

U

STUDIES IN JUDAISM IN LATE ANTIQUITY

EDITED BY

JACOB NEUSNER

VOLUME TWENTY-THREE

JONATHAN Z. SMITH

MAP IS NOT TERRITORY



LEIDEN
E. J. BRILL
1978

MAP IS NOT TERRITORY

Studies in the History of Religions

BY

JONATHAN Z. SMITH

William Benton Professor of
Religion and the Human Sciences
The College
University of Chicago



LEIDEN
E. J. BRILL
1978

CHAPTER FIVE

EARTH AND GODS*

Among the many exciting developments in History of Religions research in the past few decades has been the elucidation of the category of sacred space. One might point to the general researches of Mircea Eliade (*The Sacred and the Profane*), Roger Callois (*L'homme et le sacré*), and, within specific traditions, the careful monographs of scholars such as P. Mus (*Barabudur*), G. Tucci (*Il simbolismo architettonico dei tempi di Tibet occidentale*), S. Kramrisch (*The Hindu Temple*), and others, as well as important conferences such as that held in Rome in 1955 on *Le symbolisme cosmique des monuments religieux*, in which Eliade, Daniélou, and Lévi-Strauss participated. However, there has been a relative lack of studies on sacred space within Jewish and Christian materials. The historian of religions working with Western religious traditions has had, for the most part, to confine himself to the old, though still valuable, monographs by W. H. Roscher on the *omphalos* (*Omphalos; Neue Omphalosstudien* and *Der Omphalosedanke bei verschiedenen Völkern*), G. Klameth on *Die neutestamentlichen Lokaltraditionen Palästinas*, A. J. Wensinck on *The Idea of the Western Semites concerning the Navel of the Earth*, or J. Jeremias' study of *Golgotha*. More recently, there have been detailed studies such as the important treatment by Raphael Patai (*Man and Temple*) as well as monographs on particular aspects of the structure such as H. Sedlmayr's works on the cathedral, H. P. L'Orange on cosmic orientation, B. S. Childs' chapter on mythic and biblical space in *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament*, W. Müller's *Die heilige Stadt: Roma quadrata, himmlisches Jerusalem und die Mythe vom Weltnabel*, K. L. Schmidt's "Jerusalem als Urbild und Abbild" (*Eranos Jahrbuch*, XVIII [1950]), A. Haldar, *The Notion of the Desert in Sumero-Accadian and West-Semitic Religions*, and B. Goldman, *The Sacred Portal: A Primary Symbol in Ancient Judaic Art*. Additional resources, from quite another perspective, may be found in the contributions of phenomenologists such as Heidegger, Bachelard, Binswanger and Gurvitch, and in the important studies of phenomenological literary

* This paper was delivered as a lecture at the University of Chicago, February 12, 1968. I have retained the style of the original, adding only brief references.

critics such as Poulet and Richard on the categories of space, exile, and forgetfulness, which still have not been sufficiently appropriated by historians of religion.¹

In recent years the recovery of the structure of sacred space has, especially within Judaism, become more than a merely academic enterprise. The repossession of the land of Israel in 1947 and the repossession of the site of the Temple in Jerusalem in 1967 have re-awakened in an acute way the archaic language of sacred space and have reacquainted the modern Jew with a variety of myths and symbols which he had proudly thought he had forgotten, myths and symbols which he frequently boasted to others that he never had.

This is brought home with full force in Richard Rubenstein's *After Auschwitz*. One of the consistently repeated themes in Rubenstein's book is the notion that, for the contemporary Jew, the re-establishment of Israel, "marks the re-birth of the long forgotten gods of the earth within Jewish experience."² The issue that Rubenstein is raising is one that is ultimately far more significant than the alleged problem of Israelitic "syncretism": the question of the presence of Canaanite deities in, and their influence on, the cult of Israel (a problem which exists only for one who adopts a fundamentally unimaginative and simplistic view of the complexity of Israelitic religious traditions and experience and a correspondingly unimaginative and simplistic view of ancient Near Eastern religions), or the so-called resurgence of these deities under Jeroboam and among the Jews of Elephantine, the later renaissance of these figures in mystical and kabbalistic circles (as if they were ever dead), or the whole debated question of the existence of Hebraic mother goddesses. Whether or not Rubenstein is aware of the vast literature and long scholarly debate on these issues, the thrust of his remarks seems directed to quite a different dimension. He claims that the "re-discovery of Israel's earth and the lost divinities of that earth" enables the Jews of today to "come in contact with those powers of life and death which engendered man's feelings about Baal, Astarte,

¹ See, for example, the impressive though slightly eccentric study of Heidegger by V. Vycinas, *Earth and Gods: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Martin Heidegger* (The Hague, 1961); W. Biemel's *Le concept de monde chez Heidegger* (Paris, 1950); and the essay by W. Kluback and J. T. Wilde, "An Ontological Consideration of Place," in their translation of M. Heidegger, *The Question of Being* (New York, 1958), pp. 18-26.

² R. L. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism* (Indianapolis, 1966), p. 130; cf. pp. 70, 122-26, 136.

and Anath. These powers have again become decisive in our religious life."³ This, then, is not an issue of "origins" or "borrowings," but of religious experience and expression. Rubenstein (albeit indirectly) has performed as profound and radical a reversal of the usual mode of scholarly perception as that of Eliade when Eliade reminds us in a typically cryptic but pregnant sentence: "The drama of the death and resurrection of vegetation is revealed by the myth of Tammuz, rather than the other way about."⁴ What Rubenstein appears to be suggesting (to phrase it in other terms) is that the recovery of the land of Israel has permitted Jews to rediscover what Charles Long calls a sense of "cosmic orientation" or what Theodore H. Gaster has termed the "topocosm" (i.e., "the entire complex of any given locality conceived as a living organism").⁵

The Israelitic cosmos as described by Rubenstein, as sung about in Israeli folksongs (especially some of the new songs growing out of the Six Days' War, e.g., "Yerushalayim shel Zahav," "Jerusalem of Gold"), or as celebrated by both her artists and politicians is a profoundly different cosmos than that experienced by generations of European Jews. One may express this radical shift in a number of ways: from a condition of an almost schizophrenic existence of living in a country but understanding one's true homeland to be somewhere else; from exile to return; in Robert Ardrey's brief examination of the Jew, from deterritorialization to reterritorialization. The result of this radical shift, to quote Rubenstein again, is that "Increasingly Israel's return to the earth elicits a return to the archaic earth religion of Israel. This does not mean that tomorrow the worship of Baal and Astarte will supplant the worship of Yahweh; it does mean that the earth's fruitfulness, its vicissitudes and its engendering power will once again become the central spiritual realities of Jewish life, at least in Israel."⁶

³ *Ibid.*, p. 76. See further Rubenstein's clarification of his use of the terms "pagan" and "gods of the earth," with specific reference to Eliade, in his essay "Homeland and Holocaust: Issues in the Jewish Religious Situation," in D. R. Cutler (ed.), *The Religious Situation 1968* (Boston, 1968), pp. 39-64, 102-11, esp. pp. 41, 61, 105-6. Here Rubenstein explicitly declares, "What I refer to as pagan is very much the same religious type that Eliade calls archaic" (p. 41).

⁴ M. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, trans. R. Sheed (New York, 1958), p. 426.

⁵ C. H. Long, *Alpha: The Myths of Creation* (New York, 1959), pp. 18-19; T. H. Gaster, *Tbpsis: Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient Near East* (2d ed.; Garden City, N. Y., 1961,) p. 17.

⁶ Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, p. 7.

Merely compare this language of earth's "fruitfulness" and "engendering power" with the somewhat overdone and polemic, but nevertheless evocative, reconstruction of the world of the European ghetto Jew on the basis of an analysis of Yiddish vocabulary and literature written in 1943 by Maurice Samuel and you have the heart of the problem, a problem which, I would submit, can be best understood and interpreted by the historian of religions. A new world has been encountered, and a new mode of being must be assumed.

Yiddish is a folk language, but unlike all other folk languages it has no base in nature. It is poor almost bankrupt by comparison with other languages in the vocabulary of field and forest and stream. . . . Yiddish has almost no flowers . . . the very words for the common flowers which are familiar to city dwellers everywhere are lacking in Yiddish. Yiddish is a world almost devoid of trees. . . . The animal world is almost depopulated in Yiddish . . . the skies are practically empty of birds. . . . There is likewise a dearth of fish . . . there are no nature descriptions to be found anywhere in Yiddish prose or poetry. . . . All these expressions and perceptions were lacking because their material was withheld from the Jews. There were large areas of what we generally call folk self-expression to which the Jews were forever strangers.⁷

As symptomatic of the schizophrenia of exile, it may be noted that in general the ghetto Jew was far more expert on the flora and fauna of Palestine than he was of the neighboring fields in Poland.

What I propose in this essay is to undertake a brief examination of some Jewish texts and traditions from the standpoint of the History of Religion's category of sacred space, a category which involves the structures of "the center", of cosmic models, cosmogonic myths, and other elements familiar from works such as Eliade's.

It is to be regretted that there has been little solid work on Jewish and Christian materials using the discipline and categories of History of Religions, such as those found in Eliade's *Patterns in Comparative Religion*. Scholars have, in the main, either failed to subject these two religious traditions to the same methods of analysis, and thereby failed to employ the same categories and structures as they use to interpret other religious traditions, or, if they do employ the same methods and structures, they assert that in some unique way these do not exhaust the full reality of Judaism or Christianity (as if a historian of religions ever claimed or sought to exhaust the phenomenon he was interpreting)—that there is a "something more left over," a "some-

⁷ M. Samuel, *The World of Shalom Aleichem* (reprint; New York, 1965), pp. 194-96.

thing more" which other traditions presumably do not possess, a "something more" which makes our Western traditions unique and true. Or, finally, a third posture is assumed by some scholars who do treat certain selected elements in Judaism and Christianity by the methods and structures of the History of Religions, but who claim that these either are survivals of a "pagan" past, foreign contaminations, or late accretions, or are the practice of a people on the fringes of the normative tradition (heresies, heterodoxies, popular or low-class practices). Each of these stances seems to me inadequate and, at heart, crudely apologetic.

The more I read in Jewish and Christian materials, the more I become convinced that many elements yield themselves far better to the sensitive historian of religions than to other disciplinary approaches. Elements such as the Old and New Testament as myth, the whole range of Jewish and Christian rituals and initiations, the liturgical year, etc., would profit from a careful examination in light of analogous structures in the History of Religions.

In the topic under discussion I shall claim the historian of religion's privilege of disregarding chronological and geographical considerations, of comparing and bringing together, as revealing, texts from widely different periods and contexts of Jewish history. And I shall use as my categories of interpretation the structures that emerge from the more general considerations of sacred space as it has been expressed within the History of Religions. This does not, however, mean that the Holy Land of Zion for the Jew is the same as the Dayak ancestral village studied by Hans Schärer. It does mean that the historian of Jewish traditions could well profit from an examination of Schärer's materials in order to be sensitized to certain categories and nuances of exile, of return to the ancestral land and primordial totality in moments of sacred time that he might otherwise miss in his studies. Likewise, a student of the sacred topography of Israel as set forth in Jewish and Christian pilgrim literature might do well to consider the fantastic elaboration of the primordial significance of each topographic feature on the sacred boulder of the Pitjandjara of Central Australia meticulously chronicled by Charles P. Mountford.⁸

⁸ H. Schärer, *Ngaju Religion: The Conception of God among a South Borneo People* (The Hague, 1963), esp. pp. 94-97, conveniently anthologized in M. Eliade (ed.), *From Primitives to Zen: A Thematic Sourcebook on the History of Religions* (New York, 1967), pp. 170-72; C. P. Mountford, *Ayers Rock: Its People, Their Beliefs, and Their Art* (Honolulu, 1965), pp. 27-156, esp. p. 32, Fig. 3.

In this essay, I make no great claim to originality. I have deliberately confined myself to texts which have been translated into English in readily accessible volumes. There is nothing obscure about this material; it requires no elaborate field trips to collect. And yet, with the exception of Patai, I have not seen fruitful use made of this data either by scholars of Jewish traditions whose work usually remains uninformed by general History of Religions research, or by historians of religion who have, on the whole, exhibited a singular "failure of nerve" in incorporating Jewish and Christian materials into their works. I would further want to insist that it is only the historian of religions who is able to treat much of this material seriously.

I. THE ENCLAVE

The most archaic way Israel has of talking about her land may be described under a rubric borrowed from the war in Vietnam: Israel as an "enclave" or a "strategic hamlet." For the ancient Israelite, the wilderness or desert was not seen as neutral ground, but rather as sacred land—sacred in the "wrong way." It is the demonic land, the wasteland, the dangerous land. It is the land where thorns, nettles, and thistles grow. It is the haunt of the hawk, hedgehog, raven, owl, jackal, ostrich, hyena, and other wild-beasts. It is the place of demons and monsters, the place where the night hag shrieks. It is the land of confusion and chaos, the land that is waste and void as in the beginning (all of these descriptions from Isa. 34:9-15). It is a place of utter desolation, of cosmic and human emptiness, the "howling waste of the wilderness" (Deut. 32:10), the place called the "land not sown" (Jer. 2:2), the place "in which there is no man" (Job 38:26), the land of "no-kingdom-there" (Isa. 34:12).⁹ The desert or wilderness is a place of strange, demonic, secret powers. It is a sacred land, a holy land in that it is a demonic realm; but it is not a place for ordinary men. It is not a place which is a homeland, a world where men may dwell.¹⁰

The world-for-man is a land which, in Eliade's terms, has been "founded." This may be expressed in a variety of ways: it is the land which has been given him by the deity; it is the land which has been

⁹ I owe much in this section to J. Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* (Copenhagen, 1926), I-II, 453-60, 467-80, 491-92.

¹⁰ One must note the interrelatedness of the apparently contradictory notions of the desert or wilderness as a demonic land and Eden, the place of revelation and of purification. I am aware that the present discussion is one-sided at this point.

created for him by the deity; it is the land which man has established through his rituals; or it is the land which man has won by conquest.

In a sense (although space does not permit the elaboration of this suggestion) the Hexateuch, indeed the entire Old Testament, may be understood as a complex creation myth concerning the establishment of this land in which a man can be truly human and at home. In Israelitic terms, it is a myth of the establishment of Israel the land and the people of Israel.

It has become commonplace since the research of G. von Rad and M. Noth to speak of certain basic themes in the Hexateuch: the Patriarchs and the promise to the Patriarchs; the deliverance from Egypt and the crossing of the Sea of Reeds; the wilderness-wandering; the entry into or conquest of the land; the theophany at Sinai, and the primeval creation narrative. But, although a cultic *Sitz im Leben* is usually proposed for each of these traditions, the treatment they have received from biblical scholars has usually been overly theological or overly historicistic. Each theme is probably best understood as a creation myth; each takes its place in a mythic complex which narrates the myth of the origin of the land and its inseparable corollary, the myth of the creation of Israel.

If the Hexateuch is read from this perspective, several patterns emerge: (1) In order for land to be *my* land, one must live together with it. It is man living in relationship with his land that transforms uninhabited wasteland into a homeland, that transforms the land into the land of Israel. It is that one has cultivated the land, died on the land, that one's ancestors are buried in the land, that rituals have been performed in the land, that one's deity has been encountered here and there in the land that renders the land a homeland, a land-for-man, a holy land. It is, briefly, history that makes a land mine. In Old Testament terms it is the shared history of generations that converts the land into the land of the Fathers. (2) Alternatively, the land was not just there, at hand, to be granted willy-nilly by the deity. It was fought for and died for. The land was won. Though historians (rightly so) question the historicity of the biblical narrative of the sudden conquest of the land of Canaan, the religious-mythic reality of the tradition is beyond dispute. A holy land is a land that has been won. It is the fighting and, especially, the dying that renders the land uniquely mine. In the Old Testament, it is also the deity who has led one in battle for the land that confers upon the land its sacrality. (3) Or one may narrate a primordial charter to the land.

The land is Israel's land because Israel's god established it for her in the beginning. This view is implicit in the Old Testament and made explicit in the rabbinic traditions that Israel, Temple, and Torah were pre-existent, created by the deity before anything was brought into being.

The Old Testament presents one great initiatory saga of the death and rebirth of a people, their journey into a sacred land, their instruction there by the deity and the ancestors.

No matter how Israel's possession of the land is narrated, no matter what myth expresses the creation of the land, the possession of such a land is a responsibility, for the blessing of the land is a fragile thing. Whether the cosmography is expressed through the model of the sacred land as a mound in the midst of the raging desert or the world as a bubble of air in the midst of the dangerous cosmic waters which surround it, with the sacred land the highest point—the security of the blessing and the possession of the land is not guaranteed. The walls of the “hamlet” are always vulnerable to attack, and man must ceaselessly labor to sustain, strengthen, and renew the blessing, to keep the walls under repair. This he does (1) by the recitation of myth, by the performance of ritual repeating the new year myth of the creation of the land, the crossing of the Sea of Reeds or the River Jordan; (2) by remembering in solemn cultic recitation the mighty deeds of old, the shared history of the people and their land, the events associated with the ancestors who are buried in the land; (3) by the proper care of the land (e.g., the sabbath rest every seventh year); (4) by the way one lives on the land. The History of Religions is familiar with the widespread pattern of a close correspondence between conduct and blessing, between man's deeds and the maintenance of prosperity, fertility, and of creation itself. For the Israelite, the law provides a guaranty of the stability of the possession, the continuance of the land as my land, of its fertility and blessing: “You shall keep all my statutes and all my ordinances and do them in order that the land where I am bringing you to dwell may not vomit you out” (Lev. 20:22).

If man must labor to maintain the land as his land, so, too, the deity may be invoked to aid in the maintenance of the walls of the enclave. When David brings the ark up to Jerusalem in a great cultic ceremony, he is bringing up a powerful force (a force that can indeed kill) into the city. From the ark radiate out, in concentric circles, fields of force which maintain the city in blessing and fertility. Or, as an alter-

native expression, the traditions of the invulnerability of Zion: that YHWH will fight a holy war on behalf of his sacred city, at times against the Babylonians, and others at times against the mysterious "enemies from the North," which must be understood as demonic desert dwelling powers of chaos (especially Jer. 4:6-7; 6:22-23). For:

Great is YHWH and much to be praised
 In the city of our God is his holy mountain;
 The most beautiful peak, the joy of all the earth.
 Mount Zion is the heart [i.e., the navel] of
 Zaphon,
 The city of the great King.
 God is her citadel, has shown himself her bulwark

 God will make her secure forever [Psalm 48].¹¹

The structure of the Holy Land in the Old Testament is predominantly one of an enclave, a strategic hamlet walled against the demonic forces of evil and chaos, a land of blessing whose walls and blessing requires constant renewal.

The image of Jerusalem as the heart of Zaphon (itself an archaic image, compare *Baal and Anat*, 'nt III:26-28: "In the midst of my mighty mountain Zaphon, on the holy mountain of my governance, on the beautiful hill of my dominion") introduces another structure little developed in the canonical Old Testament or the apocryphal books, but fully expressed in Josephus and rabbinic literature: the Holy Land as the Center of space and the Temple as the Center of the Holy Land.

II. THE CENTER

The most famous and frequently cited rabbinic text illustrating this tradition reports that:

Just as the navel is found at the center of a human being, so the land of Israel is found at the center of the world . . . and it is the foundation of the world. Jerusalem is at the center of the land of Israel, the Temple is at the center of Jerusalem, the Holy of Holies is at the center of the Temple, the Ark is at the center of the Holy of Holies and the Foundation Stone, is in front of the Ark, which spot is the foundation of the world.¹²

¹¹ I have followed here the translation of M. Dahood, *Psalms* (Garden City, N.Y., 1966), I, 288.

¹² Midrash Tanhuma, Kedoshim 10, as quoted in A. Hertzberg, *Judaism* (reprint; New York, 1963), p. 143.

It is for this reason that Jewish tradition speaks of its land with one voice from the rabbis in the Mishnah who declared: "The land of Israel is holier than all the other lands"¹³ to east European Jews who observed in their travel letters home that Jerusalem is "particularly holy and the gate of heaven."¹⁴

For the Jew who journeys "up to Jerusalem" (and the journey to Jerusalem is always "up," though it stands only 2,200-2,310 feet above sea level and is surpassed in height by places such as Bethel and Hebron), he is undergoing what must be described as a mystical ascent. He is ascending to the center, to that one place on earth which is closest to heaven, to that place which is horizontally the exact center of the geographical world and vertically the exact midpoint between the upper world and the lower world, the place where both are closest to the skin of the earth, heaven being only two or eighteen miles above the earth at Jerusalem, the waters of Tehom lying only a thousand cubits below the Temple floor (in some traditions, the earthly Temple is connected to the heavenly sanctuary by an invisible tube and by shafts to the dangerous waters below). For the Jew to journey up to Jerusalem is to ascend to the very crucible of creation, the womb of everything, the center and fountain of reality, the place of blessing par excellence. It is, in Eliade's terms, to journey to the place which is pre-eminently real, a place which exhibits a "superabundance of reality," which may be expressed in a variety of ways (of which the following are only a small sample).

Emanating from the Center is an almost tangible power of holiness, of purity, which renders a magic quality to the land and insures its character as an enclave: "R. Yohanan said: 'Before the Temple was constructed evil spirits used to trouble the people in the world, but since the Tabernacle was built, the evil spirits have ceased from the world.'"¹⁵ The land of Israel was supremely pure; Jerusalem was pre-eminently so. Thus, one reads in the Mishnah such observations as "any spittle found in Jerusalem may be deemed free from uncleanness"¹⁶; "there was no fly ever seen at the slaughter house in Jerusalem"¹⁷; or, more boldly, "He who lives in the land of Israel leads a

¹³ M. Kelim I.6, in Hertzberg, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

¹⁴ Letter of Isaac Hurwitz (d. 1630) in Hertzberg, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

¹⁵ Num. R. XII.3, as quoted in R. Patai, *Man and Temple in Ancient Jewish Myth and Ritual* (London, 1947), p. 126.

¹⁶ M. Shek. VIII.1, in H. Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford, 1933), p. 161.

¹⁷ M. Aboth V.5, in Danby, *op. cit.*, p. 456.

sinless life."¹⁸ This superabundance might be expressed in the almost automatic qualities of wisdom which adhere to those who inhabit the land. According to the rabbis, "the atmosphere of Israel makes men wise,"¹⁹ "even the gossip of those who live in the land of Israel is *Torah*."²⁰ These two themes, the purity and wisdom inherent in the land and conferred on those who dwell within its boundaries, are magnificently joined together in the teaching of the eighteenth-century Ukrainian sage, Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav:

His disciples have borne witness that all the life which he possessed came only from his having lived in the land of Israel. Every thought and every opinion which was his came only from the power of his having lived in the land of Israel for the root of all power and wisdom is the land of Israel. . . . According to Rabbi Nachman, Israel is the starting place of the creation of the world, its foundation stone, and it is the source of the coming world in which everything will be good. It is the real center of the spirit of life and therefore of the renewal of the world by the spirit of life which will proceed from it. The spring of joy, the perfection of wisdom, the music of the world is in it . . . the dust of the land of Israel has a magnetic power too: it draws men to holiness . . . the earth can exert a healing influence on the man who settles on it and serves it by binding him to its indwelling holiness and then the spirit of man is supported, strengthened and borne by the power of the earth . . . the pure and healing power of the earth is represented in the land of Israel.²¹

Indeed, so great is the magnetic attraction of this center that in a number of traditions the dead, buried in the Diaspora, are pictured as tunneling through the ground in order to reach their resting place in Israel.²²

While these texts with their emphasis on purity and wisdom might (I believe wrongly) be judged a peculiar development of Jewish tradition, another complex which expresses this powerful superabundance is widespread in the history of religions: the land of Israel or the power of the land as concentrated in the Temple conceived as a center of fertility and fecundity. The vital power of the land and the Temple is expressed in a variety of ways, ranging from traditions

¹⁸ BT Ket. 110b-111a, in Hertzberg, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

¹⁹ JT Baba Bathra 158b, in Hertzberg, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

²⁰ Lev. R. XXXIV, in Hertzberg, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

²¹ Hertzberg, *op. cit.*, p. 146; M. Buber, *The Tales of Rabbi Nachman*, trans. M. Friedman (reprint; Bloomington, 1962), pp. 207-8.

²² A process known as *gilgul*. In some texts the dead burrow; in others, YHWH digs tunnels for them. See the convenient collection of texts in J. Zahavi, *Eretz Israel in Rabbinic Lore* (Jerusalem, 1962), pp. 99-100.

that so forceful was this creative power that even the gold representations of trees and vines in the Temple produced fruit which the priests ate, that even the dead wooden beams from which the Temple was constructed flowered and grew leaves,²³ to the observation that as Israel was the highest point in the world, it rains only in Israel, and the rest of the world is watered and fertilized by the run-off.²⁴

This superabundance is apparent in the size of the animals and plants within the Holy Land, and the rabbis appear to vie with each other in outdoing the exaggeration. There are grapes as big as calves; cabbages so large that the stalk of one serves as a ladder; peaches so large that one-third of one feeds two men, one-third a herd of cattle, and the remainder is given away.²⁵

More mysteriously, the land is the center of fertility, because heavenly beings engage in sexual intercourse in it, an intercourse at the heart of things which establishes and guarantees the fertility of the world. This may be expressed in some traditions by the belief that on top of the Ark in the Holy of Holies, the cherubim have been engaged in an act of unending intercourse since the beginning of time and if they should ever cease, the cosmos would collapse into chaos,²⁶ or by the tradition (quoted below) of YHWH having nightly intercourse with his bride on the "couch" of the site of the Temple in Jerusalem.

III. THE CENTER OF TIME

The land of Israel is not only the enclave whose walls guard against the demonic powers of the chaotic desert or waters; it is not only the horizontal and vertical center of space, the focal point of purity, wisdom, blessing, and fertility—the land of Israel is understood to be the center of time as well.

In the Jewish traditions of the Holy Land, this has achieved a full mythic force which transcends the obvious fact that the important events in Israel's history, as recorded in the Bible, happened within the geographical confines of the land. Rather, the Center acts as a

²³ BT Yoma 21b, 39b; PT Yoma 41d; Tanhuma T'rumah 11; Tanhuma Ahare Moth 8, all in Patai, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

²⁴ BT 'Ta'anit 10a, in H. Malter, *The Treatise Ta'anit* (reprint; Philadelphia, 1967), pp. 134-36.

²⁵ See the collection of texts in Zahavi, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-52, 156.

²⁶ Patai, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-92; E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (New York, 1954), IV, pp. 131-32.

magnet, attracting to itself, to the site of the Temple, all of the important creation events of Israel's traditions in a way similar to Golgotha in Christian legend and Mecca-Kaaba in Islamic lore. One might almost term the primeval stone, the Stone of Foundation which stands at the base of the Temple, a "dreaming" in the sense that the Australian aborigines use the term, that is, a track or sign left by a primordially significant being in mythic time.

At the Stone of Foundation, which stands at the exact center of the cosmos, the waters of Tehom were blocked off on the first day; it was upon this Stone that YHWH stood when he created the world; from out of this Stone, the first light came (this light was understood to still illuminate the Temple, which was constructed on the Stone; thus, the windows of the Temple were designed to let light out rather than in); from the surface of this Stone dust was scraped to create Adam; underneath this Stone Adam is buried; on this Stone Adam offered the first sacrifice; upon this Stone Cain and Abel offered their fateful sacrifice; from under this Stone the flood waters came and under this Stone the floodwaters receded; upon this Stone Noah's ark landed and on this Stone Noah offered the first sacrifice of the renewed cosmos; upon this Stone Abraham was circumcised and upon this Stone he consumed the mystic meal with Melchizedek; upon this Stone Isaac was bound for sacrifice; this Stone served as the "pillow" for Jacob in the ladder vision (that vision of a vertical center, a ladder connecting heaven and earth, a ladder which I suspect was either two or eighteen miles high, depending on the tradition followed); it was on this Stone that YHWH stood when he sent out and recalled the plagues from Egypt; it was this Stone which David discovered when he dug the foundations of the Temple, and, finally, it will be upon this Stone that the Messiah will announce the end of the present era and the creation of the new. With the exception of the Bethel vision and David's discovery of the Stone, each of these events is believed to have occurred during the festival of Passover, the cosmogonic feast par excellence.²⁷

For the Jew who lives within this land, which is the vertical center of space, midpoint between the upper and lower world, the horizontal center of the earth, and the sacred center of his history, there is an awesome responsibility analogous to the common motif of perfection

²⁷ J. Jeremias, "Golgotha und der heilige Felsen," *Angelos*, II (1926), 74-128. This was reprinted as *Golgotha* ("Angelos: Archiv für neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte und Kulturkunde," Suppl.), ed. G. Polster, I (Leipzig, 1926), 34-88.

in the performance of ritual in the history of religions. For there is a close correspondence between things which occur in the sacred land (especially within the Temple in Jerusalem) and actions in the heavenly Tabernacle. What is said anthropologically of Peter, the living Stone of Foundation in Christian tradition ("whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" [Matt. 16:19]) and of the Jewish magician Honi the Circledrawer, who ritually fashioned (mandala-like) a center in which he stood and commanded rain to fall ("You have decreed on earth below, now the Holy One, blessed be He, fulfils your word in heaven above"²⁹) is said also of the relation of the action of the high priest at the earthly altar below to the archangel Michael, the heavenly high priest, in the celestial Tabernacle. Whatsoever the high priest does below shall be faithfully copied by the high priest above.³⁰ One may presume that if but a single error or alteration was made below, the cosmic liturgy itself would go awry. Small wonder a high priest who changed the ritual was pelted by the crowds at the Temple.³⁰ This sense of awesome responsibility, the requirement for ritual perfection and purity, was expressed forcefully centuries later by the Jewish folklorist S. Z. Rappoport in his famous play *The Dybbuk*:

The holiest land in the world is the Land of Israel. In the Land of Israel the holiest city is Jerusalem. In Jerusalem the holiest place was the Temple, and in the Temple the holiest spot was the Holy of Holies. There are seventy peoples in the world. The holiest among these is the People of Israel. The holiest of the People of Israel is the tribe of Levi. In the tribe of Levi the holiest are the priests. Among the priests the holiest was the High Priest. There are 354 days in the year. Among these the holidays are holy. Higher than these is the holiness of the Sabbath. Among Sabbaths, the holiest is the Day of Atonement, the Sabbath of Sabbaths. There are seventy languages in the world. The holiest is Hebrew. Holier than all else in this language is the holy Torah, and in the Torah the holiest part is the Ten Commandments. In the Ten Commandments the holiest of all words is the name of God. And once during the year, at a certain hour, these four supreme sanctities of the world were joined with one another. That was on the Day of Atonement, when the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies and there utter the name of God. And because this hour was beyond

BT Ta'anit 23a, in Patai, *op. cit.*, p. 186; cf. Malter, *op. cit.*, p. 340.

Seder'Arquim, in Patai, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-32.

I am aware that this incident, recorded in M. Sukka III.16, Tosefta Sukka i, and BT Sukka 48b, is usually interpreted as a sociological-political-religious oversy; see, e.g., I. Finkelstein, *The Pharisees* (3d ed.; Philadelphia, 1962), . 700-708.

measure holy and awesome, it was the time of utmost peril not only for the High Priest but for the whole of Israel. For if in this hour there had, God forbid, entered the mind of the High Priest a false or sinful thought, the entire world would have been destroyed.³¹

The Temple as the Stone of Foundation, as the center of responsibility, is essential for the maintenance of the cosmos. This, again, may be expressed in a variety of ways. Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachman bluntly declares, "Before the Temple was built the world stood on a throne of two legs; but when the Temple was built, the world became firmly founded and stood solidly."³² More allusively, the well-known dictum that "on three things the world stands: on the Law, on the Temple service, and on piety" was interpreted in a commentary to mean that "*the world rests on service* [and that] this is the service in the Temple. And so you find that all the time the service in the Temple was performed there was blessing in the world . . . and the crop was plentiful, and the wine was plentiful and man ate and was satisfied, and the beast ate and was satisfied. . . . When the Temple was ruined, the blessing departed from the world."³³ In these passages, the terms "the world stands" and "the world rests" should be understood within the context of their full mythic import. The Temple and its ritual serve as the cosmic pillars or the "sacred pole" supporting the world. If its service is interrupted or broken, if an error is made, then the world, the blessing, the fertility, indeed all of creation which flows from the Center, will likewise be disrupted. Like the Achilpa's sacred pole, which Eliade constantly reminds us of ("for the pole to be broken denotes catastrophe, it is like the end of the world, reversion to chaos"³⁴), the disruption of the Center and its power is a breaking of the link between reality and the world, which is dependent upon the Sacred Land. Whether through error or exile, the severing of this relationship is a cosmic disaster.

For the Jew, the people, the land, the law as *derek eretz* ("the way of the land"), and YHWH are inseparable. And it is only in this context that one can understand the full, tragic force of the exile, which has

³¹ J. C. Landis, *The Dybbuk and Other Great Yiddish Plays* (New York, 1966), pp. 51-52.

³² Tanhuma Ex., in Patai, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

³³ M. Aboth, I.2, in Danby, *op. cit.*, p. 446; Aboth d. R. Nathan 4, in Patai, *op. cit.*, p. 123. Cf. J. Goldin, *The Fathers according to Rabbi Nathan* (New Haven, Conn., 1955), p. 33.

³⁴ M. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, trans. W. R. Trask (New York, 1959), p. 33.

been the characteristic mode of Jewish existence for 1,900 years.

While the exile is an event which can be located chronologically as after A.D. 70, it is above all a thoroughly mythic event: the return to chaos, the decreation, the separation from the deity analogous to the total catastrophe of the primeval flood.

IV. EXILE

The category of exile is not an exclusively Jewish one. I have learned a great deal from studying the many texts expressing exilic traditions that may be found in the history of religions; and it is to be hoped that, along with the renewed interest in sacred space, some scholar in the near future will undertake a study of exile as it has appeared in the history of religions (a study which would include both texts which reflex an exile from a sacred land on earth and those which report an exile from a primeval or heavenly home).

Texts such as the following, recorded by R. P. Trilles from the Gabon pygmies after they had to leave their ancestral land, not only illuminates the general category of homeland and sacred space, but has proved to be specifically illuminating for an understanding of some Jewish expressions as well, sensitizing one to dimensions he might not have concerned himself with prior to reading it:

The night is black, the sky is blotted out
 We have left the village of our Fathers,
 The Maker is angry with us . . .
 The light becomes dark, the night and again night,
 The day with hunger tomorrow—
 The Maker is angry with us.

The Old Ones have passed away,
 Their homes are far off, below,
 Their spirits are wandering—
 Where are their spirits wandering?
 Perhaps the passing wind knows.
 Their bones are far off below.

Are they below, the spirits? Are they here?
 Do they see the offerings set out?
 Tomorrow is naked and empty,
 For the Maker is no longer with us—there,
 He is no longer the host seated with us at our fire.²⁶

²⁶ R. P. Trilles, *Les Pygmées de la forêt équatoriale* (Paris, 1932), p. 503; Trilles, *L'âme du pygmée d'Afrique* (Paris, 1945), p. 96. English versions may be found in C. M. Bowra, *Primitive Song* (reprint; New York, 1963), pp. 137 and 262, and W. R. Trask, *The Unwritten Song* (New York, 1966), I, p. 62.

Perhaps this last phrase, "He is no longer the host seated with us at our fire," sums up best what has been for the Jew his experience of exile.

To be exiled is to be cut off from the land, from the blessing, from the ancestors, from history, from life, from creation, from reality, from the deity. It is to enter into a new temporal period, palpably different from that which has been before. It is to descend into chaos. Thus, in a phrase made famous several years ago by David ben Gurion, some rabbis lamented, "He who lives outside of the Land is in the category of one who worships idols,"³⁶ that is, he who lives outside of the land of Israel is as if he has no god. To be exiled is to be in a state of chaos, decreation, and death; to return from exile is to be re-created and reborn. For the Temple to have been destroyed is to experience the shattering of the Center, the breaking of the sacred pole. This has been expressed in a variety of ways, and it is an urgent task for some specialist in Jewish literature to collect and classify these expressions utilizing History of Religions categories, I give only four examples:

Jonathan Eibschutz, an eighteenth-century talmudist:

If we do not have Jerusalem . . . why should we have life? . . . Surely we have descended from life unto death. And the converse is true. When the Lord restores the captivity of Zion we shall ascend from death unto life.³⁷

A Yiddish folksong:

Forest O Forest how big you are,
Bride O Bride how far you are.
When the forest shall be taken away
We shall come together one day.

Exile O Exile how long you are,
God O God how far you are.
When the Exile has been taken away,
We shall come together again some day.³⁸

In 2 Baruch X:

Husbandman—sow not again,
And earth—keep locked within you the sweets of your bounty,
And you, vine—why bother to give forth wine?
For an offering will not be made again in Zion,
Nor will first fruits again be offered.

³⁶ BT Ket 110b-111a, in Hertzberg, *op.cit.*, p. 143.

³⁷ Quoted in Hertzberg, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

³⁸ Translated in J. Leftwich, *The Golden Peacock: A Worldwide Treasury of Yiddish Poetry* (New York, 1961), p. 711.

Heavens—withhold your dew,
 And do not open your treasure houses of rain,
 And you, sun—withhold the light of your rays,
 And you, moon—extinguish the radiance of your light.
 For why should light rise again,
 Where the light of Zion is altered?

And, finally, in most daring language, from the Zohar, a portion of the lament of Matrona, the bride of YHWH, at the Temple site:

She sees that her dwelling place and her couch are ruined and soiled and she wails and laments . . . she looks at the place of the Cherubim and wails bitterly and she lifts up her voice and says: "My couch, my couch, my dwelling place . . . in it you came unto me, the Lord of the World, my husband. And He would lie in my arms and all that I wished for He would give me. At this hour He used to come to me. He left His dwelling place on high and came here and played between my breasts. My couch, O my couch. . . ."³⁹

With the exile and the destruction of the Temple the cosmic liturgy has ended and there has been a fragmentation of reality, of human *and* divine reality, as long as the exile persists. (Thus the tradition that when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, the heavenly Temple fell also. "When that below is built anew; this one above will be built anew," says YHWH to Michael.)⁴⁰ This is *not* to suggest a historical judgment such as some apologetically motivated Christian authors have put forward, that Jewish existence, culture, and religion since A.D. 70 have been sterile and broken. Rather, as a historian of religions, I wish to point to a pervasive mythic and religious understanding of exilic existence.⁴¹

³⁹ Zohar Hadash, in Patai, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-93.

⁴⁰ Seder 'Arquim, in Patai, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-32.

⁴¹ For an example of Christian apologetic distortion, see S. G. F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church* (London, 1951), p. 167: "[The destruction] had a paralysing affect on the life of the Jewish people, and from it they only slowly recovered and settled to an essentially maimed existence, with their cherished religion bereft of much of its *raison d'être*." I am, in contradistinction to such an approach, attempting to interpret seriously such Jewish modes of self-expression as revealed in the following passage from Chaim Raphael's fascinating midrashic interpretation of the fall of Jerusalem (*The Walls of Jerusalem: An Excursion into Jewish History* [New York, 1968], pp. xv-xvi): "For Jews one historic event lay for nearly two thousand years in their memory—the loss of Jerusalem. It expressed everything: it accounted for everything. . . . They were now, behind every joy, a people of sorrows. But more than their own sorrows was at stake. It was not just the Jews who had been driven into exile: God himself was in exile. The world was out of joint. The Destruction was the symbol of it."

While the standard explanations and responses to the exile and the destruction of the Temple are well known—the traditional Jewish theodicy of punishment and or purification; the Christian understanding of a judgment against the Jew for rejecting Jesus; R. M. Grant's thesis of a gnosticism arising out of the frustration of Jewish apocalyptic expectations—there developed side by side with these explanations a daring new mythology of the exile, one which possibly harks back to such ancient Near Eastern myths as the lost eye of Horus, the missing genitals of Osiris, the dying-rising and disappearing gods, as well as certain common Mediterranean gnostic motifs. It is that the exile of Israel represents the exile of God as well (to reverse the famous Hermetic maxim, "as below, so above").

This is first stated in minimal terms by Rabbi Akiba in the first century: "Were it not written in Torah it would be impossible to say such a thing—whenever Israel was exiled, the Presence of God, as it were, went into exile with them. . . . And when they return in the future, the Presence of God, as it were, will return with them."⁴² What was stated so tentatively, "as it were," in the first century is stated boldly and unambiguously following the Jewish experience of expulsion from Spain in 1492 and the Marrano style of diasporic existence. In a daring myth, the land below is not homologized to sacred realities on high; but, rather, the exile of Israel is homologized to the exile of the deity. As Israel is in exile from the land and from reality, so YHWH is in exile from himself and from his plentitude. If Jewish existence is understood in this myth as broken, the divine totality is broken as well.

This language became, in a diversity of expressions, one of the dominant themes of European Jewry. It might be expressed semi-humorously, as in the famous saying of Mendel Kotzkev: "Where does God dwell? Wherever he is not forced to move on!"⁴³ Or, far more seriously and poignantly, there developed under Isaac Luria and the sixteenth-century community at Safed a thoroughly mythic description and solution to the exile.

Space does not permit a detailed exposition of the creation myths of Lurianic kabbalah, which their greatest living interpreter, Gershom G. Scholem, has called "the deepest symbol of the exile that could be

⁴² Mekilta, Visha 14, in Hertzberg, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

⁴³ One version of this quip is given in T. Reik, *Jewish Wit* (New York, 1962), p. 29.

thought of."⁴⁴ To barely summarize: God, in the process of withdrawing from himself in the beginning in order to provide room for the cosmos, in his first expansive sending forth of light which broke into countless sparks which have become trapped in the material world below, became broken, fragmented, and in exile from himself. It is man's awesome responsibility to rescue his deity and, in so doing, to rescue himself. Like the familiar new year pattern described by historians of religion—like the saved-saviors of gnostic traditions—as Israel rescues her deity from exile, she rescues herself.

The experience of exile on Israel's part is a participation in the divine pathos, and is itself, by a daring reinterpretation, a salvific experience. The exile of Israel is her initiation, is her experience of a death which will be followed by a rebirth, and hence it becomes necessary to experience death or exile in its fullest so that rebirth and restoration may more quickly come. When this cosmogony and eschatology was merged with the myth of the followers of Sabbatai Zevi (after his conversion to Islam in 1666 at the height of his messianic popularity), one finds the notion that Israel needs to press ever further into chaos and exile in order to gather the lost sparks of the deity and return the fragments of himself to him. Or, understood in terms of Israel, "This is the secret why Israel is fated to be enslaved by all the nations of the world. In order that she may uplift those sparks which have also fallen among them. . . . And therefore it was necessary that Israel should be scattered to the four winds in order to lift up everything."⁴⁵ When this language of the recovery of the lost sparks became identified as the central act of east European Hasidism, this myth became one of the dominant expressions of European Jewry.⁴⁶

That which is here expressed in a myth may be experienced and enacted in ritual. In several brilliant studies, Scholem has shown how the Jew of Safed underwent the rites of Rachel, where he mourned, participated, and became one with the exiled portion of the deity, and the rites of Leah, where, through mystical exercises and contemplation, he transformed his body into a chariot to lift on high the exiled fragments.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ G. G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (reprint; New York, 1954), p. 261. See Scholem's summary of the Lurianic kabbalah in *ibid.*, chap. vii.

⁴⁵ *Sefer ha-Likkutim*, in *ibid.*, p. 284.

⁴⁶ See M. Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man*, trans. M. Friedman (reprint; New York, 1966), pp. 187-89; M. Buber, *Hasidism* (New York, 1948), pp. 7-8.

⁴⁷ G. G. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, trans. R. Manheim (London, 1965), pp. 148-50.

Most particularly, as is widespread in the history of religions, the exile may be overcome in moments of sacred time. For the Jew of the Lurianic community, as for later Hasidism, this especially occurred at the Sabbath.⁴⁸ On Friday afternoon the faithful, dressed in white, would go out into an open field which would be transformed through ritual into the "holy apple orchard." There they would solemnly await and escort into town the exiled and weeping Bride of God. Chanting the Song of Songs, the wedding liturgy of the broken "Old One" on high and the Bride trapped below, they would bring the Bride into their house to celebrate the nuptial feast.

Each dining room would be transformed through this ritual activity into, at one and the same time, the lost Temple of Jerusalem and the celestial Tabernacle. The angels from on high enter the room (or, does the room by performance of the ritual ascend on high?) and are pacified with a prayer. An extra Sabbath soul descends and enters the body of each Jew to strengthen him for the awesome sight he is about to witness and the daring ritual he is about to perform.

The room is decorated with myrtle, forming a marriage canopy for the intercourse of the deity and his bride, for the reuniting of the totality of the deity. The mother of the house is kissed in a ritual which Luria states has "deep mystical significance" and is homologized to the Bride of God through a recitation of Proverbs 31. She begins the ceremony by lighting the Sabbath candles, shielding her eyes from the light which shone on the first day (the light which was still visible in the Jerusalem Temple, the light which shattered into sparks in the kabbalistic myth).⁴⁹

The leader of the house then chants the cosmogonic myth from Genesis 1, wine is sipped, and an invocation sung over the meal:

Prepare the meal of the King,
the meal of the field of holy apples
of the Impatient One and the Holy Old One.

And then a fish meal is eaten, a fish which is believed to be both the food of rebirth and a proleptic taste of the flesh of the water dragon which YHWH defeated in the beginning and has preserved for a banquet in the Messianic age to come.

⁴⁸ I follow here Scholem's reconstruction, *ibid.*, pp. 139-46.

⁴⁹ Cf. Goodenough's ingenious intuition: "It seems to me no coincidence that the ancient ritualistic use of sex still survives in the old requirement that on the evening of a Sabbath or festival (that is, after the wife has lighted the lights), the husband must have intercourse with her. I should guess that it is with his wife as the Light of God that he has relations" (in *op. cit.*, IV, p. 98, n. 155).

Next, the one absolutely indispensable act of the Friday evening service is performed: the chanting of a hymn celebrating the *hieros gamos* of the deity on high and the exiled Bride, which takes place before the visionary eyes of the family—an act of intercourse which for one brief ritual moment reunites the shattered deity, which for a brief moment ends the exile and translates each home into the Center of blessing and fertility which stood in days of old.

I sing in hymns to enter the gates of the field
of apples of the holy ones.

A new table we lay for her, a beautiful candelabrum
sheds its light upon us.

Between right and left the Bride approaches
in holy jewels and festive garments.

Her husband embraces her in her sexual organs,
gives her fulfillment, squeezes out his strength.

It is a sexual act which produces a new creation:

Torments and cries are past.
Now there are new faces and souls and spirits.

He gives her joy in twofold measure.
Lights shine and streams of blessing.

Bridesmen go forth and prepare the Bride
victuals of many kinds and all manner of fish
to beget new souls and new spirits. . . .

All worlds are now formed and sealed within her,
but all shine forth from the Old of Days.

And now this Center, this new creation, which for a brief moment is like the old, is explicitly related to both the old Temple and the heavenly shrine. The living room, the *hic et nunc*, is abolished, and once more the participants in the ritual “go up” to Jerusalem as in the days before the exile:

To the southward set the mystic candlesticks,
I make room in the north for the table with
the loaves. . . .

That is, in the Tabernacle the candelabrum stood on the south side, the table with the bread of the Presence on the north (Exod. 26:35), but now through ritual the dining room table has become homologized with the Tabernacle and, further still, with the celestial shrine:

With wine in beakers and boughs of myrtle
 to fortify the betrothed for they are feeble.
 Let the presence of the Bride be surrounded
 by six sabbath loaves,
 Connected on every side with the heavenly sanctuary.

The union is complete, and total integration of the deity, Israel, the family, and the temples on high and below has been achieved. Finally, since the exile is briefly ended, since one is living in the realm of sacred time, the chaos into which the Jew has been plunged is conquered:

Weakened and cast out are the impure demons
 The menacing powers have now been chained.⁶⁰

That night, there is required intercourse between husband and wife imitating and repeating the nuptials of God and his exiled Bride that have just been witnessed and celebrated.

Thus far we have seen the archaic biblical image of the Holy Land as an enclave; the later image of the Holy Land as a Center and the full force of the experience of exile from this Center, a descent into chaos, death and unreality; as well as the daring "solution" to this condition through myth and ritual.

The persistence of these themes in the many strata of Jewish tradition up to modern times is undeniable, although much careful and imaginative scholarship needs yet to be done before a full body of evidence is available.

Among Zionists, the successors to the mystical energies of kabbalism, Sabbatianism, and Hasidism, this language is predominant (as may be quickly seen by examining the writings of the most distinguished modern kabbalist, the passionate Zionist, and first chief rabbi of Palestine after the British mandate, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook).⁶¹ Even among the so-called atheistic, secularist, deeply Marxist Zionists who founded the first *kibbutzim*, their religion of "land and labor" is a resurgence of the old language of a recovered center, of life shared with the land. Thus, for example, A. D. Gordon, understood by many to be the leader of the secular communitarians in the early twentieth century, describes their experience in a language resplendent with overtones of cosmic trees, world navels, and so forth:

⁶⁰ This poem is translated in Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, pp. 143-44.

⁶¹ Regarding Kook, see the brief selections from his largely untranslated writings in A. Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea* (reprint; New York, 1966), pp. 416-31; see further the account of his life and thought by J. Agus, *Banner of Jerusalem* (New York, 1946), and the penetrating chapter in H. Weiner, *The Wild Goats of Ein Gedi* (reprint; Cleveland, 1963), pp. 159-84.

It is life we want, no more and no less than that, our own life feeding on our own vital sources, in the fields and under the skies of our Homeland. . . . We want vital energy and spiritual richness from this living source. We come to our Homeland in order to be planted in our natural soil from which we have been uprooted, to strike our roots deep into its life-giving substances and to stretch out our branches in the sustaining and creating air and sunlight of the Homeland. . . . It is our duty to concentrate all our strength on this central spot. . . . What we seek to establish in Palestine is a new re-created Jewish people.⁵²

For the European Jew prior to World War II, the journey up to Jerusalem, the journey into the promised land, had about it all of the qualities of a mystic ascent and of a pilgrimage. As with any sacred space familiar in the general history of religions, the entrance into Israel was a process of initiation, of death to the old mode of exilic existence and rebirth to a new and real life. Abraham Kalisker, a Polish Jew writing from Tiberias in Palestine at the end of the eighteenth century, makes this unusually explicit:

Many a year passes before the days of his initiation are over, his initiation into true life. But then he will truly live in his native land and always before God. . . . Everyone who comes to the sanctuary must be born again in his mother's womb, be suckled again, be a little child again and so on, until he beholds the land face to face and until his soul becomes bound up with that of the land.⁵³

But for the contemporary Jew, since World War II the situation appears to have changed. The chaos, the evil, the demonic dimension of exilic existence that was encountered in the Nazi era was of such a quality that no previous mythology has prepared the Jew of today to face it. For the majority of those who have survived, the naked horror is avoided with vague language of six million dead or the apocalyptic phrase "the holocaust." For others, like the brilliant and influential novelist Elie Wiesel, even the resources of the broken Lurianic deity are not sufficient. The God of the Jews, he insists, must be an evil, perverse, psychotic deity to have chosen a people for such an end. Wiesel has recovered the lost language of gnosticism, bereft, however, of the good though hidden deity.

The problem of Jewish existence "after Auschwitz" will, as Rubenstein has suggested, be the chief religious problem for the contemporary Jew. It is clear that the old language of theodicy, of purification,

⁵² Translated in Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*, pp. 382-83.

⁵³ I have combined the translations of N. Glatzer, *In Time and Eternity* (New York, 1946), p. 218, and M. Buber, *The Tales of Rabbi Nachman*, p. 191.

preparation, and punishment, is no longer adequate. I suspect, however, that Paul Ricoeur is correct, that evil and the demonic, as that which resists order, will by its very nature forever elude philosophical and theological speculation. Only myth and symbol are adequate to describe it. And here the creative writers such as Wiesel and the historians of religions who remind Israel of myths and symbols she has forgotten must join hands and mutually fructify one another.

On the other hand, the re-establishment of Israel, what one scholar has called the "unexpected and thoroughly unmessianic event" of her restoration, poses, as Rubenstein has also suggested, a problem for which the old *heilsgeschichtliche* language is inadequate. Rubenstein calls for a "new paganism," and perhaps he is right. Once again the creative artist and the creative historian of religions must join hands in rediscovering old myths, in forging, perhaps, a new mythology.⁶⁴ For the recovery of the Center, as well as the agonizing encounter with the demonic, has opened up new possibilities of Jewish existence and expression, a new cosmos which has not yet been fully transformed into a world where man is at home.

AFTERWORD

Compare Mircea Eliade's use of this essay in "The World, The City, and The House," *Occultism, Witchcraft and Cultural Fashions* (Chicago, 1976), esp. pp. 27-30.

Of all of the essays printed in this volume, this one causes me the most difficulty. If I were to rewrite it, I would suggest that, along side of the mythology of exile discussed above, one should also note the positive response to the cessation of the archaic forms of worship. Indeed, I should want to go so far as to argue that if the Temple had not been destroyed, it would have had to be neglected. For it represented a locative type of religious activity no longer perceived as effective in a new, utopian religious situation with a concomitant shift from a cosmological to an anthropological view-point. To make such an argument, I would have to take history far more seriously than has been done in this paper (see my "Preface", above) and seek to describe the "trajectory" of the constellation of Holy Land and Temple. For a brief statement, see chapter 8, below.

⁶⁴ From quite a different perspective, see the suggestive review by R. Sanders, "Myth and Science at Masada," *Midstream*, XIII, No. 2 (1967), 72-75, esp. 74: "Archaeology in Israel not only serves to unearth the mythic heritage of place for a re-implanted people; it is itself a major element in the national myth-making process. . . . Digging is an act of major symbolic force in the modern history of Israel, and the now epic acts of communion between hands and soil that had been performed by the drainers of swamps, the builders of roads, and the founders of kibbutzim, have today been brought back to a reconciliation with the contemplative life by the digging of archaeologists."

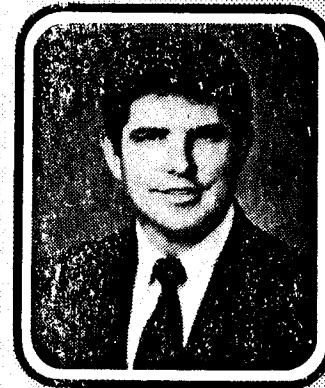
ATTENTION YOUNG SINGLE ADULTS!!

A Special YSA and Institute Fireside

*An Evening With
Bruce H. Porter*

Brother Porter has extensive travel and research experience in Europe and the Middle East where he did landmark research on The Pearl of Great Price. He is an authority on the origin and contents of the Book of Abraham and discusses it in clear and simple terms.

Join us for an enjoyable and eye-opening evening.



SUNDAY, JANUARY 22, 1989, 7:30 P.M.
AZTEC BUILDING, 5555 Aztec Drive, La Mesa

SIGN UP FOR AN INSTITUTE CLASS NOW!

Classes Begin January 30, 1989