



The Shofar

Website:
oraynu.org

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HAPPY PASSOVER

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

As I write this, it seems as though winter is winding down, but I am sure we are still in for more of the fluffy stuff. Hopefully you've all been enjoying, or at least enduring, this very Canadian of winters. At least we have all had the marvelous Olympics to distract us and give us our fill of winter sports, even if we are not participants.

Your Oraynu team has lots in store for the next two months and beyond:

Rabbi Eva Goldfinger has two sessions left of this year's very excellent lecture series: on March 1st and April 5th. Even if you couldn't make the previous talks, you are still welcome to come learn with us.

Our Show Your Heart event this year will have our Syrian family, including their relatives, cooking up a fundraiser lunch, on March 3rd. All are welcome to partake and help raise funds for African asylum seekers in Israel. Come out and support this worthy cause. It's open to EVERYONE: Congregation, School families and guests.

As always, we have two events for Passover: the School/Family Seder on the Sunday preceding Passover, March 25th and then the First Night "Roots and Branches" Seder for adults, teens and older kids on Friday, March 30th, which also happens to be Good Friday. Wasn't "The Last Supper" supposedly a seder? How appropriate to be on the same day!

On Friday April 13th, we will have a Shabbat program marking Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Remembrance) including a

Nizkor (Memorial) observance. Barbara Ackerman will add her beautiful, soulful flute music to enhance the program.

On April 15th is another of our Intro to Humanistic Judaism sessions. It's ideal for new and prospective Oraynu members to learn all about who we are and what we do. The Children's School Open House will be held the following week. Kindly spread the word to anyone whom you think may be interested in either the Congregation or the School (now starting at the Tots level).

On April 22nd we mark Israel Independence Day and the 70th anniversary of the founding of the state. Come experience Israeli songs, food and dancing!

Besides the usual columns, the Rabbi's Message and Principal's Report, Board member Hailey Meslin has contributed an excellent, insightful piece to our Notes from the Board column. Member Mark Scharf offers a report on the Emergency Response Committee's special meeting on how to combat anti-Semitism and hate. SHJ Executive Director Paul Golin, who will be coming to visit us in June, wrote an excellent piece asking what Secular Humanistic Judaism does for you and whether it is working. You could actually pair it with Hailey's article as the response!

Happy rest of winter! Hope to see you at one of our many events really soon.

Sandi

Sandi Horwitz, Editor

Members and guests are welcome to submit articles and letters and photographs. Please email: horwitz@rogers.com/ or mail to: Sandi Horwitz, 5 Bruce Farm Drive, Toronto ON M2H 1G2. Generally submissions should be no more than 800 words and should reflect a secular humanistic perspective. Please note that Oraynu reserves the right to decline or edit submissions in order to maintain the mutual respect our members enjoy and our reputation for fairness.

Letters and articles printed in this newsletter reflect the opinions of their writers and are not necessarily those of Oraynu Congregation.

RABBI'S MESSAGE

**Rabbi
Denise
Handlarski**



*Oraynu
in the
digital age*

How do you receive your news? A daily newspaper delivered to your door? Radio? Facebook? For many people, how they receive and consume news has changed. Of course, there is still something luxurious about unfolding the newspaper section by section over coffee. At Oraynu, we've been thinking about how to reach our members.

This Shofar newsletter comes out every two months in paper copy, delivered by mail. You must read it if you're reading this (unless you are reading this from our website). Recently Oraynu started putting out a weekly email newsletter. The goal was to streamline our communications with you so instead of hearing from us 4 times in one week and then none the week after, you know you'll get a complete update each week. The other goal was to deliver more to you each week — including community news and a message from me. From what we've heard, you're liking it! Which is great.

I also recently did a talk using Facebook instead of the program we were running that got cancelled due to snow. It has been viewed more than 200 times! That's more people than we'd get to a typical Shabbat. It's more people than typically engage with Oraynu over any one issue or program (except the High Holidays). So it got me thinking about what else we could be doing online.

I'm curious about this — would you attend webinars (seminars held online in real time?)? Would you be part of an online discussion forum to talk about news and politics? Would you want me to lead at-home holiday celebrations that you can follow along to?

In the coming months, I'm going to engage you in conversations about how you want to connect with me - in person and online. Nothing will change in terms of what Oraynu offers in terms of real-time, in-person, good old-fashioned get-togethers, celebrations, and programs. But I'm curious about what else we can be doing and in what kind of space.

Speaking of the digital age, recently in the email blast I spoke about an initiative called the "**Day of Unplugging**" by Reboot, a Jewish organization hoping to foster creative Jewish engagement. The idea is that for one Shabbat, from March 9 at sundown to March 10 at sundown, you put your cellphone to "sleep," and be free of technology. This isn't about whether you turn on lights or drive, but rather about not checking text or email messages, speaking on the phone, or doing any work. Would that be hard for you? It's hard for me. But I find when I make time to unplug and connect with my family, I always feel calmer and happier.

On the Day of Unplugging, I'm taking my daughter to a yurt (don't worry, it's heated). We'll be hiking, playing outdoors, cooking over a fire, and spending time just the two of us. I can't wait! Do I need to go somewhere with no cellphone reception to unplug for 24 hours? I like to think not, but, I figured this was a good tactic just in case.

I spend Friday evenings with my family having Shabbat dinner almost every week. Our kids talk about their favourite thing of the week, we plan for the week ahead, we laugh and sing, we eat too much challah. That connectedness is something I really want to foster and enjoy with my partner and our kids. I make it a priority. It's a very different type of "connected" than I feel when I communicate through my phone.

So, here we are in the digital age. Sometimes the world of technology makes it easier to reach more people, people who are far away, people who can't come out to things easily. And sometimes it robs us of the way we connect with people because we communicate with screens between us.

I am playing with how to offer the best of both worlds for Oraynu. If you have ideas or feedback, I hope you'll reach out! In the meantime, I can't wait to see you soon — in person at one of our awesome upcoming events, in the weekly email blast, online, who knows?

**Unless otherwise indicated, kindly RSVP for ALL EVENTS:
416-385-3910 | robby@oraynu.org | via online event link**

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursdays
Mar. 1 and Apr. 5
7:00-9:30 pm

(Starts at 7 pm sharp, so do plan to arrive earlier)

Borochov Centre
272 Codsell Ave
 (Allen Rd./Sheppard)

ADULT EDUCATION with Rabbi Eva Goldfinger

Topic: Origins and Evolution of the Jewish Festivals and Calendar

March 1: Winter Festivals from Chanukah to Purim

April 5: Spring and Summer Festivals from Pesach to Shavuot

Come and learn about the fascinating origins and evolution of all the Jewish Festivals and how they are understood and celebrated differently among the various movements within Judaism. Discover the intriguing natural, mystical, philosophical and psychological underpinnings of the rituals. Ask the difficult questions of what rites still have meaning and which ones may not have meaning or integrity for Humanistic Jews today.

Kindly pre-register.

Non-members welcome: \$20 per session

Saturday, Mar. 3
1:00 pm

Borochov Centre
(as above)



Cooking demo at 1 pm, then lunch, Syrian-style!

Join us for a cooking demo and lunch made with love by our Syrian friends/ family. **This is a "pay-it-forward" event!**

WE raised money to bring Lina, Tamer and Nour Ajoub to Canada, and now THEY and their family (the sisters, Aryn of the anchor family, but not Thanaa who lets us know she loves us but hates to cook) are helping us raise money for African Asylum Seekers in Israel.

This event will feature a cooking demonstration so we can learn how to make delicious and beautiful Syrian dishes. And then we get to eat those dishes!

This lunch is a steal! Only \$15 per person, with a family max of \$50 (for up to 5 people)

We will also be selling copies of the cookbook made by the sisters of the family with love.

Please invite friends, family, anyone, everyone!

Friday-Saturday
March 9-10
Sundown to sundown

DAY OF UNPLUGGING

Give those phones, and more importantly yourselves, a rest!
 For more, see Rabbi Denise's message (p. 2) and CAR/DINNER TALKS (p. 6)



Friday, Mar. 30
6:00 pm

Borochov Centre
(as above)



Join us for a humanist celebration of Passover at our FIRST NIGHT SEDER (Adults, Teens, Older Kids)

Led by Barry Olshen and Sandi Horwitz

Authors (with Lisa Wright) of "Roots and Branches: A Humanist Haggadah for Passover"

Meal details: We will once again provide a delicious catered chicken main course (from Nortown). We ask that everyone bring a **salad OR Passover-style side dish, e.g. farfel, vegetable kugel or casserole OR dessert, enough to feed 8 people**, with an ingredient list, please.

COST: Oraynu members: \$20 pp + potluck contribution

Oraynu members' immediate family: \$32 + potluck contribution

Other guests/friends/non-members: \$48 pp + potluck contribution

**** Must R.S.V.P. by Wednesday, March 21th ****

Friday, April 13
7:30 pm

Borochov Centre
272 Codsell Ave

HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY (Yom Hashoah) and MEMORIAL SERVICE (Nizkor)

Join us to commemorate victims of the Holocaust and mark Shabbat with a reflective service and Nizkor. This is a chance to honour people in your life who have passed away.



There will be beautiful music by member Barbara Ackerman on flute, meaningful poetry, and the chance for remembering and memorializing our family, and our broader Jewish family that perished during the most tragic time in our people's history.

Non-members welcome: \$15 pp

Sunday, April 15
10:15 am

Oraynu Children's School
131 Fenn Ave.
(Bayview/York Mills)

INTRODUCTION TO HUMANISTIC JUDAISM

Led by Rabbi Denise and Sandi Horwitz

Tell your friends and family to come and learn about how Oraynu does Jewish. Perhaps come for a refresher yourself!

This is a presentation on what we have left behind, what we have retained, and what we have created to keep Judaism meaningful for secular/cultural Jews today.

Everyone welcome; no charge to attend.

Kindly RSVP to Roby.

Sunday, April 22
10:15 am

Oraynu Children's School (as above)

ORAYNU CHILDREN'S SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE

Meet the staff and find out all about our acclaimed curriculum

Focus on Jewish culture, history and values from secular humanistic perspective

JK-Gr. 7 • Bnai Mitzvah Program • OraynuTots (1½-3½ yrs)


Jewish Festivals • Family Education • Hebrew • Tzedakah • Arts • Music

Principal Steve Shabes and the School Committee will be available to address any concerns/questions you may have about the program.



Help us promote Oraynu and Humanistic Judaism!

Word of mouth increases awareness of both our School and Congregation. Tell others about what Oraynu means to you and your family. We know that school families are our best PR tools!

School funded with support from  UJA Federation OF GREATER TORONTO

Sunday, April 22
7:30 pm

Borochov Centre
(as above)

ISRAEL INDEPENDENCE DAY (Yom Ha'atzmaut)

Come eat Israeli snacks, sing Israeli songs led by Mickey Lewin, and then join for Israeli dancing. Something for every sense at this all-ages party celebrating Israeli culture and Israel's 70th birthday.



Non-members welcome: \$15

**Unless otherwise indicated, kindly RSVP for ALL EVENTS:
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NOTES FROM THE BOARD

This issue's
contributor is
Hailey Meslin
Member-at-
Large

It's a pleasure to be writing in the *Shofar*, Oraynu's monthly newsletter that highlights all the interesting programs and activities participated in by members of our congregation. My family and I have been Oraynu members since 2011. We were originally drawn to Oraynu because it offered an open-minded view of how we could self-identify and practice Judaism. It offered a reassuring continuation of familiar traditions, but in a way that better suited where my family and I are, theologically-speaking. What it didn't offer was part of its appeal too: At our first high holiday service, my husband Rick and I were delighted when we heard no lecture on how to view the geopolitics of Israel and its neighbours; no proclamations of being small and unworthy in the face of an almighty God – indeed, there was no mention of God at all. It was we, the people, you and me, who stood at the center of the world, and it was us, *all of us*, who were therefore responsible for our world's continued good health. That was the first time I *really* understood the human imperative of *tikkun olam*.

I have to confess that it felt a bit strange at first to not stand and sing *Sh'ma Israel* or to chant the familiar and haunting *Avinu Malchenu*, which Jews had chanted for hundreds of years before me. I wondered if by adopting such a different liturgy for the holiest days of the year, would I in some way be setting myself apart from the larger Jewish community, cutting myself loose from a chain that stretched back thousands of years and endured through centuries of segregation, persecution, forced conversion and exile, pogroms, and the Holocaust? To be honest, I still sometimes struggle with these questions.

Ultimately, though, I come down on the side of reason. I know many people – indeed I'm related to a few of them – who have said things like "Well, you know I don't *really* believe all that stuff we chant at shul." I'm not interested in debating them – everybody has a right to practice and pray how they wish (we're so fortunate in that way, living in Canada). But, for me, I couldn't get past the slightly hollow feeling I had when I "went through the motions" of participating in the traditional liturgy. I believe that Judaism will endure for many more millennia – and, as it does, it will inevitably adapt to new traditions and belief-systems. When Oraynu was founded nearly 50 years ago, it was this thinking that guided its founders.

I've enjoyed my experience as an Oraynu board member tremendously. I would encourage anyone who wishes to be more involved in helping achieve the aims of our congregation to reach out to any board member to chat about how they might become involved. There are so many ways to contribute to the Oraynu community, board involvement is just one.

Another way to contribute to Oraynu is to donate. We are a tiny congregation existing in the midst of much larger, conventional congregations – congregations with much bigger marketing and recruitment budgets. I believe that donations are another way we can all help to keep Oraynu's flame bright for the next generation of open-minded, progressive-leaning Jewish people and their partners, families and those whom they love. Thank you for being part of a movement that makes it possible.

Mark your calendars: **MOTHERS FOR MOTHERS**

When: Saturday, May 12 at 4:00 pm

Where: Members' home (Lawrence/Mt. Pleasant area)

The day before Mother's Day we'll gather for **High Tea and Havdallah** at the home of Kim Train and Chris Fuoco. We'll eat delicious baked goods and assemble treats for women in shelters so they may have a nice Mother's Day.

A *tikkun olam* event for members, their daughters and grand-daughters, sisters, mothers and friends. We request a donation of \$10 per person to cover the cost of what we will be providing to the shelters. Kindly RSVP to Roby.



Nizkor - We Remember

We acknowledge the following memorial anniversaries (yahrtzeits), to be marked by our members:

Content removed for privacy reasons.



Members are encouraged to add the names of family members to this list. Please take a moment to email the information for inclusion (date, name, relationship) to Roby Sadler at: robysadler@oraynu.org

Donations and Tributes

We gratefully acknowledge the following donations made recently to Oraynu from:

Content removed for privacy reasons.

* * * * *

Members and friends can choose to honour a person or a life cycle event, or contribute to one of our funds, by making a tax-receiptable donation to Oraynu. For more information, please see back inside cover.

Topics for Dinner Table or Car Talks

Want to inject a little more Judaism into the life of your family? Each issue, Rabbi Denise suggests a topic of conversation for your next dinner party, around your family table, or in the car on the way to Sunday school. Each issue of The Shofar presents a new topic.

In this issue, we invite you to discuss:

THE NATIONAL DAY OF UNPLUGGING (MAR. 9-10)

Sometime in the car or around the dinner table this week, commit to make your own sign:

I unplug for _____.

What's your reason to unplug?

Go to: nationaldayofunplugging.com/ for more info.

I UNPLUG TO

- Re-connect
- Cherish the moment
- Play, etc.

Make your own pledge!

REBOOT  nationaldayofunplugging.org

ORAYNU CHILDREN'S SCHOOL

Principal's Report by Steve Shabes

Heartwarming and fleetingly fast are terms that are not usually reserved for the passage of a Canadian winter—especially when arctic winds blow mightily from the north. But thanks to the meaningful actions of our students, staff, and volunteers at the school, the winter chill is not taking its toll on me. Our students' accomplishments give me a gratifying sense of how compassion builds a better world. For this principal, seeing our students explore their Humanistic Jewish values and watching them emerge as mature, responsible human beings is better than a dream of balmy, summer breezes in February. Read about what they have accomplished and your "winter blahs" will dissipate too, only to be replaced by a little warm, humanistic sunshine.

OraynuTots: We now have the capacity to grow in a new direction—with our new toddler teacher, Dinah, at the head of a fresh preschool program at the school called *OraynuTots: Preschoolers and Parents Learning Together*. We welcome Dinah! She has a warm personality and positive approach to early childhood education, which will make our new parent and toddler group a fun and engaging learning experience. This winter/spring, the school will run 5 Sunday morning sessions for toddlers aged 18 months to just under 4 years. Our Tots program will focus on holiday themes. Sandi Horwitz shares her wonderful pre-school music each session. Anyone who enjoys stories and music will love this class!

Lina's SK and JK: There's no better place to begin our quest for Humanistic Jewish affirmation of a kind and caring identity than in Lina's Kindergarten, where the students just held their biannual *Grandparents' Purim Party*. They welcomed their grandparents by baking hamantaschen together, singing songs and making Purim-related crafts. The pictures on page 12 tell the whole story. The class has happily welcomed two new students, Oscar and Mila.

Adi's Grade 1 and 2: Tu B'Shevat was a time for reinforcing the value of giving of oneself and of caring for the aged. Our Grade 1 and 2 children ambled off to Kensington Place Retirement Residence, a nearby Jewish seniors' home. In advance of their field trip, they hand-painted designs on terra cotta pots, transplanted baby tropicals into them, and learned songs about the importance of trees and nature. At Kensington Place, with Adi and Mendy's help, they presented their plants, gave a concert and had a friendly intergenerational conversation with a group of very impressed seniors. Not only did they make new friends, the children also learned about caring for nature.

Garry's Grade 3 and 4: At Purim, the class gave away 50 *mishloach manot* to our school community and friends. *Mishloach manot* is the exchanging of edible treats among friends and community members. The students were fine emissaries for spreading Jewish tradition and February warmth.

Miriam's Grade 5: Creatively assessing the values learned from the Torah through Humanistic Jewish eyes is the focus of the class, this term. In between cerebral activities like analyzing and discussing Torah stories, the Grade 5 students somehow managed to find the time to learn and perform a flawless Tu B'Shevat Seder for the school at our assembly. Miriam's class also melted away some of the winter chills at our Purim Festival by comparing the original story of Esther with a more perfect version. They went beyond reminding us of the threat that our people overcame in the story. They asked us to contemplate what might have happened in Shushan if the world had been a more perfect place to start. The Grade 5s are happy to welcome a new student, Jake, into their class.

Denise's Grade 6: The children have shown great interest and maturity in dealing with this sensitive and compassion-generating subject of the Holocaust. At the end of their unit, they visited the Holocaust Education Centre where they met a Holocaust survivor. They presented the Centre with a generous donation that they had collected within their own class.

Etti's Grade 7: After their massively successful tzedakah project collecting toiletries for a women's shelter, the soon-to-be Oraynu graduates settled into the core of their academic program. They have just finished researching their Humanistic Jewish role models which they will



present at their B'nai Mitzvah ceremony. We congratulate all of them on their hard work, collegial attitude and solid participation in tzedakah projects. This week, they will "give back" to the Oraynu community by hosting our *Torah Story Oneg Shabbat* where our theme will be *Sibling Rivalry and Favouritism*.

Youth Conclave: Whether they are busy transforming themselves into Purim Shpiel players, Purim booth managers, or just cutting out pictures for one of classes, our youth volunteers are all wonderful! In March, four teens and Etti will be travelling to Philadelphia, to join teens from all over North America at the annual HuJews Teen Conclave. Their theme will be *Legacy: Your Place in Jewish History*. Their community service activity will be for a health organization that advocates for people with HIV. They will also tour Independence Hall and historic Philadelphia.

Tu B'shevat Schoolwide Tzedakah Project: Our *Tu B'Shevat Loonie and Toonie Drive* generated enough revenue to buy and plant 9 trees through Shoresh at Bela Farms! The kids were thrilled to help plant a 20-acre Forest for the Future. They supported a green space that will provide valuable animal habitat, clean air, and a beautiful native forest!

Well, by the time you have finished reading this message, maybe winter hasn't quite passed yet. But I am venturing a guess that after reading about our children's fine accomplishments, you too might be feeling a little warmer inside.

See you at the school!

Steve

UPCOMING EVENTS AT ORAYNU CHILDREN'S SCHOOL

- Sunday, March 4: Gr. 6 Introduction to Bnai Mitzvah Meeting. 10:00 am–12:30 pm. Rm. 110.
- Sunday, March 11: Passover Food Drive Field Trip. Gr. 5, 6 and 7. National Council of Jewish Women Council House. 10:15–11:30 am.
- Friday, March 23 – Sunday, March 25: Teen and Young Adult Conclave. Washington, D.C. Teens (Gr. 8-12) & Young adults (up to 22).
- Sunday, March 25: Passover Family Seder. Borochov Cultural Centre, Social Hall, 272 Codsell Avenue (Allen Road/Sheppard). NO SCHOOL Sunday morning. Seder begins at 4:45 pm.
- Sunday, April 8: Yom Hashoah Remembrance. For upper grades. 12:00-12:30 pm. Rm. 107.
- Sunday, April 15: Yom Ha'atzmaut Assembly. All grades. 12:00-12:30p.m. Rm. 103.
- **Sunday, April 22: School Open House. 10:15 am-12:30 pm. Staff room. Bring friends!**
- Sunday, May 6: Last day of school. *Israel Field Day*. All grades. Rm. 103. 10:00 am–noon. Early dismissal,

ATTENTION THEATRE-GOERS!!

Harold Green Jewish Theatre Company presents "MIKVEH"

Tuesday, May 1 at 8 pm

Greenwin Theatre, Toronto Centre for the Arts, 5040 Yonge St

Inside the secretive world of the ritual bath, eight women's stories unfold in this sensitive depiction of religious observance and evolving feminist consciousness. An insightful examination of traditions and ritual, this hit Israeli play explores the ever-evolving position of women in Israeli society.

Tickets: \$45 for Oraynu members/\$60 otherwise

Contact Roby to reserve or sign up online.



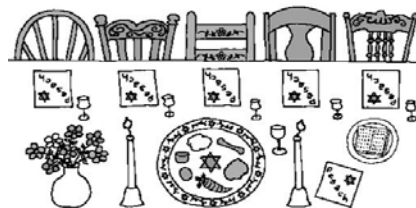
Limited seats - first come, first served!

FAMILY/SCHOOL PASSOVER SEDER

Sunday, March 25
4:45 pm
Followed by
Pot-luck Dinner

Borochov Centre
Social Hall
272 Codsell Ave.
(Sheppard/Wilson Hts)

Please join us for a
Humanistic Celebration of Passover



POT-LUCK DINNER CONTRIBUTION

Please choose one dish to serve 18 people, or two items to serve 9 people each.
SALAD or VEGETARIAN DISH or CHICKEN/BEEF or PRE-CUT DESSERT

NOTE: At our seder, we would like to provide you with a Jewish cultural, culinary experience. **Although your contributions do not need to be kosher, please do your best to bring Passover-style dishes.** Our goal is to celebrate the holiday with traditional Passover foods.

ALLERGY ALERT: *All potluck contributions must be free of nuts and poppy seeds. We have children with life-threatening allergies. Please avoid any cross-contamination with utensils that have contacted these foods when preparing dishes.*

Guests and friends welcome: adults \$15, students \$7, children ages 4 and under \$4

RSVP by email to Roby by Friday, March 9th: robby@oraynu.org

Please indicate numbers attending + pot-luck contribution(s).

School Families, please note: NO CLASSES ON THE MORNING OF THE SEDER

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

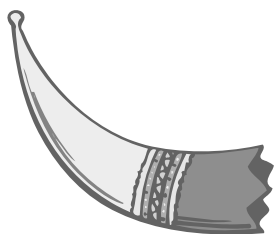
Looking to do a good deed? We need volunteers to do the following:

Copyright permissions: We need someone to help contact publishers to ask whether we can use their materials, let staff know the fees, and organize the paperwork. This would be of huge help to us and is a great way to help out from the comfort of your home!

Communications/coordination against anti-Semitism: Oraynu is joining other congregations in preparing communication and safety strategies in case of antisemitic graffiti, harassment, or violence. Of course, we hate to have to think about this, but given the rise in antisemitic expression, it is necessary. We need a person to work with the committee and communicate to staff/membership about initiatives. If you are someone who wants to help fight antisemitism and help your Oraynu community, this is a great way to make a difference.

General volunteers: Oraynu regularly calls on members for odd-jobs. If you have a talent or skill and feel we could be putting it to good use, let Rabbi Denise know! rabbidenise@oraynu.org

And ... 50th Anniversary Event Planners: 2019 marks fifty years since Oraynu (originally the Secular Jewish Association) was founded. We have come a long way and are planning a big celebration/reunion. Members of all ages are welcome to help out; we will need lots of volunteers. Contact Roby (robby@oraynu.org) if you are interested.



HIGH HOLIDAY REVIEW

Thank you to everyone who gave us input into the High Holiday rewrites. Revisions are underway and Rabbis Karen and Denise are doing their best to incorporate your ideas and feedback. Our eventual goal is a nicely bound book of services with Hebrew writing, transliteration and translation, and graphics.

ADDITIONAL MEMBER ACTIVITIES AND NOTICES

From Evelyn Goldstein:

On **Thursday, March 22nd**, we'll be meeting for an **afternoon of learning and eating**.

1. We'll attend a 1 hour lecture (Icons and Activists: Images of Motherhood) at noon at the Ryerson Image Centre, 33 Gould Street (e. of Yonge)
2. We'll lunch at Pumpnickel's on Bay Street (#161) at 1:15 pm
3. We'll take a 2:30 pm tour of these exhibits at the Ryerson Image Centre;
Collaboration: A Potential History of Photography Rich and Poor
Soon We Were En Route Again (1947-1963) Karachi Circular Railway

Join us for all or part of this event. RSVP to evelyngoldstein07@gmail.com

From Rita Small:

The Book Club will be meeting on **Tuesday, April 3rd**. Location TBA. Because the February session was cancelled, we are still going ahead with Mordechai Richler's book *Solomon Gursky was Here*. (Ed. Note: Gives you more time to read it!). Club members: watch your email shortly for a notice about this next session. If you have any questions, contact Rita at: rita.rose.small@gmail.com

From Reva Lawry:

The Medina Theatre Ensemble, a well-established group that performs plays and staged readings with a Jewish connection, is holding **auditions** for Neil Simon's THE ODD COUPLE (female version) on **Thurs. March 15 from 7 to 9 pm**. Male and female roles available. Director is well-known local performer Gloria Valentine. The play will be performed on April 23, 25 and May 1st. Rehearsals are Thursdays and Sundays in the Yonge/Davenport area. To book an audition time, please contact Reva at: stagework7@gmail.com or 416-445-8718.

SUCCINCT ANALYSIS OF WHY JEWS ARE HATED

British historian Simon Schama, in his recent book *Belonging*, defines a cycle that plays out repeatedly in Jewish history:

**“Because they are hated, Jews are expelled. Expulsion begets isolation.
Isolation begets resourcefulness. Resourcefulness begets wealth.
Wealth begets power. Power begets suspicion.
Suspicion begets hate. And the cycle begins anew.”**

(Excerpted from Jonathan Kay's article "When hate goes viral." *National Post*. Oct. 28-17.)

COMMUNITY NOTICE

**TORONTO JEWISH FILM SOCIETY at Miles Nadal JCC,
Spadina/Bloor**

Sundays, two showings: 4:00 pm and 7:30 pm | Introduced and discussed by noted speakers

\$15 General Admission (Mention "ORAYNU" at Box Office: \$12)/ \$10 Young Adults (age 18-35)

Box Office opens one hour before the screening start time. Tickets are cash only and subject to availability.

April 8: HANNA'S JOURNEY (HANNAS REISE)

A co-presentation with City Shul, Spotlight on Israeli Culture and Consulate General of Israel in Toronto

Hanna, an ambitious Berliner, travels to Israel to advance her career, confiding to her fiancé that helping Jews scores points." Her cynicism is shortlived, as sparks fly in this charming romantic comedy.



How to Respond to Acts of Anti-Semitism & Hate Crimes

By MARK SCHARF

On February 11th, at Rabbi Handlarski's request, I attended a meeting of the Emergency Response Committee (ERC), a subcommittee of the Downtown Jewish Community Council, Community Response Committee at the Miles Nadal JCC. The immediate concern of the ERC was an anticipated demonstration by an alt-right group, scheduled to take place in Toronto on February 24th. We learned at the meeting that the planned demonstration had been cancelled.

The ERC has three goals:

1. To lead and coordinate Urgent Action by providing a forum for planning, coordinating, and responding to anti-Semitism and other acts of hate and violence against the Jewish community in Toronto.
2. To facilitate and participate in community-wide response to disasters occurring elsewhere across the globe.
3. To be a Communications Hub.

There were three primary speakers who addressed the issues of hate, hate crimes, threats to the Jewish Community and Police/Community Response.: Dr. Karen Mock, Special Advisor and Facilitator, Evan Balgord, journalist and researcher of hate crimes, and Toronto Police representatives. Each attendee received folders of literature that addressed these topics.

To my mind, the central theme of the meeting was coordination of a response by the Toronto Jewish community to perceived hate crimes and alt-right type

anti-semitic demonstrations. The police representatives emphasized the fact that if anyone in the community saw what he or she perceived to be a hate crime, it was to be immediately reported to the police division in which the act or acts took place. It meant that to speed up a response by the police it was important to know the phone number of your local police division.

It is also important to know what is a hate crime. Not every anti-semitic utterance or act against a member of a minority is a hate crime. To be a hate crime the act itself has to be a crime under the Criminal Code of Canada. The motivation for the act or acts may be hate, and that aspect of the act or acts is then taken into account by the Court in sentencing once a conviction is registered. So for example, an assault against someone in a minority of the population in and of itself is a crime, but it may not be motivated by hate, and so may not constitute a hate crime.

The ideal organizational set up for a coordinated community response would be for each synagogue or Jewish organization to have a "communications director" who would be notified by the person who saw the acts complained of after the police were called. That person would then contact other community communications directors and members of his or her community, if he or she saw fit to do so. The response protocol sheet we received headed "Who ya gonna call???" with contact info is most helpful.

WHO YA GONNA CALL???

Police — Know your division!

DJCC—Community Response Committee

- Nick Gunz 647-863-1634 djcc.erc@gmail.com

CIJA - Security Advisor/Stakeholder Relations

- Gerry Almandrades—416-849-1012 galmandredes@cija.ca
- Marlee Koplowitz—416-634-3066 mkoplowitz@cija.ca

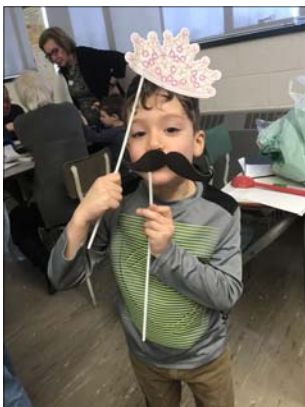
B'nai Brith—League for Human Rights

- Michael Mostyn—416-633-6224—mmostyn@bnaibirth.ca
- Anti-Crime Hotline—416-633-3692 1-880-892-BNAI(2624)



PHOTOS FROM OUR JK-SK GRANDPARENTS PURIM PARTY

On February 11th, the School held a Grandparents Purim Party. The goal of this Family Education program was to have everyone learning together—grandparents, parents and children! They all experienced three Purim traditions: telling the story from the *megillah*, the baking of *hamantaschen*, and the exchange with other children of edible treats known as *mishloach manot*.



Special thanks to teacher Lina Vishnevsky for sharing these wonderful photos.

"What does Secular Humanistic Judaism do for you? How is it working?"

By PAUL GOLIN, SHJ Executive Director

Dec. 29, 2017

As a movement, we must be mission-driven. Secular Humanistic Judaism has to work for people. We know it's working when we see it improve people's lives or help people improve the lives of others.

A big part of our job at the Society for Humanistic Judaism is to articulate how it works, especially for those who are not yet aware that it might benefit them.

Thankfully, I've heard many wonderful answers for how Secular Humanistic Judaism enriches people's lives. (And because we're a *Jewish* movement, we of course have multiple opinions!) Most answers fall into the following broad categories:

Identity - "It's just who I am." For many of us who connect to Jewish culture, history, holidays, and traditions but not to religious theology, it was an ah-ha moment to learn we can keep the best parts of Judaism while openly celebrating our secular and humanistic beliefs. It helps us identify where we stand in Jewish history and in the current Jewish communal landscape.

Inclusion - "My whole family can participate even though we're not all Jewish." A strong Jewish cultural identity is not threatened by celebrating other cultures as well. Ours is the only denomination with zero barriers for interfaith/intercultural households. We strive to incorporate and honor the full diversity of today's families, including multiracial, LGBTQ, neurodiverse, single-parent, individual, and all other household configurations.

Meaning - "It makes me feel good." Marking lifecycle events, celebrating Jewish holidays, practicing rituals that connect us to our history and tradition, can all add meaning to our lives. Music moves us. Connecting to the bigger picture helps put our own individual challenges into perspective. Doing all of it with beautiful words that we actually believe when we say them: priceless.

Learning - "I don't have to leave science and reason at the door." The search for truth is an ideal in our movement. Many folks I spoke with were still profoundly impacted by the intellectual genius of our founder, Rabbi Sherwin Wine, even ten years after his death. The Secular Humanistic Judaism clergy he trained, and who went on to train more clergy and leaders, inherited his vision of an *honest* Judaism, embracing of the search for truth even if that truth may discomfort us. It informs our approach to adult education, how we educate our children Jewishly, and our innovative cultural bar and bat mitzvah programs.

Advocacy - "We stand up for what we believe." A huge swath of American Jewry shares our worldview, with little to no voice within the organized Jewish community, so speaking openly in pluralistic Jewish settings about what we do and do not believe is central to our mission. Within the larger society, non-theistic viewpoints are often denigrated, and we are uniquely positioned to take both a Jewish and secular approach to the issues we care about most, such as the separation of church and state.

Community - "I simply enjoy being with these people." There is a benefit to being part of a Jewish community, beyond doing Jewish just with friends and family. To share joy at times of celebration and to find comfort during times of sorrow. Coming together with like-minded people toward a collective purpose is an enriching experience that we hope to offer to many more individuals and families in 2018.

All of these reasons resonate for me personally. How about you? Did I miss any? If you're on Facebook, weigh in about what you find most resonant on the Humanistic Judaism Discussion Group online poll.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/humanisticjudaism/permalink/472021046525871/>

Paul Golin was last in Toronto in May 2015 for a talk we sponsored on intermarriage and the Jewish future.

On the weekend of June 1-3, he will be coming to Oraynu for an SHJ-sponsored visit. He will be our special guest speaker at an Oneg Shabbat on June 1, attend our School's Bnai Mitzvah on June 2nd and also meet with the Board for strategic discussions. More details to follow.

Don't miss this opportunity to meet with SHJ's very wise and fearless Executive Director who promotes secular humanistic Judaism everywhere and in every way he can. We are so lucky to have him at the helm of the Society.

CELEBRATING A HUMANISTIC PASSOVER

**This year
the first night
of Passover is
March 30th.**

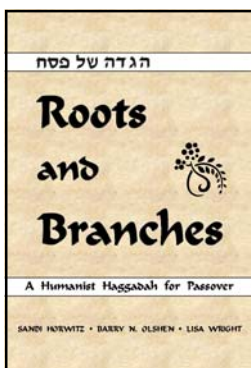
Humanistic Jews view the biblical Exodus story as one of the most powerful myths of the Jewish people, a tale that relates the courage and determination of a people fleeing slavery for freedom. Humanistic Jews question the traditional explanations of Pesach. There is no evidence that the Exodus occurred or that the Hebrew people were in Egypt in the numbers described. So what is meant by a Humanistic Passover celebration? For one thing, Humanistic Jews continue the tradition of telling the Exodus story, but they accept that it is a story, not history. A secular Passover celebration emphasizes the themes of human freedom and dignity, the power of human beings to change their destiny, and the power of hope. Humanistic Jews recognize the power and value of many episodes in Jewish history, not only ancient times. Passover thus becomes a celebration of other times and events when people have left their homes for a new life and where human dignity and courage are honored. This is what makes it one of the most meaningful and enduring Jewish holidays today.

Events of the twentieth century record the courage of millions of Jews who left the land of their birth, escape persecution and seek freedom in Palestine and the land of Israel. Passover recognizes the struggles of millions of people to overcome oppression to achieve freedom and equality. The immigration from Eastern Europe to America, perhaps the largest Jewish Exodus ever, is a powerful part of a Humanistic Passover. Even more significant, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising against the Nazis in 1943 began on the first night of Passover; including a commemoration of this struggle provides a meaningful true story of a people fight for dignity, using their own power to control their destinies. The departure of Refuseniks from the former Soviet Union for Israel and America, the successes of the labor, Civil Rights and women's movements in the twentieth century – all of these find a place in the Humanistic Haggadah.

Seder literally means "order," as in the "order of events" at the Passover dinner. Most celebrations reflect the ancient and traditional celebration of the holiday and include new meanings for today. Humanistic Jews add modern stories of human struggles and connect these with current issues and concerns. To the listing of the 10 ancient plagues, a cultural Seder might add modern plagues that we are battling today. The ancient tale becomes the non-theistic story of a people's quest for freedom, providing a symbol for later struggles for freedom.

To the symbols on the traditional Seder plate (haroset, bitter herbs, roasted egg, parsley, lamb shankbone), the Humanist Jewish seder plate might include two other symbols: an orange, representing the historical marginalization of those in the lesbian and homosexual communities (it may also suggest the fruitfulness for all Jews who contribute to Judaism) and a potato, recognizing the suffering and starvation of those in concentration camps during the Holocaust. Some Humanistic Jews add a cup of water for Miriam next to the cup of wine for Elijah, again symbolizing the role of women within the history of the Jewish people.

The retelling of our modern struggles for freedom from oppression contribute to make Passover a more meaningful and powerful community celebration for Humanistic Jews.



Celebrate Passover with Oraynu's own Haggadah!

ROOTS AND BRANCHES: A Humanist Haggadah for Passover

By Sandi Horwitz, Barry Olshen and Lisa Wright

Oraynu's haggadah offers a unique way to celebrate this holiday of freedom as the ancient story is paralleled with modern exodus experiences, and told through moving prose, poetry and graphics.

50 pages; includes Hebrew text, transliteration and music

\$10/copy

To order: contact Roby at 416-385-3910 or robby@oraynu.org

ORAYNU CONGREGATION FOR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM

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WHAT WE BELIEVE ...

- ◆ A Jew is someone who identifies with the history, culture, and fate of the Jewish people.
- ◆ Judaism encompasses the civilization created by the Jewish people. It includes art and music, folk culture, and the treasured masterpieces of our great writers and thinkers, from the Bible to the present.
- ◆ We have the power and responsibility to shape our own lives independent of supernatural authority.
- ◆ Our ethics and morality serve human needs. We participate in *tikkun olam* (building a better world) for all people.
- ◆ We strive to express our Jewishness in a manner consistent with our beliefs.
- ◆ We stand in solidarity with the State of Israel and with Jewish communities in Toronto and around the world.
- ◆ The freedom and dignity of the Jewish people must go hand in hand with the freedom and dignity of all people.
- ◆ We warmly welcome into our community all those who share our values and who are connected to the Jewish people, whether by birth, adopted identity or by family relationship.

ORAYNU TRIBUTE DONATIONS/CARDS

Members and friends can choose to honour a person or an event (memorial, birth, birthday, bar/bat mitzvah, marriage, anniversary, achievement, etc.) by making a tax-receiptable donation of \$18 or more to Oraynu. An **Oraynu Tribute Card** will be sent to the person or family of the honouree and the donation will be also recognized in *The Shofar*.

To arrange this, please contact Roby at:

416-385-3910 | roby@oraynu.org

PASTORAL AND EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE

Jewish Guidance is a service that many of our members expect from their congregational leaders. Oraynu provides part-time services of:

- Principal Steve Shabes for guidance about Jewish education for children and youth
- Rabbi Eva Goldfinger for guidance regarding life cycle transitions and conversion
- Rabbi Eva Goldfinger, Rabbi Denise Handlarski and Rabbi Karen Levy for pastoral guidance regarding intermarriage, Jewish practices, adult education and ethics

Guidance is offered, but not counseling or tutoring, which can be provided on a fee-for-service basis. **For referral to the appropriate person, contact Roby at: 416-385-3910 or roby@oraynu.org/**

GET INVOLVED!

- Chesed Circle (Sunshine Committee) - Roby Sadler: roby@oraynu.org
- Fund Raising Oraynu (FRO) - Chair, Kevin Fine: kevinfine@sympatico.ca
- Tikkun Olam Oraynu - Rabbi Denise: rabbidenise@oraynu.org
- New Member Welcome – Rabbi Denise: as above
- Syrian Refugee Sponsorship Committee - Chair, Cara Wilkie: caralw@yahoo.com
- School Committee - Chair, Erin Winocur ewinocur@rogers.com

**THE SHOFAR is a bi-monthly publication of
Oraynu Congregation for Humanistic Judaism.
EDITOR: SANDI HORWITZ**

Oraynu Congregation is part of a worldwide movement, affiliated with Society for Humanistic Judaism and the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism.

Oraynu Children's School gratefully acknowledges funding support from:



Check website
for updates:
oraynu.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Thursday, March 1 at 7:00 pm** (More info: see p. 3)
ADULT EDUCATION WITH RABBI EVA GOLDFINGER
Topic: Winter Festivals from Chanukah to Purim
Location: Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Ave (Wilson Hts/Sheppard)

- Saturday, March 3 at 1:00 pm** (p. 3)
SHOW YOUR HEART—Cooking demo/lunch with our Syrian family
Location: Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Ave

- Friday March 9 at Sundown - Saturday, March 10 at Sundown** (p. 3)
DAY OF UNPLUGGING
Location: Wherever you are!

- Thursday, April 5 at 7:00 pm** **ADULT EDUCATION WITH RABBI EVA** (p. 3)
Topic: Spring and Summer Festivals from Pesach to Shavuot
Location: Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Ave

- Sunday, March 25 at 4:45 pm** **FAMILY/SCHOOL SEDER** (p. 9)
Location: Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Ave

- Friday, March 30 at 6:00 pm** **ADULT/TEEN FIRST NIGHT SEDER** (p. 3)
Location: Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Ave

- Friday, April 13 at 7:30 pm** **YOM HASHOAH PROGRAM/MEMORIAL** (p. 4)
Location: Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Ave

- Sunday, April 15 at 10:15 am** **INTRO TO HUMANISTIC JUDAISM** (p. 4)
Location: St. Andrew's Jr. High School, 131 Fenn Ave. (Bayview/York Mills)

- Sunday, April 22 at 10:15 am** **CHILDREN'S SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE** (p. 4)
Location: St. Andrew's Jr. High School, 131 Fenn Ave. (Bayview/York Mills)

- Sunday, April 22 at 7:30 pm** **CELEBRATING ISRAEL'S 70TH BIRTHDAY** (p. 4)
Location: Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Ave (Wilson Hts/Sheppard)

- MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**
- Tuesday, May 1 at 8:00 pm** **THEATRE NIGHT "Mikveh"** (p. 9)
Location: Greenwin Theatre, Toronto Centre for the Arts, 5040 Yonge St.

- Saturday, May 12 at 4 pm** **MOTHERS FOR MOTHERS HIGH TEA/HAVDALLAH** (p. 5)
Location: Members' home on the Lawrence/Mt. Pleasant area

For all events,
kindly RSVP
to Roby:
416-385-3910 or
robby@oraynu.org
*For potlucks,
indicate your
contribution and
number attending.*



For more Oraynu news and conversation, log onto our Facebook page. FB is a great place to connect with fellow members, share ideas, and stay up-to-date on events. We'll be posting thoughts frequently and hope you chime in with opinions and relevant links of your own. Please 'like' the page, share it with friends and keep it lively.