Pesukei D’zimrah
God’s House

George Gittleman

Ashrei yoshevei veitekha, od y’haeleukkah selah/Happy are those who dwell in Your house; they forever praise You!
(Psalm 84:5)

This verse is found at several points in our siddur, including Pesukei D’zimrah/Verse of Praise in the morning liturgy. What does it mean to dwell in Your (God’s) house? How might this phrase from our liturgy inform our spiritual practice?

It could be that the Psalmist had an actual building in mind like the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. More likely, Your house is a metaphor for being in the Divine presence. The Hebrew word translated as “to dwell,” yosheve, can also mean to meditate. Perhaps Your house is not a physical location but a state of being. And if God is everywhere, every place could be beitekha, God’s place.

If this is the case, it does not seem farfetched to suggest that learning to dwell in God’s house — to live continually bathed in the Divine light — is the goal of spiritual practice. But life often seems anything but Divine. Suffering in various forms can define our daily lives, and moments of transcendence seem rare and fleeting. The challenge is to befriend the whole of our experience, to understand, as the Jewish mystical traditions teach us, ein od milvado/There is no place devoid of the Divine.

Ashrei yoshevei veitekha. Happy is the one who realizes that this place is Your place. The place I am in right now, with all the good and the bad, is God’s place. This place, with all its suffering. This place, in all its glory. This place in my brokenness. This place in our pain. It is all God’s place, and ours.

It’s not, “when I get it right, I will be there.” It’s not “when I am happy, I will be there.” We are in the Divine presence in the valley of the shadow, on the narrow bridge, in aversion, distraction, frustration,
and restlessness. *Ein od milvado*/*There is no place that is not Your place.*

And when we realize that this is all God’s place, *od y’halelukkah selah*, we praise You by being present, awake and alive right here, where You abide, which is within us.

Take a moment to settle. Feel into your body. Find your breath. And when you are ready, turn your awareness to whatever arises. Be like the sky, aware but unattached to the thoughts and feelings that arise, move through, and dissipate like the weather. Try not to push away or attach to anything. Rest in the awareness that it is all part of being in *beitekha/Your house/God’s house.*

*Rabbi George Gittleman and his spouse Laura were married by Rabbi Jonathan Slater in 1991. He has served as rabbi at Congregation Shomrei Torah since 1996. Since their first meeting, Jonathan has been his rabbi, mentor, colleague and friend.*
Torah Without End

Neo-Hasidic Teachings and Practices in Honor of Rabbi Jonathan Slater

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