



HISTORIC B'NAI JACOB SYNAGOGUE

Nissley at Water Streets
Middletown, Pennsylvania 17057

SUMMER 2020 NEWSLETTER

Services Calendar

Erev Rosh Hashana (5781)

Fri. Sep. 18 - 7:00 PM

Rosh Hashana

Sat. Sep. 19 - 9:00 AM

Kol Nidre

Sun. Sep. 27 - 7:00 PM

Yom Kippur

Mon. Sep. 28 - 9:00 AM

Yizkor - 11:00 AM

Musaf - 12:30 PM

Mincha - 5:00 PM

Ne'ila - 6:00 PM

Shabbos Service

Fri. Oct. 2 - 7:30 PM

Shabbos Service Honoring Veterans

Fri. Nov. 6 - 7:30 PM

Shabbos Service

Fri. Dec. 4 - 7:30 PM

Hanukah Party & Board Meeting

Sun. Dec. 13 - NOON

Keeping Faith with Our Legacy of Devotion During “The New Now”

This year, our Shul received a gift of a painting (copy inserted) by the Romanian-Israeli artist Reuven Rubin (1893-1974). The painting is set in the Shul's coatroom above our copies of editions of the Torah, Haftorahs and commentaries, and our prayer books, as a reminder of the devotion that is at the center of our Shul's mission, of what we must hold on to as we approach each New Year and difficult times, and especially as we confront the uncertainties of the “New Now” presented by the on-going COVID-19 Pandemic of 2020, which has required dramatic changes to our lives; even preventing us from praying together in the Shul.

Such devotion was shown when, after our

Shul's first president, Elieazar Zacks, z'l, died tragically from the Great Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1918, his widow and children devoted the rest of their lives to sustaining the Shul he built in 1906, with his own hands along with our other founding members. They worked with succeeding leaders of our Shul, who shared that spirit, through wars, hard economic times and the migration of membership to other communities. That devotion got our Shul listed on the National Register of Historic Places to preserve it as a legacy for generations to come.

That devotion continued even after the death of the last of those children, Jacob “Jake” Zuck, z'l, on July 31, 2009, through their legacy bequests and through the spirit they instilled in others in the new generations of our Congregation. That devotion sustains our Shul to this day. Havu L'Adonoi (Ascribe to the Lord!), as we will sing on Yom Kippur.

During this new Pandemic and the “New Now” that it has cast as a challenge for anything “as usual,” we can continue to hold on to our traditions, our community and each other with both hands, like the rabbi in the painting, while we are connected in new ways over the internet – a blessing we have been given just for times like these. Baruch attah Adonai, Eloheinu melekh ha-lolam, she-echeyanu, ve'qi eh'manu, va'higiy'anu, laz'man hazeh! Let us take this occasion we have been given to keep faith with our legacy of devotion and bring our Shul through to a New Year of Peace, Happiness and Good Health.



Moving In “Zoom”

While our Shul was able to hold our Annual Meeting and have our Shabbos Service on March 6, 2020, Pennsylvania's Governor declared a Statewide emergency due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and imposed public health precautions thereafter which have limited in-person gatherings and resulted in the Central Pennsylvania Jewish Community's providing “virtual services” over the Internet. Our Shul rescheduled our in-person April 3 services to



April 17 when we provided our first virtual services using ZOOM, an internet cloud-based system that enables up to 49 to participate on the same screen at one time (the system can handle up to 500 participants). The ZOOM service includes a display of the program text; although, copies are also

emailed to each participant along with the connection information. You can connect by phone alone or “in person” if you have a camera in your computer. Our Shul sends out a email before each service with connection instructions (if you want to be added to the email list, fill out the Contact Form on our Shul's website: www.bnai-jacob.org).

We will be providing High Holy Day Services using ZOOM this year as well. Program materials, including all of the sections from the High Holy Days Prayer Book, will be emailed and available during broadcasts. All of the ZOOM services this year are being led by Mark Bluestein, with the assistance of our Baal Koray and Baal Tekiya. Note because the Rosh Hashanah service is on Shabbos, there will be no Shofar; but there will be for the Yom Kippur Service. Anyone who wishes to have an Aliyah during the High Holy Days Services, should send us their contact information using the contact form on our Shul's website.

Remembering Dorothy Kapenstein, z'l

For a woman who grew up in Philadelphia and rarely left the city, Dorothy G. Kapenstein, z'l, who passed away at almost 91 years of age on October 15, 2019, dearly loved our synagogue, where one of her three sons has been our Shamus and Treasurer for many years.

She purchased the first sink and cabinets when our Shul converted the basement into a Social Hall. She remembered members of her family and others who would not be remembered elsewhere with memorial plates and a dedication plate for our memorial boards and in our Yizkor books. She contributed to our newsletters; wrote successful proposals for grants; can be seen helping with an interview in our Shul's 100th anniversary DVD; and, was there whenever we needed the proper wording or Bible-citation to put on a plaque. A scholar her entire life, she also found time to do stand-up comedy in her 80's, bringing one of her Yiddish/English routines to our Social Hall, and got lots of laughs.

After she graduated in 1946 from the Philadelphia High School for Girls, she established and maintained its archives until her death. She went to Penn on a full scholarship, graduating with honors in History and Oriental Studies; obtained a Master of Library Science from Drexel; and, after 2.5 years towards a Ph.D in Arabic and Islamic History at Bryn Mawr and Dropsie University, she was mugged and had to take a break. She was a speaker of many languages, a consultant for an encyclopedia of Medieval History; and a contributor to the curriculum for the Philadelphia School District, where also she taught and worked in K-12 classrooms and libraries from 1957 until she retired in 1991.

She married in 1953 and continued to share her love of books and learning with her husband, Henry, z'l, a deputy director of the Free Library of Philadelphia and Professor of Library Science at Drexel, and with her family and generations of students and friends. Her life and memory continue to be a blessing.

Special Donations

This year our Shul received two (2) very special donations:

- Ruth Siegel and her family donated two silver Torah breastplates that commemorate family bar mitzvahs with the Chief Rabbi of Israel, for our Shul's use with our Shul's historic Torahs, as well as books and other ceremonial items from the former Lewistown (PA) synagogue. Our Shul, with the assistance of Chaim and Rivkah Schenck and Rabbi Carl Choper, has distributed many of the books to others, including the Library at SCI Camp Hill.
- Our Shul also received a donation of \$1,500 from the Incarnation United Church of Christ in Newport (PA), expressing their Congregation's solidarity as part of the faith community after seeing news stories about our Shul's efforts to increase security in response to threats to the Jewish Community; and, in memory of the kindness and warmth during their 2015 visit to our Shul. This donation has been applied to update the basement door of the Shul and outside motion detection lighting as recommended during a State Police security audit.

Middletown News

Due to the public health emergency closing of Middletown Schools from March 16, 2020 to the end of the 2020 School Year, there was no award of the Ida Betty Orstein – B'nai Jacob Scholarship this year. Middletown Area High School had a “drive through” graduation ceremony on June 3, 2020.

The Middletown Press & Journal, our local newspaper, ceased publication on July 1, 2020, after 166 years. The paper and its staff covered the local news, including news our Shul, and will be missed.

Our Shul Honors

EVERLYN REISMAN BEN-AMI, z'l – died on May 7, 2020. Evelyn was a long-time special education teacher and the widow of Rabbi David Z. Ben-Ami, z'l, both of whom contributed to the development of our Congregation.

SHIRLEY JOYCE POLON, z'l – died on June 12, 2020. Shirley provided the meals and/or the set up and cleanup for many an oneg shabbat at our Shul and her family provided the memorial curtain (parochet) for the Aron Kodesh.

Historic B'nai Jacob Synagogue is located in Middletown, PA near the Harrisburg International Airport. If you have news you want to share or would like to be added to our mailing list, please send that information through the email link at bnai-jacob.org.

2019 Executive Committee Officers

President—Bruce Baron

Vice President—Ed Beck

Treasurer—Larry Kapenstein

Assistant Treasurer—Loren Barisch

Secretary—Bruce Baron