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Hundreds of Conservative Jews Attend Major Theological Symposium at Temple Israel Center

White Plains, NY – During a time when the Conservative Jewish community is looking to explore the future of their faith, Temple Israel Center has opened up a dialogue about the movement's identity through a successful symposium that drew almost 400 people yesterday.



Temple Israel Center is one of the largest and most influential Conservative Jewish synagogues; in fact many of the leadership in the movement have come from the White Plains synagogue. Temple Israel Center was founded 100 years ago, and throughout this special centennial year, they are learning, exploring and celebrating what it means to be a part of the Conservative community in the 21st century.

Hundreds of people filled the sanctuary during the January 13th symposium that featured leading-edge thinkers and scholars in the Conservative movement: Dr. Michael Berenbaum who helped create Washington D.C.'s Holocaust Memorial Museum, Dr. Judith Hauptman, a professor of Talmud and rabbinic culture at the Jewish Theological Seminary, and Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, a highly regarded scholar at the New North London Synagogue. Arnold Eisen, chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, served as scholar-in-residence for the weekend and spoke about recapturing and energizing the ideologies and values that the movement stands for.

The symposium addressed the classical three pillars and defining elements of Jewish belief: God, Torah, and Israel.

“Belief in God is what makes us a religious faith. Torah comprises the law and narratives that are the soul of the Jewish people. Israel is a covenant, a people, a land, a state and a nation. The traditional understandings.... are difficult for many faithful Jews today to affirm and call their own. Catastrophic events, scientific progress, an awareness of history, and ethical advancement all conspire to cast doubt on these traditional understandings.” - Temple Israel Center, “What Does It Mean To Be a 21st Century Conservative Jew? What Do We Believe In?”

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.

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