



Kol Haverim

The Finger Lakes Community for Humanistic Judaism

Affiliated with the Society for Humanistic Judaism

Newsletter Issue #19

September, 2003

Dear Friends,

This September my official tenure as Chairperson of Kol Haverim will start with the first Board meeting. During the summer I have spoken to or e-mailed most of the Board, been through two laptop computers and am now on a brand new desktop. I have received and sent more e-mails than I thought possible—and I'm still here!

For those of you who don't know me, let me tell you a little bit about myself. Although I've lived in Ithaca for just one year, I spent many years visiting my two sons at Cornell University. Since I retired a few years ago, I've been gradually moving north from New York City. My work there was at The Jewish Guild for the Blind where I created and supervised adult day health care programs around New York State. Over the years I've served on numerous Boards including being President of the New York State Adult Day Services Association and, recently, President of the Andes Public Library.

I come from a non-religious background. Although my parents had no name for what they practiced, it was a form of Humanistic Judaism. For example, ritual and organized religion had no meaning for my family but my parents stressed the concept of giving to the community. Similarly, celebrating holidays meant a connection to our Jewish heritage, as well as time with a large and loving family.

My other excursions into religion have included Ethical Culture, Unitarian and, surprisingly, the local Presbyterian Church in the village of Andes. In that small church I learned that a sense of community was more important to many people (myself, included) than organized religion.

Given my background, I feel fortunate to have found Kol Haverim and the people who are involved in our organization. Ithaca is a very special place—not just because of the gorges. The people I've met through KH are passionate in their beliefs, dedicated and enthusiastic. These are wonderful qualities in individuals and so important in an organization.

I realize that this is the first time there is a leadership change in KH. Our organization was very fortunate in having Barb Behrmann as its first leader. I don't think that anyone—other than her husband—can realize the time, energy and love that she put into Kol Haverim. This year will be a time of change—if only because I don't have a history of how everything has been done. I hope that my background with budgets, by-laws, policies, and procedures will help us to build on the strengths of our organization. It is exciting for me to have a new project (Dare I tell you how I love projects?) and to meet and work with you all to achieve our goals.

We will soon be celebrating Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. I look forward to seeing you then.

Yours,

Joan Joseph

Administrative Board

Chairperson: Joan Josephson
 Vice Chairperson: David Levitsky
 Secretary: Dee Thaler
 Treasurer: Carl West
 Holidays: Mark Silverman
 Programming: Caren Cooper
 Membership: Deirdre Silverman
 Social Action: Brian Eden
 Adult Education: Eric Mendelson
 Children's Education: Harry Segal
 Community Service: Jonathan Joseph
 Caring: Dee Thaler
 Members-at-Large: Barbara Eden and
 Ellen Wiernicki

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

Contact Information

Kol Haverim/FLCHJ

PO Box 68
 Ithaca, NY 14851

Phone: 607-277-3345
 Website: www.kolhaverim.net
 E-mail: info@kolhaverim.net
 Newsletter e-mail:
 khnewsletter@yahoo.com

Sunday School

Contact Harry Segal at 255-6434 or
 hgs2@cornell.edu.

Study Group

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

Social Action Committee

Contact Brian Eden at 533-9150 or
 bbe2@cornell.edu.

Community Service Committee

Contact Jonathan Joseph at 277-9744 or
 jj21@cornell.edu.

Membership and Renewal Form

You can find information about joining
 or renewing your membership at
 www.kolhaverim.net, or you can call
 607-277-3345 and ask to have a
 membership form mailed to you.

Yiddish Proverb

Reden is shver un shveigen ken men nit.

(Speech is difficult, but silence is
 impossible.)

Community Calendar

Rosh Hashanah Observance

Friday, September 26
 Stacia Zabusky and Nancy Grossman

Rosh Hashanah Observance for Children

Saturday, September 27
 Caren Cooper

Yom Kippur Observance

Monday, October 6
 Harry Segal

Sukkot

Saturday, October 11

Fourth Friday

Topic: Youth Night
 Friday, October 24
 David Levitsky

Visit with Ben Biber

Friday and Saturday, November 21-22
 Brian Eden and Caren Cooper

Hanukkah

Saturday, December 20

Festival of Short Films

Sunday, January 25
 Barbara Eden and Carl West

Tu B'shvat

February

Fourth Friday

Topic: Atheism and Morality
 February
 David Levitsky

Membership Party

February or March

Fourth Friday

Topic: Inter-marriage
 March
 David Levitsky and Ellen Wiernicki

Passover

(Begins April 6)
 Saturday, April 10
 Mark Silverman and Caren Cooper

Fourth Friday

Topic: Yom Hashoah
 April
 Deirdre Silverman

Fourth Friday

Topic: Immigrant Justice
 May
 Caren Cooper

Anti-Bias Workshop

(Jews for Racial and Economic Justice)
 May

Annual Membership Meeting

June

Trip to New York City

Tenement Museum, Lower East Side,
 Museum of Jewish Heritage,
 Chinatown
 Sunday, June 13
 Barbara Eden and Carl West

*Note: names listed are those of the
 contact person (or people) for the
 event. Details for some events will be
 provided closer to the event date.*

Subscribe to Our Newsletter

Kol Haverim publishes a quarterly
 newsletter in print and electronic
 form in February, May, August and
 November. The print version is free to
 members. Non-members may
 subscribe to the print version for \$10
 a year. The electronic version is free

and can be obtained by sending a
 message to khnewsletter@yahoo.com,
 asking to be put on the e-mail list.

For more information, e-mail the
 editor at khnewsletter@yahoo.com or
 leave a message at 607-277-3345.

Final Editorial

Dear Friends,

Here's a suggestion for a Rosh Hashanah resolution: If you have time to read just one book on Judaism in the coming year, resolve to make it Douglas Rushkoff's Nothing Sacred: The Truth About Judaism, a title that describes his candid, critical look at contemporary Judaism.

Rushkoff is a secular Jew, a media analyst by trade, who spent a couple of years thinking and writing about Judaism's history, core values and teachings; why there is an increasing number of "lapsed Jews;" why so much of contemporary Judaism is either suffocating or superficial; and how to revitalize Judaism. Much of his thinking is in sync with the secular, humanist view that has drawn us to Kol Haverim, but he also examines areas in which SHJ barely treads but should, if it is to resolve some of the characteristics of contemporary Judaism that Rushkoff critiques.

Rushkoff's view of our Jewish tradition is uplifting. He discusses how the tradition has not only been open to being questioned but has contained the assumption that it is "supposed to be questioned, continually;" and how it has stressed "open-ended inquiry," reinterpretation and reinvention. This profound view is brought to every topic in the book.

Perhaps the part of the book with which I was most taken was Rushkoff's view of God in the Torah. Drawing on the work of religious historians, he discusses how the Torah

needs to be read as a chronicle of the development of the Jewish conception of God over time. Beginning with a very graphic, personal depiction in Genesis, the concept evolves through the Torah, ending with God conceived as an "abstract, withdrawn deity." From that point, God is "increasingly inaccessible and rendered effectively absent," outside of and no longer relevant to the lives of Jews on Earth. Hence, the Jewish focus on an external master evolves to "an emphasis on people's duty to one another," a conception that provides—or should provide—a direct line to a secular, humanist view of creating a Judaism in which "God" is not relevant.

Reading the Torah from this perspective should give secular Jews a fresh historical and cultural understanding and appreciation of a developing view of "God" within the history of our tradition, and not feel put off by depictions of ancient conceptions that are contrary to our contemporary values and understandings.

Rushkoff interprets part of the logic of this evolving human-centered, human-caring Judaism as the need for Jews to cast an active, humanistic, universalist net: "as long as there is someone being abused or exploited in the world," activism based on Jewish philosophy "never stops. For someone is being treated in a way Jews wouldn't want to be treated themselves."

While lauding the positive qualities of Judaism, Rushkoff also worries that it

will become irrelevant if it does not confront the rest in its contemporary forms: "Although it finds its roots in some of the most progressive ideas conceived in history," he writes, "Judaism today is nonetheless associated with superstition, racism, sexism, and a haughty refusal to clean up its act."

Undertaking a "cleaning" requires applying our "iconoclastic, uncompromising, and relentlessly inquisitive" tradition to ourselves and our beliefs. It would involve "doing Judaism to Judaism, a process in which no stone is left unturned." But the process would be daunting! Everyone committed to becoming part of Judaism's "next great renaissance" would first have to eschew "Judaism-light" and undertake "a commitment to know the religion deeply and profoundly."

Will Jews make a commitment for a "next great renaissance"? Rushkoff isn't sure—and, frankly, neither am I. But I do know that reading and discussing books like *Nothing Sacred* is an essential step toward doing so (the book will soon be out in paperback).

This is my last issue as editor. Working in that capacity has been a joy and I hope you've found the newsletters I've edited informative and stimulating.

Shalom to you all!

Gerry

Members in the News

by **Deirdre Silverman**

Birthdays

Ben Forest 9/3
 Brian Eden 9/10
 Carol Chaplin 9/19
 Ben Nichols 9/20
 Rebecca Chason-McCarthy 9/23
 David Wiernicki 9/23
 Barbara Behrmann 9/25
 Barbara Eden 10/3
 Lori Yelensky 10/3
 Jane Segelken 10/12
 Joan Joseph 10/15
 Elaine Baum 10/17
 Donna Raymond 10/24
 Naomi Raymond 11/4
 Jonathan Joseph 11/12

Anniversaries

Deirdre & Mark Silverman 10/3
 Brian & Barbara Eden 10/12
 Ellen & Michael Wiernicki 11/23

Yahrzeits (Memorials)

Samuel Silverman,
 father of Mark Silverman, 11/12

by **Bill Baum**

Sunday brunch at our house early in July was a great success. That sounds like a cliché, but it really was a social occasion for Kol Haverim. There were about 30 people in attendance. The food was excellent. Everyone brought a dish to pass. Most of the younger members enjoyed the pool, while the rest of us got to know each other

Carolyn Greenwald's store, Collegetown Candy & Nuts, has launched a new website, of which she is very proud. You can visit the actual store on College Avenue, or the site at www.collegetowncandy.com.

Congratulations to **Barbara Behrmann!** After years of being rejected by publishers and agents alike, Barbara Behrmann suddenly found herself with three simultaneous offers to publish her book (currently untitled) about women's experiences of breastfeeding in a bottle-feeding culture. She is happy to announce that she is working with the University of Michigan Press, which will release her book in the spring of 2005.

On Sunday, August 31, 2003, **Antal Spector-Zabusky** became the first Bar Mitzvah of the Kol Haverim community. Harry Segal, Director of Kol Haverim's Sunday School, and Antal's mentors, Jonathan Joseph of Kol Haverim, and Alexander Zabusky, Antal's uncle, led the ceremony. The centerpiece of the event was Antal's extensive presentation on his "hero," Albert Einstein. Many Kol Haverim members were in attendance, along with family and friends from near and far. May this be the first of many such celebrations for the Kol Haverim community.

Sunday Brunch

better. Luckily, it was probably the single nicest day of the summer. The Goddess of sunshine smiled broadly that day.

Having an annual summer Sunday brunch is a great way to celebrate summer and the outdoors. Having it at people's homes, while the congregation is still small, is a plus.

For Elaine and me, it was special, because we aren't here for most of the year and so we don't get to know as many of the congregation as we would like to. We now know more members than we knew before. We hope everyone felt equally pleased with the special spirit of the day.

We hope you have a great winter. See you in the Spring.

Kol Haverim Invites You to Observe the High Holy Days with the Following Three Events

by Nancy Grossman

Rosh Hashanah

Friday evening, September 26 at 7PM. This will be an adult-oriented humanistic service with a potluck dessert and reception to follow. The service will be held at the Tompkins County Senior Citizens' Council located at 119 W. Court Street. Parking is available in front of the building and also behind the building by entering across from 113 Buffalo Street. The event cost: \$10 for members and \$15 for non-members.

For our evening Rosh Hashanah reception, we ask everyone to contribute. We ask people with last names beginning with letters A-M to bring desserts or fruit; those with last names beginning with letters N-Z, to please bring savory snacks and finger foods. We will provide wine, juice, coffee, and tea for everyone to enjoy.

by Harry Segal

This fall begins the fourth year of Kol Haverim's Sunday School. We offer classes for children from 4-10 and a three year bar/bat mitzvah program for children eleven years and older. For the youngest children, we follow the Jewish calendar, celebrating and honoring the holidays from a humanist perspective. For children in middle school, our curriculum focuses on ethics and human values, looking to stories from the Torah and Jewish history as exams of conflict and courage. Older children beginning preparation for the bar or bat

Childcare will be available. Costs for members 18 months to 12: \$5 with childcare and \$3 without. Costs for non-members 18 months to 12: \$10 with childcare and \$8 without. Please contact Nancy Grossman at dsng@capital.net or 387-6580 to confirm a childcare space for your child or children.

For questions or additional information please contact Joan Joseph at (607) 257-5225 or e-mail jjoeph105@yahoo.com.

Rosh Hashanah Family Service

Saturday, September 27 at 10:30AM. Kol Haverim will hold a Rosh Hashanah family service appropriate for children over age three and too young to participate in the Friday evening service. The service will be held at Burt House located at 227 N. Willard Way. The celebration includes crafts, a brief service, singing, story telling, a Tashlikh ceremony, honey

cake and other traditional holidays foods. Cost per child: \$6 for non-members, \$3 for members, and free for those with all-inclusive family memberships. Please contact Caren Cooper at cbc25@cornell.edu (or 257-4231) for more information about the event and to RSVP with the number of adults and children planning to attend.

Yom Kippur

Monday evening, October 6 at 7PM. This evening will start with a time for reflection and discussion followed by a break-the-fast potluck meal at the home of Harry and Pat Segal. You don't need to fast in order to come eat with us, however! This event is free for members and there is a \$3 charge for non-members.

Space is limited; please contact Harry Segal at hgs2@cornell.edu to reserve a space and/or to get more information.

Sunday School News

mitzvah, spend two years studying Jewish history and literature before choosing a person from Jewish history whose life they will present for their bar/bat mitzvah and from whom they will draw inspiration. As it happens, this fall marks the bar mitzvahs of our first bar mitzvah class: Antal Zabusky-Spector, Mike Strupp-Levitsky, and Jeremy Simon, are coming into their own having grappled with some of the central questions of identity: how do we fit into the tradition from which we came? How does that tradition affect (and not affect) the decisions we make about our lives? How can we face the hard choice of actually

choosing who we want to be, rather than simply living out a pre-arranged script? The humanist/Jewish coming of age means, for us, the facing of ourselves, our histories, and our choices.

Our first classes of the year will be held at the Senior Citizens' Council, 121 W. Court Street, on Sunday, September 7 at 10:15AM. It is also an "open house" for all interested parents and children. We always have room for more! For more information, please e-mail Harry Segal, the Sunday School director, at hgs2@cornell.edu.

Programming Committee

by Caren Cooper

The Program Committee met on August 28 and is planning some exciting events for the year. These include 'Youth Night' on October 24; Rabbi Ben Biber's visit November 21-22, topics TBA; Festival of Short Films on Sunday, January 25; 'Atheism and Morality' in February with a guest speaker; 'Panel Discussion about Intermarriage' in March; 'Our Immigrant Past/Current Immigrant

Issues' in May with a guest from Jews For Racial and Economic Justice to speak about their Immigrant Justice Campaign in New York City; A bus trip to NYC in mid—or late—June for Yiddish Theater, visits to Jewish museums, and lots of Jewish food.

For some events with guest speakers, we discussed socializing (with refreshments/desserts) after the program, rather than preceding these events with potluck dinners. The

Committee also discussed ways to encourage attendance of families with children to Friday events. The seating for potluck dinners will include a supervised children's table. Also, programs will begin with welcoming children with a story, song, and the lighting of Shabbat candles, followed by the adult program during which there will be separate supervised activities for children.

by Brian Eden

We had four meetings this summer. The Committee reviewed the activities of similar committees at some other SHJ affiliates. A mission statement was drafted. The importance of networking with local, especially Jewish, organizations was emphasized. Outreach possibilities to unaffiliated Jews were explored. In

Social Action Committee

this regard, several members plan to participate as individuals in the Ithaca Progressive Festival on September 6. A member of Tikkun v'Or approached us to determine our interest in a program sponsored by the National Religious Partnership for the Environment. Our commitment would involve the showing of the movie "Blue Vinyl" and then discussing our interest in participating in a campaign

to protect environmental health by limiting our exposure to vinyl chloride.

Meeting minutes are available upon request. Any member who wishes to participate in Committee meetings or bringing an issue to our attention, please contact Brian at 533-9150 or at bbe2@cornell.edu.

by Jonathan Joseph

I have just been re-elected as the chair of the community service committee. I am sorry to say, however, that I feel that I have been letting this committee flounder, and I apologize. I know that there are many of us in Kol Haverim who feel a strong sense of community and have a strong desire to participate in community service, and so it really should not be difficult to organize some activities.

On the surface, my goal for community service for Kol Haverim is simple. I would like Kol Haverim to sponsor 3 community service events in the coming year. My goals for events are as follows: I would like to sponsor events in which members of KH can participate together. I would like us to participate in events in which members donate their time as

Community Service Committee

opposed to their money. I would like to encourage events in which children and their parents can participate together. I would like to avoid events in which participation would involve asking others to donate money to a cause.

It is not necessary that all events meet all of my goals, but it is a priority for me to have at least one event that encourages youth/family participation. It may also be possible to become involved in an ongoing project in which we have a regular participation, perhaps once every two months.

In the past, we have walked together in the annual walk for violence prevention and have held a program in which we collected plant donations from local businesses, then brought them to the Reconstruction Home,

where we spent time talking with the residents. I am eager to pursue a continuing link with the Reconstruction Home, as our last program there seemed very successful, and one of our young members, Antal Specter-Zabusky, has volunteered his time there as well.

I would like to thank the members who signed the interest sheet that was passed around at the June membership meeting. I am scheduling a meeting for 7:30PM Thursday evening, October 9, to be held at the Tompkins County Senior Citizens' Council building on Court St. (subject to its availability) to plan our events for the coming year. The goal will be to plan 3 events, with one person (or more) taking the responsibility for arranging that event. All members and ideas are welcome.

On Barb Behrmann, Our First Chairperson

by Eric Mendelson

After serving for more than four years, Barb Behrmann finished her service as Chair of Kol Haverim/FLCHJ this summer. She was the person who made this community happen.

The group began with a talk Barb arranged on Humanistic Judaism in February 1999. She invited Miriam Jerris of the Society of Humanistic Judaism (SHJ) in Michigan to town for this meeting, which drew a standing-room-only crowd of 60. This meeting spurred an electric buzz of interest in HJ, prompting a set of us immediately to begin organizing a local community, starting that next morning.

This was not easy. We spent a year finding our ways through a mix of SHJ-recommended organizing steps and ones we invented. You think we're a disparate lot now? You should have seen us then. There was an inevitable sorting out during the first couple of years of those for whom HJ's philosophy and our own emerging approach truly worked from those whose visions and needs didn't match. I can recall only five of us current adult members remaining from the very first participants. All we had in common at first were a history of secularity (said one, "I've been an apathetic agnostic: I don't know and I don't care"), a growing desire for some Jewish-based connectedness (I kept mumbling about wanting to regularly rub shoulders with other Jews again), and our mutual temperaments of fiercely independent thinking. Oh, the negotiating and compromising we had ahead of us! The players did lots of sorting out, but it was Barb who most of all kept the play on stage.

Through the first three years, it was Barb who supplied the glue and kept the excitement going. With membership constantly shifting, she recognized that we needed a critical mass of members to make it go, and she worked steadily to attract new

people from the pool of secular Jews and interested others around Ithaca. This group is, of course, ever-shifting in our college town, and, as committed independents, ever-wary of joining. To paraphrase Groucho Marx, "I wouldn't want to belong to any Jewish group that would have me as a member" was one common, if unspoken, motto. Barb got KH into the public eye and inspired us to keep it there, so those who needed us could find us. She also was for the longest time the main force (and main worker) behind most KH event planning and newsletter production, as well as many other projects. She nurtured our connection to SHJ and lovingly nurtured, too, our connections to KH and to one another. In this way, Barb took on raising an additional child: KH.

Phoning, organizing, planning, enticing, persuading, improvising, networking, following-up, and meeting—Barb invested a huge amount of effort, and made this community go. One year, she organized a sizable grant we won from SHJ for promising new local HJ chapters. From this grant, we had a memorable visit from founder Sherwin Wine plus three other SHJ consulting visitors, which added ideas and momentum to our development. And she led us through meetings—oh, how many meetings! When many of these leaned toward becoming shmoozefests, Barb let us enjoy ourselves, but deftly guided us back to task. Some of these tasks, which highlighted differences among us, threatened to sink this KH ship. Barb unfailingly led us with a sensitivity that was so steady, it became easy to overlook, yet it was this skillfulness that guided us past many snags. She wrote the text of most of our first events, borrowing from other HJ congregations, yet taking care to make them distinctly Ithacan and KH. These served as our foundational "liturgy." Despite the differences which emerged periodically in our community, in these and in other subtle ways, Barb kept our eyes on our

commonalities.

I can only hint here at the innumerable details Barb navigated and the varying strong personalities she shepherded. She did so without a whit of pay, even while some weeks working for KH the equivalent of a full-time job. Barb never appeared to lose her patience—with a group largely of New York Jews, mind you—ever-modeling respect, civility, and humility. No shrinking violet, Barb expressed her own views. She had, for example, strong preferences for a name when it came time to consider adding a short name to the then FLCHJ (ultimately Kol Haverim). She nevertheless graciously trusted the naming committee to its lengthy and sometimes daunting decision process. I believe it was only at this point, after these first three years, that we could begin to really function without her doing so much for us.

The last year of Barb's tenure presented us with the problem of replacing the enormous Chairperson role she'd founded and filled. Her energetic service to KH was tough to replace. We filled our post-Barb chairpersonship only after an extended recruitment drive among our members. We are truly grateful that Joan Joseph stepped forward into this position. I don't quite know what this transition has felt like so far for Joan, but it sure has seemed that Barb'd be a hard act to follow.

For my money, I'll bet these will turn out the most eventful four years of KH history. This community would undoubtedly not be here today without Barb, nor would it have grown as rapidly and as satisfyingly. We are thankful to her husband, Mark, and to daughters Emily and Rachel for sharing so much of Barb during this time when we needed her, too. Doesn't this sound like a goodbye? It's not, of course. But we are asking Barb to remember that we thank her so very much for all her loving work as our first Chairperson of KH.

by David Levitsky

Where is the spirituality of a scientist, an atheist, a humanist? It is not in my head in the morning when I brush my teeth, or help the kids get dressed, or start my car engine to carry me to my day's work. It doesn't pervade my thinking as I respond to many e-mails that remind me or ask me to do the many things that will fill all the open spaces in my calendar. I am not aware of spirituality when I turn on my light or struggle with my computer to write yet another "scientific" paper.

Is my life devoid of spirituality? What does spirituality mean to me anyway? I must admit, I had not thought of the answer to this question before Gerry posed it to us in an e-mail. But, the more I thought about spirituality, the more I realized that I am spiritual—very spiritual. In fact, spirituality pervades, even guides me through the life I have chosen to live.

by Mark Silverman

Since I had not been interested in organized religion for years, I wanted to understand why I was attracted to the humanistic version of Judaism. What was the source of my interest and involvement? First, I remembered the talk Rabbi Wine gave when he visited here. His approach was historical and he referred to religion, Judaism in particular, as an ever-changing body of belief and practice. That perspective intrigued me. In my mind, traditional religion seemed frozen at some point, long before my time, and the modern world had to adjust to that past. But Rabbi Wine pictured Judaism as an organic progression, a process meant to react to newly created realities, something fresh and alive.

I have always welcomed change, progress toward meaningful goals. My involvement with Kol Haverim will always be based on such an affinity, accepting diversity, confronting and

Humanistic Spirituality

As I contemplated the question, I realized that, for me, spirituality refers to the meaning of "things" or "events" that occur in the real world. It is the process from which the mundane object that is perceived by our senses become ideas seeking connections to other ideas. In my work as a scientist, I must collect facts about the material world. But facts, by themselves, do not excite me enough to continue the drudgery of collecting more facts. Rather, what fuels my passion for science is the arranging of the facts into a story, a theory, a plausible context where seemingly mutually exclusive facts can fit neatly together like a jigsaw puzzle. The search for meaning requires that I must transcend the facts and observations. Spirituality describes this transcendence from that mundane to the abstract.

When I return home each evening to my children and wife, I am greeted

not by other people, but lives that have profound meaning to me. When they touch me, it is not the neural sensations on my skin that move me. It is the meaning of the person who is reaching for me that I feel deep inside and so much appreciate. The deep connections we feel within our family are not objective, but spiritual.

When, at a Kol Haverim Rosh Hashanah service or on a Fourth Friday, I gather with my "congregation", I feel proud to be part of a community who share my beliefs, who share my joy, and who will share my grief. Here, more than anywhere, I can confirm my link to Jewish history and renew my obligation to the philosophy of Humanism. Kol Haverim in more than the sum of its members, it has spiritual meaning.

Without spirituality, why seek meaning? Without meaning, what is point of life?

My Perspective on Religion

appreciating the unexpected in myself, other people, the group. For me, that's the magic of Humanistic Judaism, the magnetism. I love the fact that I don't know what's coming next. Ritualism can be deadly. Traditional Judaism was a turnoff specifically because of the safety, the certainty, the empty ritual. But freshly re-invented ritual and practice and ideas and people, my sense of what KH can be, that's the spiritual deal maker. When we share a stimulating moment at a gathering of our congregation, for example our last Tu B'shvat event, it feels right, it feels uplifting, it feels we are on the path to something meaningful.

I think there have been plenty of uplifting moments. Sure, sometimes there is noise, the noise of mixing opinions and interpretations of our direction, and some real disagreements among members. Good! I know that such noise can be criticized from various directions, but that's okay. I can live with this because it's a characteristic of much of

the world. But fundamentally, our times of unity and sentiment and meaningful ritual, facilitated by our resident crew of secular humanistic Jews, are what makes it worthwhile. And there has been a related benefit for me, as I've gotten to meet some stimulating people, and re-connect with others.

At another level, the Society for Humanistic Judaism has expressed an ideal: The freedom and dignity of the Jewish people must go hand in hand with the freedom and dignity of every human being. I am involved with the Social Action Committee in an effort to make this ideal a reality.

I'm an introverted person, but our congregation provides the social energy I crave. The fact that much of the energy is related to my Jewish heritage is a surprise, but not something that produces a reflexive retreat. I'm open to KH. I relish surprise, excitement, and change.

Avoiding Shtilkey (Silence): Can't We Kvetch and Dringen (Complain and Argue)?

by **Caren Cooper**

Teen pregnancy, the spread of HIV, date rape, sexual harassment, homophobia, racism, and countless other -isms. I call these "the flinch" topics because I notice that I literally flinch when I hear about one of them. Recently, I realized that if I explored my feelings and expanded my knowledge about these issue, then I no longer flinched every time one of them came up; however, if I ignored my thoughts and remained closed to discussion, then the flinching increased. I believe this "flinching" is why many people come to assume that silence on unpleasant topics is best, opting for the ignore-it-and-it-will-go-away approach.

This approach does not consider the consequences of such a belief. Time and again we see that silence makes problems remain and worsen. Only through education and open discussion can we come to grips with issues like teen pregnancies, sexual harassment, and racism.

No topic makes Jewish Americans "flinch" more than Israel. In my experience, many respond to this subject with an instinctive "let's not talk about it" or, worse yet, belittle or deny the importance of Israeli issues to our lives. Another common response is to believe that critics of Israel are opposed to the nation of Israel on some fundamental level as though everyone must fit the dichotomy of "You're either with us or against us." It reminds me of recent accusations that anyone criticizing the war on Iraq is unpatriotic. Is it "un-Jewish" to criticize Israeli policies? No, to the contrary, I argue that it is disrespectful to our heritage and

culture to not scrutinize Israeli policies.

In a recent conversation about Israel with Rabbi Rosenthal of the Cornell University Hillel, Rosenthal explained that opposition to the Israeli occupation is not an anti-Israel position because the occupation itself threatens the safety and security of Israeli citizens. Rosenthal believes Israel has both modern and historical rights to the West Bank and still he opposes the Israeli occupation because he believes that the occupation undermines Israel's character and that relinquishing the land to Palestinians will create a lasting peace. To me, the complexity of these issues demonstrates why careful thought, integrating our Jewish history with our secular values, and discussing Israeli policies is not something to avoid, but a task that will benefit Israel and the prospect of peace. On a more pragmatic level, it is important that Israeli actions don't provide fodder for anti-semitic propaganda. I want to feel proud to be Jewish, rather than apologetic about the endless violence in the Middle East. In addition, I feel that the burden to end any Israeli policies that are racist falls mainly on Jews, both in Israel and in the U.S. When hearing a Gentile criticize Israel, I still find myself wondering about their motivation: Are they anti-semitic or do they truly have a human-rights agenda? Thus, Jews should take the lead to bring long-term peace, security, and justice to Israelis and Palestinians.

Since KH is a humanistic organization, I hope many feel an obligation to be concerned about human rights. Since KH is a Jewish

organization, it seems natural to be concerned about Israel. Consequently, I was shocked and saddened that one of our most active members has left KH because of efforts by the Board to stop any references to Israel in the wonderful programs he has created for KH, such as the Tu B'Shvat Haggadah. I feel that we would all gain by listening to his comments, and if displeased, add our own contributions, rather than compelling him to silence. Although disappointed, I can accept if members prefer not to discuss Israel in services; however, part of my motivation for being in KH is to help me define what Judaism means to me, and a large part of that definition is my relation to Israel. Therefore, I would like to have a venue within KH for these sorts of political discussions and I hope there is enough interest among KH members to make such a venue worthwhile.

I don't expect members to agree about the issues, the problems, or the solutions. To encourage independent thinking, my father frequently paraphrased Darryl Zanuck by saying, "If two people agree all the time, then one is useless. If they disagree all the time, then both are useless." Differences in opinions should be embraced as a strength of the community, not shunned as a weakness. In my vision of KH, we should be able to learn from one another's opinions. We should be able to openly discuss contentious issues, such as conflicts in the Middle East. We should be able to respectfully disagree with one another. We should be able to occasionally find common-ground. If we do this together, then we will never flinch.

Report from the Mas'ha Peace Camp

Dara Silverman, daughter of Mark and Deirdre, went to Palestine and Israel in June and July of 2003. She worked with PENGON, the Palestinian Environmental NGO's Network (www.pengon.org) on the campaign to end the Apartheid Wall. The following is a vivid and moving excerpt from reports she sent from a peace camp near Mas'ha, a village in the northern West Bank. For more information, please contact Dara at dara@riseup.net.

by Dara Silverman

There is little I have experienced as quite as ominous sounding as hearing the rumble of dump trucks being loaded across a quiet valley at 6AM. I was woken up at 4AM yesterday to do a shift of watch (people stayed up all night because in the past there were some visits from the Israeli military). The Mas'ha Peace Camp is an educational project set up by Palestinian farmers, Israeli radical activists, and internationals from the International Women's Peace Service (IWPS). It started in April of this year, and is located on confiscated land that the Israeli government has seized to build the wall between Mas'ha and the vast majority of their land and resources. Over 1500 Israelis, Palestinians and international peace activists have stayed over-night at the camp, watching the construction of the wall take place, learning from the farmers, eating incredibly good local humus, pita and falafel, and building relationships across lines that don't normally get breached. There is always a joint presence of Palestinians, Israelis and Internationals on-site, and the camp teems with children and adults speaking Arabic, Hebrew, English, sign language and combinations of all of the above.

Others are awakened when the noise begins. It is striking because it had been so quiet before that. The sky is just beginning to lighten around the edge and the sliver of a moon has

faded. Aside from the idle chatter at the camp, you can only hear the wind in the olive trees, which is pretty faint. The camp is perched the crest of a ridge overlooking other hills and valleys in three directions, which are dotted with olive trees and rock, and ancient rock walls. Green houses, where the Palestinian farmers grow tomatoes and cucumbers nestle in 3s and behind the camp are the 2-story houses of Mas'ha on the left, some industrial buildings in the middle, and right next to that a settlement, Shuri Tikvah, of Israelis who have moved onto Palestinian land. You can identify these houses, I have learned, because they often have red-shingled roofs.

The wall is being built between the village and the settlement. This means most of the farming land of Mas'ha will be on the other side of the wall from the Palestinians. Before the wall, the village had more the 6000 dunums. After the wall, they will have control of less than 400 dunums. The men from the village who are at the camp, told us there are supposed to be gates in the wall. But the closest one will be 10 km away, and then it will be 10 km back to get to your land. The Israeli government will give people permits to allow passage onto their land, but only for the person whose name is on the deed. Not to their husband or wife. Not to any employees.

So while I was sitting on the hill writing about what I saw and heard, the landscape changed again. There is a bulldozer that appeared over the hill and came towards the camp on the road where the wall will be built. The camp was originally in a site about 500 meters down the road, and had recently moved, after the wall was constructed around the camp. The camp is again directly in the path of the wall and there is some question as to what will happen this time as the wall approaches. The road runs parallel to the camp, and so the bulldozer is about 20 meters away on

the other side of a small hill, digging. Simultaneously, a cavalcade of dump trucks approaches and dumps pile after pile of rubble in the middle of the road. The rumbling was the loading, and driving of the dump trucks. An orange shovel truck is slowly spreading some of the more than ten dump trucks full of rubble about on the road. A pick-up truck watches the whole operation.

If I turn to my left across the valley, I can see another construction point. But this is the settlement, Shuri Tikvah. They have about twice the equipment of the wall construction that I can see across the valley. They appear to be building a new road and housing. They have piles of rock and sand and a doublewide trailer set up.

So who is doing all this construction? Naziy, one of the Palestinian farmers maintaining the camp and educating visitors, tells me that all the workers are Palestinian except the supervisor in the truck. Everyone who I talk to about the wall tells me the same thing, almost all local workers. When Naziy took us on a tour of the site, after all the workers had gone home the previous night, he said he knows many of the workers because they are local as well. When asked about the choices that people make, Naziy reminded us that unemployment is over 50% in the Occupied Territories. Many people leave to find work elsewhere. He said, there is the power of the gun and the power of hunger. Everyone makes their own choice, but with children to feed many feel they have no choice but to take the work. One local man, after working on the wall for a few days came by the camp in the evening. He told them, "I know I am making good money, but I feel as if I am digging my own grave."

On August 5 and 6, Israeli police arrested over 45 Palestinian, Israeli and International protesters at this same site for blocking the construction of the wall. The wall was being placed so that one family would be separated from the rest of the village of Mas'ha with little to no access to their community. As of this writing the wall continues to be constructed along this path.

Retiring Rabbi Sherwin Wine, Founder of Humanistic Judaism Weathers Controversy to Leave a Worldwide Legacy

The last newsletter contained two articles on Rabbi Wine and the Society for Humanistic Judaism. The following article provides an excellent, comprehensive discussion of his contributions to SHJ and many issues related to them. The entire text of the article is reprinted here both to inform the current membership and to be included in newsletter section of the KH website for future members who will wish to learn about Rabbi Wine and SHJ.

With respect to the recently raised issue of whether Kol Haverim should become affiliated with the United Jewish Communities, please note in this article that both the Birmingham Temple and Rabbi Wine have chosen not to have a formal affiliation with UJC, presumably because of the organization's predominantly theistic perspective.

by Shelli Liebeman Dorfman

Detroit Jewish News

July 4, 2003

After a congregational career highlighted by the founding of a Jewish movement, Rabbi Sherwin Wine retires from the Birmingham Temple confident its new leaders are well-prepared to thrive without him.

Culminating a months-long tribute to the rabbi was a June 27 celebration of the 40-year anniversary of the movement and the symbolic passing of the torch at Birmingham Temple to Rabbis Tamara Kolton and Adam Chalom. More than 600 well-wishers attended.

With a radical philosophy of Judaism that includes "not finding any meaning in the concept of God," Rabbi Wine has experienced his share of controversy, condemnation and even denouncement by other Jews.

But the ever-positive, forward-

thinking leader of Humanistic Judaism, which affirms the power of humankind, had the ongoing courage to persevere and grow his movement. Today, his stream of Judaism has spread to 12 countries.

A New Movement

The roots of Humanistic Judaism were inside Rabbi Wine long before the movement was established in 1963. As a child, the native Detroiter was raised in a Conservative home and attended Congregation Shaarey Zedek in Detroit.

"Our home was consistently Conservative," he said. "My father observed Shabbat, and I went to services because he went—and I loved being with him, but I didn't love praying."

After graduating from Central High School in Detroit, he received bachelor's and master's degrees in philosophy from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

"I grew up in intensely anti-Semitic times," Rabbi Wine said. "I was very much aware of my Jewish identity."

Combining a love of philosophy and a strong connection to Judaism, he entered the next step of his life—the rabbinate.

"I had ceased to be Conservative in my lifestyle after leaving home," Rabbi Wine said. "The closest thing to my philosophy was Reform."

He was ordained at the Reform movement's rabbinical school, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in Cincinnati, also receiving bachelor's and master's degrees in Hebrew letters.

Following ordination, he served as a U.S. Army chaplain in Korea, was assistant rabbi at Temple Beth El in

Detroit, then was founding rabbi of the Reform Congregation Beth El in Windsor.

"While I very much enjoyed being a rabbi, I was not comfortable with the ideology of Reform Judaism," he said. "I didn't enjoy redefining the word of God to fit my beliefs and didn't enjoy the endless praying."

That year, in 1963, he received an invitation to meet with a group looking to form their own Reform congregation in the Detroit suburbs.

"After the meeting, eight of the families signed up," he said.

Amidst regular discussions, he said, "We realized we weren't actually Reform. We all knew we were Jewish and we loved being Jewish, but we realized we didn't want to be told what to believe. And, for most of us, we felt we could solve problems from the strength within ourselves and from other people—and not from God."

As the new movement of Judaism was formed, it needed to be named.

"We discussed calling it Rational Judaism or Naturalistic Judaism—as opposed to supernaturalistic," Rabbi Wine said. "But we needed to have the word 'human' in it—since that is where we find our strength—so the movement became Humanistic Judaism."

Humanistic Philosophy

Humanistic Judaism is based on human-centered history, culture, civilization, ethical values and a shared experience of the Jewish people.

The message found in the history of the Jewish people is that people have the power and responsibility to take control of their own lives, to rely on their own strengths, efforts, dignity

Legacy Continued

and courage, and to be responsible for their own fate. The power to deal with life's problems comes from within and from other people—and not from a supernatural being.

The Torah is not viewed as authoritative or God-created, but is rather, an account of human Jewish cultural history.

The focus is on the world in which people live, with no heaven, no hell, no Messiah, no resurrection, no Godly judgment. The focus is not to deny God, but to affirm people.

Ethics are at the forefront of Humanistic Judaism—in the way people treat themselves and one another.

Judaism, in Humanistic Judaism philosophy, is the evolving culture and civilization of the Jewish people. It is defined by its people rather than as a religion or set of beliefs.

Controversy Emerges

After relocating several times, the expanding congregation was thriving with 160 family members, when the *Detroit Free Press* ran a story in 1964 that triggered national exposure.

"The headline was, 'Suburban Rabbi: I Am an Atheist,'" Rabbi Wine remembered clearly. "The story was picked up by a national news service and suddenly we were everywhere—in *Time* magazine and all over the Jewish and general press."

Because of the uproar, the Michigan Masons denied use of their Birmingham Masonic Temple building in Bloomfield Hills; the Southfield Board of Education made attempts at blocking use of one of its schools by the group for Sunday school.

"There was even an attempt [to get] the HUC-JIR to take away my Reform rabbinic ordination," Rabbi Wine said.

"It never happened because the school's president at the time wouldn't do it."

Rabbi Wine said, "A few members left during the four-year public controversy and intensity—not wanting to be the center of attention, but most found it was worth the struggle."

When the controversy subsided, membership had reached 225 families.

"People didn't stay because it was convenient and because we were in the neighborhood, but because they believed in what we were creating," he said. "It solidified us with the result of the battle proving what Humanistic Jews believe—in solving the problems of life through people."

Though they met in various cities, the congregation retained the name Birmingham Temple, even through their final move in 1971. It was to a seven-acre campus in Farmington Hills, now housing the temple, the 1979 addition of a social hall and family room and the 1995 addition of the Pivnick Center for Humanistic Judaism.

Rabbi Wine says the hostility has faded now and relationships have been made within the local rabbinic community.

Today, Birmingham Temple rabbis are members of the multi-stream Michigan Board of Rabbis, based in Bloomfield Hills.

While once an outcast among rabbis, Rabbi Wine now has friends among those from other Jewish movements.

"I can tease him," said Rabbi David Nelson of the Conservative Congregation Beth Shalom in Oak Park. "He has a great sense of humor. I can say, 'May the God he doesn't believe in keep him around and healthy and creative for a long time—

to prove a point.' But he knows that I have great admiration for his brilliance and I consider him a good friend since the first days of my arrival here when he welcomed me. To this day, I'm very grateful for our friendship."

Traditional Reaction

While the Humanistic philosophy remains far from that of traditional Judaism, some clergy of other streams still speak with respect of the man who created it.

"Sherwin Wine has developed an impressive reputation for his intellectual insights into Jewish history, culture and politics," said Rabbi Daniel Nevins of the Conservative Adat Shalom Synagogue in Farmington Hills.

"He has succeeded in giving voice to the deeply secular views of many modern Jews and created a framework for them to form a community committed to ethics," he said.

"His formulation of Judaism without God and Torah lacks the commanding core that has guided and sustained our people for millennia. Yet, I respect the passion for justice that has been a hallmark of Rabbi Wine's career. I salute him upon his retirement and wish him many years of good health and continued intellectual vigor."

While other streams of Judaism include adaptation to modern times and needs, traditional Jews like Rabbi Elimelech Silberberg are in strong defense of Torah Judaism.

"The Torah and Judaism are based on the belief in God," said the Orthodox rabbi of Sara Tugman Bais Chabad Torah Center in West Bloomfield. "So any movement that rejects that is rejecting Judaism."

While Humanistic Jews may live ethical and moral lives for themselves,

Rabbi Silberberg said, "in Judaism, even acts of morality and ethics that we do—like visiting the sick or helping our parents—we do because God gave us the commandment to them. And that's the ultimate service, being servants to God.

"Judaism is a faith-oriented religion. We do not observe a holiday to commemorate an event of the past. We believe when a Jew makes Kiddush on Friday night or sits in the sukkah, we are not just doing it to follow tradition or respect the past, but to bring us closer to God. If we take God out of our religion, we are taking the guts out of Judaism."

Communal Connections

"We're Jewish and we are active members of the Jewish community—in cooperation with the other branches of Judaism," Rabbi Wine said. "The current president of the Greater Detroit Chapter of Hadassah, Susan Luria, is a member of our congregation and many of those who have served on the National Council of Jewish Women are also."

At the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, Humanistic Jews also take leadership and participatory roles.

"Any program we offer to teachers is offered to them also," said Rabbi Judah Isaacs, director of Federation's Alliance for Jewish Education in Bloomfield Township. "Their school is part of the network of schools we serve."

The International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism's biennial Colloquium event at the Birmingham Temple is co-sponsored by Federation.

"We have had a good relationship with the temple and with Rabbi Wine, and with the efforts the temple has spawned," said Allan Gale, associate director of Federation's Jewish

Community Council. "Birmingham Temple is a member of the Council, meeting criteria that includes having a constructive interest in some aspect of Jewish life. Through the years, members of Birmingham Temple have consistently held board positions here."

While Birmingham Temple is not a member of the United Jewish Communities, the New York-based umbrella organization of North American Jewish federations, there is an increasing connection.

"UJC has been enriched by a growing relationship with the movement and with Rabbi Wine," said UJC's Rabbi Eric M. Lankin, director, religious and educational activities in New York. "I recently flew to Detroit to give a major address to leaders at a conference of the Humanistic movement as part of a global Jewish effort to reach out to all movements, including Humanistic," he said.

Official members of the UJC are the Conservative, Orthodox, Reconstructionist and Reform movements, but outreach also includes affiliation with Chabad-Lubavitch, Renewal and Humanistic groups.

"Rabbi Wine has given the world's Jewish communities a unique perspective and message that we all believe should be heard at the table of Jewish life," Rabbi Lankin said.

Refining The Movement

With a philosophy that differs from traditional Judaism came the need for written materials and formats that reflected the movement's beliefs.

"We came to the conclusion that we needed to change the service format entirely," Rabbi Wine said. "Prayer was out. Reading philosophy, poetry, original creations—including my own—were in. Writing the liturgy was a five- or six-year challenge of asking

things like, 'What do Humanistic Jews do on holidays?'"

Some existing practices were revised; others were created from scratch.

The b'nai mitzvah celebration at Birmingham Temple involves a presentation on an admired figure from Jewish history. "Why should they be reading something that they don't understand that is chosen because it coincides with their birthday?" Rabbi Wine said. "This way, they choose someone who inspires them."

Perhaps the most powerful lesson stemming from a bar mitzvah presentation at Birmingham Temple was one Rabbi Wine remembers as "a story of courage." Bar mitzvah celebrant Jackson Klein spoke of his hero, Holocaust survivor Solly Ganor, on the Shabbat following Sept. 11, 2001. At the end of his presentation, Klein introduced the only out-of-town guest able to be there in light of the terrorist attacks—Ganor, who traveled from Israel. Jackson then invited Ganor to join him and celebrate with him the bar mitzvah he was denied when he was 13.

While Passover is celebrated as a holiday of freedom, in Humanistic Judaism, freedom takes on a different meaning. "Freedom is not a gift, it is an achievement," Rabbi Wine said. "You can tell the story with the traditional Haggadah, with the sea of miracles—or you can tell how we believe that those who escaped did so because of themselves. On Yom Kippur, we don't stand on trial, we celebrate because we want to live ethical, quality lives."

Once the materials were prepared, it was time to respond to those in other towns who requested help in establishing their own congregations. Today, more than 40 communities of Humanistic Jews exist worldwide.

Between 1969 and 1986, Rabbi Wine

Legacy Continued

founded several offshoots of the Society for Humanistic Judaism, the national umbrella for the movement. These offshoots included a graduate school, a leadership conference, an international arm in Jerusalem and a professional association for Humanist leaders.

A rabbinic program established in 1992 has ordained four Humanistic rabbis with two more to be ordained in October, including the first Israeli rabbi in the Humanistic Judaism movement.

Who's A Member?

Included among the Birmingham Temple's 450 unit members—singles and families—are those who otherwise would remain unaffiliated or lost from Judaism. "Many would not have joined a congregation if they had not come to us," Rabbi Wine said.

"My kids wouldn't have Judaism without Birmingham Temple," said Susan Citrin of Birmingham, a temple member for 23 years. "It is who we are. My husband grew up Reform, and I grew up with nothing.

"When our daughter, Laura, was 10—and approaching bat mitzvah age—we started thinking about joining a synagogue and Birmingham Temple fit our philosophy."

She and her husband also were impressed with the unique perspective on b'nai mitzvah celebrations.

"Rabbi Wine figured out that kids were more interested in learning about a hero or heroine that would stay with them," she said. "My daughter did her presentation on Nazi hunter Beate Klarsfeld, who she had the opportunity to speak with during her research and learn about her courage and convictions. Beate Klarsfeld became a part of her life and she still makes donations to the Beate Klarsfeld Foundation."

When her three children attended the Sunday school at Birmingham Temple and Rabbi Wine came into the classroom, Citrin said, "They always knew they were in the presence of someone very special. There is a great depth about him. He always puts everything into an interesting perspective."

A recent graduate of the Birmingham Temple school, Deborah Rose, 18, of Southfield remembers being "in awe of Rabbi Wine." She remembers his organizational skills and how he taught without written notes.

Rose was born into the congregation where her parents and grandparents are longtime members. Her mother, Jessica, is also a teacher in the Birmingham Temple school. Even after graduating from the school, Rose remains devoted and is spending her summer working for the Society for Humanistic Judaism before beginning fall classes at U-M in Ann Arbor.

What's Next?

The word "retirement" for Rabbi Wine only applies to leaving his leadership role at Birmingham Temple. "I am retiring from the temple but not from the movement," he said.

He will continue to visit Humanistic congregations around the world, remain co-chair of the international Humanistic federation, lecture and maintain his position as dean of the movement's rabbinical school.

He also will continue to lead and expand public discussions at the Center for New Thinking in Birmingham, which he founded in 1976 as a community forum for new ideas in the arts, science and philosophy.

He will, no doubt, continue to be a fixture in his Birmingham community, where he begins most days early, with a three- to four-mile walk, followed by hours at a table in the Townsend

Hotel restaurant, writing and organizing his lectures, planning his day.

The months-long tribute to Rabbi Wine by the temple included an archive exhibit of pictures, articles and documents portraying moments in the history of the movement. A series of reunions of those who celebrated weddings, confirmation and b'nai mitzvah with Rabbi Wine were held.

As those who know him would expect, his decision to leave the congregational post was not sudden or without calculation.

"It's all part of a five-year plan," said one of his successors, Rabbi Tamara Kolton, who will take on the rabbinic leadership position along with Rabbi Adam Chalom, both of whom are currently part of the temple clergy.

"And that's the genius of why it's working. We mentored for five years. He handed us the plan with every year mapped out with a graph of how we would each increase our responsibilities, right up to this moment."

Aside from the gradual transition on the part of the rabbis, she said, it allowed "people to slowly accept us as their leaders."

She doesn't anticipate any major changes at the temple. "We are going to continue his work, but bring our own unique way of contributing to the temple—with our own personalities.

"The temple is going to grow, not only because it's a dynamic place, but because it will meet the needs of more and more in the Jewish community," said Rabbi Kolton, the first Humanist-ordained rabbi, who is educational director of the temple's 85-student, preschool through grade 12 school program.

Rabbi Chalom, as director of adult

programming, will focus on adult education and social action. He will continue to work with youth. He was ordained in 2001, alongside his mother-in-law, Rabbi Miriam Jerris.

Rabbi Kolton uses a Humanistic phrase to eliminate any concerns she may have about taking over Rabbi Wine's role. "The answer has to be, 'No fear, only courage,'" she said.

"This is the opening of a new door and there is no fear, only joy; no fear, only hope; no hesitation, only openness. I have to live his legacy and live the life of courage he's been talking about for 40 years."

Both Rabbis Kolton and Chalom grew up at Birmingham Temple and, unlike Rabbi Wine, were never part of another movement. They were ordained as Humanistic Judaism rabbis.

"But as rabbis, we study Jews in history—in biblical times and modern times," Rabbi Chalom said. "Knowing the styles of different synagogues is part of being a good rabbi in the perspective of klal Yisrael [Jewish unity]."

The Future

Even with beliefs that hardly fit the standard of Jewish norm, the commitment and perseverance that brought Rabbi Sherwin Wine to create and bring Humanistic Judaism to international visibility are undeniable.

Called rebellious and fleeting by some and visionary and courageous by others, his intense belief, impressive education, natural confidence and trademark charismatic manner has brought a stream of Judaism to many who may not have found a place elsewhere.

"I have reached out to those who were not comfortable with other forms of Judaism," he said.

Now, he is working on perpetuating what he has started. The author of four books and recently named Humanist of the Year by the American Humanist Association, Rabbi Wine's name will, no doubt, be recorded in Jewish history.

The book [A Life of Courage: Sherwin Wine and Humanistic Judaism](#), which includes essays from former Israeli Knesset member Shulamit Aloni and Holocaust scholar Yehuda Bauer, among others, was presented at Rabbi Wine's June 27 retirement celebration. The book was organized by Rabbi Cohn-Sherbok, Marilyn Rowens, director of the International Institute of Secular Humanistic Judaism, and the Rev. Harry T. Cook of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Clawson, who shares with Rabbi Wine a philosophical approach to life.

"He will become increasingly well known," said Rabbi Dan Cohn-Sherbok, professor of Judaism at University of Wales. "He is a very important thinker."

A Reform rabbi, Rabbi Cohn-Sherbok included a chapter on Rabbi Wine in his book, [Fifty Key Jewish Thinkers](#), alongside others including Martin Buber, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Maimonides, Theodor Herzl and Elie Wiesel.

Rabbi Wine, the man who is usually looking ahead, paused for a brief glimpse back and said, "Nobody in that living room in 1963 would ever have believed what we've accomplished. They never could have imagined the movement that would become of it."

"When I first met Rabbi Wine in 1971, I asked him if the vitality of the movement was based on the charisma, talent and intelligence of one man and whether it would disappear when he retired," said Rabbi Harold Loss of the Reform Temple Israel in West Bloomfield.

"At the time, he answered me with a smile. Today, the answer is seen in the dedication of his life to the creation of the infrastructure he designed—and leaving others in place—for the perpetuation of the movement."

Reprinted with permission of Detroit Jewish News. For the full article and the photos accompanying it, go to: <http://detroit.jewish.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=521>

In This Issue

Dear Friends1
Community Calendar2
Subscribe to Our Newsletter2
Final Editorial3
Members in the News4
Sunday Brunch4
Three Events5
Sunday School News5
Programming Committee6
Social Action Committee6
Community Service Committee6
On Barb Behrmann7
Humanistic Spirituality8
My Perspective on Religion8
Avoiding Shtilkeyt (Silence)9
Report from the Mas'ha Peace Camp10
Worldwide Legacy11

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.

Kol Haverim/FLCJ
PO Box 68 • Ithaca, NY 14851

