**2022 2nd Semester Socratic Seminar #1 on Judaism (& Goddess Religion too)**

**Overview:**

Remember that each ‘Seminar” is worth 10% of your 2nd Semester Grade. Therefore, you want to make sure you take it seriously and participate. ½ your grade is your participation during today’s seminar; ½ your grade is your Paper #1 answer that you upload to Canvas before midnight.

**Directions:**

Follow the teacher’s instructions to discuss the following questions. Remember an A+ student will do the following: listen closely and ask follow-up questions; listen closely and follow-up on what others say; discuss in small group and large group also!

**Specific Questions to Discuss:**

**#1) Listen & then read the lyrics to the song “King Without a Crown” by Matisyahu.** Matisyahu is a popular music artist. I bet you know his song “One Day”. He started a rap/reggae artist not interested in religion at all. Then reggae music introduced him to the Jewish Prophets, and this led him to his family’s religion of strict Judaism- called Hasidic Judaism. He used to be a traditional Hasidic Jewish follower. Today he still follows Judaism but has given up the strict rules of Hasidic Judaism for reform Judaism.

After you listen and read the lyrics discuss with your group:

1. **What are main ideas you see in this song?**
2. **How do the song lyrics relate to the main ideas of Judaism?**
3. **Discuss specific lines and words in the song you find symbolically meaningful and why?**

You're all that I have and you're all that I need
Each and every day I pray to get to know you please
I want to be close to you, yes I'm so hungry
You're like water for my soul when it gets thirsty
Without you there's no me
You're the air that I breathe
Sometimes the world is dark and I just can't see
With these, demons surround all around to bring me down to negativity
But I believe, yes I believe, I said I believe
I'll stand on my own two feet
Won't be brought down on one knee
Fight with all of my might and get these demons to flee
Hashem's rays fire blaze burn bright and I believe
Out of darkness comes light, twilight unto the heights
Crown Heights burnin' up all through till midnight
Said, thank you to my God, now I finally got it right
And I'll fight with all of my heart, and all a' my soul, and all a' my might

What's this feeling?
My love will rip a hole in the ceiling
Givin' myself to you from the essence of my being
Sing to my god all these songs of love and healing
Want Mashiach now so it's time we start revealing

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Strip away the layers and reveal your soul
Got to give yourself up and then you become whole
You're a slave to yourself and you don't even know
You want to live the fast life but your brain moves slow
If you're trying to stay high then you're bound to stay low
You want God but you can't deflate your ego
If you're already there then there's nowhere to go
If you're cup's already full then its bound to overflow
If you're drowning in the water's and you can't stay afloat
Ask Hashem for mercy and he'll throw you a rope
You're looking for help from God you say he couldn't be found
Looking up to the sky and searchin' beneath the ground
Like a King without his Crown
Yes, you keep fallin' down
You really want to live but can't get rid of your frown
Tried to reach unto the heights and wound bound down on the ground
Given up your pride and then you heard a sound
Out of night comes day and out of day comes light
Nullified to the One like sunlight in a ray,
Makin' room for his love and a fire gone blaze
Makin' room for his love and a fire gone blaze

What's this feeling?
My love will rip a hole in the ceiling
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What's this feeling?
My love will rip a hole in the ceiling
Givin' myself to you from the essence of my being
Sing to my God all these songs of love and healing
Want Mashiach now

And see, I lift up my eyes where my help come from
And I seen it circling around from the mountain
Thunder!
You feel it in your chest
You keep my mind at ease and my soul at rest
You're not vexed

When I look to the sky where my help come from
And I've seen it circling around from the mountain
Thunder!
You feel it in your chest

**#2) DISCUSS WITH YOUR GROUP: HOW DOES JUDAISM ANSWER BIG QUESTION #2: WHAT IS GOD?** How can you understand and know God? What does God want, etc.

1. How is Judaism’s answer to this question DIFFERENT from other religions we have studied so far?
2. How is Judaism’s answer this question SIMILAR to other religions we have studied so far?
3. Open our textbook and read page 363 starting at “God” and stop on page 364 before “The Problem of Evil”. Discuss the main ideas here and your thoughts about it.

**#3) A few years ago the famous pop singer Madonna made a lot of news because she swore that reading a specific Jewish Book of Mysticism known as THE KABBALAH** changed her life. Ever since, Kabbalah has grown in popularity in Hollywood circles.

1. Watch these videos and discuss your thoughts about it?

[Kabbalah: Secret Jewish Mysticism Goes Mainstream - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=boLIrUXA2wE)

[Kabbalistic Meditation For Removing Blockages - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHAFz0dE9qQ)

1. Read our textbook page 370-372 “Jewish Mysticism” and discuss your thoughts about it?
2. How is Jewish mysticism and The Kabbalah SIMILAR AND DIFFERENT to other religions we have studied so far?

#**4) Read our textbook Page 364 “The Problem of Evil”** and discuss with your group…

1. What are the main ideas in the textbook?
2. How does JUDAISM answer this question?
3. How does The Book of Job answer this question?
4. What do you yourself think about Judaism and The Book of Job’s answers to this question about “evil in the world”? Do you agree or disagree and why?

#5) Let’s now discuss how Judaism answers (or does not answer!) **Big Question #3: What is DEATH and the AFTERLIFE?** How should one understand death and the afterlife?

1. Before we read anything…how do you think JUDAISM answers these questions?
2. Read page 369 starting at “The Afterlife” and stop before “Jewish Mysticism”. Discuss what are the main ideas here and your thoughts about it.
3. Read page 408 starting at ‘Death and Mourning” and stop on page 409 before “Other Sacred Practices and discuss what are the main ideas here and your thoughts about it.
4. Finally- discuss why do you think JUDAISM is somewhat vague about its explanations of death and the afterlife?

**#6) Now discuss how Judaism answers BIG QUESTION #1: What is the meaning of life? WHY are you here? Why are we here?**

1. Discuss how you do you think JUDAISM answers this question?
2. What are your thoughts about how Judaism answers this question?
3. How is Judaism’s answer to this question similar and different from other religions we have studied so far?
4. You may remember that I really like World Religions scholar Huston Smith and his book “World Religions”. Let’s read some of his thoughts about Judaism and discuss them also. Open my website “Religion 2nd Sem” and then “Week 9 Smith Text on Judaism PART 2”

-Only read page 186 “Meaning in History” and then discuss the main ideas on this page and how it relates to Big Question #1: What is the meaning of life for Judaism?

#7) As I have said many times, I am often ‘torn’ as a teacher of this class between my “World Religion side” and my “History side”. My “World Religion-side” truly does see all the beauty in Judaism and every religion we discuss. However, my “History-side” cannot overlook the ugly-side to all these religions as well. So let’s discuss “the ugly-side” of Judaism some more…

1. Discuss with your partners what was **Merlin Stone’s argument in the book When God Was a Woman?** How does she interpret what is happening in Judaism and the reason for many of its beliefs and practices?
2. In specific- how does Merlin Stone interpret the important Jewish belief in the “Promised Land” promised to the Jewish people by their God?
3. What are your personal thoughts about this debate?

#8) Merlin Stone was writing about the historical battle around 1000 BCE between the Jewish people “The Hebrews” vs. the local people already living in Canaan. The Jewish people claimed that Canaan was their promised land God promised only to them. Therefore, they were justified in kicking out and killing other peoples who were already living there.

-Now I want to discuss the modern version of this story which occurred after World War II and the creation of the **nation of Israel in 1948.**

1. What do you already know or remember from History class about this story? Why was Israel created in 1948? What was the justification the USA and United Nations gave for creating the nation of Israel in 1948? What people were already living in this area? How did they feel about it? How has this created problems ever since?
2. Let’s watch a video introducing the **Israeli-Palestinian conflict and** discuss your thoughts about it:

[The Israel-Palestine conflict: a brief, simple history - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRYZjOuUnlU)

#9)DISCUSS WHAT DO YOU PERSONALLY LIKE AND NOT LIKE ABOUT JUDAISM?

#10) EVERYONE WRITE DOWN 1 or 2 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS YOU WANT YOUR GROUP TO DISCUSS ABOUT JUDAISM?

#11) Let’s transition now into our next religion we will discuss- Christianity. You may remember that I argued in the 1st semester that in order to truly understand “The Buddha’s Teachings” and “Buddhism” it was first important to understand that the historical Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama) was born into a HINDUISM family. Therefore, to understand Buddhism one must understand the Hinduism that it was born into and grew out of.

1. **Why? Why is it important to understand Hinduism to understand the Buddha’s teachings? Give some examples.**
2. Based on the little you now know about Judaism (and the little you already know about Jesus and Christianity) **WHY do you think it may also be important to understand Judaism to understand Jesus’ teachings? Explain some examples you can think of already?**

**#12) What do you already know about Christianity?**

1. How would Christianity answer Big Question #1: What is the meaning of life?
2. How would Christianity answer Big Question #2: What is God? How should one understand God?
3. How would Christianity answer Big Question #3: What is death? How should one understand death?

#13) Read our textbook **pages 419-420** and then discuss your thoughts, questions, and reactions to this story. How does this story relate to #12 questions?

#14) **Read pages 420-421** Discuss what you learned from this part and your thoughts about it?

#15) **Read pages 421-422** and discuss what you learned from this part and your thoughts about it? To conclude….in order to understand the teaching of Jesus- why is it important to understand Judaism?

1. What are the important issues for Judaism in the time and place Jesus was born? Why might these be important to understand the teachings of Jesus?
2. Do you think most Christians today realize that Jesus was Jewish? Do you think this is an important question? Why or why not?

#16) As we will discuss in more detail next week- Christians believe that Jesus of Nazareth changes the Jewish covenant.

**Old Jewish covenant** is between God and the Jewish people (Hebrews)

Hebrews promise to obey only God and God promises the Hebrews the Promised Land of Israel.

**Jesus’ new covenant** is between God and all humanity.

Anyone (Jewish or not) can promise to obey God and God promises them ‘The Kingdom of God’ (which we will debate next week!)

In this class- we have briefly introduced the ideas of Bob Marley and Rastafarianism. They have their own view of the covenant.

**Rastafarianism covenant** is between God and descendants of African slaves

 Descendants of African slaves promise to worship God and God will return them to their promised land of Africa…. (note: they also believe Jesus reincarnated as Ethiopian King Haile Selassie and the messiah will continue to re-incarnate until all African descendants return to Africa!)

**DISCUSS WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT ALL OF THIS?**

#17) Why do you think descendants of African slaves found so much meaning and inspiration in these ancient sacred texts of Judaism?