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☆ Today...and for Generations ☆

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Judaism: Race or Religion?



I always learned to avoid calling Jews a "race" because this gave credence to Hitler's racial theories. Yet when Whoopi Goldberg claimed last month that "the Holocaust isn't

about race" but rather about "man's inhumanity to man," her words aroused consternation in the Jewish community.

Indeed, Whoopi's assumption is what most Americans think — that race is about skin color. Nonetheless, we know that Nazi ideology was predicated on the notion that the Aryans were a "master race" and the Jews were a "subhuman race."

So, which is it? Can we be a race when there are Jews of every skin color and nationality? People can't convert into a race, but Judaism has the process of *gerut* (conversion). Yet, Judaism isn't just a religion either. An atheist or non-practicing individual can still be counted as a Jew if born of a Jewish parent.

Most agree that Jewish identity is broader than either race or religion. We are sometimes described as "Members of the Tribe," a "peoplehood" or a "family." So, while the Whoopi controversy did little to clarify, it did reveal some troubling realities.

First, it demonstrated a glaring need for more Holocaust education here and abroad. A 2020 survey of Amer-



ican adults under 40 by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany revealed that 63% of American adults surveyed did not know that 6 million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust. Half of those surveyed could not name one concentration or death camp, and one in ten respondents had never even heard the word "Holocaust" before!

Second, we saw how the politics of the observer is what defines Jews. White nationalists see Jews as non-white with their rallying cry, "the Jew will not replace us." Conversely, left-wing extremists consider Jews at the pinnacle of white privilege. As a result, Jews cannot be included in the fight for racial justice. Any discrimination we experience is downgraded from unacceptable racism to merely annoying religious intolerance and not taken as seriously. Whether or not we believe we are a race, many in this world treat us as such.

It may be nearly impossible to define Judaism, but we can characterize the antisemitism which has plagued our people for all time. The late Rab-

bi Jonathan Sacks described it as "a mutating virus that takes different forms at different ages." In the Middle Ages, Jews were hated because of our religion. We were hated in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries because of our race. Today we are hated because of our nation-state, the state of Israel. Antisemitism takes different forms, but its essence is the same: Jews have no right to exist as equal human beings.

With all the passion with which we fight COVID-19, may we fight the mutating virus of antisemitism which never leaves our body politic. We must inoculate against hatred through education and build anti-bodies to maintain a free society in which differences are embraced and bigotry is not tolerated. Then might the idyllic vision of Esther 8 come to be: "For the Jews there was light and gladness; joy and honor."

Shalom,

Rabbi Judy Chessin

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Temple Beth Or could not accomplish anything without teamwork. Thanks to every contribution of prayer, time and funds, we can fulfill our mission of being a warm, welcoming place for ALL.

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Temple's many funds provide a meaningful way to mark the life cycle events we all experience. From a birth to a graduation, from the recovery from an illness to a promotion or marriage, we all experience joy and sadness throughout our lives. To express your caring and concern, please send your tribute card and minimum \$10 donation to the Temple office. All donations are tax deductible.

THANK YOU!

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Finding the Balance



Religion is not just rules and regulations. Judaism is not just a set of *mitzvot* commandments that we must follow.

Our shared faith is more than that; it is an ongoing discussion with our ancestors, it is a set of ethics and morals, it is a relationship we have with our community. Judaism is what we want it to be; it is a choice; it is up to each of us to allow Judaism to be what we want it to be.

A couple of years ago, I was working on a lesson about Purim that would be shared with a group of Miami University students. Purim is innately a holiday about costumes and alcohol. The tricky part is designing a lesson that does not encourage drinking to intoxication but teaches about our texts that do just that. I know these students are looking forward to celebrating Purim, but it is my job to walk that fine line between encouraging and educating.

To drink is to make a choice. I make it their choice. After all, I am a product of and a proponent of the Reform movement, where we are all about allowing our students to learn and then make choices for themselves. I brought to them many different texts, all of which talk about how Purim can be celebrated through alcohol. It was not until my final text did it all come full circle. From *Be'ur Halacha* Page 695: "We should not become drunk and demean ourselves by rejoicing. We are not commanded to rejoice for the sake of debauchery and stupidity. Rather, we should rejoice with a delight that leads us to love God and acknowledge the miracles wrought



for us."

How profound of an impact this statement had on the students. For these students, Purim is really about "drunkin' drinking," as they put it. Never before had they seen alcohol as a means to celebrate and rejoice and a means to allow us to see God and the miracles of our life in a way that we may not be able to while in a sober state of mind. This realization led us to a conversation about how drinking is not simply a means to partying. Still, in some cases, it can be used to help us, to help us relax or unwind after a long day, to help us clean a wound, or to help us celebrate our faith through a shared tradition.

Their realization led me to understand the impact that we, as teachers, have on our students. The simply pointing out of one single text brings meaning to something that otherwise may not have meaning. The explanation of our tradition and how we frame it allows our stu-

dents to find a deeper connection and motivation to want to be a part of that tradition. Our job as teachers is to bring our students to a point in which they can understand new material and re-evaluate old material to allow them to become better learners, better Jews, and better people.

By connecting with my students through a topic that they understood and knew fondly, I was able to bring them to a new revelation, one which I encouraged them to teach to their friends and fraternity/sorority mates. It was an assessment, of sorts, of their own life. I left them with an understanding of how they could bring that lesson forward. Purim became more profound than just Hamen, hamentashen, and alcohol. It became about sharing love and warmth with those around us through celebration.

B'shalom,
Rabbi Ben Azriel

Art and Music Café Virtual Preview Was a Success!

On February 5th we were honored to showcase returning artists while introducing two new artists in this special 'Virtual Preview'. This virtual event was very well attended through Zoom, Facebook and YouTube.

My music partner, Marc Gilbert, added his guitar and vocal talents to an eclectic selection of songs, while we narrated through photographers and artists within our Temple community.

A very special thanks to Mark Gruenberg, who helped to create this unique virtual program, while leading us from song to artist and providing us with an interactive environment between artist and audience.

In addition, thank you to Gayle Jenkins, Donna Brodnick and Ellen Holroyd for their assistance with marketing for the event.

Thank you to Dr. Judy Chesen, Batia and Ely Eshel, Lorraine Fortner, Stephen Goldberg, Dave London and Rachel Meyer for their beautiful contributions of photography and artwork to the virtual event.

Some of these featured artists have items available for purchase. If you are interested in reaching any of these individuals, please contact Mary 'Mahira' Rogers at maryrogers2017@yahoo.com.

We are looking forward to the in-person event; date to be announced. This event will feature additional sponsors who were behind the scenes for the February event. Our special thanks to the Temple Beth Or-Adult Education Committee, Members of the Linda A. Cohen Yiddish Club, Ugly Dog Distillery, and the Art and Music Café Committee members Annette Nathan, Marc Gilbert, Karen and Kevin Bressler, and Lynn Rogers.

If you were unable to join the Art and Music Café, Virtual Preview on February 5th, here is a link for further viewing:

<https://youtu.be/g4nl33nFtik>

Thank you, once again, for your support of the talented community at Temple Beth Or!

Mary 'Mahira' Rogers

Dorothy Lane Market Good Neighbor Program



Did you know that every time you shop at DLM and scan your Club DLM Card, you can select a nonprofit to be "credited" with the purchase through the Good Neighbor Program? At the end of the year, each organization will be credited a prorated amount based on the total donation by DLM, determined by the purchases of club members who link their club cards to the nonprofit. Be sure to link your DLM Club Card to Temple Beth Or. This is an easy way for us to earn money to fuel our mission.

Add us as your nonprofit of choice now at:

www.dorothylane.com/goodneighbor

Adult Education

Call Me By Your Name: March 6th on Zoom

Because the Adult Education Committee (AEC) of Temple Beth Or sometimes partners with Temple Anshai Emeth's Adult Education Committee in Peoria, IL, Temple Beth Or is invited to a special presentation! On Sunday, March 6 at noon (on Zoom), Professor Seth Katz will interview Professor Andre Aciman, author of the bestseller, *Call Me By Your Name*, which was later made into an award-winning movie. You may have seen it.

The book and movie is a coming-of-age story about a gay, teenage, Jewish boy. You won't want to miss this thought-provoking author interview! We are very excited to bring this accomplished author to the Dayton area (via Zoom), courtesy of our partnership with Anshai Emeth!



For more information and to register, visit:
<https://templebethor.com/event/call-me-by-your-name/>

An Exploration of the Jewish Short Story March 9th

Do you like to read, but don't have time, so you prefer short stories? Have we got a program for you! Once a month, or every so often, read a Jewish short story (and we mean short), and come to a follow-up discussion. You will make new friends, renew your current friendships, and deepen your understanding of Jewish life through the ages in a welcoming, engaging forum.



<https://templebethor.com/upcoming-adult-education-events/>

Chai Mitzvah Will Resume April 7th on Zoom

In appreciation for generous underwriting by Rabbi Judy Chessin, Temple Beth Or's Adult Education Committee (AEC) is delighted to announce the formation of a new *Chai Mitzvah* group. Because Temple Beth Or has hosted previous *Chai Mitzvah* groups, the national *Chai Mitzvah* organization is waiving the cost of materials to individuals who join the group. This means that you, personally, will pay nothing for materials.



Register & Learn More:
<https://templebethor.com/chai-mitzvah/>

The Adult Education Committee (AEC) of Temple Beth Or believes that congregants represent a rich set of skills, abilities and interests that can benefit others. Please contact the AEC (ruth.schumacher@wright.edu; 937-672-3368). We want to support YOU!



March Chai-Lights

Friday, March 4, 6:30 p.m. In Person & Streaming

Rock of Ages *Shabbat*: Marc Rossio rocks the house as he and Rabbi Chessin lead a creative and musical *Shabbat* service.

Saturday, March 5, 10:00 a.m. on Zoom

Apocryphal Study: Join Rabbi Chessin and our study group as we continue to explore the book of Jubilees. Hear the Genesis stories in a new way!

Sunday, March 6, 12:00 p.m. on Zoom

Call Me By Your Name: Facilitated by the Temple Beth Or Adult Education Committee in partnership with the Adult Education Committee of Anshai Emeth. For more information, please see the article on page 6.

Wednesday, March 9, 6:30 p.m. on Zoom

An Exploration of the Jewish Short Story: Read and discuss a Jewish short story in a welcoming, engaging forum. This program is offered by the Adult Education Committee (AEC). Please see page 6 for more information.

Friday, March 11, 6:30 p.m. In Person & Streaming

Join Rabbi Ben Azriel for a streaming Family *Shabbat* Service featuring 3-4th grade *Makor* students.

Saturday, March 12, 10:00 a.m. In Person

Torah Live!: *Shabbat Zachor*, the Sabbath before *Purim*, reminding us to blot out the name of *Amalek*.

Tuesday, March 15, 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. In Person

Corned Beef Event: Please see back cover for details.

Friday, March 18, 6:30 p.m. In Person

Join Rabbi Azriel, Ballaban and Chessin (ABC) with a St. Patrick's/*Purim* Celebration. Special guest Rabbi Ari Ballaban on the bagpipes.

Saturday, March 19, 10:00 a.m. on Zoom

Apocryphal Study: Join Rabbi Chessin and our study group as we continue to explore the book of Jubilees.

Sunday, March 20, during *Makor*

Torah Scribe Visit: *Torah* scribe Shel Bassel will present the art of *Torah* writing to our students of *Makor*.

Friday, March 25, 6:30 p.m. Pre-Recorded Streaming

Join us for a pre-recorded *Shabbat* Service with Rabbi Chessin and Rabbi Azriel.

Saturday, March 26, 10:00 a.m. In Person

Shabbat Shireinu: Sing-along Sabbath led by Para Rabbi Lorraine Fortner and Temple Music Director Mary 'Mahira' Rogers. Come learn the most updated songs we use in our *Shabbat* services.

Special Events

***Purim* Live: Top o' the *Purim* to ya!**

Since *Purim* and St. Patrick's Day coincide this year, Temple Beth Or will celebrate with extra joy. Join us live on Friday, March 18, 6:30 p.m. for a special *Purim* Megillah *Shabbat* featuring our own Rabbi Ari Ballaban on the bagpipes, green beer and hamentashen.



Torah Scribe Visit



On Sunday March 20 *Torah* scribe Shel Bassel will present the art of *Torah* writing to our students of *Makor*. We are delighted to welcome the religious school of Beth Abraham and their parents to join in on this educational opportunity. Parents of our students and interested adults are welcome to share in the experience. Shel has done the repairs on all our Scrolls over the years.

Please check Plan-it *Makor* and Plan-it Beth Or for the hours and programs which will be presented.



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