Hanukkah is in full swing as I write this, and we’re also beginning our second pandemic winter. Call it the season of glowing candles and crispy latkes, boosters for adults and finally vaccines for five- to eleven-year-olds … It is also the season of Hanukkah merchandise fails, COVID surges, and Omicron. Like many readers of this newsletter, my feelings about the holiday and the ongoing public health crisis are … complicated.

This year, especially, Hanukkah is a welcome bright spot. It feels restorative to spend eight nights warding off the usual gloom of dwindling daylight — and the unusual gloom of “the new abnormal” — with festive lights, a cappella Hanukkah parodies, kid-friendly gambling, and too much fried food.

At the same time, it’s tiring to watch ham-fisted American retailers try to capitalize on the holiday without knowing the difference between a sufganiyah and a matzo ball. I feel this same mishmash of festive and tired when someone outside the Jewish family wishes me “Happy Hanukkah!” The greeting makes me feel seen, but sometimes leaves me wondering how many people only know the part of my Jewishness they can shove into a Christmas-shaped box.

For humanistic Jews, the “message” of the holiday feels contradictory, too. Should we celebrate the Maccabees as anti-imperialist underdogs who embraced human power to change the world? They did win a revolution against a king and his allies who wanted to stamp out Jewish difference. Or, to counter, should the Maccabees be cancelled? Considering their fundamentalist intolerance for the secular Jews of their day, they’re no Humanistic Jewish Role Models.

The pandemic also keeps bringing up contradictory feelings. I’m grateful to be boosted and glad that the majority of Americans are fully vaccinated. These feelings are matched by my frustration with the CDC’s foot-dragging on acknowledging waning immunity and with the millions of Americans still refusing a first shot.

Many Or Emet events are now happening in person; compared to a year ago, this feels like a Hanukkah miracle. On the other hand, is this how we imagined the post-vaccine future? The fantasy was more carefree — no masks, no lingering threat.

With Hanukkah and COVID, we can see two contradictory truths at once. The signature Jewish winter holiday is festive fun and a commercial bummer. Mainstream awareness of Hanukkah is validating and alienating. The Maccabees are humanist heroes and fundamentalist villains. Knowing how far we have come in our struggle against COVID is joyful, and knowing how far we still have to go is painful.

As humanistic Jews, our complicated relationship to tradition gives us practice in reclaiming and rejecting. This winter, perhaps more than ever, we hold the good and the bad in both hands.
President’s Message
by Allan Malkis

Or Emet is thriving and flourishing despite COVID challenges.

• We succeeded in creating hybrid live/Zoom events which allow more people to enjoy our programs and services.
• We resumed in-person Jewish Cultural Sunday School classes.
• Our book club has met three times and had terrific discussions of fascinating books.
• We had the first of three scheduled Leadership Team meetings.
• We added new members and welcomed back those who are already part of our community.

For all this we can say thanks!

Our next Leadership Team meeting will address cultivating new leaders to help carry our congregation forward. Those who currently volunteer and help make Or Emet sparkle do a terrific job, and we need to encourage others to be ready to step forward and carry on as vacancies occur. What should we do to welcome folks new to Or Emet or new to volunteering? How do we make it easier for younger members and those with families to find ways to contribute and grow? Those will be the questions for our February Leadership Team meeting.

I attended my first meeting of the Society for Humanistic Judaism Board as a full member in November. It was exciting to meet folks who come from around the country (and Canada) and hear what brought them to Humanistic Judaism. We spent several hours thinking about outreach and making Humanistic Judaism better known in the larger community. Recent surveys of American and Twin Cities Jews have shown that a high percentage are not affiliated with the three major streams of Judaism (Reform, Conservative, Orthodox) and many do not consider themselves religiously Jewish, but are culturally connected. Or Emet can provide resources for this growing segment of our community — but only if they know about us. Good ideas for reaching out into the larger Jewish community were shared, and I expect our Outreach Committee will be focusing on some of these.

Finally, I plan to share more information in my weekly updates about other resources/events in the larger Twin Cities Jewish community. This is not to discourage anyone from participating in Or Emet or to promote theistic values, but to remind our members that there are many interesting and valuable things being done by the larger organized Jewish community (JCC, Jewish Federation, other congregations). Or Emet members may benefit from knowing about these, and by participating might even be able to spread the word about our take on Jewish identity.

So stay involved, keep joining us for our programs, and stay warm!
Jewish Cultural School Update
by Arty Dorman
Director of the Or Emet Jewish Cultural School

Our first three Jewish Cultural School (JCS) sessions this year have gone smoothly. After thirteen monthly Zoom sessions, we are grateful for the opportunity to meet in person as we maintain protocols to protect against COVID-19. Protocols include holding class outdoors in the fall, maintaining social distance within classes — made feasible by small class sizes and large enough rooms — and wearing masks except during the brief snack break, along with handwashing and sanitizing work surfaces.

Being in person has allowed students to create a variety of arts and crafts projects, play together, sing as a group, and act out stories. While being read to, younger kids can see the pictures in a real book. Older students (who typically had videos “off” during Zoom classes) see one another, and can be seen by their teacher, nurturing the feeling of community that is one of the cornerstones of the Jewish Cultural School.

Students are pumped up when they learn interesting things and engage in provocative discussions about their own heritage. Our students’ parents have different views on content their children receive, and adult family members have varying degrees of familiarity with Jewish practices, history, and culture, based on their own family histories.

We use a curriculum framework developed with input from teachers and parents, with each group having two or three years of content so that the years students spend in each group — the Littles, Middles, Juniors and B Mitzvah prep groups — do not merely repeat the same material and activities. It draws from the Society for Humanistic Judaism’s Topical Curriculum for Children’s Education Programs.

Our curriculum is divided into eight broad themes, and each month’s lesson draws from several. Themes are 1) Community Service — Tzedaka, Gemilut Hasadim, and Tikkun Olam, 2) Language - Hebrew/Yiddish, 3) Jewish Holidays, 4) History of the Jews, 5) Jewish Customs, Practices and Ethics, 6) Torah and Traditional Literature, 7) Humanism and Humanistic Judaism, 8) Comparative Religion. Jewish arts is not a separate theme, but a thread that applies throughout.

Each session draws from several themes, so over the course of a student’s two or three years in that group they do a fair amount of work on all of them. Themes such as Holidays receive more focus in the two younger groups, while themes such as Comparative Religion are mainly the province of the older groups.

Beyond content, we want JCS to be fun, with engaged learning through a variety of media. We want our students to feel that being Jewish enriches their lives, through their friends at JCS, through their activities in class and Or Emet holiday celebrations, and by seeing themselves as the inheritors of a long and evolving set of values, beliefs, and traditions.

We aim for our students to learn enough to feel confidence and pride in their Jewish identity, to have an interest in continuing those connections beyond B Mitzvah, and to be able to make an informed judgment as they approach adulthood about the place Jewish identity will hold in their lives.

If you have an interest in working as part of a team in the spring and/or summer to continue developing and refining our curriculum, please let me know. Input from parents and other members is invaluable.
High Holiday Donations Drive
Or Emet continues its tradition of successful High Holiday drives for collection of non-perishable food and personal hygiene items. To accommodate the combined virtual and in-person services, members brought donations to services or to host drop-off locations. Approximately 170 pounds of items were collected. Arty Dorman gathered the items and delivered them to Hallie Q. Brown Community Center for distribution to those in need.

Afghan Refugee Resettlement
Twin Cities refugee resettlement agencies are relocating Afghan refugees from Fort McCoy Army base. The base eventually housed 12,600 people, of which almost half were children. Homeland Security’s Welcome Allies Program aims to move refugees to new communities by late January 2022. All refugees have been through vetting and screening procedures several times and are vaccinated against COVID-19 and MMR (mumps, measles, rubella).

How can we help?
- Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota (LSS) seeks “on-call” Direct Action Team volunteers to handle donations and action needs including setting up and furnishing apartments. If team members can help, they respond to email requests — several SA/SJ Committee members have signed up. To join, email margaret.yapp@lssmn.org.
- The agency needs donations to help families get started in their new homes — household, kitchen, cleaning items; personal care/hygiene items; school supplies. Examples can be found at a LSS Target registry.
- Interested in organizing a donation drive? Maybe to gather a full package for one or two families? To share ideas for soliciting donations from local stores, contact Howard Schneider hamptonmeadow@msn.com.

Jews for a Secular Democracy
Jews for a Secular Democracy (JSD), an arm of The Society for Humanistic Judaism, is focused on issues of religion-state separation from a Jewish perspective. “Our goal is to educate, advocate, and mobilize the Jewish community into action on issues of religion-state separation, and help bring the United States back to a place of understanding that protection from discrimination for minority beliefs and minority populations means protection for us all” as stated on JSD’s website.

Go to JSD’s website at https://jfasad.org and sign up for the newsletter, check the blog, and stay up-to-date about important issues. For example, the US Supreme Court has heard arguments about a Mississippi case that could end abortion rights in the United States. A decision is expected by summer 2022. JSD is closely following this matter and is a great source to keep informed, and perhaps take action, from a secular, Jewish perspective. Or Emet’s board has voted to endorse JSD’s Statement on Reproductive Rights.

Ongoing SJ/SA Committee Activities
A January 2022 meeting will begin preparing for the March Refugee Shabbat. Another meeting will discuss/brainstorm possible additional areas of involvement such as the environment and gun violence prevention. Watch your inbox for further details when these meetings have been scheduled.

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 hamptonmeadow@msn.com or 651.278.2286
This fall has been a whirlwind return to in-person activities with Or Emet. It has been great to reconnect with the community in meet-space — and also challenging to navigate COVID precautions, including the technology for delivering hybrid services. While my rabbinic program coursework with the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism (IISHJ) is ongoing, ritual leadership has been absorbing significant focus.

Rabbinic Program
The program continues to be Zoom-based into next year. This fall, I took part in a nine-session seminar on North American Jewish culture. Professor Julian Levinson (University of Michigan-Ann Arbor) engaged students in critical reading of American Jewish primary texts. Texts ranged from Mordecai Noah’s 1825 “Proclamation to World Jewry” on his vision for a Jewish colony near Buffalo, New York, to Adrienne Rich’s powerful 1982 essay, “Split at the Root,” which meditates on the writer’s complicated relationship with paternal Jewish/maternal Episcopal identity, white Southern heritage, and gender and sexuality. We read American Yiddish poets and considered the role of Yiddish popular song in American Jewish cultural identity. Discussions were lively, and I loved exploring Jewish culture through the lens of nineteenth through twenty-first century literature and popular culture. I am excited to be taking an Israeli Jewish culture course in 2022 with Rabbi Sivan Maas — the Israeli dean of the IISHJ.

Or Emet Activities
Hybrid services and programs allow people gathered on Zoom and in-person to participate simultaneously. As the pandemic stretches on, some people still feel unsafe gathering indoors, while others feel sufficiently protected by vaccination and eager for in-person experiences. Meeting each constituency’s needs requires a hybrid approach. To make this happen, we set up a laptop connected to Zoom on the podium so that Zoom attendees can see and hear the service and program, and then we connect this laptop to speakers and a projector so that in-person attendees can see and hear participants on Zoom. At our first hybrid service on Yom Kippur afternoon, just about everything that could go wrong did. I am grateful to Dan Gladen for getting the hybrid format running effectively. As managing the format becomes more comfortable, I hope to have time during events to chat with in-person and online participants. Connecting with the humans in Humanistic Judaism is one of the best parts of my role.

Volunteering with “Friends of the Mississippi River”

It is meaningful to meet in-person again with Jewish Cultural School students, including this year’s B Mitzvah cohort. B Mitzvah students volunteered with Friends of the Mississippi River to improve river gorge health by planting shrubs, wildflowers, and grasses, and toured the American Swedish Institute’s Holocaust history exhibit “Kindertransport: Rescuing Children on the Brink of War.” I look forward to more learning and discovery with this group, including preparations for individual B Mitzvah services. See the Illuminator calendar for a full listing of the five B Mitzvah services scheduled for summer 2022!

Editor’s note: In addition to serving as Or Emet’s ritual leader, Eva teaches the B Mitzvah prep class, coaches candidates, and officiates at the B Mitzvah services.
Our Metaphorical Exile
by Naomi Rockler-Gladen

If you’re anything like me — or like the rest of humanity — it’s been a long year. Rosh Hashanah is all about reflecting on the past year, and beginning a new one with the resolve to be our best selves and do better for humanity. But it’s hard to celebrate new beginnings when we’re still not able to meet in person, and when we’re still dealing with a deadly pandemic. And it’s hard to be our best selves when we’re focused on navigating the new normal.

So if you’re anything like me, one of the things you’ve done this past year is binge-watch TV. One of my favorite Netflix binge programs has been Schitt’s Creek. So let me tell you how Schitt’s Creek inspires me to think about Rosh Hashanah at this moment in time.

Schitt’s Creek is about the self-absorbed, filthy-rich Rose family — Johnny and Moira, and their adult children David and Alexis. Johnny is Jewish, by the way, and the kids have been partly raised Jewish. The Rose family suddenly loses all their money. The only asset they have left is a town they bought as a joke because it’s called Schitt’s Creek. Like many Jews throughout history, they go into metaphorical exile and move into adjoining rooms at a fleabag hotel.

I won’t spoil the show if you haven’t seen it, but the story arc is simple: these self-absorbed, obnoxious people become closer as a family, and they all become better people. Like exiled Jews throughout history, they have to rebuild their lives — and they find out that they’re more resourceful than they thought.

We’re all kind of in exile right now — although hopefully near the end of it! The pandemic came on very suddenly, just like the Rose’s sudden loss of their fortune. One day we’re living our lives and, suddenly, we all get exiled to our homes. Better than a fleabag hotel, but still a jarring new normal.

It can be hard to think about typical Rosh Hashanah issues like self-examination and repentance when a lot of us are still trying to negotiate everyday changes. Sometimes it feels like there’s pressure on us to take advantage of the pandemic to live our best lives — whatever that means.

But here’s the thing about Schitt’s Creek — everyone changes, but no one completely changes. They’re still pretty self-absorbed — except now, they’ve also grown some empathy. At the beginning of the show, Moira and Johnny can’t even remember their Alexis’ middle name and they somehow didn’t know that Alexis was a high school dropout. Towards the end of the show, Alexis is furious when her dad scares off a creepy guy who wants to date her. Johnny apologizes and tells her that he wasn’t present enough in her life before, and that now he wants to make up for that. And, by the end of the show, the Roses all find ways to contribute to the community that they used to see as a prison. Moira’s on the city council; David opens a store; Alexis organizes a town festival for singles. Thanks to the Rose family, things are just a little bit better.

So maybe that’s the Rosh Hashanah lesson as we come out of our metaphorical exile. We don’t need to be living our best lives. That’s an unrealistic expectation. We don’t have to be simply the best — we just have to do our best. We can ask ourselves what we learned from the last few years, and how we helped others — and how we can continue to grow and do better, no matter where our story arcs take us.

L’shana tova, friends, and remember, we Jews know how to handle this exile thing.

Dan Gladen is shown blowing the shofar during High Holiday 2021 services. Notice that the shofar is outfitted with an N95 mask for COVID safety!
Humanistic-ish!
by Howard Schneider

I have reflections today on three topics: an origin story, Yom Kippur liturgy, and Jewish connectedness.

I. Rosh Hashanah origin story — it’s murky!

In the Torah, the beginning of the year was clearly set as the first of Nisan, in the context of Passover. In a Leviticus passage, God told Moses that the people of Israel should observe the first day of the seventh month Tishrei as a day of rest and mark it with the blast of horns. The Torah’s reference is sparse. Rosh Hashanah was not mentioned, rather . . . Yom Teruah (from rū’ā to raise a shout). Sometime between the Torah and the codification of the Mishnah, the Tishrei new year transformed into a major holiday.

II. Yom Kippur and Unetaneh Tokef

One thing is for sure. A central prayer in the Ashkenazi liturgy is Unetaneh Tokef, composed by an 11th-century sage, Rabbi Amnon, and still in use today. To me as a kid, it seemed very severe, outside my scope of understanding, difficult to process the words. Want a little taste?

*The angels are dismayed,*
*They are seized by fear and trembling,...*
*And on Yom Kippur it is sealed...*
*Who shall live and who shall die...*
*Who shall perish by water and who by fire,*
...by sword ... by wild beast,
...by famine ... by thirst,
...by earthquake... by plague,
...by strangulation... by stoning...
*But repentance, prayer and righteousness avert the severe decree...*

One Reform rabbi published a wonderful discussion last year and offered this advice: 1) Don’t read it if you don’t want to. You have agency. 2) Understand it as metaphor; there’s no literal Book of Life in heaven. Use t’shuvah, t’filah, and tzedakah as activities to help live your life meaningfully, or 3) rewrite it for you.

How humanistic-ish! My new word for the new year!

Rabbi Harold Kushner, author of *When Bad Things Happen to Good People,* re-interpreted the notion of what kind of God is God! Rather than an all-powerful God, he said that God does not prevent disease, death or misfortunes of various kinds. Rather, God is there in the aftermath to give us humans the capacity to be loving, kind, and empathetic.

What does Kushner’s God tell us about 9/11? — We saw God’s presence, not by failing to prevent terrorism and death, but in the aftermath. We saw humans act in profoundly brave and unselfish ways.

It confirms my belief that God, in the original and subsequent formulations, is a human creation that we continually update and revise.

III. Contemporary High Holiday Revisionism

We are part of the grand history of Jewish connectedness, even on the holiest day of the Jewish calendar.

Within our humanistic approach, we follow the tradition that the High Holidays are a time to reflect upon our behavior, acknowledge misdeeds, seek forgiveness, and do better in the coming year.

But this reflects only an individual-based approach . . . what I did, what I do now, and what I will do in the future. Maybe this tradition can be enlarged to encompass, not just separate individuals, but to reflect organizationally, collectively. Perhaps we should ask: What has Or Emet done in the past year, both positively and negatively? To whom may we owe an apology and seek forgiveness? How can we improve our organization in the future?
Non-stop conversation: Last October, members of Or Emet’s Book Club could not stop talking about Colum McCann’s recent non-fiction novel *Apeirogon*. Our many comments synched with the multitudes of thoughts suggested by the book’s title, which means a polygon with infinite sides. Our rapid-pace remarks also echoed McCann’s unusual storytelling structure: he breaks the novel into 1,001 numbered segments of varied size. This echo of legendary Scheherazade’s nightly, desperate tale-telling in *The Book of 1,001 Nights* (also known as *The Arabian Nights*) is also apt, given the similar Middle Eastern background of that folk tale collection. *Apeirogon* focuses on the devastation wrought by Israel’s treatment of Palestinians within its borders. Its kernel is the real-life tragedies that befell two of today’s Israeli families, one Jewish and one Palestinian.

Specifically, Irish writer McCann focuses on two fathers who each have lost a teen or tween-age daughter to violence born from this discord. One child is killed by a suicide bomber while the other is mistakenly shot by a nervous soldier. Although the award-winning McCann has said that these tragedies could have taken place in other countries (such as Ireland, Syria, or the United States), Israel’s ongoing, dismaying policies towards Palestinians make *Apeirogon* particularly resonant for Or Emet readers. We see the huge gap between the Jewish ideals we cherish and Israeli government practices. For instance, the needless delays imposed on Palestinian movement between occupied and unoccupied areas seal the fate of grievously wounded, 10-year-old Palestinian Abir Aramin. Her father Bassam cannot persuade Israeli guards to speed his taxi through official checkpoints. The official, dehumanized view of Palestinians is stronger than his pleas and even the evidence of the guards’ own eyes.

But, “What are the alternatives to this?” I can just hear some of you saying — an objection voiced by many others in the wider Jewish community. Yet the friendship that ultimately forms between grief-stricken fathers Bassam Aramin and Rami Elhanan, who in real life did co-found a group committed to Palestinian and Jewish dialogue, reminds us that we cannot stop asking this question. Concern for Israel’s perennially challenged statehood should not be the excuse for its treatment of Palestinians under its jurisdiction, what McCann ironically terms a “pre-occupation” with violence. The term, “End the pre-occupation” occurs throughout the novel. *Apeirogon* does not provide any easy answers here. As its title implies, there are so many “sides” to this question. This novel is also not an “easy read,” with its 500 pages threaded through with telling, sometimes extensive, allusions to birds, music, and world history. Yet *Apeirogon* will transfix you with the heart-rending hurts and injustice it depicts, and Colum McCann’s confident demands upon the reader’s attention.
We’re here for you when you need a little extra support
by Faith Oremland

While Caring Circle continues to send out cards to members in times of illness, loss, and crisis, we have expanded our services to include checking in with various members who may need a little more connection during these difficult times. We’re staying in touch with those who have been ill, experienced a significant loss or crisis, or cannot get out, and would appreciate a phone call to say, “Hello. We care about you.”

Our Meal Train is available for Or Emet members who cannot obtain food any other way during recovery from an illness or are experiencing a challenge making shopping or meal preparation problematic.

Or Emet wants to meet those challenges and provide assistance to our members when possible. Strict safety guidelines will be followed during meal preparation and delivery.

Email CaringCircle@oremet.org for more information on Meal Train or if you know of a member who could use practical, short-term assistance. Contact Faith (faitho711@aol.com) to send out cards for illness, loss, or other crises.

Caring Circle Committee: Eva Rose Cohen, Arielah King, Janet Mayer, Faith Oremland, Shana Tanenbaum

Gwyn Leder has continued to struggle over the past several months with the effects of COVID requiring multiple hospitalizations and continuous oxygen. She’s finally feeling optimistic about recent incremental progress including the ability to get out and about. Gwyn gives Lenny high marks for his caregiving. They are especially thankful for those Or Emet members who have supported them with cards, phone calls, and food.

David and Joan Barnett are exceedingly grateful to Or Emet’s village of caring helpers for pitching in when Dave’s dementia seriously interfered with his independence. We won’t identify those members because we don’t want to embarrass them but their dedication has made a huge difference. Dave is now settled into a residential care home and is content to be getting the care he needs while giving Joan a break from direct caregiving. Even though this placement is a necessary and positive step, it has still been a difficult transition.

Chernah Coblentz, was a long-time, dedicated Or Emet member. She and her wife, Kathy Hagen, participated in congregational events until disabling health problems intervened. In particular, Chernah’s beautiful voice complemented Or Emet services as long as possible. Chernah’s accomplished life is detailed in her obituary.

In Memoriam

Chernah Coblentz, Or Emet member, died September 22. Additional information above.

Frederic Weinberg, Susan Weinberg’s brother, died September 23.
Check out Susan’s blog about her brother at An Unexpected Bridge.

Hazel Chase, Sarah Berman-Young’s grandmother, died on November 22.

May their memories be a blessing.
**Member News and Information**

**Interested in joining a Shabbat dinner club?**

Come share a casual bi-monthly Friday dinner with our Or Emet brothers and sisters. If there is interest, Jeff & Florence will host the first gathering sometime after the New Year. If we get 6 members, we can then alternate location and cooking every other month; each member cooks only once a year! We can also talk about organizing this as a potluck and including children. We are open to inclusive ideas. If you'd like to join, email Jeff at jeff.pipes@sbcglobal.net.

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**Social Media Call To Action**

The Publicity Committee has been updating our web and social media presence. Please join or like our Facebook and Instagram pages AND interact with them actively. We encourage likes, comments, posts of pictures of Or Emet activities and re-posts of articles of interest to our members’ discussion page.

Many synagogues in town have Google and Yelp reviews. You can post a Google review for Or Emet now. We are working on Yelp so stay tuned.


Open Discussion Facebook page for posting discussion items and interacting casually: [Or Emet: Members and Friends Group](https://www.facebook.com/groups/oremet/

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**Faith Oremland** and her son Scott were back in action again at the St. Paul Classic Bike Tour on September 12. Faith and Scott biked 32 miles along with 1,848 others. Faith was happy it didn’t rain and pleased to support the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota.

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**Member Article**

**A Time for Involvement**

by Alan Miller

Those of us old enough to remember or who have lived through World War II are also survivors, in a way, of the Holocaust. We remember when relatives left for the war, some of whom never returned; when distant European family members, people we never met, were exterminated.

But memories of those days are fading, hard to imagine for a younger generation fixated on social media, and unfortunately, victimized by lies and much disinformation. Yet, just this fall, a trial in Charlottesville rekindled that flame of hatred, with Nazi slogans and anti-semitic rants, not only during their fateful march two years ago, but in the courtroom itself. Bigotry, hatred and anti-semitism are at a peak not seen in decades. In Pittsburgh only two years ago, it resulted in a mass killing in a synagogue. The examples, unfortunately, are worldwide.

In addition, a partisan political divide has encouraged threats of violence not only to elected officials, but to peaceful volunteers such as election judges. As Jews, as Americans who cherish not only our Constitution, but the freedom to vote and choose representatives in fair elections, we are not helpless.

The answer is to get involved, to speak up, to participate in your community, whether it be with school boards, in elections, in letters to the newspapers, or just by making certain that your voice is heard. As Robert M. Hutchins was quoted in *Great Books* in 1954, "The death of democracy is not likely to be by assassination from ambush. It will be a slow extinction from apathy, indifference and undernourishment." Silence is a death knell. We are the majority and must be heard. Become a Patriot. Get involved.
My Adult B Mitzvah Travelogue
by Jeff Pipes

I'll just start by outing myself as a new Jew, someone who did not grow up Jewish, but someone who had a tenuous Jewish family background (adoption and lost biological family history) and has cryptically been interested in and connected to Judaism my entire life. In discovering Or Emet and Humanistic Judaism, I have found a beautiful and accepting way to embrace it.

It's so much more than I ever expected. The embrace of this culture, this civilization, these people, and this religion, has overwhelmed me in its love and acceptance. I ask, how do I fit in to all of this, and how does completing an adult B Mitzvah fit into the past, present and future of Humanistic Judaism?

Five thousand years of history is daunting, especially since it unfolded across the entire globe. As our adult B Mitzvah group begins to put together a core reading list, we are including a few texts setting out the human geography of the history of the Jews. What I'm most looking forward to is hearing the family and personal histories of other members, and how we all fit into this collective history. Speaking of history, where do Humanistic Jews fit? Our history is short, but Rabbi Wine's genius insight into modern Jewish thinking is history itself. So is our thinking really new, or has this been an underlying philosophy since the beginning? Inquiring minds want to know!

We've had many fine Shabbat and Sunday programs about where Jews are today: who is a Jew, how Israel fits into 21st century Judaism, how we as Jews fit into today's world, and how we can embrace and improve the world from our Humanistic Jewish perspective. How do I fit in to today's Judaism, and what can I do to promote this unique, human-driven perspective?

Ultimately, will Judaism survive the modern world? Does it have a future? What will it look like? As humanists, we believe in a science-based, human-driven system of reason and compassion. How can we help to ensure that it continues, grows, and works to make humanity better?

I hope to answer some of these many questions. For tradition, for my present growth as a Jew, and for the future of Humanistic Judaism, I want to stand up as an adult B Mitzvah before my congregation, my wider Jewish community, and my family to acknowledge my commitment.

Under a Humanistic Chuppah
by Janet Mayer

On a beautiful fall day in September, Or Emet’s Sarah Berman-Young officiated at a wedding for a couple who chose a Jewish Humanist ceremony. Sarah worked with them over the past year to create a service that honored their wishes, which included a humanistic version of the traditional Seven Blessings under a chuppah, and ending with breaking a glass. The result was a joyous occasion that was very well received by the couple, their family, and friends.

Sarah is licensed by the American Humanist Association to perform weddings in Minnesota. Services are highly personalized and honor the couples’ wishes by allowing them to craft their own ceremony. It is their choice as to whether to incorporate traditional features. Those attending get to know who the couple is, not just that they are now legally committed to each other.

If you know friends or family for whom an Or Emet-officiated wedding, or other lifecycle event, might be just the right fit, invite them to contact ceremonies@oremet.org.
On December 5, the final night of Hanukkah, Or Emet celebrated at the Cederholm Community Room in Roseville. Over 40 people danced, sang, played dreidel, ate latkes and lit the menorah in solidarity against the darkness and despite missing our friends through the pandemic.

A definite highlight was dancing the *Banu Chosech Legaresh*, an Israeli dance meaning “we came to get rid of the dark!” Dancing outside was a fun way to keep warm.

Potato Latkes, of course!

Eva Cohen

Jeff lighting the menorah

Arty’s Mitten Menorah decked out with winter gear. Items were donated to the Neighborhood House.

Mini-menorah created by the Finestack children

Leta and Sarah teaching the *Banu Chosech Legaresh* dance

Dancing the *Banu Chosech Legaresh* outside
## Programs / January - June 2022

*Programs are currently planned to be hybrid on-site with Zoom options.*

When available, updated program information is posted on [oremet.org](http://oremet.org) calendar and shared with Or Emet’s listserv.

### Shabbat Programs

Shabbat programs (usually) meet at the Sabes Jewish Community Center, 4330 South Cedar Lake Rd, St. Louis Park. They include a brief Humanistic Shabbat service.

**Saturday, January 8 | 10:00 am**

**Program:** The Interfaith Coalition and the effort to restore teaching Jewish history and other world religions to the Minnesota Social Studies standards  
**Presenter:** Ethan Roberts, Director of Government Affairs, Jewish Community Relations Council

**Saturday, February 5 | 10:00 am**

**Program:** Gender Etiquette: working through discomfort/uncertainty with non-binary, gender fluid, gender queer, agender, and transgender identities.  
**Presenter:** Rachel Wexelbaum, Or Emet member, LGBTQ+ activist, and Education Director at St. Cloud Correctional Facility

**Friday, March 4 | 7:30 pm**

**Program:** Refugee Shabbat: Overview of Global Refugee Situation and Afghan Resettlement in MN and the US  
**Presenters:** Or Emet Social Justice/Social Action committee members and others TBD

April 1 and May 20 programs TBD

### Sunday Programs

Sunday programs are (usually) at the St. Paul Talmud Torah, 768 Hamline Ave. South, St. Paul. Adult programs meet concurrently with Jewish Cultural Sunday School classes.

**Sunday, January 16 | 10:00 am - 12:30 pm**

**Program:** Golems Past and Present - Highlighting golem literature and how female golems written by female authors differ from depictions by men.  
**Presenters:** Michal Moskow and Scott Chazdon, Or Emet members

**Sunday, February 13 | 10:00 am - 12:30 pm**

**Program:** Rondo Neighborhood’s Past, Present, and Future to include the history, keeping the community’s spirit alive, and visions for the future.  
**Presenters:** Melvin Giles, a community-builder and peacemaker, will lead a panel from Rondo.

March 13, April 10, and May 15 programs TBD

### Donations

Honoring Dr. Harold Londer’s first yahrzeit — to the Harold Londer Memorial Fund  
Dr. Jan Withers  
Richard and Carol Logan

In memory of Chernah Coblentz; and in memory of Hazel Chase, grandmother of Sarah Berman-Young  
Paul Petschke and Janet Mayer  
David and Joan Barnett

For Or Emet’s rabbi fund  
Seth Fine  
Susan Weinberg

For use where most needed  
Muriel Sterne  
Paul Petschke and Janet Mayer

* Donations may be made through Or Emet’s website [oremet.org](http://oremet.org) or by sending a check to Seth Binder, 3820 Lyndale Ave. S., Mpls 55409
**Upcoming Events / January - June 2022**

**Babylon Beer Bro’s | Thursday, January 13 | 5:30 pm — and subsequent 2nd Thursdays!**
At Venn Brewing | 3550 E. 46th St. | Minneapolis
Once the plague has subsided, let's gather to cheer on the end of the 1300s (or at least the early 2020s; what's 750 years between friends!?). Family friendly gathering of Or Emet congregants and friends.
**Agenda:** 1) vote on a better (and more feminist!) group name, 2) Get to know your friendly Or Emet members.
Contact Jeff at jeff.pipes@sbcglobal.net for more information.

**Or Emet Book Club | Wednesday | January 26 | 6:30 - 8:00 pm**
The *World That We Knew* by Alice Hoffman. More information is in an article about the book club on page 8.
This meeting will be on Zoom. If interested in participating, contact Scott Chazdon schazdon@umn.edu.

**New and Prospective Member Virtual Brunch | Saturday | January 29 | 10:00 - 11:30 am**
Join Or Emet members and Paul Golin, Executive Director of The Society for Humanistic Judaism (SHJ).
Learn more about Or Emet, SHJ, and why this might be the home you didn't know you were missing!
If interested in attending, contact president@oremet.org for the Zoom link.

**Humanistic Passover Seder | Saturday | April 16**
At this time, details are unknown about the Seder’s time and if it will be in-person or virtual.
When available, information will be posted on oremet.org calendar and shared with Or Emet’s listserv.

**Or Emet’s Annual Meeting and Picnic | Sunday | June 5 | location TBD**
• Annual Meeting with election of officers 10:00 am - 12:00 noon
• Potluck Picnic 12:00 noon - 2:00 pm