



Mark Your Calendar!

- Friday, May 1, 7:30pm
Shabbat Service Guest Speaker,
Rabbi Robin Nafshi, on Jewish
Healing
Oneg: Moyer, McNamara,
Gross, Hirshberg families
- Sunday, May 3, 9:30am
Sunday School
Cantor's Investiture in NYC
- Sunday, May 10
No Sunday School
Happy Mother's Day!
- Friday, May 15, 7:30pm
Shabbat Service
Oneg: Weiss, Herson, O'Leary,
Bauer families
- Saturdays, May 16 & June 20,
10:30am
Torah Study
- Sunday, May 17
9:30am Sunday School (K/1),
Music
Confirmation
- Sunday, May 24
No Sunday School
Memorial Day
- Friday, May 29, 7:30pm
Shabbat Service & Bar Mitzvah
of Cameron Baeck
Oneg: Baeck family
- Saturday, May 30, 7:00pm
Havdallah Service honoring the
Cantor
- Sunday, May 31, 9:30am
Sunday School
Confirmation Ceremony
Closing Assembly
- Sunday, June 7
Congregational Meeting

**Friday Shabbat 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

This column continues the theme of last month's message (about the time of Friday night services) in the hopes of encouraging further conversation and feedback.

I learned the Torah service by osmosis. My family went to the 8 p.m. Friday night service when I was a child. I heard Torah read every week on Friday night (although I am sure Torah was also read on Shabbat mornings, but that wasn't when my family went). I don't recall the length of the service. I know we used the old Union Prayer Book, a small book whose liturgy was so abbreviated that the service could not have been too long.

From a traditional perspective, Torah is read only on Shabbat mornings (and of course on holidays), never on Friday night. Because our congregation does not have regular services on Shabbat mornings, our tradition has been to read Torah on Friday nights. In order to accommodate both the Torah reading and a sermon, we have abbreviated the liturgy. Since January, we have been praying from **Mishkan T'filah**, a more accessible prayer book that offers us lovely new translations and interpretations as well as transliteration of the Hebrew. Over the past few months, we have been experimenting with how to use this book. We have cut the Friday night service (eliminating most of the beautiful psalms from kabbalat Shabbat) as closely as we can, while maintaining both a Torah service and a sermon. The length is still about an hour and a half. Since we have been starting earlier, that means we begin at 7:30 and finish at 9 before heading downstairs to the oneg Shabbat.

We could leave things as they stand, but if we do so, I think we might be missing

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President's Message

My wife Linda and I just returned from a week's trip to Prague. Our children Sarah and Brandon had already visited the city on their various tours of Europe, and finally convinced us to visit the city. They described it as a smaller Paris, and much less expensive. They were correct. However, next time I go to Prague, I believe it will be my duty to invite the President of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

President Ahmadinejad is a well-educated person, who is also a holocaust denier. It is impossible to visit a city like Prague, experience wonderful concerts at synagogues, and notice that there are very few Jews in the city. What do I mean, few Jews in the city?

In their twisted mentality, the Nazis chose to preserve the synagogues of Prague as reminders of the past. We visited the Pinchas Synagogue where approximately 80,000 names of murdered victims are inscribed on the wall. My wife uses her maiden name, Albin, and we discovered that name in several places.

Consequently, there is a visible infrastructure that was used historically by the Jews of Prague. Ironically, this infrastructure is visited today, mainly by tourists, but minimally used by the estimated 2,000 Jewish residents of Prague. More than 80,000 Czech Jews were murdered in World War II. Most of them spent time at a concentration camp in Terezin (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terezin>). We also visited Terezin. Our feelings at visiting this death camp were the same as those expressed by Rabbi Lewis in her December, 2008, newsletter. Terezin was utilized by the Nazis as a way station while the Nazis were preparing Auschwitz and other

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Rabbi's Message, cont.

an opportunity for a productive exchange about all the possible alternatives and the implications of these choices. As our conversation has progressed over the recent months, it has become clear that any discussion about the time of services can't be held in a vacuum. The underlying question is this: What are the values that should guide us in making these decisions?

When I first joined this congregation fifteen years ago, the board impressed one clear value on me and that was the value of community. They told me seriously that if I planned to teach adult education Friday night during the oneg Shabbat, I would not be hired. That was the only time the congregation got together during the week, they said. People live in different towns and don't just run into each other. We need this time to catch up with each other.

This is a congregation that has always taken seriously what it means to be together. Other congregations that are larger often offer a variety of service choices. That isn't something we have done here at the Center. We have felt that we are too small to split into smaller interest groups. Some years ago, we did make the decision to offer family services on the high holy days, but admittedly that was an attempt to thin out the crowd and allow more open seats at the later services.

So any decision about what time services should begin must include the question of how it will affect the sense of community. Should we alternate times on Friday nights, having one service a month begin at 6 and the other begin at 7:30? Where will the young children have an opportunity to meet the older members if we offer a 6 p.m. family service instead of a 7:30 p.m. service? Should we add in Shabbat morning services where Torah can be read comfortably without the concern that the children are staying up too late? Should we eliminate Torah readings on Friday night? If we did that, when would the children (never mind the adults) hear Torah read? Should we eliminate the sermon on Friday night (I don't take any of this personally, so feel free to be honest with your opinions)? How much liturgy can we cut before we have made too large a spiritual sacrifice?

All of these suggestions need to be evaluated in the light of our values. The Religious Practices Committee has taken seriously the recommendations you have offered. It seems to me and to the committee members that these decisions are serious enough to involve you, the entire congregation, in the ongoing discussion. So let's keep talking.

Rabbi Ellen Lewis

Some members have approached me about organizing a congregational trip to Israel some time in the future. If you are interested in talking about it, please let me know via email or phone. Rabbi Lewis

President's Message, cont.

death camps for their "Final Solution."

Rabbi Lewis said it very eloquently in her newsletter from December, 2008. In her message she described her conflicting feelings of visiting Auschwitz. She was impressed with Israeli visitors to Auschwitz who visibly wore the Israeli flag as a symbol.

Yes, there is an active Jewish community today in Prague, but it is a remnant of what the Nazis destroyed over 65 years ago. Mr. Ahmadinejad, I hope you now see such visible reminders of the holocaust are not a fabrication.

In the Broadway play, Irena's Vow, Tovah Feldshuh plays a devout Catholic Polish house maid who successfully hides 12 Jews. After the war, Irena moves to California as Irena Gut Opdyke, married to a United Nations official. In her words, "she places a do not disturb sign over her heart." Remembering the awful Nazi occupation was too much for her until a student asks her whether the holocaust existed. Determined, she becomes a non-Jewish exponent of the importance of remembering the Holocaust in the hope that it will never re-occur.

Please set aside June 7 for our annual Congregational meeting. More information to follow.

Shalom,
Jim Arvesen

Upcoming Events

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

Rabbi Robin Nafshi will 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.

Send-off for Cantor Marcy, May 30, 7 p.m.

On May 3, our student cantor, Marcy Kadin, will become a fully invested cantor. Some of you will be privileged to attend the investiture ceremony at Temple Emanuel in New York. Others of you were able to take a day off in midweek to attend Marcy's student recital on April 22--a memorable and fabulous concert (followed by a delicious Moroccan-style lunch hosted by Marcy and her husband Paul for all in attendance). SO . . . Marcy's three years as a student with us are drawing to a close and we want to say a proper goodbye as a congregation. So this is what we've decided to do:

WHAT: a special Havdallah service at which Marcy will perform several pieces from her recital, followed by a schmooze party in her honor in the *simcha* room

WHEN: May 30, 7 p.m. NO rsvp. Just come.
EVERYONE

WHAT TO BRING: sweet dessert or fruit

GIFT: If you would like to contribute to a gift for Marcy, please send your donation (check) by May 18 to: Lynn Kowski,

HELP: If you would like to help set up the *simcha* room on Saturday (late morning) or can stay late for clean-up, please contact Sharon Herson

Religious School/PTO Events

May is our last month of Hebrew School before the summer break. There will be no school on May 10 (Mother's Day) and May 24 (Memorial Day). May 31 is our Confirmation Ceremony – all of the Hebrew School students will participate. Mazel Tov to our eight confirmands! May 31 is also our closing assembly. (Parents should plan to stay for our Confirmation Ceremony and Closing Assembly.)

It has been a great year and we wish you all a wonderful summer!

Marsha Gross and Karen Finkelstein

New Student Cantor

Tifani Katof, who will be a fifth-year student in September, will be our new student cantor. Tifani is getting married in July, so her name will be Tifani Coyot by the time we all meet her officially. (Pronounced, as she explained, this way: co as in co-op and yo as in yo what's up!) She is an experienced, lively, and talented young woman who will work well with our congregation. The Search Committee is thrilled – she was our number one choice and we were hers.

Welcome New Members

Please welcome our newest members:
the Heller Family
Kathleen Graham (Hanukkah certificate)

From Rona & Stanley

To The Dear Congregation of the Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey and Rabbi Ellen Lewis,

Stanley and I have been members for 33 years. We have enjoyed some of the best years of our life at the Jewish center. It is with great sadness that we are leaving our many friends, we will both miss them, although you will always remain in our hearts.

We have seen many families come and go, all the children we knew and know, have grown to be wonderful adults. We have loved them all.

We hope you will not forget us and will keep in touch.

With Love,

Rona & Stanley Schick

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In memory of Fannie Garfunkel, Jan Romanczyk

In memory of Pauline Schick

In gratitude to the Mattsons and Eric Edelstein for all the help they lovingly provided in time of need

Rona and Stanley Schick

In memory of Sadye L. Hertzmark

Nancy and Bernard Robins

The Jewish Center wishes a speedy recovery to Shelly Finkelstein

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Additional information is available on the Camp website
<http://www.njycamps.org/>
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