

# Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey

# Journal

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## Rabbi's Message

Dear Friends,

As I think I've made clear to anyone who will listen, Israel is a place near and dear to my heart. There are, of course, many reasons why, but at this time of year, I always tend to come back to one in particular.

It was during my Junior Year of college, when I was an exchange student at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. While it is true that Israel tends to function on the Gregorian calendar (as opposed to the Jewish calendar), all the same, it is hard not to feel the rhythm of Jewish time when you live there. Grocery stores change their inventory for Passover, public buses sit parked on Shabbat, and the entire country stands still for a brief moment of national solidarity on Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Memorial Day) and, a week later, on Yom HaZikaron (Memorial Day for those who have fallen in war on the battlefield and by terrorism). But as I see it, there is perhaps no moment in the Israeli year more universally in sync with Jewish time than the period between Rosh Hashanah and Simchat Torah. Universities, in fact, close their gates for the entire four-week period. So for me as a 20-year-old student from America, that meant that I had to find something to do for a whole month.

Eager for new experiences, I chose to volunteer on a kibbutz. However, rather than opting for a secular kibbutz, which describes the overwhelming majority of kibbutzim, I decided to live on an Orthodox Religious Kibbutz.

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## Mark Your Calendar

- **Sunday, October 8<sup>th</sup>**  
9:30 am – Sunday School  
11:30 am – Sukkot Service  
Pizza-in-the-Hut following service
- **Friday, October 13<sup>th</sup>**  
7:30 pm – Shabbat Service & Simchat Torah Celebration  
Oneg – Fenton, Mattson, McGraw
- **Saturday, October 14<sup>th</sup>**  
10:30 am – Torah Study
- **Sunday, October 15<sup>th</sup>**  
9:30 am – Sunday School  
12:00 pm – Grow a Row
- **Monday, October 16<sup>th</sup>**  
7:30 pm – Book Club
- **Sunday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>**  
9:30 am – Sunday School
- **Sunday, October 29<sup>th</sup>**  
9:30 am – Sunday School
- **Friday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>**  
7:30 pm – Shabbat Service  
Oneg – Berkowitz (J&R), Finkelstein, Tucker
- **Sunday, November 5<sup>th</sup>**  
9:30 am – Sunday School

## Rabbi's Message (cont.)

Over the course of the month, I worked in a number of low-skill labor positions. I prepared feed for the livestock, peeled potatoes for the cafeteria, cleaned out the chicken coops, and shoveled my fair share of cow droppings. None of these jobs was particularly interesting, nor all that much fun, but each and every one of them was necessary for the practical functioning of the kibbutz. Without all of us doing this kind of work, whether or not the work itself was at all interesting, it would have been much harder for the kibbutz to meet its bottom line obligations. And this is one of the great lessons I learned from my four weeks there: When a community is truly collective in spirit, the members are willing to do jobs they don't necessarily enjoy, because only when everyone contributes can the community truly support itself.

All the same, I did have one job that month that cannot be described this way. In fact, not only did it have nothing to do with the bottom line, it actually took hundreds of labor hours to accomplish and tied up a number of valuable pieces of farm equipment which otherwise could have been serving to boost the kibbutz's financial situation. Instead, about ten of us spent the better part of a week rising high in the air on kibbutz cherry pickers to cut down date palm branches, load them onto trucks, and deliver them not only to the central lawn outside the communal dining hall but also to each individual family home on the kibbutz. They were, of course, to serve as the *schach* (the vegetation that creates the roof of a *sukkah*).

I won't lie. It was tough work. The branches became heavier and heavier as the week went on, the trucks were loud and uncomfortable, and the sun was relentless. But it was also, without the shadow of a doubt, not only the most personally fulfilling job I had during my four weeks there, even more importantly, it was clearly the one that the kibbutz members most appreciated.

What I learned from this experience is that some of the most important jobs we can take on in life have nothing to do with squeezing out a few more percentage points of profit. The palm branches, in fact, accomplished exactly the opposite. Not only did my work not contribute to the year-end financial stability of the kibbutz, it actually cost them significant financial opportunity. Yet to imagine this community using their resources for any goal at this time of year other than preparing to undertake the ritual observance of *Sukkot* would have been unthinkable. Ritual mattered to the members of my kibbutz, and ritual matters to us at the JCNWJ.

Whether it be for *Sukkot* or any other Jewish observance, we glory in the opportunity to gather together as a community and share ritual life together because ritual has a power like nothing else. Ritual has the power to put tangible shape onto the intangible spirit. When we sit in the *sukkah*, we are at once connected with the ritual matters, and the kibbutz was prepared to put their money where their spiritual core was.

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## Rabbi's Message (cont.)

Among the many lessons I learned and continue to carry with me from the experience of being intimately connected with the ritual preparation and fulfillment of *Sukkot* that month on kibbutz in 1986 are that we benefit from the opportunity to express gratitude to God for our many blessings. Specifically, we build *sukkot* in order to:

- Acknowledge that we are blessed with permanent shelter over our heads, and therefore answer the call to action to help those who do not;
- Thank God and those who work the land for the bountiful harvest we eat, and, therefore, once again, feel the call to action to help those who are without;
- Benefit from the spiritual value of community by sharing what we have with guests who come eat with us;
- Remind ourselves that while we are no longer slaves in Egypt, our own national freedom comes with the responsibility to keep moving forward through the desert of despair so that all people everywhere can enjoy freedom as well.
- Remind us that even though we relied on fragile huts for shelter while making our way through the desert after Egypt, we were able to survive the ordeal precisely because God kept shielding us at all times. So when we participate in the ritual of building and sitting in the *sukkah* today, what we are really doing is creating a tangible reality to remind us once again that God's protective eye remains with us today.

And finally, one concluding yet vitally important word of thanks: Even though it sometimes may seem that our community *sukkah* magically appears each year at the blink of an eye. But, surprise surprise, it doesn't actually work that way! It takes hard work and dedication (and some skill, too). Over the course of many many years, there has been one person more responsible than anyone else for making sure our community can enjoy our beautiful *sukkah*, and that person is Karl Gross who year in and year out makes it his business to build the structure and also to procure the corn stalks that we use as *schach* for the roof. This year, he was joined by Sandy Kahan and Andy Shelofsky. On behalf of the entire JCNWJ community, I offer our thanks to all of you gentlemen.

There are, of course, so many other tangible benefits that we derive from the ritual of *Sukkot*, but this is a pretty good place to start.

*Chag Sukkot Sameach,*

Rabbi Dubin

## President's Message

Now that the HIGH Holidays are over, my message this month is about attitude. On Yom Kippur, we made a vow to G-d that we will do our best not to sin. We also made a vow to forgive all sins from anyone who we feel has done us wrong over the past year (or years). One of the things that I have found in my life is that carrying a grudge against another person does nothing to affect the other person, but it does affect us. How do we get over feeling that someone has taken advantage of us? Or used us? Or done some harmful thing to us?

The answer is our attitude. Abraham Lincoln said that people are as happy as they want to be. I like to think that is true. I have seen people getting chemotherapy with smiles on their face and love in their heart. How do they do it? Attitude. Attitude is the one thing that when you wake up in the morning, you have control over. I am always grateful when I wake up, because I woke up again. This is a blessing and I am thankful for it. When I am asked to do something around the house, I am grateful that Iris needs me. When I am asked to do something for the temple, I am grateful that I have people who count on me. When I am asked to do something out of the ordinary at my job, I am grateful that I am able to support my family. When something doesn't go my way, I am grateful for the opportunity to try something different. Maybe it will be better than what I had been planning in the first place.

But being grateful and appreciative is a learned habit. Every day we wake up, we have a choice on how we will act. Will we be pleasant to other people? Will we be nasty? Will we build bridges, tear down fences between us or put up new fences to alienate ourselves from others? Every one of us has troubles. Life is not easy and we all have troubles to contend with. If you can look at your troubles with a smile on your face and love in your heart, that will be a good day.

Lastly, I urge you to be part of our community. There are two types of people in our community. There are the ones who reach out to help others in need. This is a good type of person to be. The other type is the type of person who will allow someone to help them. I find this type of person even more valuable than the first. My good friend Sharon Herson tells the story that her friend Charlotte wanted to come to temple but could not drive at night. Charlotte at first did not want Sharon to go out of her way to bring her to temple. Sharon replied, "You are giving me the opportunity to do a Mitzvah". Be both a mitzvah doer and a mitzvah receiver and you will lead a very full life.

Love, Howie

# SISTERHOOD

The Sisterhood had its first meeting of the year on September 17<sup>th</sup>. New members are always welcome, and we hope you are able to join us at an upcoming event.

## Sisterhood Calendar

- October 15<sup>th</sup> – Mitzvah Day at Grow A Row - Meet at Temple for Brunch at 11:30, Mitzvah Day from 12-3 (location of farm TBD)
- November 19 – Meeting 10:30 at Temple
- January 7 – Meeting 10:30 at Temple
- March 11 – Meeting 10:30 at Temple
- May 6 – Meeting 10:30 at Temple.

## 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](mailto:Howie.ruth@hotmail.com).

# Updates & Events

## DONATIONS

In memory of Philip Weinstein  
- Roseann and Edward Weinstein

In memory of Celia Robins  
- Nancy and Bernie Robins

In memory of Steve Tarlowe  
- Laura and Paul Tarlowe

In honor of the High Holy Days  
- Susan and Martin Miller  
- Dr. Susan E. Pivko

## RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

### Upcoming Dates:

October 8<sup>th</sup>  
October 15<sup>th</sup>  
October 22<sup>nd</sup>  
October 29<sup>th</sup>  
November 5<sup>th</sup>

**Sukkot celebration - October 8<sup>th</sup>**

**Grow-A-Row - October 15<sup>th</sup>**

### Adult Education

#### A Close Reading of the Book of Judges

As the political climate of our world continues to confuse, anger, delight, and excite (depending on the day and your perspective), we Jews know that such highs and lows are nothing new to the world of national leadership. Please join us as Rabbi Dubin leads us through a close reading of *Sefer Shoftim* (The Book of Judges), one of the most fascinating treatises ever written about the benefits and pitfalls of living under the political rule of other human beings. There are no prerequisites for this class, other than to please bring with you a Bible of your choice. All members – as young as post-b'nei mitzvah teenagers and as old as the vacuum cleaner (invented, 1901) – are encouraged to join us.

This series will meet at the Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey from **10:30-11:55** for three Sundays:

**Sunday, October 22**

**Sunday, October 29**

**Sunday, November 5**

# Updates & Events

## ISRAEL TRIP

**Congregational trip to Israel!**

**June 24 – July 6, 2018**

**Relive the history of our people in the place where it all happened!**

Join us for a life changing, life enriching experience in Israel - the heartland of the Bible. Visit the places you have been hearing about, enjoy exciting and adventurous hiking and water experiences, all while visiting historic landmarks and sites of interest.

Visit the trip website at <http://www.arzaworld.com/Jewish-Center-of-Northwest-New-Jersey-Trip-to-Israel-Led-by-Rabbi-Andy-Dubin.aspx> to view:

- Promotional flyer (accenting the trip highlights) to share with extended friends and family you wish to invite.
- Detailed day-by-day trip itinerary.
- Registration process “how-to” document outlining important details as well as screen shots of what to expect and how to do each step of the process.

Looking forward to sharing this incredible opportunity with my synagogue family!

Sincerely, Lynne Kowski & Roy Loomis

P.S. if you have any additional questions, do not hesitate to email both Lynne ([Lynne.Kowski@raritanval.edu](mailto:Lynne.Kowski@raritanval.edu)) and Roy ([rloomis@cherrybrook.com](mailto:rloomis@cherrybrook.com))

## MAH JONGG

Mah Jongg will resume in October. Contact Rhonda Jordan at [helpmerhonda171@yahoo.com](mailto:helpmerhonda171@yahoo.com) if interested!

### **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](mailto:berk721@aol.com)) or Ruth Schutzbank ([Howie.ruth@hotmail.com](mailto: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.



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Tues – Wed 9:30-5:15, Thurs – Fri 9:30-7:00, Sat  
9:30-4:00 (9:30-2:00 During Summer)