



The Shofar

Website:
oraynu.org

Inside this issue:

Upcoming Events.....p. 3-5
Rabbi's Message.....2
Principal's Report.....9
Notes from the Board.....7
Tribute to Brian Wright.....6
Oraynunik News.....7
Rabbi Denise Interview.....8
Purim & Passover Photos...11
Community News.....12

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Shalom everyone —

Robert and I were just in Farmington Hills, MI to celebrate the **50th anniversary of the Society for Humanistic Judaism**, the umbrella organization that Oraynu has been part of for 20 years. It was a great weekend filled with excellent speakers and lots of camaraderie. Rabbis Denise and Eva were session speakers and Rabbi Denise participated in an excellent panel discussion that will be podcast soon on Judaism Unbound. Listening to the younger rabbis speak, we know that the future of Humanistic Judaism is in great hands. We all received a newly published book of liturgy called "This is Our Light" which includes several contributions from Eva and Denise and two poems written by founding member Jerry Bain.

Now on to Oraynu events! First up is a Shabbat on May 10th **marking Israel's 71st birthday**. Two Oraynuniks with intimate knowledge of Israel—Dror Orbach and Jenny Isaacs—will contribute to the "State of the Union" discussion.

On May 18, we will celebrate **Lag B'omer** at Earl Bales Park with a bonfire, fun activities and a short informative talk by Rabbi Denise. Bring your family and friends!

On May 24th is a **theatre outing** to see Tarragon Theatre's production of "**Old Stock: A Refugee Love Story**." Oraynunik Zelda Gorlick just saw it as part of a subscription series and says it was absolutely terrific. An extra incentive to

attend is a post-show party and Q&A with the cast. Thanks to Rabbi Eva for organizing this event.

On June 14th, plan to attend a **Shabbat program** where we will show the film "**Bending the Arc**", about the founding and important work of Partners in Health, a global health initiative. The film has been shown at numerous film festivals. Oraynu's President Mark Brender has first-hand knowledge of PIH, being its Canadian National Director, and will speak too.

Our **Annual General Meeting** is on June 18th. Following the reports and election of the 2019-2020 Board, Louse Sherman will enlighten us about the results of the latest member survey. Don't miss it—she has lots of interesting facts to share.

In keeping with our commitment to better understand Indigenous culture, we invite you to join us for the **Na-Me-Res Pow Wow and Indigenous Arts Festival** to be held down at Fort York on June 22nd. See p. 4 for more details on this annual event.

Besides all the usual columns, there is a wonderful tribute to our late member Brian Wright from Rabbi Karen Levy, a response by Rabbi Denise given in an online interview about "Atheists and Humanists in the Pulpit," a profile of member Mitch Moldofsky and his latest project and, as always, lots of event photos.

Enjoy this latest issue of our bi-monthly magazine. Hope to see you all 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 700 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



Our Jewish ethics can help guide our human-centred philosophy, and vice versa.

We just celebrated Passover and, at the very same time, Earth Day. The two go together really well. Passover includes symbols of spring and rebirth (the greenery, the egg), and Earth Day reminds us that we must value the “wilderness,” even as we try to find our way to the Promised Land of a sustainable and safe planet.

We are all responsible for being stewards of the earth, especially now. There can be no greater expression of Jewish ethics. We believe in Tikkun Olam, repairing the world. We know that Jewish kosher eating laws have to do with protecting animals and sustainability. We know that there are numerous parts of Torah and Talmud that tell us to protect trees and animal life. The highest value of Jewish ethics is protecting human life, and even human life is threatened by catastrophic climate change.

There are few things we can do and, bonus!, they are Jewish.

- Host a Shabbat Yarak (Green/veggie Shabbat) dinner! Many folks do “meatless Mondays” but you can also tie your Shabbat meal, with its symbolism of gathering with family/friends and resting at the end of the week, with your environmental ethics. Eating less meat is virtually the most impactful thing you can do to help slow climate change. So dig out a few vegetarian recipes and go for it!
- Plant a tree! Just because it isn’t earth day or the festival of trees Tu B’shvat, doesn’t mean you can’t plant. This is a great season for planting in your gardens or supporting orchards. Check out the great work of our friends at Shoresh, who have Yom Manual Labour (a day to help in their garden), tree plantings at their farm, and more! And in your very own yards (if you have one), you can plant bee/butterfly-friendly plants. Such a great way to help the planet!
- Conserve water! Some of the coolest innovations Israel has created have to do with harvesting / storing / irrigating with

water. We have abundant water here but it may not always be so! We all should be mindful of water use. We can run the dishwasher only when full, keep rain barrels, ensure we take short showers and have baths less often, and we can always check that we don’t run the faucet when we’re not using the water (when brushing our teeth, washing dishes, etc).

- At our Tikkun Olam Oraynu Show Your Heart event, we raised \$200 for Water First, an NGO that helps Indigenous communities gain access to clean water. We can ask our political leaders to keep their promise about clean water for Indigenous folks, and to respect Indigenous leaders and voices when it comes to protecting the planet.
- We can get involved with other forms of political advocacy, encouraging governments at all levels to take climate change seriously.
- We can fly and drive less often. Perhaps do a stay-cation where the focus is on reading Jewish texts / watching Jewish videos.
- We can make our homes as efficient as possible. We have solar hot water at our house! There’s lots we can do. This one isn’t specifically Jewish but it’s still a good idea!
- We can help out with park clean-ups, neighbourhood greening and more as tikkun olam work.
- We can get out and enjoy nature! We live in such a beautiful part of the world. For me and many of you, nature is my sanctuary space where I feel connected to the wonder around me. For me, this is secular. For some, spiritual. But all of us can experience the beauty of nature in a way that nurtures us.

At Oraynu we believe our Jewish ethics can help guide our human-centred philosophy, and vice versa. Being a good steward of the earth is a great way to be a good citizen and a good Jew!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Friday, May 10
7:30 pm

Borochov Centre
272 Codsell Avenue
(Wilson Hts/Sheppard)

SHABBAT CELEBRATING ISRAEL'S 71st BIRTHDAY — "State of the Union"



The evening commences with a short Shabbat service with readings, poetry and music, followed by a discussion on Israel led by **Rabbi Denise Handlarski**, featuring information and insights by members **Dror Orbach** (who is from Israel and understands the political and social landscape), and **Jenny Isaacs** (teacher at the Oraynu Children's School and director of the Heart to Heart program).

"State of the Union" - Many of us love Israel. Many of us are concerned about Israeli politics and policies. At this program we will discuss the 2018 Nation-State Law, the expansion of settlements, Anti-Zionism and/as Antisemitism (when it is, when it isn't, how do you know?), the recent elections and more!

We'll also have Israeli songs with Mickey and delicious Israeli snacks, too. Don't miss this opportunity to learn, to share, and to nosh!

Non-members welcome: \$15

Saturday, May 18
4:30 pm

Earl Bales Park,
Bathurst & Raoul
Wallenberg Drive

LAG B'OMER CELEBRATION



Lag B'omer falls between Passover and Shavuot. It is a day of joy with bonfires and celebrations! **Join Oraynu and our friends at Hashomer Hatzair for a Family and Friends event.**

There will be some games, kids' activities, singing, and a big bonfire, of course! Everyone welcome!

Rabbi Denise will share with you the real history of Lag B'omer that other rabbis don't want you to know!

Friday, May 24
8:00 pm

Tarragon Theatre
30 Bridgman Ave
(e. of Bathurst,
n. of Dupont)

Join us for a remarkable theatre experience! OLD STOCK: A REFUGEE LOVE STORY

A 2b theatre company production

Written by **Hannah Moscovitch** Songs by **Ben Caplan & Christian Barry**

**** Followed by a private Q&A and post-show party ****

Halifax, 1908: two Romanian Jews stand in line at Pier 21 in Halifax, would-be immigrants to an unknown country. Chaim's entire family was murdered in a pogrom; Chaya lost her husband to fever and starvation. But the New World is giving them a second chance, and they embrace it to the fullest. This humorously dark folk tale narrated by The Wanderer—part showman, part rabbi—is a genre-bending rock concert/theatre hybrid starring Klezmer-folk sensation Ben Caplan and is inspired by the real-life love story of Moscovitch's great-grandparents.

★★★★★ *"Emotionally engaging, visually stunning and at 80 minutes leaves us still wanting more."* – Musical Theatre Review

TICKETS: Members \$50, Friends \$60 / Seniors and Student rates available

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

Friday, June 14
7:30 pm

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

SHABBAT & FILM SCREENING: Bending the Arc

Following a short Shabbat service led by Rabbi Denise, we will view the film "**Bending the Arc**," a powerful documentary about Partners in Health, an extraordinary team of doctors and activists—including Jim Yong Kim, Ophelia Dahl and Paul Farmer—whose work saving lives in Haiti grew into a global battle for the right to health for all. The film is 102 minutes long; it was an Official Selection at several prestigious film festivals including Sundance and Telluride.



Board President Mark Brender, who is also National Director of Partners in Health Canada, will speak to us about the work of his organization.

Non-members welcome: \$15

Saturday, June 22
Time TBA

Fort York
(At the northeast
corner of Bathurst
and Fort York Blvd)

NA-ME-RES POW WOW / FORT YORK INDIGENOUS ARTS FESTIVAL

Join Oraynu as we continue to learn about and forge connections with Indigenous communities. This Pow Wow and Festival, in honour of Summer Solstice, brings together incredible artists and performers. Experience Indigenous food and learn more about the many cultures that make up First Nations, Metis, and Inuit communities in Canada.

The Indigenous Arts Festival is an annual celebration of traditional and contemporary Indigenous music, dance, theatre, storytelling, film, crafts and food. Past performers have included Susan Aglukark, Tanya Tagaq, Morningstar River, Digging Roots, Red Spirit Singers, Logan Staats, Metis Fiddler Quartet, Red Sky Performance, and Kaha:wi Dance. The festival is produced by the City of Toronto in partnership with the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation and The Friends of Fort York.

TIKKUN LEIL SHAVUOT — All-Night Jewish Learning Festival

Saturday, June 8th, 8:00 pm-8:00 am | Miles Nadal JCC, 750 Spadina (at Bloor)

(Oraynu is a sponsoring organization)

Rabbi Denise's favourite community event of the whole year is back, filled with speakers and workshops on every Jewish topic imaginable! More than 50 sessions! Stay for an hour or all night. The snacks are great too... And it's all FREE! No RSVPs needed.

More info: www.mnjcc.org/tikkun

Rabbi Denise is leading two sessions this year :

8:30 pm - Jewish and Indigenous relations (she'll be speaking about the work Oraynu has been doing!)

9:30 pm - Feminist Torah/text study — chevruta (pairs). Having taught a 6-week module for Jewish young adults via Lishma (a learning organization for folks in their 20s and 30s), Denise will be highlighting how secular Jewish feminist text study works.

Oraynu's 50th Anniversary Celebration coming on November 2nd

Mark your calendars!! Plans are ongoing for our upcoming milestone event which will feature fabulous munchies, music and memories. We are still looking to collect documents or photos, either from our SJA beginnings that help explain our history or more recent Oraynu ones. If you have any materials to share, kindly contact Jim Sadler at: jim.sadler@rogers.com/



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, June 18
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 2019-20 year, Board

member Louise Sherman will review the survey data you provided and we'll talk about ideas to make Oraynu even better in years to come. 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 **Tuesday, the 18th day of June of the year 2019, at 7:30 pm, Toronto time**, for the following purposes:

1. To approve the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on June 13, 2018
2. To receive reports from the Officers of the Corporation
3. To elect directors of the Corporation to hold office from July 1, 2019 until June 30, 2020 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, 2019
Penny Parnes, Secretary

Tuesday, July 23

Note the date!

ANNUAL SUMMER BBQ & POTLUCK SOCIAL

Location/time TBA

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.

Plan to join us!



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

REMEMBERING BRIAN WRIGHT 1951-2019

By RABBI KAREN LEVY

On February 21, 2019, in Halifax, long-time Oraynunik and past President Brian Wright died after a brief battle with cancer. We offer our deepest and warmest condolences to Brian's wife, Lisa, and their family, Jon and Mi, Danny and Jeff, and Lauren and Cal, and grandchildren, Sonya and Desmond.

Brian was well known by all for his wicked sense of humour. He could dance farcically on stage or have us on the edge of our seats anticipating the punch line of one of his tales. Brian wanted his funeral to be light-hearted. His wish was that we would gather around the kitchen table with our favourite drinks and tell jokes and stories. But there wasn't a kitchen big enough.



At his memorial service on March 10th at Elgin Mills Funeral Centre every seat in the large hall was filled. Two colleagues from his law firm described a dear friend who was held in high esteem for his legal brilliance and accomplishments, his warmth, and his capacity for connecting with people as a natural leader of peers and a mentor of those younger. A video, poetry and prose composed by Jon, Danny and Lauren painted a colourful picture of Brian's love for his family, his insight, his hilarious sense of humour, his sense of fairness, his integrity, and his down-to-earth humility. Brian possessed great depths of wisdom and compassion. Ever curious, he was always learning about the world through his passion for reading and travel. His qualities made him a talented problem-solver. Tackling the dilemmas that befuddle most people when we work together, he had a gift for getting to the core of a conflict and finding resolutions that made things fairer for everyone.

For many years the Wright family found their Jewish home at the Secular Jewish Association (SJA), which later became Oraynu. Lisa and Brian were extremely active, beloved members. Brian served on the Board and co-authored new bylaws. He was a strong supporter of expanding the SJA's services with new programs and concepts that were then controversial, such as the Bnai Mitzvah, professional clergy or paid staff. In the late 1990's, during our transition to Oraynu, Brian served as President. I will always remember Brian guiding us with calm and rational leadership. I will always remember our meetings where he created a tone of decency and mutual respect that everyone appreciated. Ever since Brian and Lisa moved to Nova Scotia in 2012 they have been sorely missed.

Brian was a true mensch. His colleague, Dave Johnson, expressed this beautifully. "Brian was one of the finest people I've had the opportunity to know. I repeatedly think of Brian as the person who unfailingly exhibited the most noble qualities we should all aspire to - but always in a manner steeped in humbleness and humility - and with a twinkle in his eye. May the strength of his memory outweigh the pain of his loss for all he meant so much to." At Oraynu those who knew Brian will always remember him. We will always be grateful for the joy and wisdom that he imparted to us.

At Brian's request, donations in his memory may be made to Dying With Dignity Canada (www.dyingwithdignity.ca) and to Rainbow Railroad (www.rainbowrailroad.com).

In tribute, here is a beautiful poem written by Brian's son Danny for Father's Day 2012:

My father taught me to rush into the ocean,
To laugh and shrug at the needling icy chill;
In Nova Scotia I learned from my father the thrill
Of cold and blue and weedy water, the motion
Of waves, the sand that pulled under my feet.
My father taught me the beauty of changing tides,
The push and pull and magic as water glides
And nothing is the same for long; I greet
The movements of my life as precious things,
As if they were the heavings of the sea
In Nova Scotia, because my father gave
To me a steady voice: a voice that sings
Along to the melody of my life, a free
Voice. My father taught me to be brave.

NOTES FROM THE BOARD

**Mark Brender
President**

Introducing Shelly Maerov, our newest Board member

We are pleased to welcome Sheldon Maerov as the newest member of Oraynu's Board of Directors.

An Oraynu member since 2017, Shelly brings to the board a wealth of leadership experience in Jewish communities in Toronto and his native Alberta. A psychologist by training, Shelly enjoyed a nearly two decade-long career with social services agencies at the City of Calgary and the Government of Alberta, after which he transitioned into executive leadership with UJA Federations Canada and the Council of Jewish Federations of North America.

Following a move to Toronto with his wife Louise, Shelly was hired as Executive Director of Beth Tzedec Congregation. He has also served as board member with organizations including Beth Tikvah Congregation and United Jewish Appeal of Canada, and a national officer with Canadian Jewish Congress.

In hindsight, we can confidently say all this was merely a prelude of course to his most recent (read: most prestigious!) board appointment. Shelly says Oraynu has provided him with a Jewish home consistent with his beliefs and values, and he couldn't be happier. One of his objectives is to help increase Oraynu's visibility within the broader Jewish community in Toronto, so it sounds like a perfect fit all around. Welcome, Shelly....we're thrilled to have you on Board.



NEWS ABOUT ORAYNUNIKS



Oraynu member **Mitch Moldofsky** is a Toronto-based writer, director, film-maker and producer who has spent his life attempting to balance those passions with his day job as an award-winning e-learning developer.

His current project is a play entitled **RED-HAIRED GIRL**. It plays at the London (Ontario) Fringe Festival, running from May 28-June 8. It is a 90-minute one-act family drama that deals with sexual misconduct, closed adoptions and betrayal; it has a nine-member cast. Its witty veneer falls away to reveal dark rumblings underneath. It was developed during two workshops in 2018.

Here's what Mitch says about his play and its connection to a special tzedakah project: "RED-HAIRED GIRL is about a university professor who sleeps with his students and how one such liaison comes back to bite him years later--and hard. Though it's a far cry from sex trafficking, to my mind the same attitude prevails in both, namely the minimization of women and girls to their sexual aspect. The play will also be a fundraiser for Thorn, an outfit that builds technology to defend children from sexual abuse. They join forces with the sharpest minds from tech, non-profit, government and law enforcement to stop the spread of child sexual abuse material and stand up to child traffickers. I am excited that something effective is finally being done about this worldwide scourge, and I hope you will take this opportunity to help them out.

Mitch previously produced a full-length play BROTHERS and wrote the Toronto Fringe play HOW TO MAKE A SOUFFLE, which he also made as a short film. Another of his short films, THE BRISS, a tragicomedy about a breakup, played for several years on the Sundance Channel. More info: <http://mitchmoldofsky.weebly.com/fringe.html>

A huge mazel tov to Oraynu teen **Jennie Morris**, daughter of Board member Risa Morris, who was just elected as the Society for Humanistic Judaism's Youth Representative for North America. A graduate of our Children's School, Jennie is a vivacious, bright, committed and fun-loving young lady. *Jennie—we are so proud of you and this wonderful accomplishment.*

Photo by Jennie's dad, David Morris



RABBI DENISE INTERVIEWED FOR ONLINE ARTICLE

On March 31st **Scott Douglas Jacobsen**, founder of *In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal and In-Sight Publishing*, posted an interview online at www.canadianatheist.com with Rev. Gretta Vosper and Rabbi Denise Handlarski on the issue of "Atheists and Humanists in the Pulpit."

This was his set-up: "When taking into account the predominance of men in the leadership and in the history texts, the tales of women freethinking, in and out of religious communities, can become either lost, downplayed – for a variety of reasons, or lost in the mosaic of the profiles of men." He then asked each leader "what set the stage for the freedom of women to lead, sermonize, and create communities of faith or non-faith – in the case of an atheist reverend and a humanist rabbi?"

Here was Rabbi Denise's response:

"The Humanistic Jewish movement has always been open to female leadership, with no obvious barriers to entering our seminary, being hired in our communities, etc. I would say that all major religions are still unlearning some of the patriarchy and paternalism on which they are founded. Our texts, our institutions, our broader communities where we live and practice, continue to need to work through some gender stereotyping and expectations.

Having said that, I believe there is no movement in Judaism more committed to equality and equity than Humanistic Judaism. We give tradition a vote and a voice, but our philosophy and ideology mandate that we choose justice over tradition every time. For that reason, we do not hold onto problematic texts, liturgies, songs, etc. simply because of their traditional or nostalgic value. I'd also say that although some movements try to make the name of their god feminine, or alternate masculine/feminine names/pronouns, the idea of God as Male is still quite dominant. Sometimes the English translation is changed, but the words being said in Hebrew continue to be words evoking and invoking a male God. I do think this filters into how Judaism is understood and experienced.

I came to Secular Humanistic Judaism as a teenager, feeling my feminism was in conflict with my Jewish community. I had witnessed so much sexism already, and it made me want to reject the religion and culture completely. It was when I found secular communities that were culturally Jewish that I found I could have my feminism and my Judaism too. There is no doubt that this was foundational on my path to be a rabbi.

Again, we continue to have problems. There is no doubt that sexism still lurks in Humanistic Jewish communities, as in all communities. I believe that some of the ways I've been spoken to and treated by congregants, members of the public, other rabbis, has to do with my sex and gender. Still, I'm aware that it was only a few generations ago that a woman wanting to become a rabbi would have no option available to her. I'm proud to be part of the movement that allowed women leaders in first, and has made it part of our expression of Judaism to pursue gender justice. "

For the complete article including Rev. Vosper's response go to:

<https://www.canadianatheist.com/2019/03/ask-gretta-and-denise-7-jacobsen/?fbclid=IwAR1xCH0gvco-9cZjC7DPsgktaik456cRdipjt95msJzou-S3VwhZjV9boqs>

JOB NOTICE

Submitted by Orayunik **KAREN ELKIN** who serves on HHC's Board

Hashomer Hatzair Canada/Camp Shomria is seeking a **Full-Time Director** to join our team beginning in the summer of 2019. The position is based in our Toronto office during the year and at our camp location in Perth, Ontario for seven weeks each summer.

This is an exciting position for someone looking to demonstrate and develop their leadership skills and commitment to Jewish education and camping, in a progressive and collaborative organization where the focus is on the empowerment and education of youth and young people.

Please see <http://www.hashomerhatzair.ca/jobs-and-employment.html> for the full posting.

ORAYNU CHILDREN'S SCHOOL

Principal's
Report
by
Steve Shabes



Marking Family Passover with Oraynu Children's School

Passover celebrates freedom and independence. Its traditions are rich with storytelling and, of course, good food.

Passover is about freedom. Who doesn't love freedom? **Well, this year's Seder marked Oraynu's freedom—freedom from rentals, freedom from disposables.** Whatever do I mean? Well, every year (for at least the last 15), we've rented all of our school Seder tableware. This year, when we asked "Why is this night different from all other nights?" the answer was unique. The night was different from all others because it was the first time we sat down to our 17 banquet-style Seder tables set with our newly purchased and independently owned dishes, cutlery and more—156 sets worth. All the tableware that made our room look so festive and warm—everything you see in the photo—now belongs to Oraynu. This is thanks to the much appreciated generosity of an alumni family, the Storfers. After their two sons had bar mitzvahs with Oraynu, they offered to sponsor our Seder—to make us free from rental tableware. **We thank Michael and Robin Storfer for their kindness and generosity, for sponsoring our Seder with a permanent, environmentally friendly gift of tableware.** Their gift not only sets an example of tikkun olam in action, it has set our Seder tables in a "greener" and self-sufficient fashion for many years to come!



At Oraynu independence is important. Our staff promotes the kind of intellectual and emotional growth that fosters independent, critical thinking skills among our students at Passover and throughout the year. The Family Seder was the last time in the Oraynu school year that we as students, parents, teachers and volunteers and guests were gathered together in one room along with our very best storytellers—our teachers. It gave us the opportunity to thank them, our wonderful, deeply dedicated educators: Denise Lawee, Garry, Miriam, Jenny, Etti, Shira, Dinah, Mendy, Oren and Adele. Our school is enriched by their ability to create an enjoyable program filled with opportunities for their students to engage in cultural Judaism. At Oraynu, our teachers encourage independent thought—and their love for their students abounds!

Our Seder was filled with rich storytelling and good food. A team of volunteers led by Risa, Cari, Tracy, Jennie, Matthew, Kieryn, Karen, Larry, Denise L, Tony and the Grade 6 families arrived early to unpack and wash our new dishes. The potluck dinner was vast and varied. Our Grade 5s and 6s made a delicious nut-free charoset. The group effort to prepare the event gave the room a glow, made us all receptive to our Rabbi Denise and teens who led the Seder with engaging readings and storytelling from the Haggadah, topped off by Tracy's reading of our seminal mythological story—the nation building exodus from slavery in Egypt.

The Seder was a personal moment of great joy for me. Not only do I always enjoy our Haggadah with its strong message of freedom, independence and social justice, I am gratified by the coming together of our highly engaged volunteer families and community participants. Not only did I have fun researching, sourcing and purchasing our tableware, I enjoyed the culture and traditions—moments like our wide-eyed, grinning children finding the afikomen and approaching the teachers for their customary chocolate compensation. And best of all, the comments sent to our team afterward were heartwarming. As we close out another successful year of encouraging our children towards self-discovery and positive, independent identification with their Jewish culture, I'd like to share some of the written comments received after our Seder. I hope the kind words that follow will nourish your culturally Jewish heart and free your imagination to dream of Oraynu events to come:



"Thank you and the rest of the Oraynu staff for hosting such a lovely Seder. The entire family had a great time. It was wonderful to see how the older teens came to help out with the set up and how even the young kids were able to do their part of the set-up. The haggadah was lovely with a nice social justice focus."

"Congratulations on a wonderful night. It was our first time at an Oraynu Seder and there was something meaningful for each member of our family."

"I wanted to say how much my family enjoyed the Seder. I love seeing how much my kids enjoy taking part in their Jewish culture. It was great!"

A glimpse ahead to the next school year reveals special community tzedakah projects to engage all in our fun celebrations for Oraynu's upcoming 50th anniversary. Oraynu started largely as an educational program for children—a source of pride and pleasure, and a reason to celebrate all together in 2019-20!

The next school year will start with our annual Welcome Brunch for you and our new friends and guests. See you in September!

Steve

Oraynu Congregation extends a sincere Mazel Tov to

Jayden Breslow-Bardell Kyle Brozovky Colin Gordon
Daniel Hammer Isabelle Romalis Hannah Steeves Jailyn Waese
and their families on their upcoming

Bnai Mitzvah

which takes place on Saturday, June 1, 2019 (27 Iyyar, 5779)
at the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts

Oraynu teens at the HU JEWS CONCLAVE in Boston, March 1-3



Front row (from left):
Sarah Gordon, Lasha Waese, Kieryn Breslow-Bardell, Jennie Morris
2nd row behind Jennie:
Matthew Portugese and Noah Buncel
Chaperone was Shira Levy (far right, front row)

A report on the conclave will appear in the next issue.

PHOTOS FROM OUR PURIM AND PASSOVER FAMILY EVENTS



Thanks to Larry Kline for the Purim pics.



The Social Hall at Borochov was filled to capacity for our **Family Seder held on April 14th**. Here are a few photos. ↓ and → See Principal Steve's report on p. 9 for all the details.



COMMUNITY NOTICES

27th Annual TORONTO JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL

May 2-12, 2019

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



Monday, May 20th at 10 am (Registration starts at 9 am)
The 50th Anniversary of the UJA Walk with Israel on Victoria Day, May 20, 2019 is shaping up to be our most exciting event ever!

In honour of this special milestone, the Walk is moving back up North to its roots in the heart of the Jewish community along Bathurst Street in North York. The celebrations will continue all day long as a one-kilometre stretch of Bathurst closes to traffic for the first-ever Bathurst Street Fest!

You can drive, bike, take public transit or walk as long as you arrive at Earl Bales Park by 9.00 a.m. in time to join in the fun! Remember to leave yourself lots of travel time as there may be heavy traffic and several street closures to accommodate 20,000 people and the new Walk 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



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.

ORAYNU CONGREGATION FOR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2018-2019

President

MARK BRENDER mbrender11@gmail.com

Secretary

PENNY PARNES penny.parnes@utoronto.ca

Treasurer

ROBERT HORWITZ rhorwitz@oraynu.org

Members-at-Large

SUE DROHAN

KEVIN FINE

SHELLY MAEROV

RISA MORRIS

LOUISE SHERMAN

NORVAL WENER

CARA WILKIE

ERIN WINOCUR

RABBI

DENISE HANDLARSKI rabbidenise@oraynu.org

RABBI EMERITA

KAREN LEVY klevy@rogers.com

LIFE CYCLE DIRECTOR

RABBI EVA GOLDFINGER
evagoldfinger007@rogers.com

YOUTH & FAMILY DIRECTOR/SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

STEVE SHABES stevenshabs@yahoo.com

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

ERIN WINOCUR (Chair) ewinocur@rogers.com

TRACEY BARDELL

DAVE CHERKASSKY

YUVAL GRINSPUN

CARI HAIM

OFFICE MANAGER/CONTACT US

ROBY SADLER roby@oraynu.org
416-385-3910

MAILING ADDRESS

156 Duncan Mill Rd., Suite 14
Toronto ON M3B 3N2

WEBSITE

www.oraynu.org

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 honoree 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:

- Steve Shabes for guidance about Jewish education for children and youth
- Rabbi Eva Goldfinger, for guidance regarding life cycle transitions and conversion
- Rabbi Karen Levy, Rabbi Eva Goldfinger and Rabbi Denise HandlarSKI 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) - Contact either Mark Brender: mbrender11@gmail.com OR Steve Shabes: stevenshabs@yahoo.ca
- Tikkun Olam Oraynu - Rabbi Denise: rabbidenise@oraynu.org
- New Member Welcome – Rabbi Denise: as above
- 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

Friday, May 10 at 7:30 pm SHABBAT marking ISRAEL'S 71ST B-DAY (p. 3)
Location: Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Ave. (Sheppard/Allen Rd.)

Saturday, May 18 at 4:30 pm LAG B'OMER FAMILY CELEBRATION (p. 3)
Location: Earl Bales Park (Bathurst s. of Sheppard)

Friday, May 24 at 8:00 pm THEATRE NIGHT—"OLD STOCK" (p. 3)
Location: Tarragon Theatre, 30 Bridgeman Avenue (Bathurst/Dupont)

Saturday, June 8 from 8:00pm-8:00am (p. 4)
TIKKUN LEIL SHAVUOT—All-Night Jewish Learning Festival
Rabbi Denise is doing two sessions, @8:30 and @9:30
Location: Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre, 750 Spadina, at Bloor

Friday, June 14 at 7:30 pm SHABBAT & FILM: "Bending the Arc" (p. 4)
Location: Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Ave. (Sheppard/Allen Rd.)

Tuesday, June 18 at 7:30 pm ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (p. 5)
Location: Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Ave. (Sheppard/Allen Rd.)

Saturday, June 22 Time TBA NA-ME-RES POW WOW / (p. 4)
FORT YORK INDIGENOUS ARTS FESTIVAL
Location: Fort York, Bathurst and Fort York Blvd.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:
Tuesday, July 23 SUMMER SOCIAL AND BBQ (p. 5)
Location: TBA

For most events,
kindly RSVP
to Roby:
416-385-3910 or
roby@oraynu.org



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.



Here is this issue's suggestion:

There is a tradition of Counting the Omer (measure of barley) in the period between Passover and Shavuot. This is partly about the holidays' agricultural roots, and partly about how we keep time, spiritually speaking. Now, there's an app for that! Check out the "My Omer" app for daily mindfulness/spiritual messages. Or create your own!