

**POET
BILLY COLLINS**



**Monday, June 4
7pm**

*At Jackson Hole
High School*

The Jackson Kol



NEWSLETTER FOR THE JACKSON HOLE JEWISH COMMUNITY • MAY 2007

Letter *from the Presidents*

Thanks to Rabbi Mike Comins, Chazan Judd Grossman and the Bet Sefer ensemble cast for a fabulous Pesach service. More than 100 people attended the second night Seder at Snow King. And thanks to Sandy Ress and Susan Foster for hosting Rabbi Mike's book signing. It was an enjoyable evening listening to the Rabbi read from his newly published book, "A Wild Faith, Jewish Ways into Wilderness, Wilderness Ways into Judaism."

Along with the glorious spring weather we will be celebrating a simchah this month. Brandon Kapelow will be called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah on the 19th. Dan Gordon will be flying in from Houston to lead a Friday night Shabbat service. Brandon will be called to the Torah on Saturday morning. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to join with Brandon and his family in this milestone event.

Your officers will be heading to Park City the second weekend in May on a fact-finding mission to dis-

cuss affiliation, organization and Rabbi search, among other topics with Temple Har Shalom's board of directors. We have been encouraged by Rabbis Comins and Weider to consider the advantages of affiliation for our community. We welcome your input - questions and comments - before our meeting in Park City and will share the information from our visit in next month's newsletter.

A committee is in the final stages of compiling a questionnaire to survey our members. We are planning to complete the process and have the results within the next few months. We urge you to please take the time to answer the questions in order to better guide us in our efforts as we move forward.

Finally the JHJC is proud to be a major cosponsor with the Teton County Library foundation of poet laureate Billy Collins on June 4. Check out local newspapers for details.

*B'Shalom
Lisa and Dava*

Directors 2007

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Bar Mitzvah of Brandon Kapelow

2ND OF SIVAN 5767

The Kapelow family invites all to attend the service at 9:30 a.m. at St. John's Episcopal Church. A luncheon will follow in the Fellowship Hall. The JHJC extends warmest wishes to Brandon as he celebrates this milestone.

CALENDAR

May 2: Board Meeting. 5:15 p.m.
Downstairs conference room, 480 S.
Cache.

May 18: Shabbat service with Dan Gordon and Chazan Judd Grossman 6 p.m. at St. John's Episcopal Church. Oneg to follow in honor of Brandon Kapelow.

May 19: Bar Mitzvah of Brandon Kapelow. 9:30 a.m. at St. John's Episcopal Church. Luncheon to follow in the fellowship hall. All are welcome.

May 28: Last day of the **Dead Sea Scrolls Exhibit** at the Museum of Idaho in Idaho Falls.

June 4: US Poet Laureate Billy Collins will give a reading and commentary at the Jackson Hole High School at 7pm. Tickets are free, available May 14th at the Teton County Library (limit of two tickets per library card holder).

June 15: Shabbat with Rabbi Jerry Weider and Chazzan Judd Grossman.

June 16: Torah Study and Havdalah with Rabbi Jerry Weider.

June 24: Holocaust workshop for educators.

June 29: Challah Making and Potluck Shabbat Dinner. Learn to make challah and then gather with the community for Shabbat dinner. 6:30 p.m. at the home of Shawn and Mike Daus. Contact the office for more information and directions 734-1999 or info@jhjewishcommunity.org

BOWLING at the Elk's



The gang enjoys an evening of bowling at the Elk's Lodge during the off-season in Jackson Hole.

Bet Sefer Chocolate Seder

Arthur Blue nibbles a piece of chocolate covered matzah at the Bet Sefer Chocolate Seder. On April 5, the children and teachers of Bet Sefer sat together for a different kind of Passover Seder and asked, "On all other nights we eat chocolate chip cookies and chocolate covered matzah. Why on this night do we only eat chocolate matzah?"



Torah Trek Opportunity

Rabbi Mike Comins will be in Jackson on personal business in June. He will be available to lead a Torah Trek (www.torahtrek.com/) anytime from June 18-20. If you are interested in participating in a Torah Trek, or if you would like more information, please contact the office 734.1999 or info@jhjewishcommunity.org. The cost of participating will be dependent on the number of participants.

TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST: A Conference for Classroom teachers

June 24
@ the National
Wildlife Museum

This workshop, designed specifically for secondary teachers and pre-service teachers, will increase knowledge of the Holocaust, explore the content, methodologies, and rationales for teaching the history of the Holocaust, and examine issues associated with this history. Special emphasis will be placed on using technology to teach about the Holocaust.

Applications can be submitted online at <http://www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators/>
Online application deadline: June 8, 2007

Sponsored by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Wyoming State Department of Education, and the Jackson Hole Jewish Community.

RABBI COMNIS' COMMENTS



Shavuot is almost upon us, the holiday that commemorates the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai. It is the holiday of revelation. In other words, it's problem time. Everyone can

get behind celebrating freedom (Pesach), but revelation is divisive in Jewish life. The tradition says, and Orthodox Jews maintain, that God spoke the Torah to Moses word for word, and this is the same Torah we have today. Liberal Jews (Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist) recognize that the Torah was recorded by many people over time, and finally edited into the book we read each Shabbat. Revelation marks a wide chasm in the Jewish people today and no one gets a free pass. Orthodox Jews have to deny the strong evidence of the Torah's human history. (See Richard Elliot Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible and The Bible With Sources Revealed*.) Liberal Jews have to ask themselves, if God didn't "give" the Torah, why should we grant it authority over our lives? Are the Ten Commandments divine wisdom or, as atheists claim, human invention?

As a liberal rabbi, I'd like to comment on the latter. Enlightenment science and philosophy, and its current exponents (Richard Dawkins, author of *The God Delusion*, and Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation*), bring powerful arguments against religious fundamentalism and a literal reading of the Bible. I agree with most of them. But when it comes to grounding our moral beliefs, secular liberals don't do much better. For several hundred years now, modern philosophy has tried to prove the truth, or at least, the practical truth, of our basic moral values. But the project hasn't succeeded and now they no longer try, one of the reasons academics believe we have moved from the Modern to the Postmodern period.

Here's the problem. The core Enlightenment belief is that morality lives solely in human brains. People project their beliefs on a morally-neutral world, and since cultures and people change, morality changes. So one day slavery is OK and the next day it isn't. Morality depends in the whims of human subjectivity. This is partly right, but it is also partly wrong. Secular philosophy can't account for the striking moments of moral clarity that change our lives.

Take Huck Finn as a (fictional but true) example. When he meets the runaway slave Jim, everything that he has been taught, and hence projects on the world, tells him to turn Jim in. But his actual interaction with Jim breaks through his preconceptions and prejudices about black people. He has had, in the terms of Jewish thinker Martin Buber, an I-Thou encounter with Jim. Huck recognizes what our tradition calls the "image" of God, the "divine spark," in each of us. Jim's humanity wins out.

We do project our values on the world, but if that were the whole story, we couldn't account for Huck's moral conversion. It wasn't an intellectual decision. In looking into Jim's eyes, the sacred character of human life was revealed to him. According to Buber, this is how we meet God, not in our minds, but when we truly experience the world around us. That's why Buber also said that we might have I-Thou encounters with animals, and even trees. (You can imagine why I identify with him!)

We know the sacred character of this world through direct perception, and we can perceive the sacred anywhere, anytime. When we take the next step and write down what has been revealed to us, when we structure our society according to the discernment of holiness in the world, the result is Torah. The process continues now as it did then.

Morality isn't the product of God alone or humans alone, but the relationship between us. On Shavuot, we celebrate the Covenant, the divine/human partnership, and the power of revelation in our lives.

TID BITS

Camp Registration

Registration for our annual two week summer day camp has begun. If you would like to sign your child(ren) up, please contact Andrea Mazer for registration materials at 734-1999 or info@jhjewishcommunity.org.

JHJC Cookbooks

Don't forget to send your yummy recipes to phyllis@cogitech.com for our cookbook fundraiser for Bet Sefer. If you'd rather submit them in writing, that's fine too. Send them to Phyllis Turtle, PO Box 4937 Jackson, WY 83001.

Many Thanks:

• To **Stephen Abrams, Al Zuckerman, Russell Scott, Susan Foster**, and everyone else who helped make our community Seder a success.
• **Susan Foster** and **Sandy Ress** for hosting Rabbi Mike's book signing event at their home.

Mazel Tov:

• **Brandon Kapelow** and his family on becoming a Bar Mitzvah.
• **Eve, Hannah and Amelia Scofield** on moving into their new house.

JHJC Wish List

- Sponsor our monthly Newsletter: \$100 (per month)
- JHJC personalized stationary: \$150
- Host a Rabbi at your home or guest house for a weekend that we have a Shabbat service

Host the Rabbi for High Holidays

We are looking for a guest house for Rabbi Fraizen and his wife who are coming from Hollywood, FL for High Holidays 5768. If you have space available at your home, and would like to host the Rabbi during this very important time of year, please let us know. The mitzvah of hosting the Rabbi would be a great economic help to the JHJC.



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The office is at 480 S. Cache St.,
Suite 6, Jackson Hole
Office hours are by arrangement.



The Jackson Hole Jewish Community is committed to creating a diverse Jewish presence that unites us, celebrates our faith and promotes tolerance in the greater Jackson community. We strive to engage all families and individuals in spirituality, education, tzedakah and the joys of Jewish life.

BILLY COLLINS

U.S. Poet Laureate Billy Collins to Visit Jackson Hole

On June 4 at 7 p.m. at the Jackson Hole High School U.S. Poet Laureate Billy Collins will give a one hour poetry reading followed by a question and answer session and book signing. The tickets are free, and will be available at the Teton County Library beginning May 14 (limit of two tickets per library card holder).

Copies of Billy's best-selling books will be available at various businesses around town beginning May 7. You may pick up one of



Billy's books, read it for a bit, and return it to any location that is participating in this program. Billy's top selling books include "The Trouble with Poetry", "Nine Horses", and "Sailing Alone Around the Room".

The Jackson Hole Jewish Community is a proud sponsor of this event.