



BETH CHAVERIM

HUMANISTIC JEWISH COMMUNITY



What's Happening at Beth Chaverim

Ma Nishmah

Thursday, December 7th - Chanukah Begins

Sunday, December 10th - Pre-K Class Meets

Wednesday, December 13th - Adult Education, 2pm

**Sunday, December 24th, 31st & January 7th - Winter
Break for Sunday School**

Wednesday, December 20th - Book Group, 7pm

Sunday, January 14th - Sunday School Resumes

Sunday, January 21st- Tu B'shevat seder

Sunday, January 21st - Pre-K Class Meets



You can find all of this
information & more on
our [website](#) under
“[News & Events](#)”

Beth Chaverim Steering Committee

President - Carolyn Lewis

Secretary - Steve Rusnak

Treasurer - Deb Rusnak

Past President - Deb Rusnak

Members at Large - Dan Lewis, Alan Solid, and Rachelle Durrer

Eight Gifts for Eight Nights

My favorite Chanukah story is “In the Month of Kislev.” It tells the tale of four poor sisters who walk past the house of the town’s richest man each night of Chanukah to take in the smell of latkes being cooked. The miserly man complains that he is being robbed; so the rabbi devises a solution - the townspeople put coins in a bag and the rabbi shakes them. He tells the man that he has been paid in full for the *smell* of the latkes with the *sound* of the coins.

As I think about Chanukah this year, the intangibles are the things that really matter most. We can’t hold them in our hands but we experience them nonetheless. We can’t see them but we know they make a difference in our own lives and in the lives of others. We can’t buy them but we recognize their inherent value. So for each of the eight nights of Chanukah, consider giving the following; I suspect that in return you will receive so much more of the same.

Kindness - It has become a cliché to consider practicing random acts of kindness. Yet they are often the simplest things we can do. Holding the door open for someone or saying thank you as a matter of routine to those we know and those we don’t are ways of acknowledging the humanity of another. So great is the value of kindness that our tradition teaches it is one of three pillars on which the world stands; it is given equal footing with two religious tenets.

Generosity - A generous person gives of themselves. There is a generosity of spirit that goes beyond writing a check or making a donation of something. Giving of your time, giving of your experience, or widening your circle of care, are the hallmarks of generosity.

Compassion - We have the ability to see the basic humanity of another person. When we do, we can exercise our innate ability to empathize. Empathy and compassion are two sides of the same coin.

Love - Being loved and being able to love is about a deep connection with another human being. There are many varieties such as the love of a parent for a child, a grandparent for a grandchild, a partner for another partner. It is the gift that can continue to be given and never have its supply exhausted. It gives meaning and purpose to our lives.

Friendship - Being a friend involves the ability to listen and actually hear another person; being there in all manner of circumstance; and share the range of human emotions. Studies have shown that most people have three to five good friends, the kind we can count on and want to spend time with. The real gift of friendship is deeper than its social media counterpart where we “friend” others.

Gratitude - Developing a deep appreciation for all that we have fosters what has become known as an attitude of gratitude. It is the opposite of taking things for granted. We have much to be grateful for in our lives, even when we have challenges and setbacks. Indeed living a life of gratitude fortifies us for those times.

Wisdom - Wisdom or *chochmah* in Hebrew, is more than knowledge. It is the ability to think critically, to apply learned experiences to new challenges. It generally increases with age and accumulated life experiences. I count myself fortunate to have known several people whom I consider wise; they are the ones to whom you want to sit up and take note, to truly listen to what they have to say. Hopefully you will gain those kinds of insights as well.

Community - It is said that there is an epidemic of loneliness in our country. These are often dark and scary times. A community provides us with people who share our values and concerns. It is a place to share our joys and our sorrows. It counteracts the loneliness felt by too many too often.

If each of us gave these eight gifts over the eight nights of Chanukah, we would truly give meaning to the Festival of Lights. The world will be a brighter place for giving and cherishing these gifts. These are my gifts to you as I wish you a very happy Chanukah and a happy secular New Year.

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.

President's Column: What Can We Do?

In the face of recent events and the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, we understand that many of us are feeling a mix of emotions. The conflict with Hamas has brought pain, uncertainty, and fear, and it's important for our community to come together to find strength, positivity, and hope during these difficult times. Our Humanistic Jewish tradition emphasizes the values of human dignity, justice, and compassion for all. Even in the midst of conflict, it is essential that we uphold these values. By doing so, we contribute to a more peaceful and just world, even if the situation may seem dire. During these difficult times, we must remember that our history teaches us to be resilient, hopeful, and compassionate. As we navigate these challenges, let us continue to work towards a more just, peaceful, and hopeful future.

While incidences of anti-Semitism are on the rise, we remember that Humanistic Jews approach anti-Semitism with a focus on humanistic values such as reason, ethics, and compassion. We believe in the power of education and engagement to create a more inclusive and tolerant society. While our approach to combating anti-Semitism aligns with the broader Jewish community, our emphasis on secular humanism may guide our actions and responses in unique ways.

Education and Awareness: Humanistic Jews believe in the power of education and awareness. We actively educate ourselves and others about the history of anti-Semitism and the impact it has on individuals and communities.

Community Support: Humanistic Jewish communities offer support and solidarity to individuals who have experienced anti-Semitism. We provide safe spaces for people to share their experiences, express their feelings, and seek emotional support within our community.

Promotion of Tolerance: Humanistic Jews are committed to promoting tolerance and respect for all people, regardless of their religious or ethnic background. We often engage in interfaith and intercultural dialogues to build bridges and foster understanding.

Advocacy and Social Justice: Many Humanistic Jews are actively involved in social justice initiatives. We work to combat not only anti-Semitism but all forms of prejudice, discrimination, and injustice.

Combating Stereotypes: Humanistic Jews are often at the forefront of challenging stereotypes and misconceptions about Judaism and Jewish people. We may use literature, art, and public speaking to combat negative stereotypes and foster positive representation.

Legislative Advocacy: Humanistic Jews support and advocate for legislation that addresses hate crimes, discrimination, and anti-Semitism. We work with organizations that promote civil rights and social justice to make a difference at the legislative level.

Holocaust Remembrance: Humanistic Jews take Holocaust remembrance and education seriously. We participate in Holocaust memorial events and educate others about the historical horrors of anti-Semitism to prevent history from repeating itself.

Community Building: Building a strong and inclusive Humanistic Jewish community is essential in the face of anti-Semitism. This can involve fostering a sense of belonging, inclusivity, and mutual support among community members.

In the face of tragedy, resilience and positivity shine as beacons of hope. People often display unwavering strength, pulling together to overcome adversity. Resilience manifests as the ability to adapt, heal, and thrive, even when confronted with overwhelming darkness. Through such resilience and positivity, we find the strength to face tragedy and emerge stronger, reinforcing the human capacity for hope and recovery.

During trying times, how can we continue to be a strong and supportive community? It is important to think about what we CAN do, not what we cannot do. We CAN reach out to one another, offer a listening ear, and provide comfort to those in need. Together, we CAN help one another find solace and strength. We CAN seek knowledge about the complex issues at hand. Understanding the root causes of conflicts CAN be a powerful tool for promoting peace and resolving differences. While it may be challenging, we CAN hold on to hope. We CAN believe in the possibility of a better future as a driving force for positive change. We CAN perform acts of kindness, not just within our community but also in the broader world. Even small acts can make a difference and inspire others to do the same.

Carolyn Lewis



What's Happening at Beth Chaverim – Ma Nishmah

Welcome New Members

Julia and Fred Bliss, Claire and Zoe
Lori and Howie Oster, Brienzi and Darcy



Mazel Tov

Pam and Tom Davies on the birth of their granddaughter Lillian Jean

Donations

Linda and Rich Horn in memory of Clara Kornfeld
Sue and Hugh Pinkus in memory of Clara Kornfeld
Vivian and Loren Kramer
Julie Boyer in honor of the birth of Elyse and Tom Magill's two grandsons, Teddy and Dylan

Yom Kippur Donations

James and Bobbi Taormina
Alan and Rhonda Solid
Carolyn Rusnak
Phyllis Hecker
Anne and Barry Chessick



Todah Rabah

Maot Chitim volunteers: Rachel, Ross and Anastasia Durrer, Jen, Zoe and Maggie Enciso, Jodi and Juan Hernandez, Carolyn, Dan and Parker Lewis, Steve and Riley Ozan

Oneg bakers: The Lewis family, the Oster family, Sue and Hugh Pinkus, Alan and Rhonda Solid and Rabbi Jodi

Penny and Mike Weinberg for delivering the food collected for the Deerfield Township Food Pantry

Jillana Enteen for substitute teaching our lower primary class

Holiday toy donors: the Enciso family, the Fisher-Stawinski family, the Lewis family, the Magill family, Meryle Mitchel, the Ratliff family, the Taormina family, the Weinberg family, Rabbi Jodi

Beth Chaverim Remembers

Clara Kornfeld, mother-in-law of Rabbi Jodi



Fall Happenings

Maot Chitim: As part of our 20 for 20, we delivered Rosh Hashanah food packages to Jewish needy in Morton Grove.



Fall Happenings

Top: Our High Holidays services were made so much more lovely with the amazing vocals of Scott Bass, our member readers and the sounding of the shofar.

Bottom: Rabbi Jodi representing Beth Chaverim participated in the Interfaith Thanksgiving Service sponsored by Religious Leaders United.



Fall Happenings

Top right: We participated in Fall Fest hosted by the JCC in Lake Zurich. On a beautiful Sunday afternoon, people were able to learn more about Beth Chaverim and Humanistic Judaism.

Top left: Some of the toys collected for the holiday toy drive for the children served by Jewish Children and Family Services.

Bottom: Maxwell Street Junior Klezmer Ensemble: Our Sunday School students were treated to a concert by the Maxwell Street Junior Klezmer Ensemble. These talented young people under the guidance of Lori Lippitz gave us a wonderful performance steeped in Jewish culture.



Look What the Mail Brought In



WEST DEERFIELD
TOWNSHIP
Your Community Resource for Life

September 26, 2023

Rabbi Jodi Kornfeld
Beth Chaverim

Dear Rabbi Kornfeld,

Thank you for generous donation of groceries to the West Deerfield Township Food Pantry on September 25, 2023, as part of your mitzvah project. These items will be really appreciated by our pantry clients.

As you may know, the number of people relying on the Food Pantry has increased substantially during the last few years. Senior citizens, singles, and families all count on the Pantry for food and basic household necessities. As donations typically fall off during the summer months, your donation is especially timely.

On behalf of all those who will benefit from your donation, please accept my deepest gratitude.

Sincerely,

Alyson M. Feiger
Alyson M. Feiger
Township Supervisor

Chanukah Blessings

Chanukah Candle Lighting Beth Chaverim Humanistic Jewish Community

*Baruch ha-or ba-olam
Baruch ha-or ba-adam
Baruch ha-or ba-Chanukah*



*Blessed is the light in the world
Blessed is the light in each person
Blessed is the light of Chanukah*



20 for 20: We Did It!

To celebrate our twentieth anniversary, we set out to complete twenty community service projects under the banner that giving is better than getting. We did it! Coming together as a community allowed us to reach this goal. We earned recognition from Governor Pritzker and Congressman Schneider for our efforts. The generosity of our members in terms of time, goods and dollars made this a reality. Together we:

Volunteered at Bernie's Books, Feed My Starving Children, the Northern Illinois Food Bank, Fill A Heart for Kids, GiveNKind and St. Paul's Soup Kitchen.

Staffed the Gleanings Table at the Deerfield Farmers' Market.

Delivered holiday food packages for Passover and Rosh Hashanah with Maot Chitim.

Made Valentine's Cards for seniors, dog pull toys for the Anti-Cruelty Society, breakfast for Hope House and for PADS.

Collected food for the Deerfield Township Food Pantry, and toys for the holiday toy drive with Jewish Children and Family Services.

Assembled Dignity Bags for women fleeing abusive situations for the National Council of Jewish Women and decorated cookies for first responders.

Participated in the Buffalo Grove Pride Parade.

Painted ukuleles to raise funds for the Ukulele Kids Club for children receiving music therapy in the local children's hospitals.

Made holiday cards for military personnel stationed overseas.

While so many benefited from our efforts, we also benefited from being engaged with the larger community, from increasing our sensitivity to the needs of others, and from being enriched by the experience of repairing the world. Our ongoing efforts will not end with the conclusion of our anniversary year. Watch your emails for more giving opportunities in the coming year.



Beth Chaverim Book Club: December



Please join us as we discuss the following books

On December 20 at 7 pm we will discuss “The Wolf Hunt” by Israeli author Ayelet Gundar-Goshen. As described on amazon.com, “Lilach has it all: a beautiful home in the heart of Silicon Valley, a successful husband and stable marriage, and a teenage son, Adam, with whom she has always felt a particular closeness. Israeli immigrants, the family has now lived in the U.S. long enough that they consider it home. But after a brutal attack on a local synagogue shakes their sense of safety, Adam enrolls in a self-defense class taught by a former Israeli Special Forces officer. There, for the first time, he finds a sense of confidence and belonging. Then, tragedy strikes again when an African American boy dies at a house party, apparently from a drug overdose. Though he was a high school classmate, Adam claims not to know him. Yet rumors begin to circulate that the death was not accidental, and that Adam and his new friends had a history with Jamal. As more details surface and racial tensions in the community are ignited, Lilach begins to question everything she thought she knew about her son. Could her worst fears be possible? Could her quiet, reclusive child have had something to do with Jamal’s death? Praised for “instilling emotional depth into a thriller plot” (New York Times Book Review on Waking Lions), Ayelet Gundar-Goshen once again brings together taut, page-turning suspense, superb writing, and razor-sharp insight into the fault lines of race, identity, and privilege and the dark secrets we hide from those we love most.”



Rabbi Sherwin T. Wine

“A world without divine guarantees and divine justice is a little bit frightening. But it is also the source of human freedom and human dignity.” (*Humanistic Judaism vol. XIII, no. 3 1985*)



January & February

In January we will discuss “The Last Watchman of Old Cairo” by Michael David Lukas. According to [goodreads.com](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/54111170-the-last-watchman-of-old-cairo), “Joseph, a literature student at Berkeley, is the son of a Jewish mother and a Muslim father. One day, a mysterious package arrives on his doorstep, pulling him into a mesmerizing adventure to uncover the tangled history that binds the two sides of his family. For generations, the men of the al-Raqb family have served as watchmen of the storied Ibn Ezra Synagogue in Old Cairo, built at the site where the infant Moses was taken from the Nile. Joseph learns of his ancestor Ali, a Muslim orphan who nearly a thousand years earlier was entrusted as the first watchman of the synagogue and became enchanted by its legendary--perhaps magical--Ezra Scroll. The story of Joseph's family is entwined with that of the British twin sisters Agnes and Margaret, who in 1897 depart their hallowed Cambridge halls on a mission to rescue sacred texts that have begun to disappear from the synagogue. The Last Watchman of Old Cairo is a moving page-turner of a novel from acclaimed storyteller Michael David Lukas. This tightly woven multigenerational tale illuminates the tensions that have torn communities apart and the unlikely forces--potent magic, forbidden love--that boldly attempt to bridge that divide.”



In February we will discuss “The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store” by James McBride. As described in [newyorktimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/18/books/review/the-heaven-and-earth-grocery-store-by-james-mcbride.html), “The book is a murder mystery locked inside a Great American Novel. The story opens in 1972, with the discovery of a skeleton buried in a well in Pottstown, Pa. The identity of the corpse is unknown but the few clues found (a belt buckle, a pendant and a mezuzah) lead authorities to question the only Jewish man remaining from the town’s formerly vibrant Jewish community. However, instead of a simple whodunit, the novel leaves the bones behind and swings back to the 1920s and ’30s, to Chicken Hill, the neighborhood in Pottstown where Jewish, Black and immigrant folks make their homes. It’s a community of people bonded together by the links of love and duty, and it’s here that McBride’s epic tale truly begins. . . The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store is a charming, smart, heart-blistering and heart-healing novel. Great love bursts through these pages via the friends and families that mobilize to protect Dodo, a child endangered by the structures he was born into and injured by. With this story, McBride brilliantly captures a rapidly changing country, as seen through the eyes of the recently arrived and the formerly enslaved people of Chicken Hill. He has reached back into our shared past when, by migration and violence, segregation and collision, America was still becoming America. And through this evocation, McBride offers us a thorough reminder: Against seemingly impossible odds, even in the midst of humanity’s most wicked designs, love, community and action can save us.”

**Standing on One Foot**

Judaism in roughly 140 characters

“What hurts the victim most is not the cruelty of the oppressor, but the silence of the bystander.” Elie Wiesel

Adult Education

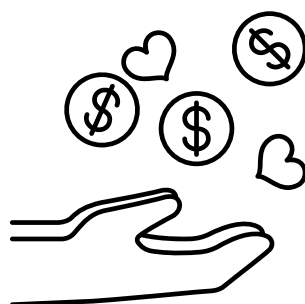
Our examination of the Bible as literature through the lens of animals mentioned in the text continues on Wednesday, December 13 at 2 pm on zoom. Check the calendar on our website for additional dates in the new year.



Support Beth Chaverim through Donation Matching

Amazon has discontinued its Amazon Smile donation program. Thank you for everyone who has used it over the past number of years to generate donations for Beth Chaverim.

If your employer has a matching program for donations you make, please note that Beth Chaverim is a certified 501 (c)(3) organization; if needed we can supply the necessary documentation to receive matching donations.



Humanist Café - Food for the Mind & the Appetite

Jewish culture is the basis for a Humanistic Jewish identity. It is broad and ranges from the things we create such as art, literature, and music; to the things we wear such as clothing and heirloom ritual objects like a tallit. Of course it includes things we eat and food that is recognizably Jewish, such as a bagel, or matzah. Other times, our tradition includes foods that act as symbols for other things such as sliced carrots used in a Sephardic Rosh Hashanah seder to look like coins and symbolize the wish for prosperity in the new year. Other times the food helps tell the story of a particular holiday such as maror or bitter herbs, or salt water, at a Passover seder to symbolize the harsh life of slavery.

Chanukah has two food traditions. The first and more familiar is food cooked in oil. The oil reminds us of the legend that when the Maccabees defeated the Assyrian Greeks and retook the Temple in Jerusalem, there was only enough oil for the menorah to last a single day. According to the story, the oil lasted eight days instead. Many Jewish communities around the world make foods for which oil is an essential ingredient.

The second food tradition is eating dairy. This comes from the less familiar story of Judith who managed to be invited to the Assyrian Greek general Holofernes' tent for a meal. She brought her own food in order to maintain the laws of kashruth, and there plied him with salty dairy to make him thirsty, and followed that with an abundance of wine. When he passed out, Judith took his sword and beheaded him, leaving his army without a leader and allowing the Israelite army to launch a sneak attack.

Our tradition is filled with stories, some inspiring and others disturbing. The following recipe combines these two food traditions into a single item.



Humanist Café - Food for the Mind & the Appetite

Mac and Cheese Balls

<https://jweekly.com/2020/12/01/fritter-away-hanukkah-with-these-fried-mac-and-cheese-balls/>

Makes 30-32 fritters



Ingredients

- 8 oz. uncooked elbow, fusilli or other “short” pasta
- 3 Tbs. unsalted butter, room temperature
- ¼ cup flour
- 1 cup milk
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. ground black pepper
- ¼ tsp. powdered mustard
- 2½ cups total shredded cheddar, Monterey Jack, pepper jack and/or Colby cheese
- ¼ cup thinly sliced green onions
- 2 large eggs, beaten
- 1 cup (approx.) store-bought dried unseasoned fine breadcrumbs
- Neutral oil for frying

Humanist Café - Food for the Mind & the Appetite

Instructions

Make pasta according to package directions. Cook until tender but with a bit of resistance in the center. Drain and set aside.

Melt butter in a 4-qt. saucepan or pot over low heat. Whisk in flour until smooth. Gradually add milk, whisking constantly, until smooth. Adjust heat to medium-low and bring to a simmer, whisking often. Simmer uncovered (lower heat if necessary), whisking occasionally, until very thick and smooth, about 5-10 minutes, but timing will vary (volume should be reduced by half).

Turn off heat, but leave pan on burner. Use spoon to stir in salt, pepper, mustard and cheese until incorporated in the sauce. Stir in the pasta and green onions until fully coated. Take pan off burner. Let rest for 20 minutes. Add eggs. Mix until well combined.

Wet hands. Squeeze, press and roll 2 Tbs. of mixture between your hands to make a compact, dense, 1-inch-diameter ball with no bits of pasta or green onion sticking out. Roll in crumbs, making sure ball stays compacted. (If it doesn't, recompact and roll in crumbs again.) Make 5 or 6 balls while oil gets up to temperature.

Cover the bottom of a wide, deep, 6- to 8-qt. pot with 1 inch of oil. Clip on deep fry/candy thermometer. Heat over high heat until the thermometer reads between 340 and 375 degrees. Adjust heat to maintain temperature, or you can remove pot from burner (turning off heat first) for a few minutes if oil gets too hot.

Add balls to pot. After a minute, turn the fritters with metal tongs or long-handled metal slotted spoon. Fry about 2 minutes total, adjusting heat as needed to maintain temperature, until browned all over. Remove to a paper towel-covered plate to drain.

Roll the next batch. Add to oil when it is between 340 and 375 degrees. Add oil if needed, but return to temperature before frying.

Repeat until done.

If serving soon, keep fritters warm on an ungreased baking sheet in 250-degree oven between batches. To make ahead, arrange between waxed paper layers and store airtight overnight at room temperature. Reheat in 350-degree oven on ungreased baking sheet until warm, about 10 minutes. Serve warm as is, garnished with Parmesan cheese and/or chopped parsley, or with a dip such as purchased marinara or pizza sauce. Warm up sauce if desired.

Notes: To avoid fritter fail, be sure balls are to size and very compact. Only fry when oil is between 340 and 375 degrees. Cool used oil, strain, and store airtight in a jar for future use.

Can You Help?

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. If you would like to be added to the list of members who will assist when needed, please email us and we 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.

We are always looking for some assistance, large and small, for our events.

Please let us know if you are interested in helping.



Humanistic Judaism 101



- Defines Judaism as the collective historic experience of the Jewish people and promotes a community of shared Jewish values.
- Promotes the development 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, baby namings, and funerals for members and non-members. Contact Rabbi Jodi for further information at:

(847) 945-6512

rabbijodi@gmail.com

Thank You for Reading!

This is a quarterly publication by



Beth Chaverim

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