

## **Rabbi Lewis' message for January 2007**

It seems everyone knows someone who might be interested in joining the synagogue.

She is the neighbor at the end of the block; they moved next door last year. They have young children; her children are grown. She was raised as a Jew but never practiced; they are an interfaith couple. They might not know we exist. If these people have never been members of a synagogue, they might be a bit leery of making the commitment. They might be unsure they are wanted. They might worry about being excluded because they don't fit some imaginary ideal, because they are single or gay or too young or too old or interfaith.

Yes, we have a Membership committee that can follow up, but you are the best person to do the initial reaching out. You can reassure them that our Jewish Center is a place where everyone is welcome. You can invite them to join you at services or Torah study. You can introduce them to other members.

Why should you bother? Because you care about the future of your own family. Because, just like our founders 60 years ago, you care about the future of this Temple. Because you want to continue their dedication into the future. Because you believe that Judaism has something to contribute to the world. Because you care about the future of Judaism in America and the world. Of the five million Jews in this country, 20% have no connection with Judaism. In a recent article in the Jerusalem Post, Prof. Arnold Eisen, chancellor-elect of the Jewish Theological Seminary, said "We are losing one quarter [of US Jews], one quarter is getting stronger and the middle we have to fight for, and most of them we lose." Eisen is not discouraged: "If I take the 20% that are active and if I turn another 20% into active [Jews], I have transformed the Jewish people. That two million out of four million would leave us in better shape than one million out of five million."

How do people find the Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey? Some look us up in the phone book, many more find us on the web. But most of the people who find us do so because of word of mouth. In honor of our 60 years, talk about us to anyone who will listen. Be your own Membership Committee. Remember the words of our tradition: If you save one life, it is as if you have saved an entire world. In this coming new year, be a life saver.

Rabbi Ellen Lewis