

**RABBI - ERIC COHEN PRESIDENT - BRUCE MOSKOVITZ NEWSLETTER EDITOR - E. M. SPINOWITZ**  President's Letter

The Jewish Goodbye

December to Remember!

This month in Jewish History: The Granada Massacre of 1066

Recipe - Fritter Me This AND MORE...

#### **1st Vice President**

#### **2nd Vice President**

#### **3rd Vice President**

#### Tresurer

#### **Immediate Past President**

#### Thanksgiving-ukkah

"In the days of the Hasmonean Mattathias, son of Yohanan the high priest, and his sons, when the sinful (Greco-Syrian) kingdom rose up against Your people Israel, to make them forget Your Torah..., You... rose up for them in the time of their trouble..., and delivered the strong into the hands of the weak... Your children then entered the Temple, cleansed it, purified it, lit lights in Your holy courts, and appointed these eight days of Hanukkah in order to give thanks and praises unto Your holy name."

 "Al Hanissim," Blue Sim Shalom Siddur, p. 160

It is has been a classic Jewish conundrum: what do we do about Christmas? In the USA, in which Christmas takes center stage for at least a month, what is a Jew to do? Starting in the early 20th century, the response was... Chinese restaurants. As time moved on, this was combined, for many Jews, with a movie. Chinese food and a movie are now a Christmas eve tradition among many Jews. And, I would add, it's not a bad way to mark a moment in which we have little invested in a particular holiday. Thanksgiving, does not, I think, pose challenges in this way. Indeed, it is a holiday totally conducive to Chanukkah and its

pose challenges in this way.
Indeed, it is a holiday totally
conducive to Chanukkah and its
spirit. It's not exactly the same as
the American Thanksgiving. In the
American version, we are thankful
for... the ability to be thankful.
How many of us, when sitting
around the Thanksgiving table, ask
those present to offer up a note of

gratitude for... something in our lives? It's a beautiful practice. And it's important to do! Gratitude needs practice. Focusing on gratitude helps us bring a positive attitude into the rest of the year. I encourage everyone to practice this!

Chanukkah IS a thanksgiving. It's not a generalized sort of Thanksgiving. We express gratitude for rather specific moments and things. Nevertheless, it fits very well into the wider cultural moment. I truly look forward to those years when Chanukkah and Thanksgiving fall close together on the calendar. May we all merit to appreciate what we have, and to shine a lot of light in this world!

RABBI

#### President's (Last) Letter

As 2021 draws to a close, so will my tenure as President of the Flemington Jewish Community Center. It has been an honor and privilege to serve. I must laugh, though, because when I tell friends that I am president of the FJCC, the immediate reaction is generally "I'm so sorry!" My response is that in synagogues, unlike every other organization, the President reports TO 200 bosses!

To say it has been a challenging two years is an understatement. Perhaps in the annals of FJCC presidents, I'll have an asterisk after my name with the notation "pandemic president!" Soon after I became President, we were forced to shut down completely under government order in light of COVID-19 concerns. That meant a steep learning curve for the Board, our members, our staff, and me. We had to navigate through the halachic, technical, and practical issues of serving our membership virtually. I am thankful to the United Synagogues of Conservative Judaism for their timely and comprehensive webinars and resources to ease the transition. I don't think that back at the beginning of 2020, as fear of infection gripped the nation and accurate data on the best response was lacking, that we expected to have enduring concerns nearly two years later. We became technical mavens and learned the idiosyncrasies of Zoom (Where is the link? How do I mute myself? What do you mean I'm upside down on the screen? How do I chat with just one person? How do I share my screen?). Our treasurer, Jonathan Weitz, secured a Payroll Protection Plan loan that helped keep our staff (including teachers and nursery school staff) "whole" even without our regular income from dues. Bar/bat mitzvahs were delayed, then delayed again. Funerals barely had the immediate family present at the burial.

Finally, with the arrival of vaccines, our staff and congregation enthusiastically responded with shirtsleeves up. With solid scientific data supporting the safety and efficacy of vaccines, nearly every eligible member was vaccinated within months. As winter turned to spring and early summer, the prospect of a real return to normal loomed. Still, fate, in the form of the Delta variant, dealt yet another cruel blow, though this time we continued our in-service programs and rituals, albeit with a return to mask wearing.

I am thankful that I inherited an organization with a sound financial footing from our previous President, Mindy Engle-Friedman. Under Mindy's leadership we put in place two of our most profitable fund-raisers, Casino Night and Farmland Ride. Despite the (hopefully) temporary setback COVID dealt to these events, I have every

#### **President's Letter**

expectation that they will continue to grow.

In 2021 more than 320 riders registered for Farmland Ride and plans are in place to grow further. We've learned a lot about organization and planning so that with the help of our dedicated volunteers, we'll have an even more memorable (and profitable) day.

Please mark your calendars, too, for Casino Night 2022, Saturday night, March 5, 7:00 pm. We'll again be offering a night of excitement, a signature drink, and great prizes, along with our 50:50 raffle draw.

We are also well along toward a final resolution of our roofing problems. The entire roof will be replaced, and sealcoating will be applied to all walls. Again, thank you Mindy for having initiated the lawsuit that funded the repairs.

This year we established our Life and Legacy fund to endow the FJCC. We are grateful to our long-time beloved member Gene Esterkin, for making the initial bequest that allowed us to create the account, and for Rose Moses whose bequest we also deposited in part to this account. To all our members, I urge you to consider a donation to the FJCC through your IRA/401K beneficiary designations, outright bequests, or various other financial vehicles when you consider the legacy you will leave.

Thanks to the Jewish Federation of Somerset, Hunterdon, and Warren Counties, we received a grant that we applied toward a series of Friday night dinners before services. The adage holds: if you want congregants' tuches (rear ends) in the seats, feed them! Our two dinners attracted many members we haven't seen

in a while. The kids and Hebrew High schoolers leading the services did an outstanding job. Look for more opportunities to schmooze with your friends at Friday night special meals and services.

I will miss the very close and productive relationship I had with Rabbi Cohen and the thoughtful way he guided me and listened to me during our bi-weekly one-on-ones, particularly when we faced thorny issues.

Under a new President, 2022 promises to be the year of emergence from a fraught and anxious period that we, nonetheless, navigated successfully, to a renewed sense of purpose and meaning for our congregation and community.

I can't leave the Presidency without some annoying jokes:

Members of a synagogue are having a terrible argument...Do you stand for the repetition of the Amidah or do you sit?

Half the congregation says, "We always stand." The other half says, "No, no, you sit."

They're arguing and screaming at each other. Finally, they go to see the last surviving founder of the shul. They say, "Mr. Birnbaum, solve this for us. Do you sit for the repetition of the Amidah?"

"That's not the tradition," he replies.
"So, we stand?"

"That's not the tradition."

"Mr. Birnbaum, we're screaming and yelling at each other..."

"THAT's the tradition!"

A pious man, who had reached the age of 105, suddenly stopped going to synagogue. Alarmed by the old fellow's absence after so many years of faithful attendance, the Rabbi went to see him.

He found him in excellent health, so the Rabbi asked, "How come after all these years we don't see you at services anymore?"

The old man lowered his voice, "I'll tell you, Rabbi," he whispered. "When I got to be 90, I expected God to take me any day. But then I got to be 95, then 100, then 105. So, I figured that God is very busy and must've forgotten about me, and I don't want to remind Him!"

Moshe was herding the sheep of his father-in-law in the desert when he saw a fire in the distance. He went to see, and behold, it was a bush that burned, but was not consumed!

Moshe drew near, and a voice emerged from the bush: "Moshe, remove your shoes, for this is holy ground!"

Moshe replied, "But, God, how recently have the custodians waxed the floor?"

God said, "Never mind, Moshe. I've seen the way the Jews are suffering in Egypt; go tell them that I've decided to take them out."

Moshe responded, "That sounds great
- but, God, is there room for this
program in the budget?"
God replied, "It's all right, it's covered;
I'm going to bring them to a land
flowing with milk and honey."
At which point Moshe interjected,
"Will we need police protection along
the way? And who's going to wash all
the dishes - or are you going to put the
milk and honey in disposables?"
And God said, "I've got the perfect job
for you, Moshe."

"Will I be Your agent to take the Jews out of Egypt? Will I be Your first prophet?" Moshe asked, all excited. "No, Moshe. You will be My first shul president."

With gratitude,

Bruce

Bruce L Moskovitz FJCC President

#### **Hebrew School**

In November we held our second Shabbat dinner/Student led service. We enjoyed some deli and knishes and the Hebrew High School students led service. I want to thank Carolyn Goldman for all of shopping, preparing, and organizing for our events. Her efforts really make our events nicer.

We held our first Zoom Shabbat this past month. It was great to see all the families light Shabbat candles together. The Dalet, Hay and Vav students, led an abbreviated service. Our next Zoom Shabbat is on December 3<sup>rd,</sup> and we will light our menorahs before we light our Shabbat Candles.



Register By January 18th \$18/ Family

Chinese Style Shabbat Dinner

Vegetarian Option by Request

Hay and Vav Classeswill lead Services at 7:30 PM

This event is supported by a grant from the Jewish Federation of Somerset, Hunterdon and Warren Counties Register After January 18th

\$25/ Family

#### Our Tzedakah Counts

The FJCC Hebrew School collected \$200 to purchase 8 children's winter coats. The coats will be donated to United Way

#### Winter Break

There is No Hebrew School Beginning Wednesday, December 22nd through Sunday, January 2nd

Classes Resume on Wednesday, January 5th

Ousted from power, Israel's ultra-Orthodox lose the final word on what's kosher

(article from Washington Post)

Some significant changes in Kashrut supervision in Israel that broaden the options for Kosher authorities. Click this article from the Washington Post.

#### Mazel tov to...

Sharon & Ed Winnick - on the engagement of their daughter Sydney to Daniel Tabari.

Samantha Muller - whose poem, "Not Alone In A Changing World," was selected to be part of the COVID-19 Community Conversations Storytelling Project sponsored by the NJ YMCA State Alliance and NJ Department of Health. The poem is part of the digital collection curated by the NJ State Library, and was presented by Samantha this week, as part of the "Building a Culture of Health in New Jersey" Conference at Harrah's Waterfront Conference Center in Atlantic City.



#### **Contributions**

Due to a technical error, December contributions could not be published in time for this posting. Contributions will be updated as soon as they are available.

#### This month in Jewish History

#### Sometimes exalted, sometimes eradicated...

#### Too often the line between the two, for Jews, is thin enough to step over

Note from the Editor: I often try to find historical events or biographies about Jewish history that are positive. Sadly, this story hones in on some of the tragic events surrounding the history of the Jews in Spain before the Inquisition and Expulsion.

The country we know as Spain before 1,000 CE was an incredible place. To name one incredible fact, the oldest cave paintings ever found, dating from 40,000 years ago, are found there. From that early



pre-history, Spanish earth has been trampled upon by many a warring tribe, gypsy hoard or persecuted peoples.

From the ancient Greek communities who gave the peninsula its name (Iberia is derived from the river Iber or Ebro in Spanish), to the Punics and Carthaginians, the Romans, and Celtiberians (think Celtic Iberians), Spain's cultural diversity is old and rich. In fact, one of the biggest cultural influences on Spain itself, came from Rajasthan in India, whose Romani people (referred to as Gitano in Spain) gave their music, instruments and dance to Spain's cultural heritage. If you've ever seen a Flamenco show, vou know this is one of the most iconic dance forms in the world and synonymous with Spanish culture. In the 2nd century BCE, the peninsula called Hispania by the Romans, covered a whopping 240,000 square miles of land replete with all of these rich cultures at one point or another in its history. In 507, after the fall of Rome, Hispania came under Visigoth rule, a tribe that had long been converted to Christianity. Religious war being what it has always been, a clash of gods was inevitable, and the peninsula was aching for a faithbased battle to begin. In the early 8th century, the Muslim war machine answered that call. The Moors (Moros in Spanish), settled and developed the area in the south of Hispania, with the city of Granada as its epicenter.

The Jewish Golden Age? How do Jews fit into Granada's history? When we think of Spain + Jews + persecution, we instinctively go to 1492 and The Inquisition. But this story is much older and the

> enemy of the Jews in this historical non-fiction is not the Christians... It all starts with a legend: Nebuchadnezzar had exiled the Jews in 586 BCE, so they were on the move again, settling in Granada. At the time, Moors looked favorably on Jews, leading to the historic period known as

the Jewish Golden Age (while the timing is hotly contested, it did coincide with caliphate rulers sometime around the 700s CE). Even the Moors called the city "Granada of the Jews," according to the online Jewish Virtual Library. In literature, we see the earliest reference to Jews in 711 when they were recorded as helping to operate the garrison there.

Under the Ummayad caliphate, Jewish Granada prospered (755-1013). One Jew in particular stood out: Samuel Ha-Nagid. Originally from Córdoba, Samuel had been invited to serve as the king's vizier in Granada. His talents catapulted him to the position of chief minister under the successor to the throne in 1038. Under Samuel's leadership, the Jewish community became a center for Jewish learning and culture. But upon Samuel's death, his son, Joseph served with much less magnanimity. While well-educated and groomed for the position by his father, Joseph was arrogant and ostentatious. He easily offended Muslim rulers and their Arab constituents with his displays of wealth and haughtiness. The inevitable result would see the storming of Joseph's palace, his eventual murder and crucifixion,

and the slaughter of 1,500 Jewish families on the 30th of this month, in 1066 (coinciding with Shabbat, no less). It cannot be denied that this massacre occurred in one day and would have lasting consequences. An Arab poem written that year makes the sentiment clear:

Do not consider it a breach of faith to kill them, the breach of faith would be to let them carry on.

They have violated our covenant with them, so how can you be held guilty against the violators?

How can they have any act when we are

How can they have any pact when we are obscure and they are prominent?

Now we are humble, beside them, as if we were wrong and they were right!

What happened afterwards reminds us that, as a people, we bounce back. After the massacre, Jews returned under a different ruler and were allowed to stay, provided they agree to convert to Islam (which many Jews feigned). Christians were also being persecuted, so the two formed an alliance to shake off the yoke of calaphatic oppression. This cycle continued for several hundred years of coexistence - eradication - return amongst Jews and their Muslim rulers. Eventually, this untenable state reached its inevitable conclusion (what we instinctively think of when we hear of Spain + Jews + persecution): the fall of Muslim control in Granada, the expulsion of the Moors and Jews from Spain, and The Inquisition.

And then the cycle begins anew...

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## Important Sisterhood Event Update



Dear congregants,

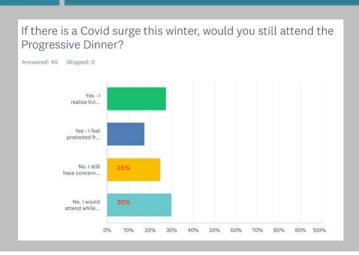
With sadness, but also much forethought, the FJCC Sisterhood has chosen not to proceed with the Progressive Dinner on January 8th. We did not come to this decision lightly. Over 40 congregants responded to our survey. Even though most of you are willing to attend (citing vaccinated guests as a requirement), one survey reply gave us pause: 55% of you would cancel if there were a Covid surge this winter. As you can imagine, coordinating an event involving multiple locations, guests and synagogue staff is a herculean effort. Such a high cancellation rate is prohibitive, especially with variants and New Jersey numbers on the rise already. In the meantime, you can help: we need volunteers for our gift

shop! Click the link to sign up!

We do invite you to keep an eye out for upcoming Sisterhood

events and joint Sisterhood/Center Series collaborations in the

We do invite you to keep an eye out for upcoming Sisterhood events and joint Sisterhood/Center Series collaborations in the upcoming year.



#### December Fried

#### Ricotta & Mint Fritters

This is a month where we ask for patience - to catch up with the social calendar and holiday events, to sit with friends and family (and all their opinions) and to spread warmth and holiday cheer. But if you want to <u>not</u> spread heart disease, hold the brisket and make this vegetarian fritter the star of the (vegetarian) holiday show.

#### **Ingredients**

- 1 lb. fresh ricotta
- 1/3 cup (25g) finely grated parmesan
- 1/2 tsp dried mint
- 1/4 cup mint leaves, chopped
- 3.5 oz baby spinach
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 1/3 cup (50g) wholemeal flour
- 1/2 cup (125ml) extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tsp wholegrain mustard
- 1 tbs apple cider vinegar
- 2 cups sugar snap peas, blanched, refreshed
- 2 cups watercress sprigs
- 1 avocado, cut into wedges
- Micro cress and fresh mint leaves, to serve

#### **Directions**

- 1. Place ricotta, parmesan, dried and fresh mint, spinach, garlic, egg and flour in a bowl. Season, and stir to combine.
- 2. Heat 1/3 cup (80ml) oil in a large frypan over medium heat. Using 2 tbs ricotta mixture for each fritter, shape into balls with floured hands. Flatten slightly, then working in batches, cook, turning once, for 5 minutes or until golden and crisp. Keep warm. Repeat with remaining ricotta mixture.
- 3. Whisk mustard, vinegar and remaining 2 tbs oil in a bowl. Season.
- 4. Arrange fritters, peas, fresh mint, watercress and avocado on serving plates. Drizzle dressing over top and sprinkle with micro cress.





## A Year in Review

Remember when everything was online?



# and then...

After a zoom-heavy, eye-fatigue-laden 2020, and the release of the vaccines against Covid to all adults in early spring, the synagogue congregants and social groups were more than ready to see each other in-person! The first event was the Woman of the Year, followed that same month by the Extravaganza. These outdoor events allowed us to feel comfortable with socializing again.



#### Welcome Back Extravaganza (May 26)







## et There be

The Hanukkah Dinner on December 1st was a brilliant success! Congregants and kids gathered safely and enjoyed an evening of good food, good conversation and lots of lights!



## -events-events-events-events-events

Click the images to be taken to the website and RSVP!



Saturday, December 18

#### **Shabbat Lunch & Learn**

featuring

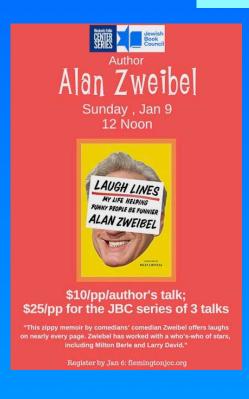
#### Dr. Beth Banks Cohn **Jewish National Fund-USA**

Learn how Israelis are working on social and environmental problems together with national and international communities of Jews, Arabs, Druze and Palestinians

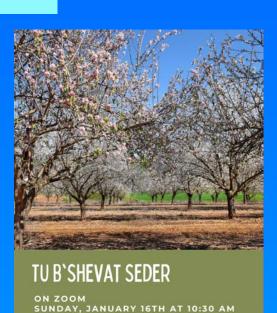


Kiddush Sponsored by Adah & Alan Radzin

Click the images to be taken to the website and RSVP!







We will send you a Tu B'Shevat handout, shopping list and zoom link the first week in January

#### **BIRTHDAYS**

11 20 Hannah Weinstock-Gallagher Benjamin Jampel Jason Quinn 20 12 Leah Green Joshua Ellenberg Stephen Riche 12 21 Ms. Monica Gort-Jakubowski Ariel Weintraub Mr. Arthur Wetstein 14 27 Mrs. Malka Goodman Mark Gertzman Dr. Alan Radzin 28 Mr. Seth Cohen Bruce Kestenbaum Leah Rudolph 16 28 Zachary Rudolph Hannah Ellenberg Gayle Neibart Mr Scott Gursky Robin Engelson NNIVERSARIES 10 18 Dylan Stein Kim Muller Evelyn & Glenn Gabai 11 Valerie Goldman Mrs. Robin Alexander



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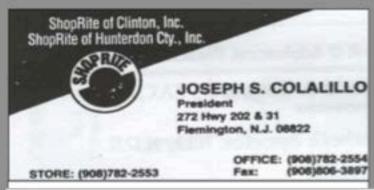




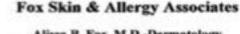












Alissa B. Fox, M.D.-Dermatology Fellow, American Academy of Dermatology James A. Fox, M.D.-Allergy-Immunolgoy Fellow, American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology

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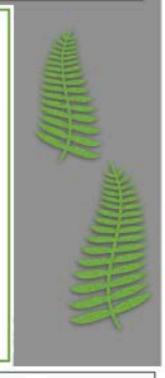




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