

Congregation Tifereth Israel
2020/5780 Scholar-in-Residence Weekend

Is Judaism a Religion of Love?

January 24-25, 2020

Featuring

Rabbi Shai Held



Rabbi Held is president, dean, and chair in Jewish Thought at the Hadar Institute. He is internationally known for his dynamic and thought-provoking writing and teaching around the question: What roles do love of God, neighbor, and stranger play in living a modern Jewish life?

Events

Friday, January 24

5:30 pm
Erev Shabbat Services

6:45 pm
Congregational Shabbat Dinner
\$36/person, \$25/aleph member (under 30) • RSVP to: bit.ly/CTIScholarInResidence2020

Love Your Neighbor: What Are We Really Being Asked For?

No lesser a figure than R. Akiva declares that "love your neighbor as yourself" is "the great principle of the Torah" (kelal gadol baTorah). Yet Jews have always struggled to discern just what this startling verse asks of us. In this session, through careful engagement with both traditional commentators and modern academic Bible scholars, we'll ask such questions as: What does this verse mean? Can love (or any other feeling, for that matter) really be commanded? Can we really love other people as much as we love ourselves? And who is the neighbor we're commanded to love, anyway?

Saturday, January 25

9:30 am
Shabbat Morning Services with D'var Torah by Rabbi Held

12:30 pm
Kiddush Luncheon with Rabbi Held

The God of Judaism is a God of Love: Undoing the Pernicious Stereotypes

It is one of the last acceptable prejudices in American culture: the God of the "Old Testament" is a God of vengeance, focused on strict justice rather than mercy, given to anger rather than love. This perception is as mistaken as it is widespread. In this lecture, we'll encounter a series of biblical texts that make the stunning claim that what makes God unique, what makes God God, is God's unfathomable capacity for love, mercy, and forgiveness. We'll explore the common complaint that a God of love is (too) anthropomorphic, and we'll ask whether belief in a God of love is still plausible in this day and age.

6:45 pm
Sponsors Only Wine & Cheese Reception

7:30 pm
Community Havdalah

7:45 pm
Discussion & Dessert

Turning Suffering into Love: Loving the Stranger, Then and Now

In this session, we'll explore the biblical verses that command us to love the "stranger" or outsider. These verses will open up an array of important discussions about the Torah's approach to immigrants and refugees; the Torah's yearning for Israelite society to be an "anti-Egypt"; the limits and possibilities of drawing contemporary policy conclusions from ancient texts; memory as a doubled-edged sword with the potential to do both great good and immense harm; and about the ongoing philosophical debate about what empathy and compassion can and can't accomplish in guiding our moral lives.

Sponsorship Opportunities

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