

God & I

Members of Sinai Temple, Springfield, Massachusetts offered these anonymous reflections on the following three questions: “I have felt close to God...,” “I have felt distant from God...,” and “If God was accepting questions I would ask...”

I Have Felt Close to God...

“At times of life (babies being born) and at times of death (funerals). Or, it could be that I feel close to my mortality, which then leads me to hoping/believing in God.”

“When I have been on the edge of despair (due to circumstances of life), often something has happened the next day or the next little while that has helped me back from the edge and keep going.”

“On Yom Kippur, looking at the Eternal Light I felt overwhelmed with the feeling G-d was with me.”

“I have been singing in the choir for three years. I feel close to God in our singing.”

“When I cared for my mother in the last months of her life and was having some serious health problems of my own.”

“When I was in second grade, coming home from school, the sky looked so beautiful. And I stood outside my door staring up at the sky and I felt such joy, such a rapturous feeling. I knew that God was there. And when I felt disturbed by something, I knew that

God knew what was going on inside me, and I knew that he loved me and that he accepted me.”

“During the births of my children.”

“I get a powerful dose of God-ness in nature.”

“I would say I do not know what it means to be close to God.”

“I feel close to God by watching and playing with my nephew and by remembering my grandfather—his love, support, and the lessons I have learned from him.”

“At Shabbat services, it is great to just relax, forget about the events of the day or week, and feel at peace thinking of God.”

“When I have had a moment of shared insight.”

“When I’m in community.”

“When I am most distressed, no matter where it may be, I feel God guiding me through the trouble. I know He has not left me alone and walks for me when I cannot walk for myself.”

“In the midst of an ordinary day—as long as I take the time to pause and notice.”

I Have Felt Distant From God...

“All the wars, famines, and seemingly unnecessary suffering that is present every day cause one to want to either hide one’s eyes, weep in despair, or become angry that it occurs (and who can we get angry at—it makes sense it would be God). I think we all feel so powerless and insignificant to make it better, so we (I) tend to give up trying (and then just feel guilty). Being angry at God is easier than trying to take some responsibility for the suffering we see.”

“When I realize that everything I have read about cosmology, medicine, evolution, anthropology, and primate behavior belies the existence of the sort of God we are taught about.”

“When I think of the Holocaust.”

“When good people die way too young, I struggle with ‘Why?’ and wonder if there is a G-d, how could he let these things happen...Then I think, G-d can’t prevent tragedies but he can help us through them; he can help us see the wonders that are still with us.”

If God Was Accepting Questions, I Would Ask...

“What do you do all day up in the sky?”

“Are we, collectively, God?”

“Why are some souls so troubled?”

“How can I do for me when so many need me to do for them?”

“Will I see those I loved on earth after death?”

“What is death like?”

“What is it that You want me to do with the rest of my life?”

“Who are you? What are you? Where are you? Why are you? What/who was there before you?”

“If you exist, why have you not given us ample evidence?”

“How can you observe the world and the actions and choices of the people in it and not be totally distressed?”

“What is the purpose of life?”

“Am I pleasing to you?”

“Are you a person, spirit, a force in each human soul? Do you manifest yourself differently and uniquely in each human being?”

“Why do we live only to die? Do we have any lasting presence?”

“How can you use me best?”

“How did it all begin?”

“How can we all come together to use your power for good?”

“Why is redemption taking so long, and will the world ever be redeemed?”