

“GODshopping” TEXT STUDY

1. GOD AS OUR “PARTNER IN CREATION”

When God created the world, God made everything a little bit incomplete. Instead of making bread grow out of the earth, God made wheat so that humans might harvest it, thresh it, and bake it into bread. The same is true for much of our world. Why? Because God wants us to become partners with God in completing the work of Creation.

This is why we read in the siddur’s *Gevurot* ...

Your might, O God, is everlasting; help us to use our strength for good and not for evil. You are the Source of life and blessing; help us to choose life for ourselves and our children. You are the Author of freedom; help us to set free the captive.

2. GOD AS “GOODNESS, LOVE, DREAMS AND IDEALS” (adapted from Erich Fromm’s *The Art of Loving*)

The truly religious person does not pray for anything, does not expect anything from God. God is a symbol of all that people are striving for: love, truth and justice. Such a person has faith in the principles which “God” represents. So he thinks truth, lives love and justice, and considers life an opportunity to arrive at an ever fuller understanding of human potential. To “love God” means to work toward the full human capacity to love. To “believe in God” is to believe that a measure of all these qualities we describe as God-like can be attained by each one of us.

3. GOD AS “AUTHOR OF LIFE AND DEATH” (adapted from the *Book of Job*)

Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundations? Do you know who fixed its dimensions or set its cornerstone? Who closed the sea behind doors when it gushed forth out of the womb, and said, “You may come so far and no farther. Here your surging waves will stop”? Have you ever commanded the day to break, assigned the dawn its place? Have you penetrated the sources of the sea, or walked in the recesses of the deep? Have the gates of death been disclosed to you? If you know of these, tell Me. Who cut a channel for the torrents, and a path for the thunderstorms? Do you know the laws of heaven, or impose its authority on earth? Can you dispatch the lightning on a mission and have it answer, “I am ready”?

4. GOD AS “EIN SOF” (The Infinite One ... from *The Zohar*, adapted from Rabbi Rami Shapiro)

You and I are real, worthwhile, and unique. What we are *not* is eternal, separate, and independent. The relationship between us and that which is responsible for our being here is like that between an ocean and its waves. Each wave is unique and distinct, but no wave is separate from the ocean; without the ocean there would be no wave. You and I, and the myriad details of creation, are manifestations of the one God; we emerge from the infinite source of everything. But we are not eternal! We are momentary, transient, and relative. Yet that makes us neither illusory nor unreal. Too often, people imagine that being empty of separate selfhood means that nothing matters; the world is a game, an illusion, a worthless place from which the soul seeks to escape. This is not the Jewish view. The fact that you and I are a temporary manifestation of God does not mean we are unimportant. On the contrary, you and I are unique and unreproducible expressions of the Divine, and we are endowed with irreducible value and holiness. Each of us is a vehicle of godliness placed here to bring godliness to bear on every aspect of life as we encounter it.