



For Immediate Release:
December 13, 2007

Press Contact: Skye Communication, LLC
Jim DeMicco: (203) 879-2258
jd@skyeline.com

Temple Israel Center to Host Theological Symposium

*God, Torah, and Israel:
Building a Community's Vision for the Next Hundred Years*

White Plains, NY – 100-year old Temple Israel Center, one of the largest and most influential Conservative Jewish synagogues, is hosting a major symposium on Conservative Judaism January 13th. The event is a highlight of the synagogue's Centennial celebration that includes a variety of community, educational, charity, and musical events.

The symposium will consist of nearly a full day of learning and high energy dialogue with leading-edge thinkers and scholars in the Conservative movement: Dr. Michael Berenbaum, Dr. Judith Hauptman, and Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg.

Drawing from traditional and modern learning, the scholars will present their visions of God, Torah, and Israel – the classical three pillars and defining elements of Jewish belief.

“Many deeply connected Jews today find it hard to affirm the traditional views of God and Torah” commented Rabbi Gordon Tucker, Senior Rabbi of Temple Israel Center. Tucker, a former dean of the Rabbinical school of the Jewish Theological Seminary, and a noted scholar in the Conservative community, felt it was important to extend the conversation on the central tenets of Judaism beyond the walls of the Seminary.

“Our community is home to many highly engaged Jews who are searching for meaningful and inspiring answers to the most basic question: What does it mean to be a Jew in the 21st century?” noted Tucker.

There has been much speculation and discussion in the press over the past few years on the direction of the Conservative movement. And with the new Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Arnie Eisen, announcing a renewed focus on “commandment,” it seems as if this symposium comes at just the right time.

“Our desire is to expose our community, and the community at large, to a diverse and original group of thinkers” said Rabbi Neil Zuckerman, Rabbi of Temple Israel Center. “We have assembled a group of scholars with a variety of perspectives – from the academic to the communal to the international.”

The symposium isn’t shy about asking the tough questions. The session led by Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg of London is ambitiously titled: Understanding God: Conservative Perspectives on the Struggle to Define and Connect with the Divine. Professor Judith Hauptman will focus on understanding the nature of the authority vested in Torah. Dr. Michael Berenbaum will wrestle with the question of Israel’s particular place in the world, often expressed by the traditional but problematic word “chosenness.”

Mark Zeichner, president of Temple Israel Center noted, “This event is very much focused on the community of committed Jews at large. We look forward to hosting this symposium and hope to welcome many Jews from communities across the tri-state area and beyond. These important questions are being asked by Jews everywhere.”

Since there is likely to be a large turnout, the organizers are advising the community to pre-register for the symposium by either calling 914-948-2800 (x175) or sending email to scholar@templeisraelcenter.org. The suggested contribution for the Symposium is \$20 per person, which includes lunch. There is no charge for students and teachers.

About Temple Israel Center

Founded 100 years ago, Temple Israel Center is a traditional, egalitarian congregation, deeply committed to fostering Jewish observance and learning in an atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance of all people regardless of gender, sexual orientation, age, background or ability. Temple Israel is also a leader in the Conservative Jewish movement, working to explore, study and open up dialogue on key Jewish issues in today’s world.

Leadership

Senior Rabbi Gordon Tucker is an influential leader and respected scholar in the Conservative Judaism movement who has also been a part of the faculty at the Jewish Theological Seminary for 31 years. Rabbi Neil Zuckerman, a leader

among the younger generation of rabbis, has worked to develop programs related to youth and family so that today they have a strong presence in the Temple Israel community. He currently serves as the President of the Westchester Board of Rabbis. Cantor Jacob Ben-Zion Mendelson is an Oscar-nominated internationally recognized singer, leading cantorial master, beloved teacher, and composer. Rabbi Dina Shargel is the Ritual Director who also leads B'nai Mitzvah programs, adult education classes, and nursery school programs. Temple Israel Center always encourages personal relationships between their religious leaders and congregants, whether it is one-on-one dialogue, counseling, education or music lessons; there is an open door policy that supports a loving, supportive community.

For more information, please visit www.templeisraelcenter.org.

###