

TEMPLE EMANU-EL Bulletin

Volume 79, Number 23

February 2, 2007

UPCOMING EVENTS

Final reminder—

- **SHABBAT SHALOM!**
Friday, February 2 6:30 p.m.
Our monthly, late worship service
- **The U.N., the U.S., ISRAEL and GLOBAL ANTI-SEMITISM**
Sunday, February 4 10 a.m.
Men's Club breakfast with Ken Jacobson, ADL

MEN'S CLUB: Book Discussion Group
Tuesday, February 13 8:30 a.m.

We will discuss *Not Me* by Michael Lavigne. The selection for our March 6 meeting will be *Fima* by Amos Oz (paperback: 336 pages, Harvest Books, 1994). Enter at One E. 65th Street. (212) 744-1400, ext. 250

SABBATH SERVICES

Friday evening, February 9 Main Sanctuary

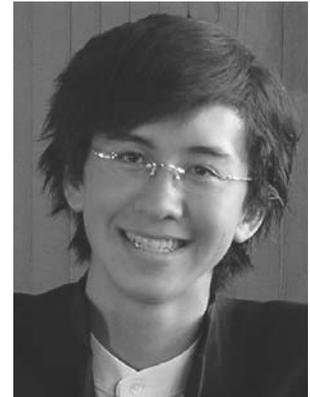
Organ Recital—5 p.m.
Sabbath Eve Service—5:15 p.m.
WQXR Radio (96.3 FM) and Internet
(www.wqxr.com) broadcasts—5:30 p.m.

Saturday morning, February 10 Women's Auxiliary Lounge

Torah Study—9:15 a.m.
Main Sanctuary
Service—10:30 a.m.
Torah Portion—Yitro
Readings—Exodus 18:1-20:23
Isaiah 6:1-7:6; 9:5-6
Sermon: Rabbi Amy B. Ehrlich

PIANO
RECITAL

**YOUNG
ARTISTS
CONCERT**
Sunday,
February 11
3 p.m.



Charlie Albright, 18, a native of Centralia, Wash., will be the featured performer at a special piano recital to be held at Temple Emanu-El in Greenwald Hall. His program will consist of works by Beethoven, Chopin, Ravel and Janacek. This concert is presented by the Stecher and Horowitz Foundation, sponsor of the New York Piano Competition. Admission is free and open to the public. Enter at the Marvin and Elisabeth Cassell Community House, One East 65th Street.

Charlie is the winner of two first prizes in the 2006 New York Piano Competition—the first young artist to have accomplished such a feat in the competition's history. Open to musicians aged 14 to 18 from across the country, the competition awards cash prizes and concert appearances.

For more information about this program, call (212) 581-8380.

BAR MITZVAH

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

Sam Fredric Gustafsson, son of
Ms. Loraine Abeles and Mr. Per Gustafsson

**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:**

Mrs. B. E. Brandes in loving memory
of *Bernard E. Brandes*

Mr. Sanford P. Brass in loving memory
of his mother, *Rose D. Brass*

Mr. & Mrs. Elliot Brownstein
in loving memory of
Sol Brownstein and Benjamin Silverman

Edward Fleur in loving memory
of his sister,
Joette Stephanie Fleur

Mrs. A. Coleman Poll
in loving memory of her brother,
Jacques G. Coleman, Jr.

Denny, Nicki and Alex Rein
in loving memory of
Mark Alan Rein on his birthday

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.
Following is our second excerpt from his lecture.*

BETWEEN THE YEARS 855 C.E.
and 1444 C.E., there lived 18
remarkable people whose lives and
works form the essential corpus of
medieval Jewish philosophy. The
first of these was Isaac Israeli, born
in Egypt, who spent most of his life as the head
of the Jewish community in Sura (Babylonia),
and the last was Joseph Albo, who lived his
entire life in Spain. Preeminent among all of
these men was Moses Maimonides, born in Cor-
doba on Saturday, March 30, 1135, and who
died in Cairo on Monday, December 13, 1204.
More than any of his predecessors or his suc-
cessors, it was Maimonides whose mind em-
braced the totality of Jewish, philosophical and
scientific thought.

Each of the great medieval Jewish philoso-
phers made an attempt to understand the
nature of the universe in which he lived and
to harmonize that understanding with his
traditional faith in Judaism. Their attempts at
such reconciliation led them along the path of
what we today call "critical thinking." Critical
thinking does *not* mean the mere contempla-
tion of issues of importance. Critical thinking
does mean addressing the very way in which we
think in order to arrive at a comprehensive
view of reality.

Admittedly, most of us live without the
intellectual strains and stresses of the ultimate
accommodation of traditional faith, intellectual
reason and modern science. Most people man-
age to lead, more or less, normal lives of con-
tentment, without the demands of achieving a
complete and unified understanding of the uni-
verse. What was it, then, that drove the great
medieval thinkers toward their task?

The answer to this question is that one who
is endowed with the prodigious mind of a
Maimonides cannot escape considering the ulti-
mate nature of all being (what we mean by the
word "metaphysics") because, by doing so, our
very temporary lives take on a greater sense of

EXAMINING MAIMONIDES: UNDERSTANDING JEWISH PHILOSOPHY

universal and eternal meaning. Intellectually speaking, the medieval Jewish philosophers could be satisfied with nothing less.

Their minds were occupied with the study of the realm of scientific realism (most of these great thinkers also were physicians) as well as the realm of religious tradition. In their search for ultimate truth, they recognized in their world two primary but different sources of knowledge. One was the writing of Aristotle. The other was the written Torah (the *Torah sheh-bichtav*, the Hebrew Bible) in conjunction with the oral Torah (the *Torah sheh-b'al peh*)—both of which, ultimately, were committed into writing in the form of the Mishnah, the two Talmuds (Babylonian and Palestinian) and the various collections of biblical interpretation (Midrash).

But how were these two authorities—the tradition of Torah and the modernity of Aristotle—to be made to agree? Broadly speaking, it was by the assertion and the conviction that the “tradition”—the written Torah and the oral Torah—contained inferences, references and meanings that were much greater than their merely surface meanings. In reality (quite literally!), they were identical with the latest trends in science and technology—the world of Aristotle.

Maimonides went so far as to cite the legend (found in Chapter 71 of *The Guide of the Perplexed*) that the Greeks borrowed or stole their knowledge of science and metaphysics from the Jews in the first place—the Jews having lost it in times of exile, persecution, storm and stress. Hidden, therefore, in the tradition of Torah are all the critical scientific and philosophic references—that is, everything you need to know about everything but weren't bright enough to see in the first place!

(Further excerpts from this lecture will appear in upcoming issues of the Temple Emanu-El Bulletin.)



UPCOMING LECTURES



**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.

**TUESDAY,
MARCH 6, 13, 20
6:30 PM**

*The Three Books of Moses:
Maimonides' Attempts to
Revolutionize Judaism —
Commentary on the Mishnah,
Mishneh Torah and The Guide of the Perplexed*



RABBI DAVID GREENSTEIN is rabbinic dean of the Academy for Jewish Religion, where he teaches rabbinics, kabbalah and Jewish thought. *(This is a three-part lecture.)*



**SUNDAY, MARCH 11
10 AM**

*Applying the Ethics
of Maimonides*

The **MEN'S CLUB** of Congregation Emanu-El sponsors a panel featuring Temple members **DR. JOSEPH FINS**, **JUDGE SUSAN DANOFF** and **NEIL COOPER**, moderated by **RICHARD VALCOURT**, to discuss ethics in business, law and medicine.

BEYOND THE TEMPLE

On Sunday, January 14, several Emanu-El congregants participated in a Habitat for Humanity building session in Brooklyn, organized through our *Tikkun Olam* program. Temple member Sarah Cohn had this to say about the day:

We each had a wonderful experience. Because Habitat is a faith-based organization, each build day is started with a prayer; Sunday commenced with a "mini-sermon" by a rabbi representing one of the other temple volunteer groups. He spoke about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the need to hear the call to help others and actually to act upon the call. It was an aspiring start to the day. The day also was particularly special because we worked alongside the future occupants of the apartments.



For information about volunteer opportunities through Tikkun Olam, call (212) 744-1400, ext. 452 or send an e-mail to tetikunolam@yahoo.com.



TEMPLE EMANU-EL BULLETIN



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