



Mark Your Calendar!

- Sunday, March 1, 9:30am
Sunday School
- Friday, March 6, 7:30pm
NEW STARTING TIME -
Shabbat Service, Oneg:
Knobelman, Goldberg,
Orenstein, Tarlowe families
- Sunday, March 8, 9:30am
Sunday School, (K/1)
Megillah Reading
Purim Carnival
- Saturday, March 14, 10:30am
Torah Study
- Sunday, March 15
Sunday School
Confirmation
12:00pm B'nai Mitzvah brunch
- Friday, March 20, 6:00pm
NOTE EARLIER TIME
Shabbat Across America
Oneg: Simons, Landau, Alper,
Margolis families
- Saturday, March 21, 10:00am
Morning Service
- Sunday, March 22
9:30am Sunday School (K/1),
Spring/Passover Craft
Music
- Saturday, March 28, 7:00pm
Talent Show
- Sunday, March 29
9:30am Sunday School
Music
Board Thanks the PTO Brunch

**NOTE: Regular Shabbat
Friday night services now
start promptly at 7:30 p.m.**

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

Rabbi's Message

Landing in Israel on El Al is a familiar experience. The moment you hit the ground, the passengers applaud. Landing in Israel on Continental Airlines had been an unknown experience for me before last Friday afternoon. We landed. I waited. No one clapped. The flight attendant made the English announcement, "We have arrived at Ben Gurion airport. Have a nice weekend." Staving off feelings of disappointment, I held my breath through the Hebrew announcement until the end when the flight attendant concluded with the words, "Shabbat Shalom." Now I knew I was home.

My Israeli friend Varda met me at the airport. She now lives in Tel Aviv, although when we met 35 years ago, she was living in Jerusalem. We have been reminiscing about that initial meeting. Not surprisingly, our memories differ. Varda lived in the same building as the American friends with whom I first stayed upon arriving in Jerusalem in the fall of 1974. The following December, we both ended up on the same Nature Preservation Society *tiyul* (tour) to Sinai (then still part of Israel). She remembers it was by design that we went on the same trip; I recall that it was accidental. We plan to take out the old photos in hope that they will spark our memories. We do both recall climbing Santa Katerina, a mountain crested in snow despite its location in the Sinai desert. For some reason, the Nature Preservation Society had eschewed the well-worn path up the side of the mountain in favor of pushing and pulling us up its uncharted craggy face. We also both remember how our young Bedouin guide flew bare-footed with ease up and down the mountain as we struggled for traction. I remember wishing I had brought warmer gloves.

Although I have returned to Israel a number of times since 1974, it is that maiden voyage (begun as a student fare on the cruise ship Michelangelo) that occupies my thoughts today. When I first arrived in Israel, I carried only what I could fit in the

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President's Message

I am honored to be serving with a diverse group of individuals working with the regional office of the Union for Reform Judaism. Our main focus is to assist congregations in the region that are experiencing financial difficulties. Since that essentially includes all congregations, it is a great opportunity to share ideas and experiences with others during these difficult times. I was interested to discover that several congregations had even merged to help improve financial issues.

The number of reform congregations in our regional number is just shy of 50. The region is essentially from Kingston, NY to Freehold, NJ. The congregations split largely into three groups small, large and very large. We are in the first category, and proud of it! The very large congregations have annual budgets well over \$1million. Our annual budget is in the \$140,000 range. I am sharing approximate figures. You will get exact figures for our annual congregational meeting on June 7, 2009. Unlike most other congregations in our region, we have no debt, and own our building. However, dues only cover about 50% of our annual budget needs. The other amounts come from special donations such as our 60th anniversary celebration, High Holy Day pledges, special pledges and hard work by congregational volunteers on the Hanukah bazaar, Purim carnival and other simchas.

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Rabbi's Message, cont.

pack on my back. This time, I packed more for ten days than I did then for a year. When we returned to Varda's apartment from the airport, we walked to the beach and welcomed Shabbat by listening to a drumming circle that harmonized with the crashing surf. Yesterday we walked around Tel Aviv and Old Jaffa. If the weather in Tel Aviv has been unusually rainy and windy, Jerusalem promises to be that much colder.

We watched "CSI: New York" on Israeli TV last night. My hope was that reading the subtitles would reawaken my dormant Hebrew. So much has changed since that first visit. At the time, Varda was my only friend who had both a television and a land-line telephone. (That many years ago, you applied for a phone and then waited years for it to be installed. I remember being told that Israel had difficulty laying the phone cables because each attempt at digging uncovered an archaeological site that required preservation. I don't know if that explanation was true or apocryphal, but I believed it at the time.) Israeli TV gave you access to two channels, one the state-run station and the other a Jordanian channel that showed endless reruns of Kojak with Arabic subtitles. Now cable TV has come to Israel and with it thousands of programs I wouldn't watch in the U.S. Thankfully for me, cell phones have arrived in Israel as well and I have rented one for the duration of my trip. Somehow the country feels less isolated now that it has acquired satellite TV and cell phones, although that feeling remains illusory when it comes to international politics and geography.

Tomorrow I go up to Jerusalem. We always speak of "going up" when it comes to Jerusalem, both because of its higher altitude in the Judean hills and because of its spiritual status. When I get there, I will walk to the Western Wall and place in it a "petek" containing my prayers for you.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

Rabbi Ellen Lewis

President's Message, cont.

Our Board established a policy that Jewish education is part of our mission. Consequently, we have one of the few "free" Sunday School programs in our region. It would not be possible without all of the volunteer help that the PTO and others provide. Thank you.

Over our 60 plus years of operation, we have received one significant endowment. The Davis family generously established a fund to support educational activities. Most larger congregations must depend on significant revenues coming from such sources since even their dues structures are typically not able to fully support the budget.

Like most creative people, our congregation has more ideas than money to actualize them. Fiscal responsibility was the cornerstone of the founders of our congregation. I related in an earlier newsletter that it "only" took the JCNWJ founders three attempts over successive years to get the original deed for the building registered at the Belvidere county offices. The building was "sold" to the congregation for the sum of \$1. Even in this terrible market, the building is worth much more than that today.

Please bring your creative ideas to our June 7 annual meeting. We need them in these difficult financial times.

Please contact me at arvesen@att.net or by phone at 917-941-4332 for any questions or comments.

Shalom,

Jim Arvesen

New Starting Time for Services

In response to requests for earlier services on Friday nights, the Religious Practices Committee has changed the start time of regular Friday night services to 7:30 p.m., beginning on March 6. Please arrive by 7:25 and move immediately into the sanctuary so that we can begin promptly. We will continue this earlier starting time through June and then evaluate it. Please give your feedback to Rabbi Lewis, Debby Knobelman, or Sharon Herson.

This does not include Shabbat across America on March 20, which is scheduled for 6pm.

Shabbat Across America

SHABBAT ACROSS AMERICA, March 20, is a national program designed to reach out to Jews across North America who are detached from Judaism in the hope to get them to connect with a Jewish community. Once again this year, the Center encourages you to invite anyone you know who is unaffiliated with a synagogue or to those who may be looking for a new Jewish community.

Services will begin at 6pm and a pot luck DAIRY dinner will follow. Please call Iris Hirsch, 908-850-1030, to make your reservations and to coordinate. No meat or meat by-products are allowed in the Center.

We look forward to welcoming your guests! Remember to call Iris Hirsch to make your reservations for the event.

Thanks for your help in making this a successful program and in helping to make our Center's membership grow!

From the Rabbi: We are planning a special musical service for Shabbat Across America. Instead of abbreviating the liturgy and trying to include all the major prayers, we are going to use our new prayerbook *Mishkan T'filah* to pray the portion of the service called Kabbalat Shabbat (literally "Reception of the Sabbath"). This part of the service precedes the formal evening Shabbat service. This mystical prelude to the service is based on the 16th-century tradition of the Kabbalists of Safed, who welcomed Shabbat by going into the fields on Fridays at sunset to recite special prayers and hymns in honor of Shabbat. What we now call Kabbalat Shabbat contains six psalms (Psalms 95-99 and 29) representing the six weekdays. The psalms are followed by "Lecha Dodi" in which we welcome the Sabbath bride. This portion of the service concludes with Psalms 92 and 93.

Upcoming Events

NOTE DATE CHANGE: Sunday, March 15, at noon. Workshop and brunch for families (adults and children) with b'nai mitzvah in 2009–2010. RSVP to Sharon Herson by March 8.

Saturday Morning Service, March 21, at 10. Join Rabbi Lewis, Cantor Kadin, and fellow congregants in an inspiring Saturday morning worship service. Learn more about our new prayer book. All are welcome.

Let your talent out of the closet at the **Jewish Center Talent Show**

Saturday, March 28th at 7 PM

Music, dance, songs, poetry, drama
Auditions: Sunday March 8, 12:30 pm
During the Purim Carnival

RSVP to Mrs. Mattson
Refreshments will be served

An Invitation from Marcy Kadin

I would like to invite everyone to my Senior Recital and Luncheon on Wednesday, April 22. It will take place in the Minnie Petrie Chapel of Hebrew Union College at 10:45 am. The college is located at 1 West Fourth Street in New York City (near NYU). This is the culmination of five years of study and I would be thrilled if you would share this morning and lunch with me. The recital is entitled "Ha Manginah Nisheret." These words are found on the tombstone of Abraham Wolf Binder, an American-born Jewish composer of the 20th century. He felt strongly that we keep the Jewish traditional motifs, chants, and *chazzanut* in our modern compositions. I will be singing compositions spanning the time frame from the middle of the 19th century until today, including a premiere of a piece that was written for me in celebration of this occasion. There will be a choir, instrumentalists, organ and piano.

If you are going to join me, please send me an email at so I have a head count for the caterer!

Religious School/PTO Events

This month we will be celebrating Purim! March 8, beginning at 10:15 (or so) we will enjoy the Purim Spiel and Megillah Reading. Get your groggers ready! Kids are encouraged to come in costume. Afterwards (at noon) we will celebrate with the Purim Carnival. This year, as in the past, we will have lots of games and activities for the kids. We will also have great prizes to be won – including two original pieces of artwork donated by Rona Schick, donations from local businesses, custom theme baskets from the Sunday School classes, and lots more. Thank you to everyone who donated items for our Purim carnival. We really appreciate it.

On March 22 the Hebrew School kids will be getting creative with a Passover/Spring craft project.

The Board would like to thank our PTO families for their contributions and dedication to the Jewish Center's Hebrew School program. All PTO families are invited to a "Board Thanks the PTO" Brunch on Sunday, March 29 at 10:30 a.m. Please feel free to bring with you any ideas, questions, comments or concerns that you would like to discuss with members of the Board.

Please RSVP via e-mail to Marsha Gross by March 22 so we can plan the food accordingly.

Marsha Gross and Karen Finkelstein

Adult Education

Adult Education, scheduled for Sunday morning, March 22, is cancelled but will be worked into the Saturday morning service on March 21. Rabbi Lewis and members of the Religious Practices Committee will be in NYC at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion for auditions of cantorial students.

Torah Study

Torah study meets monthly on Saturday mornings for about two hours, starting at 10:30. We are a lay-led group. Discussion is always lively. Everyone is welcome: March 14, April 25, May 16, June 20.

Mazel Tov!

Mazel Tov to Meryl Lettore, who was nominated and received the Honey and Maurice Axelrod Award. It is given to educators and community activists who have demonstrated outstanding efforts in teaching the Holocaust and genocide in their classroom, as well as to others who are continuing their education in the field of bias, bigotry and prejudice.

The award will be presented through an endowment to the Anti-Defamation League, in cooperation with the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education at a ceremony given at Mercer County Community College on June 7.

Donations

Joan Chase - In appreciation of the Congregation
Steven J. Ratzman - In memory of Tillie Ratzman
Steven Goldner - In memory of Adolph Goldner
Helen and John Mattson - In memory of Ellen Field,
mother of Alison Shelofsky,
Helen and John Mattson - In memory of Klaus Ottman,
uncle of Ron Seidorf

JEWISH LIFE

Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman will offer A New Look at Sibling Relationships in the Book of Genesis - Reality and Renewed Possibilities, Thursday, March 5 at 7 p.m. at the JCC. Fee: \$10/Jewish LIFE Member and \$15/Non-Member. Call x201 to register. The final Jewish LIFE program of the season will be the community-wide Yom Hashoah Observance featuring Julie Kohner on Sunday, April 26, at 7 p.m. at Temple Beth-El, Hillsborough.

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For one price of \$1800 you can send a child to one of the New Jersey Y Camps for a 4-week sleep-away session during the summer of 2009 and receive a family membership in the Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey valid through May 31, 2010. Ordinarily costing \$5000, this package can be yours if you meet the following criteria:

- ▶ Child must be a first-time camper at the NJ Y Camps in Milford, PA.
Camp Nah-Jee-Wah for grades 3 - 6
Cedar Lake Camp for grades 7 - 9
- ▶ Family must be new members in the Jewish Center of NW Jersey

For questions and more detailed information, call or email PAUL MAY at 908.832.6341 or paulmayjr57@embarqmail.com. Additional information is available on the Camp website <http://www.njycamps.org/> and on the Temple website <http://www.jcnwj.org/>

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