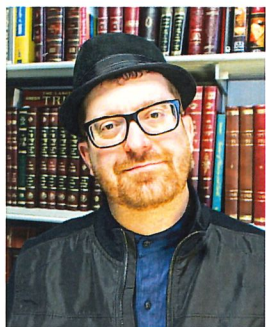


Co-Creating our Communal Journeying Together at *PrayerLab Shabbat*

Rav Aubrey Glazer



Often people share with me one of two remarks: “Rabbi, I’m *religious* but not *spiritual*.” Or “Rabbi, I’m spiritual but not *religious*.” I’ve always found this “either/or” mentality to be an interesting challenge— how can we use this tension to elevate our Judaism? First, why not join us as we collaborate and deepen our intergenerational connections on **Saturday, April 26**, as we will return

to what we began with Joey Weisenberg by sharing an interactive “PrayerLab” Shabbat service together with our religious school students and families? Each time we meet for “PrayerLab” Shabbat, we will have an opportunity to explore the “how’s and why’s” of a few key stations in the journey of traditional prayer. Bring your curiosity and questions. As with a good golf or tennis stroke, effective prayer benefits from how we fine tune our strategies for leaders and participants to create more moments of individual reflection and communal connectivity.

Second, why this enhanced offering? Nothing new here. Even a prominent Jewish philosopher like Martin Buber (1878–1965) made this distinction between what he called *religion* and *religiosity*— why? We can learn from Buber’s distinction between *religion* that refers to organized systems of beliefs, rituals, and institutions that can sometimes feel rigid or dogmatic over time, whereas *religiosity* is a more personal, dynamic, and authentic connection to the divine or the transcendent. In our strategic planning, the Worship Care Task Force, co-chaired graciously by Andy Schwartz and Steve Carne, we have been exploring our worship experience at Beth Abraham and noticing this healthy, creative tension between the importance of direct, meaningful encounters with the divine, in conversation with the formalities of institutionalized religion. Conservative-Masorti Judaism is a powerful centrist vision of Jewish living that harnesses this interaction between *religion* and *religiosity*, and in prayer we call that *kevah* or the fixed forms of liturgy and tradition (= *religion*) and *kavvanah* or the dynamic, creative forms of inspiration (= *religiosity*).

Recall not that long ago we were all moved by the powerful Shabbaton of my installation as when Joey Weisenberg shared his approach strengthening and inspiring sacred communities. Those sparks of *religiosity* Joey infused into the fixed forms of *religion* of the synagogue service, are part of the visionary work that Joey began in the choir loft above his Brooklyn shul ending up decades later melding into the main service at Kane Street Synagogue. We have been regularly learning from Joey’s work through Rising Song Institute that remains dedicated to transforming traditional prayer communities across the globe and its impact will continue to be felt through the years. In returning to Joey’s practical guide called, *Building Singing Communities*, we see more clearly in our worship care that the aim is to be fostering vibrant, spiritual, and inclusive experiences of prayer within Jewish communities, first and foremost in the synagogue. Following that installation Shabbaton, we have organically continued to gather following Kiddush lunch as a nigun circle on the Sabbath preceding the new month, *Mevarchim haHodesh* with the intention of listening more deeply to a melody of prayer for the month, along with teachings relating to the theme and direction of the month ahead. Those attending have also been studying in advance of each session from Joey’s “how-to” instructional videos that break down prayers into steps and stages in a very accessible manner. Joey has invited our Beth Abraham working group to consult on how we are learning and applying his approach to prayer to our emerging expressions of *religion* and *religiosity*. When we pay closer attention to how we pray and study together, it reminds us of the importance of leadership, teamwork, and the thoughtful use of space, sound, and silence to unlock the transformative power of music in prayer and community life. In this process of listening, learning and reflecting on how to strengthen our ties through worship, we are rediscovering what we call *tefillah* or *avodah sh’balev*, is truly a communal journey. Be part of that journey and join us for PrayerLab Shabbat in an interactive manner that fosters a deepening of communal connection through the artful balancing of the traditional *kevah* of *religion* and the dynamic *kavvanah* of *religiosity* in one space together. Bring your questions of the head and curiosity of the heart so we can grow together as a sacred communal family.



COUNTING THE OMER & ICE CREAM!

Judaism gives us a gift - the 7 week journey between the second night of Passover (April 13th) to Shavuot (June 2nd) - called Counting the Omer. Making this span of time count daily then empowers us to refine our lives, elevate our souls to be more prepared for receiving revelation at Shavuot, and fall in love with Judaism anew.

Join Rav Aubrey’s Graeter’s Omer challenge by downloading one of these Omer apps (scan QR code) or using the one inserted in this Bulletin. We’ll celebrate the completion of counting the full 49 days at Graeter’s in Oakwood on June 1 prior to the taste of Tikkun Leil Shavuot learning.

