



# THE ILLUMINATOR

Or Emet – The Minnesota Congregation for Humanistic Judaism

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## *Discovering Jewish Humanism, Part 1*

by Harold Londer, Madrikh Emeritus

Or Emet history reprinted from the 2006 Illuminator Archives

*Or Emet officially began when Drs. Harold Londer and Larry Garfin (1934-1993) founded the congregation in 1988. Before and after becoming a Madrikh in 2007, Harold dedicated himself to guiding the congregation with vision and leadership. Now, he has retired from lead responsibilities and transitioned into a Madrikh Emeritus role. One of Harold's valued contributions was writing timely, thought-provoking articles which anchored each issue of The Illuminator. Archived Madrikh Messages will continue this tradition in upcoming issues. With Or Emet's 30th anniversary celebration ahead, this issue begins a series about Or Emet's early years written for the 20th anniversary. The history contained in Harold's articles provides valuable context about Or Emet.*

In the fall of 1984 my then future wife, Jan, introduced me to the First Unitarian Society. I had been raised in an Orthodox synagogue, graduated at the highest level from the local Talmud Torah, and had belonged to a Conservative synagogue, Adath Jeshurun, for years. Yet I struggled with many of the traditional teachings of Judaism.

The minister at the Unitarian society, Khoren Arisian, was brilliant. He was the first truly humanist teacher I ever heard. I was fascinated. I "sopped up" his sermons every Sunday. (Khoren [later] left to be the leader of the Ethical Culture Society in New York City.)

Jan and I joined the congregation. I agreed with virtually everything Khoren taught, but I just did not feel at "home." Meetings were on Sunday mornings in a "church" and were led by a "minister." It just was not me. I was a Jew, not a Unitarian, as much as I embraced what I learned there.

Khoren was very active in the national humanist movement and brought in many nationally recognized humanistic leaders. I remember a wonderful small group seminar with Howard Radest where he discussed the pros and cons of using the word "God" to describe that wonderful uncertainty of the world, even if one did not believe in a controlling God.

One Sunday the guest speaker was Rabbi Sherwin Wine from the Society for Humanistic Judaism. I had never heard of him, nor his movement. He gave the regular Sunday "sermon" and was scheduled for several seminars. At the morning presentation he spoke of a Judaism which I had never realized could exist. He explained his break from traditional Judaism in strong terms.

Jan tells me that after the morning talk I was angry, feeling Rabbi Wine had "put down" Judaism too vigorously in this talk to a group of non-Jews. The two afternoon seminars were wonderful. One was a talk on Arthur Koestler, author of *Darkness at Noon*, tracing his life story, highlighting his Jewish struggles. The other was a more detailed description of Humanistic Judaism. My "anger" subsided. I purchased Rabbi Wine's book, *Judaism Beyond God*, and was convinced I had found a religious "home."

I continued to belong to the First Unitarian Society, balancing intellectual excitement with Jewish guilt, until one day I saw a notice in the American Jewish World. There was a meeting of the Twin Cities Humanistic Jewish group in a home in south Minneapolis. I was shocked! There was a group in Minneapolis? I drove to the address, on a weekday evening. There were four of us, three women and me.

— *Discovering Jewish Humanism* continued on page 12



### **The Illuminator**

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newsletter-1@oremnet.org

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International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism (IISHJ)



## *Lifecycle Events*

### **Co-Presidents' Message**

**Anna Burnstein Gillette and Janet Mayer**



As Co-Presidents, we are pleased and proud of Or Emet's strong commitment to celebrating our Jewish identity consistent with our beliefs and serving the needs of our community members throughout their lives. Since our 1988 affiliation with the Society for Humanistic Judaism, we have welcomed secular, cultural, and unaffiliated Jews, agnostics, and wondering members of many different religions and backgrounds.

Or Emet celebrates and leads lifecycle events — births, Bar/Bat Mitzvahs (B'Mitzvahs), weddings and funerals/memorials. We are immensely grateful for the hundreds of meaningful and lovely ceremonies that were officiated by Or Emet's Co-Founder and Madrikh Emeritus, Harold Londer. Many of today's members found their way to Or Emet by searching for a marriage or baby naming officiant and found a wonderful fit within our congregation. How fortunate for them, and for us.

Whether at times of celebration or very difficult moments, most people seek to commemorate life's passages with an appropriate ceremony. Every single human culture marks important transitions. Life cycle ceremonies help families and individuals express their belonging to family, friends and community. They connect us to beloved traditions and provide an opportunity to reflect upon the meaning of our lives.

We do life cycle ceremonies well! Humanistic Judaism maintains that all culture is created by humans and must serve human needs. Members of our community have extensive and wide ranging backgrounds with both knowledge and experience in Humanistic Jewish rituals. They work closely with individuals and families in crafting a ceremony that meets their wishes and celebrates the people who are the focus. Typically, several family members and friends speak at the ceremony. The result is that those attending get to know the individual(s) and feel a real connection with the participants, underlining that this is both a family and a community event.

As we transition from reliance on Harold Londer, our long-time Madrikh, we are pleased to have many resources to draw on within our congregation. We are proud of our current ritual lifecycle ceremonies leaders: Eva Cohen, Rabbinic Candidate and Jewish Cultural School (JCS) Instructor, who oversees the B'Mitzvah students, teaching preparatory classes and experiential activities, and guiding their individually chosen research projects; Sarah Berman-Young, Or Emet vocal lead and JCS Hebrew and Music Instructor, who officiates at Or Emet weddings, as well as performing baby namings; JCS Director Arty Dorman; Or Emet past Presidents Margo Fox and Richard Logan; past Co-President Lisa Gardner-Springer; and Co-President Janet Mayer complete the lifecycles ritual team.

As you consider your own family life passages let us know if you would like Or Emet to officiate at an upcoming ceremony for you or yours. If you want a humanistic approach, with Jewish traditions in a contemporary context, Or Emet is a perfect match.

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***A Year in Hindsight: Jewish Cultural School Update***  
**An Interview with Arty Dorman, Director of the Or Emet Jewish Cultural School**

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As Arty is nearing the end of his first year running the Or Emet Jewish Cultural School we were interested in how he viewed his experience. I started out by asking if anything had surprised him in his first year.

*I was surprised at how little the teachers needed support. We have a very good team of teachers working there so they were really self-sufficient with ideas and materials and working with students. I thought I would be spending more time based on my experience as a principal.*

Knowing just a bit about Arty's background, I asked him to share more about it. Arty told me about his diverse career in education beginning with teaching elementary school. Then he went to graduate school in administration with a detour into educational research. He worked as a principal in St. Cloud, later serving as the director of education at the Children's Museum. His interaction with people in the public schools led him to one of his favorite jobs, heading up the St. Paul Public Schools' Office of Family and Community Involvement.

*That was a great job. I worked with people of different walks of life and backgrounds. Working with the Hmong, Somali, African-American, Latino and American Indian communities really enriched my life so much. The other positive thing was that I met Margo Fox, a former Chair of the St. Paul School Board. It was Margo who led me to Or Emet.*

Arty became a principal in St. Paul schools and later worked with the Learning Disabilities Association of Minnesota. We are fortunate to have someone with his breadth of experience in this role.

Arty also shared his thoughts on the recent holiday events.

*Tu B'Shevat is a lovely holiday and it speaks to several of the values that are important in Humanistic Judaism, such as stewardship of the earth. It's an opportunity for the parents to be sitting down with their kids so they are sharing in that experience and for the students to see that there is a Jewish life that we celebrate together.*

*I hadn't attended the Purim Carnival for several years, not having little kids myself. I wasn't familiar with the games and the activities, but I knew that we had a bunch of stuff stored away that I could draw from. Well, when the carnival was drawing near and I pulled that stuff out, there were pieces missing and I couldn't figure out how to make things fit together. So, I basically made all new games and activities. I was a little concerned that there would be a lot of whining, "We miss the old things!" What I heard instead was that they really liked the new games. That speaks to the value of refreshing the program every now and then.*

The challenge that Arty noted was recognizing that we need to keep the pipeline full. We have a large class of B'Mitzvah students now and in upcoming years, but we have fewer in the younger grades. We need to reach out to new families and introduce them to Or Emet and the Jewish Cultural School.

Arty closed by speaking of his desire to look at the curriculum in the future and to always keep the door open to new ideas and approaches.

***For JCS-related questions, concerns, feedback, and/or suggestions, contact Arty Dorman at [school-1@oremnet.org](mailto:school-1@oremnet.org)***

**Purim Party!**



## *Social Justice/Social Action Committee*

### *From the Ground Up*

by Arty Dorman, Social Justice/Social Action Co-Chair

We are well into the second year of the current Washington administration, which served as a catalyst for many of us to step up our engagement in Social Justice and Social Action work. During the first year there was a rush to stand up for programs we wanted to protect and policies we wanted to protest, with major events such as the Women's March and March for Science, and campaigns around issues such as environmental protection and immigrant rights.

In this second year, focus is shifting to the upcoming 2018 elections. This growing attention to electoral politics is brightened by two distinct beams of light: more women candidates and more youth engagement. More than ever, women are stepping forward to run for office, as candidates for both the DFL and Republican parties. For the first time, Minnesota's U.S. senators are women, with both up for reelection this fall. Across the nation, a record number of women have filed as candidates in gubernatorial races. In Minnesota, two of the three governor candidates still in the DFL contest — Rebecca Otto and Erin Murphy — are women, and Woodbury Mayor Mary Guiliani Stephens is among the candidates on the GOP side.

The tragic February shootings at Margery Stoneman Douglas High School have spurred students there and across the nation to raise their voices to new levels of leadership in the fight to reduce gun violence.

The recent *March for Our Lives* was organized largely by students. This surge in student activism has spread to other arenas, support for immigrants and for science. Our own Rachel Springer, co-captain of the Robotics Team at Minneapolis Southwest High School, was a scheduled speaker at the Minnesota March for Science, which was unfortunately postponed by the April blizzard.

Or Emet does not engage in partisan elections though our members are certainly free to do so. It is appropriate for us to speak out as individuals and with a collective voice on issues that conflict with our humanistic and Jewish principles and values.

Many of us are involved in organizations such as MN350, Protect Minnesota, Jewish Voices for Peace, Isaiah, American Civil Liberties Union, and Jewish Community Action. We are happy to help spread the word about those opportunities and, when deemed appropriate, call for a congregational position supported by action, dollars, or both.

On our social action front, the next St. Stephen's dinners will be on Saturday July 28. We are planning a Second Harvest Heartland volunteer shift for late August, so stay tuned. These actions are great opportunities for kids, age 8 and up, to be involved in *tikkun olam*. We will resume collection of items for Listening House clients at our Shabbat and Sunday programs in the fall.

*To become more involved in Or Emet's Social Justice/Social Action Committee, contact co-chairs Arty Dorman [arty@oremot.org](mailto:arty@oremot.org) or Claire Press [clairehpress@aol.com](mailto:clairehpress@aol.com).*



**ARTY SAYS "THANKS FOR BEING A COMMUNITY THAT NOT ONLY SUPPORTS BUT EXPECTS ENGAGEMENT TO REPAIR THE WORLD."**

## Or Emet Annual Meeting

### NOMINATIONS ARE IN ORDER!

It is the job of the Nominations Committee to present a recommended slate for election to Or Emet's 2018-2019 Executive Committee. The election is on June 3 at our Annual Meeting.



The offices of president, vice-president and treasurer are elected annually. The two at-large members of the Executive Committee serve two-year terms and are elected in alternate years. The Executive Committee meets monthly at a time agreed on by its members.

*This year, we especially need a candidate or candidates for president or co-president. Our membership is filled with talented people who care about Or Emet and Humanistic Judaism. The task is to find nominees who are willing to give of themselves in leadership positions. Or Emet's Leadership Team will be meeting on May 6, and they will be discussing suggested names for the nominations committee to consider.*

☛ Please contact Alex Schwartz or anyone listed on the nominating committee below if you are interested or know someone who would like to serve.

We look forward to hearing from you!

#### **Current slate of candidates**

President: not filled  
Vice President: Scott Chazdon  
Treasurer: Sharon Miller  
At Large: Natalie Rosinsky (2nd year)  
At Large: Barbara Cohen (1st year)

#### **Nominations Committee Members**

Alex Schwartz: alex@rrts.us  
Dave Musicant: dmusicant@carleton.edu  
Allan Malkis: a.malkis@comcast.net  
Rich Sonenblum: rich.res@gmail.com

#### **OR EMET ANNUAL MEETING OFFICIAL NOTICE**

Sunday, June 3, 2018 10 am – 12 noon

#### ***New Location!***

Talmud Torah of St. Paul  
768 Hamline Ave. South, St. Paul 55116

Agenda will include:

Co-Presidents' remarks  
Financial Report with 2018-2019 budget  
Executive Committee, Leadership Team, and committee reports  
Election of 2018-2019 Officers and At-Large Executive Committee Member



After the annual meeting and JCS classes, join the picnic to continue celebrating the day. Picnic begins at 12:00 noon and officially kicks off at 12:30 when school sessions wrap up. The picnic will be on the Talmud Torah grounds or inside if it rains.

## *My Journey to Becoming a Rabbi – Eva Cohen*



Eva Cohen

The Humanistic rabbinical training process continues to be busy! I'm now in the thick of my second semester in the master's program in Classical and Near Eastern Studies at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. I've been taking three classes this spring— Beginning Biblical Hebrew II for Graduate Research, Theory and Method in Religion, and Problems in Ancient Art and Archaeology: Ancient Mystery Cults. These courses have me reading selections from Genesis in Hebrew and translating them into English, critically engaging with historical and contemporary academic theories of religion, and thinking about the intersections between ancient Judaism and mystery cults that worshipped deities like Demeter and Mithras in the Greco-Roman world.

I'm also taking a year-long seminar with Rabbi Adam Chalom that is offered through the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism (IISHJ) Rabbinic Program. It focuses on the history of Secular Humanistic Judaism. Rabbi Chalom's class offers a really stimulating complement to my work in the master's program, giving time for meaningful focus on Humanistic Judaism's modern and contemporary—as well as its ancient— forerunners.

It's also been a pleasure to continue to provide ritual leadership for Or Emet this winter and spring. Thank you all for helping to make our Passover Seder wonderful; it was an honor to lead!

I'm looking forward to leading another Shabbat service in May, as well as to officiating at the five (!) Bar/Bat Mitzvah (B'Mitzvah) services happening this spring and summer. Congratulations to all the candidates (and parents) who have been working to prepare for these celebrations.

## *Upcoming B'Mitzvahs*

B'Mitzvah candidate	B'Mitzvah date	Project topic
Ruby Fields	May 12	History and evolution of Kosher laws (Kashrut)
Gwendolyn Rockler-Gladen	June 23	Writing a play <i>Crossing the Line</i> — a Jewish girl considers joining the partisans during WWII. Will be performing short scenes.
Aaron Lindeman	July 22	History of Israel from WWII to Israeli Statehood
Leah Chazdon	August 4	“Fiddler on The Roof“ — exploring public exposure of Jewish life and process behind the creation of this theater work
Larissa Zukor	August 11	Triangle Shirtwaist Factory/Garment Workers Union

The need to mark rites of passage with ceremony is a deeply human need. Aristotle believed this function of human communication was so important that he gave ceremonial speaking its own category — epideictic rhetoric. As I assist my daughter in preparing for her Humanistic Bat Mitzvah at Or Emet this summer, I find myself reflecting on the importance of epideictic rhetoric, and the challenge and joy of creating personalized ceremonies.

I used to teach college level public speaking classes, and my favorite speech assignment was the ceremonial speech. Students presented a speech to mark a rite of passage of their choosing—a eulogy, a wedding toast, a commencement address, and so forth.

My biggest advice to students was to present a speech that was unique to the person or occasion in question. I encouraged students to avoid clichéd phrases and to tell vivid, individualized stories. For example, at a eulogy for Aunt Mabel, it would be cliché to laud her commitment to her family in a generic way. It would be far more meaningful to tell unique stories about Aunt Mabel's relationship with her family, like that time she drove 200 miles so that her college kids could have her homemade knishes for Rosh Hashanah.

Sadly, many ceremonial speeches are truly generic. Sometimes, this is because the speaker is constrained by religious expectations. At a eulogy, an officiant might tell stories about God and religion, and juxtapose generic stories about Aunt Mabel within this narrative.

The joy of Or Emet ceremonies—like the Bar/Bat Mitzvahs (B'Mitzvahs)—is that we have the opportunity to create uniquely meaningful ceremonies. Or Emet Bar/Bat Mitzvahs (B'Mitzvahs) are designed by the child, with help from the family and the congregation. My theater-loving daughter is writing and directing a short play about Jewish female identity and rebellion.

Don't get me wrong. There's something meaningful about traditional ceremonies, including traditional Bar/Bat Mitzvahs (B'Mitzvahs). But I also think that for many kids, reciting and interpreting the Torah is a cumbersome activity that is more rote and stressful than it is meaningful. I'm so glad my daughter will have the opportunity to experience this ceremony in a more authentic, less generic way.

Of course, the downside to this is that it's a lot of work! In addition to the challenges that come with creating a play, we have to put together a whole ceremony. We can't just leave it to a rabbi to tell my daughter which blanks to fill in. But I have no doubt that the creation of this ceremony will be worth the effort. We are grateful to be part of a congregation and a movement that honors the celebration of Jewish ritual in a way that is personalized and authentic.

## *Donations*



**From —**  
David Zukor and Sarah Waite  
Harry Lerner

**In honor of —**

Zadie Lin Tsai-Logan, granddaughter of Richard and Carol Logan, with congratulations to Zadie's parents, Karen Tsai and Jon Logan  
Paul Petzschke and Janet Mayer  
David and Joan Barnett

**In memory of —**

Joseph Sonenblum, Rich Sonenblum's father  
Arty Dorman  
Sarah Gretchen Lester, Johanna Lester's mother  
Arty Dorman  
David and Margo Fox  
Hansy Mayer, Janet Mayer's mother  
Arty Dorman  
David and Joan Barnett  
Louise Jones  
Richard and Carol Logan  
David and Margo Fox

## ***Lionel Davis Shares St. Paul Memories***

by Susan Weinberg

Minnesota's first Jews arrived in St. Paul around 1849, nine years before Minnesota became the 32nd state. The early Jewish population came from German-speaking areas of Central Europe and settled around the state Capitol area and in the hills near the Cathedral. During the latter part of the 1800s, Polish and Russian Jews came to St. Paul and settled in the West Side Flats.

The Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest (JHSUM) is working on a history of St. Paul's Jewish communities from early territorial days through the large Eastern European immigration into the mid 20th century. They are currently taking oral histories of community elders with deep ties to St. Paul's Jewish communities. One interview was with Or Emet member, Lionel Davis, whose mother's family grew up on the St Paul's West Side. Lionel grew up in Duluth but remembered returning to the West Side to celebrate Passover with his grandparents, both of whom were very respected in the community. Lionel recalled that when his grandfather died the funeral procession stopped at three different synagogues for a eulogy to be delivered.



Lionel also talked about the Tilsenbilt homes that were started by Edward Tilsen who came to St. Paul in 1932. In 1947 he started the first known interracial commercial housing in the country, working with American National Bank to build a series of row houses in St. Paul. This was a time when it was especially difficult for African-Americans to get a mortgage. The Tilsens were Jewish and their political values influenced their commitment to interracial housing. Today Lionel lives in a Tilsenbilt home in Minneapolis.

A conversation with Lionel would not be complete without talking about music. He spoke of a cantata that he wrote for Temple of Aaron in four parts as a memorial for President Kennedy. It had an organ prelude, choir and guitar sections, and the President's favorite Bible verses. He also mentioned the recorder solo he plays for Or Emet's High Holiday services. The Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest plans to share these and other stories with the broader community through a future exhibition.

If you have memories or materials that you think may be of interest, please contact JHSUM at 952-381-3360 or [history@jhsุม.org](mailto:history@jhsุม.org). Susan Weinberg serves on the board of the JHSUM.

## ***Passover Seder in Review***

### ***Or Emet's 2018 Humanistic Passover Seder Celebration***

by Carol Logan

On Saturday, March 31st, 2018 Or Emet hosted its annual Passover Seder, Judaism's most popular cultural celebration, for the tenth year at First Unitarian Society. Over 100 members and guests attended our memorable potluck gathering. We were thrilled to welcome many familiar and new guests to our Seder and hope that they will spread the word about our welcoming, creative, and timely interpretation of Judaism's traditions and values.



A dramatic Minneapolis skyline framed Or Emet's Seder celebration

Rabbinic Candidate Eva Cohen, in her new ritual leadership role, led the Passover service, using Or Emet's unique and moving Haggadah. Co-President Anna Burnstein-Gillette ably MC'd the event. Sarah Berman-Young led us in familiar songs, accompanied by Johanna Lester on piano and Amy Stubenhaus on guitar, and supported by children from our Jewish Cultural School. After 30 dedicated years of ritual leadership Dr. Harold Londer, Or Emet's Madrikh, is enjoying retirement in Florida.

Or Emet's Humanistic Seder celebrates freedom and dignity, the ability of individuals to change their destiny, and the power of hope, while honoring our ancestral triumph over adversity.



## *From the Society for Humanistic Judaism President*

by Richard Logan, President of the Society for Humanistic Judaism and Or Emet Past President

As the Society for Humanistic Judaism (SHJ) moves forward, I want to urge everyone to be mindful of our many strengths, and vow to build on them. Here are a few things SHJ congregations are remarkably good at:

1. Doing B'Mitzvahs for secular Jews that, while non-theistic, are based meaningfully on Jewish culture and conducted with respect for Jewish ceremonial traditions. We know that even Orthodox grandparents have spoken well of our Bar/Bat Mitzvahs (B'Mitzvahs).
2. As both a Humanistic Jew and psychological anthropologist, I can affirm personally and professionally that ritual and ceremony matter. They convey the significance of an occasion, and the shared observances help bind a community together. We may not realize it, but we stand out among secular groups for doing ritual and ceremony well. Not all secular groups can say that. This fact applies beyond our Bar/Bat Mitzvahs (B'Mitzvahs) to our services and holiday ceremonies, and to the other life-cycle celebrations. Look at how well Or Emet's recent Seder went!
3. Our Cultural School's curricula, based on sound academic scholarship, show that we also know how to do secular elementary Jewish education well.
4. Our *HuJews* movement and Conclave show that we know how to appeal to secular youth and offer them Jewishly meaningful experiences.
5. Our creativity and commitment to humanistic and Jewish values like *tikkun olam* and human rights are shown by our important new initiative *Jews for a Secular Democracy*. It is an initiative by SHJ that seeks to mobilize all Jews to work for strong secular government.
6. Our renewed commitment to who we are, represented by our newest initiative, *SHJ Brand New at 50*, makes a huge difference to the future of SHJ. Thank you to the volunteers working so hard on this and our other important commitments to action.

We are exceptionally well positioned to move ahead! In the post-Pew Research Study age, we know how to “do” the secular-cultural Judaism to which increasing numbers resonate. This applies both to potential members, and also to increasing numbers of donors and Jewish foundations. Given demographic and secular trends, it makes sense for us to aspire to be a large Jewish denomination!

## *Member Articles*



### ***Building Access to Our Democracy***

*by Sharon Miller*

In addition to serving as Or Emet's Treasurer of long standing, I also produce, with my husband Alan, what is reputed to be Minnesota's longest-running and award-winning TV interview show, "Access to Democracy."

In 18-plus years we have conducted around 1800 half-hour interviews (now archived by the Dakota County Historical Society), specials and debates, including guests such as our governors, constitutional officers, most members of the MN Supreme Court (and other courts), U.S. senators, members of Congress, legislators from both sides of the aisle, and people from all walks of life — authors, doctors, lawyers, and yes, an Indian chief.

With Alan hosting, the program is available on the web site <http://accesstodemocracy.com>, YouTube, and will soon be available throughout the state on all Minnesota cable outlets. Avi Meshar is the webmaster supreme and lends his expertise to the long-term venture.

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*Sharon and Alan have been members of Or Emet for over 15 years.*

## TRADITION...

by Alan Miller

In 2004 on my first trip back to Israel since Operation Desert Storm (I had correspondent's credentials), Sharon and I spent quite a bit of time with my lifelong friend Moshe, an Israeli publisher, and his wife Ora. One evening they said they had a treat for us: accompanying their daughter and son-in-law to the home of their children's best friends, a couple in their 40s.

When we arrived we met the couple, the husband's father and the couple's children. The father was none other than Topol, the famous Israeli singer and actor who starred as Tevya in "Fiddler on the Roof" all over the world. He was charming and, after about an hour of noshing and interesting conversation, we obviously got around to his career and requests for some songs, accompanied on the piano by his daughter-in-law.

What would we like to hear? "If I Was a Rich Man" was one of our requests. He groaned, "Do you know how many thousands of times I've sung that song?" Nonetheless, he complied, along with many of the other songs from "Fiddler," and then we were treated to some traditional Jewish songs, and even a few popular ones. It was an unexpected and exciting evening for us. It's really a surprise when what appeared to be just a social evening turns into one of the most memorable events of your life.

You never know.



## Finding Connections in Feasts and Fasts

by Natalie Rosinsky

I missed the local Jewish Theater production of "Stars of David," based on Abigail Pogrebin's *Stars of David: Prominent Jews Talk about Being Jewish* (New York: 2005), but I am glad that I caught up with her most recent book.

*My Jewish Year: 18 Holidays, One Wondering Jew* (Bedford, NY: 2017) is an enjoyable, worthwhile read. Its author, a practicing Reform Jew, looks at all the "little" or lesser known holidays as well as the "biggies," finding connections in their rhythm of feasts and fasts. (I had a cousin named Gedaliah, but I never knew what the Fast of Gedaliah stood for. . . until reading this book. And I certainly could not have explained this Fast's meaning in relation to other holidays.)

Pogrebin also looks at how different Jewish denominations and congregations observe the holidays. She visited congregations in person, conducting phone and e-mail interviews, and interviewed more than 50 rabbis researching this book, including The Society for Humanistic Judaism's Rabbi Adam Chalom. His views are prominent in the chapter titled "Activist Shabbat—Friday Night with the Kids." Rabbi Chalom sees Shabbat as "a space for Jewish identity" rather than a "holiday commemorating the Creation of the world and the creator. . . ." So, for secular humanist Jews, "reading a Jewish poet or going to a Jewish movie" are valid Shabbat experiences.

Pogrebin does not wonder about God the way we at Or Emet do, but she shares moving and sometimes funny family stories in relation to Jewish practice and thought. (Her son and daughter are teenagers, in college and high school respectively.) Her mother, Letty Cottin Pogrebin, the noted feminist and co-founder of *Ms.* Magazine, early on introduced Abigail to creating alternative Jewish rituals, which are mentioned in this interesting book along with wholly traditional ones. Their feminist Seder, for instance, has each person mention an "invisible guest"—the woman, living or dead, one would most want to include at the Seder.



## *Member News*

Or Emet member **Susan Weinberg** will be participating in two shows in the Tychman Shapiro Gallery at the Sabes JCC. From May 6 - June 10 there will be an exhibition on **Israel@70: Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow** pairing artists from sister cities Minneapolis, MN and Rehovot, Israel to explore Israel's history and future and create artwork in response. Reception on June 5, 6:00 - 8:00 pm with visiting Israeli musician Shuly Natan.

**Crossing the Threshold**, the annual Jewish Artists' Lab exhibition is June 21-August 23rd. Reception on June 21 at 6:00 pm with a 7:00 pm performance in the JCC Theater. Susan is a long-time Artist Lab member and its Resident Writer.

Susan invites members to stop by her studio in the California Building, 2205 California St. NE #409, Minneapolis during **Art-a-Whirl**, the largest open studio event in the country. The event is May 18 - 20, Friday 5:00 -10:00 pm, Saturday 12:00 noon - 8:00 pm and Sunday 12:00 noon - 5:00 pm.

**P'Chotchka**, the annual benefit event of Rimon, the Jewish Arts Council, will occur June 4th at 6:00 pm at the Metropolitan Ballroom, 5418 Wayzata Blvd, Golden Valley. Susan is one of eight artists selected to tell her story in 18 slides in 18 seconds each.

## *Simchas and Tsuris (Joys and Concerns)*



**Rachel Springer** was recently named a Minnesota FIRST Dean's List Finalist, recognizing her individual contributions and achievements in robotics. In late April, she will be joining three other finalists from Minnesota at the FIRST World Championships, and at least 50 others from across the North and Eastern regions, where they will announce who is on the National Dean's List. Her robotics team, RUBIES, also qualified to attend the Championships.

Rachel's parents, Lisa Gardner-Springer and Colin Springer, along with sister Emily, are thrilled.

**Richard and Carol Logan** are delighted to announce the birth of their third granddaughter/grandchild, Zadie Lin Tsai-Logan, born February 3, 2018. Her parents are Karen Tsai and Jon Logan.

**Arty Dorman's** recent fall on the ice resulted in a nasty quadriceps tendon rupture. Regrettably, Arty's mobility restrictions prevent him from attending and reviewing theater performances. His post-op course is on target.

## *March for our Lives Or Emet Members Make Their Voices Heard*



## *On Emet History – continued*

### ***Harold Londer Attains Madrikh Certification***

From *The Illuminator* Winter 2007/2008

by Mike Persellin

We are told that Humanistic Jews do not believe in miracles. However, one happened in mid-October [2007] at the Birmingham Temple: Our Harold Londer was certified as a recognized leader (Madrikh) with all the rights and responsibilities of clergy. According to the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism (IISHJ), which provided the certification, the Madrikh is “a Jewish professional who serves as a community guide, ceremonial officiant, philosophic counselor, educator, and movement spokesperson.” In order to attain Madrikh status, Harold completed a rigorous program of seminars offered by IISHJ and several supervised fieldwork projects. Required seminars included: “Roots of Secular Humanistic Judaism,” “Basic Ideas of Secular Humanistic Judaism,” “Celebration of Jewish Calendar and Holidays,” “Celebration of the Jewish Life Cycle,” “Jewish Education and Curriculum Planning,” “Leadership, Management and Community,” and “Philosophic Guidance and Counseling.”

That Harold was able to complete his training while maintaining his full clinical practice speaks volumes to his commitment to Or Emet and the Secular Humanistic Jewish movement. Harold’s training was at his own expense without subsidy from Or Emet; yet the benefit to the Congregation is and will be immense.

#### ***Update:***

Harold has maintained Madrikh credentials since 2007 while serving as Or Emet’s recognized leader. In 2016, he was honored with the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism’s ***Lifetime Madrikh Certification***.

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### ***Discovering Jewish Humanism, Part I—*** continued from page 1

We had cookies and tea and discussed Rabbi Wine’s book. The other three were subscribers to the national Humanistic Judaism organization and had been meeting over tea for several years. It was a quiet, relaxing evening. One of the women mentioned that she had been in contact with the national organization and had been told that if we organized a community event, they would supply a speaker. I volunteered to help. After a few phone calls we had arranged for Miriam Jerris (now a full-fledged humanistic rabbi, who has visited our congregation many times over the years) to come to Minneapolis for an “event.” We obtained a room at the St. Paul Jewish Community Center and put an ad in the *American Jewish World* advertising the program.

About ten people showed up for the event. We sat in a circle and, after a brief introduction to Humanistic Judaism by Miriam, we went around the room, each telling our “story.” I was amazed at the attachment I felt to these stories, and the people who told them. As the evening progressed, we all sensed an energy and commitment to have the group grow. The last two speakers were a couple, Norma and Larry Garfin who lived right down the block from me. It took an event in St. Paul for me to meet them! Larry was a pediatric dentist and Norma a professional actress. Larry’s organizational skills and multiple talents and Norma’s enthusiasm for life were key drivers in the early days of the group. Edna Bernstein, one of the original women at that South Minneapolis meeting, was also there. The other two dropped out, not interested in a bigger group.

We soon began to have regular meetings, spreading word of our existence frustratingly slowly. We met at homes and occasionally at the First Unitarian Society on Mount Curve Avenue. We pored over Rabbi Wine’s *Judaism Beyond God*. Though we remained small, we gradually assembled an amazingly talented and enthusiastic group of core members: Gail Farber, Larry and Seija Farber, Phil Griffin, Muriel Sterne, Jim Naiden (whom I met at a Unitarian Society new members function), Jack and Jane Katz, Allan Malkis and Diane Wanner, Dave Zarkin, Syrile and Bud Ellison, Mark and Lynn Hochhauser and others I am sure I have missed were key early, early members. Larry Garfin and I took on the role of “co-chairs.”

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Next: Or Emet has its first High Holiday Service.

Stay tuned for the following chapter in our development — *Discovering Jewish Humanism, Part II*.

**SHABBAT PROGRAMS**

Shabbat programs are at the Sabes Jewish Community Center, 4330 South Cedar Lake Rd, St. Louis Park. Programs are from 7:30 - 9:00 pm, include a Humanistic Shabbat service and end with an Oneg.

**Friday, May 11*****Trying to do the Right Thing in the Peace Corps in Fiji***

In this program Rob Rossi will discuss his experiences as a 22-year-old chemistry teacher at a time when Fiji was in political turmoil.

**Presenter:** Rob is an Or Emet member and stay-at-home dad who does technical/IT consulting and writes chemistry lab manuals.

**SUNDAY PROGRAMS**

Sunday programs are at the Talmud Torah Building, 768 Hamline Ave. South, St. Paul.

Adult programs meet from 10:00 am - 12:30 pm (concurrently with Jewish Cultural School classes).

**Sunday, May 20*****Resistance Then and Now: Learning from the Dutch***

Mary Fillmore will discuss *An Address in Amsterdam*, her prize-winning historical novel about a young Jewish woman who risks her life in the resistance.

**Sunday, June 3*****Jewish Cultural School - rescheduled after last session's weather cancellation***

Or Emet annual meeting will be from 10:00 - 12:00 noon concurrently with JCS makeup session.

**Reminder!**

In the fall we will resume collection of empty pill bottles and personal care items for clients at Listening House, a St. Paul drop-in center.

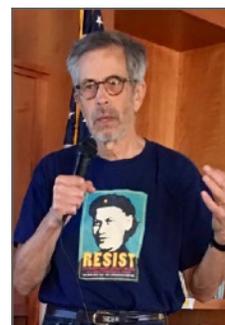
Donations are gratefully accepted at all Friday and Sunday programs.

**Recent Program Highlights**

*Rise of Antisemitism & Liberation in 19th Century Europe*  
by Ian Zukor



*A Musical Tribute to George Gershwin*  
performed by  
Les Block and Heidi Ziman



*Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust*  
by Howard Schneider

**Saturday, April 28 and July 28 | St. Stephen's Shelter dinner | 7:00 - 8:30 pm**

In the spirit of *tikkun olam*, Or Emet volunteers provide and serve dinner to Shelter guests. Or Emet members and friends, including children over 8 years old, are invited to participate.

**Sunday, May 6 | Or Emet Leadership Team Meeting | 10:00 am - 12:00 noon**

Members are welcome to attend. Contact [presidents@oremet.org](mailto:presidents@oremet.org) for further information.

**Sunday, June 3 | Annual Meeting and Picnic**

Annual Meeting and election of officers 10:00 am -12:00 noon

Potluck Picnic 12:00 noon - 2:00 pm

**New Location!** Talmud Torah of St. Paul, 768 Hamline Ave. South, St. Paul

— more information on page 5

**Tuesday, August 28 | Second Harvest Heartland | 5:30 - 7:30 pm | 1140 Gervais Ave., Maplewood**

A volunteer opportunity for families — children over 8 years old are welcome to participate.

**OR EMET 2018 HIGH HOLIDAY EVENTS**

Or Emet High Holiday Events (except Tashlich) are at the Sabes Jewish Community Center, St. Louis Park

**Rosh Hashanah Service**

Sunday, September 9, 7:00 pm

Oneg following the service

**Rosh Hashanah Tashlich Service and Potluck**

Monday, September 10, 10:30 am, location TBA

**Kol Nidre Service**

Tuesday, September 18, 7:00 pm

**Yom Kippur Service**

Wednesday, September 19, 4:00 pm

**Break-the-fast Potluck**

At conclusion of the Yom Kippur

