

Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey Journal

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Rabbi's Message

Dear Friends,

The Book of Ecclesiastes (1:4) opines that “One generation goes and another generation comes; but the Earth remains forever.” While that certainly makes good sense, as temperature gauges rise higher and higher, as more and more children wheeze from environmentally induced asthma, as increasing numbers of countries inch closer and closer to armed hostilities over depleting water resources, as entire towns wash away from the once-in-a-century storms that now come every year or two, how confident can we really be any more of the veracity of the biblical assurance that the Earth will remain forever? As much as we want to believe it, something tells us to be skeptical perhaps of such an unconditional statement. As it turns out, we are not alone in our reticence. The truth is that even back in the Early Middle Ages, the rabbis of our tradition were already expressing the concerns that so many of us feel today:

When God created Adam, God led the human around all the trees in the Garden of Eden and said, “See how beautiful and praiseworthy all of My works are? All that I have created has been created for your sake. Think of this, and do not corrupt or destroy my world; for if you corrupt it, there will be no one to set it right after you.”

-- Midrash Kohelet

(continued on next page)

Calendar of Events

Note: All events will be virtual on Zoom until further notice.

Friday, January 14

7:30pm: Shabbat Evening Service
Joint service with Mt. Pisgah AME

Saturday, January 15

10:30am: Torah Study

Sunday, January 16

11:00am: Joint Service with Mt. Pisgah AME

Friday, January 21

7:30pm: Shabbat Evening Service

Sunday, January 23

12:15pm: Sisterhood

Monday, January 24

7:00pm: Book Club (see Pg. 6)

Friday, January 28

7:30pm: Shabbat Evening Service

Friday, February 4

7:30pm: Shabbat Evening Service

Sunday School:

January 9, 16, 23, 30, February 6 at 9:30am

Shabbat in Hebrew Adult Ed:

January 9, 23, 30, February 6 at 11:00am

Torah Cantillation Adult Ed:

January 30 at 11:00am

Rabbi's Message (continued)

The fact of the matter is that while humanity certainly can't create the world, we certainly *are* capable of destroying it if we're not careful.

Recognizing that none of us can possibly have the one and only answer to how we can best preserve the planet, all the same, there is at least one thing upon which I imagine we *do* all agree: trees are awesome! Trees are beautiful, they smell nice, they bear scrumptious fruit, they offer the ideal setting to hang a hammock, and they provide the perfect carving board for people to proclaim undying love. But there's so much more. From a strictly scientific perspective, some of the most important reasons to respect trees are that, according to The National Wildlife Federation (culled from <https://www.nwf.org/Trees-for-Wildlife/About/Trees-Make-a-Difference>):

1. Trees improve air quality.

Trees are sometimes called the lungs of the Earth because they absorb pollutants through their leaves, trapping (or "sequestering"), and filtering contaminants in the air. Like all green plants, trees also produce oxygen through photosynthesis.

2. Trees improve water quality, and reduce flooding and erosion.

A tree's leafy canopy catches precipitation before it reaches the ground, allowing some of it to gently drip and the rest to evaporate. Tree roots hold soil in place, reducing erosion. In these ways, trees lessen the force of storms and reduce the amount of runoff into sewers, streams, and rivers, improving water quality. One hundred mature trees can intercept about 100,000 gallons of rainfall per year.

3. Trees temper climate.

Trees lower air temperatures and humidity; they can also influence wind speed. Evaporation of water from trees, or transpiration, has a cooling effect. Cities develop "heat islands" because dark roofs and pavement absorb solar energy and radiate it back. Trees in parking lots have been shown to reduce asphalt temperatures by 36 degrees Fahrenheit and car interiors by up to 47 degrees Fahrenheit.

4. Trees conserve energy.

Three or more large trees strategically placed on sunny sides of a house shade it from the hot summer sun, reducing air-conditioning costs by as much as 30 percent. Deciduous trees are best for this use because they lose their leaves in winter, exposing the house to the warming winter sun, which lowers the energy needed to heat the house. Coniferous trees, because they retain their needles year-round, serve to reduce wind when placed on the north and northwest sides of a building, resulting in significantly lower winter heating costs.

5. Trees create habitat for plants and animals.

Wherever trees are established, wildlife and other plants are sure to follow, ensuring a healthier ecosystem. Trees provide shelter and food for a variety of birds and small animals.

6. Trees reduce noise pollution and can serve as screens.

A belt of trees 100 feet wide and 50 feet tall can reduce highway (continued on next page)

Rabbi's Message (continued)

noise by up to 10 decibels, reducing the sound volume by half. Densely planted trees can also block unsightly views.

7. Trees help reverse the Greenhouse Effect

One tree can sequester (or take in) more than one ton of carbon dioxide in its lifetime. Planting trees and avoiding deforestation are key measures in reducing the human impact on global climate change.

In a nutshell, trees matter. They matter because we enjoy them, but they matter even more because we need them. Trees are indeed important. So important that Jewish tradition even devotes an entire day of sacred worship to their celebration.

Tu B'Shevat, the 15th day of the month of Shevat, which this year begins on the evening of Sunday, January 16 and concludes at nightfall on Monday, is observed as the birthday of all trees. And so I invite you to join us on Friday evening, January 14, as we celebrate an early birthday during our annual Tu B'Shevat Shabbat service. But this year's observance will be even more special than usual, because not only will we celebrate Tu B'Shevat, but so too will we welcome our friends from Mt. Pisgah AME Church, as we do every year, for the first half of our weekend of honoring the memory of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Also as usual, Rev. Diana M. O. Bracy will offer the sermon at our Shabbat service, while I will offer the sermon during Mt. Pisgah's Sunday morning worship. Dial-in information will be sent out prior to the service, as Mt. Pisgah is gathering by phone in light of COVID-19. I do hope you will join us for both halves of our solidarity weekend.

ONE FINAL NOTE: I am excited, in honor of Tu B'Shevat, to announce that Matt Polsky, who is not only one of our newest members but also a Senior Fellow for Sustainability Innovation and Multidisciplinary Thought at Farleigh Dickinson University's Institute for Sustainable Enterprise, has agreed to chair our brand new JCNWJ Environmental Concerns Committee. Recognizing our sacred Jewish obligation to protect the natural world in which we live, this committee will devise and implement a project of significance to help our temple family become the responsible stewards of God's Creation that we aspire to be.

We are seeking committee members to be part of the effort and hope you will consider volunteering to do so. If you are interested, or even if you just *think you might* be interested, please let me know by email at RabbiDubin@jcnwj.org.

L'Shalom,

Rabbi Dubin

President's Message

Welcome to a New Year. Last year was memorable for a number of reasons. We started off in seclusion, and early in the year, vaccines became available for some people, which allowed us to feel more secure in our ability to interact with people. We began to have services, although only a few of us attended in person. Our congregation has a significant portion of experienced-in-life members, who are being cautious about meeting in person, so we have kept up our ZOOM services throughout the year. For Purim, we had a "Brady Bunch Purim show, which was very funny using ZOOM. At the beginning of summer, it looked like we would be able to hold our High Holiday services in person, but as the summer progressed, it became apparent that a large gathering was not a good idea, so we decided to keep the services all virtual. In the Fall, we went back to a hybrid of in-person and Zoom services and were thrilled to welcome our Student Cantor Shayna Burack in person to our congregation. We began choir practice and Hebrew lessons and Torah Cantillation courses. We went back to live Sunday School, as our school has become small enough that we do not feel we pose a risk to parents or students. As we moved into November, we began a six-part Virtual tour of Israel, with our tour guide from our 2018 trip, Uri Feinberg. If you have not watched any of these, I think you will have a grand time watching them. They are on YouTube, but you need the links to watch them. If you cannot find the links that were sent via email, send me an email and I will get them to you. Our agreement with Uri is that these are not to be made available to the general public, but you can share them with friends and family. We are also watching the COVID virus spike again, and we will be vigilant in trying to keep our community as safe as we can in light of the increase in the state of New Jersey.

As always, I try to look on the bright side of life and focus on the things that I can control and try to not worry about the things that I cannot control. I also pray for the wisdom to know the difference.

I pray for all of you to be healthy and happy during 2022.

Love, Howie

Updates & Events

JCNWJ ADULT EDUCATION HEBREW READING & TORAH CANTILLATION

READING HEBREW

TAUGHT BY RABBI DUBIN

STUDENTS WILL LEARN TO READ THE HEBREW ALEPH-BET.
NO PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE IS REQUIRED.

OCTOBER 10, 17*, 24, 31

SHABBAT IN HEBREW

TAUGHT BY RABBI DUBIN

STUDENTS WILL LEARN THE FRIDAY NIGHT SERVICE IN HEBREW.

ABILITY TO READ HEBREW LETTERS IS A PREREQUISITE.

NOVEMBER 14*, 28; DEC 12, JAN 9, 23, 30; FEB 6, 20

Sunday Mornings

11:00-11:55

*(10/17 & 11/14 will be after
Sisterhood, from 12:05 - 1:00)

Every session will include a Zoom option.



zoom

CHOOSE 1, 2, OR ALL 3 CLASSES!



Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey

TORAH CANTILLATION

TAUGHT BY STUDENT CANTOR SHAYNA BURACK

STUDENTS WILL LEARN THE ART OF CHANTING TORAH.

ABILITY TO READ HEBREW LETTERS IS A PREREQUISITE.

NOV 7, 21; DEC 5, 19; JAN 30; FEB 13, 27; MAR 20

COVID UPDATE

Shalom family and friends,

The Temple Board of Trustees discussed at the January meeting what is going on in the state of New Jersey regarding the rise of COVID cases being reported.

To keep our members safe and to reach out to as many of you as we can, we came to the following conclusions:

1. ALL temple activities until February 7th will be virtual. This includes Shabbat Services, Torah Study, Book Club, Sunday School, Sisterhood, Hebrew reading class and Torah cantillation class.
2. We decided to go back to weekly Shabbat services on Zoom, though to not place extra work on Rabbi Dubin, the weeks that were not originally scheduled for Shabbat services, Rabbi will not prepare a sermon. This will allow us to meet with each other in a safe manner until the next board meeting.
3. At our next board meeting in February, we will again discuss where we are in relation to COVID and determine if we feel safe to go back to in-person activities.

Updates & Events

FOOD DRIVE

Although we are not collecting food at the Temple right now, we encourage all members to give to charities helping those in need.

The food pantries are in dire need of supplies to fill their shelves as more and more people are in need and your generosity will help fill that need.

Thank you for your continued support!

-Iris

BOOK CLUB

Book Club will meet on Monday, January 24 at 7:00pm. The book is *Skinship*, a collection of short stories “centered on a constellation of Korean American families,” by Yoon Choi (2021).

TORAH STUDY

Torah Study—Book of Joshua

We will continue our exploration of Joshua on Saturday, January 15. At recent meetings, we discussed the context and themes of the book as a whole, and then we started reading and analyzing the text in greater detail.

Anyone is welcome to join, and it is not necessary to read the text ahead of time. It is helpful to have a copy of the Tanakh (Bible) so that you can follow along. We appreciate Rabbi Dubin’s continued participation and insights.

Please watch your email for the Zoom links, which will be emailed out the week before each meeting.

Updates & Events

SISTERHOOD

Sisterhood Schedule

1/23 - Meeting with zoom - 12:15pm

3/13 - Paint 'n Sip Fundraising Party at Washington Borough Fire Hall - 1pm

Week of 3/14 - Evening Meeting with zoom followed by Mishloach Manot assembly ~ specific date TBD

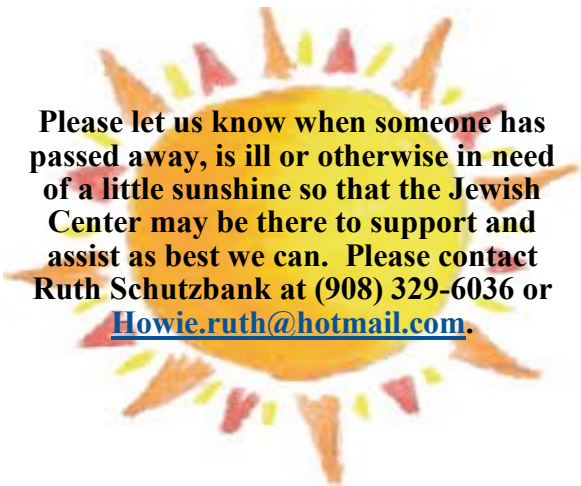
4/9 - Anything You Can Carry Fundraising Swap Party - 7pm

5/22 Mother's Day Tea at Suzi's - 1pm

June - Skip

July - Pool Party at Beth's / date TBD

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.

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