

Pilot session. 5 Apr 2020.

How have Jewish attitudes toward evil evolved?

A visual tour of our consummate 'inside outsider' – the Haggadah's Wicked Son.

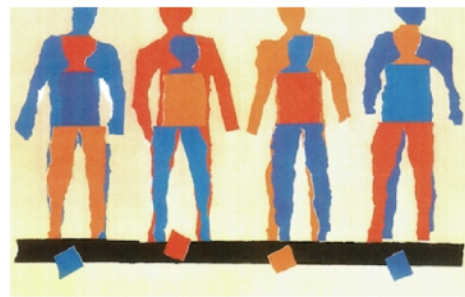


Figure 23 – a rendering of the Four Sons from the 1978 Proper Read Pass Haggadah, edited by Rabbi Meir Silverman, designed and illustrated by Eustachy Schick.



Fig. 21 The Wicked Son, mid-15th century; Manuscript, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. Hebr. 296, fol. 12r.

Comparisons also included “The Four Children of Covid-19: The One Who Hoards/Yells/Remains on the Couch/Organizes.” see ejewishphilanthropy.com/the-four-children-of-covid-19/

1st session. 12 Apr 2020.

But what if I don't play chess? Some Jewish paths toward self-liberation.

It is estimated that, at the moment, there are 4 billion people in isolation worldwide. *Four billion people*, all trying to cope with stark new realities. The situation is stark and frightening, yet ironically enough, for many of us, there is no end to our ability to distract and entertain ourselves through it. As Jews, however, during this same period of time we are called on to engage in a disciplined process whose goal is to realize the main theme of Passover – personal and national liberation. It is called Counting the *Omer* and lasts for 49 days; it began this past Friday night, after the second day of Passover. During this period we are expected to liberate ourselves from the things that make us, well, bad company to ourselves and others. Today we understand more about the struggle to become a *mensch* – we know more about the nature of abuse, addiction, and about the lingering effects of trauma. But the Jewish tradition expects us to try to liberate ourselves nonetheless.

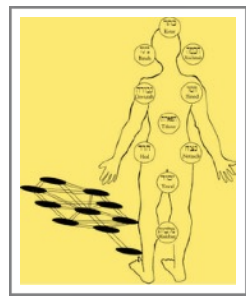


2nd session. 19 Apr 2020.

What is a Jewish way of learning how to treasure each day?

[Psalm 90:12]

Counting our days through *s'firat haOmer*.



Approaching the *sefirot* from an embodied perspective also means that the top three are “the mind of the body,” the middle three are “the heart of the body,” and the lower three are “the body of the body.” Already you might begin to perceive how the *sefirot* work to fine-tune our perceptual apparatus, drawing ever more fine attention to the details of experience. **‘Spirituality’ in its New Age forms is often derided as vague, but the *kabbalah* is anything but.**

Michaelson then describes each *sefirah*. Here is his description of the lowest triad: *Hod* is inspiration; *netzach* is perspiration. *Hod* is in those moments we sing, shout, dance, and burn; *netzach* is the rest of the time. *Hod* is in those perfect evenings on tropical islands where the sun sets over the water and the night is filled with love. *Netzach* is the times you pick your lover up at the airport. To paraphrase Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, *hod* is like a Ferrari; *netzach* like a Jeep. Or to paraphrase psychologist and teacher Jack Kornfeld, ***hod* is the ecstasy; *netzach* is the laundry.**

3rd session. 26 Apr 2020. *parshat Metzora*

What is the particular wisdom of the Yiddish saying “more words, more arrows”?

Acts of speech, the *metzora*, and Covid-19.

text 3. Seven types of speech acts receive attention in classical Jewish thought; most involve *lashon ha’ra*.
loosely adapted from *Types of Speech* | My Jewish Learning



- slander 😡
- tale-bearing/rumor-mongering 😡
- gossip 🤔
- truth-telling 😐
- swearing/vowing 😞
- defrauding 😡
- rebuke 😇

Reish Lakish says: What is the meaning of verse 14:2 in *parshat metzora*? “This shall be the law of the metzora in the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the priest.” This means that this shall be the

law of a slanderer – a *motzi shem ra*. מוֹצִיא [שֵׁם] רָע = מְצַרֵּעַ

4th session. 3 May 2020. *parshat Acharei Mot/Kedoshim*

How does Antisemitism animate white nationalism?

On the scapegoating of Jews.

Home > U.S. News


Opinion // 'Jews Control Chinese Labs That Created Coronavirus': White Supremacists' Dangerous New Conspiracy Theory

Far right theories on a Jewish-Chinese COVID-19 cabal are breaking out of the infamously anti-Semitic dark web – with real-world consequences

Flora Cassen | [Send me email alerts](#)

Apr 30, 2020 5:42 PM

20045 [Tweet](#) [Share](#) [Print](#) [Zen](#)



Anti-Semitic sign held by a protester at the Columbus, Ohio anti-lockdown demonstration. April 18, 2020. Credit: Twitter/@RepWeinstein



text 5. Give thanks for the perceptiveness of Eric Ward, who wrote: What is this arch-nemesis of the White race, whose machinations have prevented the natural and inevitable imposition of white supremacy? It is, of course, the Jews. **Jews function for today's White nationalists as they often have for antisemites through the centuries: as the demons stirring an otherwise changing and heterogeneous pot of lesser evils."**

text 7. Excerpt from a letter to a student by Emory University Professor Deborah Lipstadt in *Antisemitism Here and Now*. **"I entreat you to avoid letting this 'longest hatred' become the linchpin of your identity.** Jewish tradition in all its manifestations – religious, secular, intellectual, communal, artistic, and so much more – is far too valuable to be tossed aside and replaced with a singular concentration on the fight against hatred ...Jews need to balance the 'oy' with the 'joy.' "

p 242, Schocken Books, 2019

Advice from Jonathan Greenblatt, head of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL): ***speak out, share facts, show strength.***

5th & 6th sessions. 10/17 May 2020. *parshat emor/b'har-b'hukkotai*

How might we leave a pediatric Judaism behind?

On the difference between the names Adonai and Elohim.

text 2. In the *Frisco Kid*, a Polish rabbi on his way to Gold Rush era San Francisco shares, with an Indian chief desperate for rain, what his G-d does.

Chief Gray Cloud: [*in reference to Avram's god*] But what does he do?

Avram: He... He can do anything!



Chief Gray Cloud: Then why can't he make rain?

Avram: Because He *doesn't* make rain. He gives us strength when we're suffering. He gives us compassion when all that we feel is hatred. He gives us courage when we're searching around blindly like little mice in the darkness... but He does not make rain! [a clap of thunder is heard, followed by a downpour]

Avram: Of course... sometimes, just like that, He'll change His mind.

* * * * *

Must we content ourselves, however, with a G-d of such warm fuzziness? or with the notion that G-d can be found "in the ambulance, not in the accident"? or with the explanation offered by a religious leader who, during a natural disaster, was asked how he could explain such a tragic act of God and who answered that the disaster was an act of nature – the act of God occurred when people stepped up to help each other." The answer is *no*; our tradition has a far more robust conception than that.

" 'There is an analogy between weather forecasting and disease modeling,' Dr. Lipsitch said. Both, he noted, are simple mathematical descriptions of how a system works: drawing upon physics and chemistry in the case of meteorology; and on behavior, virology and epidemiology in the case of infectious-disease modeling. Of course, he said, 'we can't change the weather.' But we can change the course of the pandemic — with our behavior, by balancing and coordinating psychological, sociological, economic and political factors."

Dr. Marc Lipsitch, an infectious disease epidemiologist at Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health, as quoted in ***This Is the Future of the Pandemic: Covid-19 isn't going away soon. Two recent studies mapped out the possible shapes of its trajectory.*** Siobhan Roberts, *NYTimes*, 8 May 2020

7th session. 24 May 2020. *parshat b'midbar*

Why is fear of God hard to come by in liberal Jewish communities?

On yirat Shamayim as a necessary complement to ahavat haShem.

text 2. *yirat Shamayim* [fear of heaven] and *ahavat ha'Shem* [love of G-d].

Fear of G-d is the beginning of wisdom. That psalm verse does not appear in our Conservative *siddur* and I suspect it is because the idea of fearing God does not exactly gel with liberal Jewish theology. We're comfortable with a loving God, a compassionate and caring one, but a God who is to be feared? That's a bit outmoded. Only Haredim – a *haredi* is a trembler – whose religion makes them tremble, talk about the fear of God, *yirat shamayim*. They're the ones who believe in a punitive God, a stern, judgmental God. We more secular Jews are often more comfortable with being frightened by the latest horror movie than with cultivating a fear of God.

What the Torah probably intends by *yirah* is more awe than fear – a sense of amazement at something magnificent, inexplicable, full of grandeur. People who are not religious often exclaim "Oh my God!" when they see something amazing in nature. That's *yirah* [fear, awe] right there.

I want to argue that *yirah* is an essential ingredient to any healthy religious identity. Because along with the sense of awe that *yirah* produces, there is another critical perspective that comes with it – humility. One who fears God does not claim to fully know and understand God. Judaism reiterates a sense of *yirat shamayim* as a critical component to faith.



There was no agreeing with this. There was no disagreeing. This simply . . . was.
Ruth did not go to her graduation. She did not give her speech.
Still, Ruth knew what her mother wanted. Three months later, she left home to
attend college.