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## Introduction

When a man rises to pray, if he is situated outside the land of Israel he should face toward Israel and direct his thoughts toward Jerusalem, the Temple and the Holy of Holies. If he is situated in the land of Israel, he should face toward Jerusalem and fix his thoughts toward the Temple and the Holy of Holies. If he is situated in Jerusalem, he should face toward the Temple, and direct his thoughts toward the Holy of Holies.<sup>1</sup>

At the entrance to the plaza of the Western Wall, the cry of "*Minchata tefillin?*"—Have you donned phylacteries today?" draws one's focus toward a stall to the left. A young man in bermuda shorts and sunglasses stiffly twists the shiny black leather straps around his left forearm, his eyes intently meeting those of his instructor as he responsively enunciates the guttural intonations of the Hebrew blessing.

A few paces further into the plaza, another cry catches the ear: "*Minchah! Minchah!*" Waving his arm, a man in a business suit, playing the role of ritual traffic cop, steers the incoming flow of men to-

ward a velvet-covered lectern, where, in the tones and accents of Eastern Europe and of Yemen, of Brooklyn and of Birmingham, they will collectively recite the afternoon service. On the other side of the *mechitzah*—the partition dividing the men's section from the women's—the activity is quieter and more private. In a long dress and black stockings, her hair tucked under a simple kerchief, a woman sits swaying slowly over a large-print edition of the Psalms, her whispers broken only by the cries emanating from the baby carriage she gently rocks.

An older woman limps her way from person to person with both hands out; in the one, she bears a worn, laminated, Hebrew certificate from the chief rabbinar atesting to her destitution, and in the other, coins jangle against one another, vocalizing her silent appeal.

Back on the men's side of the *mechitzah*, a tourist adjusts his public-issue, gray, cardboard skullcap and approaches the Wall. Taking up an open spot next to a soldier in olive drabs, he raises his finger and traces the contours of the massive, dressed stones. As the tourist carefully eyes a crevice stuffed with small notes of paper, an exuberant Jew in black garb rushes up; his lips and swaying ear locks brush the Wall simultaneously, and the gush of memorized prayers begins to flow from his lips.

Just as stones and shells of many shapes and colors from a vast sea are drawn inexorably to a common shoreline, the tide of history and culture draws Jews of all backgrounds to stand together before the Western Wall. They see in it an enduring symbolic strength, which derives from its identity as the last remnant of the second Temple complex, destroyed in 70 C.E.

The liturgy and the Bible—the classical sources that are accessible to every Jew—point to the centrality of the Temple in Jewish thought. The traditional prayers recited three times a day include petitions that the Temple service be restored. When a Jew recites the Grace after Meals, which is ostensibly a litany of thanks, he offers a digressive and lengthy appeal for the reconstruction of the Temple. Over one-third

of the verses of the Torah and over half of the 613 biblical commandments relate directly to the Temple and the activities within it. From the conquest of Joshua until the return of Ezra, the Temple—in its road to construction, destruction, and reconstruction—emerges as a central theme of the entire Bible.

However, for all its centrality in classical sources and within the hearts of Jews everywhere, the Temple suffers in contemporary circles from a "bad" reputation. Critics from the more liberal branches of Judaism label it and its rites the vestiges of paganism. The concept of a "house" for an omnipresent and incorporeal creator is said to be theologically inconsistent with enlightened man's view of God.

The image of the Temple is problematic, not only for liberal Jews, but oftentimes for Orthodox Jews as well. Many traditionally minded Jews have little to say about the Temple other than that it is the place where God's presence dwells, and even less to say about its relevance to the present age. When the traditional Jew is summoned to think about the Temple, he is forced to abandon his own frame of experiential reference, for he lives in a Temple-less age. Often he will conjure two complementary images. In the one, he feels nostalgia for the days—which, in fact, were few in number—when valorous kings ruled the land, prophets spoke the word of God in absolute authority, miracles documented His existence and power, and sacrifices were offered in the Temple. In the other image he sighs in anticipation of a rarefied age in which the dead will be resurrected, all exiles will be gathered into the holy land, and the messiah will cause lion and lamb to dwell in harmony. It is within this apocalyptic frame that the Jew envisions the rebuilding of the Temple.

This sense of distance from the reality of the Temple is heightened in the language of halakic discourse as well. The labels a person applies to great periods of time are a telling indicator of his prime values. In the life of a nation, time may be oriented around independence—its citizens will speak of the age of statehood and the era of preindependence that preceded it. Alternatively, a culture that has

Temple — Destruction — Birth of Jewish People  
 — Remembrance — Remembrance

see

endured armed conflict will speak of the prewar and postwar periods in its history. In the life of an individual, a chronological orientation often made is that between bachelorhood and married life.

How is history oriented for the individual whose worldview stems from halakhic writings? A primary distinction made by medieval rabbinic scholars was between commandments that are applicable *bizman ha-zeh* (the present age) and those that can only be fulfilled *bizman ha-bayit* (in an age when the Temple stands). For those whose convictions stem from talmudic writings, the distinction between the *zman ha-zeh* and the *zman ha-bayit* is a pillar of chronological orientation. There are no similar terms to describe the distinction between a period when the majority of the Jewish people observe the *Halakha* and a period when they do not.<sup>2</sup> The most significant qualitative distinction that this Jew makes with regard to history is between an age when the Temple stands and an age when it does not. This phenomenon has a subliminal effect on the time-consciousness of the halakhically sensitive Jew. Because he is infused with a consciousness of the radical distinction between the two, even the most devout cannot help but feel a sense of distance from the Temple and its significance, as he lives in what has been a very protracted *zman ha-zeh*—a present age in which the Temple plays no role in the life of the people.

Nowadays, when prophets no longer speak and the messiah is yet to come, the Temple is anticipated but rarely discussed or understood. Although the Temple takes a central place in our supplications, many would be hard-pressed to explain why. It lies dormant as a vestigial organ within the body of modern Jewish thought.

While the Temple is assailed by some on theological grounds, it suffers attacks from another realm as well. The Six-Day War in 1967 saw the recapture of Jerusalem and of the Temple Mount. Possession of, and access to, the Temple Mount and the very concept of a third Temple have emerged as politically explosive issues. Since the site is holy to both Judaism and Islam, it is the focal point for much religious and political tension. Occasionally these tensions spill over, as they

did in October 1990, resulting in rioting and bloodshed on and around the Temple Mount.

It is generally extreme religious right-wing political groups that raise the banner of the third Temple. Because the very concept of Temple has been commandeered by the religious political right, it has become tainted in the eyes of many with more moderate views. Associations are quickly made. It is not only that the concrete desire to rebuild the Temple has become taboo, but any positive value attached to the concept of Temple is seen as equally suspect. To be "pro-Temple" in any sense of the term is to be antipeace. To be pro-Temple is to be religiously intolerant, for the Temple could only be rebuilt if the Dome of the Rock were destroyed. To be pro-Temple is to be branded a fundamentalist in an age when fundamentalism is the anathema of the Western world.

It is the desire of the author to rebuild the Temple's image. One is hard-pressed to find a written overview in either English or Hebrew devoted to the theology of the Temple from a classical Jewish perspective. The talmudic passage cited at the outset calls upon us to concentrate on Israel, more narrowly on Jerusalem, and most fixedly on the Temple. The centrality of the Temple in the Bible, the liturgy, and the Talmud mandates a study that restores the Temple's meaning and significance to a modern, Temple-less world. The geopolitical climate likewise focuses our attention, and the world's, on Israel, more narrowly on Jerusalem, and most fixedly on the Temple Mount. If we are to make absolutist claims to Jerusalem and to the Western Wall, it behooves us to have an understanding of the role of the Temple within our tradition.

Sources relating to the Temple can be found in every genre of Jewish literature—biblical, talmudic, kabbalistic, and poetic. The present study incorporates sources from the entire spectrum of the rabbinic tradition. However, it is the Bible that gives the earliest and most comprehensive overview of the meaning of the Temple and its role in society. This work hopes to give insight into the Temple through an exploration of its biblical roots.

## THE TEMPLE AS SYMBOL

Contrary to the popular misconception that the Temple is solely a sacrificial center, the Temple needs to be construed as part of an organic whole and cannot be studied in isolation. As the center of Israel's national and spiritual life, it relates integrally to many of the institutional pillars of the Jewish faith—the Sabbath, the land of Israel, kingship, and justice, to mention just a few.

In this study we will address the symbolism and iconography of the Temple. Symbols are a cornerstone of the collective consciousness of a culture, and it behooves us to mention a few notes about symbolism as a backdrop for this study. Many voices within the rabbinic tradition maintain that belief in God is meant to be practiced and manifested amid the symbolic actions embodied in the *mitzvoit*.<sup>3</sup> But why are all these actions necessary? Why is faith alone insufficient? It is through concrete acts of religious observance that religious conviction emerges on the human plane. Symbols provide us a vocabulary with which to perceive metaphysical and divine reality.

Seen in this perspective, the need to understand the symbolism of the Temple is particularly acute. The Temple represents the presence of the infinite, omnipresent, and incorporeal—what the kabbalists called the *ein sof*—in a limited, physical space: "Make for Me a sanctuary and I shall dwell in their midst" (Exodus 25:8). Man lacks the conceptual framework with which to comprehend God's true essence, let alone its limitation, in some way, to a house of stone. It is when man's analytic capacities fail him that symbols allow him to relate to such phenomena and integrate them into his *weltanschauung*.<sup>4</sup> Our conception of God and relationship to Him stand to be sharpened through understanding the form and structure of the Temple and its rituals.

Beyond their significance as the embodiment of concepts, symbols also play an important role in the cohesion of a society. Individuals are bonded due to the influence of the symbols upheld by society. This was the opinion of Emile Durkheim, the father of modern sociology, in his 1912 *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. If every symbol

contributes to the collective identity of a culture, then within Judaism the symbolic social function of the Temple is of paramount importance, for the Temple is the symbol that lies at the very heart of the biblical conception of society. In an age of national renewal, an understanding of this symbolic focal point can only help inform our reemerging national identity.

A study of the symbolism of the Temple can shed light, not only on our conception of God and on our collective identity, but on other symbols as well. The structuralist school of sociology emphasizes the interconnection of symbols as threads of a tapestry. The synagogue and its appurtenances, such as the Ark, the city of Jerusalem, and the institution of collective prayer, are only a few of the symbols and rituals directly related to the Temple. To understand the Temple is to shed new light on them all.

It is worth noting at the outset, for the sake of precision, that when speaking of the Temple, we need to distinguish between three related, yet distinct, terms. *Tabernacle* will refer to the transient structure that was erected by the Israelites in the wilderness and remained their central site of worship upon entry into the land of Israel. *Temple* will refer to the structure erected in Jerusalem by Solomon, and later again by the returnees from Babylon. *Sanctuary* will be used as a generic term that refers to both, with reference to the elements that are constant between them.

### HERMENEUTICS: A MODERN APPROACH TO TRADITIONAL EXEGESIS

This book is an exploration of the concept of Temple in Jewish thought, through its biblical roots. The Bible, however, is read in very different ways by different readers. It is necessary, therefore, at the outset, to delineate the approach to the biblical text that will be employed in this study.

My analysis will address the masoretic text from a conceptual framework that is in consonance with the rabbinic tradition. This book employs an exegetical strategy that has gained far wider exposure to a

Hebrew readership than it has in the pages of English Judaica. This strategy combines elements of medieval exegesis, on the one hand, and midrashic scope, on the other. The medieval exegetes, by and large, engaged in close readings of the biblical text. Their primary concern was to elucidate the local meaning of a word or verse. With the notable exception of R. Moses Nachmanides (1194–1270), the commentaries of these exegetes rarely demonstrate a concern for the evolution of broad themes, or motifs, across entire books. The genre of midrash, on the other hand, is often telescopic in its view, weaving together disparate figures and passages in sweeping thematic and conceptual statements. These *midrashim*, however, often seem to use the biblical verse as a springboard for broader discussions, rather than as a text to be closely read within its own context. In this book, I attempt to combine these two genres. On the one hand, we will read the biblical text with the precision and commitment to the meaning of the text itself of the medieval exegetes. At the same time, however, we will attempt to draw broad parallels between sections and develop themes and leitmotifs across passages, across entire books, and, indeed, across the entire Bible.

For those approaching the work from outside a traditional Jewish framework, this work is one of Orthodox biblical theology and does not relate to the historical development of the concept of Temple in ancient Israel. The exegetical approach is literary, and it has been inspired by the writings of the likes of Benno Jacob, Robert Alter, James Kugel, and Gustav Fokkelman. Through close readings, it offers a distinct emphasis on compositional structure, leitmotif, and language.

When a Jew prays, he is called upon to direct his thoughts toward the Temple and toward the Holy of Holies. It is my hope that this book will enable the reader to attain a deeper understanding of the Temple, and consequently, a greater place for it in his heart.

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Alon Shevut

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## What Is Kedushah?

In Hebrew, the term *beit ha-mikdash*, conventionally rendered as temple, literally means a house of *kedushah*—of holiness. At the outset, then, it is appropriate to ask, what is *kedushah*?

### NOT “HOLY,” NOT “SACRED”

It is of little help to simply translate the term *kedushah* into English. Something *kadosh* is interchangeably said to be either sacred, or holy, or endowed with sanctity. However, because our culture is one in which religion plays only a peripheral role, our sensitivity to the distinctions of religious language has eroded. Seen in their original contexts, these three words are hardly synonymous. *Holy* comes from the German *heilig*, meaning “complete or whole.”<sup>1</sup> *Sanctity* stems from the Latin *sanctum*, meaning “walled off.” *Sacred*, also Latin in origin, comes from the word *sacrum*, which means “dedicated to the gods.”<sup>2</sup> In a predominantly secular society, the words *sanctity* and *sacred* are often

liturgy - public service (via sam)

used in a sense denuded of religious connotation and are taken to mean "involute." This is a usage that relates neither to their etymological origins, nor to their later religious connotations. It is in this vein that we speak of the sanctity of marriage. Likewise, when we refuse to deviate from a small detail of etiquette or object to the deletion of an item in an annual budget, we often do so on the grounds that each is sacred. The many translations of *kedushah*, therefore, allow only a distorted glimpse of the original meaning of the term.

### MANY JEWISH MEANINGS

The temptation, then, is to try to define *kedushah* from within—to examine Jewish sources alone and deduce an understanding of *kedushah* that is independent of the terminology of other cultures. However, when the Jew examines the spectrum of his tradition, he can only conclude that *kedushah* has meant different things in different contexts throughout the ages. For the Italian poet and ethicist R. Moshe Chaim Luzzatto (1707-1746), in the last chapter of his *Mesilat Yesharim*, and for the late-sixteenth-century kabbalist R. Chaim Vital, in his *Sha'ar Kedushah*, *kedushah* referred to a person's character and his traits. Within this conception, a person achieves a state of *kedushah* when he reaches a degree of moral and spiritual perfection. Nachmanides, in his commentary to Leviticus 19:2, understood that the call to *kedushah* was a call to asceticism, to limit one's engagement with earthly pleasures, even when these are permitted within the literal letter of the *Halakhah*. For the kabbalists and their philosophical descendants, *kedushah* was a metaphysical property whose theurgic significance is discerned in the heavenly realms. For R. Joseph Soloveitchik, *kedushah* referred to the experience man feels as he encounters God through the *Halakhah*. Thus, even when examining Jewish sources alone, a single definition of the term *kedushah* seems unavailable.<sup>3</sup> In this chapter we will examine the context in which the term *kedushah* originates—the biblical context.

Amos 4:2 Breasts by his breasts "let apart" - like sacrificial

### A BIBLICAL DEFINITION

The list of entities described as *kadosh* in the Bible is lengthy and varied. On the one hand, *kedushah* describes God's essence. "Who is like You, majestic in holiness" (Exodus 15:11), declared the Children of Israel at the crossing of the Red Sea. "My Lord God swears by His holiness" (Amos 4:2), proclaims the prophet Amos.<sup>4</sup>

However, the term *kedushah* has broad application with regard to mundane entities as well. It can describe groups of people, such as the priests and the nation of Israel; periods of time, such as the Sabbath and festivals; objects, such as first fruits, tithes, and sacrificial animals; places, like Jerusalem and the Temple—all are described as being *kadosh*.

For one familiar with the Bible, or with halakhic practice, the notion that God is *kadosh*, or that the Sabbath, the priests, the Temple, et. al. are *kadosh*, is commonplace, even if it is somewhat unclear exactly what is meant when it is said that these entities are *kadosh*.

However, the precise meaning of the term *kedushah* becomes elusive indeed when we note two ways in which it is strikingly absent from the biblical record. The first concerns the use of the term *kedushah* with reference to individuals. In our culture, we are apt to call a righteous person, one who is saintly and pious, a "holy" person. The Bible is replete with characters who would seem apt for the appellation *kadosh*. However, when we examine the nomenclature that the Bible uses to describe its heroes, we arrive at a surprising conclusion. Noah is termed *ish tzadik*—a righteous man (Genesis 6:9). Moses is called *ish Elokim*—a man of God (Deuteronomy 33:1). Caleb is described by God as *avdi*—My servant (Numbers 14:24). Samuel is described as *ne'eman*—faithful or loyal to God (1 Samuel 3:20). None, however, are called *kadosh*. The Book of Psalms may be seen as a record of the righteous individual's relationship with God. Its protagonists are called by many names—*tzadik* (righteous), *chasid* (pious), *yashar* (straight in the path of God), *ohav Torah* (a lover of the Torah)—to

*Elo'ha = why person described*

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mention several, but none are called *kadosh*. It would seem, then, that the term *kadosh* cannot be used to describe an individual's character, no matter how "holy" he may be.<sup>5</sup> In fact, throughout the entire Bible there is but a single occasion where an individual is described as *kadosh*. The wealthy woman of Shunem says, in reference to the prophet Elisha, "I am sure that it is a holy man of God (*ish Elokim kadosh*) who comes this way regularly" (2 Kings 4:9). The fact that this term is used neither by God, nor by a prophet, nor even by the biblical narrator, but merely by a minor character within the story, serves only to highlight the exceptional nature of this usage. The general rule remains: the Bible does not characterize a righteous individual as *kadosh*.

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A second peculiar aspect of the biblical use of the term *kedushah* concerns its absence from the patriarchal record of Genesis. In light of our discussion concerning the use of the term *kadosh* to describe righteous individuals, it is no surprise that none of the patriarchs is called *kadosh*. If, as a rule, throughout the Bible, individuals are not described as *kadosh*, there is no reason why the heroes of Genesis should serve as an exception. What is astonishing, however, is that not a single entry is described as *kadosh* in the entire narrative covering the careers of the patriarchs. By contrast, when God appeared to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:5), Moses was told to hold his distance because he was treading on *admat kodesh*—holy ground. In like fashion, we find that as Joshua prepared for the capture of Jericho, the angel of God appeared to him and commanded him to bare his feet, "for the place where you stand is holy" (Joshua 5:15). If sites of revelation become holy, why are none of the sites of revelation in the Book of Genesis likewise declared holy? In light of the experiences of Moses and of Joshua, we might have expected the banks of the Jabbok River (Genesis 32:24) to become *kadosh* once the angel revealed himself to Jacob. The same could be said for Beth-El, where God appeared to Jacob in a dream, and which Jacob concluded was the very house of God and portal to the heavens (Genesis 28:17). Nowhere is this question more pertinent, however, than with regard to the site of the binding of Isaac. Mount Moriah emerges later in the Bible as the site

of the Temple itself (2 Chronicles 3:1)—the apex of *kedushah* in the spacial realm. Nonetheless, Abraham is not told that the spot is one of *kedushah*! Why did sites of revelation assume *kedushah* when God spoke to Moses and Joshua but not when He communicated with the patriarchs?

The omission of the term *kedushah* from the patriarchal annals becomes even more striking when we examine the promises to the patriarchs concerning the future of the Jewish people. The patriarchs were told that their descendants would become a great nation (Genesis 12:2)—a blessed people (Genesis 22:18)—that kings would emerge from their midst (Genesis 17:6, 35:11), and that they would enter a special relationship with God as His people (Genesis 17:8). Never were they told, however, that their descendants would become an *am kadosh*—a holy people. The Jewish people are called an *am kadosh* dozens of times throughout the Bible. Why, then, were the patriarchs unapprised of this destiny?

A review of the entire Book of Genesis reveals that *kedushah* is mentioned precisely once: "And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because on it God ceased from all the work of creation which He had done" (2:3). The Sabbath seems never to have been revealed to the patriarchs, and is only related to the Children of Israel following the spitting of the Red Sea (Exodus 16:23). What, then, does it mean when the Bible labels something *kadosh*? Why is the term nearly absent from the Book of Genesis, and why are righteous individuals never termed *kadosh*?

Our understanding of *kedushah* in the sense that we call holiness can be sharpened by examining how the root *k.d.sh.* is biblically applied in nonsacral contexts. A prostitute is sometimes referred to as a *kedeshah* (Genesis 38:21–22; Deuteronomy 23:18). When God threatens the king of Judah for fraudulent behavior, He says, "I will make *kadosh* (*ve-kidashu*) destroyers against you" (Jeremiah 22:7). Certainly, there is nothing holy about a prostitute or the destroyers of Judah! On the basis of these occurrences, which have absolutely no sacral overtones, many have noted that the root *k.d.sh.* means "set aside" or

