

WORLD RELIGIONS: THEMES AND ISSUES

Written for students of comparative religion and the general reader, and drawing on the chapters originally edited by Jean Holm and John Bowker in the *Themes in Religious Studies* series, the volumes in *World Religions: Themes and Issues* explore core themes from the perspective of the particular religious tradition under study.

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Themes and Issues in Judaism

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CASELL

London and New York

Cassell

Wellington House, 125 Strand, London WC2R 0BB
370 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017-6550

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First published 2000

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 0-304-33757-9 (hardback)
0-304-33758-7 (paperback)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Themes and issues in Judaism / edited by Seth D. Kunin.

p. cm. — (World religions: themes and issues)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-304-33757-9 (hardback). — ISBN 0-304-33758-7 (paperback)

1. Judaism. I. Kunin, Seth Daniel. II. Series.

BM561.T54 1999

296 - dc21

99-10882
CIP

Earlier versions of chapters appeared in the following books in the *Themes in Religious Studies* series, edited by Jean Holm with John Bowker and published 1994 by Pinter Publishers: *Sacred Place; Rites of Passage; Myth and History; Sacred Writings; Picturing God; Human Nature and Destiny; Women in Religion; Attitudes to Nature; Worship; Making Moral Decisions.*

Typeset by York House Typographic Ltd

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Biddles Ltd, Guildford and King's Lynn

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1. Sacred place

Seth D. Kumin

This chapter discusses the biblical, rabbinic and modern understanding and use of sacred place in Judaism. The first half examines two interrelated aspects of sacred place, that is, the Temple in Jerusalem and the relationship of the land of Israel to the rest of the world. The Jewish understanding of pilgrimage and the modern understanding of the land of Israel are discussed in the context of these two elements. The second half discusses the two key elements of modern sacred place, that is, the synagogue and the home. A case study comparing the differing use of sacred place among the Orthodox and the Progressive Jewish communities highlights the key aspects of sacred place in Judaism.

In order to understand properly the use of sacred space and place in Jewish thought and culture, the concept must be examined on two interrelated levels: the ideological and the functional. The ideological level is based on an abstract understanding of the structure of reality as it is realized in the Israelite and rabbinic understanding of geography and in the structure of the Temple and *mishkan* described in biblical and rabbinic texts. (The *mishkan* was the portable structure used to house the Ark of the Covenant during the forty years in the desert.) Although this level has its basis in biblical and rabbinic thought, it is still relevant to the understanding of the modern Jewish attitude towards sacred space, though it functions entirely on the abstract level.

The functional level is found in the structure of the synagogue and in the place of the home as the replacement for the Temple.¹ The functional level which we find today developed as a response to the diaspora and the destruction of the Temple. It has been continually transformed over the last 2,000 years to remain in alignment with the

needs of Jewish culture as it developed during each specific period.

This chapter shows that the conceptualization of diaspora and pilgrimage, as two aspects of sacred space, can be understood only through the interaction of the ideal and functional levels. It also presents a comparison of the use of sacred space in Progressive and Orthodox synagogue architecture and religious services as a case study for the practical application of the concept of sacred space in Judaism.² The comparison also indicates ways in which the concept of sacred space is transformed in respect to transformed cultural needs (or perceived needs).

Ideological sacred space

The clearest depiction of the rabbinic model of sacred geography is found in the following text taken from *Mishnah Kelim*.³

There are ten degrees of holiness: the land of Israel is holier than other lands ... The walled cities of the land of Israel are still more holy ... within the walls of Jerusalem is still more holy ... The Temple mount still more holy ... the rampart is still more holy ... the courtyard of the women is still more holy ... the courtyard of the Israelites is still more holy ... the altar is still more holy ... the sanctuary is still more holy ... the Holy of Holies is still more holy, for none may enter therein save only the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. (*Kelim* 1:6-1:9)⁴

This text presents a model for organizing space into a coherent pattern. The model works from the outside in. Israel is contrasted with the rest of the world, Jerusalem is contrasted with the other cities of the land, the Temple is contrasted with Jerusalem, and the Holy of Holies is contrasted with the Temple. The text combines two levels of geography. It presents the relationships within macro-space, that is, the world, Israel, Jerusalem and finally the Temple. It then presents micro-space which is a recapitulation of the structure of macro-space, that is, the various areas within the Temple. The micro-level focuses an association of space with humanity. All people can enter Temple Mount; yet as we move inward, the groups of people who are allowed to enter are progressively reduced.

The text presents space as consisting of progressively smaller opposing domains. One way of modelling these domains is as a set of

concentric circles.⁵ Each ring of the set of concentric circles is qualitatively compared (in terms of holiness) with its two adjoining rings. It is qualitatively positive with respect to the ring outside it, and qualitatively negative regarding the ring inside it. The negative and positive qualitative values are the degree of relative holiness.

It might be thought that this pattern of progressively wider domains of holiness extends beyond the circles listed here. This, however, is unlikely. The text itself compares Israel (i.e., the land of Israel) to the world (i.e., everything other than Israel). The structure of sacred geography is presented in Figure 1.1. Notice that while the inner rings are progressively more holy (indicated by + (plus) signs), the outer ring, the world, is profane (indicated by a - (minus) sign).⁶

This text from the Mishnah brings together several other significant elements. At each level the text offers examples from other cultural domains which distinguish that level from the previous level. With respect to the distinction between Israel and the world, the text states that offerings from agricultural produce, e.g., barley, are brought from Israel but not from the other parts of the world. Similarly, Jerusalem is

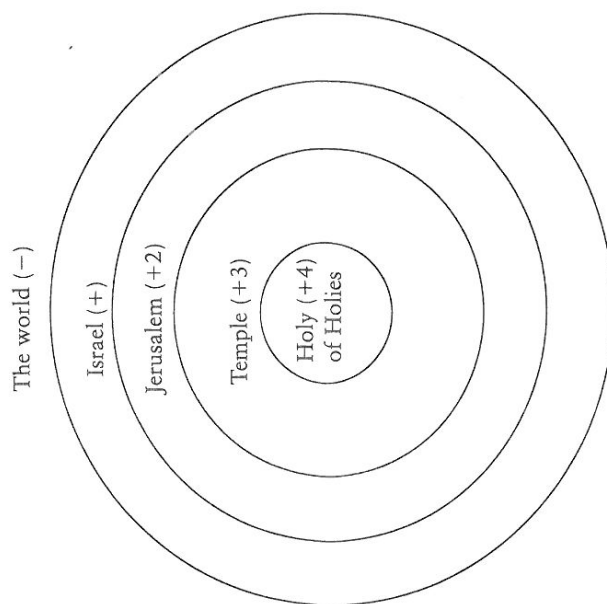


Figure 1.1 The structure of rabbinic ideological space

distinguished from the other cities by the fact that the lesser holy things and the tithe may be eaten in Jerusalem, whereas they may not be eaten in the other cities.

As observed above, the micro-levels of holiness, that is, the Temple and its courts, are distinguished by the people who may enter them. This is exemplified by the final ring, the Holy of Holies, which may be entered only by the High Priest. These distinctions emphasize the role of sacred space in organizing many levels of culture. They also reveal that sacred space is one of many related cultural hierarchies which organize experience into culturally manipulatable domains. We shall return to this aspect below (see pp. 26-9).

THE BIBLICAL MODEL OF IDEOLOGICAL SACRED SPACE

A similar model of sacred geography is also found in the biblical text, especially regarding the structure of the Israelite camp as described in Exodus and Leviticus. As in the rabbinic model, space is divided into a pattern of progressively smaller concentric circles. The camp is distinguished from the world. This distinction is found in the association of pure and impure with these two domains. Pure objects or people could remain within the camp and impure objects had to be removed from the camp. This separation of the camp from everything outside it supports the argument that the concentric circles of the rabbinic text also end with the borders of Israel, which are analogous to the boundaries of the camp. Israel and the camp are holy (albeit to a lesser degree than the inner circles) while the world and outside the camp are impure and profane. The enclosure was distinguished from the camp, the tent of meeting from the enclosure and the Ark from the tent of meeting. As in the division of pure and impure found between the camp and the outside world, the individuals permitted into each sacred space are progressively limited, culminating in the High Priest being the only person allowed into the presence of the Ark. The biblical model is depicted in Figure 1.2.

A second model, which allows a more precise depiction of the structure of ideological sacred space, both biblical and rabbinic, is that of segmentary opposition. The ideological structure of sacred space found in these texts is in many ways analogous to a segmentary opposition model. Each circle or space comes into play depending on what is being opposed to it. The land of Israel is used in opposition to

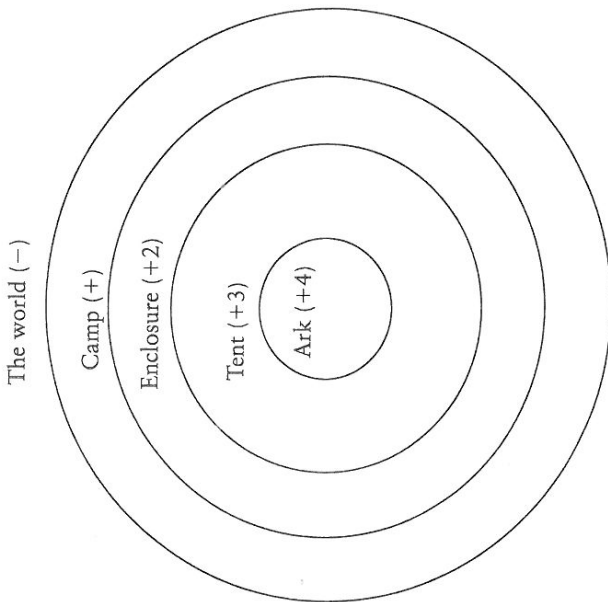


Figure 1.2 The structure of biblical ideological space

the world. At smaller levels of opposition, smaller spaces are compared. As in the segmentary opposition model, like must be opposed to like and the smaller units come into play (as relatively more sacred) only when working on a micro- rather than a macro-level. Ultimately the comparison is between Israel and the rest of the world.

Structure and sacred space

We have already observed that space, like other aspects of experiential reality, is culturally structured to fit into an overarching pattern. Both the biblical and the mishnaic texts implied divisions within humanity and the Israelite community which mirrored those in geography. The pattern allows individuals within the cultural community to give meaning or value to particular events, people or places. The structure of space, e.g., its division into sacred or profane, is closely related to more general structural patterns, and therefore must be examined in the context of general cultural structures. This synthetic approach is

especially relevant as it explains the relationship between the various circles in Israelite sacred geography.

Structuralist analysis suggests that Israelite social structure can be depicted by two related models. On the one hand the Israelites, as indicated in the above discussion, could be subdivided in relation to holiness, e.g., who was allowed to enter various holy spaces or eat specific holy foods. Figure 1.3 illustrates this model of humanity. Notice that the outer circle of 'the nations' corresponds to the circle of 'the world' in the geographic models.

It is, however, with the second model for humanity that the relationships in the other models can be clarified. This structure is based on a segmentary opposition model in which each smaller level is qualitatively more positive than the previous level. The model relies on a strong association of a preferential rule of endogamy, with the family being the smallest unit. Although one was legally obligated to marry beyond the basic family unit, ideologically the preference was to marry as close as possible. Each level of kinship further away was less ideologically preferable. This system of increasingly large and negative

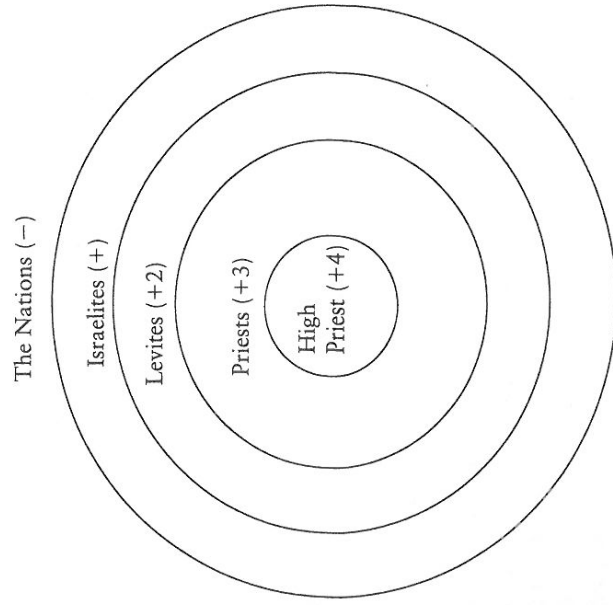


Figure 1.3 The structure of humanity

concentric circles is limited. The rule of endogamy ultimately defines a boundary of inside and outside – people considered inside are acceptable marriage partners and those considered outside are unacceptable partners. Thus, the ring of concentric circles logically ends with the culturally defined border of membership in the Israelite or Jewish people.

The model of sacred geography, as well as the other models already presented, is based on an identical structural pattern. Within a certain boundary, i.e., in respect of geography, the borders of the land of Israel, there is a pattern of graded holiness with the inner circles being progressively more holy. Yet in each case there is a clear boundary between sacred and profane. Regarding sacred geography in both biblical and rabbinic thought, sacred space ends at the borders of the divinely ordained space for Israelite occupation. In the rabbinic text sacred space is static; it is associated with a specific land and progressively more holy places within that land. In the biblical text discussed here, sacred space is mobile. It is the space in which the Israelites live, surrounded by the wilderness – a barren land associated with the rest of the world and non-Israelite humanity.

The biblical/rabbinic model of geography and the related sociological model of segmentary opposition ultimately grow from a simple structural expression: 'A not B'.⁷ Thus the various models are based on non-overlapping circles in which categories/circles of equal size are set in opposition to each other, and joined in opposition to large circles or categories. This pattern can be best understood by using a standard genealogical table to exemplify the relationships. Figure 1.4 presents such a table. At the lowest level each 'brother' is a single circle set in opposition to the other brothers. At the next level, the brothers together form a complete circle set in opposition to cousins, etc.

Figure 1.5 illustrates this pattern in a more abstract form. The two largest circles are Israel and the world respectively. The smaller circles within the Israel circle are the next two smaller units which make up the category Israel. From the macro-perspective, the basic opposition is between Israel and not-Israel, which is progressively mirrored on the micro-level. It is due to this recurring pattern that the micro-structure mirrors the macro-structure. The first half of the mishnaic text presents a macro-view of sacred space. In the second half of the mishnaic text and in the biblical text the Temple and the Tabernacle represent one aspect of the micro-level.

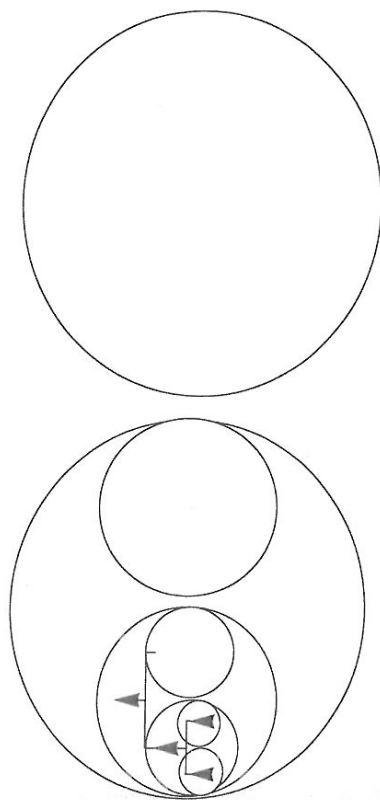


Figure 1.4 Genealogical model of sacred space

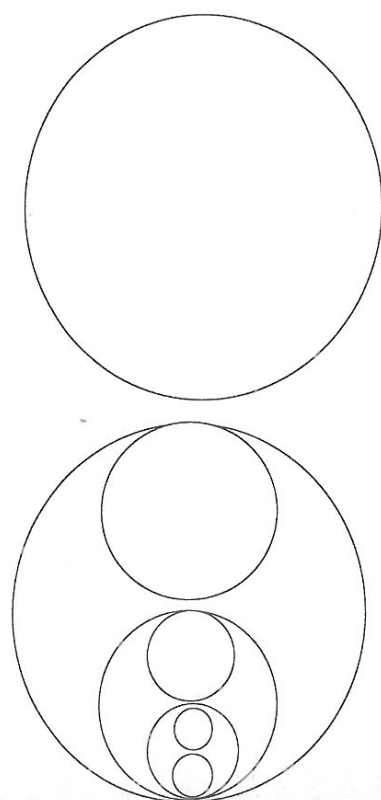


Figure 1.5 Abstract model of ideological sacred space

Alternative models of sacred space

This model of sacred space and place, however, is not the only one found in the biblical text. Several narrative texts suggest some related and some contradictory models for organizing space. The two related models presented above are associated with a qualitative understanding of directions on the horizontal (that is, north, south, east and west) and the vertical planes (that is, up and down). The models of sacred place which contrast with the two models presented above are associated with the identification of competing holy places.

THE STRUCTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF EAST AND WEST

There appears to be an association between the directions of the compass (at least regarding east and west) and the ideological quality of the events which take place or move in those directions. In Genesis all events which move in an easterly direction are qualitatively negative. In the early chapters of the book, movement in an easterly direction represents the descent of humanity into degradation. When Adam and Eve are expelled from the garden by God for eating the forbidden fruit, they leave the Garden of Eden towards the east (Gen 3:24). After killing Abel, Cain moves to the east of Eden, where he founds the first city. This ties the origin of civilization to the descent into sin (Gen 4:16). The founding of civilization is logically opposed to the discovery of spiritual realities by the descendants of Seth, who remain in the west. In later chapters the men of Babel move east before building their doomed city. The move to the east is associated with a challenge to God's power and leads to the confusion of language and conflict between people (Gen 11:1-9).

There is also an association of 'east' with the nations other than Israel. When Abraham⁸ and Lot divide the land, Lot chooses the east side of the Jordan, leaving the west bank to Abraham and the Israelites who came after him. Similarly, Abraham gives his descendants, other than Isaac, lands to the east (Gen 25:6). The text therefore makes a double association: west (or westward movement) is equivalent to holy and is the proper setting for Abraham and his chosen descendants, while the east (or eastward movement) is associated with evil and is the proper setting for the other nations. It is likely that this qualitative categorization of east and west is due to the geographic position of Israel. Its placement on the shore of the Mediterranean, the boundary of civilization, meant that it was, in a sense, as far west as possible, while most of the nations with which the Israelites fought were to the east of Israel.

This qualitative understanding of direction, however, has not survived the transformation of the Israelites into a diaspora people. With the movement into Europe, to the west of Israel, east lost its symbolic power. In fact, the qualitative characterization of east has been inverted; it now has a positive qualitative value.⁹ The Ark, the most important part of the modern synagogue, is placed on the eastern wall, and services in a synagogue are conducted facing east, that is, towards Jerusalem and the Temple. It should be noted, however, that west has

not been equally inverted. It has little or no qualitative value in the modern Jewish understanding of space. The west's primary occurrence in modern Jewish sacred geography is the Western Wall which is one of the retaining walls of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. In this particular case, west does have positive symbolic value.

THE STRUCTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF UP AND DOWN

The vertical directions, i.e., up and down, are also given qualitative value in the biblical text. Perhaps because they have no direct or necessary historical association, this value has been retained. 'Up' is consistently portrayed as a positive direction in opposition to 'down'. This opposition is best illustrated by comparing two narrative texts: Genesis 22 and Genesis 37. In Genesis 22 Abraham is commanded by God to sacrifice his son Isaac upon a certain mountain which God will show him (the text actually initially says 'place', which turns out to be a mountain). Abraham prepares to offer his son as a sacrifice, and when he is stopped God blesses him because his actions showed his faith in God.

The positive value of the upward direction is indicated in several aspects of this text. God commands Abraham to bring Isaac to the top of the mountain, and to set him upon a raised altar. The actual act of sacrifice is called in Hebrew *laba'alot*, that is, 'to raise up'. Sacrifice must be understood as a positive and purifying death, and thus supports the positive value of the upward direction. Thus, movement in the upward direction is qualitatively positive and ultimately brings a blessing and fruitfulness – God promises Abraham a multitude of descendants.

Similarly, mountains and the direction up are qualitatively positive in several other key biblical texts. Moses, for example, receives the Ten Commandments (and the entire Torah) upon Mount Sinai, and the Temple in Jerusalem is built upon a mountain. It is significant that the sacrifice of Isaac is said to have occurred on the site of the Temple.

In Genesis 37 we find the association of 'down' with evil. In this text Joseph's brothers, acting, in a sense, against God's command, attempt to murder their brother by placing him in a pit. Whereas in Genesis 22 the upward motion is associated with positive death, that is, sacrifice, in Genesis 37 the downward movement is associated with negative and polluting death, that is, murder.

The negative association of downward movement is illustrated in two other elements of the text. First, Jacob tells his sons that Joseph's death will cause him to 'go down to Sheol', that is, cause his own death. Secondly, Joseph's journey into slavery is called a descent, and later, when he is sent to prison by Potiphar, the text refers to it as a descent. Thus, 'up' and 'down' should be understood as standing in qualitative opposition, with 'up' being qualitatively positive and 'down' negative.

THE ROLE OF THE LIMINAL IN SACRED SPACE

Both of these vertical directions share a significant element in relation to the Israelite understanding and categorization of space. Both should be considered liminal spaces (that is, for example, movement in either direction, up a mountain or down into a pit, is movement into a liminal space). The direction 'up', especially in regard to mountains, joins the domains of earth and the firmament, or perhaps the divine space. It is in this intermediate area that most communication with God occurs. Sacrifice, therefore, is doubly positive in biblical thought. It involves an actual raising of the object sacrificed and, at least during the Second Temple period, was performed only in Jerusalem on the Temple Mount.

The direction 'down' also joins two domains, the surface of the earth which is the place of the living and the underworld which is portrayed in the idea of 'Sheol' as the place of the dead. Thus, downward movement is symbolically the opposite of upward movement. The negative aspect of the depths is found throughout the biblical text. Two examples of this negative value are Psalm 30 and Jonah 2.

In the anthropological literature, liminal spaces are usually regarded as ambiguous. They are the places where opposing domains meet and perhaps overlap. This ambiguity is especially relevant in the context of the material discussed here. As we have observed, a basic pattern of Israelite structure is 'A not B'. The structure relies on a clear and complete distinction between A and B. A cannot be B, B cannot be A, and similarly they cannot overlap. Such an overlap would diminish the distinction between the two.

Thus, liminal spaces are structurally problematic. Israelite mythology and ideology cloud or remove this structural crisis by transforming

the liminal spaces into non-liminal spaces, i.e., they transform or remove the ambiguity. The two directions, up and down, are transformed, not surprisingly, in opposite directions. 'Up' is moved to positive, semi-divine space and 'down' becomes negative space, the domain of the dead or sinful.

The text exemplifies the nature of these two different types of space through associating them with different types of death. We have already noted the association of 'up' with sacrifice, positive, transformative death. On the most basic level, through sacrifice sin is removed and the giver or sacrificer transformed. On a mythological level – especially in respect of Genesis 22 – the sacrificed, or symbolically sacrificed, is transformed or divinely reborn as a result of the sacrifice. The direction 'up' is also associated with several other positive deaths. Both Moses and Aaron die on mountains after transferring their blessing or mantle on to the next generation. Both these deaths fit into the transformative aspect of sacrifice. The fact that the location of Moses's tomb remains secret or unknown also suggests a bodily transformation to spiritual space.

The aspect of sacrifice and transformation from human to semi-divine is most apparent in the case of Elijah. 2 Kings 2:11 states:

And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

This text and the verses before it contain all the aspects of the positive and divine aspects of the direction 'up'. As in a sacrifice, Elijah is transported to heaven by means of fire and wind. The element of fire is emphasized by being mentioned twice. Fire is tied to sacrifice directly in the texts about Elijah; see, for example, 1 Kings 18:20 and following. The transformative aspect of sacrifice is found on two levels. First, Elijah is transformed from an earthly being into a divine being. This element is emphasized in later Hebrew mythology, with Elijah becoming the precursor of the Messiah. Secondly, the transformation also occurs on the human level. Elisha is given Elijah's mantle and is transformed into a prophet and miracle worker.

The transformation of 'down' from ambiguous to negative is also exemplified by types of death in the biblical text. The symbolic murder of Joseph is only one such example. The clearest example of this usage of the direction 'down', an example repeated throughout later books

of the Torah, is the fate of Korah. He and all his followers are swallowed up by the earth. Thus, because of the needs of Israelite structure, liminal spaces are transformed into non-ambiguous spaces. Up is positive and transforming, while down is negative and polluting.

Conflicting models of sacred space

There are, however, examples of sacred space which are based on a different model from the dyadic segmentary model which organizes the majority of textual material. Throughout Genesis there are a number of texts which highlight sacred spaces other than Jerusalem. Two examples of this type of text are: Genesis 28:10–22 and Genesis 35:1–14. Both of these texts establish Beth El as a holy place. In the first, Jacob dreams of God's presence and declares that the place is the house of God. The second text gives an explanation for its sacredness. Both of these texts justify Israelite worship at Beth El, and possibly explain the establishment of a dream cult at that temple. There are many similar texts in the Bible which either justify the position of a place as sacred space or reveal the use of such places. One such text is 1 Kings 18:20–40. That text makes it clear that Elijah rebuilt the altar of God, implying that Mount Carmel was an established Israelite holy place. One attribute which many of these alternative sacred spaces share is their raised position, fitting in with the liminal and sacred aspects of raised places. Although this alternative version of sacred space can also be understood using the segmentary opposition model, yet there is a clear difference between the model used in this approach and that presented above. This model never culminates in a single space which is distinguished from the rest, it probably has no necessary outside boundary and is not based on the pattern 'A not B', and it is not essentially dyadic. These three elements are basic to the primary understanding of biblical/rabbinic sacred space.

As suggested below, the primary distinction between the two models emerges from a different attitude towards endogamy. The multiple holy place model emerges from a society which does not emphasize endogamy,¹⁰ and the single sacred space model emerges from one which does. It is possible that the two models, that is, a single sacred space and multiple sacred spaces, are tied to a more general transformation in Israelite culture. With the return from the Babylonian

exile in 538 BCE, the Temple, which was rebuilt in Jerusalem, became the political and religious centre of the re-established community in opposition to the centres which had been established during the exile by those who remained. It is likely that several of the boundaries within different cultural domains (including a strong opposition between Israel and the nations) based on an 'A not B' structure which became dominant in Judaism were established during this period. These new mechanisms included a strong emphasis upon endogamy. The new emphasis is an essential element of the basic structure discussed above. This transformation is equally reflected in an emphasis on the Temple in Jerusalem in opposition to any competing holy place. It is possible that the alternative model which allowed for multiple sacred spaces pre-existed the return from exile.

What makes space into sacred space?

Thus far we have concentrated on the organizing aspect of sacred space but have not addressed the question of what makes a space sacred. We find a pattern of evolution of this concept within the biblical text. In some texts, especially in regard to the Tabernacle and the Ark, God is viewed as actually dwelling in these objects or places. Similarly, there are texts which describe God in anthropomorphic terms, and thus almost physically present in a specific place at a specific time. Thus, in these texts the sacredness of the space is due to God's presence there as opposed to God's being anywhere else. In other texts, however, there is a gradual transformation and displacement. In Deuteronomy there appears to be a clear theological transformation in the understanding of the Ark and the Temple. The text emphasizes that it is God's glory which is present, rather than God's actual physical presence. Presence of God's glory in one space is not mutually exclusive; God's glory can be present elsewhere as well.

This type of transformation continues throughout the development of Jewish thought. Rabbinic texts emphasize that although God was present in the Temple in Jerusalem, this did not prevent him from also being present, perhaps in a slightly less concentrated form, everywhere else. This idea is developed in the following rabbinic metaphor:

God's presence in the Temple was like the sea in a cave. The cave can be full

of the sea without reducing the amount of water in the sea as a whole. (Urbach, 1979, p. 46)

Thus, the rabbis preserved the pre-eminence of the Temple (while it still existed) as a sacred place, because of God's concentrated presence, while also allowing other places to be sacred by emphasizing that God's substance and presence were not diminished by its concentration in the Temple. Other rabbinic texts even further emphasize God's omnipresence, suggesting that sacred places were not such by particular divine presence. They stated, for example, God is the place of the world, the world (and therefore any specific space) is not God's place (*Genesis Rabbab* 1:18).

Other texts develop an even more fundamental understanding of God's relationship to space, and therefore the nature of sacred space. Many rabbinic *midrashim* suggest that God, as it were, went into exile with his people. Thus, God's presence is not tied to a specific place. Instead, it is tied to the presence of God's people, that is, Israel, who bring God's presence to wherever they are. This dynamic aspect of God's presence, and therefore dynamic understanding of sacred place, is also illustrated in the following text from the Mishnah: 'If two men sit together and occupy themselves with the words of the Torah, the *Shekhinah*, God's presence, is in their midst' (*Mishnah Avot* 3:2).¹¹ The rabbis took pains, however, to emphasize that this understanding of God's presence did not suggest that God could be divided or that there were many *Shekhinot*.¹² The metaphor of water (discussed above) was one such attempt. A second metaphor, that of the sun, was also used to similar purpose: 'It [the sun] shines on each individual and at the same time, upon the world as a whole' (Urbach, 1979, p. 48, adapted from BT *Sanhedrin* 39a).

The second aspect of the rabbinic understanding of the relationship to time and space is fundamental for the functional and modern Jewish use of sacred space and place. Both of the rabbinic concepts depend on a significant ideological innovation. The rabbis distinguished between two aspects of God. The essential essence of God is ultimately distinct from the world and transcendent. Yet one attribute of God, his presence or *Shekhinah* – coming from the Hebrew word meaning 'dwelling', or 'indwelling' – is immanent and present both with Israel and in the Temple in Jerusalem. As is seen, the *Shekhinah* itself is not necessarily tied to one place or location but can be found in any place. A second version of the text cited above (that is, 'If two men ...') gives

the number as ten men. Ten men (a *minyān*) were seen by the rabbis as the minimum number of people needed to make a community. Thus the sacredness of a place depends on the presence of a community of people who allow God, or God's *Shekhinah*, to enter.

The implications of ideological sacred space

In the beginning of this discussion we made a distinction between ideological and functional sacred space. The former is abstract in two respects. On the one hand, ideological sacred space is an abstract hierarchical categorization of geography. On the other hand, the centralization of sacred space in Jerusalem and the Temple is also primarily ideological rather than functional. By the time that the rabbinic texts were written (or edited), the Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed and Jews were forbidden to live in Jerusalem itself. A large proportion of the community was already living in other parts of the world, for example, Babylon and Rome.¹³ Even in the biblical text describing the Tabernacle, it is likely that there is a similar ideological element. These elements come from texts which were probably written during the Babylonian exile and thus describe a situation which no longer existed or never existed.

It seems likely that ideological sacred space and place with its focus on Israel and Jerusalem also has messianic implications. This possibility is supported by the use of 'Jerusalem' in the Passover *seder*. At the conclusion of the *seder* the words 'next year in Jerusalem' are read. Jerusalem, in this context, is always understood to be the heavenly or messianic Jerusalem rather than the material city of Jerusalem as it exists today.

This messianic understanding of the ideological levels of sacred space is significant in the transition to functional sacred space. We have already observed one aspect of that transition, that is, the dynamic aspects of the *Shekhinah* – moving from a view of God tied to a single and specific object or place to one in which God can be present in many places or indeed all places simultaneously.

A second implication of this understanding is found with respect to pilgrimage. In the biblical text (and those rabbinic texts which describe cultic celebrations while the Temple still stood), in which ideological space at least ideally existed in practice, there is a clear obligation to make pilgrimages to Jerusalem three times a year; this emphasizes

Jerusalem's role in the ideological structural model. This obligation did not survive the destruction of the Temple and the move from ideological to functional sacred space. Although throughout the centuries Jews have made pilgrimages to Jerusalem and other holy places in the land of Israel, such pilgrimages are not obligatory in Jewish law. With the transformation of ideological space into messianic space, return to the Holy Land, as a religious expectation or obligation, is left to the time of the Messiah. There is no special merit, as there is in Islam, for pilgrimage. On several occasions in Jewish history mass movements to the Holy Land have been associated with messianic movements or expectations. Although secular Zionism called for a return to the land, this is not due to the land's sacredness, but for nationalist and cultural reasons. The relationship of secular Zionism to sacred space is discussed below (see p. 48).

There is also a further spiritual distinction between ideological, messianic space and functional space. The rabbis considered prophecy to be possible only in the Holy Land. Although they considered prophecy to have ended in the fifth century BCE, it is primarily associated with the transition between the Temple and the synagogue, or between an ideological space and a functional space. Although it is likely that the rabbinic view of prophecy was shaped as much by political authority as by theological considerations, it does, however, reflect a significant transformation in the rabbinic view of the nature of Israel (the people) and the spiritual role of the land. Whereas the Temple and prophetic period were based on a hereditary caste of priests and a group of individuals in direct personal, idiosyncratic communication with God through prophecy, the rabbinic model was non-hierarchical within Israel, and any properly trained person could be involved in the process of halakhic, 'legal', decision-making. In essence it was non-priestly. This transformation is especially significant with respect to the traditional understanding of the synagogue. This aspect is discussed below in the examination of the nature and role of the synagogue as a sacred space (see pp. 41-3). The spiritual distinction between the Holy Land and the lands of the diaspora is strengthened by medieval Jewish thought. Jehudah HaLevi, for example, states that prophecy and direct communication with God were limited both to the people of Israel and to the land of Israel (Altmann *et al.*, 1981, pp. 64-70).

MACRO- AND MICRO-STRUCTURE

The transformation of sacred space from one to many, from the Temple to individual homes and synagogues, reflects a general change in Israelite/Jewish culture. During the biblical period (as reflected in biblical myth and law) we find two related structures: macro-structure and micro-structure. Macro-structure used the concept, 'A not B' to distinguish between Israel and the nations. This level is tied to the Israelite preference for endogamy. On the spatial level this structure is reflected in the distinction between the Land of Israel and other lands.

Micro-structure is also tied to structural opposition and is focused on the individual family and the preference to marry as close to the family structure as possible. It is associated with two different aspects of Israelite structure. On the one hand, the dyadic form reflected in the inner structure of the Temple recapitulates the basic equation exemplified in macro-structure. On the other hand, a non-dyadic variant of this level of structure may be reflected on the spatial level in the early Israelite pattern of multiple holy places.

Macro-structure and non-dyadic micro-structure are most clearly developed in Genesis 10, the 'Table of Nations'. The text includes two types of genealogy: segmentary and linear. The segmentary genealogies reflect micro-structure and the linear reflect macro-structures.

In the biblical text and the culture it reflects, there is a clear emphasis on macro-structure (and recapitulated dyadic micro-structure). This emphasis is found on the spatial level with the centralization of the cult and sacred space in the Temple in Jerusalem. The macro-level emphasizes the unity, the oneness of Israel, and therefore the cult as opposed to the unity of the nations. It is likely that macro-structure is highlighted to support the ever stronger preference for endogamy. This may have been threatened in the cultural and historical context which saw the redaction of the biblical text.

Later rabbinic texts and the community which emerged in the diaspora focus on non-dyadic micro-structure. No longer is there a single focus of sacred space or, on the human level, a single group or hierarchy with a monopoly in sacredness or cult. As in the segmentary opposition model, the system accentuates the smallest unit, that is, the family.

Functional sacred space

Functional sacred space brings together many of the elements of ideological sacred space which are discussed above. With the transformation of the community from one based in the Holy Land to a diaspora community, and with the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, functional sacred space became primarily dynamic, following the community rather than being a specific place or places.¹⁴ Sacred space in the diaspora is focused on two separate domains, the home and the synagogue.

THE HOME AS A SACRED SPACE

In rabbinic thought the home replaces the Temple as the central locus of sacred space. The family table and the family meal are seen as replacing the altar in the Temple and the sacrificial cult. Similarly, the two loaves of bread, the *halloṭ*, are symbolically associated with the shewbread which was part of the Temple ritual. The rabbis called the house a *mikdash maat*, a 'small sanctuary', using the same word, *mikdash*, which is used in the biblical text to refer to the Temple and the Tabernacle. Thus, the rabbis make a direct association between the two. During the Passover *seder*, the leader of the service, in imitation of the High Priest, washes his hands, linking the *seder* with the paschal sacrifice in the Temple. An equivalence is also made between the *seder* table and the altar in the Temple. Many other aspects of home ritual make a similar analogy between the home and the Temple cult.

A second aspect of the spiritual importance of the home is its place in the *halakhab*, the Jewish legal system. With the probable exception of the synagogue, the home is the focus of more laws than any other location. Thus, the role of the home as a sacred space may also be tied to this legal concentration. The home is holy because through being in it, eating in it, one can fulfil God's laws.

The home as a sacred space fits in with the structural patterns discussed above. It is the logical extension of the pattern of structural opposition. Structural opposition is ultimately based on the smallest unit of the system. In this case the household is the smallest unit. Thus, by making the home a sacred space, the system brings together key elements of both the social and the spiritual systems. The unity of the two areas means that they mutually support each other: the sacredness

of the home justifies the focus on the family, and likewise the focus on the family unit gives additional strength to the holiness of the home. The home is also significant as a sacred space because it also reflects a move to non-dyadic micro-structure – by definition homes are multiple.

THE SYNAGOGUE AS SACRED SPACE

The synagogue also fits within this model of micro-structure.¹⁵ Each synagogue, symbolically based on ten men (or ten people in the Progressive community), is the smallest community unit and is the communal equivalent of the family in the structural pattern. It is likely that the cultural transformation reflected in the structural transformation is a change in internal and external relations. Prior to the diaspora, endogamy needed to be enforced internally, and therefore the structure reflected this need by emphasizing macro-structure. In the diaspora period the community was isolated, with endogamy being enforced externally. In this situation an emphasis on macro-structure was not needed and thus micro-structure could come to the fore.¹⁶

The home is not alone in being perceived as being contiguous with the Temple; the synagogue also has elements of such continuity. The clearest tie of this sort is in the concept of *avodat halev*, 'service of the heart'. One major rabbinic innovation with the destruction of the Temple was the transformation of the means of communication with God. Prior to the destruction, the primary means was through the sacrificial cult, the *avodah*. By the time of the Second Temple period all such sacrifices were conducted by the priests in the Temple in Jerusalem. With the destruction of the Temple came a spiritual crisis resulting from the closing of this channel. The rabbis resolved this crisis by declaring that service of the heart was equivalent to service in the Temple. Although service of the heart, or prayer, was also associated with the home, it was primarily associated with the synagogue. Thus, the synagogue in this respect was seen as being contiguous with, and replacing, the Temple as the space where one could communicate with the divine. This is reflected in the many rabbinic texts which associate God's presence with activities performed in the synagogue.

The internal structures of the synagogue retain many of the elements of sacred space which were developed on the ideological level. These

elements are most apparent in the traditional form of the synagogue. Thus, the first part of this discussion will focus on the traditional synagogue, with reference, when appropriate, to the differences in non-traditional patterns.

The synagogue has a section in which men pray and a second section for women. The women's section is often a gallery or a section separated from the main part of the synagogue by a partition. The primary focus of the synagogue is the Ark, which is placed on the eastern wall. Most of the service, however, is conducted from the *bimah* (the raised reading desk), which is often in the centre of the synagogue. The men's seats are placed along the north, south and west walls facing the *bimah*.

Like the Temple in Jerusalem, the synagogue is divided into spaces in which only specific segments of the community are allowed. There is, however, a difference for this type of division between the Temple and the synagogue. In the Temple the division of spaces was based on relative purity, while in the synagogue women are excluded from the men's section through fear that their voices (or presence) may be seductive and draw men's minds away from prayer. This division in space is one of the primary differences between traditional and non-traditional synagogues. Non-traditional synagogues will usually have men and women sitting together.

The synagogue also has a hierarchy of sacred spaces. The building itself has an element of sacredness. This is reflected in many ways, e.g., laws concerning the disposal of a building which had been a synagogue, and the fact that a synagogue does not need a *mezuzah*.¹⁷ Within the building, the sanctuary, the room where the services are conducted, is relatively more sacred. This is followed by the *bimah*, the reading desk, and culminates in the Ark, where the scrolls of the Law are kept.

This pattern of sacred spaces is, however, not as exclusive as that in the Temple. All the sacred spaces are open to all male members of the community (the position of women is discussed above).

The synagogue also includes several other reflections of ideological sacred space. The significance of 'up' has been maintained. This significance is found in several areas. The *bimah* is always on a raised platform. Thus the most important elements of the service are led from a symbolic mountain or positive liminal space. The positive and sacred aspect of 'up' is also found in the word used to describe the action of being called to the Torah: *aliyah*, that is, a 'going up'.¹⁸ (Interestingly,

this same word is used by modern Zionists to describe going to live in the state of Israel.) The Ark is also built in a raised position in, or on, the wall.

We have already alluded to the transformation of the significance of compass directions. In the biblical text, west was positive while east was negative. In most diaspora communities this relationship has, at least in part, been inverted.¹⁹ In most synagogues the orientation of prayer and the Ark are towards the east. The eastward alignment is linked to the connection between the synagogue and the Temple, and the ideological priority given to the Temple as a locus for communion with God. Although the rabbis recognized that prayer was possible anywhere, they still recognized in the Temple a more concentrated presence of God. Synagogues face towards Jerusalem and the Temple.

Some non-traditional synagogues have intentionally moved away from this directional orientation. This transformation is linked to a significant ideological change. Non-traditional Jews, especially Liberal and American Reform Jews in the early part of the twentieth century, rejected two key elements: one was the importance of the Temple and a desire to return (in the messianic age) to the sacrificial cult practised there; the other was the notion that Jews were a nation with national aspirations, tied to a specific national homeland. Thus, the rejection of the eastward orientation reflected the rejection of both the Temple and the Zionist dream of a national homeland.²⁰

Sacred time and sacred space

Before we examine the use of sacred space among Orthodox and Progressive Jews, one other aspect of sacred space needs to be mentioned. To a degree, sacred space in rabbinic Judaism has been transformed to sacred time. Thus Shabbat, a time rather than a place, has become the locus of much of what once was the essence of sacred space. Shabbat is understood as being a taste of the world to come, and it thus replaces the Temple as the focus of messianic hope. By celebrating and keeping Shabbat, one carries sacred space to wherever one is. This is reflected in a statement by A. J. Heschel (1951): 'The Shabbat is a palace in time.' This statement reflects the close connection between the concept of sacred space and sacred time in Jewish thought. Shabbat and other festivals are therefore the most extreme examples of dynamic sacred space.

A case study: comparison of Orthodox and Progressive use of sacred space

By a comparison of the use of sacred space between the Orthodox and the Progressive Jewish communities, many significant aspects of modern Jewish sacred space and place are clarified.²¹ The key difference between the two approaches is the issue of the democratization of sacred space. While in the Orthodox community there is general access to sacred space for the male members of the community, in the Progressive community, which gives equality to men and women, there also appears to be an emphasis on the priestly function of its rabbis, thereby reducing general access to sacred space.²²

In order to contextualize this comparison, a summary of the key aspects of a Shabbat morning service is necessary. The service begins with a preparatory section. This section is recited individually in an Orthodox synagogue. In a Progressive synagogue this section is shortened and recited by the leader and the community together. The second section, the '*Shema* and its blessings', is introduced by a communal call to worship; it centres on a statement of belief and obligation. The third section of the service is then a prayer section called the *Amidah*. In an Orthodox community this is first recited silently by the congregation and then led aloud by the leader. In most Progressive synagogues it is only read aloud, and concluded by a short period of silent prayer. The fourth section of the service continues with the reading of the Torah, which is the central focus of the service. During this segment a section of the Torah is read. In an Orthodox service seven men will be called to recite blessings before and after the Torah reading. In a Progressive service, sometimes only one person is called. The final section of the Progressive service includes concluding prayers and a memorial prayer. The Orthodox (and American Conservative) service includes here an additional service called *Musaf*. This includes a repetition of the prayer section with some changes focusing on the sacrificial service in the Temple and concluding prayers.²³

One of the primary distinctions between the two forms of service is the use of individual as opposed to communal reading of prayers. As we have mentioned, the Progressive service includes little or no individual reading. The congregants read as a group when indicated in the prayerbook and listen to the leader when it is indicated that he/she should read. In an Orthodox service much of the reading is done

individually at one's own pace. This distinction is linked to the enhanced priestly function of the rabbi which is discussed below.

There is also a clear difference in atmosphere between an Orthodox service and a Progressive service. Orthodox services are much less decorous. People talk throughout the service and greet each other. In many ways the service feels more informal. This type of atmosphere is in keeping with the general pattern of non-dyadic micro-structure which is focused on individual access to sacred space. The Orthodox community is, in general, more comfortable with its sacred space than is the Progressive community. The Progressive service is much more decorous. Rubrics in the prayerbook are often taken seriously, and individuals are apparently more respectful. This pattern of behaviour is associated with a strengthened priestly function and a more exclusive use of sacred space.

The respective architectural plan of Progressive and Orthodox synagogues is the first area which reveals the different approaches to sacred space. The Orthodox community places the *bimah* in the centre of the sanctuary and therefore in the centre of the community. The community is thus made part of all that occurs on the *bimah*. The architectural plan of a Progressive synagogue usually contains a significant difference. The *bimah* is placed in front of the congregation, almost as a stage. The Ark is on the wall facing the congregation at the back of the *bimah*. There is no women's section, as men and women sit together. Unlike the Orthodox synagogue in which actions are performed in the centre of the community, the service and the actions take place on the *bimah* and are thus separated from the congregation. The Progressive synagogue plan is similar to that of Christian churches and thus supports the priestly aspect of the rabbinical role.

The use of the *bimah* is equally significant. In the Orthodox synagogue the leader of the service faces in the same direction as the congregation and thus is not distinguished from the congregation; in the Progressive synagogue the leader usually faces the congregation. Thus in some sense, he/she is leading rather than praying with the congregation.

The choice of person to lead the service (and to read the Torah) also reveals a similar trend to that revealed by the respective architectural plans. In Orthodox synagogues where there is a rabbi, the rabbi will not necessarily be expected to lead the service. Often, knowledgeable laypeople will lead significant parts of the service. Equally, many men other than the rabbi will read from the Torah scroll. In Progressive

synagogues, however, the rabbi will be expected to lead the majority of the services and usually read from the Torah scroll. It is possible that this distinction, at least in part, stems from the fact that often the rabbi is the only person (or one of the few people) in a Progressive synagogue with the skills needed. Whatever the reason, this distinction in roles further enhances the separation of the Progressive rabbi from the congregation and thereby the priestly aspect of the Progressive rabbi's role.

Several other rituals associated with the Torah are relevant to this discussion. In a traditional service (on Shabbat) seven men are called up to the Torah (to do a blessing before and after the reading of the scroll). Several other men also participate in taking the scroll to and from the Ark. Thus, a large number of individuals participate in this part of the service. In a Progressive service the number of blessings is often limited to one, and occasionally only the rabbi recites the blessing. In some Progressive synagogues only two or three people participate in this part of the service.²⁴ The respective atmosphere of the synagogue during the reading of the Torah is also indicative of this general pattern. On the one hand, in an Orthodox synagogue there is an audible connection between the congregation and reader; everyone is reading with him. Should he make a mistake, members of the congregation will correct him. On the other hand, in a Progressive synagogue there is a profound silence. No one would dream of interrupting or correcting.

The procession of the scroll is also significant. In an Orthodox service the Torah scroll is processed around the synagogue twice during the service. As it passes, men touch it with their prayer shawls. This ritual emphasizes both that the Torah is part of – i.e., not separated from – the community and that each individual has a personal connection with it and therefore with sacred space. The Torah is treated with respect but also familiarity. Within many Progressive synagogues the Torah processions were removed as being undignified and perhaps even verging on idolatry. In these communities the Torah has a strong aspect of respect but very little familiarity in the community.

These few examples reveal a general pattern. In Progressive synagogues we find a strengthening of sacred space. The *bimah* and the Torah are increasingly becoming the preserve of an almost priestly caste – the rabbis – who are almost qualitatively distinguished from the congregation. In the Orthodox community, although sacred space is

maintained, it is less exclusive. This trend in Progressive Judaism is probably tied to the cultural shift mentioned above. On the synagogue level, the Progressive community is using a macro-model which emphasizes the exclusive aspect of sacred space. Because of the Progressive community's higher level of assimilation and participation in the wider culture, there is a corresponding quicker movement to a structural model which emphasizes group identity. In the Orthodox community, because of its separation from the wider community, we find a slower movement towards the macro-model. Many aspects of Orthodox synagogue ritual still reflect the micro-model's emphasis on the individual within a pattern of segmentary opposition. Thus, at the level of sacred space, Orthodox communities appear to be more egalitarian than Progressive communities.²⁵

The Hasidic community and the *Rebbe* as dynamic sacred space

A similar phenomenon is found in developments within the ultra-Orthodox Hasidic community. The Hasidic community emerged at the same time as the Jewish community was being allowed to enter into closer connection with the wider European society. Thus in many respects it is responding to the same pressures as the Progressive community. The Hasidic community moved in the opposite direction, emphasizing traditional practice rather than modernization. We do, however, find a similar cultural transformation moving towards macro-structure. Although the Hasidic community has emphasized the importance of the individual, it has simultaneously re-created the priestly function and a new form of sacred space. This priestly function is concentrated in the person of the *Tzaddik* or *Rebbe*. The *Tzaddik* is understood as being the direct conduit between the individual Hasid and God. Sacred space is concentrated in and around the person of the *Rebbe*.

This transformation and concentration of sacred space is exemplified among the Habad Hasidim. Their preferred place of residence, even above the state of Israel, is Crown Heights in New York City – the area in which the *Rebbe* lived. The focus on the *Rebbe* and Crown Heights is further emphasized by the fact that the Habad Hasidim built a house for the *Rebbe* in Israel which is identical to the home in which he lived in New York. The focus is reversed: Israel is tied to New York

and the *Rebbe*, rather than New York being tied to Israel. The home in Israel was built in preparation for the coming of the Messiah, which was seen as being the only time when the *Rebbe* would go to Israel. The hope that the *Rebbe* was the Messiah also reflects the emphasis on ideological macro-structure, with tri-annual or annual pilgrimages to the *Rebbe's* court replacing the ancient pilgrimages to Jerusalem. Thus, the Hasidim, like the Progressive community, in the face of a more open community which no longer externally supports the rule of endogamy, emphasize the distinction between the Jewish people and the nations by accentuating the priestly function and the macro-model of sacred space.

The state of Israel as secular sacred space

We find an interesting related phenomenon in the development of the state of Israel and secular Zionism. This phenomenon is also closely tied to the transition in emphasis from micro- to macro-structure. Whereas in the earlier form of macro-structure the land of Israel was spiritual sacred space, in modern Jewish thought (especially in Western communities influenced by Zionism) the land has become secular sacred space.

Although it retains many of the attributes of the spiritual form, it exhibits them in a secular way. This transformation is most apparent in the mission statement of the World Zionist Organization. This statement lists the following goals of Zionism and the state of Israel:

The unity of the Jewish people and the centrality of Israel in Jewish life; The ingathering of the Jewish people in its historic homeland . . . through aliyah from all countries; The strengthening of the State of Israel which is based on the prophetic vision of justice and peace; The preservation of the identity of the Jewish people through the fostering of Jewish education and of Jewish spiritual and cultural values. (Hirsch, 1993, p. 14)

Notice that the spiritual aspect of the land is left to the end. The statement emphasizes the centrality of the land in relation to the national and therefore secular existence of the people. In effect the text is a secular form of macro-structure. (The land of) Israel is the embodiment of the unity of the Jewish people in structural opposition to other peoples and cultures.²⁶

Commandments and sacred space

There is one element which joins all loci of sacred space, both ideological and functional. Each space, be it the Temple and the Holy Land on the ideological level, or the home and the synagogue on the functional level, is the focus of *mitzvot*, that is, commandments. Although there are commandments which have no spatial focus, each one of these locations has a large number of commandments which must be performed there. Thus, from this perspective, sacred space becomes such through the performance of God's word. The difference between the two levels, however, is maintained. The commandments associated with ideological space can be performed (for the most part) only with the existence of the Temple and thus will come into force only with the messianic age. The commandments associated with the home and the synagogue are in force both in the diaspora and in the Holy Land.

Conclusions

In this chapter we address several aspects of the Jewish understanding of sacred place. The first dichotomy addressed was the distinction between ideological and functional sacred space. Ideological space is primarily concerned with the nature of geography and an abstract understanding of space. It is seen that two interrelated models structured the understanding of space. The initial model is based on a pattern of concentric circles with the smaller circles being progressively more sacred. This model ultimately relied on the external distinction between Israel and the nations. The second model is based on the social structure of segmentary opposition. This aspect of the structure worked from the smallest level to ever larger levels, culminating with the borders of Israel. It is shown that the models applied to both geography and social structure. The two models work together to create a structural pattern which, although it is based on a recurring structure, is significantly also a closed structure. The pattern of decreasing holiness concludes with the borders of the Holy Land. Land and space outside these borders, on the ideological level, are, by definition, profane. It is suggested further that macro-structure can be viewed via the concentric model, or perhaps more precisely as a dyadic version of the segmentary model.

We examined two aspects of functional sacred space: the home and

the synagogue. Both of these spaces are distinguished from ideological space through being essentially dynamic. They are not based on specific locations. Rather, they are based on the presence of a community or as loci of commandments. It was suggested, however, that the home and synagogue have key structures based on ideological space. Both of these spaces, for example, were understood as being analogous to the Temple in Jerusalem. The influence of the ideological level was also apparent in the structural plan of the synagogue, which is based on a hierarchical pattern similar to that found in the concentric model of structure. Other related elements included the use of raised areas and direction as symbols emphasizing the sanctity of certain areas within the synagogue. This sanctity arises from either the sacredness of the space (or objects kept in the space), e.g., the Ark, or the importance of the rituals conducted from that space, that is, the *bimah*. Direction was also used to make a symbolic association between the synagogue and the Temple in Jerusalem.

One of the underlying themes of the discussion is the relationship between macro- and micro-structure. Macro-structure is based on the distinction between Israel and the nations. It is tied to the need to maintain the preference for endogamy. On a geographical level the structure makes clear distinctions between sacred and profane spaces, echoing the distinction which it makes between people, i.e., Israel and the nations. Both dyadic and non-dyadic micro-structure are based on the logical extension of Israelite endogamy and social structure culminating in a pattern based on segmentary opposition, focusing on the smallest geographic spaces. It is suggested that, although both macro- and micro-structural patterns are always present, the relative weight given to either pattern will depend on broader cultural situations and contexts. Thus, macro-structure, which emphasizes and justifies the preference for endogamy, is itself emphasized when that preference is endangered.

In the chapter it is shown that one period of cultural transformation, which is reflected in a change in the respective weight of macro- and micro-structure, is the move from a centralized community based in the land of Israel to a diaspora community.²⁷ In the Holy Land, during the Persian period (fourth century BCE and beyond), the preference for endogamy needed to be maintained internally in the face of a culturally mixed society. Thus there appears to be a progressive centralization and unification of sacred space based on the macro-model. During the diaspora, in consequence of anti-Semitism and the ghettoization of the

Jewish community, endogamy was in effect enforced externally, and thus the micro-model became the dominant pattern. One of the key aspects of this initial realignment was the democratization of sacred space.

It is suggested that the Jewish community's becoming more connected with the modern Western multi-ethnic community, and more assimilated, will be associated with a realignment of structural weight. This realignment is seen in both the Progressive and Hasidic communities. Both have re-emphasized aspects of the priestly element of Jewish culture and the associated aspect of exclusive sacred space. It is suggested that the modern state of Israel also plays a part in this structural realignment. In a sense it has become secular sacred space, emphasizing the Jewish people's nationhood in structural opposition (within the macro-model) to other people's nationhood.

Notes

- 1 It is clear that during the biblical period, just as today, there must have been a functional level which worked in relationship with the ideological level. The biblical text preserves and is the basis of the ideological level. It also includes hints of the biblical functional level. The ideological level should not be understood as merely pertaining to the biblical period; it interrelates with the modern functional level as well as playing a significant role in its own right in modern Jewish thought.
- 2 The term 'Progressive' is used here to include all non-traditional forms of Judaism except for the American Conservative Movement. Thus it includes a wide range of practice and belief. The cases examined come from several different Progressive communities.
- 3 The Mishnah is a rabbinic text which was edited in the second century CE (see Chapter 4, pp. 117-19). It is significant that the text under discussion was edited (and probably written) at least 100 years after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.
- 4 This text comes directly after a text listing the degrees of impurity. Thus it suggests that in this aspect of the ideological model impurity is the structural opposite of sacredness. The significance of this opposition is seen below in the discussion of the reasons given for women being refused access to sacred objects in some Progressive synagogues.
- 5 A more precise structural model based on a segmentary opposition model is presented on p. 29.
- 6 The key elements of the structure can be illustrated by the set of equations Israel:Jerusalem :: Jerusalem:Temple :: Temple:Holy of

Holies) :: World:Israel :: Profane:Sacred. : is used here to mean 'is to', which indicates that the two elements are in some type of relationship. In the equation here they are in opposition. :: is used here to mean 'as'; this indicates that the two elements in the second half of the equation are related in a similar way to the first two elements.

- 7 The simple equation essentially states that elements placed in one category will never be found in the other; thus no overlap between the categories is possible. In the biblical/rabbinic variation of the model, no movement is permitted between the two categories.
- 8 We use the name Abraham here in order not to cause confusion. The biblical text actually uses the name Abram.
- 9 It is possible that in recent years east has regained some of its negative connotations. During the Holocaust, going east was analogous to being sent to the concentration camps. Equally, going west during the last hundred years was associated with going to the New World and therefore qualitatively positive.
- 10 It must be noted that this difference is based on emphasis rather than practice. Although both variation of Israelite culture may have been ideologically endogamous, one variant needed to emphasize this practice while the other did not.
- 11 It should be noted, however, that the rabbis maintained both the static and the dynamic understanding of God's presence. *Sifre Zuta*, for example, states: 'The land of Canaan [i.e., Israel] is fit to contain the House of the *Shekhinah* [i.e., the Temple] but Transjordan is not fit for the House of the *Shekhinah*' (*Sifre Zuta*, Naso, vol. 2, p. 228). For a complete discussion of this aspect of sacred place see Urbach (1979), pp. 37-46.
- 12 *Shekhinot* is the plural form of *Shekhinah*.
- 13 It is likely that the dynamic nature of the *Shekhinah* developed in relation to the needs of the diaspora community. A similar development occurred in the prophetic texts which described God as going into exile with his people during the Babylonian exile.
- 14 It must be emphasized that it is not suggested here that the synagogue only came into existence with the destruction of the Temple, rather that it was the destruction which led to a cultural transformation moving the emphasis from ideological centralized space to functional decentralized space.
- 15 A comprehensive discussion of the synagogue as sacred space is found in Heilman (1976) *Synagogue Life*. There are, however, several significant problems in his exposition. Many of the problems are due to a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of holiness in respect to Jewish ritual objects. Thus, he attributes holiness to the candle used in the ceremonies opening and closing the Shabbat. He bases this under-

standing on the fact that the light of these candles may be used only for the light of the celebration and not for any other purpose. The candles, however, are sacred only by virtue of their being used for the performance of a commandment, not for any particular virtue of their own. Almost any object can gain such contextual holiness through being associated with the performance of a commandment. This problem is also seen in his discussion of profane objects, e.g., a light switch or the *tefillin*, neither of which may be used on Shabbat. He states that touching them on Shabbat is taboo (Heilman, 1976, p. 49). Like the candles, the objects themselves are neutral; they gain contextual 'tabooness' because one is forbidden to use them on Shabbat. It is not because they are profane in and of themselves, but rather because their use is considered to be work (which is forbidden on Shabbat). Many aspects of functional holiness are contextually rather than essentially holy. The only objects which are essentially holy are those which have the name of God written in them, e.g., prayer-books and Torah scrolls. One distinguishing feature of intrinsically holy objects is that they must be buried, not thrown away.

In modern Judaism the situation has again changed. With the emergence of the Jewish community from the ghetto, the external community no longer enforces endogamy. It is likely that as structure develops there will be a gradual emphasis on macro-structure and centralized institutions.

A *mezuzah* is a box containing verses from the Torah which is placed on the door-post of all Jewish buildings with the exception of synagogues. A synagogue does not require a *mezuzah* because it (the building) serves as its own *mezuzah*.

In a traditional Shabbat (Saturday) morning service seven men are called up to recite a blessing before reading a section of the Torah portion. The Torah is divided into weekly portions which are read in the synagogue during the Shabbat morning service.

The symbolic power of the direction west is occasionally reflected in rabbinic texts. One such text, admittedly based on an attempt to distinguish between the orientation of Jewish prayer and that of Christian prayer (also towards Jerusalem), suggests that prayer should be towards the west because 'the *Shekhinah* is in the west' (Urbach, 1979, p. 62). Interestingly, many early synagogues were built with a westward rather than an eastward orientation (Urbach, 1979, pp. 62-3).

For the most part, all Jews have accepted the importance of a homeland. This is in part tied to the Holocaust and the insecurity which it created, but it is also tied to the movement back towards macro-structure. Nationalism emphasizes unity in opposition to other nations.

Although most of this discussion refers to ritual patterns among the

British Liberal and the American Reform community, many of the conclusions and observations are applicable to the Progressive community as a whole.

- 22 By priestly function we mean the interrelationship of several factors: a distinction between the rabbi and congregation in terms of participation in ritual; a view of the rabbi as being in some way spiritually distinct from the congregation (ranging from being a spirituality professional to being a conduit of communication with the divine); and giving the rabbi a monopoly of access to sacred space. This priestly function is in structural opposition to the more traditional role of rabbi as teacher and judge of Jewish law. It should be noted that in almost no Progressive community have rabbis taken on all elements of the priestly function. Rather, these elements must be understood as extreme forms at the ends of polar axes.

Two conscious examples of this emphasis on the priestly function are the use of the word 'temple' for the synagogue, and the inclusion of the 'Priestly Benediction'. In the American Reform movement synagogues are called 'temples'. Although this de-emphasizes the centrality of the Temple in Jerusalem, it also introduces a conscious association of the synagogue with the Temple and thereby with a specific kind of priestly sacred space. At the conclusion of the service in most Progressive synagogues the rabbi recites the 'Priestly Benediction'. Very often the rabbi will raise his hand in imitation of the priests in the Temple. This makes a direct association of the role of the rabbi with that of the priests as being a conduit of blessing for the congregation.

- 23 This section was removed from the Reform/Liberal service for several reasons. First, these movements chose to remove repetitive elements which were felt to lengthen the service unnecessarily. Second, this section was perceived as objectionable because of its emphasis on sacrifice and the Temple in Jerusalem.

- 24 There is one area in which the Orthodox include a priestly element not found among Progressive communities. The Orthodox reserve the first two Torah blessings: one is reserved for a Cohen, a descendant of the priests, and the second for a Levi, a descendant of the Temple functionaries. In a sense, these two groups open the sacred (the Torah) to make it available for the rest of the community. This, however, is not relevant to the priestly function of the rabbi or the general access to sacred space because both the Cohen and the Levi are now part of the general community.

- 25 It is possible that this trend is also reflected in respect to women. We have already mentioned that women are excluded from the men's section in the Orthodox community because of their sexual attraction. In some Progressive synagogues, which limit the role of women (and,

granted, most give full equality), we find a very different reason given. People will say that women are not allowed to read from the Torah because they might make it impure if they are menstruating. (In Jewish law, however, it clearly states that a Torah can never be made impure.) Thus the reason given is symbolically associated with macro-structure which used purity as the primary category for access into sacred space.

- 26 There is an interesting concomitant transformation in modern Jewish thought. Earlier in the twentieth century the model used for Jewish cultural creativity was bi-polar, with the diaspora (or America) and Israel as the two poles. This reflected a transition from the earlier micro-model, which was more multifaceted. In more recent years there has been a progressive shift to viewing Israel as the primary centre for the development of Jewish cultural creativity, thus moving to a stronger version of the macro-model. This transformation is reflected in a paper published by World Union for Progressive Judaism in which the authors suggest that acceptance of the bi-polar model is 'a depreciation of Zionism as the vital preservative and creative force of Jewish life' (Hirsch, 1993, p. 14).

- 27 It is possible that the Persian period reflects an earlier realignment. In some biblical texts we find a multiplicity of sacred spaces. Other texts emphasize the pre-eminence and exclusiveness of Jerusalem as a sacred space. If a strong form of the preference for endogamy was primarily an innovation of Ezra and his followers after the return from exile, then it is likely that the weight given to macro-structure in the biblical text reflects that specific cultural transformation. The texts emphasizing micro-structure may reflect earlier cultural patterns.

References and further reading

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