

Rabbi Sharff's Reflections



Judaism, like other religions in this country, currently stands at a crossroad. Atheism has replaced "organized religion" as the "religion" du jour. We find this in particular in the writings of intellectuals like Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris. They argue in part how they believe religion to be at the heart of just about every major world conflict. However, upon closer examination, we are much more likely to find the converse to be true; religion, like any other

value, is more often than not used to justify conflict. While many of our younger and even some older members are compelled by arguments made by these famous atheists, and thus they feel there is little value in Jewish tradition beyond our cultural heritage, of course, nothing could be further from the truth.

Eighty years ago, Sigmund Freud wrote a book whose implications still reverberate in the religious and psychoanalytic world. Though a confirmed atheist, Freud nonetheless was fascinated with understanding the heart of religion. In The Future of an Illusion, Freud wrote, "Life in

this world serves a higher purpose; no doubt it is not easy to guess what that purpose is, but it certainly signifies a perfecting of a man's nature."

Religion and in particular Judaism's main aim is to help us as individuals and communities attain a higher sense of purpose and holiness. This is why we are in a covenant with God as can be seen in the following statement, "You shall be holy, for I Adonai your God, am holy."

In the Midrash Says, Rabbi Moshe Weissman expands upon this passage from Leviticus 19:2. "The Torah does not claim that the attainment of holiness, of a life of sanctity within Torah-confines is easy. Our sages were profoundly aware of the dynamic physical urges with which God created man. They therefore depict a person's struggle of intellect versus imagination, or knowledge versus physical desires ... that every day we are confronted with choices in every area of existence which determine whether or not we will be holy."

We should be asking ourselves not, "is there a God," but instead, "are we using our tradition to help us improve our own inherent natures?" For holiness should be the goal of every examined life, and its attainment can help us create a life well lived, no matter the questions with which we wrestle.

BROTHERHOOD BUZZ

Har Sinai Brotherhood would like to thank everyone who attended our breakfast on April 25. We enjoyed an informative talk with our own Rabbi Crystal about the state of Reform Judaism. It was a great success. We had an impressive turnout, good food and many thought provoking questions.

On Friday, June 4, Brotherhood will host a "Lombard Street Deli Dinner" from 6:00 - 7:15 p.m. followed by Brotherhood-led services at 7:30 p.m. At the service, Brotherhood will honor Dick and Judy Forman as Brotherhood's "Persons of the Year," and the new officers and board members will be installed. The cost of the dinner is \$18 per person. Please show your support of Brotherhood and the Formans on this very special evening. RSVP by May 28 by mailing a check payable to Har Sinai Brotherhood c/o: Marshall Salsbury, 7120 Pheasant Cross Drive, Baltimore, MD 21209. For any questions, call Marshall at (410) 654-0078 or email to emsalsbury@verizon.net.

On June 13, join Brotherhood for an Orioles baseball game at our Annual Night at Camden Yards. More reservation information will follow. In the meantime, for questions call or email Fred Handelman at (410) 833-1208 or fred1040@aol.com.

If you have any programming ideas, please contact Rich Lebovitz at rich.lebovitz@gmail.com. Check the E-Connection and mid-month mailings for more information about future events.

Har Sinai Congregation gratefully acknowledges Sisterhood's contribution of plates, glassware, serving stations and skirts. The entire Congregation is the beneficiary of your kindness.

