

MCHE hosts celebrity panel reading from 'Curious George' children's books

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Gary Lezak

In conjunction with the exhibit "Saving the Little Brown Monkey: The True Wartime Escape of Margret and H.A. Rey," now on display at the Jewish Community Campus, the Midwest Center for Holocaust Education will host a panel of local celebrities reading from "Curious George" and other books by Margret and H.A. Rey.

The program, which is suitable for all ages, will take place at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 17, in the Social Hall at the Campus. Among the local celebrities participating in the reading panel will be Gary Lezak, KSHB's chief meteorologist; Joel Nichols, KMBC weather anchor and the host and producer of "Afterwords"; Joel Goldberg, host of "Royals Live" for Fox Sports Kansas City; Pellom McDaniels, a UMKC history professor and a former



Joel Nichols

defensive lineman for the NFL's Philadelphia Eagles, Kansas City Chiefs and Atlanta Falcons; and Deron Cherry, who played safety for the Kansas City Chiefs from 1981 to 1991 and who was designated the Chiefs NFL Man of the year in 1987.

Although the program is free, reservations are required by contacting (913) 327-8196 or program@mchekc.org. A reception will follow the readings.

"Saving the Little Brown Monkey" was organized by the Institute for Holocaust Education in Omaha, Neb. It is a program of ExhibitsUSA, a national division of Mid-America Arts Alliance, with the Kansas Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts. Sponsors are MCHE and JCC. Major funding for the exhibit has been provided by J-Lead of the Jewish Community Foundation. Supporting patrons are Pati Chasnoff, Steve Chick, Paul and Katherine DeBruce, Maria Devinki, Eddie and Gloria Baker Feinstein, Joyce, Jim, Kate and Alex Hess, Ron and Barbra Porter Hill, Paul Lerner and Rosie Lerner, Lowell and Evy Tilzer, Bob and Jean Zeldin.



Joel Goldberg

Wiesel praises evangelical Christians

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Elie Wiesel addressed a gathering of evangelical Christians Oct. 25 at a salute to Israel hosted by the John Hagee Ministries. Hagee's 28th Annual Night to Honor Israel featured not only Wiesel, the Nobel laureate and Holocaust survivor, but also Israel's minister of national infrastructure, Uzi Landau, and its consul general to the Southwestern United States, Asher Yarden. "Never in the history of my people have we witnessed an event such as this," Wiesel said, calling it "a privileged moment." Hagee stressed his organization's solidarity with Israel and the Jewish people. The \$9 million raised for the evening in donations to Hagee's organization was distributed to representatives of 29 Jewish

and Israeli nonprofits, charities and humanitarian organizations. Hagee also is the founder and national chairman of Christians United for Israel, a Christian, pro-Israel organization.

Rocket strikes northern Israel

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A Katyusha rocket reportedly fired from Lebanon struck northern Israel. The rocket, which was fired Oct. 27, landed near Kiryat Shemona and did not cause any injuries or damage, according to reports. It was the ninth rocket to strike Israel from Lebanon since the 2006 Second Lebanon War. Two Katyushas struck northern Israel in September. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Journey to 52 churches leads Jew back to Judaism

"My Jesus Year," by Benjamin Cohen (HarperOne paperback, 2009), \$14.99

By Ellen Portnoy
Special to The Chronicle

What happens when the son of an orthodox rabbi loses his religious way? Should he just go through the rituals of Judaism without true faith? Or should he try to regain his faith in an unorthodox way?

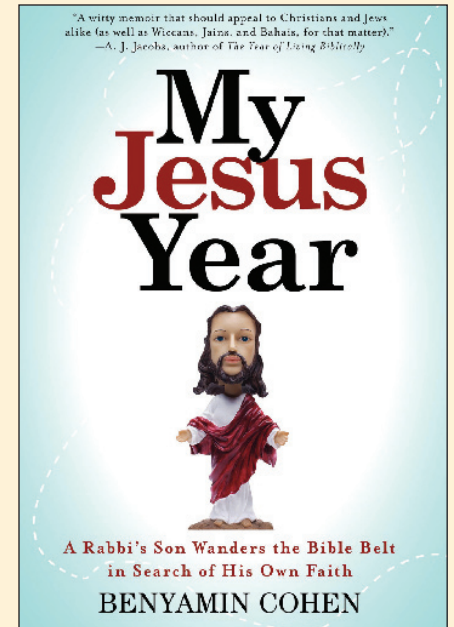
Benjamin Cohen went for the unorthodox journey back to Orthodox Judaism. He decided to visit 52 churches over a year of Sundays to see the forbidden fruit, to learn if Christianity has something over Judaism and to discover what he was missing if he was missing anything.

Cohen's distance from Judaism started soon after his Bar Mitzvah, when his mother died suddenly. His four older siblings either became rabbis or married rabbis, while he began to doubt. The church across the street from his childhood home became somewhat of an obsession for him. What was going on in there? Is it more exciting than what was occurring in his father's synagogue? But with the Orthodox taboo on entering a church, he never could go and find out.

This changed after his marriage to a woman who also struggled with her religious identity. Growing up as a daughter of a minister, Elizabeth converted to Judaism. "After all," he writes, "she herself had found inspiration outside her inherited religion; perhaps I would need to do the same ... I wasn't planning on converting, but maybe I needed to examine Christianity to see how it could make me a better Jew."

And so he goes to a variety of churches, some mainstream, some quite unusual. He spends time at a monastery; attends a Christian wrestling match; visits with an army chaplain and attends a service on a military base; attends Winter Jam, a Christian rock festival.

Each moment related in the book brings him closer to his Judaism.



Each has him questioning his questions. At the army base he discovers that most of the soldiers attending the Jewish service are not Jewish. "They were reverse-engineering my yearlong experiment — here was a group of Christians who believed Jewish prayers were more enjoyable than those of their own faith."

He spends time with two young Mormon women who are doing their missionary year. He notices the similarities between Judaism and Mormonism. "Holloway was offering a possible solution for my spiritual malaise. Follow the commandments and, instead of feeling jilted ..., you can actually feel the warmth of God's presence in your life."

As we travel with Cohen through the southern Christian world, we see his slow realization of the importance of Judaism to him. He retells his journey with humor and wit.

"My Jesus Year, A Rabbi's Son Wanders the Bible Belt in Search of His Own Faith," follows Cohen's journey. And in this journey we might all see a little of ourselves.

Benjamin Cohen will present his book at the Jewish Book Fair brunch at 9:30 a.m. Sunday, Nov. 15. Tickets cost \$12 per person. For more information call the Jewish Community Center, (913) 327-8000.

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