

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR SHJ HUMANISTIC JUDAISM, SPRING 2019

“The Next 50 Year of Humanistic Judaism,” by Paul Golin

Paul Golin's provocative essay is a challenge to all in Humanistic Judaism. How do we see its future? How do we see ourselves in building that? These are crucial questions and they don't answer themselves! Paul's canvass of the issues is compelling reading that should in itself form the basis for discussion among groups and between individuals, and from that - action!

Paul says that HJ is a "mission", growing out of the "congregational model". How do you see yourself and your group fitting into this? He shows that the experience of Humanistic Judaism can be as "mission driven" as "social justice" aims. For those born into Judaism, it is a way to "stay Jewish" without compromising fundamental beliefs about reality and for those adopting Judaism HJ enables a way to "be Jewish" in the same way. Do you feel this in your own life? Does your group/congregation practice the "intentional spirituality" he discusses effectively?

“Living Without God,” by Ronald Aronson

Ronald Aronson's take on ageing in our changing society suggests that as we get to the point where we are losing it, we have to keep holding on until we can't. He uses Simone de Beauvoir and her relationship with Jean-Paul Sartre to illustrate the problems involved in getting old. These are ever-changing and for those suffering from progressive infirmity, can be ever more depressing. How does your group/congregation fit older people into things? Is there a clear sense of purpose to include everyone in activities? If you are among those getting on, do you feel your group/congregation helps you find meaning and purpose? Does membership of Humanistic Judaism provide these in itself? What do you think could make things better?

In the afterword to the excerpt from his book, Ronald says that a gift of getting older is the feeling of freedom to get involved in the issues and causes that matter to us. "We have nothing to lose." How do you feel you can be most effective as a member of HJ, as a human being, in your community, family life, and other ways?

“Why Ritual and Ceremony Matter,” by Richard D. Logan and Rabbi Jeremy Kridel

Richard Logan and Rabbi Jeremy Kridel's article argues that ritual and ceremony have helped bond communities from the earliest times of human social life, and that this is fundamental today too. How do you feel about the ritual and ceremonies of Humanistic Judaism? Are they good enough? Can they be improved? Do they bond those who already belong but make barriers to those who don't?

“How Sherwin Wine Built the Fifth Branch of Judaism,” by Ruth Duskin Feldman

Ruth Duskin Feldman's sketch of the immense contribution Sherwin Wine made to Judaism and human life in founding Humanistic Judaism and its integrating developments is a challenge as well as an inspiration. As HJ goes into its second half century, what new initiatives do you think are needed to take the movement forward, to reach more people who are yearning for the fulfilment the movement offers?

Community News, “Proof in the Pudding.”

The community news of the magazine shows Humanistic Judaism in the context of the lives of the membership and its roles in the larger community. Do you get ideas and inspiration from the activities of others elsewhere? Are there other ways HJ can move its message?

Created by Steve Evans, SHJ Member, New Zealand