is generally true that such probing questions into the realm of reason have not been the primary concern of Jews over the ages--indeed, these questions belie a modern, and even Reform, perspective--without grasping these underlying reasons, one can only view the tip of a very large iceberg. Because the emphasis is only on what one sees, the rest of the law's history and vitality remains submerged under the dark waters of the halachik seas. Only as a result of our earlier examinations of the rabbinic texts, which provide fleeting glimpses into their world, can we begin to fully appreciate this law in its totality.

WINDOWS TOWARDS JERUSALEM

וצריך לפתוח חלונות או פתחים כנגד ירושלים .
כדי להתפלל כנגדן שנאמר וכוין פתיחן ליה בעליתיה
וגו'

One must place windows or gates opposite Jerusalem in order to pray facing them, as it is said, "towards windows in his upper chamber..." (Dan. 6:11) (Maimonides, Mishnah Torah, Hilchot Tefilah, 5:6)

וצריך שיהיו חלונות פתוחין לו דאמר רחב"א אמר ר"י
לא יתפלל אדם (ג) אלא בבית שיש בו חלונות שנא' וכוין פתיחן
ליה בעליתיה ופירש"י (ד) שהחלונות גורמין שיכוין לבו שיסתכל
כלפי שמים ולבו נכנע ולפ"ז צריך שיהיו פתוחים לאותו רוח
שיתפלל.

You need to have open windows [in the house] as R. Hiyya Bar Abba

said R. Yochanan said: "A person should only pray in a house that has windows," as it says, "Now his windows were open in his upper chamber." (Dan. 6:11) And according to Rashi, windows cause a person to direct his heart in that he will look towards the heavens and his heart will be humble. And according to this it is necessary that [the windows] be open towards the same direction that one prays.... (Tur, Orach Chaim, Hilchot Tefilah, 90, 81b)

צריך לפתוח פתחים ד או חלונו' כנגד ע ירושלים כדי להתפלל כנגדן

One must open gates or windows facing Jerusalem in order to pray facing them. (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, Hilchot Tefilah, 90, 4)

These texts base their codifications on two parallel talmudic passages, BT Berachot 31a and 34b, which are also similarly vague concerning the actual function of or purpose for having windows or gates in the place of prayer. The rabbis really do no more than state the need for them, according to their interpretation of the Daniel verse upon which they base their decision. Therefore, the authors of the codes are left to provide their own explanations, and two different interpretations of the role of windows in prayer emerge, each emphasizing a different aspect of prayer orientation.

The rabbis of the Talmud never explicitly linked windows with an increased ability to pray towards Jerusalem. However, the citation of Daniel 6:11 as a prooftext for the need for windows could very easily lead one to conclude that the purpose of windows was to look towards Jerusalem, since this is generally how the Daniel passage is understood. This is the tack that the Shulchan Aruch and Maimonides take regarding the function of the

windows. They perceive a physical and causal relationship between the need for windows and the need for a Jerusalem orientation, namely, that the former facilitates the latter in a very concrete manner.

The Tur, on the other hand, quotes Berachot 34b and includes Rashi's interpretation of this text, thus preserving his understanding of the law. Rashi suggests that the purpose of the windows has more to do with an internal orientation, rather than an external one, in that they serve as a means of creating a more suitable state of mind for the worshipper.

Though not uniform in their interpretation of the talmudic texts, the Codes have all given the rabbinic texts a particular focus, not previously apparent, so that their meaning is no longer so ambiguous but reflective of a particular orientation emphasis. Of the three texts, the Tur is the only one that recognizes the internal needs of the worshipper to establish an appropriate mood and attitude in order to pray. The other two codes only indicate a concern for the physical, external orientation: facing Jerusalem.

PRAYING AT THE REAR OF A SYNAGOGUE

ואין מתפלל .
אחורי בית הכנסת אלא אם כן החזיר .
פניו לבית הכנסת.

One should not pray at...the rear of a synagogue unless one turns and faces the synagogue. (Maimonides, Mishnah Torah, Hilchot Tefilah, 5:6)

(ה) ולא יתפלל אחורי בה"כ (ו) דאמר רבי חלבו המתפלל אחורי ב"ה נקרא רשע וה"מ דלא מיהדר אפיה לכי בנישתא אבל אי מהדר אפיה לכי בנישתא לית לן בה [מ] (ח) לפי שאנו מתפללין למזרח כשהוא מתפלל אחורי ב"ה שהוא במערב ומחזיר פניו לב"ה נמצא שמחזיר פניו לרוח שהצבור מתפללין אבל אם הוא אינו הופך פניו לב"ה נראה ככ' רשויות (ג)

And one should not pray...behind the synagogue: R. Helbo said the one who prays behind the synagogue is called wicked. These words apply to the worshipper who does not turn to face the synagogue, but if he turns to face the synagogue there is no problem. Since we pray to the east, when one prays behind a synagogue, which is on the west and faces the synagogue, one consequently faces the direction that the congregation is praying towards. But if he does not turn and face the synagogue it appears as if there are two powers. (TUR, Orach Chaim, Hilchot Tefilah 90, 81b-82a)

. ולא אחורי (ד)ב"ה אם אינו מחזיר פניו לב"ה ואחורי ב"ה הוא(°)הצד שפתח פתוח בו ט והוא הפך י הצד שפונים אליו (ס) הקהל כשמתפללים וי"מ (ו) ° בהפך וראוי לחוש י לדברי(ז)שניהם ונם ס כשמתפלל(°) בשאר צדדים חוץ לב"ה יא יש (מ) להחמי' שיחזי' פניו לב"ה וכל זה יב כשניכר שמחזיר אחוריו לב"ה ע אבל אם הוא מתפלל בבית יג הסמוך (ט) לב"ה ופניו כנגד א"י כראוי ואחוריו לכוו

And one should not pray behind a synagogue if one does not turn his face towards the synagogue. And 'behind the synagogue' is the side with the opening, opposite the side the congregation faces when praying. And some explain that it is the opposite. It is appropriate to pay attention to both opinions. And also, when one prays on any of the sides outside of the synagogue, one must be extremely careful to turn and face towards the synagogue. And all this applies only when it is apparent [to others] that one is turning one's back to the synagogue, but if one is praying in a house next to the synagogue and one faces the Land of Israel as is appropriate and his back is to the wall of his house, which is also the wall of the synagogue, it is permissable to face away from the synagogue because he is not visible [to others]. (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, Hilchot Tefilah, 90, 7)

Of the three author/compilers, Rambam's presentation of the law is the most succinct; encapsulating the essence of the ruling in a single terse sentence. He has stripped away all of the material he considered to be superfluous to one simply being able to perform the given task. Thus, he makes no mention of the

personalities to whom these positions were originally attributed; he combines the original and more general law with its later clarification; cites no prooftext; and, naturally, omits the concluding illustration. Again, from simply looking at Rambam's restatement, it is virtually impossible to understand the law's purpose.

The Tur, however, following its source closely[2], provides more insight into the function of this law in its restatement. The Tur acknowledges the fact that the term "rear" of the synagogue is ambiguous and states explicitly that this refers to the side opposite the direction in which the congregation is praying; for its readers, this would mean the west since people pray towards the east.

The Tur, more than the others, appears to provide a fuller account of the law and tends to suggest the reasons behind the action; in keeping with our general characterization above. Here, too, Jacob b. Asher explains that the purpose for not praying behind a synagogue, unless one is facing it is that--following Rashi's interpretation--it appears that one recognizes two divine powers. In addition, the Tur has made the implicit concerns of the Talmud explicit in its restatement. Like the Talmud, the Tur continues to worry about appearances in the belief that prayer orientation communicates important messages about one's theology.

The Shulchan Aruch, in an uncharacteristic display of detailed explanation, provides the longest discourse on the topic

by including an alternate view point that diverges from the norm. Karo begins with a basic and very brief restatement of the normative law found in Berachot 6b. He then, like the Tur, proceeds to explain which side of the synagogue is the "rear." Here, too, he presents the general consensus in the most explicit terms: "'Behind the synagogue' is the side with the opening, opposite the side the congregation faces when praying." We should note, as well, that this architectural configuration for the synagogue contradicts the layout presented in Tosefta Megillah 3:21-22, advocated by Rambam, which requires the gates of the synagogue to be on the east, irrespective of the direction of prayer.[3]

Up until this point, Karo has been presenting just the generally accepted interpretation of the law. Next, however, he allows that others believe that the "rear" actually refers to the eastern wall towards which the congregation prays. A fuller treatment of this option, attributed to R. Yonah in the name of R. Yohanan, can be found in Beit Yosef, Karo's commentary on the Tur.[4] There Karo explains R. Yohanah's reasons for advocating the position that he does.

R. Yohanan believes that if one were standing in the east--his notion of "rear"--it would be wrong to face the same direction that the congregation faces when praying, since this would require one to turn one's back towards the synagogue; in his mind, a greater sin than not praying towards the Temple. Furthermore, R. Yohanan asserts that there is talmudic proof that

one at the "rear"[5] should actually face the same wall the rest of the congregation is facing (i.e., the eastern wall).

He supports his position with a quote from Berachot 30a, which says that if "one is behind the mercy-seat one should imagine oneself in front of the mercy-seat." Consequently, the person standing at the "rear" of the synagogue, behind the eastern wall, should imagine himself as being in front of it, inside with the rest of the congregation. Though this interpretation is not in the mainstream, Karo believes that it is an opinion worthy of consideration.

As a result of this divergent perspective, Karo decides that the overriding concern should be for the need to face the synagogue when praying, despite the fact that the talmudic intent of this law was to insure that all of the worshippers faced the same direction; a fact of which Karo's commentary to the Tur suggests he was well aware. Thus, Karo's restatement actually reshapes the talmudic law, making the synagogue the focal point of prayer whenever one is praying on the outside of it and is therefore visible to others.

He allows, however, that in the privacy of one's home one should pray towards the Land of Israel, even if it means turning one's back towards the synagogue. The reason that this exception is made is that in one's own home there is no need to worry that someone may see and misinterpret this particular orientation. Karo demonstrates a similar concern for appearances, as noted in the Talmud, but here the worry seems to be that one's prayer

orientation will reflect badly on the synagogue and community, rather than on God.

PASSING BY A SYNAGOGUE WHILE CONGREGATION AT PRAYER

ואפי' לעבור אהורי ב"ה בשע' שהצבור מתפללין
אסור שנראה ככופר בין שאינו נכנס(י) וה"מ כשהוא פנוי אבל
כשהוא נושא משא ניכר שמפני משאו נכנע ואפילו אם הוא פנוי
אם הוא לבוש תפילין נראה שאינו כופר ואפילו אם הוא פנוי וכלא
תפילין אם יש ב"ה אחרת בעיר (יא)[או שיש לאותה ב"ה פתח אחר
אין לחוש ב שאין לחשדו ככופר דשמא יכנס בפתח אחרת או לב"ה אחרת (יב)

And even to pass by the rear of a synagogue at the time when the congregation is praying is prohibited because that person appears as a heretic because he does not enter [the synagogue]. These words apply when the person is not encumbered, but if he carries a load it is obvious that because of his load he is prevented [from entering]. And even if he is not carrying something but he is wearing tefillin it is clear that he is not a heretic. And, even if he is unencumbered and without tefillin, if there is another synagogue in town or if that synagogue has another entrance there is no suspicion of him as a heretic since perhaps he will go in through another entrance or to another synagogue. (Tur, Orach Chaim, Hilchot Tefilah, 90, 82a)

This text is clearly a simple restatement of the law, as presented in the talmudic sources--BT Eruvin 18b, and BT Berachot 8b and 61a--in which Jacob b. Asher excludes any extraneous material and integrates Rashi's perspective on why passing a synagogue while the congregation is at prayer is not permitted: For fear of being mistaken for a heretic who has rejected the basic principles of Judaism. But at the same time, the Tur has succeeded once again in making explicit what the Talmud said only implicitly.

Following this basic guideline for action, which, as was also expressed in the talmudic texts themselves, focuses on how one's actions might be interpreted by others, the Tur explains,

why, under certain circumstances, people would be able to ignore the general principle; as long as it is clear that it is not out of contempt for the synagogue that one is not entering it.

THE PHYSICAL ORIENTATION OF THE SYNAGOGUE

יאין פותחין פתחי הכנסת אלא
[ז] במזרח שנאמר והחונים לפני המשכן קדמה. ובונין
בו היכל שמניחין בו ספר תורה. ובונין היכל זה ברוח
שמתפללין כנגדו באותה העיר. כדי שיהיו פניהם אל
מול ההיכל כשיעמדו לתפלה

When one builds a synagogue, one should only put the gates on the east, as it says, "and they encamped before the Tabernacle on the east." (Num. 3:38) And an ark should be built in which the Torah scroll is to be placed. And this ark should be built in the direction people in that city pray in order that they will face the ark when they stand to pray. (Maimonides, Mishnah Torah, Hilchot Tefilah, 11:2)

The Mishnah Torah's description of the synagogue structure and physical orientation, clearly based on Tosefta Megillah 3:21-22, is the only one of the Codes examined to address this issue directly. In line with the Tosefta, Rambam asserts that the gates should be on the east, while the Torah be placed on the Jerusalem-oriented wall.

Contrary to the way that the Mishnah Torah configures the synagogue layout, both the Tur and the Shulchan Aruch suggest, albeit in an indirect fashion, a very different picture of the synagogue architecture. In the Tur's and Shulchan Aruch's discussion of where the "rear" of the synagogue is located, it was made clear that the positioning of the synagogue gates was done with reference to the prayer orientation. Thus, if the congregation prayed to the east, the gates would be opposite, on

the west.

Maimonides must have been an advocate of an alternative custom or perhaps a tradition that coexisted with the other, since the Talmud indicated that the synagogue gates should be opposite the direction of prayer. However, the rabbis living in Babylon could require that gates be placed opposite the direction of prayer and still not violate the requirements of the Tosefta, since both laws result in an eastern orientation for the gates. Consequently, the Babylonian rabbis may, in fact, have adhered to the principles of the Tosefta. There is no way of knowing for sure. Hence, it may not have been until after Rambam's time that gates were placed opposite the Jerusalem wall, on the west, in communities west of the Land of Israel.

It may have been shortly after Rambam's time, however, that the tradition of placing the gates on the east began to change. Moses ben Meir of Ferrara, a Tosafist living in the thirteenth century, protests Maimonides' ruling and believes that the gates are required to be opposite the ark, even if this means placing them to the west. Thus, we can see that the question of the location of synagogue gates was not fully resolved until rather late.

AN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ORIENTATION REQUIRED

תריך שיכוף ראשו מעט (ס) שיהיו עיניו למטה
לארץ שנאמר (ס) והיו עיני ולבי שם כל הימים ואנו מתפללין כנגד
בה"מ ולכן צריך שיתן עיניו למטה כנגדו ונחשב כאילו אנו עומדים
בו ומתפללין ובלבו יכוין למעלה שנאמר (ס) נשא לבבינו אל כפים
אל אל בשמים ר

[During prayer] one must incline one's head forward a little so that one's eyes will be down towards the Land, as it says, "And My eyes and My heart shall abide there all the days." (I Kings 9:3) And we pray facing the Temple and therefore one must direct one's eyes down towards [the Temple] and we must imagine as if we are actually standing in it and praying, but one's heart should be directed upwards, as it says, "Let us lift up our hearts with our hands"[7] to the God in heaven. (Lam. 3:41) (Tur, Orach Chaim, Hilchot Tefilah, 95, 86b)

Again, the Tur is consistent with itself in that this particular text reflects a broader, more far-reaching scope than any of the others restatements. The Tur is the only Code to address itself to this tension between an internal and external prayer orientation; a conflict originally discussed in this manner in BT Yevamot 105b. It is not at all surprising that it was the Tur that chose to present this issue, since it is the only one of the three law compilations that has indicated any interest in the internal landscape of the worshipper.

In this text, the Tur encapsulates the basic dichotomy that occurs within the body of the worshipper. The eyes, signifying the external orientation, and the heart, representing an internal orientation, are pulled in two different directions--one towards the Temple and the other towards God. Though the text preserves the reality of this conflict, which emerges when one must decide what and where the true focus of one's prayers should be, this condensed version transmits only the final resolution to the problem discussed in the talmudic passage.

This codification requiring the worshipper's eyes to be oriented "down" and heart to be oriented "up" still obscures what

it is that leads to such prayer orientation. Thus we cannot truly appreciate how beautifully this ruling weaves together two opposing forces for worship orientation--internal and external--and resolves them into a neat and seamless whole.

This text, as is the nature of the Codes in general, presents the reader with a finished product that has been worked and reworked to perfection to create just the right statement. But the end result in many cases--particularly in the Shulchan Aruch and the Mishnah Torah--is devoid of the passion, the challenges, and the anxieties that inspired its creation.

We can, however, appreciate these codifications of law for what they are and the purpose that they were meant to serve. Indeed, their ultimate goals are made clear by what it is from the rabbinic tradition upon which they choose to focus. Yet, we must also remember that these laws, as they are preserved in the halacha--which is the form in which they are generally transmitted and remembered by each generation--only tells a fraction of the story.

We observed in the very first chapter that the rabbis perceived Jerusalem as the center of the world and the eternal abode of God; an anchor in uncharted seas, providing a sense of rootedness in place. Thus, for the Jewish community in the years subsequent to the destruction of the Second Temple, prayer orientation towards Jerusalem was a lifeline tossed out to people floundering in a sea of chaos; resulting from political and religious dislocation. It created a sense of uniformity, structure, and unity which kept the Jewish people together through times of great turbulence.

However, rather than ground the stability and order, which they so desperately sought, in the topsy-turvy world of physical reality, the rabbis turned inward to create a spiritual world of their own. Thus, when the rabbis spoke of Jerusalem, the Temple, and the Land of Israel--and an orientation towards these places--they were not speaking solely of a physical reality but of an ideal, a symbol of what could be. As Neusner describes it,

> Israel the nation existed [only] in the heart and the soul of the Jewish people, with the consequence that the Land of Israel as an entity took on substance and meaning otherwise called into doubt or denied by the ordinary facts of life.[1]

As such, this internal, imaginary Jewish world, with Jerusalem as its center, nourished and sustained the Jewish people.

As the center of the rabbis' world, it was only proper, in the eyes of the rabbis, that all Jews should pray facing Jerusalem. They would thus maintain Jerusalem and the Temple as

their rightful center of the Jewish universe. Levi-Strauss could hav had the rabbis in mind when he commented:

> A native thinker makes the penetrating comment that 'all sacred things must have their place.' It could even be said that being in their place is what makes them sacred for if they were taken out of their place, even in thought, the entire order of the universe would be destroyed.[2]

Particularly following the wars against Rome, the rabbis' sought the stability of a prayer orientation towards Jerusalem.

To survive as the Jewish people following the destruction of the Temple and the subsequent exile of many of its members, the Jews were required to vouchsafe three sacred bonds: their covenantal relationship with their land, their ability to communicate with their God, and their profound sense of connection to one another as a distinct community. Each of these elements was, and remains until this day, an essential ingredient of the uniquely Jewish religion and way of life.

Prayer orientation towards Jerusalem enabled the Jewish community to accomplish all three tasks, because prayer orientation was ultimately about connection, relationship, and belonging. By establishing prayer in the direction of the Temple, the rabbis provided the possibility for maintaining a connection with a distant land, an opportunity to nurture a relationship with God from far away, and the means to generate a sense of belonging and unity among the Jewish people living on foreign soil. Consequently, we might say that prayer orientation established sacred bonds, even as it designated a sacred direction towards a sacred place.

Let us now summarize how the rabbis perceived a Jerusalem-focused prayer orientation functioning in these three different ways:

1) A CONNECTION TO THE LAND: As long as the Jews were praying every day towards Jerusalem, even a Jerusalem in their minds, they could never lose their connection with their sacred city, and all that it represented. Praying towards Jerusalem was a constant reminder of the centrality of the land, bound in the covenant between the Jewish people and the Jewish God. The land would always be at the center of their national hopes and aspirations continually nourishing the Jewish people and providing them with a strong sense of national identity, even in the darkest of times when they felt so lost and alone.

2) A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD: But an orientation towards Jerusalem linked Jews to more than a geographical place; its impact was much greater because that place was the site of the Temple, a House built to God's name, an eternal abode for the divine presence. Thus, praying towards Jerusalem linked a people to its God in a very profound way.

The Jewish God had for so long been rooted in the Jewish land. But once the Jews lived in exile, it was very easy for them to begin to feel alienated from their God. Would God continue to hear the prayers of those banished from the land? In response to this very real and pressing question, the rabbis frequently underscored the function of prayer orientation as a

means to reestablish a spiritual contact with the God of their ancient homeland.

The physical orientation of prayer towards the Temple in Jerusalem became a mechanism for enabling the worshipper to attain an intense internal focus on and relationship with a very abstract and distant God; thus assuring the people that God was accessible to them even in exile.

Furthermore, the external expression of a prayer orientation was also perceived by the rabbis to communicate a person's devotion and loyalty to God. A distinctly Jewish prayer orientation thus served as a theological litmus test which countered other religious groups' claims about the nature and location of God. Hence, praying towards the east, but away from the Temple, is disparaged by the rabbis as being the direction towards which the heretics prayed. We can now understand why it was so important to the rabbis that all Jews prayed towards Jerusalem: It was an expression, to the surrounding peoples and to Jews, of Jewish loyalty and dedication to the Jewish God.

The Jews lived, at various times and places, amidst other peoples whose particular views of God were radically different than the Jewish one. Therefore, by regulating that all Jews pray towards one place, Jerusalem, the rabbis provided a way for the Jewish community to distinguish itself from its neighbors theologically and also to make a unique statement about the nature of the Jewish God, who is also one.

A SENSE OF COMMUNITY: In addition to distinguishing the Jews from other religious groups who held conflicting views about God, a prayer orientation towards Jerusalem also engendered a tremendous sense of unity and belonging to a distinct group because, in the words of the rabbis, "All Israel would be praying towards one place."

Consequently, praying in a direction other than towards Jerusalem not only called into question one's relationship with God but challenged one's relationship with the Jewish community as a whole. A certain scorn for the Jewish community and the obligations incumbent upon its members was perceived by the rabbis when a Jew, for example, prayed outside of a synagogue in a direction that did not conform to the way the rest of the community prayed. External appearances, in this regard, became very significant because the direction in which one prayed clearly delineated who was in and who was out of the Jewish community.

The Jewish sense of identity as a distinct community, especially while living in exile amidst a multitude of other peoples and religions, could easily have been weakened and undermined. The threat of wanton assimilation or a gradual melting into the dominant culture on the part of the Jews was very much a reality. Consequently, prayer orientation functioned to insure that the Jews continued to maintain a vital connection with their people.

The rabbis' vigorous advocacy of praying towards Jerusalem

was not so much a reflection of the world that existed as it was an expression of the world they desired, with the ultimate goal of providing a structure to help insure the continuity of the Jewish people. Consequently, our earlier attempts to correlate the Jewish perspective of worship orientation, as expressed in the rabbinic texts, with the archaeological evidence regarding prayer orientation were sorely misguided, in that we were comparing two radically different worlds, with two very different frames of reference. The rabbis' texts provide insight into the world of a select group of men, grounded in a subjective need to provide structure and order for the internal life of their people. On the other hand, the archaeologists were primarily concerned with collecting artifacts which would reveal to them, in as objective a way as possible, the way things were, regardless of the way the rabbis wanted things to be. Hence, it is virtually impossible to measure the world of the rabbis against the world of archaeology.

However, archaeological evidence does indicate that, by the time of the 5th or 6th centuries, the construction of synagogues seemed to conform, by and large, to the rabbinic model of orientation. This confluence between the archaeological and rabbinic models of prayer orientation is evidence that by this time the rabbinic view of prayer orientation was not just a vision that they dreamed of but had gained acceptance among the people and was actually being practiced.

In Tosefta Megillah, we learned that the ark for the Torah

was built into the wall so as to be oriented with reference to the Temple in Jerusalem. In this way, the synagogue architecture allows, indeed demands, an orientation towards Jerusalem. Even the archaeological evidence supports this contention that the synagogue was designed to express the orientation required of the people.

If we recall the archaeological evidence concerning the evolution of prayer orientation we will remember that changes in the architecture developed in response to people's needs. The earliest synagogues had their gates towards Jerusalem so that the worshippers could easily face in that direction; however, with the institution of the Torah as a permanent fixture, the congregation needed to face both the Torah and Jerusalem. As a result, the synagogue structure was changed to better serve the people, since it was awkward to have the Torah on the same wall as the main entrance which would require the worshippers to turn around immediately upon entering. Archaeological remains have even provided examples of synagogues that were constructed in one way and later remodeled to conform with the new pattern.

This greater concern among the rabbis with the orientation of the people rather than the synagogue itself should not be surprising because in the words of Landsberger,

> The synagogue was not a dwelling of the Deity. It was a community house. Its chief function was to serve as a place of prayer for a large assembly of people. If the sacred direction of the Temple might be called theogenous, that of the synagogue, by pointing the way for the worshipper, should be called anthropogenous.[3]

In fact, orientation only makes sense in relationship to

human beings:

> Kant argues that orientation is always in relation to our bodies, maps, charts, or cardinal directions are useless unless they be oriented with respect to the individual body.... It is the relationship to the human body, and our experience of it, that orients us in space, that confers meaning to place. Human beings are not placed, they bring place into being.[4]

A distinct orientation for prayer was solely for the benefit of the worshipper, and in many ways helped the individual Jew, and the community, make sense out of the place that they found themselves in; a place, in time and space, that was initially with out bearings and completely disjointed from all prior experience. Eliade notes that, even in the best of times, religious people cannot live in a completely chaotic, undefined sense of space. There needs to be a defined orientation, a sacred direction, if you will, that defines and gives meaning to the space in which one lives.[5] One of the things which this study has demonstrated is the sheer will of the rabbis to bring the sacred place of Jerusalem and the Temple into being. With this distinct prayer orientation towards Jerusalem, the rabbis created a unique and sacred sense of space for the Jewish people, which allowed them to continue to thrive and create until this day.

APPENDIX A

ZOHAR VAYESHEV 186a

ועלמא כד
אחברי מההוא אתר אתברי דאיהו (ב) שכלולא דעלמא ותקינוי דאיהו חד נקודא
דעלמא ואמצעיתא דכלא ה) ומאן איהו ציון דכתיב (תהלים נ') מזמור לאסף אל
אלהים יי' דבר ויקרא ארץ ממזרח שמש עד מבואו. ומאן אתר כציון דכתיב
מציון מכלל יופי אלהים הופיע מההוא אתר דאיהו סטרא דשכלולא דמהימנותא

[*1]

MIDRASH TANHUMA HANIDPAS KEDOSHIM 9-10

[ט] קדושים תהיו. (מה) זש"ה ישלח עזרך מקדש ומציון יסעדך (תהלים כ' ג), [מקדש]
מקידוש מעשים שבך, ומציון [יסעדך, מציון] מעשים שבך. (מו) אמר
ר' ברכיה מעשה היה (מז) בקריתנו ברחח אחד, שהיה שרוי על המעין, בא רוח אחד
להודיעו לה, ובקש להוציאה משם, (מח) היה שם חסיד אחד, ור' יוסי איש ציפורי
שמו, (מט) נגלה לו אותו הרוח, אמר לו רבי הרי כמה שנים אני נתון כאן, ובצהרים
ובלילה לא היזקתי בריה, (ואף לא ביום), והרוח הזה בא עלי ממקום אחד, ומבקש
להוציאני מכאן, ולחזוק את הבריות, א"ל מה נעשה, א"ל מלו מקליכם ומגליכם
(נ) וצאו עליו בשעת הצהרים, ואמרו שלנו נרצה, שלנו נרצה, והוא יברח, כך עשו
והבריחוהו משם, אמרו לא זו משם עד שראו (נא) כחרדת דם צף על המים, כששמעו
חכמים בדבר אמרו ומה אם דבר שלא נברא לצורך סיוע צריך סיוע, בני אדם על
אחת כמה וכמה, לכך אמר דוד ישלח עזרך מקדש:

[*2]

[י] כי תבואו אל הארץ ונטעתם. (נב) וש"ה עשיתי לי גנות ופרדסים [ונטעתי בהם עץ
כל פרי] (קהלת ב' ה), (נג) וכי כל בני אדם אינן נוטעין כל מה שהם מבקשים,
(נד) כל מה שיטע אדם בארץ הוא עושה, בין פלפלין ובין כל דבר, אם יטע אדם חן
עושין, אלא שאין אדם יודע מקום של נטיעה ונטיעה היכן היא נוטע, אבל שלמה
שהיה חכם נטע כל מיני אילנות, [שנאמר עשיתי לי גנות ופרדסים ונטעתי בהם עץ
כל פרי], אמר ר' יוחנן (נה) אפילו פלפלין נטע שלמה, וכיצד היה נוטען, אלא שלמה
היה חכם, (נו) והיה יודע עיקר משתיתו של עולם, מנין מציון מכלל יופי אלהים הופיע
(תהלים נ' ב), מציון נשתבלל כל העולם כולו, (נז) למה נקראת אבן שתיה שממנה תשתת
העולם, (נח) היה שלמה יודע איזה ניד הולך לכרש, ונטע עליו פלפלין, ומיד היו
עושין, הרי מה שהוא אומר נטעתי בהם עץ כל פרי: ד"א נטעתי בהם וגו'. כשם
שהמיבור הזה נתון באמצע האיש, כך ארץ ישראל מיבורה של עולם, שנאמר ישבי
על מבור הארץ (יחזקאל ל"ח י"ב), ארץ ישראל יושבת באמצעיתו של עולם, וירושלים באמצע
ארץ ישראל, ובית המקדש באמצע ירושלים, וההיכל באמצע בית המקדש, והארון
באמצע ההיכל, והאבן שתיה לפני ההיכל, שממנה תשתת העולם, שלמה שהיה חכם
עמד על השרשין היוצאין ממנה לכל העולם, ונטע בהם כל מיני אילנות, לפיכך אמר
עשיתי לי גנות ופרדסים:

BT YOMA 54b

תנא *שממנה
הושתת העולם תנן כמאן דאמר מציון נברא
העולם דתניא רבי אליעזר אומר עולם מאמצעיתו נברא שנאמר °בצקת
עפר למוצק ורגבים ידובקו רבי יהושע אומר עולם מן הצדדין נברא
שנאמר °כי לשלג יאמר *היי ארץ וגשם מטר וגשם מטרות עוזו רבי
יצחק (*נפחא) אמר אבן ירה הקב"ה בים ממנו נשתת העולם שנאמר
°על מה אדניה הטבעו או מי ירה אבן פנתה *וחכמים אומרים מציון
נברא שנאמר °מזמור לאסף אל אלהים ה' ואומר מציון מכלל יופי ממנו
מכלל יפיו של עולם ר...

[*3]

MIDRASH TEHILLIM 50, 1

מזמור לאסף. אל אלהים ה׳. למה הזכיר שמו של הקב״ה ג׳ פעמים. ללמדך שבשלשה שמות הללו ברא הקב״ה את עולמו (א) כנגד שלשה מדות שבהן (ב) נברא העולם. ואלו הן החכמה והדעת והתבונה. חכמה מנין שנאמר (משלי ג׳) ה׳ בחכמה יסד ארץ. תבונה (שם) כונן שמים בתבונה. דעת (שם) בדעתו תהומות נבקעו וכן הוא אומר (שמות כ׳) כי אנכי ה׳ אלהיך אל קנא הרי שלש כנגד שלש שבהן נברא העולם. וכן בני גד ובני ראובן אומרים (יהושע כ״ב) אל אלהים ה׳ אל אלהים ה׳ הוא יודע. ומה ראו להזכיר שני פעמים אלא שבהם נברא העולם. אל אלהים שבהן נתנה התורה (ג) יכול אחד לעצמו ואחד לעצמו לאו אלא שניהם ביחד נבראו וכן הוא אומר (ישעיה מ״ח) אף ידי יסדה ארץ וימיני טפחה שמים קורא אני אליהם יעמדו יחדיו הוי (ד) ממזרח שמש ועד מבואו. (ה) ב״ו צר צורה ומתחיל בראשו וגומר ברגליו או מתחיל ברגליו וגומר בראשו אבל הקב״ה אינו כן כשהוא צר את האדם צר אותו בבת אחת. וכן הוא אומר (ירמיה י׳) כי יוצר הכל הוא. ואומר (ישעיה מ״ד) אנכי ה׳ עושה כל הוי ממזרח שמש ועד מבואו (ו) ומנין שבראו מציון שנא׳ מציון מכלל יופי יופיו של עולם. מהו הופיע [*4]

אין הופיע אלא אורה. וכן הוא אומר (איוב ל״ז) והופיע אור ענגו (ז) ומנין שבשעה [illegible] היא מדבר, נאמר כאן מכלל יופי (ח) ונאמר להלן (ברכות כ׳) ויכלו השמים [illegible] [illegible] (ט) וכן הוא אומר על ידי ירמיה (ישעיה ס״) [illegible] [illegible] לגלים ואחר כך (שם ד׳) שממה תהיה כל הארץ (י) ואומר (מיכה ז׳) והיתה [illegible] לשממה על יושביה. וכשיחדש הקדוש ברוך הוא את עולמו מציון הוא מחדשו (יא) [illegible] (ישעיה ב׳) נכון יהיה הר בית ה׳ :

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ואמר רבי ירמיה (*בר) אלעזר שלשה פתחים יש לגיהנם אחד במדבר ואחד בים ואחד בירושלים במדבר דכתיב °וירדו הם וכל אשר להם חיים שאולה בים דכתיב °מבטן שאול שועתי שמעת קולי בירושלים דכתיב °נאם ה׳ אשר אור לו בציון ותנור לו בירושלים ותנא דבי רבי ישמעאל אשר אור לו בציון זו גיהנם ותנור לו בירושלים זו פתחה של גיהנם ׃ [*5]

PESIKTA RABBATI 42, 1-2

היא בית הוועד של כל העולם שנאמר (ישעיה ב׳ מיכה ד׳) כי מציון תצא תורה ודבר ה׳ בי״ה (ד) ציון מירושלים. לפיכך כשאפדה את ציון ואת גלים שנאמר (ישעיה א׳) ציון במשפט תפדה ושביה בצדקה הם באים ותוקעים בתוכה. מנין (ה) ממה שהשלים בנביא תקעו שופר בציון ׃

ב כך ד׳) פתח ר׳ תנחומא בי ר׳ אבא (תהלים מ״ח) יפה נוף משוש כל הארץ ס) (ו) (ח) מהו יפה נוף משוש כל הארץ ו) (ג) כהו יפה נוף קלוניפו. ד״א יפה א״ר חנניא בר פפי ז) (ב) היפה א) בענפיה כתאינה הזו שמורשה בארץ ומתמרת ועולה וענפיה ב) יוצאה מכל צד והיא נאה לכך הוא קורא את ירושלים יפה נוף שכך היא עתידה להיות מרחבת ועולה (יחזקאל מ״א ז׳) ורחבה ונסבה למעלה למעלה. [*6]

PESIKTA DE RAV KAHANA 21, 4-5

ד] ר׳ פנחס בשם ר׳ ראובן א׳, עתיד הק׳ להביא סיני ותבור וכרמל, ולבנות בית המקדש על גבי ראשיהם. ומה טעמ׳, והיה באחרית הימים נכון יהיה הר בית י״י בראש ההרים (שם ב:ב). א״ר חומא ודייך עד כאן, אלא בית המקדש אומ׳ שירה וההרים עונים אחריו, ומה טעמ׳, ונשא הוא מגבעות (מיכה ד:א). ואין לשון זה ונשא אלא שירה, ומה טעמ׳ וכנניהו שר הלוים במשא יסור במשא כי מבין הוא (ד״ה א׳ טו:כב). ר׳ הושעיה בשם ר׳ אפס עתידה ירושלם לעשות קסילפנס לאומות העולם והם מהלכין לאורה. ומה טעמ׳, והלכו גוים לאורך וג׳ (ישעיה ס:ג). א״ר אחא נמשלו ישר׳ כזית, זית רענן יפה פרי תואר (ירמיה יא:טז), ונמשל הק׳ כנר, נר אלהים נשמת אדם (משלי כ:כז), מה דרכו של שמן להנתן בנר והן מאירים שניהם כאחת, כך א׳ הקב״ה לישראל, בניי הואיל ואורי הוא אורכם ואורכם הוא אורי, אני ואתם נלך תאיר לציון, קומי אורי כי בא אורך (ישעיה ס:א). [*7]

ה] תני ר׳ חייא מתחילת ברייתו של עולם צפה הקב״ה בית המקדש בנוי וחרב ובנוי. בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ (בראשית א:א), בנוי. והארץ היתה תהו ובהו (שם ב), הרי חרב. ויאמר אלהים יהי אור ויהי אור (שם ג), הרי בנוי ומשוכלל לעתיד לבא׳

VAYIKRA RABBAH KEDOSHIM 24,4

דבר אחר: "ישלח עזרך מקדש, ומציון יסעדך" – אמר ר' לוי: כל טובות וברכות ונחמות, שהקב"ה עתיד לתן לישראל, אינן אלא מציון: ישועות מציון – "מי יתן מציון ישועת ישראל" (תהלים יד, ז); עז מציון – "מטה עזך ישלח ה' מציון" (שם קי, ב); ברכה מציון – "יברכך ה' מציון" (שם קלד, ג); שופר מציון – "תקעו שופר בציון" (יואל ב, א); טל וברכה וחיים מציון – "כטל־חרמון, שירד על־הררי ציון, כי שם צוה ה' את־הברכה, חיים עד־העולם" (תהלים קלג, ג); תורה מציון, שנאמר: "כי מציון תצא תורה" (ישעיה ב, ג); עזרה וסיוע מציון – "ישלח עזרך מקדש, ומציון יסעדך". "ישלח עזרך מקדש" – מקדוש מעשים, שיש בידך; "ומציון יסעדך" – מציון מעשים, שיש בידך. אמר הקב"ה למשה: לך אמר להם לבני ישראל: בני, כשם שאני פרוש, כך תהו אתם פרושים; כשם שאני קדוש, כך תהו אתם קדושים: "דבר אל־כל־עדת בני־ישראל ואמרת אלהם: קדשים תהיו, כי קדוש אני ה' אלהיכם" (יט, ב).

[#8]

MIDRASH TEHILLIM 14,6

מי יתן מציון ישועת ישראל. א"ר לוי (כב) כל הברכות והנחמות והטובות שהקב"ה מביא על ישראל כולם מציון. תורה מציון שנאמר (ישעיה ב') כי מציון תצא תורה. ברכה מציון שנא' (תהלים קל"ד) יברכך ה' מציון. הופעה מציון שנא' (שם נ"ב) מציון מכלל יופי אלהים הופיע. סעידה מציון שנאמר (שם כ') מציון יסעדך. חיים מציון שנאמר (שם קל"ג) כי שם צוה ה' את הברכה חיים עד העולם. גדולה מציון שנאמר (שם צ"ט) ה' בציון גדול. ישועה מציון שנאמר (שם י"ד) מי יתן מציון ישועת ישראל. את מוצא שני פעמים כתיב בספר תהלים מי יתן מציון. אחד בספר ראשון ואחד בספר שני ולמה א"ר לוי הרב אמר אחד והתלמיד אמר אחד. הרב אמר אחד (דברים ה') מי יתן והיה לבבם זה להם. והתלמיד אמר (במדבר י"א) ומי יתן את כל עם ה' נביאים. לא דברי הרב ולא דברי התלמיד מתקיימין בעולם הזה. אבל לעולם הבא שניהם מתקיימין. דברי הרב מנין שנאמר (יחזקאל ל"ו) ונתתי לכם לב חדש. דברי התלמיד מנין שנאמר (יואל ג') והיה אחרי כן אשפוך את רוחי על כל בשר. ר"א למה שני פעמים ר' יוחן בשם ר' יהושע

[#9]

MIDRASH TEHILLIM 48,1-2

שיר מזמור לבני קרח. גדול ה' ומהולל מאד וגו' ואלהינו אינו גדול (א) אלא בעירו בלבד. אלא אמרו בני קרח גדול ה' במה שעשה בעירו ובמקדשו וכן הוא אומר (תהלים צ"ט) ה' בציון גדול ורם הוא על כל העמים. לומר בעירו עשה כן בעמים לא כל שכן. וכן הוא אומר (ירמיה כ"ה) כי הנה בעיר אשר נקרא שמי עליה אנכי מחל להרע ואתם הנקה תנקו. הוי בעיר אלהינו וגו':

יפה נוף משוש כל הארץ. מהו יפה נוף שהכל מיפין לה היפה שלא היתה במותה אע"פי שנאמר (יחזקאל כ"ז) בצור את אומרת אני כלילת יופי היא אמרה לעצמה אבל אחרים לא אמרו לה. וכן הוא אומר את אמרת לעצמך אבל אחרים לא אמרו לך. יהי מישל הדיוט לא במה דאמרת אמך אלא (ב) במה דאמרינן מגריא. (ח) אבל בציון אינו כן הכל אומרים (איכה ב') הזאת העיר שיאמרו כלילת יופי. ולא עוד אלא משוש לכל הארץ. וכן הוא אומר משוש כל הארץ. ובמה היתה משוש שהיתה משמחת כל הארץ היה אדם עובר עבירה היה דואג בלבו (ג) ולבו שח עליו. אמר שלמה (משלי י"ב) דאגה בלב איש ישחנה (ד) ודבר טוב ישמחנה היה הולך לירושלם ומקריב קרבן ומתכפר לו ולבו שמח עליו ויוצא כשם שמח לכך משוש לכל הארץ. הרע לך שכן הוא שנאמר הר ציון ירכתי צפון קרית מלך רב. וכי בצפון הוא (ה) והלא אינו אלא בדרום אלא שם הוא נשחטים שנאמר (ויקרא א') על ירך המזבח צפונה. מהו קרית מלך רב. (ו) רב המלך שעשה כן בעירו. בעולם הזה עשה כן (ז) אבל לעתיד לבוא אינו עושה כן:

[#10]

MISHNAH KELIM 1, 6-9

ו עֶשֶׂר קְדֻשׁוֹת הֵן: אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל מְקֻדֶּשֶׁת מִכָּל הָאֲרָצוֹת. וּמַה הִיא קְדֻשָּׁתָהּ? שֶׁמְּבִיאִים מִמֶּנָּה הָעֹמֶר, וְהַבִּכּוּרִים, וּשְׁתֵּי הַלֶּחֶם, מַה שֶּׁאֵין מְבִיאִים כֵּן מִכָּל הָאֲרָצוֹת.

ז עָרֵי הַמַּקְפוֹת חוֹמָה מְקֻדָּשׁוֹת מִמֶּנָּה – שֶׁמְּשַׁלְּחִים מִתּוֹכָן אֶת הַמְצֹרָעִים, וּמְסַבְּבִין לְתוֹכָן מֵת עַד שֶׁיִּרְצוּ; יָצָא, אֵין מַחֲזִירִין אוֹתוֹ. [*11]

ח לְפָנִים מִן הַחוֹמָה מְקֻדָּשׁ מֵהֶם – שֶׁאוֹכְלִים שָׁם קָדָשִׁים קַלִּים וּמַעֲשֵׂר שֵׁנִי. הַר הַבַּיִת מְקֻדָּשׁ מִמֶּנּוּ – שֶׁאֵין זָבִים וְזָבוֹת נִדּוֹת וְיוֹלְדוֹת נִכְנָסִים לְשָׁם. הֵחֵיל מְקֻדָּשׁ מִמֶּנּוּ – שֶׁאֵין גּוֹיִם וְטֻמְאַת מֵת נִכְנָסִים לְשָׁם. עֶזְרַת נָשִׁים מְקֻדֶּשֶׁת מִמֶּנּוּ – שֶׁאֵין טְבוּל יוֹם נִכְנָס לְשָׁם, וְאֵין חַיָּבִים עָלֶיהָ חַטָּאת. עֶזְרַת יִשְׂרָאֵל מְקֻדֶּשֶׁת מִמֶּנָּה – שֶׁאֵין מְחַסַּר כִּפּוּרִים נִכְנָס לְשָׁם, וְחַיָּבִין עָלֶיהָ חַטָּאת. עֶזְרַת הַכֹּהֲנִים מְקֻדֶּשֶׁת מִמֶּנָּה – שֶׁאֵין יִשְׂרְאֵל נִכְנָסִים לְשָׁם אֶלָּא בְּשָׁעַת צָרְכֵיהֶם: לִסְמִיכָה, לִשְׁחִיטָה, לִתְנוּפָה.

ט בֵּין הָאוּלָם וְלַמִּזְבֵּחַ מְקֻדָּשׁ מִמֶּנָּה – שֶׁאֵין בַּעֲלֵי מוּמִין וּפְרוּעֵי רֹאשׁ נִכְנָסִים לְשָׁם. הַהֵיכָל מְקֻדָּשׁ מִמֶּנּוּ – שֶׁאֵין נִכְנָס לְשָׁם שָׁלֹא רָחוּץ יָדַיִם וְרַגְלַיִם. קֹדֶשׁ הַקָּדָשִׁים מְקֻדָּשׁ מֵהֶם – שֶׁאֵין נִכְנָס לְשָׁם אֶלָּא כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל בְּיוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים בְּשָׁעַת הָעֲבוֹדָה.

אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹסֵי: בַּחֲמִשָּׁה דְבָרִים בֵּין הָאוּלָם וְלַמִּזְבֵּחַ שָׁוֶה לַהֵיכָל – שֶׁאֵין בַּעֲלֵי מוּמִין, וּפְרוּעֵי רֹאשׁ, וּשְׁתוּיֵי יַיִן, וְשֶׁלֹּא רְחוּץ יָדַיִם וְרַגְלַיִם נִכְנָסִים לְשָׁם; וּפוֹרְשִׁין מִבֵּין הָאוּלָם וְלַמִּזְבֵּחַ בְּשָׁעַת הַקְּטָרָה.

PESIKTA DERAV KAHANA 20, 7

ז] דילמה. ר' לעזר בן עזריה ור' לעזר המודעי הוון יתיבין עסיקין בהדין קרייה, בעת ההוא יקראו לירושלם כסא יי (ירמיה ג:יז). א' ליה ר' לעזר בן עזריה לר' אלעזר המודעי, ומחזקת היא ירוש', א' ליה עתיד הקב"ה לומר לה האריכי, הרחיבי, קבילי אוכלסייך, הרחיבי מקום אהליך וג' (ישעיה נד:ב). א"ר יוחנן עתידה ירושלם להיות מגעת לשערי דמשק, ומה טעם', משא דבר יי בארץ חדרך ודמשק מנוחתו (זכריה ט:א). מהו חדרך, ר' יודה ור' נחמיה. ר' יודה א' אין לשון זה חדרך אלא זה מלך המשיח, שהוא חד לאומות ורך לישר'. ור' נחמיה אמ' המקום הוא נקרא חדרך. א"ר יוסי בן דורמסקית העבודה שאני מדמשק ויש שם מקום וקורין חדרך. א' ליה ומה את מקיים, ודמשק מנוחתו (שם), אלא מה התאינה הזאת צרה מלמטה ורחבה מלמעלה, כך עתידה ירושלם להיות מתרחבת ועולה והגליות באות ונינחות תחתיה, לקיים מה שנ' ודמשק מנוחתו (שם). [*12]

MIDRASH TANHUMA HANIDPAS, Achurei Mot, 15

[טו] [ד"א] איש איש מבית ישראל. (קס) וש"ה היטיבה ברצונך את ציון תבנה חומות ירושלים, אז תחפוץ זבחי צדק עולה וכליל וגו' (תהלים נא כ כא), למה הדבר דומה, (קסא) לעשיר גדול רחוק ואין לו אשה, אין ביתו בית, למה (קסב) כשהאריסין באין הוא אומר להם לכו להנות, למה שאין לו בית, ואין לו אשה, (קסג) נטל אשה היה אומר להם כל מה שתביאו לי מכאן ואילך העלו אותם לבית, כך כל הימים עד שלא העמיד משה אהל מועד, היו הקרבנות קריבין (מכל) [בכל] מקום, שנאמר וישלח את נערי בני ישראל ויעלו עולות וגו' (שמות כד ה), וכן הוא אומר דרך שלשת ימים נלך במדבר חבחנו לה' אלהינו (שם ח כג), כיון שהוקם המשכן, א"ל [הקב"ה] למשה אמור להם, מכאן ואילך אין אתם רשאין להקריב קרבן אלא באוהל מועד, ושם היו מעלין את (הדורות) [הדורון] להקב"ה, שנאמר השמר לך פן תעלה עולותיך [בכל מקום אשר תראה] כי אם במקום אשר יבחר ה' [באחד שבטיך שם תעלה עולותיך] (דברים יב יג יד), והיכן בחר הקב"ה בירושלים, שנאמר כי בחר ה' בציון [אוה למושב לו] (תהלים קלב יג), לפיכך משה מזהיר ישראל לאמר, איש איש אשר ישחט וגו', ואל פתח אהל מועד לא הביאו להקריב קרבן וגו' (ויקרא יז ג ד):

[#13]

MIDRASH TEHILLIM 122,4

ירושלים הבנוי

(ו) א"ר יוחנן אמר הקב"ה לא אבוא בירושלים של מעלה עד שאבוא לירושלים של מטה שנאמר (הושע י"א) בקרבך קדוש ולא אבוא בעיר. ומי איכא ירושלים למעלה (ז) א דכתיב ירושלים הבנויה כעיר שחוברה לה יחדו. (ח) אריב"ל עיר שהיא עושה כל ישראל חברים. (ט) מעתה אפי' בשאר ימות השנה (י) א"ר זעירא ובלבד שעם עלו שבט

[#14]

MIDRASH TEHILLIM 132, 2-3

זאת מנוחתי עדי עד (ז) תנו רבנן (דברים יב) כי לא באתם עד עתה אל המנוחה וגו'. זו שילה ואמאי קרי ליה מנוחה דנחו מכיבוש הארץ. נחלה זו ירושלים (ח) וכה"א (ירמיה י"ב) היתה לי נחלתי כאריה ביער (ט) ואומר (שם) העיט צבוע נחלתי לי דברי ר' יהודה. ר' שמעון אומר מנוחה זו ירושלם וכה"א זאת מנוחתי עדי עד ואומר

כי בחר ה' בציון אוה למושב לו (י) ואמאי קרי ליה מנוחה על שם נחת הארון (יא) נחלה זו שילה דכתיב (יהושע י"ח) ויחלק להם יהושע ויפל להם הגורל בשילה (יב) ר' ישמעאל [illegible]

~~אומר והיתה שילה רבי שמעון בן יוחאי אומר זו זו ירושלים כי בחר ה' בציון [illegible]~~

שלא נבחרה ירושלים היתה ארץ ישראל כשרה למזבחות משנבחרה ירושלם יצאה ישראל שנא' (דברים י"ב) השמר לך פן העלה עלותיך וגו'. עד שלא נבחר בית עולמים היתה ירושלים ראויה לשכינה משנבחרה יצתה ירושלים שנא' כי בחר ה' בציון. ואומר זאת מנוחתי עדי עד. עד שלא נבחר אהרן היו כל ישראל ראוין לכהונה משנבחר אהרן יצאו ישראל (יד) שנא' (במדבר י"ח) ברית מלח עולם היא. ואומר (שם כ"ה) והיתה לו ולזרעו אחריו עד שלא נבחר דוד היו כל ישראל ראוין למלכות משנבחר יצאו ישראל שנא' (דה"ב י"ג) הלא לכם לדעת כי ה' נתן הממלכה לדוד. עד שלא נבחרה ארץ ישראל היו כל הארצות (טו) כשרות לדברות:

[#15]

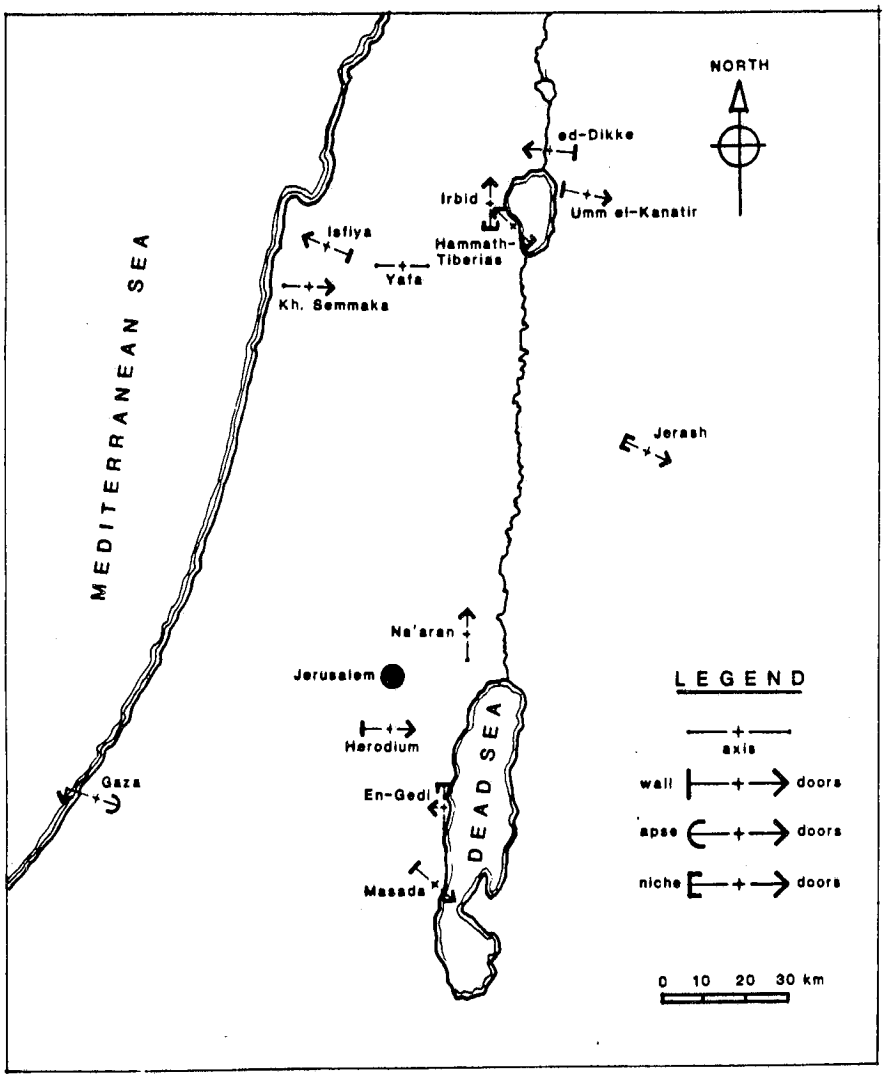

Figure 5. Orientation of some ancient synagogues in the Holy Land.

Notes to Chapter One:

1. Talmon, S. "Har;Gibhah," Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, vol. 3, ed. Botterweck, G. J. and Ringger, H. (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), 436.

2. See for example, Is. 24:23, Is. 60:14, Ps. 132:13, Ps. 48:1-3, Ps. 76:3.

3. Roberts, J.J.M. "The Davidic Origin of The Zion Tradition," Journal of Biblical Literature, (1973), 343.

4. See S. Talmon, "Har;Gibhah," 434 for greater explication.

5. See Cohn, Robert, L. The Shape of Sacred Space: Four Biblical Studies, (California: Scholars Press, 1981), ch. 3.

6. Talmon, S. "Har;Gibhah," 430.

7. Roberts, J.J.M. "The Davidic Origin of The Zion Tradition," 342.

8. Cohn, R. The Shape of Sacred Space, 65.

9. Ibid., 64.

10. See Ex. 15:17 and Ps. 78:54.

11. Roberts, J.J.M. "The Davidic Origin of The Zion Tradition," 343.

12. Ibid., 343.

13. Bright, John A History of Israel (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), 316-317.

14. The texts of the midrashim to which I will refer are numbered and located in Appendix A. Next to each citation of a midrash, I will include its number in parentheses so that the midrash may be located in the back with ease.

15. Idel, Moshe "The Land of Israel in Medieval Kabbalah," The Land of Israel ed. Hoffman, L. (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 176-77.

16. From his Rosh HaShanah sermon, Chavel, Kitvei Haramban, I, 240; cited in Rosenberg, S. "Link to the Land of Israel in Jewish Thought," The Land of Israel, 154.

17. Rosenberg, S. "Link to the Land of Israel in Jewish Thought," 154.

18. For a detailed analysis of this mishnaic passage in support of this point, see Sarason, R. "The Significance of the Land of Israel in the Mishnah," The Land of Israel, 112-15.

19. For a more detailed discussion of this issue see S. Talmon, "Har;Gibhah," 437.

Notes on Chapter Two:

1. Avi-Yonah, M. Encyclopedia Judaica, vol. 15 (Keter Publishing House Ltd.: Jerusalem, 1971), 598.

2. Shanks, Hershel Judaism in Stone: The Archaeology of Ancient Synagogues (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1979), 11-12.

3. Kraabel, A. T. "Social Systems of Six Diaspora Synagogues," Ancient Synagogues: The State of Research ed. J. Gutmann, (Chico: Scholars Press, Brown Judaic Studies 22, 1981), 87.

4. Meyers, Eric "Ancient Gush Halav, Palestinian Synagogues and the Eastern Diaspora," Ancient Synagogues, 62.

5. Seager, Andrew "Ancient Synagogue Architecture: An Overview," Ancient Synagogues, 39.

6. Ibid., 39.

7. For proponents of the "early" and "later" model, see, for example, E. L. Sukenik, Ancient Synagogues in Palestine and Greece, (London, 1934), 27-28; E. R. Goodenough, Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period, I (New York, 1953) 181-225 ("The Galileean Type"), 238-64 ("Synagogues with Mosaics); M. Avi-Yonah, "Synagogue Architecture in the Classical Period," Jewish Art, An Illustrated History, ed. Cecil Roth (New York, 1961), cols. 158-73, 179-88.

8. Avi-Yonah, Michael "Ancient Synagogues," The Synagogue: Studies in Origins, Archaeology and Architecture ed. H. Orlinsky, (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1975), 98.

9. Seager, A. "Ancient Synagogue Architecture," 40.

10. Ibid., 39.

11. "Goodenough disagrees with the others regarding the absence of a fixed Torah shrine in the 'Galilean ' type." according to Seager, "Ancient Synagogue Architecture," n.1.

12. Seager, A. "Ancient Synagogue Architecture," 39.

13. Avi-Yonah, M. "Ancient Synagogues," 98.

14. Seager, A. "Ancient Synagogue Architecture," 39.

15. Ibid., 39.

Notes on Chapter Two Cont.:

16. Shanks, H. Judaism in Stone, 97.

17. Ibid., 101.

18. Chiat, Marilyn "First-Century Synagogue Architecture," Ancient Synagogues, 49.

19. Ibid., 49.

20. Ibid., 50. See also G. Foerster, "The Synagogues at Masada and Herodium," Journal of Jewish Art, 3/4 (1977), 6-11.

21. Ibid., 50.

22. Tosefta Meg. 3:22

23. Avi-Yonah, M. "Ancient Synagogues," 99.

24. Ibid., 99.

25. Shanks, H. Judaism in Stone, 26.

26. The possibility remains that this structure is not a synagogue at all, but no scholars have suggested this.

27. Shanks, M. Judaism in Stone, 28-9. See, too, G. Foerster, "The Synagogue at Masada and Herodium," Eretz Israel, Vol. XI (1975), 224-28; see, too, the discussion of this Tosefta below.

28. Chiat, M. "First-Century Synagogue Architecture," 53.

29. Ibid., 53.

30. Ibid., 53.

31. Ibid., 53.

32. Ibid., 53.

33. Ibid., 53.

34. Landsberger, Franz "The Sacred Direction in Synagogue and Church," The Synagogue, 243-4.

35. Kraabel, A. T. "Social Systems of Six Diaspora Synagogues," 82.

36. Seager, A. "The Architecture of the Dura and Sardis Synagogues," The Synagogue, 158-9.

Notes on Chapter Two Cont.:

37. Ibid., 158-9.

38. Shanks, H. Judaism in Stone, 73.

39. Ibid., 45.

40. Landsberger, F. "Sacred Directions," 249.

41. Ibid., 247-48.

42. Ibid., 247.

43. See for example Erwin Goodenough, Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period, I (New York, 1953); E.L. Sukenik, The Ancient Synagogue of El-Hammah, (Jerusalem, 1935).

44. Meyers, E. "Ancient Gush Halav," 63.

45. Shanks, H. Judaism in Stone, 106.

46. Ibid., 106.

47. Seager, A. "The Architecture of the Dura and Sardis Synagogues," 165.

48. Ibid., 165.

49. Landsberger, F. "Sacred Directions," 243-4.

50. Ibid., 245.

51. Seager, A. "Ancient Synagogue Architecture," 43.

52. Kraabel, A. T. "Social Systems of Six Diaspora Synagogues," 82.

53. Ibid., 82.

54. Ibid., 82.

55. Ibid., 82.

56. Landsberger, F. "Sacred Directions," 242.

57. See Seager, A. "Ancient Synagogue Architecture," 43 and Shanks, Hershel Judaism in Stone, 106.

58. Seager, A. "Ancient Synagogue Architecture," 43.

59. Meyers, E. "Ancient Gush Halav," 61.

60. Most notably by Chiat, Seager and Landsberger.

61. Seager, A. "Ancient Synagogue Architecture," 41.

62. Ibid., 107.

63. Ibid., 41.

64. Ibid., 41.

65. Ibid., 41.

66. Seager, A. "The Architecture of the Dura and Sardis Synagogues," 150.

67. Kraabel, A. T. "Social Systems of Six Diaspora Synagogues," 87.

68. Meyers, E. "Ancient Gush Halav," 61.

69. Seager, A. "Ancient Synagogue Architecture," 39.

70. Kraabel, A. T. "Social Systems of Six Diaspora Synagogues," 87.

71. Seager, A. "Ancient Synagogue Architecture," 39.

72. Seager, A. "The Architecture of the Dura and Sardis Synagogues," 160.

73. Ibid., 160.

Notes to Chapter Four:

1. Such as Num. 3:38 or Song of Songs 4:4. But in these cases, their application to the issue of orientation depends more upon rabbinic interpretation rather than a clearly stated view concerning orientation.

2. All of the following texts are rendered according to the translations in TANAKH: A New Translation of The Holy Scriptures, (New York: JPS, 1985).

3. Devries, Simon J. "I Kings," World Biblical Commentary, vol. 12, (Texas: Word Books Publisher, 1985), 120-21.

4. Gray, John I & II Kings: A Commentary, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 226.

5. Jones, Gwilym H. "I and II Kings," The New Century Bible Commentary, vol. 1, (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott Publisher Ltd., 1984), 204.

6. Devries, S. "I Kings," 126.

7. Jones, G. "I and II Kings," 204.

8. Gray, J. I & II Kings, 226.

9. Coggins, R.J. 1 & 2 Chronicles, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 4.

10. Hartman, Louis F. The Book of Daniel, The Anchor Bible Series, vol. 23, (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1978), 9.

11. See Mikra'ot Gedolot on Daniel for Sa'adia's remarks.

12. Hartman, Louis The Book of Daniel. 197.

13. Ibid., 13.

14. Ibid. p. 197

15. Ibid., 13.

16. Ibid., 13.

Notes to Chapter Five:

1. The main gate of the First Temple opened to the east and the Holy of Holies was situated on the west. Thus, the "ancestors" were facing away from God. For a picture of the design of the First Temple, see Schaffer, S. Israel's Temple Mount, (Jerusalem: Achva Press, 1975), plate 3.4.

2. See Ezekiel chapter 9.

3. Even though the rabbis lived when the Temple was in ruins, its association with the divine presence was maintained. See Palestinian Talmud, Berachot 4:5, for a further discussion of this issue.

Notes on Chapter Six:

1. This verse is slightly misquoted. It's written here as Hitpalelu, but appears as Yitpalelu in the biblical text.

2. This appears to be a corrupt citation and could come from either source.

3. While the stress is on the internal, the physical orientation is by no means insignificant. How external orientation fits into this particular configuration of prayer orientation will be discussed towards the conclusion of this text's analysis since it is not mentioned by the text itself until the end.

4. This would include not only the Mishnah itself, but the Tosefta and other Baraita.

5. Neusner, Jacob "The Amazing Mishnah," Moment, vol. 14, no. 1 (January-February 1989): 22.

6. Ibid., 22.

7. Neusner, Jacob "The Symbolism of Ancient Judaism," Ancient Synagogues, ed. J. Gutmann, 11.

8. Ibid., 10-11.

9. Ibid., 11.

10. Kraabel, A. Thomas "Social Systems of Six Diaspora Synagogues," Ancient Synagogues, ed. J. Gutmann, 86.

11. Neusner, Jacob "The Amazing Mishnah," 22.

12. Saeger, Andrew "The Architecture of the Dura and Sardis Synagogues," 160.

13. Landsberger, Franz "The Sacred Direction in Synagogue and Church," The Synagogue, ed. H. Orlinsky, 246.

14. Schafer, Shaul Israel's Temple Mount: The Jews' Magnificent Sanctuary, (Jerusalem: Achva Press, 1975), 16.

15. See the commentary on the Palestinian Talmud, Berachot 4:5, relating to this issue of the eternality of God's presence at the Temple site.

Notes to Chapter Six Cont:

16. This orientation towards Jerusalem in the earliest synagogues has recently been challenged. See the chapter above on archaeological evidence.

17. We do not know whether this text accurately reflects what was done during Second Temple times or is a later rabbinic interpolation.

Notes to Chapter Seven:

1. The orientation towards Jerusalem is only inferred in Mishnah Berachot, and could just as easily be towards the Temple.

2. Goldenberg, Robert "Talmud," Back To The Sources: Reading The Classic Jewish Texts ed. Barry Holtz, (New York: Summit Books, 1984), 136.

3. See Baba Batra 25a for a discussion of the location of the Shechinah, dealt with in part below.

4. Landsberger, F. "Sacred Directions," 252.

5. Ibid., 246.

6. See sections III-VI.

7. See above for Neusner's and Kraabel's theory of how the physical Temple was transformed into a powerful symbol by the rabbis distinct from its physical reality.

8. The following passage is rather long in comparison with the others, and comprises a number of different issues, thus it will be analyzed in thematic sections.

9. Following Rashi, Bartenura, and others on this verse as it is also understood in Babyonian Talmud and Mishnah.

10. This verse is bracketed in the original.

11. R. Avun has proved that people continued to pray for Jerusalem and the Temple even after its destruction through a word play on talpiyyot. Jerusalem, therefore, is understood as the tel (a mound of ruined remains) for which people continue to pray. This demonstrates a continuing concern for the Temple and a desire to see it rebuilt. It is thus implied that people are also praying towards Jerusalem since they are praying for it.

12. e.g., Birkat HaMazon and Me'ein Shalosh.

13. The following citations refer to blessings that deal with the desire to rebuild Jerusalem.

14. The full verse states that God is returning to heaven (mekomi) until the people realize their guilt and repent; thus God is not always in the Jerusalem.

Notes to Chapter Seven Cont:

15. This verse demonstrates that God's presence in and concern for Jerusalem endures eternally despite the destruction of the Temple.

16. The two verses quoted seem to contradict one another.

17. In the heavens.

18. In the Temple.

19. The notion of a Holy of Holies in heaven parallel to the one on earth, in Jerusalem, is a prevalent rabbinic concept. See Turner, H. From Temple to Meeting House, (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979), 26-31, who asserts that many religious traditions contain a belief that sacred places on earth, like the Temple, are microcosms of the heavenly realm.

20. This is the prooftext for the Rabbi Pinchas' position.

21. The interpretations play on the root of Moriah, which is ambiguous. One claims the root (ה ר ה) to teach and asserts a reference to the teachings of the Sanhedrin that were diseminated from there. The other assumes the root (א ר י) to fear and connects this with the fear of God associated with Temple.

22. A word play on aron; suggesting the root of light (ora) to those who uphold its contents and curse (arira) to those who transgress its contents.

23. A word play on the root of devir (ד ב ר).

Notes on Chapter Eight:

1. i.e., turn mentally.

2. R. Sheshet was blind and therefore could not determine the directions for himself.

3. See Berachot 30a and Tosefta Berachot 3:14.

4. That is to say, if the heart is directed to heaven then God will listen; a motif familiar from even the biblical passages.

5. I.e., properly concentrate or focus on one's prayer.

6. See discussion in Landsberger, F. "Sacred Directions in Synagogue and Church," 246.

7. It is interesting that R. Huna, a Babylonian Amora, was a disciple of Raba who taught a related law in the following passage, Berachot 8b.

8. The rear is understood to mean behind, that is outside, the synagogue. Which side is the rear? Rashi interprets this to refer to the side opposite the wall that faces Jerusalem, which he further notes is the side with the gate, since in Babylon the gates face east. Thus the front of the synagogue faces west and Jerusalem.

9. Implying that only the wicked would go around to the back, since this seems sinister.

10. Abaye lived a generation after R. Huna, thus it is very possible that Abaye's clarifications were actually reinterpretations of what R. Huna had taught. Whatever the case, Abaye's understanding of R. Huna's teaching became the accepted view.

11. Rashi's comment on the meaning of this text.

12. Following Rashi's interpretation.

13. Though Abaye was a contemporary rival of Raba's who almost always presented a contradictory ruling (not generally followed), his comments here seem to be more along the lines of elucidations that were not contested. Furthermore, Abaye's statements are really said in response to those of R. Joshua b. Levi. Therefore, we can assume that the exceptions that he notes were generally agreed upon.

Notes on Chapter Eight Cont.:

14. The emphasis here is on "lift up."

15. Here the emphasis is on lifting hearts.

16. See sec. IV, p. 125.

Notes on Chapter Nine:

1. See discussion above on the exilic origins of praying towards Jerusalem; ch. 4, p. 55 ff.

2. The Tur, however, attributes the general law to R. Chelbo, a Babylonian contemporary of R. Huna, rather than to R. Huna, as in the Talmud.

3. See Rambam on the orientation of the synagogue in the section below, p. 120-122.

4. See Tur O.H. Hilchot Tefilah, 90, 81b-82a.

5. Outside on the east.

6. Landsberger, F. "The Sacred Direction in Synagogue and Church," 251.

7. Literally, "lift up our hearts to our hands. It has been suggested that the text be emended to read not el (to) but al (not, rather), thus rendering the meaning: "Let us lift up our hearts rather than our hands." cf. Joel 2:13.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 10:

1. Neusner, J. Our Sages, God, and Israel, (New York: Rossel Books, 1984), xvi.

2. Levi-Strauss, C. The Savage Mind, (Chicago, 1966), in Smith, J. Z. To Take Place, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987), xii.

3. Landsberger, F. "Sacred Directions," 240.

4. Smith, J. Z. To Take Place, 27-28.

5. See Eliade, M. The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1959), 20-24.

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