

December 2015 Message from Rabbi Dubin

Happy Hanukah/Chanukkah/Hanukkah/Hannukah/Channuka/Chanuka/Hanuka/Chanukka (etc.,)!

It's funny, because if you receive Chanukah cards in the mail, it's likely you won't have enough fingers on one hand to count the number of different spellings. In fact, there isn't even a definite consensus on how to spell it in Hebrew! Sometimes you'll see חֲנֻכָּה; other times it will be חֲנֻקָּה. The glorious part of it all though, is that neither is wrong. Both are correct. They are simply variations of the same thing. Different ways of depicting the same word. So too with the English spellings. And so too with community.

They say that if you ask ten Jews a question, you get eleven answers. How true! And how beautiful! Consensus and cooperation – two of the hallmark principles that guide all that we do at the JCNWJ – matter when communities want to push forward to accomplish important things. But consensus and cooperation are not the same thing as uniformity of opinion. Consensus and cooperation require not that we all have the same answers as everyone else, but rather that we all have the same goal of living "Jewishly" in a community of love and respect.

Yes, we all come with our own spellings of Hannukah, but if we did not have such a beautifully wide range, we would most surely be a poorer community for it.

We at the Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey rely on and celebrate the variety of Jewish approaches that are lived out by our members. It is the differences that keep us strong, always innovating, never satisfied with the status quo (Dare I say, in this election year of political jockeying, our candidates should take a moment to learn a few things from the way we do things!). Some congregants want more of one thing; others want less of the same. Some were raised in one movement; others in another. Some were born Jewish, some have chosen to become Jewish, and some have made the deep commitment to raise Jewish children. Some are quite conservative in their social perspective; others are tremendously liberal. Some want more Hebrew; others want less.

Some want longer services; others want shorter. Some are uncomfortable with "God talk"; others are uncomfortable when God is not given a seat in the conversation. Ten Jews, eleven opinions. However we look at it, the one thing that keeps us together and strong is that each one of us, in our own individual way, shares the same deep-seated drive to live lives of Jewish meaning – however we choose to define that.

Rosh Hashanah may be the Jewish New Year, but here in America we can't help but feel a certain twinge of excitement as we approach January 1, the secular New Year.

My resolution, as it pertains to JCNWJ, will be to reach out as much as I can to learn more and more about every member of our sacred and diverse community.

With this goal in mind, I would like to extend an open invitation: On Fridays when I'm in Washington for Shabbat services, I tend to arrive in the late morning and then spend the day on JCNWJ business. If you are available on Friday afternoons, I would love to get together to learn more about you – and give you a chance to learn more about me – over a cup of coffee or a light meal. Please be in touch with me at RabbiDubin@jcnwj.org. If Fridays don't work, let's try a Sunday afternoon after Religious School. Either way, in this season of Hannukka, please help me fulfill my New Year's resolution of rededicating myself to knowing you and representing your voice in the great symphony that is the Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey.

Chag Chanuka Sameach,

Rabbi Dubin

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