



Beth Chaverim

Humanistic Jewish Community

Rabbi Jodi participated in an interfaith service at Woodlands Academy in February. Her inclusion was an important representation of a Humanistic Jewish voice. (Photo credit: Daily Herald)



Jewish Women's History Month

Upcoming Events

March 19-26	E-Auction
March 26	No Sunday School,
April 2	<i>Spring Break</i>
April 9	Pre-K Program
April 10	Passover Begins
April 11	Community Second Night
	Passover Seder
April 12	Adult Education
May 10	
June 14	
April 17	Book Group
May 15	
June 12	
May 7	Sunday School Ends

Jewish Women's History Month is celebrated each year in March. It is intended to give voice to voices silenced, to remember those who achieved much though perhaps without enough notice, and to fill in the other half of our history that has too often been ignored. Take time in March to learn more about any of the following remarkable women, or research the story of an important woman in your own personal history. The women listed below by category of accomplishment are only a sampling; add as many names as you would like to keep the learning and honor going. For more information, look at the Jewish Women's Archive, jwa.org, or the shelves of your local library which are empty no more. Choose one woman a day and investigate her accomplishments, her contributions and the difference she made to our collective history.

The Arts: sculptor Louise Nevelson, singer/actress/director Barbra Streisand, actress Natalie Portman, Stella Adler, authors Judy Blume and Sara Paretsky

Politics: Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, Shulamit Aloni, Representative Jan Schakowsky

Activism: Bella Abzug, Gloria Allred, Joanne Alter, Rose Schneiderman, Emma Goldman, Betty Friedan

Judiciary: Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Elana Kagan, Elana Rovner, Dorit Beinisch

Jewish communal work: Rebecca Gratz, Rabbi Sally Priesand

Business: Beatrice Alexander, Bobbi Brown, Donna Karan

Medicine and Science: Judith Resnick, Elisabeth Goldschmidt, Ruth Arnon, Barbara Meyerhoff

Beth

President: Deb Rusnak
Treasurer: David Kantor

Chaverim Steering Committee Members

Secretary: Steve Rusnak
Past President: Robin Chessick
Members At Large: Vivian Kramer, Carolyn Lewis, Dan Lewis, Laurie Matlin, Sue Pinkus, Alan Solid

Needing to Love Our Neighbors More than Ever

The current national and political environment has been distressing, disarming and downright frightening to many. The level of rhetoric has risen to deafening levels; the struggles to achieve justice, long thought to have been won in many arenas, have returned front and center. How do we reset our moral compass to guide us? How can we each feel that we have made a difference to make the world a better place today and going forward for our children? How can we avoid the paralyzing feeling that we are not up to the task or too insignificant to make a difference as just one person? The answer lies in acting in those areas where we do have influence, reaching out to one another, supporting one another and not leaving anyone untouched by our generosity of spirit and our human kindness. The ripple effect from the interconnection between people will resound with greater magnitude and with greater volume. We can seek inspiration for being aware and moved to action.

Our tradition, from biblical times to modern, can help. Leviticus 19:18 famously exhorts us to “love your neighbor as yourself.” There is a midrash (Talmudic story) that tells of a man who asked Rabbi Hillel to teach him the entire Torah while standing on one foot. “What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That’s the whole Torah,” he said. “All the rest is commentary.” And of course, Rabbi Sherwin Wine, the founder of Humanistic Judaism wrote: “Ayfo ori? Ori bi. Ayfo tikvati? Tikvati bi. Ayfo kochi? Kochi bi. V’gam bach. Where is my light? My light is in me. Where is my hope? My hope is in me. Where is my strength? My strength is in me. And in you.”



Each of these ideas carries a universalistic message that is well-suited to our times. We share our common humanity regardless of our political persuasions, ethnic heritages or varied faith traditions. The suffering of one necessarily is the suffering of all; likewise the betterment of one is well served by the betterment of all. We are fully human for knowing this, for acting on it and for incorporating it into our daily lives. If I love my neighbor as myself, I maintain the equality of each individual. If I refrain from doing that which is hateful to me, I acknowledge the dignity of the other. If I find my strength not only in myself, but in another too, I recognize the necessary interrelationship between people.

So let us commit to loving our neighbor, now more than ever. Let us sharpen our insight and not our rhetoric. Let us respect our differences and not exploit them. Let us recognize the strength that comes from diversity and not fear it. Let us strive to engage those with whom we disagree, at the highest level of our humanity, mindful not to denigrate either such persons or any issues at stake. Let us take these words to heart and affirm them each day, making friends out of strangers and building connections between one another. I conclude this column with the word “b’shalom” meaning “in peace.” Shalom comes from the same Hebrew root at “shalem”, the word meaning “complete.” The dual meaning, completeness comes with peace, and peace comes with completeness, is apt. As noted elsewhere in this newsletter, we need not complete the task, but neither are we free to ignore it. Together, we stand together and draw strength from each other. Together, we will work for justice and peace for every human being.

B’shalom,

Rabbi Jodi

Beth Chaverim Mission Statement

Beth Chaverim is a place for individuals and families to explore their Jewish heritage and traditions, to learn to think critically and independently about religious and theological issues, and to develop meaningful and relevant Jewish identities through education.

From The President

My daughter had just returned from her Birthright trip to Israel. You may read her comments about Chanukah in Israel elsewhere in this newsletter. I was eager to listen to what she wanted to share of her recent adventure. The highlights were not surprising. The Western Wall was more moving and inspiring than she expected, climbing Masada at dawn was worth the effort (she'd had knee surgery last summer) and getting to know the "trip buddies" from the IDF was eye opening. She plans to return to spend more time in Israel and has started friendships with some of the other Jewish young adults on the trip that she hopes to continue. I think the trip accomplished the goals towards which the Birthright program was designed.

I wanted to share with you in this newsletter the gift my daughter chose to bring back for me (she bought a similar one for herself). I have taken a photo of it to include on this page; however, it is much more dramatic in the pinks, purples, greens, reds and blues of the original. It was painted by a local artist and sold at an artisan market. With it was an explanation by the artist herself. The thought that went in to the details moved me greatly. The fact that my daughter valued its meaning and beauty, assures me that the values I've worked to instill in her have been taken to heart. I believe that the person who created this looks for the positive that each life has to offer. I hope you will also enjoy the sentiment expressed in both the painting and the explanation.

Here is a translation of the Hebrew bordering the painting. It is the beginning of the first verse of Psalms:

"Happy is the man who has not followed the counsel of the wicked, or taken the path of sinners, or joined the company of the insolent: rather, the teaching of the Lord is his delight, and he studies that teaching day and night. He is like a tree planted beside streams of water, which yields its fruit in season whose foliage never fades, and whatever it produces thrives."



The following is the explanation that accompanied the artistry:

Explanation of the Tree of Life By Idit Aharon

This painting, Tree of Life, is based on the first psalm of King David. It talks about a man whose roots should be like the roots of the tree, which gets its nutrients from the water. Roots facing up show that we should have strong roots to support our Tree of Life.

This tree bears a few different fruits instead of only one kind of fruit like the usual tree. It leads us to the following 2 ideas:

- A) *Everyday is a new day for getting new fruit (successes) in our life, and we should always believe in our strength.*
- B) *Our relations with our parents, children and spouses are very different, like the fruits of the Tree of Life, and each of these people will give its fruit in its own time, as expressed in this psalm.*

So, we don't have to compare our children or have any expectations from the people with whom we have relationships.

The circle is a circle of life. A circle goes down and then goes up for better things to come in our lives. The little points around the circle are the days of our life. Each looks like a little dot that passes very quickly; but, each day has its own potential of happiness on its own.

We can see some branches outside the circle. They tell us that with strong roots we have no limits.

Psychology says that if you paint eyes in the trunk of the tree it shows a trauma in life; but, there is a lot of light coming out of the eyes, telling us that all the negatives in our life will lead to positives.

All the blue veins we see in between the branches are born from our own good deeds and connect us to the Higher power beyond any limits of nature. These veins are the vessels for the blessings we receive.

For more information about the artist and the work, see <https://www.facebook.com/Idit-Aharon-183904328706931>

Deb Rusnak, President



What's Happening at Beth Chaverim

Mah Nishmah

Todah Rabah *means "thank you very much"*

Nancy Freedkin for the new baking sheets

PADS breakfast food donors for December: the Kramer family; the Lewis family; the Solid family; Bobbi & Jim Taormina and Rabbi Jodi for delivering the food

PADS breakfast food donors for January: the Kantor family, the Kramer family, the Lewis family, the Matlin family, the Taormina family, and the Lewis family for delivering the food

PADS breakfast food donors for February: the Bauer family, the Encisco family, the Field family, the Kantor family, the Lewis family, the Shore family, the Solid family, the Young family and the Spritz family for delivering the food

Jillana Enteen for substitute teaching our seventh/eighth grade class and assisting with our Hebrew class

Hugh Pinkus for sharing his family's story of the Workman's Circle with our fifth/sixth grade class

Louis Spritz, Katie and Ashley Shaevitz for helping with our Tu B'shevat seder

Nancy Freedkin for preparing and supplying the dough for our Purim hamantashen baking, and baking with our students; and Jillana Enteen for helping with our Purim celebration.

Welcome New Members

Jason and Lauren Crane, Maya, Nathan and Owen

Gennadiy Dubiliner and Inna Shostak, Elizabeth and Michelle

Mazel Tov

The Lewis family on the bat mitzvah of their daughter Lora

The Young family on the bat mitzvah of their daughter Hailey

Donations

Alan & Rhonda Solid

Eugeno Shifrin

Judith Matz & David Barhydt

Beth Chaverim Remembers



Jack Joseph Fishman, father of Deb Rusnak

Harvey Gersten, father of Elyse Magill

Irene Horn, mother of Rich Horn





What's Happening at Beth Chaverim

Mah Nishmah

Donations In Memory Of...

Jack Fishman

The Lewis family
Rich & Linda Horn
The Matlin family
Rhonda Rusnak
Carolyn Rusnak
Sue & Hugh Pinkus
Alan & Rhonda Solid
Dick & Donna Strauss
Judith Matz & David Barhydt

Harvey Gersten

Rich & Linda Horn
Alan & Rhonda Solid
Dick & Donna Strauss
Judith Matz & David Barhydt

Irene Horn

Judith Matz & David Barhydt
Elyse & Tom Magill
Alan & Rhonda Solid
Dick & Donna Strauss
Deb & Steve Rusnak

Ileane Pastron

Judith Matz & David Barhydt

David Kornfeld

Julie Rosenfeld



Standing On One Foot

(Judaism in 140 Characters or Less)

"Our job is not complete the task. But neither are we free to desist from it." This call to action and against indifference comes from the Talmud, Rabbi Tarfon.

Mazel Tov!



Lora Lewis, Bat Mitzvah

Lora Lewis is a 7th grade student at Daniel Wright Junior High in Lincolnshire where she is a member of chorus, plays the oboe in the school band, performs in the school musical, is a cheerleader on the spirit team, and is a member of the Wright Way Club peer leadership group. Outside of school, Lora is an active participant in the Buffalo Grove Park District's Big Deal Productions where she will perform in her 8th show the weekend after her Bat Mitzvah. Lora loves her experiences with the Buffalo Grove Park District including Crescendo Show Choir and Broadway Buddies. Her involvement as a mentor and theater buddy for teens and adults with special needs inspired her community service project where she continues to assist in Broadway Buddies and is working to advocate for kids with special needs in her junior high school to be able to enjoy and participate in extracurricular school activities. As a result of her advocacy efforts, Lora gets to know the students in the guided special needs classroom at Daniel Wright when she plays games with them on a weekly basis.



Hailey Young, Bat Mitzvah

Hailey Young is a 7th grader at Shepard Middle School. Her favorite subject at school is science. Hailey loves to play tennis and swim. She is on her local swim team Coho. Hailey's favorite place to be is at camp Kamaji with her friends over the summers.



Rabbi Sherwin T. Wine

"So what is happiness?

Happiness is an enthusiasm for life, an eagerness to solve problems, a confidence in our strength to deal with reality, even when that reality is less than we want it to be." (From *The Jewish Humanist*, March, 1987)

Celebrating Chanukah in Israel

By Elana Rusnak

Elana taught our primary class for four years and set a wonderful example for our youngest students.

Here is her story of being in Israel for Chanukah.

Growing up, the only distinction between Chanukah at home and Chanukah in Israel was the difference in a single letter on a dreidel. The "Great Miracle" happened either here (on the Israeli dreidel) or there, the candles were lit, the prayers were sung, and gelt and presents were passed around. I had always known the story and traditions surrounding the holiday growing up, and being a Sunday school teacher here at Beth Chaverim for my four years of high school only cemented them further. But still, it was only ever a story from our history, a pleasant tradition, and nothing more.

This year however, I spent the first four nights of Chanukah in Israel on a Birthright trip with 40 American students, and 7 Israeli soldiers of the same age group. Over the 10 days we went from being strangers to family, learning about each other's cultures, lives, and aspirations for the future. Halfway through, after spending Shabbat on a kibbutz in the Judean desert, we celebrated our first night of Chanukah together. We stood in a circle in a dark room, unable to see except by the light of a single candle, which then blossomed into two. We began singing the prayers, and although there were some songs I didn't know, the ones we were all familiar with truly showed us that while we came from all across the globe, this holiday and this tradition were ours to share. In that moment, our backgrounds and differences disappeared and we all came together in a single *present* — suddenly, the letters on the Israeli dreidel had a much stronger meaning for us all.

Having this opportunity to explore my Jewish heritage in Israel afforded me the honor of becoming friends with those that protect and serve our homeland. Being able to share Chanukah with them, in the land of our people, was my own sort of holiday miracle. I will forever cherish the feeling of such togetherness in a country so far from home, surrounded by people that have become my brothers and sisters. It is my hope that we can all have the chance to learn from each other, and feel the same connection that I did from half way across the world.

I hope that your Chanukah and holiday season were as bright as the candle flames on your menorah.

Adult Education Continues

Our exploration of the monarchy in the Bible continues as we examine the so-called United Monarchy of King David and King Solomon.

Join us at 2 pm at Barnes & Noble in Deerfield on:

April 12

May 10

June 14

as we read the biblical text in English and analyze the narrative



Beth Chaverim Book Club

Please join us as we discuss the following books.

April 17 we will consider Michael Chabon's newest novel, **Moonglow**. According to Tablet magazine, it is a 20th century Jewish story. "The story of Moonglow is primarily that of Chabon's maternal grandfather, referred to in the book always simply as "my grandfather." The premise of the book is that on his deathbed, in 1989, his grandfather finally broke his lifelong habit of reticence and confided to Chabon the fantastic series of adventures that made up his life. These are the stories the novel retells, out of chronological order, and supplemented by Chabon's own childhood memories, as well as facts ostensibly discovered through later research and interviews. But the book's opening disclaimer makes clear that nothing we are about to read is to be taken as fact: "In preparing this memoir, I have stuck to facts except where facts refused to conform with memory, narrative purpose, or the truth as I prefer to understand it." And at the end, in his acknowledgments, Chabon confirms that many of the people and organizations referred to in the course of the book do not actually exist. What we are reading, then, is a novel in the form of a memoir—a fantasia on biographical themes from the Greatest Generation."

On May 15 we will discuss **Seven Good Years, A Memoir** by Etgar Keret. According to npr.org, "this [is a] collection of unusual coincidences, and tiny vignettes of a life lived on the constant, bittersweet edge of surrealism. This scattering of laughs. This pack of sighs. This charming and heartbreaking pile of stories that cover the years between the birth of Keret's son, Lev, and the death of his beloved father. It starts with a terrorist attack — with Keret in a hospital maternity ward where the doctors have all been called away, waiting for his wife to give birth — and ends with a rocket attack on Tel Aviv, with Keret, his wife and son all lying on top of each other (playing "Pastrami Sandwich") by the side of the road and listening to the air raid sirens and distant explosions. In between, it has anti-semites, air travel, war, telemarketers, Hebrew Book Week, the magic of dreams, war, IKEA boycotts, preschool, Disneyland, Ehud Olmert pretending to be a cat, war and war. Keret calls it a memoir but it's really a TARDIS — a time machine that does two kinds of magic at once. First, it takes us back through seven years of Keret's history, showing us the world (its beauty, madness, and inescapable strangeness) through his sharp and sympathetic observations. It's not an overtly political book, but one defined by violence, bookended by life and death. Second, he writes stories that are bigger on the inside. Keret can give us a day in a handful of words, a life in four paragraphs, a war in two pages, then downshift and spend five discussing the fundamentalist and geopolitical implications of playing Angry Birds ("Under the adorable surface of the funny animals and their sweet voices, Angry Birds is actually a game that is consistent with the spirit of religious fundamentalist terrorists...a game in which you are prepared to sacrifice your life just so you can destroy the houses of unarmed enemies and vaporize their wives and children inside."). The stories, despite their length, feel full and generous. They never leave you feeling cheated because there is value in every word. Even the silly ones."

We will meet on June 12 to consider **The Secret Chord** by Geraldine Brooks. This is a modern midrash giving us the King David narrative from the point of view of the prophet Nathan. From penguinrandomhouse.com, "The Secret Chord provides new context for some of the best-known episodes of David's life while also focusing on others, even more remarkable and emotionally intense, that have been neglected. We see David through the eyes of those who love him or fear him—from the prophet Nathan, voice of his conscience, to his wives Mikhal, Avigail, and Batsheva, and finally to Solomon, the late-born son who redeems his Lear-like old age. Brooks has an uncanny ability to hear and transform characters from history, and this beautifully written, unvarnished saga of faith, desire, family, ambition, betrayal, and power will enthrall her many fans."

In July we will discuss **City of Secrets** by Stewart O'Nan. nytimes.com describes this book this way: "The desperate group of four men pried loose the tracks, flagged down the train, held the engineer and passengers at gunpoint and blew the mail car to smithereens to crack the safe and make off with the payroll for the troops in town. Not Butch and Sundance, but a raid by an action cell of the Haganah, the Israeli underground resistance operating against British Mandate forces in post-World War II Jerusalem. To Stewart O'Nan's 15 previous, omniform novels we can now add the excellent "City of Secrets," a little jewel, -wonderfully sparse, moody and uneasy, reminiscent of the delicious, frayed-collar noir of le Carré's "The Spy Who Came In From the Cold.""

Many if not most of the books we read in our book group are in the Beth Chaverim library.

If you would like to borrow one of the books, please contact Rabbi Jodi.



Chag Sameach



Why is This Night Different From All Other Nights?



It's the Beth Chaverim 2nd Night Seder!

Tuesday, April 11, 2017

5:30 PM

Hilton Northbrook

2855 North Milwaukee Ave.

Northbrook

Member &
Non-Members
Welcome

Dinner Includes

Matzo Ball Soup

Chicken, Brisket or Salmon

(Vegetarian Option Passover Veggie Lasagna Available)

Vegetables

Beverage and Dessert



Adults \$40

Children 3 - 13 \$18

Children under 3 free

BRING YOUR OWN WINE

Deadline April 4th

Send Payment to: Beth Chaverim Humanistic Jewish Community
1457 Wilmot Road, Deerfield, IL 60015

We Can't Wait to Attend

Name: _____

_____ # Adults @ \$40.00/ person _____

___ Chicken ___ Fish ___ Brisket ___ Vegetarian

_____ # Children (3-13) @ \$18.00/ person _____

___ Chicken ___ Vegetarian

_____ # Children under 3

___ Chicken ___ Vegetarian

Total Enclosed \$ _____

The Humanist Café – Food for the Mind & the Appetite

Science is Real

It is with a fair degree of disbelief that in the 21st century, one must affirm a strong and unequivocal belief in science. Science is real, it is evidence-based, and it is objective. Science is not subject to the winds of change or the whims of politics. That is not to say that science cannot be misused for political or nefarious purposes. Indeed part of the ugly history of anti-Semitism purported to be “fact based” on blood lines and percentages of genealogical lineage; eugenics purported to justify cruel actions taken against certain groups of people. But overall science is the key to our understanding the world, to advances of humankind, and to the betterment of all people. On Earth Day, April 22, people will take to the streets in Washington D.C. in a March for Science. From marchforscience.com, “. . . science is everywhere and affects everyone. Science is often an arduous process, but it is also thrilling. A universal human curiosity and dogged persistence is the greatest hope for the future.”

Science is often pitted against faith implying that those who value science cannot appreciate the beauty and mystery in the world. It is an unfair suggestion. The rabbis of old advanced the idea that when one sees a rainbow, one should utter a blessing because in the story of Noah, a rainbow was a symbol of the biblical God’s covenant with humankind not to destroy the world. The blessing expresses remembrance of that promise. As a believer in science, seeing a rainbow does not serve as a covenantal reminder but instead can evoke a feeling of gratitude as well as awe. It is unusual and extraordinary, and can transcend the mundane of a given day. Astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson said, “The exact Rainbow any of us sees in the sky is entirely our own -- a personal, yet communal gift from the laws of optics.” Just one gift science has to offer.

Slow Cooker Brisket

From the Kitchen of Brooke Perlman

Ingredients:

3 lb Grass-Fed Flat Cut Brisket
2-3 Medium Parsnips, Sliced into Discs
5-6 Medium Carrots, Sliced into Discs
3 Stalks of Celery, Sliced into Discs
2 Medium Rutabaga, Diced

Marinade:

½ Cup High Quality Olive Oil
1 Cup Bragg’s Apple Cider Vinegar with The Mother
Juice of 2 Lemons
1 Bunch (of Scallions, Green Sections Only, Diced
1 Bunch of Parsley (any variety will work), Chopped
2 TBS Real Salt or Pink Himalayan Sea Salt, Divided



Instructions:

In your large container or bag, mix together the marinade ingredients, using only 1 TBS of salt. Add the brisket and marinate for 18-24 hours. The longer, the better!

Once marinate is complete, place the brisket and marinade into slow cooker and cook on high for four hours. Add in chopped vegetables and the second TBS of salt and cook on low for an additional 4-6 hours until meat is tender but not falling apart. Remove meat from slow cooker, slice, and place back into slow cooker for a few minutes before serving. Enjoy!



Membership Questions?

Do you have questions about membership? Contact our membership liaison, Deb Rusnak, at dfishman63@comcast.net.

Can You Help?

We are always looking for some assistance, large and small, for our events. Please let us know if you are interested in helping with any of the following events this year or next:

- Helping Hands Committee
- E-Auction



Over the past few years, we have had several families within our community that have had a temporary set back, ie: a surgery, loss of a job, family crises, etc. "Helping Hands" is available to help with the needs of these families, either through delivering a meal, or driving to a doctor's appointment or any other minor needs a family could use. Over the past several months, assistance has been provided to several members. If you would like to be added to the list of members who will assist when needed, please email us and Laurie Matlin will contact you when the need arises. Thank you to everyone who has volunteered already; it is greatly appreciated. Any family needing assistance can seek it by contacting Rabbi Jodi.

Humanistic Judaism 101

- Defines Judaism as the collective historic experience of the Jewish people and promotes a community of shared Jewish values.
- Promotes the developments of a strong Jewish identity, especially for those Jews who cannot intellectually or emotionally embrace a supernatural being, or who are unsure about the existence of such a being and want to express their Judaism in an honest and meaningful way.
- Emphasizes the capacity in all human beings to improve themselves and the world through learning and the performance of good deeds.
- Teaches that ethical behavior is conduct which enhances the dignity of every individual
- Understands that ritual without meaning is simply empty ritual and that liberal Judaism is authentic Judaism without apologies to the present or nostalgic bows to the past

Beth Chaverim is affiliated with the Society for Humanistic Judaism

Did You Know?

Rabbi Jodi Kornfeld is available to conduct **life cycle ceremonies including weddings, civil unions, baby namings, and funerals** for members and non-members. Contact Rabbi Jodi for further information at:

(847) 945-6512

rabbijodi@gmail.com

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(847) 945-6512

www.BethChaverim.net

Rabbi

Jodi Kornfeld

Administrator

Linda Horn

Editor

Brooke Perlman



Visit our website to learn more about us – www.BethChaverim.net