



## Mark Your Calendar!

- Sunday, Jan. 29  
Mitzvah Day at UJC - 6th & 7th grade students  
10:00 a.m. How to Raise a Jewish Child Book Discussion
- Sunday, Feb. 5  
9:30 a.m. 2006-7 B'nai Mitzvah family brunch  
11:15 a.m. Pirke Avot NOTE TIME CHANGE
- Monday, Feb. 6, 7:30 p.m.  
Board Meeting
- Friday, Feb. 10, 7:45 p.m.  
Shabbat Service & Hebrew Naming Ceremony (Cantor) -
- Saturday, Feb. 11, 10:30 a.m.  
Torah Study
- Sunday, Feb. 12  
9:30 a.m. Men's Club meeting  
10:30 a.m. Sunday School Family Assembly  
11:00 a.m. Tu B'Shevat Seder
- Sunday, Feb. 19  
No Sunday School  
President's Day
- Friday, Feb. 24, 7:00 p.m.  
Sunday School Lay led Shabbat Service

## Rabbi's Message

Every day, I scour the newspapers for word of Ariel Sharon's condition. Nothing has changed, they say. And yet everything has changed. Israel again finds herself in a precarious political situation. Sharon's new party Kadima still seems to be popular as an alternative to Labor and Likud but all remains to be seen until after the elections are held.

It often seems to us in the Diaspora that Israelis must spend all their time worrying about Hamatzav, the political situation. The truth is that Israelis may worry but they also get up in the morning and go to work, just like we do. They still work to make Israel the kind of country they want to live in. They go to concerts and malls. They read books. They watch television. Many also are looking to find a satisfying spiritual life outside the bounds of traditional Judaism.

Reform and Conservative rabbis in Israel have found enormous spiritual interest among Israelis who don't like the traditional choice of "secular" versus "religious." Because the Orthodox administer the officially sanctioned government religion, however, the state funds that are distributed to the Orthodox are often not shared with the liberal denominations.

Unlike the powerlessness we often experience when it comes to helping Israel, this time there is something we can do. Go to [www.VoteReformJudaism.com](http://www.VoteReformJudaism.com) on the web and vote in the World Zionist Organization elections. It will cost you \$7 to register and vote for ARZA, the Reform Zionist organization. Your vote will allow for greater Israeli funding of liberal Judaism in Israel.

On February 12, we will celebrate the Israeli holiday of the trees, Tu Bishvat. We will encourage our students in the school to buy trees from the Jewish National Fund. We will celebrate by having a Tu Bishvat Seder where we taste the different fruits of the land of Israel. This builds a wonderful connection with Israel but it doesn't make Israel a better place for liberal Jews. For Israel's sake, vote in the WZO election and come join us for Tu Bishvat.

Rabbi Ellen Lewis

## President's Message

I am again writing in my message about Darfur. As I read yesterday, the good news is that the government of Sudan has stopped burning villages in Darfur. The bad news is that there aren't many villages left. In a recent issue of *Parade* magazine, the leader of the Sudanese government was called the worst leader in the world. I am asking one thing of you in my message this month—please join me in Washington D.C. on April 30 and make our voice heard to the world that this genocide must end and that we must do everything in our power to stop it. As Jews, we understand the danger of silence from the international community. For the sake of the people of Darfur, help me to ensure a major turnout from the American Jewish community in Washington on April 30. I also urge you to send a postcard, either through the mail or electronically, to be counted in the million voices campaign to end genocide. Go to [www.millionvoicesfordarfur.org](http://www.millionvoicesfordarfur.org) and send an electronic postcard.

Howie

**Please join me at the Million Voices for Darfur Rally in Washington D.C. on April 30, 2006. If we can get enough people from the congregation, we can charter a bus or a van and ride down together. Contact Howie by February 28 so I can make arrangements.**

**IM THE PRESIDENT!**  
To contact Howie quickly  
or simply to say hello,  
IM me at:  
[howardhirschusa on AIM](mailto:howardhirschusa on AIM)

## ***From the Cantor's Desk: The Father of Yiddish Theater***

It's hard to believe I've been your Student Cantor for almost a year and a half now; the time has gone so quickly. I've enjoyed very much serving you all, and am very much looking forward to continuing to do so for the next few months.

As many of you know, I am in my 5th (and final) year at Hebrew Union College, and on my way to official investiture as Cantor. One of the requirements for my graduation is a Master's thesis. My subject, in a nutshell, is Yiddish Theater and Radio. I'd like to share some of my research with you all, starting with a little on the history of Yiddish Theater.

Until the mid-1800s, theater was not a typically "Jewish" medium; in fact, Jewish authorities frowned upon it as immoral, except during Purim, in which troupes of performers would perform *purimspieln*, Purim plays based on Megillat Esther, at private homes for brandy and pastry. Other early influences on Yiddish theater were the tradition of the *badchen*, or wedding jester, and the *Broder singer*, Jewish troubadours who sang narrative poems, sometimes in the persona of different characters.

The person most often credited with bringing together all of these elements to originate modern Yiddish theater is Avrom Goldfadn (1840-1908). Goldfadn was born in Volhynia, Ukraine, which was at the time under the auspices of Imperial Russia. As a child, he loved to recite poems and sing songs. His father, a watchmaker, arranged to send Avrum to a government school to avoid his getting drafted into the Imperial Army (a common fate among Jewish youth of the time). This enabled him to further his education at a rabbinical/teaching seminary in Zhitomir, Ukraine, where he was exposed to Jewish teachers, writers, and composers heavily influenced by the *haskalah* (the Jewish enlightenment). It was there that he began to write Jewish stories, poems, songs, and plays, and to perform in productions. Years later, in Iasi, Romania, Goldfadn dreamed up the formula for modern Yiddish theater; i.e., combining spoken word, and a plot, with song. The idea was immediately successful. His early works gave birth to characters who are still part of Ashkenazic Jewish culture, characters such as "Shmendrik" and "Kuni-Lemel." Once he drew the crowds in with broad caricature and comic themes, he used the medium's popularity as an opportunity to teach Jewish history and tradition. It is from his play *Shulamis* (1881) that we inherited one of the most popular Yiddish songs ever, "Rozhinkes Mit Mand'len (Raisins with Almonds)."

Many actors and playwrights owe the start of their careers in Yiddish theater to Goldfadn. However, by the time Goldfadn arrived in America to try his luck there, Yiddish Theater was a booming, competitive business dominated by his successors. He was still widely respected in America as the "Father of Yiddish Theater."

## ***How to Raise a (Jewish) Child Rescheduled for Sunday, January 29***

ORabbi 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.

### ***Hebrew Naming Shabbat***

Please join us for a Hebrew Naming Shabbat service on **Feb. 10, at 7:45 pm**. This is an extraordinary and moving service when people of different ages are choosing a Hebrew name for the first time.

### ***Summer Camp Scholarships***

The Jewish Center has three camp scholarships worth \$1000 each for families to use to attend a Jewish summer camp. In addition, we have three discounted spots for children at the NJ "Y" Camps in Milford, PA, for the 4-week period, July 24 - August 17. The camp will sponsor a child for \$1,000 and the Temple will match the \$1,000. That's a \$2000 savings! The form is available for download from our website, [www.jcnwj.org](http://www.jcnwj.org), under the forms section. Applications must be in by the end of February. Any questions, please speak to Howie. Scholarships from the temple are available one per family - one time only.

### ***Adult Programs***

*Torah Study*: Meeting dates (check with Sharon Herson [sharonherson@comcast.net] if you are coming for the first time or if you missed the last meeting): Saturday mornings — 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. **The Feb. 5 class will meet at 11:15 a.m.** Upcoming dates: March 19, April 30 - all at 10:45 a.m. Let Rabbi Lewis know if you plan to attend.

### ***To Our 2006-2007 B'nai Mitzvah Families***

The Jewish Center will hold a brunch for you, including all your children, on February 5, now at 9:30 a.m. At this time Rabbi Lewis will address issues and concerns you may have regarding your child's upcoming simcha. We should be finished by 2 pm.

Helen Mattson and Ritual Committee

## 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

It's been a bit of a bumpy winter, but our students and teachers persevere. Due to the cancelled January 15 date, the Family Assembly has been rescheduled for **Sunday, Feb. 12, at 10:30 a.m.**, right before the Tu B'Shevat seder. Please plan on joining us for both wonderful events.

**Sunday, January 29** is Mitzvah Day at United Jewish Communities at MetroWest NJ. Our 6th & 7th grade students are planning on attending. Note: Rabbi's & Robin Hall's class will still be taking place that day for the students that attended Mitzvah day last year.

We will be holding a lay Shabbat service on **Friday, Feb. 24, at 7:00 p.m** This service is being led by our own Sunday School students - you won't want to miss it!

## Support the Jewish Center with Scrip

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

## 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

**OHRTIKVAH JEWISH HEALING CENTER** (All programs take place at the JCC, 775 Talamini Road, Bridgewater):

• **Creating a Joyful Sound: Kabbalah Kirtan**, Sunday, March 5, 4:00 p.m. In celebration of Jewish Arts Month, Ohr Tikvah Jewish Healing Center and the JCC will present a special musical program of Kabbalah Kirtan that blends call-and-response chanting of Hebrew text with joyous live music featuring the beautiful voice of Susan Deikman and harmonium and drums. Donation: \$10. Call 908-725-6994 in advance to let us know you are coming. Tickets available at the door.

• **Visiting the Sick: Making It Easy and Meaningful** Sunday, February 12, 10:00 to 11:30 AM, Donations welcomed. Are you reluctant to visit the sick because you are unsure about when to visit and what to say? Rabbi William Horn, Rabbi Emeritus of the Jewish Community Center of Summit, will offer tips for making your visits easy, enjoyable and meaningful. Hear Rabbi Horn's engaging humor and heart-warming stories from his 43 years experience as chaplain and rabbi. Bikur cholim (visiting the sick) is a mitzvah; it is an opportunity to express both responsibility and loving-kindness.

• **African Drumming Just for the Fun of It**, Sunday, Feb. 26, 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. Fee: \$5. Have you ever played an African drum or created music with a rain stick? It's a great way to release stress and tension and have fun. Join us as percussionist David Malchman shows us how to create joyful music together as a community. You don't have to be musical to participate! Men, women and teens are welcome.

*Ohr Tikvah Jewish Healing Center is an agency of the Jewish Federation of Somerset, Hunterdon and Warren Counties. Call Ohr Tikvah at 908-725-6994 for more information or to register for programs. www.ohrtikvahjhc.org*

Regional Choir Festival  
MARCH 19, 2006, 3:00 PM

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Shiru Shir Chadash:  
Let Us Sing A New Song

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I/We would like to make a contribution of \_\_\_\_\_

In honor of \_\_\_\_\_

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

## SAVE THE DATE FOR JEWISH LIFE NIGHT OF LEARNING

Save Saturday, March 4, for 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. More details to come!



## LEGACY HERITAGE INTERNSHIPS FOR YOUNG SCIENTISTS

Are you looking for a summer science research internship? Introducing the Legacy Heritage Internship for Young Scientists:

- For the highest caliber, most promising High School juniors and seniors
- For career discovery in science through intensive, hands-on scientific research
- For immersion into the culture, texture and achievements of Israeli society
- For greater connection to the Jewish heritage and deeper knowledge of the Jewish world

Deadline for application: Feb. 15, 2006. Visit [www.legacyheritage.org](http://www.legacyheritage.org) for more information.

### *From Your Newsletter Editor*

The deadline for the next newsletter will be the 18th of the month.