



# Kol Haverim

## The Finger Lakes Community for Humanistic Judaism

Affiliated with the Society for Humanistic Judaism

Newsletter Issue #15

August, 2002

Dear Friends,

As the new editor of the newsletter, putting together my first issue deepened my appreciation of Barb Behrmann's hard work for Kol Haverim/FLCHJ. Editing, I discovered, means keeping track of all that's going on in Kol Haverim, and connecting an array of articles, information, and details to it. Barb has done all this for 14 issues, and this is only one of the many activities, large and small, she has undertaken for the congregation's growth and vitality over the last four years. Editing the newsletter alone would, as we say at Passover, "dayenu"—have been enough. To have done that and so much more deserves a big thanks, to Barb from all of us.

Also deserving many thanks are Marlo Del Toro, who provides the design and layout, and Ellen Wiernicki, who does the newsletter mailing. Not until I began work as editor did I fully recognize the quiet but considerable contributions they make to our congregation, and the extent to which the newsletter is a team effort. Thanks, Marlo and Ellen!

With any switch in editorship, continuity and change are to be expected. I will continue to include Barb's special touches, such as the "Dear Friends" opening column, and of course the newsletter will provide what a newsletter of this kind should provide. There will be information about and reports on Kol Haverim activities, such as Jewish holidays and Fourth Friday programs, the Sunday school, the study group, board meetings, etc. And there will be articles and news about the membership, particularly on special life cycle events (wedding, bar mitzvahs, etc.).

Among the changes, I will be encouraging those who write on Kol Haverim activities to include examples of the content of these activities that readers might find informative and evocative. In this newsletter readers will find Harry Segal's explanation of the meaning of the Shabbat that is taught in Sunday school, a Mark Twain quote in Susan Sandman's report on the study group, and information about violence in Jewish families in Jonathan Joseph's piece on the Walk for Violence Prevention.

The newsletter will also include an article on Jewish philosophy and culture, both humanistic and traditional. The latter will be included because, although we are humanistic Jews, within our theistically-based tradition there is much that can be adapted to inform and move us. In this newsletter, as an example of the latter, I have included a piece based on Martin Buber's *The Legend of Baal-Shem*. I invite members (including a special

invitation to the students in the Sunday school) to submit pieces for this part of the newsletter.

Beginning soon, the newsletter will be available in both print and electronic versions. The addition of the latter is necessary for reducing mailing costs and beneficial because of the added publishing latitude it will provide. An article on how this publication change will affect members and non-members appears in this issue.

A section of the newsletter that represents both continuity and change will be an ongoing discussion of Jewish-Palestinian conflict, a painful and contentious one for Jews everywhere. The last issue of the newsletter included a speech on peace in the Middle East given by Rabbi Ben Biber of the Machar Congregation in D.C. This issue contains a letter sent by a number of Kol Haverim members to the national board of the Society for Humanistic Judaism in response to its "We Stand With Israel" resolution (on the website [www.shj.org](http://www.shj.org) and in the current issue of Humanistic Judaism). In Kol Haverim, we are all "pro-Israel" insofar as we support Israel as a nation and desire its secure, peaceful future. Nonetheless, within the Kol Haverim spectrum of views there are differences over this central moral crisis for Jews today. Anyone attempting to make a considered evaluation of this crisis has to grapple with difficult questions: How do the actions of the Israeli state accord with Jewish values, especially the fundamental value of *Tikkun Olam*, "repairing the world"? What Jewish values must inform a just, secure and viable peace settlement for both Jews and Palestinians? And for humanistic Jews, there is the special question of how the theistic beliefs that have influenced Israeli state policy accord with a humanistic vision of the future of Israel and of Judaism around the world. As a Jewish community we need to draw upon the deep Jewish tradition of dialogue and address these issues in ways that are constructive, not divisive.

This newsletter can make a small contribution to that purpose by serving as one forum for that dialogue, and I invite readers of all views to contribute to it. I envision the model for this dialogue to be nothing less than the public and media debate in Israel. One need only look, for example, at the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aratz* ([www.haartz.com](http://www.haartz.com)) for an illustration of a broad spectrum of opinion (far beyond what is usually found in the U.S. media). This should be model for our newsletter, and for enriching the Kol Haverim community.

In peace and friendship,

Gerry Coles

## Community Calendar

### Administrative Board

Chairperson: Barbara Behrmann  
 Vice Chairperson: David Levitsky  
 Secretary: not yet filled  
 Treasurer: Carl West  
 Holidays/Programs: Maria Coles  
 Membership: Deirdre Silverman  
 Social Action: Gerry Coles\*  
 Adult Education: Eric Mendelson  
 Children's Education: Harry Segal  
 Community Service: Jonathan Joseph  
 Members-at-Large: Carol Bloomgarden  
 and Dee Thaler

National Board Rep.: Gerry Coles  
 Newsletter Editor: Gerry Coles  
 Design and Layout: Marlo A. Del Toro  
 Newsletter Mailing: Ellen Wiernicki

\* Social Action Chair is Mark Silverman

### Board Meeting

Tuesday, September 3, 7PM  
 TCAT conference room  
 737 Willow Ave., Ithaca

### Rosh Hashanah

Friday, September 6, 7PM  
 Cayuga Nature Center  
 1420 Taughannock Blvd., Ithaca

### Rosh Hashanah

**for Children Ages 3-8**  
 Saturday, September 7, 10:30AM  
 Burt House  
 227 North Willard Way, Ithaca

### Sunday School Opens

Sunday, September 15  
 Contact Harry Segal at  
 hgs2@cornell.edu or at 255-6434

### Yom Kippur

Monday, September 16, 6PM  
 Home of Jane and Roger Segelken  
 114 Texas Lane, Ithaca  
 RSVP to Jane Segelken at 257-9598  
 or jbs11@cornell.edu

### Sukkot

Saturday, September 21, 11AM

Little Tree Apple Orchard  
 345 Shaffer Road, Newfield

### Board Meeting

Tuesday, October 1, 7PM  
 TCAT conference room  
 737 Willow Ave., Ithaca

### "Fourth" Friday Shabpot-luck Dinner

"Biographical Sharing  
 and Life Lessons"  
 Friday, October 18, 6PM  
 First Baptist Church  
 Dewitt Park, Ithaca

### Board Meeting

Tuesday, November 5, 7PM  
 TCAT conference room  
 737 Willow Ave., Ithaca

### Study Group

Contact Eric Mendelson at  
 mendelson@exotrope.net or  
 277-2114

### Social Action Committee

Contact Mark Silverman at  
 dsilver@lightlink.com or  
 277-3345

### Kol Haverim/FLCHJ

PO Box 68  
 Ithaca, NY 14851

Website: www.flchj.org  
 E-mail: info@flchj.org  
 Newsletter e-mail:  
 khnewsletter@yahoo.com

## Members in the News

by Deirdre Silverman

### Birthdays:

Hannah Tashman 8/15  
 Amanda Walts 9/8  
 Brian Eden 9/10  
 Carol Chaplin 9/19  
 Ben Nichols 9/20  
 Rebecca Chason-McCarthy 9/23  
 David Wiernicki 9/23  
 Barbara Eden 10/3  
 Lori Yelensky 10/3  
 John Tashman 10/19

### Anniversaries:

Nancy Grossman & Don Swanson 8/3  
 Carolyn Greenwald &  
 Adam Schaye 8/4  
 Deirdre & Mark Silverman 10/3  
 Brian & Barbara Eden 10/12

### Yartzeits (Memorials):

Jeffrey Tashman, brother of John  
 Tashman 9/1

### A Ph.D.

Congratulations to Judith Van Allen, who completed the requirements for a Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley. It's been 30 years since Judith was advanced to candidacy, and the title of her thesis is, "Free Women: Kinship, Capitalism, Gender and the State in Botswana." It is dedicated to "my daughter, Adrian, and all our daughters who are living new lives as free women."

### A Promotion

Congratulations to Mark Fowler, who

received tenure and promotion to Associate Professor at Binghamton University.

### A Wedding

Carol Bloomgarden and Gordon Bonnet were married on July 6 on the veranda of Walnut Crest winery overlooking Seneca Lake. Kol Haverim/FLCHJ President Barbara Behrmann officiated, using a Humanistic Jewish ceremony which she based, in part, on services used by other HJ communities. Barbara spoke about the chuppah symbolizing a kind of roof that houses the two distinct traditions that they bring to their marriage and that it represents a link to Carol's Jewish past, as well as a welcoming umbrella to Gordon.

## Kol Haverim (Voice of Friends—All Friends) a New Name

by Stacia Zabusky

After 10 months of work by the Names Committee of FLCHJ (Eric Mendelson, Harry Segal, Ellen Wiernicki, and Stacia Zabusky), our name selection process has produced a new name. The choice of the membership was to add a name, Kol Haverim (Voice of Friends, or All Friends). The full name of our community will now be Kol Haverim: The Finger Lakes Community for Humanistic Judaism. But in everyday usage, we can just say “Kol Haverim.”

We had many reasons for choosing an additional name to go with our official one. A pragmatic reason was to have something that was shorter and easier to say than our full, long name. But more than this, we have also chosen a name that connects us to a Jewish heritage, and to the larger Jewish community. This meaningful name also eloquently expresses our sense that we have established a real humanistic community, a community that is about people and not just about an intellectual subject, here in the Finger Lakes.

The Names Committee strived to make the name selection process as democratic and inclusive as possible. We began last fall with an e-mail survey to our general list (including members and non-members) to establish whether or not there was interest in adding an additional name. The overwhelming response to this initial inquiry was yes; many expressed interest in a Hebrew name, others in Yiddish or English. The Names Committee then collected ideas and suggestions for possible names from the

membership and other interested parties, both by e-mail and at our Membership Meeting in March. From there, the Names Committee generated a list of 23 names, plus a “no new name” option. A ballot with these names was sent to all adult members, and people were asked to select 5 preferences. We also invited open discussion of the name possibilities via our listserv.

The results of this first ballot established seven top candidates for a final ballot. These options were: Kol Haverim, Kehila (“community”), Kol Tikvah (“voice of hope”), Kol Hayam (“voice of the lake”), Kol Shalom (voice of peace), Humanistic Jews of Ithaca, and No New Name. The Committee then sent a final ballot with these seven choices to all adult members, asking people to rank their preferences among the seven choices (and inviting discussion on the Internet). We tabulated the votes using the “Instant Run-off Voting” system; this way, we avoided the time and expense of having several additional mailed run-off votes, and were able to do “instant run-offs” as the votes were counted. Kol Haverim emerged from this process as the leading preference among a majority of voters.

This was a challenging and at times contentious process since, as in all democratic systems, people expressed strong and diverse opinions. In the end, this healthy exchange of views helped a consensus to emerge among the possible choices before us. In this way, the choice of Kol Haverim represents a genuinely humanistic community decision.

## Kol Haverim: How Do You Pronounce It?

Do you describe the bread as “challah” or “hallah”? That’s the crux of deciding how to pronounce “haverim.” In Hebrew the first letter of the word has a guttural sound—or the sound when you’re clearing your throat (or, if these aren’t graphic enough, when you’re trying to bring up ph\_\_\_\_\_). So, to be HC (Hebrew Correct), it’s CHaverim. Kol Chaverim. But we are not writing our new name with

the “CH” in order to avoid having the letter combination mispronounced as /ch/ in “chair.”

So there you have the only linguistic lesson you’ll ever need on the subject. Now say “kol,” start clearing your throat, and finish our new name with a flourish.

## Stay in Touch with Kol Haverim

Ever on the cutting-edge of cyber-space technology, Kol Haverim/FLCHJ now has a new website: [www.flchj.org](http://www.flchj.org).

And not just that, we also have a new e-mail address: [info@flchj.org](mailto:info@flchj.org).

The newsletter now has its own e-mail address: [khnewsletter@yahoo.com](mailto:khnewsletter@yahoo.com).

For those who don’t remember, the Kol Haverim postal address is: FLCHJ, PO Box 68, Ithaca, NY 14851.

## Rosh Hashanah

Please join us on Friday evening, September 6, for our observance of Rosh Hashanah, the celebration of the New Year in the Jewish calendar, followed by a communal dessert and finger food reception. As always, we are putting together a rich and meaningful alternative to a traditional theistic service, one which fosters a sense of community and connection, not only to a Jewish heritage, but to an ever-widening circle of friends—Kol Haverim.

The evening will be filled with music, song, poetry, and traditional New Year treats; we offer you an opportunity to reflect privately on the year that has past, and to share together our hopes for the coming year. If you've not been to a Kol Haverim event before and have been meaning to see what Humanistic Judaism is all about, this is an ideal opportunity.

For our evening Rosh Hashanah reception, we ask everyone to contribute. We ask people with last names beginning with letters A-M to bring savory snacks and finger foods; those with last names beginning with letters

N-Z, please bring desserts or fruit. We will provide wine, juice, coffee, and tea for everyone to enjoy.

This event is adult-oriented; to make it possible for families to attend, we are providing child care for children 18 months and older during the ceremony only. If you are interested in taking advantage of our child-care option, please contact Nancy Grossman at [dsng@capital.net](mailto:dsng@capital.net) by August 30 to register.

The Rosh Hashanah program will begin promptly at 7PM at the Cayuga Nature Center, 1420 Taughannock Blvd., Ithaca. The cost of this event is \$10 for adult members and \$15 for non-members. Children are \$5 for members and \$10 for non-members. Children three and under are free.

We are also in need of volunteers to come early to help set-up (about 5PM) and volunteers to stay after to help with clean-up. Please contact Stacia Zabusky at 277-7949 or [stacia@clarityconnect.com](mailto:stacia@clarityconnect.com) if you can help either before or after, or in any other way.

## Rosh Hashanah Celebration for Children

We are also having a child-oriented Rosh Hashanah celebration, on Saturday, September 7, geared for children ages 3-8. Singing, story-telling, honey cake and other traditional holiday foods will accompany a brief service for children and their families. The event will take place at

10:30AM at the Burt House, 227 N. Willard Way, Ithaca. The cost is \$3 for members and \$6 for non-members. Please contact Barb Behrmann at [Blbehrmann@aol.com](mailto:Blbehrmann@aol.com) for more information.

## Yom Kippur

On Monday, September 16, at 6PM there will be a brief Yom Kippur service followed by a community pot-luck break-the-fast dinner. (You do not need to have fasted to attend, however!) We will think about the year to come and share our thoughts about our own lives, as well as those concerning the social and political world around us. Please bring something appropriate to share. The event

will be held at the home of Jane and Roger Segelken at 114 Texas Lane, Ithaca. The cost for the event is \$3 per person. Reservations are expected; please contact Jane Segelken at 257-9598 or [jbs11@cornell.edu](mailto:jbs11@cornell.edu) to make reservations and to discuss what food you can bring to ensure a variety of dishes.

## Observance of Sukkot

The observance, one for people of all ages, will begin with a service, followed by a picnic lunch (everyone should bring one) and apple picking on Saturday, September 21, 11AM,

Little Tree Apple Orchard, 345 Shaffer Road, Newfield. If the weather is cool, please dress accordingly. Last year, the observance was enhanced by a campfire.

## Fourth Friday Programs

This year's Fourth Friday's are being designed with the goal of building community by helping us get to know each other better. The first "Fourth" Friday program will be on October 18, around the topic "Biographical Sharing and Life Lessons" (see Community Calendar for additional information). This will be a participatory evening where we will share stories about each other and will be appropriate for families. We are hoping to have some of the more senior members of our congregation speak for five or ten minutes on some lessons that they have learned

throughout their lives. (This is being held on the third Friday of the month because there is a national SHJ board meeting in Michigan on the fourth Friday in October.)

To help make the October "Fourth" Friday program a success, we need someone to help with the logistics—to come early, set-up, make sure we have adequate supplies, etc. Please take another step in deepening our "kol haverim" by being that person. Contact Barb at [Blbehrmann@aol.com](mailto:Blbehrmann@aol.com).

## News from the Sunday School

by Harry Segal

This year marks the third year of Kol Haverim's Sunday School. Our mission is to introduce Jewish history, literature and culture to our children, while instilling ethical values which reflect our humanistic perspective. An important part of our curriculum is to help our children discover the origins of the Jewish holidays, their connection to nature and early human life, and find new relevance for our lives.

As an example, historically Shabbat echoes the day God rested after making the world, and embodies the weekly emergence of the sacred for religious Jews. For us, celebrating Shabbat is a time in the week to step out of our lives, to gather with family and friends we love, and to remember our values and to reconsider our actions toward ourselves and others. This is but one of the lessons we teach to our children.

We offer Jewish Humanist classes for children ages 4-10 on eight Sundays in the fall and another eight in the spring. Each class has no more than six children and is often taught by two teachers. We also offer a two year sequence of classes for eleven year olds which prepares them for a bar/bat mitzvah when they turn thirteen. These classes focus on readings from the Books of Moses, the history of Jewish people, and the place of Jewish thought within the context of other religions and cultures. We have three boys who are approaching their bar mitzvah this year, and we are looking for boys and girls to take their place.

Classes begin on Sunday, September 15, and we have openings for children of all ages. (We also welcome adults of all ages who would like to get involved in teaching.) For more information, please e-mail Harry Segal, Sunday School Director, at [hgs2@cornell.edu](mailto:hgs2@cornell.edu), or leave a message for him at 255-6434.

## Study Group Happenings

by Susan Sandman

The study group, consisting of about 6 or 7 regular members, meets about every three weeks for about 2 hours to discuss readings. We recently read the award-winning *From Beirut to Jerusalem* by Thomas Friedman and discussed its many anecdotes and detailed information concerning the historical basis for the Palestinian and Israeli conflict.

A quotation from Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, which Friedman uses, sums up much that he discusses and is one I remember best:

"Did you want to kill him, Buck?" "Well, I bet I did." "What did he do to you?" "Him? He never done nothing to me." "Well, then, what did you want to kill him for?" "Why, nothing—only it's on account of the feud." "What's a feud?"

"Why, where was you raised? Don't you know what a feud is?" "Never heard of it before—tell me about it." "Well," says Buck, "a feud is this way: A man has a quarrel with another man, and kills him; then the other man's brother kills him; then the other brothers, on both sides, goes for one another; then the cousins chip in—and by and by everybody's killed off, and there ain't no more feud. But it's kind of slow, and takes a long time..."

Our discussions were varied and comfortable, including such topics as anti-Semitism and the urban/Jewish conversational style of interrupting others. Often, we relate the readings to our personal experiences. Despite being a member of Kol Haverim for less than a year, I feel the study group has helped me make new (Jewish) friends, which was part of my reason for joining the Kol Haverim community.

## Kol Haverim/FLCHJ Participation in Walk for Violence Prevention

by Jonathan Joseph

On Saturday, May 11, members of Kol Haverim joined others in a walk to raise awareness of violence in our community and to raise money for the Suicide Prevention and Crisis Service (SPCS) of Tompkins County. Maria Coles, Jonathan Joseph, Mark and Deirdre Silverman and Barbara West participated in the day's events, and other members of our community gave donations to help the SPCS. The walk was a success, and I am pleased that we participated as a group.

Violence is certainly no stranger to those of Jewish heritage. The whole history of the Jews is filled with episodes of violence, and the current situation in Israel is a constant reminder to us of the continuing violence in the world today. Despite these reminders of violence around

### Naming Sarah

by Mark Silverman

A name becomes a part of a person's identity in life. A name is out there for others to latch onto, but more significantly, a way to organize our personhood into a certain space. Even if vague in the beginning, it will someday assume its power. Without a name, we might drift into a more diffuse identity in the absence of ballast provided by the social shorthand.

Part of our Humanistic Jewish ritual is to incorporate a naming ceremony into the budding life of a child. Within this tradition, Sarah Swanson stepped to center stage at a gathering on an unseasonably cold May 18. Daughter of Nancy Grossman and Don Swanson, she was given her Hebrew names, Sarai Mitel. In English, Sarah and dew drops (Mitel, to honor the memory of her two great grandmas, Mitzi and Marie). If she toddled along at her young age, unaware of the importance of the moment, one knew that in time the name will take on increasing weight. There, but not yet there, not yet at an age of reason, perhaps the naming ceremony won't rank high in Sarah's memory. But for those of us present for the simple

us (or maybe because of them), it seems too easy to overlook violence at home and violence in our own community—and in Jewish homes.

Concerning the latter, domestic violence in Jewish families occurs at about the same rate as in other religions. Unfortunately, "Jewish women take far longer to change their situations—seven to fifteen years versus three to five years, according to one study." In some sense, then, Jewish victims of domestic violence are worse off than others. I recommend the website of the United Jewish Communities for illuminating and troubling information. See the article, "Do Jewish Men Really Do That?: Domestic Violence in the Jewish Community," posted there ([www.ujc.org](http://www.ujc.org)).

A final thought: To reduce violence, whether at home or abroad, one must first be aware of the violence.

ceremony it was definitely an emotional binding of family, friends and community, a time for us to state in clear terms our hopes for one child's future, and by extension, the promise of positive times ahead. For a journey through life, the context of the ceremony provided a link in the chain of our continuity with past and future, a sense of security and place.

Some brief, resonant words were spoken, and then we sang Dylan's song, Forever Young, an appropriate background for Sarah's naming. And the reassuring table set with food and drink, a dish-to-pass, helped create a comforting experience for those gathered, a mix of people at different points in their lives. Oblivious to the social event, Sarah and her peers were a bit wild eyed as three generations took turns embracing their wonderful offspring. All of us seemed caught up in the benign spirit of the day. Later that chilly afternoon, back home on Searsburg Road, an Allegheny Serviceberry tree was planted to honor the girl of honor.

Hooray for Sarah! Yes!

# Kol Haverim/FLCHJ

PO Box 68, Ithaca, NY 14851

## Membership Dues and Renewal Form

Yes, I'd like to join/renew membership in Kol Haverim/FLCHJ, which includes membership in the national Society for Humanistic Judaism. The cost for the 2002-2003 year is as follows\*:

\*Please note that dues may be prorated semi-annually, depending on when you join.

Family Memberships			
Basic	\$130 local	\$65 national	\$195 total dues
All-Inclusive	\$220 local	\$65 national	\$285 total dues
Individual Memberships			
Basic	\$90 local	\$65 national	\$155 total dues
All-Inclusive	\$135 local	\$65 national	\$200 total dues
Student Memberships (Basic)	\$55 local	\$65 national	\$120 total dues

All-inclusive dues include admission to Rosh Hashanah, Hanukkah, Tu B'Shevat and Seder celebrations for all members of the household. All dues include admission to Fourth Fridays.

My check for \$\_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed.

Make checks payable to FLCHJ, PO Box 68, Ithaca, NY 14851.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I would like to make a contribution to the FLCHJ scholarship fund. I understand that the money will be used to help defray the cost of membership for those who need financial assistance. Enclosed is my contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I would like to make a contribution to the FLCHJ conference fund. Enclosed is my contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Name (Applicant #1) \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_

Name (Applicant #2) \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Is e-mail is a good way to reach you for announcements: \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no

Children's Names

_____	Birth Date _____
_____	Birth Date _____
_____	Birth Date _____

Wedding Anniversary \_\_\_\_\_

Memorial Data (Yartzeits)

Name _____	Relationship _____	Date _____
Name _____	Relationship _____	Date _____
Name _____	Relationship _____	Date _____
Name _____	Relationship _____	Date _____

Occupation (Applicant #1) \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation (Applicant #2) \_\_\_\_\_

Interests \_\_\_\_\_

Interests \_\_\_\_\_

**Please circle your Interests**

**Committee Choices**

**Activities**

- Humanistic Shabbat Services
- Humanistic Holiday Celebrations
- Pot-Luck Dinners and Discussions
- Study/Book Discussion Groups
- Children's Education
- Social Action
- Other (Please elaborate)
- Community Service

- Holidays/Programming
- Adult Education
- Children's Education
- Fundraising
- Membership
- Publicity
- Social Action
- Caring

- Newsletter
- Telephone
- Rituals
- Other (please elaborate)

How did you hear about Kol Haverim/FLCHJ? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you know of anyone who would be interested in learning more about Kol Haverim/FLCHJ?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I do/do not give FLCHJ permission to share my name, address, phone number and e-mail address with other Kol Haverim/FLCHJ members.

Send to: Kol Haverim/FLCHJ, PO Box 68, Ithaca, NY 14850  
Any questions or comments: 1-800-935-1054 or info@flchj.org

## Annual Membership Meeting

by Dee Thaler

The Third Annual Membership Meeting was held on Friday, June 21, at the Burt House. David Levitsky opened the meeting with a brief Shabbat service, followed by a sharing of naches and tsauris (joys and sorrows). After a pot-luck dinner discussion began.

The Holidays and Programming Committees have now become a single committee, which many people volunteered to assist with planning and implementation of forthcoming events. Programming options other than our traditional Fourth Fridays and holiday celebrations were discussed, such as a Sunday brunch and a Rites of Passage Series with panel discussions on parenting, middle age, aging, death, and so forth. We also discussed hiring babysitters for events.

Deirdre Silverman, Membership Chair, brought up the

## Changes in Membership Dues

At the June membership meeting, concerns were raised about ambiguities in paying for Fourth Friday events. Did the contributions at the door cover the costs of a Fourth Friday event? Were the contributions voluntary? Did membership dues include the costs of Fourth Fridays? Were members and non-members expected to make the same contribution at each event? Responding to concerns like these, the board, at its August meeting, modified the membership dues structure so that, beginning with this 2002-2003 membership year, the dues will include the actual costs of approximately six Fourth Friday events. This change will ensure coverage of basic costs, eliminate the need for any member contributions at an event, and provide an equitable method of supporting the events. Non-members will be asked at the door for a donation for these events.

The change in dues was calculated based on an estimate of

issue of membership responsibilities. What constitutes volunteering? The consensus was that members are expected to sign-up to plan the logistics or program or to help set-up or clean-up for at least one programming or fundraising event each year. Deirdre will change the membership form to reflect that information.

The Finance Committee, Carl West (Treasurer), Deirdre Silverman, and Sue Perlmut (past Treasurer), had met and created a proposed budget for the 2002-2003 fiscal year. Deirdre reported that there is a \$2,000 surplus that we will hold onto as a cushion. Dues will be collected only on an annual or a semi-annual basis, no longer quarterly.

The group approved the slate for the Board of Directors for the 2002-2003 year. The new Board members are listed on page 2 of this newsletter. Only the secretary position remains open but the board looks forward to a member soon joining the board in that capacity.

a nominal amount per member or family to support each of six Fourth Fridays. The result is an increase of \$30 for a basic family membership and \$20 for a basic individual membership. The all-inclusive memberships fees will increase less because they already included some of the Fourth Friday costs.

The changes will be:

- Family basic: from \$100 to \$130
- Individual basic from \$70 to \$90
- All-inclusive family: from \$200 to \$220
- All-inclusive individual: from \$120 to \$135

These membership fee changes will provide a financially sounder and more equitable method of funding Fourth Fridays, and eliminate the ambiguity embedded in our previous fee system.

## Response to the National SHJ Board's "We Stand With Israel" Resolution

At its annual meeting on May 5, the national board of the Society for Humanistic Judaism adopted a resolution on Israel. The resolution can be found at the Society's website ([www.shj.org](http://www.shj.org)) and in the Spring/Summer 2002 issue of Humanistic Judaism. After the resolution was published, seventeen members of Kol Haverim (then called FLCHJ) wrote to the board, expressing their disappointment. The following is that letter. The speech by Rabbi Ben Biber, referred to in the letter was published in the last issue of our newsletter. (Anyone wanting a copy can write to [khnewsletter@yahoo.com](mailto:khnewsletter@yahoo.com).) Kol Haverim members are encouraged to contribute their views to the newsletter.

Dear SHJ National Board:

We are individual members of the Finger Lakes Community for Humanistic Judaism (FLCHJ) writing to express our disappointment with the board's "We Stand With Israel" resolution of May 4, 2002.

Like the national board, we too feel a "solidarity" with "the people of Israel" and "support the right and responsibility of Israel to defend its citizens." And we too "support the efforts to find a solution that will bring peace with justice to the entire region." And we strongly condemn the suicide bombings and all attacks on civilians.

Yes, as the resolution says, "the State of Israel is under attack," but a description left at that is a one-sided conception that supports the Sharon government's interpretation of and justification for recent events. This description overlooks that government's ruthless attack on Palestinian civilians, its damage to the social and moral integrity of Israel, its contribution to the elevation of dangers faced by both Jews and Palestinians, and its relentless repudiation of an equitable, peaceful solution to the conflict.

We feel that the board's resolution does not reflect a fundamental tenet of SHJ: To "seek solutions to human conflicts that respect the freedom, dignity, and self-esteem of every human being." A resolution that expresses solidarity with "the people of Israel" but is silent about the Palestinian people is a resolution not guided by the ethics of humanistic Judaism.

For example, the SHJ resolution comes on the heels of a Human Rights Watch report that provided evidence suggesting that "the Israel Defense Forces committed war crimes in the military operation in the Jenin refugee camp."

This finding was echoed by an Amnesty International investigation that concluded: "The Israeli Government

must end the gross violations of human rights and humanitarian law it is committing during Operation Defensive Wall: it must stop the unlawful and disproportionate use of lethal force, including against medical personnel; end extrajudicial executions; end wanton destruction of homes and other collective punishment."

The conclusions in these reports are reinforced by the moving statement of the Rabbis for Human Rights in Israel: "Standing with Israel requires concern for her moral, as well as her physical well being. We cannot let our moral humanity be compromised, no matter how threatened we are.... We are told: "Justice, justice, you shall pursue" (Deuteronomy 16:20). Why is the word justice said twice? Because, according to our tradition, one is to pursue a just cause by just means. In defending ourselves, we must always hold on to the prophetic vision of decency and humanity. We remain deeply committed to seeking reconciliation with our Palestinian neighbors, and believe that a just peace can and must be pursued. We feel compelled to speak out, along with other Israeli human rights organizations, to call on our government to cease violations of Palestinian human rights, even in times of war."

There is much that we could write to amplify our view that the board's resolution fails to address the entirety of causes of and solutions for the present crisis:

- We could discuss the ultra-orthodox belief (and Sharon's belief) in a God-given right to "Judea and Samaria" that has driven much of the settlement activity and the desire to rid "Greater Israel" of all Palestinians.
- We could detail how the recent Likud Party resolution rejecting the creation of a Palestinian state is not a rebuff of Sharon's position, but merely a forthright statement consonant with his long-held views and recent policies. Prior to the Likud resolution, for example, he added to his government three right-wing ministers—two from the National Religious Party and one from the Geshar (Bridge) Party who oppose withdrawing the settlements from the West Bank and Gaza and implementing a just and equitable two-state solution.
- We could quote many patriotic Israelis, such as David Zonsheine, second lieutenant in the Paratroopers Brigade in the Israeli Defense Force, who has publicly stated that he refuses "to fight this war—the war for the settlements—a war that has weakened Israel" and protected "the interests of a minority of extremists, fanatics who threaten the interest of the majority of Israelis and deprive millions of Palestinians of their basic human rights."

• And we could, in equal measure, discuss and criticize Yasir Arafat and the Palestinian Authority for their corruption and betrayal of the Palestinian people, Hamas for its inhumane attacks on Israeli civilians, and fundamentalist groups that insist upon a holy war against Israel.

We will refrain from turning this letter into an essay both because we feel we would not be telling the board members anything they do not know and we are fortunate in having within our own SHJ community an exemplary perspective on “What is Necessary for Peace in Israel and Palestine” that is grounded in humanistic values, expresses concern for both Jews and Palestinians, and is critical of both Israeli and Palestinian violence. It is especially valuable in going beyond criticism by outlining basic principles for establishing and ensuring a secure Israeli and a secure and viable Palestinian two-state solution.

We are referring to the talk given by Rabbi Binyamin Biber at the “United We March for Peace and Justice” rally at the Washington Monument on April 20, 2002. We have appended that talk below and urge that the national SHJ board formulate a position statement on the Israeli-Palestinian crisis that embodies Rabbi Biber’s compassionate and astute outlook for achieving a just peace.

In closing, we wish to restate that we are individual members of FLCHJ and do not represent the entire membership.

This issue is extremely important to those of us who have signed this letter and we await comments and, hopefully, the opening of a dialogue on what the SHJ position should be.

Sincerely,  
(signed by 17 Kol Haverim/FLCHJ members)

## From Jewish Culture: The “Burning” in Our Lives

What are the passions, the “burnings” in our lives? What takes us above the mundane? What is required for a full life? A thought-provoking passage on these life-long questions is in Martin Buber’s book on a major figure in Hasidim history, *The Legend of the Baal-Shem*. The concept of “hitlahavut,” Buber explains, refers to the “burning” or passion of life:

Hitlahavut unlocks the meaning of life. Without it even heaven has no meaning and no being. If people have fulfilled the whole of the teaching and the commandments, but have not had the rapture and the burning, when they die and pass beyond, paradise is opened to them, but

because they have not felt rapture in the world, they also do not feel it in paradise.

We need not have a theistic view or belief in “paradise” to understand the broader meaning of “hitlahavut” for ourselves and in our Jewish heritage. Living a virtuous life, a moral life; living a life of commitments to loved ones, friends, and community; living a life that furthers social justice; living a life that contributes to the world’s well-being—living any or all of these ways might produce a truly commendable life, but absent of “hitlahavut,” it will be a life with few sparks, certainly no “burning” or rapture—a life well-lived but partially lived.

## What Do Humanistic Jews Believe?

Humanistic Jews believe:

- Each Jew has the right to create a meaningful Jewish life free from supernatural authority and imposed tradition.
- The secular roots of Jewish life are as important as the religious ones.
- The survival of the Jewish people needs a reconciliation between science, personal autonomy, and Jewish loyalty.
- Theistic religions assert that the ultimate source of wisdom and of the power of the solution to human problems is found outside of people—in a supernatural

realm. Humanistic philosophy affirms that knowledge and power come from people and from the nature in which they live.

- Judaism is an ethnic culture. It did not fall from heaven. It was not invented by a divine spokesperson. It was created by the Jewish people. It was molded by Jewish experience. Holidays are responses to human events. Ceremonies are celebrations of human development. Music and literature are the expressions of human needs.

(For more on Humanistic Judaism see [www.flchj.org](http://www.flchj.org) and [www.shj.org](http://www.shj.org).)

## Newsletter: Print and Electronic

Beginning in early 2003, in order to help reduce the cost of producing and mailing the newsletter, it will be published in both print and electronic versions. The latter will most likely be sent as an attachment in an e-mail, and will offer some advantages over the printed version that many computer users value.

Kol Haverim members will have the option of receiving one version or both and will be contacted when both versions are available.

As we expand to the electronic version, the change will be somewhat more complicated for non-members. Hopefully, the following explanation will clearly enumerate the process and alternatives:

- Non-members who have been receiving the newsletter will be able to receive the electronic version at no cost. If you would like to receive this version, please send your request now to: [khnewsletter@yahoo.com](mailto:khnewsletter@yahoo.com). Once the electronic version is available we will be phasing out the printed version for non-members who have not paid a subscription. Therefore, if you would like to receive the free electronic version, please let us know now.

- Non-members who have paid for the print version of the newsletter for this year will continue to get that version. However, if they feel they would like to receive the free electronic version when it starts, they may request this now at: [khnewsletter@yahoo.com](mailto:khnewsletter@yahoo.com). They will continue to receive the print version for the rest of the year.

- Non-members who are not receiving the newsletter but would like to, can request it now at: [khnewsletter@yahoo.com](mailto:khnewsletter@yahoo.com). We will send you a free printed version, followed by the free electronic version.

- Beginning in the summer of 2003, non-members who wish to receive the printed version for the coming (Jewish) year, can do so by sending \$10 to the newsletter's postal address listed in the newsletter. Because we do not have a mechanism for handling year-round subscriptions, we will only be able to accept requests for the printed version during June through August for the coming year. We wish it were otherwise and perhaps with more newsletter staff in the future, it will be. But for now, we have no choice but to use this method.

If this explanation has not covered everything, please write the newsletter at either the postal or e-mail address.

The Finger Lakes Community for Humanistic Judaism is an Itaca-based organization that brings people together to explore and celebrate Jewish identity, history, culture and ethics within a secular, humanistic framework.

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