



## Mark Your Calendar!

- Monday, May 1, 7:30 p.m.  
Board Meeting
- Friday, May 5, 7:45 p.m.  
Shabbat Service -
- Saturday, May 6, 10:00 a.m.  
Bat Mitzvah
- Sunday, May 7  
Sunday School  
Yom Ha' Atzmaut celebration
- Saturday, May 13  
10:30 a.m. Torah Study
- Sunday, May 14  
No School - Happy Mother's  
Day!
- Friday, May 19, 7:45 p.m.  
Shabbat Service
- Saturday, May 20, 10:00 a.m.  
Bat Mitzvah
- Sunday, May 21  
LAST DAY OF SUNDAY  
SCHOOL  
Confirmation Graduation  
9:30 a.m. Men's Club meeting

## Rabbi's Message

There are months where what I want to write for this message is so clear to me and there are other times when I wait for the Muse but she tarries. More often, I find it is hard to select a topic from all the relevant options. Should I write about the parochial or the universal? Within our congregation, there are priorities to set and goals to reach. Within the slightly larger Jewish world, there is plenty to concern us, from how to increase Shabbat observance to promoting Jewish study to making interfaith families feel a part of the community. Within our country, there are ongoing concerns about the economy, the war in Iraq, rising fuel costs, health care for all and immigration. Then there is the universal world we share with all other human beings, where we wonder how to raise awareness about Darfur, AIDS, global warming, the Middle East and world poverty.

This conflict is broader than my selfish question of what to write for this column. This is the daily tension with which we Jews must wrestle. The Book of Leviticus, which we are reading in our Torah cycle, reflects that the conflict is an ancient one. Lofty commandments about loving our neighbor sit alongside of particular commandments regarding ritual observance. How do we know what is most important? The answer is that it is all important and it is all related.

I found myself thinking about this conflict as I was grumbling about returning my kitchen to its pre-Passover state. The Passover dishes (both sets, milk and meat) needed to go

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## President's Message

This month I was able to attend two events at the temple. The first was a talent show on April the first, April fools day as they say, but there were no fools present in the temple that night. The audience was treated to entertainment from our members, from the youngest, Heather Gross to the oldest Stanley Schick. This was a night that I will remember for a long long time. The performers, while nervous, were spectacular. My thanks to all of the performers for making my evening. My highlight of the evening was Stanley's rendition of 'Tis Autumn, a song he heard after returning from service in World War II, and finally had the place where his desire and an outlet to sing it coincided. When Stan finished singing, there wasn't a dry eye in the house. I hope we do this event again and those of you who were too shy or embarrassed to perform will reconsider and grace us with your talents.

The second event was a second night Seder. Rabbi Lewis was her usual self in leading us on a journey that I don't get with my family. there is something unusual about having the Seder led by our Rabbi. Although we had 50 people there this year, it felt like home. We all got to sing and read and enjoy the Seder in a new light. One of the things I enjoy about Seder is that I always seem to look at the holiday with new eyes. Some years more than others, I really feel like I am crossing the Red Sea and coming into a new age of freedom and uncertainty. Freedom does have it's price. Ask any soldier or veteran.

As I prepare to go to my first political rally in Washington later this week, to try and raise awareness for the genocide in Darfur, I am thankful to all of the Americans who have either risked or given their lives, so that we may be able to live in peace and be able to speak our minds without fear of reprisal. This is a great country we live in and I hope we never take what we have for granted and always remember that we must all find the cost of freedom in our own lives.

Howie

**Rabbi's Message, cont.**

back to the basement, the regular dishes (both sets, milk and meat) had to be returned to their usual places. Someone asked me why I kept kosher; do Reform Jews have to keep kosher? Well, no Jews "have" to do anything; what we do is always our choice, whether we are Reform, Reconstructionist, Renewal, Conservative, Orthodox or other. So I began to reflect on my personal experience with kashrut. I did not grow up in a kosher home but the idea always intrigued me. When I first lived in Israel, it was hard to find non-kosher products and I decided it was a perfect time to try keeping kosher myself. I have never stopped although my feelings about keeping kosher have changed over time. Initially, I liked the idea that all Jews could eat in my home. I still do, but what I focus on more now is the thoughtfulness and intention that kashrut requires. Each time you eat, you think about what you are eating even before you recite a blessing. The blessing requires you to consider the source of life and food. That blessing connects a particular action to a universal God. The personal is particular and universal at the same time.

Ritual observance reminds us that being a Jew is about action even more than belief. How we live reflects our truest values. Kashrut is only one concrete example. There are so many other ways in which we choose live our Judaism at home, in the congregation and in this great world. I would be interested in knowing: Which ways have you chosen to live Judaism in your daily lives? Tell me, call me or email me. I would love to hear your stories.

And may the matza crumbs of Pesach remind us all of the blessings of the freedom that is ours.

Rabbi Ellen Lewis

**Cantor's Corner: Yiddish Radio Days**

In the February issue of this newsletter, I shared with you some of my research about the beginnings of Yiddish theater, a medium that had a profound effect on Jewish immigrant audiences at the turn of the last century. The same may be said for its sister medium, Yiddish radio, in which, through the power of their imaginations, audiences were able to identify with the voices on the radio on an even deeper level than they could at the theater.

One of the most wildly successful mainstream radio shows of all time was The Rise of the Goldbergs, created by (and starring) Gertrude Berg in 1929. This was a mainstream show about, of all things, a Jewish family. Other Jewish characters appeared on mainstream radio, such as "Mrs. Nussbaum" on the Fred Allen Show, but they were heavily stereotypical. Radio historian Henry Sapoznik believes that The Rise of the Goldbergs was the only mainstream radio show about Jews that was true to life and did not rely on stereotypes.

Radio programs produced by and for the Yiddish-speaking population, such as those produced by New York City's WEVD, "The Station that Speaks Your Language," presented a somewhat more rounded portrayal of immigrant and second-generation Jews than those in the mainstream did. Sapoznik makes the

observation that, while mainstream radio programs contained a touch of the "exotic," and enabled listeners to escape to worlds not their own, Jewish audiences tended to tune into Yiddish programs to see a "mirror" of themselves and their own experiences with broader American culture. This was not unlike the relationship Jewish audiences had had earlier with Yiddish theater. By the 1930s, radio programs proliferated that were targeted to Americans of all ethnic backgrounds. Radio stations broadcasting such fare were ubiquitous, if not high-profile. The programs were usually broadcast on the weaker bandwidths, at the very ends of the dial. They served a population of first- and second-generation immigrants attempting the balancing act of hanging onto their roots while at the same time becoming fully accepted into mainstream American culture.

The difference between radio and theater was that, in listening to a radio program, one did not have to leave one's home to be connected to what was going on outside—each ethnic group's unique perspective on American culture could be beamed directly into a family's living room. The impact of radio may even have been greater than that of the later invention of the television, because, since there were no images to be seen; each of the listeners had an active role in the process. If the listener closed his or her eyes, he or she could imagine that the radio performers, through broadcasted music, comedy routines, dramatic serials, and commercials, had actually been invited into the comfort of the home.

*Our Student Cantor, Karen Neff, will be joining us for the last time this year on Shabbat, May 19. Please come to wish her well as she embarks on her career as an invested cantor. We enjoyed her presence on our bima and wish her a joyous future. She will honor us with a couple of Yiddish pieces from her senior recital*

**END OF THE SCHOOL YEAR PARTY!  
TWO HOURS OF BOWLING FUN!**

**Sunday May 21 • 12:30 pm - 2:30 pm  
Oakwood Lanes in Washington**

Cost \$9 per person • Pretzels and Chips  
Gutter bumpers and handicap ramps available  
Mail or return with payment to made out to JCNWJ by May 7

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Number of adults \_\_\_\_\_ Amount enclosed (\$9/person) \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of children \_\_\_\_\_ Bumpers yes no  
Total \_\_\_\_\_ Handicap ramp yes no

Names of people in your lane, including yourself  
(ok to include friends not in your family and not on this form)

Lane names	Additional lane
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

## **This is a True Story**

*Note from Rabbi Lewis: Many of you know that our ark contains two heavy Torah scrolls. B'nai mitzvah students always worry about dropping them (and should that happen, no we are not required to fast for 40 days, just to give tzedakah for our atonement). Until I read the following story, I had never seen any advantage to the weight of our scrolls.*

A thin young man, recently became a bar mitzvah and while on his Spring Break from middle school, decided he needed to get a job. He spends the day knocking on doors of the small businesses that are familiar to him in his village, beginning with his local book shop. Each time, he is asked, "How old are you?" Each time he answers, "Thirteen." Each time he is told, "Too young. Come back next year."

After summoning his courage to inquire for work at the book store, a bait 'n tackle shop, a florist, a cafe, a pet store, a pharmacy, the Quick Mart, a video store, he decides to try one more place before calling it quits for the day.

The next place he tries is Brook Run Farm, the local produce and garden stand. The young man, named Samuel, asks the lady behind the register if she has any work for him. The woman, looks at him carefully and asks, "How old are you?" This time Sam answers, "Almost 14." The woman looks over at the stack of bagged mulch and then turns back to Sam and says, "How much weight can you lift?" He looks back at her and says, "How much does a Torah weigh?"

## **Education Committee and PTO News**

LAST DAY OF SUNDAY SCHOOL: SUNDAY, MAY 21

**May 7** - Yom Ha'Atzmaut, Israeli Independence Day

**May 14** - No school - Happy Mother's Day

**May 21** - End Of Year Party for Hebrew School at Oakwood Lanes, more info to follow

## **Adult Programs**

*Torah Study:* Meeting dates: Saturday mornings —  
May 13, June–Aug. TBA. Starting time is 10:30 a.m., ending time about 12:30-1:00 p.m.

## **Support the Jewish Center with Scrip**

Lynne Kowski is available every Sunday at the Temple that Sunday School meets at 11:45 a.m.

## **COMMUNITY PROGRAMS**

Jewish LIFE thanks all those who attended and supported the programs offered this year. We are working on the 2006-2007 calendar of events and look forward to bringing to our community another terrific lineup of programs. We look forward to hosting Abigail Pogrebin, author of "The Stars of David" on November 2. Ruth Messinger, President & Executive Director of American Jewish World Services, will be our guest speaker on November 19. Ms. Messinger will speak on "Jews as Global Citizens: Our Responsibility in the World." The Jewish LIFE brochure for the new season will be available in the fall. Jewish LIFE needs your support. Please consider becoming a Patron or Benefactor of Jewish LIFE for its new season. Details will be published in the brochure, or contact Laura Friedman, Associate Executive Director, Shimon and Sara Birnbaum JCC, 908-275-6994 x213; LFriedman@ssbjcc.org.



**From the Jewish Federation of Somerset, Hunterdon and Warren Counties** - For more information contact Alina Sindler 725-6994 x204

May 1: Institute for Holocaust & Genocide Studies 25th Annual "Make a Difference" Reception – Honoring the Jewish Federation of Somerset, Hunterdon and Warren Counties featuring Jerry Fowler, US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Film Preview of the Hidden Child.

May 2, 3, 4 – Institute for Holocaust & Genocide Studies "Learning Through Experience" Workshop at Raritan Valley Community College – Annual program educating middle and high school students on the realities of the Holocaust and other genocides. Federation now recruiting adult volunteers for all 3 days! Please call Alina Sindler at (908) 725-6994 ext. 204 for more information.

### **JEWISH CENTER OF NORTHWEST JERSEY**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ I/We would like to make a contribution of \_\_\_\_\_

In honor of \_\_\_\_\_

In memory of \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Please contact me/us about membership \_\_\_\_\_

Make check payable to Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey and mail to JCNWJ

May 23 – Business Networking Group Breakfast – 7:30am  
A new initiative that unites the Jewish Federation’s Business & Professional and Legal & Financial Divisions, enriching connections between community professionals. Please call Daniel Schulster at (908) 725-6994 ext. 238 for more information!

May 31: Annual Meeting Federation/JCC - Joint annual meeting of the Jewish Federation and Shimon & Sara Birnbaum Jewish Community Center. Please call Diane Naar at 725-6994 ext. 202 for more information.

June 4, 2006 - Salute to Israel Parade, NYC- Annual parade saluting the state of Israel

November 5, 2006 - Pacesetters 2007 – Annual Federation gala, more details to come

**New Jersey-West Hudson Valley Council**

**Join Us On Our Voyage  
To Sustain The World**

**As We Welcome:**

**Robert Heller**

**Chairman of the Board, Union For Reform Judaism**

**Rabbi Lennard Thal**

**Senior Vice President, Union For Reform Judaism**

**National Scholar**

**Rabbi Mark Washofsky**

**Associate Professor of Rabbinics, HUC-JIR, Cincinnati, OH**

**Regional Scholar**

**Rabbi Bennett Miller, D.Min.,**

**Senior Rabbi, Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple,  
New Brunswick, NJ**

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