

November 28, 2012

Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles
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To the Board of Rabbis Staff, the Jewish Federation and the Mickey Weiss Fellowship Committee,

Rabbi
Jonathan Hanish

Spending two weeks in Jerusalem studying at the Hartman Institute was truly an amazing experience. It was refreshing, stimulating and spiritually renewing.

Cantor
Tifani Coyot

The quality of the Hartman Institute even overcame the worst apartment rental I've ever had in Jerusalem (I won't go into the details except for a word of advice -- never rent a Jerusalem apartment without first having a friend check it out).

Rabbi Emeritus
Steven B. Jacobs

As a rabbi, my faith is always being tested so the topic of faith is always on the forefront of my consciousness making last summer's topic, Dilemmas of Faith: God and Spirituality in the Modern World, truly inspirational. The quality of teaching was outstanding. This summer I had the opportunity to learn with Donniel Hartman, Moshe Halbertal, Israel Kohl, Rachael Korazim, Melila Hellner-Eshed, Yehuda Kurtzer and Art Green. Where else but Hartman can so many scholars be gathered together?

Religious School Director
Rebecca Hoffman

ECE Director
Laurie Healy

President
Steven Page

On the first day, the questioning about the place of faith began with Donniel teaching that "faith is not the obvious go-to space which explains the world or gives you the tools to understand the world." In other words, today's world is filled with knowledge and options that do not necessitate the need to have faith. We have reason, but is that enough? Donniel then wrestled with the need for faith in today's world leading to the conclusion that both reason and faith are necessary. It was a brilliant opening day.

Synagogue Manager
Tiffany Kosloy

David Hartman even participated in one session, not as a teacher but as a student. In the midst of Micah Goodman's lecture on Monotheism and Power, he interrupted and asked the eternal question -- *why does this matter?* That is of course the question with which every rabbi wrestles, especially when it comes to relating Torah to the lives of today's congregants. To say that he caught Micah off guard would be an understatement. It was a wonderful exchange and I feel honored to have witnessed it.



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A Reform Congregation Affiliated with the Union for Reform Judaism

I admit that I was never much of a Maimonides' fan. His definition of God just didn't hold my attention. Not, at least, until it was explained to me by the scholars at Hartman. More than one scholar discussed this great man and his work. This past High Holy Days, I incorporated this new knowledge, this new perspective, into a sermon I wrote about perfection. I taught that we are given the luxury of being imperfect since God is the only place/person/entity that can be considered perfect. This knowledge gives freedom to the individual since it teaches us that we no longer need to attempt to do everything perfectly. We can therefore forgive ourselves for our mistakes since perfection is reserved for God. The idea of perfection being separate from us is liberating, and that is at the core of Maimonides' philosophy.

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Perhaps Moshe Halbertal summed it up the best. He began his lecture by quoting Martin Buber who said, "We don't believe 'that', we believe 'in.'" He went on to teach that no matter how unreasonable our belief we must act on it, i.e. we must believe "in" something and that belief is based in action. Moshe calls this emunah, truth. Emunah is not about claiming something is right but the capacity to act. His example: a father who searches for a lost son even though there is only a 1% chance of finding him. Emunah is holding fast to a proposition that gives you strength.

Faith/belief was examined from so many different perspectives that I am thankful the Hartman Institute provides such a full binder of handouts and that I kept notes on the lectures. I am sure I will be referring to both for years to come.

Once again, thank you for this amazing opportunity. If not for the grant, this gateway might never have been opened for me. I hope to study at the Hartman Institute again in the near future.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Jon Hanish



10/31/12

Reflections on the Mickey Weiss Fellowship, 2012/5772

Rabbi Nancy Myers

I'm ashamed to admit this but until this past summer, I hadn't been to Israel in over ten years. My planned congregational trip fell apart as the US economy unraveled in 2008 and my personal finances weren't sufficient to cover a trip like this. So when I heard that I was the recipient of the Edna Weiss fellowship, I was thrilled beyond belief. Torah Lishma, Torah for its own sake, has been a great value for me. Every winter, I audit a class at HUC-JIR in Los Angeles, but I have not had the experience of an immersive study program since rabbinical school.

The Hartman summer institute program was challenging, insightful, and transformative. The focus this summer was on "Dilemmas of Faith: God and Spirituality in the Modern World." In particular, I found Donniel Hartman's lecture on faith needing to be both rational and reasonable very timely. Melila Hellner-Eshed inspired me with texts dealing with the difficulties of faith. And many of us were in tears as Rachel Korazim shared her passion for Holocaust literature. I found many sessions to be so stimulating that I was able to sketch outlines of meaningful sermons for the upcoming High Holy Days and imagine topics I would like to go into greater depth of study. The Hartman scholars were top notch and the sessions were designed to optimize learning from small to large groups.

I was also so honored to study with my colleagues from different denominations and experience differing ways of learning. I was impressed with not only the scholar but the amazing insights from our fellow rabbis as we studied in havruta. Pouring over texts, I marveled as my colleagues translated texts, commented on interpretations, and applied the learning to the 21st century.

What made this educational experience even more meaningful was studying in Jerusalem. Walking the streets and seeing the Old City in the distance grounded me in the rich history of Israel. It was also great to be able to dust off my Hebrew skills and put them to work in the market, taxis, and restaurants.

I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to study so intensively at the Hartman Institute. Thank you Edna Weiss for making this possible.