



Mark Your Calendar!

- Monday, Oct. 1, 7:30pm
Board Meeting
- Friday, Oct. 5, 7:45pm
Shabbat/Simchat Torah Service
Oneg: Jordan, Goldner/Post,
Heller families
- Sunday, Oct. 7
8:00am Men's Club Fall Road
Clean-up
9:30am Sunday School (K/1),
Music with Cantor Kadin
9:30am PTO meeting
10:45am Pirke Avot class
- Tuesday, Oct. 9, 7:00pm
Beginning Hebrew Class for
Adults
- Saturday, Oct. 13, 10:30am
Torah Study
- Sunday, Oct. 14
9:30am Sunday School
10:30am Confirmation class
12:15pm Cooking class
- Tuesday, Oct. 16, 7:00pm
Beginning Hebrew Class for
Adults
- Wednesday, Oct. 17, 7:30pm
Book Club
- Friday, Oct. 19, 7:45pm
Shabbat Service, Oneg:
Nagorsky, Orenstein,
Knobelman families
- Sunday, Oct. 21
9:30am Sunday School (K/1),
Music with Cantor Kadin
- Tuesday, Oct. 23, 7:00pm
Beginning Hebrew Class for
Adults
- Sunday, Oct. 28
9:30am Sunday School
- Tuesday, Oct. 23, 7:00pm
Beginning Hebrew Class for
Adults
- Sunday, Nov. 11, noon
Ginger Nathanson – "Jewish
Genetic Diseases..."

Rabbi's Message

Today Iranian President Ahmadinejad spoke at Columbia University. I think the school was right to let him speak and the students were right to protest. Demagogues don't go away if we ignore them. He is a Holocaust-denier and has been quoted as saying that Israel should be wiped off the map. It is due to people like him that I gave the following sermon on Sept. 8.

The month of Elul is a time of introspection. We don't wait until we walk into the sanctuary on Rosh Hashanah to begin the process of repentance. It's like trying to play a sport without warming up first. We have to prepare so that when we walk into this sanctuary on Rosh Hashanah, we have already been self-reflective. Our hearts are open. We are ready to repent. Part of my annual personal preparation involves studying so that I can write holiday sermons. In my preparation this year, I copied down the words of Rabbi David Ellenson¹, the President of Hebrew Union College. "I believe that theology is ultimately an expression of autobiography and that how we think about God and how we think about our ultimate commitments are bound up with our personal story." I wrote down those words because I agree with Rabbi Ellenson and I have been planning to talk about it during the next few weeks. But due to the events of the last week, I have also applied his idea to anti-

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President's Message

L'Shana Tova.

What follows is very difficult for me to express as the New Year begins. After The Jewish Center was vandalized last month, the board discussed several plans of action. The main consensus was that we should address the issue and work to prevent such obscene anti-Semitism in the future. To that end, we are planning to work with the Warren County Human Relations Commission, a quasi-public non-profit organization that works closely with the schools and the Warren County prosecutor's office.

Our crime was reported to the local Washington Police, and by them to the Warren County prosecutor's office. I will be working with the Commission over the next several months to formulate a plan of action. One possibility would be to work with them in the schools on a pro-active basis. Please let me know your thoughts, either by email at arvesen@att.net, or on my cell phone at 917-941-4332.

The Commission recommended that we have a document prepared for the press in the event we want to go that route. What follows is my first effort in that direction.

POSSIBLE DOCUMENT FOR COMMISSION OR PRESS

Our religious institution, The Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey, has been a neighbor in Washington Boro for over 60 years. For much of that time, we have been well-received by this "Hometown Friendly" community. We have been active cleaning up debris on Route 57, sponsored food drives for Norwescap in Phillipsburg and are planning a blood drive for the community.

Consequently, the following incident upsets our congregation. After dark, on

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President's Message, cont.

August 30, 2007, a swastika was spray-painted on our House of Worship. We reported it the next day to the Washington Boro Police Department. They have been very helpful in giving us direction in how to minimize these events in the future. In the State of New Jersey, this type of crime is labeled "criminal mischief," a prosecutable offense.

But our goal is not to put the perpetrators in jail, but rather to attempt to work positively to minimize such events in Washington, and elsewhere in the state. The Anti-Defamation League reports that there were four anti-Semitic bias crimes committed in Warren County in last year. In our opinion, that is too many. As a consequence, we have decided to partner with the Warren County Human Relations Commission.

The Commission works with the schools, and other local institutions, to educate our neighbors as to the harm committed when members of the community are marginalized, threatened or become victims of criminal mischief. It is through such efforts that Washington Boro can live up to its hope of being a Hometown Friendly community.

Signed by
James N. Arvesen, President

Ginger Nathanson, "Jewish Genetic Diseases: Gaucher and Tay Sachs"

Ginger Nathanson, longtime member of the JCNWJ, will be our guest speaker on November 11 (at noon). Her subject, "Jewish Genetic Diseases: Gaucher and Tay Sachs," combines science, history, and ethnicity in a unique way. Ginger's personal story makes her especially qualified to discuss this topic. Not only does she live daily with Gaucher disease, she has been a science teacher, supervisor, and curriculum developer on the high school level since the 1970s. She has also taught extensively on the college level—biology, physiology, human anatomy, among other subjects. With this background, you know she will be able to explain her subject to those of us whose science knowledge is much more limited. And why is there such a thing as a Jewish disease anyway?

To continue the conversation, Ginger's talk will be followed by a buffet lunch in the simcha room. RSVP for lunch by Nov. 5 to Sharon Herson.

Thank You

Thank you to all who made our High Holy Days observances so beautiful and meaningful, and to all who made things run smoothly for the rest of us: to Rabbi Lewis, for her leadership in worship, her eloquently personal and politically relevant sermons, and her careful

work with student cantor Marcy Kadin; to Cantor Kadin, for her deeply felt and beautifully sung melodies, and her guitar accompaniment, which added to the richness of our communal song; to Helene Friedlander, for her fluent keyboard-playing, which, together with the cantor and the rabbi, helped guide, push, and cajole the congregation to raise its voice and sound good; to president Jim Arvesen, for his assistance to Rabbi Lewis on the bima and his relaxed and caring manner; to past president Howie Hirsch, for remaining Howie the Hugger, for calling during the shofar services, and for his message on Yom Kippur about the importance of retaining our temple's history; to Eric Edelstein, for valiantly eking out sounds from the shofar on the first day of Rosh Hashanah and for blowing the shofar magnificently on the second day, after having removed a bug that was present but unseen on the first day; to Paul May, for his inspiring Yom Kippur appeal, which we hope will cause all members to lighten their bank accounts and non-members to seriously consider joining us; to all the ark openers, Torah and Haftarah readers and blessers, and Torah dressers, lifters, and paraders; to Mike Fesinstine, for lining up and supervising the ushers and tracking all that he was asked to track; and to all the ushers, for doing their jobs as requested: Bob Ballenberg, Jeff Berkowitz, Brian Friedlander, Steve Goldner, Howie Hirsch, Barry Kestecher, Robert Margolis, Ira Melon, Suzanne Moyer, Ed Nagorsky, Ron Seidorf, and Mike Weiner. Thank you also to those who enabled us to celebrate with food and drink: to the Seidorf and Kowski families for a splendid Oneg on Erev Rosh Hashanah; to Esther Bakonyi and Helen Mattson for organizing and preparing the luncheon following services on Rosh Hashanah, day 2; and to Iris Hirsch, for organizing the superb break-the-fast that followed the closing service on Yom Kippur. Thank you to those members who so graciously helped out when help was needed, especially Cheryl Orenstein, for collecting the names for the Yiskor list, and Judy May for preparing the final list. We are grateful to our committee members who work so hard, not only for the high holy days, but year round, to make sure that our worship services are all that we want them to be: Helen Mattson (who continues to guide us and thankfully has remained on the committee), Judy May (who takes care of the yahrzeit lists, invitations, and myriad other tasks—and who was responsible for the gorgeous white roses sent from Israel for Yom Kippur), and Jennifer Rosenblum (who deftly manages the Oneg list, almost a full-time job in itself). And, to anyone we forgot to mention by name, we thank you, too.

*Sharon Herson and Debbie Knobelman,
co-chairs, Ritual Committee*

Cooking

Share your special recipes and sample those of others. The first session will focus on basic crepes (feel free to call them blintzes or egg-rolls), with fillings for appetizers, main dishes, and desserts. We will also discuss future projects: Jewish holiday meals, traditional Jewish dishes to serve as part of Thanksgiving celebrations. As most participants will be more or less seasoned cooks, we will teach each other to prepare traditional or recently developed dishes. Come with ideas, suggestions, and willingness to share your most guarded kitchen secrets. Coordinated by Iris Hirsch and Esther Bakonyi.

SUNDAYS, 12:15 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Oct. 14, Nov. 18, Dec. 2, Jan. 13, Feb. 3, April 6. 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(s) you will be attending.

Book Club

First book: Amos Elon, *The Pity of It All*, 2002, 448 pages (the subtitle is different in the hardcover and paperback versions) From an acclaimed historian and social critic, a passionate and poignant history of German Jews from the mid-eighteenth century to the eve of the Third Reich. Now, in this important work of historical restoration, Amos Elon takes us back to the beginning, chronicling a period of achievement and integration that at its peak produced a golden age second only to the Renaissance. A collective biography, full of depth and compassion, *The Pity of It All* summons up a splendid world and a dream of integration and tolerance that, despite all, remains the essential ennobling project of modernity. Coordinated by Risa Smith.

WEDNESDAY EVENINGS, 7:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m.

Oct. 17, Dec. 19, Jan. 16, March 19. Participants to purchase their own books. Other titles to be decided by group participants.

Beginning Hebrew Class for Adult Learners

Join Charlotte and Howie as they take you through the basics. Our text will be *Aleph Isn't Tough* and will be taught as a ten-week course. By carefully introducing the letters and vowels of the Hebrew alphabet, the instructors work toward goals of developing the reader's ability to decode written Hebrew words and of grounding Hebrew language study in the broader sense of its use in Jewish life, ritual, and tradition. The reader will become familiar with key Hebrew vocabulary and its role in Jewish tradition, text, and prayer.

TUESDAY EVENINGS, 7-9 p.m.

Oct. 9, 16, 23, Oct. 30, Nov. 6, 13, 20, Dec. 4, 11, 18

Fee: \$54 plus materials; check payable to JCNWJ at first class session; contact Howie by October 1.

Pirke Avot

The Wisdom of the Fathers, taught by Rabbi Ellen Jay Lewis. Lively group discussion always.
SUNDAY MORNINGS, 10:45 a.m.-noon
Oct. 7, Nov. 4, Dec. 2, Jan. 6, Feb. 3, March 2, April 6, May 18 (noon) *If you are new to the class, contact Rabbi Lewis by Oct. 1.*

Torah Study

The group will be studying Exodus during this year. Another stimulating group discussion, Torah-based, with occasional digressions into contemporary events and politics. Coordinated by Sharon Herson
SATURDAY MORNINGS, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Oct. 13, Nov. 17, Dec. 15, Jan. 19, Feb. 16, March 22, April 26, May 10, June 21
Members can come and participate in any and all sessions.

Student Community Service Project - A Partnership in the Arts

Molly Kunzman, a high school senior, designed and created an original mural at the Carrier Clinic, a psychiatric Hospital, in the Adolescent Unit.

It is a room that will be dedicated for the teen resident's library - the first of its kind in New Jersey within a hospital. The project was coordinated through the Somerset Art Association, by executive director, Robyn Tromeur. When asked about the forms, Molly said, "I've been drawing these shapes for years; on my books, in my notebooks, and on my skin." The patients responded with great enthusiasm to the mural. "This will be our chillin' room!"



Rabbi's Message, cont.

Semitism. I believe that how we respond to anti-Semitism is ultimately an expression of autobiography, too. It is bound up with our personal story. So let me tell you a bit of my autobiography, as it is relevant to anti-Semitism.

My parents moved to Westfield when I was two. They bought a house that was in walking distance of the synagogue so that when I was old enough to go to Hebrew school, I could walk. It never occurred to them that no Jews lived anywhere near that temple. It turned out that my sisters and I were the only Jewish kids in Washington Grammar School on the north side of Westfield. A lot of you here know what it is like to be the only Jewish kid in your class. It was lonely. I felt invisible a lot of the time. When I was in 4th grade, it came time for me to walk to Hebrew School on Monday and Wednesday afternoons. I walked straight from Washington School to the Temple. There were some big old chestnut trees on that street on the way to the Temple. There were kids who picked up those chestnuts and threw them at me. They made fun of me. They laughed and asked me if I was going to wear a skullcap. For a 10-year-old kid, it was like walking the gauntlet twice a week. I actually don't remember whether I told anyone about it except that my parents tell me I refused to go back to Hebrew School the following year. I was telling a friend this story the other night and she was shocked. I shrugged my shoulders and said to her: in Westfield in the 1950's and 1960's, there were neighborhoods Jews couldn't live in, one of them right across from the Temple. Realtors wouldn't show you houses there. There was a tennis club Jews couldn't belong to, a golf club Jews couldn't belong to. My mother wasn't even allowed to volunteer for the PTA. It isn't the way Westfield is today but that is what was "normal" then. That's what was normal. I don't think that that part of my personal story is the only reason I hate injustice but I do think it played a large role. No one spoke up for me. I learned that if you want something done about injustice, you have to be the one to do something.

My own autobiography may also explain why I wasn't surprised to hear about the swastika painted on our building. Disgusted? Yes. Saddened? Of course. Afraid? No, not at all. But not surprised. Because I learned many years ago that people do things like that. And people do worse. Painting a swastika on a synagogue is plenty bad; but being physically attacked is worse, being forced into ghettos is worse, being killed for being Jewish is worse. Sometimes, anti-Semitic graffiti leads to worse; and sometimes it doesn't. And that's why we have to talk about how to respond to incidents like this.

I want to tell you about two different New Jersey high schools and two different ways they responded to

an anti-Semitic incident. Some years back, there was an incident at Watchung Hills Regional High School. Someone had painted swastikas on some lockers. At the time, the principal told me that they were careful about their immediate response because they suspected it was done by one particular teen who was known to have emotional problems. They didn't think it would be a helpful punishment to bring charges against him. What the principal did do was to invite ten seniors a day to his office to talk to them about how comfortable they felt in the high school. Were there issues he should know about? Were there problems in inclusion and people being left out? He found out that, yes, the African-American students – or was it the Asian-American students - were feeling left out. The principal brought them together in groups so they could talk about it. I think that was the right response. You don't want to over-react and respond inappropriately in a particular situation.

But some year or two after that, there was an incident at Chatham high school. The school was preparing for a pep rally. The kids made giant posters of the "Chatham Choo Choo" and taped them up in the lunchroom. For two days, no one noticed that one of the train cars looked different from the others. It had bars on the windows and a Jewish man wearing a black hat, sporting payas and holding a bagel leaning out of that train car. There was nothing innocent or misguided about that poster. When someone finally noticed and insisted it be taken down, the situation was handled about as poorly as I have ever seen a situation handled. It blew up in a way that raised to the surface what had been latent anti-Semitism. Eventually, the kids responsible were charged with a hate crime. They had to do community service and attend diversity training. That was a different situation that required a different solution.

When I first came to this Temple, some 13 or 14 years ago, I picked up a message on the Temple machine. I don't remember the words now, but it was anti-Semitic. It sounded like a bunch of teenage kids who had gotten drunk and thought it would be funny to call up the Temple and leave a message. I taped the message off the machine. At the time, I was ready to call the police. But we discussed it and for whatever reason, decided not to pursue it. That may have been the right thing to do at the time. I don't really know. But the question is how we understand what happened this week and what do we do now.

It may be that kids were the ones that did this to the temple. It is even likely. That is for the police to discover. It is not for us to assume. I will say that even if it is kids, painting a swastika on a temple is no accidental innocent act. It is deliberately hurtful. That's

why they call it a hate crime. And if it is kids, there is education that needs to be done. If they catch them. There were, by the way, 4 anti-Semitic incidents in Warren county last year according to the ADL website. I hadn't heard of any of them; I wonder if any of you know. The regional ADL director is looking into them for us.

When the board met last week and discussed all the issues, there was no question about the police knowing. There was no question that we would investigate what kind of additional security we should have for the building. There was also no question that we should talk to the relevant people in the Jewish community – the regional Union for Reform Judaism office, the regional Jewish Federation office, and the Anti-Defamation League – so that they too can act to protect themselves, so that they can offer us solidarity and so that they can offer us their expertise. The question on which there was no immediate resolution was: Should this anti-Semitic act be publicized in the newspapers? This is a judgment call, not a question of right and wrong. There was legitimate concern about inspiring copycat behavior if we publicized it. Because of my personal story, if it were up to me alone, I would go to the papers. But this is not my congregation; it is our congregation. You have heard me say that we are the best-kept secret in Warren County when it comes to Jews knowing about us; we don't seem to be a secret to people who paint swastikas. Maybe a little publicity would wake up those Jews who live around here but don't affiliate; maybe it would make them feel more strongly that they should join us. And maybe a little publicity would let our good Christian neighbors feel outraged and also want to support us.

I often think we don't give our neighbors the opportunity to do the right thing when we don't give them the full information. Our member Susan McNamara told me back in the spring that her school district had scheduled Meet the Teacher Night for Rosh Hashanah. At the time, she went in and talked to the principal who was adamant about not changing it. Susan was understandably upset. She sent me an update email yesterday:

School started on Tuesday and the calendar came out with the "meet the teacher night" scheduled right above Rosh Hashanah. The next day I approached a woman who is Jewish and asked her if she saw the date. She was sooo upset- she said she was up all night over it. She had already spoken to another Jewish family in our school and they were both going to call. The woman at my bus stop had her husband call. The principal gave her whole speech to him like she did to me. He then got really angry with her and told her she was discriminating [against] the Jewish families in the school. She said nothing and they both hung up with each other. Ten minutes later she called him and said

she changed the date. This was yesterday- this morning I got a call from the school secretary - her message was that she wanted to give me a heads up that the date was changed and a notice was going out."

Scheduling issues like that one are not examples of anti-Semitism, just ignorance, but they offer us examples of what can happen when members of a community speak up.

In our case, the board will decide what to do; they would like your input. Talk to them tonight, talk to them Sunday, and on Monday night at the open board meeting, come talk then, too. This community should make these decisions after much discussion. There are other actions for us to take, too, in response to this act. In addition to protecting ourselves, we need to teach our children about anti-Semitism. I wish we didn't have to. But it is better for them to learn in a loving context from people who love them than to learn the hard way. We will talk about it with them in school on Sunday morning. I once knew a woman who converted to Judaism who said her only fear was that she wouldn't know how to help her children respond to anti-Semitism since she herself had never been faced with it. Frankly, I don't think you have to have experienced anti-Semitism to know what to do. Good human beings are good human beings. Those members of our families who are not Jewish are just as hurt and wounded by this act as those of us who are Jewish. And I think that many of the people who live on this street would feel that way, too, if they knew. We also need to reach out to our neighbors on the street and invite them inside our temple. We need to be friends in order to make friends.

There is one way to respond that would be the wrong way and that is to hide being Jewish or to stop being Jewish. A colleague of mine wrote about an anti-Semitic incident on a campus where his daughter was a student. His response was to say: "Jews are not hard. Jews are not cold. Jews are not indifferent. Jews are not insular. Jews are not uncaring; Jews are not angry. Jews are not hateful. No matter who hates us. No matter what they do to us. The worst way for Jews to respond to hate is to stop being Jewish. When we face hate, we step forward toward a Promised Land. A greater miracle than splitting the sea is opening the heart to hope."¹ So the best response is to be the best Jews we know how to be, to be better Jews, in fact, than we have been. Our portion this week tells us how to do that. It says the Torah is not in the heavens; it is not too far from us. Rather it is *bfinu uvilvavenu* in our hearts and in our mouths. It tells us that when our ancestors stood at Sinai centuries ago, we stood with them; and as we stand together today, they stand with us. That is what we do. We stand together.

Ken yehi ratzon. May it be God's will.

Rabbi Ellen Lewis

Welcome New Members!

The Longenecker Family: Debbi and Barry, Derek (11th grade) and Rachel (8th grade).

The Parson Family: Melissa and William, Alexander (3rd grade) and Joshua (pre-K).

Gary Landau

Donations

In memory of Sallye Klein - Karen and David Segall, Myra & David Read, Gail Altschuler, Ann & Alan Jarmark, Molly & Dean Lager, Samuel D. Kaye, Robin & Stuart Meyer

The Zemel Family - Ralph Zemel, Ruth Easley, Harriet Teasdale

With appreciation to Rabbi Lewis: NJ-West Hudson Valley Women's Rabbinic Network

A gift to the rabbi's Discretionary Fund from Marilyn Muzikar and Michael Gottfried

Community Programs

JEWISH LIFE

October Jewish LIFE programs include **Jill Rogoff**, *The Voice of the Wanderer-Traditional Music from Around the World*, **Sunday, October 14 at 7 p.m.** at the Flemington Jewish Community Center (908-782-6410). \$15/Jewish LIFE Member; \$20/Non-Member.

Rabbi Lawrence Kushner will present *Kabbalah: A Love Story*, on **Sunday, October 21 at 7:30 p.m.** at Temple Beth-El, Hillsborough (908-722-0674).

\$18/Jewish LIFE Member; \$25/Non-Member. (This program is co-sponsored by Friends' Health Connection.) **Rabbi Ron Isaacs** of Temple Sholom, Bridgewater will present *Love Notes, Packages and Mandelbread: Grandparenting for Jewish Identity* on **Wednesday, October 24 at 1 p.m.** \$10/Jewish LIFE Member; \$15/Non-Member.

The **Jewish LIFE brochure** is available in the synagogue office, at the Shimon and Sara Birnbaum JCC office and is posted at www.ssbjcc.org (click on the Jewish LIFE page). Contact the Shimon and Sara Birnbaum JCC at 908-725-6994 x201.

JEFFREY I. BRONSON, ESQ., P.C.

Counsellor at Law

General Practice Concentrating in

**IMMIGRATION, MUNICIPAL COURT
PERSONAL INJURY, REAL ESTATE**

65 Madison Avenue
Morristown, NJ 07960

(973) 889-1116
(973) 889-1160 fax

jeffbronson1@gmail.com