

The Washington Congregation for Secular Humanistic Judaism

P.O. Box 42014, Washington, DC 20015 • 202-686-1881 • www.machar.org

Passover/Pesakh

by Deb Godden

Passover is the great spring festival of the Jewish people. For Humanistic Jews, the biblical exodus story, although powerful, is historically dubious as well as theologically unacceptable. Instead, we see Passover as a celebration of freedom and national unity. It is a holiday of deep humanistic significance. This forms the core of the story we tell at our annual community Seder.

Many times in our history, Jews have struggled for freedom or have sought escape from persecution. The 20th century exodus of thousands of Jews from Europe and from Muslim countries to America and Israel is the latest chapter in that long saga.

Passover is the time to celebrate our timeless quest for freedom. The Humanist haggadah includes the legendary tale of the exodus from Egypt and the story of that modern Jewish exodus and the reach for freedom by other people around the world.

It is probable that Passover is an amalgam of two older seasonal celebrations that marked the arrival of spring, because the ancient story of the Jewish people is a story of both herders and farmers.

One was a story of a shepherd holiday celebrating the birth of lambs and kids. The herders slaughtered a sheep or goat at twilight and ate it in haste in the middle of the night. Then they daubed its blood on the tent posts to protect against supernatural disaster and to ensure luck and safety in the coming season. The Pesakh may have been a skipping dance performed either by the entire community or by maidens eligible for marriage.

The other story, *Khag Hamatsot*, appears to have developed after the wandering shepherds settled in Palestine. The peasants celebrated *Khag Hamatsot*, the festival of unleavened bread, to mark the beginning of the grain harvest. To protect against a poor crop, the peasants disposed of all old bread and everything else that contained the leaven (*khametz*) of the previous year's crop. Only bread made from the new harvest could be eaten during the week-long festival.

Much later the two festivals merged into Passover, receiving a supernatural interpretation memorializing the exodus from Egypt and the beginning of the Jewish nation. Passover began as a celebration of spring, of renewal and rebirth. It has become a celebration of human dignity and of the freedom that makes dignity possible.

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SPRING IS ALMOST HERE! MACHARNIKS ARE PREPARING FOR OUR COMMUNITY SEDER

We're planning for another wonderful community Passover Seder with fantastic food and great company.

Nonmembers and prospective members are welcome!

Highlights include Machar's own Humanist Haggadah, sharing the Passover story, asking the "four questions," and the famous hunt for the Afikomen.

Machar's 2013 Community Potluck Seder Saturday, March 23, 4:30 - 8:00 pm Cedar Lane UU Church 9601 Cedar Lane, Bethesda, Maryland 20814

Space is limited. **Don't miss out**. Register on our website now. \$18 member adults; \$25 nonmember adults; \$7.50 children 5-13; children under 5 free (prices have not changed in recent years and help to cover rental and supply costs)

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: Wednesday, March 20 (or earlier if sold out)

(If you do not use a computer and prefer to register by mail, please leave a message at 202-686-1881 and mail a check to Machar, P.O. Box 42014, Washington, DC 20015. Nonmembers should include a phone number and a mailing address if you need us to mail you a registration form. The form includes questions about what you plan to bring and about how you can volunteer to help.)

Machar Adult Education and Community Sundays

10:00–11:45 a.m. promptly, followed by 12:00 p.m. bagels and Community Sundays for all ages! Programs conclude at 12:30 p.m.

The intent of the adult education program is to increase members' access to the best of Jewish and Humanistic practices and perspectives.

Jewish Cultural School for children 10:00-11:45 a.m.

March 17

A Look Inside the Book of Esther (originally scheduled for March 3) Michael Prival, Long-time Machar Member and Madrikh

Michael Prival discusses the Book of Esther, which tells the story of Purim. It is a fantasy that never mentions God. Where did it come from? Was Esther a secular Jew who was able to live as queen in the Persian court, not known for its kosher cuisine? Who is the real hero of the story? And just how did Esther win that famous "beauty contest" anyway? It would be helpful to read this short biblical book before the session.

Community Sunday

Preparing for Passover

Saturday, March 23, 4:30 p.m.-8 p.m.

Come To Machar's Annual Community Passover Seder and Potluck

Cedar Lane UU. Church, 9601 Cedar Lane, Bethesda, MD 20814. Member adults \$18; Nonmember adults \$18; Children \$7.50

April 14

Jewish Life in Palestine before the State of Israel Ami Argaman, Machar Member

Ami Argaman will begin with the story of the arrival of his great-grandfather in Jerusalem in 1888. He will describe the Ottoman system of governance at that time, the structure of the Jewish community in Jerusalem, living conditions, and relations with other communities and with the newly arrived Zionists. He will also discuss the attitudes toward religion, and the system of distributions coming from abroad on which the community depended.

Community Sunday

Israel Independence Day (focusing on its mixed legacy)

<u> April 21</u>

We Are Here: Memories of the Lithuanian Holocaust (originally scheduled for May 5); Ellen Cassedy, Author

Ellen Cassedy will speak on how her personal journey into the land of her Jewish forebears expanded into a larger investigation. Probing the terrain of memory and moral dilemmas, she explores how a country scarred by genocide moves forward. Ellen, a former Machar member, is a journalist whose articles and Yiddish translations have appeared in numerous publications. She will be available to sign her book.

Community Sunday

Celebration of Earth Day

<u>May 5</u>

Enhancing US Foreign Assistance by Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Carla Koppell, Machar member

Carla Koppell is spearheading efforts at the US Agency for International Development Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment to transform the way US assistance serves and empowers women while designing and implementing all aid programs in a gender sensitive manner. She will share with us challenges and priorities for increasing gender equality and empowering women during the second Obama Administration.

Community Sunday

Focus on women and the book of Ruth (tying in with the holiday of Shavuot)

May 19

Social Action & Tiqqun Olam: Humanistic Judaism's Progressive Vision & Challenges Rabbi Ben Biber, Machar's Rabbi

Rabbi Ben will discuss Humanistic perspectives on the evolution of the Jewish concept of tiqqun olam (improvement of the world). We'll also probe the centrality of social action in Humanistic Judaism.

Community Sunday

End of year picnic

Scenes from Machar's Purim Party

A special thank you to Rahel Hanadari for running the Purim Carnival. She did a wonderful job.

A special thank you to Rachel Young for writing and directing a Purim shpiel for the third, fourth, and fifth graders.

A special thank you to Rahel's Hanadari's daughters for writing and acting in a Purim play.

A special thank you to Harry Appelman for playing Purim songs for us!!

-Debby Brennan







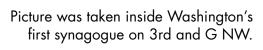








Our b'nei mitzvah class went on a walking tour of Washington DC on February 24th with the b'nei mitavah class from a secular humanistic congregation (Kol Haskalah) from North Carolina. The tour was conducted by the Jewish Historical Society in Washington, DC.





Havurot/Social Events

Laurie Miller

Roberto Levy and Nancy Harris organized a member dinner at the Chevy Chase Capital Grille on Saturday, February 23rd. Nearly a dozen members participated. They would like to meet monthly at different restaurants around the area. Notice will be sent out by email and on the web site regarding the next dinner date and location.

We hope to schedule an in-home Shabbat later this month or sometime in April. There seem to be more and more events on Machar's social calendar which makes selecting dates tricky but not impossible. That being said, Ahmed and I will host a Sunday brunch on March 31st. This will be a humanistic Easter celebration open to all Machar families - not just Virginians. I'll post more information closer to the date.

We are always searching for volunteers to host events. Hosting is fun and easy. Select your preferred date and event type then sit back and let others bring the food to you. OK, there is a little more to it than that - but not much. If you are interested in hosting or helping to coordinate a Shabbat, potluck, or any other style of event, please contact me at LAURIE.MILJAZI at gmail.com.

WITs

Renée Weitzner

The amazing women of WITs (Wimmin' in Transition), the women's group of Machar, will be meeting on **March 20 at** 7 **pm** at the home of Nancy Harris. We meet to enjoy each other's company and to draw strength from one another, as we face life's challenges and joys. Our meetings are open to all women members of Machar. We each bring a dish of food to share for our dinner. Please let me know

by March 18, 2013 if you will be able to come and what you intend to bring, so that I can let our host know. You may reach me by phone or by email at rwcats at aol.com.

I hope to see many of you there!

Evening Study Group

Michael Prival

The Machar Study Group on Jewish religious texts continues to meet every other Monday evening at my home. We are reading and discussing texts from the Bible, the Talmud, and other rabbinic sources. In this way we are learning not only about the Hebrew Bible but also many fascinating and surprising things about traditional Judaism as it existed before the Jewish Enlightenment began in the 18th century. All Machar members, at any level of prior knowledge, are invited to join us. If you'd like more information about this study group, please send me a note: mprival at aol.com.

Book Club

Darlene Basch and Renée Weitzner

The Book Club of Machar, open to all members, is very pleased to announce a special event. Natalie Wexler, daughter of founding member Henrietta Wexler, will be with us on **April** 7 when we discuss her book A More Obedient Wife. Based on historical research and the letters and diaries of the wives of two Supreme Court Justices appointed by George Washington, the book traces the family life of the period in diary and novel form. This is a fascinating, exceptionally written story that one cannot put down. Please join us on this special occasion. We will be meeting on March 10 at 3 pm at the home of Darlene Basch, Please let either Darlene or Renee know if you are planning to come.

In March, we will be meeting at the home of Martha Mednick at 3 pm to discuss Rebecca Goldstein's fine probe into the life and thought of Baruch de Spinoza, *Betraying Spinoza*. This is an erudite study of Spinoza and his time. Our reading follows from a colloquium and play that several of us attended last year at the DCJCC. Our discussion should be quite informative.

If you would like to join us, please contact Renee Weitzner at <u>rwcats at aol.</u> com or Darlene Basch at <u>dab0507 at yerizon.net</u>.

Young Adult Havurah

Liz Pomper

Join our listserve at groups.google.com/group/macharyah or join our group on Facebook at www.facebook.com/groups/macharyah to get the details. YAH events are open to all regardless of membership status in Machar, and participants are encouraged to bring friends who may be curious about our movement.

Social Action Committee

Rick Gold

Social Action Committee Helps VA Legislature Expand Medicaid

Overcoming enormous pressure from conservatives, the Virginia legislature approved the expansion of Medicaid in its two-year budget, assuring health insurance coverage for all poor Virginians unable to participate in health insurance exchanges established under the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare). To advocate for the expansion of Medicaid to almost 400,000 Virginians, Machar teamed with the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) in a network that included Non-Profit Virginia, Healthcare Access for Virginians and Virginia Consumer Voices, representing over

Clubs and Activities/Board Highlights

50 non-profit and advocacy groups. Machar joined other synagogues and Jewish organizations for Jewish Advocacy Day in Richmond, where they discussed Medicaid expansion with a large number of senators and delegates. In response to JCRC action alerts, Machar Virginians wrote to their senators and delegates at key points in the debate.

As a result of this action, the maximum annual income for Medicaid eligibility for a family of four will increase from \$6,915 to \$31,809. In addition, the maximum income for disabled adults will increase to 138% of the Federal Poverty Level, and adults with no children will be eligible for Medicaid for the first time in Virginia.

The legislative compromise authorized the budget for Medicaid expansion,

but allowed a ten-member legislative commission to approve progress on reforms before initiating the expansion in July 2014. These reforms, which will be negotiated between state and federal officials, will define benefits for newly eligible participants and their share of costs as well as allow the use of managed care to control costs.

Machar February Board of Directors Highlights

Joyce Rosenthal

 Machar's representation on the board of the Society for Humanistic Judaism stays strong! Larry Lawrence is SHJ Vice President. Marlene Cohen has agreed to stay on as Machar's representative, and Rick Gold is joining the SHJ board as an at-large member. Thanks to Larry, Marlene and Rick for their service! A big thank-you also to departing SHJ board secretary Deb Godden, who contributed her professionalism and dedication to SHJ for many years (just as she did for Machar).

- The Curriculum Committee, chaired by Education Director Debby Brennan, will soon begin reviewing the Jewish Cultural School curriculum.
- The board agreed to sponsor Machar booths at three upcoming community events: the DC Pride Festival (June 9), the Arlington County Fair (Aug. 7-11), and the Takoma Park Folk Festival (tentative date Sept. 8). Members will be needed to help out at each event, so mark your calendars!

HuJews Youth Program Associate—Society for Humanistic Judaism

The Society for Humanistic Judaism is seeking an enthusiastic secular, humanistic candidate who understands the movement of Humanistic Judaism, including the philosophy and practices, and who has experience in conference planning and youth organizing.

Position is part-time; will include some weekends. Position begins April 2013

Qualifications:

- College Grad/undergraduate degree in social services preferred; graduate degree in Jewish communal service a plus;
- Experience in youth/teen/campus programming and teen/campus organizing (2 years minimum preferred);
- Excellent communication skills, including writing and speaking, proficient computer/technology skills, including MS Office and Adobe Creative Suite and facility with social media required.
- Demonstrated ability to work with both teens and college students and their parents.
- Experience in/knowledge of Humanistic Judaism, including philosophy and practices, required.

Compensation:

April 2013 – Stipend to attend 2012 Conclave: \$200 May2013-April 2014 – Part-Time up to 10 hours/week 30 weeks a year: hourly fees not to exceed \$4500 May 2014 – April 2015 – Part time up to 15 hours/week 30 weeks/year: hourly fees not to exceed \$6750 Board Meeting attendance: \$200/weekend Conclave: \$500 for event.

To Apply:

Please send cover letter, resume, and 3 references to Society for Humanistic Judaism: bonniecousens@shj.org or 28611 W 12 Mile Rd, Farmington Hills, MI 48334.

Please submit applications by March 30, 2013. If you have questions, please contact bonniecousens@shj.org.

More information at: http://www.shj.org/Jobs.htm



Machar is a member of SHJ, the Society for Humanistic Judaism.

To Speak or Not To Speak—That Is the Question

By Andrea Friedlander, President of the Society for Humanistic Judaism

For those of you who read my column in the last Humanorah and/ or the November SHJ e-newsletter, I apologize that this article is old news. But I think that the explanation merits repeating in different formats to reach the widest audience possible.

Letters, OY, does the Society get letters! Usually these letters – nowadays emails – are written in response to a position the Society has taken on social issues, such as our recent positions on workers' rights, conscience clauses, school vouchers, and assault weapons. Sometimes the emails are supportive, and sometimes they're angry. Do more! Do less! Stand up! Sit down! What's a Society to do?

Recognizing that it is impossible to please everyone (i.e. the old adage: if you have two Jews, you'll get three opinions), it is important for everyone to understand the reason for our decisions.

Why does the Society take positions at all? First, the Society's Mission and Vision Statements (adopted by the Board in April 2010) provide in part that the Society should be a voice for Humanistic Judaism and increase the visibility of the Society. Taking positions on important social issues, especially when other organizations (both Jewish and secular) are speaking up, is one way for Humanistic Judaism to have a voice on the national stage, and it is likewise

an important means for gaining visibility and recognition as a legitimate fifth branch of Judaism. Second, the membership survey we conducted a few years ago indicates that our members want us to speak up for our Humanistic Jewish values.

Recognizing, however, that social issues can be controversial and can often become the subject of political action, last October the SHJ Board adopted criteria intended to limit the Society's positions to "the glue that binds us together" as Humanistic Jews. These new guidelines provide:

Criteria for Selection of Issues

Are we advocating evidence-based policy solutions that promote the core ethical values of freedom, dignity and self-esteem for every human being? This is a prerequisite.

If so, then the resolution must relate to at least one of the below criteria:

- separation of church and state, OR
- 2. Jewish identity/culture, OR
- a position with which an overwhelming majority of the SHJ are likely to agree.

To illustrate how these guidelines work, positions supporting reproductive choice and gay marriage, and opposing conscience clauses and school prayer would satisfy the separation of church and state prong of the test since these policies are religiously motivated. Our recent position urging the London Olym-

pics to commemorate the murdered 1972 Israeli Olympians satisfied the Jewish identity/culture prong of the test. And positions against bullying, violence &hate speech, and the sale of assault weapons would satisfy the overwhelming majority agreement third prong of the test. In contrast, for example, positions on tax reform, while arguably related to our core ethical values, would not satisfy any of the three prongs of the test.

Satisfying the criteria is just the first hurdle. The position is then subject to a vote by the SHJ Ethical Concerns Committee (consisting of approximately 15 Board members) and the SHJ Executive Committee (consisting of 9 Board members). These decision-makers represent a large number of our affiliated communities.

Bottom line: No matter what we say, we will not have 100% agreement among our members; yet remaining silent is not the better option. The guidelines are an attempt to give Humanistic Judaism a voice, but with balance and discipline. If you disagree with a particular position, let's simply agree to disagree, recognizing that the Society's only agenda is to find ways to promote Humanistic Judaism and Humanistic Jewish values. And no hard feelings, ok?

Andrea Friedland5@aol.com

The Machar Family

Birthdays

March 4: Ava Figuerdo
March 6: Joey Bonczkowski
March 7: Michael Kidwell
March 8: Aaron Ferster
March 14: Kira Appelman
March 19: Marie Ritzo
March 19: Hannah Ferster
March 21: Joshua Castellano
March 25: Tricia Ekenstam Gordon

March 30: Ali Epstein March 31: Dan Tobocman March 31: Rebecca Guilfoyle

Machar's members are our biggest asset and our greatest resource in letting their friends and family know about our wonderful community.

If you recommend a member or family who joins Machar, Machar will thank you with your choice of a \$100 gift card for dining out at Lebanese Taverna or Clydes, for local shopping at Politics and Prose or Israeli Accents, or some on-line Judaica shopping at moderntribe.com or traditionsjewishgifts.com.

So please tell people about Machar; we hope to give out lots of thank you cards!

—Darlene Basch

Anniversaries

March 1: Jules Abrams and Anita Willens March 27: Marina Broitman and Tibor Roberts March 28: Harry Appelman and Mimi Brody

Yarhzeits: We remember...

March 5: Wilfred Williams, grandfather of Dan Tobocman March 13: Nancy Tebelman, sister of Linda Tebelman March 22: Joseph Mauer, father of Marc Mauer March 24: Rhoda Zwicker, mother of Sue Zwicker March 27: Dorothy Bassin, mother of Donna Bassin March 28: Ronald Bassin, brother of Donna Bassin

Mazel Tov!

Congratulations to Darlene Basch on celebrating thirty years of working for the federal government.

We love to share good news—don't forget to keep us up-to-date on all of the excitement within the Machar Family!

Whaddaya Talkin'?

Marlene Cohen

In which Machar's newsletter will provide you with Your Monthly Word in Yiddish—Use it ten times this month and you won't forget it!

Tsedrayt (adjective) Tsedrayter (m. noun)
Tsedrayteh (f. noun)

Rhymes with "de-freight"



It means "mixed up" or "confused" – From the German zerdreht which is "twisted" or "confused"

If I'm feeling tsedrayt I could be overwhelmed and just don't know what step to take next. Yeah, I've been there...

> —Leo Rosten, The Joys of Yinglish, 1992

Staff, Board of Directors, and Leadership

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Rabbi

Binyamin (Ben) Biber

Congregational Administrator

Kelly Hand

lewish Cultural School Director

Debby Brennan

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Nadine Wettstein

Vice President

Darlene Basch

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Miriam Gitler

Susan Morawetz

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Joyce Rosenthal

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Rick Gold

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Manny Pastreich

Harriet Peck

Renée Weitzner

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Jules Abrams

Harold Black (deceased)

Ann Black

Joe Goodman

Millie Goodman

Mary Perica

Michael Prival

Henrietta Wexler

Board Liaisons

B'nei Mitzvah

Susan Morawetz

Newsletter

Rabbinic

Michael Prival

Madrikhim

Michael Prival

Deb Godden

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Marlene Cohen

Harriet Peck

Communications

Joyce Rosenthal

Community Service

Barbara Francisco

Education

Larry Lawrence

Email Lists Manager

Michael Prival

Fundraising

David Wittenberg

High Holidays

Nadine Wettstein

Liturgy

Michael Prival

Membership

Darlene Basch

Membership Directory

Miriam Gitler

Mishpahah

Renée Weitzner

New Members

Marlene Cohen

Newsletter Editor

Tricia Ekenstam Gordon

Nominating

Nadine Wettstein

Passover Seder

Rabbi Committee

Michael Prival

Shelter Staffing

Ann Levin

Social Action

Rick Gold

Sunday Refreshments

Ami Argaman

Clubs and Havurot Chairs

Book Club

Darlene Basch

Renée Weitzner

Neighborhood Havurot

Laurie Miller

Wimmin' In Transition (WITs)

Renée Weitzner

Young Adult Havurah

Betsy Kolmus

SHJ Reps from Machar

Machar Rep to SHJ

Marlene Cohen

SHJ Board of Directors Members

Larry Lawrence (Vice President)

Deb Godden (Secretary)

Machar Trained Leaders

Binyamin Biber, Rabbi

Michael Prival, Madrikh

Deb Godden, Madrikha

Dan Tobocman, Spokesperson

Information/Ads





Interested in Advertising with Machar? Contact info at machar.org

Directions to Machar

"Cedar Lane" events are held at Cedar Lane UU Church. 9601 Cedar Lane, Bethesda, MD.

From DC, go north on Wisconsin. Ave. (Rt. 355), pass the Naval Hospital, right on Cedar Lane., cross Beach Dr., 2nd entrance on right. From 495, Rockville, etc., take Rockville Pike (Rt. 355) S to left on Cedar to 9601. Metro - Red Line to Medical Center. Walk ½ mile north on 355, right on Cedar, 0.7 miles, or Ride-On Bus #34 (ask the driver).

"JPDS" is the site of our Jewish Cultural School (JCS). 6045 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Metro: Red Line to Silver Spring. S-2 or S-4 bus to Federal Triangle to Military Road and cross 16th Street. JCS and Adult Ed begin promptly at 10 a.m.; please arrive early.

For meetings in private homes, contact hosts for directions.

Machar E-mail Lists for Members and Nonmembers

Michael Prival

There are two different e-mail lists that Machar members can join. The first, the "Machar" list, enables members to receive the monthly Newsletter, event reminders by email, plus announcements of program changes that may occur between printed newsletters. Almost all Machar members are already on this list.

The second list is "MacharCommunity." Members of this list can share information about local, non-Machar cultural, educational, social action, or community service events and activities. Any list member can post a note on the Larry Lawrence "Machar Community" list at any time.

If you would like to be added to either of these lists, or if we are not using your preferred e-mail addresses for them, please send a note to Email at machar. org. Of course you can get off these lists at any time.

Earn for Machar Jewish Cultural School with Service Magic and DriversEd.com!

Get Matched to Prescreened Home Improvement Contractors and earn up to \$6*!

Service Magic is a FREE service matching you to pre-screened, customerrated service professionals: Maids, painters, remodelers, plumbers, roofers & more! *Earnings depend on the type of project and range from \$2-\$6.

Your Teen Can Start Earning a Driver's License Today!

With DriversEd.com, your teen can complete the required drivers education online—without ever stepping in a classroom.

Their quality course provides everything needed to prepare for the DMV permit and driver's license exams. Sign up and DriversEd.com will contribute 5% of the tuition amount to Machar's Jewish Cultural School.

Help Machar as You Shop

Machar participates in the eScrip (Electronic Scrip) program, a fundraising organization in which participating business partners contribute a percentage of your purchases to our Jewish Cultural School. Some participating businesses in the Mid-Atlantic are Safeway (which contributes 1-3% of your purchase value) and American Airlines (3%). To sign up for eScrip, go to http://www.eScrip.com and choose "Machar-Jewish Cultural School" as the benefiting group.

Raise Money for SHJ While vou Surf

Use GOODSEARCH.COM to Search on the Web and Raise Money for SHJ

GoodSearch.com is a Web search tool for organizations such as ours to raise money each time someone uses it. Simply go to goodsearch.com, key in "humanistic Judaism," and type in whatever you are searching for. You can even see how much we have raised—and imagine the potential if all of us use it!.