

Temple Israel Book Club

The Ministry of Special Cases by Nathan Englander

TUESDAY, MAY 19, 7:30 PM AT TEMPLE ISRAEL

Book Club members may recall a previous selection by Nathan Englander, *For the Relief of Unbearable Urges*, a collection of short stories. *The Ministry of Special Cases* is Englander's first novel and has received excellent reviews from critics. The novel is set in 1976 in Buenos Aires during Argentina's "dirty war." Kaddish Poznan, son of a whore, earns a meager living defacing grave-stones of Jewish whores and pimps whose more respectable children want to erase their immigrant parents' names and forget their shameful activities. When his idealistic college-age son, Pato is taken from home, Kaddish learns what it really means to erase iden-

ty, because no one in authority will admit Pato has been arrested or even acknowledge that he existed. As Kaddish and his wife Lillian attempt to penetrate the Ministry of Special Cases, Englander's novel takes on an epic quality, in which Jewish parents descend into the underworld and journey through circles of hell.

While *The Ministry of Special Cases* may bring to mind works of other authors such as I.B. Singer and George Orwell, "Englander's book is unique in its layering of Jewish tradition and totalitarian obliteration."

The May 19 discussion will be led by English Prof. Dr. Jay Jacoby, formerly with UNCC and

now with UNC Asheville. Jay has led many Temple Israel Book club meetings, and when he does, the discussion becomes a stimulating foray into Jewish literature.

Copies of Englander's *The Ministry of Special Cases* are available at the public library, the Levine-Sklut Judaic Library and Resource Center, and may be purchased at local book stores or online for about \$15.

Temple Israel Book Club meetings are open to all community members. For additional information call Linda Levy, 704-366-6362 or Sandra Hirschman, 704-867-7051. ☆

Spectacular Ritual that Occurs Every 28 Years Will Be Observed on April 8

A once-in-a-generation Jewish ritual will be observed in April in Jewish communities all over the world. It is the blessing of the sun where we praise God for His wondrous creation in giving us the sun and its many benefits to the world.

Here in Charlotte we will observe this ritual with an outdoor service on Wednesday, April 8 at 7:30 AM. This year the 28-year cycle of the sun falls on the night of Tuesday, April 7 and goes into Wednesday, April 8. This happens to be the eve of Pesach as well, which makes it even more special and celebratory.

The origin of this ritual can be traced back to Talmudic days as recorded in the first Tractate of the Talmud: "One who sees the sun at the beginning of its cycle ...

should say, 'Blessed are You who makes the works of creation.' And when does it happen that the sun is at the beginning of its cycle? Abbaye says, 'Every twenty eight years, the cycle begins again and the Nissan equinox falls in the hour of Saturn, on the evening of the third day, the night before the fourth day (of the week.)'" (Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot, 59b).

ny is the blessing of *Shehecheyanu*, which expresses our thanks to God for sustaining us and giving us life and for allowing us to reach this day. This ceremony is done with joy and reverence.

In today's environment of climate change and the need for us to be energy self sufficient, we can look to the sun as a potential source of solar energy which could generate a substantial amount of our power. The last solar event took place in spring 1981 with this ritual celebrated all around the world. The Lubavitcher Rebbe spoke then of America's need to not be dependent on other countries for our energy: "This country, with God's help, can be self-sufficient in energy. The problem lies in the failure to utilize God's gifts to their fullest.... There is one energy source which can be made available in a very short time. Solar energy is non-polluting, cheap, and inexhaustible ... it can power individual homes as well as giant factories. The United States has been blessed with plentiful sunshine, especially in the south.... God has blessed this country richly and it is our duty to use those riches to their fullest." This was said way before it became a popular issue to speak about climate change or energy independence.

This event is open to everyone in the community. ☆



The ceremony will begin with reciting of Psalms and blessing of thanks to God for the sun. It will be followed by a Siyum ceremony where an entire tractate of the Talmud is completed. The ceremony is preceded by the daily morning service at Ohr HaTorah at 6:30 AM.

The ceremony celebrates the last 28 years of sunlight and all the blessings it brought with it. This is an opportunity to thank God for all his kindness and the brightness he provides for our world. One of the blessings we recite in this ceremony



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Josh is a native Charlottean and attended the former Charlotte Hebrew Academy
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The Temple Israel Social Club,
 for active couples and singles, invites you to join our social group. Meet new people and enjoy our interesting programs and trips. Call Janine Rosner, 704-366-5631 for information.

Sunday, April 26, 3 PM at Spirit Square: The melodious Carolina Voices Concert. Dinner will be at Mama Ricotta's, 601 S. Kings Dr. following the concert. Flyers will be sent with further information.

Sunday, May 31, 8:30 AM: We depart from Temple Israel for our Mystery Bus Ride. Watch for more information.