



The Ziegler School  
of Rabbinic Studies

# Walking with History

Edited By  
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In Memory of Harold Held and Louise Held,  
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Published in partnership with the  
United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism,  
the Rabbinical Assembly,  
the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs  
and the Women's League for Conservative Judaism.



# UNIT 9: THE NEW WORLD

RABBI SCOTT PERLO

## THIS HOLY COMMUNITY: SYNAGOGUE AND HAVURAH IN THE UNITED STATES

A pithy and wry piece of Jewish wisdom based on the Talmud teaches us: “*meshaneh makom, meshaneh mazal*”, – to change one’s place is to change one’s fate.<sup>1</sup> One could not more aptly describe the growth of Judaism in the United States and North America, beginning in the 19th century and continuing through our era. Judaism underwent massive changes in both form and function as it was transplanted into the soil of a new continent. The freedoms of the New World and the painful vicissitudes of history have made it such that North America and Israel have been the dominant populations of World Jewry for longer than most Jews’ living memory. It is wise, then, to turn a careful eye to the development of the religious institutions that have captured nearly half the Jewish world.

## THE AMERICAN SYNAGOGUE

The most salient fact of the American synagogue is that it belongs to its laypeople, not its clergy. This inheritance was jointly bestowed by Protestant development in the early United States and by simple circumstance within Jewish communities, as we shall see later.

Post Civil War Protestantism was deeply democratic and inclusive.<sup>2</sup> Because clergy in the United States did not possess the political power they had wielded in Old World countries, religion in America revolutionized itself into new republican forms and emphasized self-determination. The immigrant Jews who landed here found themselves empowered by this new milieu.

Additionally, America suffered, well into the late 19th century, from a dearth of rabbis. The first ordained rabbi in the United States, Abraham Rice, did not arrive until 1840. Only about ten ordained and not-so-ordained of his colleagues came within the subsequent decade.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, both by philosophy and happenstance, the American synagogue was created, maintained, and governed by laypeople – an arrangement that still exists today. This organization was a powerful departure from the communal arrangements of Europe, where rabbis wielded not only clerical but legal authority (in that they would often judge court cases).

This new model set the stage for memorable clashes between rabbis and the *parnas* (an old Hebrew word for the community president and benefactor), and it forced rabbis to endure a level of criticism and equality that they had not before encountered. The legendary Reform leader Isaac Meyer Wise (who, interestingly, possessed no formal ordination), reported an acrimonious battle with his *parnas*, who attempted to prevent Wise from preaching on a given Shabbat. Wise was fired from his position, but, owing to the general lack of rabbis of his caliber, was quickly snapped up by another congregation.

Lastly, the American Jewish community was distinguished by the existence of a choice which was not available in the Old World: the choice not to participate. The high percentage of unaffiliated American Jews today may be alarming, but it is not a new phenomenon. Absenting oneself from Jewish practice is a tradition within American Judaism. For those nostalgic about a past that never was, historian Jonathan Sarna quotes the following surprising statistics: “According to the 1906 U.S. Census of Religious Bodies only 26 percent of America’s Jews could even be accommodated within America’s synagogues...Ten years

<sup>1</sup> Babylonian Talmud, Rosh HaShanah 16b.

<sup>2</sup> Riv-Ellen Prell, *Prayer and Community: The Havurah in American Judaism*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989, p.32.

<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism: A History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004, p. 91.



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later, the census counted membership figures...and listed...no more than 12 percent of America's by then 3 million Jews [as synagogue members]".<sup>4</sup> And anthropologist Riv-Ellen Prell confirms the reasons behind the numbers: "For the nineteenth-century Jewish immigrant, Judaism for the first time was a 'preference.' From the point of view of American society, religion was a voluntary activity, not a governmentally controlled one".<sup>5</sup>

The American synagogue as a communal organization was radically different from its predecessors' composition. It was congregational rather than communal, serving Jews of a specific denomination rather than Jews of a specific area. It was lay driven rather than rabbinically controlled. Most of all, participation in synagogues was voluntary rather than assumed.

If these are the factors that forged the American synagogue, what then was its use and purpose? What did it offer its congregants, and why did this new style of synagogue become rapidly entrenched in the American Jewish community?

Prell points out that in the transition to a new country, free of many of the cultural restraints of the "old" countries, the focus of American Jews changed from observance to identity and identification.<sup>6</sup> No longer places that taught Jews what to *do*, synagogues became the arbiters of how to understand what a Jew should *be* in a new democratic world.

Thus the American synagogue was and is not precisely a religious institution. It is the place in which Jews have generated and preserved their Jewish identity as a subculture in the United States, not, as in ages past, the place where Jews ensured the dissemination of their religious practices. Synagogues became places in which Jews both understood and recast their Jewishness in light of a welcome Americanness.

Synagogue Jews mediated their new American Jewish identities through decorum, best understood as the communally approved and enforced standards of behavior that tell a story about community members. Crucially, decorum is not theological. It is rarely interested in participants' religious beliefs. Instead, decorum expresses communal standards of proper behavior, related more to class and status than to religion. Common examples of American synagogue decorum, sitting quietly during services and not raising one's voice above the cantor's, were not necessarily expected in traditional, cacophonous Ashkenazi shuls. These behaviors were widely adopted in American synagogues because they were thought to be genteel, and American Jews aspired to American gentility. Thus it was that American synagogues governed themselves by rules that rarely related to *halakhah* (Jewish law), but instead reflected the aspirations of immigrant Jews rapidly breaking social barriers and achieving prosperity and respect on American soil.

As a result of the above-noted factors, post World War Two American synagogues were defined by three major characteristics. First, they were child-oriented, as opposed to the adult-oriented shuls of days past.<sup>7</sup> In harmony with a larger societal shift, the majority of synagogue resources went into the education and cultivation of children, in the hope that these children would both retain their Jewishness and be socialized properly to their parents' new American norms.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Sarna, 161

<sup>5</sup> Prell, 37

<sup>6</sup> Prell, 59

<sup>7</sup> Sarna, 285

<sup>8</sup> Prell, 58, 60



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Second, synagogues began to orient themselves towards women. The post-war American generation cherished the ideal of woman as homemaker. As husbands commuted from new suburbs to city jobs and back, the 80% of Jewish women who stayed at home during childbearing years became the dominant synagogue presence.<sup>9</sup> Though men continued to hold religious and financial leadership, the suburban synagogue belonged to its women.

Lastly, these post-war, suburban synagogues reflected 1950s American middle-class values, including the powerful desire to belong and conform, the display of security and achievement through consumption, and the respect for grandeur and institutions. According to sociologist Deborah Dash Moore, “So successful were they in binding middle-class norms to visions of Jewish fulfillment, that their children often could not disentangle the two. In the children’s eyes even the overstuffed furniture of their parents’ home reflected a middle-class synthesis, as utterly bourgeois and Jewish as a decorous synagogue service.”<sup>10</sup>

Belonging was deeply important to this post-war generation. By the late 1950s, 60% of American Jews reported synagogue membership – a figure not achieved again since then.

### THE COMING OF THE HAVURAH

This fact must be emphasized: we cannot divorce the history of American Jewish institutions from the socio-political realities that surrounded them. When the 1960s saw a backlash against authority, bureaucracy, and institutions in American life, there arose at the same time a critique of the synagogue as a bureaucratic institution that actively distanced participants from deep relationships with God, prayer, and Torah. Searching for new authenticity and entrenched in critiquing the establishment, some American Jews formed spiritual/communal groups called “havurot” (the plural of the Hebrew word *havurah*). What began as scattered initiatives became, in the 1970s, the Havurah Movement.

There were some predecessors in the Reconstructionist world, but the first havurah to be widely recognized was Havurat Shalom in Somerville, Massachusetts. Havurat Shalom was founded in 1968 by Rabbi Arthur Green, and became a community which “brought students and teachers together as equals,” and a place “to study and pray ‘seriously and intensely.”<sup>11</sup> Other havurot followed suit over the next decade.

Havurot and their participants were not shy in their attacks upon the Jewish establishment. In particular, they pointed out an inconsistency in Jewish life: while many congregants believed in the idea of synagogue, almost none believed in what synagogues themselves taught. It was increasingly rare for non-Orthodox synagogue Jews to have robust personal Jewish observance outside of the synagogue.

Havurot viewed this inconsistency as a lack of authenticity within synagogues and the larger Jewish establishment.<sup>12</sup> Why is it, they asked, that Jews belong to institutions whose religious ideals they do not find compelling? If prayer is meant to be deep communication between people and God, why does it feel so distant and performative?

<sup>9</sup> Sarna, 286

<sup>10</sup> Deborah Dash Moore, *At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1981.

<sup>11</sup> Prell, 93

<sup>12</sup> Prell, 94



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The Jewishly-educated, countercultural constituency that created havurot sought authenticity by both claiming the Old World and embracing America. They felt that the essence of Jewish tradition and the communality of *shtetl* (village) life had been lost in the transition to America. Havurot lamented the intimacy of the *shtetl* in the face of thousand family synagogues. They gathered in homes and storefronts, eschewing elegant buildings, and favored handmade ritual objects.<sup>13</sup> Though mostly from Conservative backgrounds, Havurah members tended to be more Jewishly observant than their mainstream Conservative counterparts, and had strong associations with the emotional, ecstatic ways of Hassidism.

Despite the claim on Old World tradition, the havurah is a decidedly modern child of the United States. Like their 1960s counterparts, Havurah members rejected traditional forms of authority. Though one or more members of any given havurah were likely to be ordained rabbis, most communities had no one person serving with that title and role. Religious, ritual, and communal decisions were made by group consensus. Havurot were profoundly egalitarian, and advanced the role of women and the acceptance of gays and lesbians well ahead of their synagogue counterparts.

The religious and ritual decisions of each havurah rarely adhered to a consistent interpretation of Jewish law, nor did they resemble decisions made by other havurot. Decisions grew out of an encounter with Jewish texts and Jewish law, a deep “sensibility” on the part of the highly Jewishly educated, a demand for egalitarianism between men and women, an explicit confrontation with theological difficulties and issues, and the unique needs of individuals and communities. If this description seems a mouthful, it is because it accurately reflects the complexity of havurah religious development. On any given day, the havurah prayer experience was freewheeling and intuitive, and often changed based on the desires of the day’s leader. It sought to address the needs of the people in the room, and did not feel itself accountable to a rational, ordered structure. Havurot embodied a message both vibrant and difficult to categorize: seek authenticity in Torah while personalizing Judaism as much as possible. Widespread acceptance of the importance of spirituality and personalization in the Jewish experience was the great success and lasting contribution of the Havurah Movement.

A prime example of this reach for spirituality and personalization came in 1973, when three members of Havurat Shalom, Richard Siegel and Michael and Sharon Strassfeld published the *The Jewish Catalog*. Although it seems natural now, *The Jewish Catalog* was the first of its kind: a “make-it-yourself” guide to Judaism that told readers not how they should practice Judaism, but how to create the kind of Judaism they wanted. Explicitly non-coercive, the *Catalog* pushed individuals to create Jewish life with their own hands, as opposed to relying on others, in particular professional clergy, to perform ritual for them.<sup>14</sup> In its own words, “The orientation is to move away from the prefabricated, spoon-fed, nearsighted Judaism into the stream of possibilities for personal responsibility and physical participation. This entails a returning of control of the Jewish environment to the hands of the individual...”<sup>15</sup>

In the 1970s, Rabbi Harold Schulweis and others of Congregation Valley Beth Shalom in Los Angeles seized upon the idea of the havurah as a way to create intimate community within large synagogues. Other synagogues quickly followed suit. Though a number of the original havurot remain (including Havurat Shalom), the movement itself lost steam in the 1980s. Ironically, the synagogue – the target of intense havurah critique – has preserved havurot until today. Groups come together for communal purposes, holidays, and lifecycle

<sup>13</sup> Prell, 97

<sup>14</sup> Richard Siegel, Michael Strassfeld and Sharon Strassfeld, *The First Jewish Catalog: A Do-It-Yourself Kit*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973, p.9.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*



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events, and exhibit neither the radical ritual approach nor the political orientation that characterized the independent havurot.

For the majority of American Jews, the havurah never achieved the significance achieved by the synagogue, and it remained a movement of the minority. However, it would be a mistake to underestimate the effects of the Havurah Movement. The number of current senior leaders, thinkers, and teachers with roots in havurot is staggering. Havurot are responsible for developing a vocabulary of and recognizing the pressing need for spirituality and personalization within Conservative and Reform Judaism. Havurot broke the ground for the gender egalitarianism, acceptance, and inclusivity that are now axiomatic in many American synagogues. And, not insignificantly, havurot served as the spiritual antecedents for the contemporary critique of the Jewish establishment: independent minyanim and spiritual communities.

The 2000s have seen a remarkable generational break in American Judaism. Those born in the 1980s and 1990s, called Generation Y or Millennials, show a marked reluctance to affiliate with traditional Jewish institutions.<sup>16</sup> But lack of affiliation does not translate to weakened ties with Judaism. Rather, an explosion of independent minyanim and Jewish spiritual communities, mostly pioneered by this younger generation, has dominated the last decade.

It is too soon to write the history of these still developing communities, but the strength of their voice in Jewish communal life cannot be denied. For example, both Rabbi Sharon Brous of Los Angeles' IKAR, the most famous of the spiritual communities, and Rabbi Elie Kaunfer of New York's Kehilat Hadar, the most famous of the independent minyanim, have appeared on lists of the nation's "top" or "most influential" rabbis. Representatives of both organizations enjoy wide booking in the institutions and conferences of today's Jewish establishment.

There are major differences between the havurot and these newcomers, but they share the critique of synagogues and institutional Jewish life pioneered by the Havurah Movement. Today's spiritual communities and independent minyanim can be seen as the contemporary inheritors of the havurah tradition. What this means is that no cease-fire has been called in the battle over the nature of non-Orthodox American Judaism. There is active tension as to whether Jewish holy spaces should focus on communal Jewish identity or political activism and Jewish spirituality. The future will be decided by an aggregation of individual choices, and will not be imposed from without. One thing is clear, however: every community, whether synagogue or otherwise, must converse openly, thoughtfully, and consciously, as to the nature of the choice. The story of American Judaism is that the choice of who we are, and who we are to be, is forever in our hands.

<sup>16</sup> "Religion Among the Millennials - Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life." Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. Web. <<http://www.pewforum.org/Age/Religion-Among-the-Millennials.aspx>>.



## UNIT 9: THE NEW WORLD – TEXT 1

**THOMAS JEFFERSON (1743-1826), VIRGINIA STATUTE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, DRAFTED IN 1777  
AND PASSED INTO LAW IN 1786<sup>1</sup>**

Whereas Almighty God has created the mind free, so that all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burdens, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and are a departure from the plan of the Holy Author of our religion, who being Lord both of body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it by coercions on either, as was in his Almighty power to do; that the impious presumption of legislators and rulers, civil as well as ecclesiastical, who, being themselves but fallible and uninspired men, have assumed dominion over the faith of others, setting up their own opinions and modes of thinking as the only true and infallible, and as such endeavoring to impose them on others, has established and maintained false religions over the greatest part of the world, and through all time...

Be it therefore enacted by the General Assembly, that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burdened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in nowise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.

### STUDY QUESTIONS

- **In this act, Jefferson sets into Virginia law that “all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in nowise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities”. Think about this statement in relation to the Enlightenment, discussed by Dr. Lowenstein in Essay 7. In what ways is this Virginia Statute an Enlightenment document?**
- **Jefferson was heavily influenced by English philosopher John Locke and his 1689 “A Letter Concerning Toleration”. Both concentrate on the hypocrisy of “coercions” and the “impious presumption of legislators and rulers”. What was happening in Jefferson’s time? Which legislators and rulers might he have in mind?**
- **How did the freedom of religion and the freedom from religious coercion affect Jewish patterns of behavior when Jews came to the United States of America?**

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Jefferson “Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom,” *Britannica Annals of American History*. <http://america.eb.com/america/article?articleId=385429>.





## THE NEW WORLD – TEXT 2

### MORDECAI MANUEL NOAH (1785-1851), PROCLAMATION TO THE JEWS, SEPTEMBER 15, 1825<sup>1</sup>

*Whereas*, it has pleased Almighty God to manifest to his chosen people the approach of that period when, in fulfillment of the promises made to the race of Jacob, and as a reward for their pious constancy and triumphant fidelity, they are to be gathered from the four quarters of the globe, and to resume their rank and character among the governments of the earth;

*And Whereas*, the peace which now prevails among civilized nations, the progress of learning throughout the world, and the general spirit of liberality and toleration which exists together with other changes favorable to light and to liberty, mark in an especial manner the approach of that time, when “peace on earth, good will to man” are to prevail with a benign and extended influence, and the ancient people of God, the first to proclaim his unity and omnipotence, are to be restored to their inheritance, and enjoy the rights of a sovereign independent people;

*Therefore*, I, Mordecai Manuel Noah, citizen of the United States of America, late Consul of the said States to the City and Kingdom of Tunis, High Sheriff of New York, Counselor at Law, and by the grace of God, Governor and Judge of Israel, have issued this my Proclamation, announcing to Jews throughout the world, that an asylum is prepared and hereby offered to them, where they can enjoy that peace, comfort and happiness which have been denied them through the intolerance and mis-government of former ages; an asylum in a free and powerful country remarkable for its vast resources, the richness of its soil, and the salubrity of its climate; where industry is encouraged, education promoted, and good faith rewarded, “a land of milk and honey”, where Israel may repose in peace, under his “vine and fig tree”... The asylum referred to is in the State of New York, the greatest State in the American Confederacy...

### STUDY QUESTIONS

- According to the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Mordecai Manuel Noah was “probably the most influential Jew in the United States in the early 19th century”<sup>2</sup> a flamboyant and famous public figure. Why does he offer an “asylum” in the United States to Jews around the world? How do conditions in the United States differ for Jews in Noah’s time from those in other nations?
- Noah’s project was to create a separate Jewish “refuge” in New York, and he purchased most of Grand Island for this purpose. The project failed miserably. Why do you think it was not successful?
- Noah describes the United States as a “land of milk and honey”, and a place where “Israel may repose in peace under his vine and fig tree”. The first quote references Deuteronomy 31:20 and the second, Micah 4:4. Look up these verses in your Bible. What is the context of each? Why would Noah describe the United States in this fashion? Was he right for his time, or was this hyperbole? Is he right for our time?

<sup>1</sup> Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, p.459-461.

<sup>2</sup> Leo Hershkowitz, “Noah, Mordecai Manuel.” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. 2nd ed. Vol. 15. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007, p.290-291.



## THE NEW WORLD – TEXT 3

### ISAAC MAYER WISE (1819-1900), REMINISCENCES, 1901<sup>1</sup>

During the services on Sabbath morning, the *parnass* sent the sexton to me with the message *ex-officio*, “The *parnass* serves notice on you not to preach today”. I understood the declaration of war and the arbitrary assumption of power, and retorted briefly, “I shall preach today”. I stepped to the pulpit at the regular time as the choir finished its hymn. The *parnass* now arose in front of me, and said threateningly, “I tell you, you shall not preach today”. I paid no attention to him, and began to speak in a loud voice, which thoroughly drowned the voice of the *parnass*, so that the people did not know why he was standing in front of me. He repeated his threat. I paid no attention to it, and continued to speak quietly. The *parnass* and a few of his adherents left the synagogue; but their action caused no disturbance...The gage of battle\* had thus been publicly thrown, and both sides took it up.

\* an object thrown down as a challenge to combat

### STUDY QUESTIONS

- In our text, *parnass* refers to the president of the community. Isaac Mayer Wise, one of America’s first and most famous rabbis, is being told *ex-officio* (by right of office) not to preach. Why does the *parnass* think he has such a right? What about the structure of the American synagogue would allow him to instruct a rabbi not preach?
- Wise interprets the outcome of this episode: “the gage of battle had thus been publicly thrown, and both sides took it up”. What was Wise fighting for? Why did he resist the order of the *parnass*?
- Wise eventually lost this job. Was it appropriate for the congregation to fire Wise because he refused to submit to the command of his *parnass*? What does this episode say about where power resides in congregations? Why were American synagogues set up in this way? Do you think that there is something distinctly American about this set up?

<sup>1</sup> Isaac M. Wise, *Reminiscences*. Translated by David Philipson. Cincinnati: Leo Wise & Company, 1901, p.158.



# THE NEW WORLD – TEXT 4

## JEWISH WOMEN CALL FOR CHANGE, EZRAT NASHIM'S DECLARATION TO THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT, 1972<sup>1</sup>

It is time that:

Women be granted membership in synagogues

Women be counted in the minyan

Women be allowed full participation in religious observances —(*aliyot, ba'alot kriyah, shlichot tzibur*) [being called to the Torah, reading Torah, leading services]

Women be recognized as witnesses before Jewish law

Women be allowed to initiate divorce

Women be permitted and encouraged to attend Rabbinical and Cantorial schools, and to perform Rabbinical and Cantorial functions in synagogues

Women be encouraged to join decision-making bodies, and to assume professional leadership roles, in synagogues and in the general Jewish community

Women be considered as bound to fulfill all *mitzvot* equally with men

### STUDY QUESTIONS

- Ezrat Nashim, “The Women’s Section”, was a group of Jewishly educated women including Yale Professor Paula Hyman. This group arose primarily out of the New York Havurah. What is it about *havurot* that led them to call for organizational advancement of the role of women?
- This declaration was made to the Rabbinical Assembly in 1972. What was happening in the United States at that time? How did secular movements for socio-economic and political change influence Judaism? What are the lasting effects of those movements on contemporary Judaism?
- Why did promotion of the religious role of women come from American soil? What is it about the United States that nurtured this development?
- Ezrat Nashim presented their declaration in 1972, but the Jewish Theological Seminary did not approve rabbinical ordination for women until 1983. Why were there ten years between declaration and decision? (Note that the Reform Movement ordained Sally Preisand in 1972.)
- What are some of the ways in which Judaism has changed recently? What parallels, if any, can you draw between Western secular culture and the Judaisms of the 1970s and Western secular culture and the Judaisms of today? What kinds of changes have you experienced in Judaism in your lifetime? How have they affected you and your community?

<sup>1</sup> Jewish Women’s Archive. “Jewish Women Call for Change”. <http://jwa.org/media/jewish-women-call-for-change>.



# THE NEW WORLD – TEXT 5

## RABBI KALONYMUS KALMAN SHAPIRA (1889-1943), *BENE MAHSHAVAH TOVAH*, INSTRUCTIONS IN THE MATTER OF COMMUNITY<sup>1</sup>

The place where our fellowship assembles shall be, to each member, a sacred place, a place of eternity, and a (spiritual) bath house in which one can wash and purify the soul. And that in their entering into this place, the *Shekhinah* (physical presence of God) is found there. And when they walk there, it should be in their eyes as if they have left the domain of this world and entered into the lower section of the Garden of Eden, which God has brought down to their house of assembly... And when they are found in their assembly house, they shall rejoice and have this intention: “The holy *Shekhinah* is in our midst. My soul is sick with love of You. Please God, please heal her by showing her the gentleness of Your light”.

Upon three pillars does our holy fellowship stand: upon the fellowship of members, upon love between members, and upon closeness between members. Therefore, even if all are joined together in friendly love, and each loves the other with a great love; nonetheless, each person should take for himself another fellow that, before this person, he will reveal all the secret matters of his heart.

### STUDY QUESTIONS

- **Hassidic Rabbi Kalonymus Shapira, also known as the Piaseczner Rebbe, became the Rebbe of the Warsaw Ghetto. These instructions are part of an ideal plan for sacred community (the entire book is dedicated to this concept). What segments of contemporary Jewish society would resonate with such a message? Who within the Jewish community is attempting to implement such a vision?**
- **Do you find these guidelines compelling or desirable? Why or why not?**
- **Does anything in these instructions conflict with the contemporary vision of synagogues? With your vision?**
- **To what extent are synagogues houses of spirituality? To what extent should synagogue activities be devoted to spiritual seeking?**

<sup>1</sup> Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, *Bene Mahshavah Tovah*, Jerusalem: Va'ad Hasidei Piaseczner, 1989, p.57.







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