



Mark Your Calendar!

- Friday, Feb. 4, 6:30 p.m.
Lay Service
- Friday, Feb. 11, 7:45 p.m.
Shabbat Service
- Sunday, Feb. 13:
9:30 a.m. Men's Club Breakfast
- Saturday, Feb. 19
10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Torah Study
- Sunday, Feb 20:
No Religious School
- Friday, Feb. 25, 7:45 p.m.
Shabbat Service led by our
Sunday School students

Rabbi's Message

How do we explain when bad things happen to good people? When the tsunami first hit, I thought of Rabbi Harold Kushner. When he wrote *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, he carefully titled the book "When" and not "Why." We know that bad things happen. Good people get sick, they suffer, they die, just like bad people. The "when" is clear to us. It's the "why" that is not apparent (unless, as one of my astute Religious School students pointed out, there is a clear cause and effect like smoking and lung cancer – although even then, how do you explain why some people who smoke get lung cancer and others don't?).

After the tsunami, people asked, "Why does God cause these things to happen? Why does God allow these things to happen?" You may have read the position of some religious thinkers who claim that we bring these things upon ourselves due to our inherently sinful natures, but that is not a Jewish belief. The Talmud tells us, "Nature pursues its own course." Rabbi Harold Schulweis explains what this means when he tells us to distinguish between two aspects of God, the side we call Elohim and the side we call Adonai. Elohim is the name we use for the source of nature, the God of Creation; Adonai is the name we use for that aspect of God that is involved in human affairs, the God of Morality. Both are aspects of the one God. At the same time that Elohim teaches us that nature is not within our control, Adonai teaches us that our human response to nature is within our control.

And so the Jewish response to tragedy is not to dwell on "why" but more to focus on "What can we do?" The answer is always the same: Give tzedakah and perform deeds of lovingkindness. This is the answer whether it is how to respond to tsunamis or how to react to someone who has cancer, how to respond to earthquakes or mudslides or hurricanes or how to relate to someone who is suffering. Repentance, prayer and tzedakah do not prevent bad things from happening to good people; they merely give us, as mere mortals, a way of trying to make things better. Sometimes that is all we can do; and sometimes, that is enough.

Rabbi Ellen J. Lewis

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President's Message

When Moses was wandering in the desert for 40 years, at least he didn't have to worry about a snow shovel.

My trip to San Diego last month was absolutely wonderful. I got to meet my Aunt Gloria, whom I had known about four years, and her significant other, Artie, as well as my first cousin Mary. I also learned that my other first cousin's name is Anne and that she lives in Hawaii with her husband John. I find it very satisfying to begin to tie up some loose ends in my family. I hope that over the years that we are able to mend a family rift and be able to share family moments with each other. I have learned that when people are wronged, that they can be hurt, but still move on with their lives. Very little was spoken of the past, and much was spoken of the present and the future, because that is what is left for our family. Dwelling on wrongs of the past do little to make the future any nicer. I was also able to spend some time with just my Mom and Dad, which is something I don't get to do often, as when we are together it is usually with our children and other friends and family. This is a trip I will remember for the rest of my life.

Shalom,
Howie Hirsch

Building update

We have been required by the planning board of the Borough of Washington to notify all residents within 200 feet of the temple of our impending addition, as well as the utilities of the area 10 days before the planning board meeting on February 14th. We are planning on presenting our petition at that meeting.

2nd Night Passover Seder

Join us for a special night as our Temple celebrates a second night Pesach seder together on, Sunday, April 24. For more information and to RSVP, please contact Barbara Meltz at the Temple.

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 Joanne Weiss at the Temple

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.
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

Food Drive

Dear Temple Members,

I am coordinating a Easter/Passover Food Drive for the Open Cupboard Food Pantry in High Bridge. I would greatly appreciate donations of non-perishable food items.

Donation bags will be available in the Temple Foyer.

Thank you

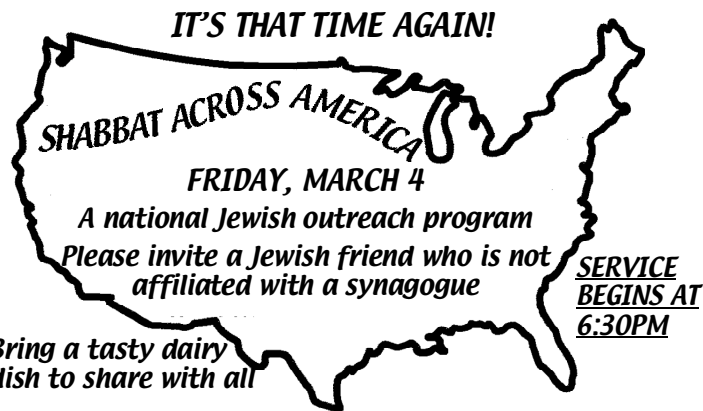
Education Committee and PTO News

The Religious School had an educational and fun time at the Tu B'Shevat Seder last month. The students tasted a variety of foods, some never tried before, and learned all about this special holiday.

On **Sunday, February 20**, there will be no Religious School, due to President's Day.

Don't miss the Lay Service on **February 25 at 7:45pm**. This service will be led by our own Sunday School students.

Confirmation Students - The annual retreat has been rescheduled for Friday, March 11-Sunday, March 13.



**We need someone to coordinate the pot luck dinner.
Please call Howie at 908-850-1030 to volunteer!**

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.

Shoprite/A&P Vouchers

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

February 13, 27 April 10
March 13 May 1, 15

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

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Jewish LIFE

Jewish LIFE presents at the JCC.... **Jewish LIFE**

- Seth Rogovoy, "Rockin' the Shtetl"
- A "Multi-Media Musical Journey." on Sunday, February 6 at 7 p.m. (please note corrected time!)
- Steve Schwager, Executive Director of the Joint Distribution Committee, presents an "Update on the Jewish World" on Sunday, February 27 at 10 a.m.
- Coming in March... Rachel Fish, "Standing Up for Veritas at Harvard: A Student Activist Reflects on the Zayed Campaign," Wednesday, March 2 at 7 p.m.
- Martin Samuel Cohen presents "Politics and Piety in Second Temple Jerusalem" on Sunday, March 6 at 10 a.m.

For fees and to register for Jewish LIFE programs, please contact JCC Assistant Executive Director Laura Friedman at 908-725-6994 x213; LFriedman@ssbjcc.org.

REGIONAL SHABBATON

Don't miss 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.

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.

This event is 8:45 am to 5:15 pm. The cost is \$36 per person. 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

Tsunami Relief The world watched in horror as December's deadly earthquake and tsunami devastated communities throughout Asia and claimed tens of thousands of lives. In response to this tragedy, the Union once again activated its Disaster Relief Fund, located online at www.urj.org/relief. By donating, you can make a difference in the lives of those who now face the daunting task of rebuilding their lives. The relief site will be continually updated with information about how much money has been raised, and which agencies will receive funding from the Union, and the Web page also contains a list of other resources, including information for parents and a prayer for the victims.

Adult Ed, At Its Best! Kallah—a Hebrew word meaning “retreat for the purpose of study”—is your chance to spend five unforgettable days learning among a vibrant community of committed worshippers. Aiyekah? Where Are You? is the theme of the 2005 Summer Kallah to be held July 19-24, 2005 at Franklin Pierce College, in Rindge, NH. Why don't you think about being there for a unique combination of Jewish learning and spiritual renewal. For more information, visit www.urj.org/educate/kallah or contact Joan Glazer Farber, 212.650.4087, educate@urj.org.

Calling All Teens for the Summer Mitzvah Corps Teens who wish to spend their summer doing something to help others will want to learn more about the NFTY Mitzvah Corps. Open to those currently in the ninth, tenth or eleventh grade, this summer teens will be working in the San Francisco Bay Area, Mississippi, New Brunswick, NJ, and Kutz Camp in New York State. Do *tikkun olam* summer in a spiritually nour-

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Located at 150-A West High St., Somerville

JFS is a nonprofit, nondiscriminatory social service agency
working to preserve and strengthen the quality
of individual, family and community life based on Jewish values

ishing Jewish environment. Programs last from one to six weeks; for more information, visit www.nfty.org/mc, or contact Nicole Rand at 415-392-7080 x 15, nrand@urj.org.

Donations

Judy and Wain Schroeder in appreciation of the joyous Chanukah service
Eric Edelstein in memory of Mary Mergi, the mother of Maureen Baeck
Linda Albin and Jim Arvesen in memory of their parents

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 February 18.

JEWISH CENTER OF NORTHWEST JERSEY

Name _____ Email _____

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Phone _____

I/We would like to make a contribution of _____
 In honor of _____
 In memory of _____

Please contact me/us about membership _____

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