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 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.

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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Readings and Performances

Promised Land: Exodus and America

Festival Schedule

Promise Land
Exodus and America
A Festival of Ideas
Boston October 22–26, 2008

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 unguilted 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, 8:00 PM
West Newton Cinema
1366 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 Erbbaum, 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 Erbbaum, author of Girlbomb, and You Have Found Her, performs a story about escape; Joseph O’Neill, author of Netherland, nominated for the 2008 Man Booker Prize, tells of an arrival; Elisa Albert, author of The Book of Dahlia and How This New 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, 7:00 PM
Cooledge Corner Theatre
390 Harvard Street, Brookline
Tickets: $6
Call 617-714-2500 or order online at cooledge.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 Bowdoinians 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 site for updates on featured readers.

Saturday, October 25, 2008, 8:00 PM
Northeastern University
NU Fenway Center
68 St. Stephen Street, Boston
Tickets: $10 (5 Students)
Call 617-373-4000 or order online at goun. tickets

Symposium

Promised Land: Exodus and America

Through a series of lively conversations, a dozen writers, scholars, and journalists explore how the 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 Mendlew Band.

Promised Lands: The American Immigrant Novel

Cosh Jan and Jamaica Kincaid, in conversation with Susan Lancer

And so suffering, fleeing, brooding, rejoicing, we离不开 nearer and nearer to the coveted shore, until, on a glorious Main morning, six weeks after our departure from Polotzk, we 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, and the Caribbean, as well as parts of the world. Galician, author of Moses 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 themes of Exodus. In this featured conversation, which will be moderated by Susan Lancer, 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 historical 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 Americanism 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-Web

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, Social Death and Freedom in the Making of Western Culture, discuss how Moses became an African American hero. They will explore emancipation, the Civil Rights Movement, and the black 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-Web, 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 legal issues such as the religious compulsion to defend Israel, DeMille’s, 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 Barack Obama in Command: The Paradox of Power in the Age of DeBlasio. 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 author and scholar Alan Wolfe, director of the Belfer Center for Religion and American Public Life at Boston College.

Sunday, October 26, 2008, 11:00 AM to 5:30 PM
Northeastern University
West Village F 40A Leon Street, Boston
Symposium Pass with box lunch: $50 (50 Students)
Symposium Pass only: $20 (5 Students)
Individual Events: $18 (3 Students)
Call 617-373-4000 or order online at goun. tickets