

Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey

Journal

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Rabbi's Message

Dear Friends,

From Sunday, March 19 – Thursday, March 22, I had the privilege and joy of participating in the 128th Annual Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis where, over the course of four days, I learned, prayed, celebrated, and planned for a more meaningful Jewish future with almost 600 other Reform rabbis. This year we gathered in Atlanta, which, as the Civil Rights capital of our land, served as the thematic backdrop for our overall theme: “Being a Rabbi in Turbulent Times.”

Borrowing from the official 2017 CCAR Convention Mission Statement, this was a convention in which we interacted with and learned from our host city, the institutions of higher learning in and around the city, and the scholars, academics, movers and shakers who help make Atlanta thrive.

As a participant, I made my own track over the course of the four days, choosing from a variety of offerings. While I did choose to do some learning for learning's sake, I also chose to attend sessions that were more practical in nature in terms of giving me fresh information and new skills that I'm sure will enhance my work as your rabbi.

(continued on next page)

Mark Your Calendar

- **Friday, April 7th**
6:30pm – Potluck Dinner
7:30pm – Shabbat Service
Oneg – Rosenblum, Simons, Parson
- **Saturday, April 8th**
7:00pm – Sisterhood Jewelry Exchange Fundraiser
- **Tuesday, April 11th**
7:00pm – Mah Jongg
- **Saturday, April 15th**
10:30am – Torah Study
- **Monday, April 17th**
7:30pm – Book Club
- **Friday, April 21st**
7:30pm – Shabbat Service
Oneg – Goldfarb, Fletcher, Klein
- **Saturday, April 22nd**
Shabbaton (see Pg. 5)
- **Tuesday, April 25th**
7:00pm – Mah Jongg
- **Monday, May 1st**
7:00pm – Board of Trustees Mtg.
- **Friday, May 5th**
7:30pm – Shabbat Service
Oneg – J/J Berkotitz, Bauer

Sunday School:

April 2, 9, 23, 30 @ 9:30am

Rabbi's Message (cont.)

While there I saw old friends and colleagues, including my own childhood rabbi, and created new relationships as well. I was especially pleased to have the opportunity to fellowship with a strong group of other rabbis who are serving small congregations. We discussed concerns that touch us in ways that large congregations are immune, and we began to strategize on how best to pool our talents and resources for the good of all smaller congregations. As well, I'm happy to say that the professional and lay leadership of the CCAR pledged to offer unprecedented support, both programmatic and financial, as we move forward in the coming months and years.

Though it was a truly wonderful convention overall, here are some of my own personal highlights:

The first thing I did upon arrival on Sunday was meet with the Small Congregations cohort to kick off discussions that then continued throughout the conference. After that, the entire conference enjoyed hearing from CNN's Dana Bash, herself an active Reform Jew and the daughter of a Reform Jewish Educator. She shared insights about the current political landscape. The evening then concluded with a gala opening dinner, during which I had the pleasure of catching up with former Rabbinical School classmates.

On Monday morning, we had the great privilege of listening to a three-person panel, which included Atlanta's Mayor Kasim Reed, Ebenezer Baptist Church's Senior Pastor, Raphael Warnock, and Associate General Counsel of Habitat for Humanity and Associate Pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, Natosha Reid Rice. The three of them – two theologians and one politician – spoke with a unified voice about the positive role religion and religious people play in the difficult endeavor of protecting the rights of the often otherwise unprotected. That evening, after a visit to the Center of Civil and Human Rights, we concluded the day with a visit to The Temple Atlanta, where we began with dinner (my dinner partner for the evening was Rabbi Lewis!) and finished with a most riveting presentation of "The Temple Bombing," a dramatic recreation of the evening on October 12, 1958, when a bundle of dynamite blew through the wall of Atlanta's oldest synagogue.

The highlight of Tuesday for me was sitting in on a session led by Daniel Medwin, Manager of Digital Media for the CCAR, Joshua Halo, Dean of the Cincinnati campus of Hebrew Union College, and Laura Baum, Associate Vice President for Learning and Engagement for the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of the Boston Jewish Federation, on Digital Learning, during which participants were exposed to a wide array of strategies and tools to enhance our teaching. I look forward to exploring this topic more.

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Rabbi's Message (cont.)

On Tuesday evening we gathered to hear Joseph J. Levin, and Alabama Reform Jew and Co-Founder of the Southern Poverty Law Center, talk about Hate and Extremism in the United States. He told the compelling story of how he, a privileged white Alabamian during Jim Crow came to see the need for the Center he created. He encouraged us to be ever-vigilant so as to protect our country from falling into the same trap of racist ideology again. And then, if that weren't enough, the evening closed with an outstandingly inspiring concert by a joint choir from The Temple of Atlanta and Ebenezer Baptist Church. It was a fantastic evening.

On Wednesday morning we heard the unlikely story of how Reform-Jew-turned-Orthodox-Rabbi-and-activist-Israeli-settler, Hanan Schlesinger, and formerly jailed Palestinian political prisoner, Ali Abu Awwad, came to know one another and how they, together, launched the Roots/Shorashim Project, which seeks to create meaningful dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis who otherwise would never find reason to interact. Their story was both moving and filled with hope for a better future. Still on the topic of Israel, I then attended a smaller session that afternoon with Anna Langer, Associate Vice President for Israel Education and Engagement at Hillel International, which focused on the current state of Israel affairs on college campuses. Special attention was given to the topic of BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions). There is considerable work for us to do to ensure that Israel and Jews are treated with fairness at many of our institutions of higher learning. I finished Wednesday's learning with a session by David Blumenthal, Professor of Judaic Studies at Emory University, and one of my theologian-heroes. It was an honor to hear him discuss God and our Jewish prayer book.

The climax of our week came Wednesday evening, when Cornell William Brooks, President of the NAACP, closed the program with 60 minutes of inspiration from the podium. He tied all the pieces together for us, and charged us to move forward as rabbis with the prophetic tradition on our side to insist that the vulnerable of our country find the protection and support to which every human being is entitled. Though a Yale-trained lawyer, it was in his persona as a fourth-generation minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church that he truly brought the house down. I cannot imagine a better conclusion to the Convention.

On Thursday morning, I said goodbye to old friends and colleagues, as well as to new ones, took the MARTA train to the airport, flew home, kissed the family hello, and fell asleep. It was a magical four days!

L'Shalom,

Rabbi Dubin

President's Message

A fiddler on the roof? Strange. I saw the play recently at Warren Hills High, and I do not think I had seen it since I was a little boy back in the Sixties. The music in the first act is superb. It is energetic, fun and truly enjoyable to listen to. While the authors have captured your attention in the first act with the music, there are many underlying themes that are either obvious or not so obvious. The idea that tradition rules the lives of many people around the world, and the courage that it takes to buck the traditions of your parents and their parents. Tevye, the main character, had 5 daughters. The first daughter decided to marry someone else after her father had promised her to another man. His second daughter becomes enamored with an idealist and runs away from her family to join her love, who is imprisoned for who knows what crime, in Siberia. The third daughter chooses to marry outside of her faith, angering her father to no end. And then at the conclusion, we see the effects of the Russian Revolution forcing the Jews to leave their homes of many generations with no time to prepare.

Okay, that is a short synopsis from my point of view of the events of the play. How does this affect our lives as reform Jews in 2017? Reform Jews have opened their hearts to fight against SOME traditions of the past, but are also tied to parts of that past as well. We do not forget our Torah. We do not forget our holidays. We do not forget our families. But where we hope we have become more enlightened is that if someone in our family does not follow our tradition, we do not cut them off from us. If our child marries outside the faith, we embrace the new family as our own. If our child is LGBTPQ, we embrace them for who they are and love them as we would every other child.

The part regarding the pogrom of forcing the Jews from their homes by people who they had considered their friends was the scariest part of the play to me. I would like to think that we have assimilated into the culture of the United States and that we are considered every bit as American as any other ethnicity, but so did the Jews of Nazi Germany. They considered themselves Germans and were shocked when the population of the country turned against them.

I urge you to keep vigilant for any signs that our country could be putting us as "inferior" citizens because of our religious beliefs. Do not be so complacent that it could not happen here.

BUT, don't let that rule who we are or what we do. We do much charitable work for the needy and we need to continue to do this. We need to support the arts and music programs in our schools, so in case budget cuts come, they do not take away from the arts and music programs.

And as my good friend Lenny has said for years, "Don't just be good, be good for something!!!"

May you enjoy a joyous Passover.

Howie

Updates & Events

SHABBATON

JCNWJ will hold its next Shabbaton on Saturday, April 22nd. If you haven't been to one yet, it involves events throughout the day, and you may choose to attend any or all of them.

Schedule:

10:30am – Shabbat Morning Service and Torah Study

12:30pm – Lunch

1:15pm – The Whole Megillah – What We Can Learn from the Five Scrolls

3:15-5:30pm – Shabbat Rest

5:30pm – Wine and Cheese, followed by Broadway Singalong: Music of the Jewish Broadway Composers

The Whole Megillah:

Did you know that there are five megillot? Most of us associate the word “megillah” with the Book of Esther. The other megillot -- the Song of Songs, the Book of Ruth, Lamentations, and Ecclesiastes -- may be less familiar. Under the guidance of Cantor Labow, we will study portions of each of these.

Please RSVP to sharonherson@comcast.net if you plan to attend and specify morning or evening or both.

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

Upcoming Sunday School Dates:

- April 2nd
- April 9th
- April 23rd
- April 30th

Family Passover Seder on April 9th

Confirmation on April 2nd

MAH JONGG

Mah Jongg at the Temple on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month continues. We start at 7:00pm. No experience needed! Contact Rhonda Jordan at helpmerhonda171@yahoo.com if interested!

Updates & Events

DONATIONS

In Memory of Edward Lewis
- Rabbi Ellen Lewis

In Memory of Rose Schutzbank
- Ruth Schutzbank

In Honor of Sharon Herson's birthday
- Jonathan & Joann Herson

In Memory of Arthur Tarlowe
- Paul & Laura Tarlowe

In Memory of Sadye Herzmark
- Bernie & Nancy Robins

In memory of Maxwell Gross
-Deb Kalisher

TORAH STUDY

Upcoming dates for Torah study are the following Saturday mornings, promptly at 10:30: **April 15, May 13, and June 10**. The "regulars" always welcome new participants. We will study the passages relating to the recapitulation of the wanderings in the desert and the boundaries of Canaan (Num. 33:1–34:29). After that, the cities of refuge (Num. 35:1–34); and, finally, the daughters of Zelophehad (Num. 36:1–13). That means we should finish Numbers by June, if not earlier. For those who haven't been to a Torah study session, some explanation may be in order. The group moves at its own pace; therefore, we don't know exactly how far we will get in any given two-hour session. (We are not reading the portion of the week—maybe next time around)

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.

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.

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