

Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey



Journal



PO Box 2, 115 Youmans Avenue, Washington, NJ 07882
(908) 689-0762
www.jcnwj.org

January 2011
Vol. XXXVII, Issue 5

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

- *Sunday, January 2
No Sunday School
- *Tuesday, January 4, 7:00 pm
Adult Hebrew Class
- *Saturday, January 8, 10:30 am
Torah Study
- *Sunday, January 9
9:30 am PTO Meeting
9:30 am Sunday School
- *Monday, January 10, 7:30 pm
Board Meeting
- *Tuesday, January 11, 7:00 pm
Adult Hebrew Class
- *Friday, January 14, 7:30 pm
Shabbat Services
Oneg: Parson, Ballenberg, Melon, Hirshberg,
and Wilson families
- *Sunday, January 16
9:30 am Sunday School (K/1) (Music)
10:30 am Tu B'Shvat Seder
- *Tuesday, January 18, 7:00 pm
Adult Hebrew Class
- *Thursday, January 20
Tu B'Shvat
- *Sunday, January 23
9:30 am Sunday School
10:30 am Sisterhood Meeting
10:30 am Confirmation
- *Tuesday, January 25, 7:00 pm
Adult Hebrew Class
- *Wednesday, January 26, 7:00 pm
Sisterhood Book Club
- *Friday, January 28, 7:30 pm
Shabbat Services
Oneg: Tarlowe, Friedlander, Hall, Torine,
and Romczyk families
- *Sunday, January 30
9:30 am Sunday School (K/1) (Music)
10:45 am Adult Education
1:00 pm Israel Information Session

Rabbi's Message

I spent New Year's Eve in Jerusalem twice in the mid-seventies and I can't remember doing anything special. That's not to say that nothing happens in Israel on New Year's Eve. In fact, as Israel continues to enjoy adopting western traditions, the celebration of New Year's Eve has expanded. It isn't called New Year's, however; it is called Sylvester as it is in some European countries. You don't say "l'shanah tovah" like we do on Rosh Hashanah (the real Jewish new year); you say "Sylvester sameach." Sylvester is named in honor of Saint Sylvester, who was reputed to have initiated anti-Semitic legislation in 325 CE at the Council of Nicaea. Go figure.

I am hoping that we will spend New Year's Eve/Sylvester quietly in Jerusalem next year as the final day of a congregational trip to Israel. I know not everyone can go on this trip; would that it were possible to take the whole congregation. I am hoping that those of us who do go will bring back some inspiration for everyone else.

On January 30 at 1 p.m., we will have an information session for anyone interested in going on the trip or just in learning about it. The only details we have so far are the trip dates. We would leave Dec. 21, 2011 and return January 1, 2012. By the time of the meeting, I will have the figures on the approximate cost per person and details of the proposed itinerary. The tour company is Arza, an arm of the Reform movement in Israel and the same group that ran the tour I was on in November.

Many of you have asked me how my trip to Israel was. I have never been on a bad trip to Israel. Every trip is unique; I have learned something new each time I have visited. The one feeling I come away with each time is that nothing substitutes for seeing Israel with your own eyes.

May the secular New Year 2011 be a happy, healthy and peaceful one. And may we spend next New Year's together in Jerusalem.

Rabbi Ellen Lewis

President's Message

One of the many advantages of travel is to be able to experience new cultures and people, as well as other traditions that are different from our own. I write this letter from the balmy tropics of the Bahamas, where my daughter Allison and I are scuba diving. We were aware that we would be here during the Christmas holiday. I did not realize that the Bahamas, being British, would also celebrate Boxing Day, which I am still not sure of the origins or traditions of, but I plan to learn some. But the celebration that I had never heard of before is a holiday called Junkanoo. Through the main street of Nassau, there will be a huge parade beginning at 1 AM on December 26th. From everything that I can find out about Junkanoo, it is a Mardi Gras or Carnivale type celebration. We are planning on altering our sleep patterns so that we can attend this celebration.

As for the New Year, my wish for all of you is simple. May you be healthy. May your family enjoy good health. May life be sweet for you. May you have good friends to help you share the good times in your life. And more important, may you have a good support system in place when things don't go so well.

I thank each and every one of this congregation for being my friend in good times and bad. I love you all and wish you the best year ever in 2011.

Love,
Howie

Cantor's Message

Shabbat Shirah, or Shabbat of song, is the name given to the Shabbat on which we read from the Torah portion *Beshallah*. *Beshallah* contains the Song of the sea (Exodus 15:1-18). The Song of the Sea, or *Shirat Hayam*, was the song the Israelites sang after they crossed the Red Sea in their flight from Egypt. Here Moses and Miriam lead their people in song and dance while experiencing God's miracle of redeeming the Israelites from Egypt. Beyond the significance of this Torah portion to the history of the Jewish people, the Torah portion also has special musical significance. When chanting from *Beshallah* the Torah reader inserts a special melody for the Song of the Sea that is not used anywhere else in the reading of Torah. This melody denotes the very unique nature of the Israelites praise of God through song at the crossing of the Red Sea. Please join us for *Shabbat Shirah* on January 14th at JCNJ to learn and sing this special melody as we read from the Torah.

Cantor Elana

Jewish Life

Stuart E. Weisberg

Wednesday, January 12 at 12 Noon

Program to Follow Lunch

Barney Frank: The Story of America's Only Left-Handed, Gay, Jewish Congressman

The road Massachusetts native Congressman Barney Frank took to win his position was anything but simple. In his biography *Barney Frank*, Stuart Weisberg tells the struggles Barney Frank lived through to become only the 2nd Jewish Congressman ever from Massachusetts. Spend an evening with Weisberg as he tells the story of a man who was able to overcome prejudice and criticism and accomplish his goals, all while remaining proud of his Jewish heritage.

Judith Viorst

Wednesday, February 2 at 12 Noon

Program to follow lunch

Un-Expectedly Eighty: And Other Adaptations

What does it mean to be eighty? New York Time's best seller and award winning writer Judith Viorst is seeing the world with new eyes—not because of revelations, but because of a successful cataract operation. All ages come and enjoy Emmy award winning and Picture Book Hall of Fame inductee, Judith Viorst, as she describes the virtues, victories, frustrations, and joys of being an octogenarian. *Un-Expectedly Eighty: And Other Adaptations* humorously explores how Judith Viorst got to be a “three-desserts” grandmother (“Just don't tell your mom!”), how memory failure can keep you married, and her hopes for the Afterlife (in which she doesn't believe, but if it does exist, her sister-in-law better not be there with her).

Joel Chasnoff

Thursday, February 10th at 7:00 pm

The 188th Crybaby Brigade: A Skinny Jewish Kid from Chicago Fights Hezbollah

What's a nice American Jew doing in a place like this? So asks Joel Chasnoff – well-known stand-up comedian and writer- as he sweats, grunts, and rolls his eyes through a military tour in the Israeli Army in *THE 188TH CRYBABY BRIGADE*. Surrounded by a platoon of mama's boys and crybabies carrying loaded weapons, this admitted peace-loving, left-leaning, lactose-intolerant Jew from the suburbs invites the reader to share his journey from gung-ho, would-be warrior to disillusioned soldier who in the end discovers he isn't really a Jew at all. Come laugh and learn as Joel Chasnoff presents a disturbingly hilarious look at life inside the Israeli Army.

All programs will be held at the Shimon and Sara Birnbaum JCC, 775 Talamini Road in Bridgewater. Please consult the Jewish LIFE brochure for program fees. Call the JCC at 908-725-6994 x201 to RSVP.

Contributions

A donation in honor of the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund in honor of the naming of Zachary.

~The Needleman Family

Wanted: Advertisers for JCNWJ Journal

Reaching hundreds of readers each month in Hunterdon, Morris, Somerset, and Warren Counties in New Jersey as well as those residing parts of Eastern Pennsylvania, advertising in the Journal is effective and affordable. Tell your friends and contacts at local businesses whom you patronize about the opportunity to market themselves through sponsoring an advertisement in the online newsletter. For more information on placing an ad, see the Journal Advertising Form (on the temple website) or contact Tracey Bauer.

The JCNWJ Proudly Presents...

The 6th Annual Talent Show

April 2nd, 2011
7 o'clock

Star on our Mainstage

**Auditions: Sunday, March 20th
12:00 pm (after the Purim Carnival)**

Acting • Vocals • Instrumental • Jokes • Dance



February Journal Deadline

The deadline for submitting articles, advertisements, and photos to be included in the February Issue is **January 22, 2011**. Please email articles, ideas or news items to Journal Editor, Abby Bauer.

Memorial Plaques

If anyone is interested in honoring a loved one with a permanent bronze memorial plaque, please contact Helen Mattson. Not only will the light on the Memorial Board be lit at the anniversary, or yahrzeit, of that person, but the Rabbi will announce the name and kaddish will be recited by the congregation, as well.

Hospitality for Our Cantor

Any member who would like to offer hospitality to student cantor Elana Rosen-Brown during the coming year should contact Sharon Herson.

Save the Date

When: February 6, 2011 at noon

What: B'nai Mitzvah Brunch

For those families who will be celebrating a Bar/Bat Mitzvah in 2011/12. Details to follow...



"Ten New Commandments..."

By Archie Gottesman, *an alumna of the MetroWest, NJ Wexner Heritage Program. She is the owner/EVP of Manhattan Mini Storage/Edison Park Fast in NYC. She can be reached at archieg@edprop.com.*

Dear Fellow Jews,

I never thought I would be saying this, but I think we have become too tolerant. I love my intellectual, open-minded people very much, but sometimes, (well, often), our obsessive need to consider all sides of an issue is working against us. Not every option deserves real consideration. For years we have been bending over backwards trying to make Judaism fit every different taste and 51% of Jews in North America are leaving the fold. Going out in droves. It is clear that we need some absolutes. Non-negotiables. Time for some new Commandments. Here are some that will work:

1. Jewish Grandchildren. You want them, right? Then raise your children to be Jewish. Children do not decide religion. Parents do. Children need direction. No matter who you marry, decide ahead of time that the kids will be brought up as Jews. Identity is important. Wishy-washy will get you 51 percent joining church or just not considering themselves to be Jewish. If the thought of being invited to your grandchild's baptism in 20 years troubles you, do something about it now.
2. Hebrew School. I didn't like it. You didn't like it. Our kids don't either. Some creative people are thinking about, "better ways" to Jewishly educate our children. Until they find it, we should send our kids to Hebrew school. I know Hebrew School will conflict with soccer, fencing or other over-programming activities. But in the end, the values, history and character our children learn from becoming members of the Jewish community will mean a lot more than yet another travelling softball team. Someday children will respect you for towing the line on this one.
3. Circumcise. This is our covenant. It is not all that barbaric so just get over it.
4. Get to Israel! If I have to talk to another wealthy Jewish parent about how much her daughter enjoyed Birthright, I am going to vomit. A family who goes on Safari in Africa, takes yearly ski trips to Vail and jaunts to Rome, but has not brought their children to Israel should be embarrassed. Please don't get huffy about this. I know all the Birthright arguments and I don't care. Israel is not scary. What is scary is the thought of the Middle East without Israel, which will surely happen if we do not do a better job of supporting our Jewish State. Every Jewish family who can afford it should be taking trips to Israel. It is shameful that the Jewish community now has to pay the bill for doing what Jewish parents should be doing themselves.
5. End BORING Synagogue. I have attended and practically slept through so many Bar/Bat Mitzvah services wondering not why we are losing so many Jews, but why we are not losing more?! C'mon Rabbis! Truly, out of every synagogue in North America, would you choose to daven at yours if you were not the Rabbi? If not, then try to change it! Be creative, be humorous, be spiritual! Shake it up! I assume that many congregational Rabbis chose their careers because they felt a calling to be a spiritual leader and inspire others. Well then, please try harder. I know that there is an awful lot of pressure on you, but you chose to become a Rabbi, so please try to keep the flock in the fold. Did you hear about the Easter services in Georgia where they held a Give-A-Way? They were literally giving cars, bikes, and televisions to people just for coming to services?! I bet you rolled your eyes. I did too. Until I watched the service on You Tube. It was fun! Invigorating! Inspiring! I stopped rolling my eyes.
6. Give Philanthropy to Jewish Causes. There are millions of non-Jews giving to the Red Cross, Cancer research, Princeton University; they have it taken care of. Jews need to be very careful that much of their philanthropy is directed to Jewish causes. Somehow, this lesson that was clear to our parents' generation is lost on ours. We are the ONLY ones who ill support our own. Jewish money needs to go to Jewish causes.
7. Jewish Camp. Jewish Camp may be THE savior of the Jewish people. I am not talking about camp with Jewish kids, I am talking about Jewish Camp where your children will get a dose of Judaism that they will cherish forever. Jewish Camp will light the spark inside your children that will make them love and identify with their cool Judaism in a way that we just can't seem to teach at home.
8. Day School. My husband and I do not send our kids to Day School, but I hear it is pretty great and inspires a lifelong love of Judaism. Many people swear by it so I am making it a Commandment.
9. Bar/Bat Mitzvahs. Mitzvah projects, where the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child does a real community service project is a positive change that has taken place in the B'nai Mitzvah world in the past twenty years. Let's make it even bigger. Many children, in lieu of gifts are asking guests to donate to their chosen Mitzvah project. What a life-long lesson! What a menschy thing to do!
10. Shabbat. Friday night is family Shabbat. Period. Will your teenagers sometimes hate you for ruining their lives as you make them miss Friday night dances, football games, and sleepovers? Yes. Deal with it. We have all heard the statistics on how family dinner makes for healthier families. Many of our non-Jewish friends are envious that we have a built in, "family night" that goes along with our religion. Take advantage. Full disclosure: We have a negotiated rule in our family: Our daughters can miss three Shabbats per school year and friends (Jewish or not) can sometimes come for Shabbat dinner.

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