



Humanistic Judaism

Magazine

The High Holidays

Rosh Hashanah Beyond God

by Rabbi Jodi Kornfeld

Celebrating Judaism

by Rabbi T. Sherwin Wine

From His Newly-Reissued Book



Starting a Havurah

by Jeff Lipkes

Community News

and much more

Autumn 2017

Table of Contents

From the Editors

p. 4

A New Look, A New Approach

From the Rabbi

p. 5

by Rabbi Miriam Jerris

Call of the Shofar

From the Executive Director

p. 5

by Paul Golin

Yom Kippur Made Me an Atheist —
And a Better Jew

Voice of Experience

p. 6–7

by Jeffrey Schesnol

A Search for Truth and Character

Starting a Havurah

p. 8

by Jeff Lipkes

Finding resources to help connect

Fresh Perspective

p. 9

by Bennett Drucker

What Judaism Means to Me

Judaism Beyond God

p. 10

by Rabbi Sherwin Wine

Jewish Holidays and Identity

Rosh Hashanah Beyond God

p. 11

by Rabbi Jodi Kornfeld

Giving Your Senses a Wake-Up Call



Humanistic Voices

p. 12–13

Not in My Name by Rabbi Jeffrey Falick

The Death Penalty Dilemma

by Vivian Kramer

A Response to Charlottesville

p. 14

by Paul Golin

What We WILL Replace

Community News

p. 15–18

Machar, Birmingham Temple, Or Emet,
Baltimore Jewish Cultural Chavurah

Contributors

- **Marlene Cohen** is on the executive committee of the Society for Humanistic Judaism and is a member of Machar, The Washington Congregation for Secular Humanistic Judaism.
- **Miriam Jerris** is the rabbi of the Society for Humanistic Judaism.
- **Bennett Drucker** is a member of Or Emet, Minnesota Congregation for Humanistic Judaism.
- **Jeffrey Falick** is the rabbi of the Birmingham Temple.
- **Paul Golin** is the executive director of the Society for Humanistic Judaism.
- **Jodi Kornfeld** is the rabbi of Beth Chaverim Humanistic Jewish Community in Deerfield, Illinois, and is the president of the Association of Humanistic Rabbis.
- **Vivian Kramer** is on the SHJ Board of Directors and a member at Beth Chaverim Humanistic Jewish Community in Deerfield, IL.
- **Jeff Lipkes** is on the SHJ Board of Directors and is the contact person for Humanistic Jews of Tampa Bay Havurah.
- **Janet Mayer** is on the SHJ Board of Directors and is co-president of Or Emet, Minnesota Congregation for Humanistic Judaism.
- **Jeffrey Schesnol** is the Madrikh at Ora Adam Congregation for Humanistic Judaism in Phoenix, AZ.
- **Arthur Starr** is co-president of the Baltimore Jewish Cultural Chavurah.
- **Rabbi Sherwin T. Wine** z'l was the founder of Secular Humanistic Judaism.

Publications



Guide to Humanistic Judaism

Featuring encyclopedia-like entries on the philosophy and practice of Humanistic Judaism, the Guide can serve as an introduction to Humanistic Judaism and as a convenient source of basic information about it. Includes an essay by Humanistic Judaism's founder, Rabbi Sherwin T. Wine.

The Guide is included with paid SHJ membership or can be purchased separately.

\$18

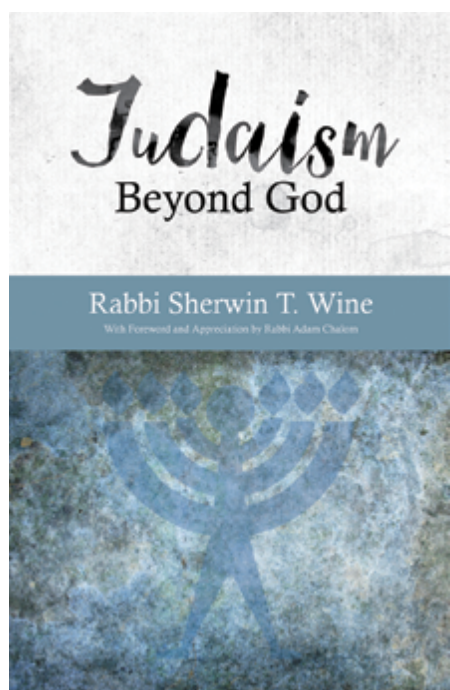
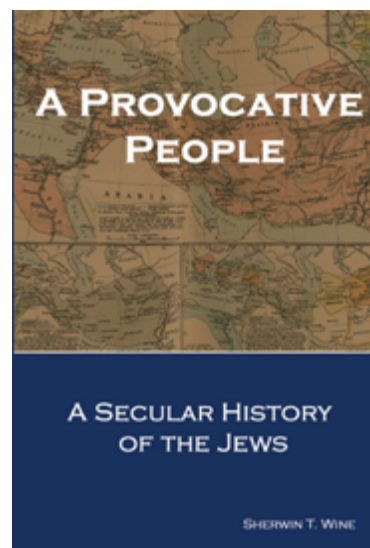
Order online at www.shj.org/store/books/understanding-humanistic-judaism/

A Provocative People: A Secular History of the Jews

A Provocative People, Rabbi Wine's final work, presents a history of the Jewish people, from their origins in the ancient Middle East to their existence as a global people in the modern world, from their beginnings as a religious people through their transition to a largely secularized people. Displaying his sense of humor, Wine once again distills complex ideas and developments into easily understood concepts, offering his readers a compelling and very readable humanistic history of the Jewish people.

\$25

Order online at www.shj.org/store/books/rabbi-sherwin-t-wine/



Judaism Beyond God

Judaism Beyond God presents an innovative secular and humanistic alternative for Jewish identity. It provides new answers to old questions about the essence of Jewish identity, the real meaning of Jewish history, the significance of the Jewish personality, and the nature of Jewish ethics. It also describes a radical and creative way to be Jewish—new ways to celebrate Jewish holidays and life cycle events, a welcoming approach to intermarriage and joining the Jewish people, and meaningful paths to strengthen Jewish identity in a secular age.

\$7.99 ebook

Paperback available soon for **\$12.99** from the Society for Humanistic Judaism



From the Editors

You may have noticed something different about this issue of *Humanistic Judaism*.

To mark the start of a new year on the Jewish calendar, *Humanistic Judaism* has been redesigned into the magazine format you see before you. The magazine will be published four times per year, twice in an online-only format, and twice in print and online. Each issue will have articles of the type that *Humanistic Judaism* has always run, but will also include:

- News from Humanistic Jewish communities in the United States and Canada;
- Profiles by and about individual members of affiliated communities and independent members of the Society for Humanistic Judaism;
- Regular features relevant to living as a Humanistic Jew.

The change in format and frequency allows the Society for Humanistic Judaism to better serve you by providing a broader variety of content that is relevant to you. We want to make sure that when you receive your issue of *Humanistic Judaism*, you *want* to open it.

So, what's in this issue?

- An essay by Rabbi Sherwin Wine, Humanistic Judaism's founder, about how Humanistic Jews can celebrate holidays with integrity;
- An article by Rabbi Jodi Kornfeld with resources for celebrating Rosh Hashanah, including ways to approach celebrations at home and in communities—and a family recipe;
- Humanistic Voices, a forum on whether Humanistic Jews should support the use of capital punishment in the American criminal justice system;
- An article with tips on how to begin organizing a Humanistic Jewish community;
- And items from communities in Maryland, Minnesota, Michigan, and Washington, D.C., about activism and new approaches to holiday celebrations.

Amidst rising voices of intolerance and anti-semitism, perhaps there is no time better to reach beyond the intellectual foundations of our movement, to focus on the work we do in our communities to keep ourselves and our neighbors free and safe, and to celebrate our Jewish heritage.

We hope the new design and content of *Humanistic Judaism* helps you face the High Holidays and the new year—5778—with light, strength, and hope.

J. M. K. and S. A. W.



Humanistic Judaism Magazine is produced four times a year 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. All four issues are available as .pdf downloads to subscribers and members of the Society for Humanistic Judaism, and later added to the SHJ website's archives.

All material © Copyright 2017 by the Society for Humanistic Judaism. No portion of this work may be reprinted or copied without written permission of the publisher.

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*, and *Standard Periodical Directory*.

Manuscripts are welcome and may be sent to shjjournaleditors@gmail.com. Word documents preferred.

ISSN 0441-4195

Co-Editors:

Jeremy M. Kridel
Susan A. Warrow

Community News:

Deb Godden

Editorial Board:

Rabbi Adam Chalom
Rabbi Jeffrey Falick
Paul Golin
Rabbi Miriam Jerris
Rabbi Peter Schweitzer

From the Rabbi

Call of the Shofar

I was speaking to my grandson a few years ago. He was probably five or six years old. He was wondering about his parents' relationship, because they had known each other since they were pre-teens, yet only began dating post-college. "Did they keep in touch, did they text each other?" he asked. I proceeded to tell him that cell phones did not exist then and asked if he could imagine another way people might have communicated before there were cell phones. Without missing a beat, he said, "Yes, they took the shofar, climbed to the top of a mountain, and blew it."

Leviticus 23:24 proclaims, "In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall be a solemn rest unto you, a memorial proclaimed with the blast of horns, a holy convocation" (JPS translation). Despite the ancient origin of the ram's horn, the clarion call speaks to us today. The Shofar reminds us to see the world as it is and to see ourselves as we are. It calls us to strive for a just and peaceful world, while challenging us to become what we are capable of being. (*Adapted from CHJ, CT, 1996*)

For those of you not connected to an affiliated community, here are two links to shofar blowing. This is [Jerry Grodsky from the Birmingham Temple](#) and this is [Jim and Andy Jacobs from Kol Hadash Humanistic Congregation](#).



Rabbi Miriam Jerris

From the Executive Director

Yom Kippur Made Me an Atheist — And a Better Jew

I don't remember ever believing in the Jewish religious narrative, but I remember when I realized I didn't. I was about eleven years old, attending Hebrew school thrice a week at a Conservative synagogue, when the High Holiday liturgy about a God who punishes the wicked and rewards the good solidified my views.

I knew my grandmother and what she experienced during the Holocaust, that she lost her parents, her siblings, her children. I knew she couldn't possibly have done anything wicked enough to deserve such suffering, and certainly, there was nothing her infants could've done to merit their own divine retribution.

What I didn't know at that time was that there's nuance in the Jewish understanding of reward and punishment; the writers of the Bible themselves struggled with it. By 10 or 11, I think most kids are ready to grapple with it on deep philosophical levels as well, but that option wasn't offered in my synagogue school.

Even if I had been invited into that 3,000-year-old conversation early enough, it wouldn't have convinced me to continue attending services that ask participants to read statements we know to be untrue—aloud, as a group—with no acknowledgement that most of us simply don't believe it works that way.

So I stopped going—for decades. And yet, the more important themes of the High Holidays stayed with me. It is, after all, the most profound milestone-marker on the Jewish calendar: Happy New Year, you made it through another year, now think about your own mortality for 10 days because there's no guarantee you'll see another New Year.

Thankfulness, remorse, apology, recommitment, renewal. These are emotions and ideals that we can access all year, yet are heightened during the High Holidays, even when we're simply aware of the dates without attending services. Grappling with our mortality and our morality, however we do it, makes us better people. And as far as I'm concerned, if you're Jewish and you become a better person, you become a better Jew.

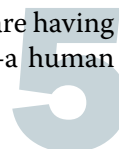
If it can be done individually though, it begs the question, why participate communally? I got my answer when I finally returned to High Holiday services, this time at the City Congregation for Humanistic Judaism in New York. The liturgy was beautiful and, more importantly, agreeable. But the moment that did it for me was when Rabbi Peter Schweitzer put aside the written text and asked the 300-plus crowd, "What is the meaning of life?" He then passed the mic around the room for 20 minutes as a dozen individuals concisely shared their thoughts.

That exercise was a profound experience for me on many levels. First, having grown up in a traditional setting, it was joyous to deviate from a set service that elsewhere is presented as if from on high. Second, what people shared was meaningful and connective. Afterward, this large room felt like a small gathering. And although I didn't take the mic, the invitation made me think of my own answers to that question.

Ultimately, I found benefit to being with like-minded people during the High Holidays: a reminder that others are having similar experiences in life, similar struggles and successes, and that we are part of something bigger after all—a human community.



Paul Golin



{ Pages 6-9 cut from this preview edition.

Full version available for members of SHJ-affiliated congregations, SHJ Independent Members, and Magazine subscribers only.

If you are already eligible for full access, please contact info@shj.org for the correct link; otherwise find membership information here:

<http://www.shj.org/membership/>

or subscription information here:

<http://www.shj.org/hj-journal/>

Thank you for your interest in Humanistic Judaism! }

{ Pages 6-9 cut from this preview edition.

Full version available for members of SHJ-affiliated congregations, SHJ Independent Members, and Magazine subscribers only.

If you are already eligible for full access, please contact info@shj.org for the correct link; otherwise find membership information here:

<http://www.shj.org/membership/>

or subscription information here:

<http://www.shj.org/hj-journal/>

Thank you for your interest in Humanistic Judaism! }

{ Pages 6-9 cut from this preview edition.

Full version available for members of SHJ-affiliated congregations, SHJ Independent Members, and Magazine subscribers only.

If you are already eligible for full access, please contact info@shj.org for the correct link; otherwise find membership information here:

<http://www.shj.org/membership/>

or subscription information here:

<http://www.shj.org/hj-journal/>

Thank you for your interest in Humanistic Judaism! }

{ Pages 6-9 cut from this preview edition.

Full version available for members of SHJ-affiliated congregations, SHJ Independent Members, and Magazine subscribers only.

If you are already eligible for full access, please contact info@shj.org for the correct link; otherwise find membership information here:

<http://www.shj.org/membership/>

or subscription information here:

<http://www.shj.org/hj-journal/>

Thank you for your interest in Humanistic Judaism! }

Judaism Beyond God

by Rabbi Sherwin T. Wine

Judaism Beyond God has recently been reissued as an e-book, and will soon be available in paperback. The following is an excerpt.

The value of Jewish identity emerges from Jewish history. The humanistic value of Jewish identity emerges from a humanistic view of Jewish history. The absence of God and the need for human self-reliance are “messages” from the Jewish experience. Jews are living testimony to the importance of reason and dignity.

Strengthening Jewish identity means strengthening an awareness of Jewish history. But how?

One way, quite obviously, is to study it. For many Jews, remembering and interpreting the events of the Jewish past is the best way to reinforce their Jewish self-awareness.

But for others, this historical study is too private and too academic. Something more is needed. Mastering Hebrew and Yiddish provides the extra bond of cultural identity. But in a Diaspora environment, where no substantial community of people speaks these languages, linguistic uniqueness is difficult. Something more practical is required.

Jewish holidays have become the lifeblood of Jewish identity. Although they are less informative than historical studies and less ethnic than Hebrew or Yiddish, they are regular events in the lives of most Jews. Because they involve small pieces of time and few special skills, they are available to large numbers of Jews. Because they are public and communal and feature ceremonial “pizzazz,” they can involve all elements of the population.

Jewish holidays—like the holidays of most national and religious groups—are connected with historical and mythical events. Even if you never study Jewish history, you cannot escape it if you celebrate Jewish holidays. They will introduce you to the Exodus, the Maccabees, and the state of Israel. The Jewish calendar gives you more than uniquely Jewish things to do. It gives you a short and “repetitious” introduction to the Jewish past.

Yet for Humanistic Jews, Jewish holidays—as they are

generally presented—are less than satisfactory. While they were not invented by the leaders of rabbinic Judaism, they were appropriated by them and put to rabbinic use. Religious authority made them convenient vehicles for rabbinic propaganda and for the rabbinic view of Jewish history. In “orthodox” Judaism, the holidays became testimonies to divine power and supernatural intervention. You could not celebrate them without bumping into God.

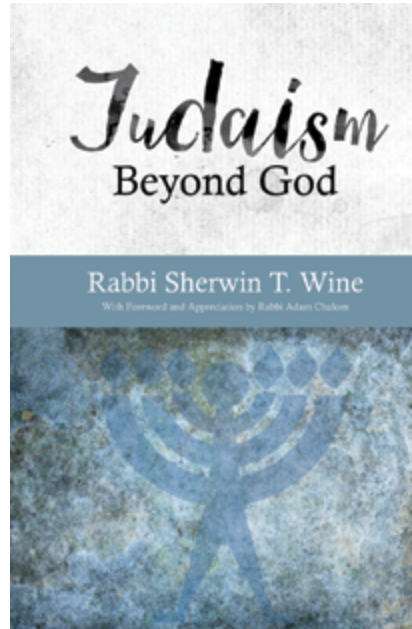
The Passover Haggada is a perfect example of the problem. It turns the Exodus from Egypt into a divine event. Without Yahveh, the Jews would never have escaped from slavery. Human effort and human self-reliance are irrelevant to the victory. Suffering and redemption are all part of some noble divine plan. Both Moses and Pharaoh become mere puppets of the Lord.

Hanukka suffers the same fate. A Talmudic legend about holy oil lasting for eight days becomes the focal event of the Maccabean triumph. Supernatural intrusion is the guarantee of Jewish survival and Jewish identity. Since the rabbis did not like the Maccabees, they consigned their winter celebration to oblivion for many centuries and gave them very little credit for their hard-won victories.

Sukkot is no better. A harvest and rainmaking festival is rendered absurd with Yahvistic tampering. The holiday is tied to the forty years wandering in the desert when the Hebrews found their only food in droppings from heaven. The farmers’ harvest hut, where workers rested in the field during the heat of the day, has been turned into a desert house for nomadic shepherds. The blood, sweat, and tears of Jewish farmers taming their own land is lost in a sea of false and silly connections.

Jewish holidays are marvelous opportunities for reliving Jewish history. But not in their present form. They need to be reclaimed for humanistic use. Since the rabbis did not invent them, they have no exclusive right to them. They are the property of the Jewish people. And they need a better showing.

(The transliteration used in this article reflects the author’s preferences.)

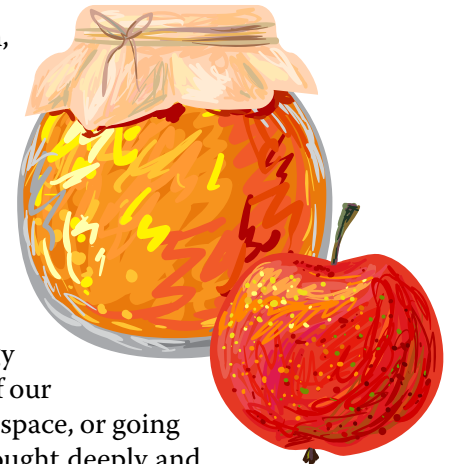


Rosh Hashanah Beyond God

by Rabbi Jodi Kornfeld

Where do we look to create meaning in our celebrations? After all, as Humanistic Jews, we incorporate all manner of Jewish culture into understanding our holidays, and give them relevance to our time and place. We come from a long tradition but we are not beholden to it. We are free to fashion a service, an observance, a community event that marks the occasion with readings both in poetry and prose, as well as music that reflect the meaning of the day. Teasing out the themes of Rosh Hashanah and making them applicable to our notion of the Jewish New Year is the challenge.

Rosh Hashanah reiterates its themes so we are sure to notice: forgiveness, resolution, peace-making, and ultimately our ability to choose to change. In making such a choice, Rosh Hashanah is not simply a single day's observance, but it has a message to be taken to heart and applied daily. It has a particular purpose, if we are wise enough to recognize it. Rosh Hashanah asks that we pause, assess, and recalibrate. We reflect on the past year, and look ahead to the next. It need not be a one-day experience, and indeed traditionally Rosh Hashanah began a ten-day period of introspection leading to Yom Kippur. We can develop the mental habits started on Rosh Hashanah and practice them every day. For example, make a point of setting aside the time to think and share your own company with yourself. The effort will be rewarded with renewed energy and creativity, with greater patience and enjoyment, and with a deeper understanding of our selves and the meaning of our lives. Whether we are traversing physical or geographical space, or going in a new psychological or emotional direction through life's transitions, if we have thought deeply and carefully about this day, we can move forward.



Rosh Hashanah is our annual moment to shake up our senses and be truly present each and every day of our lives. It demands that we pay attention; its very name involves using the head, the *rosh*. Paying attention is the purpose of hearing the shofar, the ram's horn. Awaken the senses, now. Listen to those around us, now. Enjoy the blessings in our lives, now. Notice the small wonders, now. That is where the extraordinary lies, where the true sense of awe emerges. The present is where life happens.

The tools of Rosh Hashanah include an array of actual items that act as sensory memories in our personal experience of the holiday as well as the collective memory of it. There is the shofar, to fill our ears with the holiday; the symbolic foods eaten to awaken our palate to the meaning of the day; songs of recent vintage and those that echo melodies from our past; the written word of poets and authors; and the warm embrace or handshake as we wish one another *shana tovah*, a good year. From this buffet, we can choose the a la carte items and put them together in a way that causes the day to be different from all others. For some, that is a communal event in a congregational setting that may be familiar to that experienced earlier in life, and yet profoundly different based on our understandings and beliefs. For others, it may be familial with a holiday meal and stories told around the table. And for yet others, it may be singularly personal, with an acknowledgement of the day and its impact on the individual. Whichever model makes the most sense for you is the one to incorporate. Ideas and resources follow.

The shofar acts as the penetrating and piercing sound of attention to the new year's themes. Rabbi Sherwin Wine wrote,

We need to change now. We need to be on the alert for action. There is an old Jewish sound of warning, an old Jewish sound that calls us to action. It is the sound of the shofar, the ram's horn. The shofar did many things. It warned the people of danger. It called them to battle against attacking enemies. It summoned men and women to public meetings. It announced the election of new rulers. In later years, it became the special instrument of the New Year, the special sound of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. It warns us of the danger of doing nothing. It calls us to battle our excuses and alibis. It summons us to work together to make a better world. It announces that the time for change is now.¹

Today's technology can bring the sound of the shofar to any of us virtually should an actual shofar or shofar-blower not be available. (For example, see "[shofar blowing 101](#)." This particular video has no theological or other language incompatible with one of our services; an internet search of shofar blowing/sounds may bring up examples in services with theistic blessings or even from a Christian perspective.)

...continued on page 19

11

{ Pages 12-14 cut from this preview edition.

Full version available for members of SHJ-affiliated congregations, SHJ Independent Members, and Magazine subscribers only.

If you are already eligible for full access, please contact info@shj.org for the correct link; otherwise find membership information here:

<http://www.shj.org/membership/>

or subscription information here:

<http://www.shj.org/hj-journal/>

Thank you for your interest in Humanistic Judaism! }

{ Pages 12-14 cut from this preview edition.

Full version available for members of SHJ-affiliated congregations, SHJ Independent Members, and Magazine subscribers only.

If you are already eligible for full access, please contact info@shj.org for the correct link; otherwise find membership information here:

<http://www.shj.org/membership/>

or subscription information here:

<http://www.shj.org/hj-journal/>

Thank you for your interest in Humanistic Judaism! }

{ Pages 12-14 cut from this preview edition.

Full version available for members of SHJ-affiliated congregations, SHJ Independent Members, and Magazine subscribers only.

If you are already eligible for full access, please contact info@shj.org for the correct link; otherwise find membership information here:

<http://www.shj.org/membership/>

or subscription information here:

<http://www.shj.org/hj-journal/>

Thank you for your interest in Humanistic Judaism! }

Machar plays key role in Washington DC Refugee Vigil, June 6, 2017

More than 160 people from thirteen DC Jewish congregations and others attended the June 6, 2017 Capitol Hill Refugee Vigil, that commemorated the anniversary of the 1939 denial of entrance into the United States of 900 Jews aboard the SS St. Louis, who tried in vain to flee the Nazis.

Guest speakers included Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton of the District of Columbia, Representative Bradley Schneider of Illinois, and Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz of Florida, as well as modern-day refugees and descendants of those who were on the SS St. Louis.

I represented Machar on the vigil's planning committee and read a Humanistic *Kaddish* as part of the program. Machar Teen Group co-chair and SHJ Board teen representative Areya Campbell-Rosen, holding a *yahrzeit* candle, read one of the ten true stories presented of refugees then and now. The event, coordinated nationwide by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, included Refugee Vigils from Albany to San Francisco on June 6.

This was a new role for Machar, to be a principal planner in a DC area-wide Jewish event. It has given us new connections with small and large congregations who also do social action for refugees arriving locally, and it allowed us to insert Humanistic language into the program (and remove a song about eagerly awaiting the Messiah each day). We look forward to finding more ways to work with other Jewish communities where our priorities match. If you're interested in learning more, Sara Baum is Machar's immigrant issues social action contact.

Marlene Cohen



Birmingham Temple Increases Visibility Through Social Action

The past several months have been a time of incredible activity for the Birmingham Temple Congregation for Humanistic Judaism. On the social justice front, our Board of Trustees voted unanimously to declare that we would serve as a sanctuary congregation, noting that “as people of conscience” we will “resist policy proposals to target and deport millions of undocumented immigrants or discriminate against marginalized communities.” Since then, the Temple has been a highly visible presence at events to support immigrants and refugees—from Latinos to Syrians to Iraqi Christians—bringing one consistent message: “Keep Families Together.”

Many of our efforts have also supported a unique Detroit institution called Freedom House, one of the few programs in the nation providing housing and legal support for asylum-seekers fleeing brutal persecution. Birmingham Temple members have donated time, money, and goods, and are looking forward to doing more in the near future.

Another incredible effort has been the founding of a Center for Secular Humanism in our building. Under the direction of Suzanne Paul, the Center hosts the local chapters of the American Humanist Association, Center for Inquiry, Sunday Assembly, and more. We have also continued our great programming. One of the highlights came when *New York Times* bestselling author Susan Jacoby spoke to hundreds about “Citizenship in an Age of Unreason.” In other news, we have completed repairs to the “Family Room” social hall, and we joyfully welcomed Ezra Donner as our new Music Director!

There is much more to report, but we'll conclude by announcing a brand-new modular, topical approach to our Sunday morning youth education program. We're calling it the Spinoza Program!

Rabbi Jeffrey Falick



Community News

Change and Growth at Or Emet

It's that time of year again: the dog days of summer are waning, the days are getting shorter, and before we know it, we will be in the midst of fall. For our Jewish ancestors, autumn was a season of introspection and renewal. The High Holidays have always been a time to look back at where we have been, and forward to where we are going. The overarching themes are change and growth. At Or Emet, this year is no exception.



Janet Mayer

Eva Cohen, who has run our Jewish Cultural School (JCS) for the last five years, is stepping down to pursue rabbinic certification with the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism. We are excited for Eva. This will be an enriching experience, both for her personally and for our community, as she has agreed to work alongside Madrikh Harold Londer in various leadership roles. Longtime Or Emet member Arty Dorman will replace Eva as JCS Director. Arty brings extensive educational experience and enthusiasm to his new role, as well as many years as an active volunteer; we are pleased to have Arty lead our school program.

Another new addition to the Or Emet Executive Committee is Vice President Scott Chazdon. A sociologist by training, Scott is a self-described “wondering and wandering Jew” who has, with his family, wandered back to Or Emet after a hiatus of a few years. He has jumped right back into active member mode; Scott facilitated one of our post-election listening sessions and is this year’s leader for High Holidays.

Replacing Lisa Gardner-Springer as co-president of the Executive Committee is Anna Burnstein Gillette: “I am very excited to take on a leadership role in the community that has been so welcoming to me since I relocated to Minnesota from Canada five years ago. I look forward to working with Co-President Janet Mayer.”

In an interview published last fall in *Humanorah*, SHJ’s new Executive Director Paul Golin described his vision for Humanistic Judaism: “One word is emblazoned in my mind from the start: growth.” Paul was not only talking about growth in membership numbers, but “about a deeper, harder kind of growth, and that is personal growth, mission growth, growth in meaning and impact.”

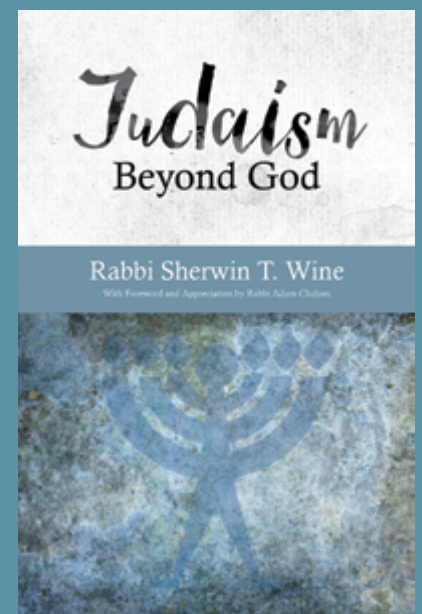
American Jewry is undeniably in a period of transition, so our challenge as a small community of Humanistic Jews is defining who we are and what we want Or Emet to be in the next three to five years. We know where we have been, but where are we going? We look forward to exploring what we envision for Or Emet.

Co-President Janet Mayer

originally submitted to the Illuminator Newsletter

Judaism Beyond God has recently been reissued as an e-book for \$7.99, and will soon be available in paperback for \$12.99.

Judaism Beyond God presents an innovative secular and humanistic alternative for Jewish identity. It provides new answers to old questions about the essence of Jewish identity, the real meaning of Jewish history, the significance of the Jewish personality, and the nature of Jewish ethics. It also describes a radical and creative way to be Jewish—new ways to celebrate Jewish holidays and life cycle events, a welcoming approach to intermarriage and joining the Jewish people, and meaningful paths to strengthen Jewish identity in a secular age.



A New Approach to the New Year Observances by Baltimore Jewish Cultural Chavurah

For many years, we observed Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur with a formal program. In 2016 we decided to forgo a program on Rosh Hashanah itself, and instead hold a preholiday observance with an emphasis on forgiveness and self-reflection, using experiential exercises. It was so well received that we decided to combine both holidays and do another alternate holiday program in between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. We decided to change our approach to our New Year observance when it became clear to our planning group (which functions as our board as well) that we were just going through the motions for these observances; there was little enthusiasm any longer for our traditional programs. So we brainstormed about how to approach it. It fell to me, as co-president, to actually come up with the details. This brought out creativity, and I relished the opportunity. Each year I try to come up with something a little different from the year before. If anyone wants to learn more about what I am planning, I would be happy to share—please ask the Society for Humanistic Judaism for my contact information.

This year, we will emphasize the themes of both holidays, particularly self-reflection and forgiveness, using various experiential exercises.

Arthur Starr



Shalom Y'all

Colonial Savannah & Historic Charleston

April 13-15, 2018

The home of Revolutionary statesmen, early Jewish communities, slavery and freedoms. Join us as Rabbi Adam Chalom's thoughtful perspective brings the antebellum South to life

Highlights include:

- Two of the oldest Jewish congregations in North America
- The streets of historic Savannah, saved from destruction after General Sherman's infamous march to the sea
- Magnolia Plantation and Gardens to experience the beauty and challenges of the antebellum American South
- Charleston, the "Holy City" of religious tolerance, home to Jewish settlement since 1695, exporting cotton and importing slaves

IISHJ tour includes:

Daily opening lectures and concluding discussions with Rabbi Adam Chalom, four nights accommodations, daily breakfast, Shabbat (Friday night) dinner, Savannah to Charleston transportation, Lunch at Magnolia Plantation, all tour and entrance fees and gratuities.

Land tour per person (based on double occupancy): \$950

BOOKING DEADLINE: January 31, 2018

*Includes a Tax Deductible donation of \$200 to the IISHJ

Register at: <https://iishj.org/shalom-yall/>

Questions: Kate Forest: operations@iishj.org 847-383-6330



In the Next Issue:

Hanukkah

&

HEROES



Board of Directors 2017–2018

Executive Committee

Dr. Richard Logan

President

Mary Raskin

Vice-President

Susan Ryan

Treasurer

Arthur Liebhaber

Secretary

Larry M. Lawrence

Past President

At-Large Members

Marlene Cohen

Andrea Friedlander

Faith Oremland

Sheila Sebor

Directors

Roger Addelson

Ellie Altman

Louis Altman

Zachary Barnett

Darlene Basch

Stephanie Blum

Bill Brostoff

Paula Creed

Jeffrey Falick

Jeff Friedman

Rick Gold

Dustin Hausner

Susan Herschman

Lee Jacobi

Michael Jerris

Erica Jonlin

Loren Kramer

Vivian Kramer

Rob Lasker

Gene Leb

Jon Levine

Jeff Lipkes

Sheila Malcolm

Janet Mayer

E. Ronald Milan

Maia Miller

Dana Preis

Victoria Ratnaswamy

Susan Rubin

Amy Schneider

Bert Steinberg

Barry Swan

HuJews

Areya Campbell-Rosen

Miriam Feldman

Sam Greenberg

Libby Otto

Teen Representatives

Staff

Kate Forest

HuJews Conclave Coordinator

Paul Golin

Executive Director

Miriam Jerris

Rabbi

Jeremy M. Kridel

Susan A. Warrow

Co-Editors,

Humanistic Judaism

Rabbi Sherwin T. Wine, 1928-2007

Founder

Tributes

To SHJ

“A gift in honor and memory of my father, Rev. Wesley T. Logan, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of his birthday 25 May, 2017.”

From Richard Logan

To Marlene Cohen

Wishing you a speedy recovery

From Miriam Jerris, Paul Golin, and the Society for Humanistic Judaism

To Jane Goldhamer Family

In loving memory of Jane Goldhamer

From Mary Raskin

From Rabbi Miriam Jerris

To Berta Gardon

In loving memory of John Gardon

From Barbara & Donald Sugerman

From Rabbi Miriam Jerris

To Larry Lawrence & Amy Kotkin

In celebration of the marriage of your daughter Liz to Aaron

From Miriam Jerris & Steve Stawicki

Judaism, of course, is rich in symbolism and the use of various items as reminders of how to behave or conduct one's life. Food related to Rosh Hashanah is no different. All the symbolism associated with Rosh Hashanah foods comes from customs, or *minhagim*. Symbolic foods are called *simanim*. Different customs developed in different communities because of the availability of different foods, the weather conditions making certain foods available or not, and the social or cultural climate of the countries in which Jews lived. The most notable differences are between the Ashkenazim or Jews of Eastern Europe, and the Sephardim or Jews of Middle Eastern or generally Mediterranean descent (including those countries to which such Jews were dispersed following the expulsion from Spain in 1492). Regardless of the source, the underlying notion is that "What you eat influences your year." Generally, then at the New Year, people avoided sour, bitter or salty things as they would portend bad fortunes; and favored sweet, flavorful things as wishful thinking for good things in the coming year. It is a variation on the adage that "you are what you eat." A Rosh Hashanah meal might include stuffed squash, tomatoes, dates, or *gefilte* (stuffed) fish for a year filled or stuffed with abundance, and a head of lettuce or a head of a fish for being a leader or the head of a group. Additional items might include pomegranates for the blessings of good things as represented by the large number of seeds, or a round challah for the cycle of the new year. And of course there are apples and honey or a honey cake to represent a sweet year. In the sidebar is a family recipe of mine for Apple Matzah Kugel for an especially sweet new year.

Our sensory journey of the holiday continues with the music we play. Perhaps it is a new version of "Avinu Malkeinu" with the recognized traditional melody but words reflecting our theology. Perhaps it is a modern song put to a new use, such as "Nothing More" by Alternate Routes. We may conclude with "[L'shanah Tovah](#)" or "[The New Year](#)" by Michael Ochs that circulated in 2016. The music undeniably enriches our experience of Rosh Hashanah.

Poetry and prose from a variety of authors enter both our eyes and our ears when read. Consider "At the New Year" by John Hollander; or "Fall Song" by Mary Oliver; or "The Head of the Year" by Marge Piercy, to name just a few. Whether read together as a single community, or individually in the quiet moments of our marking the occasion, the words of these and others center us on the meaning of the day.

No *Mahzor* (traditional High Holiday prayer book) can capture our understanding of the holiday. Instead, as we always do, we must take responsibility for having the Rosh Hashanah we desire. We can look to our collective traditions even as we forge new ones, recognizing that the new year inevitably will bring both joy and sorrow, success and disappointment. That is the human experience and we annually are reminded of it at Rosh Hashanah.

†Sherwin T. Wine, *Celebration: A Ceremonial and Philosophic Guide for Humanists and Humanistic Jews* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2003), 218-19.

Not in My Name Bibliography

Baldus, David R., and G. Woodworth. *Race Discrimination in America's Capital Punishment System Since Furman v. Georgia (1972): The Evidence of Race Disparities and the Record of Our Courts and Legislatures in Addressing This Issue*. 1997.

Death Penalty Information Center. "Facts about the Death Penalty." 2017. <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/documents/FactSheet.pdf>.

Humes, Karen R., et al. "Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin." 2010 Census Briefs. 2011. <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-02.pdf>.

Pierce, Glenn L., and Michael L. Radelet. "Death Sentencing in East Baton Rouge Parish, 1990-2008." *Louisiana Law Review* 71 (2011): 647-673.

Unah, Isaac and Boger, John Charles. *Race and the Death Penalty in North Carolina*. 2001. <https://www.unc.edu/~jcboger/NCDeathPenaltyReport2001.pdf>.

Apple Matzah Kugel

Ingredients:

- 8 sheets of matzah
- 6 eggs
- ½ c. shortening
- 1 c. sugar
- 1 c. raisins
- 6 apples, cored, peeled and sliced
- sprinkle of cinnamon

Soak the matzah in a bowl of water until soft; then drain. In a large mixing bowl, cream the shortening and the sugar. Add the eggs. Add the matzah, apples, then raisins, and sprinkle with cinnamon. Pour into a well-greased baking pan. Bake for one hour at 350 degrees.





Society For Humanistic Judaism
 28611 W. 12 Mile Rd
 Farmington Hills, MI 48334

Non-profit Org.
 U.S. Postage
 PAID
 Permit No. 349
 Farmington Hills, MI



Find A Humanistic Jewish Community Near You

Check Our Website For More Information

www.shj.org/communities/find

ARIZONA

- Phoenix
- Tucson

CALIFORNIA

- Encino
- Berkeley
- Garden Grove

COLORADO

- Boulder

CONNECTICUT

- Fairfield County

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

- Washington, D.C.

FLORIDA

- Boca Raton
- Naples
- Sarasota
- Tampa Bay

ILLINOIS

- Deerfield
- Lincolnshire

MARYLAND

- Baltimore

MASSACHUSETTS

- Boston

MICHIGAN

- Metro Detroit

MINNESOTA

- Minneapolis

NEW JERSEY

- Morris County

NEW YORK

- New York
- Rochester
- Westchester County

NORTH CAROLINA

- Chapel Hill

OREGON

- Portland

TENNESSEE

- Cumberland Gap

TEXAS

- Dallas-Forth Worth*
- Houston*

WASHINGTON

- Seattle

CANADA

- Toronto, Ontario



Established Community
 Community in Formation*