



Mark Your Calendar!

- Sunday, Jan. 6
9:30am Sunday School
9:30am Men's Club breakfast
10:00am Rabbi Dr. Shulman lecture
- Monday, Jan. 7, 7:30pm
Board Meeting
- Thursday, Jan. 10, 7:30pm
Gourmet Kosher Wine Tasting
- Friday, Jan. 11, 7:45pm
Shabbat Service, Oneg:
Berkowitz, Webb, Simons families
- Sunday, Jan. 13
9:30am Sunday School (K/1),
Music with Cantor Kadin
9:30am PTO meeting
10:30am Confirmation
12:15pm Cooking Club
- Wednesday, Jan. 16, 7:30pm
Book Club
- Saturday, Jan. 19, 10:30am
Torah Study
- Sunday, Jan. 20
9:30am Sunday School
Talit-making workshop
- Wednesday, Jan. 23, 7:00pm
Adults Hebrew Reading class
- Friday, Jan. 25, 7:45pm
Shabbat Service/Hebrew
Naming Ceremony
Oneg: Kunzman, Stanton,
Kassanoff families
- Sunday, Jan. 27
9:30am Sunday School (K/1),
Tu Bishvat seder
Sunday School assembly
- Sunday, Feb. 10
9:30am-2:00pm Blood Drive

Rabbi Lewis's sermons are now on our Website! Visit us at www.jcnwj.org

Rabbi's Message

When I was growing up in suburban New Jersey, my public school made no pretense of separating church and state. We unapologetically sang Christmas carols without the token addition of "I Have A Little Dreidel." We made Christmas cards and drew Christmas trees. In my fifth grade class, we counted down the days to Christmas on an Advent Calendar. The counter in the main office proudly displayed a nativity scene. Winter vacation was called Christmas vacation. We began our day with a reading from Scripture and the recitation of the Lord's Prayer. It wasn't until years later that I learned that the formulaic beginning, "Our Father, who art in heaven," was a rather awkward translation of the simple rabbinic phrase "Avinu she'bashamayim."

It was painful and yet, in many ways, it was better than what we have now. In my childhood, there was no pretense of separation; today, there is a pretense of separation disguising the lack of true separation. Menorahs and Christmas trees share space on school and municipal property, except in towns like mine where the town has deemed the tree secular and the menorah religious. School choirs add in token Chanukah songs whose melodies don't begin to compare to the grandeur of medieval carols. Instead of trying to enforce the idea of separation, we have created the worst kind of amalgamation. We pay lip service to a superficial diversity that masks real

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President's Message

The *genizah* is a place for storing religious books that are out of date or otherwise not used anymore. This issue will arise as our congregation moves to adopt the new prayer books. The old prayer books will either have to be sold or given to another temple, or stored in a *genizah*.

Books and ritual objects containing the name of God cannot be destroyed according to Jewish law. We have a *genizah*, of sorts. Ours consists of several tubs containing books and are stored downstairs, next to Mike Weiner's classroom. Our Hebrew school students take great care placing outdated materials in these receptacles.

It is also a Jewish custom to honor the dead by burying books with the casket. This custom was observed recently when we put our beloved congregant, Richard Herson, to rest. It is worth noting that he was probably one of the most well-read of our fellow congregants.

The most famous *genizah* discovered was in Cairo. I now quote from page 406 of the Encyclopedia Judaica found downstairs in the Jewish Center, in the bookcase outside the lift. "The Cairo *Genizah* was found in the attic of the Ezra Synagogue, whose worshippers had preserved ancient Palestinian customs, and in which Maimonides, his son Abraham, and other great scholars had taught. This synagogue was built in 882 on the ruins of a Coptic church sold to the Jews. In 1890 it was rebuilt, but the attic was not touched. The attic was situated at the end of the women's gallery; it was without doors or windows and could only be reached by means of a ladder through a large hole at the side."

In 1896, Solomon Schechter traveled to the Cairo *Genizah*. There, he was able to assemble about 100,000 pages, which he took back to Cambridge University.

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Rabbi's Message, cont.

theological divisions. Attempting to paper over these differences under the rubric of "inclusion" implies that no separation of church and state is necessary after all. We are one big happy country, a melting pot of dreidel and tinsel.

So pardon me if I say Bah, Humbug, to all of it. I really do believe we should call a Christmas tree a Christmas tree, not a Tree of Lights. And that's why we should not display it on public property. I really do believe that we should keep Christ in Christmas and menorahs in the windows of Jewish homes. I would never argue against teaching children to appreciate diversity but that isn't what they are experiencing this time of year. Ask them. They feel uncomfortable. This is not genuine dialogue and appreciation for each other's traditions. They experience a pastiche of apologetics all in the name of equal time. That is why the idea of separation to begin with. Once you break that law, how do you know where to stop? Wouldn't it be a better lesson for our kids to know that they are different, to accept that they are a minority in a Christian society and there is nothing equal or fair about it? Singing Hebrew songs in public schools doesn't mitigate that sting nor should it.

Our tradition is most meaningful when it is celebrated in our homes and synagogues, not when it is displayed in the public square. I know that many of my Christian colleagues feel the same way about their traditions. If you have a choice between fighting for the inclusion of Chanukah songs in public school choirs and fighting for a commitment to home celebration of Shabbat and holidays, you know how I would vote.

I admit it; I am a purist (you can say Scrooge, if you want) when it comes to separation of church and state. And I may be fighting a losing battle, but that has never stopped me before. In this day when too many governments around the world are ruled by religious extremists, it is that much more imperative that we preserve this American value. It is good not just for Jews but also for all Americans.

The issue will be moot by the time you receive this newsletter. In the public square, the tinsel will be off the tree and the menorahs will have been taken down and stored until next year. We shall heave a collective sigh of relief until this time next year when we are again challenged to defend our constitution. My experience in public school choirs has guaranteed that I still know all the words to hundreds (well it seems that way) of Christmas carols. I would rather have learned them on Sunday morning going to church with my friends, just the way they learned about Judaism by going to Temple with me. That is the way I like to appreciate and share other traditions. That is why I am always happy when our kids bring their friends to services on Friday night and Saturday morning or to Sunday School on Sunday. It is the blessing of living in this country that we can invite them to come see a menorah on our bimah, not in the town square.

May the secular new year bring brightness into these dark days.

Rabbi Ellen Lewis

President's Message, cont.

Schechter and other researchers were able to synthesize this material, publishing their results in several scholarly books.

Caves were also used as *genizot*. The most famous documents found in these caves are the Dead Sea Scrolls. One archeologist who worked with these scrolls was the noted Yigael Yadin. His earlier career was as head of the Israeli Defense Forces, appointed to that post by David Ben-Gurion.

Two weeks ago, before I personally undertook this "study," I knew little if any of this material. It is amazing what treasures lie downstairs in the bookshelves of the Jewish Center.

Shalom,

Jim Arvesen (917-941-4332, arvesen@att.net)

Note of thanks to the JCNWJ community:

We are so grateful for the caring and love we have received in the last week since the death of my father, Richard Herson. When we speak of community, I understand now better than ever who and what we are. My husband Daniel Fleckles and my mother Edythe, as well as my brother and sister-in-law, Jonathan and Joanne (not temple members), join me in saying thank you for attendance at the funeral service, the burial, the shiva services – ice and all. Thank you for the sustenance, material and spiritual, in person and through calls and lovely cards, that you have provided since December 13. We are so very appreciative and will never forget.

Sharon Herson

Sunday, Jan. 6, Making Time Sacred: And the Rest Is Commentary

In this talk, it is argued that transforming the not-yet holy into the holy, and in the process making time sacred is the single commandment that underlies all other commandments. Rabbi Dennis Shulman, Ph.D., examines selected biblical and talmudic passages, as well as some of the writing of Abraham Joshua Heschel to argue that to be Jewish and/or spiritual, one must sanctify time. Join us for coffee at 10, followed by the speaker at 10:30. Rabbi Dr. Shulman also is running for Congress from our district. This will be instead of the usually scheduled Adult Ed that morning.

Naming Ceremony to be Held during Shabbat Service

If you or any of your children do not have a Hebrew name, consider choosing one and being named in a beautiful group ceremony at a Shabbat service on January 25. Please contact Rabbi Lewis if you are interested and before you start looking through books for names—that may not be the way to do it. Deadline for participation: January 7, 2008.

Gourmet Kosher Wine Education & Tasting

It's not just Manischewitz any more. . . . Come join us for a tantalizing taste experience. You'll learn how to select the right wine for all occasions. We will be enjoying a wide variety of the latest red and white Kosher wines. Impress family and friends at your next celebration.

Thursday evenings, 7:30-9:30 p.m. on January 10, February 21, March 13 and April 10. Party on Saturday evening, May 10. Fee: \$35.00 per person for all four sessions or \$10.00 per session; check payable to JCNWJ; Party cost: TBA R.S.V.P. to Jennifer Rosenblum.

Religious School/PTO Events

We have postponed our school-wide family-ed BIG game from January 6 until May 4. There is a PTO meeting on January 13. On January 20 we are having a Tallit-making workshop led by Laurie Hessels. (Snow date is February 3.) On January 27 we are having a Sunday School Assembly to which parents are invited – the students will receive report cards and certificates. Parents are also invited to our Tu Bishvat seder on January 27.

Marsha Gross & Karen Finkelstein
(Education co-Chairs)

Cooking Club Update

The next Cooking Club will be Jan. 13. Everyone is welcome. Please call Esther Bakonyi or Iris Hirsch so that we know how many people to expect.

SUNDAYS, 12:15 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Jan. 13, Feb. 3, April 6. Bring bag lunch. Fee: Share in expenses of ingredients. Children interested in cooking may come with a parent. Contact Iris or Esther at least a week before session(s) you will be attending.

Book Club, January 16, 7:30 p.m.

The Book Club meeting scheduled has been rescheduled for Wednesday, January 16 at 7:30 p.m. Please contact Risa Smith by January 10 if you plan to come. The group will meet in the comfort of someone's home and we must know how many people are coming and be able to send directions to all who want to participate. This postponement will give everyone time to read Daniel Mendelsohn's *The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million*. Remember, we will not be meeting at the Jewish Center.

Blood Drive

The Men's club is holding our first annual blood drive on February 10th 9:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. We need to get 35 donors to meet our quota. Please call Howie at 908-850-1030 or email him at jcnwjhowie@comcast.net and sign up for one of the open slots for that day. Giving a pint of blood can save three lives and according to the Talmud, "And whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he saved an entire world." Think about that. It is like doing Mitzvot wholesale, do one Mitzvah and get credit for 3 Mitzvot.

Adult Hebrew Reading Course

There will be another Adult Hebrew reading course for the winter and spring months for 2008. We will be focusing on the Friday night service and working on becoming more fluent and comfortable with the service. Class will be on Wednesday night beginning on January 23rd and continuing until May 28th. We may take a week or two off during that time. If you would like to participate in this class, please contact Howie Hirsch at 908-850-1030 or email him at jcnwjhowie@comcast.net. We will be using the prayer book as our text, so there will be no charge for the books. Class fee will be \$72. The only pre-requisite is that you know the Hebrew letters and vowels.

Pirke Avot

The Wisdom of the Fathers, taught by Rabbi Ellen Jay Lewis. Lively group discussion always.
SUNDAY MORNINGS, 10:45 a.m.–noon
Feb. 3, March 2, April 6, May 18 (noon)

Torah Study

The group will be studying Exodus during this year. Another stimulating group discussion, Torah-based, with occasional digressions into contemporary events and politics. Coordinated by Sharon Herson
SATURDAY MORNINGS, 10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
Jan 19, Feb 16, Mar 22, Apr 26, May 10, June 21
Members can come and participate in any and all sessions.

Talent Show

The Talent Show is scheduled for March. Begin practicing some type of song, dance (for a small stage), instrumental number, poem, joke, or dramatic reading now so that you will be ready. Look for more news to follow in the next newsletter.

Welcome new members!

Starr, Eric, Moriah & Emma Diethorn, Long Valley

Donations

Herson-Fleckles family in appreciation to Rabbi Lewis and Cantor Kadin

Barbara and Michael Tozzo in memory of Michael Jason Tozzo

Daniel Hirshberg in memory of Mitchell Hirshberg
Leslie and Murray Heller in memory of Mildred Sobine
Iris and Howie Hirsch in memory of Jessica Hirsch, Sid Goldstein

Helen and John Mattson in memory of Laurette Pim
Blanche and Marvin Davidson in memory of Sadie Schiller, Herbert Davidson, Arthur Davidson

Rhonda Jordan in memory of Jean Siegel
In memory of Richard Herson:

Eric Edelstein, Sylvia Pearl, Norah Lessne, Nancy and Bernie Robins, Naomi and Richard Davine, Sandra and Simon Mawas, Jane and Steve Kunzman, Jane Buttars and Daniel Harris, Rhonda Jordan

The Jewish Center mourns the loss of member Richard Herson. He will be truly missed.

Happy birthday: Sharon Herson, Gwen Nagorsky, Ed Nagorsky, Marsha Koppenhaver, Ira Melon, Julia Berkowitz, Leah Nagorsky, Sam Hirsch, Cameron Baeck, Hanah Finkelstein, Grace Marr.

Community Programs

REGIONAL SHABBATON

8:45am – 5:15pm, January 26, Temple Har Shalom, Warren

The Regional Shabbaton, sponsored by the Committee on Religious Living, has historically been a highlight of the New Jersey-West Hudson Valley Council programming year. Congregants from throughout the region spend Shabbat in study, prayer, song and sociality, forming a community whose impact lingers long after the day is concluded. Fee: \$45/person. Contact: 888-750-8242.

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JEWISH LIFE

Jewish LIFE programs scheduled this winter include: Dr. Steven M. Cohen, American Jews: Implications for Jewish Education and Community Building on Wednesday, January 16 1 p.m. Amy-Jill Levine, author of *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* will be our guest speaker on Thursday, January 31 at 1 p.m. Prize-winning Author Kurt Leviant will be the speaker on Thursday, February 21 at 7 p.m. Mr. Leviant's latest book, *The Mystery of the Golem*, is the translation of Yudl Rosenberg's influential Hebrew novel, *The Golem and the Wondrous Deeds of the Maharal of Prague*. All programs will be held at the Shimon and Sara Birnbaum JCC in Bridgewater. The fee for each program is \$10/Jewish LIFE Members; \$15/Guest. Please register in advance for all programs by calling the JCC at 908-725-6994 x201. For further information on Jewish LIFE programs, please go to www.ssbjcc.org/jLife.htm

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