



Mark Your Calendar!

- Sunday, Nov. 30
No Sunday School
- Friday, Dec. 5, 7:45 p.m.
Oneg
Chanukah Boutique
- Saturday, Dec. 6, 10:00 a.m.
Bar Mitzvah,
- Sunday, Dec 7, 10:45 a.m.
Adult Ed - Pirke Avot
Chanukah Boutique
- Friday, Dec. 12, 6:30 p.m.
Lay led Shabbat service
followed by Potluck dinner
- Sunday, Dec. 14
Confirmation Class - 10:30 a.m.
Sunday School Chanukah craft
workshop
Chanukah Boutique
Men's Club Meeting
- Friday, Dec 19, 7:45 p.m.
Chanukah Shabbat
All students are expected to
attend. **Bring your chanukiyot
(menorah)!**
Oneg
- Sundays, Dec. 21 & Dec 28
No Sunday School

*All committee members: Please
be sure to send updates to your
programs to our webmaster Wain
Schroeder at niaw1@comcast.net*

Rabbi's Message

We get so confused about what is sacred and where it belongs. The Ten Commandments are sacred, but do they belong in the civil courthouse? The latest court ruling says no. Then there is the court battle over the Pledge of Allegiance and the phrase that is causing such controversy: "under God." The plaintiff wants those words removed from the Pledge on the grounds that he is an atheist. The original Pledge of Allegiance had no such phrase. The words were inserted in the 50's during the McCarthy Era. Yet to some Americans, it seems as if these words were given to Moses on Mt. Sinai. We have taken something secular and tried to make it sacred.

The yearning for the sacred is part of our human psyches but it sometimes can become misguided. I am thinking now of the custom we have of reading the names of the deceased every week before *Kaddish*. The *yahrzeit* list is a relatively new phenomenon, introduced by the Reform movement at some point no one can determine. Prior to that, the only tradition for reading the names of the dead came from the Middle Ages and was restricted to the names of those who had been martyred, who had died *al kiddush ha-Shem*. Why do we read these names? We want to honor the memories of our loved ones on the anniversary of their deaths, surely a heartfelt task. Yet for some, that lovely tradition has become so sacred that, if the name is not read on the correct Shabbat, it is as if the world has come to an end. Nasty phone calls are traded, emails are exchanged, blame is placed, and worst of all, our Temple volunteers are maligned and even threatened for the lapse.

This is not the way it should be. First of all, there is nothing sacred about the reading of the name. What is sacred is your coming to honor that person's memory by reciting *Kaddish*. Whether the name is read does not reflect on you and your sacred task or on the memory of

continued on next page

President's Message

When I think of all the things that I have to do as president, it seems mind-boggling. I have trouble believing that this congregation has enough faith in me to allow me to lead you. Yet for all of the tasks, phone calls and planning that I must do, there are days when it all seems worthwhile. Over the last month, I have shared the Bimah with two wonderful, yet different young men from our congregation. While most of you get to see the look of pride in the parents and grandparent's eyes while they are reciting their aliyot, I get to see it for the entire ceremony. There is little in the world that compares to a parent's complete devotion to their children, watching them grow and mature and become adults in our community. These joyous events are the best of times.

In the news this month, at the national biennial in Minnesota, our movement changed our name. We are now affiliated with the UNION FOR REFORM JUDAISM: Serving Reform Congregations in North America. This is a change from the UAHC that our movement was called up until now.

As world events stray further and further from peace, please take a moment and remember the people who protect our freedom. Say a prayer for them and their families, that they will be reunited safely and quickly. And remember that in America, it is not the religious leaders who give us the freedom of religion, it is the soldiers. May we enjoy peace in our homes, our work places, our congregation, our country, in Israel and in all the world.

Howie Hirsch

Rabbi's Message, cont.

the person you are honoring. Second of all, even if reading the names were the most sacred event in the history of humankind, it would not excuse anyone's maltreating another member of our congregation. How does it honor the dead to insult the living? Our Ritual Committee works hard to make sure that things go the way they ought. Occasionally, things don't go the way we have planned. That is cause for simple correction, not condemnation.

There is nothing more sacred than the way one human being relates to another, whether inside the sanctuary or out in the world. It is easy to fix errors on a *yahrzeit* list; it is not so easy to repair breaches in human relationships. Our prayerbook says: "We do best homage to our dead when we live our lives most fully, even in the shadow of our loss." Live your lives fully; that is the most sacred task of all.

Rabbi Ellen J. Lewis

Upcoming Adult Education Programs

Rabbi Lewis teaches the last in the series of Pirke Avot (Sayings of the Elders) **December 7**, Sunday morning 10:45 sharp till noon. Come and study.

In January, three sessions on the Shabbat liturgy are planned (**January 4, 18, and 25**). Same Sunday morning time as above. Learn more about our Friday night and Saturday morning liturgy, why we say what we do and where the prayers come from.

Torah study meets monthly on Saturday morning, from 10:30 to 12:30 or so. Anyone interested in lively text-based (Torah) discussion (without "homework") is welcome to attend. Meeting dates through January: **December 13, January 17**.

Education Committee and PTO News

Friday, Dec. 19 is our Chanukah Shabbat Service. Bring your Chanukiyot (Chanukah menorahs)! Don't forget, the Chanukah boutique takes place **Friday, December 5** (order taking only), and **Sundays, December 7 & 14**. No school: Nov. 30, Dec 21, Dec 28.

Upcoming events:

Sunday, January 25 is Mitzvah Day at JCC MetroWest in Whippany. This not-to-be missed event gives our students a chance to spend the morning with other Jewish students and learn about mitzvot opportunities here and in Israel.

A field trip is planned for **Sunday, March 21**, at the Bridgewater JCC 1:00-4:00pm. Sunday School and Confirmation students will be able to swim and use the gym. Cost is \$5 per person. Transportation will be the responsibility of the parents.

May 2004 will be a field trip to either the Tenement Museum or the Jewish Museum in New York City.

Our next meeting is January 18.

Don't forget to bring blankets (small/lap size), perfume or

cologne (plastic bottles), or adult size hats/mittens/scarf sets for our annual drive. These items will assist the Jewish residents of the Hunterdon Developmental Center in Clinton

Please put unwrapped gifts in the collection box in the Temple foyer by December 7. Come join their Chanukah festivities at 1:15pm on Wednesday, December 17. Direct questions to the Sandy Seidorf at the Temple.

JCNWJ's Generous Donation

More than 20 bags full of non-perishable grocery goods that have been donated by members of JCNWJ were delivered November 1 to the NORWESCAP food bank (Northwest New Jersey Community Action Program, a not-for-profit community action program. It provides cost-effective, coordinated services to low-income people in Hunterdon, Morris, Somerset, Sussex, Passaic and Warren Counties). The grocery items were delivered to a pickup point in Hackettstown, which was part of a WRNJ Radio promotion for NORWESCAP's food bank; JCNWJ was mentioned on the air for its generous donation. Many thanks to those who were helped in this worthy project!

Shoprite/A&P Vouchers

ShopRite and A&P script can be purchased at Sunday School/Confirmation Class on the following dates:

December 7	January 4, 18	February 1, 22
March 7, 21	April 4, 18	May 2, 16

Alternatively, please call Sandy Seidorf at the Temple to make arrangements to purchase.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Jewish Life



Thursday, Dec. 4, 7:30 p.m.: Rabbi Murray Levine, "Bibliodrama, the Story of Joseph and His Brothers"; Sunday, Dec. 7 at 10 a.m.: Steven Schwager, Exec. Director of The Joint Distribution Committee, "Update on the Jewish World"; and our Family Chanukah Celebration, Wednesday, Dec. 17 at 6 p.m., "The Town That Fought Hate" (for grades K-6) performed by Young Audiences of NJ and the Catskill Puppet Theatre, and Sing Along with Yossi (for ages 2-8).

Programs are at the Shimon and Sara Birnbaum JCC, 775 Talamini Road in Bridgewater unless otherwise noted. To register or for further information, contact Laura Friedman, Assistant Executive Director, at 908-725-6994 x213 or e-mail LFriedman@ssbjcc.org.

Also from Our Friends in Bridgewater:

The community is invited to attend a night of laughter at the JCC's 5th Annual Comedy Club on Saturday, December 6, at 7:30 p.m. The evening will feature the comedy of Karen Bergman, Chris Coccia and Johnny Lampert. All three comedians have been featured on national television and appear at comedy clubs across the country. Tickets are \$45 per person and include the show, snacks and a dessert reception.

MITZVAH TEA

The Women's Division of the Jewish Federation of Somerset, Hunterdon & Warren Counties presents Sunday, December 14, 1:30 p.m. at the Shimon and Sara Birnbaum JCC:

- "Behind the Scenes with Golda Meir" presented by Alice Golembo, grandniece of Golda Meir. A professional actress, who was intimately involved in the Broadway play "Golda," both as an actress appearing in the production and as a consultant to the playwright.
- Mrs. Malka Herson, Co-Director of Somerset Chabad will speak about Mitzvahs.
- Janice Badarau, an expert in the field of tea, will share her knowledge of the varieties of teas available.
- A Tea Boutique will offer items for purchase in time for Chanukah shopping!
- Ruthie Haines will provide piano music.

Couvert: \$54. RSVP to 908-725-6994 x204 by December 1

"NER SHEL TZEDAKAH" – A SPECIAL PROGRAM FOR THE 6TH NIGHT OF CHANUKAH

The UAHC, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA) and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism are sponsoring an initiative to fight poverty. We are asking Jews across North America to consider the deplorable fact that one in ten American families lives in poverty. To alleviate their suffering, we encourage everyone to devote the 6th night of Chanukah to learning about the problem of poverty. As they light the "Ner Shel Tzedakah" we hope they will donate the value of the gifts (or the gifts themselves) that they would otherwise exchange on that night to organizations that assist the poor.

WOMEN: GIVE YOURSELF A DAY TO REMEMBER

On Sunday, December 14, Jewish women from all walks of life will join together for the Second Annual Conference for the Jewish Woman, spending a memorable day together with dynamic and intelligent women, stimulating their minds and inspiring their souls at the Ramada Conference Center in East Windsor. Lectures and discussions will include: relationships, nutrition, parenting, feminism, and more. Call for early bird special. Program: 9:30 a.m.- 4:30 p.m. Free infant care.

The event is co-sponsored by the Jewish Federations of Bucks, Mercer, Middlesex, and Ocean Counties. For more info, contact Torah Links/Project Geshet 888-374-2870 or e-mail conference@torahlinks.org

Donations

Yahrzeit donations

Linda and Jim Arvesen in memory of Celia Kushner
Laverne Pollak in memory of Joseph David Bardy
Rona and Stanley Schick in memory of Rose Fleisher
Judy and Wain Schroeder in memory of Phyllis Baumann
Barbara Tozzo in memory of Ernest May
Arthur and Phyllis Sirkis in memory of Rose Sirkis
Ed and Gwen Nagorsky in memory of Ellen Nagorsky

Memorial plaque

Joseph and Gail Trachtenberg in honor of Beatrice Trachtenberg

Simcha leaf

Laurie and Steve Goldner in honor of Aaron's bar mitzvah

Rabbi's discretionary fund:

Laurie and Steve Goldner in honor of Aaron's bar mitzvah

Thank you to Mike Weiner's class for their generous donation in honor of the new year

From Your Newsletter Editor

The deadline for January's issue will be December 18.

10 Minutes of Torah

UNION FOR REFORM JUDAISM'S DEPARTMENT OF LIFELONG JEWISH LEARNING

The Union will send you a **one-page e-mail** each day on a topic of Jewish interest. All you need to do is find **10 minutes a day** to "do Torah."

WHO? Reform Jews committed to having Judaism inform their daily lives are encouraged to participate.

WHAT? 10 minutes a day of personal connection to a Jewish text, issue or topic.

- Monday: Torah
- Tuesday: Social Action
- Wednesday: Israel Connections
- Thursday: Jewish Ethics
- Friday: Jewish World

Select all five days or any combination.

HOW? Each weekday morning (Monday-Friday) an e-mail will be delivered to your inbox for you to study at your convenience.

To sign up for **10 Minutes of Torah** please visit
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- Youth/Teen Programs
- Jewish LIFE/Cultural Programs
- Vacation Day Programs
- Senior programs
- Camp Talamini-Ruach
(Early Bird Registration ends Dec. 1st.)
- Summer Swim Club
- **NEW!** JCC Dance School



**Shimon and Sara Birnbaum
Jewish Community Center**

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