



The JSC Newsletter

Newsletter of the Cleveland Jewish Secular Community

www.jewishsecularcommunity.org

October 2020/5781

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Sukkot Celebration

Upcoming Events

Sun, Oct. 4 Sukkot p.1

Fri., Oct 9 Shabbat Program p. 1

Sun. Oct, 11 Board meeting 10:30 a.m.

This Jewish festival, also known as "the Feast of the Ingathering," celebrates the arrival of fall and the beginning of the harvest season. We will honor this holiday, hosted by Walker and Edie Todd, virtually employing Zoom technology. It starts at **12 Noon on Sunday, October 4**. To attend on Zoom, check out our website: jewishsecularcommunity.org and click on Holidays and Events. RSVP by October 2 to pegfishman@gmail.com.

2020-2021 Fri. Shabbat Programs

Oct. 9, 2020. Chrissy Martinez, Co-director, Interreligious Task Force on Central America. "Human Rights and Immigration in Central America." (Mark)

Nov. 13, 2020. Francis Chiappa, Cleveland Peace Action. "Ban the Bomb! Resistance in the Nuclear Age." (Mark)

Dec. 18, 2020. Laurie Albright and Eileen McCully, "The Coalition to End the Inhumanity at the Cuyahoga County Jail." Why We Need Bail Reform in Ohio. (Mark)

Jan. 29, 2021. Sonny Simon, Cuyahoga County Councilwoman. "Cuyahoga County's Ban on Single-Use Plastic Bags." (Karen)

Feb. 26, 2021. Gregg Philipson, lecturer, educator and collector. "Dr. Seuss Goes to War and Before." (Lynn)

March 19, 2021. Lisa Griffis, photo editor, graphic designer and business owner. "Rescue Your Photos." (Lynn)

April 23, 2021. Emma Renfrew, Development Director. "Foundation Beyond Belief." (Lynn)

May 21, 2021. Hannah Servedio, Field Organizer for NARAL, Ohio. "Reproductive Rights in Ohio." (Karen)

Virtual Shabbat Program for October

This virtual event employs Zoom technology. See our website www.jewishsecularcommunity.org and click on Holidays and Events.

Date: October 9 at 7 p.m. RSVP by October 7th to pegfishman@gmail.com.

"Human Rights and Immigration in Central America"

Chrissy Martinez, Co-director, Inter-religious Task Force on Central America. Chrissy serves as a representative to the United Nations for the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, Co-Moderator of the Disciples Peace Fellowship, Co-Chair of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Chair of the Ohio Fair Trade Network and is on the Council of School of the Americas Watch.

Pandemic Judaism
By Mark Weber
September 19, 2020

This is a reprint of the talk given by Mark Weber on Rosh Hashanah.

ONE

It is a pleasure to be with you today. Happy New Year! Edmond Flegenheimer (better know as Edmond Fleg) was born in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1874, and he died in Paris in 1963. He was Jewish and also a French writer, thinker, novelist, and playwright of the last century. Few of Edmond Fleg's writings are well known; but perhaps the most well-known of his essays is one entitled..... "I am a Jew because.."

I am a Jew because being so revives in me a sense of the Jewish people and our struggles.

I am a Jew because in so being, I am seized with a desire to make our values and traditions live into the future.

I am a Jew because being so requires no abdication of my mind or my intellectual curiosity.

I am a Jew because in all places where there is suffering and oppression, the Jew weeps.

I am a Jew because the message of our people is both the most ancient and also the most modern.

I am a Jew because in every age, when cries for justice occur, the Jew hopes.

I am a Jew because, our promise is not the promise of one particular people but rather a universal promise.

I am a Jew because for us the world was not created but is being completed now by men and women.

I am a Jew because as a people we place the welfare of humankind over and above the welfare of the nations of the world and over and above the welfare of our people.

I am a Jew because we are not a chosen people but rather we are brothers and sisters of the people of the world.

 As an American Jew, I am an American citizen first and a Jew second.

TWO

These could be the core beliefs of the new sixth branch of Judaism.....called Pandemic Judaism. This latest branch has no seminary, no rabbinate, no national organization, no local organization, and no dues structure. Its scripture is not the nationalist narrative of the Torah but rather the ethical teachings of the old Hebrew Prophets. Its orientation is toward universal brotherhood or sisterhood and not toward the self-determination of one particular people. Its final demand is for more justice and not for more land.

In this new year, the first of Tishrei in the year 5781, American Jews are facing a menu of afflictions that

includes a deadly virus that has killed over 200,000 people, wildfires that have devastated the Western states signaling a climate emergency, vicious tropical storms that have ravaged the Gulf Coast and caused record flooding, outbreaks of social rebellion over police violence toward people of color, children in cages, and the rise of right-wing nationalist militias which pose a threat to the existing democratic order. All that seems to be missing are the locusts, frogs, and hail.

How might American Jews respond to this...a world with more hazards than the biblical legend of the Exodus migration? Perhaps, a beginning might be to see Judaism or Jewishness not as a movement for national and territorial rights but rather as a force for international human rights.

1. Pandemic Judaism should not be a political movement designed to promote territorial gains in historic Palestine. It is a moral and social movement aimed at bringing the promise of justice and equality to all Americans.
2. Pandemic Judaism is not a god-centered movement. It is a movement that is focused on justice; whether or not you believe in a supreme being is a personal choice. But believers and those who are agnostic must work together to build a better world
3. Pandemic Judaism has its roots not in the romantic nationalist dreams of Theodor Herzl but rather in the angry words of the prophet Amos when he said: "I hate and I despise your festivals, but let justice roll down like

waters and righteousness like a mighty stream."

4. Pandemic Judaism is rooted in the words of Hillel when he described the essence of Judaism as do unto others as you would have them do unto you. All the rest is commentary.
5. Pandemic Judaism is not "check book Judaism." It respects charity but it demands justice. The two are not the same.
6. Pandemic Judaism values all Jews and all people. It does not judge people by the size of their contribution to the synagogue building fund.
7. Pandemic Judaism asks the question: "Just what is the moral difference between Jewish children in camps in Europe and immigrant children in cages in America?"
8. Pandemic Judaism is not a partisan political movement. However, its adherents do stand with the poor and the oppressed. After all, our ancestors were poor immigrants who came to America to escape persecution and to build a better life.
9. Pandemic Judaism asks us to choose. Is our first priority the welfare of a foreign nation where some of our family and friends have chosen to live? Pandemic Judaism sees our obligation as that which protects human life, the earth, and the world as we know it.

10. And finally, Pandemic Judaism asks that during this period of the Days of Awe, we cease the practice of seeking forgiveness from a supreme being and instead practice seeking forgiveness and understanding from those whom we have wronged.

There is no after-life. This life is all we have. When we die, our possessions, our debts, our wealth, and politics will all disintegrate in an instant. Pandemic Judaism tells us that our greatest legacy can be our actions to end pandemics both those born of disease and those born of injustice and hate.

The time is now.

Jottings

Check out the Siegel Lifelong Learning program for a free lecture titled "Secularism and Religious Tradition." **Wednesday, November 11 at 4 p.m.** Phone 216-368-2091. Website: case.edu/lifelonglearning/courses. You can attend this event virtually. Suggested by Nora Kancelbaum.

In Memorium

**Donald J. Sherman
1934-2020**

Don passed away after a lengthy illness on Sept. 20, at Maltz Hospice House in Beachwood. Beloved husband for 61 years of the late Elaine. The Shermans will be sorely missed by their loved ones and the many friends at JSC. Our condolences to the entire Sherman family.

Calling All Writers

The editorial policy of the newsletter will be nonpartisan, balanced, and receptive to opposing points of view. Items of opinion do not represent the "official" position of the JSC or its Board of Trustees. We welcome attributed letters with comments, rebuttals, or new information. Subject only to space, time, interest to fellow members, and editorial constraints, your article, told in your own words, will be gratefully accepted.

The JSC Mission

The Jewish Secular Community, affiliated with the Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations, is a non-profit cultural and educational organization whose purpose is to:

- ✧ *Encourage Jewish identification in a non-theistic setting that draws inspiration from the traditional Jewish sources and values*
- ✧ *Educate adults in the history, culture, and tenets of Judaism*
- ✧ *Celebrate and observe Jewish holidays and life cycle events*
- ✧ *Contribute to the betterment of our society through social action and volunteerism*
- ✧ *Provide a link to a world-wide community of secular Jews*

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