

The Bible Corner

By Cindy Cottone
A weekly catechism for young readers
Exploring our Jewish roots

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is the first in a series of weekly religious columns for children, written by Cindy Cottone. Ms. Cottone teaches the Children's Liturgy of the Word at Resurrection Church in Fairport and has been associated with Nazareth College's theatre program for children. We hope this column will fill the void in religious education material for children that was left by our discontinuation of "Faith Today."

Jesus Christ was born into a Jewish family nearly 2,000 years ago. He came as a savior for anyone who chose to believe in Him as God. As Christians and believers in Jesus, then, we can trace our own religious beliefs back to Jewish roots. In fact, the Jewish book known as the Torah is similar in many ways to our own Old Testament in the Bible.

Many Jewish holidays are celebrated throughout the year, including Hanukkah and Passover (which coincide on the Christian calendar with our own observations of Christmas and Easter). Two Jewish holidays celebrated every fall are Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. These two holidays are very solemn occasions, and are known as the High Holy Days of the Jewish Calendar.

Rosh Hashanah, which fell on Sept. 16 this year, is also the beginning of the Jewish calendar year. Rosh Hashanah begins an important 10-day period for the Jewish faith, concluding with Yom Kippur, which falls this year on Sept. 25.

A number of valuable traditions and

beliefs are imparted by these two holidays, beliefs of Jews and non-Jews alike. The most important lesson is that God is almighty and merciful at the same time. For those who are truly sorry for their sins, He is a compassionate and forgiving God.

Rosh Hashanah is also known as the Day of Remembrance. According to Jewish tradition, God judges the lives of all people for the year just past. Three books are opened in heaven. In the first book are recorded the names of people who haven't committed any sins during the past year. These people will have as their reward the gift of life in the coming year.

The second book contains the names of people who have done only evil, and their fate will be death. The third book contains the names of people who have done both good and evil during the past year. The majority of the people will have their names written in the third book. Their fate will not be decided until Yom Kippur.

In the time between the two holidays, these people will go to synagogue (the Jewish temple, or sanctuary) and examine their consciences for offenses, pray for forgiveness from God and repent through good deeds. Their names will then be written in the first book or the book of life. On Yom Kippur, the three books are then sealed for the coming year.

Besides the religious observances of these two days, there are also special customs connected with Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. On the eve of Rosh

Hashanah, a festive meal is served to the family at home. A special white, braided bread called hallah is blessed by the father. It is then dipped in honey and passed around the table, along with the New Year's wish that the upcoming year will be as sweet as honey. Fruits such as apples are also dipped in the honey. Jewish New Year's cards are exchanged, and wishes such as the following are given to others: "May you be inscribed in the book of life for a good year."

After dinner, the family goes to the synagogue to listen to the rabbi and cantor pray for a good year. The next day, special prayers are said at the synagogue. A special book of prayers known as the Mahzor is also used. Another part of this service is the blowing of a trumpet-like instrument called a shofar. One of the oldest of all musical instruments, the shofar is made from the curved and hollowed horn of an animal, usually a ram. This instrument was used throughout ancient Jewish history in such important events as the coronation of a king or the attack of an army in wartime.

Yom Kippur, which falls 10 days after the eve of Rosh Hashanah, is known as the Day of Atonement. No work is allowed on this day, and a total fast is observed from the eve of Yom Kippur until sunset of the following day. Not even water is permitted, and only children under the age of nine and the sick or elderly are exempt from this fast.

On the Day of Atonement, the family goes to synagogue again for special prayers on the theme of confession and

forgiveness. The story of Jonah is read, because it depicts a person who disobeyed God, but later repented and was forgiven. At the end of the day, the shofar is again sounded as a signal that the holiday is over.

For discussion:

The main theme of both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is the forgiveness granted by a merciful God to those who are truly sorry for their offenses.

Is there someone I have hurt through my words or actions? How can I seek forgiveness from them?

Is there someone who has offended me by words or deeds? Why should I forgive people who hurt me?

For further reading:

1) The story of Jonah is found in the Old Testament. He tries to run from God and is swallowed by a whale.

2) Howard Greenfeld has written a series of children's books about Jewish holidays and customs. Among them are "Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur," "Passover," "Chanukah," "Purim," and "Bar Mitzvah." All are published by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, and are available at the public library.

Do you have a question about the Bible? Mail your questions to Cindy Cottone, c/o the Courier-Journal, 114 S. Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607.

Thomas M. Rosica ordained to the diaconate

Thomas M. Rosica, CSB, took his final vows along with four others, in the Congregation of St. Basil (Basilian Fathers) in a ceremony in Toronto, Canada, on Friday, Sept. 6. The following morning, he and two others were ordained to the diaconate by

Cardinal George Flahiff, CSB, in the chapel of St. Basil's College, Toronto.

The Rev. Mr. Rosica is the eldest of six children of Dr. and Mrs. Anthony Rosica of St. Ambrose Parish, Rochester. He entered the Basilian Fathers' Formation program

upon graduation from Aquinas Institute in June, 1977. He went on to receive a bachelor of arts in French and secondary education from St. John Fisher College in May, 1980.

The Rev. Mr. Rosica entered the Basilian novitiate in Detroit, Mich., in August, 1981, and took his first vows in the community the following August.

He has spent the summers studying in

West Germany and Montreal, and has just completed a summer of study in the classics department of the University of California at Berkeley. The Rev. Mr. Rosica has been assigned as deacon to parish ministry at St. John the Baptist Parish in Amherstburg, Ontario, Canada. Ordination to the priesthood is scheduled for April, 1986, at St. Ambrose Parish.

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