

Rabbi Linda Motzkin's Visit March 5 class for about a half hour.

Rabbi Linda Motzkin reminded us of all the stories we share. All over the world cultures and faith traditions have similar stories as well as tales very particular to them.

A collection of tales she owns is called "Because God Loves Stories." She said we ARE stories and we all tell them.

Jews have a rich heritage of stories. She doesn't see herself as a professional storyteller, though she has taken classes with tellers who tell on stage. "I'm an informal storyteller," she said, "yet as a rabbi I'm telling stories all the time!"

She asked about "midrash" – if anyone knew its meaning. One boy mentioned he knew of a group "midrasha" and she explained it took that name because its program wanted youth to have "a place to tell stories."

Midrash, she said, were the stories told about stories in the Bible, and that Jews had a long tradition of telling tales that might explain something not told or explained – for example "Why Abraham" or who was Abraham as a boy. One child mentioned the tale of Abraham convincing his father of the worthlessness of worshipping false idols. The rabbi also told the story about Abraham as a boy thinking the morning star was so powerful it must be G_d and then seeing the sun made it disappear so perhaps the sun was G_d, and eventually seeing the moon filling the dark sky realizing that G_d must actually be so big and powerful that He was beyond all things seen or experienced with the senses.

She mentioned the large volume of folktales that Jews treasure. She told a story of two brothers, one with a large family and another who was single. Each brother wanted to be generous to the other (thinking the other needed more grain than he did) and so he shared his surplus secretly. Finally the brothers meet and on this hilly place the Temple in Jerusalem was built.

She mentioned that she has heard versions of that story from other traditions as well but in each the spot in which the generous brothers meet is marked as a sacred place.

The group could have listened for a lot longer. The rabbi was so enthusiastic and so encouraging to the young people, so in admiration of what they are doing as an interfaith group of storytellers. It was a most satisfying time.