



The voice of Temple Israel - Greater Manchester's Center for Conservative Jewry
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Judaism & God

By Rabbi Jeremy Szczepanski

One of my passions is studying and teaching theology. I love delving into the different concepts of God, pushing myself as well as my congregants and students on our beliefs about the Divine. There are entire libraries of literature in Hebrew, Aramaic, English, German, etc. that expound at great length on this subject. What one quickly discovers is that there is no such thing as a single unified theology in Judaism, but several theologies.

There is support indeed for belief in a personal immanent God who interacts with us and seeks out a relationship, just as there is support for the impersonal, transcendent God of the First Cause of the neo-Aristotelian rationalists Who is removed from our lives and does not interact with us. The Kabbalists and Hasidim – the mystics of Judaism – teach that God is both transcendent and imminent.

There is the theology of Rabbi Mordechai Kaplan, founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, who propounded that what we call God is not a supernatural deity per se, but the force of Godliness inherent in each human being that makes for our potential to do good in the world. Similarly, there is the theology of the philosopher Hermann Cohen, who held that God is indeed the force for ethics and morals imbued to humanity and that this is in fact what it means to be created “in the Divine image.” The scholar Erich Fromm identified himself as a non-theistic mystic as a result of his theological outlook on the nature of God.

There is undoubtedly much in Judaism that is concerned with everyday life. That the figure we call God is the basis for our religion, that there is much that Jewish wisdom has to say not just

about the here and now but about God and the hereafter cannot and should not be ignored. The words of the *siddur*, the Jewish prayer book, are not mere words on the page but a structured daily dialogue with the Divine. How one defines God is up to each of us to wrestle with and figure out.

There is room at the banquet table of Judaism for a variety of beliefs, philosophies, and theologies. There is a place at the table for the theists and non-theists alike, for those who question and struggle, for challenging and allowing ourselves to be challenged on what we hold as our sacred truth. The charge to each of us, friends, is to take our seat at the table – and we all have one - and join the discussion.

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Special thanks to the following individuals:

- Steve Saulten for spearheading our security system installation and fund raising efforts
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- Rabbi Jeremy for teaching the Miller Introduction to Judaism
- Gabbai David Winthrop and Ken Cohn for managing our yahrzeit boards
- The Sydney/Singer family for grounds maintenance and much more
- Liz & Eckman for our paper and kitchen goods

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Purim – What’s it all About?

Purim, also called the Feast of Lots, is a joyous holiday celebrating saving of the Jews from a threatened massacre in Persia during 539-330 BCE. The story of Purim is told in the Book of Esther. Esther, a young Jewish woman, rises to be Queen of Persia under the care her guardian Mordecai. However, the Jews have enemies, including Haman, the grand vizier, who plots the destruction of the Jews. Although Esther has hidden her Jewish identity, Mordecai convinces her to reveal her true identity to the king and denounce evil Haman’s plot. In the end, the Jews turned the tables on their enemies, who are then punished in place of the Jews. This is one of the most beloved Jewish stories because of the hope that it give to minorities living in a hostile majority cultures.

Although unlike various other holidays, such as Passover, Purim is a community holiday. There are several activities centered in the home, such s baking hamantaschen, the triangular, filled pastries that are the traditional food at Purim time. Also, following the commandment to give gifts to friends and the poor, preparing and distributing misloah manot baskets is a fun activity. The centerpiece of the home celebration is the seudah, a festive meal accompanied by alcoholic beverages.

Purim is a joyful celebration, focused around reading the Scroll of Esther in the synagotue. This raucous affair is accompanied by hollering and noise every time Haman’s name is mentioned, so no one can hear the name of this horrible evildoer. Another tradition, Purim shpiel, is a play poking fun at community leaders and members. Often called the Jewish Carnival, dressing in costumes and taking part heighten the levity of the day.

Hebrew School



Shlichah Noam Wolf visited the Temple Israel Hebrew School on Jan. 27. Teachers and students alike were engaged by her lively teaching style and presence. Photograph courtesy of Karen Jacobs.



The Temple Israel kids really kicked up their heels at Pjammin' Havallah Dance Party! Photograph courtesy of Norri Oberlander

Temple Israel Members in the Community

Hoping to fulfill her dream of international community service, Temple Israel's Viv Schill is raising money to travel with a grassroots organization restore headstones toppled and smashed by the Nazis in 1943 in the Bagnowka Cemetery in Bialystok, Poland.



Schill was awarded an \$1,800 grant from SNHU's Chandler Center for Community Engaged Learning, but needs \$3,000 more to get to Bialystok. Schill has been contacted by several people with ancestral connections to Bialystok, including Temple Israel member Sharon Burnston of Epsom, whose grandmother was born in Bialystok in 1900 and arrived in America in 1902.

Last June, Viv Schill went to Israel. "When I went to Israel, we walked through all of these Holocaust museums, a few that were dedicated to children that had died in the Holocaust and families that were torn apart. It was very chilling to see all of these things. I definitely feel more connected to the project (in Bialystok.)"

Those interested in contributing to Sare asked to donate through her GoFundMe page at:

www.gofundme.com/bialystok-restoration-project.

What's Cooking at Temple Israel?

Our kitchen renovations are finished! LRC Fire Safety of Manchester, NH installed new duct work to vent the stove and brought our range up to code. Many thanks to Michael Sydney for coordinating the project.



Mazel Tov Georgia Schill!



Not only did Georgia's piece earn her one of 26 National Gold Medals at the National Scholastic Art Awards, she also earned the AmericanVision award for the most outstanding art work of any student from New Hampshire!

Congratulations to Emily Sheff, for being recognized as one of the Union Leader's 40 Under Forty



Happy Birthday

Mar 1: Gigi Georges-Oxman
 Mar 2: Toni Gasser
 Mar 2: Carl Hallock
 Mar 3: Ilan Baskin
 Mar 5: Christine Gagnon
 Mar 5: Roberta Sachs
 Mar 6: Shane Citron
 Mar 7: Paula Ellis
 Mar 10: Stephen Singer
 Mar 11: Newton Kershaw



Adar-I 14 to Adar-II 24

Happy Birthday

Mar 14: Arnold Cohen
 Mar 14: Pam Saulten
 Mar 16: Rebecca DePasse
 Mar 19: Rachel Russell
 Mar 20: Matan Kilchevsky
 Mar 22: John Sheppard
 Mar 22: Mel Spierer
 Mar 22: Benjamin Stock
 Mar 27: Wendy Cadieux
 Mar 29: Gabriel Baskin

Happy Anniversary

Mar 5
 Denise & Steven Rudman
 41 years



Mar 10
 Helena & Steve Guttman
 19 years



Mar 26
 Sherri & Noah Bednowitz
 2 years

Services, Candle Times & Torah Readings

Minyans – 7:00am

<u>Tuesday</u>	<u>Friday</u>
--	Mar 1
Mar 5	Mar 8
Mar 12	Mar 15
Mar 19	Mar 22
Mar 26	Mar 29

Friday

<u>Candle Times</u>
Mar 1 – 5:34pm
Mar 8 – 5:42pm
Mar 15 – 6:51pm
Mar 22 – 6:59pm
Mar 29 – 7:07pm

Shabbat Services

<u>6:00pm Friday</u>
Mar 1 – none
Mar 8
Mar 15
Mar 22 - none
Mar 29

<u>9:30am Saturday</u>
Mar 2
Mar 9
Mar 16
Mar 23
Mar 30

Torah

<u>Portions</u>
Vayakhei
Pekudei
Vayikra
Tzav
Shemini

Special Events

Fri, Mar 15, 6:00pm
 Hadassah Shabbat Service
 No RSVP needed

Sun, Mar 17, 2:00pm
 PJ Library Hamentaschen Bake
 RSVP to pjlibrary@jewishnh.org

Weds, Mar 20, 6:00pm
 Purim Party!
 RSVP by Mar 13

Sat, Mar 23, 9:30am
 Jr. Congregation
 No RSVP needed

Sun, Mar 24, 12:30pm
 Hebrew School Purim Carnival
 No RSVP needed