

# Colloquium to spotlight unaffiliated Jew

BY RENA FULKA

SPECIAL WRITER

They will gather for a four-day weekend in Oakland County — an eclectic combination of world-renowned historians, philosophers, sociologists, writers, artists, demographers and community leaders.

And through their brainstorming adventure — Colloquium '95 — a group of 16 experts will provide new insights on the issue of the unaffiliated Jew.

"The purpose of the colloquium is not simply to get people together who agree, rather, to hear the many voices of the Jewish community," said Rabbi Sherwin Wine, co-chairman of Colloquium '95. "Very important constructive brainstorming should come out of this weekend creating optimism and new ideas for action for Jewish survival in America."

"The topic is important because formal attachment to Judaism has been declining, and this is a concern to people who value Jewish identity," added Nancy Silver Shalit, executive director of Colloquium '95.

Sponsored by the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism, the colloquium is the first of its kind and is intended to be a biennial event.

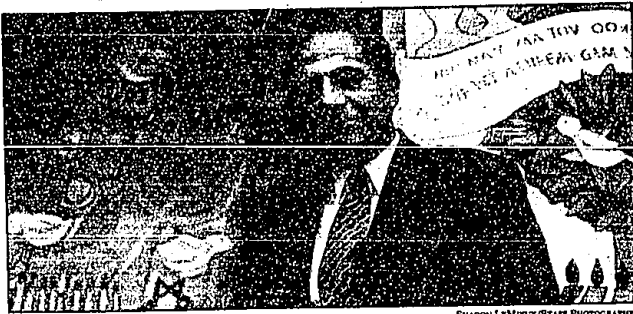
The symposium will be held Oct. 12-15 at the Pivnick Center for Humanistic Judaism, 20811 W. 12 Mile, Farmington Hills, with special art and film presentations held at the Jewish Community Center and Oakland Community College.

Honored guests will explore the reasons why the majority of America's 5.8 million Jews are non-committed, and discover ways to reverse the trend in the 21st Century. Speakers and an expected audience of 400 will represent the Conservative, Reform and Humanistic spectrum of the Jewish world.

"We're reaching out to the whole of the general Jewish community, and that's very important to us," said Marilyn Rowens, acting director of the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism. "We want to present the opportunity to become involved more deeply in Jewish life."

A resident of Livonia, Rowens has been active with the Humanistic movement for nearly 30 years, since it sprung from the congregation of the Birmingham Temple to become an international movement.

A photomural exhibit titled, "Jewish Representational Art: the



SHARON LEMMON/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

**Idea exchange:** "The purpose of the colloquium is not simply to get people together who agree, rather, to hear the many voices of the Jewish community," says Rabbi Sherwin Wine.

First 3,000 years," will be on display when Colloquium '95 opens on Thursday, Oct. 12 at 7:30 p.m. at the Jewish Community Center, 6600 W. Maple Road, West Bloomfield. The keynote speaker will be Shoshana Cardin, a Baltimore-based leader of the Jewish community in America.

Identifying the unaffiliated Jew will be the topic of discussion on Friday, when the program runs from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and convenes at 6:30 p.m. Saturday's daytime topic, "Why Be Jewish?" runs from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. These discussions will be held at the Pivnick Center.

A gala celebration of the artistic achievements of Joan Micklin Silver will begin at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday at the Smith Theatre, Oakland Community College, Orchard Ridge Campus, Farmington Hills. Silver is an acclaimed film maker, writer and director. Her classic film, "Hester Street," will be shown during this tribute.

Sunday's discussions focus on "Perspectives of the 21st Century," and run from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Pivnick Center.

Each symposium speaker will address the assembly for 40 minutes before engaging in an intense 40-minute discussion with fellow honored guests seated in the inner circle. Then, 10 minutes of questions will be fielded from the floor.

Among the 16 speakers and honorees are Yehuda Bauer, an Israeli-based Holocaust scholar and historian; Yehuda Amichai,

Israel's greatest contemporary poet; Anne Rolphe, a New York-based essayist, journalist and novelist; and Norman Cantor, an NYU-based historian and author.

The idea for an international event of this magnitude prompted by the continued growth of the Humanistic Judaism movement — a movement that began shortly after Wine founded the Birmingham Temple with eight families in 1963.

"We spent the first year exploring what it was that we were," said Wine, a Detroit native. "After the first year, the name Humanistic emerged to describe who we are."

The congregation grew quickly, drawing 40 families after two months and another 60 families after one year. Today, the Birmingham Temple boasts 500 families.

In 1971, the congregation moved from Birmingham to its present location on seven acres in Farmington Hills. Just last year, the Pivnick Center for Humanistic Judaism was built on the premises as the headquarters for the national and international movements.

"Humanistic Judaism is a Judaism which believes that the fundamental power for solving the problems of life lie within human beings," explained Wine. "The position of the Humanistic Jew with regard to God is primarily agnostic."

The movement's three most important elements are discovery of one's own personal power, ethical living and a deep attachment to the Jewish experience and Jewish culture.

When the movement began, it quickly became controversial, drawing public attention and letters from around the world. The group then developed a format and formed a national society in 1969, and an international society in 1988.

"What we believe is what large numbers of Jews believe," said Wine, a Detroit native. "Before Birmingham Temple, they had no organizational way to express their beliefs."

Today, Birmingham Temple is part of the Society for Humanistic Judaism, headquartered in Farmington Hills, which consists of about 60 communities in major cities of the United States and Canada. Other Societies can be found in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, England, Israel, France, Mexico, Russia and Uruguay.

The International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism is the intellectual center that provides philosophic and cultural materials and trains rabbis and leaders.

"Out of the colloquium, we hope a book will come, entitled, 'The Unaffiliated Jew,'" said Wine, who resides in Birmingham. "We've notified the Jewish world and we're looking forward to a strong response from the Detroit Jewish community."

The registration fee for Colloquium '95 is \$180, or \$245 with meals included. To register or obtain additional information, call the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism at (810) 476-9532.

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