

Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey Journal

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Rabbi's Message

Dear Friends,

As any seasoned carpenter will attest, one of the most important keys to success with any project is diligent preparation. Unless we measure twice, chances are, we'll be destined to cut more than once. For me, I know that when I sit down to write, whether it's a piece like this for the newsletter, a sermon, or anything else of substance, unless I prepare a general outline first, I'll wind up spending twice the time trying to write something that isn't as good. The same can be said for times of spiritual growth, such as the intensive period of seven weeks – known as the “Counting of the *Omer*” (*Omer* [עֹמֶר] being the Hebrew word for a measurement of bound and unprocessed grain) – in which the Jewish world finds itself right now.

The counting begins when the first day of Passover concludes, and continues daily for the next seven weeks, recollecting the period of seven weeks when our biblical ancestors would bring a new barley offering to sacrifice at the Temple in Jerusalem in the amount of one *omer* each day for 49 successive days, as prescribed in Deuteronomy 16:9-12 (and Leviticus 23:9-21 similarly):

⁹You shall count off seven weeks; start to count the seven weeks when the sickle is first put to the standing grain. ¹⁰Then you shall observe the

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Calendar of Events

Friday, May 6

7:30pm: Shabbat Evening Service
Yom HaZikaron & Yom HaAtzmaut

Thursday, May 12

8:45am: Sisterhood - Habitat for Humanity
volunteer opportunity (see Pg. 5)

Saturday, May 14

10:30: Torah Study on Zoom only

Friday, May 20

7:30pm: Shabbat Evening Service

Sunday, May 22

1:00pm: Sisterhood Mother's Day Tea
Party (see Pg. 6)

Friday, June 3

7:30pm: Shabbat Evening Service
Shavuot observance

Saturday, June 4

10:30: Torah Study on Zoom only

Monday, June 6

7:00pm: Board Meeting

Sunday School

May 15, 22, 29, June 5 at 9:30am

Note: Most in-person events will also be available virtually on Zoom.

Rabbi's Message (continued)

Feast of Weeks for the LORD your God, offering your freewill contribution according as the LORD your God has blessed you. ¹¹You shall rejoice before the LORD your God with your son and daughter, your male and female slave, the Levite in your communities, and the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow in your midst, at the place where the LORD your God will choose to establish His name. ¹²Bear in mind that you were slaves in Egypt, and take care to obey these laws.

On the 50th day, which is the day after we conclude counting, comes Shavuot, the day on which we commemorate receipt of the Torah.

Following the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., after which offerings could no longer be brought, the *Omer* came to represent a Jewish time of great anticipation and spiritual preparation, because while we are grateful for the invaluable gift of Torah, we know also that unless we render ourselves spiritually worthy, we run the risk of losing it in the future. And so we prepare with a mix of excitement and trepidation.

According to the mystical tradition of Kabbalah, each day of the *Omer* carries special opportunity for a different kind of spiritual growth. As such, many *Omer* calendars, such as the one written by Rabbi Margaret Holub of California's Mendocino Coast Jewish Community (<https://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/middot-omer-calendar>), lead users through a specific 49-step process of reflection on a different aspect of spiritual growth during each of the 49 days.

Traditional communities observe the seven weeks of the *Omer* as a time of mourning for the thousands of Rabbi Akiva's students who were said to have perished during a dreadful 1st century C.E. plague visited upon them by God in punishment for the disrespect with which they had been treating each other. A more scientifically historical perspective might suggest that it is more likely the students, along with well over half a million other Jews (according to Dio Cassius, the Roman historian who recorded the deaths at the time for the sake of posterity) were actually killed by the Romans in direct response to the revolt led by a man named Bar Kokhba against foreign rule in Judea from 132 to 136 C.E. Either way, whichever reason resonates more, the fact remains that for traditional communities, this period of the *Omer* is a time when we refrain from common celebratory acts such as enjoying live music, going to parties, holding weddings, and even cutting hair. There is, however, one day of exception, which comes in the middle of the *Omer*, on the 33rd day to be exact.

Perhaps you're familiar with the Jewish custom of using letters for numbers when counting (א=1, ב=2, ג=3 etc.). Under this system, 3 + 30 = ל. According to tradition, it was on the 33rd day of the counting of the *Omer* that the plague that had claimed the lives of so many students was lifted, even if for just a

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Rabbi's Message (continued)

single day. Again, from a historical perspective, scholars conclude this understanding probably grew out of the likely fact that it was on this day that a significant military victory must have occurred. Again, whether we accept the traditional understanding or the more scientifically historical explanation, it is in recognition of this happy day that Jewish communities around the world gather to celebrate *Lag BaOmer*, a somewhat vague day of gratitude to God on which the period of mourning is suspended. On *Lag BaOmer*, family and friends gather to sing around warm bonfires, enjoy celebratory meals, go to parties, cut their hair, get married, and rejoice in all kinds of ways that are forbidden during the other 48 days. This year, in recognition of *Lag BaOmer*, the Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey will be gathering around a bonfire to sing songs, eat some food, and enjoy each other's company. Details about time and place will be shared under separate cover. We do hope you will join us.

During this time of spiritual reflection, allow me to close by asking a few specific questions:

What are we doing, both individually and communally, to earn the ongoing gift of Torah that we will honor on June 3 with our annual Shavuot Shabbat service?

Where is it that we could benefit from concerted effort to improve our character?

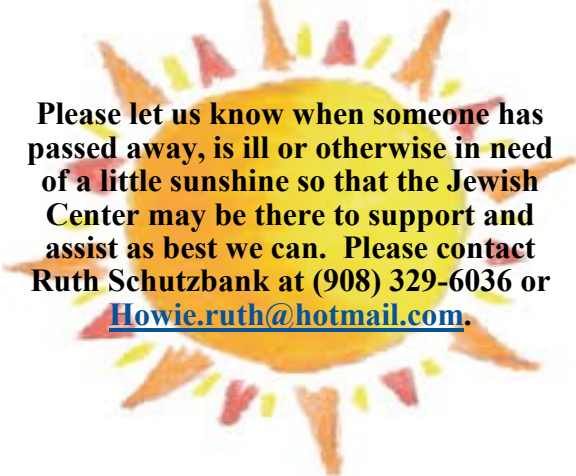
How will we prove ourselves to be truly accepting of the obligation to seek and find the image of God in each and every one of our fellow human beings?

As we continue the process of spiritual preparation in anticipation of Shavuot, I pray our efforts will manifest in genuine spiritual growth that makes us truly worthy of God's ongoing blessing.

L'Shalom,

Rabbi Dubin

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.

President's Message

As I finish my 17th year of being the president of this wonderful congregation, I look to the future.

Where will this congregation be in 20 years? Will we still be around to serve Warren County and the surrounding areas with a home for Jewish people? Will our children continue our legacy of our founding members who left us with this precious building in which we could raise Jewish children?

As I watch our Hebrew school have fewer and fewer students and fewer young families join our temple, I do wonder if we are serving our community properly. I have heard that religion is not as important in the lives of many of the younger families. I do not know why this is true, but it is not just a Jewish issue from what I hear.

I wish I knew how to attract the younger Jewish families in the area that I know are out there, but I really am clueless how a small temple like ours can do this. We do not have the capability to run a day care, which is a way for folks with young children to become engaged.

If anyone has any ideas, I would love to hear them.

As I enter my 18th and final year (I think) of my presidency, I truly see the need for new leadership, and new ideas, and new energy. I love this temple with all my heart and soul, and will continue to be part of the leadership, but I really think that leaving after my 18th year makes a lot of sense. Plus, I'm not going anywhere.

I hope to see you at the annual meeting in June.

With sincere love and appreciation to all of you,

Howie

Updates & Events

SISTERHOOD



*Jewish Center of
Northwest Jersey*



Join the Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey
Sisterhood on the Habitat for Humanity Build Site!

Thursday, May 12th, 2022
8:45am - 3pm
28 Beidleman Rd, Washington, NJ 07882

Please pack your own lunch, and kindly RSVP to
suzology.sm@gmail.com by May 5th.



Updates & Events

SISTERHOOD



Sisterhood Annual Mother's Day Tea Party Come celebrate YOU!

You're Invited!

Sunday, May 22nd
1:00pm

JCNWJ Oneg Room
115 Youmans Avenue
Washington, NJ. 07882

RSVP to Suzi Marr at 908.343.1135 or
suzology.sm@gmail.com by Thursday May 12th

Egg & Tuna Salad provided. Please bring a complimentary side dish or fruit.

YOGA

Great News!

Thursday night yoga with Gina has been extended through the month of May.

\$40/person payable to Gina Cerbone by check or Venmo @gina-cerbone. 8838 last 4 of phone #...

Please contact Suzi with any questions.

MAZEL TOV

Mazel Tov to Matt and Sandy Polsky, on the birth of their first grandson, Kai, who weighed in at more than six pounds. And Mazel Tov, too, to Noah and Ariel, the parents of the healthy baby.

Updates & Events

DONATIONS

In memory of Harry Siegel
- Rhonda Jordan

In memory of Saul Schutzbank
- Ruth Schutzbank

In memory of Esther Ehrenreich Herson
- Sharon Herson, Daniel Fleckles, and
Edythe Herson

MAY YAHREZEITS

Carol Roessner, father of Erica Sylvester
Irwin Finkelstein, father of Shelley Finkelstein
Anna Goldberg, mother of Stuart Goldberg
Julius Schiller, family of Blanche Davidson
Arthur Hertzmark, father of Nancy Robert
Rebecca Sachat, grandmother of Barbara Simons
Saul Schutzbank, father of Howard Schutzbank
Dora Merein, grandmother of Lois Goldberg
Robert Joseph Heller, cousin of Rabbi Ellen Lewis
David B. Pinn, father of Helen Mattson
Michael S. Lewis, grandfather of Rabbi Ellen Lewis
Joseph Posner, grandfather of Tracey Bauer
Larry Bauer, brother of Mo Bauer
Carol Fleckles White, sister of Daniel Fleckles
Keith Ehrenreich, cousin of Edythe Herson
Gerald Klein, uncle of Gerri Klein

TORAH STUDY

Torah Study will be held on May 14 at 10:30 am on Zoom. This will be our last session on the Book of Joshua. Judges is next. Join us on June 4 for a whole new look at ancient Israel.

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.

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

Updates & Events

SUNSHINE COMMITTEE

To Temple members:

We would like to expand The Sunshine Committee. To make this work, we need enough members to be part of this effort.

The Committee would offer some or all of the following for members who need assistance.

1. Food shopping
2. Providing rides for medical visits
3. Visiting hospitalized members (when Covid is more under control)
4. Sending cards to members when there is any kind of hardship *or* happy occasion. This would include not only condolence and get-well cards* but ones for:
 - a. birthdays; retirement; moving to a new home (if it's a happy move), etc.
 - b. mazel tov on a wedding, birth of a child/grandchild/great-grandchild, etc.
 - c. supportive "thinking of you" cards when there are other life events besides loss of a loved one, i.e. loss of a job, loss of a beloved pet, etc.

*Ruth has been in charge of sending out condolence and get-well cards, and this has not changed. For cards of a light-hearted nature, Sandy Polsky has offered to create a personalized card with a cartoon drawing (as time allows); and, if not a personalized card, a Jacquie Lawson e-card. (see <https://www.jacquielawson.com/>).

For more information and/or to join the committee, please contact Sandy Polsky, 908-451-6758, or sandypolsky05@gmail.com.

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