

Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey

Journal

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Rabbi's Message

Dear Friends,

As some of you know, I came frighteningly close to losing my father during the waning months of 2017. Last summer, he began suffering unexplained weight loss and started to become increasingly frail. None of his doctors were able to explain it, so we simply attributed it to his being 84 years old. By Rosh Hashanah, his walking had become labored, and his fine motor skills were growing weaker by the day. And then, just after Rosh Hashanah, he took a fall that landed him in the hospital. He was released a couple weeks later for home rehabilitative services, but that did not help. Not only did his physical condition continue to deteriorate, his cognitive abilities began to slip as well. Unable to hold a coherent conversation with him, I was rapidly losing the father I knew. Before long, he was back in the hospital. Within days he had fallen into a pretty constant mental fog. Over the next two months, as he remained in the hospital, his doctors were at a loss to explain his condition. Many theories were put forth, but no definitive answers could be ascertained. The only positive spin was that he seemed generally happy. We began preparing for the worst.

But then, when we had already lost almost all hope, the doctors decided as a last-ditch effort to give him a very high-powered antibiotic that is used sometimes to treat Lyme Disease. They were not optimistic it would help, but neither did they imagine it would hurt. Within a few days, my father was feeding himself with his own hands once again. His mind almost immediately became sharper and his body stronger. Less than two weeks later he was taking his first steps once again in rehab. (Today, two months later, he is walking over a mile at a stretch. His sudden and overwhelming recovery has been nothing short of a miracle.)

(continued on next page)

Mark Your Calendar

- **Friday, March 2nd**
7:30 pm – Shabbat Service
Oneg – Knobelman, Orenstein, Tarlowe
- **Sunday, March 4th**
9:30 am – Sunday School
10:00 am – Megillah Reading
11:00 am – Purim Spiel
- **Sunday, March 11th**
9:30 am – Sunday School
9:30 am – Blood Drive
10:30 am – Sisterhood
- **Monday, March 12th**
7:00 pm – Board of Trustees Meeting
- **Friday, March 16th**
6:00 pm – Potluck Dinner
7:30 pm – Shabbat Service
Oneg – Klein, Ostenfeld, Rosen
- **Sunday, March 18th**
9:30 am – Sunday School
- **Saturday, March 24th**
10:30 am – Torah Study
- **Sunday, March 25th**
9:30 am – Sunday School
- **Friday, April 6th**
7:30 pm – Shabbat Service
Oneg – Fesinstine, Stanton, Berk

Rabbi's Message (cont.)

Within days of beginning his antibiotics, my father began to recapture interest in things he had always enjoyed, which included wanting to keep abreast of the news. He had questions, of course, but was eager to become current once again.

One day, while he was still rehabbing in the hospital, he turned to me and asked the most unexpected question: "Tell me, what's with all this sex stuff in the news?" After a moment's thought, his jarring question all made sense to me. Looking back at the calendar, I realized he had fallen into his fog just days before Harvey Weinstein hit the front page. He had missed the explosion of the *#metoo* Movement. In a nutshell, he had slept through three of the most challenging and volatile months our nation had experienced in years, or perhaps even decades.

With the heart-wrenching scourge of gun violence (rightfully) retaking the front page after the massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, it's reasonable to imagine that *#metoo* might be sidelined. We cannot allow that to happen. Fortunately, I don't think it will. It may take longer than anyone wants, but since *#metoo* has become so powerful precisely because it has justice on its side, and since justice cannot be denied, I don't see how anyone will possibly be able to stand in its way over the long run.

Purim, the holiday we just finished celebrating, is one of my favorite holidays. It's fun, it exhibits the overwhelming capacity that we human beings have to shape destiny, and it's a holiday that enables us to imagine our lives in new and creative ways. At the same time, Megilat Esther is bookended by episodes that we should all find challenging, to say the least. The story begins with a wife being punished for refusing to parade herself before her husband's guests, and it closes with the indiscriminant killing of tens of thousands of people.

The ending, it could be argued (if one is so inclined), represents exaggerated numbers that are presented as amusing parody, but the beginning is more difficult to explain away. In addition, those who choose to discount the ending can point quite easily to the fact that the miracle of Purim would have been just as powerful had the scroll ended before this final wave of vengeful violence took place. The killing, after all, is superfluous to the miracle itself.

I suppose the same superfluity could be argued for the beginning, when Vashti is banished for disobeying her husband. That is, I suppose the story could have begun instead with a grand announcement that the king of the land was looking for a wife. The same miracle facilitated by Esther still would have taken place had Vashti not been involved at the beginning. But there is a difference between the story's bookends, and we would do best not to ignore it.

While the ending, as horrific as it is, seems somewhat detached from reality, the beginning is all too familiar. It is no stretch for us to think of women who pay an unfair price just for standing up to abusive men in their lives. And that, the realism that this introduction represents, is to me even more horrific than the farcical ending. The fact that it is so easy for us to picture the scene of punishment demands from us that we must listen and give credence to the cries of *#metoo*.

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Rabbi's Message (cont.)

In some ways I envy my father for having missed the first few months of the Harvey Weinstein horror show. Who of us can say we enjoyed even a moment of it? On the other hand, I am also grateful that Weinstein's story, disgusting as it is, has come to light. His is a story that we cannot afford to hide any longer. His may be an extreme version of what *#metoo* stands against, but the essence of the story, the basic perversion of the manner in which Weinstein has used his position of power to extort others to bow to his every selfish whim over the years, is understood intimately by millions of Americans, and billions of others around the world. We hate hearing the details, but it is the details that give urgency to the need for change and justice.

I cringe each and every year when I am forced to relive yet again the abusive treatment suffered by Vashti simply for having had the courage to protect her own dignity. At the same time, I am grateful for the reminder. We, as a society, have so much left to accomplish if we will ever stand a chance at calming – as opposed to suffocating – the cries of *#metoo*. Yes, progress takes time, but unless we are confronted with the ugliness of reality on a regular basis, I don't see how a better tomorrow can ever be established.

There is enormous value to enjoyment and laughter. Purim is a time for fun and frivolity, and I would never want to take that away. But embedded in the excited amusement are a number of deeper meanings. Some of them are pleasant, such as our admiration for Esther and Mordechai for devising a way to save the Jewish people from annihilation, but others are terrifyingly heart wrenching, such as our disgust over how Ahasuerus treats his first wife. Both ends of the emotional spectrum are necessary for full human existence. So let us have fun where we can, but let us never grow deaf to the cries of those who need to be heard.

Chag Purim Sameach,

Rabbi Dubin

A Reminder from the Sunshine Committee



Please let us know when someone has passed away, is ill or otherwise in need of a little sunshine so that the Jewish Center may be there to support and assist as best we can. Please contact Ruth Schutzbank at (908) 329-6036 or Howie.ruth@hotmail.com.

President's Message

I usually try and avoid controversy in my monthly messages and almost never get political, but I feel that I must take a stand at this time.

The school shooting at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, has gotten me crazy. I cannot understand how politicians and responsible gun owners think that assault rifles belong outside the military and police force in our society.

In Warren County, New Jersey, there are many responsible hunters who take care of their firearms, hunt cautiously, do not put others at risk, and then use the animals that they hunt for food as well as make use of the other parts of the animals. While not a hunter, I have no problem with these hunters, nor do I think that, as an American, anyone should take the right to defend me or my family away from me by not allowing me to own a gun. However, if I must choose between the rights of the gun owners to have these assault weapons and to watch school children being slaughtered, I will choose the side of the children.

The fact that teenagers cannot buy a cigarette, alcohol or even a lottery ticket in most places, but have no problem going into a gun store and buying a gun is appalling to me. Luckily, this is not the case in New Jersey where you must be 18 and obtain a NJ Firearms Purchaser ID Card.

I know that I live as a liberal Jew and that the conservatives will not agree with me, but I think we need to vote out any politician who is accepting money from the NRA.

If we have lawmakers in Congress who are not beholden to this special interest group, then maybe we will have a chance to have a real conversation about what gun control in this country should look like.

One of the things I have read since the shooting went something like this: In 1982, seven people died when Tylenol was replaced with poison. Since then, we have strict packaging standards to prevent a situation like this from happening again. In 1995, fertilizer was used to kill 168 people. Restrictions were put on the sale of this kind of fertilizer. In 2001, one person tried to blow up a plane with a shoe bomb. Since then, everyone getting on a plane must have their shoes screened by TSA.

What is the reason that we can't pass gun control when week after week, we hear of assault weapons killing our children? It can't only be a Second Amendment right, because to me, the fact that these teenagers from Parkland have been talking to the media is only a start. I have talked to some of my younger colleagues, who have been in school since Columbine occurred, and they tell me that this is the new normal. That you are afraid going into school, when your only concerns should be learning and making friends.

As a single person, my voice doesn't matter, but if we can get voice after voice to show our anger and vote these people out of office, that is what we must do.

Personally, I will check any candidate that I vote for, and if they are accepting money from the NRA, they will not get my vote.

-Howie

SISTERHOOD

On behalf of the Sisterhood, please accept my gratitude for your generous support of the Purim-Mishloach Manot fundraiser. Hopefully we will see you all on the 4th of March for the Purim spiel and Mishloach Manot bag pick-up. If you are unable to attend, please expect your bag to arrive by either mail or personal delivery. If, by the middle of March, you have not received your package, please contact me at Shelofsky@comcast.net

On March 11th the Sisterhood will meet at the Temple at 10:30 AM to plan the upcoming Mother's Day Tea and Accessory Fundraiser. A light breakfast will be served. Please consider donating blood at the Blood Drive that day. We will work around your appointment time if the meeting coincides with it.

Top Ten Reasons for Celebrating Purim by Kenneth Goldrich

1. Making noise in shul is a MITZVAH!!
2. Levity is not reserved for the Levites.
3. Nobody knows if you're having a bad hair day. You can tell them it's your costume.
4. Purim is easier to spell than Chanukah, I mean Hanukah, I mean, KHanukah, I mean Chanuka, I mean the Festival of Lights.
5. You don't have to kasher your home and change all the pots and dishes.
6. You don't have to build a hut and live and eat outside (but you could volunteer to build a new Purim booth for next year's Carnival).
7. You get to drink wine and drink wine and drink wine and you don't even have to stand for Kiddush (I guess you can't!)
8. You won't get hit in the eye by a lulav.
9. You can't eat hamantaschen on Yom Kippur.
10. Mordecai - 1 ; Haman - 0 !!!!

Updates & Events

BLOOD DRIVE

We are holding a blood drive!

Our friend Gil Braunstein has been fighting cancer for the past few months. Gil informed me today that the cancer is gone from his body. Gil has been a long-time blood donor. Over the past few months, Gil has been fighting, he has received over 20 pints of blood and platelets. Let's replenish what Gil has used and donate more.

Sunday, 3/11/2018 (9:30 am - 2:00 pm)
at the temple.

Schedule your appointment at:
https://donor.giveapint.org/donor/schedules/drive_schedule/40890

Thank you for supporting our blood drive and your community. We look forward to seeing you soon!

Howie Hirsch
Volunteer Drive Coordinator

SHABBAT POTLUCK

Please join us **Friday, March 16th** for a Shabbat potluck dinner at 6:00pm with services to follow at 7:30pm.

Please sign up at
<https://www.perfectpotluck.com/VRKE1483>

Thank you!

DONATIONS

In Memory of Anita Bauer
– Helen and John Mattson

In Memory of Gertrude Post and Adolph Goldner
– Laurie Post and Steven Goldner

In Memory of Melvin S. Coben
– Gwen and Edward Nagorsky

In Memory of Rebecca Goldenthal
– Nancy and Bernard Robins

On the Yahrzeit for Rose Schutzbank
– Ruth and Howard Schutzbank

Wendy and Lawrence Steinhardt

FOOD DRIVE

Our local food pantries are in dire need of supplies. Donations are down and the need for food is greater than ever. The Jewish Center is collecting non-perishable items such as canned soup, pasta, and cereal on an ongoing basis to help out those in need.

Updates & Events

ISRAEL TRIP

Congregational trip to Israel!

June 24 – July 6, 2018

Relive the history of our people in the place where it all happened!

Join us for a life changing, life enriching experience in Israel - the heartland of the Bible. Visit the places you have been hearing about, enjoy exciting and adventurous hiking and water experiences, all while visiting historic landmarks and sites of interest.

Visit the trip website at <http://www.arzaworld.com/Jewish-Center-of-Northwest-New-Jersey-Trip-to-Israel-Led-by-Rabbi-Andy-Dubin.aspx> to view:

- Promotional flyer (accenting the trip highlights) to share with extended friends and family you wish to invite.
- Detailed day-by-day trip itinerary.
- Registration process “how-to” document outlining important details as well as screen shots of what to expect and how to do each step of the process.

Looking forward to sharing this incredible opportunity with our synagogue family!

Sincerely, Lynne Kowski & Roy Loomis

P.S. if you have any additional questions, do not hesitate to email both Lynne (Lynne.Kowski@raritanval.edu) and Roy (rloomis@cherrybrook.com)

WINE SALE

JCNWJ is holding a Passover Wine Sale. Please see the e-mail that was sent out for more details and the order form. The deadline to order is March 11th, and orders will be ready for pick up on March 16th and 18th at the temple.

Wanted: Advertisers for JCNWJ Journal

Kindly take note of the ads at the end of our Journal and whenever possible, support these establishments with your patronage. It's also a good idea to mention that you saw their Temple ad. If there are any businesses that you use regularly that might be interested in taking an ad in the Journal, please contact Rita Berkowitz (berk721@aol.com) or Ruth Schutzbank (Howie.ruth@hotmail.com). You can also go to our homepage, print out an advertising form and give it directly to them to mail in.

Updates & Events

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

Upcoming Dates:

March 4th
March 11th
March 18th
March 25th

PURIM

Please join us as we celebrate Purim on Sunday, March 4th.

10:00am – Megillah Reading
10:30am – Religious School Costume Parade
11:00am – Beach Boychiks Purim Spiel

TORAH STUDY

Torah Study continues in the Book of Deuteronomy. Please join us at any or all of the following upcoming meetings at 10:30am in the Simcha Room:

March 24th April 14th
May 12th June 9th

BOOK CLUB

The next Book Club meeting will be held on Monday, April 16th at Ruth Schutzbank's house. We will be reading the Pulitzer Prize winning novel **Underground Railroad** by **Colson Whitehead**.

Anyone interested is welcome to join in. Please contact Rita Berkowitz at berk721@aol.com if you have any questions.

WEBSITE

Members Only!

The JCNWJ website has a section for temple members only. Here you'll find the latest membership list and other documents not for public consumption.

To access, go to www.jcnwj.org/members/ and enter the user name jcnwjmember and password. Forgot the password? E-mail website@jcnwj.org.

MAH JONGG

Mah Jongg continues at the JCNWJ. Contact Rhonda Jordan at helpmerhonda171@yahoo.com if interested!



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The logo for Fliegauf Jewelers, featuring the name 'Fliegauf' in a cursive script and 'JEWELERS' in a smaller, sans-serif font below it, all within a yellow oval shape.

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