

ure out how many pages I was behind or which prayers I could skip. It was a good day if I could make it through the *Amidah* once before the leader finished his repetition.

I did, however, gain a very important understanding from *davening* with others. Before *frum* week, I had assumed that more observant Jews were just speed reading through the prayers, as compared to the Reform Jews in my home congregation, who actively participated in musical prayer services—the kind of service which often helped me

feel connected to God. But after spending so much time experiencing this different style of prayer, I begin to sense that the “mumbling” was really its own type of music, with its own rhythm, its own voice rising and falling.

The new level of observance I experienced during *frum* week also gave me a different way of connecting to God. Previously I believed that some undercurrent of Divinity was in the world around me; to experience it I simply needed to enter the world with open eyes and wait for God’s presence to

appear to me. During *frum* week, each action I took was a forced pause of mindfulness of the Divine, an awareness that my every deed was meant to advance me toward God, regardless of how I was feeling at that moment.

As the week progressed, it became quite clear that I had embarked on a personal test—an experiment of trying out a lifestyle that ultimately was not for me. On one level I recognized that the painful, exhaustive reality of getting so little sleep overshadowed the wonder of walking out into the dawn for *shacharit*. But on a deeper level, it was unsettling to know that as a woman I simply did not count. However warm a community I had found in those shared, carved-out hours of the day, I would not be able to continue praying in it.



Now that an extinguished *havdallah* candle has marked the end of my altered lifestyle, my clavicles once again see the sun. And with the return to the comfort of familiar words, familiar prayers, familiar orders of the day, my former *why?* has been replaced with: *What do I continue?*

I still don’t have an answer. I am unsure.

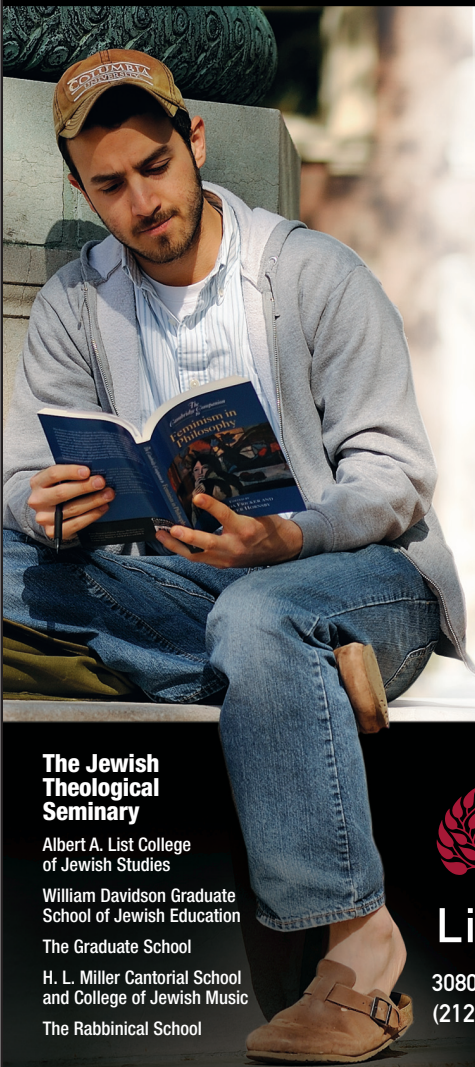
Here is what I do know: I will always welcome the opportunity to share in another person’s reckoning with the Divine. I will always continue to ask questions of others and of myself.

While this week may have appeared the very antithesis of Reform Jewish practice, it would not have been a success without the strength I have gained from my own denomination. This week gave the informed choices I make as a Reform Jew renewed depth and meaning.

Whether I choose for my alarm to go off tomorrow morning at seven or at nine, I do know that a world filled with God, and with people doing their best to reach God, is what I will be waking up to. For me, all the rest of Judaism—the ritual, the prayers, the understanding of Torah—is built around this one unchangeable truth.

—Emily Langowitz, senior at Yale University and member of Temple Beth Elohim, Wellesley, Massachusetts

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