

THE ILLUMINATOR

Spring 2006

Where is my light? My light is in me. Where is my hope? My hope is in me. Where is my strength? My strength is in me. And in you. - Rabbi Sherwin Wine

Passover 2006

15-22 Nisan
(1st night: April 12)

On the ancient Jewish calendar, Passover was the original Jewish new year. Many ancient near eastern cultures celebrated the rebirth of spring as the beginning of the year. Our Passover is actually a combination of two older holidays, and the two names in the Bible for the holiday reflect our dual roots. One holiday, *Hag Hapesakh* (holiday of the pascal lamb), is a shepherd's holiday, and in ancient times was marked by the late-night sacrifice of a lamb as a blessing of the new flocks. The other holiday, called *Hag Hamatsot* (holiday of matsas), was an agricultural festival in which farmers offered the fruits of their fields in hope of a good harvest. These two ancient holidays provide the combined symbols of our modern Passover celebration.

Later in Jewish history, the story of the Exodus from Egypt, an archetypal struggle for freedom from oppression and slavery, was overlaid onto these older and universal themes of birth, renewal, and sacrifice. Symbols from the older rituals were infused with new meanings connected to the story of Moses and the children of Israel leaving the tyranny of Pharaoh and finding their freedom.

In modern times, the Passover Seder (which means "order") was again imbued with fresh meaning. The civil rights struggle in the United States, the period of harsh Soviet imprisonment of "refuse-niks" (Jews who wanted to leave the Soviet Union), the women's movement all these modern struggles for freedom from oppression have contributed to making this holiday a more meaningful and powerful community celebration today. (adapted from www.shj.org)

Bat and Bar Mitzvot

Please join us as we celebrate with great happiness the Bat Mitzvah of our daughter **Leah Mayira Fox Liberman**.

Havdalah Service
Saturday, **April 8** at 7 pm.
Neighborhood House
Paul and Sheila Wellstone Center for Community
179 Robie St. E. in St. Paul

Our celebration continues with a Reception and Dancing from 8-11 pm. in Leah's honor.

We look forward to seeing you there.
-- Regan and David

Directions to the Paul and Sheila Wellstone Center for Community

From the North: From I-35E, take the Concord Street exit. At the Concord St. exit, take a right onto Ada St. (1 block before the stop light). Go to Robie St. and turn left to the Center.

From the South: From I-35E, turn E. on I-494. Turn N. on Hwy. 52. At the Concord St. exit, go left onto Concord/Cesar Chavez. Take a right onto Ada St. (1 block before the stop light). Go to Robie St. and turn left to the Center.

From the East and West: From I-94, turn south on Hwy. 52 South. Take the Concord Street exit. At the Concord St. exit, take a right onto Ada St. (1 block before the stop light). Go to Robie St. and turn left to the Center.

The Center is handicapped accessible and has an attached free parking ramp. If you have any questions, call 651.454.5818.

Coincident with Leah's *Bat Mitzvah*, we will also be celebrating the **85th birthday of Edith Davis**.

Ian Gorodisher and **Reed Monson** will celebrate their *Bar Mitzvah* at the Science Museum of in St. Paul on Sunday, **May 21, 2006** at 2 pm.

Written invitations along with RSVP cards will be sent to the general congregation.

Devon Cox and **Gaia R.** will celebrate their Bat Mitzvah on Saturday, **June 10**. Place and time to be announced via invitation.

The *Illuminator* welcomes:

Letters to the editor; essays; poems; humor; announcements of Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, weddings, graduations, and anniversaries; articles; photographs (black and white), if relevant to an article; and appropriate paid advertisements.

Published quarterly.

Dues:	Individuals	\$235
	Families	\$300
	- w/school	\$360
	- add. child	\$40

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Or Emet is affiliated with the Society for Humanistic Judaism (SHJ) and the International Federation of Secular Humanistic Jews .

Executive Committee Report

The current year has seen the addition of several new families and individuals to our membership. We appreciate the generous involvement that we see forthcoming from them. We will close this season in a much better financial situation than we began it. Cooperative and responsible participation by the *Or Emet* membership in all areas of activity has made this possible.

We are looking forward to several advances in our congregational activities. The Education Committee is working toward additional varied activities for students in the Jewish Cultural School. Our students, parents, teachers and committee leaders are exploring ways to make every student's experience more challenging and fulfilling.

Two new possible enrichments of our congregational life are under consideration and implementation: an organized plan to provide modest help to individuals and families who face sickness or other problems with which we can help. The Membership Committee, chaired by Joan Barnett will facilitate this work. We would also like to develop a very basic but helpful Congregational Directory if sufficient interest is evident. This will be a utilitarian booklet, not glossy and dripping with color. Clean and crisp, but meant to be used for the year, and tailored to the desires and interests of each person and family involved.

In addition, we will look forward to securing the services of an Administrative Assistant for next year. This will be a part-time job, requiring basic mobility and computer access. It would be ideal if a member of the congregation were to take the position. The qualifications will not be difficult to fulfill and the work-load should be compatible with other responsibilities. If anyone has suggestions, please let us know. We will make every reasonable effort to organize this work for the satisfaction of all concerned.

Please join me in thanking the many committee members who have worked diligently this year.

- - *Phil Griffin, President*

***Or Emet* Member Services**

We are in the planning stage of a committee to address member needs. Our purpose is to be able to respond in an organized way when members encounter major stressful life events. Providing help to members in need is a natural progression of caring within our congregation. Since this will work best with active participation, we need to hear from members who would like to help in any capacity. Please communicate your ideas or willingness to volunteer to Joan Barnett at 763.525.1058 (dandjbarnett@comcast.net) or Joyce Abel at 952.932.0832 (abel9342@earthlink.net).

Humanistic Judaism is a voice for Jews who value their identity and who seek an alternative to conventional Judaism.

Humanistic Judaism rejects supernatural authority and affirms the rights of individuals to control and be responsible for their own lives.

The Society for Humanistic Judaism mobilizes individuals to celebrate Jewish identity and culture in a manner consistent with humanistic philosophy.

Or Emet Spring 2006 Schedule

	Time	Location	Event
March			
Friday 24	7:30 pm.	Sabes Mpls. JCC	Shabbat Service and Program: "Orthodox Then – Humanist Now." Muriel Sterne.
April			
Sunday 2	10 am.	Friends School	Cultural School and Adult Program: "Humanistic Judaism and Passover." Bruce Pomerantz.
Saturday 8		Neighborhood House	Bat Mitzpa of Leah Mayira Fox Liberman
April 14	6 pm.	Department of Indian Works	Congregation Seder
May			
Sunday 14	10 am.	Friends School	Cultural School and Adult Program: "Humanist Secular Judaism and the Question of Spirituality." Margo Fox
Friday 19	7:30 pm.	Sabes Mpls. JCC	Shabbat Service and Program: "A Hidden Child of the Holocaust." Rose Meyerhoff (Survived Holocaust in a Belgian Convent)
Sunday 21	2 pm.	Science Museum	Bar Mitzvot of Ian Gorodisher and Reed Monson
June			
Sunday 4	10 am.	Friends School	Cultural School and Annual Members Meeting
Friday 9	6 pm.	Wolfe Park	Picnic
Saturday 10	tba	tba	

The Minneapolis Sabes JCC is located at 4330 Cedar Lake Rd. in St. Louis Park.

Minnesota Friends School is located at 1365 Englewood Ave. in St. Paul.
Use the Albert Street entrance.

Department of Indian Works is located at 1671 Summit Ave. in St. Paul.

All *Or Emet* Programs are free and open to the public. A Humanistic Jewish service precedes Friday evening programs and light refreshments follow.

Congregation News

"If you do not know where you are going, any road will get you there."
- - Thomas Carlyle

Strategic Planning

Or Emet's Strategic Planning Committee has been meeting for the past several months to discuss and prepare recommendations to present to members at the Annual Meeting on June 4, 2006.

Before finalizing our recommendations, we welcome any thoughts, concerns, and ideas you would like considered. Contact any Planning Committee member with your comments (See contact details at the end of this article.).

Proposed Mission Statement. *Or Emet's* mission is to be a caring and stimulating community celebrating Humanistic Judaism. We respect the variety with which Jewish Humanists choose to express their Judaism. *Or Emet* offers the opportunity to come together and celebrate Jewish identity in a secular framework.

Given our small congregation, we rely on participation from all members to accomplish our mission. You are important to our future, whether you serve on a committee or the Executive Committee; attend programs, services or special events, or simply become a member.

How to make it all happen. Here are some of our preliminary recommendations and ideas. Please send us your own comments.

Programming Committee. Plans and makes arrangements for *Or Emet* programs, which currently take place monthly for Friday night Shabbat and monthly for Sunday the adult sessions held simultaneously with the children's Jewish Cultural School sessions. Events presently run from September through May. Programs are selected in areas that relate to Jewish culture and tradition, or are of contemporary interest.

Areas to address include: Identifying subject matter, presenters and manner of presentation, ways of involving more members in the details of the Shabbat and Sunday sessions, frequency of meetings, summer programming, weekend seminars, and perspectives from other Humanistic Jewish organizations.

Jewish Cultural School (JCS). Stimulates and supports our children's Jewish humanistic identity, provides mentoring in the *bar/bat mitzvah* program, and offers opportunities for social action.

Areas to address include: Balancing traditional and secular songs and ritual, teaching Hebrew; enrollment; and publication/communication of the curriculum to all members, particularly as students move from younger to older classes.

Care Committee (new committee). Addresses celebration of life cycle events and meeting of members' needs during illness, bereavement, and other crises. Areas to address include: Creation of a structure for participation and for meeting members' needs.

Adult Education. Currently presents an annual winter series of sessions around specific subject areas (separate from *Or Emet's* semi-monthly programs).

Areas to address include: Curriculum planning, coordination with Program Committee, recruitment of presenters, and summer program possibilities.

Social Action Committee. Keeps members informed about activities in the larger community that are consistent with Humanistic Jewish principles. An ongoing project for our members is our periodic group participation in Second Harvest's food distribution program.

Areas to address include: Identification of additional group projects and special areas of attention, joint activities with other Jewish and non-Jewish groups, recruitment of members, as well as improving the public awareness of *Or Emet*.

Jewish Holidays and Celebrations. Jewish holidays and celebrations are currently integrated into our regular programming. Our observances are designed to reflect our respect for the traditions of our ancestors, but are modified to be consistent with our secular philosophy, avoiding references to supernatural intervention.

Areas to address include: Ritual leadership, how much and in what form we might choose to use traditional songs, prayers and Hebrew, and periodic review and revision of our High Holiday and *Shabbat* service booklets.

Ritual Committee. Harold Londer serves as our ritual leader. His role includes helping students prepare for *bar/bat mitzvahs*. Many of us help by conducting Friday night and *Havdalah* services. Lionel Davis and Amy Stubenhaus provide musical leadership for our services and the JCS.

Areas to address include: Creation of a description of a ritual leader's duties: do we want more or is what we have adequate? Involving other leaders, balancing of traditional and secular songs and ritual, use of Hebrew, and teaching songs to the choir and congregation.

Communication. Communication is a basic area of concern for our growth and health as a congregation. It includes keeping our members informed via newsletter, e-mail, phone, and mail, as well as informing the larger community about our activities.

Areas to address include: Media issues, including public relations, publication in Jewish and metro media, web page potential, representation by *Or Emet* at Jewish and other community events, and recruitment of people with skills to take on communication-related tasks.

Membership Committee. Addresses outreach, welcoming and orientation of new members; involvement of members; and socializing to build and maintain a sense of community.

Areas to address include: Outreach, growing the congregation, and dues (see **Financial**, below).

Financial. Develops and reports on budget, manages costs, income, and financial outlook. Areas to address include: Dues structure, fundraising, and donations.

Executive Committee. Charged with administering the congregation; but has by default done much of the work that otherwise would be done by our committees. Our members have admirably plunged in to fill gaps, but burnout is inevitable with this operating structure.

Areas to address include: Creation of clear job descriptions, expectations and responsibilities; coordination and participation of officers and committee chairs. Additional issues include the possibility of hiring a part-time Administrator and recommending amendment of the bylaws.

Please contact us with your thoughts:

Edith Davis (EdithRDavis@juno.com)
Margo Fox (MargoFox10@comcast.net)
Harold Londer (Londerh@aol.com)
Janet Mayer (jmayer@unique-software.com)
Laura Melnick (laura.melnick@smrls.org)
Rich Sonenblum (rsonenblum@LOGIS.org)

Social Justice Committee

The Social Justice Committee will meet in early April to discuss the following:

1. Social Justice message for Passover
2. Position Statements on Gay Marriage, Reproductive Freedom and Minnesota State Budget Priorities
3. Plans for presentations on Jewish social justice traditions/history at Shabbat services in 2006.

An email announcement will be sent to all members inviting them to the meeting once date and place have been determined.

Or Emet dues are: Individual - \$235; Family - \$300; Family with children in the Cultural School - \$360, additional child - \$40. Payment plans and adjustments for low-income are available. Dues are payable on September 1. If you have not already paid, please send your dues to Steve Oremland, Treasurer, 1350 Waterford Dr., Golden Valley, MN 55422. Your dues pay for all of the activities and programs of the congregation, including our seder, and include a subscription to the important journal *Humanistic Judaism*.

SHJ News

SHJ Joins Secular Coalition for America

With the advent of the 2006 calendar year, the Society for Humanistic Judaism became an active member of the Secular Coalition for America (www.secular.org). According to its director Lori Lipman Brown, the Secular Coalition of America is "the nation's first lobbying organization that works to increase the visibility and respectability of non-theistic viewpoints in the United States and to protect and strengthen the secular character of our government as the best guarantee of freedom for all."

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SHJ Communications Committee

More than 30 North American Humanistic congregations belong to the Society for Humanistic Judaism (SHJ) and membership exceeds 10,000 people.

The first Humanistic Jewish congregation, the Birmingham Temple in the greater Detroit area, was founded in 1963. The SHJ was founded in 1969 by three congregations.

Eight Humanistic rabbis, and more than 50 additional leaders and educators have graduated from SHJ's related International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism (IISHJ). The IISHJ was founded in 1985 and the rabbinic program began in 1992. Five more North American Humanistic rabbis are in the pipeline.

The first Israeli Humanistic rabbi was ordained by IISHJ in 2003, and 9 more will be ordained in a ceremony in Israel in July 2006, with additional Israeli rabbinic students on the way.

Proposed SHJ Statement on Church/State

The SHJ Ethical Concerns Committee is proposing that the SHJ adopt a position paper on the separation of church and state. This is an issue of increasing importance to us as Humanistic Jews and one that is relevant to so many events occurring in the world.

Society for Humanistic Judaism, Statement on Church and State

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof”

The SHJ embraces the historic importance of the separation of church and state and the guarantee of religious liberty expressed in the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

As we dedicate ourselves to the tradition of Jefferson and Madison and to the standard established by the First Amendment, we acknowledge that the separation of church and state enables individuals to make choices concerning religion or non-religion with freedom and without the imposition of the ideologies of others. We affirm that the imposition of religious doctrine, when facilitated by government action, is a violation of these Constitutional guarantees. We affirm that the government's role in religion is to protect the rights of individuals and groups to practice their religions. We affirm not only the freedom to practice religion as one chooses, but also the freedom to not practice any religion and to not be subjected to

government action that supports any particular religion or religion in general.

As a consequence, we oppose, as violations of the Constitutional doctrine of separation of church and state: (1) the teaching of creationism, intelligent design, or any other religion-based outlooks in science classes of public schools and any other schools supported by public funds; (2) public funding of vouchers that may be used to pay for education in religious schools or religious programs; (3) the display on public property of religious symbols, including the Ten Commandments and Hanukkah menorahs; (3) the use of public funds to support the delivery of social services by religious organizations; (4) public funding of military and other chaplains; (5) religious statements by public officials when acting in their official capacities; (6) any other government actions or funding that may be construed to be in support of religion or religious beliefs.

(The intentions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom, which includes “freedom of conscience and religion,” is reflected in this statement.)

Another Pioneer Humanistic Jew Has Departed

by Phil Griffin

Betty Friedan, author of the groundbreaking book, *The Feminist Mystique*, died last December on her 85th birthday. She had outlived most of her early adversaries, many of them women who took her scholarly treatise as an outrage on the devotion of women to their homes and families. Her positions on feminist theories were several steps ahead of her supporters and light-years ahead of her adversaries. She led the way in making the world of her daughters vastly different from that of her mother and herself.

She was both a Jew and a humanist. The former made her an onlooker to much of the small town society of Peoria, and thus bred deep resentment at the exclusion she felt. The latter gave her the tools of the social sciences by which to attack and transform the cultural inequities for women, the poor and the excluded of that culture. My personal acculturation into the male-dominant society was too early to be enlightened by the feminist movement, and it was also too late to give my mother the advantages that would have made her life more fulfilling. I am amazed to see how much my daughters have gained in freedom of choice because of the progress that humanists like Betty Friedan have helped to make. The coming of Affirmative Action rattled the cages of academic hiring bosses like me, and some of us wondered why we were so long in arriving at this obvious improvement in our recruitment practices.

Friedan's reference for gender justice was not the ancient writings, but the sciences of psychology, sociology and economics. She was a recognized scholar before she was labeled a firebrand. Her signature book, *The Feminist Mystique*, was rated number seven in the list of most harmful books of the 19th and 20th centuries in the right-wing magazine, *Human Events*. It was right there between Marx's *Das Kapital* and August Comte's *The Positive Philosophy*. The American Humanist Association named her Humanist of the Year for 1975, the same award given to Rabbi Sherwin Wine in 2003.

My personal gratitude goes to Friedan for introducing me to this passage from the writings of Rainer Maria Rilke, which she placed on the facing page of her book, *The Second Stage*,

*Be patient towards all that is unsolved in
your heart
And try to love the questions themselves.
Do not now seek the answers, which
cannot be given you
Because you would not be able to live
them.*

*And the point is, to live everything.
Live the questions now.
Perhaps you will then gradually, without
noticing it
Live along some distant day into the
answers.*

Thus began the effort to claim that denial is legitimate "revisionist" historical inquiry. Never mind that no academic historian was a denier or that denial "methodology" is a wild mixture of poorly written exaggeration, willful misreading of fact, out and out fabrication, and blatant anti-Semitism.

Extremist right-wing financing created the pseudo-academic Institute for Historical Review (IHR) in 1979. Complete with a journal, conferences and a web site, the IHR claims to be in the business of legitimate historical inquiry. No legitimate historians, however, have written for IHR and more than half of its published articles have been devoted to denial of the Holocaust. Articles such as "Ann Frank's Diary: A Hoax," "The Mendacity of Zion," "Human Soap," "The Holocaust and the Myth of the Past as History," and "Two False Testimonies from Auschwitz," have and continue to appear in IHR's journal.

Denial did attract one bona fide historian. David Irving, author of over 30 books since the 1960's, including *The Destruction of Dresden* (1963) and the acclaimed *Hitler's War* (1977), had become a denier. Irving had always argued that Hitler had more good qualities than bad, had been betrayed in most things by his Nazi associates, and had no personal knowledge of the Holocaust. Irving had by the early 1980's been adopted by the deniers – invited by IHR to their conferences, paid to speak to denier groups in the U.S., Canada, Austria and Australia. By 1989, Irving began to describe himself as a Holocaust denier.

Irving became the public face of denial. Vilified as he made his speaking tours, his stature as a historian could not be doubted. Irving became emboldened enough to sue for libel in the British courts the writer Deborah Lipstadt in 1996. Lipstadt in her book *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (1994), had described Irving as a denier, a falsifier of History, and an anti-Semite. The ensuing three-month trial in 2000 resulted in a lengthy judgment

effecting destroying Irving's reputation as a historian depriving Holocaust denial of any legitimacy insofar as it may have had.

Irving additionally was convicted of the crime of Holocaust denial – Austria, Germany and France have criminalized denial speech – in February 2006 and is currently serving a three-year sentence in Austria. His imprisonment has, rightfully, raised freedom of speech concerns. The laws were enacted in countries and at a time when the revival of fascism was a tangible fear. Has not that concern abated? Can criminalizing denial speech be still justified?

No accurate survey exists of how widespread denial is. Anecdotal evidence suggests that it has become a powerful symbol of anti-Israeli sentiment in the Islamic world. A good guess is that denial has become the modern face of anti-Semitism and has attached to traditionally anti-Semitic populist politics in Latin America (Hugo Chavez is a denier) and Eastern Europe. It has been and probably remains strong in Ukrainian and German ethnic groups in Canada (I remember a man reading a denier newsletter at the next table in a Finnish cafe in Thunder Bay) and the U.S. (the father of a friend is a denier). Patrick Buchanan has been a doubter if not a denier. Some European leftist anti-Zionists have become deniers.

No credible academic or politician in the western world has espoused denial, nor could one without facing substantial approbation. David Irving has managed to single-handedly undermine the part of the denial movement that was seeking intellectual validation. He probably still will get an invitation to President ['s] conference. Now, if he can only get prison furlough to attend.



OR EMET

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