

TEMPLE SINAI'S SCHOLAR-IN-RESIDENCE

JANUARY 5-7

Rabbi Mark Washofsky Ph.D.

The Talmud teaches that scholars enhance peace in the world (Berakhot 64a). The commentary to this explains that scholars of Torah and Halakhah (Jewish law and practice) bring peace because they help us adjudicate disputes that tear apart spouses, partners, friends and communities.

I suppose that many of you have a person, a mentor, a teacher who made such a profound impact that years later you still feel the blessing and good fortune of having this person in your life. I have been blessed with a number of mentors who have inspired me and whose teachings still inform me every day of my life. Of all of my teachers, the one who has had the greatest influence is my friend and teacher, Rabbi Mark Washofsky Ph.D.

Admittedly, it is hard to choose which title to use for Mark. He is my Rabbi. He is also the Solomon B. Freehof Professor of Jewish Law at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati. He was my primary teacher and mentor in rabbinic school and my thesis advisor.

For over twenty years Mark has also been the chair of the Responsa Committee of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, which provides guidance on questions of Jewish practice, a committee on which I have been proud to serve. For his lifetime of devotion to Reform Jewish practice and development, it is my utmost privilege to introduce him to you as our Scholar-in-Residence. In addition, Temple Sinai and Temple Emanuel will award Rabbi Dr. Washofsky the Isaac Meyer Wise Award in recognition of his extraordinary contribution to Reform Judaism and to the Jewish world. This award will be given at a very special Friday night Shabbat service on January 5 (7P).

At this service he will also give the first of his weekend of lectures: "Reform Responsa: How Halakhah Responds to Today's Issues." Following the Shabbat morning service on Saturday, January 6, 2018 (9:00-10:30A & open to community), there will be a special brunch at which Mark will deal with the pressing contemporary bio-ethical issue of physician-assisted suicide. (There will be a nominal fee to cover the cost of the brunch—10:45A -1P.)

On Motza'ei Shabbat, the evening of Saturday, January 6, 2018, there will be a special Saturday Night Dinner with Havdalah and private lecture for those who are the underwriters and sponsors of the Scholar-in-Residence weekend. (We invite all who are interested in being included in this special engagement to contact me personally.)

On Sunday morning (9-10:30A), January 7, 2018, Mark will teach a special session of my Responsa class with a session entitled "Would You Kill the Fat Man? Jewish Law Meets the Trolley Problem" – i.e., the dilemma among ethicists over whether it is right to kill one person in order to save several persons. This session is free of charge and all are welcome.

The Talmud concludes tractate Berakhot by teaching us that “whoever enjoys a meal at which a Torah scholar is featured, is as if he/she benefits from the Divine Presence.” Why? Because learning and engaging with a pre-eminent scholar is a rare and holy opportunity. It elevates our awareness and perception so we can more acutely connect to the ultimate meaning and purpose of our lives. Let me put it as candidly and as forthrightly as I can: this is a once in a lifetime opportunity. Chances are, you will simply not be able to meet and study with a greater Torah scholar than Rabbi Mark Washofsky. I am thrilled beyond words that he will be our Temple Sinai Scholar-in- Residence. And I am thankful to God that you, my beloved friends and congregants, will be able to meet and learn from one of this generation’s greatest scholars. Come to every lecture. Invite all of your friends and family. Give yourself and all those you care about the gift of Torah!

B'vrakhah,
Rick
Rabbi Rick Rheins

INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED HOLOCAUST EXHIBIT AT TEMPLE SINAI

In keeping with Temple Sinai’s legacy as a leader in Jewish education, we are proud to be the exclusive host of the acclaimed Holocaust By Bullets exhibit through December 10, 2017.

Many of you are well aware of Yahad in Unum because you came to hear its founder Father Patrick Desbois at his previous visit to Temple Sinai. Others have seen his profile on 60 Minutes (check out: <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/hidden-holocaust-60-minutes>).

Father Desbois has spent more than a decade identifying and documenting the “Holocaust by Bullets” -- the lost mass-shooting sites of Eastern Europe. Over a million Jews and other victims were murdered by the Nazis and their allies not in the death camps but in thousands of fields. The victims lie in unmarked graves, forgotten to history but not to us and not to those who care about justice for the victims. As a Catholic Priest, Desbois is able to interview elders in villages and discover the location of the killing fields. He has been remarkably successful.

Yahad in Unum (YIU) has recorded the testimonies of thousands of participants and witnesses to these events, creating a critical historical record. Through 10 years of research, YIU has identified over 1,650 execution sites and recorded 4,115 testimonies during 93 investigative research trips.

Yahad has also begun to harness its considerable forensic skills to document more current crimes against humanity, such as the ISIS assault on the Yazidis of Iraq.

We all owe Sinai member Sam Jonas & Religious School teacher Todd Hennessy a great debt of gratitude for their tireless efforts to bring this exhibit to Temple Sinai. Sponsorship opportunities still are available and the proceeds will help YIU continue their research.

B'vrakhah,
Rick
Rabbi Rick Rheins