

## September 2016 Message from Rabbi Dubin

Dear Friends,

As I sit to write this end-of-summer message to you, I do so with enormous love and gratitude, because this marks the beginning of my second year as your rabbi. I count myself among the truly lucky for having found myself welcomed into such a loving, warm, and supportive community as the Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey. This is a special congregation and I can't wait to discover all the wonderful things we'll be accomplishing together this year.

On that note, responding to the question, "Why should people participate in Jewish Community?" Rabbi Kerry Olitzky, Executive Director of a fabulous trans-denominational organization called Big Tent Judaism, recently posted the following response:

*Whenever I travel, people tell me that the mission of their Jewish communal institution is to provide community. I often push back, arguing that community can be found in numerous places. What the Jewish community has to offer is community with meaning. But how do we define this meaning? That's the hard part. So I decided to start the dialogue with these nine items. (Feel free to add the tenth—or any others.) These are not the obligations that one feels after entering a voluntary covenant (nor if one feels commanded). Obligation comes later. Rather, they are a list of benefits of community. Let me know what you think.*

The Jewish community is a place:

1. Where one always feels welcomed, embraced and made to feel like one belongs and is appreciated, and where one's right to be there will always be defended.
2. To share life's burdens, especially at times of loss. In their sharing, these burdens can be lessened.
3. To celebrate the joys of life—where joy knows no bounds.
4. That provides an anchor, direction, and hope, especially when life—and the world around—is chaotic.
5. Of shared beliefs.
6. To express one's values and act on them with others who also hold those values.
7. Where the questions of life and its meaning are asked, probed and answered, then asked again.

8. That helps one to act in such a way as to leave the world better than the way one found it.

9. That places the individual in the path of Jewish tradition, regardless of background, linking past to future.

To Rabbi Olitzky's list, I have plenty to add. For instance, I believe that a Jewish community is a place where people gather for collective uplift, enjoy permission to be vulnerable, strive to become better human beings, and grow in humility.

What is *your* definition of Jewish community?

If you have understandings that we should add to Rabbi Olitzky's list, please send them to me at [RabbiDubin@jcnwj.org](mailto:RabbiDubin@jcnwj.org). I would love to know, not only so I can share your ideas with others, but so that I, as your rabbi, will become more able to guide our congregation into becoming the Jewish community you pray we will be.

No doubt we are already a great Jewish community. With by working together with true selfunderstanding, vision, and passion, we could become even greater. And, given the choice, who wouldn't want to become even greater? L'Shalom,

Rabbi Dubin

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