

Jews and Christians in Mobile marking 10 years of dialogue

By SYLVIA HART
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This year is special to Jews and Christians of Mobile because they celebrate 10 years of dialogue.

AFTER A summer recess, the Mobile Area Jewish-Christian Dialogue opens this year's activities with a meeting on Sept. 5 at 7 p.m. in the auditorium of the Medical Science Building at the University of South Alabama.

RELIGION

Mary Filben, a Catholic layperson who has been one of the coordinators of the local dialogue since its founding a decade ago, said participants at the first meeting will view a film from a series titled "Heritage: Civilization and the Jews."

AFTER THE film, a panel of Mobilians will discuss the series. On the panel will be the Rt. Rev. Charles F. Duvall, bishop of the Central Gulf Coast Episcopal Diocese; Sister Maureen Bonner, director of the Office of Religious Education of the Mobile Catholic Archdiocese; Barry Silverman, a Jewish lay leader in Mobile; Dr. George Gilmore, a member of the theology faculty at Spring Hill College; Barbara Paper, executive director of the Jewish Welfare Fund in

Mobile; and Aliza Gerstein, a local Jewish leader.

"Heritage: Civilization and the Jews" was produced by WNET Television in New York and will be shown nationally on public television.

MRS. FILBEN said the series is scheduled on public television in Alabama and Mississippi on the following dates: Oct. 1, 2, 8, 15, 22, 29 and Nov. 5, 12, 19. The time is 9 p.m. for each segment.

Lowell Friedman, a Mobile Jewish layman who serves as chairman of the Southeast Area of the American Jewish Committee, is assisting the local Jewish-Christian Dialogue in making arrangements for previewing a segment of the TV series.

The American Jewish Committee, a human-relations organization with national headquarters in New York, has provided consultants to public television in preparing a general viewers' guide for the TV series, according to Friedman.

FRIEDMAN SAID Mobilians were asked to screen one of the series segments by officials of the Southeast Area of the American Jewish Committee in Atlanta. "We are one of the few cities chosen for previewing. Most of the cities selected are larger, I think."

Friedman said the Jewish-Christian Dialogue in Mobile has gained a national reputation, and that probably is a reason Mobile was selected.

After a film segment from the series is shown in Mobile, Mrs. Filben said, the six panelists and the dialogue participants will discuss how the series can be most effectively used in this community.

Special invitations to the screening have been issued to local librarians, college campus ministers and college teachers of history, philosophy and theology, according to Mrs. Filben.

TEAMS OF scholars and specialists assembled by WNET TV coordinated the preparation of educational kits and other materials to be used in conjunction with the TV series by secondary-school students, college students, home viewers and community groups throughout the United States.

Mrs. Filben said, "Because we in Mobile think this TV series is important historically and in every other way, we're using the series to get back into living-room dialogues."

IN ITS beginning, the local Jewish-Christian Dialogue held sessions in homes, but in recent years the meetings generally have taken place in churches and synagogues.

Mrs. Filben said dialogue participants will be divided into small study groups that will meet in homes every week while the TV series is under way. Further information about the groups is available to persons who call 342-9384.

Mrs. Filben's husband, Paul, also one of the coordinators of the local

dialogue group, said, "This nine-part series traces the heritage of the Jewish people from the birth of the monotheistic concept, or the concept of one God, to the state of Israel in the present."

FILBEN SAID, "It's the history of where all of our Abrahamic faith groups came from and an examination of where we all are going." Thus the series has significance for Christians as well as Jews.

Friedman said, "The educational-outreach program of the series is designed to personalize the historical sweep of the interaction between Jews and Western civilization."

Friedman said the film does not emphasize the Holocaust, the mass murder of Jews during World War II, or the state of Israel, which is viewed by many in modern society as a "problem."

Instead the emphasis is on Jews as creators of ideas and currents of civilization.

A VARIETY of other activities are planned to mark the 10th anniversary of the Mobile Area Jewish-Christian Dialogue.

Lectures are being arranged to begin next January.

A social gathering tentatively planned for December will feature klezmer music, which is an assimilation of ragtime with the Jews' musical idiom which developed at the turn of this century, according to Filben.

Jews and Christians may travel together to Israel next spring.