

Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey



Journal



PO Box 2, 115 Youmans Avenue,
Washington, NJ 07882
(908)689-0762
www.jcnwj.org

December 2011
Vol. XXXVII, Issue 12

Mark your Calendar

Friday Dec. 2

7:30 pm Shabbat Service
Chanukah store in Simcha Room

Sunday Dec. 4

9:30 am School/Music K/1
10:45am The Sacred Table (led by
Rabbi Lewis) Noon Ritual
committee meeting

Monday Dec. 5

7:30 pm Board Meeting
(open to all)

Friday Dec. 9

Confirmation Retreat Start

Saturday Dec. 10

10:30 am Torah Study

Sunday Dec. 11

9:30 am School Chanukah craft
9:30am Sisterhood
Confirmation Retreat End

Wednesday Dec. 14

7:00 pm Sisterhood Book Club

Friday Dec. 16

7:30 pm Shabbat Service
Chanukah & New Member Service

Sunday Dec. 18

9:30 am School (music)
9:30 am Taste of Judaism (led by
Rabbi Lewis)
11:00 am
Chanukah Program

RABBI'S MESSAGE

Our Board meeting last month made me think about something an instructor once said during my psychoanalytical training. She said, "HELP is a four-letter word. When you find yourself wanting to help someone, be careful." What could possibly make her include HELP among curse words? It is this: What you think will be helpful to someone might not be experienced that way on the receiving end. You have to make sure you are helping people get what they feel is helpful, not what you feel should be helpful. This is a basic therapeutic principle that has many other applications.

The conversation that sparked my thinking about "help" centered on what would "help" people bring their children to services. In the last few years, the attendance of children at services has dropped significantly. That includes Shabbat evenings and mornings and the high holy days. (It doesn't include the Chanukah service where people bring their children in sheer self-defense against the December holiday pressures.) Since we have only one day of Religious School, we have always considered going to services as the second day of education where students not only learn the prayers but do so with their friends. This helps them feel like a part of the Center community, another of our educational goals. We discussed all the things we usually discuss when this topic comes up: move services to an earlier time, eliminate the Torah service, eliminate the sermon, make it a requirement, offer Shabbat dinner first, make services more "fun," assign parts in the service to kids, and other ideas I can't remember. We have tried many of these various changes over the years but perhaps we need to try them again. Maybe we will find just the right solution.

On the other hand, I keep thinking about the idea of HELP as a four-letter word. I found myself wondering during the Board meeting: Are we trying to “help” people do something they don’t really want to do? Are we assuming that people really want to bring their kids to services? Perhaps people feel like bringing their kids to Religious School is enough of a commitment, in which case, no matter what changes we might make, they won’t be experienced as helpful. People are busy. They work hard. Their kids are in many outside activities. And while people say that they’d like to bring their kids, the reality is that their priorities don’t always match that desire. If soccer feels like it is most important, it just doesn’t matter what changes we might make on this end.

What are our goals as a congregation? We try to be realistic about our goals. We know that we are never going to produce Talmudic scholars in a school that meets only one day a week. What we can create, even in our limited time, is both comfort and competence in worship and a feeling of being part of this Jewish community. Those are two valuable skills our kids can take with them into the world. These skills can’t be taught in the classroom alone. They have to be experienced in the context of a worshipping community.

Are we trying to help people do something they don’t really want help with? If that is the case, we have to consider if any effort is destined to fail. Before we start trying to solve the problem, we have to agree on what the problem is. This is a discussion that goes to the core of who we are as a congregation. We need to be sure we are discussing the real issues, not the ones we think should be real. That is the only way we can fulfill the responsibility given us by previous generations and build a Jewish future.

Rabbi Ellen Lewis



PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

I have just finished celebrating the Thanksgiving holiday. I am going to use my column this month to list the things that I am thankful for.

I am thankful that I have a wonderful wife who supports me in my temple work, as well as with the rest of my life.

I am thankful that my family and I are relatively healthy.

I am thankful for my temple friends who are more like family to me.

I am thankful for my friends who are more like family to me.

I am thankful that we have peace internally in the US and the “Occupy” crews are allowed to speak their minds without fear of retribution.

I am thankful that I live in the USA, the greatest country in the world.

I am thankful for the ability to have hope. When things look the darkest, hope is a great ally.

I am thankful for the ability to perform Mitzvot and help others.

“ But most of all“; I am thankful that you think enough of me to let me continue to lead the Jewish Center.

I hope that I have earned your trust and respect, and that when you have your family visit the synagogue, that I am part of the atmosphere that makes them feel welcome.

I wish you all a Happy Chanukah and a HEALTHY New Year.

Love Howie

CONTRIBUTIONS

In honor of this year's b'nai mitzvah students
Suzanne Marr

In honor of the b'nai mitzvah of
Jonathan Rosenblum and Alex Parson
Helen and John Mattson

*In memory of Michael Levin
Rabbi Ellen Lewis*

*In memory of Heather Ellen Braunstein
In memory of Hannah Braunstein
Marcy and Gil Braunstein*

*In memory of Rose Fleisher
Rona and Stanley Schick*

*In memory of Sarah Zeiden
Helen and John Mattson*



Education/PTO

December is a month of fun and celebration. On December 11th the Hebrew School students will do a Chanukah craft project, and on the 18th they will enjoy a Chanukah Celebration with latkes and music.

The Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey will have a pre-Chanukah service on Friday night, December 16th at 7:30 p.m. The children in our Hebrew School will participate in this service and sing some Chanukah songs.

Our Chanukah store will be open between December 2nd and December 18th on Friday nights after services and on Sunday mornings during Hebrew School (9:30 to 12:00). Please stop by and support our PTO.

There is no Hebrew School on December 25th and January 1st for winter break.

Happy Holidays!!!

Marsha Gross (Education Chair)



Howie will be participating in the Washington Community celebration on Friday December 2nd. He will be lighting a Menorah, and the town will also be lighting their Christmas tree. The lighting will take place about three blocks west of route 31 on Main St. Please join Howie before services on Friday night. He would really appreciate a nice turnout to show our support for our town of Washington. The lighting will take place just before temple at approximately 7:15.



To Parents of Sunday School Students and Everyone Else

It's not too early to mark your calendars for the Feb. 24 Sunday School Service. Classes from kindergarten up will lead prayers and songs that they have practiced. All students and parents should plan to participate in this joyful service, which has become a congregational tradition over the years. Members who don't have children in the school should come, too, and worship with this wonderful group.

Give a friend a CHANUKAH Gift: FREE Membership to the Jewish Center!

As a membership drive, the JCNWJ is offering free membership from January to June 2012. Send the attached invitation to families who may be looking for their first Jewish community or seeking to join a new one. You may reproduce the invitation in order to send it to more than one family! (Note that the family must accept the gift by January 20, 2012.)

If you have any questions, contact Susan McNamara jcnwjmembership@gmail.com.

A Chanukah Gift For You



Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey

You are cordially invited to be a member of the
Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey
for
Six Months Free with Sunday School *

To: _____
From (member): _____

If interested, please fill out and return.
A membership committee member will contact you:

The JCNWJ Membership
PO Box 2
Washington, NJ 07882

Name: _____
Address: _____
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Chanukah Service December 16th at 7:30 All are welcome.
www.jcnwj.org



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Learning Is For Everyone

*FORMER AMBASSADOR TO ISRAEL DANIEL C KURTZER FEATURED JEWISH LIFE SPEAKER
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8*

*Revolutions and Change in the Middle East: Implications for American Policy
Is Topic Of Program To Be Held At Temple Beth-El, Hillsborough*

*Bridgewater, NJ – Former
Ambassador to Israel, Daniel C. Kurtzer, will be the featured Jewish LIFE speaker on Thursday,
December 8. The program begins at 7 p.m. and will be held at Temple Beth-El in Hillsborough (67 US
Highway Route 206.) Jewish LIFE (Learning Is For Everyone) is a community-wide adult education
program serving residents of Somerset, Hunterdon & Warren Counties.*

*Daniel C. Kurtzer is a lecturer and the S. Daniel Abraham Visiting Professor of Middle East Policy
Studies at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. During a
29-year career in the U.S. Foreign Service, Ambassador Kurtzer served as the United States
Ambassador to Israel and as the United States Ambassador to Egypt.*

*Ambassador Kurtzer held a number of senior policy and diplomatic positions, including political officer
at the American Embassies in Cairo and Tel Aviv, speechwriter for Secretary of State George P. Shultz,
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for
Intelligence and Research. He was instrumental in formulating and executing American policy in the
Middle East peace process. Ambassador Kurtzer received a B.A. from Yeshiva University and a Ph.D. in
Comparative Politics from Columbia University. He has received distinguished service awards from the
President, the Secretary of State and the United States Intelligence Community.*

*The Ambassador Kurtzer program is open to the community and the fee for the evening is \$10/person in
advance or \$15/person at the door. Please register in advance by calling the Shimon and Sara
Birnbaum JCC at 908-725-6994 x201. The Jewish LIFE brochure is posted at www.ssbjcc.org.*

* * * *



**What are your goals for this New Year?
What gets in the way of achieving your goals?**

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Jason L. Apter, Manager,
NJ Lic. No. 3650

January Journal Deadline

**The deadline for submitting articles, advertisements
and photos to be included in the January issue is:
December 19, 2011. Please email articles, ideas or
news items to Journal Editor, Barbara Simons at
bjbs@comcast.net**