

AN ALEPH BET
OF SYNAGOGUES



idea about community



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KUF



2017



SAMECH



RESH



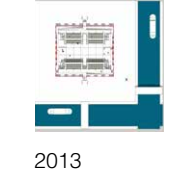
AYIN



2014



LAMED



2013



HET



1983



DALET



SHIN



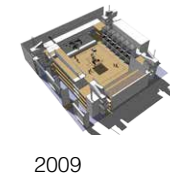
PEH



2016



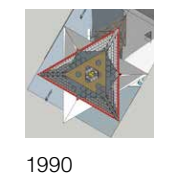
MEM



2009



YUD



1990



VAV



1976



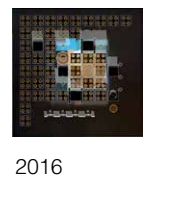
ALEPH



TAF



TZADIK



2016



NUN



2015



KAF



1994



ZION

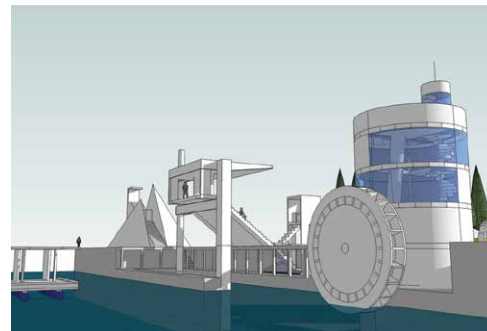
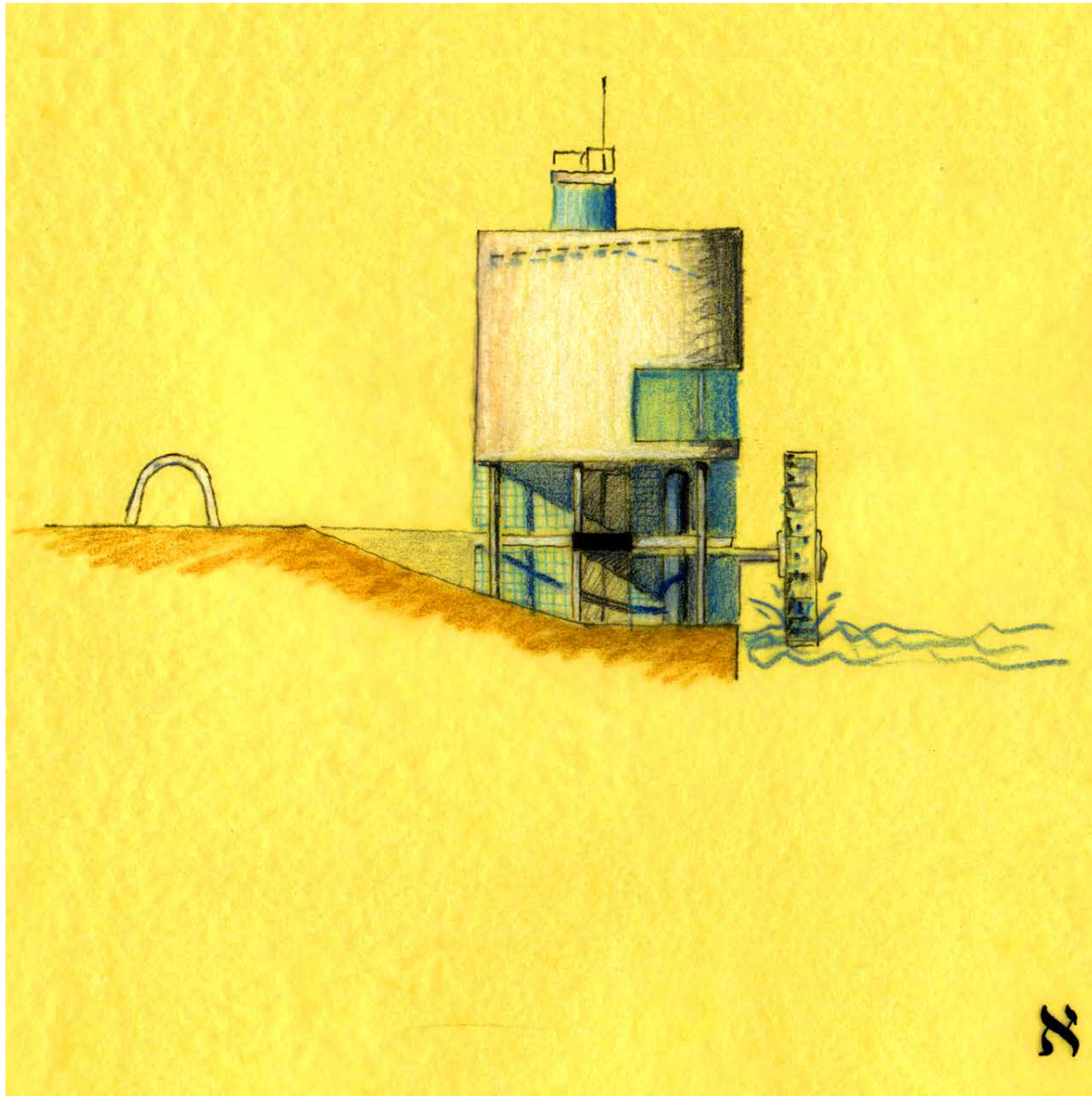


1980



GIMEL

????

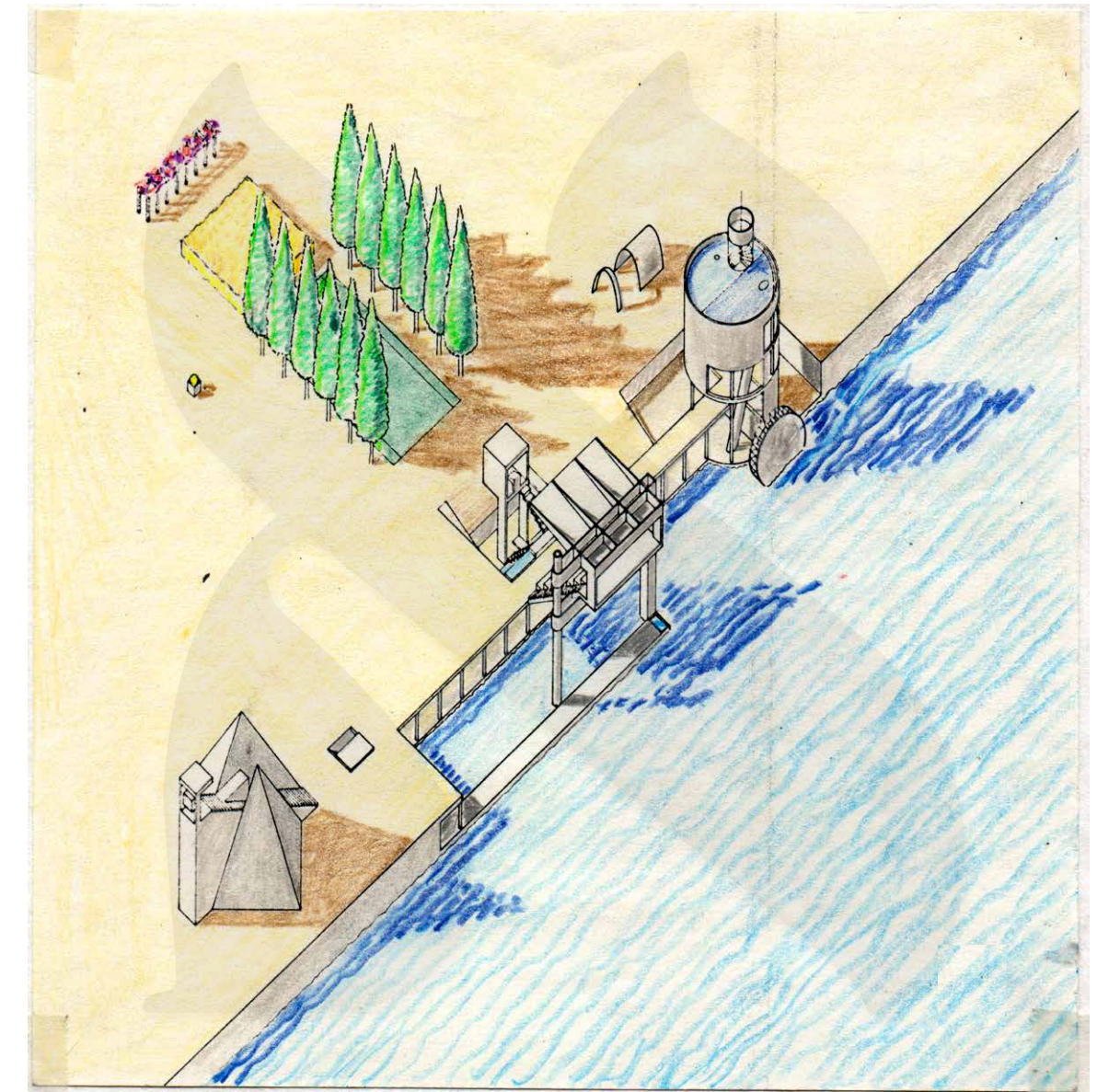


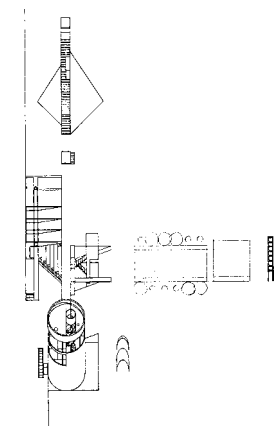
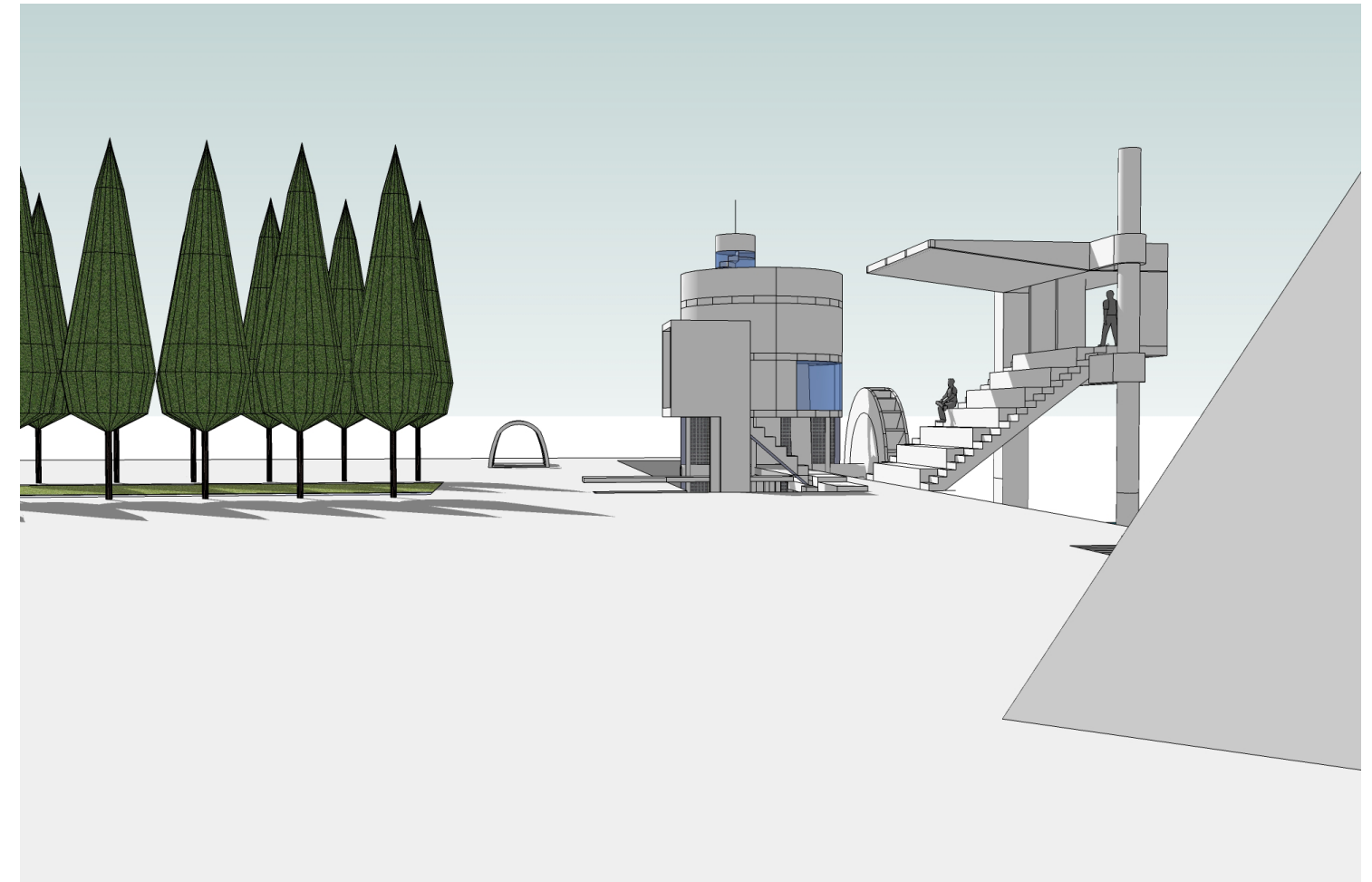
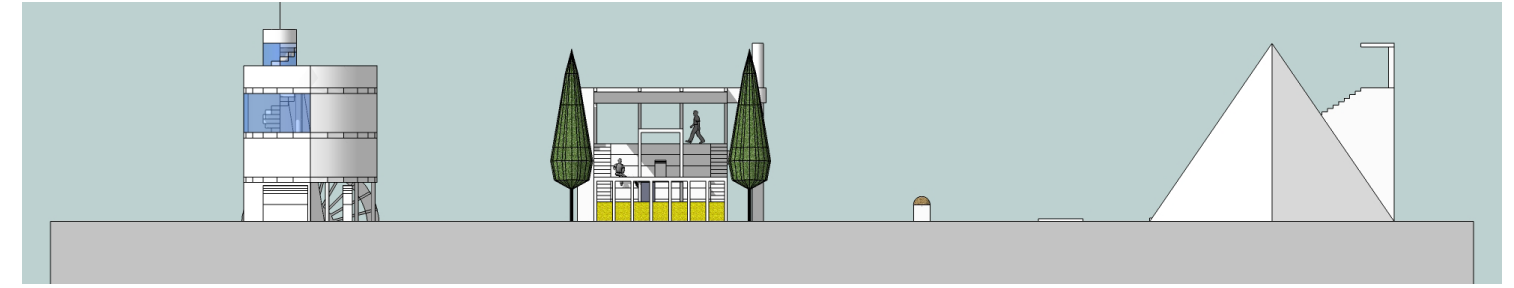
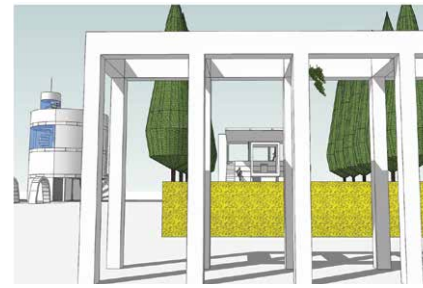
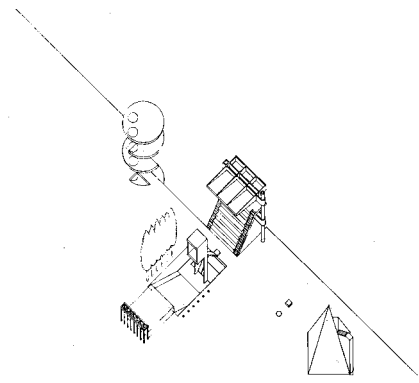
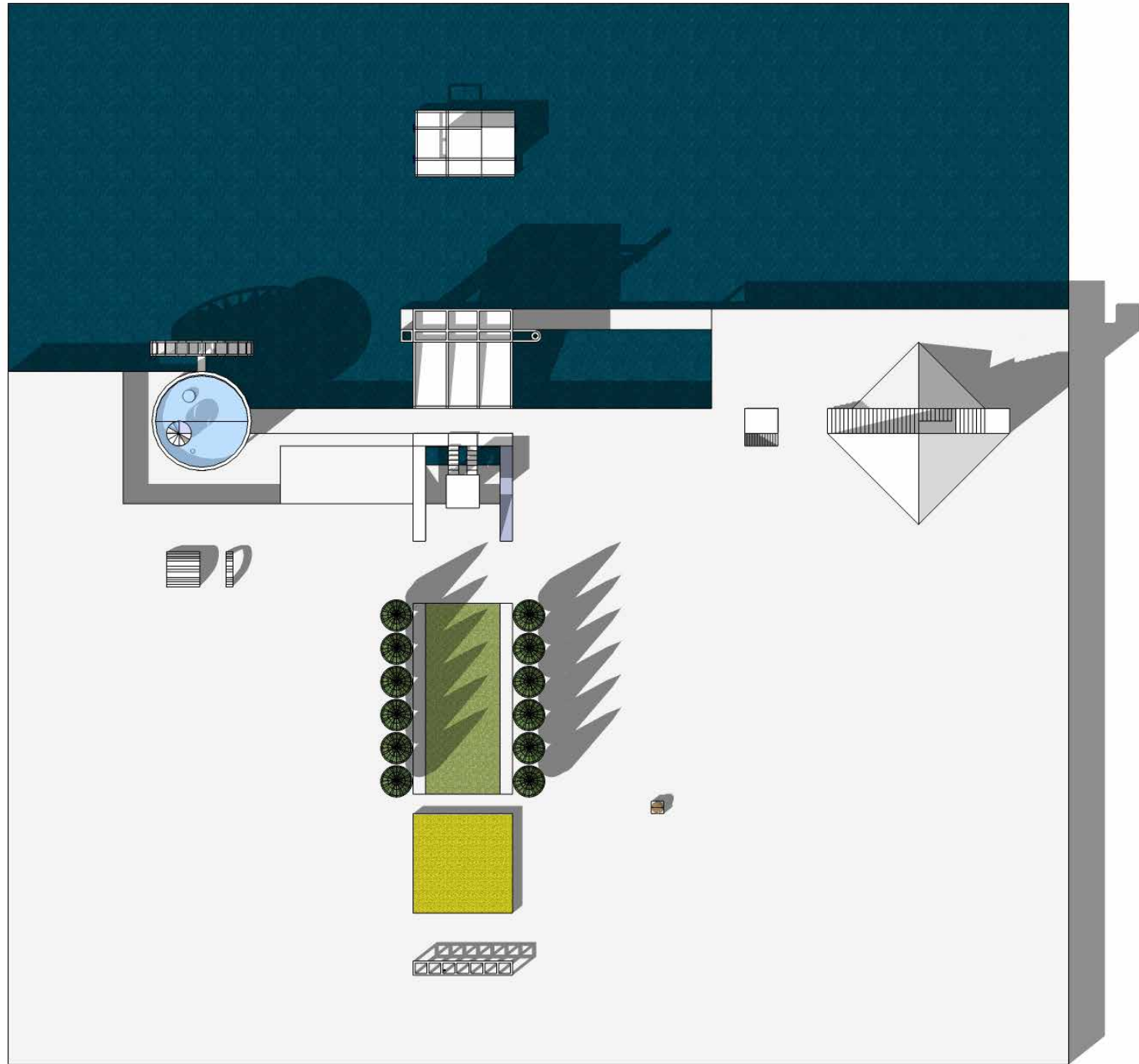
Synagogue Aleph

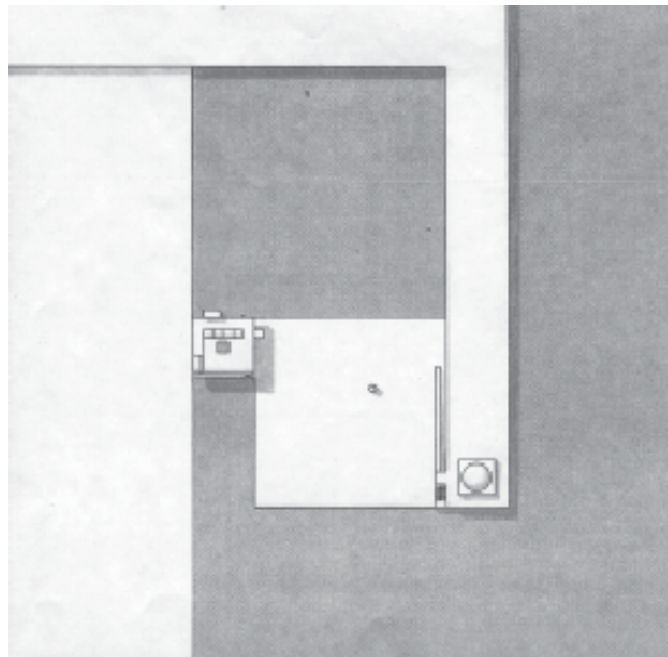
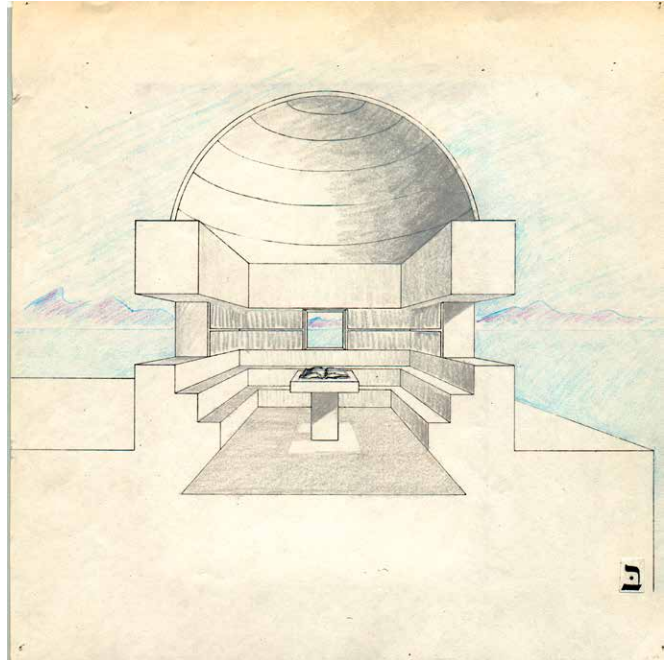
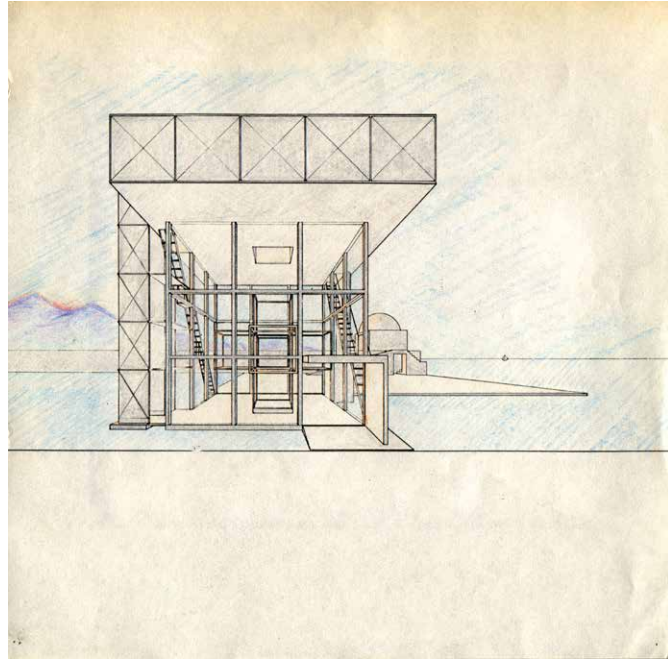
A traditional program for *Torah* (Five Books of Moses), *Bimah*, (reading lectern), seating, and *Talmud* (Commentaries) is provided for a congregation of 49 people. The roof of the cylindrical school includes observatory, antenna, and solar still. Below is the classroom and below that the library. Grade level permits public meetings, while the lower river level houses digital archives as well as sheltered harbor for boats transporting families. A small pool of water below the Bimah carries a reader's voice to the congregation.

The site, a southern bank of a westward flowing river, is relatively uncultivated, perhaps still barren. Dimensions are an integration of Le Corbusier's Modulor and American standard 8' construction system, using a 25' - 5 1/2" module. The pyramid is masonry, Bimah and seating are steel and wood, and the school is reinforced concrete and glass. There is a parabolic tent for the carpenter. The plan provides for the traditional symbolism of the synagogue, including 18 column bays, 2 pillars recalling Solomon's temple, and proper location for ritual according to orientation and time of day. The changeless nature of the Law contrasts with an ever-shifting body of its interpretation. This juxtaposition of absolute and relative provides the theme through which solid land and flowing water, wilderness and cultivation, and duration and tempo contend. Against these dualities are several sets of three including pyramid, cube, and cylinder; carving assemblage, and extrusion; block, sinew, and composite; and monument, vessel, and gnomon.

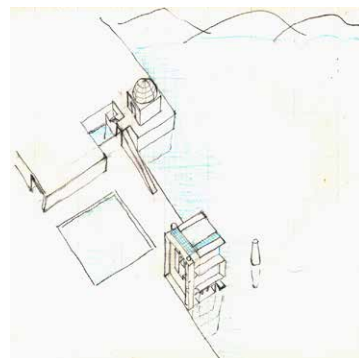
A water wheel powers the computer and an Archimedean Screw to lift river water to the solar still where the condensate is allowed to return to the river. Thus may the river purify itself. Process calculations determine sizing of these elements. Open-air seating is sheltered from precipitation by its cantilevered parasol and warmed by radiant heating pipes embedded in the underside of the incline. The small central *Bimah* cube is only six steps above the lowest level of the congregation, as required by Law. It is rebuilt every Jubilee Year from the lumber of the next ready tree in the grove of 12 cedars, like the *Ise Shrine* in Japan. The school roof platform and the acme of the pyramid become a celestial calendar. An arbor provides seven bays for grapes and wine. The lawn is grazing land for dairy cattle, while the beehive produces honey.







During the period of the technical papers, Freud was guided in his thinking about repression and resistance by conceiving of the mind in terms of a spatial arrangement of the unconscious and conscious states. In the "Introductory Lectures," proposing a "crude" metaphor, he asks the student to imagine a large entrance hall that opens onto a small drawing room. In the large hall (of the unconscious), mental impulses "jostle one another" as they try to get past the guard who stands on the threshold of the drawing room, which Freud named the preconscious. The fate of most of these impulses is to be immediately repelled by the guard or, should they slip by him and get into the drawing room, to be dragged back. (The latter are the repressed unconscious thoughts.) The few impulses that are allowed into the drawing room are not yet conscious, and may or not become so, depending on whether or not they "succeed in catching the eye of consciousness." Freud located this "eye" at the far end of the preconscious drawing room. The significant border relationship in regard to repression and resistance was not the one between the preconscious and the conscious but the one between the preconscious and the unconscious. This "topographic model of the mind was derived from Freud's concept of how dreams are formed, and it remains at the heart of psychoanalysis. "The property of being conscious or not is in the last resort our one beacon light in the darkness of depth psychology," Freud wrote in 1923 in "The Ego and the Id."

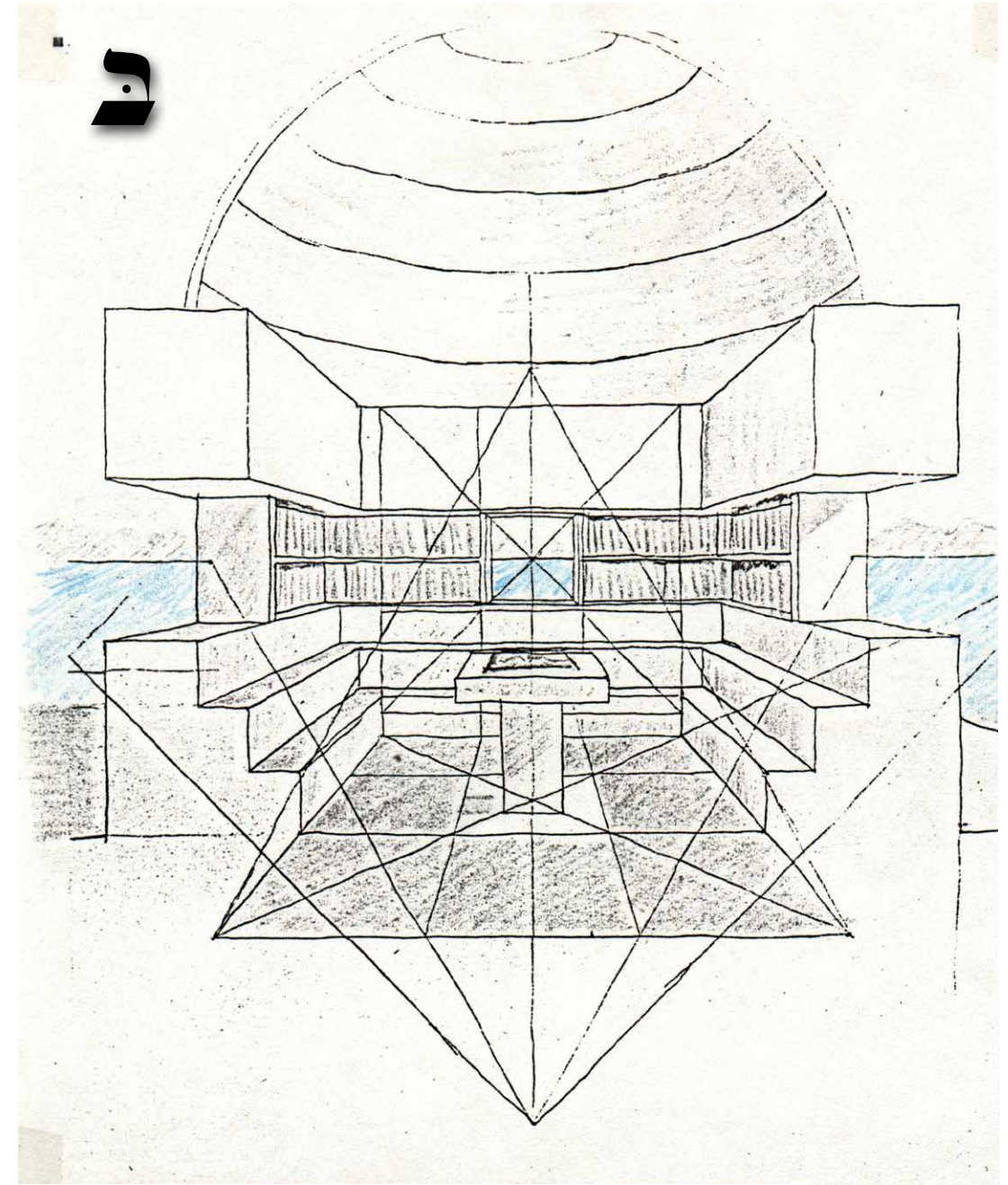


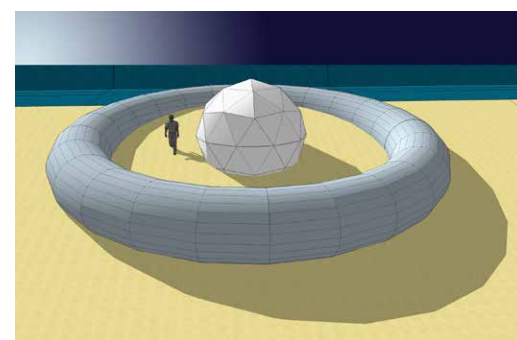
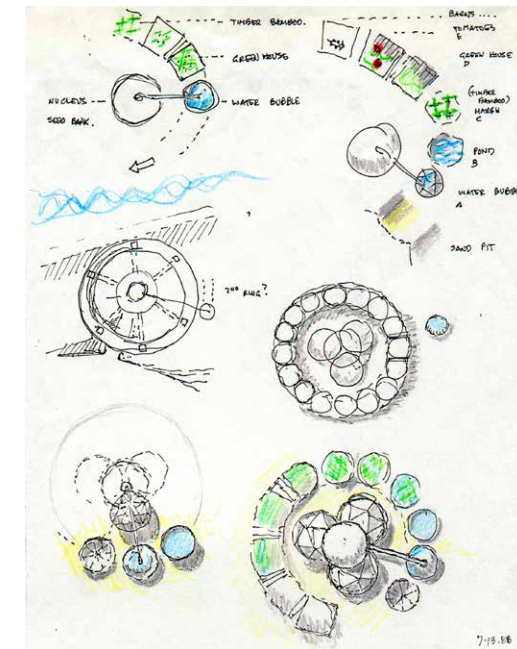
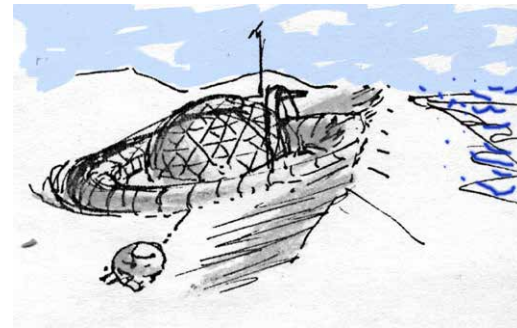
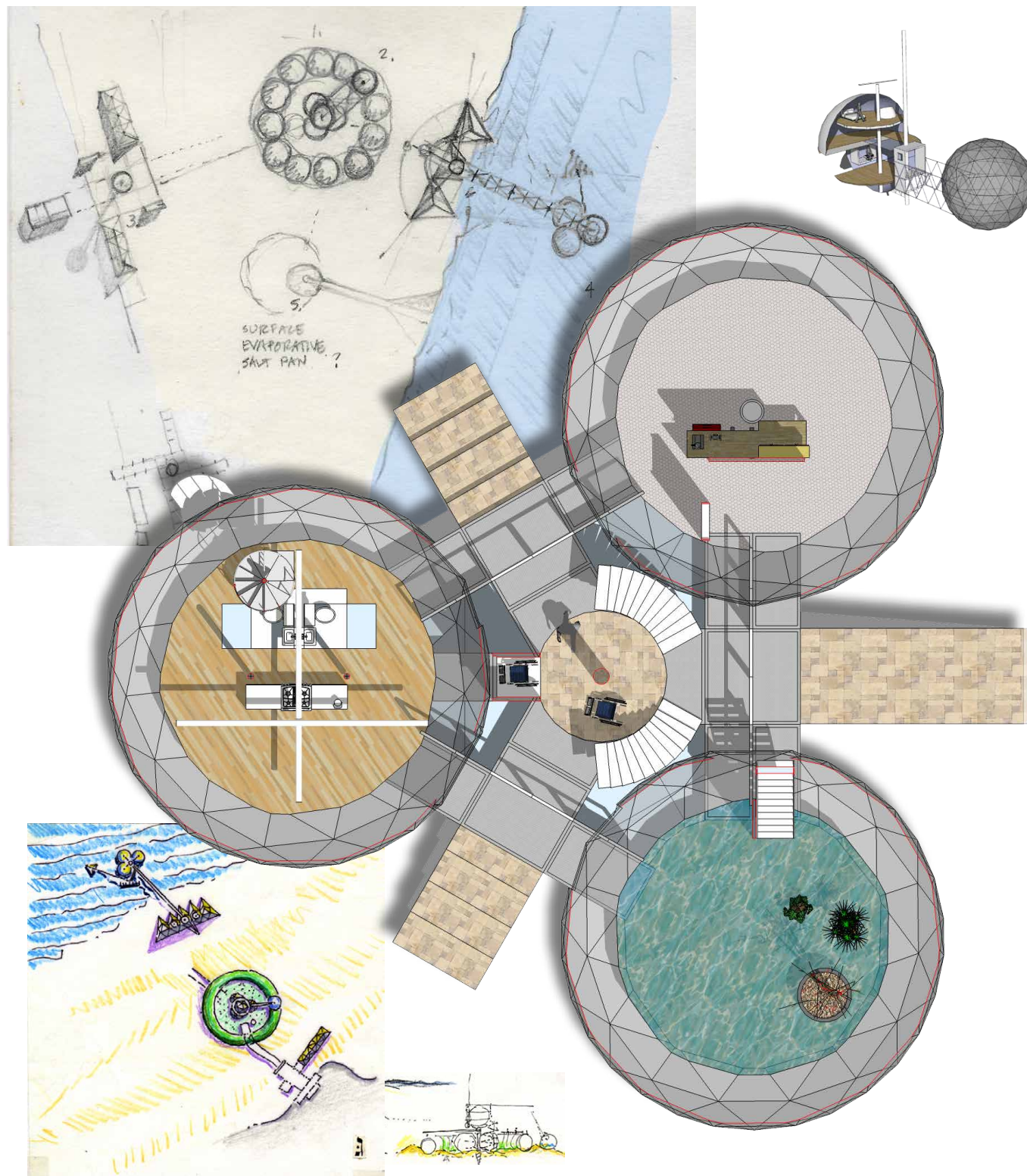
Synagogue Bayt

Bayt, the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, also means "house." That this reference to architecture should be so close to the origin of this ancient language but not yet the most important consideration in life I find a humane and satisfying outlook on my profession. Hebrew letters, the medium of the divine revelations on Mount Sinai, are often bestowed with complete and unique personalities. The ability to name things to identify their individuality, is considered by Judaism to be one of man's most holy attributes.

I spent part of the summer of 1974 living and working at Degania Aleph, the first kibbutz ever established in Israel. This pioneer collective community, founded in 1904, borders both Lake Kinneret (the Sea of Gallilee) and the Jordan River. I often swam in both in the same day. Nearby Tiberias still flourishes. Its vernacular dwellings are whitewashed masonry covered by shallow domes. One small courtyard opened to a promontory supporting a single 15' square building. A low reading lectern sat in the center of its only room. Each wall was covered with bookshelves. Centered in each of the walls a window opened directly onto the lake. Boats, lake, and the mountains of the Golan Heights beyond became stories of their own, equal to the material on the shelves. Simultaneously, the books seemed to spring to life in the midst of the room. Here I understood how a house of study and prayer is a true window to the world and how the world is only truly revealed through enlightened awareness. I try here to clarify, intensify, and celebrate the emotions and feelings I experienced in this place.

The program is a pond, plaza, and two buildings. Lake water enters pond through an inlet beneath a gateway building. Adding salt can generate electricity through electrolytic layering, a technique pioneered in Israel at the Dead Sea. This *Alphabet* building is the place for public events, like weddings, Bar Mitzvahs, and special services. Its space frame roof provides accommodations for visitors. In the distant *Book* building elders meet daily to study Law and apply it to the everyday affairs of life. In this small space, letters dwell in books, whole and integrated thoughts and ideas. In the gateway, ecstatic celebrations may take place, and the Hebrew letters are visible, although obscure, not as parts of stories, but as unique elements in themselves. Thus one can find in the crossed diagonal stairs, Aleph, in the cantilevered gate bridge at the entry, Bayt...



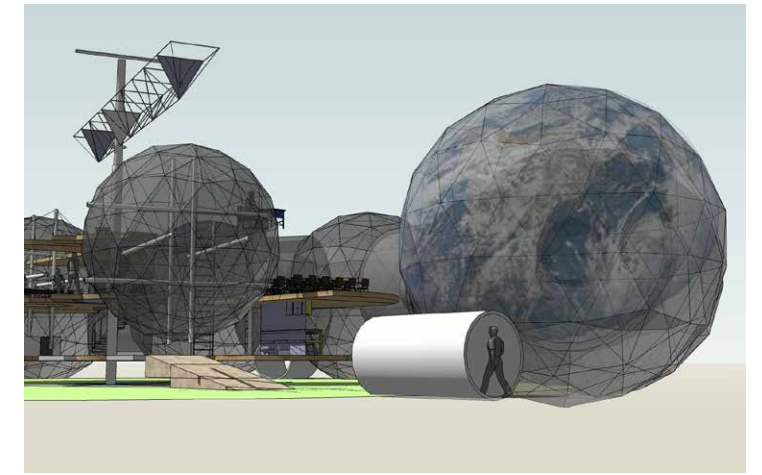
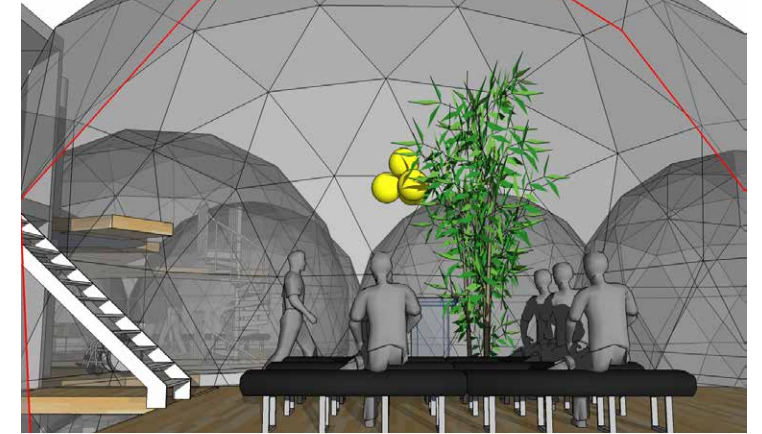
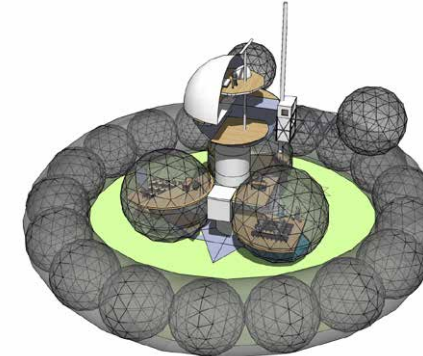
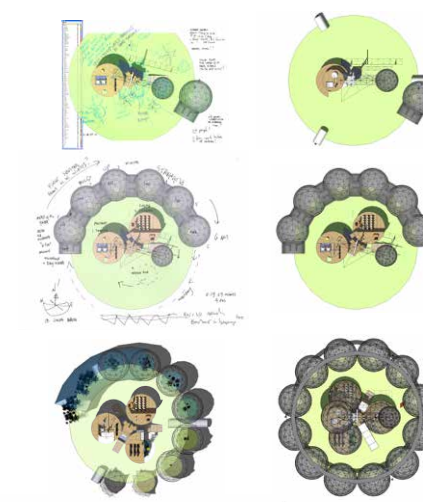
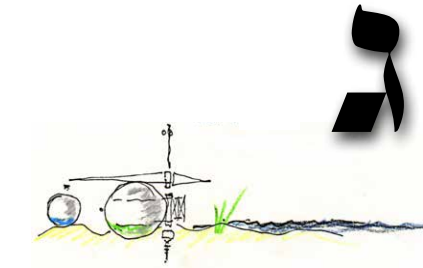


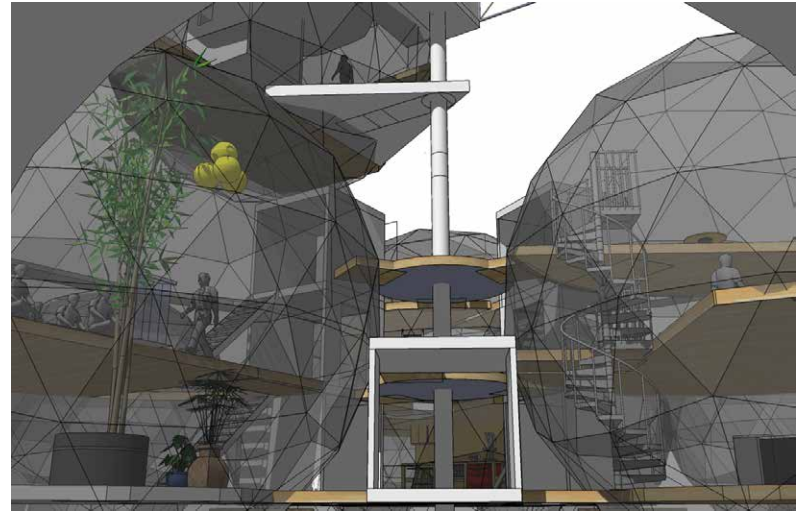
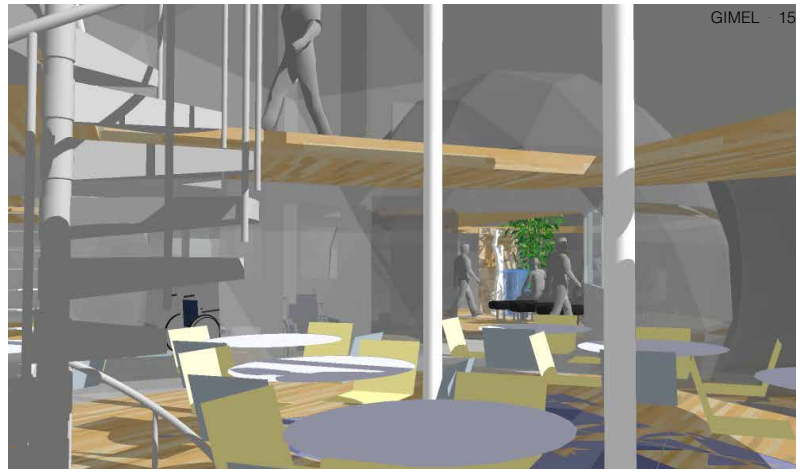
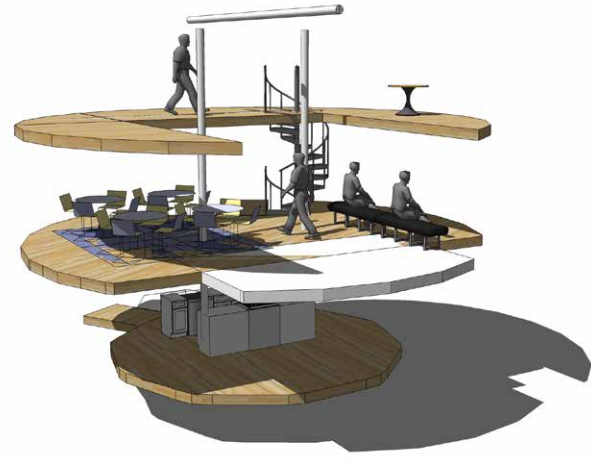
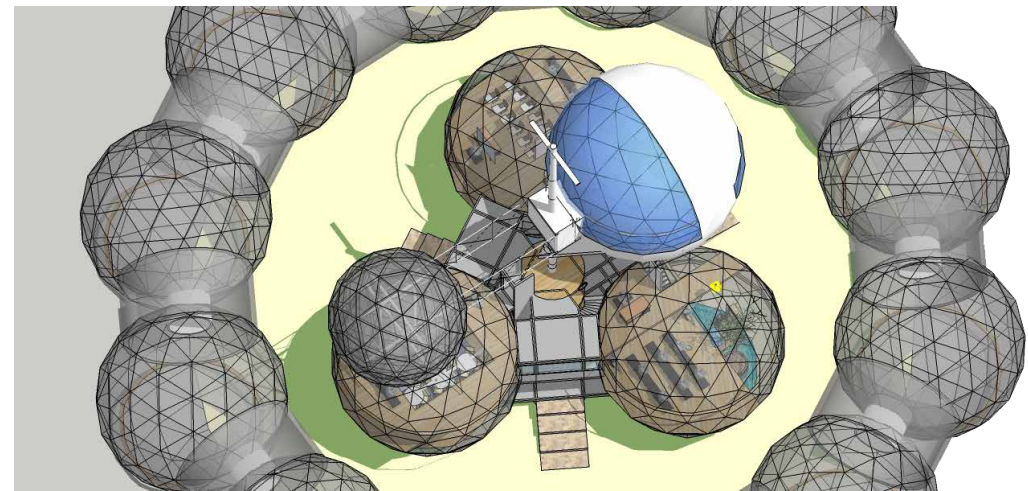
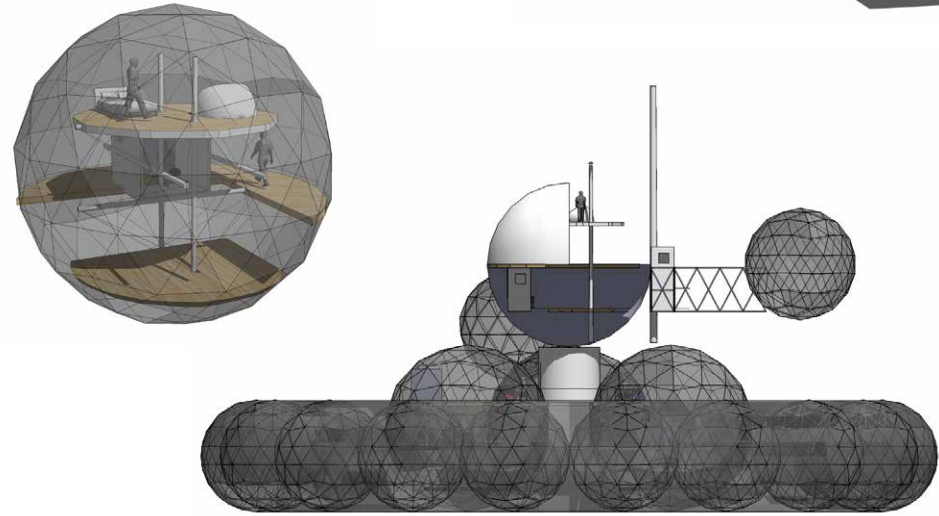
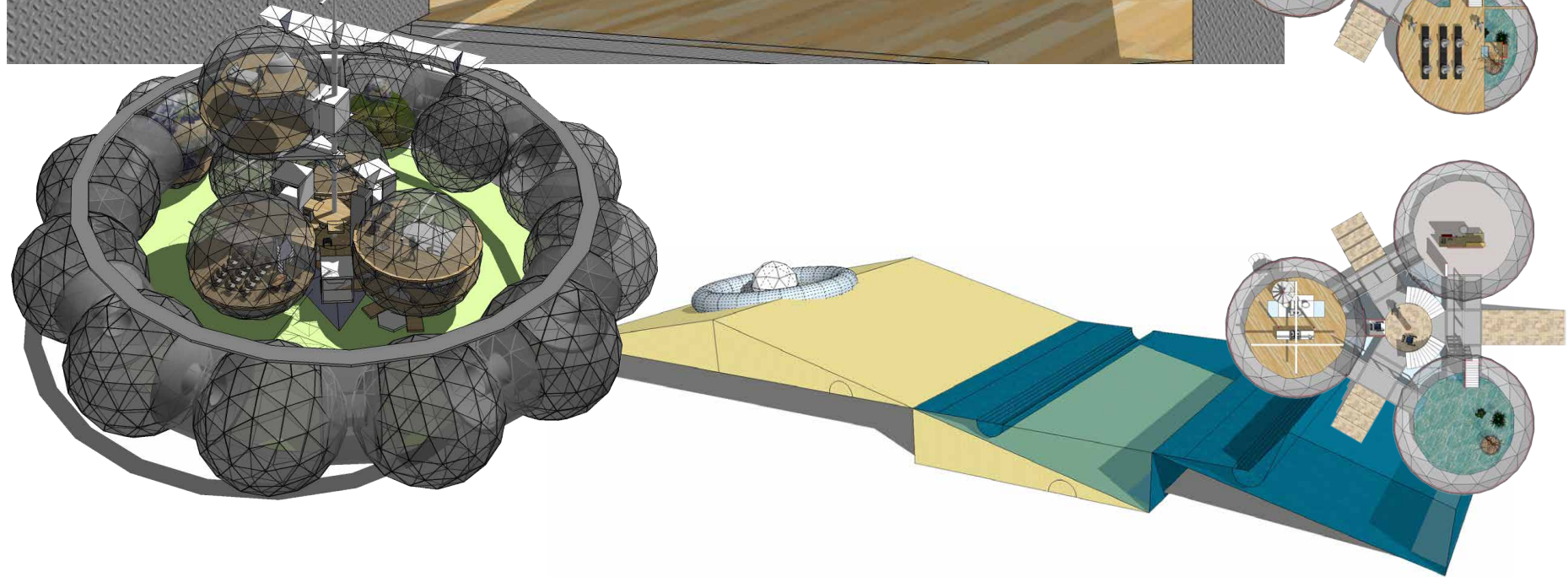
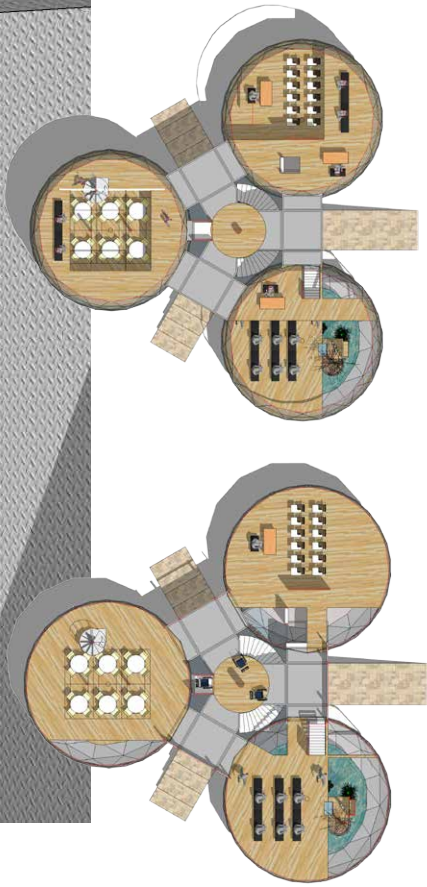
Synagogue Gimel

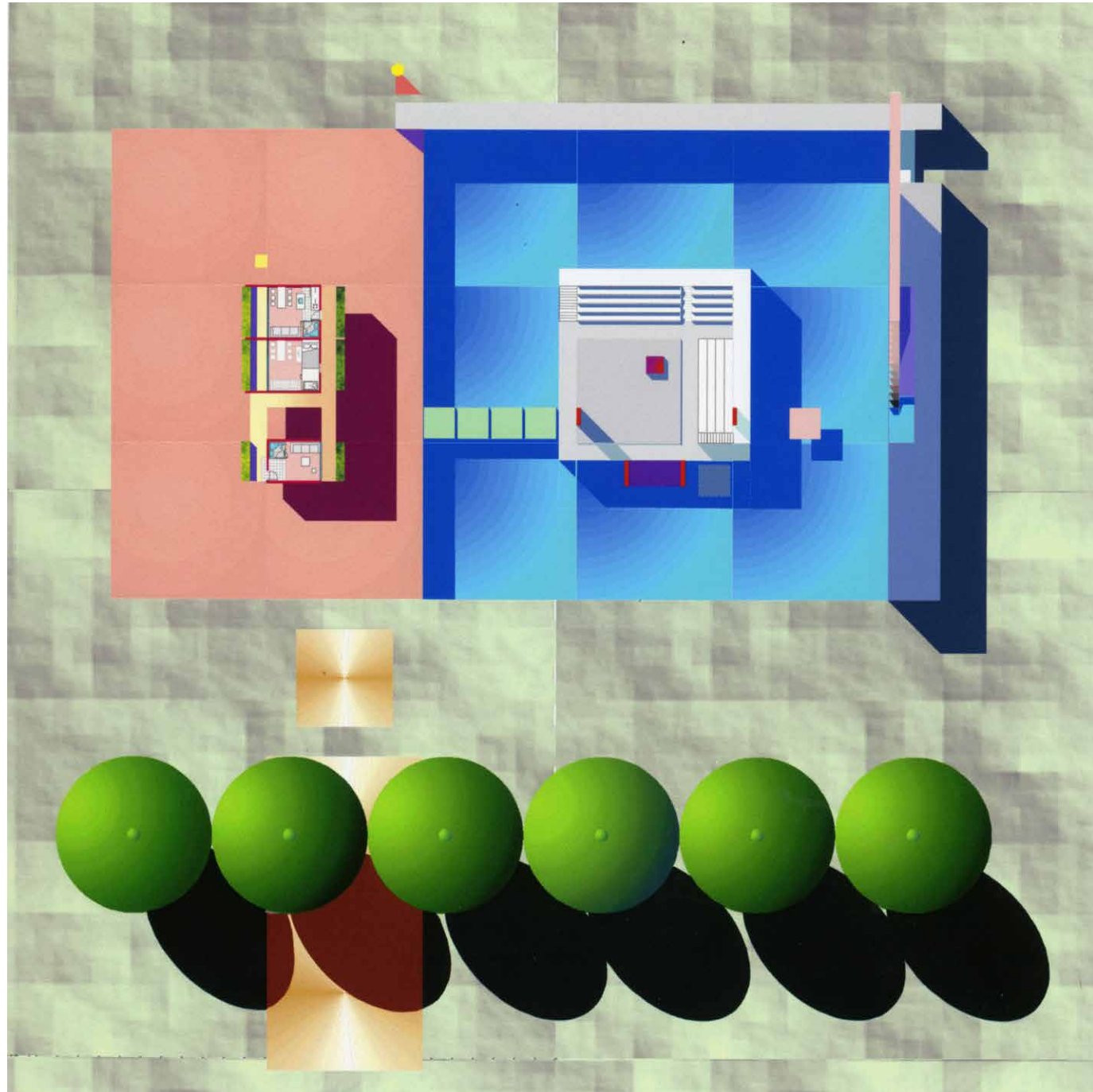
The third Hebrew letter Gimel is derived from the camel—the ship of the desert. Once when world crisis appeared inevitable. I thought of Noah’s Ark, of humanity’s survival from the ruins of an ecological catastrophe, the Flood. At the end of the Ark’s forty days and nights afloat, perhaps it first landed on a beach on the slopes of Mount Ararat. Grinding ocean waves create sandy beach where the sea ends and terra firma begins. So the arid desert of seaside sand is still a sign of hope, a gift of land for human settlement.

How could Noah have had room for two of “every living thing of all flesh” in an Ark? Add redwoods and wooly mammoths to African and Indian elephants and room soon runs out. If the Ark were an ocean going “seed-pod” gene bank, terrestrial life could survive environmental catastrophe. The post-Flood beached seed-pod can deploy its resources to refructify the land. In Judaism, the Torah (Five Books of Moses) is the “seed-pod” while the Talmud, Mishna, and contemporary debates are the flowering of the vine.

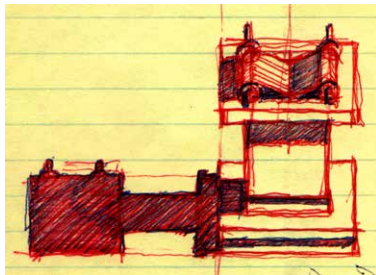
Synagogue Gimel is a phased construction. The ocean-going vessel includes genetic stock, crew quarters, and the Ark of the Torah and other essential ritual elements of Judaism. Pregnant in this first phase, it lands in dunes where it gives birth to the first cell of the torus. This bubble hydrosphere transforms the sandy microclimate into an agricultural soil to support human life. Timber bamboo seedlings mature into structural material for the next cells in the ring. As each cell grows becomes a greenhouse, it grows vegetables for people and pasture grasses for grazing. While the torus is completed, the central cell is triplicated into spaces for school, sanctuary, and celebrations. Finally the nucleus replicates the original ocean-going Life-boat, sitting above the other three, in anticipation of any next Flood. A tetrahedral breakwater shelters the torus and anchors an energy producing tidal pump. It can also support a *Ner Tamid* eternal lighthouse. Offshore winds drive electric current through suspended cables to precipitate metals from sea water, a system extensively developed by the architect Wolf Hilbertz. These generate structural elements for reinforcing the breakwater wall, which can become a barrier reef. Further inland an oct-tetrahedral solar furnace transforms silicate sand into glass for the greenhouses.







At a remarkable meeting of the City Council of Glen Cove Long Island in the days immediately following the crash of an Avianca Airline jet in nearby Mill Neck, the Mayor of Glen Cove presented emergency Rescue Squad members with citations for their prompt and heroic emergency aid services to the survivors of this tragic crash. At this same meeting however, the Mayor was intransigent about refusing any kind of assistance to the Hispanic day workers who congregated along the streets of the City. This occurred despite strong vocal protests from the large Hispanic population both within the community and in the entire surrounding region of Nassau County. The evident hypocrisy prompted one member of the audience to observe "It seems as if the only way you can be Hispanic and welcome in Glen Cove is to fall flaming from the sky!"

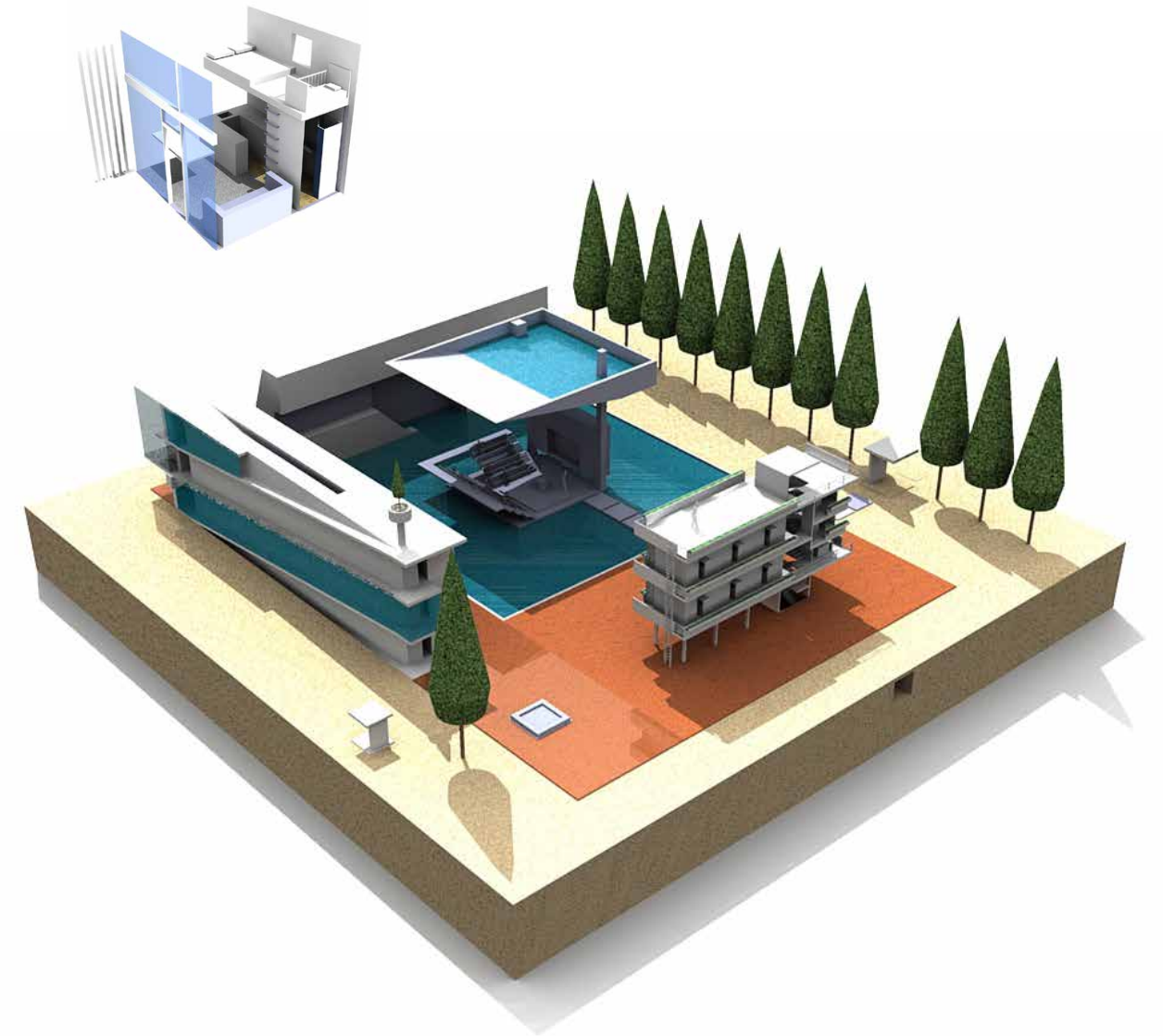


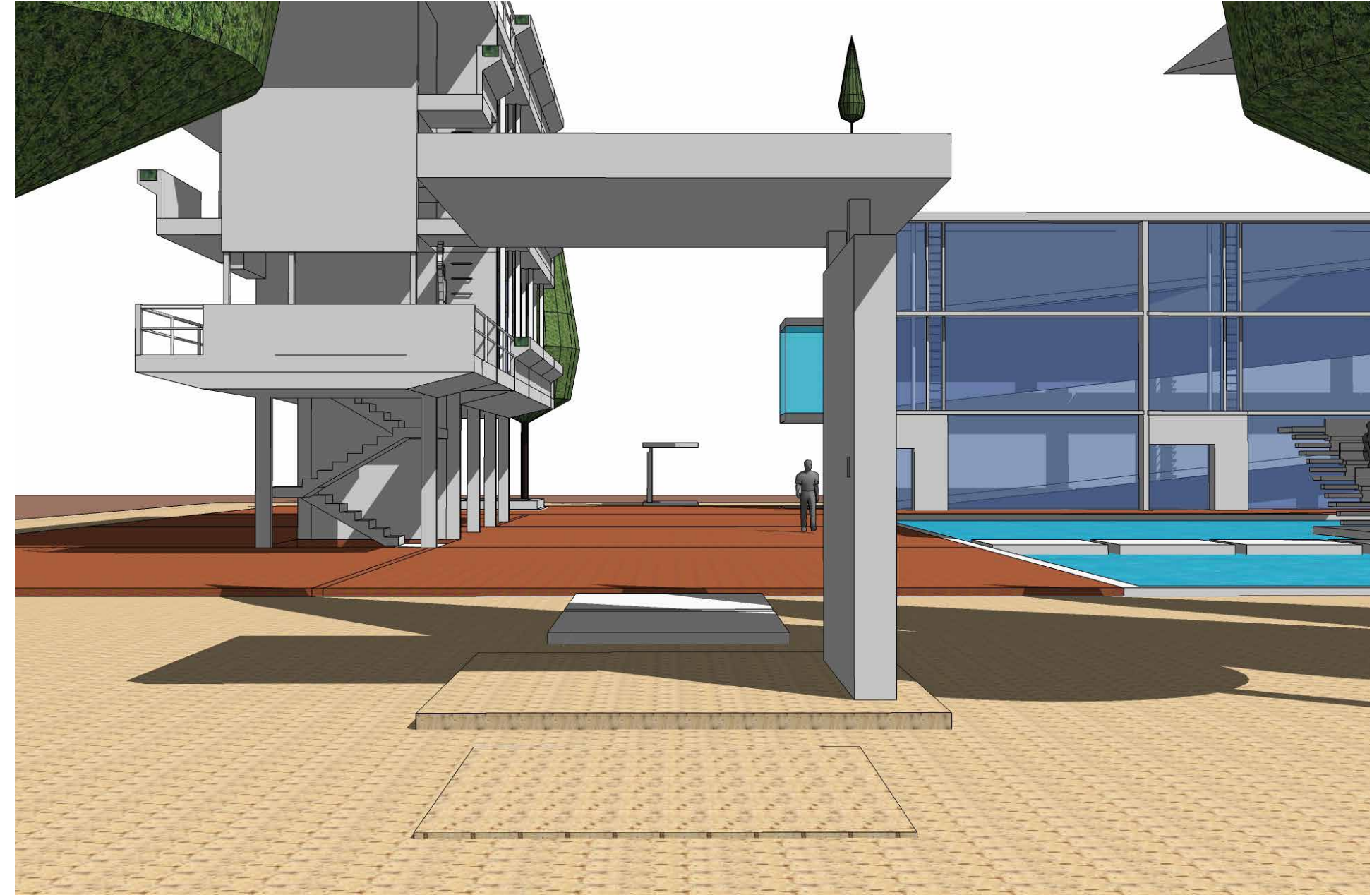
Synagogue Dalet

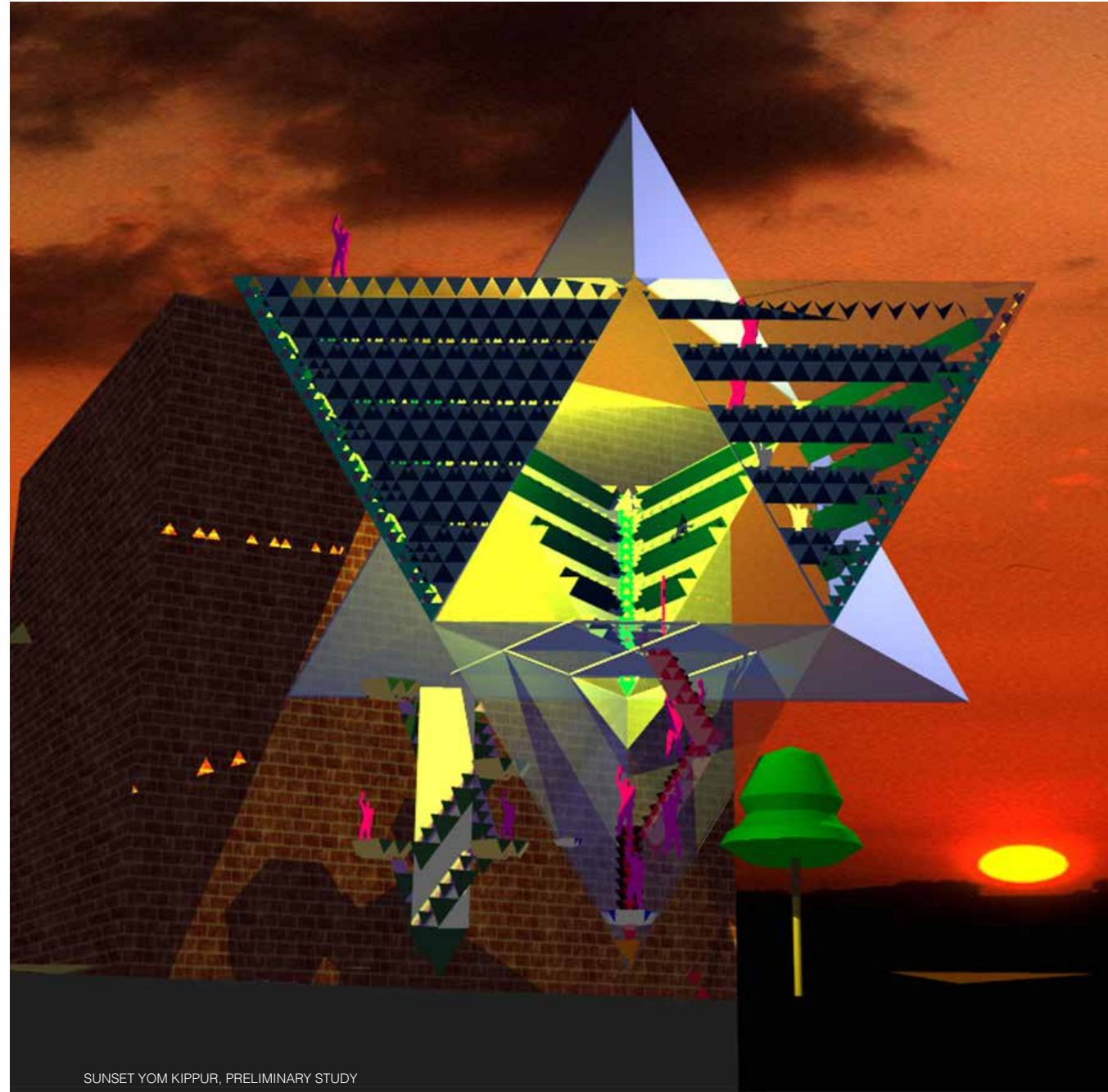
Dalet, the fourth Hebrew letter, also signifies Door. During a town meeting I thought of rejected Latino refugees in contrast to the complacency of fat cat protected suburbanites— themselves descendants of immigrants. "I lift my lamp beside the golden door" wrote Emma Lazarus of the Statue of Liberty. A social responsibility every holy person now faces is to consider and act on the plight of our human brothers and sisters who have no homes, no shelter at all. Until the last homeless person finds repose, we shall always have refugees.

Synagogue Dalet includes not only the ritual elements of *Bi-mah*, Ark of the *Torah (Aron ha Kodesh)*, Eternal Light (*Ner Tamid*) and seating for the worshippers, but also homes for six refugee families and a caretaker's apartment. The congregants are aware that these refugees must feel at home and need help to move on to more permanent settlements. Worshippers cannot enter or leave the sanctuary without walking past and beneath the homes of the refugees elevated above them. It is easy to make a space for a family in a 16' cube but almost impossible to fit them comfortably in a single 8' cube. The architectural challenge here is to provide reasonably comfortable temporary lodgings for a family of four in a 12' cube. Each of these apartments includes bathroom with shower, galley kitchen, day bed sofa, table and chairs, and balcony. The loft above provides sleeping space for parents and an infant's crib. While tight, these dwellings are meant to restore the dignity of family life for people whose most recent homes simply no longer exist.

The site is a man-made oasis south of the equator in the Australian Outback, where rain is heaven's rare gift to an arid land. The swimming pool collects rainwater, and pumps it to the overhead canopy to make sheets of aerated falling water on hot summer days. A raft provides dry crossing to the promised land of the grotto in the solar wall to the north. A written Dalet forms a right angle. Three mutually perpendicular folds define a cube of volume. A Dalet of columns and canopy is evident when entering the sanctuary. The stairs and tunnel to the chamber below form another. The third, formed is evident in plan when west is up. The lab's rehumidifier maintains a moist microclimate around the pool and prepares flora for re-vegetating the desert. Australia's policy of "fight or flight" during recent monster wildfires make the sanctuary an ideal if ironic refuge for local populations.







SUNSET YOM KIPPUR, PRELIMINARY STUDY

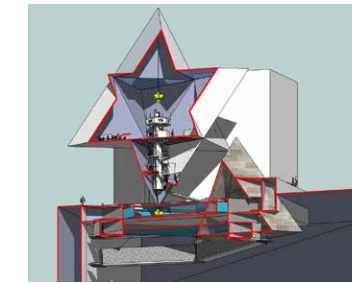
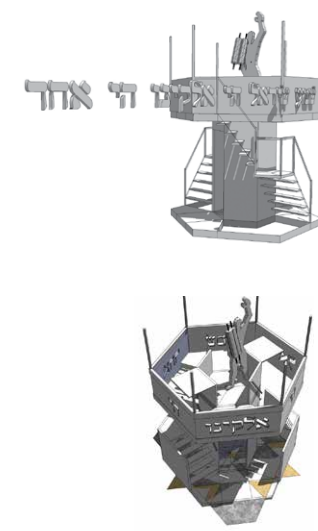


Synagogue VAV

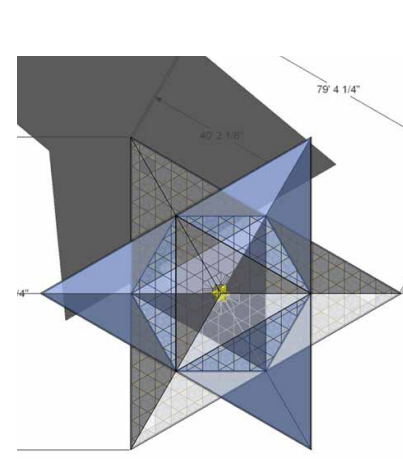
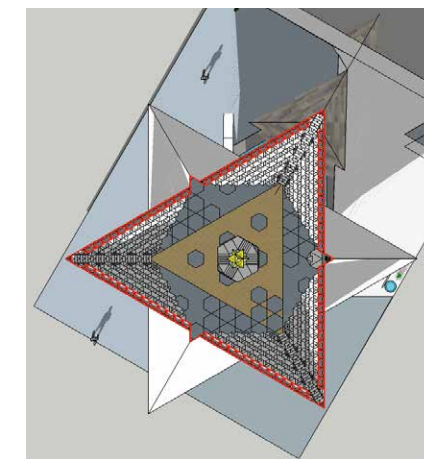
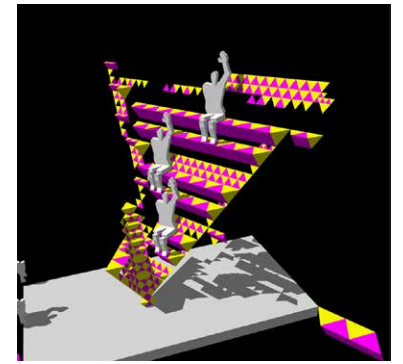
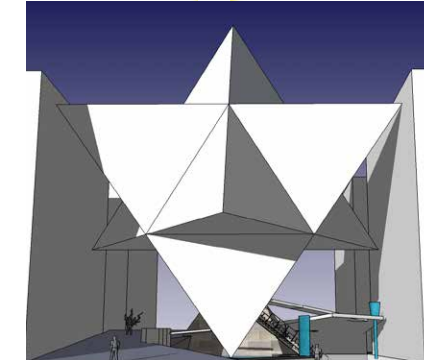
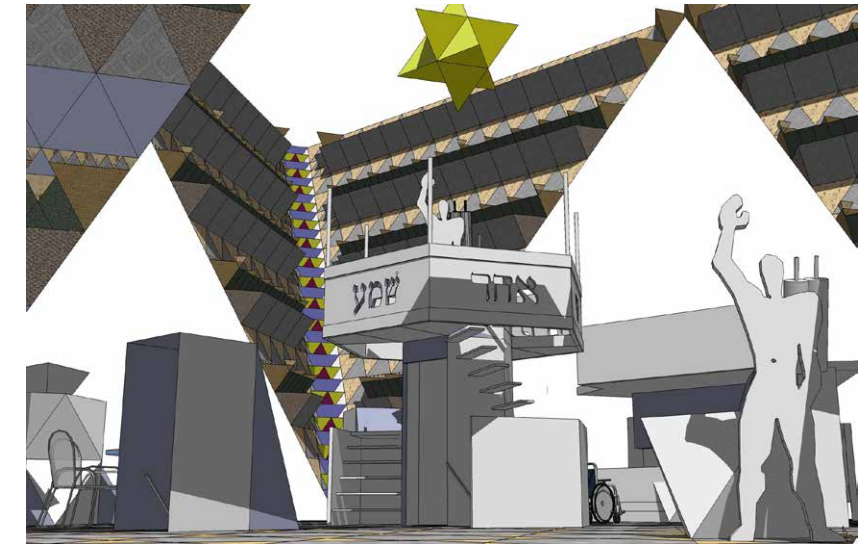
Synagogue VAV is a synthesis, both literal and figurative. The Hebrew letter VAV is a ligature, meaning AND, strongly suggestive for community space that binds generations together. Its geometry is a simple intersection of two inverted 80-foot tetrahedrons. One of the five Platonic solids, a tetrahedron is composed of four equilateral triangles meeting at equal solid angles. It cannot closepack, the way cubes fill space. But with its dual, the octahedron, another Platonic solid, it is completely space filling. The frame, all triangles, is rigid. Party bearing walls support the whole at the star's 4 contact points. The structure does not touch the ground.

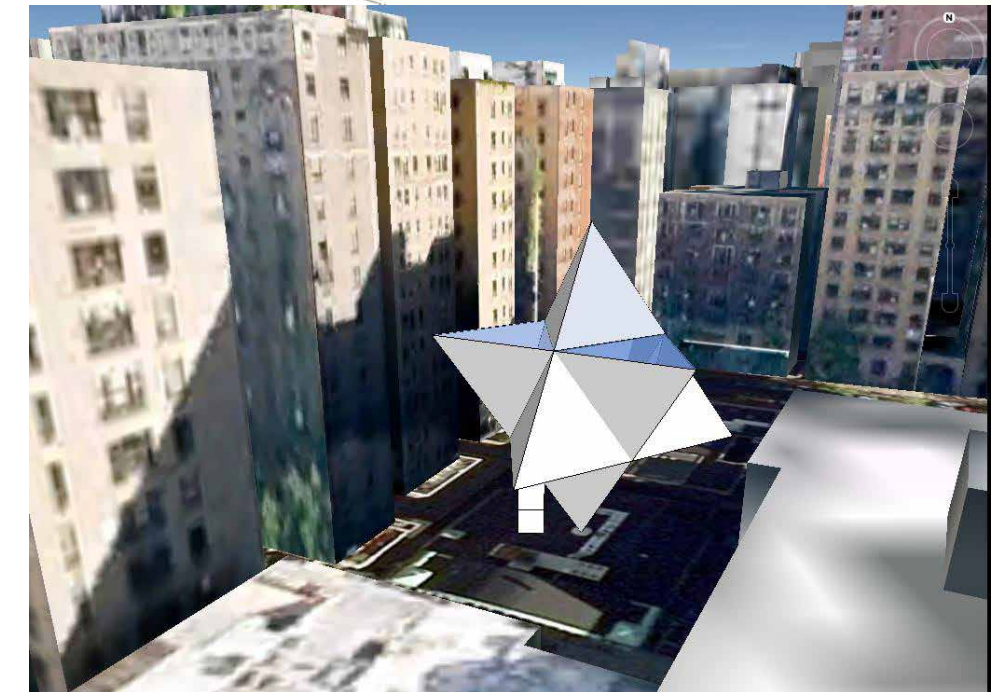
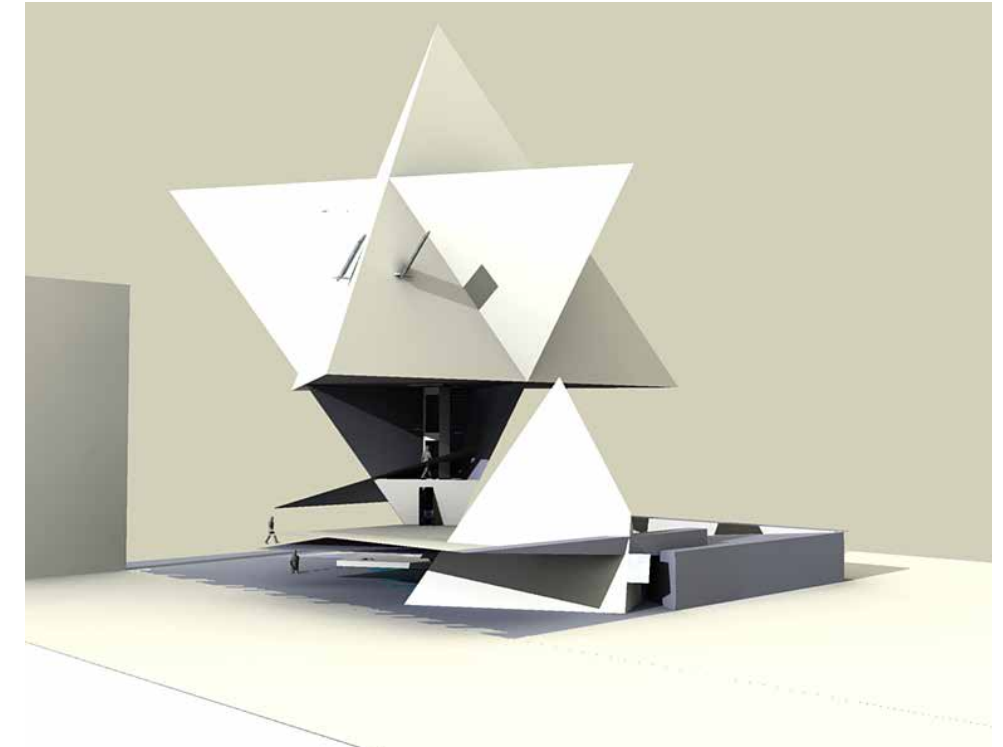
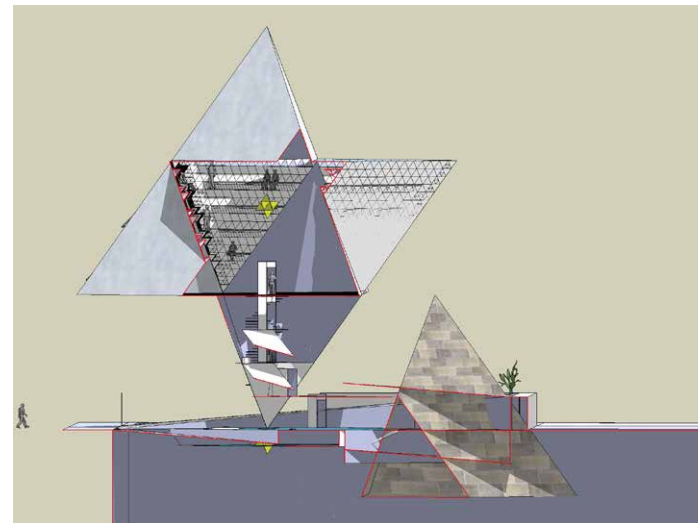
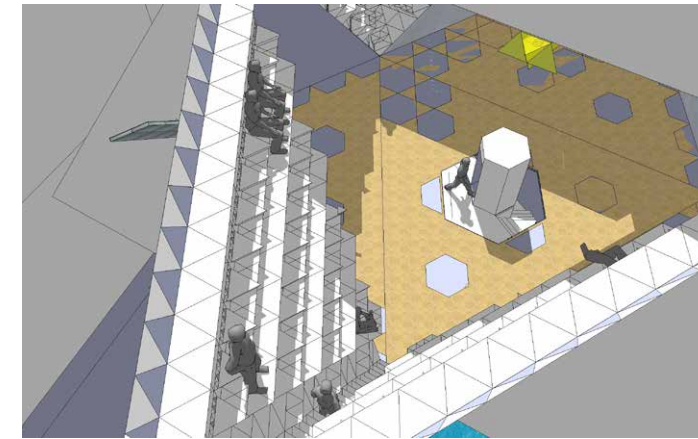
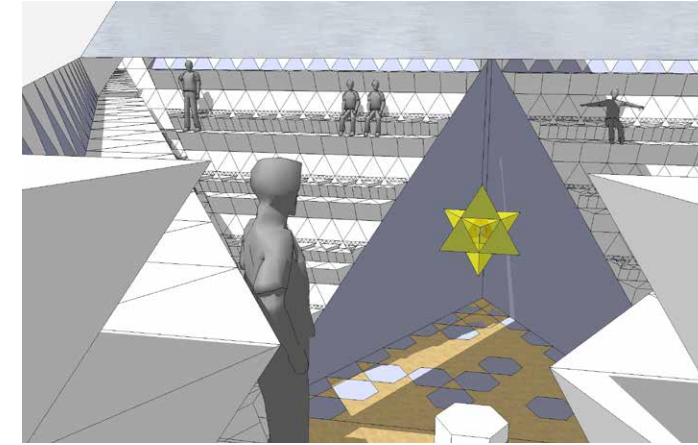
Inside a multipurpose central space provides focus for three major areas of synagogue activity-- prayer, study, and celebration. The upward pointing tetrahedron provides one for each of these 3 activities. The eastern lobe contains the *Aron Ha Kodesh* and *Bimah* that supports the *Torah* during prayer services. The southwest streetside lobe holds conference and study facilities, including a digital workstation, an apotheosis of the *Talmud*, where now through electronic communication all the affairs of the world accessible for commentary and illumination. The third northwest lobe provides kitchen, bathrooms, showers, and a sleeping loft above, for life cycle and social functions like weddings and bar mitzvahs. The downward tetrahedron creates six skylit triangular sloping walls with built-in cushions and footing, and stairs at their intersections. Each provides seating for 24 people, making 12 places for each of the Twelve Tribes. Inside a double helix stair an elevator rises through floor hatches like a service lift on a city sidewalk. Exterior photovoltaic collectors power the *Ner Tamid*, a stellated octahedron located at the precise center of the project. The six candlesticks of the High Holiday platform combine with the *Ner Tamid* directly above to reconcile the original seven-branched *Menorah* of the Temple with the peripatetic Eternal Light of a synagogue.

Street access wanders up a 1:12 ramp from dry concrete around a pyramid to a fountain and waterfall oasis at the main entry, a drawbridge that can be closed for security. Wheel chair entry to the central elevator is easy and barrier free. Manhattan's street grid runs close to 60° northeast to southwest, so VAV's rotated plan creates a ritually correct eastern orientation for the Ark in New York City. It could be located on 88th Street between Broadway and West End Avenue, which happens to be the location of B'nai Jeshurun, the oldest Reform Synagogue in America. An alternate history, perhaps.



This geometry isn't easy to visualize. Sketching a perspective from a vanishing point in a triangular space is a challenge! It made sense to explore designing this space through computer aided digital means. It was this project that led me to discover the elegance and precision of Sketch-Up. For the first time in a half-century search I have found the means to make and think and edit directly in the medium of space. I believe this anticipated the emerging popular global culture of spacial ideas.





SYNAGOGUE KAF



אבגדהו
זחטיכל

THEM AND US

KAF = CROWN AND HAND



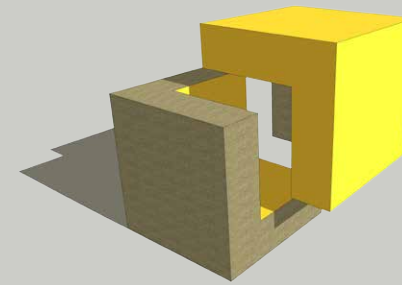
A SYNAGOGUE FOR THEM AND FOR US

THEY are the fortunate few, the one per cent. Let's be generous, and give **THEM** ten per cent. Either way, the chances are you are one of **US**.

FOR THEM: plenty of room for the 10 to 12 people, including the privileged Rabbi, with comfortable seats near the *bimah* and comfortable seating elsewhere including Le Corbusier's *Gran Confort* and Mies' *de luxe* grand Barcelona Chairs, bathrooms and kitchen cooking wetbar fresh food facilities on every floor, a winter solarium and spa on the upper floor, and not the least a graceful covered platform for access for vehicles at the *port cochere*-- while there is only partial protection for access at US. Entry doors for **THEM** are unmarked and locked. If you don't have the code, or key, or secret guide, (or the right hair color) you won't find them and can't get in. The easiest way is to have your parents show you, when you are a child. Or better, your grandparents. Most of all, the view: arrangement of the elevators favors unlimited view along the vertical surfaces of the glass box between the two volumes, enabling **THEM** to see the sunset to the west and beautiful backlit scenery of the landscape to the north, while for **US** the elevators block these vertical glazing views. In addition, a skylight Crown of Light and Ner Tamid glows directly on **THEM**. This clerestory lighting affords **THEM** continuous unbroken views of the sky, the clouds, and the heavens.

For **THEM** all fittings and appointments are of the highest quality luxury materials and finish. Topaz translucent glazing, deep carpeting, rarest woods, and iridescent gilt surfaces are found throughout.

FOR US: the slightly damp and crowded atmosphere of mothers cooking, babies in playpens, noisy classes, and *mikveh*. Fluorescent fixtures provide limited illumination. More than 20 of **US** must fit in the same area as only 10 of **THEM**. On High Holidays even more of **US** are crowded onto additional folding chairs. Some of these are hard to reach, and the footing is precarious. Here the glass ceiling is a Glass Floor and dangerous to cross. The storage for 96 folding chairs is tight, but allows the main floor to be cleared for dances and other special occasions. A *tevah* hovering over **US** during High Holidays allows **THEM** to make a "generous" gesture of equality (separate but equal) at least once a year. Rough wood finishes contrast with yellow paint applied to selected surfaces.



PROGRAM

THEM

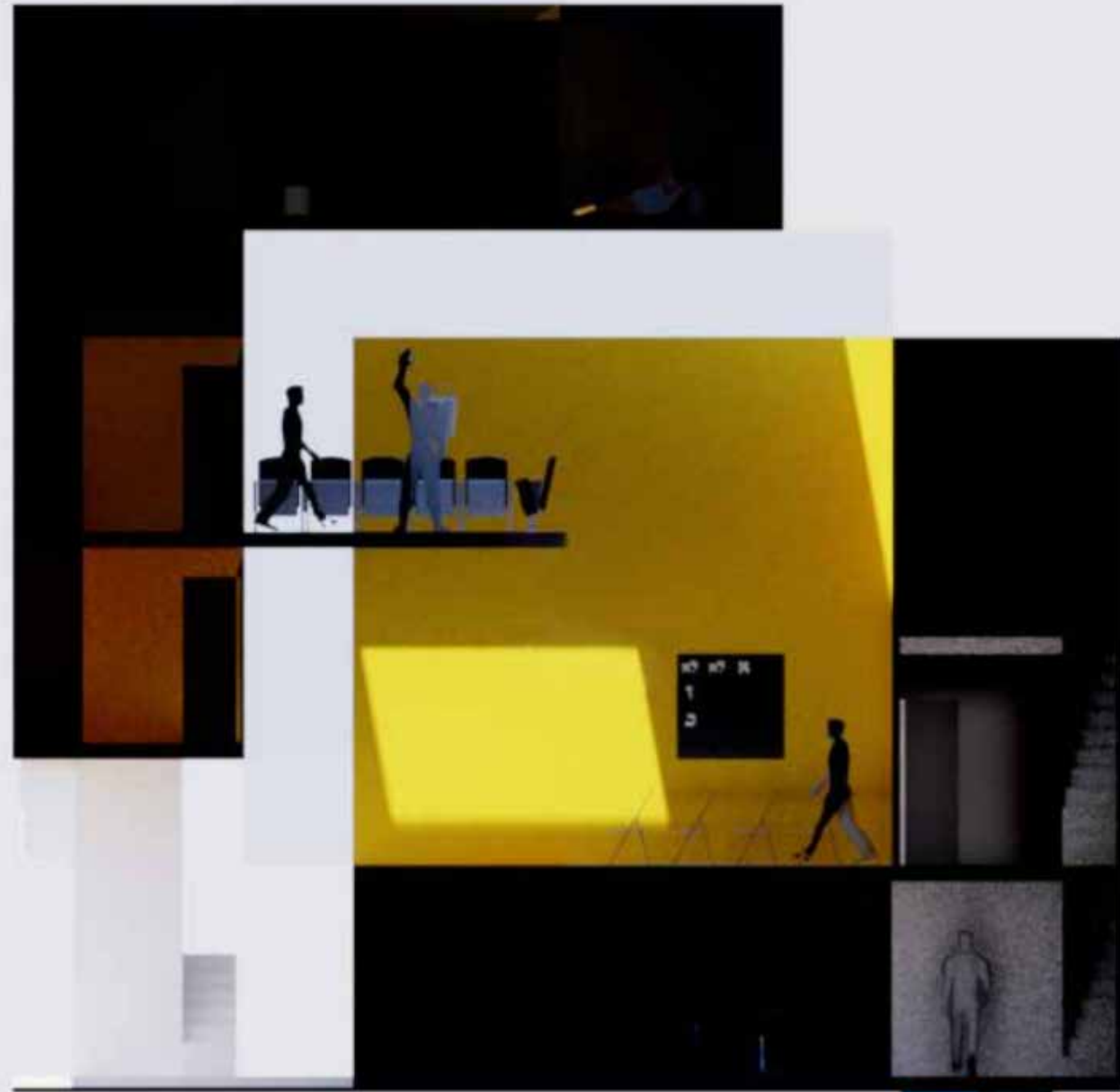
- Kohanim = 10 + 2
- Bimah and Ark
- Upholstered Seating
- Rabbi's Office
- Library-Study
- Catered Food Service
- Dining on each floor
- Wet bars and Lounges
- Luxury wc's
- Massage lounge
- Whirlpool spa
- Sunbath solarium
- Private Entry
- Private Lift

US

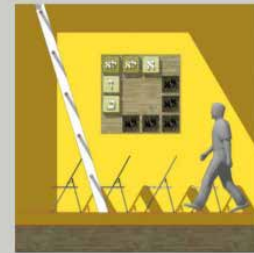
- Israel = 90
- playpen
- baby and daycare
- kitchen snacks
- mikveh
- toilet coat closet
- laundry janitor
- classroom
- folding chairs
- service and storage
- cots for workers
- service elevator



The Ark holds 4 Torah scrolls and is "naturally" located with **THEM**. One Torah is lent to **US** for use on the *Tevah* during the High Holidays and returned to the Ark via the service stairs or elevator, passing through the Rabbi's office for control and security. The holder, before returning to **US**, may be checked for contraband. The Eternal Light, *Ner Tamid*, is the skylight above the *Bimah*, which is illuminated for **THEM** at night by a halo ring of glowing incandescence powered by photovoltaics on the roof.



Jazz is the culture of America. Duke Ellington



The **CROWN** of King George XII of Georgia took the form of a circlet surmounted by ornaments and eight arches. A globe surmounted by a cross rested on the top of the crown. The crown is made of gold and decorated with 145 diamonds, 58 rubies, 24 emeralds and 16 amethysts-- and the lives of how many miserable and unnecessarily suffering serfs?

Only six steps on **THE LADDER OF SUCCESS** separate US and THEM. A *bimah* may not be more than six steps above the congregation. Thus those who are called upon to take part in the service, will not be elevated above US any more than necessary. Here that rule has been stretched, literally. The rungs are far apart-- it's a steep (and dangerous, no railings) climb to get up there, but hard work and courage is the nature of success-- unless of course you know someone or are related, in which case the doors to THEM will open for you and an easy staircase, even an elevator, may whisk you up to the *Bimah*. "No problem, our pleasure" says THEM.

The **TEN COMMANDMENTS** distinguish between privilege (the first 5 commandments) and obligation (the last 5 commandments.) Moses destroyed the first tablets when he descended from Mount Sinai and saw the Children of Israel worshipping the Golden Calf. Like the Rose Windows of the great cathedrals, this version of the Ten Commandments is a wheel-- of fortune.

Le Corbusier called his **OPEN HAND** a sign of "peace and reconciliation. It is open to give and open to receive." No doubt influenced by Gandhi, it represents the exchange of ideas. The Open Hand constructed in the Indian capital of Chandigarh is a democratic symbol of giving, reminding elected representatives that

SUBJUGATION

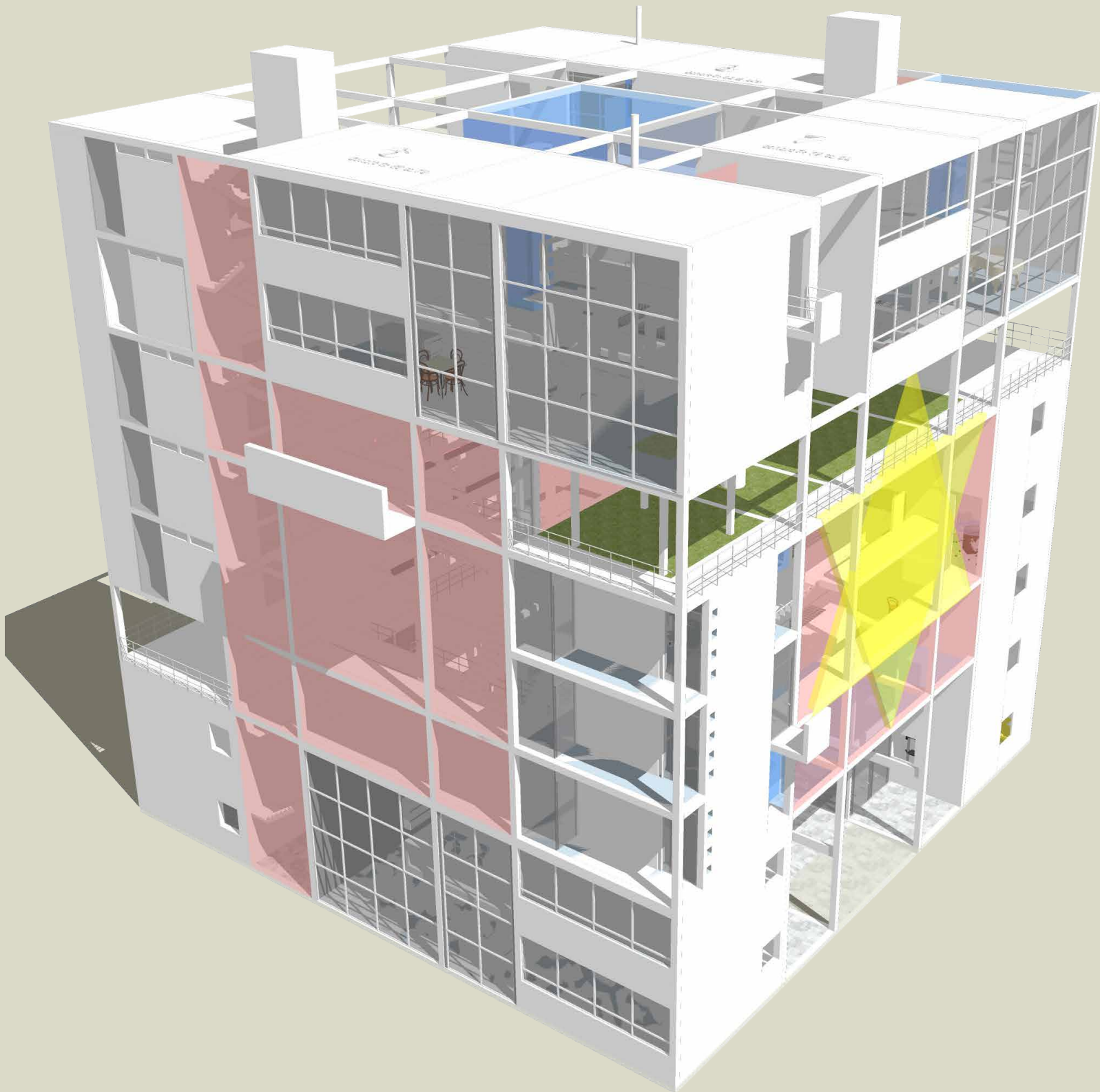
A palm turned downward suggests among other things, subjugation. Placing palm on palm is an act and sign of subjugation, similar to the act of bowing before a king. Kaf as a *verb* means "to subdue" or "coerce." The Torah refers to all productive labor as "the toil of the palms." "The toil of your palms you shall eat, happy are you and goodness is yours."

As a negative force, history is full of conflict between nations in struggle over power (the *keter* of the Kaf). Some believe that ultimately this negative, egocentric force will be converted to good when the Messiah will selflessly use the power of the Kaf to "force" all people to abide by the Divine statutes of Torah.

Meantime, we would do well to watch out for the bifurcation of Crown and palm-- of blessing and subjugation, of THEM and US.



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LAMED VAVNIK
LIFELONG LEARNING

BIMAH ON ELEVATOR
SERVES ALL 6 LEVELS



LAMED is the 12th letter in the Hebrew Aleph-Bet. It is the symbol of teaching and learning and represents aspiration, and contemplation of the heart. The Lamed Vavnik is a Lifelong Learner. The question I discovered, when consulting the commentaries on the Hebrew Letters, and their recursive reference to Lamed and learning (are not the Jews the People of the book?) was:

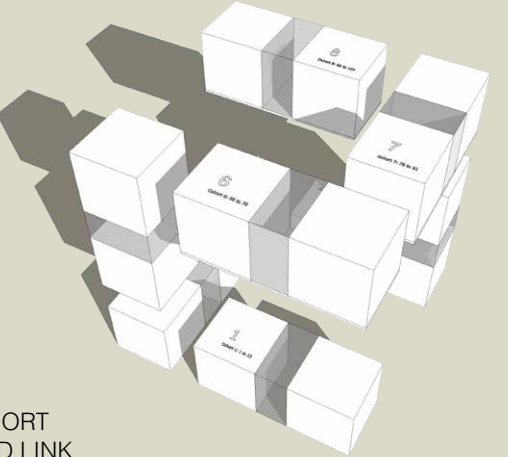
If learning takes place throughout a lifetime, what is the architecture of that learning? This comes before any question of the architecture of any building. And the answer came to me as follows--

What is a life? A series of events marking growth, spiritual, physical intellectual, chronological. And what is the structure of this growth and learning in Judaism? Clearly the first phase of development is completed at Bar or Bat Mitzvah, when a child can say "today I am a man" or today I am a woman." And normally this takes place at age 13. So, the module of an architecture of lifelong learning is a thirteen year span. What might this mean? A series of spaces that accommodate learning in each of the 13-year intervals of a full life. Thus, from 1 to 13 a child goes from infant through pre-K, primary school, and perhaps middle school. Spaces for such activities should include playroom as well as classroom, and places for naps as well as active frolic. How many will use it will determine its (minimum) size. A most fundamental version of that answer could be one girl and one boy for each year, or 13 x 2 children or 26 total in the first cohort. This cohort needs its own "house" to provide at least space for energetic play, quiet resting space, study or class room, and necessary services including storage, bathrooms, even changing tables and laundry.

8 STAGES
FIRST COHORT:
BIRTH TO
BAR MITZVAH

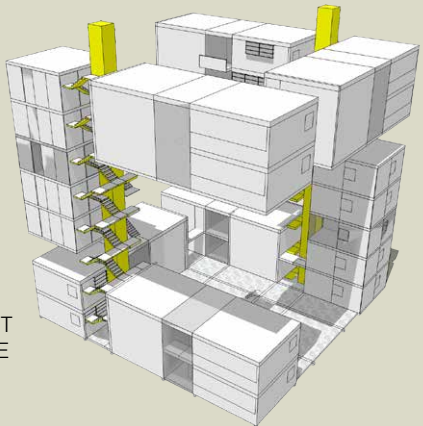
STAGE 1: 1 - 13
STAGE 2: 14 - 26
STAGE 3: 27 - 39
STAGE 4: 40 - 52
STAGE 5: 53 - 65
STAGE 6: 66 - 78
STAGE 7: 79 - 91
STAGE 8: 92 - 104

EACH HOUSE COHORT
DOUBLE CUBE AND LINK



ARK FACING EAST
SUNSET STARTS DAY
OLDEST FACE WEST

8 COHORTS x 13
= 104 YEARS
2 X 13 FOR EACH COHORT
= 2 X 13 X 8 = 208 PEOPLE



COHORT 1: TO 13
CLASSROOM
PLAYROOM
NURSERY

COHORT 2: TO 26
SEMINAR LIBRARY
WORKDESKS

COHORT 3: TO 39
KITCHEN DINING
CAFE

WORKSHOP
TABLESAW LATHE DRILL PRESS
JOINER-PLANER POTTER'S WHEEL



LOOKING NORTH INTO WEST FACING UPPER GARDEN
SUNSET VIEW FOR CENTNARIANS

YOM-KIPPUR SELF-PORTRAITS



Yom Kippur is the Day of Atonement, the culmination of 10 days of prayer and introspection that begins at the start of the New Year on Rosh Hashanah, the Head of the Year. Traditional prayer services include numerous repetitions of the same prayer, and even formalize this iterative practice with something called Additional Service, the Musaf, which essentially repeats the main prayers already just uttered. My creative instincts rebelled at this from an early age, so I sought my own way to engage the spiritual essence of this High Holy Day. Thus, in 1969, as a young recent graduate armed with a Princeton MFA and working for the up and coming architect Richard Meier, yet still briefly living with my parents and commuting with my father to NYC on the LIRR, I found a small mirror on the afternoon of Yom Kippur, and made a self-portrait. That was my first, at the age of 23, and I have made one on every Yom Kippur since. There are now 48. The 3 to the right are selected from these. I do not look at any of the previous studies until I finish that year's self portrait. Then I take them all out and regard the realities they offer. More than once I have been surprised to find that what I thought was a wholly original selection of medium and format was exactly the same as the one done the year before. Although, and perhaps because, this was in direct confrontation with Judaism's iconoclastic tradition, I felt I had to make this drawing as a true act of looking inside myself to seek the Divine presence that lives in us all. It was only after I discovered the Reconstructionist movement that I found a form of Judaism that understood and celebrated the need to creatively reinterpret and perhaps reinvent past practices into a living tradition for our own time.

Still, every year when I face the mirror, pen or pencil or crayon in hand, there is at least one moment when the great chasm comes through the dark light in my eyes.





HET TET YUD

