

Study Questions for SHJ

Humanistic Judaism, Autumn 2017

"Call of the Shofar" by Rabbi Miriam Jerris

"Yom Kippur Made Me an Atheist - and a Better Jew" by Paul Golin

"Judaism beyond God," by Sherwin T Wine (excerpt)

"Rosh Hashana beyond God" by Rabbi Jodi Kornfeld

1. Have you ever blown a shofar? What was it like? How would you describe the experience to someone who has never done it?
2. How would you describe hearing the shofar to someone who has never heard it? Do you agree that shofar blowing adds an important element to celebrations around Rosh Hashanah?
3. The High Holidays including Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah offer many opportunities to explore Jewish traditions and bring their positive aspects into the daily reality of all people, Jewish or not. The themes of reflection, repentance, and renewal are universal. Are these times important to you as an individual, or do you "go through the motions"? How would you change things so they are more relevant to you, your family and your community?
4. Are there ways you or your community use Jewish experience and understanding for a broader, inclusive enlightenment for non-Jews - about Judaism, humanistic Judaism, and "life, the universe and everything"?

"Voice of experience - a search for truth and character," by Jeffrey Schesno

1. Jeffrey Schesno shows that as people's priorities change, their lives can take radically different directions - geographically, occupationally, and existentially. How have your priorities changed in your life? What lessons would you say are most important?
2. Humanistic Jewish education by definition should be inclusive and not exclusive, focused on growth and encouragement. How does your life and your community reflect this? In what ways can there be improvements?

"Starting a Havurah" by Jeff Lipkes

1. Jeff Lipkes provides valuable tips and insights into the ins and outs of starting and developing a Humanistic Jewish community. Are there other approaches that can add to his? How can the internet particularly be used to bring people together even if they are physically far apart? Can podcasts play a role?

"What Humanistic Judaism Means to Me Four Years after Bar Mitzvah" by Bennett Drucker

1. Humanistic Jewish life as Bennett Drucker shows is an invitation to community and creativity. Are you at home as he is? How important is your community in your life? How do you benefit? What ways do you contribute and what new ones can you add?

Humanistic Voices:

"Not in My Name" by Rabbi Jeffrey Falick

"The Death Penalty Dilemma" by Vivian Kramer

1. Capital punishment is a live issue in the United States, though it is not in most other post-industrial societies. Does your community engage with both the limited issue of capital punishment and the larger issue of race and class bias?
2. Many arguments against capital punishment focus on fairness to the accused, issues of race and class, and questions about the chance for mistakes in the justice system. How role should the interests of victims and their families play in these debates?
3. How can Humanistic Jewish perspectives enlighten these problems in the larger community? Are there solutions or resolutions the Jewish experience can help provide?