



Mark Your Calendar!

- Sunday, Dec. 2
9:30am Sunday School (K/1),
Chanukah Craft
10:45am Pirke Avot class
12:15pm Cooking Club
- Monday, Dec. 3, 7:30pm
Board Meeting
- Tuesday, Dec. 4, 7:00pm
Beginning Hebrew for Adults
- Friday, Dec. 7, 7:45pm
Shabbat & New Member
Service/Chanukah celebration,
Oneg: Arvesen, Hessels,
Trachtenberg families
- Sunday, Dec. 9
9:30am Sunday School,
Chanukah celebration,
Music with Cantor Kadin
10:30am Confirmation
- Tuesday, Dec. 11, 7:00pm
Beginning Hebrew for Adults
- Friday-Sunday, Dec. 14-16
Confirmation retreat
- Saturday, Dec. 15, 10:30am
Torah Study
- Sunday, Dec. 16
9:30am Sunday School (K/1),
Men's Club breakfast for
Confirmation retreat returnees
- Tuesday, Dec. 18, 7:00pm
Beginning Hebrew for Adults
- Wednesday, Dec. 19, 7:30pm
Book Club
- Friday, Dec. 21, 7:45pm
Shabbat Service, Oneg: Baeck,
Sonzogni, Smith families
- Sundays, Dec. 23 & 30
No Sunday School
- Sunday, Jan. 6
Rabbi Dr. Shulman lecture

Rabbi's Message

I had forgotten that nothing makes you feel so American as spending Thanksgiving in a foreign country. During my week in Berlin, we ate Thanksgiving dinner three times. One was a dry official function of the Fulbright Commission, a formal occasion held in conjunction with an international think tank in Germany. A second was an intimate potluck with twelve twenty-somethings, Germans and Americans. A third was a convivial gathering of fifty (mostly) American ex-patriates, many of whom were meeting each other for the first time but had been connected with each other via an email from friends-of-friends in Berlin. While they didn't all serve turkey, all these dinners were filled with a feeling of American solidarity brought on by being a minority in Germany. We Americans asked each other: Where would you be having Thanksgiving dinner if you were you back in the States? What would you be eating? Who else would be sitting around the table?

At each of these dinners, someone asked me what I thought of Berlin. On one level, that was an easy question to answer. I was seeing Berlin with Gideon and through Gideon's eyes; how could that not be wonderful? On another level, of course, that is not what they were asking. They were asking how I, as an American, experienced a country that had once been an enemy. Those who knew I was Jewish were asking how I experienced a country that had tried to exterminate my people.

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President's Message

I thoroughly enjoyed Rabbi Lewis' discussion of A. J. Jacobs' book in last month's Journal. I will now go way over my head (and knowledge) and take some positions based upon *my* interpretation of the Torah. Mr. Jacob's would prefer to treat the Torah as the unconditional "word of God," and show the logical fallacies that emanate from that position. I prefer to follow liberal Judaism's interpretation of Deuteronomy 5:26 as granting humans free will to interpret and follow or not follow God's commands (see Plaut, p.1358).

Most of my career, I have been in the so-called service business. Mainly producing ideas (in reality reams and reams of paper), and not a product. My interpretation of several Torah passages has been instrumental in my ability to integrate this ancient sacred text into my everyday life and decisions that I make. Exodus 18:17-23 is loosely interpreted by me to mean that I do not have to do everything myself. In my family, I hope to work as a team, and perhaps even more so in my professional work. I have no problem having someone work with me (or for me) who is much smarter than I am. In fact, I seek out those individuals. I am lucky to have such individuals on our Temple's Board of Directors!

Of course, the Ten Commandments have a lot to say how we should conduct our lives. We remind ourselves of them when we enter our sanctuary, as they are encapsulated on our left wall facing the bima. Most liberal Jews, and certainly I, would not want the Ten Commandments to be displayed in a secular public building. First of all, there are 603 other commandments, some of which should also be given "equal time" to the Ten Commandments. Also, in my opinion, it diminishes their importance in our lives if they are publicly displayed in secular and/or governmental buildings.

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Rabbi's Message, cont.

And my answer to that was: I didn't know. I had all kinds of feelings that I assumed I would sort out once I arrived back in the States. Now that I am back, I think it is going to take me a long time to figure out how I feel.

Contemporary Berlin is not the Berlin of World War II, although reminders of the war are still everywhere, especially in that part of Berlin that was once on the eastern side of the Berlin Wall. This is no longer the Germany where you look into the faces of people on the street and wonder where they were during the war. Just as the American soldiers who fought in World War II are now old, so are the Germans. It won't be long before they are gone. And it will remain for us to tell their story.

But what story to tell? The Germans of this generation don't know how to feel or behave. They don't ask to be relieved of responsibility for a heinous crime perpetrated by their grandparents, but they do wonder for how long they will have to bear the guilt. They bend over backwards to memorialize the Jews who were murdered, but the reality is that the only Jews they know (if they know any) are recent Russian arrivals. I met a woman named Levine who changed her name when she married her German husband because she couldn't stand the sycophantism of Germans who recognized her name as Jewish. In addition, the Berliners of the East tell a different story from their western compatriots. They both place blame for the war on each other.

We did make a pilgrimage to Sachsenhausen, the concentration camp outside of Berlin. When I took a picture of the words "Arbeit Macht Frei" over the entrance, Gideon asked me what I planned to do with it. I said I didn't know, but I might find a teaching opportunity some day. I think now that it was simply a way of memorializing the moment and saying, "I was here."

As we ate three Thanksgiving dinners, I remembered a different Thanksgiving in Israel some thirty years ago. We were all American students spending the year in Jerusalem. We scoured the markets for turkey and finally found a frozen one that we defrosted in the bathtub of the only Americans we knew who had a bathtub. Then we cooked the turkey in the oven of the only students we knew who had an oven. Never had turkey tasted so good. Never had being an American felt so good.

May this season of lights remind us that we live in a world still waiting for redemption.

Rabbi Ellen Lewis

Chanukah and New Members' Service, December 7, 7:45 p.m.

At this service we will officially welcome and honor all our new members: the Bronson Family, the Dorman-Cafaro Family, Gary Landau, the Lettire Family, the Longenecker Family, Maureen O'Leary, the Parson Family, the Robins Family, the Shelofsky Family, and Zach Simms. Come and meet them and let's celebrate the Festival of Lights together.

President's Message, cont.

Our lift is one of the most important improvements in our Temple since I have been a member. I hope to live long enough to need to use it. We have had several guests at the Jewish Center who could not have attended Bar/Bat Mitzvahs without it. However, if there was ever a heated discussion in the Center, where not everyone agreed, this was it. Once more, the Torah made it clear to me the path to take. Leviticus 19:14 and Deuteronomy 27:18 clearly indicate that impediments should be minimized that impair one with disabilities (which all of us have).

I know I am beginning to sound a little "preachy," and to that issue I would quickly say that people will have other interpretations of these passages. I am very comfortable with that, and in fact that is part of free will too. Not everyone's free will results in the same interpretations and actions. However, most institutions, including our Temple, need to find a consensus, and move forward. I am glad we have done that.

Shalom,

Jim Arvesen (917-941-4332, arvesen@att.net)

Awarding of the Ner Tamid Emblem to A.J. Seidorf

During Shabbat services on Friday night, December 21, A.J. Seidorf will be awarded the Ner Tamid emblem, a pendant representing the Eternal Light. The emblem symbolizes the completion of all the requirements of the Ner Tamid program, an official Boy Scouts of America program that helps its participants to grow spiritually. Similar programs have been developed by the Protestant, Catholic, Islamic and possibly other committees on Scouting. Thus, all Scouts are eligible to work in the distinctive religious programs of their faith, and every Scout has the potential to achieve this high honor. Members of AJ's troop will be invited to the service. [information on the Ner Tamid program from the website of the Boy Scouts of America]

Chanukah Collection

Hannah and I will be collecting Chanukah gifts again this year for the residents at the Hunterdon Developmental Center. We need gifts for about 50 people. We will be collecting gloves, blankets, hats, earmuffs, DVD's, hand-held games, body wash, or lotion. There will be a collection box/ basket outside the synagogue doors. Please bring gifts before December 2nd. Please do not wrap gifts!

Karen Finkelstein

Sunday, Jan. 6, Making Time Sacred: And the Rest Is Commentary

In this talk, it is argued that transforming the not-yet holy into the holy, and in the process making time sacred

is the single commandment that underlies all other commandments. Rabbi Dennis Shulman, Ph.D., examines selected biblical and talmudic passages, as well as some of the writing of Abraham Joshua Heschel to argue that to be Jewish and/or spiritual, one must sanctify time. Join us for coffee at 10, followed by the speaker at 10:30. Rabbi Dr. Shulman also is running for Congress from our district. This will be instead of the usually scheduled Adult Ed that morning.

St. Cloud Hotel Fire Donations

Our Temple made a monetary donation to the fire victims of the St. Cloud Hotel, who lost everything at the time of the September 27th fire. NORWESCAP is still looking for donations: cash, clothing, or household items. Anyone wishing to participate please call NORWESCAP at 908-454-7000, ext. 110. Mention that the donation is coming from a member of our Temple.

Religious School/PTO Events

On December 2nd the Sunday School students will enjoy a school-wide Chanukah craft project of making menorahs out of clay and decorating them. December 9th is our Chanukah celebration, which will include singing Chanukah songs, eating latkes (with Teri's applesauce), playing dreidel, and more. December 14th to 16th is the Confirmation Retreat.

Coming in January... On January 6th we are planning a school-wide family-ed BIG game – this should be fun! On January 20th we plan to have a Tallit-making workshop led by Laurie Hessels. (Snow date is February 3rd.) All members are invited to join us on January 20th from 9:30 to noon if you would like to make your own Tallit. Details on materials needed to follow.

Have a wonderful holiday!

Marsha Gross & Karen Finkelstein
(Education co-Chairs)

Note from Teri Stanton: The Hersons were nice enough to let us pick apples. As a result we were able to make a bumper crop of applesauce. In order to show our gratitude to the Herson family we are donating 4 cases of applesauce to the NCNWJ Chanukah store. The price will remain the same as it's been for the last 5 years (\$5 for quarts and \$3 for pints) and all proceeds will be donated to the temple. It is pure applesauce with no additives and tastes wonderful on latkes and makes a wonderful gift. Thanks, Teri Stanton

Cooking Club Update

The next Cooking Club will be Dec. 2. We'll be cooking latkes for Chanukah! Everyone is welcome. Please call Esther Bakonyi or Iris Hirsch so that we know how many people to expect.

SUNDAYS, 12:15 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Dec. 2, Jan. 13, Feb. 3, April 6. Bring bag lunch. Fee: Share in expenses of ingredients. Children interested in cooking may come with a parent. Contact Iris or Esther at least a week before session(s) you will be attending.

Book Club, December 19, 7:30 p.m.

The next title is Daniel Mendelsohn's *The Lost*. The book is a non-fiction mystery, family history, tale of healing, biblical commentary, all woven together in a humorous (yes) and gripping story of the author's search to discover what happened to six members of his family (his father's generation) who didn't survive the Holocaust. *Please contact Risa Smith by December 10 if you plan to come because the group will be meeting at the home of a participant, and where we meet will depend on how many people plan to attend.*

Chanukah Lighting

All are invited to **Long Valley's 2nd Annual Chanukah Menorah Lighting**, beginning Tuesday, Dec. 4th at 7:00 pm, on the porch of Splash Seafood Restaurant, 1 West Mill Road. A latke and dessert party will follow at Xen Salon, across the street from Splash. The lighting will continue for the remaining nights at 6:00 pm, with the exception of Friday, December 7th, when it will be held at 4:00 pm. Splash will have latkes on their menu during Chanukah (Dec 4th – 11). For details, contact Iris Kadosh at 908-876-4392, or The Neighbour House 908-876-3519.

Pirke Avot

The Wisdom of the Fathers, taught by Rabbi Ellen Jay Lewis. Lively group discussion always.
SUNDAY MORNINGS, 10:45 a.m.–noon
Dec. 2, Jan. 6, Feb. 3, March 2, April 6, May 18 (noon)

Torah Study

The group will be studying Exodus during this year. Another stimulating group discussion, Torah-based, with occasional digressions into contemporary events and politics. Coordinated by Sharon Herson
SATURDAY MORNINGS, 10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
Dec 15, Jan 19, Feb 16, Mar 22, Apr 26, May 10, June 21
Members can come and participate in any and all sessions.

Naming Ceremony to be Held during Shabbat Service

If you or any of your children do not have a Hebrew name, consider choosing one and being named in a beautiful group ceremony at a Shabbat service on January 25. Please contact Rabbi Lewis if you are interested and before you start looking through books for names—that may not be the way to do it. Deadline for participation: January 7, 2008.

Update: Sermon in Song (Nov. 16) and Miracle in Whitwell (Nov. 2)

As of this writing (the day after Thanksgiving), I want to say that I am grateful for the two extraordinary Friday night services we had in November.

The very ancient prayer "Ritzei," which apparently dates from before the destruction of the Second Temple in C.E. 70, was the focus of student cantor Marcy Kadin's "Sermon in Song." She explained that the modern rendering in English substitutes prayer for animal sacrifice as our offering to God (though the Hebrew text retains the original sacrifice). She sang more than half a dozen melodic settings for this text, all by renowned cantor/composers: the Viennese Solomon Sulzer (1804–1890), the Latvian-born Abraham Zevi Idelsohn (1882–1938), and Americans Adolph Katchko (1887–1958), Sheldon Levin, and Stephen Richards. Some of the pieces had Spanish or Middle Eastern influences. A given composer might set the same prayer in two different modes, one for Shabbat and the other for a festival like Sukkot; the former would be haunting and beautiful, the latter ebullient and joyful. Cantor Kadin treated us to many wonderful glimpses into Jewish liturgical music. The most moving of all, for me, was the setting she herself wrote and sang while accompanying herself on the guitar. Her passion for all this music pervaded the entire "Sermon." Those who were present will always remember this night.

Those who were present will never forget Maureen O'Leary's talk about her trip to the Children's Holocaust Museum and its meaning during our congregation's observance of *Kristallnacht*. Her descriptions were so strong and clear—and with a power that seemed to come from elsewhere—that you felt yourself at the site and imprinted with her memories and the memories of the handful of Holocaust survivors with whom she made the journey.

Sharon Herson

JEFFREY I. BRONSON, ESQ., P.C.
Counsellor at Law
General Practice Concentrating in

**IMMIGRATION, MUNICIPAL COURT
PERSONAL INJURY, REAL ESTATE**

65 Madison Avenue
Morristown, NJ 07960

(973) 889-1116
(973) 889-1160 fax

jeffbronson1@gmail.com

Singers Needed for Purim Spiel

For our celebration of Purim this year, we will present the story of Queen Esther to the tunes of *Guys and Dolls*. If you enjoy singing and would like to be part of this group (which could turn into a choir down the road), come to the Center at 10:00 am on December 9. Music and parts will be distributed and rehearsal schedule arranged. *Everyone* is welcome. No tryouts. Rehearsals will likely be Sunday mornings at 10:00 am. Purim celebration, megillah reading, and carnival are March 16.

Donations

Leslie and Murray Heller, in memory of Walter Sobine
Ilsa and Arnold Fesinstine, in memory of

Mrs. Bert Figarsky

Ralph Zemel, in memory of Sally Zemel

Phyllis and Arthur Sirkis, in memory of Rose Sirkis

Helen and John Mattson, in memory of Debra Albin,

David Simms, and Belle Shure

Iris and Howie Hirsch, in memory of Henriette

Goldstein

Joan Gross, in memory of I. L. Friedman

Ida Schneider, a founding member of the Jewish Center, died earlier this week in Maryland and was buried on Wednesday, November 21, in the Easton Cemetery. She had recently celebrated her 100th birthday. All of us at the Jewish Center send our deepest sympathies to Rose Schneider, Ida's sister-in-law, and Ben Schneider, Ida's nephew. Ben and Rose have requested that donations in Ida's memory be sent to the JCNWJ.

Community Programs

JEWISH LIFE

Eva Mekler, author of *The Polish Woman*, will be the featured speaker on **Thursday, December 14 at 7 p.m.** *The Polish Woman* is a meticulous, raw study of the uneasy relationship between Catholic and Jewish Poles. \$10/Jewish LIFE Member and \$15/Guest. To be held at the Shimon and Sara Birnbaum JCC in Bridgewater. www.ssbjcc.org.

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