

1) *Dur-an-ki*, "Link between Heaven and Earth" was a name applied to a number of Babylonian sanctuaries (it occurs at Nippur, Larsa, Sippara, and elsewhere). Babylon has many names, among them "House of the Base of Heaven and Earth," "Link between Heaven and Earth." But it was also in Babylon that the connection between earth and the lower regions was made, for the city had been built *bab-apsi*, "the Gate of Apsu," Apsu being the name for the waters of chaos before Creation...The apsu, the tehom, symbolize the chaos of waters, the preformal modality of cosmic matter, and, at the same time, the world of death, all that precedes and follows life. The Gate of Apsu and the rock containing the "mouth of tehom" designate not only the point of intersection- and hence of communication – between the lower world and earth, but also the difference in ontological status between these two cosmic planes. There is a break of plane between the tehom and the rock of the Temple that blocks its mouth, passage from the virtual to the formal, from death to life. The watery chaos that preceded Creation at the same time symbolizes the retrogression to the formless that follows on death, return to the larval modality of existence.

Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*



2) Thus the troubled rhetoric of beginnings in the Torah is a rhetoric of displacement, in several sense. These texts describe the displacement of (the notion of) sacred space and those who belong in it: Home is displaced, or supplemented by, exile. Divine presence itself is displaced into an ambulatory tent located in a desert, and its arrival at that tent effects a radical displacement of the priesthood and of the orderly universe to which they aspire. At the same time, these texts involve displacement in another sense: The temporal trope of beginnings is displaced onto a spatial axis: troubled beginnings serve as a figure for geographical confusion. It follows, then, that beginnings in the Torah recall divine presence, for the texts we have examined subject each to the same turn. Beginnings and divine presence alike are constantly deferred, constantly subject to a process of *espacement*.

Benjamin Sommer, *Expulsion as Initiation: Displacement, Divine Presence, and Divine Exile in the Torah*

3) Jewish faith defies centrality and the “skewing through” of heaven earth and underworld in one axis mundi. The place is meant as a medium for the sacred only so far as it does not become the sacred’s substitute. The shift of the visual to the voice and from the voice to the book are indicative of such undermining of center. **The vocative and the textual decenter the locative.** While the place is indispensable, the true sacred center is the common faith of the people given in the Book. They are at once the People of the Land and the People of the Book.

Consequently, the notion of place is built on Resistance- advocating the essential distance between the people and their land. Accordingly, importance is laid on leaving as a counterpoint to arrival, on exit to resist nativity (the taken for grantedness of place), and on presence as but a trace of absence.

The historicity of the sacred place and the fact that the sacredness of the place is rooted beyond it- in God- are two sides of the same coin. The sanctity of the Temple, like that of the Land, has no meaning but in a historical context, i.e. at the level of the relationship between the people and its God. Sacredness is a matter of selection. It is always endowed to what in itself is not sacred.

Zali Gurevitch/Gideon Aran, *Never In Place, Eliade and Judaic Sacred Space*

4) כי הקב"ה ברא את העולם יש מאין מאיזו נקודה התחלתית, שממנה נוצר אחר כך כל העולם, "ויראה לי שהנקודה הזאת... היא שהחכמים קורין אותה אבן שתיה שממנה נשתת העולם

רמב"ן בראשית א:א

5) כשם שהטבור הזה נתון באמצע האיש כך ארץ ישראל נתונה באמצע העולם שנאמר 'יושבי על טבור הארץ' (יחזקאל ל"ח, יב), וממנה משתיתו של עולם יוצא שנאמר 'מזמור לאסף א-ל א-להים ה' דבר ויקרא ארץ ממזרח שמש ועד מבואו' (תהילים נ', א), מנין - 'מציון מכלל יופי א-להים הופיע' (שם, ב): ארץ ישראל יושבת באמצעיתו של עולם, וירושלים באמצעיתה של ארץ ישראל, ובית המקדש באמצע ירושלים, וההיכל באמצע בית המקדש, והארון באמצע ההיכל, ואבן שתיה לפני הארון שממנה נשתת העולם (תנחומא קדושים י').

לפיכך נקראת אבן השתיה, שמשם הוא טבור הארץ ולשם נמתח כל הארץ, ועליה היכל ה' עומד שנאמר 'והאבן הזאת אשר שמתי מצבה יהיה בית א-להים' (בראשית כ"ח, כב)

פרקי דרבי אליעזר פרק לה; מקבילה במדרש תהילים צא

6 חמש עשרה מעלות: אמר ליה רב חסדא לההוא מדרבנן דהוי קמסדר אגדתא קמיה א"ל שמיע לך הני חמש עשרה מעלות כנגד מי אמרם דוד א"ל הכי אמר רבי יוחנן בשעה שכרה דוד שיתין קפא תהומא ובעי למשטפא עלמא אמר דוד חמש עשרה מעלות והורידן אי הכי חמש עשרה מעלות יורדות מיבעי ליה. אמר ליה הואיל ואדכרתן (מלתא) הכי אתמר בשעה שכרה דוד שיתין קפא תהומא ובעא למשטפא עלמא אמר דוד מי איכא דידע אי שרי למכתב שם. חספא ונשדיה בתהומא ומנח ליכא דקאמר ליה מידי אמר דוד כל דידע למימר ואינו אומר יחנק בגרונו נשא אחיתופל ק"ו בעצמו ומה לעשות שלום בין איש לאשתו אמרה תורה שמי שנכתב בקדושה ימחה על המים לעשות שלום לכל העולם כולו על אחת כמה וכמה אמר ליה שרי. כתב שם אחספא ושדי לתהומא ונחית תהומא שיתסר אלפי גרמידי כי חזי דנחית טובא אמר כמה דמידלי טפי מירטב עלמא אמר חמש עשרה מעלות ואסקיה חמיסר אלפי גרמידי ואוקמיה באלפי גרמידי אמר עולא ש"מ סומכא דארעא אלפי גרמידי והא חזינן דכרינן פורתא ונפקי מיא אמר רב משרשיא ההוא מסולמא דפרת:

מסכת סוכה נג'

FIFTEEN STEPS. R. Hisda said to a certain Rabbi who was arranging his Aggadas before him, 'Have you heard in correspondence to what David composed his fifteen Songs of Ascent? — 'Thus', the other replied, 'said R. Johanan: When David dug the Pits the Deep rose up and threatened to submerge the world, and David thereupon uttered the fifteen Songs of Ascent and caused its waves to subside'. But if so, [asked R. Hisda,] ought it not to be Songs of Descent, instead of Ascent? — 'Since you have reminded me', the other replied '[I may say that] it was stated thus: When David dug the Pits, the Deep arose and threatened to submerge the world. "Is there anyone", David enquired, "who knows whether it is permitted to inscribe the [Ineffable] Name upon a sherd, and cast it into the Deep that its waves should subside?" There was none who answered a word. Said David, "Whoever knows the answer and does not speak, may he be suffocated". Whereupon Ahitophel adduced an a fortiori argument to himself: "If, for the purpose of establishing harmony between man and wife, the Torah said, Let My name that was written in sanctity be blotted out by the water, how much more so may it be done in order to establish peace in the world!" He, therefore, said to him, "It is permitted!" [David] thereupon inscribed the [Ineffable] Name upon a sherd, cast it into the Deep and it subsided sixteen thousand cubits. When he saw that it had subsided to such a great extent, he said, "The nearer it is to the earth, the better the earth can be kept watered" and he uttered the fifteen Songs of Ascent and the Deep reascended fifteen thousand cubits and remained one thousand cubits [below the surface]'. Ulla remarked, Deduce therefrom that the thickness of the earth's surface is one thousand cubits. But do we not see that one has but to dig a little for the waters to emerge? — R. Mesharsheya answered, That is due to the high level [of the source] of the Euphrates.