

Medal Honors Nobel Laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer On His Eightieth Birthday



To celebrate Isaac Bashevis Singer's eightieth birthday on July 14, 1984 the Jewish-American Hall of Fame has commissioned a medal in honor of the distinguished author. A remarkable lifelike portrait has been created by Professor Robert Russin, who has superbly captured Singer's playful personality, having been given the unique opportunity of a two-day sitting at Singer's New York apartment. The extremely high relief portrait is a masterpiece, ranking alongside of previous medals by Russin of Albert Einstein and George Gershwin (which are now sold-out). Each medal must be struck four times in order to bring out all of the details ... ranging from the twinkle in Singer's eyes to the hint of a smile. The Hall of Fame honoree personally supplied the quote "FREE WILL IS LIFE'S ESSENCE" that has been beautifully calligraphed in English and Yiddish by talented Los Angeles artist Susan Fisher for the medal's reverse design.

Twenty-nine year old Isaac Bashevis Singer, sensing the rapidly approaching catastrophe in Europe, fled Poland and came to America in 1935. His sole claim to fame was a single Yiddish book published in Poland, "Satan in Goray." He could speak only three words of English: "Take a chair." Singer feared that his lot "was to be one of those writers who write one book and become

silent forever." For the next ten years Singer barely eked out a living as a critic for the leading Yiddish newspaper, "The Forward." In this period his total income from serious literary efforts amounted to a minuscule \$90 honorarium received when "Satan in Goray" was published here in Yiddish in 1943...the same year that Singer became an American citizen.

Finally in 1945 Singer began writing "The Family Moskat," which was serialized each week in The Forward. He has been writing for them ever since, saying "I haven't missed a week in all these years, except that I get four weeks' vacation." Translated into English, Singer's delightful stories have appeared in Commentary, The New Yorker, and even Playboy. Love is a frequent theme in his writings, along with religion and the occult.

Singer's editor at Doubleday writes that "Today, Isaac Bashevis Singer is a literary figure of imposing stature. A winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1978, he is an author whose prolific output of short stories, children's books, plays, scholarly works and novels are received and embraced by an enormous and devoted audience." And author Rebecca West said in a recent interview, "I regard Isaac Bashevis Singer as the greatest writer of today." His books have twice won the National Book Award, and often found their way into the best seller lists. They include "The Spinoza of Market Street," "The

Magician of Lublin," "The Slave," "In My Father's Court," "Passions," "Shosha," and "Lost in America." One of Singer's short stories, "Yentl," was recently transformed into a major motion picture by Barbra Streisand.

While Singer's literary works are most widely known in English, the author has declared that "Nothing can spoil a writer more than writing for the translator." Obviously nothing has spoiled Mr. Singer ... not even the Nobel Prize in Literature. After receiving the prestigious international award, he said "I will still live at the same address. I will still have the same telephone number. Do you think that winning a prize can change a man's character?"

The heavy 2-1/2 troy ounce unusual rounded-trapezoidal shaped two-inch Isaac Bashevis Singer medals are being produced in very limited quantities of no more than 750 antique bronze available for an \$18 contribution, only 250 pure silver at \$85, just 75 pewter at \$36, and a minuscule 35 solid 10 karat gold for \$850. Each medal is individually serial numbered, and the precious metal issues carry the prestigious hallmark of the Johnson Matthey Refinery guaranteeing the purity of the silver or gold content. Checks or money orders (half of which can be considered as a tax-deductible contribution) should be sent to the non-profit Magnes Museum, 2911 Russell Street, Berkeley, California 94705. Allow about 60 days for delivery.

Israel's Supreme Court Lifts Ban On Two Parties

JERUSALEM (WNS) — The Supreme Court reversed the Central Elections Committee's ban on the participation of two political parties in the July 23 Knesset elections.

The five judge panel ruled unanimously that the Progressive List for Peace, a coalition of Israeli Arabs and Jews and Rabbi Meir Kahane's rightwing Kach party have the right to present their lists to the voters.

Both parties appealed to the high court against the ban, arguing that the Central Elections Committee exceeded its authority.

owned and dropped plans for a lawsuit. The Attorney General did not receive such information because, a spokesman said, it could not guarantee to protect the confidentiality of the ownership information.

The Jewish Theological Seminary announced it had obtained, before the auction, two of the most valuable items -- a 15th century Bible from Prague, estimated to be worth \$500,000, and a 14th century prayerbook from Spain, with an estimated value of \$200,000.

Sotheby Sells Ancient Hebrew Items But Dispute Unsettled

NEW YORK (WNS) — The Sotheby auction house here insisted that the 31 ancient Hebrew books and manuscripts sold recently had no "moral taint" and that those providing the materials did have legal ownership.

The auction of the rare items, believed to have been smuggled out of Nazi Germany from the College of Scientific Study of Judaism after the Nazi closed the institution in 1942, had been the subject of intense controversy and intervention by the City Consumer Affairs Department, the State Attorney General and the (Reform) Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR).

New York State Supreme Court Justice Jawn Sandifer refused to block the auction, which reportedly brought in \$1.45 million, declaring he was "not convinced"

the origin of the documents was questionable.

Jewish groups asked whether the persons who claimed ownership had legal title and how the precious items had survived the Nazi regime and the war, as well as the issue of where they had been kept for 40 years and by whom.

Sotheby's cited its policy of withholding the names of persons, submitting property for auction, who asked anonymity. Sotheby's also said it was satisfied, the owners were Jews. The CCAR adopted a resolution at its annual convention in June saying it would take all needed steps "to stop this sale" until ownership "is clearly established."

The Consumer Affairs department reportedly received information in confidence from Sotheby's that the items were legally



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