Hope you’ve all been enjoying this not-too-terrible winter. The good news is that spring is not that far away—on the calendar, anyway!

Firstly, the response to the Syrian Family Reunification Appeal was fantastic and we are grateful to all who contributed. Hopefully our adopted family’s last sister and her family will soon be here. The list of donors appears on p. 10.

Here’s what your Oraynu team has in store for the next two months and beyond:

There are two events for Purim: an adult discussion on Thursday, March 5th on “Sex and Violence in the Megillah” and our annual Family Festival is on Sunday, March 8th at Borochov.

Rabbi Eva Goldfinger’s lecture series “Marking of Jewish Life Cycles: Origins and Evolution” starts on March 26th, with other sessions following on April 30th and May 28th. There is also a separate Sunday morning program on April 19th at our Children’s School. Come learn with us!

On Saturday morning, March 21st, we will gather to mark the International Refugee Shabbat, a worldwide program recognizing the plight of refugees. It will be followed by a Rabbi’s brunch featuring special treats from our Syrian friends.

We are thrilled for Rabbi Denise and the publication of her first book “The A-Z of Intermarriage.” We are all invited to the official launch on March 23 at the Miles Nadal JCC, but we will also be honouring her on May 26th with an in-house event.

On March 29th, the Tikkun Olam Oraynu Committee is once again sponsoring The Period Purse to provide personal supplies for homeless women. Please see p. 4 for a list of items that we still need and how you can help.

The Children’s School Open House will be on Sunday, April 19th. And, a week later on April 26th will be another of our semi-annual intro sessions on Humanistic Judaism. It’s ideal for new and prospective Oraynu members to learn about who we are and what we do. Both events take place at the school.

To celebrate Israel’s 72nd birthday on April 23, our special guest Naama Baumgarten-Sharon will speak on archaeology in Israel and its impact on the secular vs. religious understandings of the bible and the land.

Lastly on May Day, we offer a Shabbat program featuring a screening of recent Oscar-winning documentary “American Factory.” How apropos is that?

Besides the usual columns, don’t miss a wonderful activist letter written by one of our grade 7 students on climate change. We are so proud of her initiative.

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

Sandi

Sandi Horwitz, Editor

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

Letters and articles printed in this newsletter reflect the opinions of their writers and are not necessarily those of Oraynu Congregation.
Some of my favourite holidays are coming up: Purim and Passover. On Purim the tradition is to drink until one confuses the name of the “bad guy” — Haman, with the name of the “good guy” — Mordecai. We remember the peril of the Jews, and our oppressors. We say the name Haman and/as we blot it out with noise. We remember in order to forget. We get to go on living, but always with that noise in the background reminding us we are not quite safe. In the bible, we are told to remember the name Amalek, another would-be Jew-killer. What does this constant remembering do to us?

On Passover the sentiment is quite different. We recall the metaphorical journey out of Egypt. And the bible tells us to love the stranger, for we were strangers in the land of Egypt. One act of remembering, the Purim-style act, is about our own self-protection. And one act, the Passover-style, is about using our experience to foster empathy over others.

You’ll hear people talk about “Purim Jews” and “Passover Jews” citing this difference. Does Jewish history make you more likely to feel insular, craving a Jewish community that will provide you with a sense of safety and the comfort that comes from being with those like oneself? Or are you a “Passover Jew,” using Jewish experience to foster connections with others who have been slaves, exiles, imperiled?

Of course, the dichotomy is false. The nice thing about these holidays being close to one another is that they remind us that it is natural and reasonable to be both interested in self-protection and also interested in the well-being of all humanity. Striking a balance here is important for obvious reasons. We should not be self-interested to the point of cruelty to others. We should not be so giving to others that we victimize ourselves. You know the Hillel quote (if not, look up “Hillel quote” and you’ll find it).

I was born in South Africa and when I was young I remember being so puzzled by so many Jewish South Africans who had been happy to be part of apartheid’s despicable treatment of Black people because at least they were considered “white,” insulated from the state violence. Did they not know better after the persecution of their own people? I worry about these types of Jews, the “Purim Jews,” and what they do to us as a community. Not only do they perpetrate terrible crimes and injustices in the name of Judaism and Jewish survival, but they also lessen and weaken the Jewish experience by framing what it means to be Jewish in apocalyptic terms.

Think about it: do young people feel drawn to be Jewish when it is framed as a responsibility and terrible obligation? Or do we excite people about being Jewish when it is framed more as a joyful and beautiful experience?

What in our own humanity gets reduced when we feel we cannot be generous to others because we are constantly in self-preservation mode? And what of those others? Are they not deserving of the care that we crave?

Humanistic Judaism compels us to stand up and speak out when there is hatred and injustice against us and others. We need to be loud about Indigenous rights, about the issues of immigration and child separation (even if it’s not in our country) the treatment of religious minorities wherever they are being persecuted, and many other issues. This is the expression of Jewish values, to love the stranger, to pursue justice, even when it isn’t directly to benefit Jewish people. Justice is always in our own self-interest.

Passover is on its way, with its themes of rebirth and resistance. Passover is my favourite Jewish holiday of the year. I love the ritual. I love the creativity with which people infuse their seders. I love matzah pizza. Mostly what I love is the metaphor of this Jewish story that has been the cornerstone of Jewish identity and experience for generations. We were in bondage, now we are free. With that freedom comes the obligation to help others achieve freedom.
UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, Mar. 5
7:30 pm
Quaker Friends House
60 Lowther Avenue
(St. George/Bloor area)

PURIM EVENT - SEX AND VIOLENCE IN THE MEGILLAH
We tend to think of Purim as a kids’ holiday, but the text it’s based on includes demeaning sexual content, egregious violence, and a story that should make us cringe, not carnival! Come learn about sex and violence in the Megillah and also how this very secular text gets religious-ized by some rabbis. And then, of course, we party!

Non-members welcome: $15

Note: This is a new location we are trying out.
We have heard from many of you that you want spaces that are more central and subway accessible. Please come so we can gather feedback on this space!

Friday, Mar. 6
7:30 pm
Borochov Centre
272 Codsell Ave.
(Wilson Hts/Sheppard)

Saturday, Mar. 21
11:00 am
Members’ home
(Wilson/Avenue Rd area)

INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE SHABBAT & RABBI’S BRUNCH
As suggested by Jewish Immigrant Aid Services (JIAS), we are participating in the “International Refugee Shabbat” — a day when Jewish communities everywhere will turn their attention to refugee issues. Rabbi Denise will do a Shabbat morning service and speak about Jewish teachings on welcoming the stranger. We will be joined by our Syrian friends Thanaa, Amyn, Lina, Tamer and Nour who will contribute some Syrian food to our Rabbi’s Brunch.

Non-members welcome: $15

Unless otherwise indicated, kindly RSVP for ALL EVENTS:
416-385-3910 | roby@oraynu.org | via online event link
Miles Nadal JCC and New Jewish Press (utorontopress.com) invite Oraynuniks and friends to attend the
OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF RABBI’S DENISE’S BOOK
Lauren Schreiber-Sasaki will interview Rabbi Denise.
Books will be available for sale.

Monday, Mar. 23, 7:00-9:00 pm | Miles Nadal JCC, 750 Spadina Ave (at Bloor)
Tickets are free, but you must register: atozofintermarriage.eventbrite.ca

Save the date — Tuesday May 26th — when Oraynu will celebrate Denise and her book.
Rabbi Denise will just have returned from several US cities promoting the book and will tell us how Oraynu and Humanistic Judaism are flipping the script on intermarriage for Jews everywhere. More details soon.

Join us for Rabbi Eva Goldfinger’s popular adult education series

MARKINGS OF JEWISH LIFE CYCLES:
ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION

Whether this will be your first time, or you have been coming for years, join Rabbi Eva 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.

Thursdays from 7:00-9:30 pm: (Non-members welcome: $20/class)
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

SPECIAL: Sunday morning, April 19, 10:00-12:30 pm: (Everyone welcome; no charge)
Jewish Life from Birth to Death: Humanistic and Religious Markings/Celebrations
Location: Oraynu Children’s School @St. Andrew’s JHS, 131 Fenn Ave.

THE PERIOD PURSE - A Tikkun Olam Oraynu Project

Thank you all so very much for your generosity so far. We are delighted to report that we have received a LOT of donations, but we do still need your help to make our packing event on March 29th a success. Please be generous with your donations of the following items – the list has been slightly amended based on current need:

• New or used excellent condition purses, backpacks or totes (large only- must fit box of tampons & pack of pads plus other comforting items)
• Tampons, pads and new Menstrual Cups. (No products from the dollar store, please)
• New black socks and new underwear (size L or XL)
• Wipes (baby wipes, moist towelettes)
• New face cloths and bars of soap (bigger need for face cloths than for soap)
• New or used good condition, washed scarves, hats, and mittens
• large clear plastic garbage bags (to hold the purses/backpacks/totes after we’ve packed them)

The Period Purse is a volunteer-run non-profit organization that strives to achieve menstrual equity by providing marginalized menstruators with access to free menstrual products, and to reduce the stigma surrounding periods through public education and advocacy. For more information, visit: https://www.theperiodpurse.com. THANK YOU!!
We invite families to share in our
SCHOOL/FAMILY PASSOVER SEDER

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

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

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

Guests and friends welcome: adults $15, students $7, children ages 4 and under $4
RSVP by email by Friday, March 27th to: roby@oraynu.org
Please indicate numbers attending + pot-luck contribution(s).
School Families, please note: NO CLASSES ON THE MORNING OF THE SEDER

Celebrate a humanist Passover with Oraynu at our
FIRST NIGHT SEDER (Adults/Teens/Older Kids)

Led by Barry Olshen and Sandi Horwitz
Authors (with Lisa Wright) of “Roots and Branches: A
Humanist Haggadah for Passover”

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

COST: Oraynu members: $20 pp + potluck contribution
Oraynu members’ immediate family: $32 + potluck contribution
Other guests/friends/non-members: $48 pp + potluck contribution

** Must R.S.V.P. by Wednesday, March 25th **

ORAYNU CHILDREN’S SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE
Meet the staff and find out all about our acclaimed curriculum
Focus on Jewish culture, history and values from secular humanistic perspective

JK-Gr. 7  •  Bnai Mitzvah Program  •  OraynuTots (1½-3½ yrs)
Jewish Festivals • Family Education • Hebrew • Tzedakah • Arts • Music

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

School funded with support from
**ISRAELI INDEPENDENCE DAY** (Yom Haatzmaut)
Come celebrate Israel’s 72nd birthday with a special program

**“Enlisted Archaeology” with Naama Baumgarten-Sharon**

Baumgarten-Sharon discusses her work as an Israeli human rights professional. She is a guide at the Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem, and holds a Masters in Hebrew Bible. She will discuss archaeology and its impact on issues relating to Palestine and the peace process, and the tension between secular/religious understandings of bible and the land.

*Israeli treats will be served.*
**Non-members welcome: $15**

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**HUMANISTIC JUDAISM ~ WHAT, WHY, HOW**

*Led by Rabbi Denise and Sandi Horwitz*

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

This is a presentation on what we have left behind, what we have retained, and what we have created to keep Judaism meaningful for secular/cultural Jews today. Everyone welcome; no charge to attend

**Kindly RSVP to Roby**

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**SHABBAT AND MAY DAY**

We’ll celebrate Shabbat and then screen the 2020 Academy Award-winning documentary “American Factory.”

May Day is a day for worker’s rights and this film asks pointed questions about how those rights are changing under globalization. We’ll end with a short discussion.

As always, there will be wine and snacks!

**SYNOPSIS of “AMERICAN FACTORY”**

In post-industrial Ohio, a Chinese billionaire opens a factory in an abandoned General Motors plant, hiring two thousand Americans. Early days of hope and optimism give way to setbacks as high-tech China clashes with working-class America.

1 hr. 50 min.

**Non-members welcome: $15**

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**THEATRE NIGHT — “THE GREAT DIVIDE”**

Presented by Harold Green Jewish Theatre Company

A Canadian Premiere ~ Winner of the 2015 Canadian Jewish Playwriting Competition

On Saturday, March 25, 1911, a fire broke out on the 8th floor of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory on the lower east side of Manhattan. Within ten minutes, 146 workers, most of them young women, most of them recent immigrants, lay dead, either on the floor of the sweatshop, or on the street eight stories below. *The Great Divide* provides an insight into the immigrant and refugee experience of the early 20th Century, and those who paid the ultimate price for seeking opportunity and a new life across the ocean.

We have secured a limited amount of seats. Reserve now! **$50 per person**

Please call Roby at 416-385-3910 to reserve and pay for your tickets.
NEWS FROM THE BOARD

Oraynu and Climate Change: Volunteers Needed

Oraynu is looking for volunteers to form a new and special committee responsible for scaling up our contribution to the fight against climate change. The committee will explore how Oraynu could best make a positive impact, both internally and by working with other groups, be they other faith-based or community organizations.

Many of our members are passionate about this issue, as is Oraynu’s Board, but we need a committed group of people to lead and guide our efforts. Oraynu has already taken steps to reduce our environmental footprint at events and regular programming. We anticipate this committee will propose further internal policies that can be adopted. It will also seek opportunities where we can add our voice and energy to environmental movements in Toronto or beyond for greater collective impact. If interested, please contact Oraynu Board member and volunteer extraordinaire Sue Drohan at: drohan@sympatico.ca

The Shofar — By Email or Snail Mail? Your Choice!

Last year we let members know that they could receive their newsletter via email - a digital full-colour pdf version of The Shofar -- if they preferred it that way. Several of our members opted in. We are now asking the same question again.

For those who want to continue receiving The Shofar by regular mail, nothing will change. We ask that Oraynu-niks who prefer to receive an email version get in touch with Roby (roby@oraynu.org/ or 416-385-3910). You’ll just need to confirm which email address you want it sent to; you’ll help the environment and save Oraynu postage costs too.

We can also send the digital version to email addresses belonging to other family members included in your paid membership. We have also been sending the E-Shofar over the winter months to any “snowbirds” who request it; let Roby know if you want to be added to that list. And remember, you can always access a slightly modified version of The Shofar (without personal info pages, e.g. Mitzvahs and Milestones, Nizkor and Donations listings) of both the current past issues of The Shofar under the ‘Links’ tab at www.oraynu.org/

SAVE THE DATE — Tuesday, June 9 at 7:00 pm at Borochov

PERSONAL PSYCHOTHERAPY: An Introductory Conversation with Barry Olshen

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

(Hillel, 1st C. CE)

Each of my psychotherapy patients is challenged by one or more of Hillel’s very wise questions. I believe that’s because all of us, in one way or another, are challenged by them as well.

If you have any questions, special thoughts or ideas about psychotherapy, please submit them directly to Barry as long in advance of the “Conversation” date as you can: barryolshen@gmail.com.

Barry has been a Registered Psychotherapist in private practice in Toronto for many years. All communications will be held in strictest confidence and presented anonymously, of course. Barry hopes that your questions, concerns, and ideas will form the basis of the evening’s conversation, allowing him and perhaps others to fill in the necessary theory and practice as we move along. The aim is for an interactive presentation.

Unless otherwise indicated, kindly RSVP for ALL EVENTS:
416-385-3910 | roby@oraynu.org | via online event link
Dear Robert Oliphant. My name is Juno ________. I’m twelve years old and in sixth grade. The other day in science class we watched a documentary about Global warming. And, frankly, it made me really mad. I wish people would actually start caring about Global warming because it’s putting everybody in danger. None of my friends or me want to die, but what would be even worse is if we spent the rest of our lives which will be very short if we keep doing what we are doing, living indoors without being able to go outside because it would be too dangerous, which is already happening in places like Newfoundland, which just got snowed in. People STILL can’t leave there homes. In some places, it’s so dirty out, but parents can’t even bathe their children for more than a couple minutes because the water is so toxic. That’s really sad. If you have kids think about what could happen to there futures. And if you don’t have kids, you must know some children who you love. I know for a fact that I don’t want to die young, do you? Apparently you do cause I’m not seeing you do much about this. People don’t realize this but it’s a really HUGE problem.

Here are some things you can do: Don’t burn as much oil! Like it or not, it has to stop!!! Plant some trees! If we get to plant enough, it can help a lot! Raise more money to help people! And endangered species, especially the polar bears. Raise more awareness about climate change! That can also help a lot. Work more on making electric cars, and not ones that run on gasoline! These are just a few reasons. Hopefully you read this and take it seriously, because I’m sure you get a lot of these kinds of letters. You can’t keep ignoring them. Not for long. Thank you, Juno.

Dear Hayden — I really appreciate you taking the time to write me. I share your concerns about climate change which is why when I was the Premier we finished shutting down all the coal plants in Ontario that were producing electricity and we implemented a Cap & Trade system that was forcing big polluters to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. You are correct that there is more to do and I hope that we can all work together including the people in government in Ontario now. I believe we human beings can figure this out if we work together.

Thank you for writing, Kathleen
Feb. 10/20

Kathleen Wynne, M.P.P.
Don Valley West
January and February were chock-full of our students fulfilling accomplishments! For this principal, seeing our students explore their Humanistic Jewish values is the best antidote to the “winter blues”. Perhaps, as you read about their actions to build a better world, you too will bask in some humanistic winter sunshine.

**Tu B’shevat at Kensington Place Senior’s Residence:** After decorating terra cotta planters in class and transplanting baby tropical plants into them, Bill’s Grade 1 and 2 students went to Kensington Place to sing Tu B’shevat songs for the senior residents. Led by their super-talented music teacher, Carl Berger, they sang songs about growing plants and trees. Afterwards, the plants they gave to their senior audience brought them smiles and great joy.

**Loonie and Toonie Tu B’Shevat Tree Drive:** For the donation of just one loonie and one toonie each child at the school participated in the planting of classroom trees at Bela Farm where Shoresh is planting a 20-acre Forest for the Future. The school helped grow the forest through our collective donation of 10 trees! Shoresh was very grateful to us as our school purchase of 10 trees surpassed the total donated by some of the larger Hebrew day schools in the city (okay...I’m *kvelling* a bit!). Risa and her grade 5 students who campaigned throughout the school for this tzedakah project deserve a meritorious *mazel tov* for a job well done! Thank you to our Oraynu families for contributing to the building of a 12,000 tree forest that will provide a valuable animal habitat, clean air and natural beauty for the Jewish community for generations to come.

**Grade 6 and 7 Climate Action Letter Writing Workshop with Aliénor Rougeot:** Aliénor Rougeot, an environmental and climate activist spoke to a group of our students about the climate emergency and the role organized strikes and group action plays in supporting environmental activism. Aliénor is a leader of Toronto’s Fridays for Future Strikes, a movement calling on students to miss school on Fridays to raise awareness of climate change. After her interactive talk, the students had the opportunity to experience a practical, hands on letter writing workshop in which they advocated for action to remedy the climate emergency. The letters they wrote were addressed to the MPP and MP for the riding where our school is situated. A grade 7 student and Bnai Mitzvah participant, Juno, wrote a particularly poignant letter which is featured on page 8 (opposite page). A special ‘thank you’ to Tasha Freidus for connecting us to Allie and to Jill Kelner for hosting our workshop.

**Rona Arato and The Last Train, A Holocaust Story:** Shira, Risa and I were delighted to welcome children’s author Rona Arato to the Grade 5 and 6 class for a second year in a row for a special presentation on her award winning book, *The Last Train, A Holocaust Story*. This biographical book tells the true story about young brothers Paul (later Rona’s husband) and Oscar Arato and their mother, Lenke, surviving the Nazi occupation during the final years of World War II. Rona read excerpts from her book and facilitated a Q&A forum. She presented astounding photos of the train liberators (American soldiers) and the liberated (concentration camp survivors) at the moment of their rescue and their reunion many years later. She also spoke about the process of writing this moving, biographical book several copies of which are currently circulating among our students.

**Grade 3 and 4 Mishloach Manot:** This class is preparing with Dani for Purim through an act of kindness directed at their own community. At Purim, they will give away 50 mishloach manot to our school families and friends. *Mishloach manot* is the exchanging of edible treats among friends and community members. The students are fine emissaries for spreading the humanistic Jewish tradition of sharing with community so that no one is left out of the enjoyment of the Purim holiday.

**Youth Conclave:** Whether they are busy transforming themselves into Purim Shpiel players, Purim booth managers, or just cutting out pictures for one of our classes, our youth volunteers are all wonderful! In February, Dani and eight teens were preparing to travel to Detroit to join their counterparts from all over North America at the annual HuJews Teen Conclave (March 27-29). Their theme will be *Culture: Exploring Jewish Identity*. Stay tuned for their report in the next edition of *The Shofar*. 
A note on our School Open House, April 19: For the remainder of the school year, we are encouraging our families to bring guests to any Oraynu class or event. Purim and Passover are opportunities to share the intellectually stimulating and meaningful Humanistic Jewish environment we have created together. And, it is not too soon to think of inviting friends to our School Open House, on April 19th! See you at the school!

Steve

UPCOMING EVENTS AT ORAYNU CHILDREN’S SCHOOL

- Sunday, March 1: Grade 6 Intro to Bnai Mitzvah Meeting. Staff Rm. 10:00am–12:30pm
- Sunday, March 8: Purim Festival. Borochov Cultural Centre, Social Hall (see p. 3)
- Friday, March 27 – Sunday, March 29: Teen Conclave. Detroit, Michigan. Teens Gr. 8-12
- Sunday, March 29: Passover Food Drive Field Trip. Grades 5, 6 and 7. National Council of Jewish Women Council House. 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.
- Sunday, April 5: Passover Family Seder. Borochov Centre, Social Hall. See p. 5 for info.
- Sunday, April 19: School Open House. 10:15 a.m.-12:30a.m. Staff room. Invite a friend!
- Sunday, April 19: Yom Ha'atzmaut Assembly. All grades. Rm. 103 11:50 a.m – 12:00 p.m.
- Sunday, May 3: Last day of school. Israel Field Day. All grades. Outdoors in the field. 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Early dismissal.

THE BOOK CORNER

Book Corner is a place to suggest books Oraynuniks may enjoy. Send your recommendations to Rabbi Denise for inclusion in the next Shofar: rabbidenise@oraynu.org/

This month, Denise has added her own suggestion, a book by Greg Marcus: “The Spiritual Practice of Good Actions: Finding Balance Through the Soul Traits of Mussar”  
Rabbi Denise’s comment: “I was particularly taken by this idea after listening to Greg Marcus on the podcast Judaism Unbound. This is a book that delves into Jewish teachings for being good and having a good life. While parts are geared towards a more religious crowd, Marcus is careful to make it “God-Optional”. Instead of the “divine spark” he refers to the “spark of sacred human life.” While not for everyone, it can be interesting to approach this system of Jewish ethical teachings and consider how we can improve.”

Celebrate Passover with Oraynu’s own Haggadah!

ROOTS AND BRANCHES:
A Humanist Haggadah for Passover
By Sandi Horwitz, Barry Olshen and Lisa Wright

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

50 pages; includes Hebrew text, transliteration and music; $10/copy
To order: Contact Roby at 416-385-3910 or roby@oraynu.org

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.
THEATRE NEWS

Besides the Harold Green Jewish Theatre Company’s production of “The Great Divide” for which we have a small block of tickets (see p. 6), there are a couple of other plays with Jewish content you might be interested in seeing over the next few months:

The Civic Light-Opera Co. is presenting “TEVYE AND GOLDE” ~ A Special Tribute to “Fiddler on the Roof” from April 15-26 (Wed-Sun) at the Zion Cultural Centre, 1650 Finch Ave. E.

In honour of the 55th Anniversary of one of the greatest musicals of the 20th Century, Joe Cascone and Julie Lennick perform a very unique staging of this monumental Broadway icon. Containing all the wonderful songs you know from this legendary musical, “Tradition,” “Matchmaker,” “To Life,” “Sunrise, Sunset,” “Miracle of Miracles,” and many others – plus a few surprises, too!

Tickets: $28 (+$2 fee/ticket for phone orders)
Reserve: www.musictheatretoronto.com/ or by phone: 416-755-1717

If you did not see the PBS telecast last year, check out the Mirvish presentation of Paula Vogel’s play “INDECENT,” playing May 5-24 at the CAA Theatre, 651 Yonge Street.

In 1923, after celebrated European productions, the Broadway debut of Sholem Asch’s drama God of Vengeance set the stage for an explosive moment in theatrical history. The evocative work of Jewish culture was praised and criticized for taboo themes of censorship, immigration, and anti-Semitism. Inspired by these true events and the controversy, Pulitzer Prize-winner Paula Vogel tells the behind-the-scenes story of the courageous artists who risked their careers and lives to perform a work deemed “indecent.” Filled with music and dance, Indecent combines the high entertainment of theatre with the heartbreak of the loss of art and culture for an entire people. An ensemble of actors and musicians portray more than 40 roles in this riveting and richly theatrical backstage drama.

The show, directed by Joel Greenberg, is a Studio 180 Production (Oslo) and stars Jessica Greenberg, Jordan Pettle, Sarah Orenstein, Tracy Michailidis, Alex Poch Golden, Jake Epstein and Dmitry Chepovetsky.
Reserve: www.mirvish.com or call 416-872-1212

FUN STUFF FOR YOUR PASSOVER SEDER

Are you going to Seder tonight?
Parsley, egg, haroset, and chrain
Remind us of the Jews’ bitter plight --
Moses freed them from Pharaoh’s chain.

Tell them to meet me at the Red Sea,
Parsley, egg, haroset, and chrain,
The sea will part and help them to flee,
Pharaoh’s soldiers all will be slain.

Use these symbols year after year:
Parsley, egg, haroset, and chrain,
The Pesach story we all must hear,
The memory of freedom will always remain.

(Inspired by Simon and Garfunkel’s “Scarborough Fair.”
Note: ‘chrain’ is horseradish)

A Vegetarian–Friendly Seder Plate

Egg (substitute): a cholesterol-free alternative
Greens: stir-fried with a little low-sodium soy sauce
Bitter Herb: espresso
Jalapeno: Matzah with sun-dried tomatoes
Gourmet Greek Charoset:
apples, pine nuts, balsamic vinegar, grape leaves

Have a healthy and happy Passover.
Passover, which begins on the evening preceding the fifteenth day of the Hebrew month of Nissan, is the great spring celebration of the Jewish people. Passover began as a nature holiday, celebrating new life. In the priestly and rabbinic traditions, it became a commemoration of the biblical exodus and the escape from slavery in ancient Egypt. This familiar tale, contained in the *Haggadah*, is retold each year at the *seder*, the Passover celebration.

Humanistic Jews view the biblical Exodus story as one of the most powerful myths of the Jewish people, a tale relating the courage and resolve of a people fleeing slavery for freedom. Humanistic Jews question the traditional explanations of Pesach. There is no evidence that the Exodus occurred or that the Hebrew people were in Egypt in the numbers described.

So what is meant by a Humanistic Passover celebration? Humanistic Jews continue the tradition of telling the Exodus story, but they accept that it is a story, not history. A secular Passover celebration emphasizes the themes of human freedom and dignity, the power of human beings to change their destiny, and the power of hope. We recognize the power and value of many episodes in Jewish history, not only ancient times. These may include telling of the courage of millions of Jews who left the lands of their birth, escaping persecution to seek freedom and equality — in Palestine and the land of Israel, in America (perhaps, the largest Jewish Exodus ever) and in other countries around the world. A Humanistic Passover may also include a commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising against the Nazis, which began on the first night of Passover in 1943. These stories are what makes it one of the most meaningful and enduring Jewish holidays today.

*Seder* literally means “order,” as in the “order of events” at the Passover dinner. Most celebrations reflect the ancient and traditional celebration of the holiday and include new meanings for today. Humanistic Jews add modern stories of human struggles and connect these with current issues and concerns. To the listing of the 10 ancient plagues, a cultural Seder might add modern plagues that we are battling today. The ancient tale becomes the non-theistic story of a people’s quest for freedom, providing a symbol for later struggles for freedom. To the symbols on the traditional Seder plate (haroset, bitter herbs, roasted egg, parsley, lamb shankbone), the Humanist Jewish Seder plate might include other symbols: an orange, representing the historical marginalization of those in the lesbian and homo-sexual communities (it may also suggest the fruitfulness for all Jews who contribute to Judaism) and a potato, recognizing the suffering and starvation of those in concentration camps during the Holocaust. Some Humanistic Jews add a cup of water for Miriam next to the cup of wine for Elijah, again symbolizing the role of women within the history of the Jewish people.

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

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**A FIFTH QUESTION FOR THE PASSOVER SEDER**

*On all other nights we seek a truthful understanding of our world. Why, on this night, do we claim myth as history?*

Many Jews would agree that the Passover story could not have happened as described in the Book of Exodus. Yet even secular Jews retell the story, not because we believe it is history, but because of its history. It’s a foundational story. It represents the forging of a people who have endured to this day against seemingly insurmountable odds. It connects us to our family and ancestors who have told the same story for three thousand years. And it raises challenging questions that help us evolve as thoughtful and compassionate people. Our “remembered” suffering makes us more sensitive to the suffering our others. We “welcome the stranger because we were once strangers in the land of Egypt.”
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 Handlarsi 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

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, Mar. 5 at 7:30 pm  SEX AND VIOLENCE ON THE MEGILLAH  (More info: p. 3)  
Location: Quaker Friends House, 60 Lowther Ave. (St.George/Bloor)  

Sunday, March 8 at 10:00 am  FAMILY PURIM FESTIVAL  
Location: Borochov Cultural Centre Social Hall, 272 Codsell Ave  

Saturday, March 21 at 11 am  INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE SHABBAT & BRUNCH  
Location: Members’ home, Wilson/Avenue Rd area  

Monday, March 23 at 7:00 pm  LAUNCH OF RABBI DENISE’S NEW BOOK  
Location: Miles Nadal JCC, 750 Spadina Ave. (at Bloor)  

Thursday, Mar 26 at 7:00 pm  ADULT EDUCATION with Rabbi Eva  
Topic: Jewish Birth and Death Rituals: From Superstition to Science  
Location: Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Ave  

Sunday, Mar. 29, 10:45 am-12:30 pm  THE PERIOD PURSE PACKING EVENT  
Location: Oraynu Children’s School at St. Andrew’s JHS, 131 Fenn Ave. (Bayview/York Mills)  

Sunday, April 5 at 4:45 pm  FAMILY/SCHOOL SEDER  
Location: Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Ave  

Wednesday, April 8 at 6:00 pm  ADULT/TEEN FIRST NIGHT SEDER  
Location: Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Ave  

Sunday, April 19 at 10:15 am  CHILDREN’S SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE  
Location: St. Andrew’s Jr. High School, 131 Fenn Ave. (Bayview/York Mills)  

Thursday, April 23 at 7:30 pm  ISRAEL INDEPENDENCE DAY: Enlisted Archaeology  
Location: Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Ave (Wilson Hts/Sheppard)  

Sunday, April 26 at 10:15 am  HUMANISTIC JUDAISM—WHAT, WHY HOW  
Location: St. Andrew’s Jr. High School, 131 Fenn Ave. (Bayview/York Mills)  

Friday, May 1 at 7:30 pm  SHABBAT & MAY DAY screening; “American Factory”  
Location: Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Ave (Wilson Hts/Sheppard)  

Monday, May 4 at 8 pm  THEATRE NIGHT—“THE GREAT DIVIDE”  
Location: Greenwin Theatre, Meridian Arts Centre, 5040 Yonge St. North York

LAST WORD: Topics for Dinner Table or Car Talks

Inject a little more Judaism into the life of your family. Here’s a suggestion from Rabbi Denise for a topic of conversation for your next dinner party, around your family table, or in the car on the way to Sunday school. This issue’s topic is:

In your family, are most people “Purim Jews” or “Passover Jews”? (See the Rabbi’s Message on p. 2 for these terms). If some are one and some the other, on what do you agree?