

## **WORDS OF TORAH - FROM THE RABBIS:**

### ***What is Diversity? Working Towards A Time When All Will Be Treated The Same***

We are not there yet! Rabbi Jay, Rabbi Jenn and the staff of Congregation Simchat HaLev is committed to the vision of welcoming all people equally under our tent. To do this, we must all understand the definition of diversity and how it relates to synagogue life. We will continue to pray and will work hard together to bring about a time when all in our midst will embrace diversity regardless of race, culture, gender, ethnic background, social status, sexual preference, language spoken, mental capacity, learning style and physical ability. And then, diversity will no longer need a definition. It begins with each and every one of us.

### ***What is Jewish Renewal?***

Jewish Renewal is GD centered and grounded in traditional Judaism and ritual. Inspired by the work of Rabbi Zalman Schacter-Shalomi, z"l, the movement's founder, Jewish Renewal Clergy are committed to provide their congregants with an experience of a Judaism that is alive, engaging, spiritual, creative, accessible, relevant and joyous.

Jewish Renewal acts to fully include all Jews regardless of the origin of their Jewishness or level of religious practice; and to respect all people regardless of race, culture, gender, ethnic background, social status or sexual preference.

It is the hope in Jewish Renewal that as congregants are engaged and renewed, they will spread kindness and love, promote justice and freedom, care for all life, the earth and the world that GD has created.

In the Jewish renewal movement there are people who also identify as orthodox, Torah observant, observant, reform, conservative, reconstructionist, neo-chasidic, liberal, secular, trans/post denominational (a combination of one or more of those descriptions), perhaps align themselves with a denomination, and others who feel a closeness to Judaism but are not technically Jewish.

### ***Elul - □ The Month of Introspection: Start a New Tradition.***

Start a new tradition: It's an easy one that will help you in your every day life. The month leading up to the Jewish New Year is called the period of Chesbon HaNefesh, Chesbon HaNefesh means examining our Soul.

As we begin to prepare for the Jewish New Year, why not begin to examine your soul. Start journaling with GD. All it takes is a marble notebook, and a few minutes before you go to sleep.

For those that wrote "Dear Diary...", you are already a step ahead of the game. Think about the gifts that you have, the things you long for, the day. Was it a day that you felt good about, a day that you could do something differently. Dialoguing with GD may be difficult at first for some, however with faith and practice you will begin to be able to get closer to GD. Start today. GD is listening. Begin the conversation.

## ***Family Time Creating Sacred Memories***

When was the last time you sat with your children around the kitchen table, had dinner and spent significant time together? When was the last time you engaged your children in helping you cook a meal or bake a special treat? Family fun is not expensive. In these days of financial uncertainty and stress, let us engage our family in the family experience that we may have had as a child or those that our parents, grandparents and their parents experienced. Let us teach our children that it is not only going to the mall, shopping and using the credit card that makes us happy. We all get hooked, even the Rabbi does. There are so many things that we can do that will create life-long memories. Memories that will last far longer than the newness of the purchase that we had to have. Family fun can include preparing a meal, together, baking cookies, playing pictionary or charades, scrabble or monopoly. What about all those pictures that you took or have in your possession, why not look at them as a family, re-tell the stories, make a memory book or a collage. Something we have done as a family each year in Israel is to create a fun video. We all have video cameras, set the camera on a tripod, plan a skit as a family and have fun acting it out. I am confident that you will laugh, have fun but most importantly capture the closeness with each other that will create that sacred memory that will last forever. Take the time to stop and to be. In this state of economy and in a world filled with general sadness, create sacred moments together, its worth it, its fun and its free. Amen.

## ***Family Time: Surviving ☐ Power Outages, Cable, Internet and Phone Issues***

Thank you Gd and All Those that helped to restore power, cable, internet and phone. Many of us were without these essentials for an extended period of time. Many of us sustained damages, financial expenditures and great annoyances. However each one of us Thank you Gd survived. For some spending time as a family was a welcomed change. Does it take an earthquake? A Hurricane? A Tropical storm? A power outage. Think about how you survived. It was with the support and presence of family members, friends, and devoted workers. Prior to this, how often were you grateful for power, cable, internet and phone. It takes a lot of dedicated people to provide what we take for granted. It's also kind of like life, when everything is going smoothly, we expect it to continue and we take it for granted that it will just happen. When it doesn't... Oy!!!! We get angry, we lose faith, we get frustrated. Maybe what we can learn from this is that we are blessed to have the wonderful things and people in our life. Take a moment to Thank Gd for the blessings in your life. Amen.

## ***Will The REAL JEW sit down please... ☐ ☐ 11-12-10***

Today is the two year anniversary of the death of Jenn's mother. A sad day. As a Jew, Jenn decided to bring kavod - respect and honor to her mom by reciting Kaddish in a minyan of Jews. A practice traditional to observant Jews and one practiced by many liberal Jews as well. Why the title: Will the REAL JEW sit down please? Here is what happened this morning,

according to Jenn "I went to a local Jewish Center for the 7am minyan. Before choosing a shul to go to I did some research. Their website said egalitarian, women on the bima, women wearing tallit and kipot. This, so I thought is a place that I could feel welcome and give honor to my mother. I arrived at the Jewish Center at 6:45am, tallit in hand, and was greeted at the door by an older man (who turned out to be the stand in Chazzan). I told him I was there for minyan and he said follow me. We went to the basement where their chapel was. I went in and sat down. The Rabbi came over and said I assume you are here to say Kaddish. I told him I was there for that reason and he walked away. I put on my tallit and a man in the row across from me said women don't wear tallisim here, you need to take it off. I was trying to contain myself and was successful though I didn't want to be, after all I thought I was in shul and kavod was best. The Rabbi signaled the Chazzan to begin and as he got up to begin another man came from the back of the chapel and said, "McCarthy we start on page 18." Now, I am not sure if it was a Jew non-Jew remark or a gender remark, but it was absolutely unacceptable! How are they to know my religious background? So we began to daven and I was unable to focus for at least 15 mins of the 30. I went there to fulfill a mitzvot, to honor my mom, and to daven, to be treated to poorly left such a terrible taste in my mouth. Today, I too have a better understanding why many Jews are turned off to synagogue life." How can we as Jews treat our brothers and sisters this way? It is a shanda, a pity and a sin. Where is the fulfillment of the commandment of welcoming the stranger or being with someone in their grief and sadness? How can we falsely advertise a sense of inclusion and welcoming and then treat people as other? Was Jenn treated this way for she was not a member of the "boys" club? This Shul is not an orthodox community. This is not the Kotel where we know that women are neither treated as equal or with respect. This is a suburban egalitarian conservative congregation. Would it have been different if there were other women members present? Would Jenn have been treated differently if the Rabbi knew that she was my daughter? It is very sad. How can the Rabbi and his flock be so insensitive? Where is the act of kindness? I am deeply saddened. Jenn continues "I would have been much better off asking those I love and those that love me to meet this morning before their busy lives began to be part of the minyan, which I could've led myself! Next year that is what I will do. The day is sad already, the last thing I needed was to be ill-treated first thing this morning." This will not happen again. In Carolyn's memory, we begin a new tradition at Congregation Simchat HaLev today We will create group of Jews that will be available for those who want to recite Kaddish in a minyan for a loved one on the anniversary of their loved one's death. We must be there and take care of our own and practice inclusion for we will put into action the words " Simchat HaLev is a welcoming, inclusive, and nurturing congregation; a sacred community traveling the journey of life. Simchat HaLev - a house of prayer and learning, infused with tradition for all people. There will never be "Will the REAL JEW sit down please" at Congregation Simchat HaLev for we From Isaiah 56:7, have heard and still hear the words "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people. ***In***

### ***response to wearing purple on Spirit Day 10-20-10***

***A mother of a Student in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade of Congregation Simchat HaLev writes:*** So I wanted to tell you what happened today. I had Mark and Jack wear purple today and we talked about that it was in support of standing up to bullying and showing people that we do not support others being mean to anyone etc. Next thing I know Mark says to me I want to go see

my friend Richard right away because I need to talk to him. I asked what was going on and he told me he needed to go convince him one more time to tell an adult about what was happening to him at school or that he was going to tell. It seems that there is another boy that teases and picks on his friend Richard and the other day he tried to spill milk on him. Mark has been encouraging him to tell someone. Well today because of you and this campaign Mark told me and of course I told Richard's mom. Mark went over there today after school and Richard's mom commented on his purple shirt which lead them into a conversation about bullying and Mark made Richard tell his mom. I am overwhelmed with pride that Mark is such a good friend and I am so thankful to you that such a simple thing as wearing purple today helped a little boy share with his mom about what is happening to him. they were able to talk strategies about how to deal with it and open the dialogue. It's a beautiful thing so thank you!

*(The names have been changed to maintain confidentiality)*

**Rabbi Jay**

**writes: Yasher Koach to Mark and to you. I am so proud of Mark. Thank you for sharing!**  
May there be many more Mark's in the world. Amen.