

JEWISH LITERACY
Michael Lotker
Sacred Space: Temple & Synagogue – Home & Kashrut

1) Israel and the Temple

- a) Concept of the sacred
 - i) 1st thing holy is time
 - (1) “God blessed the 7th day and hallowed it” (Gen. 2:3)
 - ii) God gives Abraham the land but it is not described as holy
 - iii) In rabbinic tradition, the Tabernacle is created only after the incident of the Golden Calf when God realizes that people need physical expressions of the sacred.
- b) Jerusalem and the Temples
 - i) David conquers the city but is not allowed to build the Temple
 - ii) Note: he schleps around the Ark into battle
 - iii) Solomon builds the 1st Temple in about 900BCE (Shanks*, pg. 75)
 - iv) Temple destroyed in 586BCE by Babylonians (Iraqis)
 - v) Rebuilt 80 years later
 - (1) But is a pale imitation of the original
- c) Herod’s Temple
 - i) Herod rebuilds 2nd Temple about 30BCE
 - ii) Shanks 148-149
 - iii) Destroyed by Romans in 70CE
- d) Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Shanks, pg. 200)
 - i) Plausible site of crucifixion
 - (1) Was outside city walls in 2nd Temple times
 - (2) Jewish graves found in it
 - (3) Was site of Roman temple in Constantine’s time
 - (4) Found by Queen Helena
 - ii) Church built on the site
 - iii) Site and city the subject of crusades
- e) Dome of the Rock (Shanks, pg. 232)
 - i) Built about 700
 - ii) Over Rock (Shanks, pg. 236) that is:
 - (1) Site of creation of universe
 - (2) Site of Abraham’s sacrifice
 - (3) Site of Mohammed’s night journey
- f) What we see in Jerusalem today
 - i) The retaining wall for Herod’s Temple (Shanks 148-149)
 - (1) Also gates and stairs (Shanks 142)
 - (2) Tradition of why Western Wall is holy
 - (a) Built by common folks
 - (b) Closest to Holy of Holies
 - ii) The Church – rebuilt several time
 - iii) The Dome of the Rock

* Reference are to Shanks, Hershel, *Jerusalem: An Archaeological Biography*, Random House, 1995.

2) The Synagogue

- a) Comes from the Greek for *Beit Knesset* (house of meeting)
- b) Not a Temple – it's a house of worship, study, meeting
 - i) Found after Temple destruction
 - ii) Use of name "Temple" to mean synagogue fairly recent
- c) Key Elements
 - i) Ark (facing Jerusalem)
 - ii) Torah Scrolls
 - iii) *Ner Tamid* - Continuous (not Eternal) Light
 - iv) *Bimah* (elevated place)
 - v) Prayerbooks, study places
- d) Issues and items
 - i) Music
 - ii) Men and women's seating
 - iii) Funding congregations
 - (1) In US
 - (a) Contrast with churches
 - (2) In Israel

3) The Home – Bringing the Spiritual into Your Home

As Harold Kushner states, the question is not How can I be more Jewish but How can I be more human? Judaism is not the problem --- Life is the problem, Judaism is an answer (the answer for Jews).

With the destruction of the Temple, our homes are to become small Temples.

- How do we make our homes and our lives more holy?
- Ask for their ideas.

The following are some things that work for me --- they are *an* answer not *the* answer.

Taking God More Seriously

- Seriously, not literally (God and Torah and Jewish Law)
- Seeing yourself as God's tool. Become God's hands - help - comfort
- Bring God to your speech
 - >> You act spiritual >> people think you are spiritual and expect you to be spiritual >> you become spiritual.
- Don't worry about believing

Exercise your Spirituality - Your Right Brain

- Adopt some ritual practices
 - Tallit
 - Shabbat candles, *Havdalah*
 - Daily prayer -- the Shema -- but also talk (out loud) to God, listen for an answer.

- Start observing the Sabbath in some way.
 - Bless the children -- even in absentia
 - don't work
 - Don't watch TV: the Sabbath makes time holy, TV kills time
- Saying *baruchas*
 - Wine
 - Bread
 - *Oseh, ma-aseh, bre'sheet*

4) **Kashrut & Jewish New Year's resolutions: BASIC RULES**

- Meat – Required: split hoof and chews its cud
- Fowl – a list of prohibited foods
- Fish – Required: fins and scales
- Milk and meat mixing prohibited
- Wine
- Kosher slaughtering
- Why be kosher?
 - Elevating the animal activities of life
 - To pause and reflect on taking of life
 - To remind yourself you're Jewish
 - Keeping culture together
- Making the everyday holy -- NOTICE IT!
 - You can be religious in the way you approach a business problem, in the way you eat lunch, in the way you write your checks, not only in the way you read the bible, go to shul, read Torah.

Other Ways -- Taking Jewish Law Seriously

- *Tsedaka*: always give something: A Jew that does not give *tsedaka* is not just selfish -- he has committed an act of injustice.
- *Lashon Ha-Rah* -- Gossip
- Eliminating Idolatry - what are the modern idols -- the works of our hands (jobs, cars, our bodies, careers). In the modern world the question is not who owns our bodies but who owns our souls and time. Isn't the prototypical busy executive really a slave?
- Study and Read: When I pray, I speak to God, when I study Torah, God speaks to me.
- Be Jewish for yourselves, not for the kids.
- Emphasis of today's lesson is start. *Halacha* mean a path. It's not where you are but where you are going.

NEXT TIME: Life Cycle – Read Lotker 66-70, 92-94, 101-103, 111-114, 117-123.
 Read Handbook 195-199, 222-233, 248-254, 302-306, 380-384, 393-394,
 434-436, 457-465, 503-504.