



JCSS NEWSLETTER

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Upcoming Events

- Chanukah, December 12th, Baird Center, South Orange, with Adult Program: The Real Story of Chanukah.
- Yiddish Theater, Dec. 19th (See advertisement, page 3.)
- Adult Program January 9th: Guest Speaker, Martin Schwartz, Director of the Workmen's Circle Center for Social and Economic Justice. He will discuss the Jewish Imperative for Social Action.
- First meeting of the Secular Bible Study Group, Sunday Jan. 23rd at 9:45, at the JCC. To be discussed: Genesis chapters 1-25.

2004 JCSS FUNDRAISER AT THE FOLKSBIENE YIDDISH THEATER ON DEC 19TH

Abraham Goldfaden's "Di Kaprinzne Kale" ("A Novel Romance") — A Comedy with Music and Crooks.

The 2004 JCSS fundraiser is slated for Sunday, Dec. 19, 2004: the 6 pm performance of Abraham Goldfaden's "Di Kaprinzne Kale" ("A Novel Romance"). The show, presented by the Folksbiene Yiddish Theater at the JCC Manhattan, 334 Amsterdam Ave (at 76th St), will be shown in Yiddish, with English Supertitles.

Adapted and directed by Allen Lewis Rickman, *Di Kaprinzene Kale* is de-

scribed as a "comedy with Music and Crooks".

From the program: "Old Yitskhok wants his daughter Khane to marry a nice Jewish man like Shloyme. But Khane is obsessed with romance stories and wants a husband straight out of her novels. He must speak elegantly. He must be romantic. He must have a moustache. He must be named Franz. And when a pair of shifty chisellers hear about this... " More information about the show and the Folksbiene Yiddish Theatre is available on their website: www.folksbiene.org.

The Folksbiene Yiddish Theatre is a non-profit

organization whose mission is to preserve, promote, and develop Yiddish Theater for current and future generations to enhance the understanding and appreciation of Yiddish culture as a necessary component of Jewish Life.

The price per seat is \$45 and checks made out to JCSS should be sent prior to Dec. 10, 2004 to Rivke Levine, 90 White Meadow Road, Rockaway, N.J. 0786666 (telephone 973.627.4386).

Please come enjoy this show with other members of our community and support the JCSS.

WHY I BELONG TO THE JCSS (*First in a new series*) BY PETER COLE

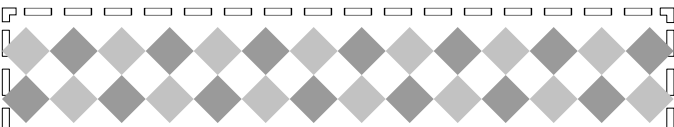
We come from diverse backgrounds and joined the Jewish Cultural School and Society for different reasons. Starting with this issue, the JCSS Newsletter will highlight one member's reflections on how he or she came to be a member

of the JCSS. Submissions will be accepted by email at colepd@umdnj.edu.

I grew up belonging to a reform temple until my bar mitzvah came and

went, when my involvement abruptly ended. With no theistic inclination whatsoever and a healthy mistrust of organized religion, I didn't feel I was missing anything by not

(Continued on page 2)



Adult Program Calendar **2004-2005**

Unless otherwise noted, the JCSS holds these meetings from 9:45am to Noon in the same rented facilities used for Sunday morning children's classes and members' meetings: at the West Orange JCC (760 Northfield Ave) in the Right Nursery.

Sunday, Sept. 19: How Secular Humanistic Jews View The Bible

Sunday, October 17: Basic Judaism: An Introduction To The Religious Tradition

Sunday, November 7: What Is Anti-Semitism?

Sunday, December 12: The Real Story Of Chanukah (Note: This event will take place at the JCSS Chanukah celebration.)

Sunday, January 9: Guest Speaker-- Martin Schwartz, Director of the Workmen's Circle Center for Social and Economic Justice. He will discuss the Jewish Imperative for Social Action.

Sunday, February 13: Guest Speaker Ed Klein, Leader Of The Queens Society For Humanistic Judaism and Professional Musician, Will Discuss Jewish Themes In Opera

Sunday, March 20: Fun With Yiddish On Purim (Note: This event will take place at the JCSS Purim celebration.)

Sunday, May 1: Jews And Socialism

Sunday, May 22: Jewish Short Stories On Tape

WHY I BELONG (CONTINUED) BY PETER COLE

(Continued from page 1)

remaining affiliated with any Jewish group.

After moving to New Jersey, with our kids starting school, Lisa and I realized we wanted them to learn more about their history and cultural heritage than we were capable of teaching. If nothing else, I hoped to counter the ubiquitous culture of Christmas and Easter that pervades our town, the media, and even the public schools. However, I couldn't bring myself to join a traditional temple, where I would feel like a hypocrite allowing my children to be taught prayers to a god in which I have no belief.

Years earlier, I had accidentally stumbled across Sherwin Wine's Judaism beyond God, browsing in Barnes and Noble. (I think I bought the one and only copy they've ever had there.) I was intrigued to discover the existence of a fifth branch of Judaism, a secular humanistic Judaism. Unlike many "angry atheists" I know (and love), Secular Humanistic Jews didn't define themselves by what they stand against, what they don't believe in. Rather, they affirm beliefs that are consistent with many of my own. Two important examples: That humans have the ability and the responsibility to shape their lives and the world, independent of any supernatural power or sacred

text; and that a Jewish identity, based on a shared culture and history, can exist and be passed on independent of the Jewish religion.

A confluence of coincidences brought us to the JCSS. First, we happened to notice an ad in the Montclair Times. Then, a parent of one of our kids' classmates happened to have heard of the JCSS and was also interested in checking it out for her children. After attending a JCSS model seder, we decided to join and enrolled Sally in the pre-alef class the following year.

Our increasing involvement with the JCSS shows we have been more than satisfied with this decision. Lisa has been the JCSS treasurer and is now our alternate delegate to the parent organization of the JCSS, the Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations. I've been the JCSS president and the acting editor of the *JCSS Newsletter*. Our son Ethan used to insist he'd never consent to attend a sixth day of school each week. Now in the bi-weekly pre-alef class, he asks why he can't go every week like his big sister. And Sally (we can't believe it!) is set to graduate in just a year and a half.

Mostly I'm happy we've found our way to this community where we can celebrate, learn, socialize, and even argue with others who share so many similar interests, politics, and beliefs.

"As democracy is perfected, the office of president represents, more and more closely, the inner soul of the people. On some great and glorious day the plain folks of the land will reach their heart's desire at last and the White House will be adorned by a downright moron."

H.L. Mencken
Baltimore Evening Sun, 26 July 1920

Notices


JCSS Fundraiser
Sunday Dec 19th

Abraham Goldfaden's די קאַפּריזונע פּלע

A Novel Romance

Come support the JCSS!

The price per seat is \$45. Checks made out to JCSS should be sent prior to Dec. 10, 2004 to Rivke Levine, 90 White Meadow Road, Rockaway, N.J. 07866 (telephone 973.627.4386).



A Comedy with Music & Crooks

Adapted & Directed by: Allen Lewis Rickman


Cast: Mitch Greenberg, Sam Guncler, David Mandelbaum, Steve Sterner with Ibi Kaufman as "Khane"

Set Designer: Vicki Davis Costume Designer: Gail Cooper-Hecht Lighting Designer: Mark O'Connor
Stage Manager: Marci Skolnick Musical Director: Zalmen Mlotek

Musicians: Annette Ezekiel & Alicia Jo Rabins of "Golem" Press Representative: Media Blitz

Goldman-Sonnenfeldt Auditorium • JCC in Manhattan, 334 Amsterdam Avenue at 76th Street

IN YIDDISH WITH ENGLISH SUPERTITLES
RUSSIAN TRANSLATION BY SVETLANA MLOTOK



FOLKSHENE
YIDDISH THEATRE
Zalmen Mlotek, Executive Director

SECULAR BIBLE

DISCUSSION

The first meeting of the JCSS *Secular Bible Discussion Group* will be Sunday Jan. 23rd, at 9:45 at the JCC.

We plan to discuss the first half of the Book of Genesis, chapters 1-25.



Read any version of the Bible you wish and be prepared to talk about it from a secular perspective. Mark Rosenman suggests you might want to look at

Genesis, Translation and Commentary by Robert Alter, that has a lot of historical and literary commentary (albeit very academic).

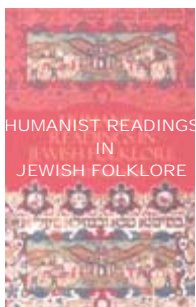


Sample topics the group might want to focus on:

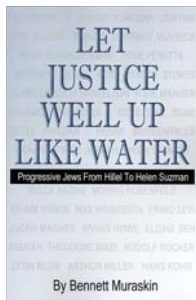
- Jewish national identity--religion as the means to differentiate us
- The meaning of God's promise to Abraham
- The balance between "tribal" and "ethical" values.
- God's demands for unquestioned obedience.

Questions? Call Mark: 203-316-3049.

AVAILABLE NOW! 2 BOOKS BY JCSS
VICE-PRESIDENT, BENNETT MURASKIN



Humanist Readings in Jewish Folklore. More than 120 Jewish folktales, selected with an eye to those Jews who seek their personal ethics and morals in Jewish culture and literature.



Let Justice well up like Water: Progressive Jews from Hillel to Helen Suzman. Progressive secular Jews need their heroes - and here are 62 of them! Concise biographies of anarchists, Bundists, communists, socialists, social reformers, labor leaders, anti-fascist resisters, Zionists, feminists, journalists, writers, historians and performing artists across the Jewish world and timeline. Heroes, but not hero worship; rather, critical assessments of their life and work.

Help Wanted!

Editor Needed for the JCSS Newsletter

After 10 years, Marsha Kalman has stepped down from this post. With no volunteers, the position is currently vacant. The JCSS Newsletter is produced quarterly. The editor is responsible for collecting submissions from the officers and faculty, updating the calendar, and pasting the material in templates, usually using Microsoft Publisher. Printing and distribution are not necessarily the editor's responsibility.

Anyone interested in volunteering, or for a more detailed description of the requirements of the position please contact Marsha (MEKalman@aol.com) or Peter (colepd@umdnj.edu).

Note: The position of JCSS Co-President (a two-year term, overlapping with the second year of the current President) is also vacant.



JCSS
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Membership Information

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The JCSS is dedicated to the study and celebration of Jewish history and culture within the philosophy of Jewish Secular Humanism.

VISIT US AT
WWW.JCSS-NJ.ORG



Mail to:

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED