

# Best gift of all: the living self

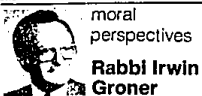
ONE OF the most fascinating aspects of human existence is the giving of gifts. Some are intended to display wealth and power, to dominate. Others are an expression of reciprocity and exchange for favors received.

There is an endless assortment of rewards and punishments that we give ourselves as prizes for successes or penalties for failures. Be it a cocktail or a safari, the indulgence is legitimized under the all encompassing phrase, "You owe it to yourself."

Life is a wondrous gift of God. Each person, regardless of status, sex or age, is given a 24 hour day and night. The recipient is free to employ or exploit it. Yet God gladly accepts whatever stewardship we may offer in return.

The receipt of any gift carries an element of surprise and for a fleeting moment transports one into a magic world that transcends time, space, poverty, and difficulties.

UNFORTUNATELY, many associate deep love with expensive gifts. Children teach us much, for they register little concern for brand names and price tags. They are impressed by unique, genuine, and ap-



moral perspectives  
**Rabbi Irwin Groner**

propriate affections of affection. In his provocative book "The Meaning of Gifts," the noted Swiss psychiatrist, Paul Tournier reminds us that in "some respects, the great quest for gifts is a means by which we deceive ourselves, and by our little gifts, we numb our longing for the greater ones which escape us."

Even so, if each gift is a symbol of love, it communicates powerful statements of worth and belonging. If giving is identifying with another at the level of care and affection, then gifts must be chosen with delicate discrimination, since they embody our feelings about relationships.

Beyond the motives and methods of giving, we need to remember Emerson's trenchant words: "Rings and jewels are not gifts, but apologies for gifts. The only gift is a portion of thyself." Rabbi Irwin Groner is with Congregation Shaarey Zedek.

## OU history update open

Current and future teachers of social studies can get an update on "Teaching About Conflicts and Revolutions" at a conference Saturday at Oakland University.

The one-day program will be held in Meadow Brook Hall. It is sponsored by OU's department of history. Topics include "American Family, American Slaves: Revolutionary New Interpretations," "Witchcraft and the Social History of Early Modern Europe," "The Scientific Revolution," "The Cuban Missile Crisis: Presidential Leadership Revisited" and "Recent Social Conflict in Brazil."

Several faculty are authors of highly regarded books, including Charles Akers, a prize winner for his books on figures of the American Revolutionary War period; Joseph A. Klatits, an expert on witchcraft and social history; and Mary C. Karasch, honored for her book "Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro, 1808-1850."

The program will be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. with concurrent sessions held during the morning and afternoon. For registration information, call OU at 370-3519. Continuing education units are available.

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