

“Pilgrimage, Place, and Meaning-Making by Jews in Greco-Roman Egypt”

Wayne O. McCready

Department of Religious Studies, University of Calgary

Draft Version

The Importance of Place

Edward S. Casey in *Getting Back to Place. Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* proposes that ‘place’ is a fundamental basis for human experience – the coming together and focal point that fuses self, space, and time.¹ Humans are profoundly place-bound, and this circumstance results in opportunities for meaning-making, as well as for development and refinement of identity and self-definition for individuals and communities.

In an essay titled “How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena” Casey makes the following comments.²

Given that we are never without perception, the existence of this dialectic [the dialectic of perception and place: place is sensed and senses are placed] means that we are never without emplaced experiences. It signifies as well that we are not only *in* places but also *of* them. Human beings along with other entities on earth are ineluctably place-bound. More even than earthlings, we are placelings, and our very perceptual apparatus, our sensing body, reflects the kinds of places we inhabit.

He is of the opinion that there is much to be offered in the ancient view that ‘place’ is not necessarily singular but universal,³ and most importantly that the reliability and truthfulness of perception is embedded in being engaged with place through what Casey calls emplaced

¹ *Getting Back Into Place. Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 102-105. Also, see Casey, *The Fate of Place. A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

² “How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena,” in *Sense of Place* (eds. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso; Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1996), 19.

³ Casey puts a great deal of weight on the Archytian Axiom that ‘place is the first of all things’ as representative of the ancient view of giving primacy of place over space (cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 52 B and Aristotle *Physics* 208 b 32-33). See Michael Harrington, *Sacred Place in Early Medieval Neoplatonism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) and Samuel Sambursky, *The Concept of Place in Late NeoPlatonism: texts with translation, intro. and notes* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1982).

experience.⁴ Humans engage with place through their bodies that are uniquely capable of integrating a person with their immediate environment in a complex dynamic of body in place. Indeed, there is a crucial interplay between people, place, and movement when considering emplaced experience. That is why humans can be viewed as not only *in* place, but also *of* place. The power of place – its potential to evoke creativity and response – is found in its capacity to involve movement that is four-dimensional.⁵

Staying and Moving in Place

The first dimension of person, place, and movement involves *staying in place* whereby a person remains in one single place albeit changing emplacement while eating, sitting, standing, sleeping, and so on; that is, when interacting with objects and persons in one single place. Closely related to *staying in place* is *moving within a place* whereby a person deliberately moves about a given place while remaining in the place whether it be at home, in the work-place, leisure setting, a city, or in a religious context such as temple, synagogue or church.

As will be detailed below – place-making has to do with familiarity of experience whereby humans endow a place with value and meaning through their familiarity with it. *Moving within a place* captures this matter in a productive manner, and it provides important insight when considering religious institutions such as worship and study environments, and certainly so with regard to pilgrimage-sites. A close reading of E.P. Sanders' *Judaism. Practice and Belief 63 BCE – 66 CE* demonstrates this point well in regard to pilgrimage to Jerusalem at the turn of the common era. Consider the following.

It is probable that most Palestinian Jews made at least one pilgrimage a year, the most popular festival being Passover (*Antiq.* 17.214). The Jerusalemites, of course, were always there. If we assume fifty per cent attendance at Passover, there may have been 250,000 to 400,000 Palestinian Jews, plus a large

⁴ Also see Dennis Skocz "Herodotus and the Origins of Geography: The Strange, the Familiar, and the Earthbound," in *Earth Ways. Framing Geographical Meanings* (eds. Gary Backhaus and John Murungi; Oxford: Lexington Books, 2004) 18-19; also, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (trans. C. Smith; New York: Routledge, 2002), Introduction: Part One.

⁵ Casey, "From Space to Place," 23-25. Note that Casey works with body, place and motion while I have changed it to people, place and movement for the sake of my study project. Further, he deals with body, place and motion from a three-dimensional analysis and treats *places gather* as a distinct aspect of place-making. My understanding of the *gathering capacity of place* is that it is inseparable from person, place and movement; thus, there are productive consequences to see *places gather* as the fourth dimension.

number ('tens of thousands') of pilgrims from the Diaspora. Herod's temple, let it be noted, could accommodate 400,000 pilgrims. The Sacred Mosque at Mecca, with an area of 180,000 square metres, will hold 500,000 pilgrims at prayer; we recall that Herod's temple was 144,000 square metres. In the case of Passover, not every pilgrim needed to be in the temple area at the same time (as we shall see below), though when they were there they occupied more space than a Muslim at prayer, since they sacrificed lambs. At other times during the festivals, especially the Feast of Booths, many or most of the pilgrims may have gone to the temple at the same time, and there would at least have been standing room in the outer court.⁶

Ancient Jewish pilgrims established an intimacy of place based on their engagement with the temple and its associated activities. The point should not be lost that religion in antiquity – whether for Jews or for Gentiles in Rome, Greece, Egypt, Mesopotamia or elsewhere – was sacrifice. The press of numbers in a confined space would have created one kind of familiarity, but the complexities of being involved in a sacrificial system, even for a lay person, resulted in first-person “emplacement experiences.” Consider Sanders' summary of the range of activities associated with a pilgrimage to the Jerusalem temple.

Below we shall discuss such topics as the sacrificial slaughter of animals; the distribution of their parts among the priest, the altar and the worshipper; support of the temple by offerings of money, animals and agricultural produce; rites of purification; and the observance of special holy days that involved additional sacrifices, dancing and music. Every element has numerous parallels in the ancient world. When Greeks or Romans commented on Judaism, they found none of this strange.⁷

Casey's idea of emplaced experience whereby humans engage with place through their bodies that are uniquely capable of integrating a person with their immediate environment takes on a particular force in antiquity that may be lost on the modern who is distant from slaughter of food animals let alone how sacrifices expressed an understanding of ultimate value for religious devotees. Researchers need to reflect, with some refinement, on how humans can be viewed as

⁶ *Judaism. Practice and Belief 63 BCE – 66 CE* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992), 127. Also, see the essays in the section “Symposium: Herod's Building Projects: State Necessity or Personal Need?” in *The Jerusalem Cathedral. Studies in the History, Archaeology, Geography and Ethnography of the Land of Israel* (ed. Lee I. Levine; Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981) 47-80 that highlight how the architecture of Herod's public structures invited familiarity of encounter by pilgrims – and Peter Richardson, “Law and Piety in Herod's Architecture,” *Studies in Religion/Sciences religieuses* 15 (1986): 347-360, “Religion, Architecture and Ethics: Some First Century Case Studies,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 10/2 (1988): 19-49, as well as *City and Sanctuary: Religion and Architecture in the Roman Near East* (London: SCM Press, 2002), 130-179.

⁷ Sanders, *Practice and Belief*, 49.

in place and also *of place* in light of the sacrificial dimension of pilgrimage-sites in the ancient Mediterranean world.

Moving between Places

The third feature of person, place and movement is *moving between places* whereby movement is not framed or confined to a single position or place. Moving between places is a genuine transition and not just a matter of transportation as it involves a beginning-place, an end-place, and in-between-places. Consider the following observation by Casey.

The most salient instance is the journey, and cases in point are emigrations, pilgrimages, voyages of exchange, and nomadic circulations. In all of these, the bodies of the journeyers follow more or less preordained routes between particular places. Just as staying in place corresponds to *position*, and moving the whole body within one locus answers to *place* proper, so moving between places corresponds to an entire *region*, that is an area concatenated [linked together] by peregrinations [travel] between the places it connects.⁸

The dynamic of linkage between places underscores the importance of *journey* for understanding *moving between place* matters. Indeed, movement is a necessary condition of place – an observation not always self-evident to the untrained eye. A journey not only takes people from a beginning-place to an end-place; the deliberateness of the journey with its beginning and end-goal locates 'place' at a primacy level for the journeyer. The movement involved in a journey links places in a significant relationship to each other through the intentionality of the journeyer. It might be framed as 'here-in-view-of-there' and 'there-in-view-of-here' orientations that illustrate how motion is intrinsic to place as is stability and movement.⁹ On a pilgrimage, the devotee self-consciously journeys from a deliberate starting-place to an equally deliberate ending-place. The destination-place made particular by the sacredness of a pilgrimage-site results in meaning-making of the pilgrimage-journey that goes beyond biographical, historical and sociological significance. It is of ultimate value for the devotee and their peers in regard to identity and self-definition.

⁸ Casey, "From Space to Place," 23-24. Cf. *Getting Back Into Place*, 43-105.

⁹ See Casey, *Getting Back Into Place*, 278-286. There is no completely static place. Place inevitably involves movement, change, and transition.

Further, *moving between places* highlights how linked-places fit into a regional context. Anthropological and philosophical studies of place suggest that once concrete and relational links are identified between places – they fall into common groupings of place such as homes, workplaces, settings of guilds and associations, leisure settings, worship-sites, academies, and so on.¹⁰ Pilgrimage-sites in the ancient Mediterranean world have a regional framework. The linkage factor between places provides substance for the regional context of pilgrimage-places. As will be discussed below, the Jewish temple at Elephantine had linkages with other religious centres in the Elephantine area.¹¹ A traditional critique might suggest that such linkages are examples of syncretism by Egyptian Jews,¹² but from a place-studies perspective it underscores the commonality of regional temples that the Jewish Egyptian temple shared with non-Jewish temples. Further, when the temple at Elephantine was destroyed as a result of Egyptian animosity against Jews in 410 BCE,¹³ the Egyptian Jewish authorities petitioned the Jerusalem authorities for permission to rebuild their temple (*TAD* A4.5-9; cf. *TAD* B3.12:18-19). Apparently permission was not granted – or if it was, the sacrificial component was not to be built.¹⁴ In regard to *moving between places*, the linkage between Elephantine and Jerusalem suggests that as pilgrimage-places, they shared a regional frame of reference. The sources available to understand Elephantine as a pilgrimage-place are limited. A productive strategy for reconstructing certain aspects of Elephantine pilgrimage can be realized in light of considering Jerusalem as a pilgrimage-place. Such a strategy must be done with care, but regional factors of place-studies suggest that ground may be gained in understanding Elephantine as a regional-Jewish

¹⁰ See the essays in Backhaus and Murungi, *Framing Geographical Meanings*, as well as Gordon Ericksen, *The Territorial Experience. Human Ecology as Symbolic Interaction* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980) 79-95, Sam Gill, "Territory," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (ed. Mark C. Taylor. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) 298-313, and Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map Is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978).

¹¹ Such as the Aramean temple at Syene devoted to Bethel, the temple of the Queen of Heaven (Anath or Astarte), Banit and Nabu. See *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt* (*TAD*) A2.1.1, A2.2.1, A2.3.1, and A2.4.1. Cf. Bezael Porten, "The Religion of the Jews in Elephantine in Light of the Hermopolis Papyri," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 28 (1969):116-121.

¹² Allen Kerkeslager, "Jewish Pilgrimage and Jewish Identity in Hellenistic and Early Roman Egypt" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1997), 13-17. Porten, "Jews in Elephantine," argues for limited syncretism.

¹³ See *TAD* A4.1-10

¹⁴ See Bezael Porten, *Archives from Elephantine. The Life of An Ancient Jewish Military Colony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968) 132-133.

pilgrimage-place. Pilgrimage journeys to Jerusalem would inform pilgrims to Elephantine, and pilgrimage journeys to Elephantine would inform pilgrims to Jerusalem.

The Gathering Capacity of Place

A comprehensive understanding of place includes its capacity to not only have movement in or about it – but also the capacity to function as linkage with other places. This observation is crucial for understanding pilgrimage and pilgrimage destinations. Long-standing pilgrimage-sites with an historical trajectory exhibit linkage and gathering capacity in a creative interplay. That is, the capacity to ‘link’ is embedded in the power of places *to gather* artifacts and people into what might be understood as an “arena of common engagement” typically extended over multiple generations.¹⁵ The *gathering capacity* of place as an arena of common engagement is the fourth dimension of person, place and movement.

Gathering not only has to do with assembling artifacts and people in a place. It also has the capacity to concentrate attention when people are gathered, to inspire individual and group identity and definition even though those gathering may come from disparate origins, to accommodate margins and boundaries, and to adapt necessary flexibilities to distinguish between ‘in’ and ‘out’.¹⁶ There is consensus that establishing boundaries between ‘in’ and ‘out’ is a “primeval architectural act” whereby settings such as pilgrimage-sites are structured to contrast being ‘out’ from ‘in’.¹⁷ However, the dynamic between inside and outside is usually dense and multi-dimensional. The *gathering* capacity of place – each in its own time and space – has sufficient substance to mediate ‘in’ and ‘out,’ and to function as creative and generative, as well as fostering renewal and regeneration.

¹⁵ Casey, “From Space to Place” 27. Cf. *Getting Back Into Place*, 109-181. Also, see James Preston, “Spiritual Magnetism: An Organizing Principle for the Study of Pilgrimage,” in *Sacred Journeys. The Anthropology of Pilgrimage* (ed. Alan Morinis; Westport: Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1992) 31-46.

¹⁶ Casey, *Getting Back Into Place*, 122. See also, John Agnew and James Duncan, eds., *The Power of Place. Bringing together geographical and sociological imaginations* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), and Anne Buttimer, “Home, Reach, and the Sense of Place,” in *The Human Experience of Space and Place* (eds. Anne Buttimer and David Seamon; New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1980) 166-187).

¹⁷ Rudolf Arheim, *The Dynamics of Architectural Form* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971) 92. Also, see Wolfgang Zucker, “Inside and Outside in Architecture,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 17 (1966): 3-15. Regarding matters of boundaries, see Jean-Paul Bourdier and Nezar AlSayyad, eds., *Dwellings, Settlements, and Tradition: Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1989).

What is involved in the *gathering* capacity of place? Humanist geographers propose that place is best understood as a locus for meaning-making whereby humans take what they view as undifferentiated space and they endow it with value and meaning through familiarity.¹⁸ Alan Gussow in *A Sense of Place. The Artist and the American Land* suggests that what converts any physical location – any environment – into a ‘place’ has to do with what he refers to as the process of experiencing deeply.¹⁹ A place is an environment that has been claimed by experience. The greater the critical mass of those experiencing a place deeply – the greater the value and meaning-making attached to a place. Pilgrimage sites are just such settings. Yi-Fu Tuan in *Space and Place. The Perspective of Experience* proposes that there is an identifiable shift in understanding matters of space to that of place when humans get to know what they view as undifferentiated space through experience, and they subsequently endow it with value.²⁰ Indeed, according to Tuan, the concepts of ‘space’ and ‘place’ require each other for full definition, understanding and meaning. Further, he recommends that space be thought of as that which allows movement while place be understood as pause. Through pause, it is possible for humans to transform space into place.²¹ Thus, there is an interpenetration of movement and pause that characterizes the gathering capacity of places such as pilgrimage-sites.

Summary

¹⁸ See Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), *For space* (London: Sage Press, 2005); Tim Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) *Place: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), *On the Move: mobility in the modern Western World* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Gary Backhaus and John Murungi, eds., *Earth Ways. Framing Geographical Meanings* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2004); David Ley and Marwyn Samuels, eds., *Humanistic Geography. Prospects and Problems* (Chicago: Maaroufa Press, 1978); and Robert Sack, *Conceptions of space in social thought: a geographic perspective* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), *Human Territoriality. Its theory and history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) and *Homo Geographicus. A Framework for Action, Awareness and Moral Concern* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

¹⁹ Gussow, *A Sense of Place. The Artist and the American Land* (New York: Friends of the Earth, 1972) 27.

²⁰ Tuan, *Space and Place. The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977). Also, see *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), and *Passing Strange and Wonderful: Aesthetics, Nature, and Culture* (New York: Kodansha International, 1995). Cf. Anne Buttner, *Geography and the Human Spirit* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993). Also, see Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place. Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 28-46.

²¹ Tuan, *Space and Place*, 6.

In summary, place is important as a framing matter of pilgrimage for the following reasons. First, it acknowledges the ‘emplacement’ of religious travel such as pilgrimage journeys. If humans are profoundly place-bound to the degree of being understood as ‘placelings’ – it is worth considering the role that emplacement plays in religious meaning-making, identity and self-definition that is reflective of a larger fundamental human activity. Further, it highlights the dynamic between travel, movement and journeys – and places whether beginning-palaces, destination-places and in-between-places. Researchers are slow to learn that movement is a necessary condition to place – and place is a necessary condition for movement, especially so with regard to linkage between places such as hub and port cities, military and administrative centres, religious centres and certainly so with reference to pilgrimage destination-places that are linked to other pilgrimage destination-places. The histories of people must be integrated with the histories of places.²² Lastly, framing pilgrimage according to place matters underscores the gathering capacity of place. There is much to be recommended in understanding that experiencing deeply the sacred factor of pilgrimage-sites establishes a continuum and a trajectory of meaning-making that is formative.

Pilgrimage as emplacement

Pilgrimage has a broad range of definitions and applications – but among the more satisfactory is that of Alan Morinis who suggests that pilgrimage is a journey taken in quest of a place (or state) understood to embody an ideal.²³ This definition accommodates religious and secular pilgrimages. If pilgrimage is travel with a religious purpose then it might be anticipated that the travel component and destination of the travel involves matters of ultimate value. Indeed, this understanding of pilgrimage links nicely with the understanding of religion as ways of living and thinking having to do with ultimate values. Further, Morinis notes that the destination at the end of a pilgrimage involves an intensification of an ideal that the pilgrim values but cannot be

²² Simon Gunn, “The spatial turn: changing histories of space and place,” in *Identities in Space. Contested Terrains in the Western City since 1850* (eds. Simon Gunn and Robert Morris; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2001), 11.

²³ Alan Morinis, ed., *Sacred Journeys. The Anthropology of Pilgrimage* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1992), 4

achieved at home.²⁴ Hence, pilgrimage involves matters of travel for a specific purpose, and the travel undertaken is intentionally focused toward an ideal. To put it in more deliberate religious terms, a pilgrimage is a deliberate act of piety that is place specific. The essence of the journey is movement. As noted above, a journey not only takes a pilgrim from a beginning-place to an end-place. The deliberateness of the journey locates place, and especially the pilgrimage-place, at a primary level of importance for acts of piety.²⁵

Other important features of pilgrimage have to do with its fluidity and complexity. Pilgrimages can involve matters of initiation, rites of passage, intensification of *communitas*, devotional acts, obligatory praxis, and anti-structural wanderings. Because pilgrimage is at its core travel – it is subject to different modes of transportation and technologies, accommodation and subsistence for those traveling a distance, cultural influences, safety issues, and the challenge of maintaining it as an act of piety when faced with physical, emotional and psychological challenges of reaching a destination.

This study takes up ideas about 'place' when considering travel and religion – and in particular pilgrimage of Jews in the Greco-Roman world. It will be alert to how movement and emplaced experience play a role in pilgrimage, place-making, as well as Jewish identity and self-definition.

Jerusalem as a Pilgrimage-site²⁶

Before dealing with pilgrimage traditions of Jews in the larger Mediterranean world of antiquity, it is useful to deal with what we know about Jewish pilgrimage with some certainty in

²⁴ Morinis, *Sacred Journeys*, 19-21.

²⁵ For discussion on the interplay between place-centered pilgrimage-sites and person-centered sites, see *Contesting the sacred. The anthropology of Christian pilgrimage* (eds. John Eade and Michael Sallnow; New York: Routledge, 1991) 6-9.

²⁶ See Yoram Tsafir, "Jewish Pilgrimage in the Roman and Byzantine Periods," in *Akten des XII, Internationalen Kongressess für Christliche Archäologie, Bonn, 1991* (eds. Ernst Dassman and Josef Engemann; Münster: Aschendorffsche, 1995) 369-376, Shmuel Safrai, "The Temple," in *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions* (eds. S. Safrai, M. Stern, D. Flusser, and W. C. van Unnik; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976) 891-904.

contrast to the need to speculate on pilgrimage given the lack of adequate sources in regard to pilgrimage to Egyptian Elephantine.

Common Judaism and the Temple at Jerusalem

Ed Sanders in *Practice & Belief* has provided a wealth of information on the sacrificial system of Jerusalem at the turn of the common era, and pilgrimage to Jerusalem that flowed from the temple there that was understood as the place of sacrifice for Judaism. Sanders proposed that, notwithstanding the well-known diversity of turn of the common era Judaism, ordinary Jews practiced a 'common Judaism' centered on temple, synagogue and the home. In Sanders' words, the ordinary people "worked at their jobs, they believed the Bible, they carried out the small routines and celebrations of the religion, they prayed every day, thanked God for his blessings, and on the Sabbath went to the synagogue, asked teachers questions, and listened respectfully."²⁷ Indeed, common Judaism for the reconstruction schema of Sanders was what the priests and people agreed on that reflected a consensus of religiosity built up over decades and centuries of practice. Common Judaism was 'normative' to the degree that it was a standard whereby loyalty to Israel and God could be measured.

Additional factors played into the expression of common Judaism including obedience to Jewish law, gathering in houses of prayer on the Sabbath, worship with prayers and sacrificial offerings, and observance of holy days. The holy days involved renewal of the covenant between God and Israel, celebration of the great achievements in Israel's past, marking the seasons in the agricultural calendar, giving thanks, and making atonement for sin. As noted above, sacrifice was the normal expression of religion in the ancient Mediterranean world, and hence many of the features of common Jewish practice were linked explicitly or implicitly with sacrificing. The primary thrust of the cult for Judaism had to do with thanksgiving and worship, awe in response to the goodness of God toward Jews, atonement for ritual impurity, feasting, and affirming the particular relationship that Jews had with their God.

The Sacrificial System

²⁷ Sanders, *Practice and Belief*, 494.

There were two features of the sacrificial system of Judaism that distinguished it in antiquity. One had to do with one temple and hence one place for sacrificial activity – that by the turn of the common era was understood by the majority of Jews to be at Jerusalem. The other distinguishing feature of Jewish sacrificing practices was that it was expensive. Because the Jewish priesthood was forbidden to work the land, the agricultural and animal sacrifices required with precise expectations were supported by general society – and especially by farmers as Sanders' extensive study details. For example, two whole-burnt offerings made each day were taxing on the resources available. The tithes and taxes built into the sacrificial system envisioned that priests would live off of the sacrificial system whereby a portion of the sacrifices were to be eaten by the priests, and they were to share the peace-offerings with their families. However, in reality, the system was not able to support the temple personnel and their families.

Food Offerings and the Temple Tax

The temple and its personnel were supported by three food offering-types, as well as a 'temple-tax.' The first food offering was a tithe although the details are not consistent in the sources. What seems to be clear is that tithe goods were stored in Jerusalem and then distributed to the priests and levites, as well as to the poor and needy. The second food offering – 'first fruit' such as first born animals – could either be kept by the priests for meat or redeemed for currency. It is likely that most Palestinian Jews brought first fruits in the fall festival of Succoth rather than make a separate journey to the temple. The third food offering was a 'heave-offering' (that is, a 'raised' or 'elevated' offering). Although there is minimal information on this offering, it likely was similar to first fruits. The temple-tax did not support the priesthood. Rather, it was intended to cover the cost of the temple overhead, especially community sacrifices such as the two whole burnt-offerings made each day that was doubled on the Sabbath. At the turn of the common era, the tax was half a shekel (two drachmas) from all adult males in Palestine and in the Diaspora. Sanders estimates that it was equivalent to two days pay in the low end of a wage scale.²⁸ Jews were viewed by Gentiles as distinctive because of their observance of Sabbath, their food laws, and how the life of Jewish societies was framed by Jewish law whether on matters of ethics,

²⁸ Sanders, *Practice and Belief*, 51.

family matters or civil life. An additional distinguishing feature of Judaism was the widespread support of the temple-tax that could not logistically be enforced by temple authorities. It demonstrates the consensus of Jews to participate in supporting the sacrificial system on a voluntary basis that highlights the power of consensus for religious practice.

Community Sacrifices

The 'community' sacrifices were substantial including two yearling lambs completely burnt with accompanying flour, oil and wine to signal the opening and closing of the sacrificial system in the morning and evening. On the Sabbath, this offering increased to four yearling lambs, and at the new moon it included two oxen, seven lambs, one ram, and one kid lamb was sacrificed.

Individual Sacrifices

Individual sacrificial offerings operated in three orbits. The first was a burnt offering whereby the worshipper killed the victim while a priest held the animal and another priest caught its blood (typically, a bird could be substituted for an animal). Second was a 'sin' or 'guilt' offering that was not about moral or ethical transgressions but had to do with restitution, resolving inadvertent transgressions, and recovery from a deviation from the 'norm' to gain access to the temple (such as at child birth or after touching a corpse). There were a variety of options for this offering including animals, birds, and grain (flour could be substituted for a bird). The priests were to keep the meat and the hide of animals with the meat to be eaten and shared with fellow-priests on duty on the same day as the sacrifice. The third type of individual sacrifice was a 'peace' or 'shared' offering (a sacrifice of well-being) with sub-categories of thanks-offering (to be eaten the same day), a vow-offering (to be eaten within two days), a freewill-offering (to be eaten within 2 days), and a 'shared'-offering that reflected the tradition of offering fat and blood of the victim to God, while the priest took home to his family a portion of the sacrifice, and the worshipper kept the rest. Bird offerings were likely the most common 'victim' of the Jerusalem sacrificial system as whole animals were expensive and easily hurt (and hence, made ineligible for sacrifice). Although later Jewish and Christian sources are uniformly hostile in the depiction of the temple priesthood – it is most unlikely that they abused the sacrificial system because their livelihood depended upon willing and voluntary devotees participating in the temple system.

Concentric Areas of Sanctity and Pilgrimage Festivals

The Jewish sacrificial system was distinguished by exacting rules for determining areas of holiness at the Jerusalem temple. That is, areas of increasing sanctity progressively restricted admission with Gentiles restricted to the outer areas, to courts of women, and the court of men, to areas of priestly activity centered around an area restricted to the High Priest. Second Temple Judaism had an acute sense of the importance of place that could not be compromised that moved from the purity of land, to the purity of temple-city, to the purity of the temple proper, to the purity of the priestly areas. Generally, matters of purity had to do with access to the temple and the cult-system, and impurity was not about transgression or immorality. Typically, purity and impurity were linked to death-corpse-funeral matters, child birth, conjugal union, and body fluids such as menstruation. Contact with a corpse was the most substantial way of limiting access to the temple-system that was resolved by the passing of time (certain days of being restricted from temple entrance) and certain actions frequently involving bathing and washing of clothes.

It is likely that the average Palestinian Jew attended one festival per year as being involved in the three annual pilgrimage-festivals was costly and time consuming. For example, the distance from Galilee to Jerusalem was approximately 100 miles and it took some seven to eight days to travel that distance. Passover (Pesah) was a spring temple-festival that celebrated the Exodus from Egypt involving a lamb victim. The feast of Weeks (Shavu'oth; also called Pentecost, and the Day of First Fruits) involved offering new wheat with loaves ('first fruits'). It likely was the smallest pilgrimage festival as it came immediately after Pesah, and its primary focus was to affirm God's ownership of land, the election of Israel confirmed in the covenant, and in the Exodus from Egypt. The feast of Booths (Succoth; also referred to as Tabernacles) was a fall temple-festival with an agricultural emphasis that came five days after the Day of Atonement festival. Devotees lived in booths for seven days in concert with community sacrifices at the temple. It was likely the second most popular temple-festival after Passover. The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) was an autumn fast-festival that did not require pilgrimage. It was a communal day of worship focused around fasting, self-examination and confession. The sacrificial component of this festival was elaborate as the High Priest served as a representative

of the nation to God with the sacrifices intended to atonement for the nation. Sacrificial participation likely was concentrated around those who lived in the Jerusalem area.

Some 20,000 priests and levites worked in shift rotation of 24 'courses' or duty rosters with each roster working a week at a time in either full or part time contexts. Priestly activity primarily had to do with liturgy as well as butchery with the latter activity being the most distinctive activity from a modern viewpoint. However, for the general context of the ancient world this activity was common. At major festivals, the priestly and levitic duties increased in detail and in number with levites functioning as support staff to the priests; they also served as guards and monitors to the gates in the temple court areas. An important duty of the priest was to advise worshipper on correct sacrifices that underscores their expertise on matters of law, scripture, and interpretation.

For this study, the point of this brief summary of the complex sacrificial system of the Jerusalem temple is to note that pilgrimage is a consequence of the sacrificial expression of religion for ancient Jews. Pilgrimage is not a first-order practice for Judaism but a second-order practice that follows the normative expression of religion in antiquity of sacrifice. By the turn of the common era, as Sanders' study so substantially demonstrates – the sacrificial system and pilgrimage to the Jerusalem temple are densely embedded in each other. Further, the momentum of concentrating the sacrificial system at the Jerusalem temple meant that Jewish pilgrimage was profoundly place-bound to Jerusalem. Sanders provides an example of a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for a festival at the turn of the common era that included the following schema:²⁹

funds set aside for a 'second tithe' (10% of the year's crop) to be spent in Jerusalem

- ritual preparation in order to have access to the temple-system (regarding contact with a corpse, matters of child birth and menstruation, and restitution with those wronged)
- immersion in one of the public pools before sunset and abstinence from sex the night before going to the temple
- purchase of the appropriate victim for the sacrificial offering
- inspection of the sacrifice at one of the gates (likely by a levite)
- entrance to the plaza or court of the gentiles

²⁹ Sanders, *Practice and Belief*, 111-114.

women directed to the 'court of Jewish women' with their sacrifice where they gave it to a levite and explained the reasons for their sacrifice before going upstairs to watch the priestly activity

men directed to the 'court of Jewish men' with their sacrifice victim given to a levite, accompanying the levite to the edge of the priestly area where they explained the 'type' of offering to the priest before executing the victim with assistance from the priest(s) followed afterward with a shared offering of the butchered parts of the victim with the priest(s) a feast-meal by the family somewhere in the Jerusalem area

Summary

Casey's idea of an "embodied experience" of place is immediately apparent in regard to a pilgrimage made to Jerusalem to participate in the sacrificial system. The sounds and smells of animal victims, as well as the touch of agricultural goods would have made a lasting impression on devotees on how pilgrimage experience is embedded in place. Even if one takes sacrifice as normative to religiosity in antiquity – the place of large-scale sacrificing would have been formative on Jewish identity and self-definition. Further, the festival-pilgrimages, as well as community and individual sacrifices, provide insight into how a Jerusalem-pilgrim would not only be *in* place, but also *of* place.

As noted above, the sacrificial system of Judaism meant that pilgrims experienced first-person 'emplacement' that was profoundly located in the specifics of the end-goal pilgrimage activities, and engaging with the officials who monitored and conducted the sacrifices. Earlier, movement was discussed in regard to pilgrimage journeys and how intentionality linked a beginning-place to an end-place – the 'here-in-view-of-there' and 'there-in-view-of-here' dynamic. The summary details of the schema involved in participating in a festival-pilgrimage at Jerusalem provide insight into the force of intentionality required of a Jewish pilgrim at the turn of the common era.

Lastly, the place-studies factor of the *gathering capacity* of Jerusalem as a pilgrimage destination-site is substantial. The temple was a venue for engaging the sacred, affirming individual and community identity and self-definition, fostering national and community solidarity, inspiring individual restitution and introspection, and providing intimacy with the priesthood and the 'emplaced' specifics of the sacrificing. The Jerusalem temple was indeed an "arena of engagement" involving experiences of substance and import. The concentric areas of sanctity

and purity make the emplacement of religious travel involved in the Jerusalem pilgrimage distinctive in regard to movement toward Jerusalem and the temple proper. Alan Morinis' point that pilgrimage is a journey in quest of an ideal that cannot be fully realized at home is made rather well in regard to the festival-pilgrimages of ancient Judaism. However, the normative factor of sacrifices for religion in antiquity recommends that the ideal for Jewish pilgrimage rests in movement toward the sacrificial system as a first principle that is followed by emplacement of the ideal as a second principle.

Pilgrimage and Egyptian Judaism

Allen Kerkeslager in "Jewish Pilgrimage and Jewish Identity," while accepting the normal rhythm of pilgrimage to the Jerusalem temple in antiquity, proposes that most Jews living at a distance from Jerusalem seldom, and perhaps never, visited the city and did not participate in its temple-system. Thus, their religious identity was not solely determined by the primacy of Jerusalem.³⁰ He states it as follows.

For many Jews in Egypt pilgrimage traditions that had grown up around other Jewish temples, local synagogues, and other sites in Egypt may have played a role far more important in their own self-understanding than their tenuous relationship to the temple in Jerusalem.³¹

Indeed, he is of the opinion that ambivalence, apathy, and in some cases – open hostility toward Jerusalem and its temple assured the development of local pilgrimage traditions in Egypt that were understood to be alternatives to festival-pilgrimages to Jerusalem. Philo is cited as an example of a wealthy Jew in Egypt who provides a detailed account of a standard pilgrimage-festival (likely Passover) that was spent among the Therapeutae on the shore of Lake Mareotis (cf. *Contempl.* 1-23 and 64-89). While this account does not mean that Philo or the Therapeutae held anti-Jerusalem sentiments, for Kerkeslager it suggests that they did not view annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem were required for Diaspora Jews.

³⁰ Kerkeslager, "Jewish Pilgrimage and Jewish Identity," 9-13.

³¹ Kerkeslager, "Jewish Pilgrimage and Jewish Identity," 12-13.

A Jewish temple at Elephantine was likely build before the fall of the first temple at Jerusalem and perhaps as early as 650 BCE.³² Further, regular travel between Elephantine and other centers in Egypt was part of the military escort economy of Jews from Elephantine.³³ Indeed, Bezalel Porten in *Archives from Elephantine. The Life of an Ancient Jewish Military Colony* makes a spirited case for a temple at Elephantine during the earliest stages of the ten-generation history of a Jewish military colony there.³⁴ According to Porten, the religious influence on the Jewish colony by Arameans and Egyptians was minimal and Jews comfortably retained their own social practices. Indeed, the existence of a temple dedicated to the Jewish God was a distinguishing feature of Elephantine. It was oriented toward Jerusalem and it was a similar size to the first Jerusalem temple – perhaps a forerunner to the temple at Leontopolis in the mid second century BCE. Indeed, Porten views that just as the temple at Leontopolis was built by disenfranchised Jerusalemite priests, so the temple at Elephantine may also have been built by Jerusalemite priests who lost in a power struggle among their fellow Jerusalemite priests.³⁵ The point to note for this study is the possibility that the profile of the Elephantine temple may be linked to the colony context at Elephantine that was a hub of trade and transportation.

While the full details of the Elephantine temple are difficult to unpack in light of limited sources, it would appear that increased emphasis of the Passover festival in the festival rhythm working in concert with a negative depiction of Egyptians in the Passover narratives ultimately resulted in the destruction of the Elephantine temple.³⁶ When the Elephantine temple authorities turned to authorities in Jerusalem and Samaria – the Jerusalem authorities agreed to the

³² Bezalel Porten, *Archives From Elephantine. The Life of an Ancient Jewish Military Colony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968) 8-16 and 320-327. The Egyptian, Aramaic, and Greek papyri from Elephantine include letters, divorce documents, and business transactions of the Jewish military colony that likely was installed there in 650 BCE during the Persian occupation of ancient Egypt (Manasseh's reign to assist Pharaoh Psammetichus I in the Nubian campaign). The manuscript materials reflect the time frame of 500 to 400 BCE. The 10 Jedaniah Communal Archive (TAD A4.1-10) are the most significant Elephantine texts for this study having to do with the destruction of the Elephantine temple and recommendations for its reconstruction by Jerusalem authorities.

³³ Porten, *Archives*, 35-42. Cf. TAD A3.8, A3.3, and A3.3.1.

³⁴ Porten, *Archives*, 105-186, and 299-301.

³⁵ Porten, *Archives*, 299-300.

³⁶ See TAD A4.1, A4.3.7, A4.5.3-4, 4.7.4-28. Also see Porten, *Archives*, 128-133 and 284-293.

reconstruction of the temple where meal-offerings and incense but not sacrificial victims would be allowed. A similar frame of reference was provided to the temple authorities at Leontopolis.

Summary

As detailed above in the section dealing with *moving between places* – a place-studies strategy of analysis suggests that the temple at Elephantine can be viewed as a ‘regional’ example of a pilgrimage-site. Note that Casey proposes that just as *place* corresponds to *position*, and *moving within a place* corresponds to *place proper* – so, *moving between places* corresponds to an *area* linked by travel. The temple at Elephantine shared certain linkages with other Egyptian temples that should be viewed as normative for regional temples. In addition, the Elephantine temple authorities looked to linkage with the Jerusalem temple for its construction and subsequently for its reconstruction and operation as a cult-centre. I am not convinced of Kerkeslager’s critique regarding Jerusalem as a pilgrimage-site in the Greek and Roman periods but his position is likely stronger for the Persian period. Indeed, his emphasis on the diversity of Egyptian temples highlights the regional interplay of temples in Egypt with those in Persian and early Greek Judaea. In light of careful consideration of the Elephantine temple – I am comfortable with my earlier observation that regional studies of this temple recommends that pilgrimage journeys to Jerusalem would inform pilgrims to Elephantine, and pilgrimage journeys to Elephantine would inform pilgrims to Jerusalem.

Conclusion

This study of pilgrimage-sites for Judaism in the Greco-Roman period suggests that Alan Morinis’ definition of pilgrimage as travel in quest of an ideal is a helpful directive. What must be nuanced about ‘ideal’ is that for Jews at the turn of the common era – the pilgrimage ideal is fully embedded in matters of praxis found in the complexities of sacrificial religion. That such an ideal cannot be realized at home underscores the factor of pilgrimage-place for ancient travel framed by pilgrimage. The travel ideal is found in a public structure whereby the individual pilgrim is fully located within the collective whole of the pilgrimage community. The papyri sources from Elephantine suggest that praxis of sacrifice was of primary concern for the temple location and

structure, as well as meaning-making that might be associated with travel to this pilgrimage-site. In a 'regional' comparison with the temple at Jerusalem in a much later period – what might have been operating at a minimal level at Elephantine is fully realized at the Jerusalem pilgrimage-site. The sacrificial factor of pilgrimage practice frames and defines 'emplaced experience' for the devotee. The *moving within* factor of place-studies analysis underscores how Jerusalem pilgrims would not only be *in* place at the Jerusalem temple but they also would be *of* place through a creative dynamic of *people* gathered in mass, *place* at an enhanced architectural, structural and organizational level, and *movement* framed within the substance of the sacrificial system of turn of the common era Judaism.

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