

NEXTBOOK AND THE NEW CENTER FOR ARTS AND CULTURE PRESENT

Promised Land

EXODUS AND AMERICA
a festival of ideas
BOSTON • OCTOBER 22-26, 2008



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nextbook >

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NEXTBOOK.ORG

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NEXTBOOK was established in 2003 to serve as a gateway to Jewish literature, culture, and ideas. In addition to presenting public programs around the country, Nextbook publishes the Jewish Encounters book series, featuring writers such as Robert Pinsky, Rebecca Goldstein, David Mamet, and Adam Kirsch. Nextbook also publishes an online magazine (nextbook.org) with lively articles on Jewish culture, as well as a weekly podcast.

NEW CENTER FOR ARTS & CULTURE

NEW CENTER FOR ARTS AND CULTURE harnesses the power of arts, ideas, and culture to enrich people's lives; forge bonds between individuals and groups; and strengthen both the Jewish and broader communities. It does so by fostering the dynamic exchange and debate of ideas and by creating a vibrant platform for exploring new forms of cultural expression. All the Center's work is illuminated through the prism of Jewish experience.

COSPONSORS:  •  MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY •  **Northeastern** UNIVERSITY

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FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

FILM SCREENING

UNCLE MOSES (1932)

Directed by Sidney Goldin and Aubrey Scotto

Yiddish with English subtitles

Hosted by Rabbi Moshe Waldoks

In one of the first Yiddish talkies, based on a novel by Sholem Asch, acclaimed director Sidney Goldin tells the story of Uncle Moses, a New World patriarch who leads his people from the Polish *shtetl* to the sweatshops of the Lower East Side. But the former butcher (played by the great Yiddish actor Maurice Schwartz) discovers that power is easier to acquire than maintain, as he is buffeted by union rebels, a scheming nephew, and an unrequited love. Rabbi Moshe Waldoks, storyteller, comedian, and co-editor of *The Big Book of Jewish Humor*, will introduce the film and take questions from the audience.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2008, 8:00PM

West Newton Cinema

1296 Washington Street, West Newton

TICKETS: \$6

Call 617.964.8074 or 617.964.6060

READINGS AND PERFORMANCES

ESCAPE! ARRIVAL! DISAPPOINTMENT!

Readings by Elisa Albert, Janice Erlbaum, and Joseph O'Neill

With animated shorts by Stephen Levinson

Hosted by Jeremy Eichler

Like the biblical story of Exodus, contemporary literature is full of narrow escapes, strange new places, and the disappointments, large and small, that can happen when dreams confront reality. Boston Globe critic Jeremy Eichler hosts a three-act evening of readings by dynamic young writers. Janice Erlbaum, author of *Girlbomb* and *Have You Found Her*, performs a story about escape; Joseph O'Neill, author of *Netherland*, nominated for the 2008 Man Booker Prize, tells of an arrival; and Elisa Albert, author of *The Book of Dahlia* and *How This Night Is Different*, recounts a disappointment. Each reading will be introduced by a short animated film from Stephen Levinson's series *God & Co.*, featuring modern retellings of episodes from the Exodus story.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2008, 7:00PM

Coolidge Corner Theatre

290 Harvard Street, Brookline

TICKETS: \$6

Call 617.734.2500 or order online at coolidge.org

THE GREATEST STORY: EXODUS IN WORDS AND MUSIC

Hosted by Robert Pinsky

Robert Pinsky, former Poet Laureate of the United States, hosts a reading by distinguished Bostonians of favorite passages from the Exodus story, along with music by the John D. O'Bryant African American Institute Unity Gospel Ensemble. Participants will include writers, artists, scientists, religious leaders, public officials, media figures, and others, each reading a favorite passage and talking about how it has inspired them.

Visit our Web sites for updates on featured readers.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2008, 8:00PM

Northeastern University

NU Fenway Center

68 St. Stephen Street, Boston

TICKETS: \$10 (\$5 Students)

Call 617.373.4700 or order online at gonu.com/tickets

SYMPOSIUM

PROMISED LAND: EXODUS AND AMERICA

Through a series of lively conversations, a dozen writers, scholars, and journalists explore how an ancient Jewish story shaped American history and identity, and how various Americans have adopted and adapted the Exodus story to meet their own material and imaginative needs. Box lunches will be available for purchase. Live music by the Guy Mendilow Band.

> **Promised Lands: The American Immigrant Novel**

Gish Jen and Jamaica Kincaid, in conversation with Susan Lanser

"And so suffering, fearing, brooding, rejoicing, we crept nearer and nearer to the coveted shore, until, on a glorious May morning, six weeks after our departure from Polotzk, our eyes beheld the Promised Land." Early Jewish American writers, like Mary Antin in this passage from *The Promised Land*, consciously played with themes from Exodus. That tradition has continued, even as the ranks of immigrant writers have grown to include men and women from Asia, South America, Africa, the Caribbean, and other parts of the world. Gish Jen, author of *Mona in the Promised Land*, and Jamaica Kincaid, author of *Lucy* and *Annie John*, talk about how their own books and other immigrant novels have drawn on the theme of the Promised Land. Their conversation will be moderated by Susan Lanser, professor of English and comparative literature at Brandeis.

> **Exodus: Story of a Nation**

Adam Kirsch and Stephen Prothero,

in conversation with Elisa New

Exodus is the story of the emergence of the Jewish nation, but for many early Americans it was also the story that gave meaning to their own historic enterprise, whether they were Puritans, African Americans, Mormons, or Jews themselves. Adam Kirsch and Stephen Prothero explore how an old story defined a new nation, and how the sensibilities of early Americans were, in some respects, as much Jewish as Christian. Adam Kirsch is a poet and critic; he is the author of five books, including the new biography *Benjamin Disraeli*. Stephen Prothero is a professor of religion at Boston University and the bestselling author of *American Jesus* and *Religious Literacy*. They will be joined in conversation by Elisa New, professor of English and American Literature at Harvard.

> **Go Down, Moses:**

The Making of an African American Hero

Nicholas Lemann and Orlando Patterson,

in conversation with Beverly Morgan-Welch

The story of how Moses freed the Jews from slavery in Egypt became a touchstone for African American slaves and continues to inform their sense of themselves and their history. Nicholas Lemann, author of *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America*, and Orlando Patterson, author of *Slavery and Social Death* and *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture*, discuss how Moses became an African American hero. They will explore emancipation, the Great Migration, and the civil rights movement, as well as cultural representations of Moses, from nineteenth-century spirituals to contemporary popular culture. They will be interviewed by Beverly Morgan-Welch, executive director of the Museum of African American History.

> **The Ten Commandments in America**

Noah Feldman and Jenna Weissman Joselit,

in conversation with Alan Wolfe

Noah Feldman and Jenna Weissman Joselit consider the legacy of the Ten Commandments in America. Ranging over culture, politics, religion, and the law, they discuss headline-grabbing debates about church and state and the big screen extravaganzas of Cecil B. DeMille, as well as the role of the Ten Commandments in shaping domestic life. Noah Feldman is a professor at Harvard Law School and the author of four books, including *Divided By God: America's Church-State Problem and What We Should Do About It*. Jenna Weissman Joselit is a professor of American Studies at Princeton. The author of several books, she is working on a cultural history of the Ten Commandments in modern America. Their conversation will be moderated by writer and scholar Alan Wolfe, director of the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life at Boston College.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2008, 11:00AM TO 5:30PM

Northeastern University, West Village F

40A Leon Street, Boston

SYMPOSIUM PASS WITH BOX LUNCH: \$30 (\$20 Students)

SYMPOSIUM PASS ONLY: \$20 (\$10 Students)

INDIVIDUAL EVENTS: \$8 (\$5 Students)

Call 617.373.4700 or order online at gonu.com/tickets

For complete details on festival participants, venue locations, and parking, visit nextbook.org or ncacboston.org.