



TEMPLE EMANU-EL Bulletin

Volume 79, Number 19

January 5, 2007

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, January 27
4:15 p.m.
**Junior Youth Groups:
Ice Skating at
Rockefeller Center**



Members of CLUB 56 and CLUB 78 are invited to join us for a winter tradition—ice skating at Rockefeller Center. Cost is \$20 per person, which includes food and beverages. Drop-off and pick-up are at Rockefeller Center Ice Skating Rink, Fifth Avenue between 49th and 50th streets.

RSVP to Youth Group Advisor Lori Jacobson:
youth.emanuel@gmail.com or (516) 965-4736

SABBATH SERVICES

**Friday evening, January 12
Main Sanctuary**

Organ Recital—5 p.m.
Sabbath Eve Service—5:15 p.m.
WQXR Radio (96.3 FM) and Internet
(www.wqxr.com) broadcasts—5:30 p.m.

**Saturday morning, January 13
Women's Auxiliary Lounge**

Torah Study—9:15 a.m.
Main Sanctuary
Service—10:30 a.m.
Torah Portion—Shemos
Readings—Exodus 1:1-6:1
Isaiah 27:6-28:13; 29:22-23
Sermon: Rabbi Amy B. Ehrlich

TIKKUN
OLAM

**HABITAT for
HUMANITY**
Sunday, January 14

We will build with Habitat-
NYC at a site on Halsey
Street in the Bedford-Stuyvesant
neighborhood of Brooklyn. Volunteers
must be 16 years or older. Some heavy
lifting and walking up stairs is involved.
Dress warmly—We work rain or shine!
Round trip transportation will be pro-
vided—**departing Temple Emanu-El
at 8 a.m., returning by 4 p.m.** Space
is extremely limited, sign up soon!

Team Emanu-El
will be working
alongside
volunteers
from Central
Synagogue,
Kehilat Hadar,
Anshe Chesed,
the Pratt Institute
for Community Development, the Pratt
Area Community Council, Youth Bridge
Fellows and the Jewish Community
Relations Council.



To register, call (212) 744-1400, ext. 452
or e-mail tetikunolam@yahoo.com.

**NOTE: Community Service
certificates are available for
Temple Emanu-El teens.**

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS
FOR THESE OTHER ACTIVITIES:**

- January 21—Stitch'n Time
- January 28—Sandwiches on
Sunday, Cookies and Milk

"Remember the Sabbath Day."

**OPERATION:
GOOD SHABBOS**

**Every Friday...
Wish a good one
to a friend!**



BAR MITZVAH

**The following student of
our Religious School will become
a Bar Mitzvah this weekend:**

*Nicholas Wiener,
son of Mrs. Heather Wiener*

**We are grateful for their sponsorship
of Friday evening's Oneg Shabbat.**

PULPIT FLOWERS

**Pulpit flowers at Sabbath services
this weekend are the generous
donation of our congregants:**

Frances A. Hess in loving memory
of her husband, *Robert L. Hess*

Andrea and Michael Sluchan
in loving memory of their father,
Seymour Sluchan

Robin Sluchan in loving memory
of her husband, *Seymour Sluchan*

The Cemeteries of Congregation Emanu-El
Salem Fields and Beth-El

A limited number of above-ground crypts are available in
our community mausoleum. For information, please call
Dr. Mark W. Weisstuch at the Temple Office, (212) 744-1400.

Charles S. Salomon

The Universal Funeral Chapel

1076 Madison Avenue (212) 753-5300
Our service is available in the Temple, home, or our Chapel.

*As part of our Emanu-El Reads!
program focusing on the life and labors of
Moses Maimonides, Rabbi David M. Posner
delivered an opening lecture concentrating on the
Aristotelian background of Maimonides' time and
what was the essential "Maimonidean" problem.
What follows is an excerpt from Rabbi Posner's
lecture, which goes into further detail.*

As we embark on a year-long course dedi-
cated to a study of works by and about
the Rambam Moshe ben Maimon,
we first must attempt to clarify the
general thrust of the philosophical
movement of medieval Judaism:
what inspired it, what encouraged it and what
engendered it. It was unique in its time, and it
really exists no more.

I say it exists no more because there are
hardly today any Jewish philosophers of whom
to speak. Actually, the creation of philosophy
itself is no longer an intellectual endeavor.
What passes for Jewish philosophy today are
really studies of Jewish philosophy, the history
and analysis of Jewish philosophy but not
philosophy or the creation of philosophy itself.
This is to say, there hardly exists any original
thinking taking place today. This is also to say,
there will be nothing of staggering originality
in this lecture. What I shall try to do is to
give a description of the great issue—the one
great issue—of the medieval Jewish philosphi-
cal purpose.

I like the title of a book by my great teacher
of Jewish history, Michael Meyer at Hebrew
Union College in Cincinnati. It is a book about
the development of Reform Judaism, called
Response to Modernity. Every Jewish intellectual
endeavor for the last 4,000 years may be charac-
terized as a response to modernity. The Torah
itself was a response to modernity. Its major pur-
pose was [and remains] to reconcile and convert
pagan Canaanite civilization into Judaism—in
other words, to make Canaanites Jewish. The
purpose of the Talmud was to create a response
to Hellenism and Romanism...and even early
Christianity.

The purpose of Jewish medieval philosophy
was to make Aristotle Jewish, even more Jewish
than Greek. For all of the major Jewish thinkers—

EXAMINING MAIMONIDES: UNDERSTANDING JEWISH PHILOSOPHY

from Philo of Alexandria in the first century before the Common Era until Joseph Albo of the early 15th century—knowledge was synonymous with Aristotle, and “modernity” meant Aristotle. The great aim of Jewish philosophizing—and notice that I use that verb “philosophizing” instead of the noun “philosophy”—was the reconciliation of Judaism with Aristotle. There are no Jewish thinkers alive today who are attempting to harmonize Judaism with the latest trends as exhibited in *Scientific American* magazine. That’s what real Jewish philosophy would be today—an amalgamation, a synthesis of all our inherited tradition from the Bible on up, with the latest knowledge of a *Scientific American*.

There are several reasons why this is never considered today. For one, this is not the burning intellectual issue of Jewish life, which is concerned more with problems of physical survival in a post-Holocaust world—not without justification to be sure. More significant, knowledge today has exploded in quantum leaps, so that no one thinker is capable any longer of a grasp of virtually all knowledge. Remember: The Jewish philosophers of the middle ages were very unusual people, and in a 700-year period, there weren’t more than a dozen whose works and influence survived.

To give you a concrete illustration, to duplicate the mind of a Moses Maimonides in our time, we would have to combine the mind of an Einstein with that of a Freud, coupled with a Kaufman Kohler of our movement or a Joseph Solevechik, a Gershom Sholom or the contemporary Adin Steinsaltz. For the medieval Jewish philosophers—certainly for a Moses Maimonides—a photographic memory was a given, a prerequisite. There can be no doubt that Maimonides must have known not only the Bible by heart but even the entire Babylonian Talmud.

(Further excerpts from this lecture will appear in upcoming Bulletins.)



UPCOMING LECTURES

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 16
6:30 PM**

*Making the
Irrational Rational:
Maimonides' Advice for
Living a Virtuous Life*



RABBI KERRY M. OLITZKY, D.H.L., is executive director of the Jewish Outreach Institute and a fellow at the Center for Jewish Studies, Graduate School and University Center, CUNY. He also is the author of commentaries on biblical texts and books on Jewish outreach and interfaith families.

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 31
6:30 PM**

Maimonides and the Art of Giving



JULIE SALAMON is a culture writer and critic for *The New York Times*. She also is the author of *Rambam's Ladder: A Meditation on Generosity and Why It Is Necessary to Give*.

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7
6:30 PM**

*Maimonides and His Image:
The Legacy of His Works
and Their Interpreters.*



DR. BENJAMIN GAMPEL, the Dina and Eli Field Family Chair in Jewish History at The Jewish Theological Seminary, teaches courses in medieval and early modern Jewish history, with a focus on the Sephardim.

AROUND THE TEMPLE

A Joyful Celebration

Rabbi Posner, Temple President Marcia Waxman, now Governor Eliot Spitzer, Mayor Michael Bloomberg and children of the congregation join together in singing "Rock of Ages" and the lighting of the first Chanukah candles at our December 15th rededication ceremony.



Photo by Sarah Lewis

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