

*The Center of Life*

JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER  
101 GARDEN OF EDEN ROAD  
WILMINGTON, DE. 19803  
(302) 478-5660

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February 15, 1978

DR DAVID ROSKIES  
The Jewish Theological Seminary  
3080 Broadway  
New York, New York 10027

Dear Dr Roskies:

I am writing you in response to your Nightwords, which I have recently read. Allow me to thank you. I am less able to use the language than yourself and hence am unable, without writing you at length, express clearly the deep impression Nightwords has had on me.

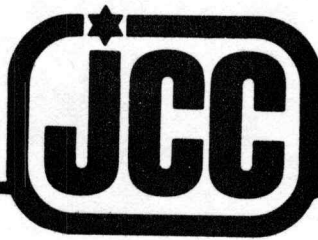
I am presently a graduate student of social work at Wurzweiler School of Social Work at Yeshiva University. I am in the Block Education Program and am doing my field placement work here at the JCC. As part of my work I initiated and led a group through a "Personal Encounter with the Holocaust". This group was based on the premise that the Holocaust is central to Jewish life. In light of this, given the state of our Judaism how does the Holocaust effect our daily lives. While all that I hoped might be accomplished has not taken place I do think the group was important to some members and certainly has been important for myself.

My supervisor and I have discussed at length the manner in which one can do social group work about the Holocaust and how doing so comes into conflict with generally accepted social work philosophy and practice. Growing out of these discussions is the idea that on Yom Hashoa this year we "produce" Nightwords. At this point we are considering asking the professional staffs of the Federation, Jewish Family Service The Kutz Home, The Albert Einstein Academy, the JCC and the Rabbinical Association to be the thirty six. This would



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a unique effort on the part of the Jewish civil service of  
Wilmington. You can appreciate the possible ramifications and  
significance of such a venture, I am sure.

I would greatly appreciate it if you might comment on the  
above idea. Further, if possible, I would like to meet with  
you at some time to discuss this idea and Nightwords. If you  
are ever in Philadelphia a meeting can easily be arranged.

I will be in New York, at Wurzweiler, all summer and hope we  
can meet then, if an earlier time is not possible.

Again, my appreciation for your Nightwords.

Shalom,

David Mozes



DAVID MELLEN, PRESIDENT

IRVING KAUFMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

February 21, 1978

Dear Mr. Mozes,

It is always exciting for me to hear from people who have read and been moved by Nightwords. I look back upon it myself as an act of inspiration which fills me with awe. Awe at having been the vehicle of expression of something I myself did not experience, and awe at being able to convey something of that experience to other Jews.

Night words was designed as a liturgy necessitating as little preparation as possible. Only the asterisked roles, I believe, need be rehearsed. From your letter I get the impression that you would want the thirty-six staff members to rehearse their roles in advance. My experience has been that great dramatic intensity derives from the unexpected configuration of voices during the reading. That is to say, by hearing your friends and colleagues reading such roles as the Judge, Isaac, the Mystic, the Poet, you unconsciously transpose them back into the Holocaust and at that moment, the human dimension of the tragedy comes alive. Rehearsal, it seems to me, would dull that effect.

A more useful form of preparation might be a study group to discuss the structure and meaning of the work: how it imitates the liturgy and turns biblical symbolism on its head. Can this legitimately be called a "midrash"? How does this form of commemoration differ from, say, Tisha B'Av or Asarah beTevet? Perhaps you might compare it to the Passover Haggadah. Why is a ritual needed anyway? Couldn't we just read a few books instead? These are not academic questions; they ought to be asked by anyone involved in the Jewish communal enterprise and perhaps Nightwords could serve as the catalyst.

Finally, every effort should be made to have the songs sung in Yiddish. The medium is the message. All three of them have been recorded in a marvelous CBS record Songs of the Vilna Ghetto, S63345.

By all means, do get in touch with me this summer. My home number is 799-6766.

David G. Roskies  
Dept. of Jewish Literatyre