

Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey Journal

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Rabbi's Message

Dear Friends,

As a rabbi, how I wish I had a wise and comforting fix for the despondency and torment we are facing in the aftermath of October 7th. But comfort is hard to come by these days. Indeed, in the current climate, the answers – and lack of answers – are as difficult as the questions.

As I write, Hamas continues to hold 240 Israeli hostages, including the elderly, children and the severely wounded. Our homeland is at war as the IDF battles to recover these hostages and put an end to Hamas' capacity ever to repeat the heinous acts of October 7. But there is another war brewing inside us, as well. It is a battle for clarity, a battle for understanding and reconciliation.

Against the backdrop of teeming antisemitism, it's becoming increasingly difficult to unpack our feelings and form sound opinions about those who hate us. Israel has a right to defend itself. We know that. And Hamas must be eradicated. We know that, too. But as Palestinian babies, children, parents, and grandparents, the ones whom Hamas abuses as human shields, die in the rubble of Israel's persistent strikes, we find ourselves shaken to the core, because as sympathetic as we may be to Israel's precarious existence, reconciling so much collateral death of innocent people is hard to reconcile or understand.

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Calendar of Events

Friday, November 3

7:00pm: Shabbat Evening Service
Kristallnacht remembrance

Sunday, November 5

9:30am: Hebrew School

Saturday, November 11

10:30am: Torah Study on Zoom

Sunday, November 12

9:30am: Community B'yachad

Monday, November 13

7:00pm: Board of Trustees Meeting

Saturday, November 18

9:30am: Hebrew School
10:45am: Shabbat Morning Service
12:15pm: Kiddush/Lunch

Sunday, December 3

9:30am: Hebrew School

Monday, December 4

7:00pm: Board of Trustees Meeting

Friday, December 8

7:00pm: Shabbat Evening Service
Chanukah observance

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

Rabbi's Message (continued)

To be sure, we must refuse the idea that Israel “had it coming” due to its longstanding occupation of the Palestinian people. Israel left Gaza 18 years ago. It is Hamas who is occupying and oppressing the Palestinians today. It is Hamas who is butchering innocent victims, both Israeli and Palestinian in Gaza. Their goal is not resistance. Their goal here is terror. Hamas is not fighting for the Palestinian people. Hamas is fighting for Jewish blood. And Israel is struggling to make sure that never happens again.

All the same, innocents are dying as Israel prosecutes this just war against Hamas. Yes, Hamas is purposely placing them in harm's way. Yes, Hamas is barring them from fleeing to safer surroundings in the south. And yes, Hamas is hoarding fuel and food and medicine that are needed so desperately by so many. Still, though, innocents are dying as Israel prosecutes this just war against Hamas. And for anyone of Jewish conscience, for any of us who remembers the lesson of our Passover Hagaddah, in which God scolds Israel for cheering the deaths of their Egyptian pursuers – as guilty as they may be – on account of the fact that “Those are My children, too”, the innocent deaths that follow each Israeli bombardment are just so difficult to reconcile.

If we are going to honor our Jewish inheritance, if we are going to take our Torah seriously, we must accept that every time another innocent Palestinian dies in the pursuit of Israeli survival, this is nothing less than the loss of yet another one of God's children. No matter how justified Israel's war with Hamas may be, we cannot rely on such justification to insulate ourselves from this loss. We cannot allow ourselves to become numb to the death of innocents.

What Israel is experiencing right now, and by extension, what we are experience right now, is a “Sophie's Choice,” in which we are compelled to decide which of two undesirable acts will be less of a moral violation. It would be so much easier if we could just see the situation with pure black and white clarity. But when we think and feel and pray with open hearts and minds, I suspect we will find ourselves living in the grey, where what is just, what is right, and what is necessary can be so hard to see.

In the end, all I can say is that it's okay to live in that grey area. Grieving innocent lives – Palestinians and Israelis alike – hardly affords safe harbor to those who seek to destroy us. In fact, it may be one of the few things that can actually save us, because grieving the loss of innocent life highlights our humanity. Truly, the moment we allow terrorists to steal that from us, that becomes the very moment we have lost the war.

Perhaps most of all, it is empathy that separates us from the terrorists. Empathy allows us to recognize the tragic consequences of our actions, even when we know the alternative can be even worse. It also demands of us that we do everything we possibly can to avoid innocent death while also protecting

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Rabbi's Message (continued)

ourselves, because when a child dies, a child dies. Hamas may have been using that child as a human shield, but still, when a child dies, a child dies. It is up to us to avoid such death when and where we can.

It's not easy. In fact, it's more difficult than we can bear at times. But it's also real. It's an existential matter of life and death for the State of Israel. And in that grey area of competing truths, it's not only ok to struggle, I would say it's *imperative* to struggle with our Sophie's Choice. And when we struggle honestly, let's not be surprised if people of good should conclude differently on specific military choices, because the right answer can be so elusive.

We must allow ourselves the grace of not having all the answers. If you are sitting in the messiness of your own grief over the loss of so much innocent life in Israel and Gaza, please know that you are not alone. But know also that it is in your grief, I believe, that you will discover the essence of what it means to be human.

Praying that empathy will guide the way to our survival,

Rabbi Dubin



President's Message

Shalom,

With everything that is going on in Israel and Gaza these days , and while praying for our Rabbi and his family, I came across this and thought it was a good time to share. This does not mean I am not concerned about what is going on in Israel and the world, because I am.

Am Yisrael Chai

We convince ourselves that life will be better after we get married, have a baby, then another. Then we are frustrated that the kids aren't old enough, and we'll be more content when they are. After that, we're frustrated that we have teenagers to deal with. We will certainly be happy when they are out of that stage. We tell ourselves that our life will be complete when our partner gets his or her act together, when we get a nicer car, are able to go on a nice holiday, when we retire.

The truth is, there's no better time to be happy than right now. If not now, when? Your life will always be filled with challenges. It's best to admit this to yourself and decide to be happy anyway.

A quote comes from Alfred D. Souza. He said, "For a long time it had seemed to me that life was about to begin - real life. But there was always some obstacle in the way, something to be gotten through first, some unfinished business, time still to be served, or a debt to be paid. Then life would begin. At last it dawned on me that these obstacles were my life."

This perspective has helped me to see that there is no way to happiness. Happiness is the way. So, treasure every moment that you have and treasure it more because you shared it with someone special, special enough to spend your time...and remember that time waits for no one.

So, stop waiting until you lose ten pounds, until you gain ten pounds, until you have kids, until your kids leave the house, until you start work, until you retire, until you get married, until you get divorced, until Friday night, until Sunday morning, until you get a new car or home, until your car or home is paid off, until spring, until summer, until winter, until your song comes on, until you've had a drink.... there is no better time than right now to be happy.

Happiness is a journey, not a destination.

Work like you don't need money,

Love like you've never been hurt,

And dance like no one's watching.

Updates & Events

COME JOIN US

Fiddler on the Roof

at the PaperMill Playhouse in Millburn
Sunday Jan 7th at 1:30pm. We have a block of 10
seats on hold orchestra left rows N and O. We
received a 20% off group discount. \$103 per
person. Venmo \$50 to hold your spot
to @Suzanne-Marr-4. Last 4 digits of cell
1135. Send Fiddler deposit no later than Friday
11/10.

Goldie is being played by Jill Abramovitz. Jill is our
member, Stephanie Fletcher's sister and an
accomplished veteran of
the Broadway stage.

<https://my.papermill.org/overview/fiddler>

SIX

on Broadway in March to coincide with the
celebration of Esther. Either March 3rd or 31st.
Again looking for 10+.

<https://sixonbroadway.com/>

Need a \$50 deposit for each show of interest, and
a date(s) to show commitment to attending as
tickets are expensive.

And any carpool volunteers. Any and every
member/friends of members welcome and invited!

Thank you!
Suzi

NOVEMBER YAHRZEITS

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Joyce Shubs | Aunt of Helen Mattson |
| Sarah Fromer Zeiden | Aunt of Helen Mattson |
| Pory Margolis | Mother of Robert Margolis |
| Myra Novy | Aunt of Robin Hall |
| William Robins | Father of Bernie Robins |
| William Kalb | Relative of Jerry Kalb |
| Maxwell Gross | Son of Marsha Gross |

Note: If any Yahrzeit information is missing or incorrect,
please notify the Temple.

DONATIONS

In memory of Jean Siegel
- Rhonda Jordan

In memory of William Kalb
- Jerry Kalb

In honor of the High Holidays
- Marshe Torine
- Irene Marinich
- Bruce & Sylvia Tucker
- Jill Gilkeson
- Samuel Rosenfeld
- Kahan Family

Updates & Events

TORAH STUDY

We have now started exploring the Book of Samuel. In this book, Samuel becomes a prophet, and a monarchy is established in Ancient Israel, starting with King Saul. Our discussions will continue to be wide-ranging but focused as we analyze some of the Bible's most interesting stories.

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.

The next meeting will be November 11 at 10:30 am. Please watch your email for the Zoom link.

FOOD DRIVE

Thank you for your participation in the High Holiday food drive. We will continue to be able to accept non-perishable food items at the temple. We are also holding a coat drive at this time to provide for those in need during the upcoming winter.

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

BUILDING UPDATE

If you notice that something is running low and needs to be replaced (either in the bathrooms or kitchen), please let me know.

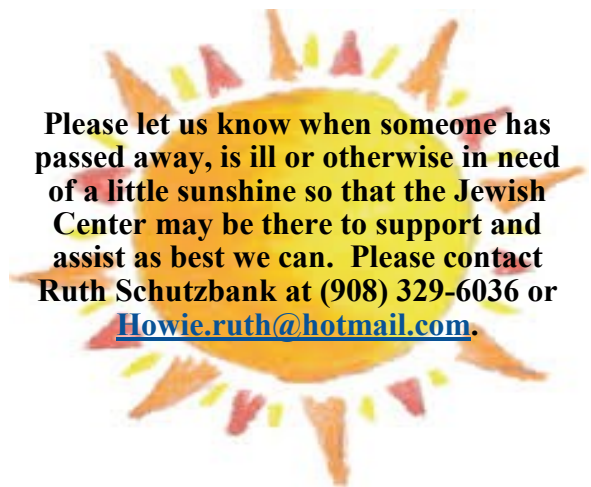
You can either call or email me at irishirsch@comcast.net or 908-850-1030.

Thank you.

Iris

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.



Chaverim *Hebrew / noun / friends* at JCNWJ

The premise of the JCNWJ Sisterhood is changing from an adult all-female-by-birth group to a more inclusive adult club. The name has changed from Sisterhood to Chaverim. We will host events that will cater to ALL ADULT MEMBERS, as well as, some female/gender neutral events to meet the needs of our changing congregation.



Upcoming Chaverim Events at JCNWJ:

Nov 12 – Community b'yachad & Meeting

Dec 10 – Community b'yachad followed by Congregational Chanukah Party - noon

Jan 7 - Fiddler on the Roof at Paper Mill Playhouse, See info on Pg. 5

Jan 28 – Sharon & Risa's 80th birthdays AND "Craft with Teri" Japanese Knot bag. \$6 + material / supplies. Refreshments.

Feb 4 – Mishloach Manot and Passover Wine Fundraising meeting

March ?? — group trip to NYC to see SIX on Broadway. Drive in or take the train/subway together. Meet & depart from temple. We need group of 10 for group discount. See info on Pg. 5

March 22 -- Purim Schpiel & Mishloach Manot Distribution [please pick up]

April 13 – 7:30pm Havdalah, followed by Judaica SWAP Fundraiser & Cocktail Party

May 19 – Annual Mother's Day Tea Party - 1pm

June – annual congregational meeting [no Chaverim meeting this month]

Weekly Wednesday Night Yoga w/ Gina @ The Barn Belvidere, NJ - Spoonful of Om - special monthly rate available.

JOIN us on FB at "**JCNWJ members only**" page for updates and/or add "**WhatsApp**" to your smart phone to get current updates. We look forward to seeing you all at these events!

Questions, please call Suzi 908.343.1135

With warmest regards,

Suzi Marr & Beth Lappin
JCNWJ Sisterhood Co-Chairs

Updates and Events

TAX EXEMPT CONTRIBUTIONS

The following is provided as general information to all members planning to pay dues and/or make a charitable contribution to JCNWJ. **This advice may not apply to all situations and persons, and you should of course check with a financial advisor to be sure you proceed correctly.** Be aware that you may be able to save on federal income tax when you pay dues or otherwise make a charitable contribution (to JCNWJ or any other qualified charity) with this money, even if you do not itemize deduction on you federal tax return.

After years of contributing to tax-deferred 401(k)s and [IRAs](#), income tax is due on that money when you take withdrawals in retirement. Annual withdrawals from traditional retirement accounts are required after age 72, and are generally considered ordinary income and federal income taxes when you withdraw any money from your IRA.

However, you can avoid income tax on your required withdrawal from an IRA by donating your money directly to a qualifying charity, which includes JCNWJ. A qualified charitable distribution is an IRA (but not a 401K) withdrawal that is paid directly from your IRA to a qualified charity. While income tax is normally due on each traditional IRA withdrawal, you do not to pay federal income taxes on the amount transferred to a qualified charity, including JCNWJ.

Please note that IRA owners must be age 70 1/2 or older to make a tax-free charitable contribution. Also, you don't need to itemize your taxes in order to save taxes. Just be sure to withdraw the funds directly from the IRA to JCNWJ by the IRA trustee in order to [qualify for the tax break](#). If you withdraw the money from your IRA and later donate it, it won't qualify as a tax-free qualified charitable distribution. You have to request that the distribution check is charitable distribution. However, you cannot additionally claim a charitable contribution tax deduction on a charitable distribution from your IRA.

Funds must be transferred payable to the charity directly. But you can have the check (payable to JCNWJ) sent to you and you can then forward to JCNWJ for dues and/or any other contribution.

(Prepared by Bob Margolis)

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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) or Ruth Schutzbank (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.