

# If not now, when?

A service about Reb Zalman

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## Welcome:

Welcome to the Upper Delaware Unitarian Universalist Fellowship this third Sunday in September. We continue with our theme of making religion relevant with a second part of exploring the cosmology of Reb. Zalman. For those of you who were here last week, you will recall that Reb Zalman is an 88-year old rabbi, who left the Lubavitch tradition and began the Jewish Renewal Movement in the 1970s. There he fused the mystical traditions of his Hassidic background with modern sensibilities concerning the environment, technology and psychology in an effort to reinvigorate a Judaism he found stultifying. At the heart of his wisdom is the idea that we need to come up with a new cosmology that helps to heal the earth. And in finding that new cosmology, we need to adopt ethics and establish practices that brings that cosmology into being. This week we will center on how we might bring ourselves in alignment with this cosmology.

## Opening Blessing:

Source of Time and Space, Avinu Malkaynu!

From infinity draw down to us the great renewal and attune us to Your intent, so that Wisdom, Your daughter flow into our awareness, to awaken us to see ahead, so we help instead of harm. May all the devices we make and use, be sparing and protecting of Your creation. Help us to set right what we have debased, to heal what we have made ill, to care for and to restore what we have injured.

Bless our Earth, our home and show us all how to care for her, so that we might live your promise given to our forebears, "To live heavenly days right here on this Earth."

May all the beings, You have fashioned, become aware that it is You who has given them being. May we realize that You shaped our lives and may each one who breathes join with others who breathe, in the delight of shared knowing of the great breath.

Assist us in learning how to partner, with family, neighbors, and friends.

Aid us in dissolving old enmities.

May we come to honor, even in those whom we fear, Your image and form, Your light dwelling in their hearts.

May we soon see the day, when Your House will be indeed, The House of prayer for all peoples, named and celebrated in every tongue and speech.

On that day You will be one and one with all cosmic Life. Amen!

**Opening Chant:**

*It is perfect, you are loved, all is clear and I am holy.*

**Chalice Lighting:**

We are thankful for the gift of this day, for this Fellowship: for those who are with us today, for those who are away from us and for those who have returned. We are thankful for this religious community, which calls us into covenant with ourselves and each other and our magnificent universe.

**Opening words:**

*God talks to each of us as he creates us,  
Then walks with us silently out of night.  
But the words, spoken to us before we start,  
Those cloudy words are these:*

*Sent forth by your senses,  
Go to the very edge of your desire;  
Invest me.*

*Back behind the things grow as fire,  
So that their shadows, lengthened,  
Will always and completely cover me.*

*Let everything happen to you: beauty and terror  
Only press on: no feeling is final.  
Don't let yourself be cut off from me.  
Nearby is that country  
Known as Life.*

*You will recognize it  
By its seriousness.*

*Give me your hand.*

**Candles of Joy, Sorrow and Concern****Offering: Spirit of Life****Previously at the Fellowship:**

Each religion is like a vital organ of the planet and we need for the planet's sake for each one to stay alive and be devout in the most healthy way;

The problems we face at this time don't seem to yield to the solutions our traditions and lineages have provided in the past.

We need to discover a cosmology we have to have in order to approach the healing of the planet.

The cosmology we seek to find should produce an ethos that honors harmonious biological health in the individual in the matrix of the most harmonious biological health of the environment.

The mind of the current chaos of global consensus leads us to an ever greater crisis. What are the upaya, or skillful means that are needed to launch the awareness of the emerging cosmology?

How do we update the inner resources of our spiritual traditions to attune our consciousness to optimal transformational power?

What do we need to do to address the matrix of the life process on the subtle plane to gain understanding of the deep life process?

In answer to this last question, we will return again to a virtual experience of Reb Zalman. In this clip he is speaking to a group about consciousness and the nature of God. In the first question, a woman asks for clarification on the container through which we can access consciousness. Zalman explains that the container is imagery and how, in order to give power to that imagery, we have to understand the matrix of our body and its connection to our mind. In the second question, what is the essence of the God to whom I am praying, Zalman points back to the four-point matrix of religious experience: being present in our bodies, touching reverence, connecting to the expanse of the universe, and becoming one with divine spirit.

### **Video Clip: Consciousness**

#### **Congregational feedback**

### **Come Sing a Song with Me: # 346**

### **My Neighbor's Faith: What I found in the chapel**

#### **Homily:**

In drawing our service to its conclusion, I want to thank you for the opportunity to explore the wisdom Reb Zalman with you. I am fortunate that my connection with Starr King School for the Ministry remains strong and that I was invited to participate in their August Symposium where Zalman was the keynote speaker and received an honorary doctorate of Sacred Theology from the school. Not surprisingly, my connection with the school continues because of the limited nature and the long-distance relationship that I had to maintain in order to receive my Masters of Divinity. It is not the same for my colleagues who moved to Berkeley, participated full-time for four years, and then moved away to pursue careers in full-time parish ministry.

This is an example, in my mind, that the limitations or the set of particular circumstances where we find ourselves, if used creatively, does indeed expand the possibilities. In our limitations there is the opportunity to find attunement with others.

In Reb Zalman's final teaching he said that all teaching should fit together integrally. That is what, I believe, we experienced here. Because of our connection and attunement, Reb Zalman was introduced into this community. My particular circumstances afforded me access to this wisdom; you were open to it being shared as part of our service. Our connections, beyond ourselves, brought this learning, this exploration to fruition.

There is one final video I'd like to share with you. Using the teaching of Hillel, another famous sage who lived and wrote at moment of the beginning of the Common Era; who wrote: "If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, then what am I? And if not now, when?"

It brings us full circle to our engagement with the divine and the magic that happens there. It connects us to the magic of our lives and the magic that we have shared today.

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