

Subject: NightWords

To: "David Roskies (E-mail)" <daroskies@JTSA.EDU>

First of all, I want to thank you for inviting me to attend. I thought that it was quite powerful.

I feel like in order to appropriately answer your question I need to give some autobiography of my own. Throughout my day school experience I felt mostly uncomfortable with the yearly Holocaust commemorations. I think the prime reason was that it was presented as history, i.e. long ago, and was much more "present" for me given my parents' experiences. In addition, I think I often reacted to the sentimentality often attached to commemoration, especially during that time period.

In college I got involved organizing Yom Hashoah events, and tried to do different things that were educationally geared. I spent the summer before senior year at Yad Vashem and, at the time, would have described Holocaust education/commeoration as a special interest. However, I "tired" of it in the sense that so much seemed to me focused on the hurbn itself and not at all delving into that which was lost - Yiddish, Eeuropean culture, etc. That was when my interest and involvement with Yiddish picked up.

So I still find it hard to choose to go to a Holocaust commemoration - I feel bad when I do not, because I want to observe the day, and often bad when I do, because I usually find myself dissatisfied with the program I attend.

In this light, I can say that I thought NightWords was appropriate and effective on the multiple levels that I consider in the area of Holocaust commemoration.

I particularly liked the interspersing of selections from Holocaust literature and traditional Jewish literature, and the echoing between the two.

A few aspects of the work move beyond literature and drama and move into the experiential realm --in particular, taking off shoes, the shoe pile, and the writing of the numbers on participants' arms. I think that my father - who did not have one - would not have liked the last piece. I noticed that a few people last night refused to give their arms. There is a lot of educational literature about educational simulations which would speak to this tension. I thought it was effective and important for those who wished to be able to desist, but I am not sure how much I liked having it as part of the ritual.

And one of the levels I think is the need to have ritual ways of remembering the Holocaust while offering people the ability to learn more about it, understand it more deeply. I think NightWords is masterful at this balance.

Thanks again.

Leah

Subject: Re: Nightwords
To: daroskies@JTSA.EDU

dear david,

thank you for the copy oif the new nightwords. i presented a small piece - 10 -minuted to israeli secualr teachers. many of them misunderstood it as a cynical secular attack on religion - like old haskalah- i clearly did not know how to pitch it. but a few were verey taken with it and willing to help me translate it and edit it for israeli use. it will not be a professional job and it will not be published as such but i would like to do an experimental edition with their help to show to people. i hope that is okay. i will send you a copy for perusal when and if i finish it.

i am involved in another project and would love your feedback.

i want to take advantage of your vast reading and especially your love biographies, to find some heroic stories for the hannukah book i am working on. let me give you the overall outline and maybe you will have some general comments as well.

my hannukah haggadah book, which david hartman asked me to prepare is probably going to look like this:

title - the hannukah haggadah: a different light : 8 perspectives on retelling the stories of the festival of lights

section 1 - seder hannukah - brachot, songs, eight part retelling of story(a kind of megillah drawn from book of maccabees and book of judith) with some explanations on the songs, some clarification of legends and historical factsd regarding the origin of the holiday as well as practical questions and answers about the halacha.

section 2- 8 dimensions of the hannukah story:

a- profiles in jewish courage stories (so far i have found pieces on: sharansky, yoni netanyahu, hannah senesh, a charedi family with a brain damaged child who ignored pressure to put him in an institution and instead created a wonderful day care center for kids like their son ; marshall meyer from argentina; a tzedakah hero from danny siegel's book; elie cohn - the israeli spy from damascus; a reform rabbi from atlanta whose shul was bombed because of his support f for integration:golda meyer raising money for broke israel in 1948;an elderly person facing aging coura geously from kathy levin of baltimore who created magic me program for teenagers to help elderly; etc)

i have been looking for a nice piece on shoah - perhaps on janus korczack - have a good book to recommend? or leo baeck? or mordechai aniliewicz?;

maybe on americans who helped smuggle guns(the pledge)to israel;
maybe arthur miller or his like who stood up to huac in mccarthy days?
maybe ilgwu or some other labor leader in early days of unions?

maybe something from jewish women's archive (gail riemer)?

maybe moshe rabbenu arguing with god and saying - wipe me out of your book if you will not forgive israel?

maybe an ethiopian oleh who walked thru sudan?

maybe shlomo hillel's book on operation babylon has a piece on iraqi jewish illegal immigrsation or a good story from bricha?(any good anecdotal book to recommend)

maybe yitzchak raBIN A HERO OF PEACE CHANGING COURSE OF ISRAELI POLITICS?

b- historians' views of maccabees: elias bickerman and tcherikover's two views of the revolt as result of religious reform by jewish hellenists or by national revolt

c- jewish law and war(david dishon is writing his phd on this topic and judah the maccabee actual;ly tried to fight by biblical laws of warfare). perhaps i should also discuss briefly here the israeli wars as a parallel to wars of maccabees

d-pluralistic views of hannukah thru eyes of habad, reform, recon, secular zionist, rav kook religious zionist, christian reading of maccabees, jewish renewal,

e- contemporary jewish thinkers (hartman, yitz greenberg, theodore gaster, mordechai kaplan, herman wouk, etc) who can speak of relevance of haoliday to my potential readers - liberal orth to reform. i do not have a woman thinker to quote unfortunately.

f- jewish thought on issues associated with hannukah (pikuach nefesh, martyrdom - kiddush hashem, miracles, pirusum hanes, hidur mitzvah etc)

g- customs and their origins. here we will include something on the hannukah/ christmas dilemma. do you know any good sermons or studies on this american issue. here we will talk about meaning of gift giving in a positive way as well as about hannukah gelt.

h- light as a symbol (scientific perspectives on light as well as the history of the menorah as a symbol and light as a jewish symbol)

section 3 - school age children activities like rebus etc and kids retelling of story...perhaps we will have the hannukah story in a newspaper version as in chronicles

suggestion - to add pocket in back of book with a gift like 10 agorot of israeli currency with its menorah on the back as hannukah gelt or paper cut dreidel or?
(what do you think?)

now, do you have any good jewish hero stories where we can see different kinds of heroism ? (struggle with yetzer hara or cowardice or drug addiction) stories that can be read outloud with a dramatic moment like sharansky making hannukah in gulag? perhaps a story about arthur miller before huac? a jewish labor leader in nyc? who are your favorite jewish heroes?

in addition i want an essay on the changing meanings of hero in culture? any ideas?

i would love to have your feedback - fdirst impressions and after you have scoured the corners of your minds for leads.

thanks, so much. noam

At 07:05 20/09/98 -0400, you wrote:

>My dear haver. I have sent you the (hopefully) last revision of
>NIGHTWORDS, which displays the many signs of your friendship. I hope to
>return this mitzvah someday, middah kenegged middah. This si the version
>I would show to whomever regarding a possible all-Hebrew edition. Shanah
>tova! Dovid

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A Different Night Web Page: <http://www.jajz-ed.org.il/hartman>
"Shalom Shalom to those who are far and those who are near" (Isaiah 57:19)

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