



Rabbi, Will You Do Our Wedding? New Approaches to Working With Interfaith Couples

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1. Purpose of Mitzvot

מה אכפת להקדוש ברוך הוא שיאכלו ישראל בלא שחיטה שיהא ישראל נוחר ואוכל ושוחט מן הצואר מן הירך תדע שלא נצטווה השחיטה הזו אלא כדי לצרף את ישראל

What does God care whether Jews eat meat that has not been ritually slaughtered or whether they tear it apart and eat it, whether they slaughter from the neck or from the thigh? Know that God only commanded this method of slaughter in order to unite the Jewish people

Midrash Tanchuma, Parshat Shemini 7

2. Phenomenology of Religious Experience

וְנוֹעַדְתִּי לְךָ שָׁם וְדַבַּרְתִּי אִתְּךָ מֵעַל הַכַּפֹּרֶת מִבֵּין שְׁנֵי הַכְּרֻבִים

There I will meet you and I will speak to you- from above the cover, from between the two cherubim -

Exodus 25:22

עֹלֶת תָּמִיד לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם פֶּתַח אֹהֶל־מוֹעֵד לִפְנֵי ה' אֲשֶׁר אֹנֵד לְכֶם שָׁמָּה לְדַבֵּר אֵלַיךְ שָׁם:

A regular burnt offering throughout the generations, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting before the lord. For there I will meet with you and there I will speak with you

Exodus 29:42

What difference does it make whether God appeared between the cherubim or next to the altar?

There is a constraining of divine manifestation in either case, but the difference is indeed great.

According to the approach of Rabbi Akiva the shekhinah dwells permanently between the two Cherubim...in contrast Rabbi Ishmael's approach (the world is filled with God's glory, truth does not vary) stipulates that the divine utterance happened to come to Moses at the entrance of the tent of meeting...a place of special significance for Moses, but not of special significance to the Shekhinah.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Heavenly Torah*

3. Power of Symbolism

Man's ultimate concern must be expressed symbolically, because symbolic language alone is able to express the ultimate...symbols point beyond themselves...participate in that to which it points...open up levels of reality which are otherwise closed to us...unlock dimensions and elements of our soul which correspond to the dimensions and elements of reality.

Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*

3. Religious Significance of Particularity

We all know something about the "scandal of the particular." The particular is the time-bound, the concrete, the local. The particular means *this* relatively undistinguished group, and not another. The particular warts and dust from the road; it has body odors and holes in its sandals. The scandal of particularity arises from the fact that over and over again disclosures of the ultimate moment find expression to and among very finite, undistinguished, local and particular peoples. Cryptic phrases and questions express our sense of the scandal of the particular: "How odd of God to choose the Jews." "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Or more straightforwardly we ask, "Why Abraham, why Moses?.... These particulars are scandalous precisely because something of transcendent and universal moment comes to expression in them or through them.

For persons committed to and through religious faith to work together on questions of religious truth means to take with radical seriousness the absoluteness of the particular.... Absoluteness means here "bearing the quality of ultimacy." Absoluteness in a tradition of religious faith is constituted by those moments in it in which the structure and character of the ultimate conditions of existence are disclosed. Absoluteness in a tradition of religious faith is a function of the faithful shape it gives to human life as a correlate of the revelation of divine character and intention that it has been given. Absoluteness is the quality of a tradition of religious faith given to it by instances in which the Unconditioned has come to expression in it.

James Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*

Resources

[RA Standards Working Group Results 2024](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)