



Winter 2-2-2005

IWU News Advisory

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Recommended Citation

Kuzniar, Taylor, "IWU News Advisory" (2005). *News and Events*. 479.
<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news/479>

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February 4, 2005

Event: *University Chapel Hour and Special Events and Services* presents: "Claiming my African-American Links to Judaism"

Date: Feb. 16 (Wednesday)

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Location: Evelyn Chapel, 1301 N. Park St., Bloomington

Admission: Free and open to the public

Background: In observance of Black History Month, Rabbi Capers C. Funnye, Jr. will speak about his African-American links to Judaism.

Funnye is a rabbi and spiritual leader at Beth Shalom B'nai Zaken Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation in Chicago. He received his ordination from the Israelite Board of Rabbis in New York City and has been involved in widespread lecturing, consulting and community service within the realm of Judaism. He has also been a member of several boards of directors with such organizations as the Chicago Board of Rabbis, the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs, and the American Jewish Congress.

Judaism, along with Christianity, Islam and the Baha'i World Faith, is an Abrahamic religion, a faith that recognizes Abraham as a patriarch. According to the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, there are approximately 13 million people currently following Judaism, concentrated mainly in North America and Israel.

The links between African-Americans and the Jewish people lie mainly within two branches of the Judaism faith. These branches, the Sephardic and the Mizrahim, represent the Jews from Spain and Portugal and from Northern Africa and the Middle East, respectively. Although their descendents are less common in America than descendents of Ashkenazic Jews from France, Germany, and Eastern Europe, Sephardic Jews originally comprised the majority of the Jewish population in America.

Contact: For additional information, contact the Illinois Wesleyan Chaplain's office at (309) 556-3005.