

# Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey

# Journal

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www.jcnwj.org

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## Rabbi's Message

### The Empty Chair

It started at least two months ago with advertisements and news features, preparing us for the advent of “the holidays.” Over the weeks, stress can build as our expectations grow, fueled by unrealistic images of the holidays we are supposed to be enjoying. Last year at this season, I wrote about the pressure to have a perfect holiday while living with the reality of our imperfect lives and imperfect families. I urged all of us to let go of the fairy tale picture which the media pushes upon us and, rather, celebrate what we do have, which is still pretty darn good.

This year I would like to reflect on a particular type of dissonance at our holiday tables – the empty chair - as this category of “imperfection” needs a different approach. For every holiday, we hold a picture in our mind of how we want our festivity to play out. For example, we look forward to the rituals, the foods, and the people who will be gathered as we light the menorah and sit down for a holiday meal together. But what happens to those expectations when a loved one has died? The anticipation of the holiday becomes painful and stress provoking as we figure out how to navigate the empty chair, a physical reminder of the loss of our loved one. I hope these words will support you, if you, your extended family or a friend has experienced a loss in the last few years.

continued on next page

## Mark Your Calendar

- **Monday, December 1<sup>st</sup>**  
7:30 pm Board of Trustees Meeting
- **Friday, December 5<sup>th</sup>**  
7:30 pm Shabbat Service  
Oneg: Stanton, Margolin, Margolis, and Wilson Families
- **Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup>**  
9:30 am Sunday School  
9:30 am Sisterhood Meeting  
10:30 am Confirmation Class
- **Saturday, December 13<sup>th</sup>**  
10:30 am Torah Study
- **Sunday, December 14<sup>th</sup>**  
9:30 am Sunday School and PTO  
Hanukkah Craft  
10:30 am Adult Education
- **Friday, December 19<sup>th</sup>**  
7:30 pm Shabbat and Hanukkah Service  
Oneg: Marinich, Marr, Gross, and Onweller Families
- **Sunday, December 21<sup>st</sup>**  
9:30 am Sunday School and Hanukkah Celebration
- **Monday, December 28<sup>th</sup>**  
No Sunday School

## Rabbi's Message (cont.)

When a beloved passes at an appropriate ripe old age and your family seems at peace with the loss, sensitivity to the empty chair still needs to be given, as the members of your family may be in different stages of mourning. The sight of a new seating arrangement or rituals may stir up feelings that individual members and your entire family did not know existed. Assuming that every member of your family can plow ahead into the holiday without recognizing the loss would be a mistake. Finding a way at the beginning of holiday meal to recognize the loss is important. Sharing some words about how your loved one continues to be present in the power of memory can be meaningful, as is incorporating a physical representation of your beloved into the holiday celebration. For example, announcing at the beginning of the meal that you are featuring Grandma's recipe for latkes, or every man wearing one of Grandpa's ties, will recognize the loss in an appropriately poignant way that will allow folks to smile and wipe a tear away at the same time. Of course, the literal empty chair has to be dealt with, especially if your family is the type that takes the same seats every year. Talking in advance as a family and deciding together how to handle it is important. Rearranging everyone is an option, as is designating the right person to take the seat in question. Coming to consensus informally will help.

On the other hand, the premature and/or tragic death of a family member may create a great deal of anxiety about how to celebrate a holiday without your beloved. Again, emotion reactions may vary depending on your stage of mourning. Some family members may be avoiding the topic completely, because it is so painful to face. The moment the rest of the world starts stirring the "What are you doing for the holiday?" conversation you need to be aware of how painful this season can be for you and your family. While long term avoidance is usually not good, temporarily steering clear of the empty chair can be the best way to deal with your loss. Sometimes it is just not possible to go back to the old rituals right away.

This is most likely a temporary stage depending on the type of loss you have, but many folks find comfort in returning to the old rituals or slightly transformed habits *after* some time has passed. In the meantime, it is fine to seek out other ways of marking holidays like taking a vacation, going out to a restaurant, or letting a friend or relative host. Recognizing your loss and pain to each other is vital; creating a safe space for family members to express what feels comforting and what feels painful is very important. It is ok to avoid confronting very painful memories until a future time when it is more comfortable for everyone. For example, if your beloved always gave a heartfelt prayer or toast at the beginning of holiday meals, create a new pattern of beginning the meal to use for the first few years of your loss until it feels right to return to the old ritual. Acknowledging that your holiday has changed because of the death of your loved one is an important step in treasuring their memory and mourning their absence.

Realistic expectations, open communication, and patience will give you and your family the opportunity to process and mourn your loss. There is no set timeline in mourning, for every family needs to navigate their way around the empty chair together gently, compassionately, and lovingly.

Wishing you a Hanukkah filled with light,

L'Shalom,

*Rabbi Mary Zamore*

If you, a family member or temple friend is ill or facing a life challenge, please know that Rabbi Zamore is here to help.

Please contact in confidence Rabbi Zamore at [zamorem@comcast.net](mailto:zamorem@comcast.net) or call her at (908) 317-0417.

## President's Message

Every Friday morning, I receive an email from ReformJudaism.Org, which provides a weekly update, including sections entitled "Ten Minutes of Torah," "Weekly Torah Portion," "Ask a Rabbi," and "News & Blog." Each section is an interesting read.

This past week's "Ten Minutes of Torah" focused on Thanksgiving and whether or not it is a Jewish Holiday. I personally have never looked at Thanksgiving in that manner. The author did acknowledge that Thanksgiving has no religious overtones and that the meal is void of any religious rituals. It is a holiday for everyone regardless of differing religious beliefs. It is synonymous to all religions, for each has a measure of thankfulness.

For us at the JCNWJ, our thanks go out to all of those who work tirelessly in making the synagogue a wonderful gathering place for both youth and adults. As the website references, our temple is a co-op membership, and its success relies on the volunteerism of and contributions from all of its members.

Through the years, these contributions have consisted of serving as lay leaders, actively contributing to the education program as a teacher, committee member, or just an assistant at the door on a Sunday morning, sponsoring one oneg a year (including set up and clean up), assisting with the organization of our bi-monthly Shabbat service, making each holiday and b'nai mitzvah a special and memorable occasion, overseeing our fiscal responsibilities, and maintaining our facility so that we can showcase a proud venue. It takes the contributions of many volunteers to address each of these.

The time and effort of our members can easily be overlooked and many times we forget to thank them for the smallest of tasks. I recognize that we all have hectic and time consuming daily lives with our respective families and that squeezing in some volunteer time can be difficult. But, thankfully, the majority of our member families, whether for personal and religious satisfaction or for our kids, have found time to assist in our temple needs, a mitzvah that has made the JCNWJ so successful.

On this Thanksgiving, I wanted to express my gratitude and thanks to our members for contributing. Happy Thanksgiving to you and your family.

*Mo Bauer*

### Adult Education – Sunday, December 14 at 10:30 am

Bible to Buber: God in Jewish Thought  
Join the monthly Sunday morning study group led by Rabbi Zamore to learn more about and to discuss "the Jewish God."

How has the idea/meaning of God in Judaism changed from Biblical times to today? Come and explore together. Come to one class or come to all. Open to adults and teens.

Future classes: January 18, February 8, and March 15

### Hanukkah Service



Join us for this festive service on **Friday, December 19** at 7:30 pm as we celebrate Hanukkah together with singing and candle lighting. Bring your family *chanukiyah* (menorah) and candles to kindle our holiday lights together. The service will include a performance from our choir, as well as a Torah reading by Rene Marinich. A festive oneg will follow.

### Confirmation Class

Our next confirmation class will be December 7 at 10:30 am.  
It's never too late to join!

### ATTENTION CHOIR MEMBERS

The Cantor will give you the dates for the next choir rehearsal and presentation.



# Contributions

- ✧ A gift to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund  
- Edythe Herson
- ✧ In memory of Doris Tarlowe  
- Laura and Paul Tarlowe
- ✧ In memory of Sally Zemel  
- Ralph Zemel
- ✧ In memory of Joyce Shubs and Sarah Zeiden  
- Helen and John Mattson



## 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](mailto:Howie.ruth@hotmail.com).

## EDUCATION/PTO

Hello from Education!

We had our first fire drill in November. We will have another one in April. We look forward to making applesauce with Teri Stanton, the PTO, and the students on December 14, and to celebrating Hanukkah on December 21.

Please visit our Facebook page via the Temple website and add to the number of "likes" to get our name out there.

Stay Warm!

*Gerri Klein*  
Religious School Chair

The JCNWJ Cemetery Committee wishes to remind the congregation that there are graves available in our portion of the Easton Cemetery in Easton, PA. Information about the cemetery can be accessed by clicking on "Cemetery" on the temple's website ([www.jcnwj.org](http://www.jcnwj.org)). Please contact Bernard Robins at 908-534-7989 for further information or with questions.

### 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](mailto:berk721@aol.com)) or Ruth Schutzbank ([Howie.ruth@hotmail.com](mailto: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.

### January Journal Deadline

The deadline for submitting articles and advertisements to be included in the January Issue of the JCNWJ Journal is **December 19, 2014**. Please email articles, photographs, or news items to the Journal Editor, Abby Bauer at [abbybauer@comcast.net](mailto:abbybauer@comcast.net).







**Jewish LIFE (Learning Is For Everyone) Upcoming Special Events include:** Allen Salkin, author of *Inside the Food Network*, Wednesday, December 3, 12 Noon, program and luncheon hosted by the JCC. Jewish Family Names with Dr. Nathan Reiss, Tuesday, December 9, 12:00 Noon at the Birnbaum JCC, Bridgewater (Fee includes lite Bagel Lunch :\$5/person); The Irma Horowitz Film Series Featuring Falafel and Israeli Short Films, Friday, December 5, 6:30pm at Or Chadash, Flemington and Thursday, December 11, 6:30pm at the Birnbaum JCC, Bridgewater (Fee includes Falafel Dinner: \$12/person in advance or \$15 day of event). The Temple Beth-El, Hillsborough Film Series presents *The Flood*, Saturday, December 13 at 7pm (To register, contact Temple Beth-El directly at 908-722-0674.) Coming Wednesday, February 4, Iris Krasnow, author of *Sex After... Women Share How Intimacy Changes as Life Changes*, program and luncheon hosted by the Birnbaum JCC, Bridgewater. To register for programs, please contact the Shimon and Sara Birnbaum JCC at 908-725-6994 x201 or register on line at [www.ssbjcc.org](http://www.ssbjcc.org).




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## What's your plan?

What will happen if you or your loved one becomes one of the 70% who will need long term care services?

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## Over a lifetime, you face the following risks:

Being in a car accident ... **1 in 57<sup>1</sup>**

Having a residential fire ... **1 in 860<sup>2</sup>**

Being admitted to a critical care unit ... **1 in 141<sup>3</sup>**

**7 out of 10** people will need long term care after age 65 ... so what's your plan?

As the cost of health care continues to rise, the costs associated with long term care are also increasing.

The cost of long term care services could quickly wipe out assets that you have worked long and hard to accumulate.

Take a look at the average annual costs for three types of long term care services.

Home Health Aide	\$43,472
Assisted Living Facility	\$39,600
Nursing Home (Private Room)	\$81,030

Source: Genworth 2012 Cost of Care Survey

**How long would your savings last?**