Asylum: From the Temple to the Synagogue

by Dr R. James Ferguson

The sanctity of the altar in Jewish thought provides a revealing comparison to Greek traditions, since the refuge which might be found there was undermined by the countervailing threat of pollution to the sanctuary. As a result, asylum practises were moved first of all to special cities of exile, and at a later date limited patterns of asylum protection may have been accorded some synagogues. In this context Jewish customs form an important component of the wider Hellenistic society for both the Ptolemaic and Seleucid realms. The extension of asylum and related rights to synagogues shows the interaction of customary perceptions of the social use of sacred places across diverse communities. The role of faith-based-communities as sources of refugee aid and protection in the 21st century, in some cases including resistance to state policies, shows that this remains an important religious tradition today.¹

In early periods temporary refuge could be found by grasping the horns of the altar in the 'Tent of Yaweh', and for a short time in its early history at the first Temple in Jerusalem.² As noted by Jacob Milgrom, the “basic premise is that those who touch the altar absorb its sanctity and are removed from and immune to the jurisdiction of the profane world”.³ Adonijah found temporary refuge from Solomon in this way,

³Ibid., p299.
though in the end Solomon had him killed, some time after he had left the altar.\(^4\)

Solomon had Joab struck down while apparently still at the altar,\(^5\) indicating the limits of such protection. Here Solomon may have claimed the legitimacy of his action as King and judge. This general tradition of protection is remembered in the phrase 'horn of salvation' in a psalm of David,\(^6\) probably as an extension of the general atonement, forgiveness and spiritual security associated with the place of sacrifice. Hence we find a Talmudic exegesis of the word for altar, Mizbéach, in the letters 'M = mechilah "forgiveness," because the altar secures pardon for the sins of Israel. Z = zachuth "merit," because it secures for them merit for the World to Come. B = berachah "blessing," because the Holy One, blessed by He, brings a blessing upon the work of their hands. CH = chayyim "life," since they become worthy of the life of the World to Come.'\(^7\)

This form of protection, however, was probably denied intentional killers, at least if their guilt was clear.\(^8\) As we shall see, this form of asylum had to be replaced by other patterns of refuge.

Asylum at legally defined sites of refuge probably developed during or shortly after the reign of King Solomon in six specified cities, three east of the river Jordan, including Bezer, Ramoth in Gilead and Golan in Bashan.\(^9\) Alongside these cities were

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\(^4\) 1 Kings 1.50-51; 2.24-5.
\(^5\) 1 Kings 2.28-35.
Kedesh in Galilee, Shechem in Ephraim and Kiriath-arba (= Hebron) of Judah, all apparently in highland areas. An earlier date for the creation of the first asylum cities under Joshua is not impossible. Although it is conceivable that some of these traditions had been established at this early date, their full significance could only be developed under the centralised monarchical structures put in place in Solomonic and post-Solomonic times. In these cities a secured refuge was found for accidental or involuntary killers but denied murderers who had acted with premeditation, that is, those who waited in ambush or 'plotted craftily' against the victim. This tradition of 'cities of refuge' is often referred to in the Babylonian Talmud, and in Érubicn 35b it is implied that not just the cities, but a prescribed area measured from them also offered

12 Difficulties in establishing exact dates for this process remain, but a distinct historical development in the establishment of the cities of exile can be discerned, suggesting that this is not merely an ideal projection back on the past, see MCKEATING, Henry "The Development of the Law on Homicide in Ancient Israel", VT, 25, 1975, pp53-55.
protection. The distinction between unwitting and intentional killing is important, and ransoms could not be substituted for the exile imposed in the former case, nor for the death penalty in the later. With typical thoroughness, Mishnah 4 of the *Bikkurim*, dealing with the treatment and regulations concerning hermaphrodites, notes that 'he who unwittingly slays him must go into exile; and if of set purpose, then [the slayer] receives the death penalty'. On the other hand, the implication in Talmudic law that all Levitical cities, not just the six cited in biblical sources, provided asylum has been plausibly rejected by Menahem Haran as unsubstantiated by earlier historical sources.

It is important to note that all these refuges, called 'cities of intaking' are associated with descendants of the priestly family of Aaron, and with Levites, who had a special role as 'teaching priests', men specially pledged to Yahweh, in keeping alive early traditions of Jewish law. Although there are utopian and schematic

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18 GREENBERG, Moshe "The Biblical Conception of Asylum", *JBL*, 78, 1958, p125, following Numbers 35.9-34.
elements in the biblical accounts of the cities given over to the Levites, Menahem Haran and B. Mazar have demonstrated that they also contain genuine historical elements. These cities were 'all part of Israelite territory only during the heyday of the united monarchy, shortly before and after the death of David', though Moshe Greenberg suggests that they might have been an adjunct to the temporary refuge which could be found at altars, rather than a direct replacement for the local altars which would later on be suppressed both in fact and the literary tradition. Apart from this centralisation of cult, however, there were also theological grounds for this abandonment of the central altar as a place of refuge in Jewish thought.

Jacob Milgrom suggests that serious tensions arose between the practice of finding refuge at an altar, and the concept of sancta contagion whereby ritual elements within the tabernacle or temple could in turn pass on some of their holy power to the person who touched them. Hence, in Ezekiel, we find sharp division in

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Ibid., p126, pp130-132.

zones of access allowed to the lay people, the Levites and priests in cultic practice,\textsuperscript{24} while other Jewish traditions demonstrate that death will ensue if certain ritual elements of the cult are touched by unsuitable persons or if the inner sanctum of the sanctuary is entered inappropriately.\textsuperscript{25} It is even said of Aaron that he should not enter 'the sanctuary beyond the veil' whenever he wished, in case he 'may die'.\textsuperscript{26} When King Uzziah as a non-priest entered the sanctuary and offered incense there, even after being warned against this by the priests, he was stricken with leprosy.\textsuperscript{27} In this context, the statutes for the Levites had indicated that any stranger or layman coming near the Tabernacle was to be executed.\textsuperscript{28} In the worst cases of sacrilege, divine retribution, operating on the principle of 'collective culpability', could threaten an entire tribe or nation.\textsuperscript{29} In effect, these trends closed off the Temple as a place where refuge could be readily found, thereby avoiding the complex problem of the possible pollution of the altar, sancta, or the temple.\textsuperscript{30} Milgrom suggests that the legal usage of

\textsuperscript{26} Leviticus 16: 2-3.
\textsuperscript{29} MILGROM, Jacob Cult and Conscience: The Asham and the Priestly Doctrine of Repentance, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1976, pp32-34 and HARAN, Menahem "The Priestly Image of the Tabernacle", HUCA, 36, 1965, p226 following 1 Chronicles 2.7; 1 Samuel 15.3; 1 Kings 20.42; Joshua 7.1; Numbers 17.11-14
\textsuperscript{30} For the different degrees of holiness traditionally associated with the furniture, fabrics, and beams of the Tabernacle, see HARAN,
the six cities of refuge was not based on their being 'altar cities', since the setting up other altars, especially in the 'impure' lands beyond the Jordan, would have been viewed, at least from the point-of-view of the Priestly tradition, as virtual treason in the post-Solomonic period.\textsuperscript{31}

Menahem Haran, although admitting that altar-asylum and city-asylum might have existed at the same time, suggests that 'the privilege of asylum was surely attached to the cities of refuge in their own right and applied to the whole of the built-up area within the walls, without having anything to do with 'shrines' or altars which

might have also been found in these cities'. Nor should the Levitical cities in general be confused with the small number of temple cities which had existed in the land of Canaan before the focusing of the cult on Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem - only Hebron was both a city of exile and an attested temple city. Rather, the formal recognition of such cities of exile was based on their role as replacements for the earlier tradition of altar asylum. Although this debate is complicated by the need to assess the first usage of cities of exile against the process of cultic centralisation on Jerusalem, it seems likely that these cities of refuge would take on their greatest significance once local altars had been repressed. In the Priestly tradition, there is an explicit effort to limit the use of the sanctuary for asylum seekers: 'the criminal not only gains no immunity by grasping the altar's horns but makes himself liable to death by divine agency. He now has a double reason to shy away from the sanctuary'. Furthermore, on this point the interests of the centralised monarchy and the priests coincided, a concord which would not be so easy to achieve in Late Period and Hellenistic Egypt. Milgrom rightly notes that 'altar asylum had ceased by the time of the Second Temple', while in the time of Herod's temple, regulations on access to the temple and its various forecourts are closely enforced and institutionalised, with

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33 Ibid., p119, pp26-42, p121.
the main concern being to exclude unclean or unsuitable persons from defined zones within the temple and its courts.\textsuperscript{38}

The intention behind these laws seems to be to keep the land of Israel free from the pollution caused by the unreconciled shedding of innocent blood, a religious and legal issue which concerned many early societies, including Athens and classical Greece generally, Jewish societies and the Christendom during the Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{39} In the case of early Jewish thought, the pollutive element cannot be entirely reduced to one of moral responsibility, since even an ox which had caused the death of a man had to be stoned, and ritualistic definitions of 'contagion' from sanctified objects are subject to complex and at times conflicting traditions.\textsuperscript{40} However, as noted above,

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[40] Exodus 21.28-32; Genesis 9.5-6; GREENBERG, Moshe "The Biblical Conception of Asylum", JBL, 78, 1958, p128; MILGROM, Jacob "Sancta Contagion and Altar/City Asylum", in EMERTON, John A. Congress Volume, Vienna 1980, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1981, pp278-310. However, there was a pragmatic tendency to link moral and purity concerns, e.g. a polluted person who delayed purification was doubly liable in that that they might end up polluting others, or even the sanctuary,
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some distinction was made for human murderers between truly accidental homicide and one due to carelessness, indicating the rise of a jurisprudential concern for decrees of human responsibility. This protection for those who had killed unintentionally was to be extended to six cities given to the Levites, which under Talmudic law could even temporarily protect intentional murderers, at least until a judicial decision could be reached. It must be noted that to stay in such places of asylum, away from family, friends and normal means of living, was regarded as providing a certain level of expiation for guilt, i.e. it is clearly a type of exile. The manslaughterer must remain in the city of refuge and could not return until the current high priest had died, the death of the high-priest here probably having a further expiatory value. Both the temporary protection afforded murderers and the expiatory refuge given those who had committed manslaughter clearly suggest that the mechanism of asylum cities reduced the social divisiveness of the earlier retributive institution of the blood redeemer, which could encourage violent direct retaliation.

The Temple at Jerusalem was a specially prescribed ritual space with zones set up for limited access by gentiles (the outer court), women (the Court of the
Women), purified Jews (Court of Israel), Levites and central areas beyond the altar forbidden to all but priests. The holy of holies, of course, was forbidden to all except the high priest, and then only for the ritual performances of Day of Atonement, and possibly in the case of emergencies. Hence Pompey the Great's intrusion into this then empty room was remembered with shock in the Jewish tradition, even though he did not plunder the temple. These bans were taken with great seriousness: when Herod wished to rebuild the Second Temple on a massive scale, he had to use specially trained priests as stonemasons for much of the work.


These zones of relative purity and relative exclusion were not just based on the concept of penetrating closer and closer, through gates, courtyards and buildings into the heart of the temple with its inner shrine (as in Egyptian temples). Since the temple at Jerusalem was also built on a hill, it also probably included some sense of ascent onto the temple platform, where 'the more sacred areas were raised above the less sacred'.

Therefore some elements of a 'divine mountain' mythology remain attached to the Temple at Jerusalem. Imagery in the Mishnah incorporates this graded wholeness in a tiered series of ten zones of holiness, beginning with the observation that the 'Land of Israel is holier than any other land' and concluding with the Holy of Holies. In a later source, the Holy of Holies could be conceived of as the centre of the universe, and the Foundation Stone, mythically located in front of the Ark, as the exact spot which is 'the foundation of the world'. Hence, the Temple of Jerusalem was not only a symbol of the universe, but also transcended it. These zones of purity

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and exclusion were also paralleled by gradations in degrees of exclusion for different
degrees of impurity, i.e. 'exclusion from the sacred, then exclusion from the sacred
and profane habitation, then penalties that permanently "exclude" one from earthly
society.'

The seriousness with which these ritual and social concerns for purity were
taken is indicated by the penalty for a gentile who stepped over the low-railing into
the forecourt of the Temple - the punishment was death. This ban had been
reinforced by an edict of Antiochus III, while the Romans accepting it even to the
point of allowing this punishment to be meted out against Roman citizens. Warning
tables in Greek and Latin were set up announcing this restriction. These warnings to
gentiles were probably necessary, since Herod's massive reconstruction of the

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60 Josephus Jewish Antiquities XV.11.5; Josephus Jewish War V.194 & VI.124-8; SCHÜRER, Emil The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ, Vol. II, rev. ed. by Geza Vermes et al., Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark Ltd, 1979, p284. See Acts 21:29 & 29. Floyd Filson translates the warning inscriptions as 'No foreigner is allowed within the balustrade and embankment about the sanctuary. Whoever is caught (violating this rule) will be personally responsible for his ensuing death', FILSON, Floyd V. "The Significance of the Temple in the Ancient Near East: Part IV - Temple, Synagogue, and Church", Biblical Archaeologist, 7, no. 4, 1944, p80.
Temple, its courtyards and its platform made it one of the wonders of the ancient world, and a likely place for travelling Greeks and Romans to visit.⁶²

These general restrictions along with concerns for ritual purity removed the Temple from consideration as a refuge for those who had committed homicide. Likewise, the attempt to use the Temple as any kind of asylum during the period of complex manoeuvring among Pharisee, Sadducee, Herodean, 'Zealot' and Roman interests would have politicised its use into that of a political refuge.⁶³ When the Jewish Revolt does break out, the Temple is involved not because of asylum-related issues, but due to the halting of sacrifices on behalf of Rome and the emperor.⁶⁴ The Temple then did indeed become a focus, both physical and symbolic, in the complex contest among Jewish factions for power between 66 and 70 C.E. It was not just the physical destruction of the great wealth and the nation symbol of the Temple in C.E. which alarmed Josephus. The severe factional strife within Jerusalem and its Temple had already profaned the shrine as God's house, allowing it to be destroyed and implying the harshest of futures for the people of Israel.⁶⁵ According to Josephus, there were popular accounts which suggested that God had already abandoned the Temple and Jerusalem before their final destruction.⁶⁶

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⁶³ The term 'Zealot' needs to be used with care, see SMITH, Morton "Zealots and Sicarii, Their Origins and Relations", Harvard Theological Review, 64 no. 1, 1975, pp10-13; FILSON, Floyd V. "The Significance of the Temple in the Ancient Near East: Part IV - Temple, Synagogue, and Church", Biblical Archaeologist, 7, no. 4, 1944, p82.
⁶⁴ Josephus Jewish War II.409-10.
⁶⁵ Josephus Jewish War VI.277.
⁶⁶ Josephus Jewish War VI.299; 2 Baruch I.1-4 & VIII.1-2; BARKER, Margaret The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem, London, SPCK, 1991, pp50-53. For the doctrine that unatoned evil can collect in the sanctuary 'until the day of retribution for the entire community', perhaps resulting in God withdrawing his presence from Israel, see MILGROM, Jacob Cult and
Aspects of these traditions were transferred onto the way synagogues would be treated. Synagogues, with their emphasis on the Law and the teaching of the Torah, became more important after the destruction of the Temple, and were found in large numbers in Jerusalem, the towns of Israel and Palestine, and wherever communities of Jews were found throughout the Middle East and Mediterranean world. It was not just the reading of the Law that was emphasised in this new environment, but also a dynamic view of sacred space in which the diaspora communities became the locus of an 'ideological sacred space'. The renewed emphasis on the Torah and Law is reflected in literature such as the Syriac Baruch. Although some synagogues would have been small, humble structures, others were impressive buildings, e.g. the 2nd century C.E. synagogue at Sardis, located in one of the wings of the gymnasium, was some 200 feet in length. They are particularly well attested in Alexandria, where one of the largest synagogues of the ancient world was erected. Known as the 'Great

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68 KUNIN, Seth "Judaism", in HOLM, Jean & BOWKER, John (eds.) Sacred Place, London, Pinter, 1994, p131.


Synagogue of Alexandria', it was described by Rabbi Judah as 'like a huge basilica, one stoa within another, and it sometimes held twice the number of people that went forth into Egypt'.

Documentary evidence indicates the presence of synagogues in other parts of Egypt, including Ptolemais during the late third century B.C.E. and at Arsinoe Krokodilopolis in the Fayum. Synagogues also existed at Schedia (near Alexandria, 3rd century B.C.), Xenephyris (Lower Egypt, 2nd century B.C.), Athribis (Lower Egypt, 3rd or 2nd century B.C.), Nitriai (Lower Egypt, 2nd century B.C.), at Alexandrou-Nesos (the Fayum 3rd century B.C.): in fact they were a likely adjunct wherever sizeable numbers of Jews had settled in Egypt.
In the Greek sources synagogues are usually identified as *proseuchē*, that is, houses of prayer, and much less rarely as *euchēoin*. At times, synagogues are also identified as *synodos* or *koinos*, indicating a collegial social organisation which would have helped members to gain recognition in hellenistic communities. Identifications of these places as *hieron*, *naos*, or *nakoros* may be appropriate at special cult centres established in Jewish colonies, e.g. at Elephantine and Leontopolis. More generally, however, the description of these assembly houses and places of prayer as temples or sanctuaries seems to be based on a loose analogy between Jewish and Hellenistic places of religious activity. The Jews of the Diaspora themselves probably did not need such terms for their synagogues, but found it convenient to allow non-Jews to use such identifications. This analogy may have allowed an easier official treatment of the *proseuchēs*, and indeed, made it more likely that they would themselves gain the privileges granted to Hellenistic temples, e.g. the right of asylum. In the context of antisemitic feeling in Alexandria, and the complex politics of the late Ptolemaic period, the attempt to demonstrate loyalty to the crown was extremely important. This

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can be seen in the use of dedication formula for some *proseuches*, which include a formula of dedication on behalf of the reigning sovereigns, but not to them. This approach helps indicate the loyalty of the Jewish population, without having them infringe regulations on idolatry.  

The inscription *OGIS* 129 (= *CIJ* 1449) seems to accord one *proseuche*, possibly the 'synagogue' at Leontopolis, the right of asylum, that is, inviolability, and the document may be a restatement of an earlier claim to be dated to the reign of Ptolemy VIII, circa 145-116 B.C.E. It uses similar formula to asylum inscriptions for Egyptian temples, as found in *SB* 7259, 31-33 & *SB* 6236, 27. The possibility that the 'synagogue' at Leontopolis was formally granted asylum under Ptolemy VIII is mitigated by the fact that the inscription claiming this right is a later notice, and is unique in requesting royal permission to replace an earlier plaque, i.e. it may be a later forgery asserting a new claim in the 30s B.C.E. It is nonetheless an attempt to parallel rights found in other temples of the first century B.C.E. These trends of

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78 Ibid., pp55-57, p74, following *OGIS* 96 and *CIJ* 1443.
accommodation are not surprising, in that by the second century considerable numbers of Jews and Samaritans had found their way into the countryside of Egypt, with some villages being predominantly of this extraction.\footnote{RIGSBY, Kent J. Asylia: Territorial Inviolability in the Hellenistic World, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1996, pp571-573.}

Even when a \textit{proseuche} is not known from the historical record as having formal asylum rights, its general correlation with a 'sacred place', as understood in the Hellenistic world, may have given it a \textit{de facto} usage as a place of refuge. We hear of one case from the Fayum where a certain Dorotheos was accused of the theft of a woman's cloak and 'sought asylum in the \textit{proseuche} of the Jews'.\footnote{FUKS, A. & TCHERIKOVER, V.A. M. (eds.) Corpus Papyorum Judaicarum, I, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1957, no. 129.} What is interesting about this case is that although the world \textit{asylia} is not used, the context makes it clear that Dorotheos was not dragged out, nor dealt with at once. Instead, the stolen cloak was placed in the protection of the verger of the synagogue until the case might be tried.\footnote{FUKS, A. & TCHERIKOVER, V.A. M. (eds.) Corpus Papyorum Judaicarum, I, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1957, no. 129, lines 6-8.} There is no certainty that this particular synagogue had asylum rights, but it is clear that the synagogue must have offered some level of protection or benefit to the person who fled to it.\footnote{See Ibid., p240, footnote 5. Aryeh Kasher argues that the evidence is strong enough to assume that asylum rights had been accorded this synagogue, KASHER, Aryeh "Synagogues as 'Houses of Prayer' and 'Holy Places' in the Jewish Communities of Hellenistic and Roman Egypt", in URMAN, Dan & FLESHER, Paul V.M. (eds.) Ancient Synagogues: Historical Analysis and Archaeological Discovery, Vol. I, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1995, p215. This is probable but not certain.} This correlates with a trend in Ptolemaic Egypt for some temples to act as places of refuge, even when specific asylum decrees are not certain for the temple in question.\footnote{See P. Tebt. 26; P. Tebt. 787; PSI 502; BINGEN, J. "Grecs et Egyptiens d'après P.S.I. 502", American Studies in Papyrology, 7,
planning of these *proseuches*, including even enclosing walls and sacred groves, may have also been beneficial in this cross-cultural setting.\(^87\) It is also to be noted that Jewish manumissions of slaves in synagogues at Delos and Penticapaion seem to parallel Greek sacral manumission practices in that the freed slave 'was consecrated to God and obliged to follow the religious way of life of the Jews'.\(^88\) At least for our limited range of evidence, there seems to be in both asylum and sacral manumission processes a convergence on Greek social practices which would have been readily understood in the Hellenistic milieu.

These asylum rights accorded both with the general policy of religious tolerance, which was part of the Ptolemaic recognition of the complex nature of Egyptian social life, and with a specifically pro-Jewish stance during the early period.\(^89\) This gained the Ptolemies the support of the large Jewish community in Alexandria, but was also part of their international program directed towards Palestine and Coele-Syria, which they hoped to retain against the rival claims of the Seleucids. This remained true in spite of a short period of intolerance due to internal conflicts

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which temporarily turned Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II against Jewish military units which might intervene in his disputes with the widow of Ptolemy VI Philometer.\textsuperscript{90} In spite of later Jewish polemic on this issue, prominent in both Josephus Against Apion II.53-55 and 3 Maccabees, it is likely that this enmity was short lived.\textsuperscript{91}

Likewise, the convergence of the treatment of synagogues with the type of rights associated with Hellenistic temples may have been set within a wider landscape of accommodation between the royal administration and Jews of the Diaspora during the first two centuries of the Hellenistic kingdom. While the Ptolemies found the Jews a useful counterbalance to both Egyptian and Greek interests, the Jews at first went through considerable hellenisation within Egypt. For example, the papyrological material known to us indicates a considerable preponderance of Greek names, including those derived from Greek gods such as Athena, Apollo, Dionysus, Zeus, Heracles and Hera, over Hebrew ones in circumstances which make it clear that the documents are most likely speaking of the Jewish population.\textsuperscript{92} The translation of the Pentateuch into Greek and the heavy reliance upon Greek as the literary and religious language of diaspora Jews supports their use of a shared, Hellenised intellectual culture, as does a certain reliance on Hellenistic law in the juridical papyri known to us.\textsuperscript{93} From these trends it is possible to suggest that in spite of the unique features of

Jewish religion and continued religious adherence, prominent Jews would seek to maximise their rights and privileges within a Greek legal context that was well known to them. This would help develop a wider recognition for the sacral nature of their synagogues, drawing on certain parallels with Hellenistic temples and later Christian institutions.94

Modern examples of faith-based refuge and asylum protection demonstrate a parallel structure to these complex relations between religious institutions and the state. Greek and Middle Eastern temples had often been moderators of harsh state laws through asylum practices, and these could be especially important for non-citizens, whose legal rights were less than well-assured. Today, churches and synagogues sometimes seek to moderate the harsh treatment of refugees and asylum-seekers, even though they have no formal right to do so. Various agencies, including migrant groups, humanitarian and religious organisations often fight for the legal recognition of exiles and refugees, even when these persons have entered a host country 'illegally' or are undocumented migrants. The modern Christian ‘Sanctuary Movement’, which emerged out of trends both towards the moral autonomy of churches and liberation theology, has given birth to new versions of church sanctuary.95 A range of U.S., Canadian, Dutch, German and British groups have been

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95 Church sanctuary had been prominent during the 4-15th centuries, but during the 16-17th centuries was undermined and no longer supported by the secular legislation of even Christian states, see BRINK, Jeanie R. "Sanctuary and the Sanctuary Movement", This World, 11, Spring-Summer 1985, pp4-6; PLAUT, W. Gunther Asylum: A Moral Dilemma, Westport, Praeger 1995, p19. The Roman Catholic Church, however, has not 'officially abandoned' asylum even today, though this is not automatically given, and must be agreed to by the priest and church authority, as indicated in the Codex Juris Canonici, see PLAUT, W. Gunther Asylum: A Moral Dilemma, Westport, Praeger 1995,
involved in the sanctuary movement of the 1980s and 1990s, basing their claims on a historical trends including Hebrew, Greek and Christian traditions, as well as English church history. In the last decade, these trends have widened to a stronger interfaith activism against social injustice. The notion of offering protection to ‘strangers’ is something readily understood by diaspora communities and by those who have themselves been persecuted.
