

Facebook

What is it? Facebook has become one of the web's most prominent social networking sites, with more than 350 million active users and an astonishing 175 million users who log on daily. More than 700,000 businesses and organizations in the United States have active pages on Facebook. The heart and soul of Facebook revolves around relationship building. As our messenger for Har Sinai, Facebook provides a powerful online tool to interact and communicate with our current community and future members in a very intimate way in a fashion that is both viral and on the user's term.

In the coming weeks and months, Har Sinai will begin to use our Har Sinai Congregation Facebook page as an interactive communications tool. We invite you to become a "fan" today (this is the Facebook way of following a page). Our HaSTY page

is a closed page and is available only to the youth members of the group. Both the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) and the North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) have highly active Facebook pages that provide a wealth of information. You should become "fans" of those pages as well.

Other major social networking sites include: Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. Many more highly specialized and focused social media sites exist and more are on the horizon. As a vibrant, growing Congregation our goal from a marketing perspective is to embrace the new world of social media while retaining the best practices from our current, more traditional communications forms.

Jonathan Oleisky is a member of the newly formed Communications Committee and is CEO/Founder of Media 924, LLC a Social Media & Digital & Print Communications firm.

Rabbi Sharff's Reflections

The end of February is commemorated this year with the wild, raucous celebration of Purim. It is a time where we dress up in costume. We also sing silly songs, and eat one of the greatest foods in all of creation, the Hamantaschen.



Typically during this time, I write a funny, irreverent article for the Congregational newsletter. But as this is my first article for the Har Sinai Connection, I felt I would forgo this particular tradition for this year. However, if you wish to read the article I have written for Temple Emanu-El, feel free to check out my blog <http://rhythmguitarabbi.blogspot.com/> where it will be posted.

Instead, I wanted to spend a little time discussing a significant element of the Purim narrative, hester panim, the "hiding of the face." In the book of Esther, not only does Esther hide her true identity from King Achashverosh, but the very presence of God is hidden throughout the entire narrative. It is the only book of the Hebrew Bible where God's name is not mentioned.

This, of course, creates certain theological challenges, because one could argue that God played no role in the miracle of this particular redemption. But the Rabbis take a different interpretation of the name of God being absent in the book of Esther.

In the Babylonian Talmud tractate Shabbat 88a, it gives a curious midrash that says as the Israelites stood at Sinai,

"God turned the mountain over them like an inverted cask, and said, 'If you accept Torah all will be well, if not, this mountain shall bury you,'" a deeply troubling passage, to say the least. The Rabbis here are implying the Israelites had no choice but to accept Torah. However, a little later in the same tractate, the Talmud teaches us the Jews re-accepted Torah in the days of Achashverosh; this time of their own free-will.

The reason for this interpretation is that Israelites, despite the miracles of the plagues and the parting of the Sea of Reeds, did not fully appreciate the immediate presence of God. Yet the Jews in Shushan, with their miraculous redemption from the hands of Haman, understood the Divine Presence, albeit hidden, in this part of their history.

I am not sure if this interpretation teaches us when and where God interacts throughout our history and our lives. But it does serve as a good reminder of the possibilities that holiness can play in our lives. We just may not always see it. During this time of transition, we are reminded of the great holiness we currently encounter, especially in the community of Har Sinai. The holiness in its tradition, in its membership, in its leadership and in its clergy. One of my main goals is to keep this holiness moving ever forward with each and every one of you.

In the meantime, have a wonderful Purim and take the opportunity to engage in your own hester panim. I haven't picked out my costume yet, but I'll keep you posted once I figure it out.