

# Humanorah

the newsletter of the Society for Humanistic Judaism  
affiliated with the International Federation of Secular Humanistic Jews



Autumn, 2008

Vol. 31 No. 1

## SHJ TO FACILITATE FREE TAGLIT-BIRTHRIGHT ISRAEL TRIP FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES, AGES 18-26

“Marvel at a beautiful sunrise over Masada, explore the nightlife in Tel Aviv, swim in the Dead Sea, sample Israeli wines at a local winery, sleep in a Bedouin tent, make new Israeli friends and so much more! Learn about the history of the Jewish people. Experience the modern state of Israel in addition to the Israel of old.” These are the words on the Taglit-Birthright Israel flyer that announces a free, yes, free 10-day trip to Israel as a gift from Taglit-Birthright Israel.

### This trip is a gift from Taglit-Birthright Israel.

A free trip to Israel as a gift? “How could I not go?” asked Jessica Addelson of Kol Hadash Congregation, Illinois, who took the trip when she was 19.

Jodi Goldfinger, member of Oraynu Congregation in Toronto, confirms the advertising and raves about her adventure. “The trip was 10 days. It was the perfect length. Anything shorter and I wouldn’t have been able to see nearly as much of Israel as I did, but also, the friendships that were built wouldn’t have been as strong.” Goldfinger, who went on the trip without friends when she was 24, said her group was split into subgroups, 18-22 and 23-26 year olds. Five years later, and she still is close with the new friends she made.

“We speak and see each other on a regular basis. I’m even close with some of the Israeli soldiers who joined us on our trip. And I stayed with one of them when I went back to Israel this year. A few of them have even visited me in Canada. The most incredible part of the trip was meeting them and forming an understanding of what it’s like for Israeli’s of my age.” Goldfinger says, “I would definitely do the trip again; in fact I have. The year I came back from the trip, I signed up to be a *madrikha* [tour guide] and I’ve led two trips since then.”

“Don’t even think twice about it,” she says. “It is one of the greatest gifts you will ever receive in your lifetime. You will experience things you never imagined, make life-long friends, conquer fears, learn about history, have emotions you didn’t know existed, meet incredible people, try new foods, learn more about your own personal beliefs, laugh, cry, fall in love with a soldier, sing, dance and feel exhausted and alive, all at the same time.”

**Young Adults, ages 18-26: This trip is for you**—as long as you’ve never been on a peer trip to Israel before! Taglit-Birthright Israel is providing a summer, 2009 trip, facilitated through the Society for Humanistic Judaism and HuJews, the SHJ teen and young adult youth group. This trip is especially designed for Humanistic, cultural and secular Jews. Although details will not be announced before January, 2009, and registration will not begin before February, 2009, now is the time to get your name on the Taglit-Birthright Israel interest list. According to AJ Chalom, chair of the SHJ Youth Committee, 40 seats exist on the bus for what she hopes will turn out to be an early July adventure. To be added to the interest list, contact [hujews@comcast.net](mailto:hujews@comcast.net). She also encourages those young adults interested, to join the Facebook Group: HuJews Birthright Interest List Summer 2009.

**So go and agree with Goldfinger on the highlights:** “sleeping in a Bedouin tent in the middle of the desert under the stars; sitting on a rooftop in Jerusalem, listening to the sounds of the chanting in the mosques and the ringing of the bells in the churches; crawling through caves; and making incredible friends for life” Sign up, take the adventure, and make your own list of emotional and intellectual lifetime highlights. **And if you take Addelson’s advice**, you might want to consider the extension on the trip for a few extra days as well. We’ll keep you posted.  
*Harriet Maza, SHJ editor*

## SHJ AFFILIATES

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OR HADASH, HJC OF BIRMINGHAM

### ARIZONA

OR ADAM, CHJ

### CALIFORNIA

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### WASHINGTON

SECULAR JEWISH CIRCLE OF PUGET SOUND

### CANADA

ORAYNU, TORONTO, ON

## BOCA BRIDE ENGAGES BOSTON RABBI TO PERFORM NEW ENGLAND WEDDING



BJ and Rick Saul of Congregation Beth Adam in Boca Raton, Florida, were thrilled to have Rabbi Greg Epstein co-officiate with Father Bruce Czaplá at their daughter Jessica's August 4 wedding. Jessica married Peter Methot, son of Diane and Paul Methot of Westport, Massachusetts. The wedding took place at Blithewold Manor in Bristol, Rhode Island, just up the road from Peter's boyhood home and a short drive for Greg, who is the humanist chaplain at Harvard University. The ceremony combined Humanistic Judaism and Catholic customs.

When SHJ board members phone you in October, it won't be for money. They will solicit your feedback on programs and services, and your vision for Humanistic Judaism. Please respond to help strengthen our Movement.

Autumn 2008

*Humanorah*

Vol. 31, No. 1

*Humanorah* is a publication of the Society for Humanistic Judaism, a non-profit organization that mobilizes people to celebrate Jewish identity and culture consistent with a humanistic philosophy of life.

*Humanorah* is sent to members of the Society for Humanistic Judaism as a benefit of membership. Membership in the Society for Humanistic Judaism is \$75 per year plus local dues where applicable. Membership is tax deductible as provided by law.

**President:** Lou Altman

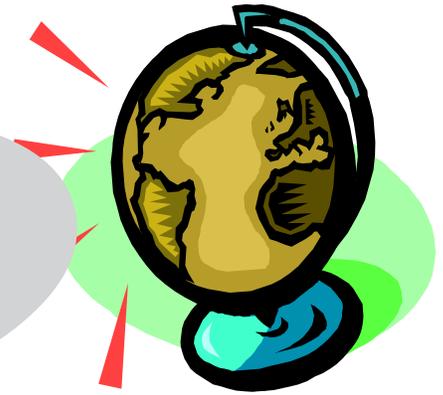
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# Notes From Around the Globe



## COLORADO COMMUNITY TO HOST ITS FIRST INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE SEMINAR THIS FALL

With this entry Beth Ami, Colorado Congregation for Humanistic Judaism, throws its hat into the *Humanorah* ring. Based in Denver, our members and friends span about 60 miles along the Front Range of the Rockies!

After a successful Passover *seder* for 100, and a rousing response to our booth at the Boulder Jewish Festival in June, we have worked to maintain contact with guests through welcome coffees, plans for family hikes and an advertising blitz for fall.

The Jewish Cultural School is thriving under the directorship of Lenore Kingston [who recently moved here from Farmington Hills, Michigan] and teachers Marti Hirsch and Christie Gosch. Countryside Recreation Center in Westminster is home base, but students travel to museums, senior facilities, homes and festivals to experience and provide learning and *tikkun olam* hands-on. The JCS presented to the Jefferson Unitarian Sunday School on August 3.

Adult members of the community model life-long learning for our students by holding Adult Education during school hours, as well as by having attended the SHJ 5-day "Jewish Education and Curriculum Planning" seminar in Michigan last July.

Beth Ami is now performing life cycle events! Michelle Davis and Sheila Malcolm, *madrikhot*-in-training, each officiated at two weddings this spring and summer. Our first *bat mitsva* was celebrated by Rachel Hirsch and family on Aug. 30.

Monthly *Shabbats* began September 2 and a new adult education format continued through the summer. We were thrilled to have Rabbi Miriam Jerris join us for *Yom Kippur*, to be followed in November by Rabbi Adam Chalom as Beth Ami hosts its first International Institute seminar, "Celebrating the Jewish Calendar & Holidays."

by Sheila Malcolm, SHJ Board Designee

### Your Generosity Makes a Difference.

Your gift to the SHJ can ensure the future of Humanistic Judaism.



- Contact me about the Pooled Income Fund or a planned gift.
- I am enclosing a tax deductible donation to the SHJ:
  - \$136
  - \$236
  - \$360
  - \$1,036
  - \$1,360
  - \$150
  - \$250
  - \$536
  - \$1,836
  - Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (H): \_\_\_\_\_ (W): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ St.: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_

## SHIR TIKVAH, WORKING UP TO BECOMING AFFILIATED SHJ CONGREGATION

Shir Tikvah completed a wonderful first year, celebrating all the holidays, including *Shabbat* services and *Shabbat* family dinners. Our Sunday school of seven students met weekly as the children bonded and enjoyed one-another's company outside of Sunday school. We began an adult education program, studying Bible stories from a humanistic perspective and enjoying it enough to continue throughout the summer.

Our *madrikha*, Elaine Kamienny, was busy networking throughout the year, working on the local *Yom Hashoa* planning committee and speaking at the local JCC and Men's Clubs in the area. She was busy throughout the summer officiating at weddings and spreading the word of the congregation.

Now we look forward to an exciting second year with plans to add more adult education programs like beginner's Hebrew for those who want to be able to read the blessings and songs we sing in the actual Hebrew.

The High Holidays were particularly inspiring this year, as we have been gifted (on loan) a *Torah* from a local family in the community. It was presented at *Rosh Hashana*, and the family talked about the history of the *Torah*. We are very excited about this. To add to the excitement, we had been fortunate to recruit Hal Katzman, a very popular member of Boston's Kadima Band, to be our cantorial soloist for the High Holidays.

We're working hard to build on the development of the community so that we can become a full member of the SHJ community of congregations.

*Elaine Kamienny, madrikha, Boston*



*Shir Tikvah members and guests enjoy their seder.*

## HJCSD MEETS NEIGHBOR CONGREGATIONS AT SHJ NATIONAL CONFERENCE; FINDS NETWORKING WITH THEM INVALUABLE

Members of the Humanistic Jewish Congregation of San Diego (HJCSD) enjoyed many creative activities last season as we aimed to interest current members and attract new ones. The monthly Sunday discussion buffets brought in speakers from within and outside the membership, from the Anti-Defamation League to an impersonation and story of the life of Golda Meir. These were well-publicized, and a number of new faces could be seen in the audience.

We co-sponsored two presentations with the Humanist organization in San Diego and enjoyed their programs, including the programming on the D.C. lobbying work of Lori Lipman Brown for the Secular Coalition of America. Last spring, a delegation of six members attended the National SHJ Conference in Los Angeles. We found the opportunity to network with our neighboring affiliates invaluable.

*Bar mitzvas*, a *b'nai mitzva*, naming ceremonies, a family *Shabbat* dinner attended by five families at a member's house, and a summer Padres baseball game brought a variety of generations together. We plan to continue family-oriented activities, including expanding our Family School, to stimulate the interest of families with children in our congregation.

Membership retention and development is our biggest challenge going into the New Year. We adjusted the style of our *Shabbat* celebrations to be more participatory by having a printed booklet with readings. We instituted a bi-monthly coffee in a public library to inform potential members about what Humanistic Jews do. Our publicity has been more targeted, with a more consistent use of a new logo design, revised website, frequent press releases and advertising, and a publicity postcard mailed to 7,000 households with unaffiliated Jews. Now we are working on more consistent follow-up of potential members.

*Beverly Zarnow, madrikha, San Diego*

## SHINING SUMMER NIGHTS GRACE THE GROUNDS OF THE BIRMINGHAM TEMPLE

It was “coming up roses,” Saturday night, June 7, when thanks to major membership involvement, the Birmingham Temple’s Million Dollar Auction Party netted slightly more than \$23,000. Scrambling about for items to offer in the *Silent* auction as well as the *Live* one, committee members found stores, sports clubs, ballroom dance instructors, piano tuners, garage mechanics, restaurants, elder law attorneys—you name it—more than willing to donate lessons, tune-ups, dinners, simple wills in exchange for the promotion and publicity of their wares. Membership combed their homes and brought in precious jewelry, a major size Persian rug, sporting equipment and more, and just about everything sold. Thanks to the auctioning off of members’ personally owned vacation spots—cottages, condominiums and time shares, both locally situated in Michigan and some to be used any place in the world—profits exceeded many people’s expectations and produced a carry-over excitement to plunge wholeheartedly into this fall’s rummage sale.

Also in June, the Executive Board donned their aprons and chefs’ hats and took to the back yard to barbecue dinner for an all-Temple picnic. Membership turnout brought old and new members together, and we ended the evening in a service, honoring our out-going officers and celebrating the installation of our new ones.



*Proud parents Shelley and Henry Pinkney and brother Michael pose with David before he rides forward into a new and exciting life. David and Deepa met at Farmington High School in Michigan. He is in his second year of medical school and she, in her last year of pharmacy school, both in Boston.*

In July, our Temple home became the backdrop for an event that displayed our humanistic beliefs about inclusion. And it happened in a magical way. While some just dream about shining *knights* on white horses, for Deepa Pinkney, the dream came true. Seated upon a white horse, her husband-to-be, David Pinkney, made his approach to the Temple and a life united with his beloved. The couple celebrated their marriage at the Temple in both a one-hour Hindu ceremony and then a Jewish one.

No *de neighing* summer events at the Birmingham Temple were simply terrific.

*Harriet Maza, Farmington Hills, MI*

*Join Rabbi Peter Schweitzer of  
The City Congregation for Humanistic Judaism  
on an exciting*

*Family-Friendly Trip to Israel  
July 19-29, 2009*

**\$3,749.00 per Adult\*    \$3,399.00 per Child under 18\*\***

**Per person, based on double occupancy**

**\*Includes \$150 donation to The City Congregation**

**\*\* For a child under 18 sharing a room with two adults, save an additional \$450 from the child’s tour**

**This trip is open to City Congregation members, with or without children,  
and non-members. space permitting.**

**For more information, please call (212-873-7849) or email Rabbi Peter (rabbipeter@earthlink.net).**

## MACHAR LAUNCHES MENTORING PLAN FOR NEW MEMBERS

Even through the summer, Machar was busy planning for the coming year and beyond. We held a very productive daylong meeting to take a deeper look at who our members are and what they are seeking from a Jewish organization.

This has led us to launch a mentoring program linking new families with long-time members. We also discussed fundraising without the excesses of synagogue financial pressuring with which many of us are all too familiar.

Some other recent important developments for Machar: we hired a new director for our Jewish Cultural School, Debby Brennan, who is excited to share her many years of secular and Jewish education experience.

We've also adopted a new dues structure, with a lower rate for members living in the outer reaches of the Washington metro area. We hope that this will encourage families to join from throughout the region, even if they cannot frequently attend our events.

Finally, we launched our redesigned website at [www.machar.org](http://www.machar.org). We hope you'll visit it regularly to learn what we're up to.

*Tom Gordon, president, D.C.*

### Got EMAIL?

Send your e-mail address to [info@shj.org](mailto:info@shj.org) and begin to receive **member only** updates about Humanistic Judaism, holiday facts and greetings and more.

## BETH ADAM UTILIZES LOCAL LIBRARIES TO TEACH ABOUT HUMANISTIC JUDAISM

In addition to its usually delicious pot luck *Shabbats*, this summer, Congregation Beth Adam initiated its first Friday *Oneg Shabbat* discussion evening. We thank Joan and Irwin Cohn for hosting this successful in-home event which concerned the current immigration dilemma.

We also continued our successful "Discover Humanistic Judaism" programs in local libraries with large audiences turn outs to learn about Congregation BethAdam and Humanistic Judaism. Following these large programs are our smaller in-home "Welcome Coffee & Conversation: Discover Humanistic Judaism" gatherings that provide a more personal level for those interested. We increase our membership with these programs.

High Holiday celebrations featured founding member Helene Flapan as our *Rosh Hashana* speaker on how knowledge of our eventual death impacts our lives; new member Miriam Aaron spoke at *Yom Kippur* about becoming a better person through action. Thanks go to Arlene Siegelwaks and Adele Kaserman for arranging location, *Break the Fast* and sending out High Holiday tickets to members and guests. At the suggestion of member Muriel Friedland, we created a Book of Remembrance for *Yom Kippur* to provide members and guests an opportunity to recognize their loved ones.

Our children's education program saw several new families joining this fall. Now we look forward to the *bar mitsva* of Ben McGrath in November.  
*BJ Saul, president, Boca Raton, FL*

## BOOKS DONATED TO ORANGE COUNTY LIBRARY IN MEMORY OF RABBI WINE

My 8th year as president began with an installation dinner in June, a July board meeting, a summer *Shabbat* dinner, a three-part film series, an annual barbeque and the donation of six books on Humanistic Judaism to the Laguna Woods Village Library in memory of Rabbi Sherwin Wine. The event was photographed by the local press.

*Madrikha* Rosalie Gottfried's Sunday Study Group met through the

summer, resulting in new memberships. She and the Ritual Committee revamped the High Holiday services and are now working on the *Shabbat* ones.

Unfortunately, we lost members to death and because of a dues increase. But our Program Committee, always busy as we meet every Friday, does a great job keeping guests coming and a portion of them do join.

*Sheila Bass, president, Laguna, CA*

SHJ COMMUNITIES: SOME OF YOU HAVE NOT YET REGISTERED WITH BIG TENT JUDAISM.

CHECK OUT THEIR WEB ADDRESS & ENROLL NOW.

<[HTTP://JOI.ORG/BIGTENT/?SEC=OPEN&PAGE=ABOUT](http://joi.org/bigtent/?sec=open&page=about)>

# COMMUNITY, COOPERATION, CONNECTION ALL PART OF CONGREGATION'S IDENTITY, TO BE CELEBRATED AT 10TH ANNIVERSARY THIS FALL

Melissa Biren, Rob Agree and a few other families created Congregation for Humanistic Judaism, Morris County. They soon added Eric and Susan Herschman, whose roots connected us to the founding congregation in Michigan. Susan and another early CHJMC member, Stephanie Zenna, were confirmed and married by Rabbi Sherwin Wine, who also officiated at the Herschman's daughter Carly's baby naming.

Even with steady growth leading to changes, we kept our congregation's intimate feeling intact. Although for many years Melissa and Rob enjoyed hosting Sunday School at their home, there came a time when we needed to find another place at a Jewish day school.

Our school curriculum, like our mem-

bers, is connected to the SHJ community. The detailed lesson plans built by our teachers and a former Birmingham Temple Sunday school teacher, Judy Schneider (mother to Stephanie), also received help from Barry Dancis in Philadelphia and Harriet Maza (former SHJ education associate and Birmingham Temple principal).

Our teachers are paid professionals from within and outside our congregation now (no longer burned out parents). The pre-*mitsva* program has grown from Rob's watchful care to that of Lisa and Michael Littman's, still emphasizing becoming a member of communities.

One way we connect to the larger community is through our *mitsva* program and social action projects. This year, our *mitsva* student, Samantha Tantleff,

collected books for needy students. Danielle Schussel raised funds benefiting the American Cancer Society. Jake and Emma Herschman worked on Save Darfur and Habitat for Humanity. Rebecca Mastellon sang for the elderly and Matthew Kerr helped homeless shelter children and made them smile.

CHJMC, now almost 40 families, shares responsibilities from administration to holidays. This spirit of cooperation, community, and connection will be honored during our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration when SHJ Rabbi Miriam Jerris comes to visit. We welcome other SHJ communities to share with us on November 15. If interested, please contact us at 973-927-0078 or [events@chjmc.org](mailto:events@chjmc.org) for more details.

**Claire Kerr, president, NJ**

## Shop Online and Support the Society for Humanistic Judaism

Help us raise funds by  
shopping through our  
marketplace.

The Society for Humanistic Judaism is now registered with Fundraising Solutions ([www.fundraising-solutions.org](http://www.fundraising-solutions.org)), a company that partners with retail merchants (including Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Dell, GAP, Macy's, Staples, Travelocity, and 1-800-Flowers) to bring shopping dollars back to designated non-profit organizations. When you shop online at any of the 1,000+ retailer partners, a portion of your purchasing dollars (anywhere from 2-25%, varying from merchant to merchant) will come back to the Society. Here's how you can help the Society *just by shopping*:

1. Visit the Society for Humanistic Judaism website, [www.shj.org](http://www.shj.org).
2. Scroll to the bottom of our homepage and click on the link that alternately flashes, "Help us raise funds by shopping through our marketplace" and the shopping bag icon that says, "click here for more info."
3. The link takes you to the Fundraising Solutions Welcome page, where you can download a desktop shortcut the next time you shop: **Download Desktop Shortcut**
4. Whether or not you download the shortcut, you're now ready to begin shopping. You can search by merchant or by category and proceed to shop as you normally would online.

By taking the extra step of making your purchases through Fundraising Solutions, you are helping us raise precious dollars that will support our distinct programs and services. Please tell your communities, friends, and families about this unique way to help us raise funds.

## GIVING IT ANOTHER TRY...BY BERT STEINBERG

In the last issue of the *Humanorah*, I attempted to explain how I successfully eliminated my annual donation to the Fund for Humanistic Judaism which, not only did not adversely affect SHJ, but also proved advantageous, taxwise, to me. Receiving only one inquiry, I'm convinced I did not do an adequate job of explanation, so I shall try again. Here goes.....

The numbers I will use are not the actual amounts of my personal contribution but will make (I hope) the explanation more understandable. Let us say I or you make an annual contribution of \$500 to SHJ's Fund. Let us also say that to produce that \$500, you received a 5 % return (you should be so lucky!) on \$10,000 — a CD, a bond, stock— wherever you have a portion of your assets.

Let us now also say that instead of that \$500 (5 % earnings on your \$10,000) coming to you, which would then permit you to draw a check to SHJ for the \$500, the \$500 goes directly to SHJ. Let's examine the advantages you would then receive: First, you save the 42 cents postage and the time and trouble to write the check. (I will assume SHJ sends you a return envelope so that cost is not a saving.) Then, you avoid the necessity of an interesting but time consuming conversation with SHJ's fundraising per-

son who will call to remind you to make the payment. But that is not enough? You want more? Remember the Texaco TV salesman who would then roll up his sleeves and tell you, "Here is what I'm gwanna do..." (I'm rolling up my sleeves now....)

Did you know that you can *transfer* that \$10,000 (or any amount from \$5,000 up) to the SHJ Planned Income Fund which is earning just about 5% annually for the last several years? If you do, SHJ will receive the income — about \$500 a year on the \$10,000 — FOREVER. Not only can this be a gift in perpetuity, but the IRS will permit you to deduct as a charitable contribution, not the \$500 a year, but a major part of the entire \$10,000 depending on your age and life expectancy. In the 70's or 80's this will be about 75%-85% of the total transfer—about \$7,500 - \$8,500. The income tax savings on that amount is between \$2,500-\$3,000, and you save it THIS YEAR (the year you start the plan).

Hopefully, this is simpler than the last explanation. To summarize, not only do you save the stamp, the time and effort, but also \$2500-\$3,000 cash. If more explanation is desired, call me, Bert Steinberg at 415 543 4595; e-mail: berts239@comcast.net. My sleeves will remain rolled up.

## ORAYNU PUBLISHES HAGGADA DEDICATED TO RABBI WINE

Next year will mark the 40th anniversary of Oraynu Congregation's founding as the Secular Jewish Association in 1969. Our membership has grown on an average of 15% per year for the past few years, and we now have over 130 families and singles on our roster.

A recent highlight has been the publication of a new *haggada*, entitled *Roots and Branches: A Humanist Haggadah for Passover* created by three members of our congregation: Sandi Horwitz, Barry Olshen and Lisa Wright. The *haggada* is dedicated to the memory of Rabbi Sherwin Wine.

The first part of our *haggada*, "Roots," suggests the traditional story and its associations. The biblical Exodus is retold, and the *seder* symbols are explained in their ancient contexts. Then they are reinterpreted for contemporary times.

"Branches" refers to those Jewish exodus experiences that

have shaped the development of modern Jewry. The migrations to America and Israel feature most prominently in this second part. The dominant theme reiterated throughout both parts is liberation—communal and personal. The "humanist" adjective in the title refers to the historical, cultural, and ethical focus of these stories of liberation.

In addition to *Torah* and prophetic excerpts, illustrious voices from modern times include those of Yehudah Amichai, Judy Chicago, Amos Oz, Marge Piercy, Chaim Weitzman, and Elie Wiesel. We have woven the text with artwork to create a unified, educational, and inspiring *seder* experience for contemporary audiences.

*Roots and Branches: A Humanist Haggadah for Passover* is available for purchase through the congregation at \$10 plus mailing costs. Contact Roby Sadler at roby@oraynu.org or 416-385-3910.

*Sandi Horwitz, Toronto*

# *From the President, Lou Altman*

## *An Important Note on Political Expression*

Since this is the political season, I want to bring up a serious issue: the degree to which it is appropriate for the Society for Humanistic Judaism to engage in political expression.

I write on behalf of the Society only, and of course I am not authorized to speak for any individual congregation; but, in my personal opinion, what I am about to say applies equally to every one of our affiliated communities.

The chances are that every one of you is an active concerned citizen, eager to be personally involved in the election. But it is not appropriate for SHJ to take a stand on such matters *as an organization*.

Humanistic Jewish communities are religious and cultural institutions, dedicated to the celebration of a Humanistic Jewish identity. Based upon that mission, we have been granted tax exempt status by the IRS, and in order to maintain that status our engagement in political activities and the use of our funds to support such activities must be limited by law. Our financial health could be jeopardized if the SHJ strayed outside the IRS guidelines for 501c3 tax exempt organizations. Loss of our tax-exempt status could alter the nature of the Society and have financial consequences, not only for the organization but also for all who have deducted contributions to SHJ for income tax purposes.

Of course we are interested in social action — collecting food for Mazon, working at homeless shelters, volunteering for Habitat for Humanity, tutoring in schools, packing *shalakh manot* baskets for *Purim*, organizing blood drives — and we should be. Such activities celebrate Jewish identity and values, consistent with a humanistic philosophy of life. As such, these and similar activities fall within our stated mission and purpose, and are permissible for a tax-exempt organization.

Taking an organizational stand on social issues — issues that affect our lives as Jews and the humanistic values we support — is also permitted. We are not required to watch idly, for example, while others promote ethnic prejudices such as antisemitism, or introduce religion into public schools or into the halls of government, or try to forbid science

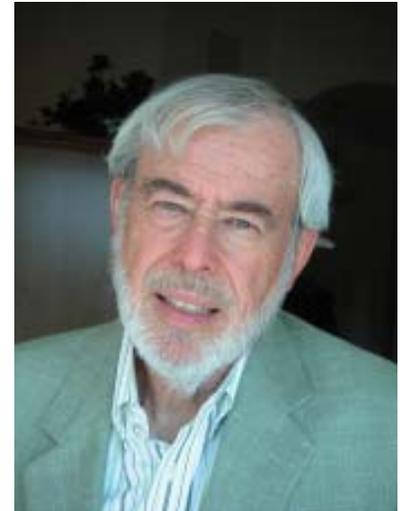
education or limit medical advances because of some perceived inconsistency with religious dogma. Those are areas of social action that demand our participation, *as an organization*, in the political process.

But we should remain non-partisan in our approach to such social issues. On many issues (for example, ethnic cleansing) a broad consensus develops within SHJ. But when such a consensus is lacking, when there is a clear liberal-conservative split (for example, hawks and doves on the Arab-Israeli conflict), our members should deal with such an issue in another forum. We should not sacrifice the unity we have achieved with respect to the core values of Humanism and Judaism.

And, we should observe the IRS limits: we can be involved in issues related to our core values, but not in promoting political candidates. Our political activities cannot become the tail that wags the dog; they must remain subordinate to our major activities of a religious and cultural nature.

There are many organizations devoted to political action — starting with the Democratic and Republican Parties. SHJ is not such an organization. Our members do not join us to find a forum for expressing their political views.

We have both Republican and Democratic members, liberals and conservatives. It would not be fair or appropriate for SHJ to lean to either side. Members can pursue their diverse political agendas outside the SHJ. So do your politicking, but please do it in another arena, and reserve this one for non-partisan celebration of your Humanistic philosophy and Jewish background.



**HuJews Teen & Young Adult Conclave**  
April 17-19, 2009  
contact [hujews@comcast.net](mailto:hujews@comcast.net) for more information

# CONGRATULATIONS!

## TO THE PRESIDENTS & LEADERS OF OUR AFFILIATED COMMUNITIES:

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The Secular Coalition for America (SCA) remains vigilant in its work to protect our rights from the encroachment of religious beliefs. If you missed SCA Executive Director Lori Lipman Brown at the SHJ Conference '08 or on the Colbert Report and want to know more about SCA, you might be able to see her in your home town. Upcoming trips include: Brooklyn, NY; Teaneck, NJ; Long Beach, Sacramento, Los Angeles & Ventura, CA; Denton, & Arlington, TX; and Ashland, OR. Or meet SCA president Herb Silverman in Charleston, SC, or Skokie, IL. To stay informed about SCA activities, sign up for e-alerts at [www.secular.org](http://www.secular.org). And be sure to check out the new "secular values voters" website — <http://election08.secular.org> — which provides voters with questions to ask candidates and information about the positions of major parties' candidates for president and vice-president on secular values issues. You can support SCA's efforts with your contribution — send your check payable to the Secular Coalition for America to the SHJ. We will forward your donation to SCA and you will feel good about helping to protect religious freedom.

Notes from Around the Globe continued

## HERE'S WHAT'S BREWING AT BOSTON'S KAHAL B'RAIRA

In view of Rabbi Sherwin Wine's untimely death, it seemed fitting for Kahal B'raira to honor him and to deepen our members' understanding of his work. We devoted the whole year's Adult Education classes to studying a variety of his books, articles, and portions of his DVD's.

In addition to this, five adult members, six teens and a youth group leader made the trip to the Los Angeles SHJ spring conference and the HuJu Teen and Young Adult Conclave. Also last spring, 40 Kahal B'raira members participated in the suggested SHJ May Community Service Month and donated blood.

Looking forward to this year, KB has hired two key personnel: a Sunday school principal and a music director. Interim principal Steven Brion-Meissels was fantastic in setting up the school in our new location. Now, incoming principal and congregation member, Sandra Mayo, who was born in Argentina and lived in Israel before moving to the Boston area, will take over. She plans to help students understand their own culture, develop critical thinking skills, and look at their heritage through a Humanistic lens.

Margie Hilton, after many wonderful years of service as our music committee chair, has stepped down, and we have hired a new music director. Accomplished musician Rebecca Wexler looks forward to introducing the congregation to traditional Jewish melodies, new arrangements of KB standards, and some of her own compositions.

On a bubbly note KB's brew club, *Kahal B'rewra*, has been very busy. The club gives members an opportunity to socialize outside of business and services as well as produce beer that the congregation can enjoy at special events. While every batch is different, each is "Blessed by the human spirit, but that doesn't make it Kosher." A collection of our labels are available for viewing at <http://kahalbraira.org/committees/sig/brewclub/brewclub.html>.

*Jon Levine, SHJ board designee, Boston*

# Building Community

by Rabbi Miriam Jerris

## A B'rit (Covenant) for the New Year: Behavioral Agreements in HJ Communities

What's this all about? Why is a Humanistic rabbi talking about covenants? Isn't that one of the things we gave up when we embraced Humanistic Judaism? What is a covenant anyway?

The word covenant comes from the Latin words *con* and *venire* meaning "come together." Its practical meaning is about making an agreement between two parties and often this type of agreement has had religious connotations. Does this discussion have any place in Humanistic Jewish communities? I think so. Speaking about correct behavior is an appropriate topic for Humanistic Jews and *Rosh Hashana* is a perfect time to do it.

I often hear from members, "That behavior wasn't very humanistic!" This statement makes a significant assumption: that there is correct humanistic behavior and we ought to know what it is. However, judging from the numerous reports from communities to the contrary, it is time for us to open the dialogue.

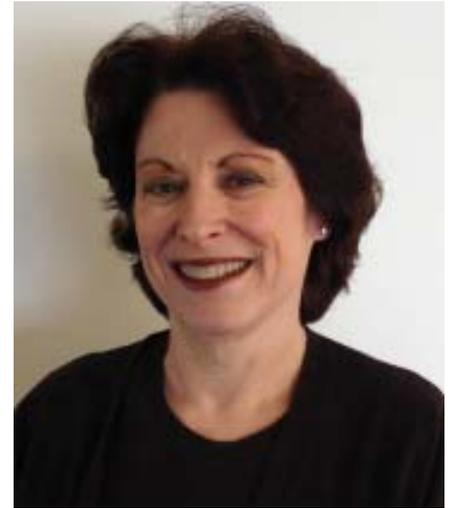
The Unitarian Universalist Churches have a process for creating Covenants of Right Relations. The Alban Institute, a support organization for congregations has published a book called, *Behavioral Covenants in Congregations*. Discussing appropriate behavior and coming to an agreement on the guidelines for it is a significant and meaningful task for Humanistic congregations. I often wonder if the resistance I have witnessed to formal agreements in HJ communities and

the Society has to do with our independent, individualistic spirit that resists being "told what to do" or whether we believe that magically, we just ought to know how to behave because we are Humanists. The reality is that Humanists and Humanistic Jews are human like everyone else and that bringing this conversation out in the open is a healthy and positive step for our communities.

In organizations, change and differences of opinion are inevitable and lead to creative growth and productivity. If we keep this in mind, then we can embrace disagreement as an ally rather than an enemy.

Since dignity is the goal of Humanistic behavior, then outlining behavior that preserves the dignity of all the parties involved is a goal to which we should aspire. We want to develop agreements for behavior between members, between members and clergy, between members and staff, between clergy and staff and between staff members. It is important that all the members of the community, no matter what role they play, participate in the process and the final agreement or agreements. An example\* of part of a behavioral covenant for behavior on the Board of Directors consists of the following:

- ▶ We promise to respect and care for each other.
- ▶ We promise to treat our time on the Board as an opportunity to make an important gift to our community.



- ▶ We promise to listen with an open, nonjudgmental mind to the world and ideas of others in our community and on the Board.
- ▶ We promise to discuss, debate and disagree openly in Board meetings, expressing ourselves as clearly and honestly as possible so that we are certain that the Board understands our point of view.
- ▶ We promise to support the final decision of the Board, whether it reflects our view or not.

I believe that some time and attention spent reviewing how we have behaved in our communities and congregations this past year and some energy put toward outlining how we believe we ought to behave in the future is a wonderful *Rosh Hashana* resolution and project. *Shana Tova U-metuka*, A Sweet and Good Year.

\* Adapted from *Behavioral Covenants in Congregations*, G. Rendle, 1999, Alban Institute

# Support the Fund for Humanistic Judaism

*Building Communities Training Leaders Developing Resources*

## Community Development

The Sherwin T. Wine Group Development Fund helps nurture and develop Humanistic Jewish communities and leadership. This fund enables humanistic rabbis and other leaders to visit established and developing communities; energize, strengthen, and guide them; and increase the visibility and outreach capabilities of the communities and the Movement. The Miriam Jerris Community Development Fund supports communities in promoting weekend events.

## HuJews: Teen & Young Adult Programs

The Society for Humanistic Judaism HuJews Teen and Young Adult Conclaves help establish bonds among our youth and reinforce both their Jewish identity and their connection with Humanistic Judaism. Young adult programs at Society conferences and humanistic *havurot* on university campuses provide a forum for discussion and the sharing of ideas among college students at a time when they are self-identifying, inquiring, and most receptive to new ideas and information. Our HuJews website enables young people to create an online connection with Humanistic Judaism and find the resources they need to celebrate Humanistic Judaism when they leave home for college.

## Publications & Resources

Society publications provide a ready reference and resource for individuals, families, and communities to create meaningful holiday and life-cycle observances as well as educational programs for adults and young people. *The Guide to Humanistic Judaism*, for example, offers an overview to our philosophy. The topical and timely journal, *Humanistic Judaism*, features issue-oriented articles and regular departments such as book reviews, travel, and regional events. Society Holiday Kits bring Humanistic Jewish holiday celebrations into

homes, dorm rooms, and beyond. Videos and DVDs provide programs on Humanistic Judaism in your home and community.

## Curricula and Training

The Society sponsors training programs and provides resources for youth and adult education. Membership orientation, three-year adult study groups, adult *bar/bat mitzvas* and confirmations, and manuals on history, culture, music, holidays, and life cycles allow members to learn about Humanistic Judaism and connect to our heritage. Visits to communities provide opportunities for onsite workshops and training.

## Rabbinic and Leadership Training

The International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism is the academic arm of the Movement. The Rabbinic Program prepares men and women to become the spiritual leaders and mentors of Secular Humanistic communities. Similarly, the leadership, educators', and music programs train individuals to serve the ceremonial, philosophic, and educational needs of our communities. The masters degree program builds on the knowledge base of the above programs and provides an advanced course of Jewish study relevant to the movement. Gifts to the Society's Scholarship Fund allow future Jewish leaders to focus on their seminary studies without the distractions imposed by financial need.

## Seminars, Conferences, and Colloquia

The Society sponsors national and regional conferences and seminars that enhance the emotional and intellectual lives of Humanistic Jews across North America. These events bring nationally and internationally renowned scholars, lecturers, and teachers to Society communities and congregations. They include adult education and organizational and teacher training workshops.

**Use Goodsearch.com**

as your search engine. Type in "Humanistic Judaism" as your charity and our name will appear. Then search the Web for your needs. And know that this time you will earn money for SHJ while you search!

# From the Executive Director, Bonnie Cousens

## Share the Vision, Network Now

*Shana tova!* A new year is beginning. We have new opportunities to plan for growth, to reach out and let others know about Humanistic Judaism. It is up to each of us to help increase the visibility of our community and beliefs. And if you don't have a community now, getting involved might help you meet others who would want to create a Humanistic community with you. Where do we start?

Visibility is created by networking — it's not only about advertising or press coverage or establishing ourselves in cyberspace (though these vehicles are important). With each connection we make within the Jewish and humanist communities, we increase awareness of Humanistic Judaism. Increased awareness often equals inclusion and growth. When people know about Humanistic Judaism, they tell others and they include us in their events.

A starting point can be your local Jewish Federation. Federations exist to serve the community; they provide connection, programs, and funding. And congregational involvement helps to strengthen Federations. As a community (or an individual), volunteer for Super Sunday — several SHJ communities do this and have been featured in their local Jewish press as a result. Serve on Federation committees. Invite Federation leaders to your events. Become part of the Federation community. Some communities receive annual grants made to congregations because they have involved themselves in Federation programs and are recognized as part of their Jewish community.

Another point of entree is the local Jewish Community Council. Most congregations and Jewish organizations are represented on the Community Council. Participate in community-wide events: Jewish book fair, Israel Independence Day, newcomers fairs, holiday events (apples and honey fair, *matsa* factory, *shalakh manot* distribution), mitsva projects. Your participation can enable you to know and be known by other congregational leaders and community members.

Be sure that your school director and teachers are involved with your local Jewish board of education; the

networking opportunities and access to resources and training can be invaluable to the development of your school. If your community had a rabbinic connection or you have an executive director/administrator, encourage them to join the local board of rabbis or directors group.



The Jewish community should not be our only connection. We share values, interests, and often causes with humanist groups. Creating coalitions and working on projects together helps to broaden our network. Local chapters of the American Humanist Association, Unitarian Universalist communities, interfaith groups, and issue-oriented groups can create networking opportunities that help you develop interesting programs and enable you to reach out to a market that might now know about Humanistic Judaism.

College campuses offer another venue where, by providing programs for students, we can increase awareness of Humanistic Judaism. Both Hillel and the Secular Student Alliance (SSA) want to increase their outreach to unaffiliated and uncommitted students. Humanistic Judaism offers a new avenue for reaching these students. Both programs on campus and in your community can bring young people to you — speakers on campus, lunch and learn programs, invitations to Shabbat dinners and celebrations, *Hanukka* parties, *Tu B'Shevat* and *Passover seders* (remember, students often need transportation). And campuses are a great place to recruit teachers for our Sunday schools and leaders for our youth groups.

Networking is key to increased visibility and growth. Remember, you don't know who will be interested in Humanistic Judaism or who will tell someone else about Humanistic Judaism. Make your new year's resolution to network for Humanistic Judaism.

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To Paul Molnar  
Best wishes for good health  
From Alma & Larry Spickler

To Jack Silver  
In memory of Sara Silver  
From Bonnie & Mark Cousens

To Lorraine & Ben Pivnick  
In memory of Ethel Horowitz Blanchard  
From SHJ  
Bonnie & Mark Cousens  
Rabbi Miriam Jerris

To Harriet Maza  
In memory of Lillian Gilman  
From Bonnie & Mark Cousens  
Rabbi Adam & Alison Chalom

Judy Bobrow  
Rabbi Miriam Jerris  
Elaine Kamienny

SHJ tributes support every occasion.

Support Humanistic Judaism,  
remember a loved one:

Sherwin Wine Group Development Fund  
Miriam Jerris Development Fund  
Community Development Fund  
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Bess & Boaz Siegel Jewish Culture Fund  
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Scholarship Fund  
Endowment Fund

To Julie Gales and Laurence Kirchmeir  
In celebration of new daughter, Sophie  
From Rabbi Miriam Jerris  
Bonnie & Mark Cousens

To Marty Gorosh  
In memory of Carol  
From Harriet Maza & Ed Chalom  
Rabbi Miriam Jerris & Steve Stawicki  
Bonnie & Mark Cousens

To Mary Lewis  
In memory of brother-in-law  
David Lewis  
From Harriet Maza

To Muriel Sterne  
In memory of husband, Phil Griffin,  
From Rabbi Miriam Jerris  
Bonnie & Mark Cousens

To Mickey Mandell  
In memory of Ida Giordano  
From Bonnie & Mark Cousens

To Anne Shonbrun & Alan Siegel  
In Memory of Herman Shonbrun  
From Bonnie & Mark Cousens

To Sue Chalom  
In honor of daughter Evés marriage  
From Rabbi Miriam Jerris

To Ed Chalom  
In honor of daughter Evés marriage  
From Rabbi Miriam Jerris

To Adam and AJ Chalom  
In honor of your sister Evés marriage  
From Rabbi Miriam Jerris

To the Ben-Gal family  
In celebration of birth of their grandson  
From Rabbi Miriam Jerris

To BJ & Rick Saul  
In honor of daughter Jessica's marriage  
Rabbi Miriam Jerris

To Paula Weinberg  
Wishing you a complete recovery  
From Rabbi Miriam Jerris  
Bonnie & Mark Cousens  
Harriet Maza

To Gerry Weinberg and family  
In memory of your father  
From Harriet Maza

*Please Print*

## Honor the Passages of Life

A tribute lets friends know you care.

YES! I would like to send:

an SHJ Tribute for a donation of \_\_\_\_\_ (minimum \$5 US) or

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TO: \_\_\_\_\_ in memory / honor (circle one)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_

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Return to: SHJ, 28611 W. 12 Mile Rd., Farmington Hills, MI 48334

## In Memoriam

Geraldyn Revzin  
Long time Executive  
Director  
of CSJO

The Society for Humanistic  
Judaism extends its deepest  
sympathy to the  
Revzin Family and to her  
Friends and Colleagues  
in CSJO

# SHJ UPCOMING EVENTS

November 7-9, 2008	RABBI BEN BIBER VIST TO QUEENS CCJ, NY, Contact: Edward Klein, madrikh@peoplepc.com.
November 7-10, 2008	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS VISIT TO THE CITY CONGREGATION, New York, NY. Contact: Amy Stein, Administrator, (212) 213-1002, info@citycongregation.org.
November 7-9, 2008	IISHJ SEMINAR: "Living the Jewish Year: Calendar and Holidays," Denver, CO. Faculty: Rabbi Adam Chalom. Contact: Michelle Davis, (720) 284-2231, msdavisz@yahoo.com, Beth Ami, Colorado Congregation for Humanistic Judaism.
November 14-16, 2008	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS VISIT TO CHJ, Morris County, NJ. Contact: Melissa Biren, birenagree@aol.com.
December 5-7, 2008	IISHJ SEMINAR: "Job and Other Biblical Responses to the Problem of Evil," Birmingham Temple, Farmington Hills, MI. Faculty: Professor Brian Schmidt, University of Michigan. Contact: IISHJ, (248) 476-9532, lglass@iishj.org.
December 12-14, 2008	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS VISIT TO HUMANISTIC JEWISH CONGREGATION, San Diego, CA. Contact: Steve Adler, (858) 549-3088, info@hjcsd.org.
January 13-14, 2009	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS VISIT, Community in Formation, Jacksonville-St. Augustine, FL. Contact: Judy Madnick, hjfirstcoast@gmail.com.
January 16-18, 2009	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS VISIT TO CHJ, Sarasota, FL. Contact: Sandy Cadman, (941) 379-9894, chjsarasota@hotmail.com.
January 16-18, 2009	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS VISIT TO MACHAR, WASHINGTON DC CONGREGATION FOR SECULAR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM, Washington, D.C. Contact: Larry Lawrence, larrymlawrence@comcast.net, (202) 364-0702.
February 6-8, 2009	IISHJ SEMINAR: "The Evolution of Judaism: Tribe and Tradition to Community and Culture," Los Angeles, CA. Faculty: Rabbi Adam Chalom, Hershl Hartman. Contact: IISHJ, (248) 476-9532, lglass@iishj.org.
February 19-22, 2009	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS & RABBINIC CANDIDATE NATAN FUCHS VISIT TO BETH CHAVERIM, Deerfield, IL. Contact: Linda Horn, info@bethchaverim.net.
March 27-29, 2009	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS VISIT TO KOL HADASH, NORTHERN CALIFORNIA, Berkeley, CA. Contact: (510) 428-1492, info@kolhadash.org.
April 17-19, 2009	HUJEWS TEEN AND YOUNG ADULT CONCLAVE, MI. Contact: (248) 478-7610, hujews@comcast.net.
October 23-25, 2009	COLLOQUIUM '09, "Challenging Convention: Secular & Humanist & Jew," Farmington Hills, MI. Contact: IISHJ, (248) 476-9532, lglass@iishj.org.
April 23-26, 2010	SHJ CONFERENCE & HUJEWS CONCLAVE 2010, Toronto, ON. Contact: SHJ, (248) 478-7610, info@shj.org.

## SOCIETY FOR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM

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