



Beth Am COMMENTATOR

MIAMI, FLORIDA

JANUARY 26, 1973

Teacher Seminar Here February 3



Reform Religious School teachers from southern Florida will gather at Temple Beth Am over the weekend of February 3 and 4. Congregations, including our own, will be suspending religious school on that weekend so that the teachers might participate in the seminars. Leading the discussions will be Abraham Segal, pictured above. Mr. Segal is Associate Director of Education for the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, which is sponsoring his visit here. His special concern is the area of teacher education.

Mr. Segal is co-author of two books, "Israel Today," and "The Eternal People." He has taught at Gratz College in Philadelphia, and he has served as editorial consultant and writer for many Jewish agencies.

Assisting Mr. Segal in the discussions with the teachers will be Rabbi Sanford Shapiro, Director of the Southeast Council of the UAHC. Allan Kessler, a past president of Beth Am, is currently President of the Southeast Council.

The UAHC Department of Education publishes many books in the field of religious education and develops many programs and units of instruction for the synagogue school. Beth Am is one of 700 congregations in the UAHC which is maintained by dues paid from the affiliate congregations.

No Religious School

Saturday, February 3

Sunday, February 4

Teacher Seminar

Mental Health Program February 7

The Mental Health Association of Dade County will present an all-day program at Beth Am on Wednesday, February 7. The program is based on the theme, "Living With Adolescence--1973." All Temple members and friends of all faiths are welcome (the program is definitely open to the public and a large attendance is expected). The program follows:

- 1 - 1:15 p. m. Welcome
- 1:15 - 2:30 p. m. . "Realizing Your Own Potential"
Gloria Greenberg, Ph. D.
- 2:30 - 3:45 p. m. "The Adolescent and His Friends"
Stan Garner, M. D.
- 3:45 - 5 p. m. "Freedom, the Law, and Teenagers"
Peter Nimkoff, Esq., Ron Shellow, M. D.
- 7:30 - 8:45 p. m. . . "Learning to Make Your Own
Decisions" Chris Corrie, M. D.
- 8:45 - 10 p. m. . . . "Sex and a Sense of Values"
Rabbi Herbert Baumgard, D. H. L.

All aspects of the program are open to teenagers as well as to adults. The Temple's Adult Ed Committee is cooperating in the program.

Poetry For Religious School Lovers

Beth Am Sisterhood has planned for you
 A Gourmet Luncheon and entertainment too!
 The Marriott Hotel is the place.
 The Dramatic Arts Group has set the Pace.
 Beth Am Religious School must attain its goal;
 Being a participant will be your role.
 The 15th of February is the day,
 By 11:00 a.m. the crowd will be gay.
 Only \$12 & 50 cents is the Patron's fee.
 For \$20 a philanthropist you can be!
 To the Temple office send your dough
 So, to this fabulous luncheon you can go.
 We hope when reservations are collected and tallied,
 We'll be over the top
 Because you all rallied.

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 8:30 p.m.

Rabbi Baumgard
'The Religious Nature
Of Football'

The Adult Choir will sing.



SATURDAY, JANUARY 27, 11:15 a.m.

TORAH SERVICE



FROM THE RABBI'S DESK

Know The Answer To Key '73

A fact sheet, prepared in anticipation of Key '73 campaign of the Protestant churches to win people to Christianity.

While the campaign of the churches is supposed to be geared to un-churched Christians, it is reasonable to assume that certain fundamentalist groups now engaged in the attempt to convert Jews will continue to do so and will intensify their efforts. As the basis of the conversion "pitch" of some of these evangelical extremist groups is the reading of our Bible (which they call the Old Testament) in a special way geared to give the suggestions and answers they wish. It behooves Jews, then, to know what the Bible does say in actuality, what it meant when it was written, and what the historical circumstance was when the text was written.

THE STARTING POINT - The Bible was originally written in Hebrew, but the oldest known text is in Greek. This is so because many Jews lived in Alexandria in hellenized (Greek dominated) Egypt 2,000 years ago, and they wanted a translation of the Bible in their local language. The Greek version was later translated into Latin. The Latin version became the authoritative version for the Catholic Church.

We Jews believe that since we wrote the Bible, since it concerns events in the life of our ancestors, since we wrote it in Hebrew, and since our English text is a translation from the Hebrew (not from the Greek or Latin), and since we know Hebrew better than non-Jews, that we have the more accurate translation of our own text.

ORIGINAL SIN - Most Christians, certainly fundamentalist Christians, teach that mankind is plagued by an Original Sin. All babies come into the world with this sin, as an inheritance, they teach. All humans inherit this sin through Adam, the first man. Since he disobeyed God by eating from the forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden, therefore, Adam stands eternally condemned, and all of his heirs stand condemned. Specifically, this condemnation earns for us the hell-fire when we die--UNLESS WE CAN BE REDEEMED FROM THIS SIN.

What does Judaism teach about this? Judaism has no concept of original sin. The Bible nowhere suggests that because Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, all future men are condemned to hell. It does say that when Adam ate of the fruit, mankind lost the privilege of living in the blissful garden and henceforth would have to work for a living (Gen. 3:17) and women would have pain at child-birth (3:16). There is no mention made of eternal condemnation or of Hell.

How does Reform Judaism look at this story? We look upon the story as a myth. A myth is a story which is not necessarily historical, but which can teach certain vital truths. This myth teaches, in effect, that often human beings "try to bite off more than they can chew!". That is to say, we are often too ambitious for our own good. The story also teaches that all mankind is descended from one set of parents, and, therefore, all men and women are part of a brotherhood. We believe that the details of the story are not as significant as this central fact. We are all brothers!

How do Orthodox Jews look at this story? Orthodox Jews believe the Bible to be literally true, but they do not believe in Original Sin.

What do Jews say of Hell? Orthodox Jews speak of reward and punishment after death, but while they speak of Gehenna,

(Continued next column)

a kind of hell, a belief in Gehenna is not a dogma in Orthodoxy. It is not central to the belief of Orthodox Jews, which is more this-worldly in its orientation.

Reform Jews do not believe in Hell at all, for we could not square such a belief with a God who is good and forgiving. We believe that no person is so evil as to earn eternal damnation, and no person is so good as to be completely acceptable to God. All of us are good and bad. This is the human condition, and God only expects us to do the best we can do.

Judaism speaks of a life after death, but this is another matter. The point here is that we have faith in the goodness and forgiveness of God for all human beings, whether they are Jews or not and whether they accept a particular faith or not and whether they accept certain dogmas or not.

What do the Prophets say of responsibility for someone else's sin? The Prophet Jeremiah, who lived about 600 BCE, taught that the child could not be held responsible for the sins of his parents. Each person was to be judged for his own actions (see Jeremiah 31:29 ff). Centuries later, the Prophet Ezekiel confirmed this view. The new generation was not to suffer for the sins of the fathers. The doctrine of Original Sin is thus against Biblical teaching.

SALVATION BY FAITH - Fundamental Christians teach that since all of us are born in sin and are condemned to hell by the cosmic sin of Adam, we can only be "saved" from Hell by another cosmic miracle. What is this miracle? The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, they answer. If you believe that Jesus gave his blood to redeem mankind from the consequences of Original Sin, you will be spared the tortures of Hell. You will be "saved." Please note, you are not saved by being a good person, by living a life of good deeds; you are saved by your faith alone.

What does Judaism teach? The Bible is the evolving religious faith of the Jewish people. As we read it, we can see how earlier Jews believed things later outgrown by more sophisticated Jews. We can see from the Bible that the Jews of those days lived lives substantially better than their contemporaries. We ought to use them as a model and try to live better than our contemporaries. Further, the ethical ideas developed by our ancestors, through many suffering experiences, have yet to be improved upon. The Bible is a history of one people's attempt to live a life of meaning. This people is our people. Their teachings are the foundation of all ethically oriented societies. We ought to renew ourselves in their reservoir and try to extend their teachings into modern times.

Some of the things taught in our Bible, Jews have outgrown. For example, we are told in one place that the priest sacrificed a "scapegoat." All the sins of the people were invested in this animal, and he was sacrificed on the altar. By his blood, according to the ancient view, the people were rid of their sins. Fundamentalist Christians say that the sacrifice of Jesus is a substitute for the sacrifice of this goat (or lamb).

Even Biblical Jews outgrew this ancient practice of animal sacrifice, however. The Prophets criticized the practice in the most angry language. The Prophet Micah declared (Micah 6:6 ff) . . . "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams . . . It hath been told thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord doth require of thee: Only to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."

Before the Jewish religion, the sacrifice of human beings was thought to have a saving grace. Jeremiah declares against the people who sacrifice their children to the pagan god, Moloch. Fundamentalist Christians teach that Jesus is "the first born Son of God" who was sacrificed to redeem men from their sins. Jews rejected the idea of the saving grace of human sacrifice long before the Prophet Micah (8th century BC) who said as part of the prophecy above (6:6 ff), ". . . shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?". Then comes the answer described above, "It hath been told thee, O man, what is good (that is, what God requires) . . . Only to do justly, etc."