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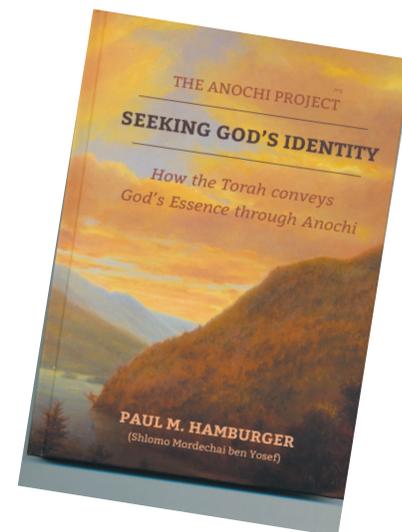
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A Night Of Learning

Author of *The Anochi*

Project: Seeking God's Identity
coming to Shaarey Zedek.



It's like coming full circle." That was Paul Hamburger's reaction to an invitation to lead an adult education program at Congregation Shaarey Zedek as part of the Berman Night of



Paul Hamburger

Learning, Thursday, March 8, at 7 p.m. at the Southfield shul.

Since 1985, Hamburger has been living in Maryland with his wife and three children. Before that, though, Hamburger grew up in Oak Park and regularly attended Hebrew school and Shabbat and holiday services at Shaarey Zedek.

Hamburger is coming back to the Detroit area to teach some insights from his new book, *The Anochi Project: Seeking God's Identity*.

Hamburger is an author of several legal books and articles, but this is his first effort at publishing on Jewish texts and philosophy. One of the first questions people ask when they see the book is, "How long did it take to write such a treatise?" Hamburger's first response is always "59 years!" The ideas in the book incorporate lessons learned from his first days in Shaarey Zedek Hebrew school. Some of his biggest early influences were the late Rabbi Irwin Groner and the late Cantor Sidney Rube.

Hamburger's latest book takes the reader on an intellectual journey exploring the use of the word *Anochi* in the Torah. Literally translated, *Anochi* means "I." But so does the word *ani*. Yet 141 times in the Torah the word *Anochi* is used instead of *ani*.

The *Anochi Project* starts with the premise that there is a meaningful difference between *Anochi* and *ani*. The book then traces that deeper meaning through classical, rabbinical and Chasidic writings to show a deeper meaning that is conveyed consistently from *Bereishit* through the book of *Devarim*.

One of the practical lessons Hamburger draws out in the book

addresses the question of how to reconcile one's identity as a proud Jew with a desire to take advantage of all that the secular world has to offer.

As Hamburger sees it, "This is a question that dates back to Abraham, the first Jew. There he was, negotiating a place in the secular world and having to face the demands of an idol-worshipping Philistine leader by the name of Avimelech. Avimelech was willing to work with Abraham; but he required one thing. He demanded that Abraham swear allegiance to Avimelech. That presented Abraham with a real challenge. On the one hand, to swear to Avimelech means swearing to all that Avimelech stands for. On the other hand, if he failed to swear his allegiance, he could have a war on his hands.

"Instead, Abraham came up with an ingenious solution. He said, '*Anochi Ishavei'a*.' Grammatically, *Anochi* means 'I' and *Ishavei'a* means 'I swear.' *Anochi Ishavei'a*, therefore, means 'I, I swear.' That redundant or double 'I' caused commentators to suggest a different meaning.

"Understanding *Anochi* as a reference to God (as in the Ten Commandments), perhaps Abraham worked it out with Avimelech by saying two things: Avimelech heard 'I swear' and at the same time Abraham remained true to his faith by saying 'I swear to *Anochi* — to God.'

"That lesson rings true to all of us who cling to a Jewish identity in a secular world; we pledge our allegiance to God at the same time as we fully participate in what God's world has to offer," he says.

Noted author and international lecturer Rabbi Chaim Dalfin said that *The Anochi Project* "is a most important addition to the world of Torah scholarship. It is well sourced and shows the hidden truths in the Torah." ❖

Paul Hamburger's presentation will be part of the Berman Night of Learning at Congregation Shaarey Zedek March 8 at 7 p.m. The event is free and open to the public.