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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Reform Judaism is the official voice of the Union for Reform Judaism, linking the institutions and affiliates of Reform Judaism with every Reform Jew. *RJ* covers developments within our Movement while interpreting world events and Jewish tradition from a Reform perspective. Shared by 305,000 member households, *RJ* conveys the creativity, diversity, and dynamism of Reform Judaism.

DEAR READER

The Search for God

For many of us, the hunt for God never stops. We may deny God, curse God, and demand proof of God's existence that we will never get...but the search continues, motivated by a sense—often just the slimmest instinct—that only God's presence can account for the holiness in our world.

Often I am asked, "Rabbi, how do I connect with God?" and I have long struggled with my answer. The obvious place to begin is with personal or communal prayer, but I have come to realize that, for many seekers, prayer is too alien even to contemplate.

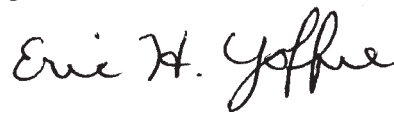
And so, I suggest: Begin with a new openness to the world around you. Reawaken your capacity for wonderment. Make room for the sense of awe you felt as a child when you first beheld the beauty and the mystery of the natural world. These are Divine sparks. Allow yourself to experience them.

Turn next to the sacred texts of our tradition. They record how those who came before us, faced with the same questions and doubts, found their way to God and to faith. In carefully studying how others navigated this course, you can find reassurance, inspiration, and guidance.

Remember, too, that God is not only a noun but a verb—not only a presence, but a process. We may not know precisely what God is, but our tradition clearly tells us what God does: heals the sick, clothes the naked, houses the homeless, and pursues peace. We cannot be God because we are limited and imperfect, but we can emulate God's behavior, and in this way bring God into our lives. Consciousness of God, of course, is not necessary for ethical engagement, but studies show that those who pursue justice with the express intent of testifying to God's existence find greater satisfaction in their actions, and are less likely to fall victim to exhaustion and despair.

Finally, I encourage you to experiment with religious rituals, including those you may have discarded. Rituals help us to cultivate a sense of the sacred within ourselves and in our midst. Rituals are also instruments of sacred reenactment, a means for us to relive momentous encounters with God—the Exodus, the revelation at Sinai—that shaped our people's religious lives.

Even if the search for God seems overwhelming, start somewhere. With God, our lives have meaning and purpose. Without God, we are reduced to being no more than a tiny speck in a vast universe.



Rabbi Eric H. Yoffie

President, Union for Reform Judaism

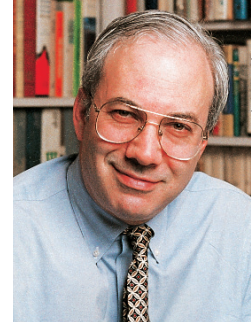


Photo by Henry Grossman

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