



Mark Your Calendar!

- Friday, Apr. 3, 7:30pm
Shabbat Service
Oneg: Finkelstein, Bauch,
Longenecker families
- Sunday, Apr. 5, 9:30am
Sunday School, Model Seder
(K/1)
- Wed. Apr 8 & Thursday, Apr. 9
Pesach First & Second Seders
- Sunday, Apr. 12
No Sunday School
Happy Pesach!
- Friday, Apr. 17, 7:30pm
Shabbat Service
Oneg: May, Robins, Joel
Berkowitz families
- Sunday, Apr. 19
9:30am Sunday School (K/1),
Music
Confirmation
11:00am-noon, Yom HaShoah
Observance: Guest Speaker
Tova Friedman
- Saturday, Apr. 25, 10:30am
Torah Study
- Sunday, Apr. 26, 9:30am
Sunday School, Yom
HaAtzmaut, Israeli breakfast
10:45am Pirke Avot class
taught by Rabbi Lewis
- Friday, May 1, 7:30pm
Shabbat Service Guest Speaker,
Rabbi Robin Nafshi, on Jewish
Healing
Oneg: Moyer, McNamara,
Gross, Hirshberg families

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

The Ritual Committee with Board approval recently decided to change the time for Friday night services to 7:30 in the hope that it would be easier for younger families to join us. We will evaluate that change in coming months. In an attempt to be responsive to the needs of the entire congregation, the Committee frequently revisits the question of the optimal time and day on which services should be conducted. These recent conversations inspired the following thoughts that I shared as an introduction to our 6 p.m. service for Shabbat Across America.

I grew up going to the "late" Friday evening service. I didn't know it was "late" at the time; to me, it was the normal time service. My father would come home from work. We would eat Shabbat dinner. And we would go to the 8 o'clock service. I didn't learn until years later that the "late" Friday evening service had been a recent Reform innovation in this country. I was living in Jerusalem when I learned there was another way. By about 2 p.m on Friday, the city shut down. Just before sunset, I could look out my window and see people dressed for Shabbat walking in the direction of their synagogues. They had lit their candles at home and were going to a service called Kabbalat Shabbat – a service that welcomed the Sabbath, a service I would have called an "early" service. The service began with the singing of psalms, one for each day of the week. Its highlight was the singing of Lecha Dodi, a poetic and prayerful welcoming of the Sabbath bride. The service was virtually all music, followed by a short Ma'ariv service (the usual evening service beginning with the Barchu and concluding with Kaddish). There was no sermon and no Torah reading. When the brief service ended, everyone walked home to a leisurely Shabbat dinner.

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President's Message

I believe that the cat is out of the bag. I am now a lame duck president, just like George W., Bill Clinton and eventually Barack Obama. However, you will not be able to get rid of me that quickly since now I will be Immediate Past President and have a seat on the Board. Also, in that capacity, I will even have a vote. In order to promote debate and discussion, our Temple president has a vote if only there is a tie (I am assuming that the Board meeting has a quorum, which we do almost all of the time).

At our Congregational Meeting on Sunday, June 7, we will vote on new officers. We are in the process of encouraging nominees, and I hope to see several new faces on the Board for next year. I realize that we have been wedded to meeting the first Monday evening of every month; however I believe other convenient dates can also be considered.

For me, personally, it has been a growing experience. Previously I had been treasurer of our Temple, another job that requires contact with essentially every member of the Congregation. I am glad that we are small enough that I have been able to get to know each of you, at least adequately enough to know you when I see you at services.

I have benefited tremendously from improving my Hebrew with Howie Hirsch and Charlotte Fels. I hope I can continue to improve in this area. It is also interesting that our little outpost in Warren County is coveted by both United Jewish Communities of MetroWest NJ and the Jewish Federation of Somerset,

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Rabbi's Message, cont.

I learned that the early Friday night service was actually an ancient custom. This special preliminary portion called Kabbalat Shabbat had been introduced somewhat later by the 16th century Kabbalists in the city of Tzfat in northern Israel. The kabbalists would dress in white and go out to the fields to welcome the Sabbath Bride. I learned to love this way of welcoming Shabbat in services and of going home afterwards to a leisurely Shabbat dinner.

Where did the tradition of the late Friday night service come from? It was an American innovation. This country presented new challenges to that early Kabbalat Shabbat service. The Industrial Revolution and upward mobility changed things. Not all Jews lived within walking distance of the Temple. The American work schedule conflicted with people's need to get home in time for an early Friday night service. The secular world offered additional competition for the early religious experience.

The American creative solution was this: move the Friday evening service to a later hour, after Shabbat dinner. It seemed contradictory: it meant you were welcoming the Sabbath bride later in the evening after the Shabbat meal when she had already been waiting for you for a few hours. It preserved the institution of the Shabbat dinner although it meant that there was no relaxed post-meal family time at home on Shabbat evening. But as Abraham Millgram writes in his book about the Sabbath, "Life...proved stronger than logic." And the new oneg Shabbat after services provided compensatory time to catch up on the doings of the community. This new late service seemed to work for many years, although it, too, presents scheduling conflicts for many families.

We continue to struggle with the idea that there is a magical perfect time that is right for a Friday night service. Tradition would argue that the perfect time is sundown, when Shabbat begins. Whatever scheduling decisions we make – early or late – they will be perfect for some and imperfect for others. How can we preserve the precious ritual of Shabbat dinner at home and still encourage families to attend services on Friday night? How do we help our families with these Jewish choices? I suspect the answer lies less in whether services are early or late and more in our own decision-making about where Shabbat services belong on our own personal priority list.

On Shabbat Across America, we started services early, before dinner, as our ancestors did for so many generations. This year, we did only that preliminary portion of the service we call Kabbalat Shabbat as a way of exposing the congregation to a ritual we don't usually have time for. We didn't pray the usual Barchu, Shma, and Amidah, although we concluded with Kaddish. We sang our way through those ancient psalms and then went downstairs for a leisurely Shabbat dinner. After dinner, we sang zemirot led by Cantor Kadin and guitar. It felt like having Shabbat dinner with family. Everyone said: we should do this more often. If we did, would you come?

Rabbi Ellen Lewis

President's Message, cont.

Hunterdon and Warren counties (www.jfedshaw.org). I have cast my personal time into the fray with the latter organization, and serve on the Board of JFEDSHAW. Our Temple also has a presence with the regional office of The Union for Reform Judaism. It has been a rewarding use of my time helping both individuals and Temples that are experiencing financial difficulties in these difficult times.

As I embark on a new career in marketing financial planning software to the financial planning community, I know that I will be able to balance this new challenge with time for our Temple. We have been members for over fifteen years, our children had Bar & Bat Mitzvahs and were confirmed, and Rabbi Lewis even helped my wife and me renew our marriage vows after thirty wonderful years. Thank you to all in our Congregation for helping to make these simchas possible.

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

Shalom,
Jim Arvesen

Upcoming Events

Sunday, April 19, 11 a.m. Yom HaShoah Observance, Guest Speaker Tova Friedman "The Holocaust through the Eyes of a Child"

On Sunday, April 19 (11 a.m.), we will hold our annual observance for Yom HaShoah. Not just a Sunday School event, this is an important holiday in our Jewish calendar, even though it is a new (relatively speaking) holiday. The commemoration is not a "holiday" in the usual sense because we are remembering a tragic event of overwhelming horror. Nevertheless, there is celebration in the remembering because the Jewish people have survived. If you have children in Sunday School, be there at eleven so that you can hear what they hear and talk with them about it afterwards. If you don't have children in Sunday School, be there because the speaker is excellent and should have a good audience.

Our guest, Tova Friedman, will show a short film that she has made and talk on "The Holocaust through the Eyes of a Child" (there will not be a formal service). Mrs. Friedman, a mere six-and-a-half when the concentration camp was liberated by the Russians, was one of the youngest survivors of Auschwitz. She came to America in 1950, lived in Israel for ten years, and taught ESL (English as a Second Language) at Hebrew University. She is the former (recently retired) Executive Director of Jewish Family Service of Somerset, Hunterdon and Warren Counties and has over twenty years of experience providing psychotherapy services and managing programs and agencies. Mrs. Friedman, a noted and sought-after speaker, has shared her experiences in Auschwitz with many schools and organizations. She hopes that her stories will emphasize that prejudice and violence destroy both the victim and the victor.

Friday Night, May 1, Guest Speaker Rabbi Robin Nafshi, "On Jewish Healing"

We are fortunate that Rabbi Robin Nafshi has accepted our invitation to speak at the Shabbat evening service on Friday, May 1 (7:30 p.m.). In addition to her duties serving as a congregational rabbi at Temple Beth-El in Hillsborough, Rabbi Nafshi is committed to working in the area of Jewish healing. She served for two years as a hospice chaplain for the Visiting Nurse Association of Northern New Jersey, and currently serves as the Community Rabbi-Community Chaplain for Ohr Tikvah Jewish Healing Center of Somerset, Hunterdon, and Warren Counties. Rabbi Nafshi was born and raised in northern New Jersey and attended New York University and Cornell Law School. After moving to San Francisco, she worked as an attorney, and as a legal author and editor. In the late 1990s, after being involved as a lay leader in her local community, Robin Nafshi realized her calling in her commitment to the Jewish people and Jewish life. In 2000, she was accepted to Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. Selected as a Wexner Graduate Fellow (four-year scholarship and stipend), she was ordained in 2005. Her past work as a hospice chaplain and present work with Ohr Tikvah ensure that her thoughts on Jewish healing will be important and relevant to all of us in our daily lives.

An Invitation from Marcy Kadin

I would like to invite everyone to my Senior Recital and Luncheon on Wednesday, April 22 in the Minnie Petrie Chapel of Hebrew Union College at 10:45 a.m. 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 nineteenth 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. Please join me on this special day!

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

Religious School/PTO Events

Spring is here! On April 5th we will celebrate Passover with a Model Seder. There is no Hebrew School on April 12th (Passover). We will observe Yom Ha Shoah on April 19th with guest speaker, Tova Friedman. And on April 26th we will celebrate Yom HaAtzmaut with an Israeli Breakfast.

Marsha Gross and Karen Finkelstein

Stay tuned . . .

The congregation is planning a celebratory send-off for our student cantor, Marcy Kadin, sometime after her early May investiture. As soon as the event is set, everyone will be informed by email and in the May newsletter.

Welcome New Member

Please welcome our newest member, Erik Heller.

In Search of a New Cantor

In May, our wonderful student cantor, Marcy Kadin, will be invested as a full cantor. Everyone who has had the privilege and delight of getting to know Marcy and hearing her sing will miss her, and we are all sad that she must leave us at the end of June, having reached the conclusion of her student internship. The board of directors and many in the congregation would have liked to have been in the position of being able to offer Marcy a permanent position with us, but our finances did not permit this (not a consequence of the recent economic downturn but rather a fact of life in this congregation's history). Consequently, we wish Marcy all good luck in her job search—and have given her the best possible rave references as she pursues this. We have also benefited from her advice as we, in turn, search for a new student cantor.

Five of us, including Rabbi Lewis, took the second step in this endeavor when we went to the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion's School of Sacred Music in N.Y. on Sunday, March 22. What was the first step? Receiving and watching a DVD recorded by first-year cantorial students who study in Israel in order to become proficient in Hebrew before beginning their work in N.Y., and interviewing them by phone. All told, we spent more than three hours on the phone with them. Four had expressed an interest in our congregation, based on a written profile and—even more important, as they told us—studying our Web site. The Web site (thank you, Paul Tarlowe!) was equally important in attracting candidates at HUC on Sunday. Also important was Marcy's written description (thank you, Marcy!) of her experiences with the congregation (we did not see this document, but everyone we interviewed mentioned it and the Web site as the crucial factors that attracted them to us). Such exhilarating days as Sunday are rare—and for me, the pleasure and challenges both were unexpected. The pleasure highlight of the day was the morning concert—actually auditions by all ten students who are seeking pulpit placements for next year. They all sing well—from beautifully to magnificently. We were transported, from Shabbat evening to Shabbat morning to Yom Kippur to Tot Shabbat. Their styles differed, they interacted with the audience in diverse ways, but all were committed and spiritually connected. We interviewed five of this group, four of whom had earlier selected us as

one of the temples they wanted to talk with. The afternoon was grueling but wonderful—twenty-minute interviews, mostly back to back. Exhausting for us, but even more so for the candidates. Such fascinating, dedicated, and talented young people all in one place! After the top two, it was very difficult to rank the rest. This we must do as part of the matching process; the students, too, do a ranking of their own. The “match” is done by Cantor Josée Wolff, Director of Placement at the School of Sacred Music. We look forward to announcing the results in the May newsletter. We will be fortunate to host any one of them.

—Sharon Herson

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Marsha Gross, in memory of Jules Katz, Michael Ganz

Rabbi Ellen Lewis, in memory of Lillian Jay

Rona and Stanley Schick, in memory of Glenn

Knobelman's father, Ralph Knobelman

JEWISH LIFE

The final Jewish LIFE program of the season will be the community-wide Yom Hashoah Observance featuring Julie Kohner. This program will be held on Sunday, April 26, at 7 p.m. at Temple Beth-El, Hillsborough. Ms. Kohner's presentation, *Voices of the Generations*, tells the story of survival and love of her parents, Hanna and Walter Kohner, who survived the Holocaust. There is no admission fee for this program. Call Temple Beth-El at 908-722-0674 for further details. *Jewish LIFE thanks all those who supported our programs this year.*

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