



## Mark Your Calendar!

- Sunday, February 4  
Sunday School TuBishvat Seder
- Friday, February 9, 7:45 p.m.  
Shabbat Service
- Sunday, February 11  
10:00 am Membership  
Committee Mtg.  
10:45 a.m. Adult Ed. Pirke Avot
- Tuesday February 13, 7 p.m.  
Women of Reform Judaism (aka  
Sisterhood) / Mah Jongg
- Saturday February 17, 10:30 a.m.  
Torah Study
- Sunday, February 18  
No Sunday School
- Friday, February 23, 7:00 p.m.  
Student-Led Shabbat Service
- Sunday, February 25, 11:30 a.m.  
*This is My Story* (followed by  
lunch)
- Sunday March 4  
10:30 a.m. Purim megillah  
reading, sing-along, costume  
contest  
Noon Purim Carnival  
Auditions for Talent Show
- Thursday, March 8, afternoon  
Auditions for Talent Show
- Friday March 16, 7:45 p.m.  
Shabbaton: Healing Service
- Saturday March 17,  
9:30 a.m.–2 p.m. Shabbaton:  
Torah study sessions, service,  
lunch

## Rabbi's Message

What would you do? You couldn't help but ask yourself that question when you heard about the man who jumped onto the New York City subway tracks to rescue someone who had fallen. His action was heroic and unselfish. He risked his life for a stranger. We wondered: Did he think about it first? Was it reflexive? Did it result from his military training? Is he more morally evolved than the rest of us?

We have always wondered about what motivates altruistic people. Studies have been done on people who rescued Jews in Nazi Europe. Samuel and Pearl Oliner wrote a book almost twenty years ago that disproved what was then the current thinking about "the fully developed moral decision-maker." At the time, the belief was that the "the fully developed moral decision-maker is the unencumbered self who transcends communal conventions in order to determine the values and principles by which he will act" (Theodor Adorno and Lawrence Kohlberg, summarized by Richard Neuhaus, National Review). The Oliners interviewed seven hundred rescuers in depth. They wanted to find out what distinguished the rescuers from the non-rescuers.

Despite all the previous theories about relevant factors, the Oliners came to one essential conclusion: "What most distinguished the rescuers is that they lived in embedded relationships." The family represented the most important embedded relationship; those families had a deep religious commitment to the welfare of others. Those families lived in communities of similar values who taught the moral thing to do. A Dutch rescuer named Kirk is quoted as saying, "It's not because I have an altr

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## President's Message

I hope that you are all as excited as I am with the events that are being planned this winter and spring to celebrate our 60th anniversary of being a congregation with a building. There are many things going on and I hope that each of you can attend as many of these events as possible. Remember that community can not exist without u and I.

On Sunday February 25th at 11:30, a member will be reading from her auto biography and signing copies of the book. All proceeds from the sale of the book will be donated to the center by her. Come hear a fascinating speaker, our own Charlotte.

Remember to sign up for the talent show. Last year was so much fun. Even if the prize I won was the "Henny Youngman and Jackie Mason don't have a thing to worry about" award, I am going to try again. Purim is coming up on March 4th as well as a second night Seder on April 3rd. Keep your eyes and ears open, and we will keep you abreast of everything that is going on.

If this sounds like my announcements from the Bimah, it is, but I really wanted to emphasize how important I feel community is and that we each draw on each other for strength. The way to build community is to be a part of it. If you don't feel that you need a boost on a given day, then you need to be the one that can help support someone else. And when you are the person who needs that support, it sure does feel good to know that there are people at the Jewish Center that truly do care about you and want to help you.

Shalom for now,  
Howie

### ***Rabbi's Message, cont.***

istic personality, it's because I am an obedient Christian. The Lord wanted us to rescue those people and we did it."

"Virtuous behavior is learned in communities of virtue," writes Neuhaus. It seems so simple. Yet that might be the most important goal of our community at the Jewish Center. Anyone who attended the January planning meeting saw a community of virtue in action. Making a sustained commitment to our Temple can only be good for everyone.

I don't imagine too many of you will be confronted by having to choose whether to jump onto the subway tracks. I pray that none of you will find yourselves in the position of the rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe. But if you find yourself in any situation where help is needed, I hope you remember the value of community for which the JCNWJ stands and has stood for sixty years.

Rabbi Ellen Lewis

### ***The Meaning of Tu BiSh'vat***

Tu BiSh'vat this year falls on February 3rd (according to our secular solar calendar), the 15th (*tu* in Hebrew) day of the month of Sh'vat on the Jewish lunar calendar. While we are still experiencing winter, in Israel the air is already filled with the promise of spring. The following famous short narrative (told by Rabbi Lewis from the bima in years past) comes from the Talmud and captures the meaning of the holiday:

*Honi the Circle Maker once encountered a man planting a carob tree. "How long will it take to bear fruit?" Honi asked. "About seventy years," the man replied. "So you think you will live long enough to taste its fruits?" asked Honi. The man explained, "I have found already grown carob trees in the world. As my forefathers planted them for me, so I plant them for my children" (B. Taanit 23a).*

Planting trees has long been a Tu BiSh'vat tradition. In both Israel and in the Diaspora, Jews plant trees in honor or in memory of a loved one or friend. The war in Israel last summer caused great damage to foliage, creating massive agricultural and topographic problems. Therefore, helping to renew the environment by planting trees in Israel becomes a very special mitzvah this year. You can do this from home by contacting the Jewish National Fund [<http://www.jnf.org/trees> or (800) 542-TREE (*The preceding was adapted by S. Herson from an Adult Education Update from the URJ Lifelong Jewish Learning Center.*)

### ***Report on the Congregational Meeting Held January 7, 2007***

*This first paragraph is intended for those of you who were unable to be present.* Enthusiasm was palpable, food was delicious, ideas were constructive. People stayed the full three and half hours! Please respond to the e-mail or regular mail packet that you will have received by the time you are reading this note.

*The remaining paragraphs are for everyone.* Follow-up work is ongoing. Committee chairpersons now have the names of all who signed up to help with various activities, and they may have already gotten in touch with you about details. Esther and Gwen are now dividing the tasks of overseeing the Membership Committee, with responsibilities for attracting new members (Gwen) and planning activities for current members (Esther), including cooking classes, book club, and community Seder. Marsha (Education Committee chair) shares leadership responsibilities for the operation of the Sunday School with Karen , Rochelle (PTO co-chair), and Susan (PTO co-chair). Helen and Jeff continue until June—and perhaps beyond—in their positions as head of Religious Practices (aka Ritual) and House, respectively.

Programs that are being scheduled in the wake of the January 7 meeting: reading by Charlotte from her memoir (followed by lunch); Shabbaton March 16–17; community seder April 3; 60th anniversary celebration. See next paragraph and the separate announcements in this newsletter about these upcoming events.

**The celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the JCNWJ** was discussed at the end of the meeting. The group consensus was to go ahead with an elaborate picnic at the home of Mike and Diane on June 10. There will be music and folk and/or square dancing. A committee consisting of Jeannie , Sharon , Iris , Suzanne , Risa , and Mike will plan the details. Jeannie and Sharon will co-chair the event. There will be a charge for attendance, the amount TBA. Details will follow in subsequent newsletters and will be posted on the website.

**Anything that is happening should be posted on the website. Send your reports, stories, etc. to Paul , our new webmaster**

### ***Adult Ed. Pirke Avot.***

#### ***Sunday, Feb. 11, 10:45 a.m.***

The last class included a lively discussion about free will, the scientific evidence for its non-existence, and different takes on why it must exist in order to give life meaning. This collection of very short texts, *The Sayings of the Elders*, provides an endless source of both wisdom and controversy. Join in the text-based discussion that bears on everyday life and decision-making in the modern world. Take full advantage of our gifted teacher, Rabbi Ellen J. Lewis, who guides us in understanding these rabbinic aphorisms and helps us decide how/if they apply to our own lives. The course, for adult members of the congregation, requires simply a desire to study and participate in lively discussion. No homework is required, though if you are willing to read a little outside of class, you will receive benefits without measure. Rabbi Lewis meets with interested students on Sunday mornings once a month, from 10:45 to noon. Winter and spring dates 2007: Feb. 11, March 18, May 6. If you are new to the class, let Rabbi Lewis know you plan to attend.

## **WRJ (aka Sisterhood) / Mah Jongg**

**Tues., Feb. 13, 7 p.m.**

A number of women in the congregation have expressed a desire to revive the women's organization known as Sisterhood. The URJ's national Sisterhood is now called Women of Reform Judaism. Whichever name we adopt, interested women will meet at the Center with the aim of re-establishing this important aspect of our Jewish community life. A short business meeting will be followed by dessert and expert teaching of Mah Jongg by Cheryl and Laura. If you already know how to play this fascinating game, you can play / munch / kibbitz. Come for fun! **RSVP by Feb. 10 to the Temple** (Cheryl and Laura need to know how many Mah Jongg sets to bring).

## **Torah Study, Saturday, Feb. 17, 10:30 a.m.**

Cross the Red Sea with us on Shabbat morning, as the Torah study group assembles monthly to wrestle, as Jacob did, with the meaning of Torah. Newcomers are welcome; the only requirement is participation (no homework). The text of Exodus continues to be the topic for discussion during 2007. Monthly meeting dates in winter and spring 2007 are Saturday mornings, 10:30 to 12:30 or so: February 17, March 24, April 14, May 12, June 9 (this is a change from previously scheduled June 16), July and August TBA. (Check with Sharon Herson if you are coming for the first time or if you missed the last meeting.)

## **This is My Story by Charlotte Fels**

**Sunday, Feb. 25, 11:30 a.m.**

**(followed by book signing and lunch)**

We are in for a treat, to be delivered by the oldest (chronologically, 88) active member of our synagogue. Born in NYC in the early part of the last century, Charlotte remembers everything she has ever learned or done. She will read from her just-published memoir, which she "talked" and which was then edited and compiled, with photographs, by her niece Tammy Mitchell, a professional writer/editor. Charlotte's fascinating 300-page book will be for sale, and all proceeds will go directly to the JCNWJ. The Sunday School children will be part of the audience, but this is not just a children's event. Help make this a congregational event, the kind of event we talked about

at the congregational meeting in early January. There will be plenty of time to schmooze over lunch with author and editor. RSVP (that means, we need to know if you are coming so we have enough food) by Feb. 20 to the Temple

## **Sunday, March 4, 10:30 a.m. Purim service, sing-along, and costume contest, followed by Carnival**

In addition to the traditional *megillah* reading, during which we get to cheer and boo Esther and Haman respectively, the Purim service this year will include a sing-along—the Queen Esther story to the music of *Guys and Dolls* (and Esther was a doll, according to the text [Esther 2:7]). No rehearsal needed, just come *in costume* and participate in the re-telling/singing of the story. Prizes for best costumes—youth, mature, and older categories. CARNIVAL (with food) to follow (around noon).

## **Shabbaton, Fri. March 16, 7:45 p.m. and Sat. March 17, 9:30 a.m.**

We will welcome Shabbat with a special Friday night HEALING SERVICE. Saturday morning begins with study sessions (9:30) led by Rabbi Lewis and student cantor Marcy Kadin: Giving from the Heart: Constructing a Community (Va-Yakhel-Pekudei; Ex. 35:1–40:38 and 12:1–20). Shabbat morning service will begin at 11:00, and the liturgy will be in Mishkan T'filah, the new Reform prayer book. Shabbat lunch and zemirot will close this wonderful day. RSVP by March 1 for Saturday to the Temple (again, we need to know how much food to prepare).

## **Community Seder, Tuesday, April 3, starting time 6 p.m.**

For the past several years, we have held a community seder on the second night of Passover. The fabulous Passover food, *kosher*, for this celebration of freedom is provided by those who come. This year's seder will be led by a member of the congregation. You may bring guests if you have house guests for Pesach. Helping Esther Bakonyi to coordinate this event are Suzanne Moyer and Sharon Herson. One of the coordinators will contact you about what to bring (after mid-March). Some of you will also be asked to volunteer for set-up

### **JEWISH CENTER OF NORTHWEST JERSEY**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

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

In memory of \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Please contact me/us about membership \_\_\_\_\_

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

or for clean-up. *Seating is limited to 50, on a first-come basis.*  
**Sign up by March 1:** RSVP to Esther Bakonyi at the Temple.

### ***Learn Hebrew***

If you are an adult who is interested in learning to read basic Hebrew, please call the Temple. We will try to set up a new class which will meet at the time most convenient for the greatest number of potential participants. This might have to wait until the fall, depending. . . .

### ***Membership Committee Meeting***

Let's begin our plans discussed at the Congregational meeting! February 11th at 10:00. No social events will be discussed. Coffee and bagels will be served!

### ***Education Committee and PTO News***

February 4th – TuBishvat Seder

February 18th – No School (President's Day)

February 23rd, 7:00 p.m. - student-led Shabbat services

### ***From Your Editor***

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

# ***Be a Star at the Jewish Center Talent Show***

***Saturday, March 24, 7 PM  
(new date)***

***Sign up for  
Music, dance, songs, jokes, poetry  
or dramatic readings***

***Auditions will take place at the Center on  
Sunday, March 4 after Sunday school and the  
afternoon of Thursday, March 8***

***English, Hebrew, Yiddish accepted***

***RSVP to Mrs. Mattson  
with your name and talent***

***Refreshments will be served***