

INTERFAITH INSIGHT

Jewish, Muslim and Christian events come together

By Douglas Kindschi*Director, Kaufman Interfaith Institute*

This week marks the New Year in the Jewish calendar with the celebration of Rosh Hashana. This week is also the celebration for Muslims called Hijri New Year.

While both traditions use the lunar calendar, the Jewish calendar adds an extra month periodically to keep the holidays in the same seasons of the Gregorian solar year. Since the Muslim calendar does not add extra months, their calendar moves about 11 days each year compared to the solar calendar.

Thus it is unusual that both calendars would be celebrating the New Year at about the same

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time. Last year, they were nearly a month apart.

The coinciding of the calendars this year leads to another interesting connection. For Jews, the high holiday of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, occurs Oct. 12 and begins the evening of Oct. 11.

This year, the Muslim holiday of Ashura also occurs on Oct. 11 and is recognized by both Sunni and Shia traditions, but for different reasons. In the Shia tradition, this day marks the murder of Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad. It was a most significant event in the schism between the two communities.

In the Sunni tradition, Ashura is a holiday that recognizes Moses and the exodus from Egypt. According to the tradition, when Mohammad entered Medina, having fled from Mecca,

he observed the Jews fasting and celebrating their escape from bondage as slaves. Mohammad commanded his followers to also fast in recognition of this event.

Moses is considered one of the six most important prophets in the Muslim tradition, perhaps third after Mohammad and Jesus. Among the prophets mentioned, Moses (Musa in the Quran) is the one most frequently cited.

LEARN OF COMMON HISTORIES

Following these coinciding days in the Jewish and Muslim calendars will be another opportunity for Jews, Muslims and Christians to learn more about our common histories.

The Kaufman Interfaith Institute and the Academic Consortium of eight colleges and seminaries in West Michigan presents the annual Interfaith Consortium Conference on

Nov. 1 at Calvin College. The speaker is Dr. Amy-Jill Levine, who brings the Jewish and Christian traditions together under the conference theme of "Understanding Jesus Means Understanding Judaism."

Levine is professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt University, with appointments in the Divinity School and College of Arts and Sciences. Her lectures on understanding Jesus in his Jewish context correct false stereotypes, brings new meaning to his piety, politics, practices and prayers, and offers a new path for Jewish-Christian relations.

Her books include: "The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus"; the edited collection, "The Historical Jesus in Context"; and the 13-volume edited series, "Feminist Companion to the New

Testament and Early Christian Writings." She is the co-author of "The Meaning of the Bible: What the Jewish Scriptures and the Christian Old Testament Can Teach Us" and co-editor of the Jewish Annotated New Testament.

Her talk, on the "Parables of Jesus," will be at 1 p.m., followed by breakout sessions and a panel discussion by scholars from the three traditions reflecting on the place of Jesus in his first-century context.

The evening lecture, on the topic "Jesus in his Jewish Context," is at 7 p.m.

Registration for this free conference is at interfaithunderstanding.org and includes the opportunity to sign up for optional lunch and dinner.

Join us and learn more about our common histories.

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