FJCC FLASH

Official Newsletter of the Flemington JCC



Rabbi – Eric Cohen President – Sharon Rednor Newsletter - רודריגז

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RABBI'S REFLECTIONS

At the end of January, we celebrated Tu BeShvat, the "birthday" of the trees. Planting trees is a mitzvah, and many of us remember collecting money to plant trees in Israel. Planting is also a Godly act.

When we are called to the Torah, we make a blessing before chanting,



and a blessing after chanting. The blessing after chanting goes: "Blessed are You our God, sovereign of the universe, who gave us a Torah of truth, and planted (nata) within us eternal life. Blessed are You, God, who gives the Torah."

Rabbi Elie Kaunfer of Hadar asks: What is it that God plants? What is the connection between "giving us a Torah of Truth" and "planting within us eternal life"?

He explains: in the Torah blessing, we hear echoes from the Garden of Eden. In Eden, God plants the garden-including the Tree of Life-and places the Adam-who has eternal life at this moment in the creation story-in it. In the blessing, God plants "eternal life", i.e. "the Torah of truth" also called the Tree of Life (etz hayyim), within us (betokheinu), the descendants of Adam. We are the fertile ground (adamah) in which the Tree of Life, God's Torah, takes root.

The Tree of Life, however, is not the only tree in Eden: There is also the one which God explicitly forbade people from eating from, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. God fears that people will eat from the Tree of Life after eating from the Tree of Knowledge, and thereby erase a critical distinction between people and God. So, God banishes humans from the Garden and protects the Tree of Life with a flaming sword.

And yet, as Rabbi Kaunfer observes, in our blessing, God seems to end the supernatural protection of the Tree of Life, and plants it, in the form of the Torah, within us!

RABBI'S REFLECTIONS

Perhaps, when God plants the Tree of Life inside of us, it no longer confers eternal physical existence. God is not concerned that the essential divide between us and the Divine will be broached by doing so. Leading a Torah-centered life offers another kind of access to the Divine, one which empowers us.

A story from the Talmud: During an argument among the ancient rabbis, Rabbi Eliezer insisted he was right, and a voice from heaven called out: "Listen to him! He is right!" Rabbi Yehoshua stood up and said: It is written in the Torah: "It is not in heaven that you should seek it." And it also says: "One should follow the majority." Since the majority of Rabbis disagreed with Rabbi Eliezer's opinion, the halakhah is not ruled in accordance with his opinion. Years later, Rabbi Nathan encountered Elijah the prophet and said to him: What did God say when Rabbi Yehoshua issued his declaration? Elijah said to him: The Holy One smiled and said: My children have triumphed over Me! My children have triumphed over Me!"

We may not live forever with our Tree of Life, with the Torah planted inside of us. However, we have a much more powerful role to play in shaping our lives on earth than Adam and Eve could ever have imagined. We are not only fertile soil in which the Torah may grow, we are now also, Rabbi Kaunfer points out, also the gardeners who plant it.

May we all nurture Torah in our internal soil, and each, in our own way, become a gardener who makes God smile.

Rabbi Eric S. Cohen, PhD



FROM THE DESK OF OUR PRESIDENT

Whew! Quickly, the FJCC plunged into a new year with lots of fantastic programs for one and all. January greeted us with three b'not mitzvah and programs/services accompanied by delicious food. My sincere thank you to the Ritual Committee and Center Series Committee for arranging services and great programming over the past month. Finally, ongoing thanks go to **Carolyn and David Goldman** for all the shopping, prepping and caring they put into our terrific Oneg, Kiddush and Sunday minyan meals.



In February, the camaraderie continues with lots of opportunities to socialize, learn and eat at the FJCC. There's more than these, but here is a sampling of the calendar:

- We kick off the month with the ever-popular PROGRESSIVE DINNER on February 2 nd . Thank you to the coordinators, **Pam Nemeth and Barbara Clarin**, and all the dinner hosts.
- That event is followed by the BOOK CLUB in-person discussion of "The Flight Portfolio" and its adaption to the screen, "Transatlantic." The story of Varian Fry rescuing artists from France in WW2 is fascinating. Newcomers are always welcome, even if you haven't finished the book.
- In response to the crisis in Israel, Rabbi Cohen added a new series of educational ISRAEL DISCUSSION GROUPS for members and non-members. They will take place on Sunday or Monday evenings throughout the month. Contact Rabbi for more information.
- In honor of February's Jewish Disabilities Month, we will have a LUNCH AND LEARN on the integration of individuals with developmental disabilities, featuring Sean Bielefeldt from Matheny. Our tradition is one that values inclusion and learning, so we invite you to participate in living those principles.
- The kids are organizing a YOUTH GROUP SHUL-IN, an overnight at the FJCC. Do we dare ask what they have planned?
- On February 24 th we will gather together at the end of Shabbat and celebrate the coming week with friends and music. Join us for HAVDALAH AND KLEZMER for an uplifting way to finish out February.
- Please take the opportunity throughout the month to invite your unaffiliated friends, neighbors, and relatives to attend SHABBAT ACROSS AMERICA on March 1 st . We will serve dinner and follow it with Friday services. This is an opportunity for us to connect as we celebrate Shabbat with Jews from across the US and Canada.

B'Shalom

Sharon Rednor

HEBREW SCHOOL

The Gimel - Vav students beautifully lead Friday night services. Our Shabbat lessons will focus on Havdalah so the students are prepared for the Congregation wide Haudalah Celebration next month. We started our Passover planning early by celebrating Tu B'Shuat. The students planted parsley that will sprout and grow over the coming months and be ready for their seder plates later this spring. Rabbi Cohen led the students in a Tu B'Shevat seder. We are looking ahead to the Family Megillah Reading on Sunday morning, March 24th. Look for details in next month's bulletin.

Can Openers Needed

The FJCC Hebrew School has started collecting food for the Flemington Food Pantry. There is always a shortage of can openers. Help Hebrew School out by donating a can opener today. You can leave your contribution in the bin outside Karen's Office.

DID YOU KNOW ?



MONTHLY CALENDAR



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
Sisterhood Meeting 10:	10:30am - Bridge		4:30pm - Hebrew School	11am - Adult Ed	7:30pm - kabbalat shabat	Eisinger Kiddush
9am - Alef - Vav Hebrew	1pm - Parshat Hashavuah		4:45pm - 7th Grade	1pm - Mah Jongg		9:15am - Shabbat service
9am - Sunday Morning	5pm - Israel Discussion			6pm - HH		6:30pm - Sisterhood
	7pm - Talmud Ann Pettit			7:30pm - Bridge		
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9am - Alef - Vav Hebrew	10:30am - Bridge	7:30pm - Genealogy	4:30pm - Hebrew School	11am - Adult Ed	6pm - Tot Shabbat: 2-3	Lunch and Learn - Jewish
9am - Sunday Morning	1pm - Parshat Hashavuah		4:45pm - 7th Grade	1pm - Mah Jongg	7:30pm - kabbalat shabat	Milecofsky Kiddush
, .	6pm - LT Meeting			6pm - HH		9:15am - Shabbat service
	7pm - Book club			7:30pm - Bridge		
	.,					
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Sisterhood Meeting	10:30am - Bridge	CS Meeting	4:30pm - Hebrew School	11am - Adult Ed	7:30pm - kabbalat shabat	Clarin Kiddush
9am - Alef - Vav Hebrew	1pm - Parshat Hashavuah	5:45pm - Security	4:45pm - 7th Grade	1pm - Mah Jongg		9:15am - Shabbat service
9am - Sunday Morning				6pm - HH		
10:30am - EB Meeting				7:30pm - Bridge		
11:30am - Maybe YG						
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Youth Group Shul In			4:30pm - Hebrew School	11am - Adult Ed	7:30pm - kabbalat shabat	Stirberg Kiddush
No Hebrew School -	OFFICE CLOSED		4:45pm - 7th Grade	1pm - Mah Jongg		9:15am - Shabbat service
9am - Sunday Morning	10:30am - Bridge		7:30pm - BoT Meeting	7:30pm - Bridge		6:30pm -
	1pm - Parshat Hashavuah					
25	26	27	28	29	1	2
9am - Alef - Vav Hebrew	10:30am - Bridge		4:30pm - Hebrew School	11am - Adult Ed	Shabbat Across America	Lunch and Learn -
9am - Sunday Morning	1pm - Parshat Hashavuah		4:45pm - 7th Grade	1pm - Mah Jongg	7:30pm - kabbalat shabat	9:15am - Shabbat service
,,				7:30pm - Bridge		

B'NAI MITZVAH SPOTLIGHT

Sarah Sornstein is from Lambertville. NJ and has attended the FJCC Hebrew School since kindergarten. She is currently in 8th grade at the Hun School of Princeton. In addition to being an honor role student Sarah is the only 8th grader on the Hun Varsity Cheer Squad. She has previously competed with the Flemington Junior Red Devils and has won two National Cheerleading Championships. In the summer Sarah attends Echo Hill Summer Camp, a sleepaway camp in Maryland, where she enjoys making friends, sailing and arts & crafts. Sarah is a total animal lover and in school last year she was the only student in her grade chosen to assist with the training of a service dog. Sarah hopes to some day raise and train a service dog.





AT HOME IN HUNTERDON





We have some news this month that I wanted to pass on to you. Through HIAS and the State Department's "Welcome Corps" program, we have been assigned a family from the Congo. So far we know that it is a mother

and her two adult age sons, who are in their 20s. Their main language is Swahili however the sons have some experience with English. They have passed their preliminary medical tests. HIAS has stated to us that many of these refugees have been waiting for years on the lists and, given the rarity of such an opportunity, for them it is like winning the lottery. They immigrate with the purpose of citizenship here and will not be returning to their county, unlike the Ukrainian program where they were coming temporarily while their country was at war.

The Welcome Corps was launched on January 19, 2023, by the U.S. Department of State in coordination with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Department of State is funding a consortium of non-profit organizations with expertise in refugee resettlement. This consortium includes HIAS and HIAS is sponsoring about 20% of the refugees coming into the US with this State Department program. The Welcome Corps creates new opportunities for Americans to engage directly in refugee resettlement through private sponsorship, independent of and complementary to the existing work of resettlement agencies.

The State Department will let us know when they are flying in and where we have to pick them up. HIAS also pays for a first month at an Airbnb until we can find more permanent housing for them. We feel as prepared as we can be presently, because we have the leftover furniture and funds from the Ukrainian family. We will let you know as needs arise.

Our HIAS Liaison has recommended that we not give out their address and protect their privacy as they adapt to their new environment. Most of the refugees will have had a history of traumatic experiences escaping and living in camps or other circumstances, so a lot of people showing up to them out of the blue, would add to their confusion. If you are still interested in participating in the volunteer efforts please reach out to

Melissa Kleiman at <u>mkleiman35@gmail.com</u>. Our HIAS Liaison was also happy that we were able to jump on this new opportunity and that we were assigned a family so fast. We will keep you informed as we progress.

-At Home in Hunterdon



This year's Progressive Dinner was a hit! Thank you to Barbara Clarin and Pamela Nemeth for chairing this wonderful event for the FJCC Sisterhood. This year saw a record 4 kosher homes and 76 attendees! This event is the Sisterhood's main fundraiser and we thank everyone who registered. Very special thank yous to our host homes: Daneshrads, Bruce Moskowitz and John Fellin, Weitzs, Goldstein-Bynes, Nemeths, Radzins, Rodriguezs. Of course the night wouldn't have been complete without the graciousness of our appetizer hosts, the Kleiman family, or the dessert host, the Nafoussis!

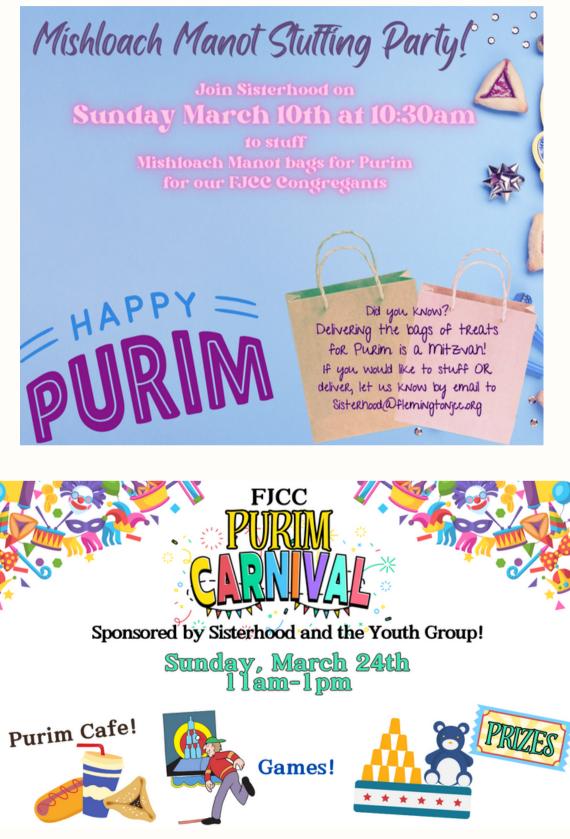


SISTERHOOD





SISTERHOOD



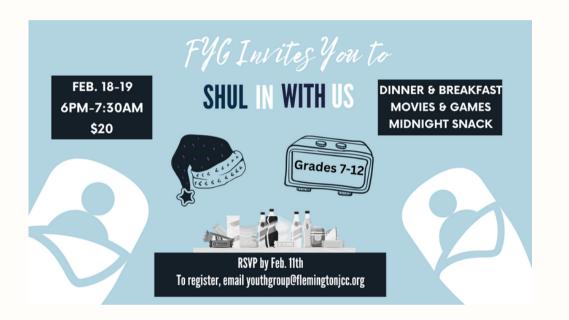
WEEKLY EVENTS



Contact Karen Walsh: kwalsh@flemingtonjcc.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

Register for events on Shulcloud. Links are posted in News and Notes





Havdalah Klezmer 7:30 PM

Early Bird: \$18, kids are free After 2/17: \$25, kids are free





Shabbat Across America Friday, March 1

Dinner will be served 6:15 PM

\$5 pp/\$10 family Register by 2/21



UPCOMING EVENTS

Register for events on Shulcloud. Links are posted in News and Notes



Finding Your Roots March 2nd

Finding your roots, tracing your genealogy with Evie Stern and John Fellin.



The value Lashon Hora teaches us to build each other up and not tear them down. Come spray with us and create cool graffiti art to bring home and share your positive message!

RSVP to youthgroup@flemingtonjcc.org

Shabbat B'Yachad

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Saturday ~ March 9 9:15 - 12:00

Design Your Shabbat

Meditation ~ Parsha Discussion

Hebrew School on Shabbat Learn Prayers Sing Songs Tell Stories

Kiddush Lunch & Board Games





March 10 Mishloach Manot Stuffing 10:30

March 17 Hamantachen Baking 10:00





Saturday, March 23

Traditional Megillah Reading

Seudah Shelisheet 7:00 Ma'ariv and Havdalah 8:00 Traditional Megillah Reading 8:30

Sunday, March 24 Family Megillah Reading Purim Carnival 10:00 Family Megillah Reading Costume Parade Treats for all Children in Costumes 11:00 Purim Carnival

BIRTHDAYS

February 2 Adam Wolf

• <u>February 7</u> David Short Kenneth Skowronek

February 10 Harry Zackowitz

<u>February 13</u> Jonathan Fox Paul Hubert

<u>February 15</u> Jennifer Goldstein Benjamin Doshna

> February 16 Flo Newrock

<u>February 18</u> Heather Brooks Dorit Radzin

<u>February 19</u> Dr. Jeanne Berk Michael Liebowitz <u>February 20</u> Seymour Mondshein

> <u>February 21</u> Danny Shor

<u>February 22</u> Brayden Jampel Dorian Batt Jaime Cohen

<u>February 24</u> Dr. Michael Wolf

<u>February 25</u> Ian Rodriguez

<u>February 26</u> Eric Wasserman Sharon Gazvy

<u>February 27</u> Catherine O'Shea

<u>February 28</u> Dr. Brian Sperling Jonathan Stirberg

<u>February 29</u> Jason Gertzman

ANNIVERSARIES

<u>February 1</u> Daniel & Eilene Weinstock

<u>February 7</u> Brett & Gail Bragin

<u>February 15</u> Martin & Debbie Mcinerney

YAHRZEITS

<u>February 1</u> Beverly Kogan

<u>February 2</u> Martin Pavelich Murray Benimoff

<u>February 3</u> George Jacobson Sanford Friedman

> <u>February 4</u> Fannie Hayfer

<u>February 5</u> Sally Eisinger Stein

<u>February 8</u> Rosalin Zackowitz

<u>February 9</u> Dr. Irena Balis Sandler

> <u>February 10</u> Murr<mark>ay Grill</mark> Yetta Atlas

February 11 Herbert Milecofsky

> <u>February 13</u> John Watson Celia Lerner Louis Friedman Hilda Daniels

<u>February 14</u> Dr. Milton Sirota

<u>February 15</u> Terry Mondshein February 17 Melvin Dvoor

February 18 Leo Sacks

February 19 Donna Anne Watts Young

> February 20 David Weiner

February 21 Charles Schutz

<u>February 22</u> Jeanne Hoberman Arcus Ely Stempler

> <u>February 23</u> Irene Abramson Morris Neibart Edythe Stern

February 24 Hildegard Likuski Lillian Berger

February 26 Betty H. Mehrlust Kitty Zuchovicki

February 27 Katherine Formica

<u>February 28</u> Melvyn Kestenbaum

> February 29 Lorraine Klein

CONTRIBUTIONS

General Donations

Mitchell and Barbara Clarin In Memory of Robert M. Brooks, brother of Kenneth Brooks Refuah Shlemah to Rabbi, Karen and Deborah In honor of David and Carolyn Goldman for adopting Carolyn Watts' cats

Yvonne and Paul Magala In appreciation of the Flemington JCC

Frederick and Suzanne Rothstein Yahrzeit of Suzanne's mother Lillian Volowitz, Suzanne's father Bernard Volowitz, Frederick's mother Mildred Rothstein Cohen and Suzanne's grandfather Morris Triber

Josy and Bruce Kestenbaum

Bruce Moscovitz and John Fellin

Melissa and Fred Kleiman

CONTRIBUTIONS

Rabbi Discretionary

Barry and Kimi Mittler For the Yahrzeit o<mark>f</mark> Sam Borman, father of Kimi

Kiddush/Oneg/Nosh

Amy Cook and Scott Hornick 1/27 Kiddush in Memory of Yahrzeit of Seena Cook

Fred Eisinger 2/3 Kiddush for the Yahrzeit of Sally Stein

Howard and Anneliese Nifoussi 12/15 Oneg for Yahrzeit of Joseph Nifoussi

Building Fund

Zelic and Marsha Gerstein In Memory of Robert Brooks, brother of Ken Brooks Refuah Shlemah to Scott Schindler's mother Refuan Shlemah to Evie Stern

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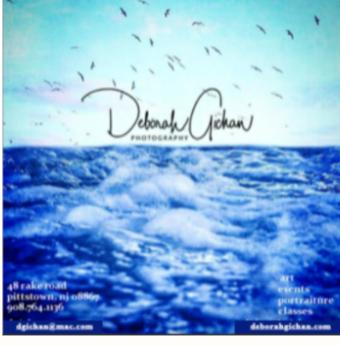
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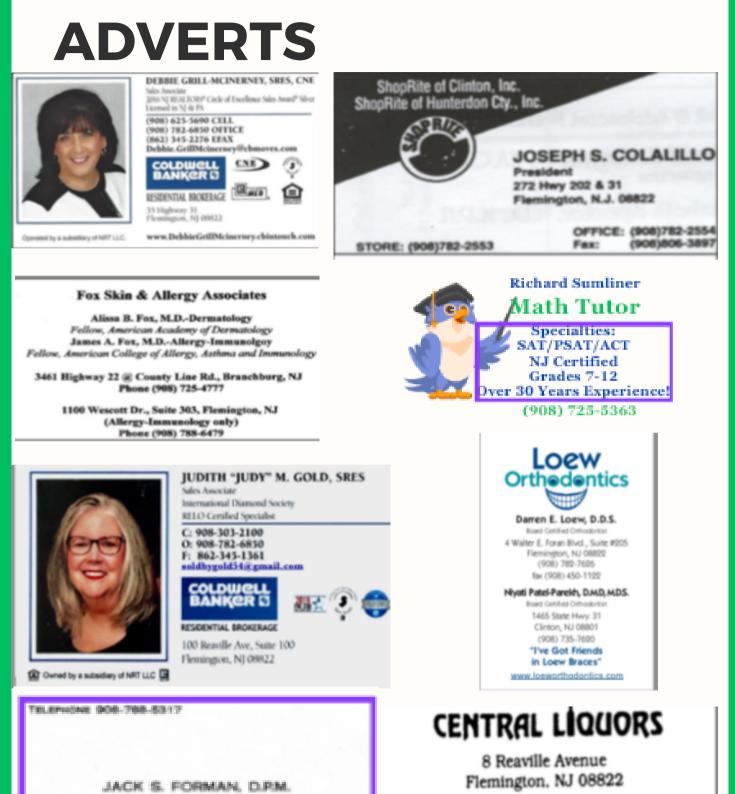
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