

Mark Your Calendar!

- Friday, December 1, 7:45 p.m.
Shabbat Service
- Sunday, December 10
PTO Meeting
Chanukah Craft Project
10:45 a.m. Pirke Avot
- Friday, December 15, 7:45 p.m.
Shabbat & Chanukah Service/
Welcome New Members
- Saturday, December 16
10:30 a.m. Torah Study
- Sunday, December 17
Continuation of book discussion:
Blessings of a Skinned Knee
School Chanukah Party
- Sunday, December 24 & 31
No Sunday School

Chanukah Bazaar Dates:

- Dec 1 Evening
- Dec 3 Day

Rabbi's Message

I write on the eve of Rosh Hodesh Kislev (and on the day before Thanksgiving), the month in which Chanukah occurs. In the aisles of the malls, red and green decorations have been joined by blue and white. Retailers have figured out how to appeal to the Chanukah shopper. Although you wouldn't know it from the decorations festooning these stores, Chanukah has always been a home-based holiday. The lighting of the chanukiyah, the eating of latkes, the spinning of the dreidel – all those were and are home rituals, although they have entered the public arena in recent years.

While I know this is a battle I cannot win, I still vote for keeping Chanukah a home holiday. The identity that is formed at home is the one we take into the world; it is what shapes and sustains us. The rabbinic sages envisioned the Jewish home as a miniature sanctuary within which all relationships are sanctified. We live within our homes as if we are all priests, our tables are all holy like the ancient altar, and the prayer of our heart replaces ancient sacrificial offerings; our home reminds us that each of us is created in the image of the Divine and therefore is deserving of respect. We then bring those values into the world when we leave our homes.

That is the concept of the Jewish home; but in a country whose primary religion is secularism, how do we live out those values? Chanukah offers us the perfect opportunity. It is not just a holiday of candles, jelly donuts and gelt; it is and has always been most fundamentally a holiday about assimilation. The struggle between Antiochus and the Maccabees only acted as a cover for another more difficult internal struggle, the one between the Jews who

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President's Message

As the holiday season is upon us, I like to reflect on the year and take time to appreciate all of the blessings that I have been given. Have I been healthy this year? If so, everything else is not as pressing. I have seen friends pass away this year, way too young, so I need to take time each day to appreciate the beauty of life. Have I done good for others? Have I put others needs before my own? Have I been a good spouse, parent, friend, and congregant, involved in the community? Most of these questions are not ones that I can answer myself. As every one of us does, I try my best to balance my life between what others expect of me and what I expect of myself. I don't have to be the best person in my community, my state or even my own house. The standards that I try to live up to are my own. Have I been the best person that I can be in my various roles? Each of us gets to ask these questions of ourselves all the time. It just seems that we tend to focus on ourselves in December and January more than other times. As you think about what you will do in 2007, try and have some time and energy for all facets of your life. It is the balance between home, community and self that will make you the best person that you can be, and the one we want to spend time with.

May you be blessed with Shalom during this season as well as throughout the year.

Shalom
Howie

Rabbi's Message, cont.

wanted to become more secularized and the Jews who wanted to retain their religious identity. That struggle continues to be reenacted in our homes at this time of year. The conflict referred to as the December Dilemma challenges our values and our identity. We are tempted to cave in to secularism and consumerism. We become indulgent in ways that conflict with core Jewish values. We allow ourselves to be convinced that a Christmas tree is just a secular symbol and therefore can find a place in a Jewish home. We spend excessively so as not to feel (or let our children feel) a sense of deprivation from all the gift giving around us.

What does belong in a Jewish home? Shabbat observance, not Christmas trees. Deeds of loving-kindness, not excessive gift giving. Study and prayer, not consumerism. Dedication to religious values, not impulsivity. The synagogue can partner with the home in reinforcing these values but cannot replace or supplant it. As Jews, we have always considered it our mission to bring light where there is darkness and clarity where there is confusion. It is the values we live that will endure, not the ones to which we give lip service. In a time which is as unclear and confused as any within recent memory, we have a gift to offer ourselves and the world. That gift is to live our Jewish values both at home and in public, not because we have been frightened by a troubled world, but because our worldly conflicts have reminded us of what we already know: that these values by which we strive to live are the enduring ones that make life meaningful.

May this Chanukah truly be a Festival of Rededication for us all. May its eight nights bring light into your souls, your homes and into our world.

Rabbi Ellen Lewis

Updated Information on Funeral Arrangements

In an effort to better serve our members, the ritual committee has formulated a policy to help our congregants who are dealing with a death in the family. Below are suggestions which may help you with your funeral arrangements.

If you are interested in having Rabbi Lewis officiate at the funeral, you should call her first. If she is unavailable at the time you need or if you are unable to reach her within your time frame, we suggest that you consider the following alternatives:

1. Call another rabbi known to you or to a family member.
2. Call a Jewish funeral home, which can provide a rabbi for their clients (these phone numbers have been checked and are valid as of November 2006).
 - a. Menorah Chapels, Union: (908) 964-1500
 - b. Bernheim-Apter Goldsticker, Livingston: (973) 763-3505
 - c. Wien & Wien, Hackensack (800) 322-0533
 - d. Goldstein, Edison: (732) 777-0032

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO US!

This is our 60th year as a congregation! We are looking forward to this celebratory year with many programs and events that will uniquely mark our simcha.

The first of these is scheduled for

**Sunday, January 7th, at noon
(snow date: Saturday, January 13th)**

and your participation is needed!

The Board, with your help, wants to look at where we are and where we're going with regard to

Our mission
Our membership
Our spiritual life
Our building
Our programs

We'll start by sitting down to lunch together, so please rsvp to Sharon Herson, at the Temple by December 20th.

We'd like to have at least one member from every family, and want to include college & confirmation students as well.

LET US KNOW YOU'LL BE WITH US!!

OR call DeVoe Funeral Home,
Washington:

(908) 689-0046

3. Call the URJ's (Union of Reform Judaism) regional office between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday-Friday for assistance in engaging a rabbi. The URJ serves as a resource to our region of Reform congregations: (201) 722-9090.

Rabbi Lewis is always available to console the family. Either the rabbi or our congregation will organize shiva services for our members.

*Ritual Committee, Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey
November 2006*

Adult Programs

Adult Education classes taught by Rabbi Ellen Lewis will continue to discuss the wisdom found in *Pirke Avot*. All adult congregants are welcome to attend and participate. There is no "homework" and you don't need to have come last year. Classes meet Sunday mornings from 10:45 to noon: December 10, January 7, February 11, March 18, and May 6.

Torah study: Monthly discussions are held from 10:30 to 12:30 or so. New participants are welcome. The group studies at its own pace, not following the schedule of the weekly portion, and will be studying the Book of Exodus during 2006-2007. The following Saturday mornings are the expected dates: December 16, January 20, February 17, March 24, April 14, May 12, June 16.

Education Committee and PTO News

Chanukah Bazaar Dates: Dec 1 Evening & Dec 3 Day

Upcoming December events:

- Next PTO meeting is December 10th at 9:30 – getting ready for the craft project
- The school-wide Chanukah craft project is scheduled for December 10
- A continuation of the Parent Book Discussion, *Blessings of a Skinned Knee*, is December 17. Please come whether you have read the book or not. It is always fun discussing families and children.
- Sunday School Chanukah Party is December 17 - each family is asked to bring in a dozen latkas.
- December 24th and 31st – No School.

Talent Show on March 31st

The Second Ever Jewish Center Talent Show will be held at the Jewish Center on March 31st. Begin planning now for what you're going to do in the show. We had so much fun last year, let's make it bigger and better. I know you have a lot of talent to share!

Donations

Gwen and Ed Nagorsky in memory of David Simms, and in memory of Ed's mother, Ella Nagorsky
Leslie and Murray Heller in memory of Walter Sobine

Judy and Paul May in memory of John Slavin and Etta May Friedman

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

JEWISH LIFE (Learning Is For Everyone) upcoming programs will feature Daniel Callahan on Sunday, December 3 at 10:30 a.m. Mr. Callahan's topic will be "Medicine, Money & Morals...Equity versus Medical Progress." \$10/Jewish LIFE members and \$15/Guests.

Jewish LIFE is sponsoring a Family Chanukah Celebration featuring Yosi & the Superdads, on Sunday, December 17 at 4 p.m. at the JCC. Popular children's singer/songwriter Yosi, along with his rockin' three-piece band of Superdads, will perform a lively and humorous family concert. Families are invited to bring their menorah and candles for a family menorah lighting celebration. The fee is \$8/person (infants are free) and includes the concert and latkes & donuts.

All programs will be held at the Shimon and Sara Birnbaum JCC, 775 Talamini Road in Bridgewater and are open to the community. To register, please call the JCC at 908-725-6994 x201.

OHR TIKVAH JEWISH HEALING CENTER

Shimon and Sara Birnbaum Jewish Community Center, 775 Talamini Road, Bridgewater. Call Ohr Tikvah at 908-725-6994 for more information or to register, www.ohrtikvahjhc.org

Visiting the Sick: Making it Easy and Meaningful

Sunday, Dec. 10, 2006

Temple Sholom, 594 North Bridge Street, Bridgewater
10:00-11:30 AM Fee: Donations welcome

Are you reluctant to visit the sick because you are unsure about when to visit and what to say? Come hear Rabbi William Horn describe how to be an effective hospital visitor, make your visit easy and meaningful, and learn ways to visit with a "Jewish heart." This learning experience promises to provide an opportunity for each of us to learn skills which broaden our perspective and enhance our lives.

JEWISH CENTER OF NORTHWEST JERSEY

Name _____ Email _____

Address _____ I/We would like to make a contribution of _____

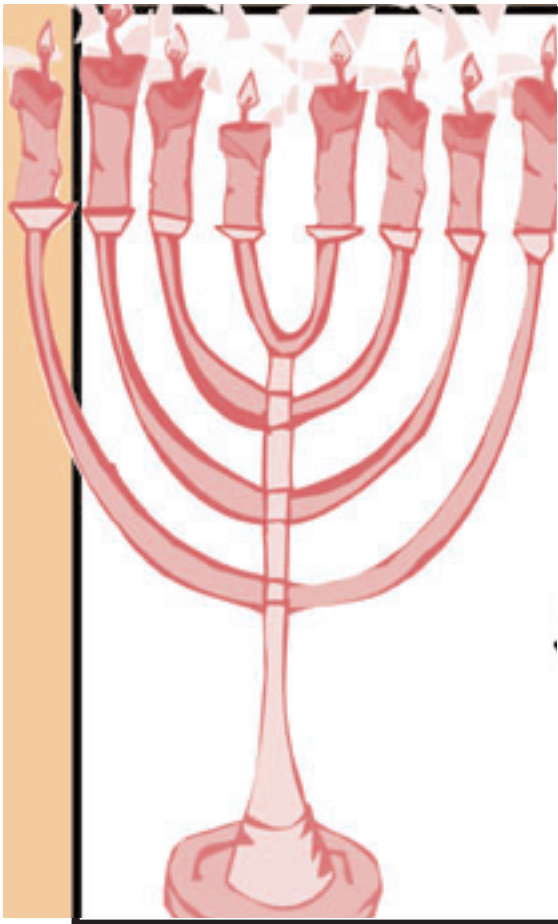
In honor of _____

In memory of _____

Phone _____

Please contact me/us about membership _____

Make check payable to Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey and mail to:
JCNWJ.



**At Services on the 1st night of CHANUKAH
Friday, December 15th, at 7:45 p.m.**

**The JEWISH CENTER OF NORTHWEST JERSEY
will celebrate our NEWEST MEMBERS**

**Bring your own chanukiyah and candles
and get ready to have a joyous evening
with your Temple family!**