



Tastes of Jewish Renewal
Disruptive Innovation, Re-Centering and Renewal

Rabbi David Evan Markus
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Blessing Before Study

ברוך אתה יהו"ה אלֵהינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם *Baruch atah YHVH eloheinu melech ha'olam*
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ *asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu*
לְעֶסֶק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה. *la'asok b'divrei Torah.*

Blessed are You, YHVH our God, sovereign in all time and space, who makes us holy by connecting command, commanding us to busy ourselves in words of Torah.

The Impulse to Control Change

Pirkei Avot 2:13

רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן אוֹמֵר, הָיִי זָהִיר בְּקִרְיַאת שְׁמַע *R. Shimon says: Be careful [or attentive,*
וּבִתְפִלָּה. וּכְשֶׁאֲתָה מִתְפַּלֵּל, אַל תַּעַשׂ תְּפִלָּתְךָ *or shining] in reciting the Shema and in*
קָבַע, אֶלָּא רַחֲמִים וְתַחֲנוּנִים לְפָנֵי ה'. *prayer; and when you pray, don't make*
your prayer fixed, but rather [pray for]
mercy and supplication before God.

Bartenura Avot 2:13

קָבַע - כַּאֲדָם שֵׁשׁ עָלָיו חוֹבָה דְּבַר קְבוּעַ *Fixed - as one with a fixed obligation*
וְאוֹמֵר אֵימָתִי אֶפְרוֹק מֵעָלַי חוֹב זֶה. *who says, "When will I unload from*
myself this obligation?"

M. Berakhot 4:3

רַבִּן גַּמְלִיאֵל אוֹמֵר בְּכָל יוֹם מִתְפַּלֵּל אָדָם י"ח. *Rabban Gamliel says: Each day one*
ר' יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אוֹמֵר מֵעֵין י"ח. ר"ע אוֹמֵר אִם שְׂגוּרָה *must pray 18 [blessings]. R. Yehoshua*
תְּפִלְתּוֹ בְּפִי יִתְפַּלֵּל י"ה וְאִם לֹא מֵעֵין י"ח. *says: [One may say] an abbreviated 18.*
R. Akiva says: If the prayer is fluent in
one's mouth, one must say 18, and if
not, an abbreviated 18.

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B.T. Kiddushin 38b

כָּל הַחֹדֶשׁ אֲסוּר מִן הַתּוֹרָה בְּכָל מְקוֹם: עֵרְלָה *[Eating] new [wheat by the priests] is*
הַלְכָה וְהַכְּלָאִים מִדְּבַרֵי סוֹפְרִים. *banned by Torah everywhere [unless it*
is sanctified by Omer wave offering] –
young growth by halachah, and mixed
kinds [outside Israel] by rabbis.

Chiddushei Torah Moshe, O.C. 1:28
(Moshe Sofer of Pressburg, 1762-1839)

כָּל הַחֹדֶשׁ אֲסוּר מִן הַתּוֹרָה בְּכָל מְקוֹם. *Everything new is banned by Torah*
everywhere.

Old Ways of Finding New Ways

Deuteronomy 17:8-9

כי יפלא ממך דבר למשפט בין דם לדם בין דין ודין ובין נגע לנגע דברי ריבת בשעריך וקמת ... ובאת אל-הכהנים הלויים ואל-השפט אשר יהיה בימים ההם ודרשת והגידו לך את דבר המשפט: ועשית על פי הדבר אשר יגידו לך: If a matter arises that is too hard for you to decide – among relatives, pleas or punishments, matters of controversy within your gates – then ... come before the levitical priests and to the judge then serving. Inquire, and they will tell to you the decision: do as they tell you.

Avodah Zara 36a

אין גוזרין גזירה על הצבור אלא אם כן רוב הצבור יכולין לעמוד בה. We apply no decision to a community unless a majority can comply with it.

Halachic Doctrines of Incremental Change

<i>Who decides?</i>	Decisors then in service	דורשי דור דור	Sanhedrin 34b
<i>Role of public?</i>	Go learn in the market	צא ולמד משוק	Chagigah 9a
<i>Role of time?</i>	Changed circumstances	שינוי עתים	Tos. A.Z. 24b

Paradigm Shift

[W]e find ourselves in the midst of a paradigm shift which is shattering our reality maps. We all have grids of meaning which we express through language. In order for us to have any discourse, to share a covenant of communication, we must have a shared reality map. So when we say something is "self-evident," we refer to a common reality map, that collusion in which we all play by the same rules of evidence in order to converse and meet in the same universe of discourse.

Only with ... subtle discernment can our reality maps become accessible to explicit inspection. Most of the time we don't even realize that we bring maps of meaning to every situation. They are, so to speak, laminated to our consciousness.... As such, they are mostly expunged from visibility. They are like the blind spot through which the optic nerve connects to the brain. It is necessary to our seeing, while at the same time, the place where it goes through the retina is the place where we are blind. We can, as in a blind spot, make them accessible but not fully visible.

This is not the first time Judaism has dealt with paradigm shifts. During the time when there was a Holy Temple in Jerusalem, which was the only venue where we were permitted to make offerings on the altar, we offered animal sacrifices as our way of serving God. But because the Temple, its altars, and its priesthood that slaughtered and offered the animals are destroyed, we can no longer make offerings of life that has to be killed for the sacred service. The cause, however, is even deeper than the destruction of a building: sacrifice was no longer the sacred technology for serving God. Another sacred technology, utilizing words, had to come to take its place. It has lasted to nearly the present day.

Paradigms shift at crisis points. One third of Jewry was destroyed with Auschwitz. The world became smaller and more fragile when we could see it from space. Something about the old way was destroyed. So we recognize that being Jewish after these events can no longer be a matter of simply following the past, but about safeguard[ing] spiritual treasures amidst a breakdown of old cosmologies.

An Example from the Sfatai Emet

Yehudah Aryeh Lieb Alter (1847-1905)
On Chanukkah

כתיב נר ה' נשמת אדם חופש כל חדרי בטן (משלי כ:ז).	It is written, "The human spirit is the lamp of God searching all the innermost parts" (Prov. 20:27).
בגמ' (פסחים ז:) חיפוש בנרות, נר מנר, אחפש ירושלים בנרות. כו' (זפניה א:יב).	In Talmud (B.T. Pesachim 7b), "search" means by lamp, one candle [lighting] another, so that God can "search Jerusalem by lamp" (Zeph. 1:12).
כי ענין המשכן וביהמ"ק נמצא בכל איש ג"כ כענין ועשו לי מקדש שוכנתי בתוכם (שמות כה:ח).	For the essence of the <i>Mishkan</i> and the Temple is that it can be found in everyone: such also is the meaning of "Let them make Me a Sanctuary that I may dwell within them" (Ex. 25:8).
מה שמברר האדם אצלו כי כל החיות מהנשמה שאומרים כל יום נשמה שננת בי טהורה היא וכו'.	Each person can discern within oneself that all life comes from the soul, such that we say daily [in morning liturgy], "The soul that You gave me is pure."
והיינו שיש נקודה א' טהורה בכל איש רק שהיא נסתרת וגנוזה באמת.	That is, there is a pure spark in everyone, except that it's really concealed and hidden.
בזמן שהיה ביהמ"ק קיים היה זה נגלה כי כל החיות מהש"ת וזה ענין השראת השכינה עדות הוא שהש"ת שורה בישראל.	When the Temple used to stand, it revealed that all life comes from God. This is the point of <i>Shechinah</i> inspiring [all life], as witness that God dwells within Israel.
ועתה שהמשכן גנוז מ"מ יכול להיות נמצא ע"י חיפוש בנרות.	Now that the <i>Mishkan</i> is hidden, [God's presence] can be found everywhere by "searching by lamp," in the manner above.

Paradigm Shift, Disruption and Re-Centering

Old Cosmology	God chose Jerusalem to locate the Temple The Temple showed that God dwells among Israel	
Paradigm Shift	Destruction of the Temple	
New Cosmology	Temple shifted from physical to spiritual construct	
Proof Text and Backward Compatibility	"Make Me a Sanctuary and I will dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8)	
Re-centering	<i>Geography</i> <i>Identity</i>	Everywhere (not just Jerusalem) Everyone (not just the Jews)
Ritual/Holiday Impact	<i>Chanukkah</i>	Triumphalism to Universalism <i>in Jewish spiritual and historical context</i>

Judaism as Disruptive Innovation After Paradigm Shift

<u>Element</u>	<u>Pre-Existing Paradigm</u>	<u>New Paradigm</u>
Monotheism	Polytheism Religious-political systems	יהו"ה אחד "God is One"
Talmud	Oral decision by priests, judges, king Monochromatic determination	אלו ואלו דברי א"ח Recorded, minority views
Prayer	Cultic Sacrifice Geographically-based practice	עבודה שבלב Service of the heart
Home ritual	Sociologically vertical cult Geographically-based practice	Democratized Dispersed, mobile
Liturgy	Spontaneous and diverse	Structured and fixed
Civic Status	Restricted homes, employment, education Limited or non-existent social mixing	Citizenship, Assimilation Mixing of identities
Denominations	Unitary rabbinic authority Unitary systems of practice	כל החדש אסור מן התורה Streams of Jewish life
State of Israel	Exile (<i>galut</i>) as physical inevitability Subjugation, destruction	Scattered (<i>tefutzot</i>) Political identity
Environmentalism	Earth's resources inexhaustible Earth the center of the universe	Eco-kashrut The earth is <i>alive</i>
Feminism & Queer Theory	Historical patriarchy Heteronormativity	Gender/LGBT inclusion Shifting power structures

What is Today's Paradigm Shift?

Authority	Vertical, binding Expertise	Horizontal, advisory Influence
Internet	Geographical communities Books, channels of publishers	Virtual communities Websites, self-publishing
Spirituality	Religion defines spirituality	Yoga? Non-Jewish ritual
Identity	Heritable, collective, immutable	Changeable, choice

What will Judaism look like in 50 years for Jews...

- who cluster less in geographical communities and "live" more online?
- whose define themselves in ever re-mixing ways?
- whose socioeconomics, politics and environmental context are very different