

Narrative Review

Particularity of the Tomb as a Holy Place

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Abstract: Throughout the ages, peoples and tribes have taken pride in place for themselves, especially the graves of the righteous, and they have been sanctified. And, various religious rituals have been performed to the point that these rituals have become integrated into the customs and traditions of those peoples. In this article, we will address the important characteristics that the Jews carry out through the graves of the righteous in the Jewish religion. The definition of the grave of a righteous friend as a holy place will also be discussed. It must be mentioned that after his death, his dignity, actions, and strength remain influential even after his death. Therefore, his burial place and his grave are considered sacred and pure places, and they are considered popular and attract many visitors.

Keywords: The Tombs, Judaism, Mystical, Hasid, The Just, Holy Place.

Introduction

In the simplest human permanent settlements from ancient times, we can find the planned burial of the dead (Memford 1990:10-16). They probably played an important role in creating the need to find a permanent meeting place, which later became an ongoing settlement. During the wandering period of the Paleolithic man, the dead were the first to get a permanent place: caves, bumpy landmarks with monuments, or mounds of common tombs. These were signs of life, to which they returned from time to time to settle near the tombs of their ancestors. For instance, in the Jewish tradition, in ancient periods, the Jews demanded ownership over the lands in which their fathers were buried (Memford 1990:24). Hence, the city of the dead preceded the city of the living and, to a certain degree it constituted the foundation of the city of the living. In other words, in many traditions, there is a strong religious, social, and cultural relationship between the dead and the alive, which is expressed, among other things, in setting the tombs aside near the settlements' places.

In the Paleolithic burial places, we can find primary clues about city life. In the foundations of a city, we can define the place of ritual meetings, while the tombs represent one of these places. They served as pilgrimage centers. What started as a holy site to which scattered groups came occasionally for rituals and liturgies turned in some places into a permanent settlement site.

Objectives of the Article

This article aims to shed light on the social, religious, and other dimensions of the events that take place in the shrine of the righteous man among the Jews. As well as the motivating factors for visiting shrines and glorifying them. The article also aims to identify the characteristics of the visitors to the shrine and their impact on continuing to visit the shrine of the saint among the Jews. The objectives of the essay require understanding some of the basic terms in the essay, beliefs related to the shrines of Jews and the Jewish religion, to understand their motivations and characteristics.

The Importance of the Topic

The article deals with one of the important topics related to the characteristics of visiting the graves of the righteous in the Jewish community. An anthropological approach is crucial in understanding pilgrimage practices, including the beliefs, rituals, and characteristics of visiting saints. This article is an attempt to contribute to the sociological and anthropological studies of religion by discussing important areas and topics of social reality: "A society that

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does not work to understand the actions and behaviors of its citizens and the issues of bias around their actions is the essential “identity society.” Therefore, it is important to understand and clarify the human relationship with the sanctities (the shrines and their patrons). Through practices and rituals that translate this relationship.

Attributing Sanctity to a Tomb in Judaism.

Rabbi Nisim Gironi was among the first to write about the importance of the tombs of the Just, though he didn't define them as holy (Drashot 2019:6-15). Rabbi Nisim (born in the city of Girona in Spain in the early 14th century) wrote: “And according to this in discovering to prophets and Hasidic Rabbis in generations, abundance will be abundant on them, and through them, there can be abundance over all the willing from their generation, and to all who come close to them and participate with them. And not only in their lives, for also after their death, their burial places are worthy to find abundance there in one of the sides, because their bones that were tools on which the Godly abundance is applied, still have virtue and honor enough for these things. And because of this, our blessed memory Rabbis (רבינו) said that it is worthy to stretch over the tombs of the just and pray there because the prayer there will be more accepted, and to find in that place bodies on which the Godly abundance is already applied”. From his words, we see that the spiritual virtue of the Hasidic Rabbi itself sanctifies his burial place, as well as his death and life.

The concept is supported by later Jewish authors and philosophers. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that the custom of stretching over the tombs of the Just and the Sacred is an ancient custom, as I mentioned earlier. The origin of this custom in Christianity lies in pilgrimage to the tombs of the martyrs from the dawn of Christianity while indicating their deeds on the anniversary day of their saints' death. Some defined the tomb of the Just as a holy place, such as R. Haim Paltial of Marburg (Germany, the 14th century). He said: “and a holy place (Tomb of Fathers) causes that a prayer will be answered”.¹ (And thus also said Rabi Yaakov Halevy Ben Moshe Mullin (Germany, the 15th century): that the cemetery is the place of peace of the Hasidic Rabbis, and as such it is a holy and pure place, and the prayer is the most accepted on holy land”.² Some of the late rabbinical religious authorities wrote in similar terms, such as Rabbi Shlomo Ginzfrid,³ from the 19th century, author of “shortening laid the table” (Kitzur Shulhan Arukh). “They are used to go in Rosh Hashanah eve after Morning Prayer to the cemetery to stretch over the tombs of the Just, and there they give charity to the poor and carry a lot of pleas so to stimulate the sacred Hasidic Rabbis in the land to recommend good things for us in the judgment day. And also, because it is the place of burial of Hasidic Rabbis, it is a holy and pure place, and the prayer is the most accepted there, for it is held on a holy ground. And God all mighty will give grace due to the Hasidic Rabbis”.

Individual Tombs' Ritual of Mystical People

In addition to the general sanctity given to the tombs of the Just, there is also a profound spiritual link between a man and his close relatives who died mainly in order to communicate with him and get a piece of advice and guidance. A pronounced example of this is our master and teacher (האדמו"ר) Rabbi Menahim Mendel Shaniorsan (Rabbi Milovovich, הרבי מלובביץ'), who used to visit the tomb of his father-in-law, Rabbi Yusuf Yitzhak Shaniorsan (הרי"ץ) permanently, who saw in him a spiritual father and an address to each reference. Many letters from our master and teacher (האדמו"ר) Rabbi Menahim Mendel Shaniorsan, in an answer to asking help, included the statement “I will mention on Zion,” that is, I will mention your request in my visit to the tomb of Rabbi Yusuf Yitzhak Shaniorsan (הרי"ץ) Rabbi Menahim.

Mendel Shaniorsan even revealed once in front of Rabbi Shlomo Goren that the reason why he doesn't immigrate to the Land of Israel is because through the masters and teachers of Habad (Hasidic Jewish movement founded by Rabbi Zelman Shneur of Liadi) is to work through the tombs of their proceeds, and therefore he cannot leave it.

The Sacred Hasidic Rabbi, whose tomb is an Object of Pilgrimage

¹Brought in questions and answers (Rabbinical discussion), Bruch Marotenburg, Levov prints, Siman Kesed.

²Rabbi Yaakov Halevy Ben Moshe Mullin, Halakhot Tanit, 18.

³Sholhan A'rukh (Shortening Laid Table), Siman Kahak, section 13.



Almost in all religions around the world, regardless of whether they emerged in the Middle East or originated in the Far East, we can find the phenomenon of admiring images of flesh and blood who excelled and turned to be – in their lives or after their death – ritual and admiration objects (Eliade 1987:132-147). It seems that actually, in the faith systems of monotheistic religions, in which the Godhead is perceived as an abstract entity and distant from daily existence, there is a strong need for mediator entities possessing human-like concrete characterizations (and yet they have miraculous powers that origin is divine), that will decrease the huge gap between God and believers. In this space, there is an important significance to the Hasidic Rabbi, who is buried in a holy place. Religions around the world treat the big problems of human existence very well, such as redemption and immortality of the soul, but they are less attentive to the “small” problems of life – sickness, lack of kids, failure in studies or business, hardships in finding a life partner and other similar distresses woven into the human experience.

Among the monotheistic religions, only in the Eastern Orthodox and Catholic Christianity can we find a wide institutionalization of saints’ rituals and assimilation within the formal religious setting. In the Orthodox and Catholic Christianity, the saints are human beings who underwent canonization by the Church authorities after their death due to their abnormal relation with God, their special deeds, or moral excellence. It must be emphasized that living humans are not considered sacred according to the Orthodox and Catholic Christianity, because as long as they are alive, they might commit a sin. The Protestant Christianity, on the other hand, doesn’t recognize saints’ rituals and allows the title “saint” to all Christian believers.

In Judaism and Islam, the admiration for the Just/Sacred expressed, among other things, in a pilgrimage to the tombs, remained as a sort of popularity which lacks formal institutionalization, and because of that, the scholastic elite of the religious wise men find it hard to accept because of the “pagan” potential hidden in it. In the next part, there will be a clarification concerning the Just’s identity both in Judaism and Islam, One that has the power of pilgrimage to create a mass attraction to the tomb of the righteous.

The Attitude Towards the Just in Judaism

In Judaism, there are four aspects in the attitude to the concept of the Just:

- 1) According to the Biblical conception, Justness and Hasidism are merits that every man can have: a man who acts in a just way, fulfills all the commandments (mitzvoth), and overcomes worldly temptations is a Just.
- 2) In the period of the oral Jewish laws (Mishnah) and Talmud, the Just turned to be an ideal image, and very few could reach it. A Just or a Hasid is an exemplary person, and generally, there is appropriateness between his Torah and his behaviors. This is a man who is God-fearing and leads a clear and pure lifestyle. This kind of lifestyle brings him closer to God while he is still alive. In this context, sometimes a man becomes a model by virtue of his greatness in the Torah and sometimes by the virtue of his merits and unique personality. A Just or Hasid lives with a permanent conscience of grace (Hesed), and his conscience is an entity in which everything is connected and related. He is aware and feels not only himself, but also everything happening with others. For example, a prototype of a Hasid (or a Just) is Hanina Ben Dosa, and from stories about him, we can learn something about the special phenomenon of the Just and about his role in this world: it was said about Hanina Ben Dosa that “in each and every day a divine voice came out of Mount Horev (Biblical Mount Sinai) and said: all of the entire world is nourished because of Hanina my son, but Hanina my son is content with a small amount of carob from Sabbath eve to Sabbath eve”. In other words, the entire world is nourished thanks to the path that Hanina produces in the world, a path of being content with little (the intention is to be content with little in life and not to ask too much, and this is how Rabbi Hanina would have done with little).
- 3) According to the Jewish Kabala of the Book of Zohar, which is the mystic central link that was generated in Spain during the Middle Ages, the Just has a prominent role of mediation, being connected with the superiors but also with the inferiors, and by the validity of his role to repair everything that needs reparation in this world and to bring the Godly opulence down on earth. The counting of the righteous that connects between the upper counting and the



lower counting, it is the counting of the kingdom. In this sense the righteous is the conduit that connects the will and thought of God, and he is a sort of channel that links this world with the upper world. The Book of Zohar says: “and this is a first foundation that God almighty has created in his world and it is called light. It is said arm light for the Just” (Tihlim-Psalms is a book of biblical books 97:11). It is also written in the book of Psalms: “the Just is the foundation of the world”, by this that the world exists thanks to the Just. Consequently, the Just has a special relation both with people and with the Creator. The judicious said: “When the Just is deceased from the world, the ministering angels say to all mighty God: Master of the Universe, the Just so and so came! He says to them: ‘Let the saints come and welcome him and say to him: come in peace, let them rest in peace: Rabi Elazar said: “When a Just is deceased from this world, three classes of the ministering angels come to welcome him” (Ish 1998:17-18). Our Sages of Blessed Memory said: “The Hasidic Rabbis are greater in their death than in their lives”.

- 4) In the world of Hasidism, in the Jewish mysticism from the 18th century in Eastern Europe, a clear distinction was made between the two concepts: the Just and Hasid (Zadic and Hasid), while a pronounced social role was added to the Just (Zadic). The Hasid is the simple believer who follows his Rabbi, the Just (Zadic), and the Just is the congregation leader and its spiritual father. And according to this, only the intention to connect with him raises the person from his low place (Gilat 2005:9).

In addition to this, there are more definitions to the term “Just” (“Zadic”). Some define a Just as a person who gives to everyone what he/she deserves and doesn’t take from him/her what he/she doesn’t deserve. In the Bible the Just (Zadic) is defined as deriving from the root “justice” (“Zedec”), which means to give everyone what he deserves: to give wages to the good ones and punishment to the bad ones. It is not the title of a man who understands the Jewish mysticism (Cabala), gives blessings, or writes amulets. According to the definition of the Just (Zadic) in Judaism, he must fulfill a number of good deeds and ideal demands of religious and humanistic nature and avoid doing a number of bad and dishonorable deeds which are defined as evil. The Just (Zadic) is a charismatic leader whose image is opposite to a certain degree to that of the Rabi in the traditional congregation, for his spiritual charisma and energy are anchored in this world (Bilu 1998:18-20).

In Judaism sometimes it is also attributed to the Just (Zadic) the ability to make miracles (Mohammad 1990:102-124). In the book of Zohar, there are many references to miracles performed by the Just. Thus, for instance, it is told about the miracles of Rabi Shimon Bar Yohai (רשב”י), “beshet hu nafak lashuka, hazia leyehuda ben garim, amar, adayin yesh lazeh baolam? Natan bo enev ve-asah gal shel azamot” (Yihiel 2004:17).

In general, it seems from the different definitions that according to Judaism, higher spiritual-mystic powers are attributed to the Just. Furthermore, the righteous rather takes on himself the role to assist the others.

The Most Important Finding of the Article.

Through the article, the most important recommendations were reached:

- 1- Interest in building education and awareness centers to inform people of the importance of visiting the graves of the righteous Jews.
- 2- Introducing the culture of visiting graves into the educational curricula to raise students’ awareness and create a generation interested in visiting the graves of the righteous among the Jews.
- 3- Paying attention to introducing the graves of the two friends into tourist centers so that the visitor can feel comfortable learning about the importance of those graves.

Conclusion

In this article, I tried to provide an idea about the doctrinal characteristics associated with the graves of righteous Jews, and I intend to provide an analysis of the nature of the relationship between the levels of the cultural structure, i.e. Religiously, at the social, political and even economic levels. I even gave an ethnographic presentation. Recording the beliefs, customs, and traditions practiced by Jewish visitors to their holy shrines and the actions they take during their visit to the shrines of the righteous saints. It should be noted



that to this day there are still many people who still participate in this ritual. Beliefs at that time were keen and interested in shrines due to the close relationships between different population groups within the Jewish community.

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