

A Rabbinic Perspective *By Rabbi Seymour Rosenbloom*

Reprinted from the October 2009 Adath Jeshurun Newsletter

A Mystical Shabbat with Kirtan Rabbi



I am hoping you will plan to participate in a *Shabbat* of mystical story and Hebrew chant with Rabbi Andrew Hahn, known as Kirtan Rabbi, beginning with *Kabbalat Shabbat* on Friday evening November 6, and culminating in a *Havdalah* Kirtan on Saturday evening, November 7.

The program is made possible through the generosity of Stephen Klein, and is dedicated to his mother, Miriam. Many of us know Miriam Klein as one of the strong pillars of our congregation, and her passing this summer was a

great loss to her family, our congregation, and the community. I am so grateful to Steve for making this program a reality.

In this time of great secularism, when a debate is raging about the very existence of God, there are those who are seeking something more. Call it spirituality, meaning, purpose, the common link is that there is a quest for personal fulfillment beyond the self, beyond the material world.

The *Mitzvah* Initiative which I announced on *Rosh HaShannah*, a cooperative effort between AJ and many other Conservative congregations across the country, and the Jewish Theological Seminary, is one avenue to greater personal spirituality.

The mystical tradition represented by Rabbi Hahn, Kirtan Rabbi, is another.

Rabbi Hahn holds a Ph.D in Jewish thought from the Jewish Theological Seminary, and was ordained as a rabbi at Hebrew Union College. He has also studied with Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, founder of the Jewish Renewal Movement.

An accomplished musician, Rabbi Hahn blends Jewish teaching with the musical modes of Eastern religion to create a uniquely Jewish portal to the mystical and spiritual world.

The key mode of Rabbi Hahn's contribution is the Kirtan. Kirtan is a form of meditative expression that was developed in India. It is a "call and response chant" where the leader chants a word or phrase with a specific intonation, and the congregation follows by repeating it. As Rabbi Hahn has said, the kirtan uses few words, but they are invoked many times. The effect is to induce contemplative serenity and peace that opens up our soul to the experience of God and community in our lives.

The exact schedule of the weekend is still being developed. But we know that Rabbi Hahn will join with us in leading *Kabbalat Shabbat*, the opening Sabbath Service, which begins at 5:30 p.m. Following the service there will be a workshop on Hebrew Kirtan, explaining the Eastern roots of the meditative form, while also citing parallel forms in our own tradition.

On *Shabbat* morning, Rabbi Hahn will conduct a meditation during services, as well as giving the *Dvar Torah*. On Saturday evening, at 7:00 p.m., we will hold a *Havdalah* Kirtan led by Rabbi Hahn. He will be joined by two musicians, and will be accompanied with the harmonium and percussion.

I am very excited about this unique weekend. It opens up a new way of engaging our souls in a spiritually uplifting way. Perhaps it will lead us to new forms of religious expression for us as individuals, and as a congregation.

For more information about Kirtan Rabbi, check out his website, www.kirtanrabbi.com. Mark your calendars. You will not want to miss any part of this weekend.

CONGREGATION
ADATH JESHURUN



7763 Old York Road
Elkins Park, PA 19027
215.635.6611
www.adathjeshurun.info