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of the Jewish Federation
Lee & Charlotte Counties
wish you a
Chag Pesach Sameach



L'CHAYIM

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April 2026 / 5786

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Volume 48, Number 8

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- 9 Community Focus
- 14 Jewish Interest
- 16 Commentary
- 17 Organizations
- 21 Focus on Youth
- 23 From the Bimah
- 27 Temple News
- 31 Community Directory

A Silent Threat Facing Seniors
Learn how to spot scams and protect older adults from financial harm. p. 3



Women's Health in Focus
Community symposium empowers women with expert advice across life stages. p. 11

For the most current news and articles on the war in Israel, please visit our website at JewishFederationLCC.org.

Federation Annual Meeting:


Reflecting on the Year & Strengthening Community Security.

We are honored to welcome John Murtagh, SCN Regional Security Advisor and special guest.

Wednesday - May 13, 2026
7 P.M. ~ Dessert Reception



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jewishfederationlcc.org/calendar

More information.
Amy Hallock, 239.481.4449 ext. 2 or events@jfedlcc.org



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**MAY ISSUE
 EDITORIAL
 DEADLINE:
 Friday, April 10**



OUR MISSION

To strengthen and enrich the Jewish Community by providing and supporting philanthropic, educational and social service programs locally, in Israel and throughout the world.

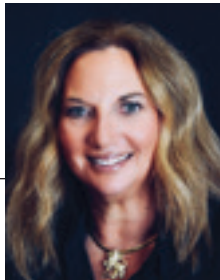
OUR VISION

A Jewish Community that is based on Jewish values such as Tzedakah (benevolence), Tikkun Olam (repairing the world) and K'lal Yisrael (taking responsibility for one another).

Israeli Consulate strengthens ties with Florida's Jewish community

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

■ **Debbie Sanford**



Leaders from the Israeli Consulate in Florida recently visited Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties, marking an important step in deepening collaboration between Israel's diplomatic mission and the local Jewish community. The visit highlighted new initiatives focused on enriching Jewish identity, expanding access to meaningful experiences in Israel and addressing digital misinformation.

The delegation was led by Israeli Consul Zuri Siso, joined by Deputy Consul General Ayellette Black and Gabriel Baredas. They met with Federation leadership and Rabbis to discuss shared priorities and new strategies for community engagement.

A central theme of the visit was expanding opportunities for travel to Israel. Consul Siso and his team emphasized efforts to encourage more community members to experience Israel firsthand — whether through heritage trips, educational missions, or cultural exchanges. These immersive experiences are a powerful way to deepen personal connections to Israel's history, culture and democratic values, while strengthening Jewish identity and community bonds.

Another focus of the conversation was the growing challenge of false narratives and misleading content about

Israel on social media. Deputy Consul General Black spoke about the importance of proactive engagement in today's digital landscape, working with partners to promote accurate information and counter harmful distortions. In an era where online misinformation can spread quickly, the

consulate is committed to supporting tools and partnerships that uphold factual discourse and combat antisemitism.

Throughout the visit, the delegation reinforced the meaning of Zionism as a source of unity and shared purpose — a commitment to Jewish continuity, community strength and connection to Israel. By encouraging thoughtful engagement — both in person and online — the consulate and the Jewish Federation aim to foster informed, positive connections to Israel across generations.

When their meeting concluded, the consulate delegation joined the Word of Life Church Covenant for Israel event, which drew more than 300 people in attendance. At this gathering, I spoke alongside other dignitaries, and members of the consulate addressed the crowd, highlighting the ongoing partnership between the Jewish community, faith leaders and Israel. The event underscored the shared commitment to interfaith collaboration and support for Israel, reinforcing the values of unity, faith and communal responsibility.

In addition to strategic conversations, the visit also affirmed ongoing cooperation between the consulate, Jewish Federations across Florida, and community leaders on initiatives that celebrate Israel's contributions and strengthen U.S.–Israel relations. 🇺🇸

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- Doubletree by Hilton.....11
- Elite Estate Services.....23
- FineMark Natl. Bank & Trust.....6
- Fort Myers Memorial Gardens.....27
- Ginsberg Eye.....3
- Green Schoenfeld & Kyle..18
- Gulf Coast Orthodontics....21
- Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center.....21
- Kushner & Kushner.....18
- Lyons & Lyons.....29
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- Margaritaville.....7
- Mobile Massage.....28
- PCC Tile & More.....18
- Preview Travel Pros.....15
- Publix.....5
- Scott Geller Eye Specialists...9
- Senior Housing Solutions...2
- Taschner Periodontics.....14
- The Bagel Factory.....18
- The Gallery at Cape Coral.26

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Standing guard

How our community can prevent elder fraud

By John Murtagh, Secure Community Network Regional Security Advisor-Florida West Coast

Elder fraud is a growing and costly problem. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3), Americans aged 60 and older reported nearly \$4.9 billion in losses from fraud in 2024 through almost 150,000 complaints — a sharp increase from prior years. Investment, tech support, romance, business email compromise and government impersonation scams are among the most common schemes targeting seniors. Many victims lose tens of thousands of dollars, and the real toll is likely higher because many incidents go unreported.



John Murtagh

Elder fraud prevention tips

To prevent elder fraud, awareness is the first line of defense. Best practices include verifying unknown solicitations before responding, refusing unusual payment methods (like gift cards or cryptocurrency) and discussing suspicious contacts with trusted friends, family or financial advisors. Financial institutions and caregivers can establish trusted contacts to help monitor senior accounts and flag unusual activity. Good cyber-hygiene protects everyone, especially older adults. Use strong, unique passwords and multifactor authentication

on important accounts; keep devices and software up to date; be wary of unsolicited emails or links; and never share personal or financial information in response to unverified requests. Learning to recognize phishing and social-engineering tactics and regularly reviewing bank statements for strange transactions can dramatically reduce your risk.

Community members are encouraged to watch out for future Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties e-blasts announcing in-person elder fraud awareness events presented by SCN and our local law enforcement partners, which will provide timely updates, prevention strategies and opportunities to ask questions directly to investigators.

If you suspect elder fraud, report it immediately to the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center at IC3.gov to help protect your loved ones and prevent others from becoming victims.

Elder fraud overview and prevention tips

Visit the accompanying link for general information about scams that are targeting older adults.

www.fbi.gov/how-we-can-help-you/scams-and-safety/common-frauds-and-scams/elder-fraud

Looking ahead at Youth and Family programming

By Brittany Salem, Youth and Family Engagement Coordinator

As the Youth and Family Engagement Coordinator at Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties, I am excited to share a preview of the growth, connection and community-building that lies ahead for our families in the coming year.



Brittany Salem

Over the past several months, our team has made significant strides in strengthening holiday programming, expanding partnerships and increasing meaningful touchpoints for children, teens and parents. One of the most impactful areas of development has been our continued work with the P2G Partnership, including preparations for the Israeli teen delegation visit. This collaboration continues to deepen cultural exchange, build global Jewish identity and create lasting friendships across continents.

Strengthening community through events

This year, families can look forward to more accessible, inclusive events designed to bring the community together. From hands-on holiday celebrations and outdoor family gatherings to parent-child learning opportunities, our goal is to cultivate experiences that feel welcoming

and deeply connected to Jewish values.

We will also continue expanding our partnership-driven programs, working closely with organizations, local businesses and community leaders to bring Jewish engagement beyond our building and into new spaces across Lee County.

Empowering teens through leadership and connection

Teens remain a central focus of our future programming. The teen delegation visit, developed in connection with our P2G partners, offers young people a meaningful opportunity to engage with their Israeli peers and explore identity, leadership and shared heritage. With additional leadership workshops and community service opportunities planned, this year will continue building a strong pipeline for empowered Jewish teen leaders.

Growing PJ Library and family engagement

Our PJ Library engagement has expanded in both reach and creativity. Expect more neighborhood gatherings, story-based

experiences, hands-on holiday events and opportunities for families to meet and build community.

As we look ahead, our mission is clear: to create vibrant, enriching and meaningful pathways for Jewish families of all ages. Through strengthened partnerships, creative programming and a commitment to building community, we

are excited for a year filled with growth, connection and possibility.

If you're interested in getting involved, volunteering or learning more about upcoming events, please reach out; we would love to welcome you and your family into our growing network of youth and family engagement. Please contact me at brittanysalem@jfedlcc.org.



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Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties

Get the latest information on upcoming community events and cultural activities, breaking news items, updates from Israel and lots more.

Send an email to debbiesanford@jfedlcc.org



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The Jewish Federation Annual Campaign provides the resources to strengthen and enrich our Jewish community locally, in Israel and around the world.



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Honors & Memorials



With a tribute gift you can mark a milestone, celebrate a special occasion, extend your sympathy or send wishes for a speedy recovery. It is a meaningful way to acknowledge friends or family and strengthen our Jewish community by contributing to the Annual Campaign.

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Debbie Sanford & Lee Strauss

jewishfederationlcc.org/tribute-memorials

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HOW

THE JEWISH FEDERATION SERVES

Local Jewish Education and Culture

- Community-wide Jewish Education and Cultural Programs for all ages.
- L'CHAYIM published monthly to keep the Jewish community informed about local, national and international Jewish issues.
- CRC-Community Relations Council to address issues of anti-Semitism and Interfaith Relations.
- Israel Advocacy and Initiatives to strengthen local Jewish community ties with Israel. Holocaust education for middle and high school students in the community and a college campus Jewish life experience committee.
- Volunteer opportunities for all ages.

Overseas

- Funding to the Jewish Agency for Israel and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) for full-spectrum social services to Israel and Jewish communities in 60+ countries around the world.
- Partnership 2Gether relationship with the Hadera-Eiron Region in Israel.

Jewish Community Foundation

- An endowment that ensures future social and educational programming and support for our community.
- Needs-based college scholarships and study scholarships in Israel.
- Jewish camp scholarships.



Jewish Federation
of Lee & Charlotte Counties

Jewish Family
Services

Local Seniors Services

- Lunch Bunch, a monthly gathering with a free lunch for older adults to meet and schmooze.
- Holiday baskets and teen visits to seniors and senior facilities for Rosh Hashanah, Hanukkah and Passover.
- Holocaust survivor outreach.

Local Social Services

- Non-sectarian, individual & family outreach, information & referral services.
- South Fort Myers United Way House.

Local Emergency Services

- Food Pantry and gift cards.
- Emergency financial assistance grants to families and individuals in crisis.
- Local disaster outreach and assistance.

Education, Arts & Culture Programs

Israeli Folk Dancing

Jewish Social Club

Mah Jongg

Holiday Senior Visits

PJ Library

Federation Hits the Road-Day Trips

Holocaust Remembrance

Jewish Film Festival

Community Breakfast

Major Gifts-Pacesetters

Jewish Heritage Day

Lion of Judah

Women's Day

TRIBE

Annual Meeting

Men's Division

P2G Partnership Together

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Serving up food, friendship and insight

By Elizabeth Elba, Life Enrichment Coordinator

February's Lunch Bunch at The Gallery at Cape Coral was a wonderful gathering with good food, great conversation and meaningful learning. On Feb. 25, approximately 30 of us came together to share an afternoon of connection and community.



Elizabeth Elba

Guests were treated to a delicious and healthy buffet featuring baked fish, a savory frittata, fresh vegetables, crisp salad and a delightful cheesecake to top it all off. The meal offered something for everyone, and the relaxed setting made it easy to linger over lunch while catching up with familiar faces and meeting new ones. Laughter and lively conversation filled the room as everyone enjoyed the warm, welcoming atmosphere of The Gallery's lunch cafe.

Following the meal, we were engaged by an informative presentation from



Lowell Schoenfeld of Schoenfeld Kyle & Associates LLP. His talk focused on the important topics of trusts, wills and estates. With clarity and approachability, he explained key considerations in estate planning and answered questions from

the group, providing valuable insights that many found helpful.

Looking ahead

We look forward to continuing the momentum next month when Lunch Bunch meets at Discovery Village The Forum on March 18.

Then, on April 22, we will gather for a special interfaith luncheon at Lakes Regional Library. The program will feature a discussion between Rabbi Nicole Luna of Temple Beth El and Reverend Zillman of Cypress Lake United Methodist Church, with falafel served for lunch.



Thank you to those who attend these lunches and we hope you will join us for these upcoming opportunities to connect, learn and grow together. 🌍



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“Purim Night Fit for the Queens”

A royal celebration honoring Lions of Judah and Pomegranates

By Amy Hallock, Community Events Manager

On March 10, Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties proudly celebrated its Lions of Judah and Pomegranates with an unforgettable afternoon at FineMark Bank & Trust. Inspired by Purim and the bravery of Queen Esther, the event was a vibrant tribute to the powerful women whose leadership, generosity and vision strengthen our community every day.

Guests were welcomed into a setting fit for royalty. The Purim theme came to life through elegant décor, festive details and a joyful spirit that reflected Queen Esther’s courage and grace. FineMark graciously hosted the gathering and provided a beautifully curated culinary experience, complete with delicious gourmet fare and custom-crafted cocktails that added a celebratory flair to the afternoon.

In true Purim fashion, attendees enjoyed thoughtfully designed beauty stations, offering a touch of glamour

worthy of a queen. Each woman also received *mish-loach manot*, artfully assembled gifts filled with sweet and savory delights, symbolizing friendship, unity and generosity. Every detail reinforced the central message of the day: our Lions of Judah and Pomegranates are modern-day Esthers, standing strong for the Jewish people and ensuring a vibrant future.



Amy Hallock

Leading women’s philanthropy

The Lion of Judah program was established in 1972 as a bold initiative to recognize women who make an individual gift of \$5,000 or more to their local Federation’s annual campaign. What began as a visionary step to honor women philanthropists has grown into

an international sisterhood of more than 18,000 Lions worldwide. The Lion of Judah pin has become a powerful emblem of commitment, leadership, and collective responsibility.

The Pomegranate Society recognizes women who contribute at a leadership level of \$1,800 or more annually.

Together, Lions and Pomegranates represent a dynamic force within the Federation: women who understand that their philanthropy sustains vital services locally in Southwest Florida, in Israel and around the world.

Through their generosity, they support Jewish Family Services, educational initiatives, security, senior care, food assistance programs and emergency relief efforts, ensuring that no one in our community stands alone.

Courage, community and continuity

Just as Queen Esther stepped forward at a pivotal moment in Jewish history, our Lions and Pomegranates continue to step forward today. Their philanthropy is not only an act of generosity, it is an act of courage, leadership and enduring responsibility.

We are deeply grateful to FineMark Bank & Trust for hosting this meaningful celebration and to every woman who continues to wear her Lion or Pomegranate pin with pride.

If you are interested in learning more about the Lions of Judah, Pomegranates, or how you can become involved in women’s philanthropy through Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties, please call 239-481-4449.

L’Chayim — to life, to leadership, and to the queens among us. 🌟

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A lifeline of dignity and hope

How our Food Pantry is making a difference

By Monica Wildonger, JFS Case Manager & Food Pantry Coordinator

At our Food Pantry, we are seeing both growing need and growing opportunity.

Thanks to the generosity of our community and partners, we are now able to provide meat on occasion and fresh eggs to the individuals and families we serve. For many of our clients, these are not just groceries, they are meaningful additions that allow them to prepare nourishing, wholesome meals with dignity.

Due to our amazing partnership with Harry Chapin Food Bank of Southwest Florida, we are also proud to continue our Share and Care boxes for a few seniors in our community. These specially prepared boxes ensure that some of our most vulnerable, older adults receive consistent, reliable food support. For seniors living on fixed incomes, this assistance makes an enormous difference.

But beyond the food itself, our pantry is about people — their stories, their resilience and the sacred responsibility we share to care for one another.

A veteran's story

One of the individuals we serve recently turned 76 years old. With his permission, we share his story as a reminder that homelessness can happen to anyone.

Originally from Illinois, he built a successful career as an insurance broker, becoming a top producer within just two years. A veteran who was drafted during the Vietnam era, he served 19 months and four days as a photographer in Korea, even submitting work to *Stars and Stripes*. After years of hard work, he spent about a decade as a "snowbird," renting a home in Fort Myers Beach.

Everything changed after Hurricane Ian struck Southwest Florida in 2022. The housing development where he lived did not carry flood insurance. In the aftermath of the storm, he lost everything.

Since then, he has been homeless.

For the past several months, he has been living in a tent in the woods. Three

months ago, he was robbed of what little he had left — his cell phone, food, cot and belongings — cutting off contact with his stepson and further isolating him.

Each Wednesday and Thursday, he rides his bicycle to our pantry, four miles each way. He takes only what can fit into his back-

pack, mindful of the long ride back. As a designated warming and cooling station, we welcome him inside during extreme weather. When we are open, he often stays to escape the heat or cold, and we offer him coffee and soup. It is a small gesture, but one that restores comfort and human connection.

Jewish Family Services (JFS) is actively working to help him secure an apartment or efficiency so that he can once again have a stable place to call home.

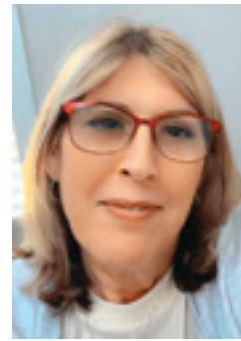


He repeatedly tells us that he does not know where he would be without JFS and the pantry.

His story reminds us of a core Jewish value: that every person is created b'tselem Elohim — in the image of God — and deserves dignity, safety and compassion.

Our pantry is more than shelves of food. It is a place of refuge. A place of warmth in winter and cool air in summer. A place where veterans, seniors, families and individuals are treated not as statistics but as neighbors.

As the need continues, so does our commitment. With your support, we can continue providing meat, eggs, Share and Care boxes, and most importantly, hope. Together, we ensure that no one in our community is forgotten. 🌍



Monica Wildonger



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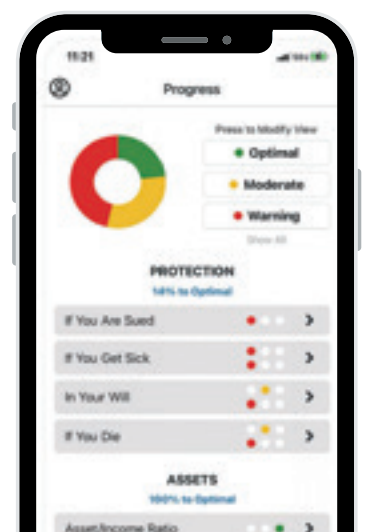
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At the Holocaust Museum

By Erin Blankenship, Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center President & CEO

More than a cultural arts venue, The Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center is an educational leader. Our staff and volunteers emphasize thoughtful interpretation, support Southwest Florida's educators and provide age-appropriate learning that help people engage meaningfully with difficult history. Whenever I speak about our Museum as part of our outreach throughout the region, people are often surprised to hear that we offer our resources for free to teachers and students.



Erin Blankenship

Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center



Matt and students at Gallery One

In 1994, Florida Legislature passed the Holocaust Education Bill, which states that the history of the Holocaust be required instruction. However, the mandate is unfunded, leaving schools and educators with few resources. That's where we come in. It is because of The Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center's donors that we can help teachers fill the gaps left by use of textbooks alone. Our educational programs are comprehensive. We offer everything from custom-created teacher workshops to field trips and in-school activities.

One of our most often requested resources is our PopUp Museum. It offers schools that can't attend a field trip an

exhibit we install on their campus. Based on the Museum's permanent exhibition, the PopUp guides students through this history of the Holocaust and even includes videos of survivor testimony. Now, we are working on a new PopUp exhibit focused on propaganda, contemporary antisemitism and media literacy, which will debut in time for the 2026-27 school year. This new exhibit will meet educators' needs as media literacy is required education and will help students understand how to identify hate and antisemitism in the world today.

Our Field Trip program for 5th through 12th grade is still our signature educational resource. Often booked months in advance, local teachers often meet the



Teacher Zach Ward's Holocaust class

Holocaust education mandate through a free tour of our Museum. What's more, through community support, our Museum covers the cost of buses for Title 1 schools and others for whom the cost of transportation makes a visit impossible.

Every Field Trip includes the opportunity to hear from a survivor or a child of a survivor; the most important part of their visit! Plus, students are led through our permanent and special exhibitions by a trained volunteer docent. Through their Museum experience, students learn the stories of individuals who experienced the Holocaust and the lessons they share: how

to identify the warning signs of genocide, what antisemitism looks like, and how to respond. Students learn the importance of being an *Upstander* — someone who stands up, speaks up and takes action for their friend or neighbor in need.

Our Museum guides students through the complex history of the Holocaust. Our programs help build empathy, understanding and the moral clarity individuals need for the courage to speak out against bias and antisemitism. Holocaust education isn't just about the past; it prepares people to act today. 🌍



Jewish Federation
of Lee & Charlotte Counties

Resilience & Renewal; Israel Today

TUESDAY, MAY 5
2:00 PM

SPECIAL GUEST
Aviva Klompas

Aviva Klompas is a respected global voice on Israel, Jewish identity, and antisemitism. She is the co-founder of Boundless Israel and previously served as Director of Speechwriting for Israel's Permanent Mission to the United Nations. Aviva is a sought-after international speaker and commentator whose work focuses on strengthening understanding of Israel and combating misinformation. She has been recognized by Hadassah Magazine as one of the "18 American Zionist Women You Should Know" and the "Top 100 People Positively Influencing Jewish Life."

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Docent and students in front lobby

Community-Wide Women's Health Symposium

Join us at this event for women, by women!

By Diane Schwartz, Hadassah Collier/Lee Chapter

Hadassah Collier/Lee Chapter is pleased to present this unique, free educational program in collaboration with other local organizations. Serving three local counties and working with two cooperating hospital systems, the program is Sunday, April 26, from 1 to 4 p.m.

Many thanks to the Sisterhood of Temple Shalom, Jewish Federation of Greater Naples, Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties, and the Women's Cultural Alliance (WCA) for joining with Hadassah to produce this special program.

All Temples, Synagogues and Chabad in the three counties have been invited to be part of this program. Those who have chosen to participate will receive registration information. Women are also able to request registration information from any of the five collaborating organizations.

With a goal of collaborating, informing and empowering, Hadassah thanks Naples Comprehensive Health (NCH) and Lee Health hospital systems for sharing the knowledge and expertise of the female physicians who are participating in the "in conversation" interview sessions.

Session 1: "How Women are Special"

Moderated by Diane Schwartz, Past Co-President of Hadassah Collier/Lee Chapter, this session is in conversation

with Dr. Cherrie Morris, Chief Physician Executive and Vice President for Women's Services at Lee Health.

With more than 25 years of experience in healthcare, Dr. Morris is dedicated to advancing women's health through innovative, patient-centered care. An obstetrician and gynecologist, she is a graduate of Rutgers New Jersey Medical School and has had experience at the National Institutes of Health, which enriched her understanding of clinical research and solidified her dedication to evidence-based practice. She is double-board-certified in Obstetrics and Gynecology and Aesthetic Medicine.

Session 2: "Women's Life Cycle"

Moderated by Shelly Bell, Past Program Vice President of Women's Cultural Alliance (WCA), physicians Elizabeth Hidlebaugh, M.D., and Allison Baker, M.D., join us in conversation.

Dr. Elizabeth Hidlebaugh, who joins us from NCH, is double-board-certified in Internal Medicine and Geriatrics. A graduate of St. George's University School of Medicine, she completed further training at Florida Atlantic University and served her fellowship in Geriatrics at Duke University School of Medicine. Dr. Hidlebaugh has been awarded with many honors for her work, publications and presentations.

Joining the conversation from Lee Health is Dr. Allison Baker, with 15 years of experience as an obstetrician/gynecologist. A graduate of University of Missouri School of Medicine, she served her internship and residency at Mercy Hospital St. Louis, a major medical center that offers nationally recognized care, including women's health. She is a board-certified obstetrician and gynecologist and noted as a Healthgrades choice provider.

Session 3: "Know Your Body"

Moderated by Julie Shlensky, Education Vice President of Hadassah Collier/Lee Chapter, this session will focus on heart disease, the number one cause of women's death, more than all cancers combined. Two physicians, Hillary Tassin, M.D., and Kelly Costopoulos, M.D., will join us in conversation.

Dr. Hillary Tassin joins us from NCH. She is a Florida native and a graduate of the University of Florida College of Medicine, having served both her residency and her fellowships there. Dr. Tassin achieved fellowships in cardiovascular medicine, advanced heart failure, heart transplantation and cardiovascular stem cell therapy. She is particularly interested in the management of women's cardiovascular disease,

infiltrative cardiomyopathies, arrhythmia management and preventive cardiovascular medicine. She has more than 10 years of experience and is board-certified in internal medicine and cardiovascular medicine.

Dr. Kelly Costopoulos is a cardiologist with Lee Physician Group. She earned her medical degree from the University of Florida College of Medicine, completing her residency and fellowship at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, Tennessee. She is double-board-certified in internal medicine and cardiovascular disease. Her clinical interests include cardiovascular disease in pregnancy, hypertensive disorders of pregnancy, valvular heart disease, cardiac imaging (echocardiography and cardiac MRI) and prevention.

Registration

While there is no charge to attend the program, **you must register**. If you can't join us in person, you can register to receive a webinar link.

The Community-Wide Women's Health Symposium takes place at a well-known meeting location in Collier County. The location and link are shared one week before the event to maintain security. Watch your email for registration information. 🌐



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Staying with what matters

Women's Simcha Circle at Temple Beth El

By Toby Buerger and Ashley Kogan-Weed, Co-Chairs of Women's Simcha Circle at TBE

Passover is full of powerful symbols: matzah, questions, storytelling and the reminder that we once moved from restriction to possibility. But long after the Seder ends, real life returns. Calendars fill up. Responsibilities resume. The laundry still needs folding.

Which raises a quieter question: What helps us stay committed to what matters once the inspiration fades?

For many women balancing work, family and personal growth, this feels especially real. It's one thing to set a goal,



■ Toby Buerger



■ Ashley Kogan-Weed

make a change or declare a fresh start. It's another to stay with it when life gets busy, motivation dips or old patterns resurface.

Passover reminds us that meaningful change isn't a single dramatic moment. It unfolds step-by-step: through daily choices, honest reflection and the willingness to recommit when we drift.

In the Women's Simcha Circle, we often talk about what makes something worth staying with. What gives our goals deeper meaning? What strengthens our follow-through? What helps us choose ourselves again and again?

This season invites us not only to reflect on change but to ask what we're ready to carry forward with intention. 🌟

Save the date!

"What Makes Your Goals Worth Staying With?"

Sunday, April 12 · 2-4 p.m.

Palm Isle Clubhouse, 15101 Palm Isle Dr., Fort Myers

Toby Buerger, Owner Entrepreneur and Business Coach of She-EO Business Academy, presents a Passover-season women's workshop for those balancing work, family and personal growth.

This presentation will explore purpose, commitment and how to stay connected to what matters most.

The workshop is free to attend, but reservations are recommended. Register by March 29 at www.templebethel.com/event/WSCGoalSettingEvent.



February's Girls Night Out at Disco Bean Coffee Company in Bonita Springs

Jews By Choice

The last Thursday of each month, 8 p.m. via Zoom

By Dawn Wineinger, Temple Beth El member and volunteer

Jews By Choice meets online the last Thursday of each month from 8 to 9 p.m. in a relaxed and comfortable format. Come discuss the delights and challenges of converting and reconnecting.

Recent converts, those exploring conversion, and Jews seeking to reconnect with their roots are encouraged to attend. If you are considering the process

of converting to Judaism, if you are in the conversion process, if you are rediscovering Judaism and if you have questions and/or need to talk with like-minded individuals in a friendly, nonjudgmental atmosphere, Jews By Choice is the place for you!

For more information contact me at d.wineinger@yahoo.com. 🌟

A Jewish 12-Step recovery group

Every Saturday at 11 a.m. via Zoom

Courtesy of Temple Beth El

If you are Jewish in search of recovery support, a standard AA class may not suffice when the higher power references are not Jewish.

Folks are invited to experience the 12-Steps from a Jewish perspective on Saturdays at 11 a.m. via Zoom. This group includes those recovering from alcohol, drugs, and other addictions such as food, gambling, sex, shopping, etc.

The guidebook is "Twelve Jewish Steps to Recovery" by Rabbi Kerry Olitzky and Stuart Copans, M.D., second edition.

All who might benefit from this group are welcome. Zoom details are available by calling the Temple Beth El office at 239-433-0018. 🌟

Nar-Anon support meetings

By Joann Goldman

Nar-Anon Family Groups is a 12-Step fellowship that offers a recovery program for those affected by someone's addiction. The group will meet in the Community Room at Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties.

Addiction is a family disease; it affects the relationships of those close to the addict — parents, spouses, siblings, children, longtime friends and employers. In the group meetings, these family members and friends share their experiences, strengths and hopes to help each other and themselves.

If someone's addiction is affecting you, first you must help yourself. Come

to a meeting and hear from others who are going through similar problems and talk about how they cope and find recovery.

Nar-Anon is based on a set of spiritual principles and has no affiliation with any particular religion. There are no dues or fees. The only requirement for membership is a problem of addiction in a relative or friend.

This group has been a part of the Lee County community for more than 18 years. Meetings are held at 7 p.m. every Thursday at Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties (9701 Commerce Center Court, Fort Myers).

For more information, please contact me at jogo118@gmail.com or 239-470-4827. 🌟

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Gail Margolis

FOR BEGINNERS

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calendar of events, visit
www.JewishFederationLCC.org.



Yom HaShoah Commemoration

By Ida Margolis and Shelley Lieb

GenShoah SWFL, Jewish Federation of Greater Naples, and the Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center have planned a program to remember communities that were lost during the Holocaust.

The commemoration will include special recognition of all local survivors, a candle lighting ceremony by children of survivors (2Gs), music and meaningful readings as a reflection on towns and cities where Jewish life thrived before World War II and as a commitment to linking the past with the future.

Included in the program will be Temple Shalom's Holocaust Torah from the Czech town of Budyne and Ohri. The Torah is a powerful reminder of the town's 40 Jews who were murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators.

The program is also sponsored by Temple Shalom, Beth Tikvah, Naples Jewish Congregation, Chabad of Naples, and Jewish Congregation of Marco Island.

A reception with light refreshments will follow the commemoration. Send in your RSVP to

Yom HaShoah Commemoration

"Every Person Had a Home"

Sunday, April 12

11 a.m.-noon

Temple Shalom, Naples

To submit your RSVP, visit jewishnaples.org.



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Israel's Emergency Services System

Lots of horror, romance (good and bad), and more

Stars of David

By Nate Bloom, Stars of David Contributing Columnist

Editor's Note: Persons in bold are deemed by Nate Bloom to be Jewish for the purpose of this column. Persons identified as Jewish have at least one Jewish parent and were not raised in, or identify with, a faith other than Judaism. Converts to Judaism, of course, are also identified as Jewish.

"They Will Kill You"

This movie — tagged as a "horror-comedy-action" film — opened in theaters on March 27. Zazie Beetz plays Asia, an ex-convict who just got a housekeeper job in a fancy New York City building. Most of the residents are creeps who are looking to turn Asia into this month's human sacrifice. **Patricia Arquette**, 57, plays an important creep-leader of the nasty residents.

"Marc by Sofia"

This movie, also in theaters on March 27, has Sofia Coppola directing a biopic about the life and career of **Marc Jacobs**, 62, an iconic fashion designer. Jacobs grew up in a secular Jewish home. His childhood was hard; his father died when he was six, and his mother was mentally ill. A grandmother helped raise him. Jacobs' talent showed early. He was only 24 when he won a major fashion award.

"The Drama"

This romantic comedy opens in theaters on April 3. Zendaya and Robert Pattinson co-star as an engaged couple with problems. The advanced publicity says that "days before their wedding, one of the partners discovers unsettling truths about the other."

The credits only list six actors in this film, and only Pattinson and Zendaya have listed character names. One of "the six" is **Alana Haim**, 34. She is a popular singer/songwriter who performs with her two sisters (Haim is the band name). She had her acting debut in 2021 with a co-starring role in "Licorice Pizza," a hit film, for which she got a Golden Globe nomination.



"Lorne"

Opening in theaters on April 17, this documentary "covers" **Lorne Michaels**, 81, the creator of "Saturday Night Live" ("SNL"). The filmmakers provide some basic information about Michaels. The film publicity says that the filmmakers got "unprecedented access to Michaels," as their cameras follow him on a day-to-day basis.

"SNL" has been on TV since 1974. Michaels has been the "SNL" executive

producer (the "top guy") for the last 52 years — except for five years when he took a hiatus in the early '80s. He often writes funny material for the show, however, he doesn't make jokes about his original name (Lorne David Lipowitz).

Right now, I know that two former (Jewish) "SNL" cast members appear in "Lorne:" **Andy Samberg**, 47, and **Maya Rudolph**, 53.

"Over Your Dead Body"

Described as an action-comedy-thriller, this film opens in theaters on April 24. Here's the premise: A dysfunctional married couple (**Jason Segal**, 46, and Samara Weaving) retreat to a secluded cabin to repair their relationship but each secretly plot to murder the other.

"The Miniature Wife"

This 10-episode series premieres April 9 on Peacock. It is a dramedy about the power imbalances between spouses Lindy (**Elizabeth Banks**, 52) and Les (Matthew Macfadyen).

Banks has been married to a Jewish guy since 2003, and they have two kids. Back in 2013, she said she had done all the conversion classes and practices Judaism but hadn't been "mikvah-dipped." A public update would be rare, one way or another. So, I'll "count her in" until I learn more.

"The Miniature Wife" has four main cast roles beside Lindy and Les. Two are played by Jews: **Sofia Rosinsky**, 19, plays Lindy's sister, and **Zoe Lister-Jones**, 43, plays Vivienne. Lister-Jones' mother was born Jewish, and her father converted to Judaism.

"The Audacity"

This original AMC series — eight episodes in the first season — begins Sunday, April 12. Jonathan Glatzer, 56, created the series. He has written many TV episodes, but "The Audacity" is the first series he has created.

Here's the "official" premise: "A self-appointed 'inventor of the future' tech CEO and his self-serving 'performance psychologist' are engulfed in a scandal sparked by the exploitation of personal data."

There are 11 main roles in cast lists. Three roles are played by Jewish thespians: **Simon Helberg**, 45 ("The Big Bang Theory") as Martin Phister; **Sarah Goldberg**, 40, as Joanne Felder; and **Paul Adelstein**, 56 ("Prison Break") as Gary Felder.

"Finding Your Roots"

The last episode of this season's "Finding Your Roots" premieres April 14, 8 p.m., on PBS. The two celebrity guests are actress Kate Burton and billionaire **Barry Diller**, 84, an almost legendary executive leader of entertainment companies.

Diller grew up in Beverly Hills, and his parents were affluent, but I suspect that his grandparents weren't rich. Diller went from a talent agency "mail room boy" to — in order — Paramount head, chair of Fox, Inc. (films/TV), and owner of the Home Shopping Network (HSN). There are many other "side showbiz projects."

Famous Jewish fashion designer **Diana von Furstenberg**, 79, née Halfin, has been Diller's wife since 2001. The couple are major philanthropists. ☺



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Complacency, a discussion for the Seder table

Aging Jewishly — What our traditions teach us about growing old.

By Rabbi Barbara Aiello

Ari and Tina were tired but grateful. They had just returned from an overseas trip that included an unplanned but most interesting visit to Pompeii. After several airline delays and cancellations, a tour of Pompeii’s volcanic ruins presented itself, and when Ari heard that a new Jewish-themed tour had been added, they signed on at the last minute.



■ Rabbi Barbara Aiello

During the Pesach season, the plight of our ancestors is front and center; especially the cruel treatment we suffered as slaves. It got so bad that Moses risked his own life by killing a slave master who was horribly abusing a Jewish slave, but in Pompeii there seems to be a different story to tell. Ari and Tina’s guide mentioned complacency. What does our

tradition have to say about what happens when we are “fat and happy” and have what we need?

According to the *Times of Israel* on Aug. 21, 2024, Rabbi Kenneth Cohen offers evidence and addresses the complacency issue as found in the Torah in Parashat Eikev. He notes that in Eikev, we find a specific warning about the danger of becoming overly complacent. In fact, we read that difficulties arise when we “grow fat in the land.”

Rabbi Cohen references our rabbinic Sage, the great commentator Rashi, who taught that complacency comes when an individual feels relatively comfortable with his current situation and that a person who rebels against God more often does so when things are going relatively well.

The ancients did not conceptualize complacency as a stagnant “autopilot” existence, but they would have appreciated the concept of what happens when we’ve settled into a comfortable and uninspiring routine. Complacency inhibits growth and often stifles a return to tradition or a movement forward to embrace new ideas.

Certainly, the Jews of Pompeii lacked basic freedom, which was inhibiting in its own right. But as Tina and Ari’s guide speculated, could the abundance of nutritious food lulled the Jewish slaves into a state of complacency where a fight for freedom would have been tempered by their attachment to the status quo?

It’s an interesting question for the Seder table, and as we move forward from Pesach, a question for our own lives. As we count our blessings this holiday, have we become complacent?

Rabbi Barbara Aiello served the Aviva Campus for Senior Life in Sarasota, Florida as resident rabbi for 10 years. Her most popular columns are now published in her book, “Aging Jewishly,” available

from Amazon books. Rabbi Barbara now lives and works in Italy where she is rabbi of Italy’s first Reconstructionist synagogue. Contact her at Rabbi@RabbiBarbara.com. 

Now, safely returned to the U.S. Ari tried to offer cash to grandson Kyle as thanks for collecting them at the airport and dragging their bags from the car. “No way,” Kyle said as he pushed his grandfather’s hand away. “No charge, Zayde. It’s a mitzvah. Tell me more about your trip.”

With that, Ari and Tina launched into an explanation of what they learned about the Jews of Pompeii. Their guide quoted J. S. Wolin, who wrote in *Mishpaca: The Jewish Family Weekly* on Oct. 31, 2023, and has studied what appears to be evidence of Pompeii’s Jewish community, comprised primarily of Jewish slaves. Mr. Wolin found “Casa degli Ebrei” (House of the Jews), along with frescoes that featured King Solomon as judge.

Tina added, “Our guide told us that in one of the archaeological digs, they found a bottle of wine labeled “Judaean” and inscriptions in what looks like ancient Hebrew. It was fascinating to see.”

Ari chimed in, “But what really got me was that the Jews were brought to Pompeii as slaves; but not like when we Jews were slaves in Egypt, when we were beaten and abused. In Pompeii, the Jews were 10% of the population and, get this, the Jewish slaves had special privileges and even got the best food — better than the peasants who lived there.”

Tina added, “It got me thinking. Was it the good food that kept them from organizing a rebellion against their masters? Our guide, a Jewish student from Rome, mused about complacency and how easy it is when we’re comfortable to maintain the status quo.”

The ancients did not conceptualize complacency as a stagnant “autopilot” existence ...

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April 24: 7:37 p.m.

Would you take spiritual guidance from a rabb-AI?

By Brian Simon

As artificial intelligence revolutionizes everything we do, there is a question of how it will impact Jewish life. Obviously, we will be impacted in the same ways as our fellow Americans. We may lose our jobs. We may have personal assistants who do all sorts of tasks for us. We may one day slave under the same robot overlords for 400 years until a new Moses demands ChatGPT to “let my people go.”

I spoke with Rabbi David Arias from Temple Judea and Rabbi Nicole Luna from Temple Beth El to get their perspectives on the AI revolution. Both of them use AI tools regularly.

“I think any professional should be thinking a lot about AI, frankly,” Rabbi Luna told me. “I think about it in terms of how it can be meaningful and helpful to me professionally.”

“As a mom I think a lot about how it’s going to impact my kids’ education, their job prospects, how they relate to others, their cognitive development, what it means for our economy.”

Rabbi Arias wants to teach a class called “JudAism.” He is optimistic and curious about using AI in Jewish life.

“I was thinking about studying Jewish ethics and moral questions to see if we can learn from AI how the system deals with these questions. We could learn or have



■ Brian Simon

another perspective on how to solve problems.”

Rabbi Arias used the word “wise” a couple of times in our conversation. I asked him if a computer could really achieve wisdom. He quoted *Pirkei Avot*:

“Ben Zoma said: Who is wise? He who learns from every man, as it is said: ‘From all who taught me have I gained understanding.’”

“You can read a lot of texts and newspapers. It makes you literate but not wise. You need to know how to use it. I believe part of this intelligence is you have to relate all this information you have.”

I should mention, there is considerable debate over whether the ability to predict and manipulate language is the same thing as understanding.

Rabbi Luna describes her use of AI as having a thought partner. She uses it to edit sermons and help create educational programs for religious school.

“It almost feels like having an amazing free coach that could improve my thought process and improve my writing. I think it’s been positive as long as you know the boundaries of how you want to use it. Judaism is good at creating boundaries.”

At the same time, both rabbis have concerns about AI crossing boundaries. Rabbi Arias references Maimonides.

“When bad things happen to good people, sometimes it’s because we don’t

have control over it, and sometimes it’s because we made decisions that led up to it. The thing with AI is how much power you give to it.”

“You know there is a risk when you give a machine more control than you want to give it. It’s another way of being conscious of what you do. Many of the rituals and the laws that we have in Jewish tradition are supposed to give us more consciousness about everything we do. Every little action, we’re supposed to be fully aware of what we do.”

Rabbi Luna adds, “I think there are issues with privacy, with misinformation, and I think there are issues with trust; all those things Judaism cares deeply about. These are all challenges of our society that AI exacerbates. You’re giving over your entire information. Also, there are environmental concerns that I sometimes feel guilty about.”

If AI is really good at analyzing budgets and creatively reasoning through problems, I’m ready to nominate it to our synagogue’s Board of Directors.

I think of Tevye singing “If I Were a Rich Man,” only replacing “rich” with “large language model.”

“The most important men in town would come to fawn on me! They would ask me to advise them like a Solomon the Wise. ‘If you please, Reb Grok ...’ ‘Pardon

me, Reb Copilot ...’ Posing problems that would cross a rabbi’s eyes! And it wouldn’t make one bit of difference if I answer right or wrong. When you’re a large language model they think you really know!”

“Today, we have the possibility to reach any Jewish text within seconds — and have translations,” Rabbi Arias said. “And I hope that in terms of jobs and work it will allow us to spend more time with family and friends. If we can automate the things we do, it’s a blessing, and we shouldn’t be afraid of it.”

From Tevye again: “If I were rich, I’d have the time that I lack to sit in the synagogue and pray. And maybe have a seat by the eastern wall. And I’d discuss the Holy

books with the learned men, several hours every day. That would be sweetest thing of all.”

AI may enhance our religious experience, but we still need each other to be Jews.

“Where do we find meaning?” asks Rabbi Luna. “Belonging, community, purpose. That’s what a people and tradition give us. People can stay in their rooms and have a deep conversation with AI, but I think at the end of the day being with other people engaging with people is so much fuller than anything you can experience in front of a computer.”

“You can read a lot of texts and newspapers. It makes you literate but not wise ...”



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Celebrating freedom, witnessing conflict

By Cheryl Fulmer, Ellen Feingold and Marcia Rudin

As we prepared to finalize this article for the April/Passover 2026 issue of *L'Chayim*, the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran. Perhaps it is inevitable that there cannot be peace and freedom anywhere in the Middle East for very long. The conflict in Gaza between Israel and Hamas continues, albeit in a different way. Hezbollah is still a factor in Lebanon. Pakistan and Afghanistan are again fighting. Iran brutally put down the protests against its way of governance. Yemen is still a place of war and battles.

Syria is struggling to survive its fighting against other Islamists and the Kurds.

The Hebrew Bible makes clear that the way to the promised land from Egypt for the Israelites was over and through the peoples already there. While every Passover we celebrate the outcome for the Israelites after all their travails, it is not a surprise that the region continues to suffer from war and fighting.

By the time you read this article, hopefully there will be clarity about the outcome of the attacks on Iran. May the Iron Dome continue to protect Israel from the rockets certain to be enroute.

Chavurat Shalom members were personally affected by the war when all flights to and from Israel were cancelled, so we could not meet Israeli Lev, the grandson of members Ellen and Michael Feingold. We planned to thank him for chanting our Torah portions via computer nearly every Shabbat.

The parallels of this new Middle Eastern war and the holiday of Purim we just completed are obvious. Iran, of course, is the modern Persia of the Purim story. Hatred of Jews stirs the hatred toward tiny Israel in the area of large Arab countries, as it did Haman's desire to wipe us out. As the Jews killed Haman, so the Israelis apparently killed the long-time Iranian dictator.

Purim gathering

Local Chavurat Shalom members gathered on March 3 to celebrate Purim at a clubhouse on Sanibel, enjoying wonderful company and conversation. The Megillah reading was concise to allow plenty of time for food and drink among friends.

Looking ahead

Pesach comes early this year. The first Seder occurs on Wednesday night, April 1; the eighth day is Thursday, April 9. On this holiday we remember our roots, four millennia ago, when we were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt. We eat matzoh in commemoration of the Exodus. And we remember there was something so awesome that happened on Mount Sinai that we, the Jewish people, still wonder at it and still adhere to The Ten



Chavurat Shalom Purim gathering on Sanibel
 (Photo by Leon Skolnick)

Commandments, that timeless body of laws. And we thank God we are free in our own land.

This unique Jewish holiday is centered on the home rather than synagogue. One may design one's own Hagaddah, the program of the service, or pick selections from many varieties of Hagaddahs written by others.

As we prepare to celebrate Passover, we give thanks that Jews survived the Pharaoh, Haman, the Romans, the Crusaders, the Inquisition, the Cossacks, Hitler and immigration quotas and — overcoming anti-Israel sentiment at the United Nations — were able to establish our own country, the State of Israel in 1948. May it long endure and flourish.

Chavurat Shalom wishes everyone a Happy Passover.

Recurring programs

Our chavurah approaches its sixth anniversary!

We hold Friday night Shabbat services every week throughout the year at 7:30 p.m. Services are led by our members, with English readings, original readings and poetry, Hebrew and English singing, and Torah reading with commentary by a thoughtful member. The weekly services are coordinated by Drs. Ellen Feingold and Kathy Zoss and include all volunteer participants.

On the first Tuesday of the month, we enjoy our informal "schmooze" session at 7:30 p.m.

"Torah Talk," led by Dr. Ellen Feingold, where we study the Parsha of the week together, is the second Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m.

"Jewish Current Events" is the third Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m.

The fourth Tuesday is set aside for the lecture and discussion series.

All Chavurat Shalom programs are held via Zoom. Everyone is welcome to join us. We plan in-person gatherings in the Sanibel and Fort Myers area occasionally.

For further information, email chavuratshalom@gmail.com or check out our website: chavuratshalomofswflorida.org.



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Celebrating courage, freedom and healing

By Shelley Einhorn, President Collier/Lee Chapter of Hadassah

Passover tells the story of freedom, courage and redemption — the journey from slavery to liberation. That same spirit lives at the heart of Hadassah.

Just as the Israelites crossed the Red Sea into a new future, Hadassah's founders, led by Henrietta Szold, crossed oceans to build hospitals and bring healing to the Land of Israel. They transformed vision into action, creating institutions that would save lives for generations.

Passover celebrates physical and spiritual freedom. Hadassah works every day to free people from illness, blindness, trauma and suffering through world-class medical care and research.



Shelley Einhorn

Passover honors the bravery of women like Miriam and Yocheved. Hadassah continues that legacy — women leading, advocating, fundraising and healing.

Passover is the time of renewal. At Hadassah's medical centers in Jerusalem, breakthroughs in medicine restore sight, mobility and dignity, offering hope to patients of every background.

The Exodus story reminds us that freedom carries responsibility. Supporting Hadassah is a modern expression of repairing the world through compassion and action.

Chag Pesach Sameach. 🌍

You are invited!

April 26 – Community-Wide Women's Health Symposium

This symposium, created for women by women, is about collaborating, informing and empowering all attendees.

The founding members are Collier/Lee Hadassah, Sisterhood of Temple Shalom, Women's Cultural Alliance, Jewish Federation of Greater Naples and Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte counties.

May 6 – The Collaboration: Antisemitism Part 3

Featuring Rabbi Ariel Boxman and Gail Marks Jarvis

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Is it ever good for the Jews?

By Marina Berkovich, JHSSWF President

It took 13 years and \$8 million to cut the path that is now U.S. 41. Challenges — like using crews of Native Americans to get rid of venomous snakes ahead of construction, swampland engineering, and using 2.6 million sticks of dynamite to safely clear the path through the wetlands — were immense. Multiple casualties took place during construction.



Marina Berkovich

By 1926, the project was stalled, and Barron Collier stepped in with his own fortune to finance the remaining 31 miles to the Dade County line.

The opening festivities began in Tampa on April 25, 1928, with the main procession driving to Miami over the following days in the motorcade that featured Governor John W. Martin, developer Barron G. Collier, and guests Thomas Edison and Henry Ford. It included stops in Sarasota, Fort Myers, and the grand ceremony in Everglades City.

Without doubt, the opening of Tamiami Trail better-connected the sparse Jewish Floridian population, among its other benefits.

These days, not too many will recognize the significance of Jewish American Heritage Month (JAHM) being so declared

on the date etched in infamy as the birth of Adolf Hitler. I call it a Jewish revenge.

Whenever left unharmed to thrive, we do thrive. And we always have someone amongst us, uniquely knowledgeable and clever, who will point out the seemingly coincidental connectivity between times and events.

As we mark our people's journey out of Egypt into freedom, let us unite in reevaluating whether all the journeys we, the Jews, have joined in since were and/or are actually good for the Jews. When I grew up in the U.S.S.R., I was taught through media and various social demands to condemn and eradicate every sign of Zionism in myself, and the young ones under my charge or command in schools and summer camps.

Then, after my own exodus and settling in Queens, New York, I studied the history of modern Israel. My very demanding, very pro-Israel professor, taught us to love and defend — both verbally and otherwise, if needed — the mothership of Jewish safety, our ancient homeland, which was our ultimate reward back in times of antiquity and, again, in the 20th century.

If anyone Jewish was told then that — not even a half-century later — Jewish people everywhere would be engaged in the daily battle of defending Israel's very right to exist from the individuals, groups, organizations and governments who made discrediting the biblical/Talmudic and historical foundation of the Jewish homeland, Zion, into a modern information war, no one — not even the most disinterested or unconcerned of us — would have believed it.

So, let us unite in choices that will live in history as good for the

Jews this Passover and for all days to come.

Become a member, supporter or volunteer. Sign up for our mailing list at jhsswf.org. Our telephone number is 833-347-7935 (833-JHS-SWFL). Kindly direct all correspondence, including contributions and renewals to P.O. Box #10075, Naples, Florida 34101.

The Jewish Historical Society of Southwest Florida is a section 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Contributions are deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

America's 250th birthday rubric April Jewish highlights

April 1781 – General Washington's order "Send for Haym Salomon" secured crucial funds for the Continental Army's Yorktown campaign.

April 1980 – President Carter issued proclamation No. 4752 for Jewish Heritage Week, authorized by Congress to honor Jewish contributions to American culture and occur in April or May, alternatively.

April 20, 2006 – President George W. Bush declared the month of May as Jewish American Heritage Month, following Congress's unanimous passing of resolutions.

April 26, 1928 – U.S. Highway 41/Tamiami Trail opened to traffic, connecting Tampa to Miami through the Everglades.

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GenShoah's mission is more important than ever

By Ida Margolis and Shelley Lieb

Most of you know that Naples is fortunate in having an outstanding Holocaust Museum. And many of you may know that there is an active group known as GenShoah SWFL that has over 300 members who are second generation (2G) descendants of Holocaust survivors and others interested in our mission.

Our mission of promoting Holocaust education and human rights, preserving the history and memories of the



Ida Margolis and Shelley Lieb

Holocaust, connecting descendants of Holocaust survivors with one another, and supporting the Holocaust Museum



Hank Bitterman (far left) with participants at the Genealogy Workshop he presented.

is more important than ever. This mission, rooted in remembrance, legacy and responsibility, is not a statement of separate goals; it is an expression of a living legacy that recognizes the importance of passing history and stories from generation to generation.

Program planning

When planning our programs for the year, the mission is of the utmost importance. For a number of years a human rights film series is the kickoff of our season. A "Readers & Learners" book group, started by Estelle Kafer, discusses important books dealing with Holocaust history. We bring a variety of members together at a pot luck and a welcome reception. Our genealogy maven, Hank Bitterman, helps members research their family, many hoping to pass on their findings to children and grandchildren.

Passing on history is so important to our group that we started "Portraits of Remembrance," where members write the story of their Holocaust parent(s) and make their stories available to students. Personal stories remain at the heart of remembrance, and when descendants share family history they transform memory into living legacy.


Upcoming programs

This year we are invited to connect with descendants of the Holocaust in Sarasota and Tampa Bay. The Sarasota 2G group is also devoted to continuing the legacy of passing on the truth about the Holocaust.



Erin Blankenship presenting "Dimensions in Testimony" at Beth Tikvah.

We are very fortunate that the President and CEO of The Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center, Erin Blankenship, has personal experience with "Dimensions in Testimony," the special initiative developed by the USC Shoah Foundation that enable people to ask questions that prompt real-time responses from prerecorded interviews with Holocaust survivors. Erin presented a community program where she explained how she worked with the Shoah Foundation to record four interactive testimonies with Holocaust survivors.

A most important annual event is the Yom HaShoah Commemoration where we solemnly remember the 6 million Jews murdered in the Holocaust and honor our local survivors. Join us on April 12, 11 a.m., at Temple Shalom. 


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TEMPLE JUDEA RELIGIOUS SCHOOL
Fort Myers
Tehila Cherubino, Director of Education

Just weeks ago, we celebrated Purim. Our sanctuary was filled with laughter. Children wore crowns and capes. We listened to the Megillah, booed Haman, shared a festive meal and embraced the joy that defines this holiday. And yet, Purim is never only about costumes.

The story of Queen Esther reminded us that behind the celebration stood a very real threat. Haman sought to eliminate the Jewish people. Esther hid her identity

until the moment she found the courage to reveal it and stand tall for her people.

History has introduced us to more than one Haman.

Long before Persia, there was a pharaoh in Egypt, who enslaved our ancestors and sought to break their spirit. In every generation, the faces have changed, but the challenge has remained the same: the attempt to silence, weaken or erase the Jewish people.



Passover reminds us that oppression does not have the final word. Pharaoh's empire crumbled. The Jewish people walked out of Egypt not only physically free but spiritually transformed.

In our homes and classrooms, our children are not just learning holiday traditions. They are learning identity. They are learning courage. They are learning that even in uncertain times, we remain proud, connected and hopeful.

As we gather around our Seder tables

this year, may we pause to reflect on the true meaning of freedom. Not only the freedom our ancestors found, but the freedom we continue to cherish and protect today.

Wishing you and your family a meaningful and joyous Passover. May we know real freedom — freedom from fear, freedom to live safely and courage to stand tall as Jews wherever we are.

חג ש מצח

Chag Pesach Sameach. 



This year, as we celebrated Purim here — safely gathering in our synagogue, dressing up our children, rejoicing together — we held close the lessons of resilience and courage the holiday teaches. And while we celebrated with graggers and joy, we were aware that families in Israel were running in and out of bomb shelters, holding graggers and hope in their hands, finding moments of celebration amid fear.

Behind the laughter and masks, our children are learning something deeper: that Jewish pride is not seasonal, and courage is not the absence of fear.

Now, as we turn to Passover, we move from the hidden miracles of Purim to the open miracles of redemption; from masks to Matzah; from palace plot to parted seas.

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TEMPLE BETH EL RELIGIOUS SCHOOL
Fort Myers
Allison Fego, Religious School Coordinator

This month was filled with celebration, connection and meaningful Jewish experiences for our students and families. From joyful Purim festivities to hands-on Passover learning and milestones in Jewish life, our community came together in beautiful and memorable ways.

Purim fun across the community

We kicked off the month with a joint Purim celebration alongside Temple Judea and PJ Library, bringing together families from across the community for an afternoon of fun and festivity. The celebration featured an array of games inspired by characters from the Purim story, allowing children to engage with the holiday in creative and playful ways.

Students and family members dressed in costume and participated in a lively Purim parade, proudly showing off their outfits. The afternoon also included spin art, a bounce house, Lee County Sheriff's ice cream truck, pizza, popcorn and cotton candy, making it a true Purim carnival experience.

Our families also took part in the Temple Beth El Purim Celebration, where students and parents joined in the Megillah reading and celebrated together in costume. After the Megillah reading, we sang Purim songs and made s'mores. It was

a wonderful opportunity to experience Purim as a full community.

Passover comes alive

After returning from spring break, our Religious School reconvened to celebrate Passover in engaging and meaningful ways for all ages.



Plus-Plus blocks. After a certain amount of time, they presented their creations and read their lines to the other groups. This allowed the students connect to themes of freedom, courage and Jewish identity.

Continuing Hebrew learning

Alongside our holiday celebrations, students continued working diligently on their Hebrew letters and Jewish vocabulary. This month they focused on the letters *Aleph* and *Pey*, and learned key words including *Pesach*, *Elohim*, and *Afikomen*.

Our youngest families, along with Pre-K and Kindergarten students, participated in a family-wide Passover celebration. Religious School parent Alon Gomel, together with Rabbi Luna and members of the Men's Club, presented a lively skit featuring Moses and Pharaoh. They marched in a parade before Alon taught the children how to make matzah by hand.

Seeing our youngest students singing, dancing, crafting and baking matzah together was truly a beautiful experience.

Students in grades 1 through 7 participated in a separate Passover program. Rather than a school-wide Seder, we mixed the classes together, and they worked on retelling the story of Passover. The students were given a certain portion of the story, had time to learn the lines, and build out the part of the story with different types of manipulatives, such as Magna-Tiles, modeling clay, and

Celebrating a B'nai Mitzvah milestone

This month also marked the beginning of a busy 2026 B'nai Mitzvah season. Cyrus Katz was called to the bimah to become a bar mitzvah. He has worked incredibly hard with his Hebrew tutors, Rabbi Luna, and Religious School teacher Morah Zoey to prepare for this moment. Cyrus views his bar mitzvah as a connection with his family and the larger Jewish community by demonstration of shared traditions and beliefs.

We are very proud of Cyrus's dedication and wish him a heartfelt Mazel Tov on this special milestone.

Looking ahead

Jewish Summer of Koach Camp is now open for registration. If you have any questions about Temple Beth El's Religious School, please contact Allison Fego at religiousschool@templebethel.com.




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Passover lessons from the thermostat

By Rabbi David Arias

As a congregational Rabbi, one of the most controversial discussions I've ever been involved in concerns an issue that affects everyone attending services: What's the ideal temperature for the air conditioning at the synagogue?

This apparently funny question can teach us important lessons just before Pesach; making us to reflect on our collective freedom, compared to our personal freedom.

Every Passover table is a bit uncomfortable, but in a good way. We might say, "There are too many people," or "There aren't enough chairs," or "That's not how I like the gefilte fish," or "My mom would never make the matzo ball soup like that," and so on. However, we gather around those large tables to commemorate the birth of the Jewish people, the festival of liberty and freedom.



■ Rabbi David Arias

I would love to set the AC in our sanctuary to 68°F, while others might prefer 76°F, so we settle on 73°F. We accommodate, and we give up, temporarily, a bit of our comfort to enable a collective experience.

Every society is built on this principle, where individuals make efforts to support the common good. We renounce part of our personal freedom to establish a collective one. The extent to which we are willing to sacrifice individual liberty — and how much the community can influence our personal freedom — shapes each country's political approach. But no system works without this compromise.

During the Seder, we recite the ancient words of our Sages, "*Bechol dor vador*," "in every generation, each person should consider themselves as if they had been freed from Egypt." We are redeemed not only as Am Yisrael, as a nation, but also as individuals.

The Haggadah states, "*Keilu Hu yatza mimitzraim*," "as if He was freed from Egypt." The phrase could be in the plural, but true collective freedom requires safeguarding each individual's liberty. Many Torah passages commanding us to remember the exodus are written in the singular.

Every society is built on this principle, where individuals make efforts to support the common good.

This teaches us that whenever we free ourselves, we should ask whether our actions affect others' freedom and whether pursuing collective liberty might infringe on someone's personal rights.

These dilemmas aren't only about setting the temperature or how much matzoh

meal we put in our matzo balls. They influence the bonds between individuals, nations and societies. I believe we must find a balance in these issues. When that balance is disturbed, it can lead to crises, revolutions, or open doors for new opportunities and challenges.

"*Ma Nishtana?*" How will this Pesach be different from last year?

We will celebrate differently this year because no hostages are being held in Gaza while we celebrate the Festival of Freedom. The Israeli people paid a high price, which has been widely discussed, but all of us were willing to pay it. Not for the personal freedom of the hostages — they are a mitzvah to redeem — but for our collective liberty, knowing we won't be free until they are.

For now, I'm glad we can return to discussions about the sanctuary's temperature.

Rabbi David Arias serves at Temple Judea in Fort Myers. 🇺🇸

Passover means "jump" or "leap"

By Rabbi Yitzchok Minkowicz

There is a beautiful passage in the Book of Ezekiel describing the exodus from Egypt: "I passed by you and I saw you and behold your time was a time of love." As our Sages commented: "The time for the fulfillment of the oath taken to Abraham to redeem his descendants had come."

From above, it was clear that it was a moment of destiny. The appointed time for the end of the years of oppression and exile in Egypt had come and redemption was at hand.

There was one problem: the Jews were not worthy of deliverance. They were pagans, worshipping the same deities as their Egyptian masters. Was it fitting that G-d work miracles for such people? To refer to the words of the aforementioned prophecy, "You were naked and bare," as our Sages said, "naked of mitzvos," lacking the merit to warrant G-d's mercy.

What did G-d do? He gave the Jews two mitzvos: the Paschal sacrifice and the circumcision to show their devotion. The circumcision is a sign of the covenant between man and G-d. Moreover, the covenant is in the flesh, and indeed, at the very place of man's most intense desires.

And bringing the Paschal sacrifice involved the ultimate self-sacrifice. The Jews were taking a lamb, the animal the Egyptians worshiped as a deity and setting it aside to be slaughtered. Moreover, they did so in a manner that would certainly attract the attention of the Egyptians,



■ Rabbi Yitzchok Minkowicz

taking it four days before its slaughter and tying it to their bedposts.

Moshe had told Pharaoh, "If we were to slaughter the deity of the Egyptians in their sight, would they not stone us?" Nevertheless, without a second thought, the people were prepared to take that risk to show their commitment to G-d.

Why was it necessary for the Jews to risk their lives?

One of the fundamental principles in Judaism is that rewards are given "measure for measure." The word Pesach, translated as Passover, means "jump" or "leap." The miracles of the exodus represented a leap beyond the natural order, transcending the ordinary pattern of Divine revelation. To merit such miracles, the Jews had to show a corresponding level of commitment, Divine service that represented a true leap beyond self-concern.

"In every generation" — and more particularly, every day and every moment — "a person must see himself as if he himself left Egypt."

For Egypt is not merely a geographical location, and slavery is not merely a condition our people once suffered. The Hebrew term for Egypt, *Mitzrayim*, relates to the term *meitzarim* meaning "boundaries" and "limitations." Leaving Egypt means going beyond one's personal limitations. This should be done in a manner of Pesach, making a radical leap forward.

One of the easiest ways to step beyond oneself is to share with others. So too, our personal journey out of Egypt should

not be a private experience; we should take others with us. For that reason, we celebrate the Passover holidays with our families — and with guests — involving

as many people as possible in reliving the exodus.

Rabbi Yitzchok Minkowicz serves at Chabad Lubavitch of Southwest Florida. 🇺🇸

One of the fundamental principles in Judaism is that rewards are given "measure for measure."



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Look beyond the headlines

By Rabbi Bruce Diamond

We Jews have learned to keep one eye on the horizon for approaching storms while attending to what must be done here and now. It's an old story that goes way back to Nehemiah. Read about it towards the very back our Bible in the Book of Nehemiah, Chapter 4.

I get too easily distracted by the headlines. The “big stuff” that I can't do much about, except get bent out of shape, absorbs too much of my focus. I should keep my eye on a lot more of what is going on all around me that actually requires my attention.

There are so very many casualties resulting from the “big stuff” dominating



■ Rabbi Bruce Diamond

the media: the horrors of willful war and its indiscriminate death, maiming and destruction; the organized uprooting and casting out of hundreds of thousands of folks surrounding us, whose biggest crime is wanting better lives for their families; the rapacious licentious predation by so many powerful men on the defenseless, mostly young women just trying to catch a break; sanctioned strip mining through “reverse mortgages;” deeply discounted life-insurance buy-outs and other scams, kept legal by political hacks of what little our aging workers have been able to accumulate over a life time of relentless labor. And to think, I was just getting started!

There are too many intentional victims to make it possible for the perpetrators to shrug it off as “collateral damage” — the latest iteration of the now-classic “Nuremberg Defense” that by and large did not work then (look up that grotesque Julius Streicher last words, “Purim 1946!”) and will not work in some inevitable, future day of reckoning.

Each one of us must not add to these global casualties by neglecting the ones nearby who have stopped asking us for help out of pride, for fear of our callous judgment, repeated scorn and rejection, ignorance or world-weariness.

That Fourth Child in the Haggadah, “the one that does not know how to ask,” requires us to take the initiative and ask:

“What do you need? What can I do for you?” Stop using the “big stuff” as a dodge.

Is there someone in your family who has given up on your help? Are there people in your neighborhood who need you to make the first move, no matter how awkward it can be? I am sure you'll figure it out. You can do better, and so can I!

Rabbi Bruce Diamond serves at Community Free Synagogue in Fort Myers. 🌍

Each one of must not add to these global casualties by neglecting the ones nearby ...

Sh'Tikah!

By Rabbi Sunny Schnitzer

Chag Sameach! In the Parsha for the Shabbat after our Seders, Chol HaMoed Pesach, we read the remarkable story of an exchange between Moses and God.

Moses has done everything God asked of him: confronted Pharaoh, served as agent for the Miracles of the Ten Plagues and the crossing of the sea, and endured never-ending

complaints from the Israelites. He is tired.

For his service to God and the Israelites, he makes a request that is as *Chutzpadich* as it gets.

“Show me, now, Your glory!”

Give me somethin' man! Let me get to know you better. Satisfy my longing. Ease my doubts that all of this will work out. Soothe my hurt feelings from the

endless *LaShon Hara*, the evil speech perpetrated by my own people. To which God replies, “You will not be able to see My face, for man shall not see Me and live ... you will see My back, but My face shall not be seen.” (Exodus 33: 18-22)

The Hebrew word for back, “*achorai*,” has a dual meaning: back and **after**. “... you will see my **after**.” You will see my effect on you and this world **after** I have passed through this moment — the effect of the Divine in the world. “*Achorai*.”

God cannot give Moses what he wants — a direct encounter — but God has given Moses the Torah: the instructions for living an elevated life, a holy life, a path for humans to become more God-like.

Moses has just come down from the highest high on Mount Sinai and experienced the lowest of the lows: The Incident of the Golden Calf. The Israelites' repudiation of Moses and Aaron's leadership and faith was caused by careless speech in a moment of doubt.

They said, “As for this man Moses, who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we don't know what has become of him.” (Exodus 32:1)

They denied him and what had been done through him on their behalf. Their words and threats to Aaron created a great sin: the worship of an idol, the Golden Calf. As they spoke, it was created. So too our words create our idols. As we speak, we create our world. And that is the danger of *LaShon HaRa*, the evil tongue.

The Israelites weren't lying. Moses had been gone longer than anticipated, and their worries may have been well-founded. They were suffering from unmet expectations, which in my experience is at the root of most expressions of anger.



■ Rabbi Sunny Schnitzer

The Chofetz Chayim, Rabbi Yisrael Meyer Kagan, teaches us that a negative statement is considered *LaShon Hara* even when the information is common knowledge; even when it is founded in truth. For to speak negatively about another person is shameful in and of itself.

There is a teaching in the Jerusalem Talmud that studying Torah is equivalent to all of the other mitzvot combined and the punishment for speaking *LaShon Hara* is equivalent to all other sins combined.

We all have heard the childhood rhyme “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Our rabbis thought differently.

They taught that words have a physical effect. That of the four basic elements of nature — fire, wind, earth and water — the intangible (fire and wind) are far more powerful than the

tangible (earth and water). The same is true in the spiritual realm.

Torah study impacts us like no other mitzvah. Many mitzvot are physical — tsitsit, lulav, shofar, matzah — but Torah study is performed through speech, an extension of the soul.

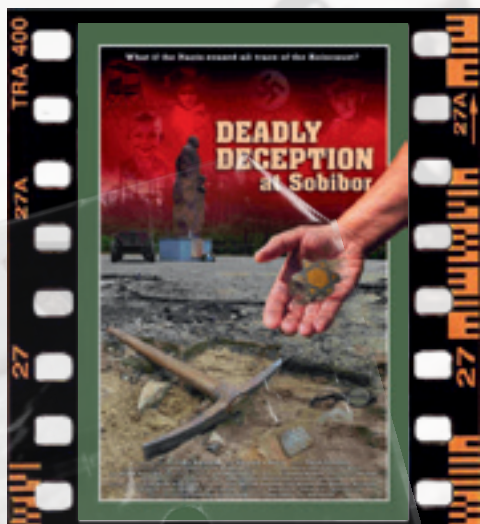
This is also true of *LaShon Hara*. Because it is committed by speech, it too is an extension of the deepest soul and its effect is as profound as Torah study.

So, perhaps the best thing we can do when the urge comes upon us to speak harshly of another, is to observe *sh'tikah* (silence). And to remind ourselves of the verse from Psalm 65, “To You silence is praise.”

When the urge to judge others and speak words that should be best kept to ourselves arises, we should ask, “what are we afraid of?”

Rabbi Sunny Schnitzer serves Bat Yam Temple of the Islands. 🌍

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Taped in Poland, France, Germany, Israel and the United States, the film is narrated by acclaimed actress Tovah Feldshuh. Produced, directed, and written by filmmaker Gary Hochman.

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Matzah and missiles

Reclaiming Passover in a world on edge

By Cantor Barry Butensky

Passover, that ancient rite of remembrance and renewal, begins this year at sundown on April 1, 2026, unfolding over seven days in Israel and eight elsewhere — a season when Jewish households transform ordinary tables into stages for profound storytelling, where the exodus from Egypt is not merely recited but relived through symbols that linger long after the last matzah crumb is swept away.

The Seder, its centerpiece, invites participants to ask why this night differs from all others, prompting a narrative that weaves slavery's bitterness with freedom's fragile triumph, all while the youngest child, wide-eyed, intones the Four Questions amid candlelight and the aroma of roasted shank bone.

Here, families gather around plates bearing *maror*, sharp horseradish evoking the lash's sting, alongside *charoset*, a sweet mortar of apples and nuts that softens the memory of forced labor, and *matzah*, flat and hurried, reminding us how haste once meant survival. The Haggadah, that adaptable text passed down through generations, guides the evening with songs, blessings, and pauses for reflection, its pages often annotated by modern hands that insert contemporary laments: refugees at borders, hostages in tunnels, the weight of endless cycles of violence.

Yet this Passover arrives not in quiet anticipation but against a backdrop of unrelenting storm — the U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran, now in their fourth day (at the writing of this article), have shattered any pretense of restraint, with Tehran ablaze under precision bombs that claimed the supreme leader's life and left craters where command centers once stood. Iranian missiles arc toward Jerusalem, Hezbollah rockets streak from Lebanon, and the Strait of Hormuz teeters on closure, sending oil prices soaring as markets convulse in fear of broader disruption.

Smoke rises over Tehran, thick and ominous, a stark counterpoint to the Seder's flickering candles, yet both scenes speak to the same human frailty: power unchecked breeds destruction, just as Pharaoh's arrogance once invited plagues. In homes across the diaspora, Seders this spring may linger longer on the Ten Plagues, fingers dipping into wine to spill



■ Cantor Barry Butensky

drops for each affliction, a ritual that refuses to celebrate suffering even when victory seems near.

Today, those drops fall heavier, echoing the civilian tolls in Beirut and Tehran, the U.S. pilots lost over Kuwait, the protests swelling in cities from Los Angeles to London.

The economy, too, mirrors the holiday's theme of scarcity: matzah's leaven-less austerity feels less symbolic

when grocery bills climb and gas pumps drain wallets faster than ever. Brent crude oil, once hovering in the \$60s, now pushes toward \$80 a barrel — a spike that ripples through supply chains, inflates costs for everything from bread to shipping, and threatens to stall recovery in fragile post-pandemic economies.

Freedom, Passover teaches, is never free, nor is it permanent. It demands vigilance, compromise, and the courage to question authority, whether that authority wears a crown or wields missiles.

In this moment, the Seder's call to empathy — recalling that "we were strangers in the land of Egypt" — resonates with painful clarity: hostages still held, families displaced, leaders trading

lives for leverage. Some tables will add a fifth cup for peace, an Elijah's goblet left untouched, symbolizing hope deferred; others will debate whether "next year in Jerusalem" sounds like aspiration or irony amid sirens and rubble. The holiday insists that liberation is collective, not solitary; that true exodus begins when chains are broken not just for one people, but for all.

So as April nears, amid headlines of escalation and charts of surging prices, Passover offers no easy answers, only a stubborn insistence on memory's power: to remind us that oppression, once tolerated, metastasizes; that freedom, once won, must be defended daily; and that even in darkness — whether from ancient plagues or modern war — the act of gathering, questioning and toasting resilience remains an act of quiet defiance.

Raise your glass, then, not in triumph, but in resolve. The sea may part again, but only if we keep walking. *Chag Pesach Sameach.*

Cantor Barry Butensky serves at Temple Beth Shalom in Cape Coral. 🕊

**Freedom,
Passover teaches,
is never free,
nor is it
permanent.**

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(ADDING "SYMPOSIUM" ON THE SUBJECT LINE)



Program of the Day
The program is presented "In Conversation"

Why Women are Special -

The first session will present a Keynote Speaker delivering remarks about "Why Women are Special" for 20 +/- minutes with a Q & A to follow. She will explain why women's care has been different from men's care over time and it does lead to differences in treatment, although it is starting to change in recent years. Following the Q & A, a Break is set for standing up, stretching, taking a healthy snack which will be provided or using facilities.

Women's Life Cycle-

The second session will be a panel discussion about a "Women's Life Cycle" focusing on various aspects not all but such as: postpartum depression, IVF, perimenopause, menopause, anxiety and depression. This session has a different moderator and is a two (2) person panel - one doctor from NCH and Lee Health. The timing is 30 minutes for the panel and a Q & A to follow the same as above.

Know Your Body-

The third session will also be a panel discussion about the #1 cause of Women's Death and therefore also a health issue in women's lives: the Heart. This session has a different moderator and is a two (2) person panel - one doctor from NCH and Lee Health. The structure and timing are the same as above.



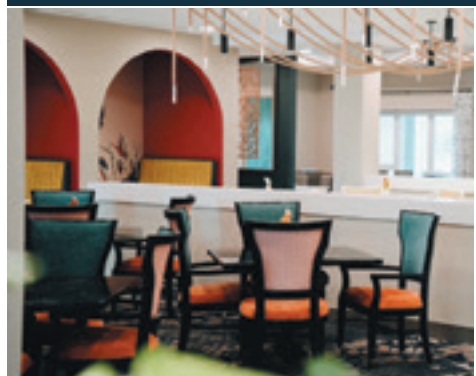

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Passover perfection isn't required

By Rabbi Nicole Luna

For many, Passover is not the easiest holiday to observe. It involves the elaborate service and ritual of the Seder, wrapped up in an elaborate and traditional meal. The Seder itself involves 15 steps, and if you're cooking the traditional Passover foods, you're spending a lot of time in the kitchen on matzah ball soup, charoset, brisket, a kosher for Passover dessert.

Every Passover, people tell me, often a little sheepishly, "Rabbi, it's just too much this year" — the planning, the cooking, and even, for some, being with a large crowd. Passover, I've come to realize, can inspire some good old-fashioned Jewish guilt; that whatever you're doing can't compare to the Seders of old with homemade gefilte fish and special China just for the holiday.

The irony is that one of the most iconic moments in the Passover Seder is the singing of "Dayeinu," when we go through all the things God has done for us, and after each one we reassure God, that would have been enough. *Ilu hotzianu mi'mitzrayim*, if God had only take us out of Egypt, "Dayeinu." That would be enough. *Ilu natan lanu et HaShabbat*, if God had only given us Shabbat, that would be enough.

So can we take some of this reassurance we give God, and grant ourselves a little grace that whatever we're doing for Passover is, in fact, enough?

Now, I realize putting some matzah out and calling it a day is not exactly the same as God taking us out of Egypt. In fact, many scholars throughout the centuries were entirely uncomfortable with the song "Dayeinu."

One line in "Dayeinu" reads, "If God had split the Red Sea for us and not brought us through it on dry land. Dayeinu." But really? The 18th Century Rabbi, Baruch Epstein, writes, "Isn't the whole miracle at the Red Sea that God split the sea and allowed us to cross through the sea? One doesn't make much



■ Rabbi
Nicole Luna

sense without the other. So how can we say that it would have been enough for God to have split the sea and not brought us through it?"

His answer is that there were other ways the Israelites could have crossed the Red Sea besides on dry ground. In Deuteronomy, God even threatens to send the Israelites back to Egypt by boat (Deuteronomy 28:68). The Israelites could

have waded through knee-deep water, swam, made rafts or boarded a ship. The real purpose, the important message, is not **how** we crossed the sea, but that we crossed, that we are free.

For each verse of "Dayeinu," it's not that we don't want God to have helped us cross the Red Sea, given us Shabbat, revealed the Torah, or brought us to the Promised Land. But the details are not what matter; the particulars are not the point. There's a spiritual message behind each verse of "Dayeinu:"

**Passover, I've
come to realize,
can inspire
some good
old-fashioned
Jewish guilt.**

we are free; we deserve rest; we have Torah within us; we have a connection to a holy land. These spiritual messages transcend the details.

So when it comes to Passover, if you forget the parsley but appreciate the spring flowers and birds chirping, "Dayeinu." If

you skip a step of the Seder, but engage in deep conversation about freedom and hope, "Dayeinu." If the brisket turns out dry or you decide to order in, but you have matzah on the table to remember that we were slaves, "Dayeinu." If you don't have matzah on the table but you donate to an organization to help the stranger, the poor, the vulnerable, "Dayeinu."

Passover is more than the 15 steps of the Seder; it's more than the details of the menu. It's a holiday about identifying with the stranger, those with burdens to carry, those who are vulnerable to the whims of tyrants. It's about appreciating what it means to free, ensuring our freedoms continue and maintaining hope.

Rabbi Nicole Luna serves at Temple Beth El in Fort Myers. 🕊️

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of Lee & Charlotte Counties

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TEMPLE BETH EL
Fort Myers

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One of the most fun projects is making Hamantaschen for Purim. Over the course of three days, 12 volunteers made clouds of flour and got sticky with fillings while making 600 Hamantaschen for our annual fundraiser and services.

The joint Temple Beth El and Temple Judea Purim Carnival was also great fun! The TBE Purim bags were all picked up, and the event was topped off with Megillah and Marshmallows.

Mazel tov

Cyrus Katz was called to the Torah as a bar mitzvah on March 7. Cyrus is in 7th grade at Bonita Springs Middle Center for the Arts. He is involved in the school's theater, choir and National Junior Honor Society (NJHS) program, enjoys reading and is a lifelong learner.



Cyrus Katz

He would like to thank his parents for raising him and always being there, as well as his brother, grandparents, aunt and uncle for their support.

He views his bar mitzvah as a connection with his family and the larger Jewish community by demonstration of shared traditions and beliefs. He believes in the tenets of Judaism which teach morals. His favorite memory of TBE's Hebrew School is learning about values and sharing the experience with his classmates.

Looking ahead

Passover is upon us with the Temple's Second Night Seder on April 2, 5 p.m., at the DoubleTree hotel. This Seder, led by Rabbi Luna, promises spiritual fulfillment and a delicious meal in community. Please register online.

Enjoy the voice of Cantorial Soloist Rebecca Gladstone at the April 3 services.

Michelle Citrin returns as part of the Leslie Luzar Memorial Cantorial Series at the April 10 services, 7:30 p.m.

Men's Club says "Farewell for Now" with brunch at Skillets in University Village on April 12 at 11 a.m. Men's Club members **only** please. Register through the calendar by April 9.

Women's Simcha Circle has a free workshop on April 12 at 2 p.m., open to all women navigating careers, families and life. Professional business coach and member, Toby Ferrel, will speak goal-setting, commitment and follow-through. Register through the calendar.

Sisterhood's Ladies Who Lunch is Thursday, April 23, 12:30 p.m. Bring a \$5 bill for the optional 50/50 drawing. Remember, neither Sisterhood nor Temple membership are required, but **registration online is required.**

Yom Ha'Atzmaut is Israel's Independence Day. Join our service Saturday, April 25, 11 a.m.-1 p.m., followed by an Israeli Luncheon. Register through the calendar by April 21.

Sunday, May 24, Jewish Veterans Post 400 will join the Rabbi for Memorial Day and Shavuot Yizkor services at the TBE



Carol Mitnik, Reina Schlager, Pam Arkin and Mitch Levine making Hamantaschen

Garden of Memories Cemetery (located in the Fort Myers Cemetery) at 9:30 a.m. See the calendar for details

Did you know?

Temple Beth El has a warm, welcoming and informal "Jews By Choice" group who meet monthly via Zoom. Join this friendly, non-judgmental atmosphere on Thursday, April 30, 8 p.m. For more information email d.wineinger@yahoo.com.

Do you love to sing? Our choir has openings! Email your contact information to james.waldorf@sbcglobal.net.

Recurring programs

Don't forget our recurring programs:

- Non-perishable collections in the lobby shopping cart whenever the Temple is open.
- Torah study, led by Rabbi Luna, Saturday mornings at 9 a.m. via Zoom. No prior study experience is required.
- Book club is April 8, 1:30 p.m., via Zoom (check calendar for log on details). The selection is "The Gates of Gaza: A Story of Betrayal, Survival, and Hope in Israel's Borderland" by Amir Tibon.

• Tot Shabbat, a kid-friendly service, is April 10 and May 1 at 6 p.m. Bring your kids, bring your grandkids. Please RSVP 239-433-0018 so we have enough for all attending.


• History & Heritage of Our People is the third Tuesday of the month, 7 p.m., via Zoom.

• Shabbat services: Fridays at 7:30 p.m., live in the sanctuary, via Zoom and streaming on Facebook.

• 12-Step Recovery Group: Saturdays at 11 a.m. via Zoom. We are seeking a path to recovery via Judaic spiritual principles and the 12-Steps using "Twelve Jewish Steps to Recovery" by Rabbi Olitzky and Stuart Copans, M.D., second edition.

There's always something happening, and our members make it happen: Current Events, Coffee & Chat, Theology & Life, Francophone & Hispanophone groups, Solo Travelers, and Caring Visitors.

Follow us on Facebook and/or Instagram: @TempleBethElFortMyers. You can always contact the office at 239-433-0018.

Temple Beth El ... **where everyone matters.** 

TEMPLE JUDEA
Fort Myers

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Join us for celebrations in April at Temple Judea.

Temple Judea Religious School continues on Sunday morning and Tuesday afternoon with Tehila Cherubino and her teachers. Shabbat B'Kef Shabbat services for families will not take place this month.

Temple Judea Preschool is alight with fun and learning for our young children.

Information about adult education classes by Rabbi Arias is available on the website or through the office at 239-433-0201.

Join us for Pesach services

- Thursday, April 2, 9 a.m., Shacharit Pesach

- Thursday, April 8, 9 a.m. Shacharit Pesach and Yizkor

Don't miss Second Night Seder at Temple Judea on Friday, April 3, 6:15 p.m. For additional information., contact our office at 239-433-0201, visit our website, and/or look for our ad in *L'Chayim*.

Friday, April 17, 6:30 p.m. – *Shabbat T'kumah* (Shabbat of the Revival);

Musical Shabbat followed by Israeli Shabbat dinner. RSVP required.

Saturday, April 18, 9:30 a.m. – Shabbat T'kumah Shacharit service followed by festive Kiddush and a special class with Rabbi Arias: "The Secret Appearance of Independence Day in the Torah."

Sunday, April 19, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. – Yom Haatzmaut Celebration. Come enjoy Israeli crafts for kids, pita baking, Israeli dancing, face painting, hummus and falafel, make your Hebrew shirt, and a Yom Haatzmaut ceremony.

To participate in Hazak, contact Joyce Rosinger at girosinger@gmail.com or 239-437-1566.

To participate in Nashim's Women's Circle contact Linat Bahar at linatbahar@gmail.com.

Ongoing programs

Temple Judea continues to accept food donations for the Cadkin Foundation Food Pantry at Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties. There are collection envelopes near the front door for contactless monetary or gift card contributions.

Contributions may be mailed. Please call the office to ensure your contribution has been received.

Temple Judea is conducting in person services with an online Zoom option. Synagogue members can use the Zoom ID and password as published in our weekly megillah. Non-local residents may contact the synagogue for information.


Co-president Jan Klein will be available at Temple Judea on Monday mornings from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Regularly scheduled events

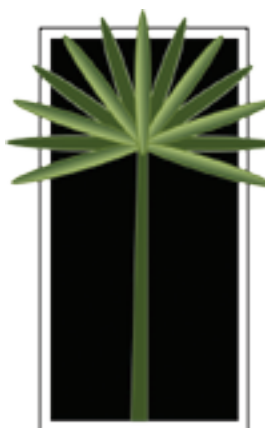
- Friday evening Shabbat services, 6:30 p.m.

- Saturday morning Shabbat services, 9:30 a.m. Kiddush luncheons are served every Shabbat. If interested in sponsoring a Kiddush, please contact JoAnn Lewin at jalewin2@aol.com.

- Morning minyan Monday, 9 a.m.

You can always find out about our activities by checking our website. We would love to see you in person or via Zoom. 

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As I write this, I just came in from watching a full lunar eclipse. Watching the beauty of the moon gradually disappear — and then reappear while turning a bright red — was exhilarating. As I watched, the beautiful red started fading into the encroaching dawn. I turned around and saw a magnificent sun rising over the horizon. I marveled at the beauty of nature, how things fade, turn dark, and then come to life again



I was thinking about that in our lives and in our synagogue; how, during Covid, things seemed to fade and synagogue life fell apart. Then, gradually — almost imperceptibly — things started coming to life again. I was thinking how last night at Purim, our Religious School roared to life with a wonderful Purim skit; how our sanctuary was full of festive, costumed members and friends; how they all participated at the top of their lungs with cheers and jeers, and the laughter that permeated the air.

I was thinking about how we did not have a Rabbi or Cantor after Covid, but we somehow managed to continue; about how the congregation embraced the Cantor, and how he has helped get us to where we are now. I was thinking about the Sunday Brunches with Cantor Butensky and the Tuesday Conversations; how they have grown and how eagerly people participate in the discussions. It is amazing how our Saturday morning Torah services are eagerly anticipated and how attendance at all services has grown.

Speaking of growth, we are grateful for all of the new members who have come



to us from varied backgrounds, ages and experiences. They enrich our lives and became part of our TBS family.

I was also thinking about our recent concert with Cantor Azi Schwartz and how everyone said that it was too big for us and that we couldn't pull it off. But we did, and it was amazing! I was thinking about how Cantor Butensky has encouraged us to think big, to reach for the stars and how if we don't reach the stars, we will reach the sky or even the tree tops.

By the time this article reaches you, it will almost be time for Passover. I encourage you to join us for the Second Night Seder. Experience the warmth of the congregation for yourself; the joy we experience when we are together; and

the spirituality, musical ability, and fun of our Cantor as he leads the Seder. Last but not least, taste the delicious food prepared by our excellent cooks for a truly homemade meal. If you would like to join us, send an email to templebethshalomcommunications@gmail.org, and we will send you a link to RSVP. The cost is \$40 per adult and \$20 for children ages 5-13.

Just as the lunar eclipse awed us with its reddish glow and the sun followed with the beautiful sunrise, Temple Beth Shalom will follow the glow of Passover with many more fun and inspiring activities. To find out what amazing activities we have coming up, please visit our website, templebethshalomcc.org, and subscribe to our weekly newsletter. 📧

TEMPLE SHALOM
Charlotte Harbor & the Gulf Islands

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At Temple Shalom Port Charlotte, we pray, but we also play.

Game Day

February's Game Day drew a large crowd of all ages. As you might expect, Mahjong was the favorite, with several tables of three to six players going simultaneously. Others played Rummikub and card games.

At Temple Shalom, the Center for Jewish life in Charlotte County, fundraisers are usually fun-raisers and this was no exception, with door prizes, a 50/50 drawing and a raffle.

Rabbi-for-a-night

Many members of Temple Shalom take part in leading worship. On March 5, members of the Brotherhood gathered on



Naomi Alexander, the force behind Temple Shalom Game Day every year, oversaw another success.

the bimah and shared the role of Rabbi-for-a-night. Dr. Alan Solomon provided the d'var Torah.

Coming up

On April 2, the congregation will gather for a second night Seder, led by Rabbi Marc Kline.

Events at Temple Shalom in Port Charlotte, including Shabbat services held every Friday at 7:30 p.m., are open to all.

Temple Shalom is located at 23190 Utica Avenue in Port Charlotte. For additional information visit templeshalomfl.com. 📧



Temple Shalom members enjoying Game Day in February



Temple Shalom member Alvin Lubiner, one of the Brotherhood members who shared in the leading of worship

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CHABAD LUBAVITCH OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA
Fort Myers

(239) 433-7708 • www.Chabadswf.org

Please feel free to join Chabad Lubavitch of Southwest Florida (5620 Winkler Rd., Fort Myers, FL 33919) for the Month of Nissan. The April/Passover Schedule of Prayer, Torah study, Passover Seders and holiday celebrations are as follows:

Tuesday, March 31

- Search for Chometz, 8:09 p.m.

Wednesday, April 1

- Morning prayers, 7:00 a.m.
- Eat Chometz until 11:22 a.m.
- Burn Chometz by 12:19 p.m.

- Evening prayers and Torah study, 7:15 p.m.
- Light candles at 7:27 p.m.

Holiday of Passover – Saturday, April 4

- Prayer service, 10:00 a.m.
- Kiddush, 12:15 p.m.
- Evening prayers and Torah study, 7:15 p.m.
- Havdallah, 8:20 p.m.

Holiday of Passover – Tuesday, April 7

- Candle lighting, 7:29 p.m.
- Prayer service, 7:30 p.m.



Chabad Purim celebrations

- Candle lighting, 7:26 p.m.
- Prayer service, 7:30 p.m.
- **First Passover Seder, 8:30 p.m.**

First day of Passover – Thursday, April 2

- Prayer service, 10:00 a.m.
- Evening prayers and Torah study, 7:15 p.m.
- Light candles after 8:19 p.m.
- **Second Passover Seder, 8:30 p.m.**

Second Day of Passover – Friday, April 3

- Prayer service, 10:00 a.m.

Holiday of Passover – Wednesday, April 8

- Prayer service, 10 a.m.
- Evening prayers and Torah study, 7:15 p.m.
- Light candles after 8:23 p.m.

Holiday of Passover – Thursday, April 9

- Prayer service, 10 a.m.
- Yizkor service, 11 a.m.
- Evening prayers, 7 p.m.
- Moshiah's Feast, 7:30 p.m.
- Havdalah, 8:23 p.m.

Friday April 10, 17 and 24

- Prayer service, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday April 11, 18 and 25

- Kabbalah, 9 a.m.
- Prayer service, 10 a.m.
- Evening prayers and Torah study, 7:30 p.m.

For Passover Seder information and to join, please call 239-433-7708, email Chabad@Chabadswf.org, or visit our website: Chabadswf.org. We look forward to celebrating with you!

Looking back, we'd also like to reflect on two special events: the Purim celebration and our recent trip to Israel.

Purim celebration

The Purim celebration at Chabad Lubavitch of Southwest Florida brought the community together for an evening filled with joy, tradition and unity. Families and friends gathered to hear the Megillah, enjoy a festive seudah and celebrate the timeless story of courage and faith. It was a beautiful opportunity for people of all ages to connect with Jewish tradition and with one another in a warm and uplifting atmosphere.

Trip to Israel

Our recent trip to Israel was a deeply meaningful and inspiring experience. Visiting the Holy sites and connecting with the land and people of Israel strengthened our sense of heritage, faith and unity. It was a powerful reminder of the enduring bond between the Jewish people and our homeland. 🇮🇱



Rabbi Yitzchok and Shani Minkowicz praying in Israel for our Jewish community

Daily prayers at Chabad

In memory of Reb Leima ben Naftali Hertz, Rabbi Yitzchok Minkowicz's father Ob'm.

Where

Chabad Lubavitch of Southwest Florida
5620 Winkler Rd., Fort Myers, FL 33919

When

- Sunday – 8 a.m.
- Monday through Friday – 7 a.m.
- Saturday – 10 a.m.
- All evenings – 6 p.m.

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Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties Presents

INTERFAITH LUNCH BUNCH

Community • Conversation • Connection

Join us for a warm and welcoming afternoon of good food and great company.

Enjoy a *delicious Israeli lunch* while connecting with friends from across our community.

🕒 Wednesday, April 22 | 12:00 PM

📍 Lakes Regional Library
15290 Bass Rd, Fort Myers

— Open to the entire community —
Registration required — space is limited

➔ Register online: JewishFederationLCC.org/calendar

Questions?
✉ Elizabeth@jfedlcc.org

**COMMUNITY FREE SYNAGOGUE
Fort Myers**

(239) 247-4556 • www.fortmyerssynagogue.com

The Community Free Synagogue meets on the Unity Campus (11120 Ranchette Road in South Fort Myers).

A priceless gift

The Rabbi supplied the *Megillah* and worship materials to the congregation of Ahavat Yisrael in Itonko, Uganda. In return, he received the accompanying photo of the Abuyudayah young people acting out the Scroll of Esther during this year's synagogue Purim celebration — priceless!



A new CFS banner

Once again, we are most grateful to Jeff and Judi Bayer of Signarama Fort Myers for creating and donating our new spectacular 4'x6' outdoor banner for use at events around the area. The Bayers donated our last banner, which held up amazingly well and provided great service for more than 20 years. If you've been asking Heaven for sign, you better hope it's from Signarama!

We're hoping you had a chance to see our new CFS banner during the Federation's Jewish Heritage Day festival on Sunday, March 22 at the Boston Red Sox's Jet Blue Park stadium. Our volunteers had a terrific time baking and giving away hundreds of free samples of our artisan homemade Passover *matsot* and miniature Sabbath *hallot*!

Other special thank-you's

Still there are some things that are just



The Rabbi attempting to duplicate Gerry's chrain in 2024



Baron and Kim Cohen with Rabbi and Mrs. Diamond at the 2019 CFS Community Seder

too hard to make at home for our special events. That's why CFS remains indebted to Publix for its Community Giving Program and its continued support of our Community Free holiday dinners.

Their generous donation to this year's First Night Seder will cover our special expenses such as lamb shanks, fresh horseradish root and parsley for the Seder plates, eggs and matsah meal for the matzoh-ball soup and more.

dish, salad, a bottle of wine or dessert. There is no charge for the meal.

Qabbalat Shabbat begins at 7 p.m., followed by a social hour. Our worship generally follows a traditional format; however, Torah is often read with the Rabbi giving a short significant talk each week. The service is highly participatory, egalitarian and in keeping with the positive, joyous spirit of the Sabbath.



The Abuyudayah young people in congregation Ahavat Yisrael

At this year's Seder, we will pause to remember two very special men who took our Passover celebrations to the next level and then higher: Baron Cohen and Gerry Friedman. Baron and Kim Cohen, through their premier Cohen & Cohen Catering, provided the traditional foods and desserts for this festive meal, while Gerry prepared gallons of his trademark gourmet Five Alarm *chrain* horseradish sauce. Their memories endure in so many ways and continue as we once again enjoy Cohen & Cohen Catering's down-home Passover cooking.

Jerry's *chrain* continues to add its unique warmth thanks to our food *maven* Doni Stokes, who's keeping the carefully guarded Friedman recipe alive for us! (Note: The Rabbi made an attempt two years ago using protective gear but couldn't handle it!)

Upcoming programming

Shabbat Eve begins each week at 6 p.m. with a traditional meal, followed by worship at 7 p.m. with a social hour at its conclusion. If you plan to attend dinner, consider bringing a non-dairy dish, side

The Rabbi teaches Torah via Zoom every *shabbat* morning starting at 9:30 a.m. Login information is on the synagogue's website, fortmyerssynagogue.com. If you do not operate a computer, the rabbi will arrange for you to join him at his home as he teaches and leads the Torah discussion. At almost 30 years, it is the longest, continuous, weekly Jewish adult education gathering in Southwest Florida, attracting committed students from throughout the U.S., Israel and Africa. Join us and grow into it!

This year our Community Free First Night Seder is Wednesday evening at our *shul* on the Unity Campus. It remains free and open to the first 80 reservations. Invitations were sent out in mid-February and very few places remain available. You can learn more by emailing synfree@comcast.net. Priority is given to those willing to volunteer their efforts for this event.

Being able to provide everything free always creates a sweet harmony and wonderful positive energy, inviting the miraculous, and growing and sharing it for all who seek what mere money cannot buy. 🌍



MOVING?

TAKE L'CHAYIM WITH YOU!

Don't forget to contact us with your change of address to continue receiving L'CHAYIM

Send changes to brigarcia@jfedlcc.org



jewishfederationlcc.org

BAT YAM TEMPLE OF THE ISLANDS
REFORM

Friday evening services at 7pm at the Sanibel Congregational United Church of Christ,
2050 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel
Spiritual Leader and Cantor:
Rabbi Sunny Schnitzer
President: Janice Block Chaddock
Vice Presidents:
Sandra Teger, Annette Pacyga
Email: batyamsanibel@gmail.com
Website: batyam.org
Services: October through April
For more information on our service times and programs, please write to batyamsanibel@gmail.com or PO Box 84, Sanibel, FL 33957

CHABAD
OF BONITA SPRINGS/ESTERO
ORTHODOX

24611 S. Tamiami Trail
Bonita Springs, FL 34135-7024
Rabbi Mendy Greenberg
Phone: 239-949-6900
Web site: JewishBonita.com
Services: Saturday at 10:00 a.m. followed by a Kiddush

CHABAD JEWISH CENTER
OF CAPE CORAL
ORTHODOX

1716 Cape Coral Pkwy. W.
Cape Coral, FL 33914
Rabbi Yossi Labkowski
Phone: 239-963-4770
E-mail: info@chabadcape.com
Web site: chabadcape.com
Sunday - Friday 8:00 A.M Shacharit
Friday Evening 5:30 P.M.
Saturday Kabbalah Class 9:00 A.M.
Shabbat Services 9:30 A.M.
Kiddush Luncheon 12:00 P.M.
Hebrew School of the Arts Sunday 10:00 A.M - 12:30 P.M.
JLI Classes Monday 7:00 P.M.
Torah Study Tuesday 7:30 P.M.
Women's Weekly Class Wednesday 11:30 A.M.

CHABAD OF CHARLOTTE COUNTY
ORTHODOX

424 W Henry St
Punta Gorda, FL 33950
Rabbi Simon Jacobson
Phone: 941-833-3381
E-mail: chabadpg@yahoo.com
Web site: chabadofcharlottecounty.com
Services: Saturday at 10:00 a.m. followed by a kiddush
Torah study: Wednesday at 8:00 p.m.

CHABAD LUBAVITCH
OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA
ORTHODOX

5620 Winkler Road
Fort Myers, FL 33919
Rabbi Yitzchok Minkowicz
Phone: 239-433-7708 • Fax: 481-9109
E-mail: rabbi@chabadswf.org
Web site: chabadswf.org
Services: Friday 5:15 p.m.;
Saturday Kabbalah
class 9:00 a.m.; Shacharit 10:00 a.m.;
Kiddush at noon
Minyan: Monday & Thursday 7:00 a.m.

SYNAGOGUES &
JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS
IN LEE & CHARLOTTE COUNTIES



www.JewishFederationLCC.org

COMMUNITY FREE SYNAGOGUE
CONTEMPORARY TRADITIONAL

The Unity Campus 11120 Ranchette Road
Fort Myers, FL 33966
Phone: 239-247-4556
E-mail: synfree@comcast.net
Web site: fortmyerssynagogue.com
Sabbath Eve Dinner every Friday at 6:00 PM followed by worship at 7:00 PM
Torah Study on Zoom every Sabbath morning from 9:30-11:00 AM
Meeting Room ID: 527 117 7864
Passcode: 435419
Rabbi Bruce Diamond, D.D.
Cantoral soloist Traci Pavel

CHAVURAT SHALOM OF SWFL
CHAVURA

PO Box 722
Sanibel, FL 33957
Chavuratshalom@gmail.com
Web site: chavuratshalomofsouthwestflorida.org
Cheryl Fulmer, President
Shabbat services - 7:30 p.m. every Friday
Schmooze - 7:30 p.m. 1st Tuesday
Torah Talk - 7:30 p.m. 2nd Tuesday
Current events - 7:30 p.m. 3rd Tuesday
Speakers - 7:30 p.m. 4th Tuesday

TEMPLE BETH EL
REFORM

16225 Winkler Road, Fort Myers, FL 33908
Rabbi Nicole Luna
E-mail: rabbiluna@templebethel.com
Learning Tree Preschool Director: Ronni Vega
Ronnilearningtree@gmail.com
President: Michael Altman
Email: President@templebethel.com
Phone: 239-433-0018
Office Manager: Karen Kagan
Email: manager@templebethel.com
Web site: templebethel.com
Shabbat services: 7:30 p.m. Friday
Torah study 9:00 a.m. Saturday
Religious School: 9:30 a.m.- Noon Sunday
Mazel Tots (0-5 yrs. old). Sunday 11:00 a.m.
Religious school coordinator: Allison Fego
Religiousschool@templebethel.com
Judaica Gift Gallery
Affiliated: Union for Reform Judaism

TEMPLE BETH SHALOM
REFORM

702 S.E. 24th Ave., Cape Coral, FL 33990
President: Helene Glocer
Phone: 239-772-4555
Spiritual leader: Cantor Barry Butensky
Email: templebethshalomcommunications@gmail.com
Web site: templebethshalomcc.org
Services: 7:30 p.m. Friday
Saturday morning Torah Service/Torah study twice monthly at 10:00 am
Enrichment night every Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom.
Shabbat 10:30 a.m.

TEMPLE JUDEA
CONSERVATIVE

14486 A&W Bulb Road
Fort Myers, FL 33908
Rabbi David Arias
E-mail: rabbi@tjswfl.org
Co-Presidents: Jan Klein & James Mann
E-mail: giaof3@gmail.com
Religious School Coordinator:
Tehila Cherubino
E-mail: tehila@tjswfl.org
Preschool Director: Suki Kelly
templejudeapreschool@gmail.com
Phone: 239-433-0201 • Fax: 239-433-3371
E-mail: tjswfl@gmail.com
Web site: tjswfl.org
Services: 6:15 p.m. Friday and 9:30 a.m. Saturday Minyan: 9:00 a.m. Monday
Religious School: Sun. 9:30 a.m. - noon;
Wed. 4:30 - 6:00 p.m.
Early childhood education: Preschool, M-F, ages 18 months-5 years;
"Mommy & Me," 12 months-2 years
Affiliated: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

TEMPLE SHALOM CHARLOTTE
HARBOR AND THE GULF ISLANDS
REFORM

23190 Utica Ave., P.O. Box 494675
Port Charlotte, FL 33949-4675
President: Judith Migdol
Phone: 941-625-2116
E-mail: Shalompc06@gmail.com
Web site: templeshalomfl
Organizations: Sisterhood; Brotherhood
Affiliated: Union for Reform Judaism

SHALOM LIFE CENTER
TRANS DENOMINATIONAL

Rabbi Lawrence Dermer
Phone: 239-218-3433
Email: info@shalomlifecenter.org
Web site: shalomlifecenter.org

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

- AIPAC
(American Israel Public Affairs Committee):
Lynda Adler & Ian Noy - 617-676-7567
- AJC (American Jewish Committee):
Brian Lipton - 941-365-4955
- Anti-Defamation League: 561-988-2900
- B'Nai B'rith International: 941-302-4500
- Chabad Jewish Student Life at FGCU
Rabbi Mendel Gordon - 347-452-0489
mendelgordon@gmail.com
- Chevra Kadisha: Taryn Sasser
- Generations of the Shoah SWFL: 263-9200
- Hadassah - Collier/Lee Chapter:
Joyce Toub - 518-330-1559
- Hazak 55+ Chapter:
Joyce Rosinger - 239-437-1566
- Israel Bonds: Regional Headquarters:
800-622-8017
- Jewish Community Services:
239-481-4449
- Jewish National Fund:
Joshua Mellits, Director, Western Florida
941-462-1330 ext. 865
Memorial Tree Planting in Israel
1-800-542-8733
- Jewish War Veterans:
Post 400: Commander
Harvey Charter - 239-246-3151
- Mikvah Bashka of Southwest Florida:
Nechamie Minkowicz - 239-822-2784

This Passover, Let's Rise Together

Dear Friends,

This Passover, as we gather around the Seder table, we are reminded that freedom, hope, and resilience are strongest when we are together. Just as the Israelites relied on one another, our community thrives through unity, connection, and shared strength. Through your support, our Federation ensures that we can stand together, honoring our traditions and celebrating our Jewishness as one vibrant, caring community.

This year, we have a powerful opportunity to turn those values into action.

Thanks to a generous matching gift, **new gifts in 2026 will be matched** – doubling the impact of your generosity. With this momentum, we are asking our community to rise together and **donate to our 2026 Annual Campaign now**, so we can fully unlock this match and meet the growing needs before us.

Why give now?

Because the strength and security of our Jewish community depend on it. Your support helps ensure a vibrant, safe, and connected Jewish life – today and for generations to come. Not just at our Federation events, but around the community.

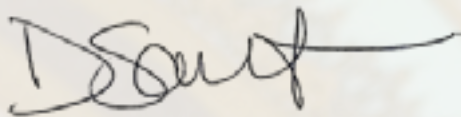
Because Jewish education and outreach shape our future. From children to adults, education builds identity, continuity, and pride. Outreach opens doors, welcomes new faces, and ensures no one feels left out of Jewish life.

Because there are people who need help right now. Locally, and overseas, too many individuals and families are struggling to put food on the table, afford essentials, or navigate difficult moments alone. Your gift brings dignity, support, and hope.

Please consider making your Passover Campaign gift today and help us reach our goal together.

Thank you for your partnership, your compassion, and your belief in a strong Jewish future. With gratitude and wishes for a meaningful and joyous Passover.

Warmly,



Debbie Sanford
Executive Director



Sherri Zucker
Campaign Chair



Keep an eye on your mailbox – our Annual Campaign pledge request is on its way. You can also make your pledge anytime at JewishFederationlcc.org/annual-campaign.