

September 2015 Message from Rabbi Dubin

Rabbi Benjamin Blech, Rabbi Emeritus of [Young Israel of Oceanside](#) (Long Island, NY) and Professor of Talmud at [Yeshiva University](#), teaches that “The Hebrew word for soul is *neshamah*. Central to that word, the middle two letters, *shin* and *mem*, make the word *shem*, Hebrew for name. Your name,” concludes Rabbi Blech, “is the key to your soul.”

Of course, he’s right. Names really do matter. I, for one, shudder with embarrassment every time someone – a “someone” whose name I can’t remember – greets me by name. Nor can I say it feels any better when I greet someone else by name, only to hear back, “Hey there,” “How you doing?” or “What’s up?” I feel defeated that s/he doesn’t know my name, and I feel even worse that I’ve put another human being in the awkward position of having to fudge the greeting.

If I learned nothing else from eleven years of “Cheers” I most certainly did learn that “Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name.” The only modification I’d make to that, when it comes to my own journey through life, is that almost always I want to go where people know my name.

As rabbi of this magnificent congregation, I have an obvious advantage. Most of you already do know my name. And those of you who don’t yet, will soon. There is, after all only one of me. Plus, my name happens to be written with BIG letters in multiple places! But this is hardly sufficient, because how can I be your rabbi if I don’t know your name? How can we together build community if such a basic wall is permitted to stand?

It may be presumptuous of me to ask, but for anyone who’s looking to give your rabbi the perfect JCNWJ welcoming gift, this is what I would appreciate more than anything else: Take a picture of yourself (or your family), identify every person in the photo, and e-mail it to me at rabbidubin@jcnwj.org. And for the cherry on top, with whatever energy you can still muster, include a short introduction. I have no specific format in mind; I just want to begin the process of getting to know you.

An apology in advance: It will unavoidably take me longer to learn some names than others. Please understand, however, that this has nothing to do with how much I care for you as individual people. Rather, this is nothing more than a quirk of how my brain works. What I can and do promise, however, is that I will make every conceivable effort to move as quickly as possible, because as your rabbi, there is nothing to which I look forward to more than earning the privilege of coming to know the soul of each and every member of this most beautiful, sacred community.

And so the ride begins. I, for one, can’t wait to discover where the journey takes us!

L’Shalom,
Rabbi Dubin

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