FROM THE EDITOR’S DESK

It’s been a beautiful and temperate fall so far. Let’s enjoy it while we can!!

A team of dedicated volunteers, led by Louise Sherman, has been working hard for months to ensure the success of our 50th anniversary celebration. By the time you read this, 130 guests, including many founders of the Secular Jewish Association (Oraynu’s predecessor), will have attended our warm and wonderful evening.

As always, we are participating in the annual Holocaust Education Week, and partnering once again with Don Heights Unitarian, on Nov 12th. Our speaker will focus on how to ensure that millennials and upcoming generations are properly informed about the Holocaust—a crucial topic, to be sure.

On Nov. 23rd Rabbi Denise is offering a Saturday morning Shabbat program with a bagel brunch at the home of Oraynu members. Come learn how Shabbat can be used as a time for contemporary Jews to set intentions, to focus on the present, and to connect with Judaism in a way that helps frame our day and week. And then, we will shmooze and enjoy each other’s company.

Our last adult program before the winter break will be a Friday Shabbat program in advance of Chanukah on Dec. 13 with our special guest musician and lecturer Jordan Klapman. Apropos the season, his program is entitled “Oy Tanenbaum: How Jewish Songwriters Wrote the Great Christmas Songs.” It promises to be an evening of great music and lots of fun facts. Jordan’s talks are always highly entertaining, so do plan to attend.

On Sunday Dec. 15th, our Annual Family and School Chanukah Festival will be held at the Borochov Centre. All members and their families are welcome to come enjoy the party and … the latkes, of course, are always yummy!

You will note on page 4 that Rabbi Eva Goldfinger’s lecture series this year will take place in the spring, rather than over the winter as in the past several years. See page 4 for details.

Member Michael Elkin has submitted an excellent review of a recent “read” for our Book Corner. There is also an enlightening piece on the origins of the Yiddish language, and lots of info on how Humanistic Jews celebrate Chanukah including blessings you can use in your own home.

There are other bits and pieces to enjoy as well. Look forward to seeing you at an Oraynu event soon. Enjoy the holidays — whatever and wherever you celebrate.

Sandi
Sandi Horwitz, Editor
50 years — half a century. 50 years ago one could go see Elvis, or the Beatles, or attend Woodstock. 50 years ago Richard Nixon was sworn in as President of the United States, Golda Meir became Israel’s first female Prime Minister, and Pierre Trudeau was Prime Minister of Canada. 50 years ago the Stonewall riots happened, giving birth to the gay rights movement. And 50 years ago, a group of secular Jews who wanted to offer their kids a dogma-free Jewish education and come together for holidays and discussions, came together and created the Secular Jewish Association, later to be called Oraynu Congregation for Humanistic Judaism.

I haven’t been around for all of Oraynu’s 50 years. I first attended SJA programs via their Sunday school and then as a teenager in their youth group. I had no inkling then that I would one day become a rabbi, or Oraynu’s rabbi. I was simply one of the many thousands of people that we have touched; providing excellent programming and services, and providing a meaningful Jewish option in a relatively Jewishly conservative city.

A few years ago at our Annual General Meeting, we had a discussion of Oraynu’s past, its present, and our projections for its future. What emerged was a beautiful timeline and tapestry of memories and stories, as well as hopes and imaginings, because it was clear that the values at the heart of our community have always driven who we are and what we do.

I’m so very proud to be celebrating 50 years of us. I hope you’ll be at the celebration! We have so much to be proud of — our beautiful Jewish liturgy and cultural practice, our social justice work, our strong and supportive community, our ability to create space for grief and joy, fear and hope, disagreement and deep love. A lot has changed in 50 years, but a lot stays the same. We are deeply committed to secular/cultural/humanistic approaches to Judaism, proving all the time that they are meaningful and beautiful. We are proud of our truly inclusive community — whether folks are intermarried, Jews by choice, LGBTQ, Jews of colour, or in any other way unwelcome in other Jewish spaces, they have a home with us. We are a community of grit, surviving and thriving despite intense scrutiny and in a time when other communities are folding. And we are, above all, a place where people can come as and be themselves, saying words they believe, experiencing and expanding their cultural practice so their lives are enriched and so that they are better forces for goodness in the world.

Interestingly, 50 years ago was also the National Convention of the Students for a Democratic Society and the birth of the Weatherman faction. They were fighting for racial and gender rights. They were anti-war. And they were passionately fighting for democracy. While it’s not the same thing, it is notable to me that some of the fights continue. I recently spoke with Lincoln Dow, the new person leading Jews For A Secular Democracy (JFASD). For those who don’t know, JFASD is an initiative of our movement organization the Society for Humanistic Judaism. Our communities, including Oraynu, have always been outspoken on issues of church and state. I’m proud to be part of a movement that raises our voices in support of reproductive choice, of legislation that responds to science-based climate claims, of keeping evolution and sex education in schools. It’s ridiculous that we should have to fight for these things which are simply understood to be part of democracies elsewhere, part of the fabric of a functioning society, but we are fighting for them here and in the United States. We (sadly) need to stay vigilant.

So, we do what we always have done. We act according to our beliefs. We say what we mean. We fight hard for a just world. We also do it while laughing and celebrating with each other. It’s all pretty special. Happy anniversary Oraynu! Here’s to 50 more years and beyond!
Happy Anniversary, Oraynu!

On Saturday evening Nov. 2nd, we marked

Our 50th Year Celebration & Reunion

Highlights were:
- Sharing of memories & wonderful displays of memorabilia
- Tributes to our founders and to Jenny Isaacs, Director of Heart to Heart
- Music by Mickey Lewin and the Ultimate Sound Trio
- Yummy hors d’oeuvres and desserts

It was a terrific evening where we honoured Oraynu’s past and present, and looked ahead to the future!

And, on Sunday morning Nov. 3rd, our Children’s School (also 50 years young!) held its own fun-filled party to celebrate this amazing milestone.

Watch for a report on the two anniversary events with lots of pics in our next issue!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday, Nov. 12
7:30 pm
Don Hts. Unitarian
18 Wynford Drive
Suite 102

NEUBERGER HEW 2019
HOLocaust EDucation WEEK

“Holocaust Education for a New Generation”
Guest Speaker: Leora Schaefer

Findings from a recent study showed that 22% of millennials haven’t heard/are not sure if they have heard of the Holocaust and 62% did not know that 6 million Jews were killed in the Holocaust. What are the consequences of such knowledge gaps?

Leora Schaefer is Executive Director of Facing History and Ourselves Canada, an organization that uses the lessons of history to inspire teachers and their students to stand up to bigotry and hate.

Everyone welcome; no charge. Kindly RSVP.

Saturday, Nov. 23
11:00 am
Members’ home
Bathurst and Ava Rd. area

Join us for SHABBAT & RABBI’S BRUNCH

Come for a morning Shabbat service that sets us up for a wonderful restful day and week. And then nosh bagels and shmooze.

This is a wonderful chance to informally hang out with other Oraynu folks and Rabbi Denise.

Non-members welcome: $15

Unless otherwise indicated, kindly RSVP for ALL EVENTS:
416-385-3910 | roby@oraynu.org | via Oraynu website Event link
**SHABBAT, CHANUKAH CANDLES & SONG**

Come for the latkes and light, stay for the singing and shmoozing!

Special guest Jordan Klapman presents: “Oy, Tannenbaum! How Jewish Songwriters Wrote the Great Christmas Songs”

Most people know that “White Christmas” was written by Irving Berlin, but did you know that at least 15 of the top 25 secular holiday songs were written by Jews?

Come hear Jordan explain how this happened, and learn why these popular holiday songs were basically written to express universal values.

_Pianist and lecturer Jordan Klapman has entertained Oraynu in the past with his in-depth musical talks on George Gershwin, Irving Berlin and the History of Jewish Pop and Rock ‘n’ Roll._

*Non-members welcome: $15*

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**FAMILY CHANUKAH FESTIVAL**

Come celebrate Chanukah with the School!!

Fun activities, singing and lots of latkes & nosh, too

Our holiday party is a wonderful way to bring light into the start of the dark and cold season!

_TZEDAKAH:_ Collection of small women’s toiletries to be donated to Nellie’s Families: Bring REFRESHMENTS (no nuts or shellfish) e.g. whole, pre-washed fruit/veggies, or cheese, crackers & nut-free baked goods for all to share.

_Guests welcome: $8/Adult, $4/Child, $20/family_  
_This program is part of Oraynu’s commitment to Family Education and is funded in part by your generous donations._

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**RABBI EVA GOLDFINGER’S 2020 ADULT EDUCATION SERIES**

**Topic: Markings of Jewish Life Cycles: Origins and Evolution**

This coming year, to avoid winter weather, we are offering one Sunday morning adult ed session and a 3-part Thursday evening adult ed series in the spring of 2020. Whether this will be your first time, or you have been coming for years, join Rabbi Eva Goldfinger for these exciting and mind-expanding sessions on the varying origins and evolution of Jewish beliefs about the meaning and marking of the cycles of life, from conception to death. Discover the evolving practices and the similarities and differences between religious and humanistic rites and rituals.

**Sunday morning April 19, 10:00-12:30pm | Children’s School@St. Andrew’s JHS, 131 Fenn Ave.**

_Jewish Life from Birth to Death: Humanistic and Religious Markings/Celebrations_

**Thursday nights, 7:00-9:00pm | Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Ave.**

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**March 26: Jewish Birth and Death Rituals: From Superstition to Science**

**April 30: Bar/Bat Mitzvot and Conversions: Torah Optional Commitment to Judaism**

**May 28: Courtship and Marriage: From Property to Love Subjects**

Mark your calendars now. More info to follow in upcoming issues.
PRESIDENT’S ROSH HASHANAH MESSAGE (Presented on Monday Sept. 30th)
By MARK BRENDER

As always, it’s such a privilege and a pleasure to be celebrating the new year with all of you.

The board and the staff of Oraynu have been thinking a bit lately, as we frequently do, about growth. Namely, among all the things we could be doing as a congregation and a community – and especially given that this is our 50th year, which you’ll hear more about soon -- where does organizational growth fit among our priorities?

It was a week ago today that Greta Thunburg spoke at the United Nations in one of the most important speeches the UN has seen. Part of her message was a critique of growth – in that case, economic growth – as an end in itself. Because without asking why, what’s the point of growth -- we not only miss what is really important, but as we’ve done with the environment, we can do serious damage.

So two brief thoughts on growth and our Oraynu community.

One, we always need some growth just for sustainability, to ensure we’re still here as an option for our kids and their kids 50 years from now, if they find Oraynu’s practice of Judaism as personally meaningful as we do.

Second, growth ensures this group of people, this community, can continue to make the world a better place. The environment table in the lobby represents just one of the many ways we’re trying to do that. The kind of ideas we talk about, the issues we choose to take on as our own, the values that we stand behind and project to the broader world – they all contribute to positive change.

And so to borrow a Harry Potter analogy, part of our job, I suspect, is to be a Jewish version of Platform 9¾ – a gateway to let people know that yes, this is really a thing, it exists – and that once you’re through that door, you might find there is a tiny bit of magic in what happens here at Oraynu as well.

When you come to Oraynu for Rosh Hashanah you are saying that you are part of this community. And so we welcome you, we honour you, we are glad you are with us.

TOPICS FOR DINNER TABLE OR CAR TALKS
Want to inject a little more Judaism into the life of your family? These are suggestions for a topic of conversation for your next dinner party, around your family table or in the car.

Consider this quote from Albert Einstein:
“All religions, arts and sciences are branches of the same tree. All these aspirations are directed toward ennobling man’s life, lifting it from the sphere of mere physical existence and leading the individual towards freedom. It is no mere chance that our older universities developed from clerical schools. Both churches and universities — insofar as they live up to their true function — serve the ennoblement of the individual. They seek to fulfill this great task by spreading moral and cultural understanding, renouncing the use of brute force.

The essential unity of ecclesiastical and secular institutions was lost during the 19th century, to the point of senseless hostility. Yet there was never any doubt as to the striving for culture. No one doubted the sacredness of the goal. It was the approach that was disputed.”

- From Einstein’s 1937 piece “Moral Decay,” later published in Out of My Later Years (1950)

Do you agree with this quote? Parts of it? What rings true for you as our community reaches 50 years?
Every morning I wake up feeling that I have the best job in the world. (A bit “mushy”? Maybe... True? Absolutely!) I work with the most amazing children and their families. Together we generate cultural meaning and community, as well as nurturing personal development and growth. The staff, volunteers and I often refer to our part in teaching humanistic Judaism as “a labour of love”. All of this and more is why I feel so privileged. It is also why Sandi and I conceived of this idea—in honour of Oraynu’s 50th, instead of the usual Principal’s Report, why not ask our teaching staff, if they wished, to write a short “reflection” offering their thoughts about Oraynu? Here are their impressions of our very special community school and congregation (and mine, too!):

**From Sharon Aschaiek, Education Assistant:** Oraynu came into my family’s life in 2016, when my son first became a student at the school. We immediately appreciated the school’s warm and caring community and its humanistic values. So while my son started Grade 4, I also went to school—by volunteering in the classes for the youngest students. This year, Principal Steve invited me to officially join the teaching staff as an education assistant in the Grade 1/2 class, and I was delighted to accept. I help Rabbi Bill Tepper with planning and delivering the curriculum, and creating a fun, supportive environment for the kids to learn about Judaism. It’s a genuine pleasure for me to support these children’s Jewish education and to help them appreciate Oraynu’s emphasis on tikkun olam.

**From Denise Lawee, OraynuTots:** I started off as an Oraynu parent and I remember Roby just laughing when I asked if there would be opportunities to get involved at the school. It turns out that the answer is YES. I began with teaching the Holocaust unit/substitute teaching and assisting with the myriad of Oraynu activities. More than a decade later, my children have long since graduated from Oraynu (but both have a strong Jewish identity and strong ties to Israel). One of the highlights for me has been to see the children grow over the years. Some of the students I taught while in kindergarten and grade 1 are now in university. I had the pleasure of working with 3 school graduates who came back to Oraynu as staff for the high holidays. As well, the school staff is a tight knit group led by our fearless leader, Steve. He is a kind-hearted child-focused principal with incredible devotion to teaching and inspiring our next generation. For all these reasons and more, Oraynu remains my spiritual community and Jewish home.

**From Risa Morris, Grades 5-6:** Oraynu is such a special place. I am so lucky to be able to teach such engaged, caring young people that want to challenge both me and each other. Together through questions, art and activism we explore our connection to Judaism and t’kun olam. Teaching our values so early will allow the students to have a fond and deep understanding of their own connections to Judaism and to our Jewish community.

**From Rabbi Bill Tepper, Gr. 1-2: Oraynu Children’s School: Why It Matters**

The Oraynu Children’s School is comprised of dedicated and inspiring leadership; skilled, gifted and caring teachers, teachers’ aides and teenage support, devoted parents and fantastic students. All of which are a recipe for success; and all of which are a source of pride. Those who contribute to the success of the school - and the congregation in its entirety - understand that there is no single manner of celebrating one’s Judaism. There is more than one way of honouring our traditions and stories; and more than one path towards interpreting our remarkable past, rejoicing in our dynamic present while envisioning our promising future. We want our children to love their Judaism; to pursue lives strengthened by way of open minds, hearts and spirits. We want our children to care about their Judaism, and for all with whom they share their Jewish and larger communities.

**And lastly, from Principal Steve:** At Oraynu, Jewish culture and values are ever evolving. This is thanks to the daily discourse between its key players—our imaginative teachers, active
students, caring parents, responsive school committee, philosophically inspiring congregational Rabbi and consulting Rabbis, and hardworking leadership staff. I feel privileged to work with a group of truly dedicated teachers who, each Sunday, share their knowledge on Judaism and Humanism, ethics, rights and freedoms. I revel in the fact that the ideals they impart to our children promotes free and independent thinking. I love instigating and motivating tzedakah and community involvement—two valuable principles deeply ensconced in the fabric of our school and congregational identity. It is my greatest joy to see our children engage in fun and interactive humanistic Jewish learning that for them is an authentic, hands on, growth experience.

Steve

UPCOMING SCHOOL EVENTS:

- **Sunday, Nov 3:** Oraynu’s 50th Anniversary Celebration! Fun activities. Bake Sale. Adopt-a-pet Tzedakah Project. Students, families and alumni. 10:00 am–12:30 pm. School Auditorium
- **Sunday, Nov 17:** Native Child and Family Service Presentation on Indigenous Children—Grades 1–7. 10:45 am–11:30 am. Room 103. (Students only).
- **Friday, Nov 22:** Pyjama Party Oneg Shabbat. JK, SK, Grades 1 and 2. 7:00 pm–8:30 pm. Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Avenue.
- **Sunday, Nov 24:** Grade 1-2 Family Education Simulated Shabbat. 10:00 am-12:30 pm. Staff Room. Students and Families.
- **Sunday, Dec 1:** Grade 3-4 Family Day—Garry’s Grade 3-4 Family Morning – Kings, Prophets and Judges. 10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Room 105. Students and Families.
- **Sunday, Dec 8:** Grades 5 & 6 —Family Education: Virtual Tour of Israel. 10:00am-12:30pm. Staff Room. Students and Families.
- **Sunday, Dec 15:** Family Chanukah Festival. 10:00 am–12:30 pm. Borochov Social Hall.
- **Sunday, Dec 15:** Grade 7 Tzedakah Project—Packing Toiletries for Nellie’s Shelter. 12:30 pm–2 pm. Borochov Social Hall. (Students only—immediately after Chanukah Festival).

PAJAMA PARTY ONEG SHABBAT

**For children in JK, SK, Grade 1 & 2 AND their families**

*Members with children or grandkids in these age groups welcome*

- Participate in a Shabbat ceremony with your Oraynu friends
- Bake challah, sing songs, hear stories!
- Kids, wear your pyjamas and bring your teddy bears.
- Everyone, bring pillows to sit on.

**School families, RSVP to Steve. Non-school families ONLY, please RSVP to Roby.**

Funded with support from [Jewish Federation of Greater Toronto](https://www.jewishfed.ca)

COMMUNITY NEWS

Rabbi Karen Levy has asked me to share this info once again:

**Israeli Folk Dancing from Step One**

**Thursdays 7 – 8 pm | Thornlea High School, 8075 Bayview**

Everyone is welcome - no experience or special skills needed

Circle dancing set to traditional and contemporary Israeli songs

*Experience Israel through your feet!*

For more info, please e-mail Sofie Azen at sofsof@rogers.com
After reading Bari Weiss’s *How to Fight Anti-Semitism*, I came away with a new understanding of how the political left, which Jews have often considered friendly, may not be friendly at all. The political right is obvious, as are the radicals. The left, however, is more insidious. Bari Weiss outlines these issues in detail, and provides insightful ideas to combat them in her new book.

Bari Weiss was motivated to write this book after the terrorist attack on the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, where Jews attending services were killed and wounded. The Tree of Life had been her synagogue, where she had earlier had her Bat Mitzvah.

In her book she does two things. First, she defines anti-Semitism in her own words. Second, she proposes actions the Jewish community can take to fight it. Her approach has garnered both support and rejection from the Jewish community. The Jerusalem Post wrote “in seeking to understand the surge in contemporary antisemitism in the United States, and how to oppose it, one could do no better than to read Bari Weiss’s new work”.

Weiss develops a three-headed definition of anti-Semitism. There is the obvious from the right – anti-Jewish slurs, postings, signs, graffiti and marches – from the Jew-haters who want us dead. Second, there is the less obvious left – the denial of Israel’s right to exist, support the BDS (boycott, divestment and sanction) movement, and blaming Israel for the current state of affairs in the Middle East. Finally, there are the radical Muslims, who teach their children to hate from the moment of their birth.

Weiss states openly what we all know but don’t talk about – that the world does not criticize China, India, Syria, North Korea, and Saudi Arabia for their human rights violations. Only Israel – the country that has no right to be there.

She then proposes how we should deal with this. She posits that nothing will come from publicity, marches, demonstrations and letters. Explaining ourselves will not make a difference. We must do what we are best at – being Jewish. This includes choosing life, being active members of our country and community, nurturing our Jewish identity, and calling out anti-Semitism when we see or hear it. Despite what we would like to believe, we are less safe in Canada and the United States than previously. This book is a wake-up call to a changing world.

*Bari Weiss is a staff writer and opinion editor for the New York Times. She previously worked at The Wall Street Journal and at Tablet, a Jewish online magazine. She has a passionate view about Zionism.*

And, Rabbi Denise has added her own suggestion: “The Testaments” by Margaret Atwood
The long-awaited sequel to The Handmaid’s Tale and co-winner of this year’s Booker prize, this book is a good reminder of the need for separation of church and state, protecting rights for women, for gay people, and for reproductive freedom. It’s a great read!

RABBI DENISE IS AN AUTHOR!
Rabbi Denise, whom we all know is a prolific writer, has written her first book. It’s called “The A-Z of Intermarriage,” and it’s being published by the University of Toronto Press. Launch date is March 2020. Here’s what the promo blurb says:

*Written by Rabbi Denise Handlarski, an intermarried rabbi, “The A–Z of Intermarriage” is part story, part strategy, and all heart, as well as a coming together of religious source material, cultural context, and personal narrative. Fun to read and full of helpful and practical tips and tools for couples and families, this book is the perfect “how-to” manual for living a happy and balanced intermarried life.*

*The advance price is only $14.92 ($22.95 after launch) and it can be pre-ordered at: https://utorontopress.com/ca/the-a-x2013-z-of-intermarriage-2*
Yiddish is the historical language of the Ashkenazi Jews. According to prominent Yiddish scholar Max Weinreich, the language originated in the Rhine Valley in the western part of Germany, when Jews from Italy and France settled there. Most sources concur with Weinreich about this location. The dates for the origin of Yiddish vary from one source to another, but they are roughly between 900 and 1100 C.E. Yiddish developed from various dialects of Middle High German plus many Hebrew and Aramaic words. Some words from the Romance languages spoken by the Jews from Italy and France also entered this developing language.

The Jews who spoke Yiddish migrated eastward due to the Crusades and other persecution. As they migrated, Yiddish picked up words from the vernaculars in the locations where Jews lived, especially words from Slavic languages. The introduction of Slavic words into Yiddish formed the eastern dialects and moved this new language further from the possibility of being considered a German dialect. Jews in Germany and other western European countries continued to speak the western dialect. Due to persecution, Jewish communities tended to isolate themselves from non-Jews. This isolation contributed to the development of Yiddish as a specifically Jewish language.

The earliest surviving references date from the 12th century and call the language (loshn-ashknaz, “language of Ashkenaz”) or (taytsh), a variant of tiutsch, the contemporary name for Middle High German. Colloquially, the language is sometimes called (mame-losshn, lit. “mother tongue”), distinguishing it from (loshn koydesh, “holy tongue”), meaning Hebrew and Aramaic. The term “Yiddish”, short for Yidish Taitsch (“Jewish German”), did not become the most frequently used designation in the literature until the 18th century. In the late 19th and into the 20th century the language was more commonly called “Jewish”, especially in non-Jewish context but “Yiddish” is again the more common designation today.

Yiddish writing uses the Hebrew alphabet with a different orthography unique to Yiddish. The term “Yiddish” is also used in the adjectival sense, synonymously with “Jewish”, to designate attributes of Yiddishkeit (e.g. Ashkenazi culture; for example, Yiddish cooking, Yiddish music and klezmer, Jewish jokes, etc.).

Prior to the Holocaust, there were 11–13 million speakers of Yiddish among 17 million Jews worldwide. 85% of the approximately 6 million Jews who died in the Holocaust were Yiddish speakers, leading to a massive decline in the use of the language. Assimilation following World War II and Aliyah, immigration to Israel, further decreased the use of Yiddish both among survivors and among Yiddish-speakers from other countries (such as in the Americas).

However, Yiddish is prominently used today in a number of Haredi Jewish communities worldwide; it is the first language of the home, school, and in many social settings among many ultra-orthodox Jews, and is used in most Hasidic yeshivas.

More recently, Yiddish is enjoying a revival, especially from the non-Jewish scholarly community, as a real language and not as the ‘corrupted tongue’ it was considered throughout history. Many universities worldwide offer courses and degree programs in Yiddish linguistics, and the literature of the Yiddish cultural period is receiving attention for its astute depiction of contemporary Jewish existence.

- A half truth … is a whole lie.
- Words should be weighed, not counted.
- The truly rich are those who enjoy what they have.
- If things are not as you wish, wish them as they are.
- A fool says what he knows, and a wise man knows what he says.
- Time and words can’t be recalled, even if it was only yesterday.
- If you ever need a helping hand you’ll find one at the end of your arm.
Chanukah from a Humanistic Perspective
From shj.com

This year, we light the first candle of Chanukah on Sunday, December 22nd. Throughout the eight-day celebration, the flickering lights are a reminder of the struggle, courage, and fragile triumphs of the Jewish people.

Chanukah, a Hebrew word meaning "dedication" is said to refer to the rededication of the Temple of Jerusalem by Judah Maccabee and his followers in 161 BCE. The basis of Chanukah is the story of a Maccabean victory embellished by Talmudic legend. This legend tells us that a small band of Jews led by Judah Maccabee and his family rebelled when the Greek King Antiochus Epiphanes sought to impose Greek culture and religion upon his Syrian empire, which included Judea. Following their recapture of Jerusalem, the victorious Jews rededicated the Temple in Jerusalem and decreed an annual celebration of Jewish independence. Some 600 years after the Maccabean victory, the rabbis, seeking to claim Chanukah as their own, added the legend of the flask of oil that miraculously burned for eight days.

The story of the Maccabees is a story of human courage, integrity, and hope. The success of their revolution is rooted in the people's desire for religious, political, and economic freedom. Their desire to choose their future for themselves was accomplished, not by pious pleas or tearful entreaties, but by decisive action, expert planning, and sheer guts. The values of the Maccabean revolution are as important today as they were centuries ago. We, too, must take the future into our own hands. We choose how we shall live, seeking to behave courageously to preserve our integrity. Chanukah is a valuable holiday for Humanistic Jews, as we celebrate the courage of authentic heroes, articulating the values we must have if heroism, humanity, and the natural order are to survive.

Families often retell the ancient stories, share the rich symbols, and connect these with modern concerns and issues. Chanukah celebrations are festive occasions, marked by the lighting of the candles of the chanukiah, which serves as a connection with our past, as a link to other Jews. Foods cooked in oil, such as latkes or sufganiyot, are shared and there are games, songs and Chanukah "gelt" or gifts.

A Simple Humanistic Candle Blessing for Chanukah
As we light our Chanukah candles, let us say:

Baruch ha-or ba-o-lam. בְּעֵמֶל הָאָרָה בּוֹרֶכֶת בְּנָא חָנִיקָה בַּרְצֶח בָּרֹקֵע בַּרְצֶח בָּרוּךְ בַּרְצֶח
Blessed is the light of the world.
Blessed is the light within humanity.
Blessed is the light of Chanukah.

The Eight Lights of Chanukah
By Marilyn Rowens

First printed in the journal Humanistic Judaism in 1979.

The first light is the light of REASON.
It is the light of reason which helps us to see the difference between right and wrong.

The second light is the light of SELF-ESTEEM.
It is the light of self-esteem which keeps us proud.

The third light is the light of COURAGE.
It is the light of courage which gives us strength to stand up for what we believe in.

The fourth light is the light of FREEDOM.
It is the light of freedom which reminds us to take responsibility for our own lives.

The fifth light is the light of LOVE.
It is the light of love which enables us to care for those who suffer.
The sixth light is the light of LOYALTY.
It is the light of loyalty which makes us keep our promises to those who trust us.

The seventh light is the light of GENEROSITY.
It is the light of generosity which encourages us to give even when we do not receive.

The eighth light is the light of HOPE.
It is the light of hope which leads us to the vision of a better world.

**Lighting Candles**

As we humans move through time and space, we assign different roles to the act of lighting candles. Sometimes candles serve the purpose of signaling the onset of passage of holy days and special occasions. At other times we light candles to communicate our solidarity with people from whom we are separated by gaps in time or space or other barriers.

The candle-lit windows of Poles after December 13, 1981, provide a dramatic example of this habit. Closer to home, we have the lighting of Yahrzeit candles in memory of beloved deceased. At still other times, we light candles to brighten dark corners and improve vision and understanding. But no matter what the religion or culture, we have shown an attachment to “burning lights,” as Marc Chagall’s wife Bella called them. Perhaps one reason for the universal appeal of candle lights is that candles are a reflection of the human spirit, Jewish and otherwise. An active, burning candle emits a glowing, golden haze around it. The flame of a candle communicates strength, vitality, triumph, vision, and warmth.

The flame of most candles has two parts. The upper, outer layer is brilliant gold. The inner, lower layer is blue. This inner, lower layer is like a shadow box, inviting us to explore the many images it suggests. Shadows suggest negative visions of Jewish synagogues and homes set afire during pogroms and wars; of books, both secular and religious, burned during cultural purges; of civilian and soldier faces scarred by flames of wartime bombs. Flickers of candles also conjure images of great moments in history, such as the miracle of Hanukka, or the mundane but equally pleasant memories of the past. The latter includes flames that heated savory meals of yesteryear and provided light to dark households and passageways, enabling people to better control their world and communicate with each other. Like the human spirit, burning lights are capable of signaling both creativity and destruction.

And lastly, candles have a finite existence. They demonstrate the fragile nature of life on this earth. Candles begin to glow while in a solid state, but eventually burn down to nothingness. Curiously, from the first moment of burning, candles seem to shed tears of awareness as the wax drips down their sides!

In lighting candles, we seek connection with the past, with each other, and with ourselves. Burning lights gives us a sense of our strength, vision, and dynamism. They also reflect the complexity of our experience on earth and the delicacy of our co-existence, peaceful or otherwise, here and now.

May the lighting of candles always remind us of the dynamic, multi-faceted and fragile nature of our lives. And may the light of candles direct us to seek each other in peace.

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**THE “SOCIETY NEWS”**

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**Heads up for the 2020 HuJews Conclave — March 27-29, 2020 in Metro Detroit**

The HuJews Conclave is an annual North American teen and college conference sponsored by the Society for Humanistic Judaism. Conclave brings together teens in grades 8-12 and college students from across the United States and Canada for a weekend of fun, service, insight, and discovery. Conclave empowers young Humanistic Jews to connect with their peers and engage in thought-provoking discussions, fun-filled workshops, rewarding community service activity, and much more.

Registration opens soon. Any Qs? Contact Anna Goldberg, HuJews Co-ordinator, at: anna.hujews@gmail.com
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 tikun 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:

- 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 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

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:
UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday, Nov. 12 at 7:30 pm               (p. 3)
HOLOCAUST EDUCATION WEEK EVENT
‘Holocaust Education for a New Generation’
Location: Don Height Unitarian, 18 Wynford Dr. Suite 102

Friday, Nov. 22 from 7:00-8:30 pm             (p. 10)
PAJAMA PARTY ONEG SHABBAT
for JK, SK, Gr. 1, 2. Non-school families welcome
Location: Borochov Centre, 272 Codsell

Saturday, Nov. 23 at 11:00 am                  (p. 3)
SHABBAT & RABBI’S BRUNCH
Location: Members’ home, Bathurst and Ava Rd. area

Friday, Dec. 13 at 7:30 pm                  (p. 4)
SHABBAT, CHANUKAH CANDLES AND SONG
With special guest Jordan Klapman
Location: Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Ave. (Wilson Hts/Sheppard)

Sunday, Dec. 15 at 10:00 am               (p. 4)
FAMILY CHANUKAH FESTIVAL
Location: Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Ave. (Wilson Hts/Sheppard)

Check website for updates:
oraynu.org

Unless otherwise indicated, for all events, kindly RSVP to Roby:
416-385-3910
roby@oraynu.org
or via our website event link
Non-members are welcome at most events; nominal charge may apply

For more Oraynu news and conversation, log onto our FB page.
It’s a great place to connect with fellow members, share ideas, and stay up-to-date on events. We’ll be posting 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.

Last Word: OUR FUN-FILLED ROCKIN’ FITNESS FUNDRAISER

Fitness Leader Louise Sherman putting Oraynu members through their paces on Sunday Oct. 27th.
The event was a success and raised $1400 to help support our school and its 50th anniversary tzedakah project — helping Indigenous kids through Native Child and Family Services of Toronto.
Special thanks to Louise and to all the participants and contributors!