

# CHAI-LIGHTS

OCTOBER 2008

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

Volume XI. No.2

## POTLUCK SHABBAT DINNER IN THE SUKKAH



**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18TH, 2 P.M.**

at the home of

**Lee and Zena Jacobi**

23 Alameda, Irvine

RSVP to [LeeJacobi@earthlink.net](mailto:LeeJacobi@earthlink.net)

or 714-838-2836

## Yom Kippur Observance

**Thursday, October 9<sup>th</sup>**

**1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

Unitarian, Universalist Church,  
Costa Mesa

**Secular, Humanistic Readings**

**Jerry Zwick will blow the Shofar**

**Bongshin Ko, Music Professor, CSUF will  
play the cello**

**Nora A. Preciado, employment policy attorney,  
Los Angeles office will present a workshop,  
"Immigrant Rights During Troubling Times"**

**Members Free, Non- Members \$30**

**No Host "Break-the-Fast Dinner" 6:00 p.m.  
Reservations required**

**RSVP to [Knechtfour@aol.com](mailto:Knechtfour@aol.com)**

## Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

On **Sunday, October 19 at 2:00 PM**, our Pacific Community will host several expert speakers who will educate us on the various important Propositions which are being offered in the upcoming November elections.

These speakers include Jean Raun from the League of Women Voters; Mike Ryu, representing Californians for Solar and Clean Energy; and Harvey Liss from the Elections Committee of County of Orange who will speak on Prop 8 which would overturn marriage equality.

**SO** - in order to get the lowdown on what is being proposed and the almost inevitable consequences, be sure to attend!

We will meet at the home of Phyllis Jacobs,  
48 Rue Fontainebleau,  
Newport Beach 92660

Please RSVP to Phyllis at: 949 644 2712 or  
[PHYLJ@cox.net](mailto:PHYLJ@cox.net)

Refreshments will be served.

## The Pacific Community Wine and Cheese Party

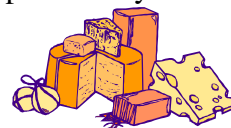
To introduce new and potential members  
Sunday, October 26 at 4:00 p.m.

It will be held at the home of Steve and Lynne  
Koffler (2906 Catalpa, Newport Beach).

Besides the opportunity to taste several varieties of wine and cheese, Steve will give an informative talk about wine and wine making.

RSVP's are a "must", so please call Steve or Lynne at (949) 644-0140, or e-mail them at [DRMRK@SBCGLOBAL.NET](mailto:DRMRK@SBCGLOBAL.NET).

We hope to see you there!





**Saturday, October 4th 10:30 AM**

**BOARD MEETING**

at the home of

**Greta Singer and Dan Goldberg**

**Thursday, October 9th, 1:00 PM**

**YOM KIPPUR OBSERVANCE**

at the

**Unitarian Church, Costa Mesa**

**Thursday, October 9th, ~5:45 PM**

No Host "Break-the-Fast" Dinner

at the

**MANDARIN RESTAURANT**

**Saturday, October 18th 2:00 PM**

Potluck Shabbat Dinner in the Sukkot

at the home of

**Lee and Zena Jacobi**

**Sunday, October 19th 2:00 PM**

**PROPOSITIONS of the UPCOMING ELECTION**

at the home of

**Phyllis Jacobs**

**Sunday, October 26th 4:00 PM**

**WINE AND CHEESE TASTING PARTY**

at the home of

**Lynne & Steve Koffler**

(see Page 1 )

**Tuesday, November 11th 7:00 PM**

**FILM CLUB**

at the home of

**Shirley Spiegel**

(see Page 3 )

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**



Dear Fellow Pacific Community Members:

It was so good for me to see so many of you at our Rosh Hashanah observance! As I said then, it is gratifying for me to see that, even though we have not adopted the religious tenets of Judaism, we still value the ethical and cultural part of it and band together to honor it. I feel that this is especially important in a world when anti-Semitism is on the rise again.

I know that this is a busy time of year for most people, what with all the holidays coming up, both Jewish and non-, but I would like to take this opportunity again to remind you that we, humanists, are all about making the world a better place. Elections are coming up and, it seems to me that they are our best hope for making our state and our country, at least, better places. If you, therefore, have the health and the time to work on any campaigns or to help with the voting process, you would definitely be living up to the ideals we espouse.

And, as for our own Pacific Community, we hope that we have planned an interesting and entertaining year of programs for you. We also hope that you will support us with your participation at these events and with your help, whenever possible.

L'Shanah Tovah!

Alice

**OCTOBER CELEBRATIONS**

**BIRTHDAYS:**

- |                      |             |
|----------------------|-------------|
| <b>Bernice Stein</b> | <b>7th</b>  |
| <b>Ken Klipper</b>   | <b>18th</b> |
| <b>Karen Knecht</b>  | <b>31st</b> |

**ANNIVERSARIES:**

- |                                  |             |
|----------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Ken &amp; Shirley Klipper</b> | <b>19th</b> |
| <b>Bob &amp; Karen Knecht</b>    | <b>29th</b> |

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR:**

"A Girl with an Apple" (*Chai-Lights* Sept. 2008) is inspiring in its demonstration of deep compassion that surpasses the self-preservation instinct. Roma risked her life and kept Herman from starving by throwing him apples over the concentration camp fence. This is one of many life-endangering acts of deep compassion that occurred in the midst of the horrors of the Holocaust.

By coincidence, they met years later, clear across the Atlantic Ocean, in the United States. Wow! Mind-boggling! If this story were fiction, it would never survive an editor's scrutiny. It's too unbelievable. It's only in real life that such amazing coincidences can and occasionally do happen. Since this story is true, it did reach publication as a children's picture book: *Angel Girl* by Laurie Friedman (Carolrhoda Books). Herman's and Roma's chance meeting in New York and their 50 years of marriage is heartwarming.

Norma Kellam

**Calling All Members!**

**This newsletter belongs to you, the members of PC.** It is meant to be an interactive medium in which we are all participants rather than consumers. Subject only to space, time, and editorial constraints, your contribution will be gratefully accepted.

The newsletter needs articles of interest to fellow members, told in your own words that will inform, inspire, and even challenge us intellectually and spiritually. Celebrated a life-cycle event? Had a bad restaurant experience? Saw a great movie or show? Read a thought-provoking book? Attended an inspiring lecture? Let us all in on what you think and why.

E-mail your item to [ChaiLights4You@aol.com](mailto:ChaiLights4You@aol.com). We welcome attributed letters with comments, rebuttals, or new information.

**Note:** We edit for length and clarity.

**Message from the Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations**

On behalf of the board, and me, we wish you and your families and friends a year of good health and peace.

*Rifke Feinstein,*  
CSJO Executive Director

Due to the fullness of the October Calendar, there will be no Film Club Meeting in October.

The film viewed in September was "Uzpuchim". "Yana's Friends" was postponed until the November meeting.

**The FILM Club**

The next Film Club meeting will be on  
**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 11TH, AT 7:00 PM,**

at the home of

Shirley Spiegel

The film to be shown will be:

**"YANA'S FRIENDS"**

The film takes place in Israel immediately before and during the 1991 Gulf War, when Israelis feared Iraqi scud missile attacks. Yana (Evelyn Kaplun) is an innocent and lovable Russian immigrant to Israel who soon finds herself abandoned by her husband, who, though Yana is pregnant, returns to Russia with their money. Their roommate Eli (Nir Levy), is an obsessive videographer who seems to have a parade of visiting women.

As scud missiles fall and people rush to their sealed rooms and gas masks, love develops in three couples

The film is light-hearted and fun to watch, though it deals with serious issues of marital trust, fidelity, and caring for each other especially in a time of war.

**DON'T MISS IT!**

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

## SHJ President, Lou Altman: A Note on Political Expression

This is the political season. I want to bring up a serious issue: the degree to which it is appropriate for the Society for Humanistic Judaism to engage in political expression. I write on behalf of the Society only, and of course I am not authorized to speak for any individual congregation; but, in my opinion, what I am about to say applies equally to every one of our affiliated communities.

McCain is running against Obama. Unfortunately, a candidate's race and religion are issues in some people's minds. Both candidates seek the votes of the Christian right; how should Humanistic Jews feel about that? Is Obama a closet Muslim, and should that affect how a Jewish person decides to vote? Should a candidate's attitude toward Israel be decisive? When Senator Joe Lieberman was a candidate, should Jews have viewed his religion as a reason to vote for him? Conversely, should Humanistic Jews have held against him the fact that he is observant?

With respect to all these questions, the answers are up to you, individually. No doubt you are an active concerned citizen, eager to be involved in world affairs. But it is not appropriate for SHJ to take a stand on such matters *as an organization*.

Humanistic Jewish communities are religious and cultural institutions, dedicated to the celebration of a Humanistic Jewish identity. Based upon that mission, we have been granted tax exempt status by the IRS, and in order to maintain that status our engagement in political activities and the use of our funds to support such activities is limited by law. Our financial health could be jeopardized if the SHJ strayed outside the IRS guidelines for 501c3 tax exempt organizations. Loss of our tax-exempt status could alter the nature of the Society and have financial consequences, not only for the organization but also for all who have deducted contributions to SHJ for income tax purposes.

We are interested in social action - collecting food for Mazon, working at homeless shelters, volunteering for Habitat for Humanity, tutoring in schools, packing *shalakh manot* baskets for Purim, organizing blood drives - and we should be. Such activities celebrate Jewish identity and values, consistent with a humanistic philosophy of life. As such, these and similar activities fall within our stated mission and purpose, and are permissible for a tax-exempt organization.

Taking a stand on social issues - issues that affect our lives and the humanistic values we support - is also permitted. We are not required to watch idly, for example, while others promote ethnic prejudices such as antisemitism, or introduce religion into public schools or into the halls of government, or try to forbid science education or limit medical advances because of some perceived inconsistency with religious dogma.

Those are areas of social action that demand our participation, *as an organization*, in the political process. But we should remain non-partisan in our approach to such social issues. On many issues (for example, ethnic cleansing) a broad consensus develops within SHJ. But when such a consensus is lacking, when there is a clear liberal-conservative split (for example, hawks and doves on the Arab-Israeli conflict), our members should deal with such an issue in another forum. We should not sacrifice the unity we have achieved with respect to the core values of Humanism and Judaism.

And, we should observe the IRS limits: we can be involved in issues related to our core values, but not in promoting political candidates. Our political activities cannot become the tail that wags the dog; they must remain subordinate to our major activities of a religious and cultural nature.

There are many organizations devoted to political action - starting with the Democratic and Republican Parties. SHJ is not such an organization. Our members do not join us to find a forum for expressing their political views.

We have both Republican and Democratic members, liberals and conservatives. It would not be fair or appropriate for SHJ to lean to either side. Members can pursue their diverse political agendas outside the SHJ. So please do your politicking in another arena, and reserve this one for celebration of your Humanistic philosophy and Jewish background in a non-partisan way.



One Rosh Hashanah morning, the Rabbi noticed little Alex was staring up at the large plaque that hung in the foyer of the synagogue. It was covered with names, and small American flags were mounted on either side of it.

The seven-year old had been staring at the plaque for some time, so the Rabbi walked up, stood beside the boy, and said quietly, "Good morning, Alex."

"Good morning, Rabbi," replied the young man, still focused on the plaque. "Rabbi Bernstein, what is this?" Alex asked. "Well, it's a memorial to all the young men and women who died in the service," explained the Rabbi.

Soberly, they stood together, staring at the large plaque. Little Alex's voice was barely audible when he asked, "Which one, Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur?"

May your year start out and continue with a smile and continue with health, happiness and prosperity!

L' Shona Tova

**OUR PACIFIC COMMUNITY FAMILY**

Our membership continues to experience a multitude of health problems. Our get well wishes go out to all of the following:

Shirley Klipper, who fell and broke her ankle

Ken Klipper, who is battling cancer.

Phyllis Jacobs, who fell and broke her ribs.

Shirley Spiegel, recovering from a broken Knee.

Jack Stein, recovering from spinal surgery.

Gerry Lumian, recovering from a stroke.

We hope it won't be long until you all are up and well, feeling fine and strong.

I want to thank all of my friends in the Pacific Community for the many kind e-mails, cards and phone calls wishing me a speedy recovery from surgery.

Jack Stein

**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>Hospitality:</b>	Dan Goldberg	danandgreta86@hotmail.com
<b>Program Coordinator:</b>	Marilyn Ackerman	JMA111@aol.com

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	Marilyn Ackerman	JMA111@aol.com
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**The** wise man, even when he holds his tongue, says more than the fool when he speaks.  
(Yiddish proverb)

**Life** is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance you must keep moving.  
(Albert Einstein)

**Not** everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts.  
(Albert Einstein)

**What** you don't see with your eyes, don't invent with your mouth.  
(Yiddish proverb)

## The Survivor Mitzvah Project remembers Holocaust

Holocaust Remembrance Day was May 2 this year, but remembering once a year is not enough. In helping the world remember, Los Angeles television director **Zane Buzby** is transforming a wish to help Jewish Holocaust survivors into action.

Buzby is the executive director of The Survivor Mitzvah Project, which is the only organization that gives financial aid directly to Jewish Holocaust survivors in Eastern Europe.

In 2001, when Buzby was on hiatus from directing a television show, she went to Eastern Europe to film the towns where her grandmothers were born. In Lithuania, while waiting for her visa to Belarus, she met Dr. **Dovid Katz**, of Vilnius University, who told her about the forgotten Jewish Holocaust survivors he had discovered on various expeditions.

"Visiting the survivors, it was like looking back 100 years in time. They were living in huts," Buzby remembered. "They needed the most basic human necessities such as heat, shelter, food and medicine. They were carrying water in buckets; the conditions were shocking. There's no one to help them."

When Buzby returned to the Los Angeles world of television, she couldn't forget the Holocaust survivors she met in Eastern Europe. "I started sending money in envelopes. They wrote back to me saying it was a gift from destiny or that they cried all day, so grateful because they never received letters from anyone. It made a difference knowing someone cared," Buzby explained. "The list grew to 250 and today we've helped more than 850 survivors. But, there are thousands of people like them and we still need more money to help. We give these people about a dollar a day and while that doesn't seem like much, \$30-40 a month helps them a lot."

Buzby created The Survivor Mitzvah Project [www.SurvivorMitzvah.org](http://www.SurvivorMitzvah.org), to spread the word and gain donations. "Mitzvah" means "good deed" in Hebrew and The Survivor Mitzvah Project is making a huge difference in the lives of elderly Holocaust survivors in Eastern Europe.

What impressed Buzby in visiting survivors was that they're still contributing, active members of society. "They write poetry, they read books. I visited a 96-year-old woman late at night and I was nervous about knocking on her door, but she was awake and busy writing an opera in Yiddish.

The letters and photos received from Holocaust survivors are being organized into a self-published book which is available through the website,

## THE JEWISH DAILY FORWARD Capers Funnye, Leading Black Israelite, Is Aspiring First Lady's Cousin

By Anthony Weiss  
Tue. Sep 02, 2008

While Barack Obama has struggled to capture the Jewish vote, it turns out that one of his wife's cousins is the country's most prominent black rabbi - a fact that has gone largely unnoticed.

Michelle Obama, wife of the Democratic presidential nominee, and Rabbi Capers Funnye, spiritual leader of a mostly black synagogue on Chicago's South Side, are first cousins once removed. Funnye's mother, Verdelle Robinson Funnye (born Verdelle Robinson) and Michelle Obama's paternal grandfather, Frasier Robinson Jr., were brother and sister.

Funnye (pronounced fuh-NAY) is chief rabbi at the Beth Shalom B'nai Zaken Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation in southwest Chicago. He is well-known in Jewish circles for acting as a bridge between mainstream Jewry and the much smaller, and largely separate, world of black Jewish congregations, sometimes known as black Hebrews or Israelites. He has often urged the larger Jewish community to be more accepting of Jews who are not white.

Funnye's famous relative gives an unexpected twist to the much-analyzed relationship between Barack Obama and Jews in this presidential campaign. On the one hand, Jewish political organizers, voters and donors played an essential role in Obama's rise to power in Chicago, including some of the city's wealthiest and most prominent families. But the Illinois senator has struggled to overcome suspicions in some parts of the Jewish community, including skepticism about his stance on Israel and discredited but persistent rumors that he is secretly a Muslim.

Funnye, who described himself as an independent, said he has not been involved with the Obama campaign but that he has donated money and was cheering it on.

When Barack and Michelle Obama married, Funnye and his family attended the wedding.

Although Funnye's congregation describes itself as Ethiopian Hebrew, it is not connected to the Ethiopian Jews.

Funnye converted to Judaism and was ordained as a rabbi under the supervision of black Israelite rabbis, then went through another conversion supervised by Orthodox and Conservative rabbis. He serves on the Chicago Board of Rabbis.

## A JEWISH HOMELAND: PRIMARILY A SECULAR ACCOMPLISHMENT

By Norma Kellam

For centuries, religious Jews prayed for a Jewish homeland in *Eretz Yisrael*, the land of Israel. Finally their prayers were answered, but not by God. Zionists, most of whom were secular, brought it about.

Many religious Jews, especially Orthodox Jews, strongly opposed Zionism, believing that it was wrong for human beings to establish a Jewish state rather than wait for God to do it. The Reform movement originally opposed Zionism for another reason. The Pittsburgh Conference of 1885 affirmed that the members of Reform congregations were a religious community, not a nation. They ceased praying for a Jewish homeland in *Eretz Yisrael*.

On the other hand, a small number of religious Jews became Zionists, believing that the secular Zionists were doing God's work without knowing it. Four key Zionists were Theodor Herzl, Ahad Ha'am, Chaim Weizmann, and David Ben-Gurion. All four were secular.

Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), who started political Zionism, grew up in a secular Jewish family and favored assimilation. Later he realized that assimilation was not the answer to the problem of anti-Semitism. In 1896, he published a book titled *Der Judenstaat (The Jewish State)*, in which he explained his Zionist ideas. In his opinion, a national Jewish territory was the only way to fight anti-Semitism. He was the first president of the World Zionist Organization (WZO). After considering the possibility of another location, he realized that the Jewish homeland had to be in *Eretz Yisrael*. His goal was to obtain a legal right to the land for establishing a Jewish state.

Asher Ginsberg (1856-1927) used the pen name Ahad Ha'am, which means "one of the people" in Hebrew. Following an exceedingly religious upbringing in a Hasidic family, he rejected Jewish theological belief. As a cultural Zionist his aim was to save Judaism, not the supernatural beliefs but rather its culture and ethical teachings. Opposing hasty establishment of a Jewish political state, he favored developing Jewish culture and the Hebrew language, both in *Eretz Yisrael* and in the Diaspora.

Although Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952)

received Jewish education in a *heder*, he did not practice traditional religion. He advocated Jewish immigration to *Eretz Yisrael* and shared Ahad Ha'am's interest in developing Jewish culture there. In addition, he participated in political Zionism, including serving as president of the WZO. He was highly influential in getting the British government to approve the Balfour Declaration, in which Great Britain promised to support Zionism. He also had an important role in founding the Hebrew University. His talking with President Harry Truman resulted in U.S. recognition of the new State of Israel, of which he became the first president.

David Ben-Gurion (1886-1973) was a socialist Zionist from a Zionist family that gave him a Jewish education. He attended a Hebrew school that his father founded. His original surname had several possible spellings: Green, Gruen, Gryn, or Grün. He became active in socialist Zionist activities while in his teens. Even though he highly valued his extensive knowledge of the Bible, he did not accept the supernatural beliefs. In 1937, the British Peel Commission advocated dividing *Eretz Yisrael* into a Jewish section and an Arab section. Considering Ben-Gurion's secular beliefs, it is surprising that, when talking to the Peel Commission, he claimed the Jews' right to *Eretz Yisrael* by stating, "The Bible is our mandate." Since the Jews wrote the Bible in *Eretz Yisrael*, Ben-Gurion saw that as evidence that they were in the land before anyone else. He fought the British restriction on immigration to *Eretz Yisrael*, including assisting with illegal immigration. After the establishment of statehood, he became Israel's first Prime Minister and Defense Minister.

The Columbus Platform of 1937 reversed the Reform movement's anti-Zionist position. Many religious Jews developed a favorable attitude toward Zionism as a result of the Holocaust. Now most religious Jews place great importance on Israel.

If religious Jews are honest, they cannot ignore the fact that secular Jews did more than anyone else to bring about the Jewish state. Secular humanists know that producing results requires action.



## HUMOR



### Three Holy Men and a Bear

A Catholic priest, a Pentecostal preacher, and a rabbi all served as chaplains to the students of Northern Michigan University in Marquette. They would get together two or three times a week for coffee and to talk shop.

One day, someone made the comment that preaching to people isn't really all that hard. A real challenge would be to preach to a bear. One thing led to another, and they decided to do an experiment.

They would all go out into the woods, find a bear, preach to it, and attempt to convert it. Seven days later, they all came together to discuss their experience.

Father Flannery, who had his arm in a sling, was on crutches, and had various bandages on his body and limbs, went first: "Well," he said, "I went into the woods to find me a bear. And when I found him, I began to read to him from the Catechism. Well, that bear wanted nothing to do with me and began to slap me around. So I quickly grabbed my holy water, sprinkled him and, Holy Mary Mother of God, he became as gentle as a lamb. The bishop is coming out next week to give him first communion and confirmation."

Reverend Billy Bob spoke next. He was in a

wheelchair, had one arm and both legs in casts, and had an IV drip. In his best fire-and-brimstone oratory, he exclaimed: "WELL, brothers, you KNOW that we don't sprinkle! I went out and I FOUND me a bear. And then I began to read to my bear from God's HOLY WORD! But that bear wanted nothing to do with me. So I took HOLD of him and we began to wrestle. We wrestled down one hill, UP another and DOWN another until we came to a creek. So I quickly DUNKED him and BAPTIZED his hairy soul. And just like you said, he became as gentle as a lamb. We spent the rest of the day praising Jesus."

The priest and the reverend both looked down at the rabbi, who was lying in a hospital bed. He was in a body cast and traction with IVs and monitors running in and out of him. He was in really bad shape. The Rabbi looked up and said: "Looking back on it, circumcision may not have been the best way to start."

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Chai-Lights

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