



The Shofar

Website:
oraynu.org

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Shalom everyone —

Spring is here, finally — I think! Time to put a literal “spring” in your step, and plan to attend our upcoming events.

Our first event will celebrate mothers and spring with our “Mothers for Mothers” tea and havdallah on May 12th. It's a *tikkun olam* event where your donation will go toward providing treats for mothers and children in shelters to help them celebrate Mother's Day.

We are a sponsoring organization once again for the Shavuot all-night festival at the Miles Nadal JCC where Rabbi Denise is presenting two talks. Go for the learning ... go for the cheesecake!

There are two events of interest planned for fans of musical theatre and the Jewish composers who broadly influenced it: a showing of PBS' documentary “Broadway Musicals: The Jewish Legacy” on May 24th, and then a presentation by member Linda Beck on Friday, June 15th entitled “Jews, Jazz and Jive.”

Paul Golin, Executive Director of the Society for Humanistic Judaism, is coming to visit us once again! He will speak at our Shabbat program on June 1st on “The Future of Progressive Judaism”, attend our Bnai Mitzvah the next day, meet with our Board and Staff and sustaining members later on Saturday and then attend our booth in the Marketplace at Na'amat Canada's Israel Day Festival on June 3rd. We all will have a very busy weekend!

Our Annual General Meeting will be on June 13th. Following all the usual business matters and election of the Board for 2018-19, we will brainstorm ideas for how to mark our 50th anniversary in 2019.

If you've been part of, or interested in, our member-led activities, check out page 10. There is info from Rita Small on what's happening with the book club. And, Evelyn Goldstein has organized three more outings: (1) to see the cherry blossoms at High Park, (2) to view one of the films at the Jewish Film Festival, and (3) to visit the Leslieville Farmers Market. Thanks, ladies, for all your hard work!

Besides our usual reports, there are other items of interest in this issue. To get you excited about Paul Golin's upcoming talk, check out the article “I Don't Care About Jewish Tribal Loyalty – And That Doesn't Make Me Anxious.” Intrigued? See p. 15. Longtime member Denise Lawee is a social worker by profession and has written an important piece on the subject of “Judaism and Self-Care.” Teen Jennie Morris reports on the recent HuJews Conclave in Philadelphia, and there is a contribution from Ted Berger on his late uncle's sacrifice for Israel. Plus, photos from various events are included, too!

Look forward to seeing you soon.

Sandi

Sandi Horwitz, Editor

Members and guests are welcome to submit articles, letters and photographs. Please email to horwitz@rogers.com/

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



A lot of people who are Humanists struggle with gratitude. We may think, "to whom, exactly, am I supposed to be grateful?"

A couple of weeks ago a friend of mine awoke in the night to the smell of smoke. She yelled for her partner and together they got their three children, one still a small baby, out of the house. As they looked back, they saw smoke all around. The fire fighters said they thought they made it out with about thirty seconds to spare. They were in bare feet, underwear, and too little clothing for the cold night. They lost everything they owned.

As I heard about this, the story touched my own terror. It made me think of how I would feel if I lost everything I owned. The fire had spread from the neighbouring house. How would I feel about the person who started it? Would I be angry? Filled with anguish and despair? Overcome with the challenge of rebuilding and finding a place to live in the meanwhile? Grief over all the mementos lost?

I don't think any of us can know how we'd feel in this situation, but I know how my friend and her family have reacted: a beautiful, deep, overwhelming sense of gratitude. The mother/grandmother of the family puts it this way: "I breathe in and breathe out fall on your knees gratitude that everyone is ok." I reached out to the woman, this mother of three who is suddenly without a home, and all she has to offer is gratitude that her kids are safe, gratitude to her friends, family, and community who have come together to quickly raise clothing, funds, and other necessities to get them through this time. All I get from these people who have a right to be bitter is gratitude and more gratitude.

I'm really touched and inspired by this family of strong and courageous women. They would be forgiven for being grouchy, angry, bitter, resentful, jealous, spiteful, and hardened by this. They would be justified. But they are choosing to focus on the positive that comes out of bad situations. What a gift that is to themselves and those kids, who will learn about grit and resilience from this. They will never forget this time.

Many of us might be walking around feeling grumpy, angry, bitter, and we might feel justified in that. We might have real reasons to feel that way. However, for many of us, what-

ever it is that we are dealing with also likely has a positive side. The more we can focus on that, the more we can grow in our positivity and resilience, the better the outcome for ourselves and the people around us.

I say this with our community in mind because I know a lot of people who are Humanists struggle with gratitude. We may think, "to whom, exactly, am I supposed to be grateful?" People who believe in the supernatural force often called God have someone to thank, and someone they can believe made any good things happen, or has a plan for when bad things happen. This isn't my belief, but I really do try to practice gratitude daily. I am not grateful to God. I am grateful to the world, to my family and community, to my children, to myself, for the beauty and joy that I find all around me.

There is lots in my life that I wouldn't describe as beautiful or joyous. I spend a lot of time commuting. I really hate sitting for long periods of time and I really dislike driving, and yet I spend about ten to fifteen hours a week exactly this way. Sometimes on my commute I'm dealing with weather, or aggressive drivers, or construction, none of which is wonderful. When I find myself in this situation or other unpleasant ones — someone being hurtful, an unexpected and expensive home repair, all of the things that fill our lives and can make us angry or unhappy, I try to ask myself: "what is awesome about this?"

I don't like driving but I get to listen to audiobooks and podcasts that stimulate me. Someone says something that hurts my feelings. What is awesome about that? They are letting me know something about myself that I can confront and perhaps help me grow. They are letting me know something about them that can heighten my empathy (mean people are usually just angry or fearful themselves), or can help me know who in my life is truly trustworthy and good for me. Something in my home breaks? I'm lucky to have a home, and people in it who I love so much, and these instances are small inconveniences in the grand scheme of things.

The more I practice this intentional form of gratitude, the more I am able to let go of the feelings of negativity (Continued on p. 6)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, May 12
4:00 pm

Members' home
Mt. Pleasant and
Lawrence area

MOTHERS FOR MOTHERS Havdalah and High Tea

This is a tea party in celebration of mothers! On the eve of Mother's Day we'll gather at a members' home in celebration of mothers, sip tea and enjoy lovely edibles.

We request a donation of \$10 per person (\$25 per family, up to 5 people) to be paid forward as treats for women and children in shelters, to be delivered on Mother's Day itself. Donations are tax-receiptable.

Come to this *tikkun olam* event with your kids, your families, or any moms you wish to honour. Dads or other men wishing to come to tea are also most welcome!

RSVPs a must!



Saturday, May 19
8:00 pm-8:00 am

Miles Nadal JCC
750 Spadina
(at Bloor)

SHAVUOT AT MILES NADAL JCC

Tikkun Leil Shavuot—The All-Night Jewish Learning Festival

(Oraynu is a sponsoring organization)

Come find out why this is Rabbi Denise's favourite community event of the whole year! Speakers and workshops on everything from meditation to Yiddish to bible study to cooking. More than 50 sessions! Stay for an hour or all night. The snacks are great too... And it's all FREE!

Rabbi Denise is leading two sessions:

8:30 pm - #metoo: Jewish text, pretext, and context

In this session we will discuss texts that involve women and sexual coercion or violence, gender-based violence in the Jewish community, and what we can do to prevent and end it.

9:30 pm - The biblical suspected adulteress and #metoo

In chevruta-style we will study the biblical treatment of the "Sotah" (suspected adulteress) and discuss it in the context of contemporary feminism and gender politics.

No RSVPs needed

Event Info: www.mnjcc.org/tikkun (scroll down page)

Thursday, May 24
7:30 pm

Members' home
Avenue Rd. and
Wilson area

FILM VIEWING: "Broadway Musicals: A Jewish Legacy"

Narrated by Joel Grey, this PBS documentary explores the unique role of Jewish composers and lyricists in the creation of the modern American musical. It features interviews and conversations with some of the greatest composers and writers of the Broadway stage, including Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, George and Ira Gershwin, Lorenz Hart, Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein II, Sheldon Harnick, Jerry Bock, Leonard Bernstein, Stephen Sondheim, Stephen Schwartz and many others. *2012; 84 minutes.*

As there is limited seating, we can only accommodate members.

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

Friday, June 1
7:30 pm

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

SHABBAT AND ... TALK WITH PAUL GOLIN

Executive Director, Society for Humanistic Judaism

The Future of Progressive Judaism: Intercultural. Ignostic. Innovation.

As more people than ever disaffiliate from traditional religious institutions, create multicultural/interfaith households, and seek meaning in new ways, what kind of reinvention might be necessary on the part of progressive Judaism to remain relevant and engage more newcomers?

Join Paul for an interactive conversation exploring the relationship between belief, "belonging," ritual practice, boundaries, and other shifting aspects of communal life, and share what is still personally meaningful from your own heritage and tradition as we consider the future that we want to build.



Non-members welcome: \$15

Sunday, June 3
Various times

Wood Valley Park
Bathurst and
Rutherford Rd.
area
(South of Lebovic JCC)

ORAYNU AT NA'AMAT CANADA'S ISRAEL DAY

Calling all volunteers! This event draws over 2000 people, and we are excited to show all attendees who we are and what we do. We will have a table which will need staffing in 2-3 hour shifts. We need Oraynuniks to help us promote our unique high holiday celebrations, our terrific school, our varied programs and more.

Come help us get people excited about Oraynu! Interested?
Please email rabbidenise@oraynu.org or Roby at: robby@oraynu.org



Friday, June 15
7:30 pm

Borochov Centre
(as above)

SHABBAT AND ... "JEWS, JAZZ AND JIVE"

Presentation by Oraynunik Linda Beck

The Roaring Twenties saw an explosion of popular music in North America, much of it of lasting quality. Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin, George Gershwin and Cole Porter are among the songwriters who built their careers as Broadway's theatre district developed during the 1920s. Most of them started out on Tin Pan Alley, the song publishers' marketplace. And all of them contributed to building the unique identity of American musical theatre.

Since retiring from a career teaching English, Linda Beck has directed her energies to the study of Broadway musicals and their creators. Linda has studied, and teaches about, Cole Porter, Fred Astaire, Rodgers & Hart, and Shakespeare on Broadway, among other topics. She has taught courses for Later Life Learning at the University of Toronto and for the Life Institute at Ryerson University, and has lectured for George Brown College Seniors Association and Lifelong Learning Mississauga.

Non-members welcome: \$15

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday,
June 13
7:30 pm

Open to Members Only

The Board invites you to join us for to discuss the past year at Oraynu and hear about upcoming plans. Following the Board reports, discussion and election of Officers for the 2018-19 year, we will brainstorm ideas for Oraynu's 50-year anniversary next year. And then, shmoozing and refreshments, as always. Don't miss it.



Official AGM notice follows

Kindly RSVP

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



156 Duncan Mill Road Suite 14
Toronto, Ontario M3B 3N2
416-385-3910
www.oraynu.org

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN of the Annual General Meeting of Oraynu Community for Secular Humanistic Judaism (the "Corporation") to be held at Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Avenue, Toronto, Ontario on **Wednesday, the 13th day of June of the year 2018, at 7:30 pm, Toronto time**, for the following purposes:

1. To approve the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on June 13, 2017.
2. To receive reports from the Officers of the Corporation
3. To elect directors of the Corporation to hold office from July 1, 2018 until June 30, 2019 or until their successors are elected or appointed; and,
4. To consider such other business as may properly come before the meeting. Any additional agenda items must be submitted to the Secretary by May 31st.

DATED at Toronto, Ontario, this 26th day of April, 2018
Sue Drohan, Secretary

Tuesday, July 10
6:30 pm

Members' home
Avenue Rd. and
Wilson area

Mark your calendars!

ANNUAL SUMMER BBQ & POTLUCK SOCIAL

Join your Oraynu friends for a summer evening of food, fun and shmoozing.

- Burgers, dogs and fixings will be provided by Oraynu
- Appetizers, sides/salads and desserts are potluck
- You may also add some wine/beer to the festivities
- Bring along a lawn chair to supplement our seating

Non-members welcome: \$15 + potluck contribution.

RSVPs a must.



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

Rabbi's Message ... Continued from p. 2)

more quickly and more fully. Frankly, it's a better way to go through life. I am working on my own resilience. I can be too cynical, too grouchy, too judgmental. That isn't great for the people around me, and it isn't great for me. I want to be a force of light and positivity for others, and the best way to be that is to feel lightness and positivity within.

Humanistic Jews have the wisdom of both Judaism and Humanism to draw from, and there is lots in both about becoming the best version of oneself. I see it as a Jewish responsibility to take care of myself and to take care of others. In the Hebrew bible and Talmud we are told to honour our parents, love the stranger, and respect our bodies and health.

In Humanism, we are told that the cosmos is chaos, and so whatever good there is on earth is ours to create and enjoy. We believe life is limited to our time here, thus it is short, so we might as well find a way to see the good in it.

I am not asking you to keep a gratitude journal, take up meditation, or stop and ask yourself "what is awesome

about this?" every time something goes awry. However, I've tried all of these things out and believe that some kind of practice of gratitude, which will help foster an overall attitude of gratitude, is a good thing to do. Gratitude helps us experience joy more fully, and helps us minimize the damage of fear and pain. Gratitude can strengthen relationships (think of the impact of someone pointing out all they appreciate about you! We tend to focus on only the things we wish we could change). Gratitude can make us healthier, happier, more giving, more gracious. If you're a Humanist who has felt excluded from a practice of gratitude because you don't believe in anyone pulling all the strings, recognize that the puller of strings is you, and you deserve to feel proud and grateful for all the good you create.

I remain, as always, grateful to you, Oraynu. You bring meaning, joy, fun, community, and ritual into my life. You push me to be my best. You inspire me with your strength and sense of intellectual curiosity and fun. You are, we are all together, pretty awesome.

Denise

EXCITING NEWS ABOUT RABBI DENISE

Oraynu is excited to announce that our very own Rabbi Denise has been accepted to next year's cohort of Rabbis Without Borders. This is a leadership development program aimed at helping rabbis take their communities into the future, fostering dynamic, creative, engaging, and meaningful Judaism. Only 20% of applicants to the program are accepted. Rabbi Denise is also the first representative of Humanistic Judaism in the program.



During her two-years as a fellow with RWB, Rabbi Denise will receive mentoring and participate in webinars and retreats. She is excited to learn from her rabbinic colleagues and also share how we do things in Humanistic Judaism. Mazel tov to Denise — we look forward to hearing all about it!

ORAYNU IN THE NEWS

Our Haggadah, *Roots and Branches* (written by members Sandi Horwitz, Barry Olshen and Lisa Wright), was featured prominently in an article, "Alternative Seder Traditions Flourish in Canada," written by Matthew Gindin which appeared in the Canadian Jewish News' Spring 2018 glossy magazine *Canadian Jewish Life*.

To view an excerpt of this article:

1. Go to our website, www.oraynu.org
2. Click LINKS on the top menu
3. Then in the dropdown, click 'Oraynu in the News'

NOTES FROM THE BOARD

Mark Brender
President



We know that Oraynu has a unique place in the Canadian Jewish landscape because we have the facts to prove it. Of 27 Jewish communities with membership in the Society for Humanistic Judaism (SHJ), Oraynu is the only one north of the 49th parallel. I've often wondered whether we should feel proud or lonely. Probably both. But our obvious biases aside, it still seems like a situation that needs changing.

If time and capacity for good works were limitless -- and how great a world would that be? -- we could set up an Oraynu Canadian expansion committee (Branchplantaynu™) to carry the word beyond Toronto and encourage others to nail up an Oraynu shingle. Oraynu-Thunder Bay, Oraynu-Flin Flon, Oraynu-Kelowna...that last one has a nice ring to it. We could be a franchise like Freshii, empowering local leaders to spread feel-good, taste-good authenticity. Or it could be a Lego model: we provide the concept and some building blocks based on our 50 years of experience so others can click the pieces together in a way they like.

Ok, so seriously...who's in?

Crickets. Why is it so quiet around here?

It might be because the board and staff at Oraynu ask that "who's in" question a lot, most often in the form of: *Who, exactly, is going to do all this stuff?* Far from lack of engagement, it speaks more to how much we have going on as a community. I'm not sure about anyone else, but the past year has felt busier than most. Those who have photographic memories for Shofar articles may recall a piece from May-June 2017 around transparency and improving our communication with members around Oraynu's finances. At that time, we reported we were in a strong financial position overall but had been running concerning annual deficits for four years running. Since then, along with our regular staff-led programming and a handful of wonderful new initiatives, the board and staff have put in a great deal of effort to improve those financial numbers, both by decreasing expenses where we could and continuing to grow our revenues.

I'm happy to report the efforts have been a success. We are expecting to roughly break-even for this fiscal year -- please join us at our annual general meeting on June 13 for more details (see pg. 5 of the Shofar) -- and have put ourselves in an even stronger position going forward next year and in years to follow. There are too many people to thank individually whose work, ideas and energy have made this possible, but suffice to say the list includes our tireless rabbis; our school principal (Steve, take a bow!) and the school committee; community development coordinator Evelyn Goldstein; board members; all those who stepped up to becoming Oraynu's first Sustaining Members; other very generous donors, and so many others.

It's worth remembering that within the SHJ, Oraynu is one of the strongest and largest congregations. Our size demands that we continue to professionalize how Oraynu is run while staying true to our community roots; that we provide exceptional value to our members while ensuring Oraynu's staff is compensated fairly; and that we always strive to foster an environment where we can all be part of a Jewish community that fits with how we live our lives and feels like home.

It was a great idea when Oraynu started small 49 years ago as the Secular Jewish Association and it's a good idea today -- and definitely worth celebrating. Planning is already underway for Oraynu's 50th anniversary celebration next summer and we'd love for you to be involved. More to come on that front at our AGM as well. As for the next 50, Branchplantaynu™ here we come.

**MITZVAHS
&
MILESTONES**

Content removed for privacy reasons

Donations and Tributes

We gratefully acknowledge the following donations made recently to Oraynu.

Content removed for privacy reasons

Members and friends of Oraynu may choose to honour a birth, marriage, milestone birthday, special accomplishment or make a memorial tribute. See inside back cover for more info.

Meet our New Members

We are pleased to welcome our new members:



Content removed for privacy reasons

May the warmth of the Oraynu community encircle you and your families.

Nizkor - We Remember

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

Content removed for privacy reasons

May their memories be a blessing.

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 and relationship) to Roby Sadler at: robysadler@oraynu.org



IMPORTANT ORAYNU BOOK CLUB NEWS

Reported by RITA SMALL

We are pressing pause until the fall and will resume after the High Holidays. Rabbi Denise will lead our first book discussion. The book will be announced this summer, so you'll have lots of time to read it.

At this meeting, Rabbi Denise will also assist us in:

- setting out the full year's calendar and making book selections for the year
- setting dates for meetings and signing up hosts for the meetings
- setting out general rules



Please start thinking about book titles you would like to recommend for our consideration. If you have any questions, email me at: rita.rose.small@gmail.com/

THREE MEMBER-LED OUTINGS

Planned by EVELYN GOLDSTEIN

Saturday, May 5 at 11:00 am at High Park:

Meet at the park entrance at Parkside Dr. and High Park Blvd.

View the cherry blossoms located near Hillside Gardens and check out the zoo on Deer Pen Road. Great family event. Information available at <http://www.highparktoronto.com/zoo.php>

Friday, May 11 - 4:00 pm showing at Empress Walk, 5095 Yonge St. (at Empress):

View the film "An Act of Defiance" - a Jewish Film Festival selection. Tickets may be purchased online.

SYNOPSIS: In 1963, Nelson Mandela and nine other Black and Jewish South Africans risk their lives to free their country from segregation and are arrested for sabotage. Their lawyer, Bram Fischer puts his own life and career in jeopardy to defend them. In this engaging historical drama, director Jean van de Velde brings to life the true story of the Rivonia trial as seen through the eyes of Fischer, highlighting the role that South African Jews played in the African resistance. A little-known moving story that pays tribute to those who brought an end to Apartheid.

Sunday, July 8 at 11:00 am at the Leslieville Farmers' Market

Let's meet at the corner of Queen St. East and Woodward Avenue. Member Asi Orbach, who is a wonderful ceramic artist, has her studio, L'Arterie, about a block away from this location. Following the market, if attendees wish, we can walk over to visit and view her work (and even use Asi's washroom, if needed—her suggestion, not mine!).

Kindly RSVP for these events to: evelyngoldstein07@gmail.com

HONOURING MY LATE UNCLE ON ISRAEL'S 70th BIRTHDAY

By TED TIBOR BERGER

My uncle Mendel Freiberg, my mother's brother, was a pilot for the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) during the first war of attrition with its Arab neighbours (1948-49) which began right after the U.N. vote that legitimized the State of Israel in 1948. He was shot down on the last day of the war over the Sinai Peninsula. He was only 21 years old and would have been 91 today. He was buried in the Cemetery of the Heroes on Mt. Herzl, one of 24,657 who have died in all wars for Israel and peace.

My aunt, another uncle, and my mother's grandmother all escaped from Hungary and the Holocaust, entering Israel on the Exodus ship, and lived the rest of their lives in Israel. Several cousins still live in Israel today.

Thanks to Ted for contributing this important story about his uncle's bravery for Israel in its infancy.

ORAYNU CHILDREN'S SCHOOL

Principal's Report by Steve Shabes



Some years fly by. This year *zoomed* by! This begs the question: Is *Oraynu time* different from *regular time*? Our mix of curricular units, family education projects, field trips, tzedakah projects, and holiday festivals at Oraynu has certainly kept us happily engaged. And, I suppose that when time is spent in meaningful, fun pursuits it does move fast!

Just a short while ago, we celebrated Purim with an amusing retelling of *The Story of Esther* written by our Rabbi Denise Handlarski. Replete with revamped character names including *Esther Shvester*, *Vanishing Vashti* and *Addled Achashveryrosh*, we emphasized the role of strong women in our stories of the past and in our hopes for the future. As is our tradition, a fun-filled Purim Carnival featuring 15 activity booths followed. In keeping with our tikkun olam theme for the year, supporting women's projects, the Grades 7s created a cupcake decorating table where all the proceeds they earned were donated to *girllove*, a ME to WE campaign that supports education for girls in Kenya. You can see the joy of the moment for yourselves in the Purim Festival pictures on page 18.

Most recently, at our family Seder, the room was warm and welcoming. So was Rabbi Eva Goldfinger's reading of our Haggadah. Together with 7 teen and student volunteers, we listened to the retelling of the Pesach story and interacted with the readings and songs. Our record crowd of almost 170 guests included many new families for whom Seder 2018 was their first Oraynu community celebration. Since Passover was the last time in the Oraynu school year that students, parents, teachers and volunteers were gathered together in one room, it provided me with the opportunity to publicly cheer for our wonderful kids and teachers. As I read out an amazing list of 10 tzedakah projects completed this year, I reminded our entire school community how fortunate we are to have a wonderful teaching staff leading and supporting our children. And as I write this message, I am equally reminded of the consistent support given by our School Committee—Erin, Yuval, Tracy, Dave and Cari—towards the staff, school families and all of our wonderful projects throughout the year. Hat's off to all of our amazing School Committee members and to our dedicated teachers!

The same day as our Seder, 4 of our teens and Etti were returning from a fun and fulfilling Society for Humanistic Judaism (SHJ) teen conclave in Philadelphia. Conclave is an annual North American teen and college conference which brings together Humanistic Jewish teens in grades 8-12 from across the United States and Canada for a weekend of fun, community service, insight, and discovery. In Philadelphia, the teens took part in an historic event—the March For Our Lives. They joined thousands of people who marched to protest gun violence and demand stronger gun control. Our teens described their involvement in the March as one of the most rewarding community service activities ever!

A few weeks later, at Yom Hashoah, the school welcomed back Oraynu grad, Ezra Ceniti. Ezra shared his experience from the March of the Living with our Grade 6 students. His discussion highlighted the importance of remembrance and of showing our respect for those who perished in the Holocaust. He made us aware of the courage and strength he saw in the survivors he met on his journey—how they rebuilt their lives and now bear witness to the tragedy. Afterwards, at our Yom Hashoah Assembly for the older children, we leaned to never be a bystander in the face of oppression—we all have the responsibility to oppose intolerance and to commit to a world where everyone has equal dignity and respect, and thus, to prevent such atrocities.

Turning to the future, we'll first look to the past. Did you know that Oraynu is nearing "the big five-oh"? And, did you know that it all began with the school? In 1969, a group of parents formed a secular Jewish school for their kids. They called their organization the Secular Jewish Association. Since our next school year will stretch into 2019, be prepared to hear about special events to come celebrating Oraynu's 50th anniversary. There will be more to come on the fun, fiftieth celebrations in the near future!

Looking ahead to the next year, current and prospective school families are reminded that you will soon be able to register online for the 2018-19 school year by visiting the school website at



www.oraynu.org/school and clicking on the "Register" tab. As part of our UJA sponsored initiative to grow the school, Oraynu will be, once again, providing a referral incentive and early-bird incentive.

As I sign off for the school year, we look forward to our Bnai Mitzvah ceremony where, this June 2nd, Executive Director of the SHJ, Paul Golin, will deliver our ceremony welcome. I'd also like to, once again, thank our teachers—Dinah, Lina, Adi, Garry, Miriam, Margarita, Jenny, Etti, Denise, Mendy and Sandi. And, thank you to all the parents, volunteers, teens and students who make Oraynu a wonderfully warm community of learners and givers!

These days, I see tremendous momentum taking place in our growing school. I see a school which continues to develop in the breadth of its dynamic education process. Oraynu is a place which is ever-evolving thanks largely to the daily dialogue between its key players --- a dialogue between some permutation of our imaginative teachers, active students, caring parents, responsive school committee, philosophically dynamic Rabbis and yours truly.

Now is the time to contribute to the process for next year. I welcome your thoughts on how to encourage the fun and fulfillment. See you at the school!

Steve

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Sunday, April 29: Grade 1-2 Simulated Trip to Israel. 10 am – 12:30 pm. Room 208
- Sunday, May 6: Israel Fun Day, 10 am – 12 pm. Field day and relay races for school kids.
- Saturday, June 2: Bnai Mitzvah Ceremony. Group ceremony for our Grade 7 graduates at Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts. By invitation only.

SCHOOL REGISTRATION OPEN SOON

Looking ahead to the next year, current and prospective school families are reminded that you will soon be able to register online for the 2018-19 school year. Watch your email inboxes for more information. Prospective families can also visit the school website at:

www.oraynu.org/school for more info and click on the "Register" tab for instructions.

As part of our UJA sponsored initiative to grow the school, Oraynu will once again offer **referral and earlybird incentives**. **Watch for deadlines.**



Oraynu Congregation extends a sincere Mazel Tov to

Noah Buncel Alex Cherkassky

Jennifer Freeman Marisa Kay Cameron Turner

and their families on their upcoming

Bnai Mitzvah

which takes place on Saturday, June 2, 2018 (19 Sivan, 5778)

at the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts

*If I am not for myself, who will be for me?
And if I am only for myself, what am I?
And if not now, when?*

Hillel’s famous words are terse but wise—and still relevant. At Oraynu, we put lots of emphasis on the second part of the verse and we talk often of *tikkun olam*: repairing the world and giving to others. Of course, this is a key part of being Jewish. However, the first part of this verse advises us to take care of ourselves as well.

The rabbis were realistic. They did not expect us to be saints to others at all times. By encouraging us to take care of ourselves, they recognized that we need to be strong and refresh and renew ourselves on a regular basis, lest we burn ourselves out. We first need to care for ourselves and only then do we have the energy and strength to reach out and care for others as well. In fact, one of the traditional commandments is *shmirat ha goof* (to take care of one’s body). Not only is basic self-care recommended but it is commanded in the traditional context.

Judaism recognizes that life has its challenges and a person can grow weary. Many things can wear us down: health problems, finances, work stress, difficulties in our relationships with family and friends and loss of loved ones. Many people struggle with mental health problems as well, such as depression and anxiety.

It is important that each person takes time to reflect on what they need and make sure to take time and give themselves permission to care for themselves.

Some of the possible ideas include:

- basic physical care like getting enough sleep, exercise and healthy food;
- time connecting with people that you enjoy;
- time to appreciate people and things for which you are grateful;
- opportunities to express oneself creatively;
- time outdoors in a natural environment

Of course, depending on your age and stage in life, you will have more or less time for self-care. When you are

a busy student, the experts still do advise that you take study breaks to refresh and digest what you have learned. A parent with small children certainly struggles to find time for self-care. Sometimes you just have to put aside the to-do list for some extra sleep, exercise or a fun time out with friends. And mothers especially need to let go of the absurd idea that we are superwomen that can do it all. We cannot.



In some cases, a person might be biologically and genetically predisposed to more significant mental health challenges. Winter time in Canada is associated with higher rates of depression in particular (referred to as Seasonal Affective Disorder or SAD). If you think that you or someone that you care about might be experiencing some depression or anxiety (or both), I encourage you to talk openly about this question. Often, others can see our struggles more clearly than we can.

The good news is that there is now solid, research-based evidence that counseling and therapy can be helpful in many cases. There are also many excellent online supports these days to help a person to determine if they do have depression/anxiety or some other mental health challenge. Talk to your family doctor or look on line to find mental health supports in your area. Now that spring has arrived, I hope that you can take the time to enjoy some time outdoors. I hope too that this helps to refresh your spirit and encourages you to renew your commitment to self-care. After all: if not now, when?

To find a local therapist: *Psychology Today*
For general information about mental health:
PsychCentral or *Big White Wall*

Denise Lawee is an experienced registered social worker and psychotherapist. She also teaches and helps run programs at our school. (See ad on p. 18)

**People who wonder whether
the glass is half-full or half-empty
miss the point ... The glass is refillable!**



REPORT ON THE HUJEWS CONCLAVE IN PHILADELPHIA

By JENNIE MORRIS

Every year the HuJews (teen/young adult Humanistic Jews) of North America gather together to have a weekend of community service, insight, and discovery. This year, we stayed at the Chamounix Mansion International Hostel outside Philadelphia. We took tours and experienced the historic parts of Philadelphia, We learned about the Jewish groups that lived there. We made amazing new friends, but the most special thing for me was getting to attend the *March For Our Lives*, which took place on the second day of our trip.



Being a part of such a historic event was life changing. As teenagers, we are the future. We need to take action now because tomorrow could be too late. Marching in that crowd of thousands of people from all walks of life, I felt like I was safe and I would never be alone when standing up for what's right. Even as a guest in the United States, I still felt like I belonged in that crowd. In that moment, I wasn't "that Canadian girl" at the march with this Jewish youth group I was one of thousands trying to make a change so that people won't have to go to school in fear for their lives. How many children need to die? How many laws will need to be put into place before we are actually together and safe? Today, we need to support gun control in the United States. What will be our challenges for tomorrow? What will we have to do to make this world a safe place for everyone---children, women, people of the LGBTQ+ community, and so many more.

I was lucky enough to attend this event with four of the most amazing people I have ever met---Tyler, Aidan, Caleb and our chaperone, Etti. We had the most spectacular time, and met even more amazing, wonderful people who we are still in touch with today. As Shimon Peres said "My greatest mistake is that my dreams were too small."



Special thanks to Gr. 7/Bnai Mitzvah teacher Etti Stubbs for being the chaperone for the teens.



Volunteers needed to prepare for Oraynu's 50th year celebrations in 2019!

We are so excited to be marking 50 years of our amazing community in 2019. There is a lot of work to be done! We are hoping to host a reunion of school graduates, past members, and other blasts from the past. If you'd like to be on the organizing committee, or are willing to lend a hand in a smaller capacity, we'd love to hear from you!



Whether you are willing to contact former Oraynuniks, help with party-planning, or are happy to volunteer with odd jobs, please let us know by replying to Roby at: robby@oraynu.org.

PAUL GOLIN, Executive Director of the SHJ, is coming to Oraynu on the weekend of June 1-3. See page 4 for a description of his Friday evening talk. Here is an article on a related topic article that was published in the August 3, 2015 issue of The Forward that we thought might pique your interest:

I Don't Care About Jewish Tribal Loyalty – And That Doesn't Make Me Anxious

By **PAUL GOLIN**

The angst some American Jews feel over Jewish identity is captured beautifully in an essay by Gal Beckerman. [This angst was expressed in questions such as: "...Can you be just culturally Jewish? Ethnically Jewish? Comically Jewish? Do we depend too much on the Holocaust for our communal identity? What about anti-Semitism? Is there still anti-Semitism? And what about Israel? ...Can we be Jewish without being Zionists? How do we balance our allegiance to the tribe with our allegiance to our country, our planet, the human race? These are more than just intellectual arguments. They reveal insecurity, a fear that there are no clear answers when it comes to Jewish identity."] As the outgoing opinion editor for the only national Jewish newspaper, he's certainly had his ear to the ground. But it's a very specific section of the ground: those who bother reading and debating in Jewish newspapers.

I know those folks. I worked regularly with synagogue leaders, Jewish clergy, and others at Jewish communal organizations, and don't disagree with the description of a "gut-churning, fraught, panicked and uncomfortable state.... of not really knowing anymore what it means to be a Jew."

But that's not how I feel. And I don't think it describes how the majority of American Jews feel. Perhaps it's just the majority of the 30% who are deeply engaged in the organized Jewish community.

Beckerman, having grown up in a self-described "Israeli bubble" at arm's length from American Jewry, writes that he is "comfortable in my skin because there is nothing else I can be. There is no other identity to assimilate to." For me — and I'd argue for a majority of American Jews — we're also comfortable in our skin, because of the identity we're evolving (not assimilating) to.

We're post-ethnic, post-tribal, *way* post-denominational, Jewish-when-we-want-to-be Jews. And we're fine with that. It's not our whole lives.

Having a foot in both worlds, I can understand why that sentiment is deeply unsettling for people whose Jewish identity defines them. And it's not to say that "angst," as in the "Portnoy's Complaint," twice-weekly-therapy angst, is not still part of the American Jewish psyche. It's just that the angst is not about what kind of Jew we are.

It is a misunderstanding on the part of those inside the organized community to describe what's happening to most American Jews as assimilation. Assimilation means blending into the larger culture beyond recognition. But our larger culture appreciates uniqueness and individual differentiation. There's no longer a choice to be made between "Jewish" and "American."

The choice to be made now is based on relevancy. Why would I spend my Saturday mornings in a synagogue, versus running in a park or grocery shopping or entertaining my kids in a thousand possible ways? If those synagogue services are the stultifying ones I grew up with, in a room full of strangers who remain strangers despite years of being in the same room together weekly, I wouldn't. If those synagogue services are spiritually uplifting, with people I actually care about, there's a chance.

Jewish prayer, ritual, cultural expression, giving to Jewish causes, supporting Israel...these are things "Just Jews" like me still do, at times, to varying degrees, but not out of blind obligation. Too much of our organized community still operates on the "that's what Jews are supposed to do" auto-pilot rather than articulating the meaning for people, answering the "Why do it?"

If aspects of Judaism or Jewish community can improve my life, improve the lives of my children, and/or help me make the world a better place, then I'm in. Otherwise, all of the other arguments — survival! continuity! God says so! — push me away.

There is an absurdity to the fear that our grandchildren's Judaism will look different than ours. Of course it will! I've asked rooms full of Jewish communal insiders — the 30%ers — how many of them express their Jewish identity exactly as their grandparents did. I'm averaging one hand raised out of every hundred. So why are we trying so desperately to calcify our version?

American Jewry is not assimilating into some "other identity" like Protestant. The overwhelming majority of born Jews are still Jewish, even those of us married to Protestants. There is another identity that we're helping to shape — universalism — and that is indeed a threat to legacy institutions that demand Jewish tribal loyalty (lately rebranded "peoplehood").

⇒⇒⇒

Our communal narrative rarely mentions, let alone celebrates, the incredible mixing and blending that's happening in our country, and how that's a positive thing — and how intermarried Jews are helping to lead the way on it. The vision of a peaceful world in which people nevertheless keep to their own kind has failed repeatedly. That so many American Jews have redefined their understanding of tribalism, even though it's imbued throughout our history, is, to me, yet another great Jewish innovation.

The organized Jewish community's initial reaction to this grand mash-up was rejection and closing of ranks. But that didn't work, so that too is evolving. The question now is: What's next? To get past the angst that so many insiders experience, I propose focusing on the meaning.

Some things will be lost and some gained. My own Jewish identity does not include involvement in the labor bund or fluency in Yiddish, as my grandparents' Judaism did. If people find this thing called Jewish/Judaism of value, then they will continue to do it. And if it's not of value, how deeply should its loss be mourned?

If it is of value, though, how do we share that value with people regardless of whether they've got four Jewish grandparents or one, or none? The notion that Judaism flows through our blood or resides in our genes won't work moving forward. This is about conveying a wisdom tradition, or ritual practice, or affinity group, or social justice movement, into which people may flow from any background.

If the organized community puts the focus back on the work itself, providing meaning and improving lives, rather than obsessing over who's doing it and what their Jewish genetic bona fides are, it would go a long way toward engaging more "Just Jews" like me in those organizations.

Prior to his appointment as Executive Director for the SHJ, Paul served as Associate Executive Director for Big Tent Judaism. He is co-author of two books: *20 Things for Grandparents of Inter-faith Grandchildren To Do (And Not Do) To Nurture Jewish Identity In Their Grandchildren* (2007) and *How To Raise Jewish Children...Even When You're Not Jewish Yourself* (2010).

Shavuot from a Humanistic Perspective

From shj.org

Shavuot (May 19th on the calendar this year) is a minor, ancient pilgrimage festival that marked the harvest of barley. Shavuot literally means "weeks," so named because the festival is exactly seven weeks (plus one day) from the second night of Passover. It is also called Festival of First Fruits, Hag Habikkurim, Pentecost, and the Feast of Weeks. This feast, one of three pilgrimage festivals, marked the end of the barley and beginning of the wheat harvest. On this festival in Temple times, according to the book of Leviticus, two loaves (*shetei halehem*) were "waved before the Lord." These had to be offered only from the best new wheat, from produce grown that year in Israel. *Shavuot* was associated with the bringing of the *bikkurim*, "the first ripe fruits," to the Temple of Jerusalem.



In rabbinic times a radical transformation of the festival took place. The festival became the anniversary of the giving of the Torah at Sinai. In the traditional liturgy Shavuot is "*zeman mattan toratenu*" ("the time of the giving of our Torah"). The ancient agricultural feasts were recreated into festivals marking the anniversary of significant legendary events in the life of the people.

Unlike Passover and Sukkot, *Shavuot* has just a few special rituals. In the synagogue, it is customary to read the Book of Ruth and some congregations decorate the synagogue with plants and flowers. Also, dairy products, such as blintzes, are traditionally eaten. In modern times Shavuot has become a day for religious school graduations and confirmation ceremonies. For Humanistic Jews, Shavuot is a time to honor educational and other achievement.

Oraynu's Bnai Mitzvah is always held close to the holiday; this year it's on June 2nd.

Miles Nadal JCC hosts its annual Tikkun Leil Shavuot, all-night learning session, on May 19th. See p. 3.



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.

PHOTOS FROM THE PURIM FESTIVAL



Thanks to Ben Spergel for these great photos.

MAKING CHALLAH AT THE SCHOOL/CONGREGATION ONEG ON FEB. 23



Thanks to Jim Sadler for these pix.

COMMUNITY NOTICES

26th Annual TORONTO JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL

May 3-13, 2018

The **Toronto Jewish Film Festival (TJFF)** is a not-for-profit, charitable organization whose goal is to showcase Jewish culture, heritage and the diversity of the Jewish experience in Canada and around the world, through film. Of over 100 international Jewish film festivals, the TJFF is the largest in North America, reaching a multicultural audience of over 30,000.



The TJFF this year offers 60 films—the best feature films, documentaries and shorts from 23 countries on themes of Jewish culture and identity. More than half are premiere showings. The Festival is dedicated to using film for its contemporary, popular value, reflecting the diversity of Jewish experience.

Showings at: Alliance Francaise • Ted Rogers Cinema • Empress Walk • Royal Cinema • Innis Town Hall • Varsity Cinema

For a complete line-up of films and to purchase tickets, visit: www.tjff.com



Sunday, May 27th at 10 am (Registration starts at 9 am)
Route goes from Coronation Park to Exhibition Place
You can WALK OR RUN the 8 km route

The Walk is a major fundraising event for the UJA'S United Israel Appeal. Dollars raised go to directly support the people of Israel, and the programmes and services UJA supports.

- Reducing social gaps and providing educational opportunities for at-risk youth in Bat Yam
- Increasing social mobility and economic independence for poverty-stricken Ethiopian Israelis in Bat Yam through professional and vocational training in various lines of work.
- Higher education and programs for young people in Eilat/Eilot, including career development and teaching future generations about renewable energy and sustainable development.
- Urgent social welfare and educational projects for residents of Sderot, which has endured unprecedented rocket attacks over the past decade.

To register, sign up sponsors, make a donation, or learn more: www.walkwithisrael.com

The Renee & Irwin Nadal Festival at Exhibition Place after the Walk has something for everyone – delicious BBQ (kosher), carnival games, camel rides, amusement rides, petting zoo, live music and other surprises! To attend the Festival you must have a 2017 Walk with Israel registration package (lanyard, T-shirt and bag).

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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

Saturday, May 12 at 4:00 pm **MOTHERS FOR MOTHERS Tea and Havdalah** (p. 3)

Location: Members' home, Lawrence and Mt. Pleasant area

Saturday, May 19 from 8:00pm-8:00am (p. 3)

TIKKUN LEIL SHAVUOT—All-Night Jewish Learning Festival

Oraynu is a co-sponsor; all sessions free

Rabbi Denise is doing two sessions, @8:30 and @9:30

Location: Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre, 750 Spadina, at Bloor

Thursday, May 24 at 7:30 pm **BROADWAY MUSICALS: A JEWISH LEGACY** (p. 3)

Location: Members' home, Avenue Rd. and Wilson area

Friday, June 1 at 7:30 pm **SHABBAT & TALK WITH PAUL GOLIN** (p. 4)

Location: Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Ave. (Sheppard/Allen Rd.)

Sunday, June 3 (10 am-5 pm) **ORAYNU AT ISRAEL DAY FESTIVAL** (p. 4)

Location: Wood Valley Park (Bathurst/Rutherford Rd. in Vaughan)

Wednesday, June 13 at 7:30 pm **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** (p. 5)

Location: Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Ave. (Sheppard/Allen Rd.)

Friday June 15 at 7:30 pm **JEWS, JAZZ AND JIVE** (p. 4)

Location: Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Ave. (Sheppard/Allen Rd.)

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

Tuesday, July 10 at 6:30 pm **SUMMER SOCIAL AND BBQ** (p. 5)

Location: Members' home, Avenue Rd. and Wilson area



LAST WORD: Topics for Dinner Table or Car Talks

Want to inject a little more Judaism into the life of your family? These are suggestions from Rabbi Denise for a topic of conversation you can have at your next dinner party, around your family table, or in the car on the way to Sunday school. Each issue of The Shofar will present a new topic.



Discuss this quote by Chaim Nachman Bialik:

“Who seeks to change his stature by donning a high paper hat or walking on stilts is but a clown.”