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Teaching God to Children:
Guidelines and Principles for Teachers and Parents
of a Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College- Jewish Institute of Religion

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DIGEST

From our earliest days in religious schools, our teachers encouraged us to pray to God and to believe in the Divine. As children struggle to make greater sense out of their ever-expanding universe, among other tools, the youngsters use their imaginations to conjure up a variety of images. When youth make connections with the Holy and Sacred Being at early ages, the relationship can shape their adulthood, create a stronger tie to Judaism, and allow for heightened participation in a life-long Jewish spiritual life. Our tradition teaches that human beings are created *b'tselem Elohim*, in the image of God. How can we help children understand what that concept really means? How can teachers and parents assist children, toward answering the questions: Who, or what, is God? What is God's name? How can we know God? How does God relate to the world, to Jews, and to individuals? What does God want from the Jewish people? Why do bad things happen to good people?

The thesis on teaching God to children ages three through eighteen is divided into four primary chapters. The first chapter is an exploration of child development theories. Chapter two will analyze a variety of traditional, Jewish theological understandings and teachings throughout our Jewish history. The third chapter will examine the variety of resources about God that currently exist in the arena of Jewish textbooks. Finally, the fourth chapter will synthesize the above sections and provide a variety of goals, methodologies, sample curriculum tools, and suggestions for teaching God to children of different developmental ages. This thesis is not meant to provide one rigid set of answers, but rather provide sacred space in ensuring that people are proactive in teaching God to children.

IN APPRECIATION

I am thankful to my thesis advisor, Rabbi Samuel K. Joseph, for his support in this project. I am most grateful for my family and friends who have continued to provide love, strength, and comfort to me both throughout this journey and all my endeavors. I am appreciative to the many children whose bright souls have forever touched and enhanced my life through their lessons of life, love, laughter, and willingness to engage in theological conversations. Finally, I am indebted to God, who is both tolerant and respectful of my strengths and weaknesses, and who serves as an Eternally Loving Presence along my higher journey.

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INTRODUCTION

From our earliest days in religious schools, our teachers encouraged us to pray to God and to believe in the Divine. In addition, the adults asked us many questions about prayer, holidays, Torah, and rituals. But, generally, they never actually taught us the meaning of that very important word: "God." One of the author's childhood memories concerns grappling with the appearance of God. "I asked my mother what God looked like, and she told me to go and ask my father. I asked my father the same question, only to be told to go ask the rabbi before my next preschool class. I did: 'Rabbi, what does God look like?' 'Well, Alison, what do you think?' At the time, I was coloring a picture of Moses, so I pointed to Moses' picture. 'Like him,' I replied. I've often wondered what would have happened if I had been coloring a picture of Miriam?" Similar to the author, somehow many of us first perceived God as an old man with a white beard sitting high above humanity.

As children grow older, teachers and parents often have to help undo over-simplistic or immature God views in exchange for a more complex understanding of the Deity. There are numerous books written for adults that could assist them as they attempt to define, explain, be in relationship with, and/ or characterize God. Yet, in religious schools, the majority of curricula emphasize subjects such as liturgical and prayer Hebrew, Torah/ Bible stories, holidays, rituals, Holocaust, Israel, Jewish symbols, Jewish/ Christian relations and so on. Overall, Jewish religious educational institutions and Jewish curricula continue to minimize or completely leave out the prime aspect of Judaism: God. All of these aforementioned topics are important in helping children learn

about their Jewish identity. However, they do not need to be taught in a vacuum; these topics could be taught in conjunction with theology and Divine aspects. In this manner, one would better understand God as a central part of the Jewish heritage, faith, and culture.

As children struggle to make greater sense out of their ever-expanding universe, among other tools, the youngsters use their imaginations to conjure a variety of images. Children are a prime group to look at and explore the Divine. Moreover, when youth make connections with the Holy and Sacred Being at early ages, the relationship can shape their adulthood, create a stronger tie with Judaism, and allow for heightened participation in a life-long, Jewish spiritual life. Our tradition teaches that human beings are created *b'tselem Elohim*, in the image of God. How can we help children understand what that term really means? How can teachers assist their students, or parents aide their children, toward answering questions such as: Who, or what, is God? What is God's name? How can we know God? How does God relate to the world, to Jews, and to individuals? What does God want from the Jewish people? Why do bad things happen to good people?

Many Jews claim that there are three major tenets of Judaism: God, Torah, and Israel. Yet, because of our own theological journeys, struggles, questions, and doubts, many of us eliminate this critical topic from so many of our curricula. This thesis is not meant to persuade people into accepting any one Jewish theological claim. Rather, this thesis is meant to serve as a tool in helping people enter into a relationship with the Divine. Additionally, the thesis is meant to offer guidelines and suggestions in providing

some ideas for teachers and parents. The list is not complete, for it is up to each and every one of us to bring our experiences into teaching about God.

The thesis is divided into four primary chapters that are further broken into smaller units. Adults will find it most helpful in assisting children ages three through eighteen. The first chapter is an exploration of child development theories. Within that section, one will find various developmental levels that explore psycho-social, cognitive, behavioral, faith, moral, and other categories of ideas generated by a variety of scholars in the field. The second chapter will analyze a variety of traditional, theological Jewish understandings and teachings throughout our religious history. It will begin with the Biblical era, shift into the Rabbinic era, move into Medieval ages, Aristotelian, and finish in the Modern era. The third section will analyze and critique the God concepts of many materials that currently exist in the arena of Jewish textbooks; again this chapter is split into developmental stages. Finally, the fourth chapter will synthesize the above sections and look at the relationship between developmental issues and theology. It will provide a variety of goals, methodologies, sample curriculum tools, and suggestions for teaching God to children of different developmental ages. As a result of this thesis, an adult will have gained a greater understanding of child development, Jewish theology, existing resources, and suggestions on how to better be proactive in teaching theology to children. This thesis will focus on teaching God to children from preschool age through adolescence. It is hoped that from this document, an adult can create a developmentally appropriate Jewish curriculum that will allow youngsters to develop and further their theological understandings. Hopefully, one will instruct about God in a method that will best serve the various ages, without having to undo any earlier teachings. This thesis is

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not meant to provide the one set of answers, for the author does not accept that there is only one spiritual path to the Divine. Instead, as previously stated, the author hopes to provide sacred space for children and better enable them to create and maintain a life-long relationship with the Divine. The author hopes that any and all misconceptions about the Divine are taken with both a deep human and Divine understanding that no human fully knows God. The author is appreciative of God's sense of humor and ability to forgive any mistakes found within this thesis. Moreover, any problems and biases found within this thesis stem from the author alone, and in no way reflect Divine error nor are they meant to minimize the greatness and splendor of God. The author is grateful for her many blessings and thanks God as the source of these gifts; in addition, the author is especially indebted that God walked with her, along this particular theological path. Blessed are You, God, Ruler of the Universe, who has enabled me to reach this joyous season.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Human beings, as unique individuals, grow and change at various rates throughout life. There is no one absolute course for growth and development that would ensure that every person would partake in certain tasks precisely at the exact moment in life. Instead, a person's developmental growth is based upon one's experiences and one's environment, with the result, ideally, of a journey of ongoing maturation along a life-long continuum. Hopefully, as a person travels along this path, the individual will learn to function as a complete, successful, and whole being. Moreover, the goal for every individual is to be part of an "open-energy system." In other words, the person wants to take in new information, experiences, social connections, behaviors, and other activities and internally process them in order to be a fuller and more highly developed individual. On the other hand, if the person were to be a part of a "closed system," he or she does not absorb any new information and is developmentally stagnant. Thus, each person's growth is individualized, based upon one's own experiences along the path of maturation.

Developmental theory helps establish an order of changes that people experience from birth to death. Many scholars and researchers have discovered patterns acknowledging various growth periods throughout a person's life. Some scholars emphasize the psychological- social developmental approach and others stress the cognitive approach. In addition, there are other schools of thought that accentuate development through culture, moral growth, behavior, or faith. Some scholars highlight

the growth only in children, where as other theorists reflect upon the whole individual's development from birth to death. **This paper will serve as groundwork for teaching God to children, by focusing upon the various schools of thought on childhood development from preschool through adolescence.** The resulting research will enable the author to create different teaching techniques to best help adults proactively teach about God to these age levels. Because different developmental theorists focus on distinct aspects of development and use different age categories, this chapter will use Erik H. Erikson's[1] psychological- social approach as a foundation and the other theorists' systems will be inserted accordingly.

Synopses of "Trust versus Mistrust" and "Autonomy versus Shame"
(Birth to three years old)

Erik H. Erikson is a leading psychological- social theorist who used Sigmund Freud's work as a basis for his own. Erikson studied the relationship of the individual's emotional needs to the social environment and stressed the internal processes inherent in the human species. Erikson believed that the principles of humanity are based upon the individual's qualities and society. Additionally, society provides numerous experiences

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[1] Erik H. Erikson is at the forefront of psychosocial developmental theorists. He emphasizes that there are crises that people must endure and resolve at every developmental stage. The way in which one resolves each crisis will have a lasting effect on both the individual's self-image and societal image. Ideally, an individual balances the id, ego, and superego which results in the formation of healthy ideas. The primary goal at each age is to collect inner strength from the first of the two terms in each developmental age and minimize the associated fears. If, for example, a child is able to cultivate trust, he/ she can further allow it to emerge in higher faith, rather than having an ongoing feeling of mistrust toward society. For more complete information, see Erikson's writing, such as Erikson's *Childhood and Society*, published in New York by W. W. Norton and Company, 1963. Many of the points of this paper stem from that book.

to allow an individual's ego to interact with its environment. Erikson acknowledged the interrelationships from one stage, or "Age," as he calls it, to another. Hence, the successes and failures of later stages are dependent upon how one solves earlier "conflicts." At each stage, a person faces a developmental crisis (or conflict), whose outcome will influence the next stage and will have life-long implications. However, even if one successfully "achieves" the more desired concepts, such as trust or autonomy, the individual maintains an often-subconscious fear that the "success" will shift to "failure." Thus, one must be careful when talking about "achieving" a concept, and recognize that it is not a guarantee for every future experience.

Erikson's first two "ages," although very important to the later development of the child, will be discussed only briefly here. The first age, "trust versus mistrust," is from birth to approximately 18 months (some sources say 12 months) and stage two, "autonomy versus shame," is from 18 months to three years. They relate to Freud's terms of the oral-sensory stage and the muscular- anal stage. The two ages, labeled by Erikson, mark the beginning of self-confidence and self-control. Because children do not necessarily have optimal verbal abilities at this point, play serves as a primary tool of communication. If the child does not have a loving relationship with his/ her caregiver(s), a sense of mistrust will develop. She/he will be less likely to share toys or will react negatively to someone's touch. If the youngster receives negative feedback about his/ her self- control, then shame and doubt could likely be the result. Moreover, if mistrust, shame, and/ or doubt are the stronger forces that arise from these two stages, then the child's foundation will be set for negative God imagery or even a simple disbelief in the existence of a Deity. These unhelpful and possibly harmful ideas arise

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because the child will look at God as his/ her paradigmatic experience. Thus, if a child has a strong component of mistrust, shame, and doubt, there is no opportunity to shift those views into a positive Deity. Moreover, these negative aspects will have long lasting and possibly lifetime effects on the individual.

Similar to the needs of every individual, age one and age two youngsters require frequent affirmations of their actions in order to have a sense of dignity, lawfulness, justice, and autonomy. The ultimate goal is to obtain a sense of trust and autonomy in the world. According to Ana-Maria Rizzuto[2], who studied Sigmund Freud and Erik Erikson, Erikson's two ages will lead to a type of God, which is experienced through the senses, mirroring, and focusing on the self. When a child is held, fed, nurtured, comforted, and able to feel the presence of his/her loved one, the infant will "achieve" trust and autonomy. As a result of these experiences, the youngster will have the tools to believe in God. The initial God experiences will be "My penis is my God," "I am me in the mirror," and "God is in me and I in God."[3] If the person evolves from the first two developmental stages in healthy manners, he/ she will begin to recognize the notion of being created in God's image. Other theorists also acknowledge the importance of infant development; again, this topic will only be briefly acknowledged in this paper.

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[2] Ana- Maria Rizzuto is a child psychiatrist who used Sigmund Freud's work as a basis for her own. She explored Freud's belief that God is a human invention as a lasting result of the Oedipus complex. The personal God, therefore, is an exalted Father. For a more complete look at her work, one can read *The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study*, published in Chicago by the University of Chicago Press in 1979.

[3] Ana- Maria Rizzuto. *The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979, p. 206.

Jean Piaget[4], a leading theorist who emphasizes children's cognitive development, calls stage one the "Sensori-Motor" phase which occurs from birth to two years (other sources say birth to 18 months and still others say it lasts through three years). David Elkind[5], a socio-cognitive theorist, (my term because his work emphasizes external social factors founded upon Piaget's ideas of cognitive theory) also looks at the infant from birth through age two. Although he does not have a formal name for this stage, he, like Erikson, focuses on the issue of trust, as well as effects of self- worth, interpersonal relations, and the emergence of symbolic function. Robert R. Sears[6], a behavioralist, notes that socialization is a fulfillment of the developmental tasks. His first category is "Phase One," rudimentary behavior based upon innate needs and initial infant learning. Robert J. Havighurst[7], another behaviorialist, looks at developmental tasks as a way to monitor "average" developmental growth. For example, during the infant years, one must learn to walk, to take solid foods, to talk, to express feelings and receive praise, and to gain access to language. He categorizes these tasks, as well as a few others, as those

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[4] Jean Piaget, the quintessential cognitive developmental theorist, emphasizes attaining equilibrium as one journeys on the developmental path. He looks at cognitive growth as gradual, orderly changes, through which the mental processes are able to become more sophisticated. Piaget concerned himself with understanding how a child's actions would relate to his/ her thoughts. The reasoning and logical processes that occur are the essence of an individual's intelligence. The majority of information in this paper pertaining to Jean Piaget originated in various sources, including the books by Hans Furth and David Elkind. Hans Furth. *Piaget and Knowledge: Theoretical Foundations*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1969. David Elkind. *Children and Adolescents: Interpretive Essays on Jean Piaget*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1970.

[5] David Elkind stressed basic attitudes toward academic endeavors, looking at the critical school years to enhance his work. His work was summarized for the purpose of this paper. For more detailed information on his developmental ideas, one can read David Elkind's *A Sympathetic Understanding of the Child: Birth to Sixteen*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1975.

[6] For more details about Robert R. Sears' theory, one can read, among other writings, Henry W. Maier's *Three Theories of Child Development, Third Edition*. New York: Harper & Row, 1978.

[7] Robert Havighurst emphasizes developmental tasks which ideally leads a person to feelings of success and achievement. For more information about his developmental research, a suggested work is Robert J. Havighurst's *Developmental Tasks and Education*. New York: David McKay Company, 1973.

meant for infants and early childhood. Ira J. Gordon[8], a sociological-cultural theorist,

calls this time period "The Emergence of 'I'". Lev Vygotsky[9], also of the sociological-

cultural school of thought (some people classify him as a socio-historical theorist) reflects

on the importance of language, but without using clear labels for the various

developmental periods. He believes that children move from the non-verbal language

cues such as crying and facial expressions, to "holophrases," single words that express

complex ideas, and "overtension," one word that covers a range of concepts. At

approximately 18 months, an infant is able to create his/ her first sentence.

Robert Coles[10], another theorist emphasizing moral development, looks at "The

Early Years" as a time for the onset of values. James Fowler[11], a faith developmental

theorist, labels this stage from birth to two years as "infancy and undifferentiated faith."

He believes that faith issues arise in the arenas of courage, hope, trust, love, and

mutuality. Gabriel Moran[12], stressing religious development, believes that the first phase

lasts from birth until age 5/7 and is called the stage of the "Simply Religious." According

to his system, there is a need for physical contact as a base for gaining the ability to see

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[8] Ira Gordon's developmental theories attempt to combine sociological and cultural studies of growth. For more information about his school of thought, read *Human Development: From Birth Through Adolescence.* New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1969.
[9] Lev Vygotsky stems from a similar school of thought, emphasizing the socio-cultural approach of developmental theory. Among other sources, one can find more information about his work from Anita E. Woolfolk's *Educational Psychology: Seventh Edition.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998.
[10] Robert Coles is a prolific writer who stresses the moral and spiritual life of children. Among his works, one can find information used in this paper primarily from *The Moral Intelligence of Children: How to Raise a Moral Child.* New York: Random House, 1997 and *The Spiritual Life of Children.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990.
[11] James Fowler, the quintessential faith developmental theorist, notes that one of his struggles is that faith is universal, yet infinitely varied, causing development to be unique and mysterious. Nevertheless, he composes a system based on the foundations of Erikson, Piaget, and Kohlberg's works. In fact, in his main book, *Stages of Faith,* he has a "conversation" among the three men. Faith, according to Fowler, is the relationship of trust in and loyalty to the Transcendent. For more information on his writing, read *Stages of Faith.* James Fowler. *Stages of Faith.* San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981.

the divine everywhere. Some theorists who are also mentioned in this paper begin their research around the preschool years. Nevertheless, however one developmentally defines the earliest years of life, the child's relationships and experiences will clearly set the foundation for the future stages. Most theorists acknowledge that the building blocks of infancy will shape a child's future and will have lasting affects upon the individual's growth.

"Initiative versus Guilt" (Three to six years old)

Erik Erikson's third category occurs between the ages of three and six, "Initiative versus Guilt." During this cycle in a person's life, however, there is a danger that the individual will feel guilty, enraged, or aggressive over his/her thoughts or actual assertiveness and actions. Erikson connects his description of this "Age" with Freud's locomotor- genital (or Phallic- Oedipal) stage. As a result, Erikson acknowledges that a child may feel what Freud terms "the castration complex," an intense fear of finding one's genitals harmed as a punishment for his/her fantasies. Thus, it is critical to have open conversations with a child in order to ensure that his/ her inner thoughts do not become all consuming. If guilt becomes the leading force during this "Age," then the child will likely move away from a belief in God, stemming in part as a result of feeling unworthy of God's love. With a high level of guilt and low level of adult support and comfort, the child's guilt will shift into despair and loneliness rather than initiative that changes into

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[12] For more complete information on Gabriel Moran one read his book: *Religious Education Development: Images for the Future*. Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1983.

moral responsibility. As previously mentioned, a child can not grasp the concept of a loving and comforting Divine image unless she/ he has human models to reflect those qualities. Furthermore, one must be careful that during this developmental age, one does not encourage a child to such a high degree that he/ she becomes overly self-righteous.

In order to help generate healthy feelings of initiative, it is important to ensure that each child experiences a sense of positive achievement and to allow him/ her to make some decisions for himself/ herself. With the addition of initiative to autonomy and trust, one is able to undertake, plan, and tackle a task in order to fulfill one's need for activity. Moreover, if the individual is "successful," the child will feel that life has a purpose. If healthy initiative becomes the dominant component of one's self, then the child at this age will have God imagery based upon, in Rizzuto's words, "idealized and aggrandized parental imagos."[13] The Deity will be recognized as lovable, wonderful, and as the Almighty. God will be a miracle worker. Hence, it is not enough for adults to preach a belief in God. Adults must enable children to have healthy components of trust, autonomy, and initiative by being consistent in their communication and acting on their words.

Jean Piaget studied a wider range of ages, from 2-7 years old, and called this stage "Preoperational." As a cognitive theorist, he believes that life's basic intellectual building blocks are connected to our physical actions. In contrast to Erikson's emphasis of the self in relation to the environment, Piaget stresses the worldly approach in relationship to the self. It is for this reason that Gabriel Moran terms Piaget as a "Constructivist," rather

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[13] Ana- Maria Rizzuto. *The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979, p. 206.

than Piaget's self- classification of a "Cognitive Theorist." After all, according to Moran, Piaget is primarily concerned with how a person learns information and how the person's mind relates to his/ her various life experiences. During this preoperational stage, a child is able to process information only in a forward manner. In other words, a child is capable of reciting the alphabet "A, B, C, D..." but would not be able to begin from the other direction, "Z, Y, X, W..." Moreover, Piaget realized that the idea of conservation was difficult to grasp at this age. Thus, if an object's appearance changed, such as ripping a piece of paper into two pieces, the preoperational child will conclude that the amount of matter of the object has been altered as well. During these years, the child is also unable to grasp the concept of "classification," i.e. discussing more than one aspect at a time. For example, the youngster could look at the height of two objects to determine the bigger object or look at the width, but not understand that both the height and width relate to the conclusion of which object is larger.

In the early years of this stage, a child believes that everybody experiences the worlds in a similar fashion to her/ his own views. Another aspect of his/ her experience is that youngsters partake in a collective monologue, rather than actually engaging another person in true conversation. However, as time progresses, stage two children are able to move away from their egocentric attitudes. They accept and elaborate on symbolic function, believing in the Tooth Fairy, angels, and/ or monsters; not surprisingly, it is during this phase when children have their most active dreams and nightmares. Thus, the God implications are critical during this experience. One aspect is that a child must recognize the distinction between the imaginary Tooth Fairy and the realness of God.

Another implication is that any God image will be magnified in the child's mind; hence it is imperative to portray God as a loving Deity.

Children during this stage struggle to find meaning of their experiences, whether positive or negative ones. As they confront the world and attempt to make sense out of it, they ask numerous questions. However, they do not want scientific or clinical responses, rather these youngsters seek answers from a psychological or moral response. For example, if a child asks why the grass is green, he/ she does not want to learn about chlorophyll. Instead, he/ she would want an answer that "makes sense." Therefore, one might reply that the grass is green because animals like to walk on green things such as grass or lettuce. The question "Why do I have to go to bed?" is not meant to trigger a response about the physical needs of sleep nor the biological structures of the body. Rather, she/ he is looking for an answer along the lines of "Because daytime is for playing and nighttime is for sleeping." In order to help children be successful during this stage, it is important for adults to use visual aids and concrete props, actions along with words, and only short instructions. Furthermore, activities are better if they are "hands-on" and the instructor needs to give opportunities for a variety of experiences to help build the same concept from different angles. Children will later be able to interpret their collected data of experiences and shape their thoughts to create more mature ideas.

David Elkind terms this phase of two through five year-olds as the "stage of the young child." In addition to his ideas within the age range, he also looks at every individual age to reflect the differences within the bracketed time frame. For the purpose of this paper, his general categories will suffice. At this stage, a child rarely has gender issues and males and females will easily play together. The youngster has a "let me do it

by myself" attitude, unless there is a new sibling which often causes the older one to regress. The child has a high level of creativity as well as a strong attachment to his/ her possessions. Sharing, therefore, does not come easily to these youth. As Piaget noted, a child at this age tends to talk "at" someone, rather than "to" someone. However, one's high level of fantasy may impact one's speech. In this monologue, a youngster is verbally very up-front, often causing embarrassment to an adult who is near the child.

Generally, a child views adults in an all or nothing manner. Thus, adults are good or bad, smart or dumb. The same is true with God; the Divine also becomes all or nothing. Overall, a youngster in this developmental age views her/ his parents as all good, powerful, and knowing individuals who can do anything. If the parent(s) has negative qualities, the child will project his/ her feelings onto other people or animals. Another concept seen during this stage in life is that emotion rule over the intellect. In conjunction with this idea, a child assumes simultaneous events or near simultaneous events is caused by one another, even if there is no actual relationship. These connections often stay with children and eventually turn into adult rituals or superstitions. Children at this age need a lot of praise and recognition as they are in a stage of high pride at their work.

Robert R. Sears, a behavioral theorist, emphasizes learned causes and subsequent actions as the prime foundation for future behaviors. Because the human being works in a cycle of stimuli and responses, early causes and effects become critical to one's ongoing development. Although Sears' work follows along the lines of B.F. Skinner, another behavioral theorist, Sears deviates in an important manner. Where as Skinner believes that if a child had proper learning, he/ she would have an ideal behavior in all situations,

Sears questions if proper learning can ever fully compensate from environmental factors. Moreover, Sears recognizes that an individual's personality is the result of a lifetime of experiences, which will impact all future actions. He also notes that healthy socialization will enable a child to fulfill the appropriate developmental tasks. Sears' first phase reflects the idea that a child's rudimentary behavior is based upon innate needs, beginning from infancy. For example, a child needs to be held; one who never gets held will have a lasting sense of loneliness. Hence, Sears' belief system stresses actions that are often taken for granted by many adults. Whether consciously or subconsciously, an adult must behave in a positive manner in order for a child to more successfully grow and experience life.

Robert J. Havighurst, a behavioralist, emphasized more details about the first phase of childhood development, occurring in his perception from birth until six years old. He focused on developmental tasks, duties that arise at a certain period in the life of an individual and are of limited duration. If the youngster "flourishes" at the task, he/ she will be happier and more "successful" at later tasks; however, if one "fails," then the individual will be unhappy, feel frustrated, and perceive society's disapproval. Havighurst believes that both living and growing are tools for learning and that these aspects of life are important foundations for morality. For example, toilet training, a developmental task occurring around the ages of two to four, causes a child to learn how to control his/ her body. A person will always need the skill of controlling one's body, whether it is in thought or in action. Early in this stage, a child will not grasp the concept of gender differences; later in this phase, a child the distinctions between males and females. Other theorists, however, contradict Havighurst's thoughts, and instead believe

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that there is no strong gender distinction throughout this life stage. A child at this stage, according to Havighurst, will enhance her/ his language skills to be able to acknowledge the social and physical realities of her/ his world. Reading skills, ideally, will also arise, furthering a child's language skills to an even greater degree. The best technique to help enhance children's behaviors and allow them to be more successful at their tasks is through visual stimulation. If parents and other adults help provide visual experiences (and not just lecture them), the youngsters will be able to more easily model specific behaviors.

Ira J. Gordon, a socio-cultural theorist, believes that behavior and development are in a constant process of interaction. He emphasizes that the environment, such as one's home, peers, school, and society, most strongly impacts a child's development. Recognizing that a child functions as both a unique individual and an entire system, Gordon stresses that in order to help a child positively develop, the child needs constancy in his/ her world. Gordon looked at middle-class American children, as well other cultures, to help determine a child's "climate of affection." He notes that 20 percent of American children come from "broken homes," and, therefore in his opinion, a less stable environment.

Gordon's first stage, "From I to the Three R's," acknowledges, like many other theorists, that here children partake in activities with more imagination and fantasy as they try to communicate their thoughts and feelings. Like other socio-cultural theorists, Gordon believes that language plays an important role in a child's development. For example, a youngster is able to name objects before fully comprehending the meaning behind the name. At the end of this stage, approximately around age 5, a child will better

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be able to verbalize concepts. Furthermore, the child's cultural and emotional setting will significantly impact the deeper meaning of words. Hence, an adult must be sensitive to this linguistic diversity as a meaning in one culture may have a very different meaning in another culture. Gordon also notes that stereotyping is very common at this stage in life because, as Piaget noted, there is an associative logical formation. In other words, a child merges his/her past thoughts and experiences with the present and often can not make exceptions or distinctions in his/ her mind. At the end of this stage, an adult must teach a child how to release emotions, particularly anger, in acceptable manners. To teach a child successfully from this socio-cultural perspective, an adult must really strive to understand a child's familial and cultural background.

Unlike other theorists and psychiatrists, such as Erikson or Virginia Axline[14] who emphasize play as a method of communication, Lev Vygotsky believes that language is the most important tool in understanding child development. When children partake in an activity, according to Vygotsky, they move from talking to themselves out loud, to silent self-talk, to simply doing the action. Vygotsky believes that the peak of private speech is around the ages of five to seven years. Their language skills during this phase of life moves from learning grammar and vocabulary and applying it to all situations, even wrong ones, to a basic level of mastery by the age of five or six. In order to help children grow, therefore, a teacher or other adult needs to recognize that "private talk" is a necessary learning tool. Moreover, children at this age also need "scaffolding," support

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[14] Virginia M. Axline is a child psychiatrist who emphasizes play therapy as the most effective technique in understanding young children. She believes that a child cannot adequately verbalize his/ her thoughts and needs an uninterrupted outlet to express emotions, such as one hour a week of play therapy. For more information, one can read: Virginia M. Axline's *Dibs in Search of Self.* New York: Ballantine Books, 1964.

for learning and problem solving, such as other peers, clues, reminders, examples, or adults.

Lawrence Kohlberg[15] utilizes morality as his developmental emphasis. He did not study infancy, rather he began his efforts at a point when a child could ask questions of right/ wrong. Kohlberg focused on the child's thinking processes associated with the resulting judgments. He acknowledges that he used Piaget's cognitive developmental stages as his own foundation and then elaborated on the ensuing moral aspects. Where as Piaget called this stage "preoperational," Kohlberg terms this level as "preconventional." During this time period, a child journeys through two "stages." One stage is the "Punishment-Obedience," with a strong deference toward superior powers. The second stage is "Personal Rewards Orientation." Included in this aspect is the child's judgments based upon her/ his own needs and perceptions. Similar to many of the other developmental theorists, this stage is an egotistic one for the child as he/ she considers the world to revolve around him/ herself. Level One, therefore, recognizes judgment based on other people's rules and personal needs. Kohlberg reasons that there is an assumption that justice is absolute and therefore can be responded to in an abstract, impartial manner. In order to help teach children, he notes that a child cannot learn morals through indoctrination or simple values- clarification, as the former implies reciting an objective list of rules and the latter includes subjectivity. Instead, Kohlberg promotes teaching morals by stimulating the "natural" development of a child's moral judgment. Thus, one needs to provide experiences to actively teach morality.

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[15] For a more detailed overview about Kohlberg's moral development, one can read Anita E. Woolfolk's *Educational Psychology: Seventh Edition.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998.

Carol Gilligan[16], offering a feminist perspective to moral development, looked primarily at adult women. However, her developmental system emphasizing "an ethic of care" can also be understood within child development. Gilligan discovered that women consistently had lower moral scores on Kohlberg's moral tests. From this, she found out that women respond differently to moral dilemmas, rather than merely accepting the idea that women had a lower value system than men. Furthermore, she noted that Kohlberg's theory is one of a morality of rights, whereas hers is a morality of responsibility. For example, a woman opting not to have an abortion would express a variety of responses depending on the situation. Her theory rests upon the idea that women respond to relationships with other humans and with nature. When a woman reacts with her "moral self," she includes feeling, thinking, choosing, and acting in a different manner than men. The moral question is survival pertaining to the female self- image and the relevant follow-up internal question is how she minimizes hurting herself. Moreover, a woman's goal is to care for others and avoid violence both to humans and to nature. This first stage [for women] is having a tenuous concept of the self.

William Damon[17], a moral theorist, does not formally classify children into different stages. However, his discussion of moral growth allows a person to use similar classifications to Piaget's system. Damon defines morality in a variety of manners: "an evaluative orientation toward actions and events that distinguishes the good from the bad and prescribes conduct consistent with the good, a sense of obligation toward societal

[16] For more details about Gilligan's studies, one can find information in Anita E. Woolfolk's *Educational Psychology: Seventh Edition.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998.
[17] For more information, one can read William Damon's *The Moral Child: Nurturing Children's Natural Moral Growth.* New York: The Free Press, 1988.

standards, concern for the welfare and rights of others, and a commitment toward

honesty."[18] There is an early awareness of morality, as heard by a child's frequent use of

the phrase "that's not fair." He/ she knows that people are supposed to be honest, loyal,

kind, and respectful. Additionally, a child at this age has a beginning sense of justice and

injustice, often expressed in the creation of new rules for games. In contrast to David

Elkind's opinion, William Damon believes that sharing is an early moral value, although

it is often bound to the child's own needs. Often, as part of a youngster's moral code,

she/he will be honest in one situation and cheat in another one. However, it is important

to note that an adult may define something as cheating, such as helping a friend on a test,

while a child may define it as loyalty. Emotions such as fear, empathy, guilt, anxiety, and

boredom are often at the foundation of a young child's morality. The more empathy a

child has at this stage, the less aggressive he/ she will be both at the present moments of

his/ her life and in the future. Thus, an adult must actively help teach a child to feel

empathy and compassion.

Robert Coles, both a moral and religious theorist, calls this age category "the early

years." Although the term "a good person" can be defined in multiple ways, Coles

expresses the idea in relation to one who serves as an active bystander. He defines a good

person as one who is "the alert witness not only of others, but to his or her own ethical

tensions as they flash their various signals, warn of conflicts ahead or of ambiguities not

so easy to resolve, or of mixed feelings and temptations and the rationalizations that

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[18] William Damon. *The Moral Child: Nurturing Children's Natural Moral Growth.* New York: The Free Press, 1988, p. 5.

justify them."[19] It is this definition that serves as Coles' foundation for his work. According to Coles, adults must avoid the "holier than thou" attitude with these young children. He is of the opinion that values begin in the mother's womb; thus, neglected infants have a lasting apathy and view that the world is a threatening, unfriendly, and scary place. When adults consciously or unconsciously teach morals to this stage child, they use the word "no" over and over again. However, Coles reminds adults that it is important to offer a positive alternative for the youngster; thus, instead of always saying "no," the adult can teach "yes" by providing positive alternatives.

Because James Fowler believed that birth- two years was "undifferentiated faith," he labels this age group of two – six/ seven years as "stage one," or "Intuitive- Projective faith." As Piaget acknowledged, the child asks many a question at these early ages. In opposition to Robert Sears' perspective, Fowler believes that the child does not grasp cause and effect nor does he/ she understand reversible thinking or deductive and inductive logic. Instead, she/ he has fluid and magical thinking, enabling the youngster to articulate simple God ideas, such as heaven and creation. During this stage, a youngster also becomes aware of both sex and death, often understood as taboo subjects because parents will try to "protect" their children from these subjects. However, in order to provide healthy imagery for the child, it is important to help a child grasp these topics in a non- threatening environment. These subjects, according to Fowler, will influence later faith experiences.

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[19] Robert Coles. *The Moral Intelligence of Children: How to Raise a Moral Child.* New York, Random House, 1997, p. 20.

If he/ she is given Biblical teachings, he/ she is able to put the stories, images, and own creative thoughts together in his/ her mind to explain God. Even if an adult attempts to avoid the topic of God, God- imagery is so prevalent in our culture that every school age child has God image(s). Thus, it is important for adults to help teach that God is a loving, courageous Deity who is not as powerful or scary as the child's fantasy world may infer. It is equally critical to foster an environment that freely enables children to express their God images in both verbal and non-verbal manners. Because of the dominance of the child's fantasies and imaginative powers, long-lasting images and feelings will be the foundation for later faith development. Hence, Fowler reiterates that it is critical to support the child's faith growth by answering questions and explaining theological subjects in non- stressful and non- crisis moments.

Gabriel Moran, a religious theorist, used Kohlberg, Gilligan, and Fowler (as well as other theorists) as a base for his work. He emphasizes that there is a distinction between "religion," in his mind a set of objects, and "religious," an impulse within an experience and language, community, and imagery. Thus, he stresses that the focus of his research is religious development. His first stage, "Simply Religious," correlates to Fowler's pre-stage as well as some of stages one and two. Moran determined that this stage of "Simply Religious" begins at birth and lasts until Five/ Seven years. Within this age, there is fluidity in both physical and mythic concepts. Hence, a youngster will vacillate his/ her opinion on the existence of monsters, angels, and the tooth fairy. Another component of this stage is the need for physical contact among youngsters, resulting, ideally, in trust, care, and love. If these positive factors result, the Divine will be experienced everywhere and seen in daily miracles that are often taken for granted by

adults. For example, Moran notes that a child of seven will be excited that he/ she opened a door and saw a dragon (in his/ her imagination), where as a child of three will be excited that she/ he opened a door. God will be recognized as "alive" in the universe and the child will be delighted with the fantasy world of dragons and myths.

Ronald Goldman[20], a faith or religious developmental theorist, uses Piaget's stages as the foundation for his own system. At this age, similar to many other theorists, he recognizes that children are in a "fairy tale" stage of religion. In addition to using Piaget's work, Goldman also looks at Gessell and Ilg's[21] research, which suggests that a child of five years is innocent of causal and logical relationships and presumes the idea of animism. For example, clouds move because God pushes them and when God blows there is wind.[22] Also, at this end of this stage a child often thinks of God as the Creator over all beautiful things and has a sense of awe during worship experiences. These ideas are all part of "mystical realism" and enable the child to really be creative in her/ his theological concepts. At this stage, if one were to ask a child, for example, why was Moses afraid to look at God? One can expect responses such as "because God had a funny face, or Moses was afraid of God's rough voice, or Moses was just being rude." If one were to ask about the holiness of the ground upon which Moses stood, one can expect answers such as "because there was grass on it, or it was nice." In other words, children

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[20] The majority of information on Ronald Goldman's theory originates from his book *Religious Thinking From Childhood to Adolescence*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1964.

[21] For more information on their research, read: Arnold Gesell. *The First Five Years of Life: A Guide to the Study of the Preschool Child.* New York: Harper & Row, 1940 or Arnold Gesell, Frances L. Ilg, and Louise Bates Ames. *The Child From Five to Ten.* New York: Harper & Row, 1977 or Arnold Gesell, Frances L. Ilg, and Louise Bates Ames. *Youth: The Years from Ten to Sixteen.* New York: Harper & Row, 1956.

[22] Ronald Goldman. *Religious Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence.* New York, The Seabury Press, 1964, p. 25.

use their creative instincts to make sense out of Biblical concepts. Moreover, the Bible itself at this age is absolute and magically true.

"Industry versus Inferiority" (Six to twelve years old)

The fourth age of development, according to Erik Erikson, occurs between the years of 6 and 12, "Industry versus Inferiority," and relates to Freud's latency stage. Because of the onset of school, resulting in a more routine schedule, the child's imagination often becomes subdued as he/she is forced to focus on specific tasks at school. This "Age" is a critical component of child development; if the child is unsuccessful in his/ her school environment, he/she may feel incompetent, inadequate, or inferior. These emotions, as well as those attributes from earlier stages, will have lasting affects on the person's developmental growth. If the child feels inferior, he/ she will turn away from God, believing God to be "destructive and a useless protector."[23] On the other hand, if he/ she successfully produces at the assigned tasks, such as reading or answering math problems, the child will gain a sense of industry. If a child has the opportunity to successfully prove industriousness, the youngster will eagerly await opportunities to partake in productive work. The idea of industry will further allow for the development of God imagery. Here, God will be a protector to the child and not only labeled as the Almighty, but also as the ideal Father (or Mother). Thus, it is essential that adults give

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[23] Ana- Maria Rizzuto. *The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979, p. 207.

children experiences that enable children to create individualized and realistic goals in order to allow them feelings of success, competence, and "industry."

In contrast to Piaget's wide age range for the preoperational stage, his "Concrete-Operational" stage only ranges from 7-11 years (some sources say until 10 years of age). At this point in a youngster's life, he/ she may problem solve if there are physical objects, although he/ she will still struggle to respond to verbally stated hypotheses and abstract thoughts. During this stage, the child will be able to look at multiple dimensions, such as height and width, to determine the larger object. The child can reason through a step-by-step process to discover the right answer, but is unable to put his information into subsets with multiple categories. However, he/ she can do classification, grouping objects into categories, according to one aspect at a time.

During this stage, Piaget states that children generally experience three different levels of consciousness. First, a child believes that everything that exists is conscious; for example, he/ she thinks that when a stone is stepped on, it will feel pain. Second, the youngster thinks that everything that moves has consciousness. Finally, she/ he is able to grasp an accurate definition of what is life. According to David Elkind, an analyzer of Piaget's writings, religious understanding unfolds in a similar manner. At first, the child will look at religious names just like any other name. He/she will not understand that one can be, for example, both American and Jewish, because just as one cannot have two names, so too can one not have two identities. Then, religion will be associated with an action; thus, Jews are people who attend synagogue (if only that were always the case). Finally, religion will be connected with beliefs and actions. As the concrete-operational youth progresses through this stage, he/ she will realize that his/ her parents are not

omniscient; however, he/ she will continue to listen to his/ her parents' rules simply because of their authoritative roles. In order to help the learning process during this stage, adults need to continue to use concrete props, while allowing children to experience and test the objects for themselves. Additionally, the youngsters need brief and well-organized instructions as well as familiar ideas to help them process more complex problems.

David Elkind, in addition to studying Piaget, had his own theory pertaining to child development. He calls this developmental stage simply "the child" and intends it to pertain to those youngsters between the ages of six and eleven. Elkind believes that children now have heightened sexual awareness, as they no longer want to sit or interact with people from the opposite gender. The child is also more aware of children who depart from the "norms" of physical appearance. She/ he is afraid of rejection by peers as well as fearing failure in school. In contrast to Erikson, who believes this age child will look at his/ her parent(s) as ideal, Elkind thinks that despite the family being the central core, the parents are no longer seen as exalted figures for these children. The child has a limited understanding about community life as a whole, and attempts frequent bargains and contracts with his/ her parents to achieve his/ her desired freedom. A child in this stage has better mental capabilities than the previous stage. One can better integrate information from various sources and use the already developed verbal skills to discuss her/ his perceptions. The youngster is able to reason, problem- solve, and grasp quantity terms such as more, less, some, few, many. However, at this stage, spatial concepts, such as geography still have minimal significance in his/ her thought process.

At the earlier years within this stage, a child will judge somebody by the actual action taken, rather than by his/ her intention. However, by around age 11 the reverse is true; a child judges by the person's intent and not by the action. In conjunction with ideas about judgment, this stage child has a strong notion of retribution, belief in punishment and reward, and immanent justice. She/he looks at prayer in a similar manner. At the earlier ages within this stage, prayer is usually considered an opportunity to ask for things from God, who is usually visualized as an old man with a beard. If prayers are not answered, the child often gets angry and feels bitter toward God or abandoned by the Deity. At the end of this stage, prayer is better understood both as asking for things and as a method to talk to God. Moreover, the child begins to make the shift into looking at God's attributes rather than physical traits. The child is still disappointed when her/ his prayer is unanswered, and looks for explanations why this happened. Many children feel that if a prayer was unanswered it was because he/ she was not good enough, or did not pray hard enough. Consistent with Erikson's theory, a person whose prayers are unanswered feels guilty and inferior.

Robert Sears notes that "phase two" emphasizes family-centered learning. In order to minimize a child's behavioral problems, the teacher must enter into the youngster's primary learning environment. Thus, by teaching the whole family acceptable behaviors, the child will acquire positive modeling. Family education is important in teaching God to children because, like most subjects, lifetime learning occurs most effectively when a subject is taught through a variety of mediums and environments. Moreover, a person has an ongoing journey with God, which meanders through our life's experiences. It would be helpful to children to see their parents also

grappling with theological issues via family education programs. Robert Havighurst, from a similar school of thought, adds that the developmental tasks of middle childhood stem from three outward stimuli: out of the home and into a peer group, into the world of games that require neuromuscular skills, and into the world of adult communication, concepts, and logic. In order to support the developmental tasks, a child of this stage needs to acquire nine skills to be behaviorally successful and to better connect with her/ his peers. For example, he/she needs to acquire physical skills for ordinary games, to build wholesome attitudes toward the self, to relate to peers, and to understand one's gender role. In addition, the child requires fundamental skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic, must understand concepts necessary for everyday living, develop a conscience and scale of values, achieve personal independence, and, finally, generate thoughts toward social groups and institutions. Unlike the majority of theorists who feel that early childhood developmental tasks are the critical foundational pieces of later development, Sears and Havighurst both believe that the second stage marks the most crucial time of a child's growth.

Ira J. Gordon titles this stage as "School Days, School Days." Ironically, he perceives school to be second to the family in its impact on the child's sense of self. Because schools generally have children in classes solely by their ages, they generate a false impression of identity "sameness." Classrooms, however, are not homogeneous. A child's reading level, i.e. "the highest group" or "the slow group," significantly impacts a child's development, as does the child's relationship with her/ his teacher, the physical building layout, and the natural biases of her/ his teacher(s). Like many theorists, Gordon acknowledges that peers play an important role in shaping a child's development. A child

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who is mercilessly teased will have a very different global perspective than the child who is in the popular clique. Conflicting values often emerge within the youngster as he/ she interacts with individuals of other social cultures and classes.

During this stage, Gordon follows Erikson's reasoning that children see their parents as good, intelligent, powerful, and admirable while continuing to seek parental approval. A child develops beliefs about right and wrong and good and bad, as well as a growing understanding of "fairness" and "justice." She/ he recognizes rules and is capable of increased abstract knowledge (other theorists believe this comes later). It is critical that adults help children develop positive feelings about their background and experiences during this phase of life. Moreover, it is also important for adults to recognize linguistic differences based upon class and culture. Lev Vygotsky acknowledges verbal disparities based upon culture and class and again stresses the importance of speech and language during these formative years. Earlier he emphasized the importance of language chatter, now he notes that during this stage of childhood and for the remainder of a person's life, private speech essentially disappears and the child is simply able to partake in thinking and action.

Lawrence Kohlberg recognizes that during this second level, which he calls "Conventional," the laws and expectations of society are taken into account as the child strives to determine right from wrong. Moreover, the first stage of this level (Stage Three, or "Good-boy, Nice-girl Orientation,") focuses on the child's need for approval and her/ his attempt to please and help other people. Then, the second stage of this level shifts into a more global perspective. The Stage Four name, "Law and Order Orientation," acknowledges that the child recognizes the power of the social order and

shows respect for this authority. A child will be obedient to his/ her parents because of their authoritative position. Thus, level two affirms the idea that judgment is based upon other people's approval and emphasizes traditional values found within family and society.

Carol Gilligan supports a somewhat similar moral outlook during this second stage. She believes that an individual transitions into this category when one does the right thing according to society's standard. Moving away from a tenuous concept of the self, a person now defines goodness by self-sacrifice. The woman (and Gilligan recognizes that this idea may be shared by both genders) validates her claim to be included within society by adopting its values. She maintains her guilt to feel responsible for the actions of everyone, except herself. The woman's overriding concern, seen by other developmental theorists in later stages, is that her goodness allows her to be accepted by other people. One problem for a woman in this stage is that the traditional image of women conflicts with her desire for self-realization.

William Damon notes that one's early values still exist and serve as the ongoing basis for the child's moral development during this stage. He writes that morality is not based on pure rote; rather, it is based on experiences and actions. Damon quotes the Hartshorne and May study which proves that "even if one can recite the Ten Commandments, there is no bearing on [his/ her level of] honesty."[24] The global empathy of the previous stage now shifts into a more accurate conception of empathy. Now, there is a growing display of the relationship among specific situations, justice, and conduct.

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[24] William Damon. *The Moral Child: Nurturing Children's Natural Moral Growth.* New York: The Free Press, 1988, p. 7.

For example, many people would tell a lie to save a person's life in a death- threatening situation. As a child generally develops, her/ his morality also expands. In contrast to many theorists, Damon believes that a child no longer sees his/ her parents as omniscient or omnipotent and actively questions seemingly inconsistent messages. If a child is told that he/she can not do something, but sees the parent doing it, such as smoking, the child will have very inconsistent messages and his/ her moral code will be weaker. Furthermore, a child is wonderful at reading body language and the emotional charge within the words of adults. Thus, a child at this stage has a strong awareness of when to take an adult seriously and when to ignore the adult's message. The youngster also knows if something is wrong only at home or if it is wrong in general. In order for a child's moral awareness to continue to grow, parents must maintain proper and consistent authority.

"The Age of Conscience" or "the elementary school years" are the two terms that Robert Coles uses to define this developmental stage. It is an ideal time, according to Coles, for teaching a child how and why one should behave in certain ways. Because the child's fantasies are still prominent in this phase, the moral imagination has an ideal climate in which to grow and prosper. The youngster is very curious during this stage and is frequently asking "why." He/ she wants to please adults at this stage and uses a primary tool of mimicking adult thoughts and expressions. Thus, the youngster's questions press on adult morality as the child attempts to grapple with "good" and "bad." However, if morals are taught in an overly explicit manner, the child can become nervous and withdrawn and will constantly doubt his/ her instincts and actions. An adult must define moral terms, such as courage, and show the child various nuances about the word.

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In this manner, a child will be less likely to think that certain values are absolute in all circumstances. Courage, for example, could be a youngster touching a snake, trying a new food, or something more challenging like telling someone he/ she does not like to be teased. Therefore, in order to help a child succeed, an adult must define values in a variety of manners and allow the child to experience these different scenarios.

James Fowler uses similar age categories to Erik Erikson's eight ages. Thus, "stage two" or "mythical- literal faith" ranges from 6/7- 11 years. Here, a child strives to separate the real from the fantasy. She/ he gains skills in deductive and inductive logic and has a heightened capacity to verbalize her/ his experiences. God as Creator plays into strong imagery for a child during this phase and the youngster gains other stronger God concepts as well. For example, a child can accept the ideas of love, obedience to the Ten Commandments, and forgiveness at this developmental stage. God is considered to be with humanity at all times and is both in and outside of people. At this stage, the child also grasps stronger anthropomorphic imagery pertaining to God. As Erikson expressed, God is like a Parent; however, Fowler also notes that Divine mistakes are permitted in the child's mind. Another common idea in the mythical-literal stage is Divine reciprocity and the resulting concept of immanent justice. An adult can help teach a child in this stage through narration, as a technique to organize meanings. However, an adult must use caution in which Biblical stories to teach because meaning is both held and "trapped" in the narration. Because of a child's need for literal interpretations, moral rules and symbols are taken as absolute aspects of religion. One developmental weakness is the fervent belief in reciprocity and an over-controlling nature of God. As a child transitions into stage three, he/ she will have, in David Elkind's language "cognitive conceit," new

understanding of material which leads to a dismissal of all previous teachings and will feel as if only he/ she has the right answer. The child will then have to struggle to reconcile seemingly conflicting ideas, such as the Biblical creation story and scientific evolution.

Gabriel Moran reflects that his stage two corresponds with some of Fowler's first and second stages as well as stages three and four in their entirety. Thus, for the purpose of this paper, one need not explore his third stage, a stage for adults. Moran's stage two is called "Acquiring a religion," and looks at both communal religious beliefs and potential disbelief. The youngster will recognize that some things are living where as other things are not alive; moreover, the child will ask many questions to help remove the challenging mysteries of the universe. In this stage, a person will learn how to properly worship and, hopefully, how to succeed in life. An adult can help the child by teaching religious experiences and showing the importance of the symbols and rituals.

Ronald Goldman believes that this stage is simultaneously the more realistic religious stage than the previous one and a more skeptical stage for children. This stage, according to Goldman, occurs in children seven- ten years old. The child leaves the naïve fanciful God-imagery and shifts her/ his ideas into "technical artificialism." In other words, the previous stage child would note that the sun is a result of God using a match to light a fire in the sky. The child now, in contrast, would note that the sun is due to the condensation of clouds that come from God. The child would want different answers to questions that he/ she asked earlier about God. Her/ his skepticism would generate questions such as whether God lives in a house, how God can be everywhere, and if a person can see heaven. The Bible is no longer absolute in its truth; instead, it is viewed

as inspirational, but fallible, while being true in relation to the child's experiences. If an adult were to ask a child of this stage why Moses was afraid to look at God, the child would offer different answers than a few years earlier. Here, he/ she would respond that it is because God is a threatening man or power, because Moses did not attend synagogue (or church) regularly so God would be upset, or because God was a big ball of fire which might burn Moses. If an adult asked the child about the holiness of the ground upon which Moses stood, one could expect answers such as it was where God was standing, where God spoke to Moses, or because it was like a graveyard or synagogue (or church). Thus, the answers contain some "leftover" creativity, but are generally more logical and technical than the theological analysis of the previous stage.

"Identity versus Role-Confusion" (Twelve to eighteen years old)

Erikson's fifth "Age," and final age for the purpose of this paper, occurs within the framework of 12- 18 years of age: "Identity versus Role-Confusion," based on Freud's "Puberty and Adolescence." Appearance is of the utmost importance to an adolescent; she/ he is searching for "sameness" and conformity among his/ her peers while trying to rebel against existing systems. Moreover, an adolescent struggles to eliminate confusion about his/ her role; it is during the latter part of this "Age" that the integration of one's identity and ego occurs. Adolescents are in an ambiguous place within society as they are no longer children, yet they are not ready to take on the full list of responsibilities of adulthood. One's morality reflects this state of "in-betweenness," as a youngster's response often fluctuates between childlike arguments and adult solutions. Not

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surprisingly, the big concern during this "Age," according to Erikson, is the "who am I?" issue.

If a person fails to develop a sense of positive self- identity, the result will be that the individual will be dependent on other individuals to make choices. Additionally, the individual will feel a lack of being centered, as well as feel confused and unbalanced. If the failure to gain a positive identity is even more severe, the person will have identity crises throughout his/ her life. God will be seen as an unjust, evildoer, who suffocates the adolescent's freedom. As a result, the youth will move away from God because he/ she will feel that God is not necessary. On the other hand, if one successfully affirms the adolescent and supports his/ her changing identity, the youngster will be able to lessen his/ her fear of not fulfilling his/ her somewhat nebulous role. The adolescent will know that she/ he is supported and, therefore, will be more stable and more likely to succeed in positive ways. Moreover, he/ she will have a stronger sense of commitment to choices that positively enhance his/ her life. Instead of an unjust Deity, God will be understood as the Maker or Creator of all things, as Beloved and as a Loving Presence, despite the evils that exist in the world. Thus, it is important to help give adolescents many positive role- models, separate from their parents, and to give them resources to help them work through their personal problems and identity struggles. They need encouragement, realistic feedback, and for adults to be tolerant of their harmless fads.

Jean Piaget's final category is the "Formal-Operations" stage. A child between the ages 11-15 (other sources say this stage lasts until or through adulthood), is now able to respond to verbal hypotheses, reasoning, and abstract thoughts. She/ he can respond to hypothetical situations and construct an ideal world. Hence, the youngster is able to

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discuss "what is" as well as "what ought to be." The child can use reversibility, i.e. recite

the alphabet beginning at "A" or beginning at "Z." Now, one can coordinate a number of

variables to a problem or partake in multiple classifications at the same time. The

adolescent is able to identify all the factors that might affect a problem and then create

his/ her own solution or evaluate other people's responses. Although on some level, this

stage of youth has "decentered," in terms of moving away from an egocentric response,

he/ she takes on an adolescent-ego. Thus, the individual believes, for example, that

everyone is watching what he/ she eats and wears and how she/ he interacts. This

"imaginary audience," to use David Elkind's term, causes the Formal-Operational people

to struggle with self- decision making. At this point, an adolescent has lots of ideas and

sometimes struggles with having too many choices. Thus, in order for an adult to best

help an adolescent, one needs to present only a limited number of choices. Moreover,

adults need to continue to use concrete-operational strategies, as well as present

hypothetical questions. The adult must teach by using a range of ideas and subjects

relevant to the lives of these students. Finally, Piaget stresses that it is important to let an

adolescent problem-solve for her/himself, and for adults to step in only when absolutely

necessary.

David Elkind uses the word "adolescent" to label children ages 12- 16. According

to Elkind, this stage is the age of sexual maturity and adult physical status. Formal

abstract thoughts are fully developed, enabling the youngster, as Piaget mentioned, to

partake in hypothetical situations. Mentally, one reaches his/ her intellectual peak in

adolescence. Because abstract thinking is complete in this stage, the youngster will more

easily speak her/ his ideas, beliefs, hunches, and respond to a problem with various

solutions. Although one wants freedom from his/ her parents, he/ she also wants

intellectual, emotional, and material support from them. Elkind emphasizes that there are

three primary relationship categories in the adolescent's life: the youth with friends, with

parents and other adults, and with other peer groups. Females generally have one or more

"best friend(s)" with whom they are inseparable. Gradually, however, this shifts into a

larger group of girls. In the latter part of this stage, the girl shifts from her female friends

and moves toward males for mates. The boys, on the other hand, do not have a "best

friend," but, instead, are members of informal groups of all boys. As this stage develops,

boys' groups shift into mixed genders, and then to an almost exclusive pairing.[25] Because

of societal expectations, females tend to focus on verbal skills and minimize their time

spent on math and sciences. Males tend to do the reverse, focusing on math and science

while allowing their verbal skills to decline.

Another aspect of this developmental stage, according to Elkind, is the importance

of trends. They vary from food to clothing to "causes" and even to political and social

action. An adolescent generally regards all adults as extensions of one's parents, and,

therefore, is to be ignored. Occasionally, an adult will be idolized because he/she is the

"opposite" from the youngster's parents. Again, an adolescent shifts her/ his perspective

in understanding the essence of prayer. Now, prayer is recognized as a private form of

communication. God is personalized and often viewed as "Master" or "Father" (other

theorists believe that God is the "Father" in earlier stages, but not at this phase of life).

The adolescent's prayers become altruistic and more universal. If a prayer is not

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[25] Various scholars still hotly debate the question of whether these common social behaviors are biological or learned.

answered, the youngster realizes that he/ she has some responsibility in making it come true and also accepts that not all prayers have an apparent answer.

During this stage, Robert Sears recognizes that motivational systems are based upon learning primarily outside the family. Thus, teaching an adolescent becomes more challenging for school instructors and one hopes that previous patterns of positive behaviors continue to exist. Comparable to the majority of other developmental theorists, Sears believes that basic behaviors are already set at this point and adds that the teacher must simply correct wrong behavior. In order to help the adolescent be successful, a teacher should offer a lot of drills, repetitive tasks, and guided practical experiences.

Robert Havighurst notes that this period from 12- 18 years old is a time for youth to mature both physically and emotionally. The principle lessons are not intellectual, but rather emotional and social. As part of this emphasis, an adolescent needs active and "expressive activities," focusing on enjoying the present tense without overly worrying about the future. She/ he seeks independence from parents and families and searches for, as Erik Erikson calls it, "achievement of identity." During this stage, there are eight developmental tasks to strengthen the youth's feelings of success and happiness. For example, the individual needs to achieve more mature relationships with peers, fulfill his/ her gender role, and accept one's physical stature. Additionally, the person requires emotional independence from parents and other adults, begins to think about marriage, prepares for a career, acquires a set of values and systematic guide to behavior, and partakes in socially responsible behavior. However, Havighurst acknowledges that this last task is poorly accomplished. These different tasks are the hurdles that an adolescent must experience in order to provide better tools for later struggles in life.

Ira Gordon splits Erikson's category of children 12- 18 years into "preadolescence" and "later adolescence." His label of "preadolescence" coincides with other theorists' notions of later adolescence. For example, he believes that abstract thought is fully developed during this stage of life. A youngster no longer idolizes his/ her parents, instead she/ he relies on the peer group for primary support. Gordon somewhat contradicts himself because he notes, on the one hand, that a child has the ability to conceptualize about religion, but, on the other hand, states that "until age thirteen [children] tend to take Bible stories literally and deal with the material about God anthropomorphically."[26] For example, a preadolescent often explains the splitting of the Red Sea as intervention by God in natural forces, most often by directing the wind. If a child emphasizes the literal aspects of the Bible, then he/ she can not fully grasp the deeper meaning of religion. Another component of this developmental stage is that the child struggles to be free, while parents wrestle with the idea that their child is no longer a child. There is a lot of pressure for the youngster at this age and he/ she needs support and understanding at this juncture in life. A good relationship between the child and his/ her parents in the previous stages will significantly help reduce tension during this troubling stage.

"Later adolescence," according to Gordon, occurs at approximately age 15 and lasts until about 20. During this phase, the visible growth has nearly ended and the adolescent becomes both physically more stable and more emotionally at ease. According to a 1969 publication of Gordon, females at this stage are more focused on

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[26] Ira J. Gordon. *Human Development: From Birth Through Adolescence.* New York, Harper & Row Publishers, 1969, p. 236.

inter-personal relations, where as males stress occupational achievement. Another aspect of this developmental stage is the high need for consumption. Hence, in this stage, poor people who are unable to afford the modern trends have trouble maintaining a high social status. This fact plagues a person's long- term development. As a youngster nears the end of this developmental stage, he/ she forms one's own value system based upon his/ her interpretations of life's experiences. In order to help individuals succeed at this level, like many theorists, Gordon emphasizes that adults need to be understanding of fads and allow youngsters to involve themselves in healthy trends.

Lawrence Kohlberg considers this third and final phase of moral development to be "postconventional." In this level, a person has the ability to make judgments based on abstract thoughts and hypothetical situations. The fifth stage (or first within this level) focuses on a contractual and legalistic orientation and is called the "Social Contract Orientation." The individual defines his/ her duties in terms of contracts while attempting to avoid violating the rights of other people. The United States' Constitution, for example, reflects this level of morality. The last stage of Kohlberg's theory is that the individual's conscience is the principle factor in determining right and wrong. The stage, coined the "Universal Ethical Principle," reflects the individual's respect for freedom of choice. He/ she tries to be consistent and logical in her/ his responses because justice is an abstract notion. At this final stage, cognitive thought and action are blended together into one technique to determine absolute justice. Not all books agree that the stage five and six separations and other works by Kohlberg blend these two stages into one category of universal ethics.

Carol Gilligan, stemming from the same school of thought as Kohlberg, acknowledges the growing universal attitude within women at this point. Furthermore, she notes that the transition into this stage three domain helps a woman move from goodness to truth as the foundation for her judgment. At stage three, the woman internally endorses herself and supports herself, recognizing her own value to society. A female accepts responsibility for decision-making, whether it pertains to herself or other people. Her guiding moral code is to care for all people, including having time for "self-care". At this stage of her life, she is able to connect religion and morality and she realizes that life is a wonderful and mysterious present. Ideally, she now makes life-affirming decisions that benefit both herself and her community.

At this stage in life, William Damon emphasizes that children require a combination of democracy and control. In other words, an adolescent needs assertive kindness mixed together with leniency, as one tests her/ his own moral belief systems. A youngster craves respect from adults and hopes that he/she is taken seriously. At this domain in life, the adolescent understands obedience as a matter of choice. Mutuality, as well as intimacy, become two prime moral standards at this point. A child must know that his/ her parent trusts him/ her and respects him/ her. One's social circles significantly impact the youth's moral codes; hence, a parent must be aware of who is friends with her/ his child. At this stage, a child usually directs her/ his moral energy toward effective social action and an ability to control her/ his emotions. If an adolescent is unable to positively direct his/ her moral code or to control one's emotions, Damon quotes Robert Hogan who says that one of three things will result. One, a child will be a strong "moral realist," maintaining an insensitivity to the needs of others yet holding on

to a strong awareness of rules. Two, the child will become a "moral enthusiast," having high emotional sensitivity, but little global perspective. Three, the child will become a "moral zealot," displaying a strong sensitivity with little understanding of societal rules or one's place within society. It is this type of person who will most likely be a terrorist or someone who seeks aggressive confrontations with authority in the name of social justice.[27] Damon adds that the person could also become a morally self-indulgent person, placing his/ her needs at the center of his/ her moral code. Therefore, in order to help adolescents at this stage, parents and other adults need to openly share their own emotional reactions to different situations and encourage children, beginning at a young age, to share their feelings. Value clarification should not be avoided as it can help enhance a child's overall adjustment and self-esteem.

Similar to many other developmental theorists, Robert Coles simply calls this stage of life "adolescence." It is in this realm that a youngster faces a variety of emotions, simultaneously attempting to call attention to oneself while struggling to fit into the group. As a result, adults and children often have trouble communicating in this stage while the adolescents grapple with their frequently fluctuating emotions. Nevertheless, it is important for an adult to be honest and explicit in sharing the expected values and beliefs and teaching right and wrong. According to Coles, even if an adolescent does not admit this fact, he/ she wants a set of standards and values to help be the guide in his/ her life. In order to fully reach the adolescent, the adult needs to show love and understanding, and not act as a police officer or judge. Anna Freud, a child

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[27] William Damon. *The Moral Child: Nurturing Children's Natural Moral Growth*. New York: The Free Press, 1988, pp. 121- 122.

psychiatrist, comments in a similar vein: "the more I [Anna] hear a young person say that he or she doesn't trust anyone who isn't his or her age, the more I know the need of that person for someone to share feelings with!"[28]

James Fowler's third phase, and final stage for the purpose of this paper, reflects a wider perception than Erikson of the adolescent years and notes that the stage of "Synthetic- Conventional Faith" lasts from approximately age 12 through age 20. Because these are the years of conformity, authority becomes located externally to the self. The youngster will search for answers, even as he/ she articulates his/ her values. However, according to Fowler, many of the values stated in the earlier years of this stage are parroted from other people; it is only at the end of this stage that inner reflection is seen in a more prominent manner. During this stage, symbols and rituals are considered sacred, unless somebody actively trivializes them to the adolescent. In addition, God is considered to be ever- present and have inexhaustible depths while working in mysterious ways. If taught properly, as the adolescent struggles through rapid emotional changes, God can be understood as a Companion, Guide, and Supporter. Although a person's faith system is individualized, an adolescent often sees it as a conventional, global, and unified system. Fowler also comments upon faith developmental stages in adults; however, many people find equilibrium here at stage three.

The "logical- scientific" or the "abstract" stage of Ronald Goldman's religious development theory, begins earlier than the understandings of most other theorists, for Goldman emphasizes that it is for ages ten and above. This formal operational setting

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[28] Robert Coles. *The Moral Intelligence of Children: How to Raise a Moral Child.* New York, Random House, 1997, p. 160.

enables a child to think about hypothetical situations, even if she/ he has not formally had the experience. Although the holiness of the Bible still exists, it is no longer considered "true." Many of the youth are now taught Biblical scholarship and accept that the Bible has multiple authors. If a youngster were to ask about why Moses was afraid to look at God, the answers would reflect one's developmental growth. For example, a child might respond that Moses, like all people, has sin within him, and therefore hesitated to look at God. Another answer might be that the magnificence of God would make Moses feel like a small creature. If an adult asked about the holiness of the ground upon which Moses stood, solutions might be either that everywhere can be holy space or that the presence of God is like a magnetic field, in which God is everywhere but the pole is in one spot. With the answers to these questions, one can see and understand the more developed thinking within this stage child, according to Goldman's perspective.

Conclusion

The many theorists' positions enable the reader to obtain a strong sense of developmental theory. Although not all the information gleaned from the research of the many theorists is incorporated into this work, both the research and this paper itself created a strong groundwork for the author. General concepts of each theorist allows the author to put the various studies together in order to more expertly teach children about God. Erik Erikson's psycho- social developmental theory, for example, emphasizes one's journey of conscience to dependence to value dependence, and finally, to independence. The goal at each "Age" is "achievement," or dominance of the first term; yet, there is

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always a fear of failure intermingled with the hope of success. The psychological-social approach stresses the importance of perspective taking and helps encourage moral realism. Thus, this structure of developmental philosophy focuses on the relationship of the person's environment and the individual's emotional needs. Ideally, at the end of adolescence, a person will have a healthy sense of trust, autonomy, initiative, industry, and identity. They will serve as the foundation for on going problem solving and enable the adult to better cope with life.

Along with Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget's name is also most often used as a groundwork for educational theory. Piaget believes that a child's cognitive development travels from action to thought, and from accommodation, that is trying to process new information, to assimilation, trying to blend new information and experiences with the older matter, and finally, to equilibration. Moreover, Piaget does not believe that there are actual ends to the various stages. Rather, he believes that the constant goal is equilibration (other sources use the term equilibrium), finding a balance between the cognitive building blocks and the information from experiences. Although children "progress" through the stages and are able to substitute more mature ideas with less mature notions, on some level they still hold on to their earlier thoughts. Hence, it is very important that the information taught at earlier ages be correct in some manner in order to avoid it having to be "untaught." Piaget provided experiential data to validate Kant's principle that space, time, and causality is not perceived by the senses, but from the mind. Another general concept of Piaget's study is the stress on the idea that in order for an object to be meaningful, the child must experience it. According to some theorists, one problem with Piaget's stages is that there is a lack of consistency in the manner of

children's thinking. As a result, a child could grasp the idea of conservation in an area such as numbers, before grasping the same idea of conservation in an area such as weight. Another challenge to Piaget's thinking is that sometimes a child may not be able to respond to a problem simply because he/ she does not understand the instructions, rather than the problem itself. Furthermore, different cultures and societies stress various pieces of information as important or unimportant. Nevertheless, his work serves as a critical foundation for developmental growth.

Anita Woolfolk, synthesizing the concepts from many developmental theorists, notes the importance of enhancing cognitive thoughts. She explains that true understanding is "being able to do a variety of thought- demanding things with a topic – like explaining, finding evidence and examples, generalizing, applying, analogizing, and representing the topic in new ways."[29] In order for adults to teach children, Woolfolk notes that every lesson needs examples and non-examples, relevant and irrelevant objects, the name of the object, and a clear definition. Furthermore, she adds the importance of problem solving through the use of the acronym IDEAL: Identifying the problem or opportunity, Defining the goals, Exploring possible strategies, Anticipating outcomes, and Looking back to learn.

Woolfolk explored various cognitive teaching models to help adults enable children to succeed. Jerome Bruner, for example, emphasizes active learning and teaching through frameworks and hierarchies. He promotes group learning to allow children to discover basic principles on their own. In addition, he encourages adults to use inductive learning, examples, and guided discovery. It is important in this model, as

Woolfolk suggested, to present both examples and non-examples, to help children see connections among the concepts, and to ask open- ended questions. David Ausubel promotes expository teaching/ reception learning. Relationships, according to his method, are based upon verbal communication. Thus, the teacher would present the complete material, moving from the general to the specific. Robert Gagne, stresses the instructional events model, promoting the learner as an active, not passive role. John Dewey utilizes the inquiry- learning approach in which the teacher presents a challenging situation and students gather data and test their hypotheses. Clearly, there are many cognitive learning approaches that will result in greater learning success for children.

David Elkind, studying children ages 6 through 16 as the most crucial for the growth of academic skills, believes that a child's development moves from the egocentric to the socio-centric. Intellectually, the child substitutes more mature ideas with less mature ones, as well as integrates the older and newer experiences. He recognizes that his developmental stages are targeted toward white, middle- class people. Thus, youngsters from other realms may struggle if they attempt to fit into Elkind's models. His theories do not dramatically differ from Piaget's; however, he does add in a higher involvement of the sociological perspective.

Robert R. Sears, a behavioralist, is often compared both to Piaget and Erikson. Yet, the reality is that his approach is different in that he believes causes and effects are cyclical and impact all future behavior. He focuses on the manner in which people behave, rather than Piaget's point of view stressing thought or Erikson's perspective that emphasizes psycho-social relationships. Although Sears' phases do not have clear age

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[29] Anita Woolfolk. *Educational PsychologSeventh Edition*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998, p. 288.

frames, one can understand them in context of other theorists. Robert Havighurst, also a behavioralist, is criticized because he does not emphasize how one "succeeds" at his different developmental tasks. Rather, the tasks' goals are simply that they need to be accomplished to help one's growth.

Another component to Ira Gordon's socio-cultural studies that impact his developmental theory is the reflection of birthing order of children. For example, Gordon notes that a first- born youngster is better oriented toward a strong desire to achieve; yet, at the same time, she/ he is more likely to surrender in the face of difficulties. A first-born child tends to be less secure than his/ her sibling(s), is more likely to hide feelings, and more frequently perceive himself/ herself to be inadequate. Finally, first- born children "recover less readily from upsets as well as anger."[30] The middle child tends to be more sociable and craves a higher quantity of physical affection. The youngest child strives for individuality within the family. She/ he feels very secure and is the most sociable of the various siblings. Thus, these factors are important as they affect the sociological development of children. Some theorists criticize Gordon's writing because of the inconsistencies that exist about certain points. For example, at one point he comments that race awareness and prejudice develops before age three and at another place he notes that it is during the school years. Nevertheless, his look at specific cultural models enhances the ideas behind socio-cultural developmental growth.

Lev Vygotsky, from the socio-cultural school of thought, is often compared to Jean Piaget. However, whereas Piaget described the child as a "little scientist who

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[30] Ira J. Gordon. *Human Development: From Birth Through Adolescence.* New York, Harper & Row Publishers, 1969, p. 44.

constructed the world largely alone," Vygotsky believes that "cognitive development

depends on interactions with people in their world and tools that the culture provides."[31]

Vygotsky also states that the "curve of development does not coincide with the curve of

school instruction; by and large, instruction precedes development."[32] Vygotsky

emphasizes the role of dialogues between children and more knowledgeable members of

society. Children learn by mimicking other individuals and then eventually taking on

thoughts and actions as their own. Furthermore, teachers and other adults can help

children gain linguistic prowess by telling their families the upcoming goals and activities

in the classroom. Parents can be involved in curriculum decisions and the whole family

can have "homework" to help enhance positive reinforcement. One drawback to his

method, which he acknowledges, is that lower-class children have a difficult time

learning language because their parents often speak differently, using different words

and/or grammar, than the child's teachers.

Lawrence Kohlberg's studies about moral development are very important in

helping to teach right and wrong. His levels and stages, are in the shape of a ladder, with

a goal of climbing upward in heightened sensitivity to right and wrong. In fact, he even

reflects that stage seven, one not previously mentioned, is transcendence and perfect

harmony, which leads to pantheism. Thus, he calls himself a "mystic." During this

mystical realm, the individual's self disappears and there is universal unity in moral

responses. Despite the importance of his theories, there are various critiques directed

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[31] Anita Woolfolk. *Educational Psychology: Seventh Edition.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998, pp. 44-45.
[32] W. Waetjen, ed. *Learning and Mental Health in the School.* "New Conceptions of Children's Learning and Development." Washington, D.C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1966, pp. 61-62.

toward Kohlberg's works. For example, his stages do not seem sequenced, separated, or consistent. He is simultaneously looking at the rights of individuals and of groups, but sometimes, there are differing moral goals. Moreover, the "stages" do not have clear correct choices; for example, if a man's wife is dying of cancer and only a very expensive drug could save her, should the husband steal the drug? Although Kohlberg's ideal is for everyone to strive toward stage six, he acknowledges that only a minority moves beyond stage four. Furthermore, Kohlberg is criticized because he does not accept the idea that religion may have a strong effect on moral responses.

Carol Gilligan is another critic of Kohlberg because his stages favor the Western man and they neither support women's responses nor other cultural answers. However, her moral development theory is founded upon Kohlberg's ideas, but also looks mainly at one gender. She looks at males primarily only in contrast to females, because she believes that the majority of development theories look at males. Thus, like Sears and Havighurst, her theory would be incomplete if left on its own; yet, with other theories to help balance it, her theory is an important tool in better understanding growth and development.

William Damon looks at culture and gender to help explore moral development. He recognizes that everyday moral choices have a mixture of practicality and general principle. He also comments that many people shy away from teaching morals in schools; however, he is emphatic that one can never ignore value clarification exercises in schools. Moral dilemmas always arise and, thus, it is important to have teachers promote awareness, tolerance, and individual choice. A teacher can use debates, role- playing, discussions, and projects, to encourage the individual growing thought processes of the

students. The goal, according to Damon, is to help children reason about moral problems, make their own decisions, and apply basic moral values to unfamiliar experiences.

Robert Coles emphasizes that all children need moral, cognitive, psychological, and intelligent direction. Although a lot of children's' values are experienced through one's instincts, adults need to actively teach children morals and help reenact different scenarios. Moreover, introspection and a spiritual life serve as the foundation for values and need to be an active part of the child's life. Coles believes that how one behaves toward another human outweighs the "why" which surrounds the action. The average child will go through various phases of loving, defending, obeying, angrily disobeying, and ignoring God. Children ask a lot of questions as they grow and their minds develop, especially about God and the way of the world, and it is important to share one's own perception and/ or struggles so youngsters understand that their questions and emotions are valid.

James Fowler looks at the theories of Erikson, Piaget, and Kohlberg as the foundations for his faith development studies. Fowler discusses the notion of faith and the surrounding concepts in great depth. Moreover, he acknowledges that it takes practice and deliberation to actually notice one's own faith journey and make it active, rather than a passive experience. Faith, comprising of both rationality and passion, involves qualitative transformations. Additionally, there are three major components of faith: core values whether they are causes, concerns, or people; images of power(s); and master stories that are told and interpreted. As the tide toward spirituality heightens, more and more people are recognizing the importance of actively enhancing one's faith.

Fowler remains the leader in studying faith development as an essential aspect to one's complete developmental growth.

Gabriel Moran, focusing on religious educational development, provides various instructional steps and models to enhance one's faith. For example, he uses the model of Ralph Tyler to explain that there are four basic instructional components: objectives, selection of experiences, organization, and evaluation. In this manner, an adult helps a child learn religious education and teaches what the child *should* learn, rather than what the youngster *could* learn. Following Kieran Egan's lead, who emphasizes four stages of religious educational development (mythic, romantic, philosophic, and ironic), Moran adds a stage at the beginning, the physical, and one at the end, the leisurely. Moran also touches upon Elliot Eisner's theory that there are five basic components to curriculum: cognitive process, academic rationalism, personal relevance, social reconstruction, and technology. Moreover, there are four main learning environments: the family which teaches communication, the school, which teaches knowledge, the job which teaches a work ethic, and leisure time which stresses wisdom. Thus, Gabriel Moran not only discusses his religious developmental theory, but also provides basic tools and models to help an adult teach a child. As a result of following Moran's religious development techniques, one will provide an opportunity to enable himself/ herself to be on an "inner/ outer journey that leads to the center where peace and justice reside."[33]

As another religious developmental theorist, Ronald Goldman discusses in greater depth the notion of Biblical stories. He believes that if the stories are taught too early,

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[33] Gabriel Moran. *Religious Education Development: Images for the Future.* Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1983, p. 207.

"religious concepts" will be built very early as well and can often cause tension at later stages in life. Thus, his ideal is that a person begins teaching religious stories around fourth grade, or approximately around ages nine or ten. However, he acknowledges that most religious institutions begin teaching Biblical stories as early as preschool. Furthermore, Goldman comments, when starting a child's Biblical education at such a young age, the child is learning primarily by rote. Often, one can mishear or misunderstand the teacher or the story, resulting in theological misunderstandings or difficulties. In addition, he stresses, religious teachings contain a lot of mystery with ideas not easily taught to adults, never mind to children. He believes that religious thinking must be taught in an intellectual manner; yet, children need to learn by experiences. Thus, there are major struggles that arise when religion, or faith, is taught too early and Goldman vehemently emphasizes the importance of teaching Biblical stories at a later age than is customary.

The numerous developmental theorists within the above pages create a foundation of educational knowledge. Thus, the author of this paper will have the child development knowledge from preschool through adolescence in which to formulate ideas about teaching children about God. There are various reoccurring themes in the multitude of developmental theories. For example, a child from preschool to age six will need actual experiential learning to help enhance his/ her awareness of a subject. Moreover, the child needs love, support, and encouragement as she/ he tests new materials. Adults must act in a manner that complements, not contradicts, their words. Children will ask many questions at this developmental stage and desire clear and concise responses that pertain to their ways of understanding the world.

A child between the ages of six and twelve, for instance, will have many other influences than at the previous stage. Thus, parents must ensure that they continue to provide a loving and supportive home in order that a child gain strength as he/ she enters his/her new world of school and rules. The child's reasoning and knowledge will dramatically grow, enabling adults to teach higher levels of information. Adolescence, ages twelve through eighteen, marks a time of great change and fluctuation, a time when the world of peers becomes all encompassing. The youth will be able to generate answers to hypothetical questions and participate in abstract thinking. They need choices as well as rules as they learn to formulate values on their own. In order to establish an optimal method for helping parents and teachers instruct children about God, one needs a variety of approaches. One may find help through the psychological- social approach of Erikson, the cognitive approach of Piaget, the socio-cognitive approach of Elkind, or the behavioralist approaches of Sears and Havighurst. In addition, one can access the socio-cultural outlooks of Gordon and Vygotsky, the moral techniques of Kohlberg, Gilligan, Damon, Coles, and the faith developmental studies of Fowler, Moran, and Goldman. With the many theories, the hope will be to recognize the importance of the various approaches, and compile the information accordingly to optimally help adults teach children about God.

CHAPTER TWO

Introduction

Throughout Jewish history, Jews have grappled with the concept of God and the mysteries of the universe. Often, people think that Judaism is based solely on one's actions and not on one's beliefs. Thus, many individuals state that Judaism is a religion of "deed, not creed." In an over-simplified manner, it is indeed an appropriate perception. One can be an inactive Jew while maintaining a strong faith in God; however, one can also be an active Jew and have a skeptical, doubting belief in the existence of God, or be a person with any combination of action and belief. In contrast to Christianity, which clearly states that part of being Christian is the belief in Jesus as the Christ, Judaism does not have one mandatory and universal theological concept. There are believing and disbelieving Jews, cultural Jews, religious Jews, social action-oriented Jews, ritual-oriented Jews, and more. Furthermore, the Jewish views on God are quite diverse, ranging from a variety of beliefs such as God as the Creator, the Ruler, the Lover, or God as a force. The emphasis of the "deed, not creed" motif, certainly a critical component of Jewish life, overrides active theological teachings. But, the reality is that the Jewish people have a creed as well.

This chapter will review synopses of various Jewish understandings pertaining to God over the thousands of years of Jewish history. Often, individuals altogether avoid the subject of the Deity, for he/she is embarrassed that he/she does not really know the answers to life's difficult questions or he/she does not like the solutions. Yet, throughout

Jewish history, Jews have attempted to better understand and become closer to the Deity. None of us really grasp a complete understanding of life's mysteries; however, the different theological approaches can serve as foundations for our own belief systems and allow us to gain comfort and make sense of the world.

On a related note, many Jewish theologians understand God in masculine terms, but the author of this thesis wishes to remain true to her belief system that God is beyond gender. Hence, unless there is a direct quote that uses male God language, all references to God will be generic, enabling each individual to create his/ her own conclusions. Different theologians emphasize various aspects of God. However, some of the Divine aspects discussed will be God's name, God's nature, God's relationship with the world, with Jews, and with individuals, how humans can "know" God, what God "wants" from us, and the issue of theodicy. This chapter will not endeavor to provide definitive, absolute answers to theological questions. Instead, it will present a variety of approaches, hoping that some concepts will serve as models to better enable adults to proactively, rather than passively or reactively, teach children about God.

Biblical Period

As the groundwork for Jewish beliefs, the Bible itself offers a diverse understanding of God's nature. In contrast to the present day, the Bible never questions the existence of God. Rather, the sacred text assumes that there is a Deity and grapples with who is God and what is God's role. In fact, the very first words of the Bible (Genesis 1:1) serve as proof of the Deity's existence and actually acknowledge part of

God's job description: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth..."[1]

Hence, the first of many Biblical images of the Deity is God the Creator. Another important concept found in the Bible is the idea that people are created in the image of God. Thus, every individual has the responsibility of acting in a holy and Godly manner. An additional Biblical idea is that God is both a forgiving and merciful Being who wants to see humans succeed. On the other hand, the Bible also portrays God as a jealous and vengeful Deity. The Divine actively interacts with humans, both positively, as in the gift of Isaac to Sarah and Abraham, or negatively, as in punishing Cain for the murder of his brother.

In addition to God's actual name, *YHVH*, the Bible also uses *Elohim* (both terms are often translated as Lord) as a common epitaph of God. Throughout the Bible, God has many descriptive terms that reflect God's attributes. For instance, God is a "God of knowledge,"[2] "Still, Small Voice,"[3] God is "everlasting,"[4] "The Lord of Hosts,"[5] and "is Good."[6] These are only a small sampling of the diverse epitaphs for the Divine; in fact, the Bible has seventy- two different names for the Deity. According to many scholars, the essence of God's attributes is summarized in the Book of Exodus: "The Lord, The Lord, God is merciful and gracious, endlessly patient, loving and true, showing mercy to thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and granting pardon."[7] As expressed, God is not only a merciful and loving Deity, but also a judging and punishing

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[1] Unless otherwise noted, all Biblical quotations come from *The Jerusalem Bible: The Holy Scriptures*. Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 1992.
[2] I Samuel 2:3.
[3] I Kings 19:12.
[4] Isaiah 40: 28.
[5] Malachi 3:17.
[6] Psalms 34:9.
[7] Exodus 34:6-7. This translation comes from *Gates of Repentance: The New Union Prayerbook for the Days of Awe*. New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1978, p. 122.

One. Another Biblical idea is the acknowledgement that other deities exist; however, *YHVH* is the sole protector of Israel. God is active in the human realm, as seen by the creation and redemption stories, and is the One who brought order into an otherwise chaotic world. As the human protector, God expects every individual to fulfill his/ her end of the covenant. Finally, as expressed in the story of Job, the Bible does not really understand the reason for good people's suffering, and simply accepts afflictions as an unfortunate part of life.

Rabbinic Period

The Rabbinic, or Talmudic, Era,[8] which follows the Biblical Period, builds on the God images found in the Bible, but also shifts the perceptions of the Divine in ways pertaining to the rabbis' needs. For example, the rabbis of the Talmudic Era were so concerned with dualism (having two gods, one of whom is the god of good and the other of whom is the god of evil), it is not surprising that they do not even acknowledge the existence of other gods. Where as the Bible recognized various deities but declared *YHVH* to be the true Deity, the rabbis simply declared all other "gods" to be idols. Furthermore, during this era, many additional names for God were created. The rabbis' base these new names upon their views of the sacred Biblical stories. For instance, God is "The Mighty One (*Hagevurah*), The Merciful One (*Harachaman*), The Holy One Blessed be He (*Hakadosh Baruch Hu*), The Place (*Hamakom*), The Master of the

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[8] The Rabbinic Era lasted until approximately 500 C.E. During this period, numerous rabbis passed down the Oral Tradition from generation to generation. The rabbis wrote in a combination of Hebrew and Aramaic, creating the *Mishnah* and *Gemarah*, which join together as the Talmud. In these compilations, one may find legal, sermonic, religious, historic, and moral material.

Universe (*Ribono Shel Olam*), The One Who Spoke and the World Came into Being (*Mi She'amar V'hayah Haolam*), and Our Father in Heaven (*Avinu Shebashamayim*)."[9] In the rabbis' minds, these epitaphs reflect some of God's more important attributes, such as might, mercy, and holiness. Additionally, the names reflect the simultaneous and seemingly contradictory beliefs that God is omnipresent, who exists above, beyond, and within the world, as well as the One who dwells in Heaven and is the Master over all life. The rabbis also note that God is "The Light of the World,"[10] "The Eye of the World,"[11] "The Ancient One of the World,"[12] and "The Righteous One of the World."[13] Like the previous list, the names in this list signify some of the most important Godly attributes to the rabbis. Again, there is such a diverse approach to God imagery in rabbinic literature that it is only possible to give a small sample. Another component to the rabbinic naming of God is the explanation that *YHVH* reflects God's mercy and *Elohim* reflects God's justice because of the way the terms are distinctly used in the Bible.

Although there are some rabbis who object to depicting God in human terms, the majority of rabbis readily accept both anthropomorphic (representing the Divine with a human form) and anthropopathic (representing the Divine with human emotions) God imagery. Some other generally accepted ideas are God's omniscience as well as omnipotence, and that God is a Deity who loves Israel as a parent loves his/ her child. Because the Written and Oral Torah is God's gift to the Jewish people, according to the rabbis, the bond between Israel and God is forever and is absolutely unbreakable. God has also given every human *yetser hatov* and *yetser harah*, the good inclination and the

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[9] Rifat Sonsino and Daniel B. Syme. *Finding God: Ten Jewish Responses.* Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc, 1993, p. 26.
[10] Midrash Tanhuma 4:24b.
[11] Genesis Rabbah 42:2.

evil inclination; it is up to each individual to make appropriate choices. Thus, one way for a person to better "know" God is following her/ his good inclination and making positive choices. Another method is through prayer, a tool that will bring God's transcendent and remote nature closer to humanity. On the other hand, some rabbis already accepted God's immanence and believed that God is like a friend who "is near in every kind of nearness."[14] Like the Biblical image, the rabbis note that God takes a personal interest in all of humanity and an extra special interest in the world of the Jews. A person's misery comes from sin, according to many rabbis, and the individual's suffering will purify her/ his soul and lead her/ him to salvation. Where as the Bible considered death to be a final act, the rabbis believe in afterlife and bodily resurrection. Hence, a righteous person who suffers in this world will be rewarded in the next world. However, although a concept of the afterlife exists, the rabbis stress the importance of living in today's world. Because people do not know the future, it is always critical to follow one's good inclination. Thus, the rabbis have built upon the Biblical imagery of God, in order to heighten and connect their needs with the Godly sphere.

Philo[15] lived during the rabbinic era but came from a very different school of thought: Greek culture that served as a foundation for his theological beliefs. He believed that God is One, while being indescribable who cannot be named. Thus, he reflected that because of humanity's limited language, all one can do is refer to God as *Ontos*, a Greek term meaning "That which exists," or "Being." Moreover, even when a

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[12] Ruth Rabbah 21.
[13] Babylonian Talmud. *Yoma* 37a.
[14] Jerusalem Talmud. *Berachot* 13a.
[15] Philo Judaeus lived from approximately 20- 50 C.E. in Alexandria, a city in northern Egypt. He was both a diplomat and a scholar, with vast knowledge about his Jewish roots as well as in philosophy and the sciences. Philo wrote a variety of essays and commentaries in the favored scholarly language: Greek. For

person refers to God's attributes, one is limited in understanding the enormity of what is God. Hence, according to Philo, one can only really comment upon God's negative attributes, such as the idea that God is not unholy. Despite the Divine's incorporeality, God is able to control the world as well as interact with humans through *logos*, a Greek term for "word" or "speech." God is not the cause of evil, according to Philo, but rather evil is generally a test of one's faith or a result of the error(s) of one's ancestors.

Medieval Period

After the Biblical and Rabbinic Eras, there were no significant changes in Jewish theological scholarship for a few hundred years until the Medieval period. Although there is some discrepancy about the dates of the medieval era, most scholars accept the perspective that it ranges from the Ninth through the Thirteenth Centuries. During this period, many nations created harsh laws against the Jews or attempted to convert them to Christianity, with penalties of exile or death for those individuals who opted to maintain Jewish loyalties. It was a time of world trouble for the Jews, causing many of the Jewish theological ideas to shift. Thus, instead of simply acknowledging the existence of God, people began showing more agnostic tendencies and began questioning the actual existence of God. The evidence of this theological change stems from the theologians who now sought to create proofs of God's existence, rather than immediately discussing who/ what is God.

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more information about Philo, among other sources, one may read Rifat Sonsino and Daniel B. Syme's book *Finding God: Ten Jewish Responses*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1986.

One of the earliest Medieval theologians, Saadia Gaon,[16] for instance, believed

that the Jewish religious obligation is to provide a rational basis for Torah. Thus, he felt

a need to prove the existence of God and the Jewish faith. He acknowledged four main

sources of knowledge: sense perception, self- evident principles (e.g. truth telling),

inferential knowledge, and reliable tradition. These four components blend together to

help support his ideas of proof that God is the Creator of the world. According to Saadia,

God is not only the Creator, but God is also the cause of all corporeality. God's essential

qualities are incorporeality, life, power, and wisdom, which join together as part of the

Divine's Oneness. God demands that the Jewish people act in a gracious manner, say

thank you for the *mitzvot* (commandments) via prayers, and that humans do not utter the

Divine name in vain. An individual should avoid describing God in anthropomorphic

language; however, because of one's linguistic limitations, if one were to use

anthropomorphic language, then the term must be understood in an allegorical manner.

Finally, sharing the belief of the rabbis, Saadia explains that when righteous people

suffer, they will be rewarded in the world to come.

Many of the Medievalists focus upon God as the Creator. Isaac ben Solomon

Israeli,[17] for example, notes that it was God's goodness, love, power, and will that created

the world out of nothing. Solomon ben Judah Ibn Gabriol[18] emphasizes that the names

for the Deity reflect mystical symbols pertaining both to the Creator and to wonders of

creation. Ibn Gabriol views God as a personal Deity, of whom he may turn in

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[16] Saadia Gaon is a Ninth Century Biblical Scholar and philosopher who translated the Bible into Arabic. He appealed to his senses of philosophy and reason even more than precedent and religious authority. His most famous book is *Beliefs and Opinions*.

[17] For additional information, please see Steven T. Katz, ed. *Jewish Philosophers*. New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1975.

[18] For a fuller picture, read Steven T. Katz, ed. *Jewish Philosophers*. New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1975.

supplication or confession. Bahya Ibn Paquda[19] moves somewhat away from the idea of

God as Creator; instead, he comments in greater detail that the foundation of religion is

the existence of God. Moreover, according to Ibn Paquda, one must trust in God because

God is good and humble. It is a human's responsibility to fulfill one's duties to God via

repentance, temperance, and self-examination. Through these mechanisms, one will

come to love God. Another major medieval theologian is Judah Halevi.[20] He focused on

God's great love for all people, but especially for the Jews. Although God is occasionally

a harsh and remote judge, a person's good deeds will lead him/ her toward a heightened

experience of sensing God's presence.

Aristotelian Period

The next major theological and philosophical trend of Jewish history is

Aristotelianism, occurring from approximately the Twelfth through the Seventeenth

Centuries. The primary emphases within this school of thought are that the world must

be understood through science and that the world is eternal. Abraham ben David Halevi

Ibn Daud[21] is the primary precursor to the most famous Aristotelian, Maimonides. Ibn

Daud stated that God has absolute unity, simplicity, and uniqueness and that God is the

Prime Mover. Similar to Philo, Daud believed that God could not be known in any

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[19] Bahya Ibn Paquda's greatest piece of writing is *Duties of the Heart*. For more information about Ibn Paquda, one can find information in Steven T. Katz, ed. *Jewish Philosophers*. New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1975.

[20] Judah Halevi is an Eleventh Century Spanish writer. In addition to Judah Halevi's poetic contributions to society, his most famous philosophical essay is *The Kuzari*. For more information about Halevi or other medieval theologians, one may read a variety of sources. For example, one will find information in Steven T. Katz, ed. *Jewish Philosophers*. New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1975.

[21] For additional information, one can read Steven T. Katz, ed. *Jewish Philosophers*. New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1975.

positive manner; rather, one can discuss God only in negative terms. Despite God's

qualified omniscience, humans received their absolute intellect from God. Although Ibn

Daud did not comment upon evil, he did note that the Torah and Jewish laws exist to

teach people to be obedient to God.

The most well-known Aristotelian (also labeled as a Rationalist or Neo-

Aristotelian), Maimonides[22], stressed that the Divine image is found in the essence of

every individual, rather than through a person's physicality. Like his predecessors,

Maimonides believed that God is One and stressed the importance of proving the

existence of the Divine Being. In fact, Rambam (also known as Maimonides)

demonstrated God's reality by noting the many discrepancies between reason and

revelation (i.e. science/ philosophy and Scripture/ Rabbinic texts) and reflecting that only

with the existence of God could that tension sustain itself. He believes that the two

pieces work together through the overlap of science and revelation. Moreover,

Maimonides demonstrated God's reality through an either-or argument: both the world is

eternal and therefore God exists or the world was created out of nothing and therefore

God exists. In other words, no matter what one's perspective, there is a God. Another

aspect of Maimonides' ideas about God is that a person can not truly state God's

attributes; however, similar to some of his predecessors, Maimonides acknowledges that

sometimes a person's linguistic limits cause him/ her to state God's attributes. If one

declares the Divine's attributes, he/she is really referring to attributes of action. For

example, if someone acknowledged that God is Merciful, the real meaning of that

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[22] Maimonides (also known as Rambam) was born in 1135 in Cordoba, Spain; however, his family moved several times and he eventually settled in Egypt. He was a philosopher, physician, and writer who wrote a variety of pieces on astronomy, logic, medicine, and theology in both Arabic and Hebrew. Rambam, considered one of the greatest scholars of all Jewish history, died in 1204 and was buried in Palestine. For

statement is that God acts mercifully. Because God has omniscience, according to Maimonides, all of God's *mitzvot* are to be understood as a product of Divine wisdom. Rather than Maimonides simply following the rabbinic perspective about evil,[23] he claimed that evil is simply an absence of good. Moreover, the only true beliefs about the Divine Being that one can possess are God's existence, unity, and incorporeality. All other aspects of life do not incorporate God's reality nor do they have absolute proof. A person has the ability and obligation to sanctify God's name by leading a committed life of integrity and honesty, and remembering God's Oneness by one's daily recitation of the *Shema*.[24] Furthermore, one must simultaneously love and fear God.

As mentioned, it is impossible for a person to truly speak about God's essence; nevertheless, individuals crave an opportunity to speak about God in that manner. Thus, according to the Maimonides, one ought to use only the attributes (found in Exodus 34) expressed by Moses. Otherwise, a person will actually insult the Deity rather than praise and glorify God. Despite Maimonides' commitment to avoid positive attributes in a description of God, Maimonides declares in his *Guide to the Perplexed* that God is a "*Hasid* (one possessing loving- kindness) because He brought the all into being; a *Tzaddik* (righteous) because of His mercy toward the weak... [and] a Judge because of the occurrence in the world of relative good things and of relative great calamities necessitated by judgment that is consequent upon wisdom."[25] Thus, Maimonides indeed proclaims some positive attributes pertaining to God. The declaration of the Thirteen

more information about Maimonides, one can look at Isadore Twersky, ed. *A Maimonides Reader*. New York: Behrman House, Inc., 1972.

[23] The Rabbinic perspective about evil is that if something bad happens to a good person in this life, he/ she will be rewarded in *ha'olam habah*, the next world. If a person is bad in this life, she/ he will be punished in the next world. Thus, the rabbis support Divine justice.

[24] Deuteronomy 6:4.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 352.

Principles, one of Maimonides most famous pieces of writing, has caused hundreds of years of controversy. Many Jews, such as the Yemenites, found it imperative that individuals follow these principles; other Jewish groups, however, did not accept that the principles were definitive criteria in determining who is a Jew. The following list serves as the hallmark to his principles: one must believe in the existence of the Creator and affirm that God is both One and is incorporeal. God is the One who is absolutely eternal and only God is rightfully worshipped, magnified, and obeyed. One must believe in prophecy and recognize that Moses is the chief of all prophecy who gave us the whole that is entirely from God. Moreover, the Torah (oral and written) is authentic from God. God knows all that men [people] do and never turns away from them, rewarding those who do *mitzvot* and punishing those who transgress its admonitions. One must believe that the Messiah will come and [finally] believe in the resurrection of the dead. As stated, Maimonides meant for these guiding rules to be universal Jewish creed. However, despite his proclamation that the rules were absolute, there have always been Jews who have not believed in every one of the thirteen principles.

There are even Aristotelians who disagree with some of Maimonides' points. For example, Levi ben Gershon (Gersonides)[26] noted that one might use positive attributes for God without worrying about insulting the One, as long as the reflections are based upon the Deity's actions. God's essence, for instance, is thinking and Divine knowledge envelops every event within the world, with the exception of acts of individual choice. God gave the Jewish people the Torah to help Israel attain intellectual and moral

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[26] For more information about Gersonides, one may look at Steven T. Katz, ed. *Jewish Philosophers*. New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1975.

perfection, which in turn, serves as the foundation of immortality. Hasdai Crescas[27] reflected that one could not be told to believe in God; rather one's belief is simply the base assumption for all commandments. In fact, even if a person does not admit to believing in the Deity, a person still needs to follow the commandments because God exists. Moreover, a belief in God is an involuntary action; in contrast, following the Torah is a voluntary action. Through Torah, one will hopefully learn to believe in God. Thus, many people view Crescas' reasoning as circular. Whereas Maimonides stated that God provides to people on the basis of their intellectualism, Crescas believed it was on the merit of love. Similar to many of his predecessors, Crescas emphasized that God is the Creator who created the world out of nothing. Although God is Goodness, Crescas' favorite name for God is the rabbinic *Hamakom*, "The Place," because just as space permeates the entire universe, so too does God's glory. This name is also the most critical nomenclature for the later mystics, believing God to be ever-present. Joseph Albo,[28] another Aristotelian, echoed many of Maimonides' ideas but stressed the idea that God is separate from time. Finally, Isaac Abrabanel[29] focused upon the concept that people ought to be satisfied with nature's activities and instead highlight God's spirit.

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[27] For more information about Crescas, one may look at Steven T. Katz, ed. *Jewish Philosophers*. New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1975.
[28] For more information about Albo, one may look at Steven T. Katz, ed. *Jewish Philosophers*. New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1975.
[29] For more information about Abrabanel, one may look at Steven T. Katz, ed. *Jewish Philosophers*. New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1975.

Bridge to Modernity

Isaac Luria[30] represents one of the theologians that bridged the gap between the Aristotelian perspective and the Modern Era. He emphasized the Jewish mystical aspects of God, stressing the idea that the human desire was to strive toward connecting with God, who is unlimited, infinite, and unknowable. Luria's favorite name for God is the Hebrew *Ein Sof*, translated as "The Hidden of All Hidden," or "The Endless One." Despite God being unknowable and unreachable, there is a constant attempt for interaction. Like most mystics, Luria supports the idea of connectors or paths, known as the ten *sefirot,* which draw God and humanity closer to one another. These spheres are the ways in which the Divine is displayed: crown (*keter*), wisdom (*chochmah*), understanding (*binah*), mercy (*chesed*), judgment/ power (*din/ gevurah*), beauty (*tiferet*), eternity (*netsach*), majesty (*chod*), foundation (*yisod*), and kingdom (*malchut*).

In addition to the *sefirot*, Luria believes that there are four stages of God's creation of the world. The first aspect is *tsimtsum*, or God's contractions and self-limitations. The Divine One then emitted beams of light to bring out the world from nothing. Third, there was the breaking of vessels (*shevirat hakelim*), causing the world to be imperfect and for everything to be out of their proper places. Finally, there is the idea of *tikun*, humans serving as co-partners with God, and, therefore, helping to mend the world. In order for individuals to help with *tikun*, repairing [the world], one must partake

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[30] Born in 1534, Isaac Luria, a Kabbalist, focused on the mystery of the hierarchy, or ladder, of creation, which leads to God. Using *The Zohar* as a foundation for his beliefs, Luria explored this mystical pathway to God. His work was so important that some people considered him to be closely connected to the Divine and even as the forerunner of the Messiah. For additional information about Luria, one can read, among other sources, Rifat Sonsino and Daniel B. Syme's book *Finding God: Ten Jewish Responses*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1986.

in both *mitzvot* and prayer. If a person puts her/ his heart and soul into one's prayers, one will have a more intimate connection with God and will be closer to the Divine's domain.

Another bridge to the modern era was a radically different theological approach than Luria, Baruch de Spinoza's[31] pantheistic attitude. Like many of his colleagues, Spinoza accepted the idea that there is One God who demands justice, love, and forgiveness. However, his radical theological differences from many of his colleagues were the belief that God both equals Nature and the World (and therefore is not the Creator of the Universe), and that God is not a purposeful being, rather just that God is. Another controversial point of Spinoza's belief system was his attempt to search for the Torah's authorship. He did not accept the idea that it originated with Moses; this final straw caused Spinoza to be excommunicated from the Jewish community. Humans strive toward receiving the intellectual love of God and desire to comprehend God's infinite nature. However, because everything is predestined and cannot be influenced by human action, one can never actually attain these ideals. Unlike most Jewish philosophers who accept the idea that God interacts with humans, Spinoza notes that God is an impersonal Deity who does not watch over humans, is not a loving a parent, and does not know us. Spinoza responds to the issue of theodicy by commenting that good/ bad is simply relative to humans' experiences and that God is beyond any type of relativity. In apparent contradiction to some of his own views, Spinoza also acknowledges that, indeed, God sustains the order of the universe.

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[31] Spinoza was born in 1632 in Amsterdam, where he learned the traditional Jewish subjects as well as Latin and secular studies. He was the first philosopher to openly question the legitimacy of the claim that Moses wrote the Torah. As a result, Spinoza was charged with heresy and was excommunicated. Nevertheless, Spinoza's writings became famous (many posthumously) and there have been various attempts to lift the ban after his death in 1677. For more information on Spinoza, one can read, among other sources, Rifat Sonsino and Daniel B. Syme's book *Finding God: Ten Jewish Responses*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1986.

There are other bridges to the Modern Era such as Moses Mendelssohn, Solomon Formstecher, Samuel Hirsch, Nachman Krochmal, Samuel David Luzzatto, Solomon Ludwig Steinheim, and Moritz Lazarus.[32] Mendelssohn, for example, stressed the goodness, wisdom, and mercy of God. In fact, he even believed that Divine justice was superceded by Divine goodness. Like many of his colleagues, he acknowledged that God created the world; nonetheless, he believed that God later became detached from the world. In contrast to Mendelssohn who emphasized God's somewhat immanent nature, Formstecher felt that God was transcendent. Fairly similar to Spinoza, Formstecher accepted the perspective that God is to be strongly associated with nature. Hirsch moved a step beyond this outlook, stating that God transcended nature, as the Deity was the giver of human freedom. In contrast to many of his predecessors, Krochmal believed that God equals "the Absolute Spirit... who is a power equal to every latent and potential form within itself."[33] Thus, Krochmal dramatically shifted away from God as Creator and instead focused on God as Spirit. Luzzatto shares Mendelssohn's idea of opposing Maimonides because Judaism cannot have dogmas as God is beyond the capacity to be understood. A person's moral actions, according to Luzzatto, lead to righteousness, which is the ultimate goal of the *mitzvot*. Steinheim returns to the seemingly earlier concepts that God is the Creator and a Unified Being. He also stresses that revelation came from God. Finally, Lazarus focused on God as Holiness. He believed that God is the author of life's ethical imperatives who commanded simply because it was the right thing to do.

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[32] For more information on these men, one can read Steven T. Katz, ed. *Jewish Philosophers*. New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1975.

Modern Period

The Twentieth Century marks a large array of theological and philosophical perspectives. For example, Hermann Cohen[34] focused on the images of God as the Protector of the stranger, the Sponsor of the world's eternity, and the Guarantor of our Ethics. Cohen shifted his theological perspective, as is seen by comparing some of his earlier and later writings; at first, he believed that God was an Idea or Concept and later stated that God was Pure Being. The bridge between humanity and the Divine, according to Cohen, is the *ruach hakodesh*, often defined as the Spirit of God. In order to get closer to God, people need to imitate God and strive toward fulfilling the moral ideals. God issued the *mitzvot*, commandments, to every Jewish person, and it is up to his/ her free will and good inclination to fulfill them. Thus, Cohen's concepts of the Deity are far from the Biblical idea of God as Creator.

Leo Baeck[35] emphasized another alternative to the common notion of God as Creator. He commented that one could not have true ethics without the values being supported by one's faith in God. In contrast to Maimonides, Leo Baeck does not accept the idea that Jews have either creed or religious dogma. Instead, Baeck notes that the "dominant form of Judaism always remained that of a religious philosophy of inquiry, a philosophy which produced method, rather than system."[36] Moreover, he emphasized that Judaism is a dynamic, ever-growing faith and one should not limit him/ herself to

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[33] *Ibid*, p. 166.

[34] Hermann Cohen was born in 1842 and was one of the earlier Twentieth Century Philosophers. For additional information about Hermann Cohen, one can read, for example, Steven T. Katz, ed. *Jewish Philosophers*. New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1975.

[35] Leo Baeck lived from 1873- 1956. For additional facts about Leo Baeck, one can read Leo Baeck's *The Essence of Judaism*. New York: Schocken Books, 1948.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

dogma. Some of Baeck's concepts of the Divine are God as Merciful, Just, Good, and Holy. Because humans were created *b'tselem Elohim*, in the image of God, we are meant to pursue the aforementioned positive traits. Although one can comment upon God's attributes (in contrast to the belief of many of his theological colleagues), one should avoid using names for the Divine One because God is nameless and incomprehensible. However, Baeck also believes that God is living, personal yet transcendent, as well as a Savior, Protector, Helper, Supporter, Guardian, Shepherd, Healer, and a Redeemer. In order to know God, one must follow her/ his ethical conscience that will then lead the individual to a love of God and an ability to make demands upon the Deity. Through good deeds, one will remain in the presence of God and will be united with God. Although the emphasis of Baeck's theology is ethics, he also acknowledges that God acts as Israel's judge. Thus, God stands before the Jewish people as the Commanding, Judging, and Just One.

Abraham Isaac Kook[37] was the first chief Ashkenazi rabbi of Israel. Rather than merely accepting God as Creator, Kook followed Luria and took a more mystical approach. Kook believed that everything stems from the Divine, is dependent upon God for life, and that all nature evolves toward God. Franz Rosenzweig[38] emphasized that the Jewish people did not specifically need to seek out God, for Jews are naturally with the Deity. The proof, according to Rosenzweig, is revelation. As a result of mutual love and relationships, God gave us the Torah. Part of this revelation is the sense of being commanded by God and for humans, in return, to be obedient. God does not legislate, for

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[37] Abraham Isaac Kook was an Orthodox rabbi in Israel who lived from 1865 to 1956. For more information, one can read, for example, Steven T. Katz, ed. *Jewish Philosophers*. New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1975.

that would be impersonal. Instead, God commands, as the events are personal, subjective, and experienced. Another component of Rosenzweig's theology is that the only objective statement about the Deity is, simply, that "God exists." All other aspects concerning the Divine relate to one's own experiences and cannot be adequately communicated to other people. Nevertheless, "God as a concept is no more remote than the concepts of man and of the world."[39] According to Rosenzweig, God is simultaneously remote and near, unknown and revealed, Creator and Redeemer. A person can not talk about God because God is "Wholly Other." Alternatively, a person is only able to discuss the Deity's effect on each of us.

In some ways Martin Buber's[40] ideas are founded upon the thoughts of Franz Rosenzweig. For instance, his theological quest was to discover truth. Buber determined that a person understands either an object or another individual only in relation to her/ himself. Furthermore, dialogue and real encounters act as the foundation to knowledge. Basing his understanding on Rosenzweig's ideas, Buber established that there are two types of meetings: I- Thou and I-It. Most people interact in an "I-It" relationship, with the connection based on an interaction of using and being used. For example, a passenger in a taxi simply wants to get to his/ her destination and generally does not truly care about the driver.

In contrast to an I-It encounter, the rarer and holier I-Thou meeting is the ideal interaction. In fact, Buber's favorite name for God is "Eternal Thou," who is not known

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[38] Franz Rosenzweig was born in 1886. For additional information on Rosenzweig, one can read Nahum N. Glatzer's *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought.* New York: Schocken Books, 1953.

[39] *Ibid.,* p. 193.

[40] Martin Buber was born in 1878 in Vienna. Like many Jewish theologians, Buber was knowledgeable in both Jewish and secular subjects. Buber escaped the horrors of the Holocaust and, as a cultural Zionist, immigrated to Palestine. For a more complete perspective of Martin Buber, one can read: Martin Buber. *I*

through cognitive plans or metaphysical speculations, but through a true I- Thou

relationship. Hence, according to Buber, one can not define God or prove God's

existence, in contrast to many attempts by his predecessors. An individual can only

"meet" or encounter God. The result of the connection is a person's heightened

sensitivity, love, and responsiveness. Martin Buber also believes in ethical relativism;

thus, what may be right for one individual may be wrong for another. Furthermore, he

states that evil is actually the failure to enter into genuine dialogue and is the fault of

humans. Buber recognizes two primary stages of evil: passivity, as a result of a lack of

decision or direction, and then an actual decision to do evil. Buber believes that people's

true inner nature is not evil; rather, some people just misuse their freedom. After the

Holocaust, however, Buber adds that there is "radical evil," also known as "an eclipse of

God," extraordinary times when God withdraws from humanity.

Milton Steinberg[41] labels himself as a limited theist, based on some components

of classical theism. For instance, classical theists focus on several ideas such as: God is

One, alone, incorporeal, omnipotent, omnibenevolent, omniscient, and both supernatural

and "transnatural"(i.e. God is both outside and within the universe). Classical theists also

support the idea that God is a spiritual Being who expresses will, love, and concern for

the created world, and that God knows us, hears our prayers, and in some fashion,

answers them.[42] Similar to many medieval theologians, theists also accept the notion that

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and Thou (A New Translation with a Prologue "I and You" And Notes by Walter Kaufmann). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970.

[41] Milton Steinberg was born in New York in 1903 and was ordained a rabbi by the Conservative Rabbinical school, the Jewish Theological Seminary. He spent the majority of his life in New York and died at the early age of 47. Steinberg has written several books including Milton Steinberg. *Basic Judaism*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1975 or Milton Steinberg. *Anatomy of Faith*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1960.

[42] Rifat Sonsino and Daniel B. Syme. *Finding God: Ten Jewish Responses*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1986, p. 96.

God's existence can be proven. However, Steinberg, as a limited theist, differs in a few critical thoughts. For example, unlike classical theists, Steinberg explains that evil is a result of God's limited power. Moreover, because of the shortcomings of humanity, our knowledge of God also is limited. Thus, one must accept God's existence on faith and not absolute logic or via proofs. In conjunction with his limited theist perspective, Steinberg prefers the image of God as Father (maybe if he were writing today he would say Parent?) rather than King, because God can not do everything. Steinberg also accepts the somewhat conventional notion that God is also a Creator, a Guide of History, a Liberator, and a Savior of Souls. Finally, Steinberg explains the Deity as a God who is a Mind and Power and is purposive and ethical. As a result, a person may know God's works, but not actually "know" God.

Mordecai Kaplan[43] shifted away from the majority of Steinberg's theistic God images. As part of his "religious naturalistic" theology, Kaplan emphasized that Judaism was a civilization, rather than the more common approach of stressing it as a religion, faith, and/ or ethnicity. He viewed God as the Power or Process within every individual that causes one to gain a higher sense of spirituality. The Divine is a presence that enables individuals to pursue freedom. Throughout life, one is expected to wrestle with the Deity, because God is "correlative to the idea of man and that conceptions of God necessarily bear an organic relationship to man's understanding of himself and the world."[44] In other words, the world can be explained in terms of science and God is

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[43] Born in 1881, Mordecai Kaplan emigrated out of Lithuania and immigrated to the United States. He received his *s'michah*, rabbinic ordination, from the Conservative Seminary (Jewish Theological Seminary) in 1902. However, his philosophy pulled him somewhat away from the Conservative Movement and he became the founder of the Reconstructionist movement. Additional information on Kaplan can be found in Mordecai M. Kaplan. *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion.* New York: Behrman's Jewish Book House, 1937.

[44] Steven T. Katz, ed. *Jewish Philosophers.* New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1975, p. 198.

merely a tool toward higher understanding. If one has a belief in God, according to Kaplan, he/ she will internally improve because he/ she will strive toward removing violence and exploitation from one's life. With Kaplan's theology, one does not need to suspend ideas about the natural laws, for God does not contradict them, and instead, serves as a source of inner fulfillment. Finally, he believes that evil is simply a part of the universe which God has not yet refined.

Erich Fromm's[45] humanistic theology is even further away from the naturalism of Kaplan. Fromm's school of thought emphasized that religion is merely looking at the world through a certain perspective, and that a person ought to center her/ his ideals around human strengths rather than the Divine's. Moreover, Fromm states "that the concept of God was a historically conditioned expression of an inner experience."[46] God is a symbol or an idea of what one ought to strive and obtain. One can know "that God is," not "what God is." Most religions, according to Fromm, are authoritarian in nature and stress a Higher Power who demands obedience, reverence, and worship. Humanism, on the other hand, focuses on the talents of humanity and increases an individual's ability to reason. As a result, he/ she will gain a better understanding of him/ herself and other people, and will have a higher awareness of individual strengths and weaknesses. The essence of Judaism, according to Fromm, is to imitate the Divine by practicing Godly values such as justice, truth, and love. In contrast, according to Fromm, evil is the stranglehold of life.

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[45] Erich Fromm was born in 1900 into an Orthodox Germany family. With Hitler's rise to power, Fromm left Germany and became a citizen of the United States. He is a social philosopher and well-regarded humanist. Additional information can be found in Erich Fromm. *You Shall Be As Gods: A Radical Interpretation of the Old Testament and Its Tradition.* New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966.
[46] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

Another modern, post- Holocaust theologian is Abraham Joshua Heschel,[47] a man

distinguished, in part, for his prolific writing. He focused on the immediate and direct

reality of God, emphasizing God as the Father, Creator, and Cause. According to

Heschel, God is not at all important, unless the Deity is of Supreme Importance. Prayer

is a technique to make oneself visible to God; the response, states Heschel, is love. God is

both a transcendent and personal Deity; in fact, the Bible is an epic love poem of an

intimate affair between God and humanity. The Torah, the sacred text that is God's will

for Israel, is itself a *midrash* based on people's interpretations of various events. As a

result, one can never "know" the Deity because God is totally beyond human

comprehension. Heschel stresses that faith alone is not enough for people; authentic

religious living emphasizes the doing of deeds. The *mitzvot*, therefore, allow a person to

act out God's concern for the world and Jewish people. Heschel coined the term "radical

amazement" as a way to try and define one's relationship with God. Like Martin Buber,

Heschel maintained faith in God, despite the Holocaust, believing those years to be an

eclipse of God's love.

Other post- Holocaust theologians, such as Joseph Soloveitchik, Richard

Rubenstein, Emil Fackenheim, Ignaz Maybaum, and Eliezer Berkovits equally struggle

with how to explain the horror of the Holocaust. For example, Rubenstein simply said

that "God is dead"[48] and, therefore, human existence is meaningless. Emil Fackenheim,

who accepted Buber's conception of an I-Thou relationship with God, declared that one

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[47] Abraham Joshua Heschel grew up in Poland and lived from 1907- 1972. Nearly his entire family died in the Holocaust. Instead of his theological ideas emphasizing the tragic aspects of the Holocaust, Heschel wrote about East European Jewry's spiritual achievements. For more information about Heschel, one can read, among many works, Abraham Joshua Heschel's *Man Quest for God: Studies in Prayer and Symbolism*. New York: Charles Scirbner's Sons, 1954 or Neil Gillman's *Sacred Fragments: Recovering Theology for the Modern Jew*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1990.
[48] Steven T. Katz, ed. *Jewish Philosophers*. New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1975, p. 224.

could not explain the Holocaust because it simply is not a part of one's rational cosmic pattern. Despite the Holocaust, according to Fackenheim, Jews must still believe in God for the Deity is the moral ideal of humanity. Moreover, God's presence is, somehow, always in history. Maybaum decided that "Hitler is God's agent,"[49] in other words, God used Hitler to punish, cleanse, and then purify an evil world. Finally, Eliezer Berkovits declared that God must abstain from reacting to the moral evils of people if our actions are to contain any value, even though the Divine may indeed want to be directly involved. The idea of the Holocaust is so appalling, that many people, such as Rubenstein, simply can no longer maintain faith in the Supreme One.

After the initial shock of the Holocaust wore away, Jewish theologians have somewhat moved away from a strong emphasis of Holocaust theology. Instead, many people have accepted the idea that the Holocaust is one more general example of evil and a reminder of the many trials within Jewish history. David Wolpe,[50] for instance, looks at the Bible and Rabbinic Literature for the basis of his mystical theology. Like some of his predecessors, Wolpe prefers the classic Rabbinic and mystical name *Hamakom*, or "The Place," to reflect his primary God-belief of Divine omnipresence. Wolpe focuses on the issue of exile and notes that when one dwells with God, one is home. The exile of God depends upon people and, therefore, becomes a call to human action. Like the view of many of Wolpe's colleagues, he believes that since we are partners with God, it is our responsibility to help with the process of redemption. God truly shares our pain and comprehends our joys as well as misfortunes. However, Wolpe notes that today God is

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[49] *Ibid.*, p. 237.
[50] David Wolpe is currently a Conservative rabbi in California. He is a prolific writer who has shared his theological perspectives with many audiences. For a more complete look at Wolpe, one may read David

not exiled <u>with</u> people but rather <u>from</u> people. He further comments that one of the hardest obstacles to religious belief is the presence of evil in an environment managed by a kind Deity. One way that a person can "know" God is to chastise or challenge the Deity for life's problems. As long as we revere and show a need for the Divine, God will continue to openly express Divine love. Thus, according to Wolpe, humans and God are locked in a lover's quarrel, which can only be mended when we all work together.

Another supporter of mystical theology, Rabbi Arthur Green,[51] explores the importance of prayer as part of the human connection with the Divine. Similar to the vast majority of other theologians, Green believes that the essence of our prayers is the *Shema*, a Jewish prayer focusing on God's Oneness who, in some people's minds, has an unchanged and unaffected demeanor throughout history. In conjunction with this idea, Green returns to the Torah for his favorite term for God, *YHVH*, defined by him as the One who "Is- Was- Will Be." Another preferred name by Green is *Ruach Kol Basar*, "a Spirit That Resides In All Flesh." Both names, expressed through Green's mystical side, may be better expressed as simply a breath. Thus, when a person discovers God, she/ he finds a sense of wonder that lifts the person out of ordinary experience. The goal of one's journey toward God is attaining an ever- deeper level of spiritual growth. However, because a person does not truly know God's name and therefore can not know the Deity personally, the Jewish faith is based on an intimacy with the abstract. An individual is able to find God wherever one searches, based upon one's relationships with other people. Hence, God is a Spouse, Parent, and Loving Friend. Arthur Green comments

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Wolpe. *The Healer of Shattered Hearts: A Jewish View of God.* New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1990.
[51] For more information, one can read: Rabbi Arthur Green. *Seek My Face, Speak My Name: A Contemporary Jewish Theology.* Northvale, NJ: Jacob Aronson Inc., 1992.

about evil in metaphorical terms of light and darkness. Even though a hidden light can sometimes be painful, we still seek it; even though Sinai was an event far away from today, we still struggle to rekindle that light.

Harold Kushner[52] follows many of the footsteps of Mordecai Kaplan. As a Naturalist or Reconstructionist, Kushner shares the idea that God is a Power within us; however, Kushner differs from Kaplan in also accepting God as the Creator. Kushner believes that when an individual has faith, it does not necessarily make God any more content, but faith makes the person happier and more fulfilled. God is strong enough to endure all of our human emotions, including our doubts and our anger. In fact, according to Kushner, the Jewish philosophical perspective has never emphasized struggling about the existence of God, but rather the Deity's role in our lives. The Divine, therefore, helps us open our eyes and see beyond ourselves. A belief in God does not make one's path smooth, but rather helps give a person the grace and strength to continue on life's journey even when it is rocky. God shows love to the Jewish people by the gift of Torah; as a result of following Torah, one can enter, as Buber declared, into an I-Thou relationship with God. Another component of Kushner's theology is the continued aspect of miracles. Rather than determining that they no longer exist, Kushner comments that "God works miracles today by enabling ordinary people to do extraordinary things."[53] When our prayers become active, we are able to draw nearer to God. Finally, Kushner stresses that a better question than "where is God" is "when is God." The answer, like the responses of Arthur Green and many other theological colleagues, is whenever we let God enter our lives.

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[52] Harold Kushner has written numerous books including *Who Needs God.* New York: Summit Books, 1989.

Like Harold Kushner, Harold Schulweis[54] believes that the better question

concerning the Deity is not where is God, but rather when is God. The Divine is meant to

give heightened meaning to life, without necessarily taking sacred texts literally.

According to Schulweis, "God is real, the most real. God is ideal, the most ideal. And

God is One."[55] Even though God is One, Schulweis acknowledges the importance of

God having various names. For example, when one sees the name *Elohim,* one will focus

on the attribute of justice; when one sees the name *YHVH,* one will focus on Divine

mercy. These distinctions stem from Rabbinic *midrash,* enabling the rabbis an

opportunity to explore when one term versus the other was the primary name for God in

the Bible. Furthermore, if the experience is something in which a person has no control,

Elohim will guide him/ her into passive acceptance. Schulweis notes that a person

desires both justice and mercy, his rationale for why every benediction unites the terms

Elohim and *YHVH.* Although many theologians attempt to move away from

anthropomorphic imagery, Schulweis does the opposite. He comments that "God is most

like a person, and like a Person has His own designs."[56] Paradoxically, Schulweis

continues, God is not like us. He promotes the idea that God shifts from a Person to his

term for Godliness, *Elohut.* This move shifts God from a noun to a verb, which he calls

"Predicate Theology." God, as a dynamic verb, is always in activity, whether it is via

healing the sick, raising the fallen, or doing justly. Schulweis does not directly address

the issue of theodicy, but does note that God was at the Holocaust, supporting the

rescuers.

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[53] *Ibid.,* p. 136.
[54] For a more complete look at Schulweis, one can read: Harold M. Schulweis. *For Those Who Can't
Believe: Overcoming the Obstacles to Faith.* New York: Harper Collins Pub., 1994.
[55] *Ibid.,* p. 105.

Herman Wouk,[57] like many of his predecessors, emphasizes the Biblical view of God as the Creator. In fact, he believes that Shabbat is a day in which to honor God specifically as Creator. The Deity, according to his perception, is an Invisible Spirit who serves as the beacon of hope throughout Jewish history. Because God has a covenant with the Jewish people, both the Ten Commandments and the whole Torah are special gifts to the Jews. Although people look to the Divine for justice and guidance, the Deity's primary goal is to help humans become better individuals. Wouk comments that prayer is somewhat of a circular problem. According to his ideas about prayer, if God exists, then God is omniscient. If God is omniscient, then God knows everything, including all future prayers. If God knows the future, then our lives are fixed and prayer becomes a wasted experience. Nevertheless, Wouk notes that prayer is our link to God and is an important gesture to thank God for the wonders of life. With prayer, one can feel an inner sense of renewed energy, as well as an opportunity to declare one's commitment to God.

Jakob Petuchowski[58] expresses the view that God is a spouse to the Jewish people and the Torah is a series of love letters to/ from God and Israel. The most important Jewish theological concept, according to Petuchowski, is the unity of God. As a result, like many of his predecessors, he shares the idea that the *Shema* serves as the watchword of the Jewish faith and is the principal Jewish prayer. God's different names, such as Petuchowski's preferences, *YHVH, El Shaddai* (The Almighty), *Shechinah* (Divine Presence), and *Elohim,* all reflect different aspects of God's nature, while contributing to

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[56] *Ibid.*, p. 130.
[57] For additional information, one can read Herman Wouk. *This is My God.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1959.

God's oneness. The Deity elected Israel to have Torah, and thus, Jews have a special relationship with God. God, as the Author of Liberty, encourages every individual to study and then "to do." In this manner, one will proceed closer to God and work toward bettering the world.

Another significant contributor to Jewish theological thought is Eugene Borowitz,[59] a man who stresses the significance of searching for new gleanings of Jewish ethnic and ethical commitments. Borowitz acknowledges that God has a treaty, or covenant (with a small "c") with the entire world and a special Covenant (with a capital "C") between God and the Jewish people. The Covenant is the foundation for Torah and serves as both a record and a decree; it is expected that the Jewish people will uphold it. Prior to his theological statements, Borowitz believes that there are four main paradigms of Jewish faith. There is the revelation- dominated archetype, the rationalistic model, the socially based pattern, and the mediating of one's self ideal.[60] Borowitz, however, suggests a fifth alternative: holism of God, Israel/ self, and Torah. In this manner, one can more easily recognize that the Deity is the groundwork for everything and everyone. Moreover, God is the Creator who formed a fully real and independent world that we humans can not fully grasp. Like many other theologians, Borowitz thinks that speaking in absolutes about the Divine is a weakness because our knowledge is limited. God is

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[58] A more complete picture of his belief system can be found in Jakob J. Petuchowski. *Ever Since Sinai: A Modern View of Torah.* New York: Scribe Publications, 1961.

[59] Eugene Borowitz is a Reform rabbi, teacher, and professor at Hebrew Union College- Jewish Institute of Religion, the Reform Rabbinical Seminary. Among his many works, one can better understand Borowitz's theology in Eugene B. Borowitz. *Renewing the Covenant: A Theology for the Postmodern Jew.* Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991.

[60] Heschel, who views God as the Source of revelation and the One worthy of human awe, best represents the revelation model. Cohen and Baeck best depict the rationalistic model, in that revelation is a result from ongoing human quests for an integrated comprehensive worldview. Mordecai Kaplan best supports the socially based pattern, maintaining a high regard for Judaism as a civilization. The fourth model of the mediating self can best be expressed in Buber's theology of wrestling with I-it and I-Thou relationships.

both immanent and transcendent and is the One who defines us. Because we can not

fully understand what God wants, it is important that we respect the Deity by showing

God obedience, piety, and by partaking in worship.

Recently, the contributions of feminist theology have further expanded our

theological horizons. Women such as Judith Plaskow[61] and Rachel Adler[62] are pioneers

in feminist theology. Judith Plaskow, for example, shares certain ideas of most other

theologians, including the existence and oneness of God. However, she shifts away from

the patriarchal images, noting that there is nothing specifically male about *YHVH* or

Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh (commonly translated as "I am who I am" or "I will be who I will

be). Plaskow stresses that moving away from traditional male God imagery is quite

challenging: "God's maleness is so deeply and firmly established as part of the Jewish

conception of God that it is almost difficult to document: it is simply part of the lenses

through which God is seen."[63] Nevertheless, Plaskow also acknowledges that the Bible

itself even has female God images, such as God as Mother.[64]

Many theologians, Plaskow argues, see God in conflicting roles, both as "Him"

and as incorporeal. Since God is incorporeal, God can not have a gender. Furthermore,

she stresses that somehow God's "maleness" is exempted from attributing positive

features to God. In fact, "Maimonides, for example, considers it illegitimate ever to

characterize God in positive terms, for this might imply that God is similar to other

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[61] One can gain a more comprehensive about Plaskow from her book: Judith Plaskow. *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective.* San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1990.
[62] Rachel Adler's new book has caused quite a stir in the theological and philosophical circles. Many people believe that this book is an answer to a long awaited need for increased awareness of feminist theology. For a more complete look, read: Rachel Adler. *Engendering Judaism: An Inclusive Theology and Ethics.* Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1998.
[63] Judith Plaskow. *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective.* San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1990, p. 123.
[64] For example, Isaiah 42:14.

existing things. Yet, throughout his discussion of negative and positive attributes, Maimonides continually refers to God as He and Him without ever taking note of the fact that maleness is a positive trait or applying to this attribute his doctrine of negation."[65] Moreover, the problem with ascribing God solely as male is that the Deity's power of dominance gets transferred to men's power over women and can be harmful to women. Additionally, one understands God as the possessor of higher qualities; thus, most people recognize that God is regal rather than simple, and, according to most theologians, male rather than female. Maleness, therefore, becomes the "better" ideal.

Plaskow views God as omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent, resulting in a personal Deity who is at the same time distant, exalted, and majestic. Rita Gross, another feminist, commented that if an individual does not mean that God is male when male pronouns and images are used, one should not mind if female images and pronouns are used. Somehow, however, that idea is not acceptable to most people and they balk at the use of feminine language in formal prayer services. The goal, according to many of the aforementioned feminists, is not impersonal and neutered God- language, for those terms would reduce one's ability to speak with God and masks sexism behind abstractions. Instead, the goal is to be comfortable using both male and female language. Moreover, throughout Jewish tradition, there are God images such as Friend and Lover; unfortunately, epitaphs such as King and Father overshadow those metaphors. Thus, Plaskow's more favored name becomes the neutral rabbinical and mystical name (although a feminine word in Hebrew) *Makom*, Place, as the title evokes images of God as an active presence in the world. God wants us to connect and become closer in holiness; our language is only a result of our own limitations. .

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[65] *Ibid.*, p. 127.

Rachel Adler focuses on a different perspective than Judith Plaskow. Rather than looking primarily at male versus female God language, Adler stresses that theology is based upon responding to the issues of what God tells us through stories and what we tell God. Like Plaskow, she agrees that the patriarchal dominance found within Jewish tradition reduces or eliminates the voices of women; additionally, history displays female spirituality only as a tool for the realization of male spirituality, as displayed by the womens' sections in traditional synagogues or the male God language. Adler thinks that the only way to include female voices is to redefine *halachah,* Jewish law, to enable it to become "engendered." The stories and values are ongoing actions and the tradition belongs to all Jews. At the same time, Adler thinks that it is critical to hold on to the sanctity of Jewish texts and not simply minimize or eliminate texts in which people disagree. Thus, Adler states that paradox is the crux of the problem in attempting to include feminist voices into a male dominated sphere. According to Adler, the new *halachah* ought to focus on the ethics of caring, rather than the more common approach of emphasizing the ethics of justice. In this manner, one will become closer to God.

Another method of becoming closer to God is to add new prayers into female experiences, such as praising God for a woman's first menstrual period. As a result, prayer will return to being its intended theatrical representation rather than merely rote text. She notes that "it [prayer] is a living reality whose effects upon worshippers vary from enactment to enactment."[66] With the addition of new benedictions, women will be able to become closer to God and be woven deeper into the Divine covenant. Some feminists suggest that the answer to male God imagery is just to constantly shift

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[66] Rachel Adler. *Engendering Judaism: An Inclusive Theology and Ethics.* Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1998, p. 75.

metaphors to avoid a pure male concept, as is done in Deuteronomy 32. For example, one could call God the Rock, the Tree, the Father, the Mother, the Lover, the Friend... In this way, the images would be blended in a more seamless manner and God's gender becomes less critical. Finally, Adler acknowledges that God needs to be emphasized as the Covenantal Partner and the Creator. With these images, it would be more acceptable to weave women into Jewish tradition.

Conclusion

As emphasized, the idea of "a" Jewish theology is an oxymoron. There is no one single theological perspective agreed upon by all Jews at any one time, never mind throughout the long history of the Jewish people. As a result, many people feel that there is no Jewish creed or dogma. God's names may be as varied as the Creator, the Place, the Judge, the Merciful One, the Power, or the Invisible Spirit. God's nature may be personal or distant, active or passive. God may have a strong or weak relationship with the world, with Jews, and with individuals. Humans may or may not "know" God, nor fully understand what God wants from society. People may approach God through a rational explanation, such as Maimonides, or through a revelation dominated expression, as expressed by Heschel. Kaplan, for example, may stress social or ethical theology, where as a man such as Buber may emphasize a dialogue with God. The historical journey of Jewish theology, therefore, is clearly diverse and complex. Nevertheless, Jewish creed actually does exist. Jews, for instance, accept that that the *yetser hatov* and *yetser harah* (good inclination and bad inclination) are both found within every human

and it is up to each individual to choose the better path. Thus, Jews do not accept the Christian idea of original sin. Jews also continue to hold that the Messiah (or Messianic Age) will come, and thereby refute the Christian belief that Jesus is the son of God, part of God, and/ or the Messiah. More importantly, all Jewish theologians agree upon God's Oneness, even though they may immediately disagree as to how that idea would be defined. Therefore, the *Shema,* a prayer affirming God's oneness, is the essence of Jewish creed and the watchword of the Jewish people. Judaism both accepts and promotes the idea that the search for God is a lifelong theological journey, which will meander through one's trials and tribulations and cause many shifts in a person's theological outlook. The multiplicity of theological approaches enables most Jews to find some connection to a higher meaning in life. As a result, individuals can find comfort in life's mysteries in a variety of manners while declaring him/ herself to be an active member of the Jewish community. With these numerous Jewish theologies, adults can find Higher Meaning and proactively, rather than reactively, teach children about God.

CHAPTER THREE

Introduction

There are very few religious schools in the United States that proactively teach children about God. Admittedly, there are a wide variety of subjects that need to be taught in a brief time period that will help enable Jewish youth to become knowledgeable Jewish adults. However, God, a pillar of the Jewish people, needs to be an active element of religious school curricula. By teaching about God, one will explain the "why" behind many Jewish discussions. The Divine will serve as the foundation for experiencing life in a holy manner. A deeper understanding of the Deity will help ensure a sense of higher purpose, will help encourage self- esteem, will help teach about relationships, and perhaps will help provide a life-long Friend and Listener. The idea of God, even though everyone has individual beliefs, will help focus individuals into a more cohesive community.

Teaching about God will help generate a foundation for morals that will be sturdier than if one does something simply "because." It may be that many people have avoided teaching about God in religious schools because they were unaware of the variety of available books. Thus, this chapter will offer an annotated bibliography to help adults explore options that might be suitable for proactively teaching God to children. Part of the commentary on the books will connect to the first two chapters of developmental theories and theological perspectives. For consistency within this thesis, the rubrics in this chapter are based on Erikson's age ranges. As a result, there are some books that fit one person's developmental stages, but cross Erikson's age ranges; therefore, they are listed after the age rubrics under "multiple categories."

Three to Six Years Old

Developmental and theological theories are parts of the influences that impact the shape of the analyses of these resources. The primary understanding of developmental research can be found in chapter one of this thesis; chapter two emphasizes theological ideas. In order to help with the exploration of these books, the author of the thesis will reiterate key points pertaining to this age range of each developmental theorist previously listed. Erikson is a psycho-social theorist who relates individual emotional needs to one's social environment. After already gaining a sense of trust and autonomy, this age child will focus on "initiative versus guilt." A child will need a positive sense of achievement through his/ her actions. When a child feels aggressive or believes she/ he did something wrong, she/ he will gain an intense feeling of guilt. Another primary issue, according to Erikson, is that a child wants to believe that everything in life has a purpose. Finally, God will be viewed as an Idealized Parent.

Jean Piaget, a cognitive theorist, notes that this stage is "Preoperational," a time for basic intelligence to emanate through one's physical actions. A child communicates in a collective monologue and who processes information only in a forward manner. Similar to Erikson, Piaget views this age child as one who seeks meaning for every aspect of life, while recognizing the importance of symbolic function. David Elkind, a socio-cognitive theorist, notes that a child has a high level of creativity at this stage with a "let me do it myself" attitude. A child's emotions rule over his/ her intellect and he/ she views life in an all or nothing manner. Sears, a behavioralist, views a child's environment as the ultimate source of learning, even beyond the "ideal" education. Also

a behavioralist, Havighurst believes that learning tasks are the driving force beyond all development.

In a similar venue, the socio-culturalist Gordon, recognizes that behavior intertwines with development in a steady process. A child has a high need for constancy in this stage, and, as mentioned by other theorists, has a high level of imagination and fantasy. One's culture and one's emotions shape a child's words. Along with this linguistic idea, Vygotsky, also a socio-culturalist, notes that language is the primary aspect of a child's development. His theory emphasizes the shift from out-loud self-conversation to silent self-talk to simply doing an action. Another major aspect of his theory emphasizes scaffolding, a concept that supports the idea of giving a child clues while enabling her/ him to figure out the concept for herself/ himself. Lawrence Kohlberg, a moral theorist looks at this stage as "Preconventional," a time when a child looks at the world as resolving around him/herself while trying to please other people. Carol Gilligan, a moral theorist who uses Kohlberg as a foundation for her own work, notes that this stage is one of an "ethic of care" and a time of responsibility. Another moral theorist, Damon, notes that this stage is one of an obligation to society and a commitment to honesty, justice, sharing, and loyalty.

Robert Coles, accepting both the labels of moral and religious theorist, views this era as one of ethical ambiguities. James Fowler, a faith developmentalist, notes that this stage of "Intuitive Projective Faith" reflects magical thinking as well as very prevalent God imagery. Moran, a religious theorist, also recognizes the connection to myths as well as discussing a child's view of daily miracles. Finally, Robert Goldman, a faith or religious theorist, also promotes the "Fairy Tale Stage" as a time of animism and

creativity. There are many theorists who comment on a child's ability to accept facts in a literal and not metaphorical manner; as a result, they emphasize teaching Bible at a later stage and not during this stage.

Prayer is Reaching
Howard Bogot and Daniel B. Syme
New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981.

This child's book stresses the various ways one prays. For example, one can appeal to the Divine by praising God for various parts of nature. One can ask God for help in relating to other people such as "prayer is asking for peace..." (page 7). Another type of prayer is to say thank you. Finally, the book teaches that prayer is a way for humans to reach for God. The pictures are black and white sketches, with very few words per page. At the end of the book, there is a transliterated and English rendition of the *shehecheyanu* prayer, praising God for enabling a person to reach this season.

Although there is no listing for age appropriateness, one would be most inclined to target this book for children ages three to five. Thematically, the book focuses on Erikson's idea of helping a child experience positive achievement. The emphasis of the book is the rabbinic theology of the importance of prayers in our lives; however, God becomes more of a passive and implicit subject. Discussion questions might help make explicit the idea that God is a Creator or a Peace-Keeper. This 23- page book needs an adult who is comfortable reading transliteration in order to teach the *shehecheyanu* prayer to his/ her child. This book is proactive in our talking to God through prayer, but is passive in teaching children actual concepts about God.

The God Around Us: A Child's Garden of Prayer Revised Edition
Mira Pollak Brichto
New York: UAHC Press, 1999

According to the publisher, this book is geared toward children in preschool and in kindergarten (i.e. approximately ages three to five), while recognizing that educators and parents might find the book to be a helpful a teaching tool. The author's goal is to enable youngsters to express their deepest emotions through prayer. Because children inherently love to pray, according to Brichto, the author hopes that life's wonders and experiences within everyday life will be enhanced by a stronger connection to God. The book is a picture book of poems and prayers in Hebrew, Hebrew transliteration, and English.

This book is indeed listed in its correct developmental category from a visual point of view. There are very colorful pictures that may help a young child understand the meaning of the prayers. At times, the images are too busy with no white space on the page, causing some of the words to get lost. Moreover, Piaget, Vygotsky, and other developmental theorists would likely view the words as too complex for this age child because a youngster probably will not fully understand the words and then he/ she will feel guilty and/ or stupid. Another challenge is the lack of page numbers; this absence makes referencing the book and returning to certain pages more challenging, both for adults and children. The Hebrew prayers are traditional one-line Jewish prayers. However, the English that is used in connection to the prayer often has only an indirect connection with interpretive translations. For example, on one page the prayer is *Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Haolam Mechayeh Hametim.* The translation in the book is "Praised are You, Adonai Our God, Ruler of the Universe, who returns loved ones safely home," rather than the literal translation of "Blessed/ Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe who brings life to the dead." As a result of the interpretative language, a child, when she/ he is much older, may misunderstand the correct usage for

these specific blessings. An adult may help mitigate this potential result by teaching both the book's translation as well as the more accurate translations. In this way, a parent or teacher would help facilitate a child's magical thinking and fantasy world while sharing the more typical purpose. At the end of the book, there is an index by the last few words of the prayers in Hebrew transliteration and then the more traditional use for the blessing. Thus, if a child looks in the glossary, there is an opportunity for a youngster to grasp the more typical time to recite these blessings. Nevertheless, the interpretations can be misleading to a youngster.

The themes included in the book are God as Creator, God as Source of goodness, God as the Source of bread, God as the Upholder of the covenant, God as Judge, God whose power and might fill the world, and God as Redeemer. The strongest emphasis is God as Creator; this theme is used four different times within the book. Hence, one would align this book with the Biblical theology, which emphasizes the beginning stories in the book of Genesis. This book is proactive in its desire to help a person add blessings into his/her daily life; however, it serves as more of a passive and implicit lesson to teach about God. There are no follow-up questions or suggestions for discussions to aid parents or teachers. A positive aspect about this book is that God is not discussed in a genderized manner. As a result, a child may create his/ her own God images in his/ her mind, rather than shifting into the rather common idea that God is "an old man with a white beard."

In the Beginning
Miriam Ramsfelder Levin
Rockville, MD: Kar-Ben Copies, Inc., 1996

The suggested age for this book is a child three to four. There are no page numbers, making specific references more challenging. The book is attractive with brightly colored pictures that are quite pretty. There are very few words per page, with a

lot of white space. The story is based upon a boy named Adam who looks at the world through a creative lens. One of the only Jewish or Hebrew words used in the book is a reference to Jewish legal text, "*Talmud*," with the idea that "the Talmud says that we have been chosen by God as partners in creation." However, there is no glossary or definition of the word; thus the author assumes that people have a foundation of Jewish knowledge.

After that initial statement, the book makes no reference to God, focusing on the human aspects of creation. This story uses modern storytelling, *midrash*, based on the Talmudic concept to support Biblical theology about creation. Thus, the main character is Adam who "looked at his room in the light, and even though it was messy, he saw that it was good." One interesting switch from the Biblical version of the creation story is that when Adam was lonely, he slept in his parents' bed, rather than the common idea that Eve was created to eliminate Adam's loneliness. Developmentally, the main character supports one of Erikson's messages of promoting positive achievement and Elkind's idea of letting Adam "do it himself." Nevertheless, this book only implicitly teaches about God; moreover, without discussion questions or suggestions, it is not a very helpful teaching tool for one who proactively wants to teach children about God.

For Heaven's Sake
Sandy Eisenberg Sasso
Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1999

Although this book has no age listing by either author or publisher, it would be most helpful to children if it were included in this developmental age. Although the theme of learning about heaven and exploring what it is and its whereabouts is abstract, it is a book that encourages the ideas of Gordon: the importance of imagination, fantasy, and creativity. In fact, the primary character takes the initiative in seeking the purpose of heaven. The book has plenty of pictures, a lot of white space on each page with very few

words per page. Isaiah, the main character of the story, often hears the phrases "for heaven's sake," "heaven forbid," or "thank heavens." He is intrigued by these phrases and begins to ask people about heaven. His father compares heaven to the taste of rich, fudge brownies. His uncle tells him that heaven can be found "above the clouds where God lives," (page 13). However, these answers do not satisfy him; he then asks the mail carrier who responds that heaven is a place where one can sit around all day and rest and not have to worry about transporting anything. His older sister notes that she "is not sure there is a heaven" and adds that he should not waste his time contemplating it (page 16). None of these responses are fully accepted by Isaiah. Finally, his grandmother offers to help him explore heaven. They went to various locations that were his grandfather's favorite places. Finally, the grandmother explains to Isaiah that heaven "is often in places where we are least likely to look. 'When I want to find heaven, I look in here,' Grandma said, holding her hands to her chest… 'I think, Isaiah, we can get close to heaven and to God in a place in our hearts…'" (page 30).

This book is a wonderful tool to explore heaven. Each character in the book relates heaven to his/ her experiences, personalizing the concept to fit his/ her needs. The conclusion of the book is that heaven can be found anywhere. However, there are no discussion suggestions or follow-up questions to help a child understand other concepts. The proactive idea about teaching about heaven does not carry into thoughts about God, a subject that becomes more implicit and passive than would be most suited for the context of this thesis. The theology of this book emphasizes the use of rabbinic *midrash* to interpret heaven. This book is enjoyable and is a great learning device to help discuss heaven or death with a young child. With follow-up, it could also be a beneficial tool in teaching children about God.

Designed by God, So I Must Be Special
Bonnie Sose
Winter Park, FL: Character Builders for Kids, 1988

This book is recommended for children age three through six. There are good clear pictures and a lot of white space on each page. The words are very easy to read; however, it is hard for someone to reference the pages because there are no page numbers. The book's primary message is the Biblical concept of God as the Creator. Each page focuses on a different aspect of creation. For example, God gave us eyes "to see life's beauties," "ears to hear the many sounds," "noses to smell things," and "skin to feel life's many great sensations." In addition, the Divine provided "bodies so that we could be free to experience the world," "minds to dream, think, plan, and imagine," "hearts to feel good and bad emotions," and spirit. As a result of the gift of spirit, one "could know that He's always beside me every place I go. To love me, to protect me, to show me the way, to be there in hard times as well as each day. He designed me with special talents, gifts, and abilities you see, which let me know that He has something special in mind for me." These various aspects of creation also promote the thought of Fowler (and other theorists) of magical thinking and is a way to enhance one's creative ideas.

The book stresses God's "maleness" by frequently using the words His, Him, and He. Furthermore, those words are in larger print than the rest of the words, emphasizing God's masculine gender. Thus, the book falls into stereotypical God-imagery as male, resulting in a decrease of imagination for the child in determining for himself/ herself the appearance of God. This book focuses on the Biblical story of creation and specifically focuses on our bodies and souls. Each page has God's gift to us and then gives examples of how we can use our gift to experience the outside world. The book is enjoyable and is a helpful tool in proactively teaching children about God.

Six to Twelve Years Old

There are a variety of issues from chapters one and two to reiterate and highlight in this developmental age group. For example, Erikson targets this age as one of "industry versus inferiority." Now that a child enters school, there are certain expectations and a need to conform to various behaviors and learning styles. If a youngster does not succeed in this manner, she/ he may feel inadequate or inferior. Thus, there is a certain level of importance in making a child feel good and successful in school. During this stage, God is most noted as Protector. Piaget narrows the age range from Erikson, and names it the Concrete- Operational Stage. During this time, a child can problem-solve if she/ he is given the physical objects. The child shifts his/ her frame of reference from the idea that everything is conscious to everything that moves is conscious and finally to a more accurate perception of what is life. In conjunction with this idea, a child gains a more precise definition of religion being beliefs along with actions. Elkind focuses on this stage as one of "normalcy" in contrast to "abnormal," concepts that most other developmental theorists save for adolescence. Elkind also emphasizes that this stage is one of bargaining and looks strongly toward reward and punishment. According to Elkind's belief, a youngster of this age judges people by their actions rather than by their intentions.

Sears' main message pertaining to this developmental age is the idea of the importance of family-centered learning. Havighurst, in contrast, stresses the need for games, recognizing that learning component to be of primary concern to this age youngster. Gordon discusses the consequence of teasing and the critical need to avoid

being the target in order to be a member of the "in-group." Gordon also recognizes that this stage also reflects conflicting values because it is the first real opportunity for a child to interact with adults and children of other social classes and/ or cultures. Similarly to Elkind, Gordon comments on the importance of fairness and justice for this age group. Vygotsky also focuses on cultural differences, emphasizing the various linguistic issues that may arise as a result of the differences. He also highlights the idea of processing through thoughts and actions.

Lawrence Kohlberg labels this stage as "Conventional," a time when a child has a high need for approval as part of a desire to be a "good boy" or "nice girl." Moreover, this stage is a time of law and order in appreciating the power of the social order. Included in that idea is the need to judge experiences by seeking other people's approval. Carol Gilligan takes a somewhat similar stance in exploring the idea of doing the right thing because of the standards of society. She also believes that the second stage is one of self-sacrifice when a person feels responsible for everyone else. Damon, like Piaget and Vygotsky, recognizes that one's morals are based on one's experiences and actions; he adds that they can not be the result of pure rote. Empathy is another important quality to this stage child. Damon's final primary message is that a child recognizes situational morality and challenges inconsistent messages. Coles declares this stage to be the "Age of Conscience," a time when children ask a lot of "why" questions in order to fulfill their curious minds. Similar to other theorists, Coles focuses on the good in contrast to bad and the idea that a child defines values in a variety of manners. James Fowler comments that this era is the "Mythical-literal stage," a separation between the real and the fantasy. In contrast to Erikson's idea that God is primarily Protector, Fowler thinks that this stage

child looks to God as the Creator. Along with other developmental theorists, Fowler shares the idea that this stage is important in exploring Divine reciprocity as well as a time when it is acceptable to acknowledge God's "errors." Gabriel Moran shares a somewhat similar philosophy of a child's development. He considers that this stage, "Acquiring a Religion" is one of minimizing life's mysteries and becoming more strongly connected to science at the expense of beliefs. Finally, Goldman follows suit in recognizing the higher level of skepticism in this age group and understanding that the Bible is not literally true.

Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.
Judy Blume
Scarsdale, NY: Bradbury Press, 1970

This popular book is meant for children in grades four through six, approximately ages nine through twelve. Interestingly enough, according to the card catalogue, the book's subjects are maturity and personal problems, but not theology. Nevertheless, one can easily glean a taste of theology through reading this book. Margaret, the main character, is constantly talking to God and asking for the Divine's assistance in various matters. She is not religious, as a result of being brought up with parents of two faiths and them agreeing to basically not do anything. According to the author, Margaret looks toward God as One who can give her answers. Throughout the book, Margaret questions God's actual existence and then continues talking to the Deity. Generally, her conversations to God involve the explicit teaching of seeking the Divine's help, as well as the implicit beliefs that her monologues help her gain strength and courage. Moreover, she looks to God as a Friend who has power to make changes. She also recognizes that talking to God is not universally acceptable: "My parents don't know I actually talk to God. I mean, if I told them they'd think I was some kind of religious fanatic or

something. So I keep it very private. I can talk to him without moving my lips if I have to. My mother says God is a nice idea. He belongs to everybody" (page 14). Thus, on some level she has discussed the Divinity with her mother; at the same time, she is not comfortable talking to God in front of other people.

The theology found within this novel coincides with Milton Steinberg's ideas about "Limited Theism." God is a powerful deity who can make changes, such as causing her to be a woman by giving her the gift of her menstrual cycle. At the same time, God is not omniscient, as the Divine does not know Margaret unless she introduces herself "...It's me, Margaret." Moreover, bargaining is an acceptable theological idea to Margaret, a concept that fits with Elkind's developmental theory for this age group. When her father is ill, she will "give God anything" if God will heal him. God is male, although, interestingly enough, "he" is never capitalized. Again, the small letter might be because God is seen as a friend. God is someone with answers who is able to participate in decision- making. Although earlier in the book, Margaret's mother acknowledges God's universal presence, according to Margaret, the Divine lives in a holy building: "I've never been inside a temple or a church. I'll look for you, God." Although Margaret was unable to feel anything in the religious institutions, she continued to look at God's immanent side.

Other theological aspects found within the book are the expressions of blame and anger toward God. When she hurt the feelings of Laura, her classmate, she asked God "why did you let me do that?" (p. 120). As a result of her school project not working in the manner in which she had hoped, she exclaimed, "I don't even need God... I was never going to talk to God again. What did he want from me anyway?" (page 134). However, at various points she almost speaks with God and acknowledges that she misses the Divine Presence. After her first episode of her menstrual cycle, she returns to talking to God. This book is a wonderful tool in teaching God to youth. Although there are no discussion questions or suggested topics for further exploration, this book has a wide

variety of theological concepts that a person could use as tools in proactively teaching children about God.

Julia and the Hand of God
Eleanor Cameron
New York: E.P. Dutton, 1977

The publisher recommends this book for children in grades four through six, approximately ages nine through twelve. As a result of a series of crises, 11 year old Julia is able to understand her family in a new way. There are some pictures in this 168-page novel, but the majority of the pages are just words. In one instance, there is an earthquake mentioned in San Francisco that is compared to the Hand of God like the story of Sodom and Gemorrah. This acknowledgment of God is one of the few references to the Divine. Despite the title, God is only passively discussed in the majority of the book. In another chapter, there is a statement by Julia that is controversial to her family regarding her belief that animals have souls and therefore go to heaven. When her family disagrees, she firmly states that if mean people are allowed to enter heaven, just because they go to church, but not kind and loving animals, then God "is hateful and horrible and mean." Her grandmother thinks that statement is absolutely blasphemous, as she accepts only the Biblical image of God. The essence of the story is that Julia implicitly looked toward God as a Protector or Rescuer (following Erikson's ideas), where as the grandmother looked toward God as a Punisher (utilizing the theories of Elkind or Fowler). Developmentally, this book shares common elements from the ideas of Erikson, Fowler, Moran, and Goldman as the child struggles to reconcile miracles and science. The book is enjoyable, but is only a passive method to teach children about the Divine.

Partners With God
Gila Gevirtz
West Orange, NJ: Behrman House, Inc., 1995

A book geared toward introducing Jewish concepts of God and holiness, *Partners With God* is meant for children in grades three to four (approximately children ages 8-10). Within the book, there are stories, illustrations, photos, analogies, metaphors, and activities, all of which help to serve as teaching tools about the Divine. Although we can not know about God's actual appearance, we can see and appreciate God's many creations. Because we are all created in God's image, our souls connect with one another and with God. Moreover, this book is meant to help us display our faith and trust in God through our actions. There are page numbers and a table of contents to better help reference the book. The book is split into two main categories: discovering God's world and understanding God's ways. Within each primary section, there are six subdivisions: how we know God, where we find God, God the creator, in God's image, God's teaching, and God is one. In the second section, the subcategories are: God's wonders, listening to our souls, Shabbat as an island in time, speaking with God, God's forgiveness, and faith makes us strong.

The 128-page book has brightly colored pictures that are both Biblical and modern in their nature. There is a lot of space on the page, along with large, clear print. One concept found within the book is that "the truth is that God is not a person and does not look like one… God is not short or tall, thin or fat, young or old… We cannot see God. We can only see what God creates" (page eight). The author of the book uses the analogy that God is like the wind. We cannot see the wind, but we can see the leaves on trees blow or feel the crisp air. One problem with that metaphor is that there are some days when it is not windy at all. A child might make the connection that God is only sometimes accessible. In the first chapter, a child will learn that the Divine is the Creator or the genderized Father, following Biblical and Rabbinic theology. Another analogy to

describe God is that the Divine is like footprints; they represent signs of a Being that we do not see. Just as we see the footprints, so too are we able to see God's creations. Within the book, there are some Hebrew phrases, along with transliterations and English, in order to ensure that a higher percentage of people can grasp the material found within the book. However, this dimension is not universal throughout the book. For example, on pages 104-105 there are blessings with only Hebrew and English. Thus, there is an assumption that the child can read Hebrew. Another concept within the book is that God can be found anywhere/ everywhere. Within the book itself, there are discussion questions and activities to help the child learn the material.

This book is a wonderful asset in teaching children about God. Developmentally, the book uses Piaget's model of focusing on concrete-operations. The majority of activities emphasize cognitive learning and are appropriate for this developmental age. Clearly, this book is optimal over a large amount of time and is not meant to teach the child everything about the Divine Presence in an hour. Furthermore, the book is an authentic tool in the wide variety of lessons about the Deity, as well as the acknowledgment in the final chapter that some questions about God remain unanswerable. The book is a proactive tool, appropriate for the developmental age listed by the publisher, and assists in teaching about God through a variety of means such as stories, history lessons, explanations, and activities.

Partners With God: Teacher's Edition
Irene Bolton, Rabbi William Cutter, Gila Gevirtz, Rabbi Jules Harlow, Frances B. Pearlman, Tamar Raff, Ruby G. Strauss, Jessica B. Weber, Rabbi David Wolpe
West Orange, NJ: Behrman House, Inc., 1995

According to David Wolpe (p. iii), "We teach the holidays. We teach history. We teach about the Bible, about our land, and language. But when it comes to teaching about God, we are often silent." God is the explanation for why we live Jewishly, to help

us feel holiness, to be moral, and to have positive self-esteem. The teacher's guide is very accessible as the page numbers match the pagination of the book itself. The book has various arenas: introducing the lesson, goals children will gain by the end of the lesson, issues to discuss and to examine more closely, how to teach the included story, how to use the photos and to teach the Hebrew, other facts, activities, and a rabbi's commentary. The teacher's guide is in black and white and, in a small font, includes the actual pages from the textbook to easily enable the teacher to use the guide as a reference.

As mentioned, the majority of activities emphasize development through a cognitive perspective. This style is appropriate, given that as Jews we are taught to question and struggle with the Divine. One activity, for example, is to handout index cards with one of three questions: "When do you think about God? What do you believe about God? What do you wonder about God?" For this age child, it is logical that the majority of activities focus on cognitive development. However, cognitive development is not the only angle; the model of psycho-social learning also exists. For instance, another activity in the book suggests bringing the children into the sanctuary and playing various sounds such as children laughing, birds chirping, brook gushing, etc. After the conclusion of playing the sounds, the teacher can ask the children how each sound makes us aware of the Divine Presence. From a psychological-social perspective, such as Erikson's, there is also a lot of subtle teaching concepts that stress the idea of "industry". As a sample, there is an activity in chapter four that suggests holding a mirror so that each child may see herself/ himself and then asking what she/ he sees. The teacher may encourage looking beyond the physical attributes. There are a tremendous number of activities and methods to help a teacher explore the various topics. This book is an excellent tool to proactively teach children about God.

Living as Partners with God
Gila Gevirtz
West Orange, NJ: Behrman House, 1997

According to the publisher, this book is meant to be a continuation of *Partners With God*. As a result, the publisher recommends this book for children in grades four through six, children approximately between the ages of nine and twelve. Moreover, this book's primary goal is to assist youngsters in reaching a new level of understanding about God, one that focuses on the Jewish people's covenantal relationship with the Divine. We add to life's holiness through the many acts of *mitzvot*, commandments. Parallel to its predecessor, the book is split into two primary units with six subdivisions in each unit. In Part One (understanding our covenant with God), the sections include: following God's ways, sharing God's holiness, God's holy land, the message of God's prophets, the wisdom of God's sages, and joining God's community. Honoring our covenant with God, Part Two, consists of the following chapters: God gives us free will, repairing God's world, caring for God's world, God makes time holy, God makes living holy, and partners in the covenant.

In this book, there is a higher use of Biblical quotes as a way to explain a concept. The book has a similar structure to its predecessor with pictures as well as a lot of white space, questions on the side, stories, and activities. The activities do not represent any developmental growth from the first series, appropriate to Erikson's developmental theory (as this developmental age begins at age six and ends at approximately age twelve), but would not be acceptable for Piaget's framework. In some manners, the activities are too juvenile for the cognitive levels of this age group. For example, one activity is to write three wishes one would want if he/ she were a slave in Egypt. Another "game" is to write a song about being happy as a Jew, and write about how it feels to be an outsider. The activities also do not reflect Piaget's ideas about entering into the stage of post-operational thinking. In fact, in many ways the book is developmentally meant

for the same age or even younger children. Moreover, the book is not as proactive in teaching about God as is its predecessor; this text emphasizes doing *mitzvot*. The message could easily be shifted into a more proactive stance on the Divine. However, the book on its own is less about God and more about our role in shaping the world. Actually, some chapters, such as chapter three which looks at God's holy land, is much more of a history lesson about Israel and Jerusalem than in teaching children about God. This book is recommended for a curriculum whose focus is passive about God and proactive about humans, in order to emphasize our role as God's partners and the importance of performing *mitzvot*.

Living as Partners with God: Teacher's Edition
Rabbi William Cutter, Gila Gevirtz, Rabbi Jules Harlow, Terry Kaye, Nachama Moskowitz, Ruby G. Strauss, Jessica B. Weber, Rabbi David Wolpe
West Orange: NJ, Behrman House, 1997

The introduction and first several pages of this book are the same as the teacher's edition of *Partners with God*. Similar to its prototype, the book has a wonderful layout, making it a very accessible text for teachers. Again, there is an assortment of teaching tools to better serve the teacher. There are goals, how to teach the pictures and stories, discussion questions to look deeper at the material, and a wide variety of activities. Just as the book itself emphasizes *mitzvot* more than it does the subject of the Divine, so too does this teacher's guide reflect that same stress. Many of the activities found in this sequel are seen in similar manners in the first book. However, the teaching goals are new and have many explicit ideas about what a child should learn about God; ironically, many of the goals are carried out in a mostly implicit manner. The conclusion in chapter 12 supports children's ongoing struggles with God. We are indeed on an ongoing journey to live as partners with God. Given the importance of this series, the teacher's edition indeed acts as a helpful resource to parent(s) and/ or teachers in instructing about God.

Let's Talk About God
Dorothy K. Kripke
New York: Behrman House, Inc., Publishers, 1954

Because this book is no longer published, I was unable to locate the suggested age range from the publisher. Nevertheless, it would be the most helpful tool for children between the ages of six to nine years old. The book teaches numerous concepts about God in a way that would be developmentally appropriate for this group. It follows Piaget's stages of moving from Preoperational to Concrete- Operations, as it helps find meaning and shifts the definition of life. The book's categories follow school rules, such as the developmental theories of Gordon, Damon, and Coles. According to the table of contents, the emphasis of the material includes: God's Oneness, God made the world and is everywhere, we cannot see God, things God gives us and how God helps us, God's special gifts, God tells us what to do, sometimes we make mistakes, how we talk to God and how God talks to us, God is different from people, and there are things that we just do not know. These are concepts suitable for this age group and the lessons are relatively easy to grasp. For example, in the conversation about our inability to see the Divine, the book reflects (there are no page numbers): "God is never seen, and yet we know He's there, because we see the things He does and feel His loving care." This is a concept that when taught in more detail, can be comprehended by a youngster within this age group.

The book reflects the era in which it was written. As one may have noticed from the aforementioned quote, the God language reflects gender bias. Here, even though God cannot be seen, somehow the Divine is male. In fact, the book notes that "God is not a man, although we speak of Him as 'He.'" Thus, maleness is attributed to God! One aspect of this book, which may be scary to small children, is that God is a perfect Being who never forgets anything. When a child makes a mistake, she/ he might be very disturbed if she/ he thinks that God will always remember the error. There are no follow-

up questions, guidelines, or suggestions to further contribute to a child's learning. Nevertheless, this book serves as a proactive tool to help teach God to children, particularly when an adult may be present to minimize a child's fears of having every error be remembered.

But God Remembered: Stories of Women from Creation to the Promised Land
Sandy Eisenberg Sasso
Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1995

The publisher's description of this book focuses more on the issue of women than it does about God. It is suggested for ages eight and higher, although as mentioned later in this analysis, it might actually be more appropriate for younger children. The book uses both Biblical and Rabbinic theology as a way to explain the women who are discussed. There are colorful pictures as well as words with a lot of white space on each page. At the beginning of the book, there is a *midrash* to explain the title of the story. Moreover, it defines the word "*midrash*" to ensure that every reader can understand the complete concept. The author helps people be able to more easily reference this source, by including both a table of contents as well as a page numbers. The four stories are about Lilith (based on Genesis 1:27), Serach (Genesis 46:8-17), Bityah (Exodus 2:10), and the daughters of Z (Numbers 27:1). An explicit concept that stems from these stories is the Biblical idea of God as Creator.

In addition to the explicit belief of the Divine as the Creator, there are also many implicit ideas that could be taught to children. However, most of the ideas would need to originate from the adult as there are no discussion questions or activities that would better equip a parent or teacher to instruct the implicit ideas. An adult, for example, could help a child understand that God is omniscient for the story of Lilith notes "...and God saw all that was going on in the garden of, and God found it very good." One could also grasp that God has memory. Other tacit ideas found within the book are that God gives us gifts,

such as stories and songs, and God is the God of all people. Thus, developmentally the book is appropriate in answering the question of God's function, as Coles, Moran, and Goldman suggest, a critical question for youngsters. The stories also teach that we are capable of walking together with God and we can speak directly to the Divine. Although God is Judge, the Divine does not play favorites. Despite the publisher's recommendation, I would opt to teach this book to younger children, such as children ages four to eight. The big book, the many pictures, and the amount of words all stylistically lend itself to an earlier age. Furthermore, around age four, a child has a lot more acceptance in "magical thinking." At eight and beyond, the youngster would be more likely to have learned the Biblical stories (despite the protests from many theorists) and would be less likely to accept these *midrashic* variations as they would have trouble blending the different versions. Within this context, the Biblical and Rabbinic theologies that exist are primarily passive opportunities to teach children about God, where as the explicit lessons are about women in the Bible.

Twelve to Eighteen Years Old

One of the more challenging stages, according to many developmental theorists, is the age (to use Erikson's nomenclature) of "Identity versus Role-Confusion." To reiterate some key elements of this twelve to eighteen year-old stage, Erikson notes the importance of an adolescent's appearance and the need to simultaneously have both conformity and rebellion. Not surprisingly, it is a time of moral "in-betweenness," as the youngster struggles between acting like a child and acting like an adult. The adolescent generally questions his/her identity, and struggles to find a way to be centered and balanced in the midst of this turmoil. Despite the evils of the world, a youth will look at God as Creator. Piaget labels this category "Formal Operations" which begins at age eleven (according to some sources). At this developmental point, a child can grasp

hypothetical situations and abstract reasoning. In order to minimize chaos, an adolescent should only have a limited number of choices. Elkind also reflects on the youth's ability to partake in abstract thinking and emphasizes the important need of having freedom and support from one's parents and gaining strength from one's peers and various trends. God is often viewed as Master or Father (Parent) during this stage. Sears reflects the idea that at this point in a child's development, all behaviors are set; thus, a teacher/ parent merely can correct "wrong" behaviors. Havighurst believes that the child is emotionally independent from adults and needs expressive activities to best serve his/ her needs. Gordon subdivides this category into "Preadolescence" and "Later Adolescence." In both groups, Gordon acknowledges the youth's ability to think in the abstract, the importance of peers, and the hope to partake in appropriate and safe fads.

Kohlberg's label for this phase in life is "Postconventional," a time when one makes a lot of judgments and, as Piaget, Elkind, and Gordon note, enjoys abstract reasoning and hypothetical situations. People in this phase, according to Kohlberg, enter into an internal "social contract" and attempt to avoid hurting other people. Furthermore, it is a time of establishing a "Universal Ethical Principle" of the freedom of choice. Gilligan shifts the developmental framework from goodness to truth. In part, this consists of endorsing oneself, being responsible for decision-making, caring for everyone including oneself, and generating life-affirming decisions. Similar to Kohlberg, Damon stresses democracy, control, and tough love as important pieces to this developmental stage. Moreover, a child seeks intimacy from peers, while craving trust and respect from parents. If a child is obedience at this stage, it is seen as a choice rather than an obligation. Damon also touches on the importance of social action as a prime factor for developmental growth. Coles reflects back to the idea that this stage is an emotional roller coaster in which the youth needs a tolerant adult community in the midst of this experience. James Fowler labels this stage "Synthetic- Conventional Faith" in which authority is located externally to oneself. A child is also able to partake in inner

reflection and appreciates both symbols and rituals. Faith is seen as a global issue (rather than individualized) and God is looked at as a Companion, Guide, and Supporter. Finally, Goldman titles this phase of life as "Logical-Scientific" or "Abstract." Similar to many other theorists, the developmental emphasis is on the newly acquired ability to partake in abstract reasoning or hypothetical situations. He also reflects on the adolescent's willingness to explore Biblical scholarship and to shift away from the literalness of the Bible. All developmental issues in all categories are general oversimplifications to reiterate certain points that have been used as a foundation in analyzing the various resources.

God: the Eternal Challenge - an A.R.E. Minicourse - Student Manual
Sherry Bissell with Audrey Friedman Marcus and Rabbi Raymond A. Zwerin
Denver: Alternatives in Religious Education, Inc., 1980

This black and white booklet is meant for adolescents in grades seven and higher (children beginning at age twelve) and is a program geared toward 10- 14 hours of study. The 31-page booklet has a variety of issues to be discussed, as displayed in its table of contents. For example, the following is a general overview: our need for God, how the idea of God originated, God's names and God's oneness, where God lives, how we can speak with God, and why God also needs us. There is no glossary within the student guide about God language (in contrast to the leader's guide), such as terms like omniscient, omnipresent, transcendent, immanent, theism, atheism, agnosticism, and more. This book has brief explorations about different topics. For instance, on the first page, there is a lesson about why we need God. The statement under the picture has a small space for our thoughts on God and then notes that "the God idea is central." Although the sentence is not further explained, the *Shema* is written in English, thus affirming the oneness of God.

Developmentally, this book is very age appropriate to the suggested range of twelve years and older. The book uses hypothetical situations and abstract reasoning, discussed by theorists such as Piaget, Gordon, Kohlberg, and many others. The topics listed within this booklet are very important and helpful in teaching children about God. In order for an adolescent to fully grasp this material, the book would need to be supported by the corresponding leader's guide (the next entry to be discussed). There is an assumption made that people reading this book has some awareness of the Hebrew language and Jewish terms because not every word or phrase is transliterated or translated. For example, the word "*Shoah*" is used without any reference to the common English term "Holocaust." One of the wonderful assets of this book is noting that we can speak to God in private prayer or public worship, with faith, song, or a specific purpose, but also with anger, doubt, and skepticism. The theology stems primarily from the Bible, especially the Deuteronomic passage containing the *Shema*. In addition to the Biblical point of view, the book also looks at the rabbinic teachings and modern issues to support and enhance one's view of the Divine. The activities listed in this booklet are helpful as tools to teach youth about God. Overall, this book is a terrific proactive method of teaching children about God.

God: the Eternal Challenge - an A.R.E. Minicourse - Leader's Guide
Sherry Bissell with Audrey Friedman Marcus and Rabbi Raymond A. Zwerin
Denver: Alternatives in Religious Education, Inc., 1980

This guide is not entirely consistent with the student manual, for it suggests a time period of 16- 20 (rather than 10- 14) hours of study. It is also written in black and white and the pages are smaller, but there are additional pages in the leader's guide, totaling 36. The book notes that the student's manual has both cognitive and affective objectives, thus successfully helping teachers facilitate the youth learning the material in a variety of manners. The cognitive objectives are: to be able to read about aspects of the Divine and

discuss God, to list at least six names for God, to be able to describe the Divine as Creator, Lawgiver, Redeemer, and Judge, to analyze the importance of God's Oneness to the Jewish people, to explain Jewish understanding of God's dwelling place as it developed through history, to explain public worship, to create a personal prayer, to explore the issues of evil and human imperfections, and, finally, to express one's own beliefs based on his/ her course of study. At the same time, the author hopes that the student will have affective results. The guide's goal is to provide space for sharing one's feelings, emotions, and beliefs about various names for God, expressing both faith and doubts connected with God, exploring one's relationship with God, and discussing how one's ideas may change over time.

The overarching goals for this mini-course on God are to understand the Divine, God's role in the universe, as well as glean ideas about individual and communal relationships to God. The author acknowledges on page three that "questioning, probing, and searching for God is a lifetime endeavor - an eternal challenge..." In addition, the leader's guide has a variety of activities to enhance the youth's learning. There are value clarifications, role-plays, discussions, creative writing opportunities, and art projects. Another positive aspect about the guide is that it provides suggestions for setting up the class and getting the teacher prepared to teach the class. Furthermore, the leader's guide has a glossary for some of the theological terms that are used in the student's manual. One negative about the leader's guide is that the page numbers do not match the numbers of the student's manual. Nevertheless, the wide breath of activities along with the more in-depth questions and discussion topics make this leader's guide a wonderful resource and proactive tool in teaching children about God.

God Made Easy
Patrice Karst
New York: Warner Books, 1997

The book is a small, catchy book that lacks page numbers. Although the author or publisher does not formally establish a suitable age range, the content is most appropriate for children ages thirteen and above, in large part because it discusses abstract ideas and uses irony as a method of communication. For example, on one page, it talks about how the "world is pretty crazy" and then moves into greater detail about some of the problems on earth. For a younger child, the content may be too scary and disconcerting and, in taking the book at face value, the child would potentially lose sight of the humor. However, for the average teenager, he/ she looks at the world with a very critical eye and has a skeptical attitude toward most experiences. Thus, this book would be a positive way to enter into the adolescent's subconscious. There is no one theological stance, although God is experienced inconsistently as an eternal male for the book declares that "He was never really gone, by the way- just forgotten in all the chaos and confusion." The book's greatest theological asset is the multiple names for God. For example, God is known as "Goddess, Supreme Being, Heavenly Father, Divine Mother, the Creator, Lord, Higher Power... Something Bigger than Me." The variety of names suggests a liberal theology that moves through the historical use of names. The book also notes God's omnipresence as well as the fact that people can trust that the Divine will always listen. Finally, God is said to have no ego. This book is a fun and creative way to teach about God. If it were included with many other books, it would be a positive and proactive resource. However, it would be insufficient if it were the only book used to teach children about God.

Ally McBeal television show
July 23, 1999
Executive Producer David E. Kelley
Fox network

This television show is rated TV14, meant for people ages 14 and above. Due to its recent popularity, this episode could be another tool in teaching children about God. The case is about a young boy who is sick and dying with leukemia who decides to sue God. Although the opposing counsel did not take the case seriously at first, the defense attorney convinced the boy's church about the importance of the case. Eric, the youngster, doubts God's existence and compares God to Santa Claus. However, he acknowledges angels as God's messengers. Ally McBeal tells the story of seeing a blimp as a sign of God's presence. When Eric dies, Ally herself questions the existence of God; however, when she looks into the sky, she sees a blimp. This television show is an important tool in teaching about how most people go through stages when their faith may be stronger or weaker. The show gives people an opportunity to explore the medieval and modern concept of skepticism toward God. Hopefully, the FOX network would share this television episode again, especially knowing that it would be a helpful resource. If this television show were shown in conjunction with other teaching tools about God, it would be an important learning device.

Being God's Partner: How to Find the Hidden Link Between Spirituality and Your Work
Jeffrey K. Salkin
Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1994

The primary goal of this book is to turn our thoughts into deeds by changing the way we view religion and "work." The two terms are not meant to be separate entities, but rather, ideally, are to be synthesized together. Thus, the first chapter's heading of "smuggling religion into work" is a way to reintroduce God into our daily moral lives.

According to Heschel (page 51), "...the ineffable Name of God: we have forgotten how to pronounce it, we have almost forgotten how to spell it. We may totally forget how to recognize it." Thus, each of our tasks is to regain the deeper connections with God. The other chapters included in this book are named: "What is Spirituality Anyway? Imitating God, Being God's partner, Standing in the presence of God: how to hear God's voice in business ethics, The ultimate business school final examination: Leviticus 19, Shattering the idols of the workplace, and Restoring balance to our work lives: specific things you can do." These chapters' titles reflect the examples and lessons within the book. For instance, in the chapter "Imitating God," the reader learns that when one lights Shabbat candles, one becomes "akin to the Holy One" because God made the sun and the moon during creation.

This book is a great asset for adults to learn how to bring God into their lives. Ideally, it can then be restated for children and adolescents as a way to help them. However, if a child or adolescent on his/ her own were to read this book, he/ she may not understand the connection to his/ her actual experiences. In addition to the concepts, the language is also geared more toward adults than youth. One important message that the author states is that we need to find ways to imitate God (following the Biblical concept of *b'tselem Elohim*, in the image of God) in our daily work/ activities. We have to learn to assess our efforts to know if we believe that our work is "very good." We have to take part in *tsimtsum*, withdrawing, in order to allow others to try their hands at things. These terms are definitely concepts that we can, and should, teach our children. However, without any formal discussion questions or topic guidelines, the messages may be lost on our youth. I recommend this book as an adult tool in teaching children about God, but would shy away from giving the book directly to children.

Teaching Your Children About God: A Modern Jewish Approach
David J. Wolpe
New York: Henry, Holy & Co., 1993

According to Wolpe, a "spiritual education is as important to a full life as an intellectual and emotional education" (page four). He notes that children often feel a sense of the sacred and then look to adults for the vocabulary that supports the experience. This book is geared toward an adult assisting a child (or children) in exploring God. The book is split into nine chapters: "Finding God ourselves: rediscovering our spiritual roots; Catching it from our kids: how do they see the world and what can we learn from them; Origins and explanations: where does God come from, Did He write a Book, and is He a She; Hide-and-seek: where to look for God; God's love and God's law: what does God want from us, why are there different religions; Prayer: does God hear our prayers; Why does God permit evil? Dealing with God's hardest questions; The bridge of life: explaining death to children; Reaching God together: renewing religious life." These headings are important topics for adults to grapple with themselves and then discuss with children.

Within each topic, there are suggestions of questions to ask the child/children. For example, in chapter five there are, coincidentally, five questions: "Do you believe that God loves you? How do you feel about God's love? When you committed a [sin] *chet*, what did you do? How can we correct a *chet*? Do people of different faith's worship the same God?" Thus, this book assumes a certain level of Jewish and Hebrew knowledge as there is no definition for certain words. Moreover, one significant flaw of this book is that the book is not shaped for child development. The book makes no reference to distinguishing between teaching God to a 3 year-old child or an 18 year-old adolescent. The book is written in a very general fashion. Nevertheless, the resource certainly provides wonderful material to serve an adult as a resource. However, unless a

parent or teacher understands child development, he/ she may not explain about God in a way that would allow the child to grasp the various concepts and ideas.

Multiple Categories

I Learn About God
Howard Bogot and Daniel B. Syme
New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1982.

This book, as listed by the publisher, is appropriate for two different age ranges: ages three to four, as well as children in kindergarten through third grade (ages five through nine). The book has black and white pictures with red inked words. *I Learn About God* gives examples of when one learns about God. For example, the child learns about God when "I wake up each morning," "when I taste a juicy red apple," "when I cuddle a new puppy," "when I sit alone and think," and "when I see a butterfly come out of its cocoon..." Thus, the book offers a variety of examples that could enter into a child's imagination of times when she/ he encounters God.

Although the catalogue recommended that the book could be used through age nine, many of the older children within the suggested range would think that the book is "too babyish." Moreover, older youth would be able to grasp more difficult language than is presented here and would also have a greater assortment of experiences in which to use as a reference point. Thus, the catalogue's first offering that the book is geared toward ages three to four would be a more successful match. One reason for the support of the book being targeted to the younger age is the use of concrete objects and ideas, following the ideas of Piaget's "Preoperational" stage or Moran's "Simply Religious" phase. The book needs a glossary, as there is an assumption of a basic knowledge of Judaism. For example, the words *"mitzvah"* and *"Shema"* ("commandment" and "hear")

are used without definitions. However, in the page after the one with the word *Shema*, the first line of the prayer is transliterated and written in English.

The majority of the God images stem from the Biblical stories of creation; they are joined together to emphasize the Deuteronomic message (Deuteronomy 6:4) of the oneness of God. One of the downfalls of this book is that it does not teach a child how the different examples enable one to learn about God. It would be helpful if there were explicit statements, such as the idea that God is Creator and God is One. This age group needs questions and discussion topics to further assist their abilities to show initiative and enable their fantasy-worlds to have a voice. As a result, the book becomes a rather passive instrument, rather than active, in teaching children about God.

I'm Growing
Howard Bogot and Daniel B. Syme
New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1982

Similar to the previous book, the catalogue suggests that this book is appropriate for children ages three to four, as well as for kindergarten through grade three (ages five through nine). The book is lacking page numbers, and has black and white pictures and words in turquoise print. There are very few words per page, making it easy for the young child to follow the words. There are a variety of Jewish terms used, both in the words as well as in the pictures. For instance, the pages focus on *Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Torah, mezuzah, Chanukah, Purim, Pesach, matzah, blintzes,* and *Shavuot.* Also, the pictures use various Jewish symbols and write words in transliteration, such as "*leshanah tovah tikatevu.*" Again, comparable to the previously listed book, the style of the book including the use of pictures are best suited for children ages three and four, rather than the older suggested category.

Because children have a lot of questions at this age, an adult would need a Jewish background to read this book, as there is no glossary. Although the holidays could easily

be connected to the Divine, in this book, ironically, the word "God" or any direct reference to the Divine is completely absent from this book. Moreover, the story has no lesson plans or discussion ideas, making the connection back to God even more remote. The final page of the book is "I'm growing as a Jew;" a more accurate conclusion for the book would be: "I'm learning about the holidays." This book does not have activities to promote using it as a tool to teach the holidays nor does it reflect an active learning style. It is passive and ineffectual in teaching children about God, unless there is a creative, independent-minded adult who supplements the material.

Hear O, Israel: About God
Molly Cone
New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1978

The ideal age range for this book, according to the publisher, is between ages six and eight. Although this suggestion is actually very limited, the later version of this book (to be discussed in greater detail following this annotation) has a suggested age range of either three to seven or five to ten for *Hello, Hello, Are You There, God?* Thus, for the sake of consistency, I have acknowledged that it falls under multiple developmental ages. The page numbers (64 in all) make it easier to reference and find certain stories. Additionally, there are simplistic illustrations throughout the book to help the child better understand the concepts. At the end of each story, there is a Hebrew word or phrase, without transliteration, to help convey the point. For instance, similar to some of the other books listed in this thesis, the word "*Shema*" has no translation. Moreover, just as there is no translation within the text itself, so too is there no glossary at the end of the book. However, at the back of the book, there is a section of "how to say the Hebrew words" with transliterations and the referencing page numbers. One would expect that this index would assist readers and result in a larger reading audience. The irony of the page explaining how to say the Hebrew is that the page numbers listed do not always

match the page number of the Hebrew text. There are various categories for the stories to help frame the story: "What is God, Why can't I see God, How do we know about God, What can God do, Why doesn't God make everything good, Does God make everything happen, We're partners with God, We hear God in a special way, Can God hear me, and finally, Does God know me?" These different groupings all have stories within them to help explain the topics.

There are a variety of concepts that would be appropriate for children ages six to eight that are taught in this version of the book, such as God's omnipresence. On the other hand, there are also some potentially confusing concepts. For example, in within the story found on pages 30-33, "The Good Husband and the Good Wife," the reader is taught that the couple discovers good in everything. The question prior to the story asks why God does not make everything good. Thus, the story and the question are contradictory. Furthermore, it might be very challenging for people to find the good in everything. For example, a person who has cancer may not be able to find the good in his/ her disease. Thus, that concept would be more appropriate for older age children who are more developmentally able to partake in abstract thinking. Another aspect about *Hear, O Israel: About God* is that the book is a somewhat outdated publication, especially apparent in its graphics. They are not reflective of the sharp computer age graphics that children come to expect. Although there are a variety of issues in this book, overall the stories can be a helpful resource in exploring God, especially when told in a story-telling fashion.

Hello, Hello, Are You There, God?
Molly Cone
New York: UAHC Press, 1999

As mentioned in the previous section, in one section of the catalogue, the publisher suggests that this book is appropriate for children between ages five and ten.

However, in another portion of the catalogue, the book is listed for children ages three through seven. The goals of this book are to explain to young children the concepts of learning about God, the idea of belonging, teaching the youth to value themselves and their tradition, and to instill a sense of Jewish identity. Developmentally, these goals do indeed cross suggestions from the various theorists. The idea of belonging can be taught to school age children; in contrast, instilling Jewish identity and learning about God are more abstract and, therefore, would be more helpful for older youth. The book has a table of contents, pictures, and page numbers, although is lacking a glossary. The beginning of the book has the *Shema* in Hebrew, transliteration, and English, enabling a greater majority of children to understand the words. At the same time, the book expects a certain level of Jewish knowledge. There are words such as consecration, confirmation, *Bar/ Bat Mitzvah*, *mezuzah*, and Rabbi Akiva that have no explanations or translations attached. Stylistically, the book is composed of many short stories that are approximately one to two pages in length but do not have follow- up questions or discussion suggestions.

The book is segmented into three primary sections: "about God, about belonging, and about learning." The segments of the book on belonging and learning are more passive than proactive in explaining about God. However, some of the stories in the "God section" are very helpful. For example, the question on page five is "why can't I see God?" The story is about a little fish that learns that water is essential for life. The little fish then asks many other fish where is the water. At first, no other fish knows the answer; finally, one explains that the water is over the little fish, under him, and all around him. Thus, when referenced back to the Divine, the story is a helpful teaching tool in learning about God's omnipresence. Ideally, the suggested story range would be best served for a child ages four through seven. The stories use concrete experiences and animal imagery, concepts supported by many of the theorists for children ages three to six. Because of some of the confusing aforementioned issues of the book, an adult's

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assistance would be critical in learning about theology from these stories. Despite its flaws, this book has helpful stories and would serve as one tool in teaching children about God.

The Shema Storybooks: Teacher's Guide
Rabbi Daniel B. Syme, ed.
New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1977

This book is basically the teacher's guide both for *Hear O, Israel: About God* and *Hello, Hello, Are You There, God?* The goal, according to the author, is to help relate the Bible to modernity, with the *Shema* prayer being the unifying concept. The aims of the book and series (there are two other books in the series which do not pertain to God) are to help the child learn to recite the *Shema* and understand its meaning, to encourage respect for learning and especially the Torah, to develop a sense of belonging to the Jewish people, to realize one's sense of awe about God, and to teach value- bearing Hebrew words and phrases. Interestingly, even the list of goals expresses teaching God as the next to the last of the book's objectives. Many of the stories' activities do not directly pertain to God. There are some helpful suggestions, but overall God is only implicit and passive as a lesson.

Where Does God Live? Questions and Answers for Parents and Children
Rabbi Marc Gellman and Monsignor Thomas Hartman
Liquor, MO: Triumph Books, 1991

This book has no suggestion for a targeted age range; however, the book is written as if it were meant both for parents and for children of a variety of ages. The book is separated into various questions:

> Is God real? - Part one: nature, part two: our inside voice, part three: the
> Bible, Where does God live? What does God look like? Does God make
> miracles? When my pet hamster, Elmo died, did he go to heaven? Does

God know what I'm thinking or what I'll do? If God is so good, why is there so much bad? Why couldn't God let Grandpa die fast without pain? Does God punish people? Is it okay to get angry at God? When I talk, does God listen? Does God always love me? If There's One God, why are there so many religions? Does God talk to people? What does God want me to do?

The book comments about various attributes of God such as Divine goodness, power, kindness, intelligence, and the fact that God is invisible. Moreover, there is an implicit teaching that God is the Creator, for humans are acquainted with God by the world around us.

Another positive aspect about this book is that it does not refer to God in a genderized manner. Although this book does not have a suggested age range for children, there are some concepts that would be very scary to a younger child. For example, on page 41 it states that "people change, and God is always waiting to love them." Thus, if a person is bad, he/ she may not receive God's love and the Divine will be forced to wait. According to developmental theorists such as Elkind, Gordon, Kohlberg, Fowler, and others, Divine retribution is a critical component to children ages six to twelve. However, according to Erikson, it is precisely for this reason that we must emphasize to this age group the idea of feeling good, in order to ensure that God is viewed as a Protector. Another note in the book comments that "God does not live everywhere. God could live everywhere, but... God lives only in people who let God live in them" (page 43). For young children, the idea that Someone may live in them would be quite frightening, especially because small children comprehend language in a literal manner. The book also reflects that God is like a watchmaker, rather than the more common image of Disney's Jiminy Cricket. In explaining miracles, the book states that they are "weird" and, therefore, hard to explain. There are plenty of other theological concepts that could be challenging or scary for small children. Looking at content issues in order to remove the various possible fears for smaller children, I would recommend this book for children in ages 12- 18. During those ages, they will be able to grasp abstract

reasoning and hypothetical situations. However, stylistically, a lot of the language is simplified, seemingly targeting children approximately ten years old. Hence, this book may not be the most helpful resource, as its targeted age would shift depending on the focus being content or style.

Let's Discover God
Gila Gevirtz, Dr. Gavriel Goldman, Terry S. Kaye, Lisa Lipkin, Martin S. Saiewitz, Ruby G. Strauss, Jessica B. Weber, and Rabbi David Wolpe
West Orange, NJ: Behrman House, Inc., 1998

Rather than a typical book format, *Let's Discover God* is a series of eight folders that are geared toward children in kindergarten through second grade (five through eight). According to the publisher, the goals of the folders are "to illustrate the rich beauty of God's world" and "to bring God into the lives of both parents and children." The contents stem from primarily Biblical and Rabbinic theology and include God's creations, God's oneness, *b'tselem Elohim* (humans made in God's image), thanking God, God's promise (i.e. covenant), God's gift of Shabbat, talking to God, and God's world. Along with the actual folders and in conjunction with the theory of Robert Sears, there are enrichment sheets to help continue the learning at home.

These folders are clear and easy to use. They have a blessing in Hebrew, Hebrew transliteration, and English, which will better ensure that every reader can fully grasp each prayer. There are various activities on each folder to help the child learn the God concept. Theologically, these folders are most closely aligned with both the Biblical and Rabbinic images of God. For example, God acts through creation, and we humans can use prayer as a pathway to communicate with God. The theological concepts are all very comforting, an important aspect because of where a child is developmentally. Thus, rather than looking at God as a Judge, a concept which can be scary to people in this age group, God is looked at as One who makes order in the world. Moreover, as folder seven emphasizes, one can talk to God anywhere and say anything. There is no gender

reference to God, further allowing a child's imagination and creativity to determine God's "appearance." These folders are wonderful and proactive tools in teaching God to children.

Let's Discover God: Teacher's Edition
Gila Gevirtz, Dr. Gavriel Goldman, Terry S. Kaye, Lisa Lipkin, Martin S. Saiewitz, Ruby G. Strauss, Jessica B. Weber, and Rabbi David Wolpe
West Orange, NJ: Behrman House, Inc., 1998

The Teacher's Guide is an equally fabulous guide to teaching children about God. In the introduction, there is an explanation about the importance of instructing youngsters about the Divine. After all, God is the "why" we should live as Jews and the Source to help teach people how to be good. Additionally, God is the source of all our morality, rituals, the builder of self-esteems, and is the One who enables us to feel holiness. With each folder, there are teaching objectives, how to begin the lesson, how to teach the blessing, how to use the photograph, how to discuss it, various games and hands-on activities including arts and crafts. The teacher's guide is very accessible and furthers the learning that can stem from the colored folders. The guide is clear, user- friendly, proactive, and would certainly be a helpful teaching instrument to teach children about the Divine.

The Children's God
David Heller
Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986

This book explores images of God for children between the ages of four and twelve. According to Heller, the title "God" is not as critical as the representation the word creates. *The Children's God* is separated into ten divisions: children's conceptions, the method: in search of the children's God, religious themes, age themes, gender themes, personality themes, the family: a socialization scenario, common themes, conclusion:

implications for childhood religion, and the epilogue. This book is rare in that it uses developmental theories from many perspectives. Heller covers Gilligan's focus of gender issues, Piaget's emphasis of cognitive development, Kohlberg and Damon's focus on moral development, Coles' ideas of religious development, and more. He splits the children he studied into three age groups: four to six, seven to nine, and ten to twelve. The book looks at various Divine images such as God, the Friendly Ghost, the Angry Villain, the Distant Thing, the Lover, the Inconsistent One, the Once and Future King, and God, the Therapist.

The author uses four main religious groups to interview children: Catholics, Baptists, Jewish, and Hindus. According to the research, the Jewish children focused on a Deity who exists within the realm of human history. Although this text suggests a variety of God images and experiences, there is only a general overview in how to actually teach God. There are no discussion topics or questions, debates, or any type of activities. Nevertheless, the author's research is helpful in having a sample of God imagery in order to teach God to children. Thus, this book which is meant as a resource, is helpful in that capacity. When used with other sources, it is a helpful tool in proactively teaching children about God.

Talking to Your Child About God
David Heller
Toronto: Bantam Books, 1988

Although this book briefly discusses children ages four to twelve, the pedagogic emphasis is meant for adults who will, in turn, teach children about God. Some of the concepts found in this book are the same as those found in *The Children's God*. For example, the ideas behind God as a Friendly Ghost, an Angry Villain and the other terms are repetitious. An interesting issue raised in the book is that of gender. In chapter five, Heller notes that males tend to view God in physical and rationalistic terms and focus on

God's power. Females, on the other hand, tend to stress the Divine's spirit like aspect and look toward God as a Creator and Lover. The book is subdivided into three major parts: laying the groundwork, introducing a child to God, and helping a child find God. Within each section, there are various chapters to help adults. Again, similar to Heller's previous book, there are no discussion topics, questions, or activities. However, the author notes in the final chapter that one ought to "use games, stories, field trips, analogies, or other experiences because the more creative the approach, the better..." The book serves as a general overview and can, similar to the prior book, be used as a reference. After all, the primary goal of the book (discussed at the conclusion of the text) is to experience God as an everyday presence.

I Wanted to Know All About God
Virginia L. Kroll
Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994

Although this book suggests a narrow age range, five through eight, it is included in this category of multiple listings because it overlaps two different ages according to the theories of Erikson. This split is not necessarily a problem, merely the rationale for placing the book in this section. The goal of the book, according to the publisher, is that children will learn that God can be found in everyone and everything that they encounter. In some capacity, it reflects Elkind's ideas of a young child having a high level of creativity. Visually, there are no page numbers, very few words per page, and the whole page is a picture. The first page focuses on the Biblical theme of God as Creator: "I wanted to know all about God, so I went out looking for Him in signs of His creation." Some of the other images of God that stem from this book are God's strength and gentleness. God smiles and likes all colors, at least of the different people in the world. The Divine loves us and is an internal presence in our lives: "I wanted to know where

God likes to visit, and I felt someone knocking at my heart. Now when I go out looking for God, I know exactly where to find Him."

This book is better meant for children ages three to six because of the simplistic language and brightly colored pictures. Children ages 7 and older tend to read "more advanced" books than one that looks this simplistic. Also, the concepts are relatively concrete and, therefore, more accessible to a younger child. Moreover, according to Piaget, children beginning at age seven are in a higher cognitive stage. Another negative of this book is the gender bias. Either the word "God" or male language is used to refer to the Deity; thus, the book inhibits a child's creativity in determining what is the Divine's appearance. One inconsistency within the book is that sometimes the male references to God (i.e. He, Him) are capitalized and sometimes they are not. Although the book has a lot of implicit teachings and several failings, if one can read the book and eliminate the gender bias, it may help young children learn about God.

When Children Ask About God
Harold S. Kushner
New York: Reconstructionist Press, 1977

According to Rabbi Kushner, this book is meant for adults teaching about God to children between the ages of four and fourteen. He notes that God is "the name we attach to the fact that we find certain things possible and meaningful in the world and in our lives and the fact that we find ourselves stirred to move in the direction of realizing these possibilities" (page xii). In addition to his own theology, Kushner uses Rabbi Schulweis' idea to focus on "predicate theology."[1] In an over simplified manner, predicate theology reflects that when one states that "God is love" or "God is truth," one should emphasize the aspects of love and truth rather than the term "God." In addition to Rabbi Schulweis'

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[1] For more information on predicate theology, please refer to page 82, found within the second chapter of this thesis.

ideas, Kushner's theories are founded upon the thoughts of Mordecai Kaplan, Jean Piaget, and Erik Erikson. Kushner notes that it is critical that an adult teaches a child that God is real, but not a thing. He separates his book into an introduction and then six chapters: If God isn't a bearded old man in the sky, what is He? Children Ask About God, Don't blame God for acts of God, God and the Bible, the vocabulary of religion, and some affirmative ways of meeting God.

The book comments upon the Biblical *Elohim* as an "invisible, intangible Creator of the world who brought us out of Egypt and gave us Torah." The author then shifts the reader to allow for a less personal God who affects people personally. Although this book offers a general overview of various God concepts to children of a variety of ages, developmentally, the book is ambiguous. How one would teach a four year-old can not be the same as how one would effectively teach a fourteen year-old. In a general fashion, Kushner notes that a young child wants to understand what is God's purpose because everything has a purpose. At approximately ten years old, a child wants to eliminate in his/ her mind what is logically or morally unacceptable. Teenagers will be most interested in learning that it is a Jewish duty to question ideas about the Divine. The book focuses on answering children's questions or asking new ones. However, on page 123, he notes that "the best course is to avoid raising questions until our children do..." Thus, although he writes a book to aid people in teaching God, his actual philosophy on his subject is to be reactive rather than proactive. Nevertheless, when an adult uses this book is used in conjunction with other resources, it serves as a good asset in providing one set of answers to teach children about God.

Basic Judaism for Young People: Volume Three: God
Naomi Pasachoff
West Orange, NJ: Behrman House, Inc., Publishers, 1987

The suggested age range of grades six and seven, or children eleven through thirteen, falls under one developmental category for many theorists. However, for consistency of this thesis, because the book crosses from the category of six to twelve into twelve to eighteen years old, it is listed in this section of multiple ages. The book acknowledges that God is a difficult subject to teach in religious schools (arguably anywhere) because "God is one, and yet He [the Divine] appears to each listener differently" (page viii). Each chapter of the book is based on a Hebrew word or phrase such as *emunah, emet, ba'al taschit* (faith, truth, and do not destry), and seventeen other terms. Within each section, there is a definition of the word, a goal of creating space for the word in the child's life, and a connection to various theological perspectives. For example, the category of *emunah* includes the thirteen principles of Maimonides. There are also various stories to help enhance the lesson.

Although any Jewish child could gain insight from this textbook, it is slanted toward Traditionalism. For instance, the book comments about how our children are taught to lay *tefilin*. The book also genderizes God as male; hence it limits a child's creativity. Another quality that might cause children to dislike this text is that every chapter has the same format without any variety. Although the purpose is to teach about God, several lessons within the book only passively or implicitly teach about the Divine Presence. These chapters, instead, focus on Hebrew or history or other general Jewish subjects. One benefit about this book is that it has a glossary; then again, one must be comfortable in transliteration, as the glossary is alphabetized by the transliterated word. There is also an index to assist people in referencing specific subjects. This book would be a good reference for a guide to general Jewish knowledge, but is relatively passive in its teaching about God.

Basic Judaism for Young People: Volume Three: God: Student Activity Book
Naomi Pasachoff
West Orange, NJ: Behrman House, Inc., Publishers, 1987

This activity book asks some questions about God to help facilitate a child's own learning. Because this activity book is meant for individuals, the activities are primarily written questions and puzzles. There are approximately three to four games per chapter, but there are no answers in the book. Furthermore, the activities are geared for children younger than the actual textbook. There is a lot of implicit and passive teaching that a child can potentially grasp; however, this book does not have a real theological focus and is rather tedious in its nature.

Basic Judaism for Young People: Volume Three: God: Teacher's Guide
Cynthia F. Reich
West Orange, NJ: Behrman House, Inc., Publishers, 1987

This book has a variety of activities that are black-line masters. The chapters are split into the same twenty categories as the student's book and activity book to better assist the teacher. The introduction acknowledges that "some of the concepts describe attributes of God. Some define our relationship with God. Others depict Jewish rituals and celebrations that concretize ideas about God. Still others deal with bringing God and godly qualities into our everyday lives..." (page xv). Through this opening, one realizes that the passive chapters do connect back to God in the mind of the author. However, for the student, this concept is not conveyed if one does not have access to the teacher's manual. Each chapter contains an introduction, objectives, outcomes, an opening activity, questions, and activities. The answers to some of the student's activities are listed in the teacher's guide. Thus, as long as a student has access to the teacher's guide, he/ she will know if his/ her answers are correct.

Because the page numbers do not coincide with the student's book, a teacher would need both resources at his/ her disposal. There is an expectation that the teacher knows Hebrew. The handouts are far too simplistic in nature than is appropriate for the suggested age range. There are theological perspectives from a variety of people. However, they are not being compared to the same topic. Thus, it is hard to display the variety of Jewish theological ideas. This book would be an appropriate reference for a teacher to help explore some concepts about God with a child.

Deena the Damselfly
Steven M. Rosman
New York: UAHC Press, 1992

According to the publisher, this book is geared toward children in kindergarten through grade three, approximately children ages five through nine. The publisher notes that it is a "charming and gentle parable about life and transformations, this book is also a vehicle to teach young children about death." The book is set up in an easy-to-read manner, with the words on white pages on the left side and colored pictures on the right side. Moreover, the page numbers further help a reader find the proper page with ease.

This book has neither direct connection to God nor a strong reference to Judaism in general. The only association with Judaism is that it uses the word "miracle," a word not even meant exclusively for Jews. This 31-page book is a nice bedtime story for children ages three to five, as it touches upon issues for that age. For example, the book looks at initiative, that is a caterpillar changing into a butterfly, as well as magical thinking. Developmentally, the book supports the ideas of creativity, following theorists' ideas such as Goldman. Due to the lack of direct mention about God, it is not a helpful resource in teaching children about God. If there were discussion suggestions or questions, one could shift the focus of the story to talk about the beauty of God's creations and how God makes miracles by turning caterpillars into butterflies.

God's Paintbrush
Sandy Eisenberg Sasso
Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 1992

The publisher suggests that this book be read in several sittings. Moreover, the proposed age range of this colorful book is for children in kindergarten through fourth grade, approximately ages 5- 10. It explores questions and issues such as if one has ever wondered about God, the appearance of the Divine, if God is ever sad, where to look for God, and what God wants from us. There are no page numbers in the book, therefore creating a more difficult time in referencing it. On almost every page, there is a new question for a child. For example, "a sunbeam peeked in my window this morning, and painted a rainbow on my wall. I think the sunbeam is God's paintbrush dipped in a watercolor sea, painting clouds and coloring our world. What color would you paint the world today?" Hence, not every question directly relates to God. Although the theological emphasis of God is the Divine as Creator, there are also a variety of anthropomorphic and anthropopathic God-images.

In partial contrast to the publisher's opinion, developmentally, the book supports the important idea found by many theorists for the ages of three through six: creativity. The brightly colored pictures and the style of the book would be "too babyish" for children older than approximately age six. There are both explicit teachings about God, such as "what do you think would make God laugh?" as well as implicit lessons such as God feels emotions like humans, God paints, laughs, and interacts with the world in a way similar to that of humans. The book acknowledges that we are all God's creations and that each one of us is unique and special. The world is considered God's playground. Another important question to help children develop concepts of the Divine is "if you saw the world through God's eyes, what would you see?" This book provides a variety

of questions and issues in which to enhance one's theology and would serve as a wonderful asset in teaching young children about God.

Partners
Deborah Shayne Syme
New York: UAHC Press, 1990.

According to the publisher, the book is meant for kindergarten through third grade, approximately ages five to nine. The book is about two boys who are best friends who attend synagogue regularly. One Friday night, they hear a sermon about being partners with God, but they do not fully understand what that means. Then, the boys go on a field trip to a "bad" neighborhood and they begin to brainstorm how they can help poor people. The boys have a list of five things that would help the poor people. One option would be to give a portion of their allowance money to a charity. They could also take cans of food from one's home and donate it to the synagogue's "Feed the Hungry" food barrel or take old clothes to a neighborhood thrift shop. They could give a Chanukah or birthday present to the hospital, or run a carnival and give the money to *tsedakah* (charity) at religious school. Through the boys' field trip, they learn what it means to be partners with God.

Although the author and publisher shifted the frame of this book into two different developmental ages, one might be more inclined to use this book for children three to six years. A child beyond age six would tend to find the story too simple and "babyish." This book is proactive on the importance of teaching about the *mitzvah* of *gemilut chasadim*, acts of loving kindness, and passive about connecting that idea back to God. The emphasis of the story is how a human being can/ should be involved in projects that help other people. The author makes the assumption that people who read this book already have a basic Jewish vocabulary, as there are words such as *"tsedakah"* and *"Oneg Shabbat"* that do not have translations.

The illustrations are helpful in conveying the message of the text; however, for today's child, he/ she may look more intentional at the book if the pictures were in color rather than in black/ white. The book's point is very clear and is summed up on page 25 "Every Jew can be God's partner in healing the world." Moreover, there are various subconscious points that are also important in teaching about Jewish deeds. For example, one ought to live an active Jewish life and have a Shabbat meal, attend synagogue regularly, and listen to sermons. The rabbi in the picture is a woman, again enabling other images besides typical gender stereotypes to enter a youngster's mind. Although the messages within the book are positive and important in enhancing one's Jewish learning, the beliefs and creeds about God are very passive. If there were follow- up guideline questions about God, it would be a useful tool in teaching children about God.

Conclusion

Many people are surprised at the number of books that, on some level, teach children about God. However, if one were to compare the number of texts in this subject versus many other Jewish subjects, theological books would definitely be in the minority. Moreover, several of the books, which use the word "God" in their titles or goals, do not always follow-up in the most active manner. Furthermore, many people are afraid to teach about God due to their own theological struggles. In order for an adult to teach theological concepts, he/ she must have a willingness to explore new alternatives and be comfortable with the idea of relating to God as an ongoing journey. Teaching God can, and should, be a wonderful and exciting opportunity if the adult has strong resources to aid a leader in her/ his journey. As displayed in the above bibliography, a number of the books only passively and implicitly teach about God, and proactively teach about other subjects. Nevertheless, if the books are combined, a wide variety of theological concepts can be taught to children of all ages. In contrast to Harold Kushner who believed that one

should only be reactive in answering children's questions, a leader who is proactive in this endeavor will help build a strong Jewish foundation for her/ his children and will enhance their spiritual quests. God, as one of the primary elements of Judaism, needs to be actively inserted into Jewish religious school curricula.

CHAPTER FOUR

Introduction

Teaching God to children is indeed a daunting task. After all, we adults are teaching about a concept that not only involves an abstract image, but also is based on our individual faiths. Certainly, there is no one absolute or universal method of discussing and teaching God, as each lesson is very much shaped by our own experiences and beliefs. Nevertheless, the idea of the Divine, along with Torah (in its broadest sense) and the people Israel, constitutes one of the primary tenets of Judaism and needs to be taught in a proactive manner. In order to help a child look favorably upon the world and hold that vision throughout his/her life, it is important that adults lay the foundation for a positive and fulfilling relationship with God while people are young. As a result, the child's faith will help sustain her/ him throughout the trials and tribulations along her/ his life's journey. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge the variety of factors that will impact a child's understanding of God. For example, gender, birthing order (also called sibling order), one's place within the socio-economic scale, and one's cultural heritage all contribute to a child's understanding of God. Moreover, if there is a family education component, the child will have a higher understanding of the Divine, then if God is taught in isolation solely "in the classroom." Now that this thesis has explored child developmental theories, theological perspectives, and many of the Jewish guides within this field, this chapter will emphasize actual guidelines for parents and teachers. It will explore general developmental and theological issues and then will discuss specific age related issues, goals, strategies and methodologies, suggested activities, and some preferred curriculum resources to help an adult be proactive in teaching God to children between the ages of three through eighteen.

There are numerous issues in teaching God to children, and, also arguably, to adults. The teacher/ parent needs to have wrestled with his/ her own God-images and have a relatively deep understanding of his/ her own theological perspectives, while being open to his/ her own emotions, questions, struggles, growth, and change. The greater the number of activities that teach a concept and the more senses that are involved, the more the child will fully grasp the concept. Thus, when teaching about God, one needs to use activities that focus on seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching to better enable children to appreciate the Divine. Incorporated into that picture is the idea that a learner must be active and not passive. Thus, frontal teaching that merely lectures about God will not be absorbed in the same way as a child who participates more fully in the activity. Because God transcends all of our human conceptualizations, it is important to promote awareness of a diversity of theological beliefs and be tolerant of individual understandings. Moreover, it is equally critical to recognize that we will never fully be able to teach God, precisely because we do not fully understand God. The average child will go through a variety of phases of loving, defending, obeying, questioning, angrily disobeying, and ignoring God. All of these frames should be supported and encouraged, recognizing that God is big enough and strong enough to accept all of our emotions. Additionally, because God is "wholly other" and we are not one hundred percent sure about aspects of the Divine, all God concepts have at least tentative and temporary validity. At the same time, while validating the child and being fully present to the youngster's needs, it might be possible to offer alternative frameworks to heighten one's strength of feeling connected to God.

Common folk wisdom notes that there are 72 names for God found within the *Tanach*, the Hebrew Bible. The Talmudic Rabbis utilize many of those names, as well as adding new labels for the Divine. Throughout Jewish history, there are theologians who applied previously stated nomenclatures to God, as well as who determined new labels for God. With each name, one gains different perspectives and insights into God's nature

and assists us to better understand the magnificence of the Divine. Other general reoccurring themes found in Jewish theological history are God's nature, God's relationship with the world, with Jews, and with individuals, how we humans can "know" God, what God "wants" from us, and the issue of theodicy. Although children are not necessarily able to express these theological ideas into clear verbal language, the religious struggles are essentially universal throughout one's life and throughout our Jewish history (and, arguably, the history of humanity).. Thus, the aforementioned primary concerns must be acknowledged in some capacity at each developmental level.

Another issue that arises when teaching about God is the tension between accepting anthropomorphic and/ or anthropopathic imagery or forbidding these representations of the Divine. While some theologians believe that it is acceptable to use human labels for God because they are the only concepts we can understand, many other scholars believe that human nomenclatures insult the Divine because God is far more of everything than any human characteristic. As part of this struggle, one must be careful to avoid the common male language pronouns. Although one might think that it makes our language awkward, the common alternative seems to teach that God is male. Children learn a lot from our implicit words and actions as well as our external remarks. Thus, if an adult notes that God is neither male nor female, but uses "He" or "Him," the child will probably glean that God is male. It is also important to avoid teaching aspects about God that will later have to be undone. For example, one should not teach that God is "an old man in the sky," for later that image may no longer be of service to the child. In addition, another point of tension is to determine which theological name(s) one will teach, as Judaism offers such a prolific range of views of God.

The author of this thesis recognizes and acknowledges her theological biases. The author does not accept the idea that Jewish people are truly atheists, i.e. a disbelief in the existence of God or Supreme Being. If one were to question an "atheist" and ask what he/ she does not believe, the likely end result would be a response of some notion in a

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Higher Power. Therefore, if people were accurate and honest in their labels, the vast majority of Jews would be closer aligned with agnosticism, rather than atheism. In fairness, very few Jews have had formal instruction on the Divine and, therefore, simply do not think so much about God, resulting in the agnostic label. Other biases of the author are that God is beyond gender and beyond full human comprehension. Although the question of "why" is essentially universal, it is primarily unable to be answered in an adequate manner. The author accepts both Divine revelation and scientific reason and sees them as complementary rather than contradictory. The author is a strong idealist and, despite life's many challenges, believes that the world is basically a good place and God is "good." The author does not accept punishment theology, the idea that God punishes us because of a mistake. Instead, God helps a person find the needed inner strength for all sorts of experiences. God is not meant to be an excuse; for instance, it is unacceptable to avoid working because God will provide or to eliminate medical care because there will be a miracle. Rather, miracles come in our everyday experiences when we find the sacred within our daily lives and take action as partners with God. Another bias of the author is that God gives us *yetser hatov*, the good inclination, and *yetser harah*, the bad inclination. With the gift of free-will, we can make good choices that causes God "to be happy" or we can make bad choices that causes God "to be sad." In conjunction with that, the author accepts anthropopathic labels, but generally avoids anthropomorphic imagery because feelings are not visible and are found in some form in every human being. On the other hand, humans physically look different from one another. If one were to comment upon God's physicality, when the fantasized image of the Divine did not match a person, he/she would not be able to see him/herself *b'tselem Elohim*, in God's image, and, therefore, would feel distant from God. No one knows what God looks like because no one has ever directly seen the Divine. In fact, even Moses was not able to see God face-to-face. Finally, the author notes that one of the drawbacks of the majority of the material already in existence is that God becomes a reactive subject

and the commandments, or *mitzvot*, prayers, holidays, and other categories become the primary subjects. Thus, the material is not "bad," but simply shies away from its intended purpose. The author of this thesis hopes that the many lessons of Judaism, especially teaching about God, will be integrated in a proactive manner to best strengthen a child's Jewish identity.

Preschool - Kindergarten (Approximately Three to Six Years Old)

The assumption and hope for children at this age is that they have already learned how to trust and gain a sense of autonomy, as a result of experiencing healthy relationships with adults. However, if a child has been severely hurt, he/ she may need counseling or therapy and an adult will have to work harder to portray God in a positive light who is different than that adult. Otherwise, a child will hold the belief that God is mean and cruel like the adult who hurt him/ her. Thus, in helping these preschool children gain a deeper understanding of the Divine, the assumption will be that the child has been appropriately nurtured by the adults around her/ him. It is important to reiterate that developmental theory helps provide generalities about various stages. Thus, there are exceptions and individual experiences that shift away from any absolutes. During this stage, a child will begin to take initiative[1] for various tasks so he/ she must be empowered to plan and "attack" an assignment. Moreover, the youngster will have a lot of fantasies including very hostile thoughts. Although aggressive behavior should be subdued, it is important to soothe the child by reminding him/ her that the high level of fear of being harmed as a punishment is only in his/ her imagination and will not be a repercussion for any of his/ her thoughts or actions. In any case, a child's fantasy world and the ideas that

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[1] See pages 11-12 of chapter one of this thesis, especially paying attention to the information on Erik Erikson's third age category.

come with "magical thinking" are critical to a youngster this age and the child's emotions will dominate over her/ his intellectual side.

A child in this age category processes information only in a forward and concrete manner. Generally, she/ he will not be able to partake in abstract thinking, one of the great challenges for adults in trying to teach about God. At this age, a child will likely already have a sense of justice and an early awareness of "that's not fair." Moreover, a three to five year old child will also have an understanding of honesty, loyalty, kindness, and respect. All of these factors will be helpful in teaching God to this age group. Another struggle for adults is that children do not fully understand how entities can have more than one label. For example, it would be very difficult for a boy to understand that his name is Joseph and also that he is Catholic. In his mind, he is only entitled to one "name," causing another challenge for the adult. Moreover, this age child takes information literally, not really understanding about similes and metaphors. While speaking in a "collective monologue," a child will want to know the meaning for everything in a psychological and moral way and how it pertains to her/his world.

The primary goal for this age group is to give a youngster a foundation for a positive relationship with the Divine. Because of the greatness of the child's imagination, one ought to avoid, if possible, the idea that God is a Punisher. If an individual holds the idea that God is a Punisher, it may cause the child much trepidation and fear, leave the child with a long-lasting feeling of nervousness, and/or cause one to distrust his/her intuition. This anxiety and self- doubt will carry over into all arenas and will likely have long-lasting effects that may forever impact the person's life. Because our sacred texts provide a diversity of nomenclatures for God that reflects an assortment of Divine attributes, it is important to provide that access to young children. Thus, a secondary goal for this age is that the child also will begin to recognize a variety of names for God, such as Creator, Shepherd, Peacemaker, and Friend; moreover, the child will begin to identify God as benevolent and as One who acts as a support system. The child will glean that

there is a lovable and wonderful Miracle Worker (i.e. God exists) and two of God's roles are to help children play nicely and to cause plants and animals to grow. Although the child will get an introduction to alternative names for God, the focus of the activities will emphasize the Divine's attributes as Creator and that God is One. Children in this stage of life are innately curious; thus, one of the more important goals for this age group will be to foster a safe environment for questions. The adult needs to provide answers that will leave the child satisfied and that will not have to be retracted at a later date. The final goal will be to give this age group a basic sense of the six overarching issues: God's names, God's nature, God's relationship with the world, with Jews, and with individuals, how we can "know" God, what God "wants" from us, and the issue of theodicy.

There are a variety of strategies, methodologies, and suggested activities that will help a child begin his/ her quest to enter into relationship with the Divine. Because a child at this age has a "let me do it" attitude, it is important to find techniques that help a youngster do the task him/ herself. Moreover, rather than frequent declarations of "no, that's not okay," it is important to find "yes" alternatives to help give a child a sense of accomplishment. Children have a big need for repetition of activities, whether by reading the same book or partaking in the same game. In this manner, again, a child will feel a greater sense of accomplishment than if he/ she always has to learn new rules to new activities.

All God concepts mentioned for this age group are meant to act merely as foundational pieces that will be enhanced as a child develops. A child will not be able to fully grasp the facts about the Divine (then again, who can?), but it is important to lay the groundwork. In discussing God's names, one can teach that we, too, actually have a variety of identities that all cause us to be seen in different lights. For example, one could explain that her name is Alison, her friends call her Ali, and she is at the same time a sister, daughter, and a rabbi but is still the same one person. The same concept is true with God. God is *Adonai*, the Sovereign, the Creator, the Shepherd, and more, but all the

names help to make the One God. God's nature ought to be stressed in a positive light such as good, kind, and loving rather than vindictive, punishing, or cruel. God has a relationship with the whole world and is The God over all of humanity. At the same time, we Jews are blessed with the gift of Torah and, therefore, have a special bond with the Divine. God is with every individual, but people rely on the Divine in different ways and, hence, experience God in various venues. We can "know" God through prayer and our actions. God "wants" us to be holy by studying Torah, by being kind to other people, and helping to enhance the beauty of the world. When bad things happen, we are sad and/ or angry, but ultimately, it is not God's fault. Children are right when they say that sometimes "it's just not fair." We do not really know why some terrible things happen, except for those actions that are human driven.

Because of the importance of allowing children to use all their senses, especially at this age, there are a variety of activities that will enhance this group's understanding of the Divine. For example, one can take a nature walk, focusing on the idea that God is the ultimate Creator. It would be helpful to point out a variety of trees, flowers, and any animals along the path to show that God created both plants and animals. Depending on the climate, an adult might take the child or class on a nature walk during each of the four seasons, pointing out the growth and changes that have occurred. This activity would promote the senses of seeing, touching, and hearing. Another activity that would focus on the same senses would be to go to the local zoo or farm. In this manner, a child could see a variety of creations and recognize that Someone (and not a stork!) helped to create them. Ideally, the children would hear some of the different sounds of the animals, touch some of them, and look at them. They also might be able to smell some of the animals and plants and begin to recognize that the magnificence of the world comes from a Higher Source than from humans. Important elements of these field trips are to acknowledge that God is the Creator and to be proactive in talking about other aspects of God. If field trips are not a viable option, the adult can cut-out pictures of a magazine to

provide a similar forum for talking about God. After the field trip or display of pictures, it would be a great opportunity to discuss the children's experiences and to invite questions about the Divine.

Another activity that would foster the splendor of creation would be to blindfold the children and have them partake in a taste test. Although a parent and/or teacher must be careful of food allergies with children, having youngsters smell and taste a variety of foods would again help them grasp the diversity of life. The adult could ask the child where these foods originated, helping lead them to the idea of God. Another method to focus children's attention on the Divine is for the teacher to lead a puppet show, with the children as the audience. This performance would focus the children on both seeing and hearing various experiences. The puppet show could have God speaking (but not seen) about the Divine's love for all humanity and have a variety of "human" puppets to represent different types of people. In the puppet show, the "Jewish" puppet could also hold a miniature Torah and show his/ her appreciation for the sacred gift. Each puppet could also talk to God using a different name for the Divine, with the conclusion that they are all referring to the same Being. A different type of experience for the children would be to give them play telephones (or have them bring them from home or just cut out paper phones) and have them individually talk to God. In this manner, the adult would better understand the specific needs of the group and it would provide another opportunity to answer some of the children's questions/ concerns/ thoughts/ fears brought about by their amazing imaginations.

In a similar venue, the children could be asked to draw pictures that somehow represent God's attributes or actions. For example, they could draw "kindness," "love," or "mercy." Again, it would be a chance for the children to express creativity and use their imaginations, to give them the chance to acknowledge some of their God images, and to promote a positive relationship with the Divine. The teacher and/ or parent could also teach the child a few of the ritual blessings that Jews commonly recite. For example,

an adult could teach the blessings over *chalah* (traditional "Jewish" bread), lighting candles, wine, or seeing and hearing lightening and thunderstorms or rainbows.[2] Through these blessings, one could help children recognize God's many tasks as well as serve as opportunities for communal recognition of God's "awesomeness" that has lasted throughout much of Jewish history. Moreover, the prayers would teach children about Jewish blessings, how prayer is both a private and public experience, and they act as part of the base for maintaining a Jewish life. To explain theodicy, one could give a child a small puzzle; however, take out one or two pieces so that the puzzle is incomplete. In this manner, the adult could teach that he/ she does not really know the whole picture without those pieces. Similarly, we do not fully understand God; nevertheless, we try and appreciate the beauty of the pieces we do have in our sight.

To aid a parent/ teacher along the journey of teaching God to children, there are a variety of resources already in the field. Although this thesis focuses on literary material, the parent/ teacher might also want to explore media options. For example, most of the Disney animated movies are wonderful resources when used with an adult to help explore different theological issues. For instance, one could look at "Bambi" to discuss death and how, like humans, God is "sad." One could opt for "The Lion King" to help teach the theme that God was with Simba when he was lonely and helped by providing friends. One could use "101 Dalmatians" as a method to teach that the Divine is with us to help protect us and keep us safe, even when we are in the midst of danger. For more detailed information on many books, refer back to chapter three. In addition, there is a new small

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[2] *Chalah: Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Haolam, Hamotzi Lechem Min Ha'aretz*, Blessed are You, God, Ruler of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth. Lighting Candles: *Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Haolam, Asher Kidshanu B'mitzvotav V'tzivanu L'hadlik Ner Shel Shabbat*, Blessed are You, God, Ruler of the universe, who commands us to kindle the lights of Shabbat. Wine: *Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Haolam, Borei P'ri Hagafen*, Blessed are You, God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates fruits of the vine. Seeing lightening and thunder storms: *Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Haolam Oseh Ma'aseh V'reishit*, Blessed are You, God, Ruler of the universe, who is the Source of Creation. Rainbow: *Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Haolam Zocher Habrit V'ne'eman Bivrito Vekayam Bema'amaro*, Blessed are You, God, Ruler of the universe, who remembers the covenant and fulfills Divine promises.

board book: *What is God's Name?* by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, SkyLights Paths Publishing, Vermont, 1999. Sasso's other books would also be helpful, particularly if the adult uses the books as a pathway to open up a dialogue about God. Another helpful resource would be Bonnie Sose's book *Designed by God So I Must be Special.*[3] However, it would be important when reading the book to eliminate the male-dominated God language, thereby making it more gender inclusive. Howard Bogot and Daniel Syme's books, such as *I'm Growing*[4] would also be helpful stories to share with children this age. Despite the challenges that inherently arise in teaching an abstract concept to people who are unable to think in that manner, this age group is optimal for setting a tone about the sacredness of having an on-going relationship with God. Thus, the more resources, games, and activities to teach a youngster about God, the better the child's Divine experiences.

First - Third Grades (Approximately Six to Nine Years Old)

Similar to the previous section, the assumption and hope for this age group is that the children have learned how to trust, gain a sense of autonomy, and are beginning their sense of accomplishment through healthy interactions with adults. As previously stated, if a child has had a major physical or emotional trauma, an adult will have to deliberately attempt to portray God in a positive light and as different than the adult of that unfortunate experience. Otherwise, a child will believe that God is mean and cruel like the adult who hurt him/ her. Thus, these guidelines are primarily geared toward children who have been appropriately cared for by the adults around her/ him and, again, reflect only generalities. During this stage, a child will grapple with the feelings that stem from

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[3] For more information, please see page 98 of chapter three.
[4] For more information, please see chapter three, pages 121-122.

success and failure,[5] and he/ she will need tasks that will enable the positive idea of industriousness. Furthermore, a youngster will probably no longer view her/ his parent(s) as omniscient, thus causing a new array of questions about God. Because of school and its accompanying rules, children in this age group have a more subdued imagination than seen in their earlier years.

A child in this age group will be able to problem solve if there are physical objects and will be able to comprehend multiple labels for the same object. Moreover, the youngster will shift his/ her understanding from the idea that one can be, for example, both a Jew and an American, to the belief that Jews are people who pray at a place called a synagogue (if only that were always the case).[6] Thus, a person's name may be connected to an action; this idea is very important and helpful in teaching children about God. In conjunction with this thought, at this age a child's morality is based on his/ her experiences and actions, not lessons of rote.[7] Thus, it is easier for God to be viewed as a Creator, a concrete idea, than the more abstract concept of a Merciful Being (even though both are equally valid). Moreover, an adult's words must match her/ his actions or the child will develop a weak moral and theological code. Another aspect of a child's development within this age group is that he/ she will no longer want to interact with a child from the opposite gender. For this reason, one ought to avoid teaching the idea that God has a gender. If the adult uses gender neutral terms, a child will more easily believe that he/ she is indeed made *b'tselem Elohim*, in the Divine image, and will more easily be able to relate to God. Another important developmental concept is that this age child has a very strong idea of fairness and retribution. This notion again will be very significant when leading activities about God. On a similar note, a child will be very receptive to bargaining and reward systems. The child will more easily be able to verbalize her/ his

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[5] See pages 25-26 of chapter one of this thesis, especially paying attention to the information on Erik Erikson's fourth age category.

[6] For more information, see page 26 in chapter one.

[7] For more information, see page 28 of chapter one.

experiences and will discuss God primarily in concrete anthropomorphic and anthropopathic imagery. One can validate the child's thoughts while encouraging a child to look beyond the physicality of God.

When teaching God to children of this age group, there are a variety of goals for the adult to implicitly transmit to the youngster(s). The adult will continue to promote the positive aspects of the Divine's nature. Although a child looks toward retribution in order to make something "fair," one should avoid promoting God as the ultimate source of punishment and penalties. Instead, another aspect of explaining God's nature will be to teach retribution in a different manner than seeking ultimate vengeance. In other words, and this idea will be explained in greater detail at a later point, maybe retribution can be taught by expressing the idea that instead of hurting another person in response to one's own hurt, there may be a more creative way to fix the problem. An additional goal will be to continue teaching a variety of names for God, for instance, Creator, Guardian, Judge, Shield, as well as those names from the previous age group. Another objective will be to continue to provide safe space for a child's own theological struggles, questions, and beliefs. The final aim will be to give this age group a deeper understanding of the same six overarching issues mentioned in the above sections. Hence, one will get a further glimpse of the following: God's names, God's nature, God's relationship with the world, with Jews, and with individuals, how we can "know" God, what God "wants" from us, and the issue of theodicy.

There are a variety of methodologies, strategies, and suggested activities that will help a child's ongoing quest for a fulfilling relationship with the Divine. The child will still need concrete props, as he/ she cannot truly think in the abstract at this point in his/ her development. During this developmental time period, the child's attention span is at its shortest. Unfortunately, the child's imagination is still high, while simultaneously he/ she tries to suppress it in order to be successful at the rules within the classroom. Thus, instructions for an activity need to be brief in order to maintain the child's interest or she/

he will daydream. The child at this age needs experiences as he/ she will not grasp material in a true sense if he/ she learns it solely through rote activity.

As a result of the natural developmental process, similar to the previous stage, a child in this age group will not fully comprehend the Divine (but, then again, who does?) because God is abstract and this age child can not fully grasp the intangible. Nevertheless, an adult who proactively teaches about God, especially for a person in this stage, will leave a long-lasting impression on the youngster. The teacher or parent will be an important leader in enabling the child to maintain a strong, positive relationship with God, both in the present and in the future. In discussing God's names, one can ask the youngster for the various names that contribute to his/ her identity. For example, he/ she is an American, a Jew, has a formal full name for when he/ she is in trouble, a nickname, he/ she is a sibling, a child, a student, etc. However, all of these labels help to make up the one individual. The same is true for God. God is *Adonai*, the Creator, the Judge, the Guardian, the Shield, and more, all of which contribute to the Divine's Oneness. God's nature ought to be stressed as primarily positive, while recognizing that sometimes things are not fair. Instead of a human hoping for Divine retribution, the adult can teach that God wants justice. Thus, if child A pushes child B, instead of B pushing A back, B can try and have an alternative response, and remember what it felt like to be pushed and not do it to someone else. Another aspect of the Divine nature to explore is God's intangibility.

God has a relationship with the whole world and is The God over all humanity. However, we Jews are blessed with the sacred gift of Torah and, therefore, have a special connection to the Divine. God is with every individual in different manners, depending on the labels that the person proscribes unto God. We can "know" God through prayer, through our actions, and following the holy and sacred path of Torah. Moreover, God "wants" us to be holy as individuals, as Jews, and as people, through studying Torah, by being kind to all of God's creations, and by helping to redeem the world. When bad

things happen, we are sad, angry and/ or confused, but ultimately, they are not God's fault. Sometimes, a tragedy may be human driven and sometimes it is simply beyond our comprehension. In any case, it is not helpful to say that everything is a test and/ or makes a person stronger, for the underlying question is still "why." Instead, it is more helpful to teach the child at a young age that even though bad things happen, nevertheless, it is important to try to be a good person and look toward God as a Comforter and Supporter.

Some of the activities that were mentioned for children in the previous age category would be equally appropriate for this age group. In discussing God as Creator, one could again go to the zoo, a farm, or take nature walks.[8] A person could also take a smell and/ or taste test,[9] again recognizing the splendor of God's diverse creations. As another opportunity to explore the Divine's creations, a child could make a collage of Divine gifts. A child could also make a scene of some of God's attributes. For example, the child could design a picture that reflects God as the Creator of apples and oranges. God fashioned our wisdom in order that we act as God's partners to also design objects like computers or medical treatments. If the emphasis were God's attributes, the picture could reflect mercy, love, kindness, and/ or hope. In this manner, the child would get a better understanding that we do not see love or mercy, but simply see the effects of love or mercy. The same idea is true for God. We do not actually see God, and therefore cannot fully know the appearance of the Divine, but we can see effects of God's actions. Another method to teach that God is intangible[10] is for the adult, or for every child, to bring in an "empty" shoebox with the lid on the top of the box so the child cannot see the interior. The teacher can then ask what is inside the box and have the children guess.

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[8] For more information, see page 147 of chapter four.

[9] For additional information, see page 148 of chapter four.

[10] Intangible is a better word choice than invisible, for invisible means that one simply cannot see an object, where as intangible means that one can not see or touch an object. Furthermore, for many children, invisible implies "not real." In connection with the exercise, love, mercy, kindness, and air are all intangible rather than invisible.

After several guesses, the parent/ teacher can tell the story of the Sky Maiden[11] and then again ask the question. The adult can help the child recognize that sometimes the most precious things, including God, cannot be seen. Moreover, because God is intangible, we view the Divine in different ways. Even though the box itself is the same, the Sky Maiden has a very different view of the contents of the box than her husband.

God is One, but we view the Divine through our own lenses and experiences. Another method to begin to explore the idea that God's nature is intangible is by discussing air. We humans cannot see air or wind, but if we go outside, we can see the leaves move on trees or feel the cold air rushing around us. A different type of activity to help teach children about God is to have a mirror in front of the child so she/ he can see her/ himself. Ask the youngster what she/ he sees. At first, it might be responses such as brown hair or blue eyes. However, the adult can use the mirror to help the youngster "look inside" and "see" kindness, goodness, care, or humor. These are some of the attributes that enable us to say that we are created *b'tselem Elohim*, in God's image. As a

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[11] Members of a West African tribe tell the legend of the Sky Maiden: "It happened once that the people of the tribe noticed their cows were giving less milk than they used to. They could not understand why. One young man volunteering to stay up all night to see what might be happening. After several hours of waiting in the darkness, hiding in a bush, he saw something extraordinary. A young woman of astonishing beauty rode a moonbeam down from heaven to earth, carrying a large pail. She milked the cows, filled her pail, and climbed back up the moonbeam to the sky. The man could not believe what he had seen. The next night, he set a trap near where the cows were kept, and when the maiden came down to milk the cows, he sprang the trap and caught her. 'Who are you?' he demanded. She explained that she was a Sky Maiden, a member of a tribe that lived in the sky and had no food of their own. It was her job to come to earth at night and find food. She pleaded with him to let her out of the net and she would do anything he asked. The man said he would release her only if she agreed to marry him. 'I will marry you,' she said, 'but first you must let me go home for three days to prepare myself. Then I will return and be your wife.' He agreed. Three days later she returned, carrying a large box. 'I will be your wife and make you very happy,' she told him, 'but you must promise never to look inside this box.' For several weeks they were very happy together. Then one day, while his wife was out, the man was overcome with curiosity and opened the box. There was nothing in it. When the woman came back, she saw her husband looking strangely at her and said, 'You looked in the box, didn't you? I can't live with you anymore.' 'Why?' the man asked. 'What's so terrible about my peeking into an empty box?' "I'm not leaving you because you opened the box. I thought you probably would. I'm leaving you because you said it was empty. It wasn't empty; it was full of sky. It contained the light and the air and the smells of my home in the sky. When I went home for the last time, I filled that box with everything that was most precious to me to remind me of where I came from..." Harold Kushner. *Who Needs God.* New York: Summit Books, 1989, pp. 11-12.

teacher, one can host a talent show (possibly in conjunction with Purim[12] in order to have the activity be surrounded by Jewish content) and then discuss the Source of those talents, i.e. God gave each person different special talents to help make them unique.

In order to provide opportunities for the children to share their theological perspectives, the youngsters can role-play a family with one child "acting as God." The adult can switch the roles to give everyone a moment at "playing God." After the role-plays, the adult can invite questions and discussion on some of the different views and the different actions that "God" accomplished. In this manner, one can again teach that all of our ideas have some validity and all contribute to God's Oneness. The discussion can culminate with the teaching of the *Shema*.[13] Another game that children know and love is Hide-and-Seek. Normally, it is simply a game of one person trying to find other people. Sometimes, the person struggles for a while and "catches" people and other times the seeker may not make as much of an effort and give up. The adult can connect this game back to the Divine. Some people look for God for a long time; other people give up. Just as the people are there, even if the seeker gives up, so too is God there, even if a person stops actively looking.

Another activity to help contribute to a greater understanding of the Divine is to write down approximately thirty commandments, *mitzvot,* from the Torah and then have the child make his/ her own Torah using those rules as well as their own inventions.[14] This project will provide another opportunity to explore the child's theology and help promote the idea that God is good and we are blessed to have these responsibilities. Another possible field trip would be to take the children to a candy store. Every child has

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[12] A holiday in February/ March that, among other aspects, encourages Jews to "lose themselves" with levity, fun, games, carnivals, costumes, and more.

[13] This prayer is central to Jewish values and is an affirmation of God's Oneness. It is traditionally recited both upon awakening and prior to going to bed. The prayer stems from Deuteronomy 6:4: *Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad,* Hear O Israel, the Lord is Our God, the Lord is One. In traditional circles, the prayer would continue with the *V'ahavta,* a prayer acknowledging how we should love God.

[14] Among other sources, one can find a list of the *mitzvot* from *Sefer Hahinukh* or *Encyclopedia Judaica.*

her/ his favorites as well as those types of candy that she/ he dislikes. However, each sweet has positive attributes that are pleasing to some people or the candy would not still be in existence. If a class cannot take a field trip, the adult could bring in a variety of candies and teach the same concept. The point is that the same idea is true for people. Sometimes, it is very easy to see why people are "good." But, everyone has some redeeming qualities because God created every human being. Thus, the trick is discovering the good in everyone. In conjunction with this idea, the teacher can have every child write one positive sentence about every child in the class. Then, the teacher can compile them and give Student A all of the positive statements that pertain to her/ him and give Student B all of the statements, etc.

Another important experience that would better display how we "know" God as well as what God "wants" from us would be to take a field trip to a local hospital. Through this action, one could teach the significance of the *mitzvah* of *bikur cholim*, visiting the sick. Furthermore, one could again reiterate that we are all God's children and all have special roles in life. The child or group could interact with the patients, which would help "demystify" some of the fears that are often associated with hospitals as well as help them partake in an act of loving-kindness. It would be important as a first- time experience only to go to certain patients, such as those that do not have too many tubes and avoid unconscious people (not stated as a generality, but solely for this exercise) to help minimize the child's anxiety. As another component of reminding the youngster that everyone is sacred because everyone is part of the Divine's creations, one could teach some of the blessings that pertain to the disabled people. For example, one could recite the blessing for seeing someone of unusual appearance.[15]

The issue of theodicy, why bad things happen to "good" people and good things happen to "bad" people, is very important to this developmental age (and, again, is a life-

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15 *Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Haolam, M'shaneh Habrit,* Blessed are You, God, Ruler of the Universe, who makes people different.

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long issue). One technique for teaching about theodicy is to validate the "why" questions while acknowledging that no one knows all the answers. In order to help portray our limited knowledge, the teacher or parent can have the children plant seeds. To further promote Jewish content, one can plant parsley seeds around the time of the holiday of Tu Bishvat[16] and, generally, they will be ready to eat for Passover. One can teach that sometimes, we may take care of the plant exactly right, offering it just the right amount of sunlight and water. However, sometimes, the plant may still only grow to be very small or not grow at all. On the other hand, sometimes we may give the plant too much or too little water or sunlight and the seeds will still sprout. We do not know why those differences exist. The same is true with the issue of theodicy. The idea is not to promote blaming God (or anyone), but rather acknowledging that sometimes experiences happen for reasons beyond our comprehension. In conjunction with this idea, God can be viewed as a Parent or Guardian. Ideally, the parent or guardian tries his/ her best to care for a child. Sometimes, however, the youngster still gets hurt and both the child and the adult are sad about the pain, but we still love the parent or guardian. The same is true for God. Sometimes bad things happen and both the individual(s) and God are sad, but there is still mutual love.

To aid a teacher/ parent along the path of teaching God to children, there are a variety of resources already in existence. Although this thesis focuses primarily on literary material, the parent/ teacher might also wish to investigate alternative media options. For example, similar to the previous age group, many of the Disney animated movies have themes that would significantly help an adult who wants a forum for discussing theological issues.[17] For more detailed information on many books, refer back to chapter three. The best source for this age group is Dorothy Kripke's, *Let's Talk About*

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[16] Tu Bishvat is a holiday celebrating the birthday of the trees that falls on the fifteenth of the month of Shevat. This holiday coincides with the secular months January or February, the time when Israel's plants begin to blossom.

[17] See page 149 of this chapter for more detailed information.

God. This book might be hard to find and the adult may need to go to used bookstores to access it. Another great resource for adults would be David Wolpe's: *Teaching Your Children About God: A Modern Jewish Approach.* This book does not distinguish various age categories, but would serve as a foundation to help adults begin to grapple with theological questions. Another terrific guide would be *Let's Discover God* (and its connected teacher's edition) by Gila Gevirtz and other people. Despite the challenges that inherently arise in teaching an abstract concept to youngsters who cannot think in the abstract, this age group is a prime age to discuss theological issues. The more resources, games, and activities that an adult uses to teach about God, the better the child's Divine experiences and on-going relationship with the Deity.

Fourth - Sixth Grades (Approximately Nine to Twelve Years Old)

As previously stated, the assumption and hope for this age group is that the children have learned how to trust, gain a sense of autonomy, feel industrious, and have had healthy interactions with adults. If a child has been physically or emotionally harmed, the adult will have to work in a deliberate manner to teach God as a positive Being. If a child has been injured, he/ she will want to understand why God would "allow" this act to happen. It is important for the adult to stress the idea of free will and the Divine did not "want" it to occur; moreover, God was just as "sad" as the wounded youngster. If/ when the child asks "where God was" during the painful experience, God was there sharing the emotional pain by "crying" along with the youth, by offering the child the awareness of a Supportive Presence, and by providing the child the strength and courage to live through that moment. The goal for someone hurt is to help reveal God as "other" than the harmful person. Overall, these guidelines are meant toward children who have been appropriately cared for by the adults around him/ her. During this stage, a child will continue grappling with the feelings that come with success or failure,

recognizing that he/ she is in the "advanced" reading or math group or the "slow" group. Academic labels enter into the child's psyche and have long-lasting effects. Thus, when teaching God to this category of children, it is imperative that the adults stress the positive elements within each person.

A child in this age group will be able to problem solve, especially if there are tangible objects, and will be able to comprehend multiple labels for the same object/ person/ Being. Furthermore, the youngster will shift her/ his understanding from the idea that Jews are people who attend synagogue to the idea that Jews are connected with a collective belief and/ or action system.[18] Thus, a person's identity is now viewed in a more realistic manner; one who belongs to a group or collective experience must have shared values and/ or deeds. It is not until the next stage, that a person will also recognize an individual's intent as a contributing factor to being a part of the group. Again, it is for the reason of maintaining a shared moral system, among others, that adults need to be proactive in teaching children about God. Although there are diverse viewpoints about the Divine, one of the central points in Judaism is having a relationship with God. Another aspect of a child's development within this age group (until puberty) is that he/ she will no longer want to interact with a child from the opposite gender. Thus, one ought to avoid genderized God- language, as it would inhibit a child's ability to relate to God. Gender neutral terms, on the other hand, will enhance the child's understanding of *b'tselem Elohim*, that he/ she is created in the image of the Divine. Another important aspect of this developmental stage is that a child will have a strong idea of bargaining, fairness, and retribution. Although the child will connect more to anthropomorphic and anthropopathic God-language because those words are more concrete, it is important for the adult not to teach God in a manner that will later have to be untaught. Thus, one ought to minimize the "human" aspects of God and instead emphasize the "Divine"

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[18] For more details, see page 26 of chapter one.

aspects in humans. In addition, the child will now be able to comprehend the Bible as fallible, yet inspirational. Thus, an adult ought to avoid teaching the Bible prior to this stage to avoid having to "unteach" its absoluteness and literalness.

When teaching God to children of this age group, there are numerous goals for the adult to implicitly transmit to the youngster(s). The adult will continue to promote the positive aspects of the Divine nature, while helping the child to grapple with some of the "less positive" features. As previously stated, although a child looks toward retribution in order to make something "fair," the adult should not encourage the idea that God is the ultimate source of penalties or punishments. As partners with God, we are not meant to expect God to take action while we remain passive on the sidelines. Instead, we are supposed to communicate our dislikes/ distrusts in a manner helpful to the other person. Thus, retribution is supposed to be through talking (or Jewish guilt?) and not seeking ultimate vengeance. Another goal will be to build on the array of God names already taught, as well as increasing the child's knowledge of having a variety of names for God. In other words, God can be viewed as Creator, Holy One, Ruler, or Parent (again trying to avoid labeling God with a gender such as King or Father). Another objective will be to continue to provide safe space for the child's own theological questions, struggles, doubts, and beliefs. The final aim will be to give this age group a deeper understanding of the same six overarching issues: God's names, God's nature, God's relationship with the world, with Jews, and with individuals, how we can "know" God, what God "wants" from us, and the issue of theodicy.

There are a variety of strategies, methodologies, and suggested activities that will help a child's ongoing quest for a fulfilling relationship with the Divine. The child will still need concrete props, as he/ she cannot truly think in the abstract at this point in his/ her development. The child will be striving to "succeed," will be judgmental of everyone, and will want to be "cool" with her/ his peer group. Instructions for an activity need to be clear and concise and the activity itself needs to offer ample time for group

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work and social time. Finally, the child needs actual experiences, rather than rote and/ or frontal teaching or the child will not be able to grasp the concepts.

An adult who proactively teaches children about God at this stage will help the child hold onto a long-term fulfilling relationship with the Divine. In discussing God's names, one can ask about and discuss various names that contribute to the youngster's identity. For example, she is a Jew, an American, a sister, a daughter, a student, and more. All of the labels help to contribute to the individual's identity. The same is true for God. God is the Creator, the Quintessential Parent, the Ruler, and, among others, the Holy One. What do these names mean? How do these labels impact our view of God? What are some other names/ identifying labels for God? These questions and more can contribute to the child's understanding of God's diverse nature, while simultaneously stressing that all of these nomenclatures contribute to God's Oneness. God's nature ought to be stressed as primarily positive, while recognizing that sometimes, things are not "fair." When one looks toward the Divine for retribution, he/ she is giving up his/ her own power in the situation and becomes a victim. However, if the person shifts how she/ he views the tragedy and looks for good, then she/ he holds the power and is in more control of his/ her own destiny, thereby becoming a survivor. In this manner, God becomes an active Presence in helping the person see alternative viewpoints, while simultaneously keeping the individual(s) involved as an active presence. This idea of God's nature implies that God is a Being to help people find the strength, the will, the comfort, and the autonomy within themselves to continue along their respective journeys. By the same token, this idea is not meant to lead a person into holding the thought that the literal "eye for eye, tooth for tooth..."[19] is acceptable on a human level. Just as the idea is unacceptable in a human/ Divine relationship, so too is it unacceptable in a human/ human relationship. Instead, it is meant to say that another interpretation of "an

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[19] Exodus 21:24.

eye for an eye" is to discover other means for compensation. For example, depending on the issue, a person who loses an eye can, and arguably should, get financial reparation for the medical bills and for the loss of time at work. Another way to look at the issue of "retribution" would be that the one who loses an eye could be a lawyer or judge and fight to ensure justice. The person could be a developer of eyeglasses or become a doctor to help other people keep their vision or reduce their impairment. Thus, there are many ways of "retribution," including those paths that transform pain for gain and move away from the status of victim and become a survivor. He/ she could, therefore, help other people in similar situations instead of continuing the cycle of suffering. It is in this manner of shifting the paradigm away from the literal translation that one could redefine and teach retribution, maintaining God's overall positive nature, and acknowledging that we are partners with God.

The Divine has a relationship with the whole world and is God over humanity. As Jews, we are blessed with the sacred gift of Torah, thus enabling us to have a special relationship with God. Therefore, it is our duty, our responsibility, our obligation, and our privilege to study and interpret Torah. Because God has so many names and therefore so many attributes, the Divine enters into unique relationships with every individual. We can "know" God through public and private prayers, through our actions, and through careful interpretations of our sacred texts. Moreover, God "wants" us to be holy as individuals and as Jews and be "a light unto the nations."[20] Regardless of interpretations, God wants us to follow both the ethical and ritual *mitzvot*, commandments. Thus, one may interpret keeping Shabbat as not driving and avoiding the use of electricity on the day of rest. Another person might look toward keeping Shabbat as not doing work. Still, another person might look toward Shabbat as a day in which to do pleasurable, comforting, and relaxing things such as driving to go to the zoo

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[20] Isaiah 42:6.

or watching a movie. Thus, although the experiences themselves are radically different, they are all out of one's belief that he/ she is "keeping" Shabbat. Additionally, God "wants" us to be partners with the Divine, working together to help redeem the world. When bad things happen, we are sad, angry, and/ or confused, but ultimately it is not God's fault. Sometimes, it may be human driven and other times it may simply be that we just do not understand why. However, rather than looking toward God to place blame, we can look toward the Divine Presence as a Comforter and Supporter.

Some of the activities that were mentioned for children in the previous categories would also be appropriate for youngsters in this stage. In discussing God as Creator, one could visit a zoo or farm or take a nature walk.[21] A person could also partake in a smell and/or taste test[22] as an alternative method to explore the magnificence of God's creations. A child could make a collage or scene of some of God's attributes, such as justice, mercy, love, and kindness. This stage of child development is the first stage that should actively teach the Bible because now children are in a mental place in which they can look toward the Bible as inspirational without taking it as literal truth. Thus, another option in learning about God as Creator would be to read Genesis chapters one and two (or an abridged version) and act out the Biblical stories, enabling the children to interpret the text for themselves. Another method to teach about the names and nature of the Divine is to explore the prayer *"Avinu Malkeinu"*[23] from High Holiday liturgy.

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[21] Additional ideas in conjunction with this idea can be found on page 147 of chapter four.

[22] For additional information on this activity, refer back to page 148 of chapter four.

[23] Although one could choose many prayers and teach about various Divine nomenclatures, *Avinu Malkeinu* is a prayer that a high percentage of Jews recognize. Moreover, it is a prayer of which the Hebrew words, *"Avinu Malkeinu,"* challenges many people's theology. The most common literal translation of those two words refers to the Divine as "Our Father, Our King." Paradoxically, Jews would feel cheated if the prayer were not included within the liturgy of the High Holidays. The vast majority of Jews would agree that *Avinu Malkeinu* is one of the "must include" prayers in the High Holidays. Because it is petitionary in its nature, traditional, as well as some liberal, Jews do not recite it on Shabbat. On those years, it would be recited only on the second day of Rosh Hashanah. Looking at this prayer would provide opportunities to proactively discuss both the names and nature of God. Among other sources, the Reform version can be found in *Gates of Repentance: The New Union Prayerbook for the Days of Awe.* New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1978, pp. 121-122. In this Reform version, male God language is used. It is important to note that this prayer book also has a gender neutral revised edition from

In order to teach that God is intangible, an adult can bring in an "empty" shoebox with the lid on the box so the child cannot view the interior. The teacher can then ask what is inside the box and have the children guess. After several guesses, the parent/ teacher can tell the story of the Sky Maiden[24] and then ask the question again. The adult can help the child recognize that sometimes the most precious things, including God, cannot be seen. Moreover, because God is intangible, we view the Divine in different ways. Even though the box itself is the same, the Sky Maiden has a very different view of the contents of the box than her husband. God is One, but we view the Divine through our own lenses and experiences. Another method to explore the idea that God's nature is intangible is by discussing air. We humans cannot see air or wind, but if we go outside, we can see the leaves blow or feel the cold air rushing around us. An alternative would be for the class to prepare a project for younger children, such as a puppet show, on love, mercy, or anger. We cannot see those feelings, but we can see their effects.

Another activity to help teach children about God is to have a mirror in order to help children see that they are *b'tselem Elohim*, created in the image of God.[25] Also, the class could host a talent show (possibly in conjunction with Purim in order to have the activity further surrounded by Jewish content) and then discuss the Source of those talents, i.e. God gave each person special talents to help make them unique. Another option to teach about *b'tselem Elohim* is to share the story of Zusya.[26] A different type of

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1996. Among other options, the Traditional version can be found in Philip Birnbaum's *High Holyday Prayer Book*. New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1951, pp. 271- 276.

[24] For the full story, see footnote 11 on pages 154-155.

[25] See page 155 of chapter four for more details.

[26] The Chasidic story of Zusya is a *midrash* focusing on the idea of Zusya trying to be himself: "When the students of Zusya approached their dying teacher, he whispered to them, "My students, I am very afraid!' His students were shocked and responded, 'Reb Zusya, did you not always teach us that we should have no fear of dying because God is our Parent and God is filled with kindness and compassion?' "That's true,' replied Zusya, 'but that is not why I am so frightened. I am not afraid that when I stand before the Throne of Judgment God will say to me, Zusya, why were you not a Moses? because I am not Moses. And I am not afraid that God will say to me, Why were you not an Isaiah? because I am not an Isaiah. But, my dear students, I am afraid that when God asks me, Zusya, why were you not Zusya? Why didn't you live up to the best that Zusya could have been? I am afraid, for what shall I answer?'" This version of the story

field trip would be to take the children to the candy store as a way to stress that we all have positive attributes.[27] In conjunction with this activity, the adult can have every child write one positive sentence about every other child in the class and then the teacher can compile them. The adult can give Student A all of the positive statements that pertain to her/ him and all the positive sentences to Student B and so on for the whole class.

In order to provide occasions for the children to share their theological perspectives, the youngsters can role-play a family with one child "acting as God."[28] In this manner, one can again teach that all of our ideas have some validity and all contribute to God's Oneness. The discussion can culminate with a recitation and discussion about the *Shema*. Another opportunity to enable the child to speak about his/ her own theological belief system is through the game Scruples, a game asking questions of moral dilemmas. If one does not have the game, one can buy it at a toy store or simply make up questions pertaining to various value clarificiations. Another game that children know and love is Hide-and-Seek. Normally, it is simply a game of one person trying to find other people. Sometimes, the person struggles for a while and "catches" people and other times the seeker may not make as much of an effort and give up. The adult can connect this game back to God. Some people look for God for a long time; other people give up. Just as the people are there, even if the seeker gives up, so too is God there, even if a person stops actively looking.

As previously stated, it is during this stage that one should really teach Bible. There are so many stories and tales in the *Tanach*, the Hebrew Bible, it is hard to list them all. The Genesis stories are probably most helpful because there are a variety of legends that the children could role-play to learn them in a more tangible manner. However, it is important that one really give a good overview of the *Tanach* to help make

comes from Ronald H. Isaacs and Kerry M. Olitzky, ed. *Sacred Moments: Tales from the Jewish Life Cycle.* Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1995, p. 203.
[27] For more information about connecting God in this manner, see pages 156-157 of chapter four.
[28] See page 156 of chapter four for more details.

the children Biblically literate. One option would be to read the *parshat hashavua,*

portion of the week, of both Torah and Haftarah in a simplified and abridged format.[29]

Through the sacred scrolls, we learn a variety of attributes and names for the Divine. One

quotable favorite is the idea that "I will trust, and not be afraid for the Lord God is my

strength and my song."[30] Through this one quote, the child can decide, with the teacher's

guidance, what the term "Lord" means to him/ her as well as view the Divine as

trustworthy who is a source of energy, comfort, and joy. Along with the act of reading

more of the *Tanach,* one can offer the child approximately 30 of the 613 *mitzvot* from the

Torah and then have the youngster "create" his/ her own Torah using those

commandments as well as his/ her own ideas.

      During this stage in a child's development, it would be very important for the

youngster's overall growth and relationship with the Divine to actively and regularly

partake in a *mitzvah* project. The goal would not be a one-time experience, but rather a

set number of hours to help a child build a weekly activity into his/ her schedule.

Although many children are busy with soccer, basketball, and a variety of "after-school"

activities, age nine is a terrific age to begin to incorporate a *mitzvah* project into a regular

pattern. The aim of the experience would be three-fold: it would help a child feel good

about her/ himself, it would enable the child to recognize that she/ he is helping in the act

of *tikun olam,* repairing the world, and it would promote the idea that humans are active

partners with the Divine. In conjunction with this idea, one could teach the *midrashic*

story about the man and the flood.[31] We must be active in our relationship with the

Divine and not simply expect God to do everything.

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[29] There are a variety of sources that would help an adult teach parshat hashavua in an abridged format. For example, one could use Sorel Goldberg Loeb and Barbara Binder Kadden. *Teaching Torah: A Treasury of Insights and Activities.* Denver, CO: Alternatives in Religious Education, Inc., 1984.

[30] Isaiah 12: 2-3.

[31] There is a *midrash* that shows a man's great "faith" in God. There is a huge flood and the water by Shlomo's house begins to rise. People are scattering from their apartments, running this way and that way. One neighbor calls out to Shlomo: "Hurry up, Shlomo, before it's too late." "No, I am okay. You go. I have faith that God will save me." The water, however, continues to rise and Shlomo now looks out the

Another important experience that would better display how we "know" God as well as what God "wants" from us would be to take a field trip to a local hospital or nursing home. Through this action, one could teach the significance of the *mitzvot* of *bikur cholim*, visiting the sick, and/ or *kivud av v'em*, showing respect for our elders. Furthermore, one could again reiterate that we are all God's children and all have dignified roles in life. The child or group could interact with the patients and "demystify" some of the fears that are often associated with hospitals. It would be important to go to certain patients that do not have too many tubes or machines in order to help minimize a child's anxiety. As another component of reminding the youngster that everyone is sacred and one of God's creations, one could teach the blessing which praises God for seeing someone of unusual appearance.[32]

Another activity for children at this stage in their development would be to take a field trip to a courtroom and/ or set up the classroom as a "mock-courtroom." In this manner, there could be "lawyers" advocating for various acceptable/ unacceptable experiences as well as a judge/ jury who must decide who is "correct." One important lesson from the courtroom is to explain that there might be multiple "right" answers, even though as a society we create rules to establish order and norms. One could teach this lesson in conjunction with the blessings for Chanukah and the surrounding ideas of lighting the candles.[33] These ideas of mock-courtroom and Chanukah could lead into a

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window and sees various rowboats scurrying out of the watered land. "Come join us, Shlomo! Hurry, before it's too late." "No, it is all right. God will save me. You go if you must." The water continues to rise and Shlomo climbs to the roof of his house, for the rest is now underwater. He looks up to see a helicopter and a woman screams "Come, Shlomo, get out of the water." "No, no," replies Shlomo, "God will save me. I do not worry." But, the water continues to rise and soon it is up to Shlomo's chin. He cries out, "Oh God, I have always had so much faith in your ability to save. Even now, when all the neighbors scurrying about, I had faith that you would rescue me. Why God did you forsake me?" God answers: "Oh, Shlomo. I tried. I gave you time to leave on foot, but you ignored me. I offered you a rowboat, but you said no. Finally, I brought a helicopter to your house, but you rejected it. I tried Shlomo..."

[32] For the blessing itself, see footnote 15 of page 157 of chapter four.

[33] There are three Chanukah blessings on the first night and two on the following nights. The first prayer is *Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Haolam, Asher Kidshanu B'mitzvotav V'tzivanu L'hadlik Ner Shel Chanukah,* Blessed are You, God, Ruler of the universe, who commands us to kindle the lights of Chanukah. The second blessing is *Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Haolam She'asah Nisim*

discussion of justice, what is "right," miracles, and how these experiences interact with the Divine. Moreover, it also acknowledges the difficulty of God's "job." In this way, too, one can begin to transition a child away from the idea that God "answers" prayers in a concrete way. If one person prays for it to be a sunny day and another person prays for rain, God is not "answering" one prayer as a "yes" and the other prayer as a "no." Instead, God responds to prayers by being a good listener and hoping that people will gain strength in whatever path lies ahead.

As part of teaching the idea of Divine justice, one could also explain about the idea of *teshuvah*, repentance, both on a human level and with God. It could be taught in connection with *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement and have the youngster truly experience the action of *teshuvah*. The person could say to someone in the class why he/ she is sorry for a something and then if/ when the experience arises again, help enable the child to choose a different path. True *teshuvah* also works with indiscretions toward God. Another activity in conjunction with this idea is to participate in a maze, showing the trials and tribulations of staying "on the right path."

Every person has a good inclination, *yetser hatov*, and an evil inclination, *yetser harah*. God wants us to follow the *yetser hatov* by our leading holy and sacred lives. Although as humans we will all sometimes *chet*, miss the mark or sin, the goal is to return to the positive track. Additionally, God wants us to appreciate our many blessings, rather than curse our problems and stress our misfortunes. We should not, for instance,

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La'avoteinu (V'imoteinu) Bayamim Hahem Bazman Hazeh, Blessed are You, God, Ruler of the universe, who performed miracles for our ancestors in long-ago days at this season. On the first night, the Shehecheyanu is also included: *Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Haolam Shehecheyanu V'kiyemanu V'higianu Lazman Hazeh,* Blessed are You, God, Ruler of the universe, who has kept us alive and made us strong and enabled us to reach this season. Another aspect of Chanukah is the method in which to light the candles. The traditional way of lighting Chanukah candles is to begin with one candle (plus the *shamas*, the servant) and end with eight (plus the *shamas*). The great Rabbi Hillel established this ritual. However, when the rabbis were deciding how the *chanukiah*, menorah, should be lit, Rabbi Shammai declared that one should begin with eight candles and end with one, marking the pattern of the declining oil. His position is logical and "right." Nevertheless, we follow Rabbi Hillel and the majority position that noted that we should always increase our level of holiness, thus ending with eight candles. One rabbi is not more correct than another is, even though we have an overriding custom.

say a *berachah levatalah*, a blessing in vain. The Talmud offers a couple of examples to be strong and cope with what already exists.[34] These ideas, or other examples, can be shared with the class to help introduce the idea of theodicy, why bad things happen to good people. Instead of us griping about our problems, we need to learn how to cope.

Another opportunity to teach about theodicy is to teach the validity in asking the question "why" while acknowledging that, ultimately, we do not know the answer. One can again take some pieces out of a puzzle and have a child put the pieces of a puzzle together.[35] An alternative technique is to have everyone plant seeds. To further promote Jewish content, one can plant parsley seeds around the time of Tu Bishvat. Generally, the parsley plants will be ready to eat on Passover. One can teach that sometimes, we may take care of the plant exactly right, offering it just the right amount of sunlight and water. However, sometimes, the plant may still only grow to be very small or not grow at all. On the other hand, sometimes we may give the plant too much or too little water and/ or sunlight and the seeds will sprout into a tall and proud plant. We do not fully know why those differences exist. The same is true with the issue of theodicy.[36] Although we do not know why bad things happen, both the Divine and the human(s) can be sad, but the mutual love still can and does exist (or at least from God to the individual).

To assist a parent and/ or teacher in finding tools to proactively teach children about God, there are a variety of literary resources that one can utilize. The Torah is a fabulous place to gain insight, wisdom, and ideas about God. For more detailed information about the following sources, one would be better served in returning to

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[34] The Talmud teaches us that if one sees fire engines heading down our street, one should not say "Please, God, do not let it be at my house" because the fire already exists or the fire officials would not be racing to put out the fire. Thus, the "correct" prayer is to ask God for the strength to cope with the situation, helping retrieve things from one's own house, being grateful for being alive, or helping the neighbor if the fire is at his/ her house. The second example, which is not as applicable to this developmental stage nor for today's society, is that a pregnant woman who is already aware of her status as a soon-to-be mother, should not pray for a boy because it is too late. Again, the woman should merely pray to have the strength and skills to cope with what lies ahead on her journey.

[35] A more complete idea about how to use the puzzle can be found on page 149 of chapter four.

[36] For more information, see page 158 of chapter four.

chapter three of this thesis. The best source is Gila Gevirtz's *Partners With God* (and the corresponding teacher's edition). This book helps enhance a youngster's trust in God and provides a variety of lessons to help teach God. The second book (and corresponding teacher's edition) in that series, *Living as Partners With God*, is equally helpful and also an important asset for the child. David Heller's, *The Children's God*, would be a good resource for the adult to help a child in learning more about God and building a relationship with the Divine. This resource helps look at different models of God, such as "the Friendly Ghost," "the Angry Villain," "the Therapist," and, among others, "the King (Ruler)." These different models are important tools in determining one's own theological agenda. Despite the challenges that inherently arise in teaching about an abstract Deity, this age group is at a critical developmental stage to discuss theological issues and better equip a child to survive the challenges that stem with adolescence. The more resources, games, and activities that an adult applies in his/ her teaching, the better the child's Divine experiences and on-going relationship with the Deity.

Seventh - Ninth Grades (Approximately Twelve to Fifteen Years Old)

The ongoing hope is that a child has had a healthy exposure to adults and the world. If not, the adult will have to work much harder in teaching God as a Kind and Loving Being. During this stage, social status is of prime importance and the family's role becomes minimized, at least from the adolescent's perspective. The youngster is very concerned with what he/ she appears to be in the eyes of others. On the one hand, he/ she tries to stand out and be the trendsetter, while simultaneously searching for sameness and continuity. There is a tremendous amount of fear that the youngster possesses while she/ he struggles to learn her/ his identity. The ongoing internal question: "who am I?" plagues the young adolescent's mind as he/ she explores his/ her sexuality, values, interactions with parents and peers, and more. Not surprisingly, in

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conjunction with these constant personality shifts during this first stage of adolescence, the child's morals are also fluctuating between childlike arguments and adults solutions. Abstract reasoning also emerges in this stage, enabling a child to separate out the real from the ideal.

At this age, the child desperately craves and needs a positive self- image, which will have a lasting impact on his/ her God ideas. If the youngster has a positive identity, the Divine will be viewed as a Beloved and Loving Presence, despite the world's evils. If the youngster holds onto a negative identity, the Divine will be an unnecessary Being who is an Unjust Evildoer, and One who stifles freedom. Just as the adolescent "tests" his/ her parent(s), so too does the youngster test God. She/ he wants her/ his parents to trust and respect various decisions and equally wants God's trust and respect. Thus, it is important for parents to accept harmless fads as a way of building trust. When teaching about God, it is also important to stress God's universal love for all of humanity, even when God disagrees with something.

There are a variety of goals for the adult to implicitly and explicitly transmit to the youngster(s) when teaching God to children of this age group. The adult will continue to promote positive aspects of the Divine nature, while helping the adolescent grapple with some of the "less positive" features. As previously mentioned, although a child looks toward retribution in order to make something "fair," the adult should not encourage the idea that God is the ultimate source of punishments or penalties. Retribution, an especially strong concept for children until the age of fifteen (which will last a lifetime if not taught properly) ought not to be a lasting theological belief. If it stays as a dominant hold on one's theology, then the idea of retribution considerably lessens the person's role in taking positive action and, instead, enables the individual to be passive because it is God who must take action. Moreover, if retribution does not happen in the way that the child expects, the child will become completely disenchanted by the idea of the Divine and will either disbelieve or believe that God answers prayers, but said "no." When God

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"says no" to prayers, according to this theological belief, the underlying issues become "I did not pray hard enough," "it is my fault," or "I am not worthy," and the person will be left with eternal guilt over something beyond his/ her control. Therefore, the most critical goals in proactively teaching God to children of this age group are to acknowledge God's unending love, even in the midst of pain, and to teach retribution through a more positive lens than is the typical approach with punishment theology.

There are other goals that will also be important in helping children in this stage continue to build their relationships with the Divine. For example, the teacher ought to build on the variety of names for the Divine, both from the pool of names that were taught when the child was younger, as well as new names to continue helping the child recognize that we all build our own individual relationships with God. In other words, God can be viewed as Parent, Loving Presence, Everlasting God, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob. Another objective will be to continue to provide safe space for the child's own theological questions, struggles, beliefs, and doubts. The final aim will be to give this group a deeper understanding of the same six overarching issues that have been mentioned in the other stages. Hence, the adult will help the youth explore God's names, God's nature, God's relationship with the world, with Jews, and with individuals, how we can "know" God, what God "wants" from us, and the issue of theodicy.

There are numerous strategies, methodologies, and suggested activities that will help a child in this stage gain and/ or maintain a fulfilling relationship with the Divine. In following his/ her developmental patterns, the child will need to trust, to feel autonomous, to express initiative, to display industriousness, and to develop a sense of identity to best help him/ her along his/ her theological journey. The child will appreciate concrete objects, but will also be able to participate in abstract reasoning. Because of the high level of social need, the best activities will be those in which the child learns from his/ her peers, rather than frontal teaching from an adult. Although the child can

comprehend pure memorization, the best knowledge for these youngsters will come through actual experiences and not rote memory skills.

An adult who proactively teaches this stage youth about God will help the youngster(s) maintain a long and fulfilling relationship with the Divine. Moreover, a positive connection with God will significantly help the adolescent as she/ he struggles to build her/ his identity and feel positive about her/himself. As mentioned, there are numerous names for God, approximately 72 of which are found in the *Tanach*, the Hebrew Bible. The number of Divine names grows even more significantly when looking at Rabbinic literature and other Jewish texts. A teacher could lead a discussion on the variety of Divine names. The adult could split the class into small groups, give them a *Tanach* and have them make a list of approximately twenty names.[37] The individuals could either stay in their small groups or rejoin as one class to discuss the names and the resulting attributes that the names convey. Because of the importance of team sports and activities, another opportunity to explore the diversity of God's names

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[37] The variety of Divine names help reiterate that Judaism promotes a flexibility of belief. We show our love and belief in God through our human interactions. Adapted from Robert Blinder, "What's in a Name?" Genesis-- A Synagogue of Our Times, St. Louis, MO, here is a list of over 100 names for God: Adonai, Lord, Ruler, The True God, The Divinity, The Fear of Isaac, Mighty One of Jacob, El, the God of the Patriot Israel, Most High, Everlasting God, God Almighty, God of Vision, God of the Covenant, Everlasting Ruler, Everlasting Rock, Ancient God, Everlasting Arms, Everlasting Life, "The One who causes to be" (YHVH), I am that I am, Lord of Hosts, Creator of Heaven and Earth, Holy One, Holy One of Israel, Shepherd of Israel, the Rock, Ruler of Israel, The God of Truth, Former of All, Praiseworthy God, Guardian of Israel, Shield of Abraham, Rock of Israel, Ruler over the ruler of rulers, The Name, The Holy One, Praised be God, Heaven, Peace, I, Judge of the Earth, The Awesome One, My Rock, Eternal One of Israel, Ever-living God, Lover of the People Israel, The Ransomer, The Redeemer, The Guide, Our God, God of our Ancestors, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, The Mighty One, the Heroic One, Acquirer of All, The Living Lord, Rescuer, Reviver of the Dead, Father (Parent) of Mercy, The Merciful One, The Merciful, The Holy God, The Place, The Might, The Faithful One, Lord (Ruler) of the Universe, The One who Spoke and the Universe Came into Being, Our Father (Parent) in Heaven, The Infinite, The Possessor of Will, Hosts, Ruler of Compassion and Mercy, Rock of Our Lives, The Good One, The One who is Merciful, Maker of Peace, Thankworthy God, The Holy Ruler, Ruler of All, The Creator, The One who Caused the Divine Name to Dwell in this House, "Our Father, Our King" (Our Parent, Our Ruler), Our Shepherd, Mighty One of Israel, Our Healer, Mentor, The Living God of Majesty, Sovereign, The Compassionate One, the Patient One, The Bountiful One, The One who is Forgiveness, The Generous One, The Eternal, Hidden of Hiddens, Ancient of Ancients, The First Cause, World- Soul, Absolute Spirit, Absolute Rest, Lord of War, The One who Hides the Divine Face, and Indwelling Presence...

and attributes could stem through a game of basketball. The group could divide into two teams and form a line with both teams. The person with the ball would have to shout out a different name for God before he/she shoots the ball. The opposing team would return the ball if he/she made the shot or take it if he/ she did not score a basket. If the person got a basket, he/ she would pass the ball to his/ her teammate who would then have to shout out an attribute of God (e.g. Merciful, Loving, Vindictive...) and then shoot. If the person missed, the ball would go to the other team and the pattern would repeat. If a person could not think of a name or attribute, he/ she would be "out." This game could be adapted in a variety of manners, but would again provide a comfortable setting for this age group and would also provide space to have an initial set induction activity to discuss God. The experience could then shift into a more focused conversation about the Divine. In addition for children to hear a diversity of theological names and attributes, it would also provide an opportunity to hear the youngster's theological views which could then promote discussion.

Similar to the earlier ages, field trips would be positive outlets to teach about God. At this age, a child will have a greater variety of choices for *mitzvah* projects to help be God's partner and better understand what God "wants" from us. The adult needs to help the child make the project an ongoing, regular experience of the person's weekly and/ or monthly schedule. A child could volunteer in a hospital, nursing home, homeless shelter, animal shelter, or at a variety of other sites to better recognize her/ his role in partaking in *tikun olam*, repairing the world. These projects would not be experienced in isolation, but rather would have set time for group discussion on the adolescents' thoughts and feelings on these events. In addition, there would be a theological component, including such issues as what God thinks of the problem, the solution, and the person helping to change the problem. In this manner, it would be a collective approach toward enabling the

youngster to recognize that God "wants" us to be "a light unto the nations."[38] In other

words, although we acknowledge that God has a special connection with every human

being, we also believe that as Jews we have the sacred responsibility of living in a holy

and sacred manner based on our receiving the Torah. The Torah states 36 times, more

than any other *mitzvah*, that we should "not vex a stranger nor oppress the stranger, for

you [the Jews] were strangers in the land of Egypt."[39] Thus, we have the responsibility,

commanded by the Divine Voice, to be partners with God and participate in acts of *tikun*

olam.

One teaching tool for this age group child (who are at an age in which they think

they know everything) is to break the class into small groups and give them each a paper

bag filled with 6-10 objects. The activity could be used to either provide an opportunity

for the adolescents to share their theological perspectives or to teach God's positive nature

about God. Either direction that the adult takes the activity, the group would have to

create a story or skit with the objects found in the paper bag.[40] Paper bag dramatics have

been a great success with youngsters of this age category. Another opportunity for

learning would be to play the game "Scruples." The game is terrific in that it sets a scene

and then asks the various participants to respond to various moral scenarios. This would

provide another model of helping the adolescents theologically express themselves,

which could in turn lead into a discussion about various aspects of God's nature. It would

be important to provide examples of God's goodness, while recognizing that adolescents

have an especially "dark side" in connection with God at this stage as the children fight to

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[38] Isaiah 42:6.

[39] Exodus 22:20.

[40] At first glance, the objects may have no connection; for example, one paper bag might have a paper clip, a green ribbon, a tennis ball, a piece of chalk, a pen, and a hat. The bag may contain anything that would give the youngsters an opportunity to interact with their peers and show their creativity about a serious subject such as God's goodness. Like the majority of activities described in this chapter, there are numerous twists and turns that an adult could use to shift the focus of the experience. For example, if there were four groups, three groups could focus on God's goodness and one group could focus on God's existence, despite the world's evils.

understand their own identities. It is far from surprising that the God imagery within this stage mirrors their inner struggles.

Another manner in which to teach God to adolescents would be to give an individual or small group various marketing goals (e.g. God acts Mercifully, God acts Justly, God acts Lovingly, God acts as a Peacemaker...) and have the person(s) create advertisements about their "product." It would be an activity to both assist the shape of their theology while recognizing the beauty that stems from their own creative minds.

As previously mentioned, one can teach that we "know" God through public and private prayer, through Torah, and through our positive human relations with one another. Many of the activities already listed incorporate these values, such as the *mitzvah* projects or learning various Biblical passages. To help make the *Tanach* come alive, the youngster(s) can read and act out various Biblical stories. In order to promote learning beyond the basic Biblical stories (e.g. the two creation stories, the story of Noah, the Exodus, the golden calf...), it would be more helpful to spend approximately 15 minutes every week looking at *parshat hashavua* for Torah and/ or Haftarah and acting out those experiences.

Another experience to help youngsters of this age is to "act" as God and be the Judge and/ or Compassionate One, while the other children act as humans and live out various situations. A different activity that would help enhance a relationship with God with a child in this age would be to blindfold the kids and do various trust games. For example, the adult could blindfold half the group and then split into partners. The children cannot talk, but somehow, the non-blindfolded student must help the blindfolded child "recognize" various objects around the synagogue (or any building). In the same way, we do not "see" God, but we recognize the variety of the Divine's creations. An alternative would be to blindfold everyone and take them on a nature walk. The group would need a rope to connect one adolescent to the other and would have to rely on their other senses to better appreciate the miracles discovered by their senses as well as the

miracles of God's many creations. Moreover, occasionally, a youngster may fall; this experience does not make the leader (or Ultimate Leader, who is God) "evil," but acknowledges that sometimes bad things happen in the world while we continue to trust God for support and strength.

In order to create additional "spaces" for the adolescents to share their own theological perspectives, one could create a "Mad-lib" in which the child must fill-in-the-blanks with theological ideas.[41] Another experience would be to have cookie dough with various edible decorations (e.g. sprinkles, chocolate chips, icing, etc.) that the youth makes into various shapes depending on how he/ she feels about his/ her perception of various theological issues. For example, if one were to say "God were merciful," the cookie might have a very different form than if one might say "God is apathetic." This activity, like so many others, would provide a needed safe space to discuss various theological ideas. At this age, the adolescents might also look toward the issue of God as a Clockmaker (i.e. God winds up the world and then let it runs), a Puppeteer (i.e. God controls the strings and we are merely puppets), or God as Jiminy Cricket (i.e. God is our individual and/ or collective conscious). The adult could post the three signs, as well as a blank fourth one, around the room. The child would have to choose the idea that most closely aligns to his/her theological perspective. A youngster might choose the blank one if she/ he has never had an opportunity to really think about God, because she/ he currently does not think about God at all, or does not know what to think about the Divine. Each group could have a small discussion, affirming their beliefs, as well as

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[41] A Mad-lib is basically a word puzzle in which there are blanks for nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, numbers, etc. One individual would ask another person, or a group of people, just the blanks. For example, she/ he would say "noun, verb, adjective..." When all the blanks have words, the person would go back and read the story. This activity would provide another opportunity to lead into a deeper theological discussion. For example, an abridged theological Mad-lib might be one that states something like this: "_____ (name for God), one of my favorite names for God, _____ (singular past tense ` verb) apples, oranges, and my favorite _____ (noun). Sometimes, I think that _____ (same or different name than previous one) is _____ (adjective) and other times I think that God is _____ (adjective). I become _____ (feeling) when I think that _____ (name for God) does not _____ (singular present tense verb), but other times I feel _____ (feeling) because God _____ (action verb) with me..."

making a stand for why their position is the "best" and then rejoining the other groups to have a formal debate about the various perspectives.

One method to teach the issues of retribution and theodicy is to discuss the idea of payback. One could ask what the underlying feelings are that would cause someone to truly want equal payback for an act. The discussion could help people recognize that "an eye for an eye"[42] has a variety of explanations.[43] The issue of theodicy is critical and needs to be recognized as an important aspect of life. Bad things do happen; we adults should not try to "protect" the child from that reality. But, we can teach youngsters that God still comforts us in the midst of pain and evil. There are a variety of stories and history lessons that can be taught to express the issue of theodicy. For this stage child, one can teach theodicy in connection with a course on the Holocaust or Jewish tragedies throughout our history. For many theologians, the issue of the Holocaust, although a terrible tragedy, is "easier" to teach in connection with God than other horrors because the Holocaust was based from human acts as a consequence of the gift of free will. Although some people question God's presence and many theologians note that God was in an eclipse or not present during the Holocaust, the author of this chapter would respectfully suggest otherwise. God was very present at the *Shoah*, Holocaust, crying along with the victims, recognizing that *yetser harah*, the evil inclination, of millions of people was winning over *yetser hatov*, the good inclination. The Divine was also present when a righteous Gentile stood out and helped the Jews or when a Jew managed to utter a *berachah*, a blessing praising God, in the midst of eating a crumb of bread. God was present every time a person shared a piece of her/ his toilet paper. Despite the many evils of that era, the Divine Presence embraced the Jews and other victims/ survivors when someone found the strength to survive another day.

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[42] Exodus 21:24.

[43] For more information on the issue of retribution, among other pages, one can look at pages 156-157 of chapter four.

There are other types of evil issues that are harder to acknowledge. For instance, the issue of an earthquake that kills many people, leaves many more hurt, or without homes. Another natural disaster is a person sick with cancer who must undergo the risky medical treatments. Although these are, on some level, Divinely enacted rather than human driven, God is still there. God exists, in part, for a person to enhance his/ her coping skills, to offer strength, to give hope (even if it is a glimmer of hope in the midst of despair), etc. Thus, the adult can and should discuss theodicy, but in a way that acknowledges and encourages accepting God. Another method to teach theodicy is to play the ice-cream game.[44]

There are a variety of resources that will enhance a teacher's ability to proactively teach children about God. For a good *Tanach*, the best options are the Jewish Publication Society or Koren Publishers. A fabulous tool for teachers would be Sherry Bissell's A.R.E. Publication of *God: the Eternal Challenge* (both the student and the leader's guide).[45] In conjunction with pop-culture, a good movie would be "Star Wars," a classic film that lifts a variety of Jewish theological issues. Also, one could look at the television

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[44] This game has very little to do with ice cream. However, one splits (carefully choosing which children are which group) the group into four uneven groups with the "favored" group being chocolate (or whatever the leader's favorite flavor and the other groups having other ice cream names. Out of the four groups, one is especially favored, two are relatively equal, and one is terribly low. Basically, within each group the adolescents must "create" an imaginary city. The leader can make play money and unequally distribute it and then add new rules as the leader wishes. The individuals must sit within the masking tape (the "walls" of the city), which is unevenly divided into sections. The leader can let the people know that in order to build each city, a person must raise his/ her hand to ask if he/ she can purchase something for the city (e.g. $40 for hospital, $20 for school, $70 for synagogue...) The leader might more quickly say yes to something (regardless of its actual merit) for the chocolate group and say no to something more worthy of the vanilla group. The leader may charge different prices for the same thing. At first, the chocolate group will probably exploit their situation, but gradually they will recognize the unfair experiences of the other groups and attempt to share. The same is true with the unfavored "vanilla" group. At first, the group will not recognize their problem, but gradually, their problem will become more and more obvious. The essence of the game is that sometimes people are "chosen" for easier paths and harder paths, but we all have to learn from all of them. Moreover, the "vanilla" group did not give up and continued asking for things to build their city. Here, too, we continue to ask God for Support, Strength, Sustenance, as we go about our daily routines and tasks... In addition, sometimes bad things happen to good people and vice versa and we do not understand the underlying issues...

[45] For more information about this source, one can read the information on pages 113-115 of chapter three.

episode of "Ally McBeal" that was aired on July 23, 1999. Although many people look at this age group as a "challenge," the adolescents in this stage will be very receptive to learning about God as long as the teaching can stem from "fun" and "social" activities. The more that an adult can teach about God using a variety of experiences, the more the child will discover/ maintain an ongoing and special relationship with the Divine.

Ten- Twelfth Grades (Approximately Fifteen to Eighteen Years Old)

The assumptions and hopes for this age group, as stated several times throughout this thesis, are that the adolescents have basically mastered trust, autonomy, industry, and have had healthy interactions with people. This statement is not meant to imply that the person's childhood is blissfully and naively happy, but rather that the individual has learned the lesson that, although bad things happen in life, the world is relatively "good" and "safe." If a child has been abused or had a traumatic experience other than the day-to-day happenings, an adult will have to work harder to establish God as a positive Being. It is also quite possible that the individual will need therapy or counseling in order to allow him/herself the gift of exploring the loss and surrounding emotions, and thus, be more able to see God as a Comforting Presence. If the Divine Being is understood only in a similar light as the abuser, there is no reason in the person's mind to maintain any type of relationship with God. As a result, she/ he will journey through life in a more lonely place than if she/ he looks toward God for strength, comfort, hope, and peace.

Overall, this final stage of "childhood" will be a more settled and stable experience than the majority of other stages for the youngster. He/ she will have already been working on learning about his/ her identity and will be viewing him/herself in a less paranoid perspective. Thus, although appearance will be important, it will not take on the same grandiose value as it did in the previous age category. Helping the youth emphasize her/ his strengths, will continue to promote positive God imagery and will continue to

provide support for an ever-lasting, and changing, relationship with God. Moreover, at this stage, all the tools are in place within the youngster and the adult's "job" is to reinforce the benefits that emerge from a relationship with God.

The goal of connecting with the Divine is that a relationship with God provides "safe space" to share one's deepest emotions and thoughts. This idea is the primary goal in proactive teaching this developmental age category about God. Another important aim for the adult to promote is that one's relationship with God is always changing based on one's experiences within life. Moreover, because "God" is a verb and not a noun, the ability for the relationship to be an ever-changing experience is quite acceptable. In conjunction with this ideal, our human emotions of anger, happiness, fear, despair, hope, doubt and so many other feelings can all be in relationship to God. Another goal for this age group is to stress that there is indeed a lot that we humans do not know or understand about God, and yet, we remain in relationship with the Divine while accepting our human limitations. Another objective for youth in this realm will be to uphold their theological ideas. The final goal will be to help maintain and/ or broaden the adolescents' views on God's names, God's nature, God's relationship with the world, with Jews, and with individuals, how we humans can "know" God, what God "wants" from us, and the issue of theodicy.

There are a variety of methodologies, strategies, and suggested activities that will help an adolescent in this stage gain and/or maintain a fulfilling relationship with the Divine. In following her/ his developmental patterns, the child will need trust, autonomy, initiative, industry, and an awareness of self-identity to best help him/ her along his/ her theological path. The adolescent will appreciate primarily abstract discussions as well as participating in more concrete experiences. Because of the importance of socialization, in the adolescents' mind, the majority of activities need to be those in which the adolescent learns from her/ his peers or is able to draw her/ his own conclusions.

An adult who proactively teaches this stage youth about God will help the adolescent(s) forever enhance his/ her Divine ideology. Furthermore, a relationship with God will provide a stronger foundation for the splendor of life. Prior to this stage, the suggested activities in teaching God's names and nature have always been in conjunction with some of the more concrete Divine nomenclatures. However, at this developmental level it would be important to explore God's quintessential name when Moses asked what was the Divine name: "And God said to Moses '*Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh*' and God said, thus shalt you say to the children of Israel, '*Ehyeh*' has sent me to you."[46] One of the many interesting aspects of God's response to Moses is that the phrase, *Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh*, is one that every person can use; additionally, Jews are entitled to God's nickname, *Ehyeh*. Thus, the discussion may shift into the idea of the Chosen People and the meaning of that concept. Are Jews entitled to the nickname for the Divine? Are there other components of being considered "Chosen?" Scholars have wrestled with the aforementioned Hebrew word and phrase for generations. Some common translations for the phrase are "I am who I am," "I will be who I will be," "I am that I am," "I will be what I will be," "I will ever be what I now am," and for the word *Ehyeh* "I am" or "I will be." Thus, Moses who is considered the greatest prophet of all time, does not really get a straight answer from God. We are deliberately given a nebulous response in order that we may forever form individual, as well as collective, relationships with the Divine Presence!

One activity to help teach this challenging and abstract idea is to blindfold everyone and have them touch a different piece of a piñata or large stuffed animal. Each person would then present his/ her experience and guess what is the animal. Although nobody would be wrong, they would most likely need each other's ideas as well to help guide their own. If it were a piñata, the adolescents would not know the colors, shape, or size of the piñata, as well as the contents of it, but they would still appreciate trying to

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[46] Exodus 3:13-14.

experience the activity in its fullest. Another method to help teach our limited, knowledge about God is to share the Asian myth of the giant elephant.[47] Although everyone feels a different part and states an entirely new perspective, they are all sharing part of the same experience. The same idea is true with our relationships with God; the Divine Presence is so vast that, individually, we can only view a small piece of God, while together we can see a greater variety of the Divine. Moreover, in order to help us on our theological journeys, we are provided with well over one hundred names for God which focus on various attributes.[48]

In order to promote the late adolescent as an independent thinker, one needs to do minimize formal teaching and instead rely very heavily on the individual's experiences. Developmentally, this age child is in a similar position to the previous subcategory. Furthermore, most of the suggestions listed in the prior categories would be helpful if the adolescent could be given a position as an assistant to a teacher. In this manner, the adolescent would continue his/ her theological journey in a more formal setting, without having to play "baby games" if they were enacted in her/ his own classroom. Thus, rather than repeat everything already listed, the suggestion would be to have this stage youth be assistant-type teachers (e.g. "ozrim," helpers, or "madrichim," leaders, the more common names for this program in many synagogues) or lead small-group discussions.

One resource that would help the leader have a concrete path for discussion would be to use Sonsino and Syme's book, *Finding God.* Another resource is the *Tanach,* as an

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[47] The ancient myth of the Asian elephant has been handed down from generation to generation. There were numerous men surrounding an elephant in the dark. They could not see very well and struggled to understand the mammoth object standing still before them. One touched the tip of the elephant's tail, another touched a giant toenail, and still another person touched the elephant's foot. Other men touched the belly, the hair on the back, the ears, and the trunk. Each person described what he thought and what he learned; not surprisingly, the statements expressed vastly different experiences with seemingly no connection to one another. Each person's ideas were honest, thoughtful, and valid; yet, no one recognized that they were all discussing the same object. That night, they believed that they were talking about several different animals. The next morning, when coincidentally the elephant was still standing in the same position, the men realized that they were all talking about the same animal just through their own lenses.
[48] For a sample listing of God's names, see footnote 37 on page 174 of chapter four.

entry into a variety of theological ideas, experiences, names, and more. An important and solid resource for students and adults would be Sherry Bissell's A.R.E. Publication of *God: the Eternal Challenge*.[49] As previously stated, one could also look at "Star Wars," a classic film that lifts several Jewish theological issues. Finally, one could look at another pop-culture medium, "Ally McBeal." The television show that aired on July 23, 1999, was a powerful opportunity to use as a set induction for discussing God. The more that an adult can teach about God or provide "safe space" for discussions, the more an individual can enhance his/ her life- long theological quest.

Conclusion

Because God is a verb and not a noun, the Divine encounter is always shifting in relationship to our own experiences. Likewise, we change our views of the Divine Presence depending on our day-to-day activities and emotions. Moreover, God is an abstract and intangible Being, and thus, we must rely on our faith. We cannot see the Divine and we only have a limited sense of the Divine. Nevertheless, despite the many challenges that arise when one proactively teaches God to children, it is indeed an enriching experience for everyone to instruct and share theological ideas. Rather than continue to minimize our theological quests in order to maximize other areas of Jewish learning, we have an obligation to help our children find a deep sense of the Divine in the world, by helping build an everlasting and ever changing relationship with God. There is no one absolute method to teach God, nor does this thesis even pretend to have answered all of life's challenges in an acceptable manner for every individual. Despite these limitations, this chapter is meant to provide one set of guidelines to help enhance a youngster(s) life. Ideally, one's theological questions, struggles, doubts, hopes, wants,

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[49] For additional information about this resource, see pages 113-115 of chapter three of this thesis.

and needs will forever be shifting as one journeys through life. Thus, by teaching God to children, we are setting the foundation for an ongoing quest. Teaching about the Divine to children is clearly a difficult task, in part, because at the same time one is challenging a youngster's theological ideas, one is also challenging his/ her own beliefs. The excitement and fulfillment that can be the result make this daunting task less scary and far more rewarding. The author hopes that people will use this chapter as a foundation for lessons in proactively teaching God to children.

CONCLUSION

This thesis is a successful endeavor to grapple with Jewish theology. It explores qualitative research as a primary method for its foundation. Moreover, this thesis is a result of numerous religious school teachers, educators, and rabbis promoting the importance of prayer. How do we pray if we are unsure of the recipient of our sacred thoughts? How do we find Higher Meaning if we have never been taught how to seek out the Divine? These and other questions are found within these pages. Rather than be content with understanding God as an "Old Man with a white beard," this thesis suggests alternative ideas for a relationship with God. With these gleanings, one can better accept a common Jewish notion that God is one of three primary tenets of Judaism. God, Torah, and Israel, the three major aspects of Judaism, all interact with one another and all need to be taught in a proactive style.

Chapter one of this thesis explores a variety of developmental theories for children ages preschool through adolescence. All of the scholars recognize that a study of developmental growth is based upon patterns and generalizations and is not meant to serve as an exact science. Nevertheless, when an individual understands developmental theory, it can act as a helpful mechanism to teach other people. Within this genre, one must further recognize the various categories and subgroups. For example, Erik Erikson is one of the primary scholars in psycho-social learning. He helps people comprehend the relationship between one's individual ego and the larger society. In contrast, Jean Piaget analyzes development through a very different lens. He prefers the cognitive approach, discussing learning style based on our ability to think in distinct manners.

Elkind takes elements from both Erikson and Piaget and generates a socio-cognitive developmental theory. Sears and Havighurst shift the frame of reference in order to focus their energy on behaviors. Gordon and Vygotsky define socio-cultural theories, emphasizing culture as a founding component of one's development. Kohlberg, Gilligan, Damon, and Coles all explore moral development, stressing the development of various values that emerge within us. Fowler, Moran, and Goldman explore faith and/ or religion as the primary aspect of a person's development. However, if an individual studied only one person's theories, one would not get a full picture. A person who wants to teach about a subject, especially God, must look at all of these aforementioned developmental theorists in order to understand how every experience shapes who we are as individuals. Through this knowledge, the foundation exists to proactively teach about the Divine.

In addition to developmental theories, this thesis also looks at theological interpretations to gain a better understanding of Jewish ideology. Chapter Two, therefore, explores the various models of Jewish theology throughout history. The first section, not surprisingly, is the foundation of Judaism, an exploration of God within the Bible. From this section, the author moves into Rabbinic ideas, Medieval, Aristotelian, Pre-modern, and Modern Jewish theology. Because of the understanding that we must individually and collectively develop a relationship with the Divine, there is not one rigid Jewish theology. Instead, there are a variety of ideas about the Jewish experience with God. All Jewish scholars agree that God is One, thus supporting the claim that the *Shema* is the quintessential Jewish prayer. Additionally, all Jewish theologians recognize that we are still waiting for the Messiah/ Messianic Age and, therefore, do not accept Jesus as Godly. Whether we call God Adonai, Creator, Judge, *Hamakom*, or many other labels, is

less important to Jews than maintaining a relationship with the Divine. Thus, the emphasis of chapter two is a theological exploration to help serve as a foundation for teaching God to children.

Chapter Three looks at a majority of the resources that are currently available to assist with a curriculum about God. Although many of the books are passive in their methods and strategies in instructing about the Divine, they could easily be adapted. Books that explore holidays, prayers, *mitzvot*, as well as the Divine, can all be connected to God. All of the resources have value; some sources are simply more proactive in teaching about the Divine. Thus, instead of enabling God to be a passive or implicit subject, the hope is that God will also be a more explicit and proactive subject in homes and religious schools.

Finally, the culmination of the previous chapters is expressed in chapter four of this thesis. The chapter synthesizes developmental theory, theology, resources, and a sampling of activities to help an adult proactively teach God to children. There are guidelines, principles, and a variety of experiences that would assist a child's learning. The chapter is separated into smaller age categories to further enable an adult the tools that would best serve his/ her needs. Hopefully, the thesis would encourage a deeper experience in teaching and exploring the Divine.

This thesis assists children in finding paths to relate to God that will be a life-long foundation. When youth make connections to the Holy and Sacred One at early ages, the relationship will likely shape their adulthood, create a stronger connection to Judaism, and allow for heightened experiences of Jewish spirituality. Although the author in no way claims to have all the answers, there is a sample of responses to various theological

questions: who/ what is God? What is God's name? How can we "know" God? How does God relate to the world, to Jews, and to individuals? What does God "want" from the Jewish people? Why do bad things happen to good people?

The thesis is a place to provide sacred space in exploring and maintaining a relationship with the Divine. It is not meant to eliminate questions and struggles; in fact, it is meant to serve in the opposite manner. Meeting God is a lifelong journey and the author's hope of this thesis is that it provides a foundation in which an individual can grapple with theological concerns. Our spiritual journeys are lifelong endeavors, shifting and meandering, as we have new experiences. God is with each of us and welcomes our questions, our doubts, and our growth spurts. We are the people Israel, a community who wrestles with God. It is our sacred duty and privilege to teach about the Divine to children. When we offer space for children's theological ideas, we, too, will leave the moment a little richer and a little more fulfilled. God is with all of us, on our individual and collective journeys. Through proactively teaching about the Divine to children, our Jewish heritages will be forever strengthened.

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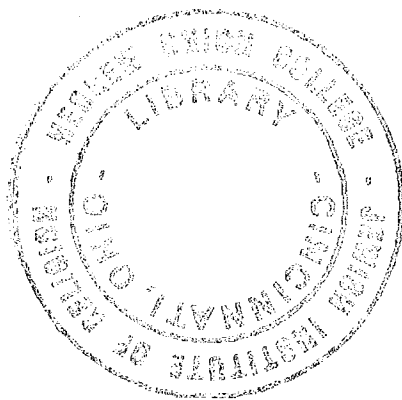*Jerusalem Bible, The: The Holy Scriptures*. Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 1992.

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