



MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE

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JANUARY 2023



Chanukah Party!

Here are some of the members who attended our Chanukah Party on December 18th. A great time was had by all with friendship, food and of course, Latkes!

NEXT SHABBAT SERVICE

Saturday, January 21st at 10:00am

Services are now held on our winter schedule of one Saturday each month, in-person and on zoom.

For those members who prefer to attend via Zoom, please watch your email for the link!



Yosi Knight
Our Spiritual Leader

Please watch your email and our website for notices regarding dates and times of services, which will be conducted both in-person and live online via Zoom.

NOTICES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Have some news to share with our members? We want it all! Contact our newsletter editor, Harvey Morse at harvey@probate.com (828) 631-0000

2. Mi Shebeirach – (Prayers for the ill)

Rhoda Haber
Howard Fuhrman
Phyllis Cardoza
Cathy Kelly
Ann Ferman
Maxine Goldstein
Wendy Newman

3. Recent Yahrzeit Donations

(Received by December 15th)

Marshall Greenman for brother, Gerald Greenman
Phyllis Lunsik for husband Hal Lunsik

4. Recent General Donations

Ronald Shnider

5. January Member Celebrations

Birthdays:

Penny-Lynne Goldstein

Laurie Edelson

Barry Meltzer

Doug Mower

Susan Hananel

Anniversaries:

None this month

6. Tree Of Life Leaf Purchases

Leaves are \$50 and Stones are \$500 each.

George & Joan Berman 2 leaves for granddaughters
Ava and Claire Bat Mitzvah's

7. Memorial Plaques

Memorial plaques which will be placed in our social hall are \$50 per name for an engraved, permanent remembrance. [*Our Tree of Life is reserved for celebrations, family or personal events of note, not memorials.*]

8. New Members

None this month

9. Volunteers

If you are interested in volunteering to assist our Board, please contact President, Joel Edelson at joeledleson@yanoo.com, or Vice President Harvey Morse at harvey@probate.com

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Joel Edelson
President

“Put your Faith in...in Fred?”

As we look forward to 2023, we think of Judaism's origin as we embark on a new (secular) year. Please enjoy this excerpt regarding our origins and enjoy the full article as well (link provided). See you at services!

B'Shalom, Joel Edelson
President

The beginnings of all ancient and modern religions have a common thread: one or two people have a revelation and persuade others to follow. Thus, for example, Buddhist writings tell us that Prince Siddhartha Gautama launched Buddhism after his solitary ascendance through the eight stages of Transic insight; Islamic texts tell us that Muhammad founded Islam following the first of many personal, prophetic experiences; Christian writings reveal that Paul first met Jesus, converted to Christianity. And spread the faith more than three decades after Jesus' death; Joseph Smith, Jr., and his partner, Oliver Cowdery, launched the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormon Church) after the two men were visited by angels and long-dead disciples of Jesus; and Sun Myung Moon launched the Unification Church after privately receiving direct orders to do so from Jesus himself. The beginnings of Children of God, Christian Science, Eckankar, Elan Vital, I AM, and Theosophy – in fact, the beginnings of all world religions – are equally unverifiable. Never does a large, clearly identifiable group of people experience prophecy and live to tell others about it. Moreover, in a handful of cases wherein large groups of people supposedly witnessed miracles, rarely are these witnessed named or identified in any way what would allow for verification; and in the very exceptional cases involving clearly identified groups of witnesses, never more than one or two of the religion's current adherents claim to have met or descended directly from the named witnesses. In all these cases, the religion's credibility rests on the credibility of its one or two founders. While it is certainly possible that the beginnings claimed by any of the thousands of sects and cults included in the world's more than three hundred major religious traditions could be true, it is easy to imagine how charismatic charlatans could have launched any of these movements.

The one known exception to this rule is Judaism. The Torah claims that every Jewish man, woman and child alive in 1312 B.C.E. –about three million people, according to the Torah, -- heard God speak at Mount Sinai and survived to teach their descendants about the event. Here we have an easily identifiable group – all of Jewry – who could have verified or denied the story any time during the first two or three generations after the alleged mass prophecy transpired. While it is easy to imagine how most religious mythologies could have been fabricated and spread, understanding how Judaism could be a lie requires more extensive analysis.

Smart Lies and Foolish Lies

Anyone who has studied history will affirm that people are gullible. We consistently find that sufficiently charismatic leaders can persuade people of any lie, even a lie that obligates followers to engage in painful or self-destructive behavior, as long as the followers cannot check the lie. Lies that cannot be checked or validated are “smart” lies, insofar as they are maximally seductive. However, claims that can be checked, “foolish” lies, tend to be

Shabbat and High Holiday Prayer Books

As we continue to have services in-person and on Zoom, having your own prayer books at home is important to follow along. **Our Mishkan t'Filah prayer books are available for \$40 each. Our new High Holiday Mahzor's are available for \$40 each.** These are very important to have, if you attend services online.

Shipping is \$5.00 for one or two books. If interested, please send your name, address and which books you want together with payment to Mountain Synagogue, PO Box 504, Franklin, NC 28744. Contact Bobbi Serra at ms.treasurer79@gmail.com

SAFETY TEAM MEMBERS NEEDED

We are seeking additional members to join our synagogue safety team. Approved members will be trained in AED, CPR, Stop the Bleed, Usher/Greeters procedures, use of pepperspray, portable radio's, our procedures and optionally, concealed carry with a valid permit. Those who are approved are covered under our synagogue's insurance policy. If you are interested in serving, please contact Harvey Morse, our Safety Director at: harvey@probate.com or (828) 631-0000

NEWSLETTER EDITOR ASSISTANT

We are looking for a member who would like to assist with our monthly newsletter preparation.

Please contact Harvey Morse at harvey@probate.com for details.

SURVEY

All members were sent a survey regarding services, to assist the Board in scheduling for 2023. We ask that everyone please complete the survey as soon as possible and mail it back to us no later than January 31st. All instructions are included on the form.

We cannot emphasize enough, how important this is, so kindly give this your immediate attention.

OUR SYNAGOGUE WEBSITE

www.MountainSynagogueWNC.com

tested and rejected, especially when the lie obligates followers in unpleasant or suicidal observances.

As an illustration of this principle, consider the case of the California cult known as Heaven's Gate. The group, led by Marshall Applewhite, included seventeen men and twenty-one women between the ages of eighteen and seventy-two. Applewhite taught his followers that he was an alien who first "moved into and took over" Jesus' body just prior to Christianity's founding, and that he again in 1970 "incarnated into" his current human body. In March 1988, Applewhite revealed to his followers a prophecy indicating that an approaching spaceship trailing the Hale Bopp comet was coming to pick up members of Heaven's Gate, but they would have to take lethal doses of phenobarbital in order to join him aboard the alien craft. On video, members of the group affirmed their faith in Applewhite's vision and then commenced committing suicide. Significantly, Applewhite did not tell his followers that "the spaceship that dropped you (our your grandparents) here on Earth is coming to pick you up." This would be a foolish lie. Applewhite, like all other successful religious leaders, told smart lies – lies that couldn't be checked.

Moses Theory and Fred Theory

The claim that three million people heard God speak appears in every intact Torah scroll ever found. The claim is either true or false. If it is a lie, and no such revelation ever took place, at some time in the past someone must have made such a claim. If we contemplate what the scene must have looked like when a false claim of national prophecy was first launched, we find ourselves locked into one of two scenarios: The person making the claim either told his followers (a) that the national prophecy happened in the present – "You *personally* heard God speak" – or (b) that the national prophecy happened in the past – "Your *ancestors* once heard God speak." We might call the first theory "Moses Theory", since the Torah records that "Moses" was the name of Jewry's leader when the prophecy took place. We can call the second possibility "Fred Theory", since the leader during post-Sinaitic period need not be Moses – he might as well be Fred.

According to Moses Theory, ancient Jewry's leader told a foolish lie: "You personally heard God speak, and He said these words: I am the Lord your God. . . . "We can imagine the scene as people first examined the supposedly divine Torah and their charismatic leader tried to explain to Jewry some of the text's more unpleasant rituals: "Circumcision? Yes, use a very sharp knife and a quick downward motion . . . *and it was the God Whom you heard speak Who told me you should do this!*" People would probably know if they had heard God speak; and if they hadn't heard God speak, they might be a little hesitant to accept the Torah's validity. Because people won't accept foolish (checkable) lies that demand self-destructive behavior, even critics who posit that the Torah is a fictional, man-made document reject Moses Theory.

Those who view the Torah as a work of human imagination therefore put their faith in Fred. They posit that the initial lie was: "God spoke not to you but to your ancestors. He gave them the Torah. They carried the Jewish tradition for a period but then fumbled, and it was forgotten. Now I, Fred, am returning to you your long-lost religious heritage." So, the question is, who to believe, Moses, or Fred?

(Want more? The entire article can be found at <https://www.simpletoremember.com/articles/a/proof-torah-true/>)

B'shalom,
Joel

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