

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR SHJ HUMANISTIC JUDAISM, SUMMER 2019

“Sexual Ethics for the 21st Century,” by Jeffrey Falick

The Association of Humanistic Rabbis adopted this statement on sexuality in September 2018. If you want to live at least 150 years, decide to discuss every aspect of this remarkable statement, and not die until you've covered them all. In it beats the heart of Humanistic Judaism. If your group or congregation hasn't spent time on it, make sure you do - and with friends, colleagues, partners.

1. One of the more fascinating questions that may rise out of discussion is why "mainstream" faiths, in and out of the Jewish traditions, might find it difficult.
2. Does this make you or community members uncomfortable, and if so, in what ways?

“A Retrospective: SHJ@50,” by Rabbi Miriam Jerris

Rabbi Miriam's speech to the 50th anniversary celebration is a fine example of a living tradition.

1. Using her talk as a guide, what do you think the next 50 years will be like?
2. What do you see as your personal contribution or the contribution of your group or community?
3. What are the challenges facing the movement? How can they be met?
4. What would you like to see as a "new mythology"?

“Grace Paley’s Midrash on Happiness,” by Mark Swartz

Grace Paley was the SHJ’s 2018-2019 Humanistic Jewish Role Model of the year. She brings into focus the idea of "praxis" - the union of theory and practice. Grace Paley's life was informed by commitment to social progress, responsibility to community and family, and artistic creativity.

1. How are these reflected in your community's life?
2. What opportunities are there to expand and develop them? What are the stumbling blocks?

“Hypothetical, Book Excerpt,” by Mark Swartz

In this excerpt from Mark Swartz’s novel, “Summertime Jews” (2018), the narrator interviews for a junior counselor position at a Jewish summer camp in 1986.

1. Mark Swartz's fiction uses humor to impart wisdom. Is there a way to incorporate humor into the liturgical life of the movement?