



Jewish Design Guide

Seven Principles of Design for Jewish PARK(ing) Spaces

B'reishit – Design & Creation – world building

If there were ever a guide to Jewish creation, Genesis – The Book of Creation – would probably be it!

Beyond the inspiration provided by Breishit, what are elements of world-building you could incorporate into your PARK(ing) space? For example, a sand and mud pit for kids (and adults!) to mold into earthworks with pitchers of water to pour through as rivers to study erosion and deposition? Perhaps a setup where participants create micro-habitats for all sorts of different living creatures? Plus one for science lesson plus hands on Jewish fun!

Hospitality – Open Tent

Abraham and Sarah are venerated for their open tent hospitality, referenced in the chuppah (wedding canopy) by the four open sides, suggesting that all are welcome. PARK(ing) Day is about engaging with the public. Jewish PARK(ing) Day spaces should similarly be welcome to all. Signage and friendly demeanors help with this, as do design elements that are inviting (e.g. multiple entrances, bright colors, high visibility). If you're doing something hidden with walls (maybe a personal sanctuary or mini-labyrinth) just make sure passersby know that all are welcome.

The Commons – Migrash, Eruv

PARK(ing) Day is largely about reimagining how we define public space. Judaism has been thinking about this for millennia as well. The migrash – biblical greenbelts around Levitical cities in ancient Israel – is one example. The exact nature of migrash is debated, but it's generally understood as a commons space: neither solely for agriculture nor for private use, but to provide a public amenity accessible by the entire community. Eruv – the line religious communities erect to extend the private residential space throughout the community for the purposes of Shabbat observance – similarly pushes our boundaries of what is public and what is private.

We often think of our private bubbles of space when moving through spaces that really are public – especially when driving MY private car, and parking in MY parking spot (even if only for the time paid for). How might you use your Jewish PARK(ing) space to suggest a different relationship to public and private? What are some amenities that you could bring into the PARK(ing) space that would normally be private or may be difficult to find or use, especially in our ever more urban communities?

Wilderness / Awe

Some of Jewish history's most pivotal moments occurred in the midst of wilderness, where awe-inspiring landscapes open us up to more easily receiving the wonders of creation. This is admittedly a bit more challenging in a small urban space. Still, sometimes all it takes to create a moment of awe is a shift in perspective. As you choose your PARK(ing) site,

consider what else is around. Maybe there's a particularly interesting view, a magnificent tree older than most of the buildings around it, or perhaps architecturally inspiring buildings that trigger a sense of a larger, longer history than our own personal lives encompass. How can you site position itself in relation to these things? How might it frame views to "borrow" from the buildings and landscape elements surrounding it?

Movement & Journey + Cycles of Nature / Cycles of Time

Jewish tradition is one of movement and journey – through the wilderness, through the diaspora, in and around ancient and modern Israel, and, of course, through time. Again, this becomes a bit tricky in small spaces. The first thought is to consider how to weave movement paths into tight configurations – mazes and labyrinths, for example – if you want users to physically move in and around your space. There are also ways of physically moving the body without moving through space – yoga, for example. And then there are the ways we're always moving through time and space (as in the cosmos) whether we're actively trying to or not. Perhaps your PARK(ing) space creates a meditative space for people to be still in their bodies while intentionally experiencing the movement through time and space we undergo as cosmonauts on Spaceship Earth. Your space can also highlight natural cycles, encouraging users to look for signs of the changing seasons in relation to the Jewish calendar, and the movement of the earth around the sun as Shabbat draws closer.

Localism & Place: Seven Species & Native Plants; Locality

In ancient Israel, everything was basically local. Maybe some cedars were imported from Lebanon, and eventually the spice trade from the East, but essentially everything came from the region around our ancestors. These days, we can get almost anything from almost anywhere – but at a cost. In designing space and ritual, we have the opportunity to highlight localism and place – the unique cultural, ecological, and social qualities and aspects of our surrounding landscape. One analogue from the Torah would be the seven species – seven plant species native to the ancient Middle East that held special status in the Torah. What might be the local equivalent of the seven species for the place where you're building your PARK(ing) space and how might you feature these species? What other aspects of place can you utilize and highlight?

Rest, Rejuvenation, Relaxation, Release – Shabbat, Shmita, Yovel

Many of Jewish tradition's key elements revolve around creating distinct time and space for rest and rejuvenation. Many of us lead increasingly hectic lives, especially while moving in and around urban spaces. PARK(ing) Day is a great opportunity to bring in aspects of Shabbat, Shmita, and Yovel into the public urban realm. In your PARK(ing) space, you can do this by providing seating, refreshments, shade, recreation, and other design elements that help passersby to take a load off and smile for a few minutes. You could bring in more proactive elements like massage or acupressure / acupuncture if you wanted to go that route, or you could bring fresh produce for public consumption if you have access to a growing space in the spirit of Shmita.

What other ways could you provide some release, relief, and redistribution of resources in the spirit of these three essential times?

Jewish PARK(ing) Day is organized by Mitsui Design, and is a subset of PARK(ing) Day - original concept by Rebar Group: www.rebargroup.org