

Congregation Kehilat Shalom NEWS

A Welcoming Jewish Reconstructionist Community

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Newsletter of the Congregation Kehilat Shalom of Belle Mead, NJ **December 2007** Kislev – Tevet 5768

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President's Message: Miracle of the Oil

The weather has now turned colder. Soon, if not already, we will be able to see our breath outside. Within a few days of receiving this newsletter Menorahs of all kinds will be pulled out of their annual storage place in order to be filled each night of Chanukah with candles.



This year Chanukah is early, putting some distance between itself and Christmas. If asked what their favorite part of Chanukah is, many people might say the time with family, others will say the music, and almost every child will emphatically say the presents. For me, Chanukah is about the Latkes. How can something that tastes so good and totally unhealthy be part of the holiday custom?

Of course Chanukah is not about giving or receiving gifts. It just, well, ended up that way. Chanukah celebrates the miracle of the oil. As the story goes, after the Jews defeated the Syrians, they began re-sanctifying the Temple. According to Jewish history, when the Jews returned to the Temple there was only a one day supply of "pure oil" available for sanctification. Reflecting on this point, later commentators pointed out that in addition to this paltry supply, the Syrians left countless jars of open, defiled oil. Instead of polluting the Temple with this "unholy" oil, the Jews decided to put these jars aside and only use the one day supply of clean oil to light the sacred lamp. Miraculously, their one day supply lasted the eight days and nights and so we celebrate Chanukah for eight days.

Although the word literally means "dedication", some later biblical commentators observed that the word Hanukkah is in fact an acronym for *Heth Neroth WeHalakha KeBeth Hillel* (eight candles and the law according to the House of Hillel). According to the famous biblical story, Rabbi Hillel and Rabbi Shammai were having a debate about the way candles should be placed in the Hanukkah menorah. According to Shammai, there should be eight candles placed in the on the first night, decreasing one candle each day. Hillel on the other hand, took the opposite approach citing that the number of candles should increase each day, Shammai says light eight candles the first night, seven candles the second night, and so on down to one candle on the last night. This way the Menorah shows how many days of Chanukah are still to come and also indicates what happened to the oil in the lamp that was lit in the Temple each night. As the oil burned, there was a little less in the jar.

Hillel's way of doing things, each night it shows how many days of Chanukah have already happened, one on the first night, two on the second night, and so on. It also visually depicts that each night the oil continued to burn, the miracle got bigger and bigger and so the Menorah grows more radiant as the holiday progresses. Both seem logical and you could make a case for doing it either way.

However, we all know who won this debate.

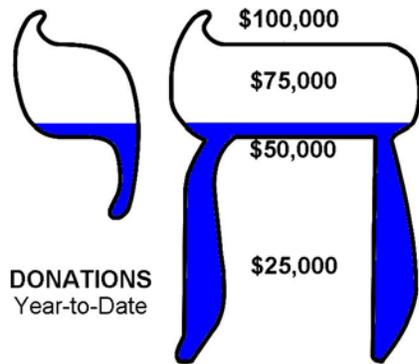
But why do all Jews today follow the system of Hillel? The Talmud gives us an answer. It says, "In all matters of sanctity, we increase, but do not decrease." In other words, we try, in everything we do, to grow in holiness, not to decline which sounds like a good idea to me.

I'd like to personally add that celebrating the "Miracle of the Oil" is best served with greasy Latkes sprinkled with sugar on top. Others may opt for applesauce topping instead. Either way it is much better when you can share the joy of a greasy Latke with friends and family. I hope to see all of you at Congregation Kehilat Shalom's Chanukah party on December 5th. Bring your Menorah to light and bring your appetite. I look forward to saying hello to each of you. In case you can't find me, try looking next to the serving tray of Latkes!

-Matt

CKS Donations

CKS gratefully acknowledges the generosity of our members and friends.



General Donations:

Richard and Sheryl Rosenberg

Barbara Herzog

Gregory and Susan Corsan and family

Stuart and Sherri Kurtz

In honor of their daughter, Nicole Shaum's, upcoming

Bat Mitzvah

Kristina Wise

Thank you to Natalie London

Eric Applegate and Deborah Tesser

In honor of Rabbi Susan and Kate Fridkis

In memory of my grandparents, Murray Tesser,

Lillian Tesser and Leo Klein

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In memory of Nate Bard

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Furniture donation

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High Holiday Donation

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Kol Ahava

Thanks = תודה

Thanks to Eric Weitze and family for their labor and monetary contributions and the CKS cafe for donating their profits toward the beautification of the lobby. Eric secured the supplies and did all the labor involved in turning the closet into the copier alcove plus he helped to underwrite the plumbing costs when the cafe money was not enough to cover all the heating duct work that had to be done.

Committee Happenings

From Genesis to Eco-Kashrut, Part II:

Exploring Judaism's Relationship to the Environment

Eco-Kashrut, Eco-Shabbat, and what it all means for us!

Sunday, December 2, 9:00 to 10:30 am at CKS (during first session Hebrew School)

Presented by Rabbi Falk and sponsored by the Adult Education Committee

This is a continuation of our stimulating and thought-provoking discussion that began on October 21. In this session, we will also discuss kashrut, Shabbat, and other compelling topics related to Judaism and the environment. **RSVP** to Robin in the office, robin@ksnj.org.

Come early for a bagel and coffee. \$3.00 fee per person covers materials fee and cafe for temple members. \$5 for non-members.

Beginner's Level Hebrew

A Beginner's Level Hebrew Class will start **Sunday, December 9 at 9:00 am**, during early session Hebrew School. The class will meet for approximately 7 sessions (but not on Sundays when other adult education programs are already scheduled).

If you would like to register contact Meryl Bisberg or the synagogue office.

The synagogue is updating our *Mishebevrach* list. Please call or email Robin in the office (908-359-0420 or robin@ksnj.org) with the names of any people whose names you would like to be read during our regular prayers for healing. Please give us names, even if those people have been on the list in the past, if they should still be on the list now. In addition, let us know when a person's name should be removed from the list. Thank you.

Volunteers needed for CKS gift shop. Gift shop open 10-11 am every Sunday when Hebrew school is in session.

Celebrate at the CKS Hanukkah Party

DATE: Wednesday, December 5

TIME: 6:00 pm

Catered dinner by Lox, Stock and Deli

\$15 per person

Children 13 and under free

Singing, games...

Bring your menorah and we will all light candles together.

CKS Book Club

December 3 at 7:30. We will hold this book club meeting at CKS.

The book is "**Suite Francais**" by Irene Nemirovsky

If you have read it...come talk about it. If you have not read it yet...there's plenty of time to read it !!

Please bring any suggestions for the 2008 book club meetings to the next meeting.

Message from the Rabbi

A SEASON OF DARKNESS, A FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS



Did you know that in the days of the early rabbis there was a debate between Rabbi Shammai and Rabbi Hillel about how to light the Chanukah candles? Shammai thought the candles should represent the days of Chanukah still to come. He thus recommended that *eight* candles should be lit on the first night, and then the number should be *reduced* by one each night. Hillel, on the other hand, thought the candles should represent the days of Chanukah already fulfilled. Therefore, Hillel believed that *one* candle should be lit the first night, and then the number should be *increased* by one each night.

Poor Shammai! He could never win an argument. Our tradition ruled, as it did on almost every occasion, in favor of Hillel. Shammai's consolation was that his practice will be put into place when the Messiah comes.

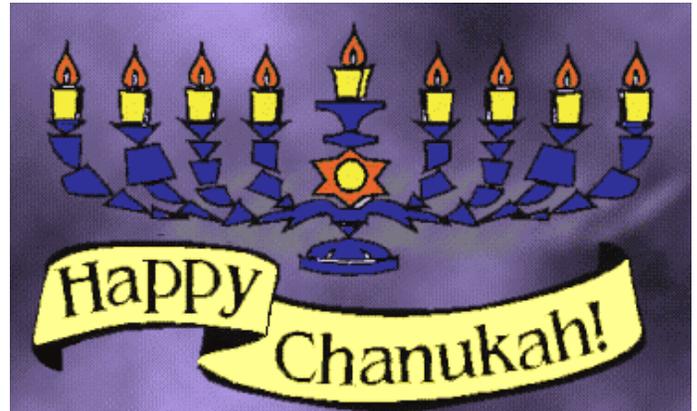
Why would this be the case? Why would we light candles differently, *decreasing* light, after the Messiah comes? Rabbi Arthur Waskow, a leader in the Jewish Renewal Movement, speculates that given that Chanukah arrives on or near the winter solstice, at the turning point from darkness to light, the normal human fear of darkness is best allayed by *increasing* light. After the Messiah comes, however, when we will follow Shammai's practice of decreasing the number of candles, human beings will be better able to tolerate – and even to celebrate – the Divine Mystery that resides in darkness.

Chanukah falls during the darkest, coldest part of the year. At this time, we naturally seek out sources of light and warmth to sustain us. It is during this season that Christians, too, through the lighting of the Christmas tree, as well as other cultures and religions, celebrate festivals of light. The need for light in times of darkness is not only a physical need, but also an emotional and spiritual one. This is the season to reflect on the lights that burn in our lives – the relationships and activities that illuminate our spirits. Darkness is an inevitable part of life's journey; none of us will escape the experience of heartbreak and suffering. What keeps us going are the glimpses of light we encounter along the way.

During this season of darkness, during this season of festivals of lights, may each of us be blessed to find the light of love, hope, and connection shining brightly in our lives, inspiring us in our work and in our holiday celebrations.

B'shalom uvracha,

Rabbi Susan



Kindercapers

Now in its 14th full year, the JCCBM's non-sectarian pre-school for children 2-1/2 to 5 years old, offers a unique atmosphere, giving children a chance to explore, create, and, most importantly, learn to think and reason.

For more information, call 908 359-0160.



The CKS Gift Shop
is open each Sunday
10 am - 11 am



Questions?

Susan Waskow 609-333-1113
or Harlene Rosenberg 908-874-8283



Tree of Life

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Hebrew School Happenings



December 2007

- 2 Sunday music cooking
- 5 Wednesday music cooking
- 9 Sunday music
- 12 Wednesday art- Mock Shabbat 5-6
- 16 Sunday art- Mock Shabbat K-4
- 19 Wednesday music
- 23 Sunday No Class- Winter break
- 26 Wednesday No Class- Winter Break
- 30 Sunday No Class Winter Break



Robynn's sixth grade classes were given the assignment to "Stump the Rabbi". They were asked to look in the book of Beraisheet or look on the internet and find out about Rosh Chodesh. They were then charged to try to find a question that would be difficult for the Rabbi to answer. Rabbi Susan was a great sport. Students did great research and put forth a hundred percent effort.

Mazel Tov to the winners of the "Stump the Rabbi" Game!
Dylan Carson, Max Melnick, Scott Papsin, Nancy Weiss, Jon Kaufman, & Sophie Haeuber.

Sixth graders also finished reading and discussing a book about the Holocaust. The class was divided into two groups and each group read a different book, answered questions about each reading assignment, and then engaged in a group book discussion. Thanks to all of the parent and teen volunteers who supported this program: Fran Varga and Harry Waskow. Kol Hakavod to Corey Cochran who took the initiative to contact the author of one of the books to express his enjoyment of the story and the manner in which it was told.



We enjoyed guest teachers, Devora Haeber and Eli Ungar during Mr. Hughes' absence.

We celebrated Mock Shabbat again this month and the Rabbi continued to teach us about Erev Shabbat and Havdalah. Many thanks to the Spinrads and the Rubinsteins for providing us with Challah and grape juice which added enjoyment and sweetness to our learning.



Josh taught us the difference between Parve and Dairy Kugel, when to make each and how to make each recipe. If you would like the recipe, it is hanging on the Hebrew School bulletin board and is available on the Congregation's website.

With the help of the parents, tutors and Hebrew teachers, we have seen an overall improvement in Hebrew reading and language skills. Please continue to have students read during commercials and practice online. Hope that everyone enjoys the community Chanukah Party on December 5th from 6PM to 8PM!
Chag Orim Sameach! *Dori*

Shabbat Superstars next page!



Hebrew High School/Youth Groups

HEBREW HIGH SCHOOL



The Hebrew High School was in full swing in the month of October. Wednesday's class was alive with discussion. Rabbi Susan led an extremely informative discussion about Reconstructionism and how it is different from other denominations.

Susan Waskow spent some time exploring the question, "If you could live your life a year longer, but know that by living your life longer, someone else would die sooner, would you?" The class touched on some great topics for further conversations, such as:

1. Is it better to be clever or is it better to be kind? Which trait do you value more in others? Which trait does society value more? Which trait do you want more in yourself? Which trait do your parents see in you? Which would you like them to see?
2. Time travel/science fiction/fantasy
3. What are the consequences of one's actions - for example, the people who dropped the bomb in WWII did not know what they had done until afterwards.
4. Intelligent design.

Thank you Susan Waskow for leading the second hour of discussion each week in the Wednesday class.

Thursday's Hebrew High School class was lead by Rabbi Susan for the first hour and congregant volunteers for the second. The volunteers for mid-October to mid-November were Susan Krisiloff and Richard Cohen. All sessions were very well received! The students are thrilled to have the opportunity to discuss important issues with the rabbi and adult congregants. Susan Krisiloff lead two discussions about medical ethics. In her first hour long discussion she explored on the topic of medical morals. The class discussed abortion, malpractice, patient confidentiality, and more. Susan's second visit to Thursday's class was shared with Rabbi Susan. Together the two adults lead a two hour discussion about death. Such questions as: "When does life start? When does it end?" were discussed from a medical and religious viewpoint. Further discussion questions were: "What does Judaism say about assisted suicide?", "Does Judaism allow you to remove a feeding tube?", and "What is considered a life line?" Thank you, Susan, for sharing your time and expertise with the Hebrew High School students.

Richard Cohen shared his knowledge about law with Thursday's class. He spoke about the moral dilemmas that arise in law and how Judaism can help you guide your decisions and help you form a moral code. Richard also spoke about Jewish law. Thank you, Richard. The students appreciate your coming to their class to talk with them.

Upcoming guest congregants:

Judy Turkheimer will lead two hours discussions on the transition from home to college and more on November 29 and December 13.

Susan Krisiloff will be returning on December 20 to discuss medical ethics.

Shalom,

Karen Fridkis, Hebrew High School chair

REGIONAL RECONSTRUCTIONIST YOUTH GROUP

In November the regional youth group held two events. On Sunday, November 18 the group met in Princeton at Small World Cafe and then carpooled to North Brunswick to see the New Jersey premiere of "The Year My Parents Went on Vacation" at the Jewish Film Festival. The film is a coming of age tale featuring a twelve-year-old boy, Mauro, who is caught between political upheavals and the excitement of the World Cup in the summer of 1970 in Brazil. Mauro's parents are forced to flee for their safety, leaving their only child on the doorstep of his Jewish grandfather. The movie was followed by a discussion and dinner at a local restaurant. For their second event in November, the regional group played laser tag at Laser Park in Princeton Junction.

SAVE THE DATE: December 14 - 16, 2007 - The Eastern Youth Kallah. Waynesboro, PA.

This week-end retreat is a favorite of all those who were able to attend last year. Please contact Steve or Dov for more information. If you are interested, please contact them at your earliest convenience. They would like to get a solid estimate ASAP.

SAVE THE DATE: Saturday, January 19, 2007 - TBA

Please check your email for more information from youth advisors, Steve (smarcus@princeton.edu) or Dov (dbkaufma@princeton.edu) about upcoming regional events.

Shalom, *Karen Fridkis*, youth group chair

CKS YOUTH GROUP

Back by popular demand - the shul-in!

SAVE THE DATE: Saturday evening December 22 to Sunday morning, December 23.

Come join the fun at our annual CKS youth group shul-in. This event is open to all post b'nai mitzvah teens. The shul-in will begin with dinner on Saturday evening and end with a bagel breakfast on Sunday morning. We need a chaperone or two for the night. Please let me know if you are available to help. Look for more details in the weekly email newsletter.

Karen Fridkis, youth group chair

Shabbat Superstars:

Sept 28	Cory Cochran	Joshua Goldhammer
Cory Cochran	Jeremy Orlando	Scott Weitze
Jason Rosenthal	October 12	Jack Weitze
Allison Rosenthal	Harry Waslow	Jason Rosenthal
Ben Eckerdt	Dorothy Waskow	Joanna Javeline
Jackie Sokol	Rachel Underberg-Davis	Melissa Javeline
Jacob Fischman	October 19	Jason Weitze
Ben Applegate	Harry Waskow	Ben Applegate
Rachel Speilholz	October 26	Rachel Spinrad
Harry Waskow	Jason Weitze	Allison Rosenthal
Ben Weinstein	October 19	Jacob Fischman
Dorothy Waskow	Harry Waskow	Jeremy Orlando
October 5	November 2	Cory Cochran
Jason Weitze	Dorothy Waskow	Zach Anderson
Marc Weitze	Harry Waskow	Kelly Anderson
Scott Weitze	Rachel Underberg-Davis	
Jack Weitze	Ian Murphy	



Mark your calendar for upcoming Jewish LIFE programs this Winter! Eva Mekler, author of *The Polish Woman*, will be the featured speaker on Thursday, December 14 at 7 p.m. *The Polish Woman* is a meticulous, raw study of the uneasy relationship between Catholic and Jewish Poles. The fee for the evening is \$10/Jewish LIFE Member and \$15/Guest. January programs include Dr. Steven M. Cohen on Wednesday, January 16 at 1 p.m. The topic will be *American Jews: Implications for Jewish Education and Community-Building*. Dr. Cohen, a sociologist of American Jewry, was appointed Research Professor of Jewish Social Policy at HUC-JIR/New York. The program fee includes a bagel lunch: \$10/Jewish LIFE Member and \$15/Guest. Amy-Jill Levine, author of *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus*, will speak on Thursday, January 31 at 7 p.m. Ms. Levine is the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Professor of New Testament Studies at Vanderbilt University Divinity School, Department of Religious Studies, and Graduate Department of Religion. The fee for Ms. Levine's talk is \$10/Jewish LIFE Member and \$15/Guest. The above programs will be held at the Shimon and Sara Birnbaum JCC in Bridgewater. Additional details on Jewish LIFE programs -- including synagogue courses -- are included in the Jewish LIFE brochure posted at www.sbjcc.org. Copies of the brochure can be picked up in the synagogue office.

Ohr Tikvah Jewish Healing Center

Somerset * Hunterdon * Warren Counties

Upcoming Events...



Healing Waters: The Mikveh as a Source of Renewal for Men and Women

Part II: Field Trip to a Mikveh!

When: Sunday, Dec. 2, 2007, from 9:00 to 12 noon

Where: Mikveh at Shir Ami, Newton, PA

Fee: \$10

Have you ever wondered what a mikveh looks like and wished you could visit one? Ohr Tikvah invites you join us as we tour a mikveh at Shir Ami, a reform synagogue in Bucks County. We will meet at the JCC, Talamini Road, Bridgewater, at 9 AM and take a mini-bus to Newton. On the way, Rabbi Robin Nafshi will provide an overview of the ancient Jewish ritual of immersion in sacred water and share with us new ways in which men and women are adopting this ancient practice to mark the birth of a child or grandchild, or a miscarriage; entering parenthood; beginning or ending a relationship; recovering from illness or completion of treatments; starting a new job; or moving into retirement.

Rabbi Nafshi was ordained by Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion in 2005. Her rabbinical thesis explored the ancient Jewish ritual of hand washing and developed a general interest in Judaism's sacred uses of water. Seats are limited on the mini-bus, so please call early to reserve a place.

Hebrew Chanting Circle

When: Monday, Dec. 3, 2007, 7:30 to 9:00 PM

Where: Temple Sholom, 594 N. Bridge St, Bridgewater

Fee: \$5.00 donation

We invite you to take a break from the busy holiday season and join our chant circle as we prepare for Chanukah, honoring the darkness and celebrating the light within. Repetition of a sacred phrase can clear the mind of clutter and connect us to each other and to the divine. Experience the power and potential of this pathway to a sense of peace and wholeness. No prior knowledge of singing, chanting, or Hebrew language is necessary.

These Are the Obligations without Measure: *Bikkur Cholim* - Visiting the Sick

When: Sunday, Dec. 9, 2007, from 9:00 to 10:30 AM

Where: Temple Beth El, 67 Route 206 S., Hillsborough

Fee: \$ 5 donation

In the Jewish tradition, *Bikkur cholim*, "visiting the sick," is a mitzvah, or good deed; it is an opportunity to express both responsibility and loving-kindness. Visiting someone who is ill or isolated brings comfort, reinforces connections to life, and supports and strengthens our community. Rabbi Arnie Gluck, spiritual leader of Temple Beth-El, will give a teaching and engage us in a discussion to broaden our perspective and explore how we can enhance our lives by reaching out to others.

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ROBERT "BOB" FASS
SALES REPRESENTATIVE

DECEMBER 2007

December 2007
21 Kislev 5768 - 22 Tevet 5768

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 21 Kislev Vayeshev: Gen. 37.1-37.36 Amos 2.6-3.8. Harry Waskow Bar Mitzvah - 4:00 PM
2 22 Kislev Hebrew School 9:00 - 10:30 am - Adult Education: Eco Kashrut and Eco-Shabbat, Part II	3 23 Kislev	4 24 Kislev EREV HANUKKAH	5 25 Kislev HANUKKAH I Num. 7.1-17. Hebrew School Hebrew High School 5-7 pm 6:00 pm - Family Dinner and Chanukah Party	6 26 Kislev HANUKKAH II Num. 7.18-29. Hebrew High School 5-7 pm	7 27 Kislev HANUKKAH III Num. 7.24-35. Family Shabbat Services - 7:00 pm 5:45 pm - Shabbat Dinner, 5th, 6th and 7th grades	8 28 Kislev HANUKKAH IV Miketz: Gen. 41.1-41.57 Num. 7.30-41. Zechariah 2.14-4.7. Daniel Klingler Bar Mitzvah - 1:00 PM
9 29 Kislev HANUKKAH V Num. 7.36-47. Hebrew School 9:00 am - Adult Education: Beginner's Hebrew Class	10 1 Tevet ROSH HODESH - HANUKKAH VI Num. 7.42-47. Rosh Hodesh Num. 28.1-15. Women's Spirituality Group - 7:30 PM	11 2 Tevet HANUKKAH VII Num. 7.48-59. 7:30 pm - Board of Trustees Meeting	12 3 Tevet HANUKKAH VIII Num. 7.54-8.4. Hebrew School Hebrew High School 5-7 pm	13 4 Tevet Hebrew High School 5-7 pm	14 5 Tevet Shabbat Services - 7:45 pm	15 6 Tevet Vayigash: Gen. 44.18-45.18 Ezekiel 37.15-28. Rachel Spielholz Bat Mitzvah - 4:00 PM 7:00 pm - Family BINGO Night
16 7 Tevet Hebrew School 9:00 am - Adult Education: Beginner's Hebrew Class	17 8 Tevet	18 9 Tevet	19 10 Tevet FAST OF TEVET 10 Morning: Exo. 32.11-14, 34.1- 10. Afternoon: Exo. 32.11-14, 34.1-10. Afternoon: Isaiah 55.6-56.8. Hebrew School Hebrew High School 5-7 pm	20 11 Tevet Hebrew High School 5-7 pm	21 12 Tevet Shabbat Services - 7:00 pm	22 13 Tevet Vayehi: Gen. 47.28-50.26. I Kings 2.1-12. Mari Skoutchi Bat Mitzvah - 9:30 AM SHUL-IN! 6:00 pm
23 14 Tevet NO HEBREW SCHOOL	24 15 Tevet	25 16 Tevet	26 17 Tevet NO HEBREW SCHOOL NO HEBREW HIGH SCHOOL	27 18 Tevet NO HEBREW HIGH SCHOOL	28 19 Tevet Shabbat Services - 7:45 pm	29 20 Tevet Shemot: Exo. 1.1-2.22. Jeremiah 1.1 - 1.19
30 21 Tevet NO HEBREW SCHOOL	31 22 Tevet					

[1]Candle Lighting, §Observance End, Printed November 15, 2007/5 Kislev 5768 for Belle Mead, NJ USA]

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Life Cycle (Caring for each other)	Sheryl Rosenberg- 908-253-7049 swellcourt@verizon.net
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Deadline for next newsletter: **December 15th**