

Thank God for humor

(American Jews &)

Oh GOD!

By William Rabinowitz

In the lord! In the name of the Lord, Lord, in the name of God!

God, but I get confused.

*“Krom, I have worshipped you. I have served you.
If you do not come through for me now, then to hell with you”.*

Conan the Barbarian – sort of (Can God really go to Hell?)

Driving down Boynton Beach Boulevard, I was returning from the eye doctor wearing my, eyes just got dilated, huge, thick, square, you must be blind sun glasses. My thoughts traveled with all the extra time. What else can you do hurrying down the road at 12 miles an hour in the slow lane because you can't see? I was only going from here to there and home. “God, get me home safely,” I found myself beseeching. ‘White haired speed demons are passing me at at least 25 miles per hour. A guy could get killed.”

So there I was, asking God to get me home safely. I had not asked God to get me to the eye doctor safely, just home safely. Perhaps, I should have asked the wife to drive, but my male ego assured me; she is not as good a driver as I am.

Have you wondered how, why and the ways we call upon God?

When behind the wheel; “please God, I am late for a meeting, don't let that light turn red”. Or, “please God, help me find a parking space close to the office”. A friend once suggested that God actually does not do parking spaces rather God assigned that job to a parking space Angel. I wonder what you have to do to get on the good side of that Angel.

Did you ever meet an old acquaintance on the street that you have not seen and exclaim, "Oh my God! How long has it been? I have not seen you in ages". Why not say "Suzan, I have not seen you in ages". Why do we say "Oh my God!" Is there a reason that we call upon our personal God and nudge him to notice that Suzan has just shown up. Yet we do call upon God in times of real need – say the lottery numbers are being announced. Do we not say "Oh God", or simply "God, let me win. I will give a lot of Tzedakah (charity) if I win". We hope for divine intervention if the bribe is big enough. We don't usually say, "Oh my God" unless the numbers are getting close. Perhaps God has appointed a lottery number Angel and we need to figure out how to get on the good side of that Angel too. Being as God is God we don't start with the "Oh my lottery Angel". God forbid, we might offend the All Mighty and not win.

Perhaps you saw an accident and said "Oh my God." On one hand you are thankful that it was not you in the accident. But, just the same, you need to be sure that your God is awake and aware that there has been an accident. Is it really possible God is not paying attention? If God is not aware a sharp exclamation, or, even better, a screech of "God ", usually brings God's attention back in line. A "God!" saves time and does help God focus where you think he should be paying attention.

Think of the different ways we say "God". Just inflect your voice – and say "God". Lower your voice to a whisper and say God. Put a question mark into your voice and say, God?

Jews are different in the ways we constantly call out for God. Don't you wonder if God needs a vacation now and then from all the constant harassment? You know a few days in Miami; maybe a nice cold beer and a snooze on South beach. (Who can sleep on South Beach with all those tiny bikinis walking around?)

American Jews are different from Israeli Jews in how they call on God, especially while driving. "Jesus Christ – God did you see what that jerk driver did. He could have killed us." Why not simply say, "Sarah – did you see that crazy driver". Isn't that more accurate. Or is Jesus riding in the back seat? Of course Israeli drivers could scream out "Yeshu – God did you see that crazy driver" - nah - probably not. Do Muslims call out at the same bad driver "Jesus Christ" or simply "good Allah and Mohammed is his Prophet". Or do they exclaim "Jesus Christ – Allah did you see that left turn". Perhaps, they just drop the Jesus and say "Allah may his name be praised by all the living, did you see that left turn?"

How about Hindus, what do they call out?

"Varnishtuhindumistuphajannicrambaseekosinto – did you see that crazy driver!!!"

American Jews may call out the name Jesus Christ all the time but rarely if ever do Jews sit at the same traffic light and say “Lord”, or, “in the name of the Lord, did you see that left turn”.

In the prayer book, Jews do not exclaim, “God!” or “My God!” or “God?”

I suppose, you can in a moment of personal contemplation say, “Yoh, big guy up there – we need to talk. That basketball game last night, when the Miami Heat lost to the Los Angeles Lakers, was just tragic. How could you let that guy sink that ball for three in the last two seconds Miami lost the game 100-99, what were you thinking of?”

It is easy to imagine a fan sitting at the game saying “God don’t let that ball go in the hoop.” If the ball does go through the hoop, is the same fan going to say, “to Hell with you God?” Maybe that fan might say, if that ball goes through, “I am going to find another God that is sensitive, attentive and understands basketball better”.

On Yom Kippur, when we Jews clench our fists and beat our breasts, do we read in the Machzor “Oh my God” forgive my sins. If we say “Oh my God” too much on Yom Kippur we may be guilty of a sin – my God is not your God and your God does not cover the guy next to you. How often is the prayer for God’s mercy rethought over a soothing cup of tea, our chests can get pretty sore from all the pounding. The Al Chet (the this sin we did or that sin prayer that we seem to recite over and over in Yom Kippur services) is occasionally rethought at the traditional break the fast meal at “Moshe Dragon’s Chinese family buffet. Moshe’s early bird specials are 4:00pm to 6:00pm – no credit cards please. The food is pretty good but the MSG will kill you.

Now let us take it from the other point of view. What is God thinking when he hears this cacophony of “God” all the time. It is very fortunate that God is loving, forgiving and extra fortunate that God has a sense of humor. If God did not have a sense of humor – we would be in real trouble.

You are a father or a mother and your child has called on you for “Mom, I want, I need, and I gotta have. Mom, help me with this or that. Mom, do this or that for me. Mom, lend me five dollars”. At some point, you, as a normal parent, do loose it, don’t you? Especially, when Mom asks in return “call me when you get there” and you forget. Or, “call me sometimes – just to be sure that I am still alive”. “Call me to be sure I didn’t make a dumb left turn and someone else watching said Jesus Christ –did you see that. My God! She could have been killed.”

Oh God, (I hope you are listening), how lucky we are that you are indulgent of all of us.

Thank God!

After writing down my thoughts I thought perhaps my thoughts are thought insensitive so I sought spiritual thought counsel to be properly P.C. A friend is a minister of the All

Souls Evangelical Church of God – so I asked her for her thoughts about O-God. Just to be fair I asked the rabbi of the Orthodox synagogue in Del Ray for his thoughts about O-God.

The Rabbi said almost instantly, O-God is not funny and don't share it. The minister responded with a story about her mother, who had passed away recently. "One time just before she passed I drove her to get a perm. At a four way stop I turned right and pulled into a funeral procession by error– two cars behind the hearse. We were trapped. Mom's vision was such that she was unaware but wondered why I was driving so slowly. When I explained, she first scolded me, giggled, prayed for whoever we were following, and then giggled more at our predicament. I told her to get serious as we were coming to a light and would be pulling beside the hearse so she burst into "Nearer My God To Thee", pretended to wipe her eyes, continuing to giggle so hard her shoulders were bouncing. And who says Christians can't have fun!" The minister thought any thoughts about God must be good, go spread the good word about God.

Dictionary:

Noodge – to bug or bother

Tzedakah – loosely charity – more properly to do justice

Yesu – Hebrew for Jesus

Mahzor – High Holiday prayer book