

Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey

Journal

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Rabbi's Message

How exciting it is for me to be writing this month's message as – for the first time – your officially installed rabbi! While I believe in thanking people for good works, in this case, because so many of you have gone to such enormous lengths to make me feel welcomed and valued, I will refrain from singling out any particular congregants by name out of an abundance of confidence that I would invariably forget to include someone. So... **TODAH RABBAH** ("Thank you very much") to the **ENTIRE COMMUNITY** of the Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey! I am grateful beyond words for the chance to become part of this community.

Being your rabbi is both an absolute honor and – to be perfectly honest – a bit daunting. How do I know that I am up to the task?

In *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel asks:

"Now what qualifies a person to be a rabbi? What gives him the right, the privilege to represent the word of God to the people of God?" Then, responding to his own question, he continues: "If the main purpose of being a rabbi is to bring men closer to their "Father in Heaven," then one of his supreme tasks is to pray and to teach others how to pray. To be a Jew implies the preeminence of prayer. To be able to inspire people to pray one must love his people, understand their predicaments and be sensitive to the power of exaltation, purification, and sanctification hidden in our Prayer Book.

continued on next page

Mark Your Calendar

- **Sunday, November 1st**
9:30 am Sunday School
- **Monday, November 2nd**
7 pm Board Meeting
- **Friday, November 6th**
7:30 pm Shabbat Services (Kristallnacht)
Oneg: Stanton, Jordan, Hirsch, and Berkowitz (R/J) Families
- **Saturday, November 7th**
10:30 am Jewish Texts and Tunes with Cantor Labow
- **Sunday, November 8th**
9:30 am Sunday School
9:30 am Read Hebrew America
- **Tuesday, November 10th**
7 pm Mah Jongg
- **Sunday, November 15th**
9:30 am Sunday School
9:30 am Read Hebrew America
- **Friday, November 20th**
7:30 pm Shabbat Services
Oneg: Parson Family
- **Saturday, November 21st**
10 am Josh Parson's Bar Mitzvah

Mark Your Calendar (cont.)

- Sunday, November 22nd
9:30 am Sunday School
10:30 am Confirmation Class
10:30 am Sisterhood Meeting
- Tuesday, November 24th
7 pm Mah Jongg
- Sunday, November 29th
No Sunday School

Rabbi's Message (cont.)

To attain such sensitivity he must commune with the great masters of the past, and learn how to pour his own dreams and anxieties into the well of prayer.”

Prayer is a funny thing, because even though we all read the same words from the same *siddur* (prayer book), as individuals, we each bring something unique to how these words can be understood. About this tension, Heschel writes:

“There is a specific difficulty of Jewish prayer. There are laws: how to pray, when to pray, what to pray. There are fixed times, fixed ways, fixed texts [in Hebrew, we call this concept of fixed words and times, *keva*]. On the other hand, prayer is worship of the heart, the outpouring of the soul, a matter of *kavanah* (inner devotion). Thus, Jewish prayer is guided by two opposite principles: order and outburst, regularity and spontaneity, uniformity and individuality, law and freedom, a duty and a prerogative, empathy and self expression, insight and sensitivity, creed and faith, the word and that which is beyond words. These principles are the two poles about which Jewish prayer revolves. Since each of the two moves in the opposite direction, equilibrium can only be maintained if both are of equal force...

Thus, Maimonides declares: "Prayer without *kavanah* is no prayer at all. He who has prayed without *kavanah* ought to pray once more. He whose thoughts are wandering or occupied with other things need not pray until he has recovered his mental composure..." How grateful I am to God that there is a duty to worship, a law to remind my distraught mind that it is time to think of God, time to disregard my ego for at least a moment! It is such happiness to belong to an order of the divine will. I am not always in a mood to pray. I do not always have the vision and the strength to say a word in the presence of God. But when I am weak, it is the law that gives me strength; when my vision is dim, it is duty that gives me insight." (*The Spirit of Jewish Prayer: Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America – 1953*)

You have noticed, I'm sure, that one of the privileges I particularly value from the *bima* is the opportunity to frame our worship experience by offering introductions to different prayers. I find that by infusing intentions that are framed through a traditional Jewish lens in the context of today's world, we are able to maintain clear relevancy and connection to our ancient liturgy. This is why the kinds of short introductions that I offer are called *kavanot* (plural of *kavanah*). Yes, there is an actual rabbinic name for them. And yes, intention does matter!

As we look forward to our future prayer-life together, I extend what is both an offer and also a request: While I am the rabbi of this congregation, it is and always will be your congregation.

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SISTERHOOD

The Sisterhood and the Religious School joined together with the congregation for Mitzvah Day at America's Grow-A-Row in Pittstown, NJ. First, our volunteers (20 strong) learned a little about the program. Then we picked apples for those in need. We were joined by other groups from the area. Congregants both young and old filled the huge containers of apples to help feed the hungry.

Please look out for announcements for monthly food pantry donations. October's item was soup.

The Sisterhood held their first meeting prior to the Sukkah service on September 27. We discussed our different subcommittees: Service, Education/Social, and Fundraising. We are still looking for a chair for our Fundraising committee, but all of our sub-committees are up and running.

Our book club continues to be a very active part of Sisterhood and our five-week Read Hebrew class is well under way.

If you have not yet joined the Sisterhood, please feel free to contact Alison Shelofsky or Marci Braunstein.

Our next meeting is November 22, 2015 at 10:30 am.

Rabbi's Message (cont.)

Your individual voices need to be heard, because only when they are, will our entire collective voice be elevated fully. Please, come help us grow spiritually. Come help us find ourselves in prayer. Come help us elevate the *keva* of what we do by bringing your own *kavanot* to what we do.

If you are interested in offering your own 100-word *kavana* during a future Shabbat service, please let me know at RabbiDubin@jcnwj.org. I would be grateful for the opportunity to talk it through with you and help make it happen any way I can.

I – and the rest of the congregation – look forward to learning from you and finding new inspiration.

Rabbi Dubin

FOOD DRIVE

As a community service project, Sisterhood will be having themed donations to our local county food pantries. Each month we will highlight a specific item needed by the food pantries. In the month of November, we will be collecting soup and/or pasta.

Please bring items to the JCNWJ on Shabbat Fridays (**November 6 and 20**), Sunday School Sundays (**November 1, 8, 15, and 22**), or on Torah Study Days (**November 7**).

Thank you in advance for your generosity!



President's Message

For those of you who are math wizards, I am sure that you figured out from last month's quiz, that right around the time you are reading this, I will be turning 60.

I am truly blessed with my life. I have a wife who I adore and who loves me. I had a wonderful mother and still have a fantastic father. I have wonderful family and friends surrounding me and making me feel loved. In addition to all of that, I have all of you, my temple family. The love and support I get from my temple family is one of the reasons that I keep coming back as your president.

One of the things that I would like to ask of all of us is to try and be more loving to the members of our temple family. If you hear someone's name on the Misheberach list, give them a call (not an email) and let them know that you care about them. Call up a member you know well or maybe not as well and ask them to come to Shabbat services with you. We pride ourselves on being a warm and welcoming community and that is what I love about us, but we can always make one more phone call. Let's make an honest effort to be more welcoming to our temple members, our family and our friends.

Let this be the year that we let go of an old grudge, and forgive or make peace with those who we have grown apart from or with whom our relationship has been strained. Be the bigger person and make that call. Make peace with someone before it is too late. Life is short and friend and family relationships can get complicated. Be the person who makes them simpler.

As I start my seventh decade of living, I realize that I can always do better. I can be a better friend, a better husband, a better father, and a better person.

Thank you for everything that you do to keep Judaism alive in Northwest New Jersey.

Howie Hirsch

Contributions

- ✧ In honor of Sharon Herson, Woman of the Year
 - Joan Chase
 - Teri Stanton
 - Howie and Iris Hirsch

- ✧ In memory of my brother, Gino
 - Teri Stanton

- ✧ To the JCNWJ family - a healthy and meaningful New Year
 - Joan Chase

- ✧ In honor of Howie Hirsch's 60th Birthday
 - Helen and John Mattson
 - Diane Margolin
 - Robin and Leon Hall
 - Rita and Jerry Berkowitz
 - The Bauer Family
 - Linda Croker
 - Tracey and William Heisler
 - Rabbi Ellen Lewis
 - Beth and David Grening
 - Cheryl Cohen and Jerry Seeler
 - Risa Smith
 - Linda and Robert Margolis
 - The Wilson Family



MAZEL TOV

From the JCNWJ to the Parson Family on Josh's Upcoming Bar Mitzvah.

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.

December Journal Deadline

The deadline for submitting articles and advertisements to be included in the December Issue of the JCNWJ Journal is **November 19, 2015**. Please email articles, photographs, or news items to the Journal Editor, Abby Bauer at abbybauer@comcast.net.

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.

AWAKEN JEWISH IDENTITY

Through Federation you can transform the lives of Jewish children, teens, and young adults by providing a wide range of experiences to ignite their Jewish identities. You can help them develop as our future leaders with Jewish camps, Jewish day schools, Birthright Israel, the Diller Teen program, and more.



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JFEDGMW.ORG



The new season of Jewish LIFE (Learning Is For Everyone) is off to a great start. In addition to our special events, there is still time to register for The Melton School an iEngage, two wonderful programs of year-long learning.

The Melton School is offering both the Core Class and Melton Graduate School, both classes meet weekly on Tuesday mornings at the Shimon and Sara Birnbaum JCC in Bridgewater. The Core Curriculum is taught by Rabbi Dan and Karen Selsberg and the Graduate School is taught by Rabbi Richard Fagan. iEngage, a video and lecture series from the Shalom Hartman Institute, Jerusalem, gets underway on Sunday, November 15 at Temple Beth-El, Hillsborough with Rabbi Arnie Gluck and meets monthly. This year's curriculum is Engaging Israel: The Tribes of Israel: A Shared Homeland For a Divided People. (You do not need to have taken iEngage 1 to participate in iEngage 2.)

Elissa Altman will discuss, *Poor Man's Feast – A Love Story of Comfort, Desire and the Art of Simple Cooking*, Sunday, November 15, 10:30am at Or Chadash, Flemington. AIPAC's Alicia Silverman will present "America & Israel: Worry, Relax or Both?" at the annual Dr. Michael Fink Memorial Lecture, Tuesday, November 17, 8pm at Temple Beth El, Somerset. *Bobby Wonderful: An Imperfect Son Buries His Parents* with Robert Morris takes place Thursday, December 3, 12 Noon at the Birnbaum JCC, Bridgewater; Chanukah "Dish" with *Chopped* Champion Chef Rachel Rubin takes place on Thursday, December 3, 6pm at the Birnbaum JCC, Bridgewater. The Friends of the Israel Defense Forces (FIDF) Musical Ensemble will be in concert for Chanukah on Tuesday, December 8 at the Birnbaum JCC, Bridgewater. There will be a choice to attend one of two performances – one for young families (5:30pm) and the other for adults (7:30pm). Both groups will enjoy dinner and candle lighting together at 6:30pm. *Please consider becoming a Benefactor of this event.* The Irma Horowitz Film Series Featuring Falafel and Films takes place on Thursday, December 17, 6:30pm at the Birnbaum JCC, Bridgewater with short Israeli films from the Ma'Alah School of Television and the Arts in Jerusalem. The Jewish Film Series presents *DeliMan: A Freshly Made Documentary* by Eric Greenberg Anjou at Temple Beth-El, Hillsborough on Saturday, December 12 at 7pm. Discussion and Q & A with film maker Eric Greenberg Anjou will follow the screening. Jewish LIFE rounds out 2015 with a return engagement with incomparable Judith Viorst who will discuss her latest book, *Wait for Me and Other Poems About the Irritations and Consolations of a Long Marriage*, on Wednesday, December 16, 12 Noon at the Birnbaum JCC, Bridgewater (program includes luncheon).

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