

Mark Your Calendar!

- Sunday, May 2
Men's Club Meeting, 9:00 a.m.
Adult Ed, 10:45 a.m.
- Friday, May 7, 6:30 p.m.
Lay-Led Shabbat followed by
potluck dinner
- Sunday, May 9
No Sunday School
Happy Mother's Day!
- Friday, May 14, 7:45 p.m.
Shabbat
- Saturday, May 15, 10:00 a.m.
Bat Mitzvah
- Sunday, May 16, 10:00 a.m.
Confirmation
- Saturday, May 22, 10:30 a.m.
Torah Study
- Sunday, May 23, 9:30 a.m.
Shavuot Confirmation
Last Day of School

SAVE THE DATE!

- Sunday, June 6, 9:30 a.m.
Annual Meeting

Rabbi's Message

I love the kind of service we had last Shabbat evening. It was quiet and reflective, followed by an oneg Shabbat at which people lingered and visited. One of our youngest members asked me some difficult theological questions ("Does God answer prayers? Because if two teams are playing a game and both sides are praying to win, how does God decide?"), followed by the question, "Did you always know you wanted to be a rabbi from the time you were a little girl?" I told her that it hadn't occurred to me to become a rabbi until I was in college, that when I was a little girl, women couldn't become rabbis. She looked positively mystified. You have no idea how happy her surprised reaction made me (and how it made me even happier when she reported that she just might become a rabbi herself one day).

Our conversation made me stop and think about how much our Jewish world has changed since I was a little girl. No women sat on the Board of synagogues, no women sat on the bimah unless it was to present the bar mitzvah gift from the Sisterhood, no women were called to the Torah, and no women went to rabbinical school or cantorial school (and no women earned PhDs and taught at rabbinical school). Just look at us now. And beyond the gender issues, look at how the entire Reform movement has continued to evolve. The Reform prayerbook has changed a number of times since my childhood and is soon to change again, all in an effort to facilitate the kind of worship which stays true to the past while meeting the needs of the present. We will be exploring that prayerbook in our adult education sessions in the Fall.

Nothing important ever stays the same, least of all Judaism. We have always been a "reforming" religion, not a "reformed" religion since that would imply a process that is over. We are continually re-forming ourselves in our attempt to understand and do what God wants of us.

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President's Message

As we enter the spring, change is all around us. From the crocuses peeking the buds through the snow, to the pansies, tulips, hyacinths and the early spring bloomers, they are here to remind us that things are always in a state of change. Some people love change, but most of us seem to be creatures of habit. We love it when shoes gets comfortable, and enjoy wearing them that way.

In our temple life, as some things stay the same, so must other things change. Hopefully, as we bring in some changes into the JCNWJ, we remember what is great about this congregation, and attempt to enhance the lives of all of us. As I begin talking about change, I want to start with something that will not be changing, and that is our Rabbi. Other changes are being planned, none of which should do anything but improve the quality of our temple life.

As always, I am thoroughly enjoying my role as President and I hope that if you have any questions, concerns, suggestions, ideas or anything else you would like to talk about, I am a phone call away. Do not hesitate to call me. I am here to act as your agent to make things better.

Shalom,
Howie Hirsch

Rabbi's Message, cont.

That conversation Friday night reminded me that change is an imperative in our tradition, not a choice. If that daughter of our congregation becomes a rabbi, she will be serving a Jewish community who will not look like us any more than our community looks like the one created by our founders over 60 years ago. As the needs change, so does Judaism wrestle with those needs. Staying the same is not an option; it is the equivalent to going backwards. We are a people who look backwards only for inspiration that will help move us carefully and thoughtfully into the future.

As the season changes and the buds flower, consider the changes that surround us each day and say a blessing for a world that does not stay the same.

Rabbi Ellen J. Lewis

YOUR VOTE COUNTS!

Be sure to attend the annual Congregational Meeting on **Sunday, June 6 at 9:30 a.m.** Topics include:

- The Education committee will propose to become a co-op and to hire a new school administrator.
- The 2004-2005 budget and dues will be presented along with a financial and operating plan to carry us into the future.

Upcoming Adult Education Programs

Torah Study - If line-by-line (and sometimes word-by-word) textual study interests you, come join us one Saturday morning per month, 10:30 to noon or thereabouts, on the following dates: **May 22 and June 12**. If you would like more information, call Sharon Herson.

Adult Ed - **Sunday, May 2** at 10:45 a.m.

Education Committee and PTO News

The Education and PTO committees have been busy planning already for next year:

- **School Administrator** - This person will support the curriculum with new ideas and enrichment and will help run the school.
- **Co-op School** - We have always been a co-op in spirit, by depending on volunteers to run the school, and we are now making it official to enlist total parent involvement. We will create a list of PTO/activities that need your help. Simply select the ones you can work on.
- **Parent handbook** to clarify the school's goals and expectations.

Please be sure to attend the annual meeting to offer your input and vote.

There is no school on May 9, Mother's Day. **Sunday, May 23** is the Awards Assembly and the last day of school. Parents: please plan on attending this special event.

Lauren's Mitzvah Project

For my Bat Mitzvah project I collected toiletries for the Hunterdon Youth Facility. The facility provides basic emergency care for juveniles ages 12-17 in a supportive and home-like environment. It provides a safe place to stay, as well as food, medical care, therapy, and recreation for teens.

I put a collection box in the Oldwick library for people to drop off toiletries. I also went to dentist's offices to explain what I was doing and to ask if they had extra toothbrushes, toothpaste, and dental floss I could use for my project. I also asked people we knew. We then delivered the toiletries to the facility, and I got to meet the people there.

Overall, this project has really made me feel good about myself. I feel like I really made a difference.

Renaissance Invitation

Robin Hall's mother has asked us to extend an invitation to any members 49 years and up of our temple that would like to join Temple Beth El's Renaissance group. They go on day trips, both cultural and fun, have parties, etc. Their group currently has 40 members, but are looking to add new members. This is a Reform movement group for older temple members who want to stay connected and socialize with their peers.

A Very Special Request

Chelsea Friedlander will be traveling to Russia this summer. She is collecting goods to deliver to a hospital: first-aid supplies, latex gloves, children's coloring books with little or no writing, and toiletries. Watch for a box at the Temple.

Mazel Tov!

Congratulations to Laurie Hessels, who donated her sculpture "Survivors" to the New Jersey Holocaust Commission and was honored by the commission at Raritan Valley Community College on April 20.

Relay for Life

The Seidorf family is participating in the American Cancer Society Relay for Life which will be held at North Hunterdon High School on June 4-5. The Relay for Life honors cancer survivors, remembers loved ones who lost their battle against cancer, and educates the community about cancer prevention. We would appreciate your support for this effort. Donations of any amount will be happily accepted. Checks can be made out to the American Cancer Society and sent to me at: 5 Grace Drive, Annandale, NJ 08801.

Thanks for your support. At the Relay for Life, there is no finish line until we find a cure.


David Seidorf

Shoprite/A&P Vouchers

ShopRite/A&P script can be purchased at Sunday School/Confirmation Class on May 2 & 16. Please call Sandy Seidorf at the Temple to purchase scrip.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Jewish LIFE

 Jewish LIFE concludes the season on Thursday, May 20 at 7:30 p.m. with a discussion on Anti-Semitism on College Campuses with guest speakers Jay Rubin, Executive Vice President of Hillel in Washington, DC, and Shai Goldstein, Regional Director of the Anti-Defamation League, NJ Regional Office. For fees and to RSVP contact JCC Assistant Executive Director Laura Friedman at 908-725-6994 x213; LFriedman@ssbjcc.org.

The Fresh Air Fund

The Fresh Air Fund is looking for host families to open their homes to an inner-city child this summer. This experience is known to be as rewarding for the host families as it is wonderful for the visiting child. Anyone interested in learning more about the program can call Susan Richards at 813-8791.

Shavuot Activities

What will you do this year to celebrate Shavuot, which begins at sundown Tuesday, May 25? In addition to remembering the giving of the Torah to Moses at Mt. Sinai, the holiday celebrates the spring harvest. The Jewish Parent Page, located at www.urj.org/educate/parent, contains a history of Shavuot and a listing of family projects for the holiday, relevant blessings in Hebrew and English, a recipe for fruit and yogurt pie, and more. The Jewish Holiday Page for Shavuot, found at www.urj.org/holidays/shavuot.shtml, has a brief overview of the traditions of *tikkun leil Shavuot* and the counting of the omer, and links to congregational Web sites that offer fun and educational Shavuot materials. Log on and learn!

Music, Music, Music!

For the past 15 years, hundreds of Jewish musicians and music lovers have descended on New York's Catskill Mountains to hone their craft, network with their peers, and enjoy some of

the most inspirational Jewish music anywhere! The North American Jewish Choral Festival, July 11-15 at the Hudson Valley Resort and Spa in Kerhonkson, NY, gives participants the unique opportunity to work with top conductors, participate in workshops; enjoy daily concert performances by the country's leading Jewish choirs, and join in large community singing events. To participate, please contact the Union of Reform Judaism's Department of Worship, Music, and Religious Living at 212.650.4226, worship@urj.org, or visit www.urj.org/music.

Study + Worship + Community = Kallah

Spend five unforgettable days learning and studying among a vibrant community of committed worshipers — register for the 2004 Summer Kallah! This year's Kallah will be held at the University of California at Santa Cruz, July 7-11, and Franklin Pierce College in Rindge, NH, July 21-25. For information, visit www.urj.org/educate/kallah, or contact the Dept of Lifelong Jewish Learning, 212.650.4110, educate@urj.org.

Donations

Linda and Jim Arvesen made a contribution to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund in appreciation of the Rabbi Cynthia Bloom in memory of Harold Bloom
Rona and Stanley Schick in memory of Irv Zweibel
Rabbi Ellen Lewis in memory of Michael S. Lewis

The Jewish Center extends condolences to Mary Finkelstein on the death of her mother

From Your Newsletter Editor

The deadline for June's issue will be may 18.

JEWISH CENTER OF NORTHWEST JERSEY

Name	_____	Email	_____
Address	_____	I/We would like to make a contribution of	_____
	_____	In honor of	_____
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- Jewish LIFE/Cultural Programs
- Vacation Day Programs
- Senior programs
- Camp Talamini-Ruach
- Summer Swim Club
- **NEW!** JCC Dance School



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