



“Surely There is No Fear of God in This Place” – The Biblical Plagues and OUR Plague: An Anthropocentric “Theology” and a Lesson for Our Times

Wednesday, December 1

12:00PM – 1:00PM

Zoom

RSVP for a Zoom invitation at
<https://religion.ucla.edu/event/surely-there-is-no-fear-of-god-in-this-place-the-biblical-plagues-and-our-plague-an-anthropocentric-theology-and-a-lesson-for-our-times/>

The onset of the coronavirus brought with it a slew of perverse efforts to identify the ‘sinful’ behaviors for which the plague was God’s punishment. Through an analysis of “Vehaya im Shamo” (Deut. 11:13-21) I offer an alternative understanding of punishment as a disciplinary act attributed to God but, actually, the direct consequence of human conduct. Proceeding to outline the Pharoanic behavioral antecedents of the Egyptian plagues I move on to focus on the causal chain of human missteps that have led to the current crisis. In doing so I hope to diminish the degree of randomness with which we frame the pandemic and argue that this human induced ‘plague’ imposes on us a moral obligation to take corrective actions that could bring healing to our beleaguered planet.



Chaim Seidler-Feller recently celebrated his fortieth year of working with students and faculty as the Executive Director of the Yitzhak Rabin Hillel Center for Jewish Life at UCLA. He is currently Director Emeritus. He was ordained in 1971 at Yeshiva University where he completed a Masters in Rabbinic Literature. Chaim has been a lecturer in the Departments of Sociology and Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at UCLA and in the Department of Theological Studies at Loyola Marymount University. He is currently a faculty member of the Shalom Hartman Institute, North America and of the Wexner Heritage Foundation. He was the founding director of the Hartman Fellowship for Campus Professionals and a founding member of Americans for Peace Now. In 2014 he initiated a fact finding mission for non-Jewish student leaders to Israel and the Palestine Authority which is now offered on ninety campuses. In 2020 a Festschrift entitled *Swimming Against the Current: Reimagining Jewish Tradition in the 21st Century* was published in Chaim’s honor. He is married to Dr. Doreen Seidler-Feller, a clinical psychologist, and is the father of Shulie, a photojournalist and Shaul, an ordained rabbi who is currently serving as a Judaica consultant at Sotheby’s while pursuing a doctorate in Jewish History at the Hebrew University.