



THE ILLUMINATOR

Or Emet – The Minnesota Congregation for Humanistic Judaism

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Mixed Emotions: Happiness and Tears

by Rabbi Eva R. Cohen



How do you celebrate when you feel like crying? This is the season for gratitude and spreading light. But after a presidential election where [“the politics of fear, misogyny, racism, and xenophobia scored a victory,”](#) [many Jewish-Americans](#), among others, are [fearful and angry](#).

If the pressure to be festive is making your mood worse, Jewish tradition can offer support. Year-round, our holiday and lifecycle rituals hold space for conflicting emotions.

— On Rosh Hashanah, in between “Shanah Tovah” greetings and honeyed bites, we reflect on how we have missed the mark.

— On Passover, we list the plagues as we take blood drops of wine from our cups, diminishing our happiness in recognition of others’ suffering.

— On Shabbat, services emphasize joy and rest but also center the Mourner’s Kaddish.

— Joyous Jewish wedding ceremonies finish with glass breaking, a reminder of sadness, Temple destruction, or other sobering facts.

These rituals all reflect a human truth — in good times or bad, [experiencing a mix of positive and negative emotions is normal](#).

As Or Emet’s ritual leader and now rabbi, I have seen struggling people feel out of sync with the calendrical. Illness, interpersonal conflict, and loss are frustratingly indifferent to the important days on our calendars (or even perversely encouraged by pre-event stress). And yet joy finds its way in, too. I think about the words to [“Sunrise, Sunset”](#)— “One season following another / Laden with happiness and tears.” Sometimes we have a season of happiness followed by one of tears; more often, we have seasons where happiness and tears layer chaotically onto each other.

The weekend after the election, Sarah Berman-Young and I facilitated an online healing circle for Or Emet members and friends. We all talked about the things weighing on us — our concern about threats to marginalized people, basic rights and freedoms, government institutions, foreign policy, public health, *the future...* We also shared thoughts on how we can respond, whether as a congregation or in other parts of our lives. Among a range of thoughtful responses, participants recommended taking concrete action to support immigrants and LGBTQ people, donating to organizations that embody our values, getting involved in local government and other opportunities for participatory democracy, and learning about tyranny, authoritarianism, and resistance. Together we acknowledged our fears — and felt uplifted and purposeful.

We are a caring community that will meet the coming challenges. The Zohar fits our mood: “Weeping is lodged in one side of my heart, and joy is lodged in the other.” (II:255a; III:75a)



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President's Message

by Jeff Pipes

As we reflect on an eventful fall and election season, we find ourselves entering winter — both in season and in spirit. For many of us, this is a time for introspection and preparation. While I am taking a quieter approach in the coming weeks, I am also focused on how Or Emet, along with each of us individually, can work to safeguard our community, friends, relatives, and neighbors in the months ahead.

Earlier this season, Rabbi Eva and Sarah hosted a well-attended election debriefing. It was a safe space for us to share our frustrations and concerns, and from those discussions, ideas for collective action emerged. In the coming months, we will hold meetings to develop these ideas and take meaningful steps. Rabbi Eva is available to provide care and guidance to those in need during these challenging times.

Looking forward, we will soon have an opportunity to amplify our voices at the National Day of Reason/National Religious Freedom Day Forum. Or Emet has proudly partnered with Jews for a Secular Democracy and HumanistsMN to co-sponsor this important event for several years. This year, the event moves from May to January 18. You will be invited to join us at this event. We encourage everyone to reach out to their legislative representatives to schedule meetings and articulate the importance of supporting a secular government and maintaining the separation of church and state. During October's JCSS program, Rep. Mike Freiberg, chair of the Minnesota State Legislature's Secular Government Caucus, laid a solid foundation for this conversation with his insights on promoting secular values in governance.

On a lighter note, we hosted our first Shabbat potluck on November 15. It was a wonderful evening filled with delicious food, camaraderie, and joyful faces. While the evening was primarily social, we also welcomed Shabbat with candle lighting, Kiddush, and Hamotzi. A heartfelt thank-you to Joan, Lydia, Garrett and the many volunteers whose hard work made this event such a success.

In September, we moved our JCSS/Adult Program to the Twin Cities German Immersion School. This new facility offers a bright, comfortable environment, with well-equipped classrooms for our children. We are delighted to welcome Sam Wegner as a new teacher and several new classroom helpers this year. At the same time, we bid farewell to Renee Dorman, who retired after years of dedicated service. We are deeply grateful for her contributions and will miss her presence.

Our High Holiday services this year were deeply meaningful and well-attended. As always, Rabbi Eva inspired us with thought-provoking reflections and members enriched the experience with insightful commentaries. One highlight was Joan's first commentary since joining Or Emet many years ago. She offered a personal historical perspective and encouraged all of us to consider ways we can contribute.

The Rabbi Fund donation drive is ongoing and the President's Challenge Grant still has unmet reserves. As the year closes, consider making a year-end contribution. Or Emet thrives solely on the generosity of member dues and donations.

Thank you for your ongoing support and dedication.
Wishing you peace and light as we close out the year together.

Jewish Cultural Sunday School (JCSS) Update

by Molly Phipps, JCSS Director



NEW JCSS (AND SUNDAY ADULT PROGRAM) LOCATION

Twin Cities German Immersion School (TCGIS), 1031 Como Ave, St. Paul

After a year of searching for a new home, Jewish Cultural Sunday School has settled into our new home at the Twin Cities German Immersion School. The new space has ample room for each of our classes in age-appropriate classrooms, access to a newly refurbished playground, and a cafeteria for songs, blessings, and our adult programs. Our enrollment continues to hover around 25 youth across the four classes.



Welcome to a New Teacher and Teacher Aides!

JCSS welcomes Sam Wegner as our new Juniors teacher. Sam grew up at Or Emet and is creating fresh,

innovative lessons for Juniors.

This year the school has four aides who support



Little's, Middle's, and Juniors' teachers in creating a positive learning environment for our students. Our aides: Kai Dickson, Aayush Dongre, Isaac Rinerson, and Julian Young are all graduates of the JCSS program. In September, their presence allowed Middle's and Juniors to take a field trip to Como Lake to tie local environment to *tikun olam* and reverse *tashlich* practices.

Sukkah

We celebrated Sukkot in October for the first time in our new location. Being in a non-Jewish space, we needed to take the sukkah building into our own hands. Sarah Berman-Young brought a pop-up sukkah and we created a sukkah with tarps.

Classes tied Sukkot to housing justice issues in age-appropriate ways. Rabbi Eva led a rhythmic participatory service with a Minnesota *lulav* and *etrog* (using local produce like wheat and gourds).



A New Collaboration!

Molly and Rabbi Eva are in touch with the education coordinator at First Unitarian Society about ways we can coordinate our humanist efforts. We're exploring starting up a humanist youth group between the two congregations for youth in middle school and high school. Our goal is to have these joint events a few times per year at first and see how it goes.

A (possible) JCSS Service-Oriented Volunteer Opportunity!

First Unitarian Society already participates in "Second Sunday Oasis Dinners at Plymouth Church" and suggests that as our first collaborative event. "The First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis invites JCSS to volunteer at regular Second Sunday Oasis Dinners. Every 2nd Sunday of the month, volunteers from 1st Unitarian and St. Mark's Episcopal arrive at 4:00 p.m. and help distribute food, clothing and personal care items, before descending to the dining area and helping serve dinner to around 85 guests. The presence of service-oriented folks of all ages, especially youth and families, adds so much to the evening as we practice humanism in action and serve our community."

We'll reach out to families with middle and high school youth when we have more information about the events. A collaborative Purim party with First Unitarian Society is also a possibility. But, we will need volunteers!!

For more information about Or Emet's Jewish Cultural Sunday School, visit the [School Blog](#) on the Or Emet website, oremnet.org. Visitors are welcome to join JCSS classes. To arrange a visit, learn more about JCSS, the Youth Program, and/or for school-related questions and issues, email school-1@oremnet.org.



Social Justice/Social Action Committee Update

Howard Schneider and Gwyn Leder
Social Justice/Social Action Co-Chairs



An Or Emet and Global Movement REVERSE TASHLICH: Repair the Sea, Lake, and/or River | Tikkun HaYam Environmental Cleanup — A New Twist on the Tradition



Or Emet's Reverse Tashlich September 29 at Marydale Park/Loeb Lake, St. Paul

This 3rd annual event involved eight adults and four children. They collected trash and garbage from the lake, trail, and surrounding area. This cleanup helps to maintain the health of Loeb Lake which is designated as a “Fishing in the Neighborhood” lake by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. The day’s other highlights included Earth Day t-shirts for the children (donated by the city of Lakeville) and magic tricks by Howard.

Traditional Tashlich Observance

Symbolically casting away transgressions of the past year.

Or Emet’s High Holiday Tashlich was observed on October 3. Rabbi Eva led a service at Lebanon Hills Holland Lake which was followed by a potluck lunch at Alan and Sharon Miller’s home.

The Millers deserve huge appreciation for their enduring hospitality!



HIGH HOLIDAY COLLECTIONS OF FOOD / PERSONAL CARE ITEMS

Non-perishables, collected at High Holiday services, weighed in at 128 pounds.

Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf gratefully received the boxes and bags delivered by Arty Dorman.

Annual REFUGEE SHABBAT

Or Emet Refugee Shabbat

Or Emet’s annual Refugee Program will follow the Shabbat service on February 15.

Why do we recognize refugees with a special Shabbat?

HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) notes that this event is an opportunity “... for congregations, organizations, and individuals to express their solidarity with the global Jewish movement for refugee protection and welcome. People seeking asylum are being turned away at borders around the world. The number of forcibly displaced people has grown to over 120 million, or 1 in every 69 people. The growing impact of climate change exacerbates the effects of violence, conflict, and economic instability on already vulnerable populations.”

Or Emet members are welcome to join the Social Justice/Social Action Committee and/or offer input on activities and issues. If you wish to be involved, contact Howard Schneider at hamptonmeadow@msn.com or 651-278-2286.

High Holiday Member Commentaries

The following presentations by Or Emet members were featured at Or Emet's 2024 High Holiday services. These original commentaries offer unique, individual perspectives. They have become an enduring and meaningful congregational tradition.

High Holiday Commentary: Introspection, Growth, and Promise

by Ian Zukor



I've been a part of Or Emet since before I could walk. I have been to this service for most years of my life, so I thought I'd take a stab at offering a commentary. After all, who better to give advice than someone who still lives with his parents? I took a decent amount of time grappling with how I wanted to approach this. Ultimately, there was one central theme I kept coming back to. I think it's such an interesting situation that we, as Jews, are experiencing a new year, while the majority of folks in our day to day lives are not.

As the world around us continues its usual rhythm in September, Jews pause to reflect and renew. While others mark this time with the transition from summer to autumn or as "back to school," we embrace it as a period of introspection, growth, and promise. In other words, this unique moment allows us to see the month not just as a bridge between seasons, but as a time set apart to consider our place in the world and how we might impact it in the year ahead.

This offers us a special opportunity. We have the chance to reflect on how we can contribute to our communities. As we engage in acts of *tzedakah*, strengthen relationships, and commit to justice, we can bring the essence of Rosh Hashanah into the broader world. My hope is that our celebration, though personal to us, can ripple outward, inspiring others to consider their own impact and encouraging unity at a time when it's needed most.

With the coming of 5785, I challenge us all to take on the role as agents of change. And that can be on whatever scale you find feasible and empowering to you. For me, as someone who wants to be a social studies teacher, I need to be introspective about the fact that I tell students about getting civically engaged, justice-oriented, and taking on courageous conversations. If I preach those values, it is my job to act that way in my community. However creating positive change looks for you, remember that as humanists we believe in our own power and ability to create good.

In the spirit of a new year, I also want to aspire to have some longevity in my goals. Just like folks on January 1 make fitness goals that have petered out by Valentine's Day, I don't want to fight the good fight until the election and then lose sight of my aspirations. Last year, when my Littles' class made Tzedakah boxes, I told them that they would be able to use them to help others all year, not just during the monthly Or Emet session when we talked about it. To their credit, the Littles referred back to the boxes and what they stand for throughout the year all the way until our last session in June. I hope we can act as they did and have a 5785 that is full of creating positive change for those around us. Let us not lose sight of our goals.

Finally, as we gather to celebrate Rosh Hashanah, let us be reminded that this time is not only for personal reflection, but also for communal responsibility. Our new year in September may feel out of sync with the world around us, but this difference is a gift. It allows us to pause and contribute in ways that can uplift our communities and inspire change. As we turn inward to renew our spirit, let us also look outward with a renewed sense of purpose — to bring light, compassion, and hope into the lives of others. May this new year be one of growth, connection, and lasting impact, not just for ourselves, but for the world we share.

A Continuing Commentary Invitation

by Joan Barnett



Yom Kippur signals the season for reflection — for considering those times one hasn't measured up, for figuring out how to improve, and for continuing to grow.

So, have I fallen short in never having presented a High Holiday commentary? Maybe! Probably! After all my husband and I benefited mightily over the past 50 or so years of sticking with a disorganized group that evolved into Or Emet.

I'm stepping up because Carrie Dickson's 2023 High Holiday commentary was inspirational — and left a guilt chaser. Her challenge was "you have 383 days to prepare your commentary . . . start thinking, start writing, and reach out to the High Holiday committee." It worked!

My husband and I are fairly typical of people who find Or Emet meaningful.

Dave grew up in a culturally Jewish home — they were humanistic Jews, but didn't have the language for it.

My mother was French Canadian and deeply attached to the Catholic faith at the core of her heritage. My father was a devoted atheist from a small town Protestant family. They were married in a Catholic church, and my dad half-heartedly agreed to raise the children Catholic. While we four children were imbued with Catholicism, my dad repeatedly disparaged believers and religion. With maturity, my siblings and I came to appreciate our father's critical thinking, questioning authority, and believing in oneself. We drifted toward Unitarianism.

First Unitarian Society was a good fit for Dave and for me — we were married there and continued to be members — even though it was "too churchy" for Dave.

Then, in the early 70s, we connected with people who were exploring something called Humanistic Judaism. It was a small, curious, and disorganized bunch. We met in homes and learned about the movement from Society for Humanistic Judaism videotapes.

Fortuitously, just when our little group had stalled, Rabbi Sherwin Wine was a guest lecturer at the First Unitarian Society in the mid/late-70s. In several presentations, Rabbi Wine addressed the congregation about Humanistic Judaism and related philosophies. He was a gifted, charismatic speaker. The spark that Rabbi Wine ignited inspired Dr. Harold Londer's journey into Humanistic Judaism. Harold's vision and leadership were the crucial ingredients that led him — along with Dr. Larry Garfin — to develop and nurture this congregation.

When our rag-tag group became a real congregation, Dave and I knew we had found a home. Dave valued Or Emet's cultural and historical embrace of Jewishness. I identified with the humanistic element and enjoyed being in a congregation that had room for both of us. Over the years, I've found my place through a variety of volunteer roles. Dave was allergic to committees, but always participated in music and singing. Or Emet is a community that values all types and levels of involvement.

The Or Emet community became even more meaningful for us when Dave's health seriously declined. During this time we received solid help and support. We especially valued those musical friends who sang with Dave while he was in a care facility. An indelible memory is when, during his final days, a few people gathered around him and sang his favorites. It is a blessed memory that he lived and died with music! And, it's a testament to this community of people who know how to make a difference.

When Dave died two years ago our OE community (especially Janet) continued to do what was important. Almost immediately, Eva, then our ritual leader, helped plan a farewell appreciation ceremony for his facility caregivers. Then, a couple weeks later, Eva did a masterful job of leading a Celebration of Life attended by family and friends. It didn't stop there! A year ago, we came together for a non-traditional unveiling ceremony with burial of Dave's ashes and placement of a marker in a pine grove at a friend's farm.

Clearly, the Or Emet community has been with us through and through. Here's to each of us continuing the tradition of extending help to others. It's about embracing the spirit of Yom Kippur and the New Year.

As we consider opportunities awaiting in 5785, don't forget Carrie's Kol Nidre message. This is your invitation to start thinking about and making plans for a High Holiday commentary next year. Let's keep it going!

High Holiday Member Commentary . . . continued

Meditations

by Michal Moscow



On Yom Kippur, I am happy to sit with other Jews, thinking about the text and language, wondering about the culture that brought these writings. Often, I simply let my mind wander, as I think people who meditate do.

This year, in light of all that's going on in the Middle East, ongoing threats to Israel and in the broader world, I am frightened and frustrated. I can donate money, but there doesn't seem much else I can do to stop wars.

We should start with the children. In the Rosh Hashanah story, the binding of Isaac, we are told Abraham, blindly following his amorphous father, was about to kill his son. Isaac lived because Abraham's unseen father reprieved him. We know Isaac grew up to be one of our ancestors, but we don't know how near-death by his father affected him. Trauma does not easily disappear. It remains with children.

Children learn by what surrounds them, overtly and covertly. What is said and what is not. As a student, I was in charge of second grade girls at the local JCC. They met Sunday mornings for play, stories, and crafts. Most attended the public school and talked about what happened on the bus or classroom that week. I asked a little girl who didn't join in if she went to the same school. She replied all in one breath, as if the words were all part of the school's name: "I go to St. Paul's Christian Academy we don't allow Blacks or Jews."

I had no idea what response to give. Public swimming pools had integrated. Lots of whites had joined private whites-only swim clubs. I've no idea why her parents thought it okay for their daughter to play with Jewish, but not Black children, while not allowing her to attend school with either. I wonder who that little girl is now. Did two hours a week result in a friendship with a Jewish child? Does she avoid the untouchables and partly untouchables? Or has she realized the limitations of being cut off from other people?

My granddaughter, Leela, was assigned to kindergarten in a different public school from her sister Rosalie — one of three white children in her class. She made friends; didn't pay attention to skin color or hair texture and wanted to learn Spanish to speak more easily with friends. That school was not funded as well as Rosalie's school with more white children which offered a higher quality education and extra enrichment. Equality of opportunity has not been achieved.

Children do learn. For the past three years, Or Emet has had a reverse *tashlich*. The kids have a fantastic time. Who needs a bunny to leave eggs around when they can hunt and pick up other people's trash?

And it has a more lasting effect. This year Rosalie, Leela, and their friend Leta, spent an hour picking up an amazing amount of trash. Recently, Rosalie and I walked to Lake Como near my house. She returned holding a McDonald's bag filled with food detritus and wastepaper she had gathered, complaining she would never understand how people could just drop their waste in nature. Did she learn this from reverse tashlich?

Children learn what we teach them. If we teach them that it's acceptable to exclude some people or send rockets into the homes of some people, that's what they learn.

Yom Kippur is a day of reflection. I think about the world and my responsibilities in it. I'm frustrated. I do not know what I can do to stop bigotry and wars. I know real solutions take a long time, but we can't stop trying. When I donate, I choose organizations that are actively working toward reconciliation and improvement of social inequalities. One such organization is Hand in Hand, a group of schools in Israel, with mixed Palestinian and Jewish staff and children. This school connects children who may have been taught to hate each other, but now know each other. They eat together, play together, learn together, and are more likely to search for solutions beyond rockets. They are children learning to be children in dangerous situations rather than being used as political tools. Read more in the [NY Times](#) or on their website <https://www.handinhandk12.org>.

Adults can also work together. Consider [Sindyanna of Galilee](#), a fair-trade olive oil producer in Israel with a staff of Arab and Jewish women who share a vision of peaceful coexistence.

Our tasks as Yom Kippur closes are: keep our minds open, think critically, try however we can — with donations, buying certain products, writing letters, volunteering time, and not dropping trash on the ground and in water.

Member Articles

It's the Democracy, More Than the Economy, Stupid

by Alan Miller

I awoke on November 6th, deeply depressed. In 90 years I have participated in many elections, but this year the Presidential election is the only one where the result left me with a feeling of desperation. I considered engaging in the Jewish tradition of *kriah*, which is a sign of mourning when one tears a piece of clothing upon the death of a loved one. I did not tear any clothing, except symbolically, but my fear is for the death of democracy.



I have endured many setbacks in my life, including the loss of loved ones, but I never imagined, until this past decade, that I would ever fear for our democracy, an experiment which is the envy of the civilized world, and which has endured since the American Revolution. Yet the signs have all been pointing in that direction, the symptoms both large and small. I believe that our Founders envisioned a nation free from what they described in the First Amendment to the Constitution with the words, "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." That meant that we, all Americans, were free to believe, or disbelieve, the God we chose to look to, or we have the freedom not to believe in any God. Yet little by little, those tenets have been impinged upon, all the way up to the presently constituted Supreme Court.

We were founded on Judeo-Christian principles, but in recent years a growing movement, led by both evangelicals and Christian nationalists, has espoused beliefs that forget the "Judeo" in that preamble. More and more, states have imposed laws and statutes which focus on Christian beliefs, to the exclusion of all others. A school district in a southern state just mandated that a bible be placed in every classroom. Which bible? The Old Testament or the New Testament? The Tyndale Bible, the King James version, or any of the multiple other versions? Although bibles can be purchased as cheaply as two dollars, the superintendent of this district chose a sixty dollar version published by our President-elect. What about all the other religions and their beliefs? Don't their students have equal rights? Or, as I believe, there is no place for bibles in public education, for it manifestly impinges on the separation of church and state, another foundational principle of democracy. Another incident in another southern state is being tested in the courts because it required that the Ten Commandments be prominently posted in every classroom. My argument continues in that regard.

"Equal protection," as codified in the 14th Amendment, guarantees and has been held to mean that every person is guaranteed "the equal protection of the law." Yet do women enjoy equal protection when they are subject to laws which control their right to make determinations about their own bodies, based on another person's religious beliefs? What about the threats of censorship and book-banning, where others can determine what we, or our children, can read. It is directly contrary to the guarantees of the First Amendment which protect both "freedom of speech, or of the press." And the threats in this regard are burgeoning.

These are more than the ruminations of an old man, because this conduct strikes at the very core of what I believe this nation stands for, and I cry out in fear.

You can lead me to the holy water, but you cannot make me drink.

RABBI SHERWIN WINE – LEGACY WEBSITE

www.sherwinwine.com 1928 - 2007



Learn about the life and work of Sherwin Wine (Z"l), from growing up in Jewish Detroit to reform rabbi to creating Humanistic Judaism. Rabbi Wine inspired and mentored Drs. Harold Londer (Z"l) and Larry Garfin (Z"l) in developing and nurturing Or Emet.

SHJ 2023-24 Role Model Honoree Johnny Clegg (Z”L)

by Richard Logan

Or Emet member Richard Logan wrote the cover story for the Winter 2024 issue of Humanistic Judaism magazine on the 2023-2024 Humanistic Jewish Role Model, South African Johnny Clegg.



Johnny Clegg was an anthropologist, ethnomusicologist, superstar singer-songwriter-instrumentalist, philosopher-poet, public intellectual, teacher, storyteller — and courageous anti-apartheid activist. Rather than being confrontational with white power, he sought to get whites and blacks to both love indigenous music and culture. He composed “crossover” music — Celtic with Zulu with Rock. He called it “a conversation between cultures.” And it proved to work that way. His music did unite South Africans of all backgrounds.

Johnny began his career by composing and singing in the Zulu language about Zulu life and migrant workers, forming multi-racial bands, and playing to multiracial audiences, violating many apartheid laws at the risk of his freedom and probably his life.

But in the beginning he was just a curious Jewish kid fascinated by the Black African world always nearby. Raised by a secular Jewish mother, Johnny would grow up to become a secular Jewish adult with strong humanist values, determined to unite South Africans of all cultures and to bring respect to the many indigenous peoples of the country. He succeeded, and became close to the great Nelson Mandela, and probably was the most beloved white man in South Africa.

Some interesting facts about Clegg’s life and legacy

Clegg received many awards and recognition in his life: designated an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE), an honor rarely given to a non-British citizen; France’s highest civilian honor — Chevalier des Arts et Lettres; Post-apartheid South Africa’s highest civilian honor — Order of Ikhamanga; many honorary doctorates; untold music awards from around the world; millions of albums sold and lives changed

After Johnny died in 2019, Zulu leaders held a traditional “crossing” ceremony for him. Thereby, he formally became a revered ancestor. In his life, Johnny had been formally inducted into no fewer than three Zulu clans. That is just one measure of how authentically he was viewed by the Zulu people. www.youtube.com/watch?v=j9Bwaqizbvc

Here is a link to just one of Johnny’s many living legacies — the literacy work of South Africa’s Click Foundation. The soundtrack to this video is his anthem, “The Crossing”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H84WX1sPz98>

As a youth Johnny had been given the praise name “*Skeyi*” by his Zulu dance partners because he was such a capable and dependable dance team member and an authentic believer in the value of Zulu culture. Zulu people came to call him by that name the rest of his life. In fact, “*Skeyi*” is engraved on his tombstone. The name is high praise because it translates to English as “linchpin,” one who brings and holds people together. That was secular Jewish humanist Johnny Clegg. Finally, I found this question posted on a Johnny Clegg site: “What does *Skeyi* mean?” One reply was simply, “*Tikkun Olam*.”

With arrangements made by the Johannesburg Jewish Burial Society, Johnny Clegg is buried in Westpark Jewish Cemetery in Johannesburg. Former SHJ Role Model Helen Suzman lies nearby.

Along with other lines from his anthems, Johnny’s tombstone has this poignantly informal line, from his anthem “The Crossing” — “It’s funny how those once so close and now gone still so affect our lives.” In other words, his memory *is* a blessing.



The Courage of Secular Jewish Women in the Madres de Plaza de Mayo

by Judith Tiferes

Growing up as a secular Jewish person in Argentina, the fight for justice has always hit close to home for me. My family's journey has been unique — we were nominally Jewish, but not really in practice. My mom, Diana Wang, was born in Poland in 1945 to Shoah survivors and moved to Argentina with her parents in 1947.

My parents named me Judith, thinking that would be my only connection to our heritage. However, life led me to a Jewish secular high school and eventually to the Or Emet Humanistic Jewish community in Minnesota. Initially, my family lived outside the Jewish community, not even celebrating Jewish holidays. It wasn't until after the AMIA (Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina) center bombing in 1994 that my mom became actively involved in the Jewish community. She ended up on the Governing Board at the World Federation of Jewish Child Survivors and Descendants of the Holocaust, became a member of the Museo del Holocausto de Buenos Aires and, from 2004 to 2018, she was the Chairwoman of Generaciones de la Shoá en Argentina. During that time she got close to Sara Rus, a Holocaust survivor.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Argentina was in chaos with many people, mostly children and youth, disappearing under the dictatorship. A disproportionate number of them Jewish. Women, including secular Jewish women like Sara Rus, held vigils and demanded answers about their missing loved ones. Sara Rus became a significant part of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo movement as both a founder and leader of the movement of brave mothers and grandmothers. The strength and determination of women like Sara Rus and others in the secular Jewish community were vital to the Madres de Plaza de Mayo. These women, driven by their painful pasts and a quest for justice, played a huge role in seeking answers and justice for the “desaparecidos,” the disappeared... For my family, the dictatorship was a time of caution and fear. They kept their beliefs private and stayed out of politics, which kept us safe from direct repression. Still, the stories of those who suffered left a lasting mark on me.

Today, the legacy of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo still inspires me. Their unwavering fight for justice shows the power of collective action. Reflecting on my family's history and my own journey, I'm reminded of the importance of standing up for what is right, no matter what.

Editor's note: On January 18 Judith will present an Or Emet Shabbat program *The Fight for Social Justice: Growing up as a Secular Jew in Argentina*. (more information on page 12).

Jewish leaders of the Madres, like Sarah Rus (Z'L), are SHJ's role models for 2024-2025.

Or Emet News

Or Emet Logo Gear is Available!

Megan Brakob Narvey has set up a site where we can order **Or Emet Hanukkah gifts** including beautiful shirts and mugs with our **logo!** Show your pride [Order Or Emet Logo Wear](#)

Adult B'Mitzvahs

A new Adult B'Mitzvah program cohort is starting with a program orientation meeting this month! The first official program meeting will be in January (scheduling for both meetings is in process). If you want to participate, but haven't already spoken to Rabbi Eva, please contact president@oremot.org

Making Masterpieces With Elmer's Glue and Mustard Seeds

<https://www.nytimes.com/card/2024/10/24/arts/crop-seed-art-minnesota>

The October 24, 2024 New York Times featured an article titled *Making Masterpieces With Elmer's Glue and Mustard Seeds* about Minnesota crop artists including Laura Melnick and Mark Dahlager. For 25 years Laura and Mark have been submitting — and winning — Minnesota State Fair awards for their amazing creations.

Welcome **New Members and Families**

Marcia Avner
Ben Drucker and Christian Galo

Alkemy Frost
Paul Hardt

Donations

Contributors to the Or Emet Rabbi Fund *(in memory of Dr. Harold Londer)*

In support of Rabbi Eva Cohen

Natalie Rosinsky and Don Larsson
Carol and Richard Logan
Harry and Sandy Lerner
Molly Wilbur-Cohen
Eli Effinger-Weintraub
Sarah Ruiz and Sergei Rakhmanov

Joel Weisberg
Jan Withers
Shelley Haven
Joan Barnett
David and Margo Fox
Scott and Ellen Chazdon
Molly Phipps and Ralph Busby

Thank
You!

General Or Emet Donations

Janet Mayer and Paul Petzschke
Rebecca Hicks
Lisa Gardner-Springer
Claire Press
Arty Dorman
Marcia Avner
Dana Fox
Mike Forstein

Barbara Burke
Karol Rubin
Laurie and Joel Kramer
Madeline Louise Miller
Reuben Lubka and Gail Freedman
Jeff Pipes and Florence KC Wong
Seth Binder and Meleah Houseknecht

Don't forget our **Fundraising Drive** in support of the ordination and installation of Rabbi Eva Cohen. Make donations to the Or Emet Rabbi Fund *(in memory of Dr. Harold Londer)*. Donations can be made via [GiveButter](#) or via checks mailed to: Seth Binder, Or Emet Treasurer, 3820 Lyndale Ave. S., Minneapolis MN 55409.

The President's Challenge Grant will match the first 20 donations of \$500; double your donation!
The Goal is \$10,000 matched to \$20,000!

* Donations may be made through Or Emet's website, [oremet.org](#), or by sending a check to Seth Binder, 3820 Lyndale Ave. S., Mpls 55409

Caring Circle

We're here when you need a little extra support



Or Emet's Caring Circle (CC) offers simple, practical, short-term assistance and support to members in times of illness, loss, and crisis. This support supplements and coordinates with other resources (e.g., family, friends, community, professional).

Anyone can let the CC know if they, or a person they know, want or need Caring Circle attention — from a simple card to a personal phone call, an email, a one-time visit, or something more frequent.

— Sarah Ruiz is a trained hospice volunteer and has begun to provide companion visits.

— Our Meal Train is available for Or Emet members who cannot obtain food any other way during recovery from an illness or when experiencing a challenge, making shopping or meal preparation problematic. Strict safety guidelines will be followed during meal preparation and delivery.

Or Emet wants to meet challenges and provide assistance to members when possible.

Email CaringCircle@oremet.org for more information.

Caring Circle Committee

Rabbi Eva Cohen, Karen Cohen, Daniel Lupton, Janet Mayer, Megan Brakob Narvey,
Faith Oremland, Bruce Pomerantz, Sarah Ruiz, Sonny Taylor

SHABBAT PROGRAMS

Shabbat programs meet at the Minnesota JCC Sabes Center, 4330 S. Cedar Lake Rd., St. Louis Park. Programs include a brief Humanistic Shabbat service and are followed by social time.

Saturday | January 18 | 10-11:30 am

Program: *The Fight for Social Justice: Growing up as a Secular Jew in Argentina*

Presenter: Judith Tiferes, Or Emet member

Saturday | February 15 | 10-11:30 am

Program: *Refugee Shabbat*

Presenters: Social Justice/Social Action committee

Saturday | March 22 | 5 pm

Celebration and Installation of Rabbi Eva Cohen
More information on page 13

Friday | April 4 | 7:30 - 9 pm

Program: *The Dead Sea Scrolls*

Presenter: Allan Malkis, retired sociologist, amateur biblical historian, Or Emet past-president

Friday | May 9 | 7:30 - 9 pm

Program: Issues Concerning Communities of Color

Presenter: *Sahan Journal staff*

Sahan Journal is "dedicated to reporting for immigrants and communities of color."

SUNDAY PROGRAMS

Sunday programs are at a **new location:**
Twin Cities German Immersion School

1031 Como Ave, St. Paul.

Adult programs meet concurrently with Jewish Cultural Sunday School classes.

Programs conclude with social time.

Sunday | January 26 | 10 am - noon

Program: *How should Humanists teach their children about the Bible?*

Presenter(s): TBD

Sunday | February 23 | 10 am - noon

Program: *Jewish Communities in Egypt*

Presenter: Patricia Ahearne-Kroll, Director of Graduate Studies | Department of Classical and Near Eastern Religions and Cultures | University of Minnesota

Sunday | March 23 | 10 am - noon

Program: *What is a Jewish Book?*

Rabbi Chalom will lead a public learning session

Presenter: Rabbi Adam Chalom, Dean of International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism; Rabbi, Kol Hadash Humanistic Congregation, Chicago

Sunday | April 27 | 10 am - noon

Program: *The History of Unitarianism*

Presenters: Philipp Muessig, long-time active member of First Unitarian Society

Victor Urbanowicz, long-time active member of Unity Church-Unitarian, St. Paul

Sunday | May 18 | 10 am - noon

Program: *Jewish Identity and Antisemitism*

Presenter: Sami Rahamim, Director of Community Relations and Community Affairs, Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC)

Reminder!

We continue to collect empty pill bottles and personal care items for clients at Listening House, a St. Paul drop-in center. Donations are gratefully accepted at all Shabbat and Sunday programs.

Phishing Warning:

Please be aware there have been **phishing** emails and texts that some members have been receiving from people impersonating "Rabbi Eva." If you receive anything strange or odd, please do not click on links or respond.

Phishing is the fraudulent practice of sending emails or other messages purporting to be from reputable people you may know in order to induce individuals to reveal personal information, such as passwords and credit card numbers, or to ask for money.

Upcoming Events / December 2024 - June 2025



Hanukkah Party | Saturday | December 28 | 4 - 6:30 pm
Minnesota JCC Sabes Center, St. Louis Park

If you want to attend and haven't RSVPed by December 16, contact president@oremet.org

Welcome Brunch

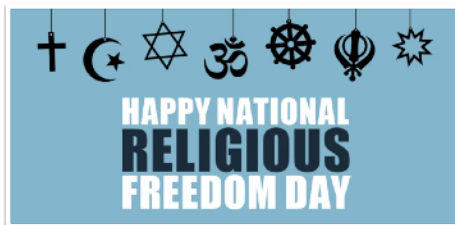
Sunday | January 12 | 2025 | 10:00-12 noon — West Metro location provided with sign up.

For new Or Emet members and others interested in learning about Or Emet!

Families with children are welcome.

Membership information is available on Or Emet's website www.oremet.org

If you are interested in attending and for more info, please contact president@oremet.org.



NATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM DAY FORUM

Saturday, January 18, 2025: 2 – 4:30pm.

At First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis, 900 Mt Curve Ave.

A reception will follow the program.

[Click here for more info and to sign up](#)

Join HumanistsMN to commemorate National Religious Freedom Day exploring the true meaning of religious freedom. This principle, enshrined in our Constitution, keeps government and religion separate and protects the right of Americans of all faiths — or no faith — to practice their beliefs.

Keynote Speaker is Rachel Laser, President & CEO of Americans United for Separation of Church and State in Washington, D.C. She will explain what's at stake in the battle over religious freedom and the steps her group is taking to fight back against the erosion of church-state separation.

Or Emet Book Club

February 9, 2025 | 10:30-12 noon | Kenwood Retirement Community social room | 825 Summit Ave, Mpls

When Time Stopped: A Memoir of My Father's War and What Remains by Ariana Neumann.

Contact bruce.f.pomerantz@comcast.net if you want to participate.



~Installation and Celebration~
Rabbi Adam Chalom, Special Guest
Havdalah service — Klezmer music — Food

Saturday | March 22, 2025 | 5 pm
Minnesota JCC Sabes Center
4330 S. Cedar Lake Rd., St. Louis Park



Passover Seder

Sunday | April 13 | 4:00 pm | First Unitarian Society | Minneapolis

Or Emet Annual Meeting and Congregational Picnic

Sunday | June 1 | 10:00 am | Twin Cities German Immersion School

250 Turners Crossroad South
Apt 324
Golden Valley, MN 55416

OR EMET
MINNESOTA CONGREGATION
FOR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM

