

Humanistic Judaism

Magazine

Chrimukkah?

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Still a Dilemma?**

**Have Yourself a Merry
Little Chrimukkah**

**A Journey Through
Hanukkah**

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Fall 2020

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Speaking for those of us in the Northern Hemisphere, facing the cold winter months this year is particularly daunting. Surviving a pandemic in the summer when we are free to enjoy the out-of-doors is one thing. Staring out over the frigid landscape of our lives stuck inside, with the increasing spread of the pandemic and the decreasing temperatures, is nothing short of frightening, depressing, and anxiety producing.

It is understandable why there are so many “festivals of light” that occur at this time of year. Light enlivens us and brings us hope. With that understanding, in this issue of Humanistic Judaism Magazine we examine Hanukkah from different perspectives—sociologically, historically, and poetically, all with an eye to how we see Hanukkah differently from many other Jews.

Rabbis Miriam Jerris and Jeffrey Falick examine Jewish stereotypes of this season of light. Jerris wonders if the “December Dilemma”—as it is so often referred to by much of the Jewish community—is still a dilemma at all, and Falick tackles modern syncretism from a positive perspective.

Paul Golin, SHJ’s Executive Director, finally wrote the article about Hanukkah that he has been thinking about for a long time. He explores how combining a hobby you feel passionate about with your Jewish identity adds greater meaning. In his article, “Maccabees, Military History, and Me,” he demonstrates this idea while providing some very interesting facts about the military history of Hanukkah.

We are pleased to print an excerpt from Rabbi Judith Seid’s excellent book, *God Optional Judaism*. If you are a Secular

Humanistic Jew and want to know why we celebrate Hanukkah, this is the article to read. You can learn more about the observance and ritual of Hanukkah for cultural Jews by reading the rest of the chapter in the book.



In this issue, we honor Richard D. Logan, the 2020 recipient of the Sherwin T. Wine Lifetime Achievement Award, SHJ’s past-president and esteemed past president and member of Or Emet, Minnesota Congregation for Humanistic Judaism.



Our communities have shared. Richard Rubenstein, member of Kol Shalom in Portland, Oregon, celebrated his B(ar) Mitzvah, as an adult. He tells his experience in his moving article, “My Journey Into Understanding and Wholeness.” CHJ in Fairfield County, CT explain their powerful Oral History program. Machar, Washington Congregation for Secular Humanistic Judaism inspires us with programming designed to connect their members during the pandemic and Kahal B’raira (KB), Boston Congregation for Humanistic Judaism updates us on what’s new, including a short introduction to their new Managing Director.

If you are looking for a new Hanukkah Candle Lighting, Rabbi Adam Chalom leads us through the history and practice of Hanukkah, each candle telling us something you may or may not have known. And we welcome first time writer, poet Herb Levine.

May this season bring light into your home and hearts and may it be a little bit brighter because of this magazine issue. Happy Hanukkah/Chanukkah/Chanuka (חנוכה). 

P.G. and M.S.J.

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Humanistic Judaism Magazine is published quarterly by the Society for Humanistic Judaism, a non-profit organization, 28611 West Twelve Mile Road, Farmington Hills, Michigan 48334, (248) 478-7610, info@shj.org, www.shj.org. Two issues are printed and mailed, and all four are mailed electronically to subscribers and members of the Society for Humanistic Judaism, and later added to the SHJ website’s archives.

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Subscription Rates: \$25.00 per year. Canadian Subscriptions \$31.00. Overseas Subscriptions \$43.00 per year (U.S. Dollars). No refunds. Sample copies available at single issue price plus postage. Additional copies of a single issue are available from the Society for Humanistic Judaism at the cover price plus postage. Address all inquiries and subscriptions to *Humanistic Judaism*, 28611 West Twelve Mile Road, Farmington Hills, Michigan 48334. Listed in *Index to Jewish Periodicals*, *American Jewish Yearbook*, *Encyclopedia of Associations*, *Standard Periodical Directory*, *American Theological Library Association Religion Database*.

Manuscripts are welcome and may be sent to info@shj.org. Word documents preferred.

ISSN 0441-4195

Fall 2020

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Maccabees, Military History, and Me

Hanukkah is still my favorite Jewish holiday, for reasons other than when I was a kid

by Paul Golin

When your hobbies intersect with your Jewish identity, do you feel a heightened connection? Maybe you cheer for a player on a rival team once you learn they're Jewish. Perhaps you watch all the Jewish-themed dramas on Netflix or focus your philately on Israeli stamps.

There is a Jewish angle on almost every hobby, interest, or pursuit. A love of history is an obvious one. Jews have such an incredible history, we apparently invented the concept (at least according to Thomas Cahill's "The Gift of the Jews"). I'm interested in a subset of history: military history. And particularly — though not exclusively — when it has a Jewish angle. And because of that, Hanukkah is my favorite holiday.

Hanukkah is *the* military history holiday. It celebrates a war won. Its hero is a de facto general. And unlike most other religious holidays, it's actual history not myth.

Obviously, celebrating Hanukkah is great fun regardless of the history. Deep-fried food, chocolate coins, and high-stakes gambling (dreidel), what's not to like? For kids, nothing else on the Jewish calendar can compete with eight nights of presents.

If you're into history, though, and particularly military history, you can dive deep. Books-length deep. University scholarship-level deep. And that's the wonderful thing about any hobby, the detail and depth found when you dig into the specifics. Hanukkah offers multiple angles — for example, if you love cooking, you can google thousands of recipes for chutney latkes alone!

In working as a Jewish communal professional with a focus on "outreach and engagement," I've tried to help individuals find an angle into deeper Jewish meaning through their own interests, because I believe there is a benefit to feeling that connection. And I've tried to help congregational staff and volunteers who want to grow their communities nurture Jewish angles for less-regular participants.

The depth that make hobbies so engaging can also be a challenge to creating community-wide programming, however, when such programming often tries to appeal to broader audiences. Knowing that someone loves music doesn't mean you should immediately invite them to a Marvin Hamlisch retrospective, if the more relevant Jewish musician for their tastes is Joey Ramone (*née* Jeffrey Ross Hyman!).

For many of us, just knowing we share a common heritage with an accomplished person in our area of interest may foster a sense of Jewish connection. At other times, we need to know what about them or their work is actually *Jewish*, and why is it relevant?

Even as I admittedly derive meaning from ethnic pride-by-association, I'm also discomfited by it. Who cares if Einstein (and a disproportionate number of other Nobel Prize winners) was Jewish if it doesn't make *me* any smarter! By feeling a connection, am I somehow claiming credit for *their* accomplishments? The deciding factor for Jewish genius is not in the genes. And my multiracial children will hopefully benefit from their connection to another great civilization as well (Japanese).

Still, there's no denying the thrill of feeling represented, particularly as part of a minority group, whether in popular culture or any area of interest. These ongoing intangible connections that may seem insignificant or kitschy—like the wonderful inside joke of Sacha Baron Cohen's anti-Semitic character Borat speaking a fake "Kazakh" that is part gibberish, part Hebrew—build a Jewish identity for many cultural Jews that's not easily measured by traditional demographic studies.

A while back, I helped conduct a [qualitative study](#) of adult children of intermarriage to determine what childhood experiences contributed to their current Jewish identities. Having a b'nai mitzvah ceremony emerged as the key indicator of how strongly they identified as Jewish later in life. One surprise finding was how many of them—regardless of later identity—described watching films like "Fiddler on the Roof" and "Schindler's List" as not just a form of impactful entertainment but as actual *Jewish activities*.



Of course, the key difference between b'nai mitzvah and watching movies is who you do it with. Movies are solitary or just with friends and family; Jewish lifecycle events almost always extend to a wider community, often including clergy.

That is a challenge, as I consider what kind of Jewish “engagement” my connecting through military history really is. Reading military history is not something I do in community with anyone, beyond talking to my step-dad about it. Perhaps there’s a community I just haven’t found yet—or want to find.

Certainly, there is an abundance of self-forming Jewish communities around other interests, including interests I share. While Facebook is not the same as in-person (or even Zoom) community, there are some great groups on the platform for whatever your tangentially Jewish-related hobbies may be. One of my favorites is the self-explanatorily named “Star Trek Jewposting.” And I’ve actually made real-world friends by hosting the “Jewpanese” Facebook group, where Jewish and Japanese converge. While Humanistic Judaism is of course so much more than an interest group, there are folks on our Facebook Humanistic Judaism Discussion Group who are connecting with us for the first time, and perhaps that may lead them to participate in one of our in-person communities in the future.

Isn’t it enough to connect Jewishly on our own, or just with friends and family? Sure. Is there a benefit to also connecting with a wider Jewish community? I believe so and have dedicated my career to sharing that benefit. For Humanistic Judaism as a movement, we need to not only weave together various interests with Jewish identity, but also with Secular Humanistic values.

I bring my secular humanistic worldview to reading military history, in my understanding that there is no invisible higher power guiding human events and this is our one and only life to live. Therefore, war is the worst thing human beings do to one another, period. Something has always gone horribly wrong if the outcome is war. Understanding why it happens, and how people behave during it, might provide some insights into preventing future conflicts, in society and maybe even in our own lives.

I’m not a military “enthusiast” and don’t want to glorify it. I’m grateful to be part of a generation that avoided a draft even as I appreciate those who served, and empathize with those who suffered, including my own grandparents who survived hell-on-earth in Poland during World War II. Still, I’m fascinated by the ultimate extremes that war requires in behavior, organization, technology, and human endurance, and wonder how I would have comported myself in those same life-or-death situations. And so, with all that in mind, here are...

Eight Reasons Why Hanukkah is the Most Interesting Jewish Holiday for Secular Humanistic Military History Buffs... Like Me:

8. It Really Happened

Hanukkah is the only ancient Jewish holiday that commemorates historically-provable events. It’s the story of Judea gaining political independence for the first time in centuries, in the Second Century BCE, procured by an improbable military victory that contemporary sources verify. In the Book of Maccabees, God is not a central character and all accomplishments are people-powered—though certainly

religiously-believing people, zealots even. Today, rabbis in all denominations outside ultra-Orthodoxy are willing to admit that the Hanukkah “miracle” of the Temple oil lasting eight days was tacked on centuries later to downplay the military accomplishments of the eventually-corrupted Hasmonean Dynasty. The real miracle was of a backwater province defeating a regional superpower.

7. Guerilla Warfare

While not the first historic use of the tactics, the Jews’ early victories against the Seleucid (Greek Syrian) Empire came about through what today we would call “asymmetric warfare,” and their victories would inspire future generations of freedom fighters. The story of an outnumbered band of highly-motivated irregulars, using surprise attacks and familiar terrain against a professional invading army too rigid in training and structure to improvise, would repeat throughout history. The Maccabees’ dawn sacking of Seron’s camp at Emmaus has similarities to Washington at Trenton, for example, and the use of a hostile civilian population for intelligence gathering conjures parallels to the Viet Cong two millennia later.



6. The "Miracle" Happened Toward the Beginning of the Story

Hanukkah means “dedication,” in reference to the recapture and rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem after it had been plundered and defiled (pig sacrifices!) by the Seleucids. As part of a plan to aggressively Hellenize the Jews into passivity, King Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) ordered an altar to Zeus erected in the Temple and outlawed Judaism throughout the land, in 167 BCE. The plan backfired. The Jews rose up in revolt—led first by Mattathias and his five sons, then after Mattathias’s death, by middle son Judah “the Hammer”

(Maccabee)—fighting a series of battles until, in 165 BCE, they claimed Jerusalem and restored the Temple. End of story, right? Wrong! That’s only chapter 4 of 16 in the First Book of Maccabees! The war continued, with the battles growing in scale until the Maccabees were fielding an army upwards of 20,000 men. Judah Maccabee was killed in 160 BCE, but his brothers fought on, with the Seleucids finally recognizing Jewish autonomy—in 142 BCE.

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Is the December Dilemma

by Rabbi Miriam Jerris

Still a Dilemma?

When I conceived of this article, the question I posed in the title was sincere. I know so many intermarried couples who have blended their traditions together successfully. Then I Googled “December Dilemma.” It produced about 94,400,000 results. To be fair, the first two were positive in tone, suggesting best practices and teaching tolerance. But quickly, many of the others, at least on the first page, dealt with the topic as a “problem.”

Around the time intermarriage in the Jewish community reached 50%, I met the man who would become my second husband, Stephen Stawicki. I came from an Eastern European (Russian/Polish) Jewish background. I was second- and third-generation Canadian. He came from an Eastern European (Polish) Roman Catholic background. He was second- and third-generation American. What we share is a strong cultural commitment to our heritage, a humanistic philosophy of life, and similar political views (thank goodness).

For more than thirty years, we have created a home together that rejoices in our similarities and celebrates our differences. In December, we celebrate Hanukkah and Christmas because these are the holidays that hold our childhood memories. For me that means lighting the Hanukkiah (Hanukkah menorah), eating potato pancakes, and sending my grandchildren gifts. For Steve it means decorating a Christmas tree, listening to Polish Christmas Carols, hanging stockings, and exchanging gifts. We also developed some traditions of our own— a special meal Christmas Eve or Christmas Day with friends and maybe a movie and Chinese food. And as years passed, Steve is the one who never forgets to set up the Hanukkiah every night, and I am the one who has to buy a tree ornament on every vacation we take.

Although I wouldn't call it a dilemma, we did experience a speed bump when we moved in together in late October of 1987. We had agreed on most of the above, but one evening Steve told me he was going to the store to buy lights for the outside of the house. I flipped out—mostly internally, but it did not sit well with me. After reflecting, I remembered a childhood tradition of driving through my neighborhood with my parents at night looking at the lights on the houses. I remembered pointing to a house with lights and saying, “This is a Christian house,” and then pointing to a house without lights and saying, “This is a Jewish house.” So, no lights on the outside of our house.

I never for one moment felt that I was disloyal to the Jewish people, but some people have suggested that I'm not an appropriate role model for young unmarried Jews, for Jewish families, or anyone else Jewish for that matter. However, I see myself as an ideal model for Jews today. More than 50% of Jews are marrying individuals not born Jewish. Two-thirds of Jewish families

are intermarried. What Steve and I model is a successful strategy for coping with our differences and sharing what we love about our backgrounds.

In 1996, I graduated with a Master of Arts Degree in Humanistic and Clinical Psychology. My thesis, entitled “Celebrating Differences,” focused on the experience of being intermarried. The second to last chapter took the form of a message to a couple being intermarried. In part, I said:

There are times when people feel that religious differences between two people who are about to marry may be an obstacle to their happiness. I have a slightly different point of view that I often share with couples during their marriage ceremony.

All marriages are mixed marriage. All marriage partners are different in some ways. They may differ in the way they spend money, or the way they resolve conflicts, or in their sleeping patterns. But I guarantee that there is not one couple on this earth that would say they agree on everything.

Couples who come together from different religious, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds acknowledge their differences immediately. They learn skills of negotiation to cope with their differences. And these are the exact skills that are needed in all marriages. I believe that intercultural couples can be stronger than other couples who share backgrounds, and are not as aware of their differences as you may be.

The cultural life of an intermarried couple can also be more enriched than those who share backgrounds. Diversity keeps life interesting and offers creative opportunities to blend existing traditions and develop new traditions. (Jerris, Miriam S. “Celebrating Differences,” Master's thesis, Center for Humanistic Studies, 1996.)

I know other couples have more difficulty than we did. Yet, we are not the only couple who can share success stories. My hope is to let families know that dealing with intermarriage and navigating the sometime rough waters of the December holidays can be done, with success. So for some, December is a wonderful time for family and friends.

Currently, while speaking or writing about diversity in intermarriage, I am more apt to say, “Diversity keeps life interesting. We can always enjoy the things we share. It takes special people who can learn to celebrate their differences—special people like you.” December does not have to be a dilemma. 🔥





A Journey Through Hanukkah

For All Ages

by Rabbi Adam Chalom

(Read passages after lighting Hanukkah candles)

First Night—Light and Winter

In winter, the nights grow longer and colder. People all over the world light candles and lamps to fight the darkness. Every time we light Hanukkah candles, we remember how important fire is to our lives. The power of fire cooks our food, keeps us warm, and makes our lives better.

We need each other for warmth and inspiration. Fire is like our family, our community. Our family cooks our food, keeps us warm, and makes our lives better. And our family goes back a long way, part of a long tradition. The Festival of Lights is a festival of memory and tradition, too.

Second Night—The Maccabees

The story of Hanukkah goes back to over two thousand years ago, when the Jews had their own land, with their own temple in Jerusalem. A new people, the Greeks arrived, and the Greeks wanted everyone to be Hellenized—to speak Greek, to eat Greek food, and to follow Greek religion. Greek ideas were interesting, but the Greek king Antiochus tried to force all Jews to be Greek. There were only a few Jews compared to the Greeks, but the Jews wanted to decide for themselves what to believe and how to be Jewish. The Maccabee family stood up to the Greek king and took back the Jerusalem Temple. They entered the Temple, cleaned it up, and re-lit the Menorah with new oil. And they dedicated the Temple with an eight-day festival—the Hebrew for “Dedication” is *Hanukkah*.

Today, compared to everyone else in the world, there are only a few people who celebrate Hanukkah—they are the Jewish people, all over the world. Jews still decide for themselves what to believe and how to be Jewish. Jews still celebrate Hanukkah. Jews still remember how good it is to be free.

Third Night—The Legend

The Rabbis who led Judaism after the Jerusalem Temple was destroyed did not like the Maccabees. They thought that the Maccabees betrayed Judaism by themselves Hellenizing, and by declaring themselves to be High Priests and Kings, even though they weren't from the family of King David. And they thought that military rebellion and national pride was dangerous, from their own experiences of two failed revolts against the Romans. But they couldn't stop Hanukkah—Jewish people kept lighting lights in the middle of winter.

So the Rabbis told a story to take credit away from the Maccabees—they claimed that the pure oil in the Temple was only enough to last for one day, but it miraculously burned for eight days. We know today that

human beings can do amazing things, things our ancestors would have thought were miracles. We celebrate the human power to tell stories, to imagine new possibilities, and to make the marvelous real.

Fourth Night—The Menorah and the Hanukkiah

Ashkenazi Jews call it a *Menorah*, from the word *ner* (light). Sephardic Jews call it a *Hanukkiah*, from the word *Hanukkah*. The lights used to be all in a row, but today there are as many ways to light lights for Hanukkah as imagination can make.

The Talmud records a debate of how to light the Menorah—one side said you should light eight lights the first night, seven lights the second night, and count down; the other side said you should light 1 the first night, two the second, and so on. Why did the second one win? Because we should always promote the good and not reduce it.

We use the *Shammes* to light the other candles on the Menorah. As we light more candles each night, the light grows brighter. From one light, we make a lot of light. From one person with hope, we can make a lot of hope. *We* need to be the candle that lights all the rest.

Fifth Night—The Food—Latkes, Sufganiyot, and more

The story of the oil may have taken credit away from the Maccabees, but it also led to some of the tastiest food of the Jewish year. In memory of the long-lasting oil at the rededication of the Temple, we now share foods cooked in oil as part of the holiday celebration.

Potato *latkes*, with applesauce or sour cream or a bit of both, became very popular among Ashkenazi Jews in Eastern Europe. And *sufganiyot*, jelly doughnuts fried in oil and filled with jelly or custard, are popular among Sephardic Jews in Middle Eastern countries, and in modern Israel as well. An old joke claims to describe every Jewish holiday: “they tried to kill us, they failed, let’s eat.” It just wouldn’t be Hanukkah without sharing these special foods with family and friends.

Sixth Night—The Dreidel Game

When the *dreidel* game was invented in the Middle Ages, the letters on the *dreidel* were the Yiddish rules for the game—**נ** Nun for *Nisht* “nothing”; **ה** Hay for *Halb* “half”; **ש** Shin for *Shtel ayn* “put in”; and **ג** Gimmel for *Gantze* “the whole thing”.

These *dreidel* rules are still the rules we play with today! We also have a new meaning for the letters—*Nes Gadol Haya Sham*—a great wonder happened there. In Israel, the *dreidel* [or *s'vivon*] says *Nes Gadol Haya Po*—a great wonder happened here. Whatever the letters mean to us, we know that the game is fun, and that our holiday has well begun.

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Musings of A Jewish Hellenist on Chanukah

by Herbert Levine

"When I spoke up at a parent meeting in favor of teaching our children Greek, they mocked me: 'Sure, we can teach them Greek when you find a time that is neither night nor day, because night and day, we are absorbed in our Torah.' When I showed them how the Septuagint improves upon the ancient, garbled Hebrew, they called a fast to lament the desecration."

Now I sit and watch the tiny candles burning in my deep diaspora, competing with their small light against the giant blaze of Christmas and feel grateful for a festival of small lights, because only from small deeds-- giving a soft answer, turning away anger, increasing peace at home-- is the world sustained.

Seventh Night—Giving and Receiving

To make children happy during Hanukkah, parents would give them some coins (*gelt*) to play *dreidl* or to spend on themselves during the holiday. As Jews became more connected to the world around them, and as Christmas became more about giving lots of gifts and less about religion, Hanukkah also became a time to give and receive gifts. The trick is knowing how to do it.

It's too easy to get caught up in "getting" and not spend enough time on "giving." We can give not just to our families and friends, but to people in the wider world who really need it. They don't *need* expensive gifts—we can give them food, and clothing, and shelter, and hope. In fact, we don't need expensive gifts either—we are grateful to be remembered and loved, and we are grateful to have the chance to show how much we love other people. It turns out that to give IS to receive!

Eighth Night—Heritage and Future

In Jewish life, we light candles for the past and for the future. *Yahrtzeit* (memorial) candles remind us of the life of people that we loved, and Shabbat candles on Friday night celebrate the time of rest and community that is just beginning. The warmth of the flame is the past, and the light of the flame leads us forward.

We are heirs to many traditions. We are human, and we celebrate the achievements of humanity throughout its history. We are American, and we celebrate the freedom and opportunity that our ancestors were looking for when they came here, and that we enjoy today. And we are Jewish, part of a "golden chain" of Jewish culture and custom and holidays and history and story and food and games and giving. They are ours, and we rejoice. 🕯

Reprinted from the "Festival of Lights" A Home Hanukkah Celebration, Kol Hadash Humanistic Congregation.

הרהורים של מתיוון יהודי בחנוכה

"כשקמתי באספת הורים להציע שנגלמד את בנינו יונית, לעגו בי: 'בטח, נלמד להם יונית אם תמצא שעה שהיא לא יום ולא לילה, כי יום ולילה נהגה בתורתנו.' כשהראיתי להם איך תרגום השבעים משפר את העברית העתיקה המעותת קראו צום ליל על החילול."

כעת אני יושב ומסתכל בנרות הקטנטנים, דולקים בתפוצות הרחוקות שלי מתחרים באור הקטן שלהם עם הלהבה הענקית של חג המולד ומרגיש את עצמי מאושר בחג של אורים קטנים, כי רק תודות למעשים קטנים-- תשובה רכה, הרגעת כעס, רבוי שלום בית-- העולם עומד.

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CommunityNews

Amity in the Time of COVID-19: Machar's After-Service After-Party

Machar, The Washington Congregation for Secular Humanistic Judaism—Washington, D.C.

While it may not have the same ring to it as “Love in the Time of Cholera,” people are looking for amity...friendship during this trying time of COVID-19. As Yom Kippur was coming to a close, Rabbi Jeremy asked his (Machar) virtual congregation to share (in one or two words) their thoughts about how they were feeling, or what their goals were, in this season of celebration, contemplation, and renewal.



The two words that came up most were “isolation” and “community.” In this time of COVID-19, the congregants have been feeling isolated at home, and have been longing for a sense of community. One person commented that a virtual conversation would be a good way for people to discuss their feelings and concerns, and to be able to connect with others. I immediately sent a private chat comment to Tara (Machar’s administrator) and volunteered to organize a group to do this.

Literally four days after the idea was hatched, thanks to Rabbi Jeremy’s and Tara’s blessing, I hosted the first Machar Zoom “gabfest.” Five other attendees (singles and couples) joined my wife and me, and for a little over an hour we all connected. The common theme that I heard from everybody was, indeed, feelings

of isolation and desire for community. Isolation from not being able to see grandchildren as they grow up, or to meet with coworkers in person. The community of family, friends, and coworkers has been absent from everybody’s lives.

In the weeks since the first chat, we’ve averaged 6–10 attendees, and have talked about various topics such as vacation plans (post COVID-19, of course), and where people were born and how they wound up in the DC metro area. It appears that a core group has developed, and there are new faces joining in each week.

I’ve been very gratified by the interest in the chat sessions and humbled by the thanks that I’ve received for organizing and “moderating” each session. As a brand-new member of Machar, I felt like these chats are the cornerstone of building a new community, and I look forward to organizing more of these sessions, and hope that the interest and attendance grows. 🔥

Jay E. Reiner

OH! CHJ's Oral History Project Embodies "L'dor v'dor"

Congregation for Humanistic Judaism—Fairfield County, CT

L’Dor V’dor, “from generation to generation,” is the Jewish imperative to share customs, traditions and values from one generation to the next. Congregation for Humanistic Judaism, Fairfield County, CT, in cooperation with The Jewish Historical Society of Fairfield County, (JHS), has launched an exciting project to collect and preserve the personal histories of current and former members of CHJ for future generations.



CHJ Oral History Project

The Oral History project (OH! for short) records our legacy and insights into Jewish life in Fairfield County as experienced and shared by each participant, from past presidents who have moved away to current board members and new members. Despite the pandemic, CHJ volunteers were trained to conduct interviews virtually on Zoom — a situation that has proven challenging yet rewarding.

The interviews cover each subject’s personal religious upbringing, their family’s journey that brought them to Fairfield County, and their path to discovering Humanistic Judaism. As Rachel Dreyfus, project coordinator, puts it, “We want to discover the initial attraction of CHJ to our members—plus what keeps them engaged. Is it our values, philosophy, social action or intellectual stimulation, or simply the friendships that develop over the years?” She adds, “We’ve unearthed some very touching stories. With these insights into our human needs and motivations, we will be better able to focus our marketing messages. This is very exciting; also, we are learning so much about each other.”

JHS of Fairfield County will organize and maintain an archive of oral histories including CHJ’s contributions. All interviewees receive a copy of their interview video recording and a personalized thanks from CHJ President Steven Getz. 🔥

George Rockmore and Rachel Dreyfus

Community News

Kahal B'raira, Moving Along in October 2020

Kahal B'raira—Boston, MA

Kahal B'raira, Boston, MA, began 5781 with a full roster of well-attended and well-received live virtual gatherings. Our High Holiday teams (too many to list!) put in a huge effort over several months to create meaningful services with high production values and thoughtful, creative content. We welcomed a virtual, international contingent of visitors, thanks to family connections, member outreach, and the SHJ holiday listings.

We prerecorded two highlights from our High Holiday services: a video compilation from KB families sending Shana Tova greetings and a video of members of our chorus, the K'Beats, singing and playing an energetic version of Na'aseh Shalom, recorded individually and synchronized into a chorus. Both videos evoked the community we share beyond our screens.

Our biggest news is a change in key personnel. In 2003, we hired KB member Gladys Maged to coordinate our volunteers as our first administrator. Since that time, her responsibilities grew considerably. She presided over tremendous growth at

KB, helping transform our Sunday School and expand our programming, connecting us to the Greater Boston Jewish community, leading successful fundraising drives, and managing our recent virtual transformation. More than that, Gladys has become a dear friend to so many of us. Although she is retiring as managing director, we are delighted that she will continue to participate in KB as an involved member.

Our new managing director, Lidia Prunte, is thrilled to join Kahal B'raira. She grew up in the Boston area, and after detouring to Iowa, Israel, and New Hampshire, is back in Boston to experience its vibrant and open Jewish community. Lidia has performed a wide range of tasks, from database and website maintenance to co-teaching Sunday school electives. She is excited to bring her skills and experience within the Jewish community to contribute to KB. 

Photo caption: (left to right) Greta Schnee, Ed Sciore (toy xylophone) and Janet Cohen in K'Beats, who created a composite video rendition of Na'aseh Shalom.

Jon Levine and Nancy Waters



Jews and Church-State Separation
What Are the Issues? Why Should We Care? And What Can We Do About It?

Join the organizers of a new initiative, Jews for a Secular Democracy, to discuss how religious fundamentalists are turning the clock back on hard-won gains made for...

Thursday, May 21
2 pm Eastern Time

Free and open to all but please register: bit.ly/JFASD

With staff lead Paul Golin, program coordinator Sarah Lenth, and community organizer Lidia Bore...





Jews for a Secular Democracy now has a YouTube Channel!



Watch our past webinars at <https://bit.ly/JFASDvids>

Join JFASD for a Virtual Townhall with:

 **Harvey Epstein**
New York Assembly Member
National Republican Security
District 14 (East side of Manhattan)

Separation of Church and State During a Time of Crisis

Friday, May 1
11 am Eastern Time

Please register: bit.ly/JFASDspeaks



Science, Government, and Religious Communities:
What Are Their Roles During a Pandemic?

A Virtual Conversation with:

Dr. Paul A. Offit
Director, Division of Infectious Diseases
Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

Sam Sherman, MD
Vice President
New England Baptist Hospital

Friday, April 17
8 pm Eastern Time



Jews For A Secular Democracy

Friday, March 27, 2020 10:00am Eastern US Time

Secular Education in America: An Increasing Urgency

Online Conversation With:

 **Natalie Mosler**
Executive Director
SAFEED: Young Advocates for Fair Education

 **Bertha Valquez**
Director of the Teacher Institute
NY Educational Services (YES)

 **Brandon Haught**
Author of
Being Gay
Over a Journey of
Self-Discovery



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In celebration of the birth of your granddaughter, Roxie
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For a complete and speedy recovery
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