



Mark Your Calendar!

- Sunday, April 6
9:30am Sunday School
10:45am Adult Ed/Pirke Avot
12:15pm Cooking Club
- Monday, April 7, 7:30pm
Board Meeting
- Friday, April 11, 7:45
Shabbat Service
Oneg: Bauch, Margolis,
Finkelstein families
- Saturday, April 12, 10:30am
Torah Study (continuing
discussion of the Fifth
Commandment)
- Sunday, April 13
8:00am Men's Club Spring
Road Clean Up
9:30am Sunday School (K/1)
Model Seders
- Sunday, April 20, 6:00pm
Community Seder
No Sunday School
- Friday, April 25, 7:45pm
Shabbat Pesach Service
Oneg: Rosenblum, Kaplowitz,
Bakonyi families
- Saturday, April 26, 10:30am
Torah Study
- Sunday, April 27
9:30am Sunday School (K/1)
10:30am Confirmation
11:00am Yom HaShoah
Observance, Guest Speaker:
Mathilde Benveniste

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

Rabbi's Message

Watch out. You may be held responsible for what I say from the pulpit. If you plan to run for President someday, you had better come to every service so you know what I am saying.

Seriously, I felt empathy for my Christian colleagues when the controversy about Obama's minister broke the week before Easter. The pressure was on. They were asking themselves: Should I speak about it from the pulpit on Easter? Is it appropriate to the holiday? Will the congregation be expecting to hear something? The Jewish parallel is when you have all your high holy day sermons written and then something happens in Israel – or New York. Do you do a fast rewrite? Is it germane to the themes of the holidays?

In this country, clergy have freedom of the pulpit. All we have to do is open the paper and read about what is happening with China and the Dalai Lama in order to appreciate again how lucky we are to have that freedom. We can say anything we want as long as we are willing to live with the consequences. We cannot support a particular candidate from the pulpit although we can support particular political positions, especially if we can place them in a religious framework. Rev. Wright seems to be a proponent of Liberation Theology, a particular Christian approach to religious thinking and preaching that emphasizes the connection between theology and social activism. From what I can tell, he did speak from within his religious framework, whether you disagree or agree with what he said.

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President's Message

I was able to attend a meeting sponsored by the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) on Jewish demographics. It was held at Temple Bnai Jeshurun in Short Hills on March 2nd. The presenter was Ira Sheskin, Ph.D., of the Department of Geography at the University of Miami (in FL). The presentation was loaded with statistics, and many people in the audience were noticeably nodding off. NOT ME. I have spent most of my professional life attempting to make sense and draw inferences from statistical information that most other people find arcane.

Dr. Sheskin used a survey technique called random digit dialing to obtain his information. Although I am not an expert in this approach, it should be projectable with sufficient accuracy to the population at large. I assume that he had people like my daughter Sarah in his sampling "frame," even though Sarah's only phone is cellular. Without any commentary/analysis, let me share some of this "arcane" information with the reader. The numbers that follow should be considered "directional" in nature, and not accurate to the last decimal place. One more note, for this survey, one is a Jew if one says they are a Jew.

Number of Jews in New Jersey

1960-326,000

1980-443,000

2000-468,000

2007-498,000, 5.7% of the state population.

In 2007, only New York (1,617,720-8.4%), California (1,194,190-3.3%) and Florida (654,935-3.6%) had more Jews.

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Rabbi's Message, cont.

As to holding candidates responsible for what their preachers say and believe – I sometimes wonder how anyone can survive running for office when we have so much information on them. We scrutinize their every move, including viewing old home movies and asking high school friends about them. What will it be like in the future when we can look back at candidates' youthful profiles on Friendster or Facebook? I do think that all this information makes us lose sight of the positives of this political race and of the change it represents. Even ten years ago, I wouldn't have believed that we would be seeing challenges from both a serious female candidate and a serious black candidate. I wish I could say that I am impressed with the level of political discourse about and between them, but that would probably be too much to ask.

I was reminded recently of how quickly these social changes have occurred. I attended a dedication of the new Torah: A Women's Commentary at Temple Emanu-el in New York. This commentary was underwritten by the Women of Reform Judaism (formerly the National Association of Temple Sisterhoods) at the urging of a female cantor. The book itself is scholarly and unique in many ways. I knew all this going into the ceremony. What struck me, however, was the visual. I looked up at the stage at the three professors who were to speak. They had all contributed to the volume either by editing or by writing commentary. They all teach serious subjects (Talmud, Midrash, Modern Hebrew Literature) at Hebrew Union College. And they were all women.

It isn't that long since I attended Hebrew Union College in a time when there was not one woman on the faculty. When we (the women at the time) asked why, we were told that there were no qualified women for the job. We were told that some day, when a woman first was ordained and then went on to get a Ph.D., that woman would be hired. That seemed as if it would take forever, but that night, I felt that forever had arrived. If no one had uttered a word that night, the experience of looking at them on the stage would have been sufficiently profound.

So in the midst of all the *narishkeit* of political campaigns, it is good to take a moment and be grateful that we live in such a time. We have not been freed from all the constraints of the past, but some of the shackles have been removed. Going into Pesach, we can be doubly appreciative of the power of liberation both socially and personally.

Rabbi Ellen Lewis

President's Message, cont.

The three counties with the largest Jewish population in 2007 are Bergen (83,700-17%), Essex (76,200-15%), Monmouth (64,000+6,000 part-time mainly summer-13%). Morris county had 33,500-7% and Warren county is 400 (another of his documents has 900 Jews in Warren county; I am unable reconcile this apparent discrepancy). www.co.warren.nj.us has the population of Warren county as 110,000. Thus Warren county has less than 1% of the population describing themselves as Jews. Hunterdon county (www.co.hunterdon.nj.us) has a total population (with a little estimation) around 130,000 in 2007. Dr. Sheskin has 1500 Jews estimated in Hunterdon county, slightly more than 1% of the population.

In what follows, results are only presented for Monmouth, Bergen, Essex or Morris counties due to numbers being smaller for other counties. Some other interesting factoids follow: Over 84% of Jews in these counties participate in a Passover seder. For Bergen county, 69% of Jews married to a Christian partner have a Christmas tree, while 2% of Jews married to a Jewish partner have a Christmas tree. Again for Bergen county, in intermarried households (definition, one partner is Jewish, the other is not) 59% of their children are being raised Jewish.

Once more for Bergen county, 39% of Jews have utilized the Internet in the past year for Jewish related information. It is interesting to see the age gradation for this result. Under 35 years, 51%; over 35 to 49 years, 50%; 50 year to 64 years, 40%; 65-75, 23% and greater than 75 years, 1%. Also for Bergen county, the estimate of Jews by choice is 2.6% of the Jewish population. Finally, 62% of Jewish households in Bergen county have a household member who has ever visited Israel.

There are many more interesting factoids in this study. Information about our fellow Jews is not easy to obtain. As I mentioned previously, these numbers should not be taken as exact by any means. They can indicate important trends and benchmarks. Should anyone (school projects?) want further access to these results, please contact me at arvesen@att.net or by phone at 917-941-4332.

Shalom,
Jim Arvesen

Community Seder, Sunday, April 20, 6 p.m.

We will celebrate our second annual community seder with a full seder and lots of wonderful home-cooked food. The dinner is coordinated in advance, with all participants bringing specified items. Therefore, if you want to come, you **MUST** contact Esther Bakonyi (r.bakonyi228@comcast.net) by April 10. Esther will get back to you and together you will figure out what you should bring. Last year, we had eight people cooking two chickens each and following a simple recipe so that all were the same; others brought roasted potatoes, veggies, fruit, juice, and wine, and all the trimmings for the seder plates. Everything was delicious. We use a haggadah legally obtained over the internet. In order for this event to work, advance planning is necessary. So please get in touch with Esther NOW (and not later than April 10). If you are inviting guests, be sure to include them in your head count. Remember, seating space is limited.

Yom HaShoah Observance, Sunday, April 27, 11 a.m.

Mathilde Benveniste will be the guest speaker at our Yom HaShoah observance. 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. This will be a fascinating talk--guaranteed that you will learn a lot and meet a delightful individual.

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.

Book Club

The Book Club will announce a new date/place for our meeting. The book is *Rashi's Daughter* by Maggie Anton. Please contact Risa if you are interested in joining the group.

Religious School/PTO Events

Passover is coming... On April 13th we will have a Model Seder for the Hebrew School kids. April 20 there is no Sunday School (First day of Passover). April 27 we will have a Yom HaShoah service. Looking ahead, we plan to celebrate Yom Ha'atzmaut on May 4.

FYI: Teri Stanton's 2nd and 3rd grade class is collecting toiletries, which they will donate to the Women's Shelter. Please see the last page of the newsletter for the "wish list." Anyone wishing to contribute may bring items into the Jewish Center and either give them to Teri Stanton, Marsha Gross or Karen Finkelstein, or leave them on the table in Teri's classroom. Thank you.

*Marsha Gross and Karen Finkelstein
(Education co-chairs)*

We would like to thank all the PTO members and confirmation class for your help at the Purim Carnival. Without all of you, the carnival would not have been such a great success.

Susan McNamara, Marsha Gross, Lynne Kowski & Karen Finkelstein

Pirke Avot

The Wisdom of the Fathers, taught by Rabbi Ellen Jay Lewis. Lively group discussion always.
*SUNDAY MORNINGS, 10:45 a.m.–noon
April 6, May 4 – changed from May 18 (noon)*

Torah Study Group Changes Meetings

Torah study dates have changed (again). They are as follows: April 12 and 26; May 10 and 24; June 7 and 21.

Thank You!

Thank you one and all for participating in the Jewish Center's Third Ever Annual Talent Show. We have great talent and a great audience who appreciates a good show. Thanks to Mike Weiner, the Judge and Jury, for his participation in the Talent Show. The children and adults who participated looked like they were having as much fun as the audience did in watching them. The show was followed by a Make your own Sundae dessert.

Donations

In memory of Helen and Henry Steinhardt
Lawrence Steinhardt

In memory of her father,
Jules Katz

In memory of Edward Gross, father of Susan McNamara
Marsha Gross

In memory of Arthur Tarlowe, father of Paul
Marsha Gross

Gwen and Ed Nagorsky
Sharon Herson and Daniel Fleckles

Community Events

Hebrew Chanting Circle in Celebration of Pesach

Thursday, April 10, 7:30 to 9:00 PM
Temple Shalom, 594 N. Bridge St, Bridgewater
\$5.00 donation

Come join our chanting circle that uses sacred Hebrew phrases to promote the healing of our souls (Tikkun Ha'Nefesh) as we strive to contribute to healing our world (Tikkun Olam). Hebrew is a sacred vibrational language, and the repetition of a sacred phrase can clear the mind of clutter and create a sense of inner peace and wholeness. This month we will learn chants that connect us to the Festival of Freedom. No prior knowledge of singing, chanting, or Hebrew language is necessary.

Living Hopefully with Illness & Physical Challenges

Ohr Tikvah is starting a support group for individuals living with chronic illness and physical challenges. Co-led by Rabbi Robin Nafshi and a social worker, the group will provide a safe environment to share personal stories, to laugh and maybe cry, and to learn from Jewish text and traditions how to live life fully in the face of adversity. A minimum of eight people is needed to launch the group. Please call Ohr Tikvah if you are interested in participating

JEWISH LIFE

Jewish LIFE and Ohr Tikvah are pleased to present Dr. Dan Glottlieb, *The Wounding and Healing of the Human Spirit* on Thursday, April 3, 7 p.m. This program will be held at the Shimon and Sara Birnbaum JCC in Bridgewater. Dr. Gottlieb, psychologist and family therapist, hosts "Voices in the Family," an award-winning mental health call-in radio show aired in Philadelphia. The fee for the program is \$10/Jewish LIFE Member and \$15/Guest. Call the JCC at 908-725-6994 x201 to register.

Save the date for these community-wide programs: The Yom Hashoah Observance is scheduled for Sunday, May 4th at the Flemington JCC (time TBA). The Jewish LIFE Yom Ha'atzmaut Celebration takes place on Thursday, May 8th (time TBA) at the Flemington JCC.

The Salute to Israel Parade is Sunday, June 1st in New York City. A bus will be leaving from the Shimon and Sara Birnbaum JCC in Bridgewater to take parade goers and marchers to New York. Watch for more details on all of these events. Call the JCC office at x201 to register. Additional details on Jewish LIFE programs are posted at www.ssbjcc.org.

JOIN THE JCC!

Expand your Connection to the Jewish Community with Membership to the Shimon and Sara Birnbaum Jewish Community Center

The JCC is commemorating Israel's 60th Birthday with a very special Membership offer.

Family: Join the JCC for one year for only \$460!
Couple: Join the JCC for one year for only \$360!
Single: Join the JCC for one year for only \$260!

To make this special membership offer even better, we're waiving our Joiner Fee, **saving you up to an additional \$200!**

This offer is available only to current synagogue members joining the JCC for the first time.

This offer is good May 1- 16, 2008.

For further information, call the JCC office at 908-725-6994 x201.

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WOMEN'S CRISIS SERVICES

Wish List Items (*new items only please*)

Gift Certificates

Shoprite
BJ's/COSTCO/Sam's club
Fast food (McDonalds, Burger King, Wendy's, KFC)
Entertainment
Pre-paid phone cards

Food

Sponsor food budget for the shelter one day: \$100 or 15 people
Sponsor food budget for the shelter for one month: \$1200
Kids snacks-small bags of chips, gold fish, fruit cups
Breakfast bars
Drip coffee - regular (flavored once in a while a real treat)
Snack foods
100% fruit juice- 6-packs of small cans & variety of flavors including tomato

General Items

Toilet paper/paper towels (cases are great)
Bathroom cleaner/cleaning products
Cleaning gloves - med & large
Laundry detergent
Clorox bleach
Non chlorine bleach
Pots and pans (non-stick)
Rubbermaid storage bins
2008 date books
Alarm clocks

Women

Feminine Hygiene products
Body wash
Shampoo
Anti-perspirant
Make-up various shades
Toothbrushes, toothpaste

Children

Disney or G rated videos and DVD's
Play Station tapes
Model magic
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Toothbrushes, toothpaste

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