



# HISTORIC B'NAI JACOB SYNAGOGUE

Nissley at Water Streets  
PO Box 118  
Middletown, Pennsylvania 17057

on the National Register of Historic Places (built in 1906)

SUMMER 2025 NEWSLETTER

## Services Calendar

### Shabbos Service

Fri. Sep. 5 - 7:30 PM

### Erev Rosh Hashana (5786)

Mon. Sep. 22 - 7:00 PM

### Rosh Hashana

Tue. Sep. 23 - 9:00 AM

### Kol Nidre

Wed. Oct. 1 - 7:00 PM

### Yom Kippur

Thu. Oct. 2 - 9:00 AM

Yizkor - 11:00 AM

Mincha - 5:00 PM

Ne'eila - 6:00 PM

followed by Break the Fast

### Shabbos Service Honoring Veterans

Fri. Nov. 7 - 7:30 PM

### Shabbos Service

Fri. Dec. 5 - 7:30 PM

### Hanukkah Party & Board Meeting

Sun. Dec. 21 - NOON

## Preparing for the High Holidays: Tefilah

**T**he time of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur call us to embark on our own process of returning to our deepest essence, great potential; to return to our family, and to God. When trying to prepare for this journey I can't help thinking of the many texts and prayers in Siddur for that time of the year. How will I keep the prayers fresh and meaningful? Will I be able to pray with Kavanah (intention)? How will I be able to focus on the meaning of the text so that I can make the necessary changes?

Hasidic Rabbis suggest meditating before you begin to pray so that your mind and heart are in it already. They also try to focus on certain words in the text that moves them and repeat them silently. Another prominent technique within *Hasidut* is the movement of the body during prayer. This is another means to take prayer out of the cognitive arena and make it physical and experiential-making prayer active. "All my bones shall say, 'Lord, who is like you?'" (Psalm 35:10). It is not only the mind or heart that is activated during intense prayer, but the body also itself becomes animated, and more intentional.

Maimonides, a medieval philosopher and physician advises that certain practical acts of preparation take place before praying to enhance the experience:

Find a space without too many distractions – create a sacred space for yourself. Minimizing distractions may bring meaningful encounter and maximize our ability to appreciate wonder, to create harmony with God and the community; Fix your clothing so that you look fit to pray; Use proper posture and positioning.

Personally, writing in my journal, during the month before Rosh HaShanah, helps me focus on my core values; how I plan to continue aligning myself to those; Exploring what am I grateful for in my life; and what do I want most for the coming year.

And if you still find yourself struggling with prayers and religious rituals, the contemporary Jewish thinker Blu Greenberg remind us that we do not only perform rituals for spiritual connection with the Divine. Sometimes we do them to promote cohesion of shared memories within a family, a congregation. Sometimes just standing in prayer with others, hearing the voices together, strengthen us -we are not alone. Prayer, like all Jewish life-validates much of who we are and insists that with effort and with some discipline we become even more thoughtful and more caring human beings.

—Dr. Ilana De Laney

## From Lithuania to Middletown: A Genealogical Journey Across Continents

**I**n 2019, a remarkable connection was made between our Shul and a genealogist halfway around the world. Larry Kapenstein, our dedicated Vice President and Treasurer, received an unexpected message from Anne Prozer in Perth, Australia. Anne had spent years researching and documenting the genealogy of the Prozer, Prouser, and Prosser families—different spellings of the same lineage that had spread from Lithuania to South Africa, the United States, and England.

Anne had compiled an extensive family tree, but one name remained a mystery: **Chaya Feiga**. She knew Chaya was part of the Prouser family, but her exact place in the puzzle eluded her. That's when Larry stepped in.

*Continued on back....*

....From Lithuania to Middletown (continued)

With his deep knowledge of our community's history and a passion for preserving it, Larry was able to uncover the missing link. Chaya Feiga, it turns out, was the mother of **Jake Zuck**, who served as the **Shamas and Treasurer of B'nai Jacob for an astounding 90 years**, from 1919 until 2009. Chaya was a Prouser by birth who had married into the Zacks family—completing the final branch of Anne's family tree. She was the wife of B'nai Jacob's 1st president, Lewis Zacks who tragically died in 1919 during the flu pandemic. That's when 6-year-old Jake and his older sister Lena stepped in to take care of the synagogue until their deaths.

This discovery allowed Anne to publish a second edition of her book, *The Prozors of Pumpenai (Lithuania)*, now enriched with the full story of Chaya Feiga and her descendants. In gratitude, Anne sent both the original and updated editions of her book to our synagogue, where they now reside as part of our historical collection. There are many references to Historic B'nai Jacob Synagogue in the books.

But the story doesn't end there. Despite the distance, Anne has become a part of our extended community. To this day,

she joins our **Sabbath services from her home in Perth**, a beautiful reminder of how shared heritage and a little detective work can bring people together across oceans and generations.



## In Memory

**R**oxanne Toser was the granddaughter of Sam Payne, one of the founders of the synagogue. Roxanne served on the schul board for many years and helped with various projects including fundraising efforts to replace the stairs in front of the synagogue.

Roxanne was the foremost authority on non-sports trading cards in the United States and founded the national magazine *Non-Sport Update*, which she ran for twenty-five years.

Roxanne is survived by her husband Marlin; her sons: Barry (Jody) of Vienna, VA; Marc (Cathy) of Carlisle, PA; and Harris of Harrisburg, PA; her granddaughters: Becca and Mia; and her brother, Michael (Barbara) Payne of Ambler, PA.

She will be missed greatly by our Congregation.

## Ida Betty Prouser Orstein/ B'nai Jacob Scholarship Winner Jason Maldonado: A Journey of Resilience and Leadership

**E**very so often a story comes along that reminds us what true grit and compassion look like in action. Jason's path through Middletown Schools has been anything but straight—a winding journey marked by change, challenge, and, ultimately, triumph. Kindergarten to 2nd grade: Middletown, 3rd grade: Lower Dauphin, 4th–5th grade: Back to Middletown, Middle school: Cumberland Valley, 10th grade onward: Returned to Middletown (after living in Louisiana). These moves gave Jason more than a varied transcript—they built adaptability, widened his perspective, and finding community wherever he landed.

Shortly after Jason's return, his family faced a major crisis: his father's sudden health emergency. Overnight, Jason became the primary caregiver in his household. It would have been easy to let stress topple his grades or dim his leadership. Instead, he—Maintained honor-roll grades: Served as Varsity Cheer Captain; Rallied teammates with energy and heart; And managed doctor appointments, medications, and home care. It isn't just multitasking, it's a testament to his empathy, discipline, and determination.

Jason's metamorphosis over these past two years is nothing short of extraordinary. He's developed: Athletic prowess and team-first spirit on the cheer squad; Leadership skills

grounded in genuine care for others; Academic resilience under pressure; Emotional maturity beyond his years. Saying he “overcame the odds”, almost feels understated—he rewrote the odds entirely.



A future in service with graduation on the horizon, Jason has one goal: to enroll at Harrisburg Area Community College and train as a paramedic. It's the perfect fit for someone who's already spent so much time caring for others and thriving in emergencies. We have no doubt he'll bring that same warmth, focus, and calm under pressure to every call he answers.

—Larry Kapenstein

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](mailto:bnai-jacob.org).

### 2025 Executive Committee Officers

President—Bruce Baron

Vice President—Larry Kapenstein

Treasurer—Larry Kapenstein

Assistant Treasurer—Ilana DeLaney

Secretary—Bruce Baron