

“THREE SACRED PLACES”

Rabbinic tradition teaches that, since the destruction of the Temple, three places are considered sacred: the synagogue, the study hall, and the dinner table. Why those three?

First, each is essential to the life of the individual: one to the life of the spirit, one to the life of the mind, and the table to the life of the body.

Second, all three are places where the generations interact and teach each other.

Third, each embodies a different level of relationship: the synagogue with the community, the study hall with friends and the table with family.

Studies of academic achievement regularly find that those students who score highest are those whose families had dinner together in their formative years. The table, our sages teach us, is an altar: with blessings, we show gratitude; with manners, empathy and consideration; with conversation, closeness and learning.

Too often children go to school, but do not go to synagogue or sit down to a family meal. They learn the life of the mind, but do not understand community or the centrality of family. Our sages understood the many levels on which each human being must learn. Synagogue, study hall, dinner table -- three sacred places to shape a soul.