

# CHAI-LIGHTS

JULY 2009

Pacific Community of Cultural Jews

Orange County, CA 949/262-5850  
PacifComm@aol.com, <http://www.pccjews.org>

Volume X11. No.11

## Koogle

A kosher search engine designed for Orthodox Jews. (Kugel + Google.)

“Religiously devout Jews barred by rabbis from surfing the Internet may now ‘Koogle’ it on a new ‘kosher’ search engine (<http://www.koogle.co.il/>),” Reuters reported recently:

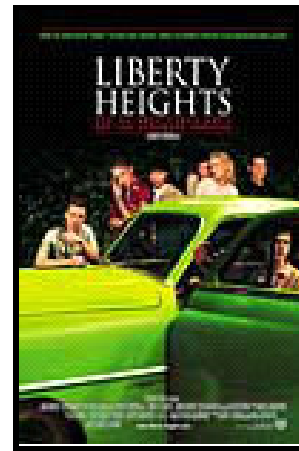
Yossi Altman [the site's developer] said **Koogle**, a play on the names of a Jewish noodle pudding and the ubiquitous Google, appears to meet the standards of Orthodox rabbis, who restrict use of the Web to ensure followers avoid viewing sexually explicit material.

Its links to Israeli news and shopping sites also filter out items most ultra-Orthodox Israelis are forbidden by rabbis to have in their homes, such as television sets.

According to Reuters, **Koogle**, which was developed with the encouragement of rabbis, won't allow users to make purchases, or post items, on the sabbath.

The Next PC Film Club presentation  
Tuesday, July 21st at 7:30 PM:

## "LIBERTY HEIGHTS"



It is Baltimore in 1954 and everything is changing. In this year, school desegregation is happening for the first time, bringing black and white children from different neighborhoods into the same classrooms. In this year, the dawning of rock'n'roll is giving teenagers their first slice of a musical world that will become uniquely their own. In this year, the influx of automobiles becomes a powerful force in America, allowing people the mobility and privacy to travel at will--to see things right in their own hometown that were previously unknown to them. And in this year, the Kurtzman family developed a newly heightened understanding of what it means to be Jewish in a rapidly growing world in this story which examines the changing times of the mid-1950s and issues of race, class and religious distinction as seen through the eyes of a particular American family

At the home of Shirley Spiegel  
(THE SPIEGEL THEATRE)

Please RSVP to Shirley at:  
714-378-1186 or [SHIRL-B@SOCAL.RR.COM](mailto:SHIRL-B@SOCAL.RR.COM)

## DINE OUT

SATURDAY, JULY 25th at 6:00 P.M.

### THAI TANGERINE

2541 S Harbor Blvd  
Garden Grove, CA 92840  
(714) 534-4490

(Note: Thai Tangerine will make the 3rd or 4th Thai restaurant Dine Out will have tried over the years. After dinner, a vote may be taken as to the favorite for future visits)

RSVP no later than July 22nd  
[Knechtfour@aol.com](mailto:Knechtfour@aol.com) or 714/739-1366

*Mark  
Your  
Calendar*

**Saturday, July 25th, 6:00 PM**

**DINE OUT**  
at  
**THAI TANGERINE**  
(see Page 1)

**Tuesday, July 21st, 7:30 PM**

**FILM CLUB**  
at the home of  
**Shirley Spiegel**  
(see Page 1)

**Saturday, Sept. 19th, 10:00 AM**

**ROSH HASHANAH Observance**  
**Unitarian Church of Costa Mesa**

**Monday, Sept. 28th, 2:00 PM**

**YOM KIPPUR Observance**  
**Unitarian Church of Costa Mesa**

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Fellow Pacific Community Members;

Here we are at the end of another formal year of P.C. programming, and, although things are looking pretty grim in our country at large, I think the state of things in our little organization is looking up. First, we have gained several wonderful new members this year. And, secondly, I feel that we have provided for you, the membership, a full complement of programs, some intellectually stimulating (i.e. our discussion of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and the League of Women voter's presentation on the propositions), some spiritually stimulating (i.e. our High Holiday observances and our community Passover seder) and some just delightfully entertaining (i.e. our Hanukah party; our Election Night party; our Purim party and play; and our talent show). Of course, we must not forget our Shabbat/Havdalah dinners and film club meetings.

As I write, we are about to end the year with a bang at our end-of-year party, complete with entertainment by the terrific klezmer band which performed for us a few years ago. As I've said before, we'll continue with a few of our activities, such as Film Club, over the summer, but we'll resume the majority of our programs in September. We hope you will consider helping out by coming to our planning meeting over the summer or, at least, volunteering to plan a program for one of the months. I'll be sending an announcement about that later.

Shalom,

## HELLO FROM CSJO!

Hello Everyone. By now, you should have received or downloaded the CSJO newsletter. It is filled with glowing reports of the CSJO conference this past May. It was a wonderful conference and people really enjoyed themselves...aside from learning a great deal!

At the Conference business meeting delegates, alternates or representatives, presented reports about their communities. As in life, some communities are struggling while others are experiencing growth. After the presentations there were questions asked of the representatives and ideas were shared to help each other. That is the basis for the business meeting. If anyone would like to know about any other community...their joys and/or their woes...please email me and I will share the information with you.

I hope you have a good and healthy summer. Those of us in the cold northern climes are especially grateful for the warmth.

Fondly,  
Rifke

## Road cleaned by neo-Nazis may be named for rabbi

By MARIA SUDEKUM FISHER

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) - Two Adopt-a-Highway signs on a Missouri road acknowledge a neo-Nazi group's participation in the state's litter prevention program. But if Gov. Jay Nixon signs a large transportation bill, that half-mile section of road will be renamed "Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel Memorial Highway" in honor of a rabbi who narrowly escaped the Nazis in World War II and later marched with Martin Luther King Jr.

The Springfield unit of the National Socialist Movement committed last year to clean up trash along the section of Highway 160 near the city limits in west Springfield. Two signs noting the group's membership in the Adopt-A-Highway program went up last October.

"For the National Socialist movement to be in the Adopt-a-Highway program is well within their rights," said Rabbi Alan L. Cohen of the Jewish Community Relations Board of Kansas City, which worked on selecting Heschel's name for the highway.

"But obviously there were people raising the concern that this is the wrong message for people to see driving down a Missouri highway, that there are National Socialists out here," Cohen said Sunday. "Wouldn't it be nice to have someone who stands for justice."

The state says it had no way to reject the group's application. A 2005 U.S. Supreme Court ruling arising from a similar effort by the Ku Klux Klan says membership in the Adopt-A-Highway program can't be denied because of a group's political beliefs.

In general, the state can deny an organization's application only if it has members who have been convicted of violent criminal activity within the past 10 years.

After the state dropped the Klan from cleaning up a section of Interstate 55 near St. Louis in 2001 for failing to pick up trash, that stretch of highway was renamed the "Rosa Parks Highway" in honor of the black woman arrested in 1955 when she refused to give up her seat to a white man on a bus in Montgomery, Ala.

Representatives of the National Socialist move-

ment in Missouri did not immediately return calls seeking comment about the legislation Sunday. But a statement on the movement's Web site calls the renaming "a lame attempt to insult National Socialist pro-environment/green policies."

The Web site has images of the Confederate flag, swastikas and members in military garb, and says the group fights for the rights of "all White American citizens of European descent."

"We welcome this spineless legislation, as it will no doubt spur a backlash from the local people whom will wonder why anyone, especially outside Jewish agitators would attempt to disrespect local citizens that volunteer their time to clean local roads," the statement said.

The governor has until mid-July to sign or veto the transportation bill. Nixon spokesman Scott Holste said Sunday that while the governor is reviewing the entire bill, he is in favor of the amendment to rename the stretch of highway.

Heschel, who died in 1972, seemed the right choice for the person to be honored in naming the highway, Cohen said.

"Rabbi Heschel said the struggle against injustice is a Jewish imperative, and on that he dedicated his life," Cohen said.

Heschel was deported from Germany and then escaped from Poland weeks before the Germans invaded in World War II, said Michael Abrams, chairman of the Jewish Community Relations Board. He taught at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati during World War II and later at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York.

He was revered for his piety and for his activism on civil rights and other issues

"He's a great example of the Nazi failure to annihilate the Jews and of Jewish participation in the civil rights movement," Abrams said. He said a famous photograph shows Heschel and King walking side by side at Selma in 1965.

---

*Associated Press Writer Margaret Stafford contributed to this report.*

# ANNUAL MEETING AND PARTY





## SOCIETY PAGES

### SHJ CHANGES CONFERENCE DATE

Save the Date:

APRIL 29 thru MAY 1, 2011

The Society for Humanistic Judaism has changed the date of its next conference to April 29 through May 1, 2011. The 2011 HuJews Conclave will be held the same weekend. There will be a 2010 HuJews Conclave. The date will be announced shortly.

Recognizing the current difficult economic conditions, the SHJ Board of Directors, following input from communities, voted to postpone the 2010 conference until April, 2011. The SHJ is considering several different sites and will make a decision on location based on the best financial circumstances.

The Board of Directors of the Society will meet in the days prior to the 2011 conference. There will be an optional tour following the conference.

Further information will be available in the coming months. Mark the date now - April 29-May 1, 2011, and plan to join SHJ for Conference and Conclave 2011.

### THE SOCIETY FOR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM CHOOSES BARUCH SPINOZA AS HUMANISTIC JEWISH ROLE MODEL OF THE YEAR; RESCINDS SPINOZA'S EXCOMMUNICATION

The Society for Humanistic Judaism has chosen Baruch Spinoza as their Humanistic Jewish Role Model of the Year. The Society's Board of Directors has elected to rescind the 1656 excommunication of Baruch Spinoza by the Dutch Jewish community, reclaiming him as part of the Jewish community. We are recommending that, during the month of February, Humanistic Jewish communities honor Spinoza's intellectual contributions to the Jewish people, to the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment understanding of Judaism and to a modern understanding of Jewish textual material by celebrating his life, values and contributions to the development of secular and Humanistic Judaism.

Baruch Spinoza was born November 24, 1632, and died February 21, 1677. He was a Dutch Jew excommunicated by the Jewish community in 1656. The writ of excommunication or *cherem* was based on "heresies" primarily Spinoza's questioning of divine revelation of

the Jewish texts. There was the additional concern that Christians would look upon his views with disfavor so the Jewish community had no other recourse if it was going to protect its precarious position within the community at-large.

"It is time for Jews to reclaim Spinoza as part of the Jewish community," says SHJ Rabbi Miriam Jerris. "Humanistic Jews should be in the forefront of rescinding Baruch Spinoza's excommunication by the Dutch Jewish community. Spinoza introduced using reason as an approach to Jewish thinking that is commensurate with the best of modern academic scholarship on many issues important to Jews today."

Watch for further information and resources coming from the Society for Humanistic Judaism that will enhance your programming.

## TRIBUTES

Donations have been made to the  
Pacific Community in  
memory of Ken Klipper

by

Jerry & Leslie Zwick  
Dr. Steven & Lynne Koffler

*Pacific Community is always glad to accept donations to commemorate simchas or tsuris. When you donate, our Tribute Chairperson, Greta Singer will send a card to the person or family whose event you have commemorated (so be sure to include their address) as well as a card to you acknowledging your contribution.*

714-594-3866 or  
danandgreta86@yahoo.com

**Orthodox Group Stirs Pot With New Kosher Ethics Seal**

*by Corrine Rainey, Forward, May 22, 2009*

A new label just went up alongside the other colorful stickers and pamphlets adorning the window of Your Heights Cafe in northern Manhattan. It's a seal with an image of clasped hands, and it was given out by a new organization looking to improve working conditions in New York's kosher restaurants.

This month, the Orthodox social justice group Uri L'Tzedek announced that it would be giving the Tav HaYosher seal to seven restaurants in New York City that treat their workers fairly and obey existing labor laws. The first recipients of Tav HaYosher - Hebrew for "ethical seal" - were announced May 12, the first anniversary of the federal immigration raid at the Agriprocessors kosher slaughterhouse in Postville, Iowa, where working conditions had come under intense scrutiny.

Since the Agriprocessors raid, there have been a few efforts to push for the improvement of ethical standards at kosher food businesses. Tav HaYosher is the first to provide seals of approval, but the debate that has accompanied it indicates some of the problems that come along with Jewish organizations enforcing labor standards.

"It's a double-edged sword," said Michael Gershkovich, owner of Mike's Bistro and of Mike's Pizzeria & Italian Kitchen, both of which received the seal. "If you're not getting a Tav HaYosher, you're basically breaking the law.

Gershkovich said that the seal had offended some Orthodox customers because they felt it undermined kosher authorities by trying to create a higher level of ethics. He said he questioned the seal because it

awards the designation of "ethical" to law-abiding establishments. "Who's to say that legal standards are the basis for moral and ethical behavior" he asked. "But I qualify and I don't think it can hurt business."

Although organizers call the seal "Torah--inspired," its criteria are little more than a mixture of federal, state and local labor laws.

The laxity of workplace enforcement has been a burning issue in the Jewish community since the Agriprocessors raid. Before the raid, kosher certifying agencies said that Jewish organizations would do better to leave the protection of workers to government agencies. Some kosher experts now acknowledge the flaws in that approach

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY**

Lynne Koffler July 12th  
 Jack Stein July 27th  
 Shirley Spiegel July 29th

**HAPPY ANNIVERSARY**

Jack & Bernice Stein July 11th

**OFFICERS 2008-2010**

<b>President:</b>	Alice Selfridge	SELFRIDG@earthlink.net
<b>Vice President</b>	Lee Jacobi	LeeJacobi@earthlink.net
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Karen Knecht	Knechtfour@aol.com
<b>Membership:</b>	Shirley Spiegel	SHIRL-B@SOCAL.RR.COM
<b>Secretary:</b>	Leslie Zwick	erlesz@earthlink.net
<b>Hospitality:</b>	Dan Goldberg	danandgreta86@yahoo.com
<b>Program Coordinator:</b>	Marilyn Ackerman	MA111@aol.com

**Committee and board positions:**

<b>Publicity:</b>	Lee Jacobi	LeeJacobi@earthlink.net
<b>CSJO Representative:</b>	Karen Knecht	Knechtfour@aol.com
<b>SHJ Representative:</b>	Phyllis Jacobs	PhylJ@cox.net
<b>Board Members At Large:</b>	Jack Stein	JStein7901@aol.com
	Marilyn Ackerman	JMA111@aol.com
	Dan Goldberg	danandgreta86@yahoo.com
	Karen Knecht	Knechtfour@aol.com
<b>Madrikha:</b>	Bernice Stein	ChaiLights4You@aol.com
<b>Newsletter Editor</b>	Greta Singer	danandgreta86@yahoo.com
<b>Tributes:</b>		

## BARUCH SPINOZA: FIRMLY SECULAR AGAINST OVERWHELMING ODDS

by  
Norma Kellam

For almost half of his life, Baruch Spinoza was a man without a religion, a status unheard of in his era.

Spinoza, one of the most revered philosophers, came from a Portuguese crypto-Jewish family. His birthplace was Amsterdam, where his family immigrated so they could openly resume their ancestral practice of Judaism.

In spite of Spinoza's Orthodox Jewish education, he developed beliefs that the Orthodox Jewish authorities regarded as heresy. He believed that God was in everything and that God and nature were the same, which in Pantheism. Many people considered this to be the same as atheism. He did not believe in traditional religion, and he believed that the Bible was of human origin. Not only did he hold unpopular beliefs, but he also was quite vocal about them. He published *The Principles of Descartes' Philosophy* under his real name. The subsequent publications of his works were anonymous or posthumous. The timing of the development of his beliefs is uncertain.

In 1656, when Spinoza was 23 years old, the Portuguese-Jewish community of Amsterdam excommunicated him. One of the reasons for his excommunication was probably fear of the reaction of the Christian community against his heretical beliefs. Dr. David Biale, the Emanuel Ringelblum Professor of Jewish History at the University of California, Davis, says, "We don't know for sure why Spinoza was excommunicated since the writ of excommunication only speaks vaguely of heinous opinions. One scholar -- Steven Nadler -- has argued that Spinoza, following Uriel da Costa, denied the immortality of the soul, but it's hard to know for sure." The same Jewish community excommunicated da Costa prior to



Spinoza's excommunication. Biale continues, "Spinoza's written work comes more than a decade later, so we don't know what he thought in 1656. But it may be that he was already denying that the Bible was divine revelation, as he does in his *Theological-Political Treatise*, published fourteen years later."

The *herem* was almost certainly just for the Amsterdam Portuguese community, but it was unusually severe since it had no time limit on it." Spinoza's excommunication was permanent.

Even though Spinoza no longer was part of the Jewish community and changed his first name from the Hebrew Baruch to Benedictus, the Latin equivalent, Christians viewed him as Jewish. He had liberal, freethinking Christian friends, especially from a sect called Collegiants. However, he did not convert. Today we view Spinoza as a secular Jew, but the concept of secular Jewishness did not exist in Spinoza's time.

As a lens grinder, Spinoza breathed in lots of particles, which probably contributed to his fatal lung disease. He died in 1677 at age 44. His grave was on church property because his excommunication denied him a Jewish burial.

In the 1950's, David Ben-Gurion advocated revocation of Spinoza's excommunication, but the Amsterdam Jewish community was strongly opposed to rescinding it. That is a shame. Even though rescinding the *herem* in the 20th or 21st century wouldn't help Spinoza, it would send a message to the world that he didn't deserve excommunication.

*(Editor's note: See the "Society Pages" on page 4)*

By being a man without a religion, Spinoza was an early pioneer for secular humanism. We can be thankful that he stood firm regarding his beliefs

## The Great Cake Debate

A Taste of History behind a Shavuot Tradition

*Excerpted from an article in the Forward by Devra Ferst*

The history of cheesecake is a bit sticky - everyone wants a slice. Some variation of the cake has been around for about 2,800 years and is served across Europe, in the United States and Canada, and in several countries in the Middle East. A version with pineapples is even made in Hawaii, more than 8,000 miles from the cake's birthplace. The recipe has been adopted by numerous Jewish communities as a food for Shavuot, the holiday that originally celebrated the spring harvest and later became associated with the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. But, how did this come to be?

First, we must say, not all cheesecakes are created equally. The cake exists in a number of forms, including sweet, savory, custard, mousse and even pancakelike, and is made from myriad soft cheeses, including ricotta, mascarpone, pot cheese, farmer's cheese and cream cheese, to name only a few. Recipes have evolved with local ingredients and with modern technology like refrigeration. Were the early forms of cheesecake served today at the famed New York cheesecake spot Lindy's, customers would not recognize it.

The history of cheesecake takes the form of a Jewish argument - many opinions, little consensus - in large part because the definition of a cheesecake is so hard to pin down.

John Segreto, author of "Cheesecake Madness" (Simon & Schuster, 1984) explains that the first cheesecake on record was created "between 800 to 700 BC in ancient Greece on the Island of Samos in the Aegean Sea. "The decadent food was fed to competitors in the first Olympic Games in 776 BCE, purportedly to fuel them with energy to compete. The treat soon became a wedding cake for the wealthy in ancient Greece, and trickled down to the common man by the time of the Roman Empire. Cheesecake, according to this lineage spread throughout Europe under Julius Caesar's reign.

Joan Nathan, author of the "Jewish Holiday Cookbook" (Schocken Books, 1988) states that the cake was originally created in the Middle East by placing sour cream in a bag that was hung, allowing moisture to drain from the substance so that it would dry to form a curd. It was then mixed with honey, lemon peel, egg yolks and more sour

cream and baked into a cake that was most likely quite lumpy. She cites the crusaders in the spread of this dessert, claiming they returned to Europe with the idea in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Nathan explains that cheese curd was carried to Russia by the Mongols in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and was embraced by the Jewish community there. Russian Jews used the curd to prepare cheesecake and later they took the recipe with them when they moved to other places in Europe, and then to North America.

Jewish communities throughout the West adopted and adapted the recipe to local ingredients and tastes. Some communities even borrowed from Christian traditions, such as Italian Easter cheesecake, which is made with citrus rind and fragrant orange blossom water and is now served in Italy for Shavuot. Israelis eat a light and creamy mousse-like cheesecake.

But how did this decadent dessert become a Jewish holiday tradition?

This question brings us to another debate. The reasons for eating dairy on Shavuot are numerous - ranging from biblical to numerical. The rabbinical and historical debates about this divine food go on and are outnumbered by only one other argument about cheesecake: Which recipe to prepare.

## 50 Years Ago (In the Forward)

Ironically, Abba Eban, former Israeli ambassador to the United States, wasn't even an Israeli citizen during his tenure as ambassador. Eban, who is a South African-born British citizen, moved to Israel and became active in its government without ever completing the appropriate steps to become a citizen. Because he is now running for a seat in the Knesset, he has been required to obtain his official citizenship, which he has via an exceptionally quick Interior Ministry mis-sive. Unfortunately, however, Eban will not be able to vote for himself, or anyone else, since in order to do so, he would have had to have been a citizen for a year prior to the election.



**HOW TO STAY SAFE IN THE WORLD TODAY:**

Avoid riding in automobiles because they are responsible for 20 % of all fatal accidents.

Do not stay at home because 17 percent of all accidents occur in the home. (that's 37 % already)

Avoid walking on streets or sidewalks because 14 percent of all accidents occur to pedestrians. (now that's 51%)

Avoid traveling by air, trains or buses. 16 percent of accidents involve these forms of transportation. (that's 67%)

Of the remaining 33 percent, 32 percent of all deaths occur in hospitals. Above all else, avoid hospitals.

You will be pleased to learn that only 0.01 % of all deaths occur in a synagogue, and these are usually related to previous physical disorders.

Therefore, logic tells us that the safest place for you to be at any given point in time is in a Synagogue.

Torah Study is even safer. The number of deaths during Torah Study is too small to register.

For safety's sake, go to Shul as often as possible, and attend Torah Study.?? It could save your life!

Author Unknown, but is presently in Temple.

PS: You don't have to be Jewish to go to shul. You may not understand what the old guys are saying but they always serve wine in paper cups

**If you're not familiar with the work of Steven Wright, he's the guy who once said:**

- The problem with the gene pool is that there is no life-guard.
- A clear conscience is usually the sign of a bad memory.
- The early bird may get the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese.
- Everyone has a photographic memory, some just don't have film.
- When everything is coming your way, you're in the wrong lane.
- If at first you don't succeed, destroy all evidence that you tried.
- A conclusion is the place where you got tired of thinking.
- Experience is something you don't get until just after you need it.

*Chai-Lights* is published monthly by the Pacific Community of Cultural Jews, Orange County, CA  
Phone: 949/262-5850 E-mail: [PacifComm@aol.com](mailto:PacifComm@aol.com),  
<http://www.pccjews.org>

*An annual (hardcopy) subscription may be purchased for \$18.00.  
For an electronic copy, please provide your e-mail address  
Editor: Bernice Stein ChaiLights4You@aol.com*

*Affiliated with The Society for Humanistic Judaism and  
The Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations*

Chai-Lights  
21152 Lockhaven Circle  
Huntington Beach, CA 92646