



Mark Your Calendar!

- Sunday, Jan 1
No Sunday School
Happy New Year!
- Sunday, Jan 8
10:45 a.m. Pirke Avot
- Monday, Jan. 9, 7:30 p.m.
Board Meeting
- Friday, Jan. 13, 7:45 p.m.
Shabbat Service (Cantor)
- Saturday, Jan. 14, 10:30 a.m.
Torah Study
- Sunday, Jan. 15, 10:30 a.m.
“How to Raise a (Jewish) Child”
Discussion
Coffee 10:00 a.m.
- Friday, Jan. 27, 7:45 p.m.
Lay led Shabbat Service -
- Friday-Sunday, Jan 27-29
Confirmation Retreat
- Sunday, Jan. 29
9:30 a.m. Men’s Club meeting

Rabbi’s Message

One of the students in my Sunday morning 6th and 7th grade class recently asked the following question: “Where does theology come from?” I remembered an answer given by one of my teachers years ago: “Theology begins when someone asks you what you believe and you have to explain it.” Until then, your belief is just your belief; only when you have to articulate it to someone else does it become theology.

“Much have I learned from my teachers, but even more from my students.” My students ask me questions like that every week. Questions like that remind me of why I teach. Questions like that force me to step back and think about why I do what I do. And if I needed yet another reminder, teaching the Taste of Judaism class also made me take a step back; the experience forced me to explain to adult learners the concepts I take for granted. Eight members of the community came into our Temple, ate a delicious lunch provided by Sharon Herson (“How can you call it a Taste of Judaism and not have food?”) and Judy May, and studied alongside of some of our own members. The structure of the course was simple. Each session was devoted to one major Jewish concept. Session one focused on God; section two on Ethics; and section three on Community.

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President’s Message

As I was sitting on the Bimah for the healing service this past Sunday, just as the service was beginning, I saw the lift door open and two people who waited patiently for the lift to be installed came out of the lift and proceeded into the sanctuary, without help from anyone else or without a major effort of climbing the stairs. They came out of the lift with grins on their faces a mile wide. It was a moment I will cherish for as long as I live. It made all the hard work and the efforts of so many people feel like it was all worthwhile. I want to thank everyone in the congregation for their support of this project. All of us should be very proud of what we have accomplished this year. Making the building handicapped accessible is a remarkable feat and we all need to take a step back and give ourselves a pat on the back.

I have a few people who deserve special consideration as their help was immeasurable. Rochelle Ostenfeld for her vision and being the latest person to bring this idea to the board. To her husband Tom for his help in overseeing the architecture of the building and for his wonderful design ideas. To Paul May and Stan Ehrlich for overseeing the fiscal responsibility of spending our temple’s assets. To Rabbi Lewis, without whose wisdom, guidance and moral support, I do not think I would have gotten this far, as well as her generosity in allowing us to raise funds during her 25th anniversary Shabbaton. To Jeff Berkowitz, whose fundraising abilities are unmatched in this congregation as well as being there for me on days when things were not going so well and being there to listen and advise. To Gwen Nagorsky, who drew up a plan almost identical to the one we built over 7 years ago, for her knowledge, wisdom, and guidance (and not once saying “I designed this a long time ago”). To Laurie Post, who helped me remove the storage closet so that the lift had its place. To Roland Bakonyi, Marsha Gross and Helen Mattson who were able to open the center when the workman did not have the code to get in, for stopping whatever it was they were doing and opening the center. To my three past presidents, Gwen Nagorsky, Sharon Herson and Helen Mattson, you give so much of yourselves to this center and to me. Thanks for teaching me how to be president. To Laurie Hessels, who while working on her own major project, still was able to lend advice and support when asked. To the board of directors over the past 8

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Rabbi's Message, cont.

The goal of the Reform movement-sponsored class is outreach to the community. The idea was to advertise in the local papers, invite people in and let them know how welcome they would be in our congregation. Some of them were born Jews who had spent many years living outside the Jewish community and wanted to find a way back in. A few were the children of intermarriage who wanted to learn more about their Jewish heritage. One or two had been raised in other religions but, for whatever reason, felt drawn to Judaism. One person just wanted to learn more about her Jewish neighbors. One person came and cried because she felt that she had been searching and finally had found her home.

I don't know if you can imagine how moving it was for me to teach this class. I wish you all could share the excitement of people discovering Judaism for the first time. I can't tell you how privileged I felt. I don't know where these individuals will end up, but I know that they have begun a process which won't end with the end of the class. I hope that those who are comfortable will join us in worship and study as a part of our community. We Jews don't believe in exclusive salvation and so have no theological incentive to force people to join us, but that shouldn't prevent us from reaching out with open arms and welcoming those who choose to walk through the door.

May the upcoming secular new year offer you all continued opportunity for study and community and may the lights of Chanukah dance in your hearts through this dark winter.

Rabbi Ellen Lewis

President's Message, cont.

years, for all of your friendship, advice, camaraderie and support. To the families of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah this fall for their understanding that the long term good that we were doing outweighed any short term inconveniences.

To everyone else in the congregation, for your good wishes and support along the way. Just coming up to me at services and saying a kind word about the project was one of the things that kept me going.

To our contractor, Brad Bartow and crew, who while doing a superior job of renovating our synagogue never once failed to remember that they were working at a house of G-d, and always showed the respect this building deserves. They also are due special thanks for having the building always ready for our services. Once you were inside for one of this fall's Shabbat, Bar/Bat Mitzvah or High Holiday services, you would be hard pressed to know that construction was even going on.

And lastly to my wife Iris, who pushes me to do the best that I can, as well as her sacrifices of not having her husband/handyman around as much as she would like. Without her, I would be much less of a man than I am today. Iris, I love you with all my heart and soul.

Howie

How to Raise a Jewish Child

"For anyone who has a child, was a child, or cares about children. Wendy Mogel teaches you how to raise a child to be a good person and not just raise a child to feel good. Great for the Jewish parent, great for the Presbyterian parent, the Buddhist, even the skeptic." - Carrie Fisher

On Sunday morning **January 15**, Rabbi Lewis will lead a discussion on Wendy Mogel's book, *The Blessing of a Skinned Knee: Using Jewish Teachings to Raise Self-Reliant Children*. Dr. Mogel is a clinical psychologist in Los Angeles who tries, with authority and humor, to help parents learn how to turn their children's worst traits into their greatest attributes. Her goal is to help parents see and treasure both the ordinariness and the uniqueness of their children. She uses Jewish sources to help parents teach children how to honor their parents and respect others. The book is published by Scribner and can be found easily in most bookstores.

Come at 10 for coffee followed by a discussion beginning at 10:30. Do read the book, but come even if you haven't read it.

Your Vote Helps Reform Judaism in Israel

We at the Jewish Center need all of our members to join in supporting our Movement in Israel by registering and voting the World Zionist Elections at www.VoteReformJudaism.com. Our Movement in Israel is counting on our support. It will only take a few minutes of time and a \$7 registration fee that is collected to cover the cost of the elections.

Our Movement's success will provide:

- Support for Progressive Jews across the former Soviet Union and Israel
- Training for Israel's next generation of Reform Rabbis
- Reform Jewish programming on six continents
- Almost two million dollars in annual funding to Israeli Reform Jewish projects

URJ President Eric Yoffie had this to say about the elections: "The WZO not only gives us a platform to express our views, it also supplies the resources that we desperately need."

Registration is fast, easy and helps Reform Judaism around the world. On page 72 of the most recent copy of Reform Judaism you will find a registration form. Send this in no later than January 15, 2006 or register online today at www.VoteReformJudaism.com. Thank you in advance for doing your part to protect your movement, your values, and your Israel. For more information on the election, visit the ARZA website at www.arza.org.

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.

Save the date!

The Talent Show will take place on Saturday, April 1, 2006.

Adult Programs

Torah Study: Meeting dates (check with Sharon Herson if you are coming for the first time or if you missed the last meeting): Saturday mornings — Jan. 14, Feb. 11, March 11, April 15, May 13, June–Aug. TBA. Starting time is 10:30 a.m., ending time about 12:30-1:00 p.m.

Pirke Avot: This collection of very short texts, The Sayings of the Elders, provides an endless source of both wisdom and controversy. Upcoming dates: Jan. 8, Feb. 5, March 19, April 30. Let Rabbi Lewis know if you plan to attend.

Volunteers Needed

Have you been looking for an opportunity to do something at the temple as well as help the community? We are looking for someone to head a social action committee at the temple. We also need someone to keep an eye on the kitchen supplies and order them and put them away after they arrive. This is a good job for a Sunday school parent who is at the synagogue on a regular basis and can take care of this. Please contact Howie if you are interested in either of these positions.

Education Committee and PTO News

We completed 2005 with a bang! Between the wonderful craft project led by Lynne Kowski, Mike Weiner's class play, latkes made by our devoted parents and Chanukah songs led by Rabbi Lewis, it was a tremendous day. And don't forget the great boutique once again run beautifully by Jeanne Berkowitz. Thank you to everyone who helped! Our next PTO meeting will be **Sunday, January 8.**

There will be no Sunday School on **January 1.**

Confirmation Retreat: The Confirmation Class is going to Camp Harlam for our annual retreat **Jan. 27-29, 2006.**

Support the Jewish Center with Scrip

Lynne Kowski is available every Sunday at the Temple that Sunday School meets at 11:45 a.m.

To Our 2006-2007 B'nai Mitzvah Families

The Jewish Center will hold a brunch for you, including all your children, on February 5, 2006, after Sunday school. At this time Rabbi Lewis will address issues and concerns you may have regarding your child's upcoming simcha. Information regarding your child's date and what your child needs to know will be addressed as well. Each family will receive a packet of information to take home with you to read and digest. Please set aside this date and time so that you can attend. We should be finished by 2 pm.

Helen Mattson and Ritual Committee

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Save the Date for Jewish Life Night of Learning

Saturday, March 4, 2006 will be a NIGHT OF LEARNING, a community-wide evening of study with Rabbis from across the Jewish LIFE



family. They will join together to share wit, wisdom and insights in areas of interest and passion. This program will offer the opportunity for members of our community to study and learn with Rabbis serving the Jewish LIFE family.

**New Jersey • West Hudson Valley Council
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January 28, 2006 • 28 Tevet 5766

Shabbat Va'era

Temple Beth Or

56 Ridgewood Road, Township of Washington, NJ

8:45 AM – 5:15 PM \$36.00 per person

Featuring Storahtelling: a fresh fusion of storytelling, *Torah*, contemporary performance art, and traditional ritual theatre. The primary focus is the revitalization of the Torah Service, Judaism's oldest form of ritual storytelling. Incorporating innovative translations, dramatic commentary, and live music into the weekly reading, STORAHTELLING reclaims the art of sacred Jewish storytelling and transforms the Torah Service into modern ritual theatre. Complete Shabbat Experience!

This event is sponsored by Temple Beth Or, Township of Washington, and the New Jersey-West Hudson Valley Council of the Union For Reform Judaism. For information contact: Paul Kaufman: 201.722.9090 ext. 201, pkaufman@urj.org

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