FROM THE EDITOR’S DESK

Shalom everyone —

Spring has sprung!! It’s so nice to be able to enjoy the outdoors a lot more now, especially after being pretty cooped up these past many months. Hopefully as time goes on, we will be able to resume a more normal way of life, whatever that is!

We are now finishing up two years of Zoom programming, but ... hopefully the end is in sight. We do have two in-person programs planned: a guided Forest Walk on June 12th and a session on Personal Psychotherapy with Barry Olshen on June 14th. We hope many of you will feel comfortable enough to join us.

But before those events take place, there are several virtual programs of interest coming up: First on the roster is another of our twice-yearly Humanistic Judaism info sessions, now titled: How Oraynu “Does Jewish!” It’s on May 3rd. Then on May 6th, Rabbi Jonathan Cohen will lead a Shabbat program honouring Israel on its 74th anniversary. He will discuss what Israel’s founding document, its Declaration of Independence, actually says.

On May 17th, thanks to a generous donation from Sue McLeod, we will welcome noted American commentator and author Yair Rosenberg as our annual major event speaker. His topic is most timely: “Antisemitism on the Left and on the Right.”

Justice Jack Grossman, a personal friend of Rabbi Eva Goldfinger, has written an entertaining memoir based on his experiences as a lawyer and as a judge. Join us on May 31st as he shares memories and highlights of his long career with us.

This year, we will mark Shavuot on Sunday, June 5th. Rabbi Cohen will discuss “Shavuot and Humanism: The Question of Commitment.”

On June 23rd, the Board will welcome members to a Special Meeting, rather than an Annual General Meeting. See p. 5 to learn all about this change.

We’ve included an advance notice about a Book Event on July 14th to be led by members of the ARC Indigenous Issues Group. It’s the acclaimed novel “Five Little Indians.” You can start reading now!

We have a few reports in this issue including a message from Board President Mark Brender and a round-up from the Children’s School submitted by Acting Principal Risa Morris.

ARC chair Carol Elman reports on the three anti-racism learning sessions that Oraynu’s Board, staff and membership had with Colleen James and Naomi Levitz-Shobola from Divonify. A moving poem that they shared with us is included.

Make sure to read the Cemetery Report from Robert Horwitz. It contains some important and timely information about burial plot prices.

Roby Sadler has added a wonderful suggestion to our Book Corner—a current bestseller that is getting a lot of buzz. As a postscript to our Yom Hashoah event, we share reflections on the Holocaust from some of the readers. Long-time member and chef Michelle Wolfson has shared a yummy dairy recipe for Shavuot. Lastly, in view of the changes we have all been dealing with these past two years of the pandemic, we are republishing a piece from Rabbi Sherwin Wine on “Changing.”

Hope to see you all again soon very soon, whether on Zoom or in-person!!

Sandi
Sandi Horwitz, Editor
Thanks to the generosity of Sue McLeod, on May 17, 2022, Oraynu will be holding a special event with one of the leading journalists covering modern-day antisemitism, Yair Rosenberg. Elsewhere in this newsletter you can find further information about the event. I urge you to come. Antisemitism is growing in our world, and although it is not a fun topic for us to examine, it is an important one.

Antisemitism is not, of course, the only form of hatred in our world, and I thought I would share some remarks from an anti-hatred event, “Writing on the Wall,” at which I was asked to speak. As you may know, along with serving as Oraynu’s congregational rabbi, I also currently work as a law professor at the University of Florida. “Writing on the Wall” is an inter-university event in which students construct a wall and write on it words of hatred and prejudice, and then tear down that wall to symbolize their rejection of those things. Below are pictures of a piece of the wall and everyone who spoke at or performed at that event (entertainment included student troupes of ukulele players and belly dancers), as well as an edited version of my remarks:

The aim of today’s event is a symbolic action: the tearing down of a wall. Why do we tear down that wall? On that wall are written words of hatred and oppression. But why do people use those words? Where do those words come from? Why do people so often embrace them?

There are many reasons. Some relate to history. Some relate to economics. Some relate to the media. Some related to child rearing. People do not learn to hate from nowhere.

I want to focus today on a single dimension of this. It is a dimension I’ve studied as a professor who teaches in the areas of diversity, social inequality, and conflict resolution. That dimension is identity, specifically, what I call negative identity. What do I mean by this?

We all have identities, multiple identities in fact. I, for example, am not only a professor. I am also, among other things, a father, a husband, a son, a heterosexual, a Jew, a rabbi, an American, a fan of Marvel Universe movies, a vegetarian, and, of course, a human being. Some of those identities are more core to who I am than others, but they are all part of me. I think this is true not just for me but for everyone: we hold not a single identity but multiple ones. Generally speaking, this is not problematic: it is fine for a person to have an identity – multiple identities in fact.

The problem arises when part of my identity is built in a negative way – through putting down, denigrating, or vilifying others. What does it mean to be a man? For some men, it means not to be a woman. What does it mean to be straight? For some heterosexuals, it means not to be gay. What does it mean to be an American? For some Americans, it means not to be an illegal immigrant. What does it mean to be a member of my political party? For many people today it is not about what I stand for but whom I stand against.

When people hold negative identities, the chance that they will be hostile toward others grows. If I am not you and I am to be good, then you must somehow be bad, wrong, dangerous, or deviant. You must be some nefarious “other” whom I am not. As a Jew, I feel the effects of this with rising antisemitism in our world today. For example, a 2020 study by the FBI found that 54.9% of all religiously-motivated hate crimes in the United States were directed against Jews. Yet we Jews compromise only 2.4% of the American population. So why is so much hatred directed against us?

I suspect that part of the reason relates to identity, specifically, negative identity. Too many non-Jews, either consciously or subconsciously, see us Jews as an “other” and are wont to take out their frustrations about life upon us. But this phenomenon is not limited to Jews. Many people look to raise themselves up by putting another down. The most extreme version of that is what psychologists call “schadenfreude” – the twisted experience of taking pleasure, joy or satisfaction in the suffering of another.

What does all this mean in terms of tearing down this wall?

To me, tearing down this wall poses two challenges for us. One is the external challenge. Tearing down this wall challenges us to confront hatred and oppression out there in our world, not just in one form, but in all forms. The other is the internal challenge. Are there ways we build ourselves up through putting others down, by seeing them as less than ourselves, by seeing them as not fully human? That is a question we must each ask ourselves, not just today but everyday.

May it not be long before caring and respect replace antisemitism and other forms of hatred throughout our world!
UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday, May 3 @ 7:30 pm
Via Zoom
REGISTER

HUMANISTIC JUDAISM ~ How Oraynu “Does Jewish!”
Learn about the 5Ws: Who We Are, Why We’re Different, When We Do What We Do (Shabbat, Festivals, Life Cycle events) and Wow! Where has HJ been all my life?
This session will be of interest to those new to Oraynu and Humanistic Judaism, and wanting to learn more about it, as well as to those wanting a “refresher”. Find out what we have left behind, what we have retained, and what we have created to keep Judaism meaningful for secular/cultural Jews today.
Presented by Oraynu Staff members Sandi Horwitz, Roby Sadler & Rabbi Jonathan Cohen

Friday, May 6 7:30 pm
Via Zoom
REGISTER

YOM HA’ATZMAUT SHABBAT PROGRAM:
“Israel’s Declaration of Independence”
Rabbi Jonathan Cohen will offer a short Shabbat service followed by a special program marking Israel’s founding in 1948.
On May 14, 1948, the modern State of Israel was born via an announcement – Israel’s Declaration of Independence. Arguably this brief but complex work is the most important document in modern Jewish history. But what’s in it? What does it say about those who wrote it? What does it mean to us today? Come celebrate Israel’s 74th anniversary this Shabbat and explore its founding document.

Tuesday, May 17 7:30 pm
Via Zoom
REGISTER

Join us for our MAJOR SPEAKER EVENT as Oraynu welcomes noted American journalist YAIR ROSENBERG
“ANTISEMITISM ON THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT”
Yair Rosenberg is a contributing writer at The Atlantic, where he writes the Deep Shtetl newsletter on the intersection of politics, culture, and religion. Previously a senior writer at Tablet Magazine, he has also written for the New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, and The Guardian, and his work has received awards from the Religion Newswriters Association and the Harvard Center for Jewish Studies.
Yair has covered everything from national elections in America and Israel, to observant Jews in baseball, to the translation of Harry Potter into Yiddish, and in his spare time, he composes original Jewish music and creates bots that troll anti-Semites on Twitter. His latest project is “Antisemitism, Explained,” a video series that tackles the biggest questions about anti-Jewish prejudice.

Tuesday, May 31 7:30 pm
Via Zoom
REGISTER

“DECISIONS: BALANCING THE LAW AND JUSTICE”
An interesting and entertaining evening with Justice Jack Grossman
Jack will share his memories and some of the highlights of his career, and discuss some of the challenges he faced balancing the law, justice / tikkun olam, and being a mensch, and strategies he employed while serving as a judge of the Ontario Court of Justice.
A signed, personalized copy of his recently published book, DECISIONS, MY MEMORIES AS A LAWYER AND A JUDGE, is available for purchase ($24.95, pick up from one of three GTA locations, or can be mailed at an extra cost); please let Roby know if you are interested.

Unless otherwise indicated, kindly RSVP for ALL EVENTS:
416-385-3910 | roby@oraynu.org | via online event link
Non-members are welcome to attend Oraynu’s events at no charge, but are asked to consider a donation in lieu of an event fee to support our programs.
SHAVUOT & HUMANISM: The Question of Commitment
With Rabbi Jonathan Cohen
The story of the Exodus from Egypt is one of the Torah's central narratives. God giving the Torah to the children of Israel at Sinai is another central narrative, one traditionally celebrated at Shavuot. As Humanistic Jews, we read both of these stories as myths; however, that does not mean that these myths hold no meaning for us. Many of us embrace the Passover narrative both ritually (e.g., by holding a seder) and thematically (e.g., accepting that it is our responsibility to fight for freedom in our world). But what of the Sinai story? What can this story mean for Humanistic Jews?
Come join us as we explore this fascinating topic.

GUIDED FOREST WALK/“FOREST BATHING”
Join expert guide Alexandra Horsky for a 2-hour walk; step back from the cares of everyday life and access the relaxing power of nature! You’ll have a chance to experience “forest bathing” - a practice that started in Japan and has since spread around the world as more and more people discover its benefits. Forest bathing is more like a walking meditation than a hike or jog you’d take for vigorous exercise. You won’t necessarily learn the names of trees or birds as you would with a naturalist. The focus is more on helping your nervous system relax, your mind quiet, and your senses engage the beauty and life in the forest. We’ll be walking in silence, observing and discovering our surroundings, stopping periodically to talk about what we’ve experienced.
Our guided walk is aimed at adult and older teens, 16 and up. Although the pace is slow, a basic level of fitness and mobility is required. More info is provided on the registration page. Rain date is June 26th; we will advise if a change is needed!

PERSONAL PSYCHOTHERAPY: AN INTRODUCTION
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 wise and provocative questions. I believe that’s because all of us, in one way or another, are challenged by them as well. Our responses are central to being a person in the world.
Would you like to know (or know more) about personal psychotherapy? If so, this program is for you! Join Barry Olshen, long-time Oraynu member, scholar, poet and registered psychotherapist, for an introduction into psychotherapy. Barry will cover a wide range of practical and theoretical matters, and there will be ample time for questions.
Barry is Professor Emeritus and Senior Scholar at Glendon College, York University. He has been in private psychotherapy practice in Toronto for over fifteen years. He is a Registered Psychotherapist in the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario, and a Clinical Member of the Canadian Association of Psychodynamic Therapy.
NOTE: WE ARE REQUESTING EARLY REGISTRATIONS FOR THIS PROGRAM:
Please register by noon on Friday, May 20!

SUMMER BOOK EVENT: “Five Little Indians” by Michelle Good
NOTE: We are giving you a heads up now to give you plenty of time to read this book. Just as an FYI—Toronto Public Library has 600 holds on it with 200 copies available.
Five Little Indians is a story of intergenerational trauma deftly depicted through the braided narratives of Kenny, Lucy, Maisie, Clara and Howie, all survivors of a fictional, church-run, residential school in British Columbia. Each character struggles with ghosts that constantly threaten to destroy them, and some are more successful than others.
Michelle Good is a Cree writer and lawyer, as well as a member of Red Pheasant Cree Nation in Saskatchewan. Five Little Indians is her first book. It won the 2020 Governor General’s Literary Award for fiction and the 2021 Amazon Canada First Novel Award. It was also on the 2020 Writers’ Trust Fiction Prize shortlist and 2020 Scotiabank Giller Prize longlist.
REPORT FROM ARC (Our Anti-Racism Committee)  
By Carol Elman, Chair

I am excited to report that ARC has made progress on all three of the key focus areas that Oraynu committed to in our June 2021 Statement in Support of No Silence on Race (NSOR). An excerpt from the statement reads as follows (in italics) and I include updates on each piece:

... for the next two years at least (July 2021-June 2023) our focus will include the following activities:

**Education** – We will bring in external facilitators from BIPOC communities for anti-racism education and training for a minimum of 2 sessions in 2021-22.

A huge thank you to Ilene Hyman and Mark Brender for working with me to create a short list of potential facilitators to explore and interview. Divonify, with Colleen James and Naomi Levitz Shobola, was selected. Workshops were held on March 5 (for board/staff), March 24 (for Oraynu membership and school families) and April 9 (debrief with board/staff). To those who took the time to send me comments/feedback, thank you. Your perspectives will be part of what informs next steps for both Oraynu’s ARC and Board. More to come.

**Indigenous Education and Relationship Building** – Oraynu will continue to integrate Indigenous education within our annual programs each year.

A sub-committee of ARC has now been formed, led by Penny Parnes. The first meeting, of a small but mighty group of 6, generated several ideas for both continued education and action. Ideas such as a book club, film/discussion, visit/tour a former residential school site, Orange Shirt Day and more. More to come on this piece as plans are finalized.

**Inclusive and Diverse Programming** – We commit to consciously elevating the diversity of Jewish diasporas and histories in our events, programming and curricula.

The program committee is working hard to ensure that this continues to be a focus of our adult programs. If you have attended, you have experienced this in such recent programs as Virtual Tours in Jewish Argentina and Portugal, Oneg Shabbat - The Full Humanity of Others led by Rabbi Cohen, Moving Towards Inclusion in Humanistic Jewish Communities led by Claire Bergen.

As well, Rabbi Karen Levy and our interim school principal Risa Morris will be embarking on a review of Oraynu Children’s School Curriculum to ensure that the curriculum includes a strong view towards inclusion, particularly recognition of the diversity that exists within Jewish spaces. The plan is to create a committee made up of school staff, parents, leadership and to review a couple of grades each summer for the next few years.

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SPECIAL MEMBER MEETING

Every year in June, Oraynu has had its Annual General Meeting (AGM) where a slate of directors to sit on the Board is elected and we review events and happenings of the past year.

This June will be a little different as we will be having a Special Member Meeting instead of the normal AGM. The reason is the new Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010 (referred to as ONCA) has recently come into force. As a result, Oraynu will be changing its governing documents and this process requires approval by our members prior to filing the new documentation with provincial authorities. In addition, to comply with regulations, our AGM will now take place every Fall.

This Special Meeting is on June 23 and about 30 days prior all members will receive formal notification of the meeting along with several official legal documents that we are required to share. HEADS UP, there’s a lot there . . . but no worries, at the meeting we will highlight very succinctly the few salient points you need to know to vote on moving forward. The whole process should take less than 30 minutes.

The Board will also bring members up to date with other items that we know will be of interest to you. There will also be ample opportunity to ask questions of the Board. To maximize the attendance and participation for those wishing to do so, we will be holding this meeting via Zoom. We look forward to seeing many of you at this meeting on June 23.

OPEN TO MEMBERS ONLY  
Kindly RSVP

Thursday, June 23  
7:30 pm

Via Zoom

REGISTER
Colleen and Naomi both spoke about the importance of repeating the histories, the importance of listening to each other and our stories, that as the stories may not change, we do, we shift our perspectives over time, we alter our approaches and I know for myself, each time, I take in just a little bit more and it resonates with me more deeply. This is also one of the reasons we continue to include Land Acknowledgements at our programs, where possible. To retell a small part of Indigenous history. There is also a sub-committee of ARC that will continue to work with the Program Committee to ensure that our Land Acknowledgements continue to evolve and remain meaningful for our community.

Now what?
At the Board/Staff debrief, Colleen and Naomi shared the poem An Invitation to Brave Space by Micky Scott Bey Jones. The poem, in its entirety, is included below. But the first three lines read as follows:
Together we will create Brave Space
Because there is no such thing as a “safe space” —
We exist in the real world.

Colleen and Naomi talked about taking risks, listening is key, being aware of both action bias and action paralysis, starting small, taking that first step. And they asked us the question – What would you add/shift to reflect your own Brave Space at Oraynu? ARC will focus going forward, within our key activities, on helping to form and inform that Brave Space.

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If anyone is interested to know more about ARC or any of the ARC sub-committees and activities, please contact Carol Elman at carol1elman@gmail.com. We are a small but mighty group of 12 and even if you are unable to participate, we still welcome your insights, history and perspectives to add to our discussion and our actions.

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## AN INVITATION TO A BRAVE SPACE
(by Micky ScottBey Jones)

Together we will create brave space
Because there is no such thing as a “safe space” —
We exist in the real world.

We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds.

In this space
We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world.
We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere,
We call each other to more truth and love.
We have the right to start somewhere and continue to grow.
We have the responsibility to examine what we think we know.
We will not be perfect.
It will not always be what we wish it to be.
But
It will be our brave space together,
and
We will work on it side by side.
MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

By Mark Brender, President

Whether in the workplace or within organizations like Oraynu, we’ve all heard the mantra that we need to do things differently in order to stay relevant. The impact of technology on how we relate to each other was obvious long before the pandemic, and then Covid totally upended how we have been able to interact and be in community. Amidst the isolation of the past two years, many of us are finally paying attention to long overdue conversations around anti-racism, EDI (equity, diversity and inclusion), and who feels welcome ... and more important, who doesn’t and why.

It’s not always easy to know how to respond -- or even what we should be responding to -- but doing a lot of deep listening is never a bad place to start.

Oraynu needs to go down this road of organizational self-reflection for a few reasons, I think. For starters, to put it politely, our board and staff isn’t exactly composed of the demographic that is innovating and creating these tech fancy platforms we’ve all gotten used to. We need to be deliberate about fostering the next generation of Oraynu’s leadership.

In parallel, trends show that the congregational membership model that has lasted for decades – and an organizational approach that defines membership as the ultimate measure of organizational success –won’t hold up as well in years to come as it has in the past.

And finally, in some subtle and other not-so-subtle ways, we’ve learned through events and discussions and workshops that despite the best intentions of Oraynu’s incredibly committed and caring community to be inclusive, welcoming, and equally embracing for all, we sometimes fall short.

So what to do? One approach that the board and staff have been talking about is to focus on engagement, so people are welcomed in and are invited to tie that long-term knot with Oraynu in their own time, in a way that brings them fulfillment whatever their stage of life. This will look different for different people. In the spirit of nothing-about-us-without-us, this process won’t be a top-down approach. We envision a diverse engagement steering group made up of members, school parents, youth, and staff and board members. We will do a lot of listening and pledge to act on what we hear.

A few potential starting principles, for consideration:

• To repeat, success will not be defined only by increasing membership as our short-term goal (although increased membership could be a wonderful outcome); it will be about planning our events, activities, and communications in ways that result in increasingly deepened engagement and satisfaction from all who are seeking a sense of community in their interactions with us.

• Similarly, this is not about proving our value for money; it’s about deepening opportunities that reveal the meaning Oraynu -- and by extension humanistic Judaism -- can bring to our lives and to the lives of others who don’t yet know about us. It’s about positioning Oraynu as a cause worth supporting because we play an important role within the Jewish and broader community, and because we stand for values that deserve to be supported.

We are in a financial position will be able in to put resources behind this effort precisely because so many in our community already feel so strongly about what we do. For this, and for all those new and old who have dedicated time to building and being part of Oraynu, we are deeply grateful.

It’s exciting to think about how our tent can be expanded even further. We’ll talk about it more at the Special Members Meeting on June 23rd and hope to see you there (see pg. 5 for details). Onward we go, with much more listening and learning and engaging to come.

Mark

ORAYNUNIK IN THE NEWS

I did not know that Brandon Michael Arrington was an actor until I saw a promo clip for the play ROOM, currently on at the Princess of Wales Theatre until May 8th. He and husband Eitan Grinspun are parents of Eden and Aviva, both students in our Children’s School.

A theatre triple-threat, he has appeared off-Broadway, in regional productions, in several national tour companies and on film. He also has directed and choreographed many programs and productions for kids. Plus, he is a trained pastry chef! Reviews for the show have been outstanding; Robert and I see it on April 30th.

ROOM tells the story of a young woman who has been held captive in a room for seven years by her rapist. She has a 5-year old son Jack, who knows only this room as his home. The movie version won an Oscar for Brie Larson in 2016, and the story was subsequently turned into a stage play and now, songs have been added. Brandon Michael plays Super-Jack, the older alter-ego of the boy.
IMPORTANT CEMETERY ANNOUNCEMENT FOR ORAYNU MEMBERS
From ROBERT HORWITZ, Cemetery Committee Chair

*Prices on traditional burial plots are increasing. Act before June 30th for savings.*

Cemetery pricing has been increasing at a much higher rate than general inflation and will continue to do so. In that vein, both Elgin Mills and Highland Hills cemeteries took substantial increases recently and we are advising you now that **Oraynu is increasing its prices, as of July 1st.**

- At the Oraynu section at Elgin Mills: price increases **from $5,300 to $5,700** (only 3 plots left!)
- At the Mount Zion Garden at Highland Hills: price increases **from $5,125 to $ 5,700**
- We have various options for cremation burials at Elgin Mills and are holding our prices for now.

Pre-planning in advance of your death relieves your family of making choices at a stressful time. It will ensure your burial is consistent with your beliefs and intentions. It also enables you to search out various options at your own convenience. If you are approaching your senior years or are a little younger, do consider pre-planning in advance.

**IMPORTANT:** If you wish secure a burial plot at our Elgin Mills section, kindly contact me as soon as possible. **Two-in-one burials are available. After July 1st, we will be open sales to non-members.**

There is only a limited amount of information in this announcement. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have in general or specifically about the various burial options available through Oraynu. Contact me at: 416-229-9313 or rhorwitz@rogers.com

Robert
Committee Members: Rabbi Eva Goldfinger, Les Kelman, Bruce Cole, Sandi Horwitz, David Morrison

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**Nizkor - We Remember**

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

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*May their memories be a blessing.*

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

Note: ★ indicates a Holocaust survivor. If you wish this designation added to any of your previously submitted names, please let Roby know.

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**Oraynu Congregation wishes a sincere Mazel Tov to**

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and their families on the occasion of their upcoming

**Bnai Mitzvah**

Ceremony will be held at the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts on June 4th.
Is it possible that we only have one more class to go before the end of our school year? And, what a roller coaster of a year it was! Our classes were held both on and off Zoom. Our festivals were together and apart. We had classes and adventures in apple orchards, Borochov Centre, York Mills Collegiate, and even at my house — when we were locked out of York Mills! (See pic below.) Yet, there were constants that made this year extremely special.

Our students came to school, though masked, with smiles on their faces and curiosity abounding. Our teachers—Denise, Rayna, Lawrence, Rebecca, Shira and Etti—with their incredible dedication, created and delivered excellent classes allowing the students to ponder and explore. They are not taught what to think, but how to think. Our B’nai Mitzvah class is in full swing ready to awe us all with their accomplishments on June 4th. Carl filled our rooms (no matter where they were) with music that we all would sing along with. Our volunteers helped, guided and participated in every activity. Roby Sadler had our backs whenever there was a question or an upcoming that needed mentioning. And Sandi Horwitz makes sure that Oraynu knows what a wonderful experience we have on Sundays through this newsletter.

This has been a difficult year for me. As Acting Principal, many have heard me say that I am trained in the former, but am learning the latter. With the loss of Steve Shabes, so much of our institutional memory is gone. My mentor was not here to guide me – yet I was so grateful for all the support and wisdom that was shared with from all of those I work with, the board and the generosity of the families I get to see that the journey was so much easier than I was expecting.

I must thank all of you for making this year happen. I really could not have done it without all of you, the kids, the parents, the grandparents, Oraynu’s staff, my volunteers, and the board. I cannot wait to celebrate Israel’s birthday next week with singing, dancing, games and, of course, cake and loot bags. We will also be awarding our first Steve Shabes Tikkun Olam Award to two deserving teen volunteers.

While I was talking to the parents at our Open House this week, I was reminded of the incredible value of Oraynu’s Children School and of our Oraynu congregation. I truly believe if more people knew about Oraynu – more people would join us. Please spread the word about our School and Congregation to everyone you know.

So, I want to ask a favour: would you kindly post on your Facebook or Instagram page, or on whichever platform works for you, the following information: Secular Humanistic Judaism - How Oraynu “Does Jewish.” Learn all about the 5Ws! It’s on Tuesday, May 3rd. Info is our website at: www.oraynu.org/ Thanks!! If they miss this session, there will be another in the early fall.

Until next time,
Risa
Rabbi Eva Goldfinger was honoured to officiate at the following funerals:

Donations and Tributes

Thanks to the following for your contributions in appreciation of our online events:

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We also gratefully acknowledge the following donations made to the Steve Shabes School Fund from:

NOTE: All donations to this fund are being matched, by an anonymous donor, up to total of $10,000.

And lastly, we acknowledge these additional donations from:

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Members and friends of Oraynu may also choose to honour a birth, marriage, birthday, special accomplishment or make a memorial tribute. See inside back cover for info.
On April 28th, Rabbi Eva Goldfinger led a beautiful program which she created on the “Meaning and Purpose of Remembering the Holocaust through Words, Voice, Art and Music.” In planning it, Eva engaged 25+ members, from teens to seniors, to participate by either reading a poem or prose passage written by a survivor or victim, playing or singing songs, or sharing reflections of what remembering the Holocaust means to them personally.

Here are some extracts of the reflections shared by members:

**From Jennie Morris:** My journey through Holocaust education begins in the walls of Havergal College, a Christian all-girls school when I was 10 years old. There was a book on the shelf with a young girl on the cover. I was immediately drawn to her big fluff of curly hair, her wide eyes, and her beautiful little dress. I had never seen someone in a book that looked like me, so naturally, I picked it up and read it cover to cover. Elly (last name) was 11 years old when she was taken away to a work camp where she worked in a factory making the famous uniforms you see in the pictures and the paint that they used. She survived solely on the potato skins she would find in the garbage behind the factory. Her poetry from the camps was my first inspiration to write. Her survival was my instinct to proudly fight. During my B’nai Mitzvah year, I chose to be paired with a girl who died before her 13th birthday during the Holocaust through Yad Vashem. I was paired with Gitel who died in Poland when she was 13. I had my Bat Mitzvah for her with my own because she never got to have one, never got to grow up. Later in the pairing process, my grandfather noticed Gitel’s last name which was the same as our family’s from before the war. After a bit more research, it is likely that she and I are related. Her story being a part of my bat mitzvah was life-changing. I was not acting for solely myself. I was an advocate for future knowledge and a beacon for light from the past.

**From Carol Elman:** My grandparents and their siblings were all in Canada, in Montreal, well before the Holocaust having fled eastern Europe in the early 1900’s as children. But I grew up with the inter-generational legacy of antisemitism experienced by my parents and grandparents. Hearing those stories, learning the history of the holocaust, serves to remind me that I am part of something enduring and much larger than myself. Lest we forget, I think remembering ties the past and present together and I believe it can and should inform future actions. I cannot change the world or even my own small community on my own, but I do believe that even the smallest of actions have an impact and I can influence those in my circle, those closest to me and I can hope, maybe naively, optimistically, maybe not, that human beings will eventually fully understand what we are capable of, both good and evil and really meaningfully completely learn the lessons of the past and put an end to war, genocide and atrocities of any kind, anywhere.

**From Lisa Simon:** As a child, learning about the impact of the holocaust on the Jewish population and on my own family, it seemed like a period of time that loomed so large, surely it would be indelible in the hearts and minds of all people – Jews and non-Jews alike. But as I emerged into adulthood, and now living and raising my own children in a primarily non-Jewish community, it is clear to me that is already not the case.

We need to take times like this to remember the Holocaust. We do so in order to honour the 6 million Jews who were killed – almost 2/3 of the European Jewish population. Equally, we honour those who survived the horrors of the holocaust, and carried those memories with them. My own Bubby and Zaida were survivors, most of their families having perished in the Holocaust. I honour them and their families.

We also remember the Holocaust to honour the brave and righteous individuals who resisted, in whatever ways were within their means.

And we remember the Holocaust to remind us of what lay beneath: the recurrent human tendency to see less worthiness in some humans than others, of subjugating them because of that, and of inaction in the face of such injustice. Let us use this memory to move us to action on the many injustices in our own generation, around the corner and around the world, and to foster that in our children.

**From Mark Scharf:** As a son of Holocaust survivors, a relative of Holocaust victims, and a student of history, I fully appreciate the horrors of the Holocaust. As a father I have encouraged my children to understand the difference between despising the perpetrators of the Holocaust and what they stood for and giving the benefit of doubt to all people, as worthy of understanding and friendship. Unfortunately, still today, the world is not full of good intentions and loving kindness. We, therefore, cannot leave our children a legacy of blindness to those who wish to do evil to Jews. Our legacy must be a balanced one. One outcome of the Holocaust was the stark awareness by not only Jews, but also many nations, that Jews needed a homeland, a safe haven to go to for safety if need be. As in all human activity there is no perfection and Israel is no exception. It has many warts. But Israel is a legacy of the Holocaust that we must be vigilant not to forget or abandon.

**From Hart Robinson:** Those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it.

This quote, from George Santayana, has become famous. He wrote those words in 1905. Notice also he did not say may repeat it, are likely to repeat it, not even are certain to repeat it. He said are condemned to repeat it. Some might say he was a man ahead of his time. But he was looking to the past.

If history has taught us anything, it is that we have still not learned from history.

In spite of this crime against humanity, we should still consider the words of Anne Frank, who said in her diary. “In spite of everything. I still believe people are good at heart.” And “How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.”

This is why we must study history, and learn from the past.
**THE BOOK CORNER**

Book Corner is a place to suggest books your fellow Oraynuniks may enjoy. Please send your recommendations for inclusion in the next Shofar to Editor Sandi Horwitz at: horwitz@rogers.com

This issue’s suggestion comes from prolific reader Roby Sadler:

**PEOPLE LOVE DEAD JEWS** by Dara Horn

“I only knew of Dara Horn as a novelist. And I have to admit I had not read any of her books. I don’t recall just why I ordered up *People Love Dead Jews* from the library; I always have about a dozen books on hold and by the time they become available, invariably no recollection of why I was interested in the first place: something I heard on the radio? Something I read in the Globe? A referral from a friend?

All to say I had no idea what to expect from this book. I can tell you it was a wrenching read. Fascinating and compelling and beautifully written and very disturbing indeed. Which is entirely the author’s point; she SAYS so in the last line of her introduction. “I hope you will find it as disturbing as I do.” Yup, mission accomplished.

What we have is a collection of non-fiction essays, many of which had already appeared in various publications. All focus on different aspects of the world’s interest in dead Jews: individuals, or the towns they LIVED (past tense) in, or their Holocaust experiences as per museum exhibitions, or... on and on. Rather than claiming these are all signs of respect, the author argues that the fascination with Jewish past is an “affront to human dignity”, an affront to current ALIVE Jewry. A point of view which was new to me: one I had, in considerable naïveté perhaps, never considered. I’m not sure how I feel about it, or if I agree with her, but I do know I enjoyed (?) reading the book, learned from the book, and recommend the book!”

Thanks, Roby, for your very personal comments on this provocative book.

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**Shavuot from a Humanistic Perspective**

Shavuot (May 16-18th on the calendar this year) is a minor, ancient pilgrimage festival that marked the harvest of barley. Shavuot literally means “weeks,” so named because the festival is exactly seven weeks (plus one day) from the second night of Passover. This feast, one of three pilgrimage festivals, marked the end of the barley and beginning of the wheat harvest. In Temple times, according to the book of Leviticus, two loaves were “waved before the Lord,” offered only from the best new wheat, from produce grown that year in Israel. *Shavuot* was associated with the bringing of the bikkurim, “the first ripe fruits,” to the Temple of Jerusalem. In rabbinc times a radical transformation of the festival took place. The festival became the anniversary of the giving of the Torah at Sinai.

Unlike Passover and Sukkot, *Shavuot* has just a few special rituals. In the synagogue, it is customary to read the Book of Ruth and some congregations decorate the synagogue with plants and flowers. Religious Jews may observe with all-night Torah study. In Toronto, there is an annual Tikkun Leil Shavuot offering all-night programming. In Israel, Shavuot became a holiday celebrated with eating dairy foods because the Bible says that Israel was a land flowing with milk and honey; North American Jews will enjoy blintzes or cheesecake. Shavuot has also become a time to honour educational achievement. Many Humanistic Jewish communities and congregations include the celebration of education (end of the school year) and graduation or Bnai Mitzvah. Oraynu’s Bnai Mitzvah is on June 4th this year. Humanistic Jews can also mark Shavuot with picnics featuring fresh loaves of bread, dairy products and fruit.

**A Humanistic Blessing for Bread**

*B’rukh-im ha-motzi-im, lekh-em min ha-aretz.*

*חֶלֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ בָּרוּכִים הַמוֹצִיאִים לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ*

*Blessed are those who bring forth bread from the earth.*

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**WISDOM FROM RABBI SHERWIN WINE: CHANGING**

Change is often threatening. Routine provides the comfort of the predictable. Familiar pain is, for many of us, more desirable than unfamiliar pleasures.

But life is change. Every day makes us different. No matter how hard we hang on to summer, autumn overtakes us. No matter how hard we cling to youth, aging captures us. No matter how hard we try to lose ourselves in the past, the present confronts us. Nothing stands still; everything is in motion.

If we do not accept change, we resist reality. We turn the moment into eternity. We freeze our talents. We never grow, we never learn. If we accept change, we embrace reality.

We turn the present moment into an opportunity for the future. We unleash our talents. We grow with grace. We are always learning. In the never-never land of our fantasies, nothing changes. But in the natural world of our day-to-day living, change is the stuff of existence. Making it useful is the test of our strength.

* * *

The late Rabbi Wine was the founder of Humanistic Judaism. He was the author of several books including *Judaism Beyond God* and his last work, edited posthumously by Rabbi Adam Chalom, *A Provocative People: A Secular History of the Jews*.
Why do we eat dairy on Shavuot, the holiday which celebrates the giving of the Torah?

One rabbinic explanation says that: It is customary to eat all sorts of sweet foods on [Shavuot], such as honey and milk, because “Honey and milk are under your tongue” (Song of Songs 4:11), which is explained [in the Midrash] as referring to the giving of the Torah. Another refers to Deuteronomy 26:9 which mentions God bringing his people to “this place ... a land flowing with milk and honey.” There are many, many commentaries on this.

But there is probably a much simpler explanation. Jeffrey Singman, in his book Daily Life in Medieval Europe, states: “Milk was available principally in the spring and summer, once the calves were weaned and when fodder was plentiful. Since it did not keep well, especially in an age before refrigeration, most milk was made into butter and cheese. Thus, it seems that the custom of eating dairy on Shavuot may have been simply due to the fact that there was an abundance of milk, butter and cheese in Europe during May-June.” So despite many religious text references, this latter one is likely why we eat blintzes, cheesecake and other dairy foods on Shavuot.

Oraynu’s Michelle Wolfson is a professional chef and has catered food for some of our events, plus given several classes to members over the years. She has generously shared her favourite Blintz recipe. Thanks, Michelle!

MICHELLE’S CHEESE BLINTZES
A great make ahead brunch for lazy cottage mornings, entertaining or bridal showers. Serve with your favourite fruit sauce or maple syrup. Batter and filling yield around 30 smallish crepes.

Prep Time: 30 min  Cook Time: 25 min  Total Time: 1 hour  Difficulty: medium  Servings: 6

INGREDIENTS

**For crepes:**  
- 2-1/4 cups milk  
- 2 cups flour  
- 4 eggs, large  
- 1/4 cup butter, melted

**For Filling:**  
- 500 ml Cheese, Ricotta  
- 1 Egg  
- 2 tbsp Lemon Juice  
- 125 ml Sour Cream  
- 1/2 teaspoon Cinnamon, Ground  
- 2 tbsp Sugar

DIRECTIONS

**Crepes:**
1. In a blender add milk and eggs and process until well mixed. Add flour in 2 or 3 additions making sure that there are no lumps of flour by stirring with a wooden spoon (blender turned off, of course, or you’ll get wood chips in your crepes!). Add melted butter and run blender for another 30 seconds until well blended. Let mixture stand for at least 1 hour.
2. Heat crepe pan, lightly oil, swirl batter, cook until crepes are done then flip and lightly cook second side.

**Blintz filling:**
1. Mix all ingredients together in a medium sized bowl. Keep refrigerated until you’re ready to make up your crepes. Each blintz uses 20 grams of ricotta filling (about 1-1/2 Tbsp).
2. Lay out crepe, place a tablespoon of filling in the centre of the crepe and then fold up. You can roll them but I like to fold them into little square parcels.
3. When it’s time to serve them you can fry each little square packet or just reheat them all in a tray in a warm oven.

NOTES

Loads of substitutions are possible for the filling. You can use small or large curd cottage cheese, baker’s cheese, dry curd pressed cottage cheese, quark or even mascarpone. You can use light sour cream as well.

This recipe reminds me of what I ate as a child, although my Bubbie never made them herself so it was mostly at relatives’ homes. I suspect that I like mine with ricotta because it tastes like cottage cheese with a smoother texture.
NEWS FROM THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

ALBUM RELEASE CONCERT: Thieves of Dreams – Songs from Theresienstadt’s Secret Poetess
Sunday May 8 @2:30pm | Paradise Theatre, 1006 Bloor St. W.

LENKA LICHTENBERG, our wonderful Kol Nidre vocalist, who also sang for Oraynu’s recent Yom Hashoah program, is celebrating the release of her extraordinary new album of music.

These exquisite songs are based on recently discovered poems penned by Lenka’s own grandmother while she was imprisoned in the Theresienstadt concentration camp during WWII. Lenka was surprised to discover that a majority of the poems were intimate fantasies and love poems that you’d never expect to be written on the brink of death. The poems were set to music by seven Canadian and Czech composers, and offer a rich musical tapestry in a variety of musical formats, all warmly bathed in Lenka’s signature 3-octave harmonies.

On May 8, Lenka will be backed by a stellar supporting cast, including David Buchbinder (trumpet), Jessica Deutsch (tech director, violin, viola, bass, vocals), Auri Fell (vocals, beatboxing, ukelele), Fern Lindzon (piano, vocals), and special guest Aviva Chernick (vocals).

TICKETS: $22/$15 students. CLICK HERE TO PURCHASE.

30th Annual Toronto Jewish Film Festival
June 9-16

TJFF2022 features the best in Jewish-content film from Canada and around the world including International, Canadian and Toronto Premieres:

- Dramas
- Comedies
- Documentaries
- Archival films

In-Theatre Viewing: June 9-15. Locations are TBA.
Online Viewing: June 15-26

Full lineup will be announced on May 9

For more info, go to: https://tjff.com/our-30th-festival/

UJA’S ANNUAL WALK WITH ISRAEL
Sunday, May 29th at 9:45am
Earl Bales Park, on Bathurst s. of Sheppard

The 7km Walk begins at Earl Bales Park in North York, and winds its way through neighbourhoods along Bathurst Street north of Wilson Avenue, before ending up at the Renee & Irwin Nadal Walk Party. The Walk Party will take place for the first time ever at the park adjacent to The Toronto Heschel Day School. Join us from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. for a family-friendly celebration complete with music, dancing, entertainment, food and more!

Attendees are asked not to park at Earl Bales Park, but to carpool. Rain or shine.

FOR MORE INFO / REGISTER, GO TO: www.jewishtoronto.com

May is JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH

Celebrate the inspiring role that many Jewish Canadians have played and continue to play in communities across the country. From law, to politics, to culture, to sports, this important initiative honours the contributions Jewish Canadians have been making to this country for 250 years. There are wonderful free online resources including materials from the Ontario Jewish Archives.

Check out: http://jewishheritage.ca/guide/
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 also be 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:
♦ Rabbi Eva Goldfinger, for guidance regarding life cycle transitions, intermarriage, conversion/adoptive, Jewish practices, adult education and ethics
Guidance is offered, but not counseling or tutoring, which can be provided on a fee-for-service basis. Contact Rabbi Goldfinger at:
evagoldfinger007@gmail.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:

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.

Facebook
👍 “like” us on facebook
UPCOMING EVENTS

Note: All events are on Zoom unless indicated

Tuesday, May 3 at 7:30 pm
HUMANISTIC JUDAISM: HOW ORAYNU “DOES JEWISH!”
(See more: p. 3)

Friday, May 6 at 7:30 pm
YOM HA’ATZMAUT SHABBAT PROGRAM: Israel’s Declaration of Independence
(p. 3)

Tuesday, May 17 at 7:30 pm
MAJOR SPEAKER EVENT: “ANTISEMITISM ON THE LEFT AND ON THE RIGHT”
With special guest Yair Rosenberg
(p. 3)

Tuesday, May 31 at 7:30 pm
DECISIONS: BALANCING THE LAW AND JUSTICE
With Justice Jack Grossman
(p. 3)

Tuesday, June 14 at 7:30 pm
PERSONAL PSYCHOTHERAPY: AN INTRODUCTION
With Barry Olshen
(p. 4)

Sunday, June 12 at 9:00-11:00 am
FOREST WALK / FOREST “BATHING”
Led by Alexandra Horsky
Location: Sunnybrook Park (Leslie and Eglinton)
(p. 4)

Sunday, June 5 at 7:30 pm
SHAVUOT AND HUMANISM: THE QUESTION OF COMMITMENT
With Rabbi Jonathan Cohen
(p. 4)

Tuesday, June 23 at 7:30 pm
SPECIAL MEMBER MEETING
(p. 5)

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:
Thursday, July 14 at 7:00 pm
SUMMER BOOK EVENT: “Five Little Indians”
Location: T.B.A.
(p. 4)

LATE-BREAKING NEWS
Announcing a Bookmark Fundraising Project for Ukrainian Refugees

Member Janet Finkelstein, who is a wonderful artist, approached us with the idea of creating hand-painted bookmarks for Oraynu to sell in order to raise money for JIAS (specifically to their Ukraine Crisis Newcomer Fund) as they welcome, support, and integrate Jewish Ukrainian refugees arriving in Canada.

The tasseled bookmark will measure about 5” x 1.5”; one side will be painted in Ukraine’s colours of blue and yellow; the verso will be “something else!” It will be presented in a clear sleeve. Yes, you are buying them sight unseen, but we promise that each individual piece of Janet’s artwork will be beautiful and unique!

Watch your weekly e-blast for more info.