



Mark Your Calendar!

- Sunday, March 2
9:30am Sunday School
9:30am Men's Club Breakfast
10:45am Pirke Avot class
- Monday, March 3, 7:30pm
Board Meeting
- Friday, March 7
Shabbat Across America
6:00pm service
7:00pm dinner
- Saturday, March 8, 10:30am
Torah Study
- Sunday, March 9
9:30am Sunday School (K/1),
Music with Cantor Kadin
9:30am PTO Meeting
10:30am Confirmation
- Sunday, March 16
9:30am Sunday School (K/1),
11:00 Megillah Reading
12:15 Purim Carnival
Talent Show auditions
- Wednesday, March 19
7:30 p.m. Book Club
- Saturday, March 22, 10:30am
Torah Study
- Sunday, March 23
9:30am Sunday School
- Monday, March 24, 7:30pm
Board Meeting
- Friday, March 28, 7:45pm
Shabbat Service
Oneg: Marinich, Iacono, Hirsch families
- Saturday, March 29, 7:00pm
Talent Show
- Sunday, March 30
9:30am Sunday School (K/1),
Music with Cantor Kadin

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

Rabbi's Message

One of my favorite trick questions to ask my 6th and 7th graders is, "What happened in 1492?" Someone always responds in rhyme, "Columbus sailed the ocean blue." Then I ask them what else happened of historical significance in 1492. The answer I am looking for is one they don't know but is important for them to learn. In 1492, Ferdinand and Isabella expelled all Jews from Spain. Hundreds of thousands of Jews dispersed, some to Portugal where they would be expelled a few years later, some to Italy, Turkey, France, North Africa – wherever they could find a place to go. The reason for the expulsion was nominally because they were Jews and not Catholics but actually because Ferdinand and Isabella wanted to confiscate all the Jewish financial assets. Don Yitzhak Abravanel pleaded the cause of his fellow Jews with Ferdinand and Isabella, offering a sizable financial incentive, but the offer was rejected by Torquemada, himself of Jewish ancestry.

Never did I imagine that one day, I would stand in the Alhambra in Granada, in the very place where Ferdinand and Isabella issued that fateful decree (and where they also met with Columbus to plan his venture to the New World). Last week, as I stood within the walls of the palace trying to imagine the scene, I could feel the desperation of Abravanel (I once lived on Rehov Abravanel in Jerusalem) and those Jewish families whose fate hinged on the cruelty of Torquemada. I tried to imagine the immensity of that trauma. The Jewish experience in Spain had been different from the Jewish experience in Eastern Europe. Jews had been in Spain since the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. Jews had experienced a true Golden Age in Spain, an age in which Jewish poets, philosophers, writers, doctors, states people and thinkers had flourished in every level of society. In the

continued on next page

President's Message

My position as President of our congregation is becoming exciting. Like most of the previous significant positions I have held, it is starting to become one that cannot be completed within the time I can devote. This was true when I taught at Purdue, worked in clinical and market research at Pfizer Pharmaceuticals and ran my own consulting company. In each of these previous positions, the "lightbulb" went on at some point, and I was able to move forward with some success. I know that will happen soon while serving our Congregation, and I know I have the support of the Board and members to make things happen. I hope many of these items can be addressed fully before our annual meeting in June. For issues involving significant budgetary requirements, they will probably have to wait until the Congregation can vote on them at the annual meeting. This may seem bureaucratic, but the Board has limited freedom to spend outside our annual budget.

With the above preamble, here are some of the key unresolved items on my plate.

1. Security for our Temple. I remember visiting the beautiful grounds of Shalom Park in Charlotte, NC. I believe the land houses a Reform Temple and a

continued on next page

Rabbi's Message, cont.

Middle Ages, half of the world Jewish community lived in Spain. Spain itself had the largest Jewish community in Europe. Then came the 1300s when the Jewish community became vulnerable and the Inquisition took root. Some Jews converted, at least on the surface; some of those secret Jews (known as conversos or marranos) were burned alive. Now suddenly, hundreds of thousands of Jews were uprooted from a land that had been home for many centuries. It wasn't until 1869 that Jews began to return to Seville after a new constitution proclaimed religious liberty. It wasn't until 1927 that Spain offered citizenship to all Sephardic Jews. Franco undid all this. It wasn't until 1992 that King Juan Carlos I cancelled the Edict of Expulsion from 1492.

Never had I imagined that one day, I would walk the streets of Cordoba, home of Maimonides (Rabbi Moses ben Maimon). I wrote my rabbinic thesis on "Maimonides on Liturgy and Prayer." He was one of the greatest scholars and thinkers Judaism ever produced, leading to the expression, "From Moses to Moses, there was no one like Moses." Maimonides fled to Egypt from Cordoba in 1146 when the Almohades conquered the city. He continued to practice medicine, write rabbinic Responsa, and advise the caliph. Despite what life dealt him, he not only survived but thrived. And that is what the Jewish people did, despite the enormity of tragedies like the expulsion from Spain.

Traveling always reminds me of how limited we Americans are by our borders and by our own perspective. Traveling makes me feel that the world has gotten smaller. It hasn't, of course, at least not geographically. But we can go to places we never thought we would visit. We can see how interdependent we are, how what happens in one part of the world has impact on the rest of the world. If we thought of the world as a small place, if we treated the world as if it were our backyard, we might treat each other differently. May the memory of the expulsion in 1492 lead us to work against similar destructions.

Rabbi Ellen Lewis

Shabbat Across America Friday, March 7, 6:00pm

It has become our tradition to celebrate this Shabbat with a *Kabbalat Shabbat* service (a short service with no Torah reading), starting at **six**, followed by a community dinner, starting at seven, followed (sometimes) by wild singing and dancing. We are doing POT LUCK (DAIRY ONLY) this year and asking for a donation of five dollars (\$5) per family to cover drinks and paper goods. Please contact Rochelle Ostenfeld who will be coordinating this event. Rochelle needs to know how many will be coming and what you will bring—and she will make sure that we don't end up with only green salads. **Let her hear from you ASAP and send your check so that it gets to her by Feb. 29.** Seating is limited in the *simcha* room, so reserve early (after 60 people, no more).

President's Message, cont.

Conservative Synagogue. I was there in the middle of the week, and unable to attend services. However, there was much activity on the property, and it was patrolled by private security guards. Our post 9/11 security "fixes" are not as substantial. They currently consist of a direct beeper to the Washington Borough police, activated by the touch of a button. During events with large attendance, when requested, we have contracted with the Borough police for more active physical presence on Youmans Avenue. The issue of security for our Sunday School is real. As of the present, no cost-effective solution has been identified. The Board is working on the issue, but may need more input from the Congregation if non-budgeted expenses are required.

2. Closely related to 1. above, but hopefully easier to solve, the issue of fire drills for our Sunday School classes. Most public and semi-public buildings like ours have "escape" routes clearly marked in each room of the building. Anyone who has stayed in a Motel 6 or more elegant motel/hotel knows the existence of these signs on the door of the room. Working with the local fire department, this issue should shortly be improved.

3. Our membership has increased impressively. Double digit numbers of new members have joined our Congregation in the last year. We hope this continues, and I will spend more time with our Membership Committee to help continue this encouraging trend.

4. Every one of my 20+ years at Pfizer, we would actively develop a "five-year plan." I always found it amusing that a "capitalist" business entity would develop a plan similar to the former Soviet Union. Nevertheless, irrespective of the name, this plan served very good purposes for moving forward. It created a reasonably level playing field so that all management and staff knew what was expected in the next few years. I propose that we try to develop a similar approach (with a better name) for our Congregation. I look to those members of the Congregation that can help in this area, especially if there are any appropriate software tools that we should utilize.

5. I look forward to attending the Bar/Bat Mitzvahs in the coming months. I also look forward to "relaxing" in the audience when other members can serve on the bima.

Any suggestions will be gratefully appreciated, either by phone (917-941-4332), email arvesen@att.net or at an Oneg or other Temple function.

Shalom,

Jim Arvesen

Purim Spiel

A musical Purim *spiel* will be presented by the SPIELERS, a group of adults and almost adults who will have been practicing the Purim story to the tunes of *Guys and Dolls*. A must-see. Don't miss the one and only performance on Sunday, March 16, at the Purim service.

Religious School/PTO Events

March is an exciting month for Hebrew School. March 9 we have a Teachers' Meeting (8:30 a.m.), a PTO Meeting (9:30 a.m.) and the Sunday School kids are baking hamentaschen ... YUMMMMMM. March 16 we celebrate Purim with the Megillah Reading and Purim Spiel; then at noon with the Purim Carnival.

We have great prizes to be won at the Purim Carnival Raffle this year including donations from the following local Washington Businesses: Fliegaufl Jewelers, Washington Head Quarters, Russo's Ristorante, Sports Scene Restaurant, Oakwood Lanes Bowling, Family Affair Florist, Chocolate Shoppe, Gibson's Gym, Washington Bagel, Washington Dunkin Donuts, Washington Diner, Family Pizza and Hunan Wok. Also, each grade level is donating a theme basket (Blockbuster, Webkinz, Stationery and Gardening) for raffle prizes.

At the Carnival you will enjoy lots of games and activities for the kids, and refreshments for everyone. See you there...

Marsha Gross & Karen Finkelstein
(Education co-Chairs)

Yom HaShoah

The date of our Yom HaShoah commemoration service has been changed to Sunday, April 27 (11 a.m., followed by a buffet lunch open to all).

Mathilde Benveniste will be the guest speaker. Dr. Benveniste will talk about the experiences of her family, one of five that remained in Thessaloniki (Salonika), Greece, and survived the Nazi occupation. (More than 50,000 Jews from Thessaloniki were deported and murdered in the Holocaust.) She will place her personal story in the context of the history of her native city, once known as "Mother of Israel" and "Jerusalem of the Balkans."

Dr. Benveniste received a B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania on a Fulbright Scholarship, and Master's and Ph.D. degrees from the Johns Hopkins University, on a fellowship from the AAUW/IBM. She is employed at Avaya Labs in New Jersey and is a board member of the American Friends of the Jewish Museum of Greece. Everyone will have the opportunity to meet and talk with our guest at the buffet lunch that will follow her presentation.

Think Spring – Think Passover Think Second Night Seder at the Temple

Sunday night, April 20, is the Temple's Second Passover Night Seder. Save the date, and come with your family and friends. Please advise Esther Bakonyi at r.bakonyi228@comcast.com by the end of March regarding attendance. No charge, but we will assign everyone to bring or prepare a designated item. Any questions or comments: Please contact Esther Bakonyi.

Cooking Club Update

The next Cooking Club will be Sunday, April 6, 12:15-2:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome. Please call Esther Bakonyi or Iris Hirsch so that we know how many people to expect.

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 you will be attending.

Reminder: Book Club March 19, 7:30 p.m.

The book is *Rashi's Daughter* by Maggie Anton. Please contact Risa Smith by March 10, if you plan to attend. We will notify all attending as to location.

Pirke Avot

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

Torah Study Group Changes Meetings

Torah study dates have changed (again). They are as follows: March 8 and 22; April 12 and 21; May 10 and 24; June 7 and 21.

Attention Talent Show Participants and their Families

Auditions for the Third Annual Jewish Center Talent Show will begin at 12:30 p.m. on Sunday, March 16, during the Purim Carnival. Please bring your instruments, music, tape or whatever else you need. This audition is not to exclude anyone from participating but to see who is doing what talent for the line-up of performers in the program. I am looking forward to seeing everyone. Keep practicing. If you cannot make that date for your audition, contact me and I will set up another date and time. I hope you are as excited as I am!

The Talent Show will begin at 7:00 on Saturday night, March 29. The program will be followed by a make-your-own sundae dessert.

If you have any questions, please contact me.
Helen Mattson

Welcome new members!

Stuart & Lois Goldberg, Hackettstown

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In memory of Philip I. Janof
Joan C. Gross

In memory of Lillian Jay
Rabbi Ellen Lewis

In memory of Ruth Zuckerman
Barbara and Denny Dreisbach

Community Events

The Holocaust: My Experience

March 8, at 1 p.m.

Washington Twp. Public Library

37 E. Springtown Rd, Long Valley

Ursula Pawel recounts her personal story of surviving Hitler's rise to power in 1933, the insidious restrictions against German Jews, and ultimately the Holocaust. She spent three years in concentration and labor camps and undertook a 500-mile bicycle trek from Poland through Germany, looking for her mother after liberation.

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This program is offered through the Horizons Speakers Bureau of the New Jersey Council for the Humanities, a state partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Call the Library at 908-876-3596 or go to www.wtpl.org under Adult Activities.

JEWISH LIFE

Jewish Life presents Dr. Murray Spiegel, author of *300 Ways to Ask the Four Questions*, Thursday, March 13, 7 p.m. at Or Chadash in Flemington. (Or Chadash is located at 149 Foothill Road, Flemington. 908-806-2122.) Jewish LIFE and Ohr Tikvah Jewish Healing Center are pleased to co-sponsor The Wounding and Healing of the Human Sprit with Dr. Dan Gottlieb. This program will be held Thursday, April 3 at 7 p.m. at the Shimon and Sara Birnbaum JCC, 775 Talamini Road in Bridgewater. Please register in advance by calling the JCC at 908-725-6994 x201. Save the date for Yom Hashoah Observance on Sunday, May 4; Yom Ha' Atzmaut Celebration Thursday, May 8; and Salute to Israel Parade/Dinner on Sunday, June 1. More details to come! The Jewish LIFE brochure is posted at www.ssbjcc.org.

Purim at Central NJ Jewish Home for the Aged

Sunday, March 9, 2008, 2:00-3:00 PM
Central New Jersey Home for the Aged,
380 Demott Lane, Somerset

Ohr Tikvah is sponsoring a Purim celebration for residents of Central New Jersey Home for the Aged. We will distribute Purim cards made by community religious school students. Please call Ohr Tikvah, 908-725-6994, if you can help make cards, and want to help distribute cards and gift bags to residents.

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