

Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey Journal

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April 2019
Vol. XLIV Issue 8



Rabbi's Message

Dear Friends,

When I think back at the benchmark memories from childhood, a few stand out:

- I remember the tetherball game that I almost won against the best player at my day camp
- I remember the exasperation on my mother's face that time I walked barefoot on the streets of New York City the day after we had returned home from having spent the summer, as we did every summer, with my cousins and grandparents in Maine, where I pretty much never wore shoes
- I remember my interview for 1st Grade (that's right, I had to interview for a spot in the first grade!) when, for the life of me, I could not figure out how to use two straight lines to get three squares from a rectangle
- I remember the disbelief that I felt when I, as a 2nd Grader in Hebrew School, learned that Israel was just 26 years old

But my single clearest memory comes from March 26, 1975. That night, like the 15th of Nisan every year, I had been looking forward to driving out to Long Island to enjoy Passover seder at my aunt and uncle's home with my extended family. I was excited to see my Uncle David's antique car, I was excited to see the ocean, and I was excited to sing the songs of Passover. But I was especially excited to receive my present when Elijah came bearing gifts to our *seder* (my Uncle Larry used to dress up and appear as Elijah when we opened the door for the prophet). That is, I was especially excited until I started itching.

(continued on next page)

Mark Your Calendar

- **Friday, April 5**
7:30 pm – Shabbat Service
- **Saturday, April 6**
6:00 pm – Reel Theology: *The Hunger Games* including Havdalah, Dinner, Movie, and Discussion
- **Sunday, April 7**
9:30 am – Sunday School
- **Monday, April 8**
7:00 pm – Board of Trustees Mtg.
- **Friday, April 12**
7:00 pm – Shabbat Service (4th Annual Bark Mitzvah – Pets Welcome)
- **Saturday, April 13**
10:30 am – Torah Study
7:00 pm – Sisterhood Jewelry & Judaica Swap
- **Sunday, April 14**
9:30 am – Sunday School
- **Monday, April 15**
7:30 pm – Book Club
- **Sunday, April 28**
9:30 am – Sunday School
- **Friday, May 3**
7:30 pm – Shabbat Service
Yom HaShoah observance
- **Sunday, May 5**
9:30 am – Sunday School

Rabbi's Message (cont.)

At first it wasn't so bad, but before long, I just couldn't stop. It turns out I had contracted chicken pox. And so had my older brother. My parents and my sister would still go (otherwise, how would my grandmother have gotten there?), but my brother and I would have to stay home with the babysitter and skip the seder. I was devastated.

Passover always has been – and I'm guessing it always will be – my favorite holiday. Friends, family, a great story, matzah ball soup, and a good excuse to eat as many eggs as I want. What's not to love about that? As an adult, though, I now have an even greater reason to love Passover so much, and it's one that I never quite got as a kid.

The festival of Passover (which begins this year on Friday evening, April 19) is a holiday known by at least four different names:

- *Chag HaMatzot* (Festival of Unleavened Bread), which serves the purpose of bringing biblical history alive for the participant
- *Chag HaPesach* (Festival of Paschal Offering), which serves the purpose of emphasizing our gratitude to God for the miracle of salvation
- *Chag Ha'Aviv* (Festival of Spring), which serves the purpose of marking the season
- *Z'man Cheiruteinu* (Time of Our Liberation), which serves the purpose of celebrating our divinely ordained national destiny

Yes, Passover is many things. One thing Passover is not, however, is *Chag Moshe* (Festival of Moses). In fact, Moses, *Moshe Rabbeinu* ("Moses, our Rabbi" as he is referred to by Jewish tradition), the obvious hero of our story, is not only not made the focal point of the Haggadah, he's not even mentioned (except for one brief instance in one passing prayer). And so we ask, "Why? Why is the single most important person in the entire 4000-year history of our people, the one without whose leadership we may well have never managed to leave Egypt, absent from the telling of the story?"

The obvious answer is that just as the Torah keeps Moses' burial site a mystery, lest we should be tempted to deify him at the grave, so too, the Haggadah keeps Moses out in order that we should not be led to assume it was through the miracle of this human being rather than the miracle of God that our people were freed. On this topic, the Jerusalem Talmud (Horayot 3:47, column 1:5) states:

"When God wanted to remove Israel from Egypt, the Holy One did not send a messenger nor an angel; the holy One, blessed be God, came directly, as is written, 'And I passed through the land of Egypt on that night (Exodus 12:12).'"

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Rabbi's Message (cont.)

So yes, this would be the obvious answer: By removing Moses from the Passover story in the Haggadah, the rabbis were protecting us from falling into the trap of crediting Moses for the miracle rather than God. But the obvious answer is not the only answer.

As you read the telling of the story this year, pay extra attention to the beginning of the final part:

"...In every generation each of us is obligated to see ourself as having ourself come out of Egyptian bondage."

That is, we are cautioned to think of liberation not as something that happened to those people back then, but rather as something that each of us today continues to experience. Were Moses to be the focal point of our story, we would be tempted to think of redemption not only as something that he (as opposed to God) made happen, but also as something that happened 3400 years ago and therefore now is ancient history.

We cannot let this become the message of Passover, because Judaism is not a religion of yesterday only. Judaism is a religion of ongoing revelation; it is up to each of us in every generation to participate in the discovery and telling of our story. Moreover, it is up to each of us in every generation to feel the pain of the experience that we suffered in Egypt, because if we don't, if we fail to internalize the pain of bondage, we risk looking the other way when others experience similar pain.

When I was a child, Passover was my favorite holiday because it was fun, it was exciting, it was an excuse to be with family, and it was a great story. Now, as an adult, it is my favorite holiday for all these reasons, but also – and especially – because it challenges me to experience the suffering in a very real way, a way that will call me to stand in the breach and make sure I do all I can to ensure that no other person will ever have to go through the same torment as I. As an adult, Passover has become my favorite holiday because as I see it now, Passover, when celebrated fully, has the potential to harness the energy and efforts of every celebrant – in concert with God – to accomplish nothing less than world redemption itself. So I ask again, "What's not to love about that?"

חג פסח שמעך (Chag Pesach Sameach)

Happy Passover,

Rabbi Dubin



Daffodils in bloom at JCNWJ

President's Message

In March, I was asked to speak at a Presbyterian confirmation retreat to an audience of young adults aged 12–15 about my journey of being Jewish in our society. I had to think long and hard about what I wanted to say, and this also gave me time to reflect on my religious journey.

I will share my thoughts with you this month and next.

My adult Jewish journey began after my Bar Mitzvah. I had spent 5 days a week going to Hebrew school and services from the time I was 7 until I was 13. By the Bar Mitzvah, I had had enough. After that, I limited temple attendance to the High Holidays, although my family did celebrate all the major Jewish holidays at home. During my college years, I heard about something called an “eruv,” which allowed the Orthodox, at least in my mind, to circumvent the laws of Shabbat. I was so incensed by this that I turned away from Judaism.

As a young adult, I had the opportunity to learn to be a computer programmer as a trainee at AT&T. During my training, the final exam was to write a program and produce specific output. I had 20 days to do this. The day before the program was due was Yom Kippur. I had never worked on Yom Kippur before and decided that instead of asking for a one-day extension, I would just work through the day and get the project done. When I went into work, I accomplished absolutely nothing while the sun was up. When the sun set and the Holy Day was over, within an hour I had my work completed. At that point, I looked to the skies and said to myself, “OKAY, I get it.” This was the “*aha* moment” in my life regarding how I would live my life as a Jew.

Within a month of that day, I met Iris and fell in love with the most beautiful and kindest woman that I have ever met. Do I think any of this was a coincidence? I don't. As we fell in love and talked about our future, we needed to make one major decision in our lives: since Iris was Catholic, would we bring up our children as Jewish? As much as I loved Iris, if she had said something different, I think that would have been a deal breaker for me.

We were married in the temple I grew up in and began our lives. I started to become more active in my temple. Really, that meant I assisted with fundraising by working the weekly bingo games, and was soon asked to be one of the callers. My daughter Jessica was born in 1984 with a condition called Trisomy 18, which is mainly incompatible with life, and she passed away at 11 months old. It was devastating. The one phrase that my Rabbi used to comfort us was that this “taught us how to love.” I didn't understand what he meant, but the phrase stuck with me.

Four years later we were blessed to adopt Sam, and then were blessed again the next year with Allison and Caitlin, after we moved up to Warren County.

I'll finish telling you about my religious journey (thus far) next month.

Love, Howie

Sisterhood

NEWS & UPCOMING EVENTS

Thank you, Thank you to all who donated to the Mishloach Manot Fundraiser. You raised over \$3000, which will be donated to the Temple for security needs. By now everyone should have received a Mishloach Manot bag either at the Temple or by mail (an anonymous donor covered all shipping costs). Please let me know if you did not receive a bag!

In April, please consider joining the Sisterhood at the Judaica Swap. We would love to see everyone. You do not need to be a Sisterhood member to join the fun. Please see the flyer below for important information.

Alison Shelofsky



Updates & Events



JCNWJ – COMING ATTRACTIONS

Friday, April 5
7:30

Shabbat Tazria

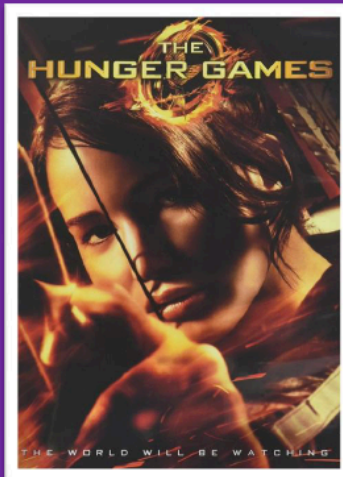


with

Rabbi Dubin's Sermon:

"Paging Dr. Cohen!"

Saturday, April 6
6:00



Dinner

Havdalah

The Hunger Games

Dessert Discussion

Friday, April 12
7:00

Shabbat Metzora



4th Annual

Bark/Meow Mitzvah

Updates & Events

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

Upcoming Schedule:

- April 7
- April 14
- April 28
- May 5

Note: No Sunday School on April 21st

TORAH STUDY

Torah Study continues at the JCNWJ. The next meeting will be Saturday, April 13th at 10:30am. All are welcome. We are in the middle of Deuteronomy. Our remaining schedule for the year is:

- April 13
- May 11
- June 22

BUILDING UPDATE

Kitchen and Bathroom supplies

If you notice that any kitchen or bathroom supplies are getting low, please email Iris Hirsch at irishirsch@comcast.net.

MAH JONGG

Mah Jongg continues at the JCNWJ. Contact Rhonda Jordan at helpmerhonda171@yahoo.com if interested!

WEBSITE

Members Only!

The JCNWJ website has a section for temple members only. Here you'll find the latest membership list and other documents not for public consumption.

To access, go to www.jcnwj.org/members/ and enter the user name jcnwjmember and password. Forgot the password? E-mail website@jcnwj.org.

FOOD DRIVE

Our congregation continues to donate food all year round to the food pantry. The Jewish Center is collecting non-perishable items such as canned soup, pasta, and cereal on an ongoing basis to help out those in need.

Updates & Events

DONATIONS

In Loving Memory of Sanford Rems
– Dolores Rems

In Memory of Lillian G. Jay
– Rabbi Ellen Lewis

In Memory of Tillie and Bernie
– Linda and Steven Ratzman

On the Yahrzeit of Arthur Tarlowe
– Laura and Paul Tarlowe

On the Yahrzeit of Harry Siegel
– Rhonda Jordan

To the Rabbi's Professional Development
Fund
– Rhonda Jordan

Melissa and William Parsons

ADDRESS CHANGE

Please note that the mailing address for donations and dues payments for the Jewish Center of Northwest New Jersey has changed to:

JCNWJ
c/o Andrew Shelofsky
10 Buttonwood Street
Lambertville, NJ 08530

If you make automated payments through your bank account or charitable foundation, please update the mailing address accordingly.

A Reminder from the Sunshine Committee

Please let us know when someone has passed away, is ill or otherwise in need of a little sunshine so that the Jewish Center may be there to support and assist as best we can. Please contact Ruth Schutzbank at (908) 329-6036 or Howie.ruth@hotmail.com.



Purim Spiel

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Wanted: Advertisers for JCNWJ Journal

Kindly take note of the ads at the end of our Journal and whenever possible, support these establishments with your patronage. It's also a good idea to mention that you saw their Temple ad. If there are any businesses that you use regularly that might be interested in taking an ad in the Journal, please contact Rita Berkowitz (berk721@aol.com) or Ruth Schutzbank (Howie.ruth@hotmail.com). You can also go to our homepage, print out an advertising form and give it directly to them to mail in.