



Kol Haverim

The Finger Lakes Community for Humanistic Judaism

Affiliated with the Society for Humanistic Judaism

Newsletter Issue #18

June, 2003

Dear Friends,

The front hallway walls of our home are covered with family photographs spanning several generations. Among the photographs are those of my grandfather's brothers, sisters and parents—all lost in the Holocaust—copies of smaller, brittle photos my grandfather, the only family survivor, carried in an inner pocket of his jacket all his life. Every day, walking by them, they are stark, poignant reminders that while Yom Hashoah is officially commemorated on a single day, as Jews the Shoah is with us everyday, regardless of whether we personally lost anyone in it.

How the Holocaust is “with us” is a question that has its own answers, but is the kind of question Jews were forced to confront prior to that horror. Over the centuries Jews have been slain in pogroms or in countless variations of anti-Jewish violence. Often, if “lucky” enough not to be murdered, we have, as an entire national subculture, been driven—humiliated and penniless—into perilous exile (1492 wasn't just the year “Columbus sailed the ocean blue”). Though these sufferings were smaller in comparison to the Shoah, they have been sufficiently abominable and unending for us to look deeply into this vicious side of our history for meaning and lessons.

Engaging in this process has produced conclusions that have, and continue to be, varied. One response has been to abandon Judaism: If one were not Jewish, there would be no risk of becoming a victim of anti-Jewish hatred and violence (an alternative countless “assimilated” Jews learned did not work). Another meaning drawn from this history has been to see the survival of Jews as paramount, requiring whatever survival dictates, regardless of the consequences to any group perceived as threatening that survival. A third conclusion has emphasized the links to other oppressed groups, a view infused, for example, with the extraordinary principle expressed in the Passover seder: We are linked to the suffering of others because we too had been slaves in Egypt. With the Shoah has come an additional view specific to the incomprehensible scope of that tragedy: Its dimensions demand so great a grieving that it requires grieving alone; any attempt to attach meanings and conclusions beyond this grieving is impossible, if not a dishonor of the dead.

Jews have embraced these and other meanings separately and in combination, and in doing so have made clear that the lessons drawn have not been fully self-evident in the horrors themselves, a complication that has considerable consequences for answering the fundamental questions of “What does it mean to be a Jew?” and “What does it mean to act as a Jew?” In turn, answers to these questions have profound, practical consequences for the future of Judaism at all levels. In his book, *What Shall I Do With This People?*, Milton Vorst explores the fractious politics amongst Jews, linked to the aforementioned questions, that put contemporary Jewry in crisis. In various ways this is felt within congregations, except for the few that are composed of solely like-minded members, particularly around the question of “What does it mean to act as a Jew?”

To illustrate this, let's look at holidays. Each has its stories and morals, and celebrating them as a congregation helps us understand and feel connected to a rich history and philosophy; the ceremonies deepen our feeling of being Jewish. Passover teaches us to oppose oppression and support liberation; Tu b'Shvat teaches us to love and protect the Earth; Rosh Hashana encourages us to reflect on how we can change and improve ourselves. We cherish the general moral meanings of our culture: celebrated collectively, with the lessons left general and contained within the boundaries of the holidays themselves, with a strong union following as each person determines and applies the lessons in a singular way.

But this union begins to fracture when specific contemporary lessons and meanings seen by some in the more general meanings are openly voiced and applied to specific contemporary events and issues. At our recent Yom Hashoah service, for example, it became apparent that members of our congregation are not of one mind on the meaning of the Shoah and the deaths of Iraqi civilians and whether these deaths were justified by Bush's original explanation for the attack—eliminating weapons of mass destruction—or his second explanation, severing Iraq's connections with Al Qaeda, or his later explanation, the need for a unilateral invasion in order to execute “regime change.” The union fractures even more when proposals are made to take actions around these events and

Continued on next page

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Membership and Renewal Form

You can find information about joining or renewing your membership on the Kol Haverim website, www.flchj.org, or you can call 800-935-1054 and ask to have a membership form mailed to you.

Yiddish Proverb

Oif fremder erd boit men nit.

(One doesn't build on foreign ground.)

Community Calendar

Board Meeting

No meetings this summer.

Summer Membership Brunch

Date and time TBA

News Flash

Barb Behrmann, founder and leading spirit of Kol Haverim has stepped down as Board chair in order to devote more time to her writing career. Replacing her will be Joan Joseph, who brings to the position a strong background in organizational

leadership. The new Board has several new members, whose names appear in the "Administrative Board" section of this newsletter. More on Barb, Joan, and Board members past and future in the next newsletter issue.

Newsletter: Print and Electronic

This newsletter is available in both print and electronic form. Kol Haverim members receive the print version as part of their membership. Non-member subscriptions for the print version will be available once-a-

year, beginning with the September issue (due to bookkeeping constraints). Both members and non-members can receive free electronic versions by writing the editor at the newsletter e-mail address above.

Continued from previous page

issues—to engage in active opposition to the death of innocents.

Speaking for myself, to do otherwise would make Judaism a luminous fossil—well-set and appreciated, but separated from an application to today's world. In a recent interview with the *Jerusalem Post*, Ariel Sharon defined a Jew and the application of being Jewish this way: A Jew is "whoever comes, sees themselves as part of the Jewish people, serves in the army, and fights." Most, if not all, members of our congregation would disagree with this definition of being a Jew and actively applying Judaism. But, disagreeing, what alternative definitions would be offered?

In his poem, Brooklyn Bridge, Walt Whitman, "speaking of the connections across generations, asked: What is it, then, between us?/What is the count of the scores

or hundreds of years between us?" These are the questions we must address when we look for the meanings and lessons in our Jewish past and our congregational present, because the answers affect us in countless ways: the content of our programs, our efforts to become a genuine community, our personal interactions, and the long-term commitment of members. The same can be said for any other congregation; Kol Haverim certainly is not unique in grappling with these issues. But grapple we must.

Since becoming editor of this newsletter I've urged members to write letters or articles about any issues. So far, the newsletter has received none. I urge readers to consider responding to the concerns outlined here.

Peace,

Gerry

Members in the News

Jane Segelken will be starting a new career by attending Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville to earn a Master's Degree in Health Advocacy. Jane says, "This is something I've wanted to do for a long time, and when my job ended in December both Roger and I agreed the right time is now."

A new career is also looming for **Maria Iannacome Coles**. Maria is running for Common Council from Ithaca's First Ward. Maria's decision to run for political office was based on "my appreciation of Ithaca, my passion for working to improve my community, and the encouragement of various residents."

Dee Thaler is celebrating her daughter Jessie's graduation from Cornell with a degree in Linguistics. Dee says, "Whew!"

Dara Silverman, Deirdre and Mark's daughter, is now in Israel and will be going to the Occupied Territories as an international observer.

Jewish Foods: A Celebration of Roots

Editor's note: A celebration of Jewish food—filled with magnificent food!—was the Fourth Friday event organized by Carolyn Greenwald and Carol Bloomgarten. The following is Carolyn's introduction to the evening.

by Carolyn Greenwald

Many people think of common Ashkenazi dishes, such as brisket and gefiltefish, as traditional Jewish food. But there are people who claim that there is no such thing as Jewish Food because what is familiar to one person as Jewish Food may be totally unknown to another. Since Jews have lived all over the world, the argument goes, they have adopted the foods of the countries they lived in. Local regional food becomes Jewish when it travels with Jews to a new homeland.

What makes Jewish food special to me, and what probably makes it special to you too, is that in Jewish families, such as mine, cooking has always revolved around the Sabbath and religious festivals. All celebrations, whether they commemorate a religious holiday, an episode of Jewish history, or a

moment in the cycle of life—a birth, a marriage, or death—were once ruled by tradition, and special foods were part of each of these traditions. The dishes chosen to celebrate these occasions became part of the festival rituals and acquired embellishments as they acquired symbolic significance.

They were glamorized to glorify the occasions—colored with saffron, sprinkled with raisins, wrapped in a pie.

Dishes are important because they are a link with the past, a celebration of roots, a symbol of continuity. They are that part of an immigrant culture which survives the longest, kept-up even when clothing, music, language and, in my case, belief in god, have been abandoned. Cooking is passed on from generation to generation and it has the capacity for change and for passing on new experience from one generation to another. It is possible, by examining family dishes, to define the identity and geographic origin of a family line.

I am from what can be called a mixed marriage: My father is Ashkenazi and my mother is Sephardic. But since we spent all the holidays with my mother's family, and they are the ones who did the cooking, I cook Sephardic and therefore consider myself Sephardic. My mother's maiden name is Kamhi and Kamhi's hail from a place called Monestere. Monestere was, at one time, in the hills of Yugoslavia, and is probably now in Serbia or Croatia. The dishes I make come from my mother's mother's family, the Lereas.

The Lereas hail from Constantinople, now Istanbul and serve borekas at every family gathering. Little pies are said to be the pride and joy and the trademark of the Sephardi table. Our little pies, in the Turkish tradition are called borekas. The name comes the Turkish word boerke for "pie." What is interesting about Jewish borekas, as opposed to Turkish pies, is that their filling and shape makes them closer to the Spanish and Portuguese empanadas. And, while it may be lore, my relatives seem to talk about the Spanish Inquisition as if it happened directly to our family.

Passover

Our Passover seder was greatly enhanced by the following talks on

"freedom" by two of our Sunday School students.

Imagining a World Where Jews Hadn't Escaped

by **Elias Spector-Zabusky**

Passover is about freedom, reminding us what happened when we were slaves.

I tried to imagine what it would be like to live my life in a world where Jews hadn't escaped, and didn't have any freedom. I'm going to tell you a story about what that might be like.

I'd get up in the morning in our apartment in the part of town where Jews are forced to live. I'd have breakfast of food that we had to buy in the only store where Jews were allowed to shop. Then I'd pack my shabby backpack with the ripped up books that we were allowed to use,

and start walking to school. I'd like to take the bus or ride my bike to school, but if you're Jewish, you're not allowed to do that. While I'm walking, a police officer stops me and gives me a list of rules and he says "Don't ride your bike in public, kid, or you can get in big trouble." The list was really long, with all the new rules of what Jews were and weren't allowed to do, and what would happen if you disobeyed them. When I got to school, I'd show my special pass so I could get in. The pass says I'm Jewish, and then I'd go to the special Jewish classroom where Jewish kids were crowded in. Even the teacher, who was Jewish, was treated badly, even though he was a grown up.

That's what it could be like if we didn't have freedom. We wouldn't be able to do the things that other people do. I think that would be a pretty awful way to live. I'm grateful that I do have freedom. My society is free, and that means that everyone can do the same things, as long as we obey the law. The story about "unfreedom" is kind of like what happened to African Americans in our country, and we've worked really hard to make sure they have the same freedoms everybody else does. I'm glad we all have freedom today in my town, because not everybody in the world does. I hope that in the future everyone everywhere can have the kind of freedom I do.

Standing Up to Pharaoh

by **Emily Behrmann-Fowler**

I was in two demonstrations against the war because I thought that the war was wrong. Many people in this country did not want war, but the president thought, "Those are just a bunch of specks in the country dust. I don't have to listen to them, I can do it my own way." Even the United Nations didn't want the war, but the president still said, "I don't need to listen to them. I can do it my own way." He should not have had the right to do that because he should have considered what the people think.

I wrote a letter to the president saying that he should consider what the people think and he shouldn't be the only one in charge of deciding what we should do. Also, some of the soldiers who were fighting probably

didn't want war.

Basically everybody agrees that Saddam Hussein is (or was?) an evil man and shouldn't be in charge, but there were other ways for him to get the message than through Bush's war.

The Jews in Egypt were not allowed to stand up to Pharaoh. The president has some qualities like the Pharaoh because he doesn't listen to people and he does things his own way. Pretty soon the whole world is going to be against America because the whole world basically didn't want the war. So the weapons we sell them are going to be just turned back on us.

Gerry told me a story I thought was pretty funny. George McGovern said that when George Bush was running for president he said he was a great uniter of people. McGovern said that

George Bush certainly has that right: he's united the whole world against him.

The Jews got out of their bad problems in Egypt by running away. We tried standing up to our leaders by protesting, but that didn't work.

Maybe we should use plagues to get him to do the right thing. We could start with frogs. I learned this song from my sister and have made one small change:

One morning when Bush awoke in his bed,
there were frogs on his head,
frogs here, frogs there,
frogs were jumping everywhere.

Yom Hashoah

At the Yom Hashoah evening on April 29, organized by Deirdre Silverman, Sergei and Alla Lukina presented a moving overview of the German massacre of Jews at a ravine named "Babi Yar," near the Ukrainian city of Kiev. Sergei and Alla provided the following internet website addresses to learn more about the tragedy.

history1900s.about.com/cs/babiyar

www.us-israel.org/jsource/Holocaust/babiyar.html

www.ess.uwe.ac.uk/genocide/babi_yar.htm

tfn.net/holocaust/online/babiyar.html (pictures)

Maura Stephens also contributed to the evening by presenting a slide show of photographs her husband, George Sapio, took of Iraqi people when they visited the country in early February, approximately a month prior to the US-Great Britain attack. The photographs are now in a book titled

Collateral Damage, a term used to define injury or death to civilians during a military attack. (So far the "collateral damage," i.e., deaths of Iraqi civilians as a result of the attack on Iraq, is between 5,542 and 7,214, according to independent sources. See iraqbodycount.com.)

The book, Collateral Damage, is available in Ithaca (e.g., bookstores, Greenstar) for a nominal \$5 donation or can be downloaded for free from www.gsapio.com.

Interfaith Dialogue on Faith and War

by David Levitsky

On April 10, I represented Kol Haverim at the third meeting of the Interfaith dialogue on Faith and War: Practical Perspective on Violence, sponsored by ACT (Area Congregations Together), the Catholic Charities Justice and Peace Ministry, and Voices for Peace, and held at the First Presbyterian Church of Ulysses in Trumansburg.

Although the event was covered by the

Ithaca Journal, the article very much missed the flavor of the evening. It was a very somber and deeply moving event where people spoke genuinely from their hearts. What was remarkable was that despite the wide variety of "faiths" that were represented by both the speakers and the audience, the opinion was almost unanimous—the US incursion into Iraq was unjustified and unethical. Each of the panelists had to speak about their personal experience with violence and how their faith helped

them. I recounted my days as a Civil Rights worker in the 1960s when we were arrested and beaten by police for sitting together, blacks and whites, in a public restaurant and when I was gassed by police for demonstrating against the war in Vietnam. I also spoke about my faith in the people who were standing next to me—black, white, Asian, Christian, Jew, atheist—who also were willing to withstand the violence in order to make this world a better place for all of us to live. We succeeded then, and we'll succeed now.

Study Group Happenings

by Eric Mendelson

By the time you have read this, the Adult Study Group will have shared some of its experience of finishing reading Irving Howe's World of Our Fathers over May's Fourth Friday meal. Many of you will have heard there some of the particular discoveries of that reading experience and gotten to chew it over with the Study Group, right after our potluck chews. The book's 600 pages portrayed a critical slice of Jewish American life that is hard to fairly summarize without slipping into clichés, but I'll try.

Overall, Howe's classic history details the lives of our Eastern European

immigrants who settled in NYC's Lower East Side surrounding the turn of the twentieth century. It is an in-depth picture of survival, assimilation, and insularity in a compact world of deep poverty in the most densely populated neighborhood in the nation; a portrait of grinding labor alongside a lively theater, lecture, and café society; of lives guided by devout daily observance of traditional Jewish laws rubbing shoulders with committed anarchists and socialists; and of immigrant families collapsing under New World pressures alongside neighbors who produced a stunning burst of art, intellectuality, entertainment, and entrepreneurship from what quickly became the world's largest concentration of Jews.

In June, we dive into our next reading, an effort at exploring the roots of humanistic thought by reading Edward Ericson's The Humanist Way. Rather than attempting Spinoza or the other original humanist philosophers—who wrote like philosophers—this more readable history (which is also considerably shorter than Howe's) comes out of the Ethical Culture tradition, one which is philosophically allied, it appears, to Humanistic Judaism. Meetings are open to all members and take place approximately every third Wednesday evening. For more information, contact me at mendelson@infoblvd.net.

Rabbi Wine Redirects His Work

Studs Terkel, interviewed at 90, while writing a new book, replied to a question about retirement, "Smile when you say the 'r' word!" Rabbi Sherwin Wine, founder of humanistic

Judaism, surely would say the same about his "retirement" as rabbi of the Birmingham Temple. The following are two articles about Rabbi Wine containing much valuable information

about him and the SHJ movement. The second article raises some questions about SHJ's future without Rabbi Wine as leader, and is followed by two letters replying to the article.

Breaking Barriers: As Rabbi Sherwin Wine Retires,

by **Judith Doner Berne**

From *The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers*

June 4, 2003

When Sherwin Wine retires next month after 40 years as founding rabbi of Birmingham Temple, he merely will transfer his energy to his other passions.

"I'm shifting my work," says Wine, a dynamic, imposing, outspoken Birmingham resident who thinks outside the box.

"I want to work on visiting more communities, training more rabbis and doing more writing."

Wine, who at 75 operates at full throttle intellectually and physically, will continue to travel the world and to further develop the Birmingham-based Center for New Thinking, his take on community education.

The visiting, training and writing all fit his goal of securing the religion he began—Humanistic Judaism—as the fifth branch of Judaism, alongside Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist.

Movement Grows

Wine estimates that 30,000 members

in 12 countries consider themselves part of the Humanistic Jewish movement, with the outreach larger than that. They identify culturally, historically and traditionally with Judaism and with its ethical values, but they don't believe in God.

"For us, the heart of religion is not God, prayer or worship—but human behavior," Wine said back in 1975. That was during the time when he was labeled "the atheist rabbi" and the subject of condemnation.

Today, he says, "Our focus was not to deny God but to affirm people. We're helping create something long lasting for the worlds of religion, philosophy and Judaism."

Completing his fifth book, *The Jews From a Humanistic Perspective*, is a priority. These and other writings preserve his work the way his talks never can. That's because he speaks from a single, salmon-colored, 4-inch by 6-inch card, never writing out the full text of what he will say.

"I think very carefully about my talks," he says. "I consider the podium a barrier between the speaker and audience. For me, talking to people is a very enjoyable experience."

Those who encounter him even once are impressed by his memory, which allows him to recall historical facts as

easily as he inquires after each temple member's child by name.

"It's not just his memory, it's his whole system of knowledge," explains Rabbi Adam Chalom, 27, who along with Rabbi Tamara Kolton, 32, will lead Birmingham Temple after Wine's retirement next month.

'A Genius'

"His humor is delicious and it's really part of enjoying him."

Retirement also will allow Wine to travel. Antarctica and Cuba are two of the few places he hasn't been.

"I like politically interesting trips," Wine says. "I don't sleep a lot when I travel. I walk, sometimes as much as 20 miles in a day. I know what I want to see and I don't want to waste my time. Next to philosophy, my major interest has been history. Travel is my way of seeing history in the flesh. It's my greatest recreation."

Connie Wolberg, a Southfield-based travel agent and temple member, has arranged many of his trips, accompanying him on some. She is amazed at his energy, thirst for new adventure, and ability to take mishaps with humor. Her favorite story involves an over-eager guide in West Africa who took Wine and his longtime partner Richard McMains to

He Leaves Legacy in New Form of Judaism

see a witch doctor supposedly renown for his supernatural powers.

Wine's wry comment: "You can always learn from other clergy."

Choosing His Path

Wine did not grow up in Detroit bent on founding a new religion.

He came from an observant family, active in the conservative Shaarey Zedek synagogue, now in Southfield. As a philosophy student at the University of Michigan, he thought he might want to become a college professor or an attorney.

But the academic world "was less adventurous than I wanted my life to be," he said. And law fell by the wayside when he decided, "I couldn't defend someone who was guilty."

"I was always very connected to Judaism," he said. "I wanted to combine philosophy and Judaism and the thing that seemed closest to that was the Reform Rabbinate.

"They were my teachers," he says. "I didn't have anyone in the rabbinic world who was my mentor. They didn't agree with me. I liked being a rabbi. But I didn't like the praying," he said. "I decided I would explain to everyone what I meant by the word 'God.'"

A two-year stint as a Jewish chaplain in Korea further cemented that idea and his communication skills. "The Jewish soldiers there weren't interested in praying," he said. "They were farm boys from places like central Iowa, and I learned how to talk to them. They needed to be nurtured."

That's when he left to form Birmingham Temple, which took its name from its initial gathering in the home of a Birmingham couple.

"I've always regarded myself as a philosopher-missionary," Wine says. "I've provided people a new setting for what they believe."

Although the temple eventually moved to a permanent site in Farmington Hills, Wine himself chose to move to Birmingham, a city he loves. He is a familiar figure walking its downtown and residential streets and having breakfast each morning at The Townsend Hotel.

A New Direction

Once he retires, residents will see him regularly take a new route—from his condominium with the walled garden on the west side of Birmingham to his new library office on the east side, at Adams Square. That's where he and the faculty of the Center for New Thinking—the Rev. Harry Cook, art historian Michael Farrell and

journalist Jack Lessenberry—hold some of their classes. Others take place at the Birmingham Unitarian Church and The Community House.

The nonprofit center, which he began in 1977, is another aspect of his original mind. After teaching some adult education classes for Wayne State University, he got the idea that people might like to pay as you go for a single class on a particular subject, rather than commit to a whole semester.

"It was all about interesting people in the world of ideas. I thought I could create a forum in a more convenient place based on new books and new thinkers."

Last month, the American Humanist Society named Wine "Humanist of the Year." He joins a line up that includes philosophers, doctors, scientists and writers including Jonas Salk, Carl Sagan, Julian Huxley, Benjamin Spock, Linus Pauling, Margaret Sanger, Kurt Vonnegut, Alice Walker and Isaac Asimov.

"I look at my life and I really like what's happened," says Wine, in a softer tone than usually characterizes his bold statements. "I feel very fulfilled because my life's work has touched a lot of people in a very positive way."

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Tough Test Looms for Godless Faith: Radical Rabbi's

by **Marsha Low**

From the *Detroit Free Press*

June 11, 2003

Rabbi Sherwin Wine sashayed across the Birmingham Temple stage, greeted the crowd with his piercing black eyes, and began belting the words to Frank Sinatra's "My Way."

Yes, there were times, I'm sure you knew,
When I bit off more than I could chew.
But through it all, when there was doubt,
I ate it up, and spit it out.
I faced it all, and I stood tall,
and did it my way.

Applause echoed through the Farmington Hills synagogue last month as the congregants, there to celebrate Wine's upcoming retirement, rose to their feet. As it turns out, Ol' Blue Eyes' song is a fitting anthem for the rabbi who created a Jewish movement that is not guided by God.

Across metro Detroit, Wine is known as the rabbi who caused a national uproar in 1963 when he founded Humanistic Judaism. The movement's followers do not view Judaism as a religion, but as a culture. They sing about the power within people rather than about the love of God. They replace prayers with poetry and bar and bat mitzvah Torah readings with presentations on historic figures such as Anne Frank, Abraham Lincoln and Eleanor Roosevelt.

Wine, 75, has spent his life forsaking convention for what he believes. As a result, he has been labeled eccentric, iconoclastic, rebellious, intellectual and courageous.

He's built a movement that began with eight metro Detroit families into

a worldwide one with an estimated 40,000 members. And after four decades at the epicenter of controversy, he's set to step beyond the spotlight on June 26.

"At the end of these 40 years, I feel very gratified," said Wine, who has never been married, has no children and lives in Birmingham. "I've enjoyed my work enormously because I've touched people. I'm very glad I made the choices that I did, because if I hadn't, I would have lived a very unhappy life."

But as he prepares to step down, a tough test looms.

How It All Began

Raised on 12th Street, now Rosa Parks Boulevard, in Detroit by conservative Jewish parents, Wine was a boy who reveled in his father's company. On Saturdays, that placed him obediently beside his father at temple, reciting prayers by rote.

He loved school, won scholastic awards and was always at the top of his class at Detroit Central High School. At the University of Michigan, he received bachelor's and master's degrees in philosophy. When it came time to decide on a career path, Wine searched for a job that would couple philosophy with his love of the Jewish culture. He decided to become a rabbi in the Reform sect of Judaism, spending five years at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. But a nagging problem remained.

"I enjoyed being a rabbi but... I was not comfortable with the belief system," Wine said. "For me, a good religion doesn't make people feel weak and needy and force them outside to find power. A good religion helps you find the power within yourself."

In August 1963, Wine began exploring his beliefs, and by 1964, word was spreading of a new Jewish movement led by a rabbi who didn't believe in God.

Newspapers declared him the "rebel rabbi." Jewish leaders across the country denounced Humanistic Judaism as a fleeting, '60s, wild-child craze. And hundreds of metro Detroit Jews packed the Eagle Elementary gymnasium in West Bloomfield to see what Wine was up to.

What drew so many was curiosity and the radical idea of gathering people in a way that mimics religion, but without a belief in God. What kept them coming was Wine, a bright and articulate man who exudes charisma.

Still, acceptance hasn't come quickly. It was only five years ago that the movement's leaders were invited to participate in the United Jewish Community, a federation of national Jewish leaders. This, Wine's followers believe, validated their movement as Judaism's fifth sect, joining Reconstructionist, Reform, Conservative and Orthodox.

But the divide between Wine's philosophy and that of Orthodox rabbis remains vast.

"I find it a bit quirky when you develop a religion based on the human spirit. To me, it's contradictory," said Rabbi E. B. (Bunny) Freedman, a member of the Orthodox movement and director of the Jewish Hospice and Chaplaincy Network. "And as our world becomes more complex and threatening, I see in my world a greater interest in a God-based religion, especially post-9/11."

Retirement May Jeopardize the Movement He Created

Others who are closer to accepting Humanistic Judaism say they find Wine's unwillingness to live within predetermined boundaries courageous.

"He did not sell out because he was afraid that somebody wouldn't like or support him," said Rabbi Dannel Schwartz of Temple Shir Shalom, a Reform synagogue in West Bloomfield. "Abraham Lincoln once said if they're going to tar and feather you and throw you out of town, get in front of the mob and make it look like a parade. That's what Sherwin did. People threw insults at him, the Jewish newspaper in town refused to print any events or weddings he's had. Things have changed because of his courage."

Still, others say the future of Wine's movement will be fleeting unless it can admit the existence of God.

"People are becoming more religiously traditional, and I don't think Sherwin's message will ring in the hearts of people for much longer," said Rabbi David Nelson of the Conservative synagogue Congregation Beth Shalom in Oak Park. "Also, I don't think that this movement would

have done as well without him. He is clearly its leader, he did it through charisma, and through his God-given abilities."

Planning for the Future

While the movement's naysayers predict the near-certain demise of Humanistic Judaism after Wine retires, members of the Birmingham Temple have been busy molding its future.

In the spring of 1983, a blond, blue-eyed girl stood before the congregation on her bat mitzvah, likening her life to that of Eleanor Roosevelt.

It was an exhilarating day for Tamara Kolton, who at age 13 decided that she would one day stand before a congregation as a Humanist rabbi.

Wine helped mold Kolton. He was her rabbi, her mentor, friend, disciplinarian and cheerleader. In 1999, she became the movement's first ordained rabbi. Shortly thereafter, Wine announced he would retire in five years, and Kolton would be his successor.

"He trusted the integrity of my beliefs, that I'd continue the message of Humanistic Judaism," Kolton said. "And he trusted my ability to be a kind leader, a creative leader."

For Kolton, the future's toughest task will be to dispel the myth that Humanistic Jews are people living free of ethics and free of a commitment to care for other Jews and their shared history.

As Wine looks to the future, retirement will be not mean rest. In fact, he jokingly predicts that his final breath will be taken on a stage, mid-sentence during a lecture on Humanistic Judaism.

"Right now, I'm having a lot of feelings," Wine said. "There is joy because I feel very successful knowing that out of my last 40 years, comes something that will last. There is sadness because I wish I could be here for the next 40 years. And above all, there is gratitude because this movement does not exist because I had a few ideas, it exists because of the people who surround me."

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Two Letters to the *Detroit Free Press*

There was a glaring omission in the June 11 article about my retirement from the Birmingham Temple ("Tough Test Looming for Godless Faith: Radical Rabbi's Retirement May Jeopardize the Movement He Created"). The article mentioned Rabbi Tamara Kolton as my successor but failed to mention that I have two successors. Rabbi Adam Chalom also serves as the rabbi of the congregation. Rabbi Chalom and Rabbi Kolton will serve as a team of co-rabbis. Rabbi Chalom grew up in the Birmingham Temple and is an outstanding graduate of our rabbinic seminary.

Rabbi Sherwin T. Wine
Birmingham Temple

I take issue with the sensationalistic focus of the article about Rabbi Sherwin Wine—that the movement may not survive his retirement. This is old news that has been proved wrong over the last many years. Through our transition, we have ensured our future with two highly talented and motivated rabbis who have demonstrated their leadership, energy and creativity over and over again. Our membership is committed to their success, and we have a philosophy that will continue to stand on its own.

Bill Trapp, President
Birmingham Temple

Humanism and Its Aspirations

The American Humanist Association, which this year gave Rabbi Wine a “Humanist of the Year” award, has strong philosophical ties with SHJ. Below is a revision of AHA’s “Humanist Manifesto.” As the organization states: “Seventy years after the first Humanist Manifesto and thirty years after the second, we find ourselves living in a world where

many Humanist values and ideals have never been more widely accepted while others have never been more urgently needed.” This third manifesto is a clarification of “Humanism as endorsed and advanced by a cross section of Humanists living, thinking and acting today. And like its predecessors, it remains subject to clarification,

modification, and improvement as times and conditions change.” For more information on the manifesto and to see its signers (which include Rabbi Wine) go to www.americanhumanist.org. All are invited to read it, provide comments, ask questions and/or endorse it.

Humanist Manifesto III, a Successor to the Humanist Manifesto of 1933

Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity.

The lifestance of Humanism—guided by reason, inspired by compassion, and informed by experience—encourages us to live life well and fully. It evolved through the ages and continues to develop through the efforts of thoughtful people who recognize that values and ideals, however carefully wrought, are subject to change as our knowledge and understandings advance.

This document is part of an ongoing effort to manifest in clear and positive terms the conceptual boundaries of Humanism, not what we must believe but a consensus of what we do believe. It is in this sense that we affirm the following:

Knowledge of the world is derived by observation, experimentation, and rational analysis. Humanists find that science is the best method for determining this knowledge as well as for solving problems and developing beneficial technologies. We also recognize the value of new departures in thought, the arts, and inner experience—each subject to analysis by critical intelligence.

Humans are an integral part of nature, the result of unguided evolutionary change. Humanists

recognize nature as self-existing. We accept our life as all and enough, distinguishing things as they are from things as we might wish or imagine them to be. We welcome the challenges of the future, and are drawn to and undaunted by the yet to be known.

Ethical values are derived from human need and interest as tested by experience. Humanists ground values in human welfare shaped by human circumstances, interests, and concerns and extended to the global ecosystem and beyond. We are committed to treating each person as having inherent worth and dignity, and to making informed choices in a context of freedom consonant with responsibility.

Life’s fulfillment emerges from individual participation in the service of humane ideals. We aim for our fullest possible development and animate our lives with a deep sense of purpose, finding wonder and awe in the joys and beauties of human existence, its challenges and tragedies, and even in the inevitability and finality of death. Humanists rely on the rich heritage of human culture and the lifestance of Humanism to provide comfort in times of want and encouragement in times of plenty.

Humans are social by nature and find meaning in relationships. Humanists long for and strive toward a world of mutual care and concern, free of cruelty and its consequences, where

differences are resolved cooperatively without resorting to violence. The joining of individuality with interdependence enriches our lives, encourages us to enrich the lives of others, and inspires hope of attaining peace, justice, and opportunity for all.

Working to benefit society maximizes individual happiness. Progressive cultures have worked to free humanity from the brutalities of mere survival and to reduce suffering, improve society, and develop global community. We seek to minimize the inequities of circumstance and ability, and we support a just distribution of nature’s resources and the fruits of human effort so that as many as possible can enjoy a good life.

Humanists are concerned for the well being of all, are committed to diversity, and respect those of differing yet humane views. We work to uphold the equal enjoyment of human rights and civil liberties in an open, secular society and maintain it is a civic duty to participate in the democratic process and a planetary duty to protect nature’s integrity, diversity, and beauty in a secure, sustainable manner.

Thus engaged in the flow of life, we aspire to this vision with the informed conviction that humanity has the ability to progress toward its highest ideals. The responsibility for our lives and the kind of world in which we live is ours and ours alone.

Amy Goodman: Walking a Path in the Jewish Tradition

Democracy Now! is the news program hosted by Amy Goodman that, for many Kol Haverim members, is a welcome contrast to the dominant media, a place to hear extensive "alternative" coverage on issues from Iraq to Israel to Bush's tax cuts to the 50TH anniversary of the execution of the Rosenbergs (June 19). A nationwide program, broadcast in this area from Hobart and William Smith Colleges at 9 AM, Amy Goodman's Democracy Now! is where one goes on the FM dial (88.1 or 89.7) to hear extended interviews with people like Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, Susan Saradon, Archbishop Desmond Tutu or the children of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. For her contribution to American democracy, Goodman is much admired and appreciated by Ithacans, having spoken here several times to overflowing audiences, most recently at Ithaca College.

Goodman is in the tradition of Jews who have been in the forefront of social justice activism. An article in the *Washington Post* describes her this way: "Goodman grew up a movement child, the daughter of radical parents in Bayshore, New York, across from Fire Island. Her father, a physician, was featured in a poster for nuclear disarmament, the image of a mushroom cloud in his

stethoscope. Going further back, she is descended from prominent Hasidic rabbis, although she counts herself a secular Jew." It's not clear if she actually belongs to an SHJ congregation, but her connection to her Jewish heritage is clear to regular listeners. For example, during the last two Passover holidays, she has replayed portions of a women-centered seder she participated in and reported on a few years ago.

Working most of her waking hours, her friends are awed by her drive, but also express concern for the depth of passion that has minor time for a "personal life." Goodman shrugs off these expressions of concern, focusing instead on an afflicted world requiring activism to heal it. Drawing on her family history, she describes the inspiration she drew from a grandmother who, when one hundred years old and sick, nonetheless organized her sanatorium.

Goodman has been reporting for Pacifica Radio since the mid-1980s, starting Democracy Now! in 1996. Working not only as the host of a news show, she has been a reporter in the field, doing stories from across the world, in places such as Yugoslavia, Haiti, Cuba, Israel's occupied territories, and East Timor. While

covering the East Timorese battle for independence, she was beaten by Indonesian soldiers, barely escaping death. Her work has earned her journalism awards, such as the Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award, the George Polk Award and the Overseas Press Club Award.

But as the *Washington Post* article observed, "the awards seem beside the point. Her Edward R. Murrow comes always with a twist of Emma Goldman." Speaking to a reporter prior to the attack on Iraq, Goodman leaned forward in her chair, "trying to explain what's so very clear to her. 'I feel this is a very urgent time, for this nation and the world,' she says. 'The clock is ticking towards war. We can't do enough, we absolutely can't.'"

When accepting an award, asked to explain her approach to journalism, she replied: "Go where the silence is and say something."

That's good advice for us all!

(Democracy Now! can be heard anytime on the Internet at www.democracynow.org. At that website, there is a link to Michael Powell's Washington Post article quoted here.)

In This Issue

Dear Friends . . . . .	.1
Community Calendar . . . . .	.2
News Flash . . . . .	.2
Newsletter: Print and Electronic . . . . .	.2
Members in the News . . . . .	.3
Jewish Foods: A Celebration of Roots . . . . .	.3
Passover . . . . .	.4
Imagining a World Where Jews Hadn't Escaped Standing Up to Pharaoh	
Yom Hashoah . . . . .	.5
Interfaith Dialogue on Faith and War . . . . .	.5
Study Group Happenings . . . . .	.5
Rabbi Wine Redirects His Work . . . . .	.6
Breaking Barriers Tough Test Looms for Godless Faith Two Letters to the <i>Detroit Free Press</i>	
Humanism and Its Aspirations . . . . .	.10
Humanist Manifesto III	
Amy Goodman: Walking a Path in the Jewish Tradition . . . . .	.11

The Finger Lakes Community
for Humanistic Judaism is an
Ithaca-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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