



## Mark Your Calendar!

- Friday, Dec. 5, 7:45pm  
Shabbat Service  
Oneg: Kestecher, Parson,  
Shelofsky families
- Sunday, Dec. 7  
9:30am Sunday School, (K/1)  
Music, Chanukah craft  
10:45am Pirke Avot class  
taught by Rabbi Lewis  
12:00pm – Lunch in honor of  
90th birthday of Charlotte Fels.  
Details inside newsletter  
1:30 p.m. Meeting of the  
Religious Practices Committee
- Friday, Dec. 12  
Confirmation Retreat
- Saturday, Dec 13, 10:30am  
Torah Study
- Sunday, Dec. 14, 9:30am  
Sunday School, Confirmation  
class returns
- Friday, Dec. 19, 7:45pm  
Shabbat pre-Chanukah Service  
welcoming new members  
Oneg: Goldner/Post, Ostenfeld,  
Fesinstine, Yanow families
- Saturday, Dec 20, 8:30pm  
Adult Chanukah Party  
Details inside newsletter
- Sunday, Dec. 21, 9:30am  
Sunday School (K/1) Music,  
Chanukah celebration
- Sunday, Dec. 28,  
No Sunday School  
Winter break
- Sunday, January 11, 12:00pm  
Lunch in honor of Stan and  
Rona Schick. Details inside  
newsletter

**Rabbi Lewis's sermons are  
now on our Website!**  
Visit us at [www.jcnwj.org](http://www.jcnwj.org)

## Rabbi's Message

It is quiet here in Auschwitz. The only sound is the crunch of gravel beneath our feet. Even the large tour groups pass each other soundlessly. The lapel microphone worn by our guide carries his voice directly into our individual earphones. Auschwitz is the kind of place where you don't feel like talking.

We had debated making this visit, my children and I. We were already in Krakow, we reasoned: how could we not make the 90 minute trip to the town the Poles call Oswiecim? Shouldn't we go simply out of respect for the dead? But then again, should we go if it is only out of a sense of obligation? What is the point of visiting that terrible site that had become the largest Jewish cemetery in Europe? We had seen the pictures, we had heard the stories, we had read the books and seen the movies. We didn't have to go all the way to Auschwitz to say Kaddish.

In the end, the feeling of wanting to go won out. And we soon discovered that, when you visit Auschwitz, even the simplest acts become charged with meaning. Should we take a bus or a train? The buses are more convenient and run more frequently, but we agree without discussion that we will go by train, one that will roll on those same fateful tracks as the boxcars that had carried so many millions to their deaths. Do we eat lunch as normal on this train or is that somehow a sacrilege? What are the thoughts of the taxi driver who takes us from the train station to the camp? Does he speculate about the motivation of these crazy tourists or is he simply grateful for the job? We wonder: how can you possibly charge an admission fee to a concentration camp? And we discover that someone has thought of this before us, that they handle this well, explaining that the fee is not for admission but for the 4-hour guided tour.

After you pay, you are given a small sticker to place on your outer coat. How can your mind not flash to the yellow stars pinned to the coats of European Jews, or

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## President's Message

Rabbi Stacy Offner of the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) led a webinar a few weeks ago discussing how small and mid-sized congregations could help their members who are suffering from the current economic crisis. Since my desktop and laptop always seem to be lacking a working "sound card," I was encouraged by the fact that there was a telephone dial-in option for the conference. The call concentrated on two aspects of the crisis, and offered approaches to dealing with them.

The first aspect discussed ways to lower Temple costs during these difficult times. Discussion included buying in-bulk, forming buying groups of local religious institutions and using volunteers from the Temple. Needless to say, we have become true experts in the latter category, and could teach the URJ much in the area.

I was honored to attend the Eagle Scout ceremony on November 29 for AJ Seidorf. At age 16, AJ is among the youngest of Eagle Scouts. We know what a fine job the scouts, under AJ's supervision, did painting the interior of much of the first floor of The Jewish Center. AJ was an inspiration for me, which I will address below. This is one of the best examples of volunteerism that we have witnessed at the Temple.

*continued on next page*

## Rabbi's Message, cont.

worse, to the identity numbers tattooed on the arms of Auschwitz inmates? The gift shop sells posters marking various commemorations of Auschwitz/Birkenau. Who buys posters like this and where do they display them? The tour guide divides us into two groups, one split off to the left and the other to the right, an innocent direction that calls up images of "selection."

Before the Germans turned it into a killing camp, Auschwitz itself had been designed as barracks for Polish troops. The first people killed there were Polish partisans, political prisoners who were members of the Resistance. You are allowed to take photos outside on the grounds at Auschwitz but not inside. At Birkenau, just minutes down the road, you can take photos anywhere. Birkenau was designed and built with the sole intention of killing millions of Jews, Poles, Roma (Gypsies) and homosexuals. The Nazis had evacuated and resettled the local population so they could free up 175 hectares for their gas chambers, barracks and crematoria. Birkenau became the central and final destination for Jews shipped in from east and west, north and south. The sudden thought occurred to me that my mother's relatives from Hungary had died here along with my father's relatives from Lvov in eastern Galicia. How strange to consider that two different families, whose only prior common experience was to be joined in death, would one day be joined in life.

Because Birkenau was only partially destroyed by the Nazis in their last desperate days, you can still see the remains of the original crematoria as well as some of the over 300 prison barracks. When the Russians liberated the camp on January 27, 1945, they carefully documented their findings. They preserved the heaps of shoes, locks of women's hair shorn after death, piles of baby clothes and suitcases painstakingly lettered with family names. As the guide describes these artifacts, he manages to strike an appropriate tone. He tells us that even the weather conspired against the inmates with the Nazis. Warm weather encouraged the spread of diseases like typhus; cold weather simply froze people who already had no body fat to warm them. Our guide is a native of Oswiecim. We ask how he feels about the new large homes whose backyards look out onto the remnants of Birkenau. "I could never live there," he says simply.

We observe that the weather matches the mood. Everything looks stark and depressing on this cold and snowy day. The only color to punctuate the grayness comes from two tourists in another group. They are wearing large Israeli flags like capes on their backs. This is the solution the Israelis have found to their own conflict about visiting Auschwitz. Go to Auschwitz but do so defiantly. Go to say Kaddish, but more than that, go to remind the world that we are still here.

And so we did.

As we light our Chanukah candles this month, may our festival of freedom remind us to value that which we too often take for granted.

*Rabbi Ellen Lewis*

## President's Message, cont.

The second half of the webinar discussed ways that congregants might assist others during this financial crisis. I have spent my entire professional life as a statistician. I doubt that many congregants need my help in calculating a standard deviation or providing a p-value for them. However, after I "retired" from that profession, I decided to get training in financial planning at Fairleigh-Dickinson University. The course work is much more difficult than work "a few years ago" earning a Ph.D. in Statistics at Stanford.

Based on this work, and also on pro-bono work that I have performed with the Financial Planning Association ([www.fpanet.org](http://www.fpanet.org)), I have developed the confidence to help, gratis, many individuals in the Essex to Warren county corridor. I am willing to meet confidentially with my fellow members and offer them whatever assistance I can. Possibilities include organizing a budget, building an emergency fund, diversifying one's investments as much as possible and planning for retirement. I am not an expert in picking stocks, but then it seems that nobody has been good in that arena. A thorough review of one's financial situation inevitably uncovers options that were not available before this type of review.

I would only ask that this pro bono offering be accompanied by a signed waiver to not sue the Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey, myself personally, or my business, Strategic Solutions and Services, Inc. If one decides to take me up on this offer, we could meet for as many meetings as necessary, either at your home, my home or the Center.

Finally, I want to mention another service available to our community, Jewish Family Services based in Somerville. One does not have to be Jewish to utilize this service. I googled "Jewish Family Services" "Somerville, NJ" and found a lot of information there.

Most recessions do not last that long, less than a year. This one appears as if it will last much longer. Please contact me at [arvesen@att.net](mailto:arvesen@att.net) or by phone at 917-941-4332 for any questions or comments.

Shalom,  
Jim Arvesen

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## Birthday Invitation

On December 7, one of our oldest congregants and teacher, Charlotte Fels, will be a nonagenarian "90." The congregation, friends and family of Charlotte are invited to join in a celebration of her birthday at the Center. She will read from her new book (not yet titled) at noon (after Sunday School), and a pot luck lunch will follow. All are invited. Please RSVP to Teri Stanton (908) 638-8580 by December 1st. Please let Teri know if you can bring a salad or main dish (dairy).

## Chanukah is for Adults too!

Saturday night, December 20, 8:30 p.m., will be the Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey's Chanukah party for adults. Enjoy line dancing, taught by new member and dance pro Bette Silber. Potluck refreshments: wine, cheese, and sweets (bring one). RSVP to Jeannie Berkowitz by December 15.

## Bon Voyage Party for the Schicks

Join us on Sunday, January 11, at noon. We will be serving lunch in honor of Stan and Rona Schick, long-time members who will be moving away in February. RSVP to Helen Mattson by Dec. 20.

## Give a friend a wonderful CHANUKAH Gift - FREE Membership!

As a membership drive, the JCNWJ is offering free membership from January to June, 2009. Be sure to send the gift certificate (found at the end of the newsletter) to anyone you know who may be looking for their first Jewish community or looking to join a new one. Go ahead and reproduce it yourself in order to send it to more than one family!

Any questions, contact Gwen Nagorsky.

## Regional Biennial -

### Always a Great Event!

It is with great excitement that we announce the opening of registration for our 2009 Regional Biennial to take place at Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple in New Brunswick, NJ. The Biennial committee and the regional staff have been working hard to create an exciting One-Day Biennial program in response to the needs of our congregations.

We welcome you to be with us on January 31, 2009, on our mission of *Tzedek U'mishpat*- Righteousness and Justice.

To download a registration form, go to [www.urj.org/njwhvc/biennial](http://www.urj.org/njwhvc/biennial). In order to minimize costs, payment is by check only. No credit cards will be accepted. Special hotel arrangements are available if you wish to stay overnight in New Brunswick. Contact the Regional Office at 201-722-9090.

## Religious School/PTO Events

It's time again to share with our friends at the Hunterdon Developmental Center. A wish list from the Jewish residents will be posted at the temple, and if you'd like to help, you can contact Karen Finkelstein. There will be a collection box at the temple for all your generous gifts. We would love to have all our gifts collected by Sunday, December 15, so that the gifts can be delivered in time for Chanukah. All donations will be greatly appreciated.

*Marsha Gross & Karen Finkelstein*  
(Education co-chairs)

## Adult Education

Rabbi Lewis's Adult Education class, studying *Pirke Avot*, will meet Sunday mornings from 10:45 to noon on the following dates: Dec. 7, Jan. 11, Feb. 1, March 22, and April 26. The class is open to all members. This is your opportunity to exchange ideas with other congregants under the leadership of a superb teacher. You don't have to have been in the class last year to join now. Contact Rabbi Lewis before the first class if you would like to come.

## Torah Study

Torah study meets monthly on Saturday mornings for about two hours, starting at 10:30. We are a lay-led group. Discussion is always lively. Everyone is welcome: Dec. 13, Jan. 17, Feb. 21, March 14, April 25, May 16, June 20.

## Save the Date

Our next blood drive will be February 22, 2009. The last date one can donate blood and still be eligible to donate for us is December 28th.

## Welcome New Member

The Temple welcomes Kathleen Graham

## Donations

In honor of Charlotte Fels' birthday - Gwen & Ed Nagorsky

In memory of Rose Fleisher - Rona and Stanley Schick

In memory of Frank Bronico, father of Jeannie Berkowitz - Rona & Stanley Schick, Marsha Gross, Judy & Paul May

In memory of Jules Nestle - Marsha Gross

In memory of Henrietta Goldstein - Iris & Howie Hirsch

In memory of Michael Levin - Rabbi Ellen Lewis

In memory of Walter Sobine - Leslie & Murray Heller

In memory of Newton Klein and Fannie Lewinsky - Dr. Alan Klein

In memory of Herbert Seidorf - Sandy & Ron Seidorf

In memory of William Robins - Dr. Bernard Robins

In memory of Belle Shure, Sarah Beiden, and Laurette Pinn - John and Helen Mattson

In memory of Ellen Nagorsky - Gwen & Ed Nagorsky

*The Temple extends congratulations to Marsha Kopenhagen on her son Matthew's engagement.*

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