

Mark Your Calendar!

- Sunday, Jan. 2:
No Religious School
- Friday, Jan. 7
Confirmation Retreat with
Rabbi Lewis
6:30 p.m. Lay Service
- Sunday, Jan. 9:
Religious School resumes
9:30 a.m. Men's Club Breakfast
for Confirmation Students
- Saturday, Jan. 15
10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Torah Study
- Sunday, Jan. 16:
Tu B'Shevat Seder
- Friday, Jan. 28, 7:45 p.m.
Shabbat Service
Oneg: Finkelstein families
- Sunday, Jan. 30:
10:45 a.m. Tu B'Shevat Service

Rabbi's Message

Last Sunday, one of the children in my class asked, "Why do we have Sunday School on Chanukah?" The other students jumped in and said, "Because Chanukah isn't a major Jewish holiday." There seemed to be some confusion about what holidays were major and what holidays were minor, so we talked about it. After further discussion, the class decided that Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Passover, Sukkot and Shavuot (for those that knew Shavuot) were major; they also agreed that Chanukah, Tu Bishvat and Purim were minor. "Which major holiday did you forget to mention?" I asked. Someone finally realized we had forgotten about Shabbat, the most major Jewish holiday of all.

Too often, we forget about Shabbat. And yet we are told, "More than Israel has kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath has kept Israel." For generations, Shabbat has shaped how we live and how we view the world. We Reform Jews may not observe Shabbat according to the specifics of Jewish law, but that does not mean that we do not take Shabbat seriously. We believe in the sanctity of Shabbat at home, in the lighting of candles, the recitation of blessings, the blessing of the children, and the sharing of a Shabbat meal. We believe in Shabbat evening and morning worship and study, and in making Shabbat special, a day unlike other days. How do we teach our students to take Shabbat seriously? The simple answer is for us to take Shabbat seriously ourselves, both at home and in the synagogue.

In 1979, when I served a student pulpit during rabbinical school, I was invited to Shabbat dinner at the home of recent Russian immigrants. They had set a beautiful table,

continued on next page

President's Message

Sometimes during the holiday season we find ourselves feeling a little depressed for one reason or another. We all have things about our family that we wish were different and that we could change if we could.

My mother has a sister, who at age 18 ran off with a married non-Jewish man in the early 1940s. The family story goes that my grandparents actually sat shivah for her. They never spoke with her again, even though she tried to make peace with them at least one time that I am aware of. My grandmother passed away over the summer and my mother was able to reconnect with her sister after almost 60 years. It turns out that they only live a few miles from each other. They are feeling their way through a relationship that they have not known their entire life. As for me, I have never met my Aunt Gloria, nor her family. I am making my plans to go and visit them early next year. This is an exciting time, but also lends me to wonder who we are, and what makes families get so angry at each other that they could exile someone in that manner.

I think that this is one of the reasons that I have moved towards the Reform stances of Judaism. Anything that can tear families apart is reprehensible. I also believe that people teach you how to act all the time by their example, some show you the correct way of doing things and others show you things to avoid. I think that most of us have both qualities that we show the world.

My wishes for you this year is to try and mend fences with your families and to treat your families with all the love and respect that they deserve. As Rabbi Lewish tells us, you never know if the person you are dealing with is the Messiah.

Shalom,

Howie Hirsch

Rabbi's Message, cont.

complete with candles, challah and wine. They asked if I would lead them in the blessings and I demurred, as I usually did with congregants, telling them I preferred to listen to them lead the words of prayer in their customary way. There was a brief embarrassed silence before they told me they didn't know the words. They had never seen anyone observe Shabbat in Russia because they had been forbidden to study and practice Judaism. They were so proud to have a rabbi as a guest in their home that they had carefully researched how to set the Shabbat table, but they didn't know the blessings. I remember being so choked up that I could barely lead the blessings myself.

My mother tells a story of when she and my father attended a Shabbat service as newlyweds. The rabbi gave a sermon asking people to consider about what they did in their homes that made their home Jewish. My mother, who had been raised in a very assimilated German-Jewish home, says she realized then that she needed to introduce Shabbat rituals into our home. She first had to learn how to do them herself; then she began to light candles and eventually they progressed to making kiddush and blessing challah.

Shabbat is not just the most important Jewish holiday; it is also a gift the Jewish people gave to the world. Give yourselves that gift. Shabbat observance can begin with one small step. In these dark days of winter, let Shabbat bring light into your home.

Rabbi Ellen J. Lewis

Building Update

We did not make the December agenda for the zoning board, and are on the January agenda. We need to receive a mini site plan to go ahead with the additon. I will let you know how we make out next month.

Howie

Cantor's Committee

Cantor Karen Neff joins us one weekend a month and graces us at services with her beautiful voice. Please join me in making her feel welcome. We need hosts for various dinners and/or lunches as well as help with transportation. Please call me at the Temple.

Joanne Weiss

Adult Education

Here are schedules for Torah Study and the Rabbi's class for first half of 2005.

Torah Study, Saturdays, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

January 15, February 19, March 19, April 9, May 7, June 11

Rabbi Lewis's Adult Education Class,

Saturdays, 9:30 a.m.-noon

(9:30-10:45 Pirke Avot: 10:45-noon Mishkan T'filah)

March 26, April 2, April 16, April 30, May 21

Emily's Mitzvah Project

Tzedakah is an important part of ones Jewish life and in our family it's been an important part of growing up. So my mitzvah project was not easy to pick. I'm already involved in a lot of community service through the many clubs I belong to. I tried to pick something that had meaning to me. I wanted to work at a turtle refuge but it is not yet set up and ready for volunteers. So, I chose to raise money for the State 4-H Goat Show and The Woodland Wildlife Refuge.

As most of you know, I have had goats most of my life and have been involved with 4-H for 7 years. I know how important agriculture is to our state and think that supporting it through 4-H is a good way to keep the youth of NJ interested, and therefore secure a future for NJ "ag." This year with my mom/leader, we went to many businesses and solicited donations. We raised more then \$600 plus lots of candy and pet food from Master Foods USA. We had a very impressive 4-H State Goat Show. We were able to pay for good judges, buy nice trophies and gifts for the many participants and everybody had a sugar rush by the end of the week. We also helped businesses advertise in our program and at the fair. It was very successful and we even had some money left to help next year's show.

As a farmer I've learned it's not always easy to share the land with wildlife but it's very important. I gave a percentage of my Bat Mitzvah money to the Woodland Wildlife Refuge. I also got a beautiful Tzedakah box from the Nagorsky family, which made me think it would be nice to raise some more money for the Woodland Wildlife Refuge so I did that at my Bat Mitzvah. I thank Tracy at the Wildlife Center for all her hard work and hope my contribution will help with care of the injured and orphaned animals.

A special "thank you" to all my Jewish family at JCNWJ. Thanks for all your support during my Bat Mitzvah. To all those who helped in the kitchen, during services and those who took part in my ceremony. You made it a very special and memorable day. A special thank you to all my Hebrew teachers, Lisa Braunstein, Rabbi Lewis and my mom, who's tutoring and encouragement made it possible for me to reach my Bat Mitzvah.

A heart felt thank you, Emily

Education Committee and PTO News

The Chanukah service was amazing! Judy Schroeder summed it up beautifully:

I just want to compliment all who participated in the Hanukkah Service on December 10th. The music was lovely and the candles glowed with warmth and peace. It was one of the most inspiring services I have attended at the Center. The Cantor did a terrific job, and I have never heard the children sing so sweetly. Smiles were on everyone's faces, and there was obvious pride in the Rabbi's eyes when she listened to the young ones recite their Hebrew Prayers. There was pleasant conversation, laughter, and delicious treats at the Oneg. Thanks to all who prepared this special holiday gathering.

Judy Schroeder

On **Sunday, January 2**, there will be no Religious School, due winter break. School will resume Sunday, January 9. On January 16 at 10:45am, we will be having our Tu B'Shevat Seder. This is always an educational and fun time for our students. Parents: please plan on helping set-up/clean-up and join us for the wonderful event.

Confirmation Students - Don't forget, it's the annual retreat 5:00pm., Friday, January 7 - 9:30am., Sunday, January 9.

6th & 7th grade: Sunday, January 30, 9-11 a.m. is the Mitzvot of MetroWest program at the Alex Aidekman Family JCC in Whippany. This program introduces Mitzvot to children of Bar/Bat Mitzvah age. Details will be discussed in class.

Thank you!

I would like to say Thank You to one and all for all of your thoughts and good wishes during my convalescence. Thank you, again, to all of you who provided delicious meals, desserts and food baskets for our family. We all, especially, Howie, appreciated your kindness so very much. It's always hard when one of the "parental units" are laid up and we can't tell you how much we appreciate everyone's help. I'm back on my feet again and running and hope to see you all very soon.

Iris Hirsch

Shoprite/A&P Vouchers

Shop Rite scrip and A&P gift cards are available at the Temple on the following dates:

- January 9, 23 April 10
- February 13, 27 May 1, 15
- March 13

Contact Sandy Seidorf at the Temple for any questions or special delivery.

Cancellations Due to Weather

Should bad weather be an issue on a Friday evening and services need to be canceled, a message will be left on the Center's answering machine by 5:30 p.m. Should bad weather be an issue on Sunday morning and Sunday School needs to be canceled, a message will be left on the Center's answering machine by 7:30 a.m. We will also use the snow chain.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Jewish LIFE



- Rabbi Moshe Herson, Sunday, January 23 at 10 a.m. Rabbi Herson will present "The Hassidic Journey - from the Baal Shem Tov to the Lubavitch." A bagel breakfast will be served. The fee is \$10/Jewish LIFE members, \$15/guests
- Seth Rogovy, "Rockin' the Shtetl - A Multi-Media Musical Journey" on Sunday, February 6 at 10 a.m.
- Steve Schwager, Executive Director of the Joint Distribution Committee, presents an "Update on the Jewish World" on Sunday, February 27 at 10 a.m.

For further information and to register, contact Laura Friedman at 908-725-6994 x213; LFriedman@ssbjcc.org

REGIONAL SHABBATON

Rabbi Lance Sussman, Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel, Elkins Park, PA will be the Darshan at the 2005 Regional Shabbaton. The event, to be held on Shabbat, February 26, 2005 at Temple Emanu-El, Westfield, NJ, will highlight the 120th anniversary of the Pittsburgh Platform, the nation's first comprehensive statement of the principles of Reform Judaism. Rabbi Sussman's talk will focus on "The Beauty of Holiness: Reform Jewish Worship."

The Regional Shabbaton provides a complete Shabbat experience, from Torah study, through morning worship services, lunch, including z'mirot led by a regional song-leader, to workshops led by regional clergy, and concluding with a moving Havdalah service.

For information, contact Paul Kaufman at the Regional Office, 201-722-9090, ext. 201, or e-mail pkaufman@urj.org

From the Union for Reform Judaism

Thanks to the generosity of Reform Jews, more than \$138,000 has been donated to the Union for Reform Judaism's Sudan Relief Fund to help the victims of genocidal activity in Darfur, Sudan. As of the late November, \$80,000 has been sent to Care USA, Catholic Relief Services and the International Rescue Committee, and the Union is evaluating which organizations can best use the funds remaining. Darfur continues to be the worst humanitarian situation in the world today, and funds are

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Make check payable to Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey and mail to the Temple.

urgently needed. Donations may be made at www.urj.org/relief. For more information, see www.rac.org/advocacy/issues/issue-sudan/sudangen.

Donations

Rona and Stanley Schick in memory of Rose Fleisher
Ann Stahl in memory of Samuel Horowitz
Lewlie and Murray Heller in memory of Mildred Sobine
Laurie Post and Steven Goldner in memory of Gertrude Post and Adolph Goldner
Judy and Wain Schroeder in memory of Bill Brugmann
Rona and Stanley Schick in honor of Judy and Paul May's new grandson, Adam
To the Rabbi's discretionary fund by Richard and Edythe Herson in honor of the bat mitzvah of Emily Stanton

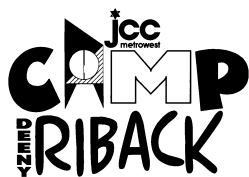
Jackie and Max Spinner, in honor of the New Year
(we apologize for the delay in printing this)
The temple mourns the loss of Mary Mergi, the mother of Maureen Baeck

From Your Newsletter Editor

Advertise in the Journal! If you or someone you know would like to advertise, have them call Lisa at the Temple. The deadline for the next newsletter will be January 18.

All committee members: Please send updates to your programs to Wain Schroeder at niaw1@comcast.net for Web posting.

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