



HAPPY HANUKKAH

May your candles burn long, your blessings be many, and your heart be full of peace & light.

From the Board & Staff of the Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties



L'CHAYIM

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December 2025 / 5786

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Volume 48, Number 4

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- 7 Community Focus
- 12 Jewish Interest
- 20 Commentary
- 21 Organizations
- 25 Focus on Youth
- 27 From the Bimah
- 31 Temple News



Honoring Special Donors

Plan to attend an elegant Major Gifts Dinner evening in December.
p. 4

First Annual Menorah Lighting Celebration

Join us for this community-wide event at Bell Tower Dec. 18.
pp. 4 & 29

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

Lights, Camera, Inspiration! *join us* **Community Breakfast**

Guest Speaker

SAUL BLINKOFF

Disney & Netflix Filmmaker * Motivational Speaker

Saul Blinkoff is a celebrated film director, producer, and motivational speaker whose career spans work with major studios like Disney and Netflix. Deeply rooted in Jewish culture, Saul often draws upon his heritage to inspire stories of purpose, resilience, and identity. Whether through animation or public speaking, he weaves Jewish values such as perseverance, community, and faith into his work, encouraging audiences of all backgrounds to live with meaning and intentionality.

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L'CHAYIM invites correspondence on subjects of interest to Jewish people. Partisan political opinions will not be published, but opinions on subjects affecting the Jewish community are welcome. All inquiries regarding copy for **L'CHAYIM** should be directed to the editor. All news material must be very clearly printed or typed (not in all-capital letters) and double-spaced. Electronic submissions encouraged. The editor reserves the right to edit for space and content.

Photographs should be clear, black-and-white or color prints. If you wish a photograph returned, include a stamped, self-addressed envelope of appropriate size.

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JANUARY ISSUE

EDITORIAL

DEADLINE:

Tuesday, December 2



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

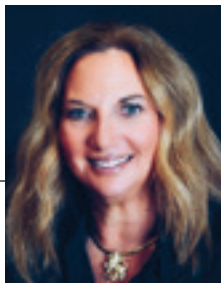
A Jewish Community that is based on Jewish values such as Tzedakah (benevolence), Tikkun Olam (repairing the world) and K'lal Yisrael (taking responsibility for one another).

The power of community

Come celebrate Hanukkah together at Bell Tower!

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

■ **Debbie Sanford**



Let me start by saying that I am very excited about this, so I wanted to share some more information. I think it is a really nice event for our community, something joyful, and I encourage you to participate.

On Thursday, Dec. 18, at 6 p.m., our Jewish community, for the first time, will gather at Bell Tower for a family-friendly Hanukkah celebration. A large menorah, at the center of the event, was purchased by Bell Tower for our community. The evening will be filled with music, Israeli dancing, sufganiyot, chocolate gelt, crafts and the warm feeling of being together.

Hanukkah is a treasured holiday at home and in our synagogues. Lighting candles with family, enjoying latkes at the kitchen table and celebrating with our congregations are traditions that make the Festival of Lights so meaningful. None of that changes. The Bell Tower celebration

is not meant to replace anyone's personal or congregational observance. It simply adds something special: the power of community.

Coming together in a public space reminds our neighbors that Jewish life is vibrant and present here. It gives our children a chance to see other Jewish families celebrating the same holiday. It gives adults a moment to connect with old friends and make new ones. It brings light, pride and joy into the center of our city.

This year's celebration will feature entertainment, activities for all ages, traditional treats and a grand menorah lighting that you won't want to miss. Whether you stay for the whole program or just stop by after lighting candles at home, your presence matters. When we stand side by side and share the miracle of Hanukkah with the wider community, we strengthen one another, and we know we are **stronger together!**

Mark your calendars for Thursday, Dec. 18. Bring your family, your friends and your holiday spirit. Let's fill Bell Tower with light, laughter and community as we celebrate Hanukkah together! Don't forget to wear your Hanukkah gear or blue, white and silver! ☺

Federation earns ENPY Award nominations

By Debbie Sanford, Executive Director

I am **beyond** incredibly proud to be included among the nominees for this year's ENPY Awards, presented by the Community Foundation of Cape Coral. The Foundation does so much to highlight and celebrate the outstanding nonprofit work being done across our region, and it is truly an honor to be recognized alongside so many inspiring organizations and individuals.

Seeing Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties named multiple times on the list fills me with so much pride and gratitude for our dedicated staff, volunteers and supporters who make

our impact possible every day. This recognition is a testament to the strength, compassion and collaboration within our Jewish community and the broader community we serve.

We have been nominated in the following categories:

- Arts and Culture Advancement Award
- Community Catalyst Award
- Food Security Advocate Award
- Executive Leader of the Year

To see the complete list of nominees, visit CharitableCommunity.org. ☺

THIS MONTH'S ADVERTISERS

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Ajax Paving Industries.....14

Alliance Financial Group....16

Anago.....27

Clarity CPA.....13

Classy Car Service.....33

Doubletree by Hilton.....17

Elite Estate Services.....13

FineMark Natl. Bank
& Trust.....34

Fort Myers Memorial
Gardens.....31

Ginsberg Eye.....3

Gordon's Pool &
Spa Service.....33

Green Schoenfeld & Kyle..33

Gulf Coast Orthodontics....25

Lyons & Lyons.....7

Kushner & Kushner.....33

Margaritaville.....21

Mobile Massage.....16

PCC Tile & More.....33

Publix.....5

Scott Geller Eye Specialists..11

Senior Housing Solutions...24

Snyderman's Shoes.....33

Taschner Periodontics.....20

The Bagel Factory.....33

Temple Judea.....7

Temple Beth Shalom.....35

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or Brigarcia@jfedLCC.org.**

A season of reflection, service and hope

By Monica Wildonger, JFS Case Manager & Food Pantry Coordinator

The Jewish High Holidays have drawn to a close after a meaningful and spiritually rich season. These sacred days provided an opportunity for reflection, renewal and reconnection with our faith and community.

During this period, the JFS Food Pantry observed closures on Oct. 2, 8 and 15 in observance of the holidays. Despite these necessary pauses, our commitment to serving those



■ Monica Wildonger

The holidays were marked by many cherished traditions and moments of unity. Yet perhaps the most profound event was the release of the remaining hostages who were still alive on Simchat Torah — a moment that brought both relief and renewed faith to the Jewish people worldwide.

As we move forward, we remain guided by the resilience, compassion and hope that define our community.

Donations of food are always welcome and greatly needed — especially canned vegetables, tomato sauce, jelly and cereal.

As always, monetary donations to the pantry are deeply appreciated and help us continue serving those who rely on our support.

The JFS Food Pantry is open Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., serving residents of Lee and Charlotte counties.

For more information, please contact us at 239-481-4449 ext. 1.

Am Yisrael Chai — The people of Israel live. 



in need remained unwavering. Throughout the month, we were able to assist 843 individuals with food support and distribute diapers to 55 clients, ensuring that essential needs continued to be met.



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An Artists' Program from Partnership2Gether

GLOBAL COMMUNITY OF ARTISTS
Hadera-Eiron, Southeast U.S. & Czech Republic Consortium



Join artists from the Hadera-Eiron Jewish communities for creative collaboration exploring identity, heritage, and shared values.



Who Should Join?

Established or emerging visual, photographic, sculptural, and mixed-media artists who identify as Jewish

Program Details

- (4) 10 week program cycles
- Thematic prompts inspired by Jewish values
- Online collaboration & showcases
- Quarterly Zoom gatherings





For more information & to register, contact Debbie Sanford at debbiesanford@jfedlcc.org



TOGETHER we can make a Difference

 Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties

INDIGENT FUND PACESETTERS

The Federation expresses special gratitude to our Indigent Fund Pacesetters for the example they set for the rest of us.

Anonymous	The Cadkin Foundation
Naomi Bloom	Taryn Sasser
Toni & Stuart Morgenstein	Lynn & Lory Kirby
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The Jewish Federation loves our GENEROUS DONORS

FOOD PANTRY / MARCIA CAN HELP

Temple Judea	Victor Gold
Temple Beth El	Naomi Bloom
Shalom Dancers	Sylvia Simko
Rabbi Nicole Luna & Joseph Bord	Russell Bogen
Brian & Mindi Simon	Esther Jahnke
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Jewishfederationlcc.org



Celebrate, connect and learn

Join the festivities!

By Amy Hallock, Community Events Manager

The season of connection, celebration and community is here — and Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties



Amy Hallock

has an exciting lineup of events you won't want to miss! From inspiring speakers to culinary experiences and meaningful holiday gatherings, there's something for everyone to enjoy as we come together to celebrate Jewish life, learning and culture.

Major Gifts Dinner

December

Our Major Gifts Dinner will be held in December for our special donors, featuring an elegant evening and a distinguished guest speaker. This year's dinner promises to be memorable.

Community Breakfast

Dec. 7, 10 a.m., DoubleTree at Bell Tower

We'll kick off the month with our annual Community Breakfast, featuring special guest Saul Blinkoff — a Disney and Netflix filmmaker, motivational speaker and storyteller. Blinkoff's message of living a life of meaning and purpose will inspire you to dream big and take action. This event is always a favorite and tickets are selling out fast — don't wait to register!

First Annual Menorah Lighting Celebration

Dec. 18, 5-7 p.m., Bell Tower Shops

Join us as we light up the night at our First Annual Menorah Lighting Celebration at Bell Tower! This community-wide event will bring families and friends together for a joyous evening filled with music, treats and celebration. Everyone is welcome to attend and share in the light and unity of Chanukah.

Linda Idelson Culinary Event

Jan. 12, 2026, 6 p.m., Canterbury School

We're thrilled to present the Linda Idelson Culinary Event, hosted in the beautiful Charles & Linda Idelson Kitchen at Canterbury School. This special evening will celebrate food, culture and community in true Federation style. For more details, see the ad on the back page.

The following sponsorship opportunities are now available.

\$175 Sponsor: Includes two tickets, two cookbooks, VIP seating and a meet-and-greet experience.

\$250 Sponsor: Includes three tickets, three cookbooks, VIP seating and a meet-and-greet experience.

Don't miss this one-of-a-kind culinary celebration — sponsorships are limited!

30th Annual Jewish Film Festival

Kicks off Feb. 1, 2026

Our beloved Jewish Film Festival returns for its 30th year, featuring 30 films to mark 30 years of cinematic storytelling. From

powerful documentaries to inspiring narratives, this year's lineup will transport audiences and spark conversations throughout the community.

Jewish Heritage Day

March 22, 2026,

Red Sox Fenway South

Mark your calendars for a fan-favorite event! The annual Jewish Heritage Day returns with this year's theme, "Jews Got Talent!" Start planning your act now and get ready to showcase the amazing talent within our community while enjoying a great day at the ballpark.

Open House

As we look forward to an exciting and meaningful season ahead, we also want to thank everyone who joined us at our Open House at Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties on Oct. 29. It was wonderful to connect, share and celebrate together!

To learn more about upcoming events, sponsorship opportunities or to register, visit jewishfederationlcc.org/calendar.

Let's make this season one of connection, celebration and community pride. I look forward to seeing you at our events! 🌟



Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties' Open House



The light. The love. The latkes.

Brighten your candles and your kitchen with the Chanukah favorites your family loves. Explore at publix.com/chanukah.





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



YOU MAKE IT HAPPEN!

TRIBUTES

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.

A personalized tribute card will be sent to the honoree or bereaved on your behalf, reflecting a personal message if you wish.

In Memory of Pete Smith

Debbie Sanford & Lee Strauss

In Honor of Suzanne Orkin's Birthday

Barbara & Doug Gribin

Robin & Bruce Jacobs

In Honor of Betty Massie's Birthday

Barbara & Doug Gribin

jewishfederationlcc.org/tribute-memorials

Stay **connected**
& **informed.**



Sign up for the Shalom JFED Newsletter

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

jewishfederationlcc.org/newsletter

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

What do you think?

L'CHAYIM wants to know!

Send your letters and comments to Sharon Hood, L'CHAYIM Editor, at sharon@marketcrank.com.

Letters Policy

Letters must include the writer's full name, full address and daytime phone. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. We reserve the right to edit for length and/or accuracy. Letters do not necessarily reflect the viewpoint of L'CHAYIM nor its advertisers. We cannot acknowledge or publish every letter received.

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Upcoming GenShoah SWFL programs

By Ida Margolis and Shelley Lieb

We are excited to share the following upcoming programs, but don't forget to RSVP!

GenShoah Member Brunch Potluck Gathering

Sunday, Dec. 21, 11 a.m.
The location (a private residence) is to be determined. **RSVP is required**; email liebro@gmail.com.


Come together with other members of GenShoah SWFL in an informal setting to schmooze and feed each other. This event includes a discussion of "Hanna's Suitcase" by Karen Levine, but you don't need to have read the book to enjoy the talk led by Linda Denning.

Open House/ New Member Reception

Tuesday, Jan. 27, 2026, 10 a.m.
Located at the Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center. **RSVP is required**; visit hmcec.org
This event, for all GenShoah members and survivors, includes a guest

presentation, "They Were Children: Rescue as Resistance," by Emily Murray. The Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center will host the event, offering light refreshments and a short tour of the Museum for anyone interested. A special invitation to join us is extended to new members.

Special event to recognize GenShoah: "Dimensions in Testimony"

Tuesday, Feb. 3, 2026, 7 p.m.
Located at Beth Tikvah. **RSVP is required**; email office@bethtikvah.us.
Beth Tikvah invites all GenShoah members as special guests to hear Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center President and CEO Erin Blankenship talk about her experience with "Dimensions in Testimony." The project, from the USC Shoah Foundation, enables people to ask questions that prompt real-time responses from pre-recorded video interviews with Holocaust survivors and other witnesses to genocide. 



Emily Murray

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FORT MYERS, FL 33908

4:00-5:30 PM

RSVP: TEHILA@TJSWFL.ORG





At the Holocaust Museum

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

As we approach the end of 2025, I want to express my gratitude for the members of our community who support our mission: “teach the lessons of the Holocaust to inspire action against hatred and to promote mutual respect.”

Because of your support, we are able to reach thousands of individuals in Southwest Florida with the stories of local Holocaust survivors that illustrate the power of resilience, hope and community. Because of outreach efforts that began last year, we ended the 2024-25 school year having reached over 44,000 students through 52 schools in 10 Southwest Florida counties.

Our popular community engagement programs — PopUp Museum Exhibitions, Survivor and 2G Presentations, and private events held at the Museum — are booking fast this season. Our calendars are rapidly filling up for 2026, so don't delay in reaching out to us! For more information on our education programs, contact Katie Butte at katie@hmcec.org. For more information on the community engagement programs, please contact Julie Cohen at Julie@hmcec.org.

None of this important work would have been possible without the help of individuals like you and that of other generous donors like the Harvey D. and Janet G. Cohen Foundation; Jewish Federation of Greater Naples; Ray Foundation Inc.; June Hirsch Jones Foundation Inc.; the State of Florida's Division of Arts and Culture; Suncoast Credit Union Foundation; Collier Community Foundation; and others.

Holocaust Torah

A very special object is now on display in the Museum through March 2026: Temple Shalom's Holocaust Torah. Through a unique partnership with the Temple and the Memorial Scrolls Trust, the Museum is honored to share the Torah's remarkable survival story with a much wider public audience.



■ Erin Blankenship

Recently seen at the community's annual Kristallnacht Commemoration, the Torah is one of 1,564 Czech Torah scrolls rescued during World War II and preserved by the Memorial Scrolls Trust, an English organization that has allocated the scrolls to synagogues and museums all over the world. This particular scroll, written in 1874, was found in a synagogue built in 1821, in a Jewish community dating back to the 13th



Boxcar Exhibition visitors at the Bonita Springs Library;

century. In 1941, the Nazis deported the small remaining Jewish community to concentration camps.

Exhibitions

Our current exhibition, “Painting the Irena Sendler Story,” features the original paintings by Bill Farnsworth illustrating the children's book, “Irena Sendler and the Children of the Warsaw Ghetto,” written by Susan Goldman Rubin. The exhibition

will be on display through Dec. 15 in the Estelle and Stuart Price Gallery.

We were pleased to host “An Evening with Bill Farnsworth” last month. Farnsworth discussed his experiences collaborating with children's book authors Susan Goldman Rubin and Ruth Vander Zee to create illustrations for their Holocaust-themed children's books, such as “The Anne Frank Case” (Rubin) and “Eli Remembers” (Vander Zee).

Our next exhibition, “Holocaust by Bullets,” is presented in cooperation with Yahad-In Unum, a global humanitarian organization founded in 2004 by its president, French priest Father Patrick Desbois. The organization is dedicated to identifying and commemorating sites of Jewish and Roma mass executions in Eastern Europe during World War II. The exhibition will be on display from Jan. 6 through April 13, 2026.

The Luncheon

We look forward to hosting The Luncheon, our annual winter fundraising event, at the Vineyards Country Club on Dec. 3. This year's program features a special presentation by critically acclaimed director and photographer Gillian Laub, who created the Live2Tell Project, which documents the



Student field trip

testimony of Holocaust survivors through photographs. Several photographs from the project will be displayed, including a photograph of Marcel Fachler, a survivor who has worked with our Museum.

I'm excited to share that while in Naples, Laub will transform the Museum into a photo studio for a day! She and her Live2Tell team will photograph and interview several local Southwest Florida survivors for the project. All of us are looking forward to seeing their photos become part of the Live2Tell project, and we will share them with the community when they do.

Many thanks to our Luncheon Committee for their hard work on what will be a memorable event: Co-chairs Nina Diamond and Marjie Zucker, and committee members Debbie Annes, Michele Brotman, Margo Ceresney, Ellen Englander, Maureen Lerner, Judy Leventhal, Estelle Price, Sandy Roth and Mindy Sterns.

Looking forward to 2026

The year 2026 marks the Museum's 25th anniversary! We're celebrating with a season of memorable programs and events. Among them: complimentary admission — by RSVP to hmcec.org — for International Holocaust Remembrance Day; book talks by Dr. Alex Kor and Dr. Jacob Flaws; a Holocaust Film Series at Paragon Pavilion Theater in Naples; a new exhibition of photographs from our permanent collection by WWII Signal Corps filmmaker Ken Regale; and more.

Also, please save the date for Triumph 2026, which will take place at the Arthrex Conference Center on Wednesday, March 4, 2026. For the latest updates, visit hmcec.org, follow us on Facebook and Instagram, and sign up for our monthly e-newsletters on the website.

On behalf of our Board of Directors

and staff, I wish you and your families a Happy Hanukkah, and a healthy and joyous new year! I hope to see you soon at the Museum! 🌟



Gillian Laub



Rabbi Miller of Temple Shalom with the special Holocaust-era Torah

Little Learners at Temple Judea

Sunday program for families with children under four

By Abby Pezzi, Little Learners' Coordinator

Our Sunday program for families with young children is off to an amazing start this year! Our meet-ups give families a wonderful opportunity to connect and learn together. Each week, our tots enjoy hands-on crafts, from decorating their own tzedakah boxes to creating colorful rain sticks while learning the story of Noah's Ark. They also love singing new songs with the rabbi and spending time



together on the playground, which is always a highlight! It's been such a joy watching our youngest community members explore Jewish learning through play, creativity and song — and we can't wait to see what the rest of the year brings. We invite all families with young children to join us for upcoming sessions and be part of the fun! We meet several Sundays each month starting at 9:45 a.m. To join this free meetup, email me at abbyepezzi@gmail.com.

Upcoming JHSSWF events

By Marina Berkovich, JHSSWF President

The Jewish Historical Society of Southwest Florida has some exciting and important upcoming events. Don't miss out!

“Soviet Jewry Movement and the Moon”

Dec. 18, 3 p.m., via Zoom only
The life of longtime Society friend Norm Winski's uncle, Abe Silverstein, is woven like a spy story. A top engineer and manager from the days of NASA's predecessor, NACA, he helped send men to the moon, retired, and later worked on freeing Soviet Jewry. This is a joint event with Jewish-Russian Cultural Alliance, whose many members are here due to Silverstein's initiative. Attendance is free, but you must register to get a Zoom link. To register, visit

jhsswf.org/upcoming-events/. Make sure not to miss it!

Florida Jewish History Month 2026

You won't want to miss this two-event major fundraiser held during Florida Jewish History Month in January 2026.

Event 1 – Southwest Florida Jewish History Luncheon

Sunday, Jan. 4, noon-3 p.m.,
Nina Iser Jewish Cultural Center
Marcia Jo Zerivitz's mesmerizing “Jews of Florida” lecture, previously recorded, lets you discover many fascinating historical facts, trace Jewish origins and follow the trail of Florida Jewish history she helped create in our state.

Event 2 – “A Jewish Visionary: Jane Schiff”

Thursday, Jan. 22, 2 p.m.,
Nina Iser Jewish Cultural Center
Join us for the premiere of a new film from the locally produced Telly Award-winning Southwest Florida Jewish Pioneers Series: “A Jewish Visionary: Jane Schiff.” Meet the

incredible family behind the JFGN artwork, whose names appears on the dedication plaque. Fundraiser tickets cost \$85 per person and admit one person to both events. You may attend either event or both. Reserve your seats at jhsswf.org/upcoming-events/.



Israel Day & Jewish Advocacy Day in Tallahassee A Two-Day Mission of Unity, Advocacy & Action

Join Jewish leaders, advocates and allies from Greater Naples and across Florida for a powerful two-day experience in the heart of our state's capital.

- Promote understanding of Florida-Israel relations
- Educate attendees on state-level legislative priorities
- Advocate for Jewish community interests
- Showcase Israeli innovation

Visit jewishpb.org/israeldaysflyin for more information and to register. \$199 per person.

RSVP Deadline: December 22, 2025



Organized by the Palm Beach Center to Combat Antisemitism & Hatred in Partnership with the Israeli Consulate of Florida, the Jewish Agency for Israel, the Florida Legislative Jewish Caucus and Jewish Federations statewide:

Greater Miami Jewish Federation • Jewish Federation & Foundation of Northeast Florida Jewish Federation of Broward County Jewish Federation of Greater Naples • Jewish Federation of Greater Orlando Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties • Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County • Jewish Federation of South Palm Beach County Tampa Jewish Community Centers & Federation The Jewish Federation of Florida's Gulf Coast • The Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee

Marcia Can Help

a fund of the Jewish Federation and Jewish Family Services, provides for emergency nutritional needs through our Food Pantry, gift card distribution, and crisis grants to prevent utility cut-offs, evictions, loss of transportation and other essential services without which none of us can live.

Inspired by the recognition that these needs must be addressed in our community, and as a tribute to Marcia Cohen, a long-time resident of Sanibel and social activist. Her husband Jack established the **MARCIA CAN HELP** fund in 2017.

Help us meet these pressing needs by contributing to the **MARCIA CAN HELP** fund.

For further information please contact
Debbie Sanford at (239) 481-4449 ext. 6 or debbiesanford@jfedlcc.org



Jews By Choice

The last Thursday of each month

By Dawn Wineinger, Temple Beth El member and volunteer

Discuss the delights and challenges of converting and reconnecting at Jews By Choice. We meet in a relaxed and comfortable format — via Zoom — on the last Thursday of each month from 8 to 9 p.m.

Jews seeking to reconnect with their roots, as well as recent converts and those exploring conversion, are encouraged to attend. If you are rediscovering Judaism,

considering the process of converting to Judaism, or are in the conversion process, we invite you to attend Jews By Choice.

If you have questions and/or need to talk with like-minded individuals in a friendly, non-judgmental 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

Are you looking for a path to recovery? We invite you to experience this Jewish 12-step program and discussion group, whether you are recovering from alcohol, drugs and/or other addictions such as food, gambling, sex, shopping, etc.

Our guidebook is “Twelve Jewish

Steps to Recovery” by Rabbi Kerry Olitzky and Stuart Copans, M.D., second edition. We meet on Saturdays at 11 a.m. via Zoom.

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

Nar-Anon support meetings

By Joann Goldman

Nar-Anon Family Groups, a 12-step fellowship that offers a recovery program for those affected by someone’s addiction, will be meeting in the community room at Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties.

The disease of addiction can affect family members and friends of addicts physically, emotionally and spiritually. In

the group meetings, these family members and friends share their experiences, strengths and hopes to help each other and themselves.

Addiction is a family disease. It affects the relationships of those close to the addict: parents, spouses, siblings, children, longtime friends and employers. If someone’s addiction is affecting you, first you must help yourself. Just

come to a meeting. You will hear 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 over 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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All sorts of Jewish-connected movies and a French series

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.

There are five new films with a Jewish connection this month, but only two open "wide" in movie theaters: "Ella McCay" and "Anaconda." Two others are Netflix films that open for a week in a few movie theaters so they can be eligible for Oscars, then premiere on Netflix a couple of weeks later. The last, and the least, is a Hallmark Channel "holiday season" film.

"Ella McCay"

Opening on Dec. 12, the film is set in late-2008. Ella McCay (Emma Mackey) is the lieutenant governor of an unnamed state. She is getting ready to take over from Governor Bill, the state's longtime incumbent (played by **Albert Brooks**, 78). Gov. Bill is taking an Obama cabinet post.

Jamie Lee Curtis, 66, co-stars as Helen McCray, Ella's aunt. **Julie Kavner**, 75, has a supporting role as Estelle, Ella's secretary. Kavner also narrates the film.



James L. Brooks, 85 (!) directed and wrote the film. I recommend you read his Wikipedia entry. I can only touch on his amazing career: a news reporter in the mid-'60s, he moved to creating, writing and directing TV shows in the late '60s (and later). Here are a few: "Room 222" (the first one), "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," "Rhoda" (co-starring Julie Kavner), "Taxi", and "The Simpsons" (co-creator).

Brooks has made nine films. Three films he wrote and directed were huge hits: "Terms of Endearment," "Broadcast News" (co-starring Albert Brooks), and "As Good as It Gets." Brooks' last film was "How Do You Know" (2010), a romantic comedy. It flopped with critics and moviegoers.

I am totally rooting for an 85-year-old legendary talent who has won six Oscars!

"Anaconda"

This action-comedy-horror film opens in theaters on Dec. 25. A 1997 film named "Anaconda" became a cult horror film over time, and it spawned four pretty cheesy sequel films. The 2025



film begins with two pals, Doug (**Paul Rudd**, 56) and Griff (**Jack Black**, 56), going to the Amazon to re-make their "fave" flick: the 1997 "Anaconda" film. Well, things go badly — largely due to a very nasty real anaconda.

Ione Skye, 55, has a supporting role as Doug's wife. She's best known as John Cusack's love interest in "Say Anything" (1989). Her mother is Jewish. Her (estranged) father is Donovan, a '60s folk-rock star.

"Wake Up Dead Man: A Knives Out Mystery"

Opening in a few theaters on Nov. 26 and premiering on Netflix Dec. 12, this film is the third mystery-comedy film in the "Knives Out" film series. Daniel Craig reprises his role as Benoit Blanc, a master detective. The film's stars include Glenn Close, Josh Brolin, and **Mila Kunis**, 42. Kunis plays Geraldine Scott, a local police chief.

"Jay Kelly"

This comedy-drama opened in a few theaters on Nov. 14 and begins streaming on Netflix Dec. 5. The stars include George Clooney, **Adam Sandler**, 59, Laura Dern, and Billy Crudup. The film follows the friendship between Jay Kelly, a famous actor (Clooney) and his manager, Ron Sukenick (Sandler). As they travel, they reflect on many aspects of their lives.

The film was directed by **Noah Baumbach**, 56, and he co-wrote the film. He grew up in Brooklyn, the son of a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother. He's not religious, but he recognizes his career was

greatly influenced by his Jewish background.

He previously made two outstanding films for Netflix. He directed and wrote "The Meyerowitz Stories" (2017) and "Marriage Story" (2019). Sandler gave a fine performance as Danny Meyerowitz and **Scarlett Johansson**, now 40, received a best actress Oscar nomination as Nicole (the wife) in "Marriage Story."

"The Hunt"

On Dec. 2, AppleTV+ will premiere "The Hunt," a French language thriller series that was filmed in France. Two episodes will air on the third, followed by one episode a week until Dec. 31.

Melanie Laurent, 42, a French Jew, has a star role. She had large roles as a Jewish woman in two hit American films: "Inglourious Basterds" (2009) and "Beginners" (2010). She's won two César Awards, the "French Oscars."

"Oy to the World!"

The Hallmark Channel makes about 30 original Christmas films every year. In 2022 and 2023, Hallmark finally made two good Hanukkah themed films: "Hanukkah on Rye" and "Round and Round." In 2024, they produced a so-so interfaith holiday film: "Leah's Perfect Gift".

"Oy to the World!" premieres on Dec. 14. It's another not-very-good inter-

faith romance film. (Suggestion: Take advantage of the one-week free Hallmark subscription. You can probably view the 2022 and 2023 films.)

Long ago, Hallmark made good films for CBS. "Loving Leah" (2009) is a great Jewish, Hallmark-CBS movie that is now available on many free aps, such as Tubi, Plex, etc. 🌐



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Finding happiness

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

By Rabbi Barbara Aiello

Nan looked up from her Kindle and observed the man she'd been married to for over 40 years. "Kurt, you're pacing, and when you're pacing I know something's not right."

"OK, so I'm pacing; what's the big deal?" was Kurt's defensive response. Undaunted, Nan continued, "The big deal is that something's bothering you. I'm here. I'm listening. So, you'll tell me."

Reluctant as he was to open up, Kurt knew it was time to talk. After all, it had been over a month and Kurt felt miserable. He said, "Rosh HaShanah usually picks me up, but this year, no. It's the news, the politics, the war and the nasty talk all around. Our kids and grandkids live far away and nice as it is, the virtual hugs just don't cut it. For some reason I feel like something's missing. I ... I ..."

Nan looked closely at Kurt. Were those tears in his eyes? The year had been difficult. Several close friends had passed away, but only now did Nan realize how deeply unhappy Kurt was.

What do our traditions teach us about happiness? What can we do, if anything, to overcome sadness? According to Tzvi Freeman, the famous sage, the Ba'al Shem Tov had an answer ("How the Baal Shem Tov Changed the Way We Think About Happiness," Chabad.org). A respected rabbi who lived in Poland in the 19th century, his name means the "man who has an excellent reputation." He brought about major changes in the Jewish religion. He encouraged rabbis to refrain from a focus on the negative and instead teach the people how to have a joyful relationship with God.

How is happiness achieved? Rabbinic sages from historical to modern times have interpreted the Ba'al Shem Tov's teachings and applied them to our lives. According to Leon Zernitsky, these teachings emphasize principles that alleviate sadness and lead us to living in joy ("Eighteen Joyous Quotations of the Ba'al Shem Tov," Chabad.org).

Trust and celebrate

Imagine that God's loving presence is continually with you and protecting you. Remember that you are bound to the Creator, and the Creator is bound to you. You are never alone.

Sincerity and joy

When you do something out of love for God and your fellow human beings, do so with no ulterior motive. In other words,



■ Rabbi Barbara Aiello

take an action because it is the right thing to do, and not because you expect something in return.

God will save us

Be joyful in the knowledge that when you have troubles, the God of your understanding will come to your rescue — with a fresh perspective, a new thought, an idea of how to approach and solve a problem.

Joyous studies

Find a subject that interests you and study it with energy and great joy. When you immerse yourself in study you will reduce disturbing thoughts.

The happy ascetic

We all want the good things in life but do not permit an obsession — like a desire for a vacation, a bigger house, the latest electronics, more money, etc., lead you into depression. On the contrary, celebrate that you have the capacity to overcome these desires and remain grateful for what you have.

God is in your words


When you pray, meditate or reflect, visualize that God is invested within the letters

and the words that you choose. Zernitsky writes that "Words are the clothing for your thoughts." Clothing that is neat and clean brings out a person's inner beauty. Your words of prayer provide the same sort of clothing for God's presence as well-spoken words bring out your inner thoughts.

The Baal Shem Tov taught that in every

word you speak, you should intend to sweeten a relationship. This means that you must let go of the harsh approach of finding fault or criticizing and instead enter a mode of compassion, seeking out the positive.

Finally our sages believed that "The joy we are talking about is not the screaming and shouting of a crazed fanatic. It is joy with a purpose, for when we offer a helping hand to another, when we marshal our efforts to bring happiness to our world, we find that 'we are living in joy.'"

Rabbi Barbara Aiello served the Aviva Campus for Senior Life as resident rabbi for 10 years. Her most popular columns are now published in her recent book, "Aging Jewishly," available on Amazon books. Rabbi Barbara lives and works in Italy where she is rabbi of Italy's first Reconstructionist synagogue. Contact her at Rabbi@RabbiBarbara.com. 



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Ketubah: Ancient Jewish marriage document

And it still works today!

By Arlene Stolnitz

Occasionally, I hear from readers requesting an article on a particular subject. Recently, such a request came from my Sarasota editor, Heidi Lurie, suggesting I write about *ketubot* (plural). I decided it was an interesting topic to research.

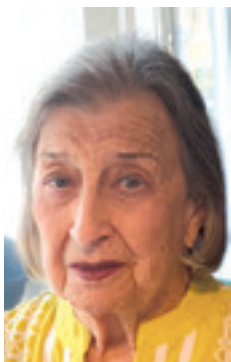
If you have ever been married and are a Jewish woman, I am sure you have a *ketubah*. A *ketubah* is a replica of an ancient marriage contract written in Aramaic, the lingua franca of the Near East dating back as early as the sixth century B.C. It specifically spelled out the groom's responsibilities to the bride, guaranteeing his financial as well as conjugal and marital obligations.

In ancient times the *ketubah* provided security for a Jewish woman in a society which had little or no protection against economic insecurity. It was, in specific terms, a legal document that ensured a safety net for women. Think of how revolutionary that was for its time!

Ketubot can be traced back to Biblical times. When a father agreed to an arrangement for his daughter to marry, he was, in fact, agreeing to the loss of a contributing member of his household. The *ketubah*, an arrangement between families, was viewed as compensation for this loss.

But it was much more than an agreement for the union. Besides guaranteeing the wife's financial security, a *ketubah* was important in cases of divorce or the husband's death. In ancient days, an Israeli woman could not own land which made her economically dependent on her father, husband or son (for example, the daughters of Zelophehad).

Thus, the bride was provided protection against loss of income during adversity. Often a guaranteed sum of money was required and was paid in silver pieces. Provisions for any children and the wife's continued support were also included. It was a business arrangement.



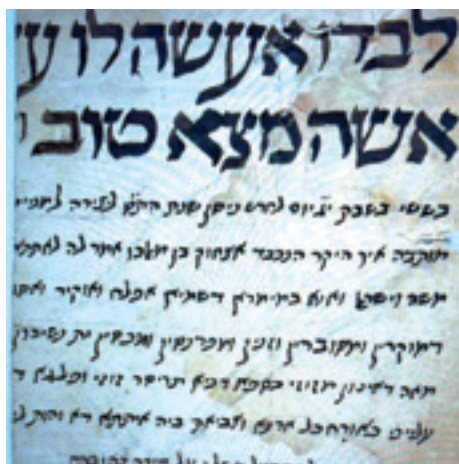
■ Arlene Stolnitz

There have been many archaeological discoveries in recent times. In 1960, the *ketubah* of a second century woman, Babatha, who lived near the Dead Sea, was found in the Cave of Letters.

Over 200 *ketubot* were discovered in the Cairo Geniza dating back to the sixth century, some in plain text and others elaborately decorated with micrographic and illuminated text.

Over time, the *ketubah* continually evolved and became more complex. It addressed more specific concerns regarding inheritance and issues of financial support. Eventually the *ketubah* came to represent a broader statement of respect and commitment between the groom as well as the bride.

Initially, the *ketubah* was a document containing the details of the contract in plain text. In today's world, a couple may



Ancient Aramaic Ketubah:
Yitzhak+ben Makho+groom

choose an artistic design for the *ketubah*, even designing their own unique version, including egalitarian or even gender neutral in concept. Intricate paper cuts have always been popular, but today modern laser technology can be used with floral motifs and Hebrew phrases such as the Priestly Blessing. Often, it is a beautiful



Ketubah: Bozzolo, Italy, Sept. 1781, Cantoni Family

work of art to adorn the home of the couple.

In Israel, a *ketubah* is a legally binding marriage contract, while in the United States, it is primarily a symbolic religious document with little or no legal standing in civil courts.

The *ketubah* signing is a key part of every Jewish wedding, which takes place just prior to the wedding ceremony. Traditionally, it is signed by two honored witnesses and traditionally is read under the chuppah. The *ketubah* is then handed to the bride for safekeeping.

The English text of the ancient document reads as follows:

"On the ... day of the week, the ... day of the [Hebrew] month of ... in the year 57, according to the manner in which we count [dates] here in the community, the bridegroom ... said to this virgin, 'Be my wife according to the laws and traditions of Moses and Israel. I will work, honor, feed and support you in the custom of Jewish men, who work, honor, feed and support their wives faithfully. I will give you the settlement (*mohar*) of virgins, two hundred silver *zuzim*, which is due you according to Torah law, as well as

your food, clothing, necessities of life and conjugal needs, according to the universal custom.' Ms. agreed and became his wife. This dowry that she brought from her father's house, whether in silver, gold, jewelry, clothing, home furnishings or bedding, Mr., our bridegroom, accepts as being worth one hundred silver pieces (*zekukim*)."

This is another example of the forward thinking of the Jewish people. Recognizing the intrinsic humaneness of women, their equality of rights and need for protection, the *ketubah* blazed the way toward parity of men and women.

I hope you have found this article informative, and that you will contact me with your requests for information on other topics related to ancient Judaica. Please e-mail me at arlenestolnitz@gmail.com.

Arlene Stolnitz, the "Jewish Music" contributor to Federation papers for the past eight years, has started a new series focusing on Judaic Folk Art. It will appear in Federation newspapers on an irregular basis. Stolnitz, a native of Rochester, New York, is a retired educator and lives in Venice, Florida. ☺



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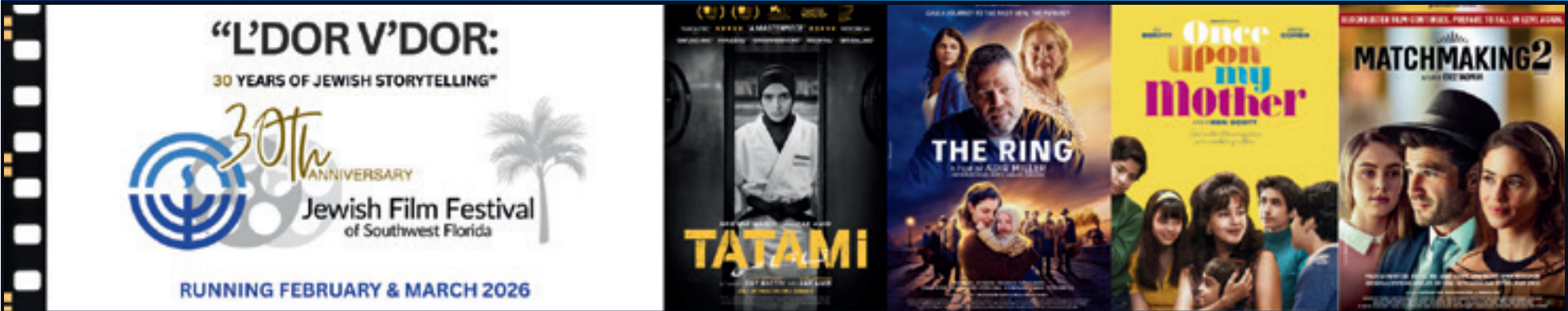
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The Hanukkah miracle of the hostages’ return

By Chef Dalia Hemed

The release of the hostages offers new perspectives on the timeless Hanukkah story.

With the release of all the remaining hostages in October 2025, Hanukkah will likely be a particularly joyous and deeply meaningful celebration for many, reinforcing the holiday's themes of light, miracles and triumph over darkness.

Hanukkah 2025 will be marked by a heightened sense of gratitude, joy and hope.

While the holiday traditionally commemorates the Maccabees' victory and the miracle of the oil, this year's celebration will carry the powerful, contemporary significance of freedom and deliverance. Many observances and reflections will connect the ancient story with the modern-day miracle of the hostages' return.

Hanukkah — it’s my favorite time of year. It’s *sufganiyot* time.

Sufganiyot, jelly-filled doughnuts, have a long and interesting history and a special connection to the Hanukkah holiday.

It started feeling like Hanukkah in Israel about two days after Sukkot, when the first vendors started frying the delicious and high-caloric *sufganiyot* in vats of oil in front of bakeries and on the streets in towns throughout the country.

Just as malls in America rush the Christmas season by putting up decorations right after Halloween, some vendors in the heart of Jerusalem were making *sufganiyot* in the middle of Sukkot.

Sufganiyot are yummy, jelly-filled (or these days filled with almost any

sweet flavor under the sun) globs of fried dough lovingly sprinkled with a dusting of white sugar.

Seriously, my family waits all year for this. The opportunity to eat the world’s best *sufganiyot* for dinner — yes, we don’t feed the kids beforehand; this is not dessert; this is **dinner** — is amazing and worthy of excitement.

A *sufganiya* (doughnut), if you must delve deeply into its definition, is a "food made from dough fried in deep oil."

Thought you’d seen it all in the over-the-top *sufganiyot*? Well, think again. *Sufganiyot* are no longer just the classic ones I ate in kindergarten when I was a little girl, with strawberry jam and powdered sugar.

Tradition is a tradition, and I am not going to break it. Almost. Although they are fried *sufganiyot*, they are salty and full of twists, including an offer to fill

My version of *sufganiya* is an incarnation of three different recipes that came together into one upgraded version of a salty (and non-dairy) *sufganiya*.

One of them is the recipe for my "challah bread." The second inspiration comes from “traditional *sufganiyot* with a twist,” a recipe in which the addition of mashed potatoes enriches the dough and gives it an especially airy and soft texture. Finally, the third recipe came from the *sfenj* (Moroccan donuts) that has been with me for years.

The dough combines well with salty flavors and brings a change to the traditional *sufganiyot* and surprising flavors, especially good for those who are not fond of sweet flavors. The *sufganiya* can also be used to make buns in the spirit of the Hanukkah celebration to serve when entertaining the family. 🥰



Personal Chef Dalia Hemed can be reached at daliahemed@msn.com.



a layer with fried eggplant — it’s still Hanukkah food; it’s **fried** — and top it with matbucha salad and tahini.

Salty Sufganiyot

Ingredients:

- 6 cups bread flour
- 1½ cups water
- 2 medium potatoes, cooked and mashed into cold mashed potatoes
- 2 eggs
- 6 tablespoons sugar
- 2 flat-tablespoons dry yeast
- 1 tablespoon salt
- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- Vegetable oil (for frying)
- 1 tablespoon matbucha (tomato salad, optional)
- 1 tablespoon tahini sauce
- 2 slices fried eggplant
- ½ chopped onion
- Handful of parsley
- ½ cup diced tomato
- 1 hard-boiled egg

Instructions:

1. Mix the flour, sugar and yeast in a bowl. Pour the water, eggs, oil and mashed potatoes into the mixer bowl.
2. Add the dry ingredients mixture to the mixer bowl on top of the liquids.
3. Using a kneading hook, knead at speed No. 1 for 5 minutes. Stop the mixer and add salt. Continue kneading at speed No. 2 for another 5 minutes.

4. Transfer the dough to a floured surface, then to a bowl. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise for 2 hours.
5. Gently remove the dough from the bowl, stretch it into a square and fold each corner to the center. Turn the dough over and roll it out. Let it rest for about 10 minutes, covered.
6. Grease baking paper with a thin layer of oil.
7. Divide the dough into 24 pieces. Roll each into a ping-pong-sized ball and place neatly on the greased paper. Oil each ball lightly and cover with plastic wrap. Let rise for about an hour or until doubled in volume.
8. In a frying pan, heat vegetable oil to medium-high for deep frying (about 160°C). Fry 5–6 balls each round. After 2 minutes, turn each *sufganiya* and fry for another 2 minutes.
9. Remove to a colander and let cool. Once cool, cut in half, spread tahini and matbucha on both sides, and insert slices of fried eggplant and hardboiled egg.
10. Sprinkle with parsley, chopped onion and diced tomato. Close the *sufganiyot* and drizzle with tahini on top.

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What goes with what?

By Jerry Greenfield, the Wine Whisperer

Among the (many) delights of wine appreciation, one pursuit is especially interesting and engaging. That’s the fun of pairing wine and food. It’s practically an art unto itself, and it makes both our dining and quaffing so much more enjoyable and fulfilling.

There are several basic principles to selecting a certain wine to pair with a certain dish, and they all involve being able to taste critically and really concentrate on what’s happening on your palate. When we start to choose wines to complement various cuisines, there’s a lot to consider. Not just the flavors, but also the textures of both the food and wine.

Wine and dine

One of the best ways to get familiar with this area of the wine life is to attend events that focus specifically on pairing certain dishes with matching wines. An example of this is a dinner we recently enjoyed at the Old Vines Supper Club in Naples. On Wednesday evenings, Wine Steward Zach Bingham puts together a multi-course experience that focuses on the cuisines of a particular region. Our dinner featured French fare with lots of truffles and corresponding wines from that country.

“I formulate a wine pairing based on the story that I want to tell through the course of a guest’s experience with the menu,” Bingham tells me. He says that he considers not only how individual



■ Jerry Greenfield

dishes pair with their corresponding wines but how the palate is going to be transported from one course and one wine to the next. Interesting that he uses the word “transported.”

Bingham starts by making a list of the most prominent flavors and aromas he detects in a wine, then comparing that with the structure of the food. He follows the process I mentioned above. “When you taste a wine, make a mental note of the sensations you experience,” he recommends. “The aromas that jump from the glass and the ones that may linger a bit longer after the sip has passed.” Then, think about how those flavors match or complement the specific dish.

Complementary and contrasting pairings

There are two basic approaches to this process: the complementary and what you might call the contrasting. In the first, you think about how the characteristics of the wine are like those of the dish. For example, a beef short rib is dense and highly flavored, so a good pairing would be a Cabernet Sauvignon, which shares those qualities. If you’re enjoying shellfish with a squeeze of lemon, a Sauvignon Blanc is ideal, because the wine has a lot of acidity and pronounced lemon and citrus flavors.

In fact, there’s a saying in the wine world that if you can put lemon on it, you can drink Sauvignon Blanc with it.

The “opposites attract” approach is exactly what it sounds like. For example, many people enjoy an after-dinner glass of Port or Sherry with some Stilton or bleu cheese. The sweetness of the wine somehow — don’t ask me how — enhances the tart and salty flavors of the cheese. Similarly, you might serve chicken with cream sauce along with a Sauvignon Blanc



because the wine’s acidity will contrast well, cutting the buttery and fatty sensations of the dish.

When you’re ready for a delicious, educational wine and food pairing dinner, contact the Old Vines Supper Club at 239-417-4466. When you’re ready for some new discoveries, try our latest recommendations.

Poliziano Rosso di Montepulciano 2022 (\$17)

This is made from a grape called Prugnolo Gentile, which is actually a clone of Sangiovese, blended with 20 percent merlot.

There’s a smooth mouthfeel, redolent with notes of cherry, plum and tobacco aromas and flavors. The rich flavors are supported by firm tannins. Wine Whisperer rating on a scale of 100: WW 90

Robert Hall Paso Red 2022 (\$18)

From the Paso Robles region, an interesting blend of Petite Sirah, Syrah, Zinfandel and some other rich reds. The concentrated structure supports the 15 percent alcohol content. The hallmark flavor is rich black berry. Great with spicy barbecue and burgers. WW 87

Davis Bynum Russian River Chardonnay 2022 (\$30)

There are lots of different apple flavors in this creamy and complex sample. Apple pie and baked apple predominate with some lemon and butterscotch on the finish. WW 88

Davis Bynum Russian River Pinot Noir 2022 (\$20)

You don’t often find decent Pinot at this price, but this sample is a steal. Rich red fruit, dominated by cherry flavors, with hints of baking spice right up front. WW 91

Jerry Greenfield is The Wine Whisperer — a wine author, educator and consultant. Order his books, “Secrets of the Wine Whisperer” and “Ask the Wine Whisperer,” available through his website or on Amazon. Read his other writings at www.winewhisperer.com



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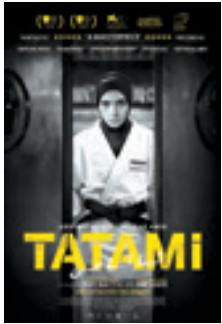
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THE JEWISH FEDERATION

30th Annual Jewish Film Festival

SUNDAY, FEB. 1 - SUNDAY FEB. 13



“TATAMI”

Feb. 1 at 3 p.m.

Co-directed by Guy Nattiv (Academy Award-Winner for Skin) and Zar Amir (Cannes Film Festival Best Actress-Winner for Holy Spider), TATAMI follows Iranian female judoka Leila (Arienne Mandi) and her coach Maryam (Zar Amir), who travel to the World Judo Championships, intent on bringing home Iran’s first gold medal. Midway through the Championships, they receive a chilling ultimatum from the Islamic

Republic: Leila must fake an injury and lose, or be branded a traitor. With her own safety and her family’s freedom on the line, Leila faces an impossible choice: submit to the Iranian regime, as her coach Maryam implores her to do, or fight on for the gold. TATAMI is the first feature film to be co-directed by an Iranian and an Israeli filmmaker.

105 MINUTES • PERSIAN, ENGLISH • GEORGIA, ISRAEL, USA, UK • NARRATIVE



“THE RING”

Feb. 3 at 6:30 p.m.

Arnon Noble is a religious man with a strong bond to his mother, a Holocaust survivor. He usually drives her to school lectures where she tells the students how she saved the lives of her baby boy and herself with the help of a thin gold ring. When the mother's health deteriorates, he travels to her old hometown, Budapest, to search for the mythological ring that saved her life in the past. He turns to his estranged

daughter, a TV researcher, for help and offers to go on this journey together. Will the search for the ring be successful? Will the ring save the mother's life again and will the same ring that saved his mother also succeed in saving Arnon's relationship with his own daughter.

This film is a heart-warming dramady about three generations and the family history that reconnects them. "The Ring" is based on Adir Miller's Holocaust survival story.

122 MINUTES • HEBREW AND HUNGARIAN WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES • ISRAEL • NARRATIVE



“ONCE UPON MY MOTHER/ THE LAST JEWS OF GUANTANAMO”

Feb. 11 at 6:30 p.m.

In 1963, Esther gave birth to Roland, the youngest sibling of a large family. Roland was born with a clubfoot that prevented him from standing. Against everyone's advice, she promised her son that he would be able to walk just like everyone else and have a wonderful life. From that moment on, Esther devoted herself fully to ensuring this promise came true.

Spanning decades of hardships and miracles, this film is the story of an incredible destiny and the greatest love of all: a mother's love for her child.

98 MINUTES • NARRATIVE

“MATCHMAKING 2”

Feb. 13 at 3 p.m.



Baruch Auerbach (Maor Schweitzer), a mature Yeshiva student who missed every opportunity to marry, is left to live in a small room in the Yeshiva where he studies and serves as the faithful assistant to the matchmaker Malki (Irit Kaplan). When Malki assigns him the task of escorting her young daughter Shira (Omer Nudelman) from the airport, he decides that it is time to get married.

Baruch asks for Malki’s help, but when she tries to match him with Ruth (Niv Sultan), he decides to do everything he can to thwart the matchmaking with Ruth and win Shira's heart. Only when he realizes how much he has misinterpreted the circumstances of his life will his heart open to the love he deserves.

118 MINUTES • HEBREW AND HUNGARIAN WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES • ISRAEL • NARRATIVE



“NEVER ALONE/THE ICE CREAM MAN”

Feb. 17 at 6:30 p.m.

Shortly after the Nazi invasion of the Netherlands, a popular Jewish ice cream parlor owner, Ernst Cahn, finds himself targeted by the infamous “Butcher of Lyon,” Klaus Barbie. As his world crumbles, “The Ice Cream Man” must choose between resistance and death...a choice that will reverberate throughout the country. Based on actual events.

85 MINUTES • FINNISH • FINLAND • NARRATIVE



“AIR WAR”

Feb. 19 at 6:30 p.m.

A rivalry between two charismatic Israeli air force fighter pilots reaches breaking point on the eve of the six-day war. After single handedly shooting down six Egyptian migs in aerial combat, the young, brash Lt. Ran Neshet is awarded a new assignment: to take over the command of a fighter squadron.

The squadron's second-in-command, the more methodical and disciplined Lt. Eitan Rom is profoundly threatened by his new reckless Commander, who is clearly inexperienced and domineering.

The ongoing power struggle begins to affect the performance of the squadron; however, as their country’s existence hangs in the balance, the two men must learn to work together. It is only then that they are ready to lead their squadron to victory.

106 MINUTES • HEBREW WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES • ISRAEL • NARRATIVE



“WELCOME TO YIDDISHLAND/ JEWS IN MUSIC”

Feb. 26 at 6:30 p.m.

Welcome to Yiddishland offers an upbeat, witty, and timely exploration of a global community of artists rediscovering and revitalizing the endangered Yiddish language through progressive and provocative creative works. As we journey through Yiddishland — not a homeland, but a heartland without borders — we travel across continents, from Melbourne to Berlin, New York to Haifa, meeting a diverse array of individuals who find solace, identity, and inspiration in Yiddish language and culture.

96 MINUTES • ENGLISH, YIDDISH • AUSTRALIA • DOCUMENTARY



“PINK LADY”

March 5 at 6:30PM

In an ultra-Orthodox Jewish community in Jerusalem, Bati has a seemingly perfect life. She is happily married to Lazer and the young couple have three children. But their world starts to crumble when Lazer is blackmailed and Bati discovers his secret affair with his male study partner. Desperate to protect her family and keep the man she loves, she supports Lazer as he attempts to “cure” his homosexuality, whilst uncovering her true desires.

106 MINUTES • ISRAEL • NARRATIVE



“MARATHON MOM/ UN TANGO PARA RACHEL”

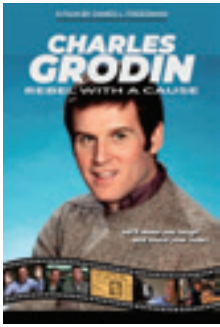
March 11 at 6:30 p.m.

Marathon Mother tells the inspiring story of Beatie Deutsch, an ultra-Orthodox Jewish mother of five who, after a pause from athletics to focus on her family, reignites her passion for running. In 2015, driven by a personal promise and the challenges of motherhood, Beatie embarks on a rigorous journey to complete a marathon. As she trains with dreams of becoming an Olympian, her remarkable journey transcends the track, embodying a powerful message of perseverance and empowerment. Through her story, Beatie inspires other women to embrace their dreams and overcome their own challenges.

90 MINUTES • ENGLISH, HEBREW WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES • ISRAEL • DOCUMENTARY

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MARCH 29

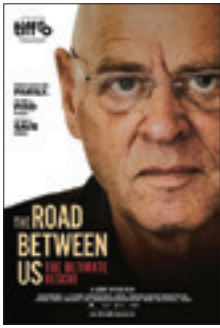


“CHARLES GRODIN: REBEL WITH A CAUSE”

March 15 at 3 p.m.

Raised in a Jewish household in Pittsburgh, Charles Grodin’s life embodied the concept of Tikkun Olam. "Charles Grodin: Rebel with a Cause" not only celebrates his hilarious acting career, but also his remarkable, decades-long, successful fight to get wrongly convicted people — most of whom were mothers of color with young children — out of prison.

93 MINUTES • ENGLISH • USA • DOCUMENTARY



“THE ROAD BETWEEN US”

March 19 at 6:30 p.m.

Retired Israeli general Noam Tibon rescues his family from Hamas terrorists who invaded their home during a massacre, sparking an ongoing conflict.

95 MINUTES • ENGLISH • CANADA • DOCUMENTARY



“SONG OF ASCENT/ALON MY BROTHER”

March 24 at 6:30 p.m.

In the wake of the October 7 massacre in Israel, acclaimed singer-songwriter Matisyahu finds himself at the center of a cultural storm. This powerful documentary/concert film follows Matisyahu’s journey as he performs three sold-out shows in Israel while facing cancellations and protests at his US tour dates due to rising anti-Israel sentiment. Thrust into a

role he never sought, Matisyahu becomes a powerful voice for Jewish people worldwide, navigating the complexities of identity, faith, and resilience amidst a global crisis.

86 MINUTES • ENGLISH • USA • DOCUMENTARY



“TURN LEFT AT THE END OF THE WORLD/CUT OFF”

March 26 at 3 p.m.

A group of families emigrates from India to Israel in the late sixties, seeking a better life in what they believe to be the first outpost of the West in Asia. To their surprise, they are sent to a new settlement in the middle of the desert, populated mostly by Moroccan Jews. The two cultures clash as the group tries to integrate into the community, and are faced by harsh realities. But despite the conflicts and prejudices, young love develops between two girls from opposite sides of the struggle. The film finds a perfect combination between humor and sentiment in a very real and very difficult situation.

"Turn Left at the End of the World/Cut Off" was selected as a "New Israeli Classic" in a special event by the Tel Aviv Cinemateque in October 2024, exhibiting the new digitally restored version made for the film's 20th anniversary.

108 MINUTES • HEBREW/FRENCH, ENGLISH SUBTITLES • ISRAEL • NARRATIVE

2026 Jewish Film Festival of Southwest Florida

Regal Belltower, Fort Myers
Individual film tickets: \$14, On Sale 12/1
Festival Pass: \$168, On Sale 11/1
www.jewishfederationlcc.org/jff2026

FILMS & DATES

“Tatami” - Sunday, Feb. 1 at 3 p.m.

“The Ring” - Tuesday, Feb. 3 at 6:30 p.m.

“Once Upon My Mother/The Last Jews of Guantanamo”
Wednesday, Feb. 11 at 6:30 p.m.

“Matchmaking 2” - Friday, Feb. 13 at 3 p.m.

“Never Alone/Ice Cream Man” - Tuesday, Feb. 17 at 6:30 p.m.

“Air War” - Thursday, Feb. 19 at 6:30 p.m.

“Welcome to Yiddishland/Jews in Music”
Thursday, Feb. 26 at 6:30 p.m.

“Pink Lady” - Thursday, March 5 at 6:30 p.m.

“Marathon Mom/Un Tango Para Rachel”
Wednesday, March 11 at 6:30 p.m.

“Charles Grodin: Rebel with a Cause”
Thursday, March 15 at 3 p.m.

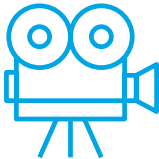
“The Road Between Us” - Sunday, March 19 at 6:30 p.m.

“Song of Ascent/Alon My Brother”
Tuesday, March 24 at 6:30 p.m.

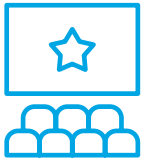
“Turn Left at the End of the World/Cut Off”
Thursday, March 26 at 6:30 p.m.

For more information, please contact Debbie Sanford at debbiesanford@jfedlcc.org or 239-481-4449 ext. 6.

For more information about the Jewish Film Festival, please e-mail David Garonzik at Jewishfilmfestival@jfedlcc.org.



Films will be screened at the Regal Belltower!



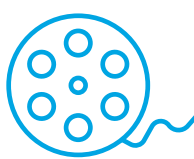
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Festival Passes available on Saturday, Nov 1



Individual tickets available on Monday, Dec. 1



The series of 13 films is \$168/Individual films are \$14 each

Hanukkah or Chanukah?

By Brian Simon

When I was a kid, I was confused about how to spell Hanukkah. Did it start with an H or a Ch? Was Hanukkah with two K's or Chanukah with one? So, I asked my rabbi at Hebrew school, and he laughed.

"Chet-Nun-Kaf-Hay," he said, spelling the holiday in its Hebrew letters. "That's the only way to spell it." But he was wrong about that! There are multiple ways to spell Hanukkah in every language, including Hebrew.

The first problem for English speakers is the *chet* ח. *Chet* makes the guttural, scratchy H sound that you can't even spell in English. It's like the sound of radio static or a cat when it's angry.

Apparently, the Scottish pronounce it when they say "loch," and Germans when they say "Bach," but Americans can either pronounce the hard-C sound like "*callah* bread," or the soft-H sound, like *hutzpah*. We can't make the scratchy "chhh" sound; we make the CH sound as in Choo-Choo.

Chanukah starts with a *chet*, so it becomes Hanukkah.

Chet has an interesting history (or "chistory," if you will). It comes from the Phoenician alphabet. The Greeks took the same Phoenician letter and made it "*eta*," which looks like an H, but evolved to be pronounced like a long-E. The letter



■ Brian Simon

passed from Greek into classical Latin, but by the time it became part of the Romance languages, it was largely used as a silent letter.

According to kabbalistic tradition, the *chet* ח is a fusion of two other letters — the *Zayin* ז and the *Vav* ו — representing a man and a woman and a bridge that unites them. *Chet* is the first letter in *chup-pah*, after all.

Chet also represents the number eight in Hebrew. It's in this role that we get the number 18 for the word that means life, *chai*. *Chai* is spelled *chet-yud*. The letter *yud* is also the number 10, so 8 + 10 = 18.

Coincidentally, there are eight days in Hanukkah, and more than eight ways to spell it!

According to reformjudaism.org, Hanukkah-related invitations on the online invitation website Evite spell it a variety of ways: Hanukka, Hanukkah, Hanuka, Hanukah, Chanuka, Chanukah, Hannuka and Hannukah. You might even find it spelled Xanuka or Chanuqa. The Library of Congress prefers Hanukkah, and so does Webster's Dictionary, which also lists the "less commonly used" variants Chanukah or Hanukah.

In Spanish, they spell it with a J, either Janucá or Jánuca. Same letters, two different accents. I guess that counts as

different spellings. Many Spanish speakers pronounce the J more like a *chet* than an H, so that works especially well.

In Hebrew, it can be spelled *chet-nun-vav-kaf-hay*, with the *vav* making the "oo" sound. Or, it can be *chet-nun-kaf-hay*, with the "oo" sound coming from the Kubutz vowel (three diagonal dots) under the *nun*.

Why is spelled differently in Hebrew? Well, here's a story I just made up .

A dreidel came to all the Hebrew letters and said, "Hey guys, I'm part of this

toward the end of the word. All he had to do was wear his dot, and he would become Kaf.

"I knew you guys looked familiar!" exclaimed Tav, only then realizing that Kaf and Khaf were the same letter. Tav was always a little slow.

Meanwhile, Koof was kind of bummed because he wanted to make the "k" sound, so he went back to hang with his friends Tzadi and Reish, who stand next to him in line.

Nun volunteered to make the "n" sound, and Hay settled into his spot at the end. "Ahhh," he said. "Right where I belong."

But there was still one more sound to make.

"Oo, oo, pick me!" said Vav.

The vowels heard what was going on and came up from their basement under the alef-bet. "Oo oo, pick me!" said Kubutz, lining up his dots diagonally.

Nobody could decide what to do, so they formed a committee. "Don't you mean a chomittee?" said Chet. Then, all the other letters told him to shut up.

The committee could not come to a consensus. "Don't you mean ..." started Chet, but Dreidel cut him off before the rest of the letters could tell him to shut up again.

The committee decided to leave the spelling up to whoever was writing the word. So, both versions are acceptable.

The end. 🕊


Coincidentally, there are eight days in Hanukkah, and more than eight ways to spell it!

new holiday, but we need to find a way to spell it. It's called Hanukkah."

And then Chet said, "Don't you mean Chanukah?" emphasizing the scratchy "ch" sound.

"Right. Anyway, who wants to help?"


Chet and Khaf both volunteered to start, since they both make the "ch" sound. Khaf suggested a compromise, since he could also make the "k" sound



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CHAVURAT SHALOM OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA
chavuratshalom@gmail.com

Celebrating Chanukah and community giving

By Cheryl Fulmer, Ellen Feingold and Marcia Rudin

December brings with it chilly weather to southwest Florida but our Festival of Lights, Chanukah, countermands all that. On the evening of Dec. 14, Jewish people throughout the world will light the first candle of Chanukah. We use a special menorah called a Hanukkiah that has an extra candle called the *shamash* that is used to light all the others. We light one candle for each of eight nights.

This offers us eight times to marvel at how the Maccabees during the second century B.C.E. prevailed against the Greco-Syrian occupiers so that the Jewish band of rebels could reclaim and rededicate the Second Temple in Jerusalem. After the Maccabees won, they found the Temple in disarray.

The story is that there was only enough holy oil to light the temple’s candles for one day, but the oil lasted for eight days, allowing time for the Maccabees to produce new holy oil. Some modern scholars believe the Seleucid king, Antiochus IV, intervened in an internal civil war between the traditionalist Maccabean Jews and the Hellenized Jews about who would control the Temple in Jerusalem.

This year especially, we will light the Hanukkiah with special gratitude that

the living Israeli hostages were finally released after two years and returned to their families and communities.

Winter season programs

Our Chavurat Shalom programs are underway for the winter season. Everyone is welcome to attend our events.

Our Friday night Shabbat services continue every week throughout the year at 7:30 p.m. Services are led by Chavurat Shalom members, with English readings, Hebrew and English singing, and Torah reading with commentary by a member. Each service is a bit different and reflects the selections of that week’s leader. The weekly Shabbat services are coordinated by Drs. Ellen Feingold and Kathy Zoss and include all volunteer participants. This gives our membership an opportunity to explore Judaism on our own without the guidance of clergy, widening our understanding of our Jewish heritage through personal exploration of our Biblical texts.

On the first Tuesday of the month, Chavurat Shalom participants enjoy our informal “Schmooze” session hosted by Marcia Rudin at 7:30 p.m. The discussion is far-ranging and very social.

Torah Talk, led by Dr. Ellen Feingold, when we study the weekly Parsha together, takes place the second Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m.

The third Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. features Leonard Minsky Jewish Current Events, organized by Dr. Don Bachman.

The fourth Tuesday of each month is set aside for the lecture-and-discussion series coordinated by Irene Skolnick and Barry Fulmer, which takes place at 7:30 p.m.

All activities are held via Zoom, with in-person gatherings on Sanibel Island and in Fort Myers planned occasionally. Email us at chavuratshalom@gmail.com or visit our website at chavuratshalomofswflorida.org for more information about these events and to obtain the schedules. Please note that all times are Eastern Standard Time.

Tzedakah Committee donations


Chavurat Shalom members have the opportunity to show their Jewishness by making a donation to the Tzedakah Committee.

If you wish to contribute, send your check payable to Chavurat Shalom of SWFL to P.O. Box 722, Sanibel, Florida

33957. Please mark “Tzedakah” on the memo line of your check.

The focus of this year’s Tzedakah drive is on the fight against antisemitism and the fight against food insecurity and poverty in our communities, including Israel. In this manner we contribute to Tikun Olam as best we can. Since Chavurat Shalom is a qualified 501(c)(3) organization, please consider the option of using your RMD (required minimum distribution) funds to make a charitable donation.

In the past, the Tzedakah committee has contributed funds to the following: Israel Children’s Fund, Rambam Hospital, Saroka Medical Center, Leket Israel, the IDF, Brothers and Sisters for Israel, Magen David Adom, FISH (Sanibel), Gladiolus Food Pantry (Fort Myers), Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties, St. Matthews House (Naples and Fort Myers), Harry Chapin Food Bank (Fort Myers), Planned Parenthood, Quality of Life Center (Fort Myers).

We thank Tzedekah Committee Chair Dr. Ellen Feingold and her committee members for their efforts. If you wish to donate to the Tzedakah Fund, send your check made out to Chavurat Shalom with “Tzedakah Fund” in the memo line to P.O. Box 722, Sanibel, Florida 33957. 



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December essentials

By Marina Berkovich, JHSSWF President

The Fourth Annual Local Jewish History Film Festival, sponsored by Rosalee and Jerry Bogo, concluded Nov. 18. There are now 27 completed



Marina Berkovich

Southwest Florida Jewish Pioneers films. Our heroes and heroines trailblazed this part of Florida, germinating local Jewish culture, tradition and respect from the general community. Their stories

are being produced and delivered to the community in entertaining documentary format by JHSSWF.

Richard Plager, the 97-year-old former chief, star of “Chief Plager” (Sanibel Island), delivered poignant remarks. Elena Rosner, who starred in “When Destiny Called,” sent a powerful message in support of our Jewish history preservation work. Dr. Jerry and Sheila Laboda, the stars of “Labodas of Fort Myers,” became staunch supporters of the Society even before the film about them was released. *Lehayim* to all till 120!

Become a subscriber to the Society’s YouTube channel to view some of the films: www.youtube.com/@jewishhistoricalsocietyofSWFL

Do you know someone we should feature? Let us know.

Community Hanukkah table

Visit our Community Hanukkah table at Mercato on Dec. 15 to enjoy our popular latke throwing game and giveaways.

“Soviet Jewry Movement and the Moon”

We invite JHSSWF members and supporters to a unique Zoom presentation by longtime Society friend Norm Winski, titled “Soviet Jewry Movement and the Moon.” This **free event** is scheduled for Dec. 18 at 3 p.m. **Register** at www.jhsswf.org/upcoming-events/ to receive the Zoom link.

The life of Winski’s uncle, Abe Silverstein, is woven like a spy story. A top engineer and manager from the days of NASA’s predecessor, NACA, he helped send men to the moon and later worked on freeing Soviet Jewry. We are joined by Jewish-Russian Cultural Alliance, whose many members, owe him our freedom.

Florida Jewish History Month 2026

Florida Jewish History Month (FJHM) was established by Governor Jeb Bush in 2003. Marcia Jo Zerivitz initiated the legislation for both FJHM every January, and a Jewish American Heritage Month



Abe Silverstein at NASA (unlimited copyright use)

(JAHM) every May, to increase awareness of the contributions by Jews.

Zerivitz gave a powerful presentation to the JHSSWF during her “Jews of Florida: Centuries of Stories” book tour where she gave us permission to record and replay her presentation. We will bring the recorded presentation to you on Jan. 4, 2026, at the Southwest Florida Jewish History Fundraiser luncheon — the first event of our two-event major fundraiser.

The second event is a premiere of the Southwest Florida Jewish Pioneers Series documentary, “A Jewish Visionary: Jane Schiff,” which will take place on Thursday, Jan. 22, 2026, at 2 p.m. One 2026 JHSSWF Fundraiser ticket (\$85) covers admission to both events. Register at www.jhsswf.org/upcoming-events/.

Don’t miss this **two-event major fundraiser**. Our work depends on your support,

and we appreciate you spreading the news of our events and programs. Please see our ad for details.

Our correct 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.

Essential December facts every Floridian should know

Dec. 25, 1821 – Florida officially became a U.S. territory after being ceded by Spain.

Dec. 25, 1845 – Florida was admitted to the Union as the 27th state.

Dec. 22, 1939 – The Tamiami Trail, a major highway, connected Tampa and Miami.

Dec. 22, 1990 – The first commercial flight departed from the Southwest Florida International Airport in Fort Myers.

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Hooray, they are home!

Your generosity helps Hadassah support the healing of Israelis.

By Diane Schwartz, Co-President Collier/Lee Chapter of Hadassah

In a recent interview with The Media Line, Professor Yoram Weiss, director general of Hadassah Medical Organization in Jerusalem (HMO), explains that medical professionals are encountering not only the visible wounds of physical injuries but also the invisible “wounds” of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) affecting civilians as well as military personnel.

Since Oct. 7, 2023, doctors at the Hadassah University Hospital-Ein Kerem have treated hundreds of victims of Hamas terrorism. Many are receiving advanced rehabilitation care, including at the new Gandel Rehabilitation Center at the Hadassah University Hospital-Mt. Scopus. Still others, including children who survived the Oct. 7 attacks, are receiving psychological services.

Prof. Weiss advises people to talk openly about PTSD and portray it “as



Diane Schwartz,
Presidents Council for
Collier/Lee Chapter

something that can happen to any one of us” and to ask for support. “The more you wait with post-traumatic stress disorder, the more it settles in, and then it’s much more difficult to treat it,” he says.

During these difficult times, we can’t forget the people who have done nothing to bring this situation upon themselves. Hadassah’s work is to provide help to those in need.

HMO remains at the forefront in health-care; promoting women’s and men’s health; and providing at-risk children in Israel a path to a successful future.

Hadassah works building from generation to generation, a community that recovers from this tragedy and all of us remain connected to Israel and our sisters, brothers, family and friends who live there.

Wishing everyone a Happy Chanukah!
Am Yisrael Chai 🕎

You Are Invited

Dec. 14 – Donor Recognition Luncheon
Special Guest: Hadassah National President Carol Ann Schwartz.
All members are invited.

Jan. 8, 2026 – Installation of Officers
Guest Speaker: Hadassah Medical Organization
Chair Dr. Judith Mann

Feb. 23, 2026 – Spring Luncheon Meeting: Lunch & Learn
A pot lunch with a program about how Hadassah advocates for its mission and values.

Feb. 27 and 28, 2026 – Hadassah Shabbat Zachor
Located at Temple Shalom on Friday, Feb. 27.
Located at Beth Tikvah Synagogue on Saturday, Feb. 28.

March 15, 2026 – Collier/Lee’s Fourth Annual Inspiring Women
This is a luncheon honoring local women whose work and efforts make a difference in our communities.

April 26, 2026 – Women’s Health Symposium
This program will collaborate, inform and empower all attendees.
Founding Members are Collier/Lee Hadassah, Jewish Federation of Greater Naples, Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties, Sisterhood of Temple Shalom and WCA.

Stay connected all month long at

www.JewishFederationLCC.org



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2026
WOMEN

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The Collier/Lee Hadassah “Inspiring Women” Luncheon honors local women from both counties whose leadership skills, dedication, experience, generosity, and time make a difference in their organizations and the quality of our lives.

Join us to celebrate their accomplishments and support Hadassah’s Gandel Rehabilitation Center, Mt. Scopus, Jerusalem, Israel. For information, contact CLIW2026@gmail.com.



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and Jewish Educator



Jane Schiff
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Sylvia Simko
Global Zionist and
Community Leader

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Lots to be grateful for

By Ida Margolis and Shelley Lieb

Some people actually enjoy listening to sermons, and I am one of them. During Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, I listened to sermons that rabbis likely spent hours writing. It was not long ago that listening to a sermon required that you actually attend a house of worship. Since COVID, we have the opportunity to hear sermons not only by our local, excellent rabbis, but by rabbis throughout the country. Hopefully, you heard something that inspired, educated or motivated you toward spiritual or ethical growth.

One widely known rabbi is Elliot Cosgrove of Park Avenue Synagogue in New York City. I found it interesting that on Yom Kippur, in addition to his sermon, Rabbi Cosgrove invited New York Archbishop Timothy Cardinal Dolan to join him. They have a history of interfaith dialogue, and during Yom Kippur they spoke of the 60th anniversary of Nostra Aetate, which transformed Catholic teaching about Jews, and calls for greater respect and understanding between Catholics and Jews.

60th anniversary of Nostra Aetate

In Collier County, we have been fortunate to have an active Catholic-Jewish Dialogue (CJD) that presents a variety of excellent programs. Along with Jewish Federation of Greater Naples and others, it presents our local annual Kristallnacht Commemoration each November.

This year, in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of Nostra Aetate, CJD, the Community Relations Council of Greater Naples (JCRC), and Ave Maria



Ida Margolis and Shelley Lieb

University are presenting a symposium at Ave Maria on Dec. 6, and at the Nina Iser Jewish Cultural Center on Dec. 7 at 2 p.m.

We are grateful to have CJD and these programs in our community. For more information contact [cjdo@colliercounty@gmail.org](mailto:cjdo@colliercounty.org) or info@jewishnaples.org.



Holocaust Museum Curator Cody Rademacher with Movies That Matter Series Naming and Benefactor Sponsor Rhonda Brazina

“Movies that Matter”

GenShoah is also grateful for our Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center (HMCEC). In addition to the programs the Museum presents, GenShoah sponsors a variety of programs for second generation (2Gs) and community members interested in Holocaust education and human rights.

Along with the Museum and other groups, GenShoah again presented the “Movies that Matter: Brazina Memorial Film Series.” Thank you to those who expressed interest in these important films.

Potluck gathering and book discussions

Because GenShoah members expressed an interest in book discussions, we added two book discussions, in addition to the book presentation, at our annual December potluck



GenShoah Co-chair Shelley Lieb (right) with Movies That Matter panelists Arnie Rubin and Marge Cox



Linda Denning with “Hana’s Suitcase,” the book she will present at the December Pot Luck

gathering. The books selected were “Life in a Jar” by Jack Mayer, and in March, the discussion will be about “Sabine’s Odyssey” by Agnes Shipper, who will be speaking at the Museum.

The potluck gathering mentioned above is traditionally an extremely popular GenShoah member event. This year it will be held at a private residence on Sunday, Dec. 21, at 11 a.m. In addition to the delicious food and the opportunity to see good friends and make new acquaintances, there will be a brief book talk given by Linda Denning on the nonfiction book “Hana’s Suitcase” by Karen Levine.

Did you know that there is a small Holocaust education center in Tokyo? Did you know that the curator of this center and the children there solved a mystery of an empty suitcase they had received from a museum at Auschwitz? You may want to read the book to find out how the mystery was solved. Even if you don’t read the book, Denning will share with you the investigative work that was done to solve this mystery.

To attend, GenShoah members must send an RSVP to genshoahswfl@hmcec.org. Then, you will receive directions to the event and a request for a dish to share. **Please note that space is limited!**

A listing of upcoming events and more information about GenShoah is in the monthly newsletter. If you would like to receive the newsletter, simply e-mail genshoahswfl@hmcec.org.

GenShoah SWFL is open to all interested in our mission. We send our wishes for peace, love and understanding. 🌍

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

Our Religious School students have been busy preparing for the first Religious School Shabbat of the year! They practiced reading and singing the prayers both in class and at home and proudly helped the rabbi lead the Friday night service.

We are so proud of our students for a job well done! They sang beautifully and danced joyfully to “Tzadik Katamar – צדיק כחמר,” which they learned with Marsha and her Israeli dancing group.

Following the service, families enjoyed sharing a traditional Shabbat dinner together — a warm and festive way to celebrate community and faith.

November Shabbat B’kef
The theme for our November Shabbat B’kef was “Gratitude” — saying *Todah*, תודה, Thank you! We read “The Gratitude Jar” by Katrina Liu. In the story, Mina feels sorry for herself, always noticing the good things others have. One day, her family creates a gratitude jar, and everything begins to change. They soon discover the power of thankfulness and appreciation for life’s simple joys.

Following the story, each family decorated their own gratitude jar and began writing notes of gratitude to take home and continue the practice.


The Hebrew word for Jew — *Yehudi* יהודי — comes from the same root as the word *Todah*, תודה — thanks. Being thankful is part of our identity. We have a special

prayer called *Modeh Ani* (“מודה אני” — I am thankful), which we say each morning as soon as we wake up, even before getting out of bed.

Starting the day with gratitude and making thankfulness a daily practice helps us appreciate life’s blessings, both big and small.

May we always remember to see the world through a lens of gratitude and

cherish the blessings — great and small — that fill our lives each day.

We now look forward to celebrating Chanukah together! Our next *Shabbat B’kef* will be a Shabbat Chanukah B’kef — a joyful community Festival of Lights. Join us as we celebrate the sixth night of Chanukah on Friday, Dec. 19, starting at 4 p.m. 



Shirah, singing with the rabbi



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TEMPLE BETH EL RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

Fort Myers

Allison Fego, Religious School Coordinator

Over the past few weeks, our students have continued exploring the important value of *B'tzelem Elohim* — the idea that we are all created in the image of God — and how we can show respect, kindness and empathy toward others. We also began learning about *Gevurah*, the strength and courage we use to make good choices and stand up for what's right.

In Hebrew, our students continued mastering new letters: *Lamed*, *Samech*, *Tav*, *Chet*, and *Nun*, and are beginning to recognize and read them in familiar Hebrew words. Some of the new words we learned include *L'Chayim* (to life), *Siddur* (prayer book), *Torah*, *Todah* (thank you), *Hanukkah*, *Nes* (miracle) and *Ner* (candle).



Abby Fego with Bella at
TBE Pet Blessing Day

Community Shabbat Dinner

We recently shared a wonderful Community Shabbat Dinner, beautifully hosted by one of our families with Russian roots, who prepared a delicious meal for everyone. It was a warm and joyous evening of togetherness and gratitude. Getting to share a piece of traditional cooking with everyone in our community has been amazing and delicious.

Special Mitzvah Project

Our students and their families also took part in a special Mitzvah Project, decorating and signing Hanukkah cards for the blind, spreading light and kindness to others in our community. We had so many families participate in this special gift and also got to enjoy lunch together after a day of learning.

Festive Bazaar

During Hanukkah, our Sisterhood will host a festive Bazaar where students have the opportunity to shop for special gifts for their family and friends. It is always heartwarming to see the joy and thoughtfulness as students select meaningful items to share with their loved ones.



Gabby Snaders, Abby Fego, Eli Davis, Hannah Garrison,
Eta Gonsenhauser, Elia O'Grady and Caden Bloom
building their class version of Noah's Ark



Morah Alyssa's class singing songs

Tiqqun ‘olam starts with you

By Rabbi Bruce Diamond

It is said that at his 90th birthday celebration in 1962, British analytical philosopher Bertrand Russell was asked what he would do to improve the world. In his famously pithy-style, he responded, “First, I should undertake to improve myself so there would be one less scoundrel with which to contend.”

Over the years, I have watched nonobservant synagogues, their rabbis and the “movement” organizations they pay to join struggle to remain “relevant.” In this case, “relevant” generally means attracting and holding dues-paying members so the synagogue can pay its bills.

Having long ago untethered themselves from authentic Jewish moorings, these “liberal” synagogues attempt to chart their own course when, in fact, they are actually aimlessly adrift. It is hardly surprising that these synagogues are losing members since they themselves are



■ Rabbi Bruce Diamond

lost. Ignoring the tested charts and tossing your compass overboard has that effect.

More recently, many of these nontraditional synagogues have tried tacking towards social action projects under the banner of *tiqqun ‘olam* (תיקון עולם).

The term *tiqqun ‘olam* first appears in the late second century C.E. Mishnah (Gittin, section 4). It means “creating social stability.”

The Mishnah discusses the nullification of a *get* (writ of divorce), the proper way to manumit one of your slaves, under what circumstances a bondsman is allowed to reproduce, the prohibition of overpaying to free hostages or trying to help them escape, and other practical regulations intended to protect the existing social order. The concept is meant to prevent change, not cause it!

Tiqqun ‘olam does not mean undertaking social action projects, “doing real and permanent good in this world,” as Andrew Carnegie put it in his essay “The Gospel of Wealth.”

Translating *tiqqun ‘olam* as “fixing” or “repairing” the world is C-Hebrew. What is worse is that it suggests that there is something broken about this world that we humans can fix. Over its five-billion-year natural history, this planet has experienced several catastrophes far more massive than humans

Translating *tiqqun ‘olam* as “fixing” or “repairing” the world is C-Hebrew.

could ever inflict, and each and every time the world “healed” itself, recovered and recreated an environment conducive to the flourishing of life.

No, it’s not the world that needs *tiqqun*. It’s you and me that need fixing, starting with restoring what Schweiter called a “reverence for life” in all its

miraculous forms. What is broken is our deep personal connection, not only with other people but with all that is, all that lives and all that life requires.

What links all of this together is God. “God” is shorthand for the source of all that is and its ultimate purpose. What most needs repair is our sense of intimate connection with God. That is the primary purpose of the synagogue.

Off-course compassionate people must try to lessen the suffering of others, but first, that compassion must be restored. That is also the purpose of the synagogue.

It’s very nice to try to lessen the suffering of others in a world where suffering is inevitable. It certainly is even more important not to unnecessarily add to the suffering of all living things by our own selfishness, indifference and outright ignorance. This is only possible once you and I have effected a personal *tiqqun*.

Happy Hanukah!

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

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Hanukkah reflections on broken bonds

By Rabbi Nicole Luna

Genesis is full of family relationships that go off the rails. Abraham and his son Isaac never speak again. Jacob and his brother Esau reconcile but ultimately go their separate ways. Joseph and his brothers find forgiveness and harmony together. These dynamics are both ancient and modern. Research suggests that about 40 percent of Americans have experienced family estrangement at some point, with about 30 percent currently not in contact with a relative.

What used to be considered hush-hush or a source of shame is now acknowledged as part of our modern society. I know from my pastoral conversations that this is part of the lives of many in the Jewish community. Financial battles, political differences, in-law challenges, boundary issues, childhood memories, sibling rivalry — the causes of conflict are endless. The Hanukkah season, with its themes of family and tradition, can intensify our feelings. Estrangement and conflict are not new, they are part of our Torah.

In the *Akeidah* (the story of Abraham and Isaac), God tells Abraham, “Take



■ Rabbi Nicole Luna

your son, your only one, the one you love, Isaac; go to the land of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering” (Gen. 22:2). Abraham and Isaac approach the mountain, and it is only when an angel of God calls out, telling him not to lay his hand on his son, that Abraham slaughters a ram instead. When the entire incident is over, the Torah says that Abraham returned alone. Where was Isaac? What happened to Isaac? One thing is certain, the biblical text is chilling in its silence. Abraham and Isaac never speak to each other again.

Sometimes the bond between parent and child, siblings, relatives or friends is broken by trauma or betrayal and repair never comes. The Torah does not cover this up. It gives us the courage to name it — some wounds do not heal. This is not to say it is easy or that people won’t take sides or place blame.

For those who see the *Akeidah* as a story of great faith, generations argue over who is more praise-worthy, Abraham or Isaac. Some commentators insist that Isaac acted out of his own free will; that his father would not have been able to tie him down if he had not acquiesced. Everyone has an opinion, but the truth remains regardless.

The Torah does not insist on reconciliation. For one party, this might feel healthy and necessary. For the one who has found their family ties cut without any say in the matter, this can be exceptionally painful. After all, Abraham felt he was following the word of God; he trusted in God’s promise that no matter what, Isaac would be the next generation.

Despite this incident, we still hold up Abraham as the faithful father of our people. And yet, the Torah accepts that not every relationship can be restored, and

Estrangement and conflict are not new, they are part of our Torah.

we must still find the strength to move forward. The wounds caused by family rifts and the severing of relationships are real and can be painful. The loss may be deep and often unspoken, carrying shame, loneliness or guilt.

The Torah does not offer us easy answers or a step-by-step guide toward happily ever after. What it offers us is possibilities.

For some families, like Abraham and Isaac, having no contact will be the right

answer after trauma and abuse. Choosing distance can be an act of survival, not failure. Though, for the one who has found family ties cut without any say, the pain can cut deep. For those walking that path, the Torah reminds us: you are not alone, and your worth is not diminished by estrangement.

Some families, like Jacob and Esau, live with polite distance. Holiday phone calls and occasional visits preserve the relationship, but not all reconciliation ends in intimacy and closeness. Sometimes boundaries and space help maintain respect and well-being. When *teshuvah* (true repentance) occurs, families may then find their way to complete healing. Transformation and vulnerability can lead to this rebuilding, but it requires real change, accountability and forgiveness.

When the angel of God called out to Abraham not to harm Isaac, Abraham lifted his eyes and saw a ram caught by its horns in the bushes. He went and took the ram and offered it in place of his son. We too are called to lift our eyes and see the possibilities before us.

May this Hanukkah season bring strength to those who hold silence, gentleness to those seeking boundaries, and courage to those who pursue reconciliation.

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



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I choose to believe

By Rabbi David Arias

A few weeks ago, thanks to Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties, I had the wonderful opportunity to attend an inspiring event — an evening when Omer Shem Tov, a released hostage, shared his amazing story.

Among the many things he mentioned, he repeatedly emphasized his perspective on what he called “small little miracles” that happened to him and others during his captivity. For many people, all these seemingly unrelated details could be coincidences. And they might have been for him as well; however, when we choose to believe, we decide to actively add meaning to simple facts of our daily life.

The story of Hanukkah has many faces and perspectives. As I usually teach, there are at least two versions of it: the one told in the Talmud (Shabbat 21b) focuses on the miracle of the little oil curse, while the story in the book of Maccabees praises the entrepreneurship and strength of a small group of brave soldiers who fought fiercely against a powerful enemy. Most people would say, the first one is the story that tells us about



■ Rabbi David Arias

Darkness isn't just defined by the absence of light but also by a lack of faith.

a miracle, of course. But, again, in the eyes of a believer, the second story has a miraculous perspective as well.

For eight days, we will light the candles, adding more light each night and bringing greater brightness into the world. Hanukkah is a celebration where we increase the light while remembering the wonders Hashem did for us in the past. Therefore, Hanukkah must be an invitation to open our eyes, to bring that light into the little details of our daily lives — details we haven’t yet acknowledged for their Divine and miraculous significance.

Darkness isn't just defined by the absence of light but also by a lack of faith. As committed believers, we don’t exclusively deposit our hope in the hands of The Creator. We also take action ourselves, just like the Maccabees did, without

waiting for a miracle to happen. Interestingly, it is only in retrospect that we realize a miracle has taken place.

Sometimes, when we are too busy with life, we forget to look for that Divine spark and to notice these “little miracles” like Shem Tov did. Every time we open our eyes, every morning when we wake



up, it’s a miracle, and we shouldn’t take it for granted.

Celebrating the festival of Hanukkah can be even more meaningful if we choose to believe and decide to see the miracles around us. Because it is one thing to remember a *nes* (miracle) that happened to our ancestors, but it's

much more powerful to be a witness to one.

Seeing Shem Tov here, speaking to us as a free man, was one of those moments.

For more light and miracles to come, *Hag Urim Sameah!*

Rabbi David Arias serves at Temple Judea in Fort Myers. 

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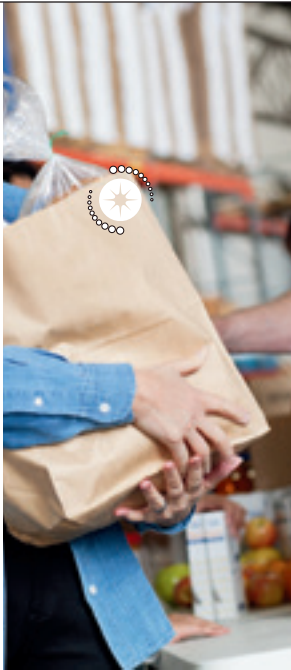


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Chanuka, lighting up the darkness of exile

By Rabbi Yitzchok Minkowicz

The previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, taught, "We must listen carefully to what the Chanuka candles are saying." Throughout the ages, the lights of the Chanuka menorah have carried a message of hope, strength and the eternity of our sacred heritage. The candles carry an additional message: the reminder that we must publicize this message and the miracle.

There is a *mitzva* on Chanuka of *pirsumei nisa* (publicizing the miracle). We fulfill this special *mitzva* by lighting the



■ Rabbi Yitzchok Minkowicz

Chanuka menorah. In fact, many of the laws and customs involved with lighting the menorah emphasize this concept of publicizing the miracle. We are told that the menorah should be lit "at the outside of the entrance of one's home," and that the candles should burn into the night. Thus, the Chanuka candles illuminate the public domain, especially when it is covered in darkness

Lighting the candles at night is symbolic of the mission of every single Jew. We live

at a time when G-dliness is concealed by the night of exile. By learning the Torah and fulfilling its *mitzvot*, we illuminate the world and elevate it so that G-dliness may be revealed.

The darkness also recalls the dark situation of the Jewish people in the time of the story of Chanuka. The Greeks physically conquered and controlled the Land of Israel, and they sought to impose their culture upon its inhabitants. The Jews suffered in physical and spiritual darkness under the influence of the Greeks. It

was the Maccabees who illuminated their situation, who instilled the Jewish people with both physical strength to fight off their oppressors and spiritual fortitude to withstand their influence.

When Moshiach is revealed, it will be the ultimate "publicizing of the miracle." The entire world will be cognizant of G-d's greatness and dominion over the world. May this happen immediately.

Rabbi Yitzchok Minkowicz serves at Chabad Lubavitch of Southwest Florida. 


Lighting the candles at night is symbolic of the mission of every single Jew.

CHABAD LUBAVITCH OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

Fort Myers

(239) 433-7708 • www.Chabadswf.org

This year's Grand Chanukah Community Celebration will take place at Castle Golf (7400 Gladiolus Dr., Fort Myers, Florida 33908) on Sunday, Dec. 14, at 3 p.m. Hosted by Rabbi Yitzchok and Shani Minkowicz of Chabad Lubavitch of Southwest Florida, this event will include: the

Grand Menorah Lighting; holiday refreshments; Chanukah doughnuts and latkas; music; free miniature golf; and fun for the whole family. For more information, please call 239-433-7708, email rabbi@chabadswf.org or visit chabadswf.org. 



Last year's Chanukah event



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Temple Shalom is the center for Jewish life in Charlotte County, and there's always something going on, from Friday night worship to holiday and life cycle events.

Sukkot and Simchat Torah

For Sukkot, the members of the Brotherhood erected our sukkah, and the arts and crafts committee took care of decorating it with paper chains, card stock veggies, tissue and spices.

The congregation celebrated Simchat Torah — the end and the start of the Torah cycle — with all our scrolls carried so that everyone could touch them and reflect on the meaning of Torah in their lives.

Save the date!

Music and latkes are in store for everyone

who comes to the Chanukah menorah lighting at Temple Shalom in Port Charlotte.

On Sunday, Dec. 14, we will light our large menorah on the front lawn at 3 p.m. Musical Director Dr. David Katz will lead the singing. Additionally, the North Port High School Chorus, led by Director David Sommer, will perform.

And what would a Chanukah celebration be without latkes, along with apple sauce and sour cream? There will be plenty for all — and donut holes as a bonus! Everyone from the community is invited to our Chanukah celebration. There is no cost.

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. 📍



Temple Shalom members Gayle Druker and Steve Perlstein work with the team to set up the sukkah.

TEMPLE BETH SHALOM

Cape Coral

(239) 772-4555 • www.templebethshalomcc.org

There is never a dull moment at Temple Beth Shalom. We started out the month with a lightning strike that took out our Wi-Fi, our electronic door locks and at least one computer. But as my former neighbor used to say, "there are no obstacles in life, just new opportunities." We now have better Wi-Fi, a new computer and a backup plan for our electronic locks.

Addressing the challenges of those losing their SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) benefits due to the government shutdown was not so easy. As soon as we realized that the cuts were not going to be averted, our cantor and members of the congregation stepped up — they bought gift cards from local supermarkets to be distributed discretely to those in need. Within days, we met with

Iglesia Vida, the church that rents space from us, to work together to help alleviate hardship in the community.

"Picking Up the Broken Pieces"

Temple Beth Shalom reaches to the community in other ways as well. On Nov. 3, Cantor Butensky and Holocaust survivor Peter Simenauer participated in "Picking Up the Broken Pieces," an observance of Kristallnacht at Shell Point Retirement Community.

It was a beautiful and powerful program educating Jews and non-Jews alike about the horrors of the Holocaust and the absolute necessity of never repeating such evil on any group of people. One of the highlights was watching Cantor Butensky of Temple Beth Shalom invite

Rabbi Arias of Temple Judea to sing with him. It was a powerful display of unity among the Jewish community.

Out of Darkness Walk

On a totally different note, Team TBS participated in the Out of Darkness Walk to prevent suicide. Led by Team Captain Paula Anderson, it is one more opportunity to help those facing difficult challenges.

TBS Choir and The Senior Serenaders

Despite all of the challenges, we also experienced the joy of celebrating the upcoming holidays. TBS Choir along with The Senior Serenaders were invited to sing at The American House in Fort Myers. It was pure joy to share music, singing and conversation with the residents. We look forward to sharing many more joyous moments with them.

Lunch Bunch

One of our greatest pleasures is hosting Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties' Lunch Bunch at our synagogue.

The presentation at TBS last month was led by SCN Regional Security Advisor John Murtagh. He is not only a great speaker who brings real, practical information to our guests but he has also been a great help to all of our local synagogues. We are eternally grateful to our Jewish Federation for organizing these lunches and to Murtagh for helping us ensure the safety of our people.

Annual Chanukah Party

Please join us for our Annual Chanukah Party on Dec. 14 at 5 p.m. It starts with the lighting of many Chanukah candles and just gets better from there. It is an evening of fun, laughter, a wonderful presentation by our religious school, music and good food. Cantor Butensky and George Laufer make the best latkas you have ever tasted!

To make your reservation, call the office at 239-772-4555 or visit our website at www.templebethshalomcc.org.

All of us at TBS wish you a Happy Chanukah, a joyous month filled with friends and family and a very happy new year. 📍

TEMPLE JUDEA

Fort Myers

(239) 433-0201 • www.tjswfl.org

There's so much to celebrate together at Temple Judea in December.

We are still basking in the glow of our Shabbat of Song with Cantor Andres Levy. From Friday evening services and a wonderful dinner to Shabbat morning services with Kiddush lunch and an amazing Saturday evening concert, it was an inspiring weekend filled with beautiful music and fellowship.

Upcoming events

"Reasonable Faith," the class that is based on the book "The Great Partnership" by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, takes place Mondays at 6 p.m. and continues through mid-December.

The Temple Judea Preschool Book Fair is Dec. 15 through 19.

The Temple Judea Preschool Winter Festival is Dec. 18 at 4 p.m. Come enjoy food, fun, games and vendors.

On Dec. 19, the Congregational Chanukah Festival begins at 4 p.m. The festival features a live Israeli band, bounce house, face painting, donuts and gelt. The candle lighting is scheduled at 5:20 p.m.; the musical Shabbat at 5:30 p.m.; and the Shabbat dinner at 6:15 p.m.

"Oy to the World!"

Jodi Cohen's one woman show about shopping, family and the holiday spirit, with improv and musical accompaniment by Barry Iceberg is on Dec. 25 at 4 p.m.

This is the event of the season! General seating tickets are available only online. Visit www.tjswfl.org. If purchasing tickets before Dec. 15, the cost is \$36; if purchasing tickets after Dec. 15, the cost is \$45.

Those who wish to join are invited to dinner at Ginger Bistro following the show.

Ongoing programs

Religious school continues Tuesday afternoons and Sunday mornings.

Chaverot women's group continued events in November. For additional information, contact Jodi Cohen at jodi@jodi-cohen.com or 608-513-9737.

To participate in Hazak, contact Joyce Rosinger at grosinger@gmail.com or 239-437-1566. We are looking forward to our "snowbirds" return.

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.

Regularly scheduled events

Friday evening Shabbat services at 6:30 p.m.

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

Morning Minyan has resumed and takes place Mondays at 9 a.m.

Co-president Jan Klein's Monday morning meetings will be at Temple Judea, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

We would love to see you in person or via Zoom. 📍

TEMPLE BETH EL
Fort Myers

(239) 433-0018 • www.templebethel.com

December begins with TBE members going to Cuba! Over 40 folks, including Rabbi Luna, are on a mission to support the Jewish community in Havana. Temple Bel El President Michael Altman spearheaded this adventure. Next month, we will have a full report about the experience.

Upcoming events

Chanukah begins Dec. 14, and the TBE Gift Shop is your premier Southwest Florida source for Judaica. Chanukah bazaars will be held at 6 p.m. Dec. 10, 12 and 14, to give members and the public plenty of chances to get those wonderful gifts and supplies in time for the holiday.

Dec. 10 is a busy day with the rabbi's adult study group, "Wrestling with Virtue," followed by the Hanukkah Bazaar. And our Annual Congregational Meeting will be held in the Temple Sanctuary at 7 p.m. Members in good standing are invited to this Congregational Annual Meeting. This event will not be available via Zoom. Please be sure renewals are

in good order for voting purposes. Meet your Temple leadership and confirm our slate for 2025. We will present financial updates and event/activity updates for the upcoming year.

Sisterhood does not disappoint. December's "Ladies Who Lunch" will be held at Dos Sabores Mexican restaurant in Fort Myers on Thursday, Dec. 11 at noon. Join us for fellowship and good food. Remember, Sisterhood or Temple membership is not required. However, **a reservation is needed.** Major thanks to Bo Lieberman for bringing this activity to life.

Join us for Hanukkah Shabbat on Dec. 19. We will share a catered dinner and light our outdoor TBE menorah during a community lighting ceremony, followed by a Hanukkah Shabbat service at 7:30 p.m. The oneg is sponsored by Doug Kasten in memory of his mother, Ruth.

The month isn't over without our annual Chinese Dinner in the Dubin Center on Dec. 24. Our Men's Club has a fun and delicious evening planned with music

and silent auction items galore. Make your reservation through the calendar.

Save the dates!

- Feb. 1, 2026 – Mitzvah Day
- Feb. 14, 2026 – Fabulous Fifties Party

Recurring programs

Our recurring Temple Beth El programs continue:

- Drop off nonperishable food items in the lobby shopping cart whenever the Temple is open.
- All are welcome to join Torah study with Rabbi Luna via Zoom, Saturday mornings at 9 a.m.
- There will not be a December book club. But save the date for Jan. 7, 1:30 p.m. where we will discuss "What to Do about the Solomons" by Bethany Ball via Zoom.
- Tot Shabbat, a kid-friendly service, will not take place in December. It will resume on Jan. 2 at 6 p.m. Come for the fellowship, fun and pizza. Please RSVP to be sure we have enough food.
- History & Heritage of Our People is the third Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. via Zoom.
- Shabbat services are open to all on Fridays at 7:30 p.m. We are live in the sanctuary, via Zoom, and streaming on Facebook.
- 12-Step Recovery Group: Experience the 12-Steps from a Jewish

perspective, seeking a path to recovery through Judaic spiritual principals, every Saturday at 11 a.m. via Zoom. We are a fellowship of people who are recovering from alcohol, drugs, and other addictions such as food, gambling, sex, shopping, etc. We use the book, "Twelve Jewish Steps to Recovery" by Rabbi Olitzky and Stuart Copans, M.D., second edition.

• Are you a recent convert, exploring conversion or seeking to reconnect with Jewish roots? "Jews by Choice" meets online the last Thursday of every month from 8 to 9 p.m. Discuss the delights and challenges of converting and reconnecting in a confidential and safe setting. Zoom details are on our calendar.

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

Follow us on Facebook @TempleBethElofFortMyers and on Instagram @templebethelformyers. Questions? You can always contact the office at 239-433-0018.

Wishing you a safe and celebratory new year and hoping for more peace in the world and in Israel in 2026.

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

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COMMUNITY FREE SYNAGOGUE
Fort Myers

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

Invitation letters for our Sunday evening Dec. 14 Hanukah First Night Community Free Latke Dinner are being sent out now. If you have not received a letter and would like to attend, please email your street address to synfree@comcast.net. It is free and open to all, but seating is limited to the first 100 reservations. Once again, Publix made a generous grant to help us with this festive event.

Our next CFS Brown Bag movie night is Monday, Dec. 1, 6 p.m., featuring the classic 1967 “Cool Hand Luke.” Shot in Florida, it stars Paul Newman and George Kennedy, winner of Best Supporting Actor in 1968 for his role. Much like last month’s Brown Bag pick, “Being There,” it is contemporary retelling of an ancient story. This event is free and open to all.



Last year's outdoor Menorah lighting

The Community Free Synagogue congregation gathers each Friday evening at 6 p.m. to share a traditional Sabbath Eve meal. All are welcome. Feel free to bring a dish, side, salad, wine or a dessert for the social hour that follows worship. Please no dairy for the meal.

Qabbalat shabbat, the Sabbath Eve service welcoming the *shabbat*, follows at 7 p.m. Worship leans towards the traditional.

The meal and worship are at the CFS home on the Unity campus (11120 Ranchette Road).

Weekly Sabbath morning Torah Study with the rabbi is from 9:30 to 11 a.m. only via Zoom. The synagogue Zoom room is easily accessible via the CFS webpage. Visit www.fortmyerssynagogue.com.

Now in its 21st year, CFS follows the “Old World” community synagogue model. It is a public Jewish resource, not a private membership organization. Its purpose is “prayer, learning and benevolence” in an informally structured intimate setting open to all. To keeps a focus on its purpose, CFS refrains from all fundraising, non-religious activities and secular engagements in a “no politics zone.”

The synagogue meets on the Unity Campus (11120 Ranchette Road).



CFS is Rabbi Diamond’s synagogue — his “home haven” — from which he has continued to serve our community for nearly 30 years. A Bard College graduate, he holds a Master of Hebrew Letters, his ordination and Doctor of Divinity from Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, as well as a higher degree in rabbinics from Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Rabbi Diamond also served our country as a chaplain in the U.S. Air Force and for the Federal Bureau of Prisons. He was a longtime adjunct professor of civic engagement at Florida Gulf Coast University. 🌐

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Candle lighting times:

Dec 5: 5:17 p.m.

Dec 12: 5:18 p.m.

Dec 19: 5:21 p.m.

Dec 26: 5:25 p.m.

Internationally acclaimed vocal performer Cantor Azi Schwartz and our own Cantor Barry Butensky of Temple Beth Shalom of Cape Coral present



Cantor Azi Schwartz

**in Concert,
with Cantor
Mira Davis**

**FEBRUARY 2, 2026
THE BROADWAY PALM
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5:30pm Buffet Dinner 7:00pm Concert

World renowned for his magnificent voice and dynamic interpretations of Jewish music, Cantor Azi Schwartz has 25 million online viewers and over 18 albums. He has performed at Carnegie Hall, the United Nations, Madison Square Garden, the US Capitol Rotunda and the Israeli Knesset, as well as for Pope Francis at the 9/11 Memorial, and featured in a PBS special entitled The New York Cantors for millions of viewers around the globe. His recent work includes Shabbat On Broadway.

Cantors Schwartz and Davis will blend traditional Jewish prayers with contemporary melodies in an unforgettable evening of joy and spirit.

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Look for Cantor Azi Schwartz' awesome videos, photos, and social media.



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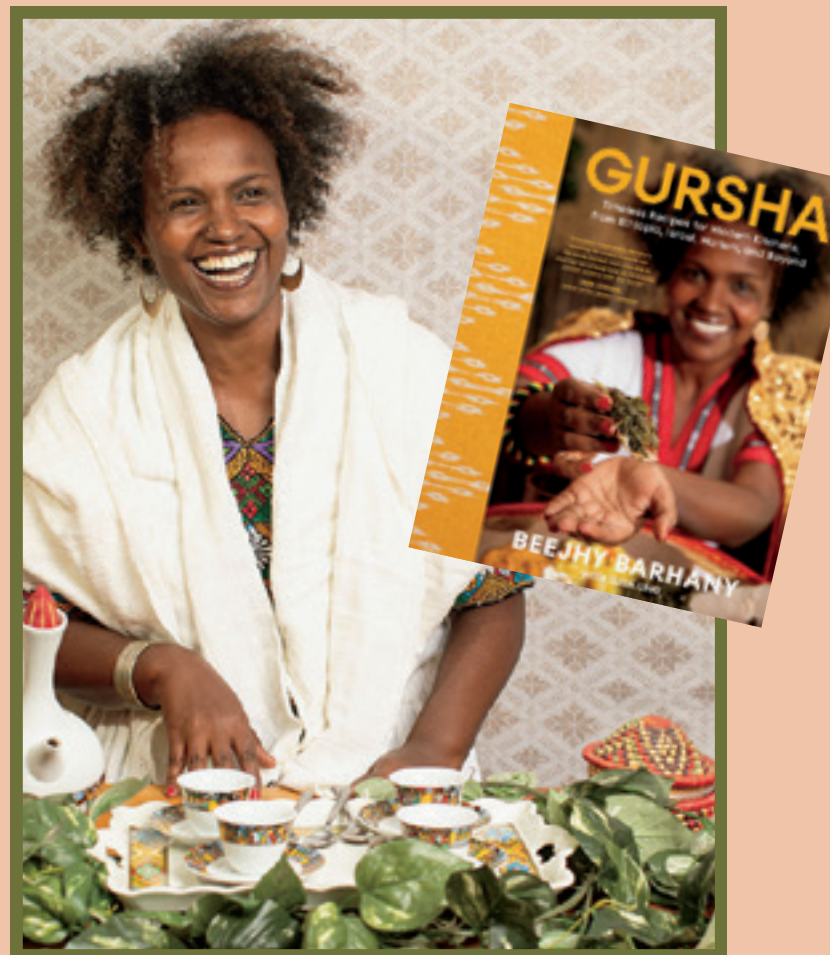
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BETH SHALOM



Linda Idelson Culinary Event

Hosted in the Charles & Linda Idelson Kitchen
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Monday, January 12th
6pm - 8pm



We proudly welcome Beejhy Barhany — chef, author of Gursha, and founder of Tsion Café in Harlem.

Born in Ethiopia, Beejhy fled with her family as a young child during the mass exodus of Ethiopian Jews in the 1980s. From Ethiopia to Sudan, to Israel, and eventually to New York, her journey is one of courage, Jewish identity, and unbreakable tradition.

She will guide us through a traditional Ethiopian Jewish Coffee Ceremony, share stories of Jewish resilience, and serve stew and fresh bread that honor her heritage.

The evening will open with music by Canterbury students and a shared commitment to memory, culture, and community.

Where food gathers us, tradition sustains us.

Where stories are shared, legacy lives on.



TICKETS: \$36 pp or VIP \$75 (includes cookbook, VIP seating and meet & greet

Want to be a sponsor? \$175 includes 2 tickets \$250 includes 3 tickets

RSVP by: 12/29/25

Register at jewishfederationlcc.org/calendar

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