



## Mark Your Calendar!

- 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
- Saturday, March 10, 10:30 a.m. Torah study (see inside)
- Sunday March 11  
10:30 a.m. Confirmation
- Friday March 16, 7:45 p.m. Shabbaton in honor of our 60th: Healing Service (see inside)
- Saturday March 17, 9:30 a.m.–2 p.m. Shabbaton in honor of our 60th: Torah study, service, lunch (RSVP by March 9, see inside)
- Sunday, March 18  
9:30 a.m. PTO meeting  
10:45 a.m. Adult Ed. Pirke Avot
- Friday, March 30, 7:45 p.m. Shabbat Service
- Sunday April 1  
Sunday School Model Seder
- Tues. April 3, 6 p.m. Community Seder (RSVP by March 9, see inside)
- June 10 JCNWJ 60th anniversary celebration, a family event (save the date)

## Rabbi's Message

I find myself continuing to think about the meaning of the Center's 60th anniversary. I invite you to think along with me. Each holiday seems to inspire in me another way of considering that meaning. Every Purim, for instance, we begin with a song entitled "You Can Change the World" (words and music by Cantor Jeff Klepper and Rabbi Don Rossoff). It's a cute song about a serious dilemma; i.e., whether Esther should risk her life and approach King Ahasuerus in an attempt to save her people. Esther realized she was the only hope for the Jewish people. The chorus goes like this: "You can change the world, you can make the world complete. Take the pride you feel inside and never accept defeat." In the end, we know how Esther chose.

Although the song's words are inspiring, they are also intimidating. Can you even imagine the idea of becoming a modern-day Atlas, carrying the burden of the world on your shoulders? When you think about how much change the world needs, how can you fail to feel overwhelmed before you even begin? Esther models for us the only possible way of approaching the task: think big, but start small. As Rabbi Harold Kushner writes: "No matter how much we would like to, we can't bring the Messiah and solve the world's problems. Nor can we bring the Messiah for ourselves and solve our own problems. But maybe we can bring the Messiah for someone else."

Even trying to bring the Messiah for someone else seems pretty daunting, but it offers us a way in. That is what our founders did in establishing this congregation. They acted out of self-interest, of course, but they were also thinking into the future. They thought big and started small. We are the beneficiaries of their foresight. A few of them even left significant money in their wills to perpetuate the Temple and Jewish education, and we have relied on

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## President's Message

### THE DEATH OF A CONGREGATION

What was here before you were? What was here when you needed it to educate your children? What was here when you needed a place to say Kaddish for your loved ones? What was here when you needed a place to attend a High Holiday service? What was here when you simply needed a friend, or someone to be with you during a time of trouble?

The answer is our temple, the Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey.

I am quite concerned for the future of our temple.

I am seeing a trend where people, after the children have been confirmed, feel that they do not need the temple anymore. They do not come to the bi-weekly Shabbat services and they become twice-a-year Jews. They still belong to the temple, but do not participate anymore. After that happens for a while, then they give up their membership.

This behavior will lead to the death of the synagogue, unless many new young families move in and take over running the temple while their children are here.

I believe we have a responsibility as Jews to make sure that the temple is a vital and functioning organization. We need to do it, simply because someone did it for us. The founders of our temple, 60 years ago, made sacrifices so that there would be this shining example of Judaism. I have heard from people a reason why they do not continue their membership in the temple: "We do not come any more." I offer two suggestions: first, come and be part of the congregation. If there are things that you would like to see happen, then help

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

that legacy. They were bringing the Messiah for us.

And so it is our job to bring the Messiah for the future. Esther realized she was the only hope. Our situation at this Center is not nearly as dire. Yet the question remains: if every member relies on someone else to do the job, how does the work get done? How will that ensure the Center's survival? What might you do differently if, instead of relying on someone else to do the job, you thought of yourself as the Center's only hope?

There are many commitments begging for your time. Each of you has to answer that question for yourself: what might I do differently if I see myself as the Center's only hope? I have never forgotten the words of one of our members, Don Meltz, who once told the story of his childhood congregation in Rahway. He said that because they didn't plan for the future, they had to close, and it caused him great pain. He didn't ever want to see us in the same position.

You may have heard this story from Jewish folklore about choices and consequences. I quote parts of it from a book called *Sidrah Stories* by Steven Rosman:

Rabbi Baki was the wisest teacher in all Lithuania. There was no question he could not answer. There was no subject about which he could not teach. Students came from far and wide to sit at his feet and listen to him teach about the early rabbis called the Tannaim and the Amoraim or about the great sage of the Middle Ages Moses Maimonides. All Rabbi Baki's students adored him. All, that is, except one. His name was Tipesh. When he had first heard of Baki's reputation, Tipesh left his village and traveled to the town where Rabbi Baki lived. He planned to enter the rabbi's class to ask him a question the rabbi could not possibly answer. Tipesh, of course, would know the answer, and thus he would become famous as a wiser person than Rabbi Baki.

Tipesh asked Rabbi Baki a number of questions, but each time, the Rabbi was able to answer them. For two days, Tipesh stayed away from class, straining to invent a question without an answer. Then, finally, he came upon a solution. With two hands hidden behind his back, he approached the rabbi. "Rabbi, I am holding a dove in my hands. Can you tell me if it is alive or dead?" Tipesh had devised a wicked scheme. If Rabbi Baki replied that the bird was dead, Tipesh would simply open his hands to show everyone a live dove. If the rabbi said the bird was alive, then Tipesh would close his hands around the dove and smother it, showing everyone a dead bird. "There is no way the rabbi could solve this puzzle," thought Tipesh.

Baki closed his eyes and stroked his long beard. Although only a few moments passed, it seemed like forever before he opened his eyes and spoke. "Tipesh, you have presented us with a very difficult puzzle indeed. In your hands, you are holding a life. Choose well what you will do with it. The answer to this puzzle lies in your hands."

Think big, start small. It is your choice whether to bring the Messiah for someone else. The answer to this puzzle lies in your hands.

Rabbi Ellen Lewis

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

us make them happen. Second, remain members for the greater good of Judaism. We are always stronger when we are united. When we are separated, we are weaker. If you know someone who has left the temple because it does not help them in the present, but has helped them in the past, remind them of their obligation to continue the Jewish tradition. It was passed from their ancestors, but it also needs to be passed on through the community. In Warren County and the immediate environs, we can feel very alone out here, and we need and depend on every one of us to make this congregation work.

Please work to keep this community alive and vibrant.

Shalom for now,

Howie

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

#### ***Sunday, March 18, 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: March 18, May 6. If you are new to the class, let Rabbi Lewis know you plan to attend.

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

Read and discuss the Song of Moses and the Song of Miriam (Exodus 15), begun at the February session and to be continued in March. Upcoming dates: April 14, May 12, June 9 (this is a change from previously scheduled June 16), July and August TBA. Check with Sharon if you are coming for the first time or if you missed the last meeting.

#### ***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).

### **News from the Ritual Committee**

Reminder to parents: please encourage your children to participate in the Talent Show, scheduled for March 24 at 7 pm. Auditions will be held during the Purim carnival and on Thursday, March 8 in the afternoon. Please call Helen to let her know when your child will audition. Children should come with their music or anything they need to have to perform.

We will hold a brunch on March 18 at noon for parents and students who will become bar/bat mitzvah in 2008. Letters will be send home to confirm.

Second Seder will be held at the Jewish Center on April 3rd. Contact Esther if you are planning to attend and what you plan to bring to share for the seder meal.

Thank you to all who participated in the Sunday School Lay Led Shabbat Service last month. Having the students lead the service is an inspiring evening and a special treat.

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

**Our Shabbaton** (what is a shabbaton? a program of education, worship, and celebration that is held on Shabbat) is part of the JCNJW community's celebration of our sixtieth year as a congregation (the party is on June 10). **We will start on Friday evening, March 16, at 7:45 p.m. with a healing service** (see insert: *What is a healing service?*), **followed by an Oneg Shabbat. The Shabbaton continues Saturday morning and into early afternoon on March 17. At 9:30 a.m.**, Rabbi Lewis and student cantor Marcy Kadin will lead a study session focusing on the Torah portion of the day (*Va-Yakhel-Pekudei*; Ex. 35:1–40:38 and 12:1–20), Giving from the Heart: Constructing a Community. At 11:00 a.m., Shabbat morning service will begin, the liturgy for which will be in *Mishkan T'filah*, the new Reform prayer book, which we are borrowing from the URJ for the occasion. Sometime after noon (12:30 or so), Shabbat lunch and zemiroth (songs) will conclude this celebratory day. **RSVP by March 9 for Saturday to Ginger** (we need to know how much food to prepare).

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

*Seating is limited for the community seder, so sign up by March 9 by contacting Esther at the Temple.*

For the past several years, we have held a community seder on the second night of Passover. This is a chance to commemorate the Exodus with your temple family, and celebrate with song, prayer, and traditional (and maybe not-so-traditional) food. This year's seder will be led by a member of the congregation. You may bring guests if you have house guests for Pesach. One of the coordinators (Esther Bakonyi, Suzanne Moyer, or Sharon Herson) will contact you about what to bring (after mid-March)—and please remember, everything **MUST BE KOSHER**. Please also volunteer for set-up or for clean-up.

### **Thank You!**

Thank you, Charlotte Fels, for sharing your story with all of the Center family who joined you for your book reading and luncheon. It was indeed an inspiration to all who attended to hear what it was like for you growing up Jewish over eighty years ago in New York.

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

#### **New on the Shelf at JCNWJ!**

For the first part of this school year, Mrs. Hall's Sunday School class had been reading and discussing a book about the Holocaust. The book is called *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* by John Boyne. The book is a touching story of a young German boy named Bruno whose father was a Commandant in 1943. The family has to move to "Out-With" because the father was stationed there by Hitler. While exploring the area around his new house at "Out-With," Bruno comes across a boy his age on the other side of the fence named Shmuel. The two become best friends, and after a year, the naive young boy has

*When you are asked to RSVP by a certain date, this means: please contact the person who is collecting such responses if you are coming. If you do not do this, events will be canceled. This is what happened with the Sisterhood meeting that was scheduled in February. If no RSVP is requested, then the event will take place (weather permitting) no matter how many (or few) are present.*

to move back to Berlin. Before moving back, he decides to take a final adventure with Shmuel. We cannot tell you what happens next, but we promise you will be captivated by the ending and very surprised. This is a very good book, though may not be appropriate for people who don't know about the Holocaust. This book has been donated by Mrs. Hall to the synagogue library so why not "check it out" today!

### ***An All Member Project!***

Be sure to send any digital photos of events at the center to Dan Hirshberg for publicity. Include: names of those in the photo, from left to right, towns in which they live, date and occasion. Remember, photos showing a little "Jewishness" in the background with close ups of smiling faces work the best!

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

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

# ***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***

***Refreshments will be served***

**JEWISH CENTER OF NORTHWEST JERSEY**

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

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

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