

Podcasting God

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G-dcast is a weekly “take” on the parshat hashavua. Rabbis, teachers, hip hop artists, writers, and Hollywoodies present a dvar Torah in their own words, and then we animate it in a Web cartoon format. G-dcast is post-denominational; we deliberately invite guest writers/narrators from every conceivable synagogue movement, as well as people who don’t identify with those labels at all. All of our commentators have something to say about the week’s Torah portion, and they can share their thoughts in language that doesn’t alienate viewers — wherever they’re at on the spectrum of belief in God, background in Jewish texts, observance of halakhah, gender identity, or anything else.

This is pretty typical of recent socially entrepreneurial work in the Jewish community. Whether they affiliate with institutions or not, a lot of today’s Jews vote with their feet when it comes to where they learn, pray, and party — and those votes change from event to event. Watching G-dcast might enhance the learning you do at your Reform or Orthodox synagogue, or it might be the only learning activity you do at all. We’re particularly excited about viewers who have little or no background in Jewish texts, who watch G-dcast as sort of an online “CliffsNotes” to a new practice of Torah study.

We know from recent testimonials and a registration survey that our viewers are as diverse as our contributors. We have fans of all ages, from 95 countries. We know that in our audience are adult newcomers to Judaism, current yeshiva students, parents home schooling their children, religious school teachers looking to engage their students, and Christians interested in learning from a Jewish source about the Old Testament. We have received specific feedback that an episode “cracked open” a bar mitzvah boy’s parashah for him, and that the series helps a young woman in an isolated Midwestern town stay connected.

G-dcast features not only well-known movement rabbis like Lawrence Kushner (Reform) and Joseph Telushkin (Modern Orthodox), but also emerging artists like Y-Love (Hasidic) and Alicia Jo Rabins (we’ve no idea how she affiliates, but can she sing!). This gives the series a really eclectic voice. Our contributors are straight, gay, and transgendered; black, white, old, young, and Jews by choice. Some went to day school; others never had a bar or bat mitzvah ceremony.

You name the Jewish outlook, we’ve G-dcasted it. And we like to think that the world of online Torah is richer for our indie approach.

Sarah Lefton is the executive director and producer of G-dcast.com. She lives in San Francisco with her husband, Bill, and their new son, Levi, who is almost as animated as his namesake. (see episode 7.) Visit G-dcast at <http://www.g-dcast.com> for a new episode each week. One can join a mailing list there and receive a weekly email on Friday mornings with a reminder to watch the new episode!