



L'CHAYIM

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11 Jewish Films; 29 Days
 Join us this month for the 28th Annual Jewish Film Festival of Southwest Florida. There's something for everyone!
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Security, Women's Giving Circle and Film Festival month

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

■ Debbie Sanford



When I look back at the last two years and ahead to 2024, it is with great pride in the community we're building together. Despite significant challenges, we have come together as a Jewish community to meet the needs of Jews locally, and globally. Through this, we have deepened our connections with each other. I want to thank each of you — our community's leaders, supporters and champions — for your commitment, generosity, passion and energy.

Security

I'd like to give you a rundown on a few significant things that have taken place here recently. As discussed previously, we are strengthening our commitment to security after local bomb threats have breached our small and safe community of Southwest Florida. As I write this, the search is on for a new security advisor from SCN (Secure Community Network) who will work in our community for the next three years. We have the associated costs covered for the first year, that's the

good news. The bad news is, we need these extra security precautions now more than ever.

At the end of January, I am off to Tallahassee to meet with our Florida senators and representatives. I have been offered the opportunity to meet one on one and speak on our agenda, security and antisemitism. I will report back on this in the next month or so.

Women's Giving Circle

The Women's Giving Circle Open House was productive, and we are off to a great start. To be a part of this circle, each woman contributes \$360. The circle allows like-minded Jewish women of all ages an experience of collected giving and granting. Each member reviews grant requests from Jewish organizations around the world. As a group, each application is reviewed and discussed for funding.

Each woman gets to vote and your vote helps to assist a Jewish organization that supports women and children.

Our grant cycle will open in March, and funding will take place in September. Your funds are distributed to the organization the circle votes on. To be a part of our Women's Giving Circle, please email me at debbiesanford@jfedlcc.org

It's Film Festival month

If you can believe it, it is just about February when you receive this issue, which means film festival month. This may be the best lineup of films in many years. You don't want to miss it! I want to personally thank the sponsors who support this festival year after year, and the many new sponsors this year. They afford us the ability to bring the best films to Southwest Florida. Thank you for your support! See you at the movies. 🎬



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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.

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MARCH ISSUE

EDITORIAL

DEADLINE:

Monday, February 5



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).

February fun awaits

By Danielle Bernstein, Special Events and Program Coordinator

Hi, everyone! Can you believe February has snuck up on us? Get ready for a fantastic lineup of films this month. If you haven't grabbed your tickets yet, make sure to snag them before they're gone!

Here's a little bit about what's been happening around here.

Challah Prince event

The long-awaited Challah Prince event exceeded all expectations, captivating over 130 eager attendees. The evening was spent learning how to master our challah skills with a simple but unique braid. As we delved into the secrets of crafting the perfect



Photo credit: Marc Houston



■ Danielle Bernstein

Challah braid, laughter and shared moments made it an unforgettable night. Who's wants to do something like this again?

Community Breakfast

Our Community Breakfast exuded warmth this year, a much-needed embrace after recent events in Israel. We hosted an engaging speaker who delved into the depths of Einstein's legacy. Laughter and smiles filled the morning air as we savored an enjoyable breakfast spread crafted by Crowne Plaza. It was a morning to remember.

Women's Giving Circle

Earlier in January, we held the Women's Giving Circle at Chocolattes. This circle comprises passionate individuals guided by Jewish values, combining efforts to directly aid women and children in Israel and abroad. A suggested donation of \$360 fuels our collective impact. If you're interested in taking part in this compassionate initiative, we'd love to have you join us.

Before I move on to upcoming events, I'd like to express a heartfelt thank you to all our Film Festival sponsors.

Upcoming events

March kicks off with a grand adventure – the JFED Cruise to Bimini's private



island and Key West. Shabbat dinners and an array of activities await us. I'm personally thrilled about this weekend and can't wait to share these moments with all of you.

Following that, mark your calendars for Jewish Heritage Day at Jet Blue Park, where the Red Sox will face off against the Atlanta Braves. The game starts at 1 p.m. (note the correction from previous announcements). We'll gather an hour earlier for a special group event, with reserved parking arranged for our group.

Stay tuned for a save-the-date announcement for Israel Fest!

If you have any questions or ideas for future programs, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at danielleb@jfedlcc.org. Your input is always valued.

Let's make February a month to remember. See you at these fantastic events! 🌟

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A heartfelt journey

My new adventure in community leadership

By Nancy Klein, Friendly Visitor/JFS Coordinator

I'm absolutely thrilled to share some exciting news with you! I'm stepping into a new chapter of my professional life, and it's shaping up to be an incredibly rewarding journey. Alongside my ongoing role with the Friendly Visitor Program, I am now taking on the challenge of managing the Food Pantry, the Faith-Based Nursing Program and working with the local community, providing space for new events through the South United Way House. It's a big step up, and I'm buzzing with energy and ideas!

Leading the Food Pantry is not just a job; it's a mission close to my heart. I see it as a golden opportunity to make a real difference in people's lives, offering more than just food — it's about providing hope and a warm, welcoming community. I'm eager to roll up my sleeves and dive into this new role, ensuring that everyone we help leaves with a smile and a sense of belonging.

The Faith-Based Nursing Program is another venture that resonates deeply with me. It's a unique blend of health care and spiritual support, and I'm excited to explore new ways to expand its reach and impact. I believe

in caring for the whole person — body and soul — and this program is a perfect embodiment of that philosophy.

The United Way House venture has enabled us to open our doors wide to the local community, inviting them to use our space for their events. We are able to achieve this by partnering with the United Way and their local partners. Imagine the possibilities! From community meetings and workshops to celebrations and gatherings, our space is set to become a buzzing hub of activity, connection and community spirit.

Continuing with the Friendly Visitor Program, I remain as passionate as ever. The stories and resilience of the aging adults we visit never cease to inspire me. It's a beautiful reminder of the power of human connection and the joy we can bring into each other's lives.

But here's the thing — none of this would be possible without the incredible support of our local community. The spirit of volunteerism is the heartbeat of our programs. Whether it's lending a hand at the food pantry, brightening the day of an elderly person or helping out behind the scenes, every volunteer is a hero in my eyes.

The Federation is always on the lookout for more compassionate individuals to join our cause. Each volunteer is a vital part of our mission and, together, we are a force for good.

So, as I embark on this new adventure, filled with both challenges and opportunities, I am overflowing with gratitude and excitement. I can't wait to see what we can achieve together.

With the unwavering support of our volunteers and community, the sky's the limit. Let's make a difference, one heart, one smile at a time!

If you would like additional information on any of our programs mentioned above — or if you are interested in volunteering — please reach out to me at either NancyKlein@jfedlcc.org or 239-481-4449, ext. 2.

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In this place, in this time

Jewish Family Services update

By Jodi Cohen, Life Enrichment Coordinator

This past December, the Federation hosted a Hanukkah luncheon for local Holocaust survivors. We were joined by musicians Diane and Chuck Coffman, who performed after lunch, playing soulful music that made the afternoon feel sacred. Stories were shared in English with French, Azerbaijani and Brazilian accents. Everyone received a Hanukkah bag full of goodies, but the real gift was being together, in this place, in this time. Saying goodbye, Emma Zeldes came up to me with tears in her eyes, put her hand on her heart and said, "There are no words."

Lunch Bunch

All my life, whenever my parents attended a *simcha*, a happy occasion, they would send photos from the event and always included pictures of the food. ("Such a lovely brisket!") Forgive me for doing the same, but the dessert table at The Terraces of Bonita Springs during our Hanukkah lunch was simply gorgeous.

Everyone at the Terraces was gracious, from the catering staff to the marketing folks and executives who welcomed us. The food was so delicious that it felt like we were dining at a five-star restaurant, and for once, I'm not exaggerating! The Shalom Dancers performed and it's always a treat to witness their *ruach*, their spirit, when they dance. When it came time for leader Marsha Kistler to teach the group some dances, the young



■ Jodi Cohen



Jewish Family Services

Lee & Charlotte

women servers at the Terraces joined in, making everything that much more buoyant and fun. The gal I'd been coordinating the lunch with could not be there but all the staff stepped in and stepped up with kindness and attention to details.

I'd also like to thank Rabbi Sack and the staff at Temple Judea for hosting our last Lunch Bunch of 2023. Jason's Deli, our generous community partner, provided the food, and for the first time ever, there were no leftovers!

The Shalom Dancers performed at this lunch as well, since it was mostly a new crowd from those who attended in Bonita Springs, and a good time was had by all.

On a somber note, Howard Parish passed away just a few days after he and Sofia attended the Lunch Bunch at Temple Judea. I don't typically provide names of the people in the photos, however, I wanted to honor Sofia and Howard. May his memory be for a blessing.



Purim

Purim is coming! Purim is coming! I love Purim, and not just because of the hamantaschen. A highlight from years ago, when I did improv with the kids at my synagogue, is when I put on a caftan, a long-haired wig, Cleopatra-style eye make-up and talked about my everyday life as Queen Esther. After my short monologue, the kids asked questions about how I stayed warm in such a big castle, how much shampoo I used for my long hair and what the king did all day.

In March, we will be **packing** Purim gift bags (Wednesday, March 13) and then **delivering** the bags (during the week of March 18) to older adults throughout our community.

It's an important mitzvah to deliver holiday gift bags because, while people relish the goodies, they truly appreciate the contact with the volunteers. When Alexandra and Emily Polk were kids, they delivered gift bags to my dad, and he always looked forward to seeing the girls during the holidays. I was there a couple of times when the girls came over and the air sizzled with joy. Your presence delivering the presents makes a big difference.

It's said that a big part of succeeding in show business is simply showing up.



Sofia and Howard Parish

It's the same thing with delivering the gift bags. All you need to be successful is an open heart and a desire to connect with the elders in our community. There are a lot of Jewish residents scattered throughout the area, so there are many opportunities for everyone in our village to deliver the Purim bags.

The Talmud says, "The highest form of wisdom is kindness." I invite you to extend the Purim spirit to the older adults in our community who look forward to meeting you. I promise a "*grogger*" for the delivery angels!

B'shalom. 🌍

The Terraces
at Bonita Springs
A SantaFe Senior Living Community



Bottom row: Françoise Onufer and Emma Zeldes. Back row: Diane Coffman, Chuck Coffman, Peter Simenauer and Ilya Zeldes

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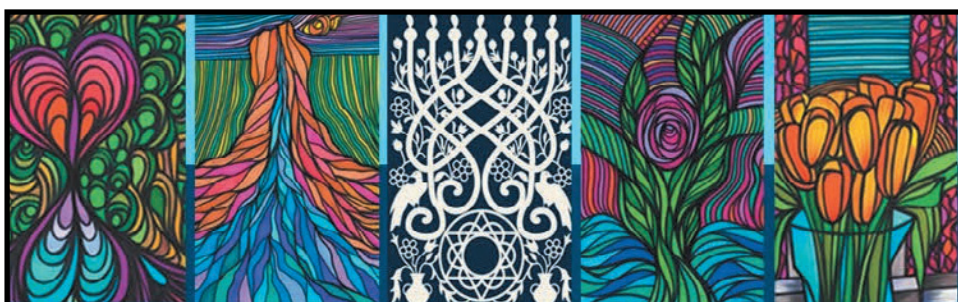
This year please consider making an additional campaign contribution in honor or memory of a loved one. Because kindness is contagious, we would like to highlight your generosity in L'CHAYIM and notify personally those whom you honor. You may choose how your generosity is noted and how we share your mitzvah with the community.



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Honoring a special person through a tribute gift to Jewish Family Services of Lee & Charlotte Counties is a wonderful way to recognize a simcha or remember a loved one. Not only does your gift show your family and friends that you care, it goes to work helping Jews in need and building vibrant communities locally, in Israel and around the world.



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jewishfederationlcc.org/tribute-memorials



Jewish Federation
of Lee & Charlotte Counties

HOW THE JEWISH FEDERATION SERVES

Local Jewish Education and Culture

- ✧ Community-wide Jewish Education and Cultural Programs for all ages including the Jewish Film Festival, Jewish author events, Out & About Films, Israel celebration, day trips, Israeli folk dancing, PJ Library & TRIBE, a young adult group.
- ✧ L'CHAYIM published monthly to keep the Jewish community informed about local, national and international Jewish issues.
- ✧ New 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.
- ✧ Projects and programs aimed at Jewish community enrichment.



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 and family outreach, information and referral services.
- ✧ Friendly Visitor Program.

Local Emergency Services

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

Stay in touch throughout the month. Sign up for the Federation's e-blasts.



Jewish Federation
OF LEE & CHARLOTTE COUNTIES

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At the Museum

Just as Southwest Florida and Naples are now in “season,” so is the Museum! Our recent expansion couldn’t have come at a better time! In addition to a variety of interesting public programs, we’ve hosted many Student Field Trips, Private Group Tours, local visitors as well as those from other states and countries. Our Education Department held another “Family Day” event for grades 5 and up, which was well attended.

We held screenings of a major motion picture, the 2008 film “Defiance,” and a documentary, “Rescue in the Philippines,” about a little-known WWII humanitarian effort that saved over 1,000 European Jews from the Holocaust. The special Q&A sessions that followed each film were remarkable because each had speakers with a personal connection to the events and people depicted on screen. For “Defiance,” this was Ruth Bielski, daughter of Tuvia Bielski, the film’s main character who was portrayed by actor Daniel Craig. For “Rescue,” it was descendants of both the refugees who were saved, and family members of those who saved them.

We are honored that Ruth Bielski will be our special guest speaker at this year’s annual Triumph fundraiser, “Triumph of Resistance.” She will share her family’s story of resistance, courage and compassion.

This is the time of the school year when teachers and students at public schools are likely to study World War II history. We have multiple mornings of Museum field trips scheduled for the larger middle and high schools in the area. We also work with students in other school environments, from home school groups, private schools, charter schools and alternative education programs.

Our PopUp Museum displays, utilized by both local schools and those in distant



■ Susan Suarez

Southwest Florida locations, have been in such high demand that we have created multiple sets to accommodate the need. These exhibits and displays can be customized according to what the students happen to be studying at the time the PopUp is on display. The PopUp Museum concept is also available to community organizations, as are the Maureen and Arnold

Lerner Classroom and the Herbert H. Schiff Classroom. Contact Education Specialist David Nelson at david@hmcec.org or 239-263-9200, ext. 205 for more information and scheduling Holocaust education programs, public speakers, PopUp Museum displays and reserving one of the classrooms for your meeting.

If you are looking for a meaningful experience to offer visiting family and out-of-town guests, our private group tours can accommodate both small and large groups. Contact David Nelson to learn about available options. Alternatively, you may be interested in joining our public docent-led tours which are available several days a week at 12:15 p.m. Reservations are required – please check our website, hmcec.org, for specifics.



Ellaine Rosen

Upcoming Museum events

“Witness to Goodness” lecture by Museum Docent Ellaine Rosen

Wednesdays, Feb. 14 and Feb. 21, 2-4 p.m. at Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center, Herbert H. Schiff Classroom. RSVP required at hmcec.org.

GenShoah – Let’s Speak Yiddish

Sunday, Feb. 18, 3:30-5 p.m. at Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center, Maureen and Arnold Lerner Classroom. RSVP required at hmcec.org.

“Triumph of Resistance” annual fundraising event

Wednesday, March 6, 5:30-8:30 p.m. at Arthrex Conference Center. Tickets are \$350



Ruth Bielski



and RSVP is required at hmcec.org. Guest speaker: Ruth Bielski, daughter of Tuvia Bielski, leader of the Partisan Fighters profiled in the film “Defiance;” sponsorship packages available.

GenShoah – “Growing Up Sephardic in an Ashkenazi World” by Sam Varsano

Wednesday, March 13, 2-3 p.m. at Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center, Herbert H. Schiff Classroom. RSVP required at hmcec.org.

“The Holocaust: Medically-Driven Genocide” by Museum Docent Stuart Mest, M.D.



Stuart Mest, M.D.

Wednesday, March 20, 2-4 p.m. at Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center, Herbert H. Schiff Classroom. Tickets are \$20 and RSVP is required at hmcec.org.

Our education mission — to teach the lessons of the Holocaust to inspire action against bigotry, hatred and violence — remains relevant and grows in importance daily. Each of us has the power to make a difference in our world. I hope to see you soon at the Museum. 🌍

Join Us for
“Triumph of Resistance”
 Annual Fundraising Dinner
 Wednesday, March 6, 2024
 Naples
 5:30pm - 8:30pm
 RSVP Required



Special Guest Speaker Ruth Bielski Ehrreich,
 Daughter of Tuvia Bielski,
 Leader of the Bielski Brothers Partisans

We hope you'll join us for this very special program as Ruth Bielski Ehrreich shares her family's unique story of resistance, courage and compassion.

Brothers Tuvia, Zush and Asael Bielski were true heroes of the Holocaust. Their armed Partisan Brigade saved the lives of 1,200 Jewish men, women, and children. The Bielskis' story was depicted in the 2008 feature film, *Defiance*, starring Daniel Craig, Liev Schreiber and Jami Bell.

Triumph of Resistance tickets and Sponsorship Packages are now available. For more information, please visit hmcec.org. Net proceeds benefit Museum Education programs.

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GenShoah presents

Inside information on upcoming programs

By Shelley Lieb and Ida Margolis

The following is information you need for GenShoah SWFL's upcoming programs:

A special time to share

"Our Stories" GenShoah member get-together brings us together in a comfortable, inviting location to talk about our past and our present in the company of other 2Gs and 3Gs. The discussion is under the direction of Rene Geist, Ida Margolis and Shelley Lieb. We hope it will encourage the writing of more of our parents' stories of survival for the "Portraits of Remembrance" Project. Sunday, Feb. 4, 1 p.m.; location TBD — limited attendance. RSVP required to attend by emailing Rene Geist at renegeistgroup.com.



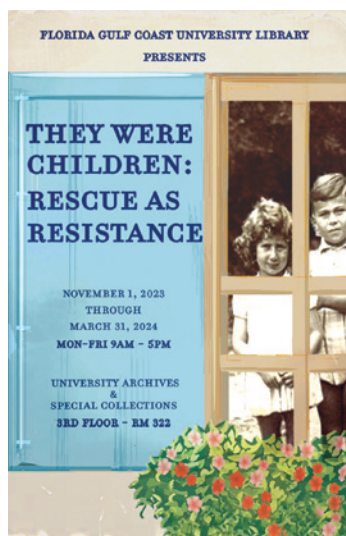
Rolly Jacob

If not now, when?

Genealogy workshops (2 equivalent). Bring your device and follow the lead of Hank Bitterman, 2G, who takes you to various online resources to find out about you and your family's past. Bitterman shares his knowledge from his own family findings both in the U.S. and abroad. Each session is limited in size and will provide a good starting point for further inquiries. Sunday, Feb. 25 and Sunday, April 7 at 1 p.m.; location TBD — limited attendance. RSVP required to attend by emailing Shelley Lieb at liebro@gmail.com.

Special invitation to GenShoah members

"They Were Children: Rescue as Resistance." This exhibit is about a specific resistance group, the OSE, which was active in German-occupied France. It provided a network of escape to Switzerland when children were being deported throughout France. A team of archivists from the FGCU library traveled to France and now share their information, discoveries and artifacts-on-loan.



This free exhibit is open to the public through March 31, Monday through Friday 9 a.m.-5 p.m., FGCU Archives, Bradshaw Library. GenShoah members are invited for a private tour (lunch included) on Sunday, March 3 at 10 a.m.; limited attendance. RSVP required to attend by emailing Shelley Lieb liebro@gmail.com.

Planning ahead

GenShoah SWFL is already planning for the Yom HaShoah program in Collier County on Sunday, May 5. Although it is still months away, there are two items that need attention now:

- We are encouraging you to invite your children/grandchildren to be at your side for this program. It is an opportunity to share your history with your family in a meaningful way.
- We are asking everyone in the community to submit family names for Holocaust remembrance at this program. Send them to genshoahswfl@hmcec.org.



Sam Varsano

Information on other future programs

If you talk to Sol Awend in Yiddish, his eyes light up and he will probably tell you a story in Yiddish to make you smile. He is the energy behind a monthly get-together for Yiddish speakers at any level. Join him at Zoog Mir in Yiddish the third Sunday of each month Nov. 2023-April 2024, 3:30-5 p.m. at the Holocaust Museum. Attendance is limited to 20 people. RSVP required to attend for each session by emailing hmcec.org.

Growing Up Sephardic in an Ashkenazi World by Sam Varsano

Wednesday, March 13 at 2 p.m.; Holocaust Museum. RSVP required to attend by emailing hmcec.org (Special Events).

Yom HaShoah Commemoration

May 5 at 4 p.m.; Nina Iser Jewish Cultural Center. RSVP requested by emailing jfgn.org.

Pre-event reception for GenShoah SWFL and survivors at 3 p.m. at the Nina Iser Jewish Cultural Center.

Possible book discussions – locations/dates/times TBD based on interest. Contact Estelle Kafer at ekafer520@gmail.com. 🌐

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Open letter to the Lee and Charlotte County Jewish community

Would you like to be part of a Community Campus Investigative Committee?

By Lynda Adler, Interim Investigative Committee Coordinator, and other citizens of Lee and Charlotte County Jewish Community

You may have heard people talking about a seedling of an idea for a **community campus** for those Jewish communities in Lee and Charlotte County that wish to participate. The overall idea (for discussion) is that every participating

community organization retains its own identity but shares resource management and expenses while continuing to do what they do best for their individual communities.

People have proposed many exciting ideas for this potential joint project,

but we need to set up a **Community Campus Investigative Committee** to decide if, and how, we move forward.

Please contact us at CommunityCampusFM@gmail.com if you would like to be involved 'from the beginning' or have any questions. Your participation

does not obligate "your community" in any way. In fact, it is preferable to consider all committee members and citizens of the Lee and Charlotte County Jewish community.

Wishing you a wonderful season here in Southwest Florida. 🌴

A Jewish 12-step recovery group

Every Saturday at 10 a.m. on Zoom

Are you looking for a path to recovery? Whether it is alcohol, drugs and/or other addictions such as food, gambling,

sex, shopping, etc., we invite you to experience this Jewish 12-step program and discussion group. We meet Saturdays, 11 a.m. on Zoom,

and we use the guidebook "Twelve Jewish Steps to Recovery" authored by Rabbi Kerry Olitzky and Stuart Copans, M.D.

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

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The explosion of antisemitism compels us Jews to own our identity

Aging Jewishly — What our traditions teach us about growing old

By Rabbi Barbara Aiello

It started with pennies but at first my dear friend's teenage daughter didn't take it seriously. After all, the boy who was throwing pennies at her couldn't even get the insult right. "He's calling me a Kite," said the girl. "That's how stupid he is. He doesn't even know what to say!"

As a Jewish mother, my friend's reaction was swift. She wanted to march into the principal's office and put a stop to this antisemitic harassment, but her daughter would have none of it. "Don't make a big deal in front of my friends," the daughter pleaded. "Just let it go." Respecting her daughter's wishes, the mom did not confront the school administration, but from time to time her daughter was showered with pennies and taunted as a "Kite."

Rewind the tape to 1957 and I am a little girl of 10 walking home from school with my friends. My cousin, Rebecca, two years younger, holds hands with two friends and skips ahead. They pass a brick wall, and standing on the ledge are several teenage boys. It is a warm April



■ Rabbi Barbara Aiello

afternoon and near to what in those days was called Holy Week or Easter vacation. The boys on the ledge, each holding a mud pie, begin to pelt Rebecca. They shout, "This is for you, Jew girl. You Jews killed Jesus." Screaming and covered in mud, Rebecca runs back toward me while our girlfriends flee the scene. As I turned to look after them, a neighbor lady watching from her window drew her curtains closed. Frightened and dirty, Rebecca and I stood there alone.

My last name is "Aiello." It is one of the oldest Italian Jewish surnames, but this fact is virtually unknown in North America where Ashkenazi Jews whose ancestors hail from Eastern European countries like Russia and Poland predominate. We Sephardi Jews from Mediterranean countries are a minority within a minority and a surname like Aiello is not readily recognized as Jewish.

In fact, throughout my life people would say to me, "Aiello, that's an Italian name. If you're Italian, you can't be Jewish." As I got older,

I realized my Aiello surname was my ticket into the non-Jewish world, especially in the early days of a new job or a new neighborhood. Amazingly, I had a window on antisemitism that few Jews experience firsthand.

What I mean is that if your surname was Cohen or Greenblatt or Rosenfeld, for example, some people would be cautious about what they might say about Jews in your presence. After all, those names and dozens of other Ashkenazi surnames are red flags that your coworker or neighbor would recognize as Jewish — a recognition that would often hold an antisemitic attitude at bay. Not so with Aiello. Since the assumption was that I was Italian and could not be Jewish, I was introduced to a world of antisemitism that few Jews ever see.

During one period of my adult life, I supported myself by working in a Call Center. It was a highly competitive job and each day the highest sales were posted. I recall how one colleague said to me, "At least we've got you in the top five, all the others are Jews." I asked what that meant, and the colleague continued, "Jews are all about money. That's all they think of."

To my eternal shame, I kept my ethnicity a secret and as a result, I continued to observe antisemitism up close and personal.

It didn't take long. Sure enough, at the Christmas season, it started again. "It really gets me how Jews don't celebrate Christmas. I guess it's because they don't believe in God." Still tight-lipped about my religion I finally blew my cover when the subject of the Holocaust came up. "When are those Jews going to get over it?" one colleague asked. "They love being victims," another said. It was at that moment that the incident with the boys on the ledge came back to me in full force. With tears in my eyes I said, "You have no idea of what it means to be a Jew."

So, what's the end of the story? Antisemitism in the form of "money-grubbing Christ killers" and worse, is still with us, but ignoring the bullies or remaining silent is no longer an option. The difference is that now, with mass communication and social media, words of hate can turn quickly into vicious hate crimes. Couple that with the fact that slowly but surely we are losing the last eyewitnesses to the greatest hate crime of all.

Children living today represent the last generation that will have the opportunity to meet a Holocaust camp survivor face to face. The remaining Holocaust generation,

the child survivors, will be the ones to share their stories of what it was like to be hidden, lost or abandoned — important experiences indeed — but the stories of survival in Hitler's mechanized death factories will no longer be told by the eye witnesses themselves.

For me it was mud-slinging in the literal sense. For my friend's daughter it was pennies. And what of those who observed these antisemitic incidents? The other students in the hallway who scattered as the pennies hit the floor, the lady in the window who closed her curtains, the friends that

ran away and left a little girl crying all alone.

It took my behavior with my colleagues at the Call Center to remind me of what philosopher Edmund Burke said about evil: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men should do nothing."

I came face to face with my own fears and, despite the consequences, real or imagined, never again did I conceal my identity. For if I did, although I am a Jew, I would be no better than the students who ran from the hail of pennies or the lady at the window who saw our mud-soaked clothing and drew the blinds.

It is sometimes awkward, but when asked to repeat my last name now, I say, "It's Aiello, one of the oldest Italian Jewish surnames." And when the response is "But if you're Italian, how can you be Jewish?" I take the time to explain.

Over the years, I've learned that what is required is constant vigilance and if the October massacre tells us anything it is that there's still so much work to be done. Jew hatred that leads to violence against Jews didn't begin with internet postings or with something this or that celebrity or academic said. Antisemitism began eons ago when religious differences were perceived as fair game for bullies and when those who witnessed our debasement, humiliation and suffering simply turned away. "See something. Say nothing" gave our persecutors a free hand to up their game. And for millennia, that's just what they did, until the cruelest alarm was sounded on Oct. 7.

Never Again starts now.

For 10 years, Rabbi Barbara Aiello served the Aviva Campus for Senior Life as resident rabbi. Currently as Rabbi Emerita she shares her experiences on aging Jewishly. She is also program host of the 17-year Radio Rabbi program, airing Fridays at 7 p.m. and Saturdays at 1 p.m. and streaming live at 1490wwpr.com. Contact her at Rabbi@RabbiBarbara.com. 📧

Antisemitism in the form of "money-grubbing Christ killers" and worse, is still with us...

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Exploring the Art of Paper-cutting

Some legends trace the origin of Judaic paper-cutting back to the 13th century

By Arlene Stolnitz

Do you remember those paper cutout snowflakes we made when we were children? Those cutouts were much like the popular Polish folk craft of the 1800s called *wycinanki* (vee-see-non-key). Known as folk art in other countries also, (for example, *papel-picado* in Mexico, *scherschnitte* in Germany), the art of cutting designs into bark, parchment, fabric and paper was widely practiced among other cultures for thousands of years. Polish art works were popular in decorating the houses of non-Jewish peasants and often consisted of older Slavic traditions of protective plaques and symbols. Colorful decorative arts were most important in the cultural life of the Polish people.

The Polish Jewish population, a highly literate people, created their own style of paper-cuts, but theirs were strictly religious in nature. Although there are some legends that trace the origin of Judaic paper-cutting back to the 13th century, very few can be dated with certainty before the latter part of the 18th century. Most items we know of today range from the 19th to the early 20th century. According to one legend I read, there



■ Arlene Stolnitz

was once a rabbi who wanted to rewrite the Torah but had problems with cold weather. Even the ink froze, and he couldn't continue his work. He came up with a better idea and started cutting out letters for the Torah, and so the first Jewish paper-cut was created!

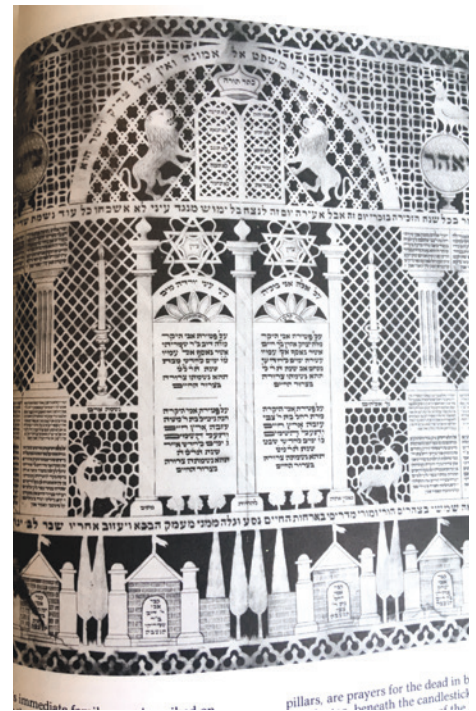
Jewish paper-cuts were created mainly by the poorest members of the Jewish community, countrypeople, who could not afford expensive religious plaques. Many were created by *soferim* and rabbis as a way of earning additional funds. The paper-cut's function was mainly symbolic. We know paper-cuts were quite common in Ashkenazic Jewish homes, although relatively few survived. It is certainly understandable due to their fragile nature and vulnerability of the material.

Paper-cuts included items such as *mizrach* (directions for prayer) and *shiviti* (meditative prayer), *ketubot* (Jewish marriage contracts), *yahrzeit* lists (lists of deceased family members), *omer* (calendar listings), *megillot* (scrolls of book of Esther) and documents for religious ceremonies and observances. Paper-cuts were usually decorated with traditional symbols found in Judaism and often included animals and birds as well as

calligraphic inscriptions in Hebrew. Paper was cheaper to use than wood or metal and was easy to get, especially after the introduction of cheap wood-pulp paper in the mid-19th century. The simplest of tools could be used... paper, pen and ink, pencil, penknife, watercolors and colored crayons which were readily available. If a mistake was made, it could easily be replaced, just start over! According to Giza Frankel, whose study of Jewish folk art has spanned five decades, paper-cuts were made mainly by men and schoolboys. However, one researcher claims to have spoken to a woman who remembers having learned the art as a girl.

Jewish immigrants arrived in America from Eastern Europe in great numbers in the late 19th century and brought with them the art of paper-cutting. As I have written in prior columns, Baruch Zvi Ring, my husband's grandfather, came to Rochester, New York from Vishay, Lithuania, in 1902. His earliest known paper-cut had been created in Europe when Ring was only 10 years old. According to experts, it shows his love of intricate patterns and clarity of composition.

The artist's signature appears in the lozenges (diamonds) attached to the lower roundels (medallions): "My handiwork in which I glory (Isaiah 60:21) From me, Baruch Zvi son of Jacob."



Although much of the traditional art form has been lost, there has been a rebirth of interest in the art form by young, accomplished artists in this country. It is my hope that Americans will come to know something of the arts of the Jewish people as practiced in the past.

Arlene Stolnitz, the "Jewish Music" contributor to Federation papers the past eight years, is starting a new series focusing on Judaic folk art. A native of Rochester, New York, Stolnitz is a retired educator and lives in Venice, Florida.

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Lots of WWII stuff, Einstein BBC style, new movies, more

Stars of David

By Nate Bloom, Stars of David Contributing Columnist

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

“Masters of the Air”

This “major” Apple+ limited series (9 episodes) began streaming on Friday, Jan. 26. New episodes are released on successive Fridays.

The series is based on a 2006 nonfiction study entitled “Masters of the Air: America’s Bomber Boys Who Fought the Air War Against Nazi Germany.”

Steven Spielberg, 77, is the main producer of “Masters.” I guess he has great confidence in “Masters,” which cost more than \$250 million to make.

There are over 70 members in the cast list. I presume that the 70+ character names were all real persons and almost all were bomber crew members.

I have read the “Masters” book, and I can tell you that Major Robert “Rosie” Rosenthal is prominent in the book and is a star character in the Apple series. In real life, he was Jewish and was highly respected as a pilot and, later, as the head of bomber units.

My problem: It appears that the producers consciously selected little-known

actors to play the bomber crew members. For example, Nate Mann plays Rosenthal. He’s 24, has been in one Broadway play (2020) and has had two small film roles. That’s pretty much his whole online biography.

I am pretty sure he is Jewish, but I can’t confirm that now. I can say that I think Spielberg wouldn’t cast a non-Jew in the “best” Jewish hero role.

Spielberg’s own son, **Sawyer Spielberg**, 31, is way down the long credit list. He plays Lt. Roy F. Clayton. Interestingly, Clayton isn’t mentioned in the book. Also not in the book, are two characters with Jewish names: Lt. David Salomon and Aaron Jacobs. They are played by two unknown actors with Jewish names.

As I write this, “Masters” hasn’t premiered. Perhaps interviews released in early February will clear things up.

Staying on the WWII theme: Back in 2022, I wrote a column item about WWII vets who became famous after the war and were still alive. I found 14 famous living vets (half were Jewish). Sadly, five Jewish vets died in 2023 and four non-Jewish vets died. We are approaching the end of “The Greatest Generation.” By the way, most of “7” saw combat. **Norman Lear** flew 52 missions on a bomber.

Here are the famous Jewish WWII vets who died and the two survivors:

Shecky Greene (comedian, died age 97); **Bernard Kalb** (CBS reporter, died age 100); **Henry Kissinger** (Sec. of State, died age 100); **Newton Minow** (FCC chairman, died age 97); and **Norman Lear** (producer/writer, died age 101). Survivors: **Alan Bergman**, 98, top songwriter, and **Mel Brooks**, 97.

“Einstein and the Bomb”

More WWII: On Feb. 19, Netflix will premiere a new BBC docudrama entitled “Einstein and the Bomb.” Its subtitle should be “How do we cash in on the success of ‘Oppenheimer,’ the film?” Plus, it has those English/BBC “things:” (1) The Brits almost never import an American actor to play an American character, Jewish or not, and (2) non-Jews almost always play Jews in English films and series that have Jewish characters.

Playing Einstein is Aidan McArdle, an almost unknown, not Jewish, UK actor. The rest of the cast are completely unknown Brits. McArdle did play Einstein in a PBS program about Einstein in 2004 — so, he’s qualified, I guess. I can tell you that I am 99% sure that the unknowns aren’t Jewish, but several will play Jewish characters — like Einstein’s wife. Not very sporting!

Capsule plot: Einstein writes a letter to President Roosevelt warning him that the Nazis could make “the

bomb.” Einstein has regrets after the war and says that he might not have written the letter if he knew how behind Nazi scientists were in “the bomb race.”


“Argylle”

A big budget spy-thriller film, “Argylle” was written by **Jason Fuchs**, 37. He co-wrote “Ice Age: Continental Drift (2017), a huge moneymaker. His father grew up Hasidic. (Opens Feb. 2)

“It Ends Here”

This film is based on a big-selling novel about Lily, a woman whose father beat her mother and, to her shock, her husband, a doctor, turns out to be a wife-beater, too. Lily’s best friend, **Allysa** (played by **Jenny Slate**, 41), is also Lily’s husband’s sister. (Opens Feb. 9)

Upcoming series

The long actors’ strike delayed the fall return of many series. Here are two hit ABC shows that are finally returning: “The Connors” (8 p.m., Feb. 7). Its main cast includes two Jews: **Sara Gilbert**, 48, and **Michael Fishman**, 42, and “The Good Doctor” (10 p.m., Feb. 20) has two Jewish main cast members: **Richard Schiff**, 68, and **Noah Galvin**, 27. 

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Sicily: the wines you can't refuse

By Jerry Greenfield, the Wine Whisperer

Since practically the beginning of time, the Romans (then the Italians) have been toying with the idea of building a bridge over the Straits of Messina to link the island of Sicily with the mainland. Hasn't happened yet. Maybe never will.

This makes a visit to Sicily a bit of a hike but one that's well worth taking, especially since there are direct flights from Rome to three of the island's major cities. The scenery is incredible — there are more Greek temples in Sicily than in Greece itself — and the wines are spectacular, especially the varietals you never heard of.



■ Jerry Greenfield

For practically forever, Sicilian grapes were used for raisins, while certain varietals were grown to make Marsala, a sweet wine that most people associate with Sicily, if they think about it at all. But over the last 30 years or so, the Sicilians have realized that they can make great wine ... and they've become very hip to international grape varietals. In fact, Sicily is one of the two largest wine-producing areas in Italy, which is saying quite a bit. Producers such as Planeta, Regaleali and Donnafugata make chardonnays, syrahs and other wines that hold their

own against anything that comes from the mainland. But if you really want to pick up some great bargains, look for the wines made from grapes that are indigenous to the island.

Sicily is located, after all, in the Mediterranean, and the coastline is studded with palm trees, so the balmy climate isn't suited to growing zippy, acidic wines. The chardonnays tend to be big, bold and buttery, with deep flavors — not the lean, minerally Burgundian style at all. And since the warm weather causes the grapes to get extremely ripe, the reds are deep, dark, brooding ... and intensely alcoholic.

The big fun is in the reds. Our two favorites are Nerello Mascalese and Nero d'Avola, both of them deep, dark and great with food.

Nero d'Avola, as the name indicates, is native to Avola in the extreme southeast corner of the island, near Siracusa. However, the grape is now grown everywhere, and just about every Sicilian producer makes it. The good news is, no matter which kind you buy, it's probably going to be good. Since I sample so widely (ahem...), I've tasted Neros from many of the major producers, and never met one I didn't like. The wine has an intense ruby color and flavors of dark fruit, earth, and aromatic herbs. It's a big, satisfying wine, and great with grilled meats. The two major producers are Regaleali and Duca di Salaparuta, but don't let that deter you from trying others.

At the eastern end of the island, the still-active volcano of Mt. Etna broods over the landscape. It's 10,000 feet high, snowcapped all year round and emits a steady column of white steam into the deep blue sky, just to let us know it's not dead yet. But on the eastern slope, the Nerello Mascalese grapes grow, and while we might never think to walk into a wine store and ask for a bottle, maybe we should.

Often blended with other wines, Nerello Mascalese makes a great quaff in its pure form. Medium bodied, spicy and with strong notes of deep fruit, violets, Earth and forest floor, it's a bit like Cabernet Sauvignon, and pairs well with steaks, chops and other hearty meats.

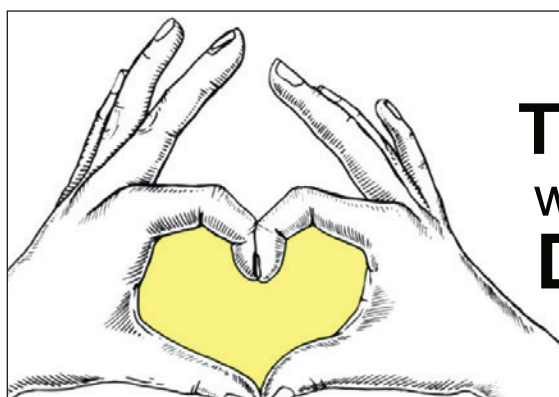
Some recommendations

Planeta Syrah 2019 — A bold, extracted wine with flavors of blackberry, mint, chocolate, cinnamon and very characteristic black pepper.


Feuco Montoni Nero d'Avola Lagnusa 2021 (\$25) — A lushly textured, full-bodied red offering cherry and raspberry notes and well-balanced acidity. Some notes of minerality and smoke, too.

The point: don't be afraid to try unfamiliar wine varietals. There's a discovery in every bottle.

Jerry Greenfield is The Wine Whisperer, a wine educator, author and journalist. Read his blog and order his books at winewhisperer.com.



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Volunteering in Israel post Oct. 7

By Sid Wilker

My parents were married in August 1967; however, had the 6-Day War lasted longer, their wedding might have been delayed because my father would have gone to Israel to volunteer. From an early age, my parents instilled in me a love for Israel and the drive to do whatever I can to support Israel, so in the days following the Oct. 7 massacre, one of the first things on my mind was finding a way to get to Israel to volunteer during my time off from work in December.

While I was on the ground in Israel for less than four days, it was packed full of activity. I landed at 3:30 a.m. in Israel with a handful of other volunteers, and it was 6 a.m. by the time we made it to Be'er Sheva and the rest of the JNFuture group. With everybody else waking up shortly and breakfast

at 7 a.m., we decided to stay up and power through the day.

Our first stop of the trip was with HaShomer HaChadash, an Israeli organization that, in part, helps train people to farm and grow Israeli agriculture. Since Oct. 7, when many farms lost their laborers (some returning to other countries, some to the IDF and some due to Palestinians losing work permits), HaShomer HaChadash has been helping to organize volunteers to work on farms throughout the country. We spent the morning picking lemons. I didn't know before, but I now have the scars to prove that lemon trees have thorns! We don't know how many lemons we picked, but it was certainly measured in tons!

Following lunch, we made our way to the cemetery at Kibbutz Revivim, where they graciously buried 20+ people massacred at Kibbutz Be'eri on Oct. 7 until it is possible to relocate them back to Be'eri to be with their families. This was the first emotional portion of my journey. While listening to the stories of some of the victims, I looked down at the birthdates and noticed that a pair of twins shared my birthday. It

felt like I was meant to be there at that moment.

The following day we were again with HaShomer HaChadash, this time in Be'er Milka on the Egyptian border where we helped weed spiky seeds from the crops to stop them from breaking the irrigation equipment. The founder of the community took us on a tour, showing us how he had planted one of his groves in the shape of a Jewish star to help give Israeli pilots a landmark.

We spent our afternoon at Soroka Medical Center in Be'er Sheva, the largest trauma hospital in southern Israel and one of the main destinations for victims on Oct. 7. We started by hearing the stories from doctors on call in the ER that morning and delivered care packages to soldiers and children recovering in the hospital.

That evening, we headed to Tze'elim, one of the largest IDF bases in southern Israel and where replicas of Gaza neighborhoods have been built to train soldiers. We took a tour of the base in the moonlight, which was eerie to say the least, and heard the story from a soldier who jumped in on Oct. 7 to try to stop the massacre. Finally, we had the amazing opportunity to join the soldiers on the base for a BBQ, hear a performance by the Special In Uniform music group and have an impromptu dance party. It was very surreal to be partying with 20-year-olds who were preparing to go into battle for their country.

Day 3 was spent in the Tel Aviv area, first volunteering with the Sar'el program where we packed boxes of food to feed the soldiers in Gaza and on the Lebanese border. The afternoon was the start of the most intense 24 hours of the trip. First, we heard from two survivors of the Nova Festival who told us their harrowing story of escaping from the area while having panic attacks, making their way to a rented house for safety and talking to their friends who were not able to get away from the Hamas terrorists. The organizers had relocated everything left from the party site near Kibbutz Re'im to the new exhibit in the Tel Aviv Expo, including a pile of burned-up cars and a lost and found of the personal items left behind at the party. While the hope is that, over time, the items will be claimed by their owners, this won't happen. As I looked over the items, my immediate thought was of the room of shoes at the Holocaust Museum in Washington DC. I could not stay in that area very long.

Day 3 wasn't over yet. After a long ride back to Be'er Sheva and a quick dinner, we heard from one of the members of the Eshkol Regional Council, which includes two-thirds of the border with Gaza. She told us of her friend's battle to save and retake their community from



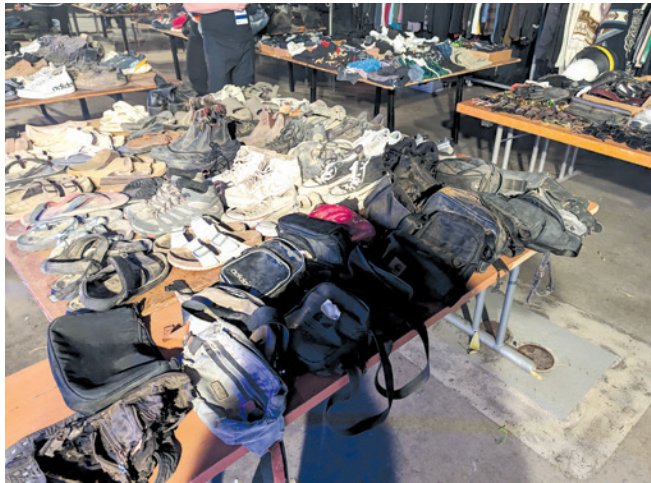
Preparing to pick lemons

Hamas terrorists and how she has not left her community despite most of the region being evacuated.

Our last day in Israel started as the previous night had ended. We learned that the cook where we were staying, Yankel, was an ambulance driver with United Hatzalah. Yankel told us how he started his day on Oct. 7 in his safe room for 30 minutes as rocket sirens constantly went off; how he was called from his family when a rocket hit a nearby building and then spent the rest of the day evacuating injured civilians and soldiers from the Gaza area.

JNF then sent us on a detour from our original itinerary. The members of Kibbutz Gvulot, which miraculously had been spared on Oct. 7, wanted to return home over shabbat, so we went to help clean up the kibbutz. I spent my morning cleaning out bomb shelters while my bus mates split up between cleaning the dining hall, helping with landscaping and picking oranges. I never thought that as a Floridian I would need to go to Israel to pick oranges.

I couldn't have found a better way to spend a week. I got my hands dirty helping Israelis with an amazing group of like-minded people with JNFuture. We were able to thank IDF soldiers for protecting all our friends and family. Everywhere we went, we were also being thanked by random Israelis just for being there. This truly was the most meaningful and emotional four days I have ever spent in Israel. 🇮🇱



Lost and found of personal items left behind at the Nova Festival



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The cemetery at Kibbutz Revivim

Brian meets his hero

By Brian Simon

Joe Posnanski is the best sports writer in America. That's somewhat subjective, but I think I qualify as an expert witness in this area. If you like good sports writing, you would probably enjoy Posnanski.

Posnanski also is a best-selling author of seven books. I've read all of them. Six are about sports. He also wrote one about Harry Houdini. His first book, "The Soul of Baseball," followed Buck O'Neill, one of baseball's great storytellers and personalities, as Buck traveled the country to raise support for the Negro Leagues Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. I reread the book a few months ago. It still holds up as well as when he wrote it almost 20 years ago. If you like charming stories, you would enjoy reading Posnanski.

Posnanski grew up in Cleveland, the son of Russian/Polish/Israeli immigrants. He writes about family as well as anyone I've ever read. If you enjoy reading about fathers and sons, and fathers and daughters,* or reading about Cleveland or Bruce Springsteen or Taylor Swift or Pixar movies, you would enjoy Posnanski.

*I dare you to read Posnanski's piece about taking his daughter to see Hamilton in 2016 and not cry. You have to promise to read the postscript, though. That's the crying part. Here's a link: <https://goodmenproject.com/families/hamilton-dad-daughter-mkdn/>.

You can see I'm a big fan. And here's the thing: Joe Posnanski is coming to Ft. Myers. The Southwest Florida Reading Festival is March 2 at the Ft. Myers (downtown) Regional Library campus.

Here's the other thing: I get to moderate his presentation. Have you ever seen the Chris Farley sketch where he nervously interviews Paul McCartney?

Farley (swallowing hard as he stammers through his anxiety): "You... you remember when you were with the Beatles?"

McCartney: "Sure"

Farley: "That was awesome!"

That will be me. If you enjoy seeing Brian become a bumbling fan-boy around one of his heroes...

Posnanski will be here either promoting his last book, "Why We Love Baseball," released in September, or perhaps promoting his next book, "Why We Love Football." I'm not sure which, actually, but since he agreed to come to Ft. Myers near the start of spring training, he'll probably talk more about baseball.

He might disagree, but Posnanski is one of the most influential voices about



■ Brian Simon

baseball. He has appeared in movies at the Hall of Fame. He's a frequent guest on MLB Network, and he might be the best at explaining the advanced statistics that confound traditionalists.

Posnanski has never been shy about challenging the orthodoxy around stats like batting average, runs batted in and pitchers' wins. It was his mother, though — who knew nothing about the game — who challenged young Posnanski on the subject of earned runs after reading his very first baseball story in a newspaper, "Who are you to decide what's unearned?"

Look, I've been fortunate in my professional life. Working at WINK-TV for 11 years, I had the opportunity to interview lots of stars — Michael Jordan, Cal Ripken Jr, Dan Marino — plus a couple of my childhood heroes like George Brett and Frank White. I remember one-time Buffalo Bills quarterback Jim Kelly came to Ft. Myers. I had so many questions ready for him that afterward, one of my colleagues complimented me. I told him it was thanks to a lifetime wasted on the couch watching sporting events.

I also remember my cringeworthy attempt at interviewing the members of the boy band 98 Degrees while covering the Super Bowl weekend festivities in Tampa. Another station's producer was excited to learn that we had gotten the interview, and we were happy to share it with them. I can still hear her disappointment as she told me, "There's nothing I can use here."

Anyway, I'll have plenty of questions ready for Posnanski. I'm sure more than he'll have time to answer. I hope you'll consider coming. The reading festival has plenty of other authors speaking at the event, if sports is not your thing. There are adult book authors, like Mary Kay Andrews, as well as teen authors and children's authors. The reading festival (see www.readfest.org) has built a strong reputation with readers and authors over 25 years.

One last story. About 20 years ago, I was in an elevator at City of Palms Park and Steven King (yes, that Steven King) walked in. I asked him if he would consider coming to the reading festival. He gave me a number to call to speak to his office. He wrote his name in my notebook as "Steve King."

Steven (or Steve, as I guess I could call him) never came. But Joe Posnanski is coming. It's gonna be awesome. 🌍



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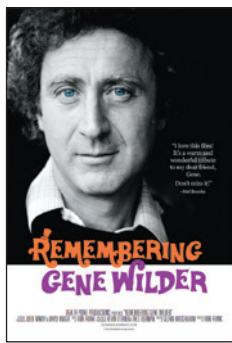


DEAD SEA GUARDIAN

Thursday February 1st at 7:15pm

The Dead Sea - the lowest place on earth and one of the wonders of the world - is dying. Three historic enemies join forces on a heroic journey to stop this catastrophe and save the Dead Sea from disappearing.

75 MINUTES • ENGLISH AND HEBREW • ISRAEL • DOCUMENTARY



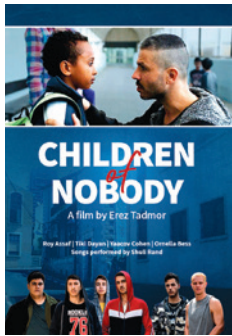
REMEMBERING GENE WILDER

Sunday February 4th at 3:00pm

"In this captivating biographical drama, follow the remarkable life of the legendary actor and comedian, Gene Wilder. From his early struggles to his iconic collaborations with Mel Brooks and his unforgettable portrayal of Willy Wonka, the film takes viewers on a heartfelt journey through the man behind the laughter, revealing the complexities and brilliance of a true Hollywood icon."

92 MINUTES • ENGLISH • UNITED STATES • DOCUMENTARY

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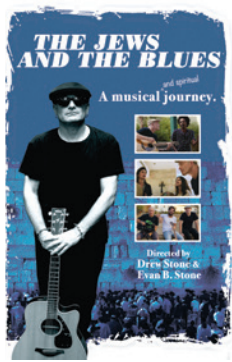


CHILDREN OF NOBODY

Tuesday February 6th at 7:15pm

In a heartfelt drama based on a true story, troubled boys living on the outskirts of Israeli society unite to protect a shelter for at-risk youth, led by the compassionate surrogate mother Margalit. When tragedy hits, Jackie, her right-hand man, must defend the home from corrupt developers and navigate social worker scrutiny. With Jackie's guidance, the young men learn to take responsibility for their lives and preserve their refuge, shedding light on the often overlooked and neglected voices at society's periphery.

108 MINUTES • HEBREW WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES • ISRAEL • DRAMA



THE JEWS AND THE BLUES

Thursday February 8th at 7:15pm

This new documentary by filmmaker, musician, and talk show host Drew Stone takes us on a musical adventure to understand how the blues can be found in a number of Israeli cultures, including Ethiopian, Ashkenazi, Mizrahi, and others. Learn how the blues ties Jews together all over the world.

67 MINUTES • ENGLISH • UNITED STATES • DOCUMENTARY



LOST TRANSPORT

Tuesday February 13th at 7:15pm

In the spring of 1945 a train deporting hundreds of Jewish prisoners gets stranded near a small German village occupied by the Red Army. Condemned to each other and in a context of deep mistrust, desperation and revenge, an unexpected friendship emerges between Russian sniper Vera, village girl Winnie and Jewish-Dutch woman Simone.

100 MINUTES • DUTCH, GERMAN, AND RUSSIAN WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES
NETHERLANDS, GERMANY, AND LUXEMBOURG • DRAMA, HISTORY, WAR



ISRAEL SWINGS FOR GOLD

Thursday February 15th at 7:15pm

In 2021, Israel's baseball team competed in the Olympics for the first time. With no media allowed in Tokyo's Olympic Village, the players record their own experiences. Mostly newly minted Israelis, they log unexpected battles against anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. Victory for Israel comes on the playing field, even if not on the podium.

78 MINUTES • ENGLISH AND HEBREW • UNITED STATES • SPORT DOCUMENTARY

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MATCHMAKING

Tuesday February 20th at 7:15pm

An entertaining and good-hearted romantic comedy that gives a light Orthodox twist to "Romeo and Juliet".

96 MINUTES • HEBREW • ISRAEL • COMEDY

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FAREWELL, MISTER HAFFMANN

Thursday February 22nd at 7:15pm

"Mr. Haffmann" is a gripping World War II drama set in Nazi-occupied France, centered on a Jewish tailor who risks everything to forge identities and documents, helping others escape the horrors of the Holocaust. The film explores moral choices, sacrifice, and the enduring spirit of hope in the face of unimaginable adversity.

115 MINUTES • FRENCH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES • FRANCE, BELGIUM • DRAMA

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Sunday February 25th at 3:00pm

A Holocaust survivor, born and raised in a different time, must face the realities of modern world. When confronted with an unfamiliar object, an iPhone, will Mordecai be able to fit into a world that has changed so much around him?

102 MINUTES • ENGLISH • UNITED STATES • COMEDY AND DRAMA



THE SHADOW OF THE DAY

Tuesday February 27th at 7:15pm

Italy, after the promulgation of the racial laws (1938). Luciano, a Fascist-abiding restaurateur, nonetheless believes he can still live by his own rules inside his business. However, everything changes when Anna, a girl with a dangerous secret, starts to work at his restaurant.

125 MINUTES • ITALIAN AND FRENCH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES ITALY • ROMANCE, DRAMA



THE CATSKILLS

Thursday February 29th at 7:15pm

With a trove of lost-and-found archival footage and a cast of characters endowed with the gift of gab, "The Catskills" journeys into the storied mountain getaway north of New York City that served as refuge for Jewish immigrants fleeing poverty as well as a lavish playground for affluent Jewish families. As bungalow colony proprietors, guests, waiters, comedians, hoteliers, and beauticians share colorful tales of Catskill farms, boarding houses, and luxury resorts, they paint a picture of vibrant American Jewish life and culture in the 20th century.

85 MINUTES • ENGLISH • UNITED STATES • DOCUMENTARY

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FILMS	DATES
Dead Sea Guardians	Thursday, Feb. 1st • 7:15PM
Remembering Gene Wilder	Sunday, (Matinee) Feb. 4th • 3:00PM
Children of Nobody	Tuesday, Feb. 6th • 7:15PM
The Jews and the Blues	Thursday, Feb. 8th • 7:15PM
Lost Transport	Tuesday, Feb. 13th • 7:15PM
Israel Swings for Gold	Thursday, Feb. 15th • 7:15PM
Matchmaking	Tuesday, Feb. 20th • 7:15PM
Farewell Mister Haffmann	Thursday, Feb. 22nd • 7:15PM
Imordecai	Sunday, (Matinee) Feb. 25th • 3:00PM
The Shadow of the Day	Tuesday, Feb. 27th • 7:15PM
The Catskills	Thursday Feb. 29th • 7:15PM

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We live in scary times

By Rabbi Sunny Schnitzer

In December, Bat Yam Temple of the Islands received a bomb threat. The threat turned out to be a hoax, but it caused great disruption to the peace and tranquility of Sanibel Island. Our congregation is grateful for the rapid response of the Sanibel Police, the Lee County Sheriff's Department, the mayor, city manager and council of the City of Sanibel, and our spiritual siblings with whom we share sacred space, Sanibel Congregational United Church of Christ.

But that is merely the latest in a series of shocks to our sense of safety over the last few months.

Incidents of antisemitism worldwide are at an all-time high.

Our Jewish homeland, Israel, is under an existential threat. We are engaged in a war that, at this moment, seems to have no end.



■ Rabbi Sunny Schnitzer

But we do not have to live with fear. In fact, fear must be fought with as much vigor as any battle. As the great Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav taught, “*Kol ha'olam kulo gesher tsar m'od v'haikar lo l'fached klal* — The whole world is a very narrow bridge, the thing (or essence) is to not to be afraid.”

Fear robs us of our power and agency. How do we face and cope with our fear so that we will not be afraid?

In Hebrew, we have multiple words for fear. The most common are *pachad* and *yirah*.

My late teacher, Rabbi Alan Lew, taught that *pachad* is “projected or imagined fear,” the “fear whose objects are imagined.”

Rabbi Lew describes *yirah* as “the fear that overcomes us when we

suddenly find ourselves in possession of considerably more energy than we are used to, inhabiting a larger space than we are used to inhabiting. It is also the feeling we feel when we are on sacred ground.

We often conflate or confuse the two types of fear, and simply call what we are experiencing “fear.” But we can discern them more closely, and in doing so, more effectively manage fear so it doesn't get in our way.

Nelson Mandela in his book “Long Walk to Freedom” has much to teach us about coping with fear. He writes: “Time and again, I have seen men and women risk and give their lives for an idea. I have seen men stand up to attacks and torture without breaking, showing a strength and

resiliency that defies the imagination. I learned that courage was not the absence of fear but the triumph over it. I felt fear myself more times than I can remember, but I hid it behind a mask of boldness. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid but he who conquers that fear.”

An effective way for us to conquer our fear is to draw together ever tighter in community. By declaring the unity of Klal Yisrael, all Israel, despite differences in our rituals, philosophy or politics is the best defense we could ever muster. When we declare that we are united with each other, then the Unity that is Divine is with us. Adonai Li V'lo Ira. God is with me, I shall not fear.

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

“The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid but he who conquers that fear.”
~ Nelson Mandela

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The day after this war

Jan. 7 — Day 93 of the war in Gaza

By Rabbi Marc Sack

Salo Wittmayer Baron (born 1895 in Vienna, died 1989 in New York) was the professor of Jewish History, Literature and Institutions at Columbia University. His 16-volume *magnum opus* was “A Social and Religious History of the Jews.” In popular circles, Baron is perhaps best known for rejecting “the lachrymose conception of Jewish history,” the notion that the main elements of the Jewish experience are suffering and religious study. Baron said, “Suffering is part of the destiny [of the Jews] but so is repeated joy as well as ultimate redemption.” I agree. Jewish history is more than movement from one expulsion to the next, one massacre after another. It does not serve us well to see each tragedy of our people as, “it’s the same thing, all over again.”

Oct. 7, 2023 was a dark day in the history of our people. But it was May 14, 1948 that marked a watershed change in Jewish history. Jewish powerlessness came to an end on that day. And with the end of powerlessness, came options and responsibility. In May 1948, we gained the ability to direct our own history rather than have it foisted upon us by outside forces, often malevolent.

During the Iraq War of 1990-1991, Saddam Hussein, the president of Iraq, lobbed Scud missiles at Israel, hoping Israel would respond and make that war into a greater conflict between the Arab world and the West. President



■ Rabbi Marc Sack

George H. W. Bush and Secretary of State James Baker asked Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir not to retaliate. I agreed with that request and spoke about it during a Shabbat sermon. I said that, while the state of Israel was founded to protect Jews, it was also founded to join the community of nations, to work together with other countries to promote international peace and security. President Bush had promised Prime Minister Shamir that the U.S. would eliminate the Scud installations, and it did. Israel did not bomb Iraq, that war did not escalate, and the U.S. achieved its objective of driving Iraq out of Kuwait in shorter order because Israel held back.

I fully support Israel’s goal of “destroying Hamas,” even while I do not know what such an objective would look like. A rogue government on Israel’s border with the stated goal of wiping it off the map must not be tolerated. Hamas started this war with the violation of Israeli men, women and babies. It must be made clear that Hamas offers the Palestinian people only misery and conflict but no hope of dignity.


But the purpose of a responsible government is to offer security and peace to its people. And, I believe, Israel will never have these until there is a resolution of the conflict with the Palestinians. I agree that Mahmoud Abbas, who is in the 18th year of a four-year

term, is not a viable negotiating partner with Israel, but others might be. The state of Israel is powerful, which means it has options and responsibility — to its citizens and its neighbors. If, when this war is over, there are options for resolving the conflict, then Israel must pursue these vigorously. And if there are no such options at this time, then Israel can pursue civil ties with

the Palestinian people, ties that may blossom into a new Palestinian government open to resolving the conflict.

Our people may have seen Oct. 7s in the past. But it was May 14, 1948 that changed us forever. Now we have the chance to direct our own history. Out of this darkness, there may be opportunities for new light. I believe Israel must pursue them. 🕊

A rogue government on Israel’s border with the stated goal of wiping it off the map must not be tolerated.




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Be strong and be strengthened

By Rabbi Nicole Luna

Chazak Chazak V'nitchazek. Be strong, be strong, and may we be strengthened. This phrase, which we traditionally recite at the end of reading a book of Torah, is a relevant and important prayer for us today. We need strength more than ever. As a Jewish community, we are exhausted from constantly being aware of and on guard against antisemitism, constantly following the news and grieving over Israel, worrying about loved ones and friends in Israel and on college campuses, feeling uncertain about the future — both the immediate days ahead and generations to come.



■ Rabbi Nicole Luna

We say the words *chazak, chazak, v'nitchazek* as a plea to ourselves and to God — be strong and strengthen us. But we need a little more direction. From where do we get our strength? How can we be strong?

As Jews, we find strength from our embrace of life. Rabbi Meir Soloveichik told a story about an IDF reserve soldier recently called up to army service, who had to leave behind a newborn son at home. The soldier watched the circumcision of his 8-day-old son via Zoom, and in the midst of war, he pronounced the traditional liturgy, concluding with the Shecheyanu blessing, saying “Blessed are you Adonai our God, who has kept us alive, sustained us and allowed us to reach this moment.”

We celebrate life even under difficult and tragic circumstances. Years ago, Hezbollah’s Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah proclaimed: “We have discovered how to hit the Jews where they are the most vulnerable. The Jews love life, so that is what we shall take away from them. We are going to win because they love life and we love death.” What our enemies do not understand, is that our strength comes from loving life, from embracing it fully even after loss and trauma. We enter the new year with gratitude for being alive. From there, we find strength.

We also look to the Torah for words of inspiration and promise. In the

end of Genesis, Joseph shares a final message with his brothers in Egypt. Genesis 50:24 reads: “Joseph then said to his kin, “I am dying, but God will surely **take note of you** and bring you up out of this land to the land that God promised to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob.”

Later in Exodus, God uses the same words, telling Moses, “Say to [the elders of Israel]: ‘The Eternal, the God of your ancestors has appeared to me, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and said, ‘I have **taken note of you** and of what is being done to you in Egypt. (Exodus 3:16)’” God’s words in Exodus mirror Joseph’s promise in Genesis.

The midrash imagines God saying, “They have a tradition from Joseph that I would redeem them with exactly this language. Go and say to them, ‘This is the sign!’” In other words, God says, I have cared for and watched over this people in the past, and I will do so again. For us, we find strength in the promise of God’s deliverance, that things will be better, because we have experienced it again and again.

...we find strength in the promise of God’s deliverance, that things will be better, because we have experienced it again and again.

Despite tragedy and loss, we survive, we live. No matter how difficult the circumstances, we hold fast to God’s promise to remember us, care for us and watch over us. We enter the new year with faith.

We find strength through gratitude for and embrace of life and faith in God’s care. As we enter into the new year, may we find strength to continue on and to hope for better days ahead. *Chazak, chazak v'nitchazek*. Be strong, be strong, and may we be strengthened.

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

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February 2: 5:52 p.m.

February 9: 5:57 p.m.

February 16: 6:02 p.m.

February 23: 6:07 p.m.



What matters to this rabbi

By Rabbi Bruce Diamond

The memory of my mother, “aleha hashalom,” remains a blessing to me. Time and time again she explained, “You can only talk to one person at a time, eat one mouthful of food at a time and sleep in one bed at a time, so don’t worry yourself about how to get more and more!”

And my father, the light of my eyes, was hardly driven by materialistic ambitions. He worked hard to provide for us but found great joy in what most would consider little things. Like feeding the ducks that wandered onto the back patio or fixing something that needed fixing.

Among the many gifts they bequeathed as their legacy to me were these perspectives. I have never been preoccupied with money, am largely indifferent to the workings of organizations and don’t feel the need to be broadly popular and win the approval of lots of people. The love and support of my wife, a few really good friends and a closeknit circle of companions who worship and study with me and enable me to be me are more than enough. I am much too secure and have often paid the price for that.

My motivations come from inside of me, and my measure of success is not ever-increasing income or building institutions (that’s from mom) or



■ Rabbi Bruce Diamond

needing bigger and flashier toys (that’s from dad).

Add to that a pronounced anti-authoritarian bias stemming from my upbringing and 12 years in yeshivah and, voila, you have all the makings of a difficult employee, who, no matter what talents and abilities, is virtually impossible to control from the outside and who also has a built-in adversarial attitude towards management.

In short, I make an awful, often frustrating employee who, from the employer’s point of view, is “destructively creative.” Just ask my former employers. I resent being told what to do but love to be shown how to do it and why.

So, what’s my point? Simply this: there’s no denying that our local aging Jewish population is contracting by attrition without many replacements coming in. That’s probably true for America’s Jewish population in general, with the exception of vibrant pockets of “haredim” (very observant Jews) with large families. It’s no secret that some of our local synagogues are struggling, and one just closed its doors after a 10-year run. The numbers are just not with our local Jewish organizations.

But frankly, for me that hardly matters at all. So, what does matter?

What matters is being able to focus on one person at a time, and having the

freedom and the ability to help them when they turn to me without arbitrary rules and restrictions imposed from the outside. Like Dad, “alav hashalom,” I like to fix. Teaching is fixing. Tsedaqah is fixing. Standing with someone who feels alone is fixing. True prayer in and of itself is also fixing.

“Do not make (your Torah learning) a diadem for self-exaltation, nor a spade with which to dig.”
~ Rabbi Zadoq

Expecting them to pay me for this, especially if I already have enough to live on, drains all the pleasure out of it, creating an implicit adversarial relationship that blurs the focus and diminishes the power to try and fix.

That is why we find in Pirke Avot Chapter 4: Rabbi Zadoq said, “Do not

make (your Torah learning) a diadem for self-exaltation, nor a spade with which to dig.”

So too, Hillel used to say, “And he that puts the crown (of Torah) to his own use shall perish.”

Thus, you have learned, anyone who derives worldly benefit from the words of the Torah removes his life from the world.

I’m guessing there are around 5,000 identifiable Jews in Lee County, but not many more. Not a lot by American urban standards, and as things are heading, maybe not enough to comfortably sustain five or six local synagogues and a well-staffed Jewish Federation, especially when only 10-15% of our local Jews show much interest in affiliating and supporting the area’s Jewish institutions.

But that’s more than enough for me to find meaning and satisfaction. Thanks for helping me be me!

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



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L'Dor Vador

By Rabbi Lawrence Dermer

In our sacred Torah, when Jacob reaches the end of his earthly days, he blesses his children and instructs them to carry his remains out of Egypt into the land of Israel. As he lays his head down on the bed, his soul departs from his body. With this story, we not only conclude the first book of the Torah Bereshit, but in its retelling, we keep the blessing of our Patriarch Yaakov's blessed memory alive. His essence lives on in us, and as long as we live, Jacob lives on as well.

This year on Simchat Torah, we began the Torah cycle anew with Bereshit, a beginning in which we awoke to the catastrophe of the Oct. 7 massacre. Then we read of the great flood in the time of Noach even as we faced the deluge of Hamas' operation Al-Aqsa flood, which triggered an Israeli response truly biblical in proportion as the IDF prepared to flood the terrorist tunnels hidden under Gaza with water piped in from the Mediterranean Sea.

Since Oct. 7, war and death continue to surround us on a daily basis. And not even deaths like that of Jacob, an old man, dying in his bed surrounded by loving family, but losses that should never have to be endured, premature deaths that are the direct result of hatred and murderous violence.

Our Torah tells us: *Vayechi Yaakov*, 'and Yaakov lived.' As we remember and honor Jacob's memory, we can also do so for those whom we mourn today. The blessed souls of the fallen IDF soldiers, the men, women, children, mothers, fathers and grandparents who sacrificed their lives in defense of Eretz Yisrael enable future generations to prosper in the land of Israel.



■ **Rabbi Lawrence Dermer**


Like Jacob, the fallen heroes of this war will live on forever. They may no longer be with us physically, but their memories shape our present day and will guide and shape the future of Israel and world Jewry.

Jacob was buried in the cave of Machpelah, which was purchased by Abraham rather than being received as a gift, so that no nation would ever be able to dispute its eternal ownership by B'nei Yisrael — the children of Israel. Jacob wished to be buried there alongside Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, and Leah, so his memory, along with our patriarchs and matriarchs, would live on and continue to inspire us from generation to generation.

...the fallen heroes of this war will live on forever... their memories shape our present day and will guide and shape the future of Israel and world Jewry.

May all their timeless and eternal memories be not only a blessing, but an ongoing inspiration for all of us, so that the people of Israel will live on — L'dor Vador.

Together, may we go forward in 2024 in great unity as we draw strength and wisdom from our ancestors driven with the Divine purpose of building a better world together. Am Yisrael Chai!

Rabbi Lawrence Dermer serves Shalom Life Center in Fort Myers. 


TEMPLE JUDEA PRESCHOOL
Fort Myers
Suki Kelly, Preschool Director

January was a fun month for Temple Judea Preschool as we got back into the swing of things. We started the month learning about musical instruments. The children made their own instruments and paraded around with them. Music and dancing are very important to early childhood development. It encourages children to socialize and participate in a group setting when dancing and playing instruments together. It also helps with body and spatial awareness. Emotionally, children are able to express emotions they may not be able to express verbally.

The pre-K had its 100th Day of School party, dressing up as their 100-year-old selves and counting many items by 10 to 100. We saw a lot of fun wigs and canes and pretended to be older!

This month, we are looking forward to our annual auction event on Feb.

17 at the Plantation Golf and Country Club. This year, we will be raising funds to update our playground equipment. We are currently accepting donations and sponsorships for the event. Donations can be anything from gift certificates to services, gift cards to stores and items. Sponsorship for the event will help cover the cost of the event and allow us to use all proceeds from the event for the playground. If you are interested in sponsoring or donating to our auction, please feel free to contact us.

We currently have a few openings for the Tiny Toddler and pre-K class. We have very limited openings for the Terrific Twos class. If you are interested in registering or coming in for a tour, please reach out to Suki Kelly at templejudeapreschool@gmail.com or 239-482-1121. 



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Jewish Federation
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Jewish Family
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Rabbi Mendel Gordon

Jewish life at FGCU is strong and growing

By Rabbi Mendel Gordon

I have been busy with a newborn, so monthly updates have been skipped but here is a quick run-through of an incredible fall semester.

We started in full swing in August with more Jewish students than ever joining shabbats and other events requiring us to overflow with outdoor seating.

It's always amazing to see so many Jewish students looking to grow and learn more about who they are.

We had multiple weekly classes in our new Jewish lounge on campus, including a deep dive into Jewish lifecycle events, understanding each one and its different laws and customs from birth and bris to death and the importance and requirements of proper Jewish burial.

Then hit the tragedy of Oct. 7, shaking up everyone in the Jewish world and especially our students with the crazy rise of antisemitism on campuses all over.


But that just powered us to go stronger. Students took initiatives to run fundraisers for Israel and Jewish

solidarity events. They took on increasing Jewish observance and Jewish pride, showing the time-old Jewish way of the more they try to stop us, the more we grow.

One amazing idea that students had is to start a weekly prayer minyan, getting together in the dorms to pray for Israel — and we haven't missed a week yet.

As semester drew to a close, we climaxed with an incredible menorah car parade displaying our Jewish pride with menorahs on top of our cars parading around campus and Gulf Coast Town Center.

We are looking forward to an amazing spring semester ahead, with lots planned including a grand shabbat on campus, a mega challah bake and lots more programs and classes.

Chabad at FGCU services Jewish students of all levels of observance at FGCU and nearby colleges. For more information or to connect a student, please reach out to Rabbi Mendel on 239-355-8481 or Rabbi@chabadfgcu.com. 



Jewish Federation
of Lee & Charlotte Counties



Fall 2024

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Applicants must be under 30 years of age and priority will be given to full-time students. Funding is limited and decisions will be based primarily on financial need.

APPLICATION PROCESS: For guidelines and application process, visit our website.

Scholarships are made available from designated funds held by the Jewish Community Foundation.

Jewishfederationlcc.org/scholarships



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SUMMER 2024 JEWISH OVERNIGHT CAMP SCHOLARSHIPS

The Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties overnight camp scholarship program helps families with elementary and middle school children with the cost of tuition for regional Jewish overnight camps.

For more information contact Debbie Sanford at debbiesanford@jfedlcc.org

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Jewish Federation
OF LEE & CHARLOTTE COUNTIES

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is available through TOP Jewish Foundation of Lee & Charlotte Counties and may be used for travel to Israel to participate in programs that are volunteer or educational in nature.

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The Jewish Federation Seeks Volunteers with Foreign Language Skills.

The Jewish Family Services division of the Jewish Federation has found that clients with limited English language skills encounter difficulty accessing social services otherwise available in our community. We would like to help break this language barrier.

If you speak languages besides English, we invite you to serve as an occasional interpreter, by phone or in person, for our clients, when they communicate with various social service agencies.

Do you speak

Spanish, Russian, French, Creole, Haitian, Mandarin, etc.?
Please share your gift of language with the needy in our area.



Send your response to Jodi Cohen at
239.481.4449 x1 or jodicohen@jfedlcc.org.
She will contact you as needed. Thank you.

BBYO

Naples/Fort Myers

Cayla Schreier, BBYO Southwest Coordinator



Updates from BBYO Naples and Fort Myers

By Cayla Schreier, BBYO Southwest Coordinator

It's been one busy December. The teens were dedicated to studying for mid-terms, along with celebrating Hanukkah with their families and attending BBYO events. On Sunday, Dec. 2, elections were held for the spring 2024 Naples BBYO chapter board. The following teens were elected to the upcoming board: N'siah (President) – Bella Schaab, Sigant (Programming Chair) – Emily Schaab, Mazkirah (Secretary) – Mimi Goldberg, Shaliach (Jewish Enrichment) – Adam Berman and Gizbor (Treasurer) – Noah Tspursky. Mazel Tov to our new Naples BBYO chapter board.

Our teens celebrated BBYO's Global Shabbat on Friday, Dec. 8 at Temple Shalom's Hanukkah Friday night services. The teens donated canned goods to contribute toward building Temple Shalom's Can-norah. They were then called up to the bema to help recite the Pri Hagafen and Hamotzi blessings along with the congregation. Temple Shalom served delicious latkes and jelly donuts to celebrate Hanukkah. The teens also helped the younger kids build the Can-norah.

On Monday, Dec. 11, we were happy to participate in The Jewish Federation of Greater Naples's Hanukkah Festival. Four of our teens braced the chilly weather to table for Naples BBYO. It was nice to see the local Jewish community come together to celebrate such a joyous holiday.

We are also excited to participate in Temple Shalom's Mitzvah Day which was held on January 21. We plan to hold two events in early-February. Some of our teens plan to attend BBYO's International Convention February 15-19 in Orlando. Please keep an eye out for more details about those upcoming events.

What is BBYO?

BBYO is a diverse and inclusive Jewish youth group to encourage Jewish teens to become more immersed and interested in meaningful Jewish activities

and programs. This organization accepts Jewish teens attending 8th through 12th grades of all backgrounds, sexual orientations, gender, race, denominational affiliation, or socioeconomic status. BBYO currently reaches over 70,000 teens worldwide, with participants in over 60 countries and hundreds of chapters across the United States.

Supporting our teenage Jewish community

It is crucial to engage teens post-B'nai Mitzvah age in Jewish activities. Having teens get involved in BBYO and be eager to create and confidently continue their own Jewish community within their greater Jewish communities is critical to our future.

The BBYO chapter of Naples has entered its 11th year of partnership with the Jewish Federation of Greater Naples, Temple Shalom, Chabad of Naples and Beth Tikvah. Each organization provides financial support, volunteers and community involvement opportunities for the BBYO teens. We thank each and every one of our BBYO alum, friends and other supporters for making this a safe and positive environment for the teens of BBYO Naples and Fort Myers.

If you know of someone who has a teen who might like to join BBYO Naples or Fort Myers or know of someone who may want to be an advisor to our chapters, please email the Southwest Coordinator, Cayla Schreier, at cschreier@bbyo.org. You can also follow us on Instagram at [Mishpacha_BBG](https://www.instagram.com/Mishpacha_BBG) and Negevaza.

Scholarships to attend BBYO conventions and summer programs are available through both the Jewish Federation of Greater Naples and the Temple Shalom Men's Club. Please contact Cayla for more information on scholarships. If you are a BBYO alum and would like to be included in our Friends and Alumni of BBYO mailing list, please email us at mjs0821@aol.com.

BAT YAM TEMPLE OF THE ISLANDS
Sanibel

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This year's Hannukah was splendid. Rabbi Schnitzer and our Board intended it to be a major Jewish festival. After the darkness wrought on Jews by the Hamas terrorists, we needed to rededicate (Hannukah means "dedication") our commitments, reinforce our Jewish identity, embrace the light, to use well what we have and never give up. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel said, "We are called to bring together the sparks to preserve single moments of radiance and keep them alive in our lives. To defy absurdity and despair and to wait for God to say again: Let there be light. And there will be light."

Bat Yam Temple of the Islands Rabbi Sunny Schnitzer and our Board were inspired by "Shine a Light," a

coalition of Jewish and non-Jewish organizations from across the United States and Canada, who are speaking up against antisemitism and who have partnered with Jewish Federations, including our local Federation of Lee and Charlotte Counties.

Many clergy, dignitaries from Sanibel's Chamber of Commerce and Sanibellians, both congregants and friends, made up the almost 100 people celebrating our Shine a Light interfaith lighting ceremony at The Seahorse shopping center, hosted by Oded and Tal Yahav and the Jewish Federation of Lee and Charlotte Counties.

On the shortest night of the year, a dark, windy night, the support of our neighbors brought us the brightest light of the season. When we think back on

this past Hannukah, one word comes to mind and it is "radiance," the physical radiance of our huge Hannukiah and the emotional radiance of the crowd who, on a blustery night, celebrated neighbor with neighbor. The clergy's and dignitaries' speeches shone a light against hate, the Hannukah songs filled the night air and the sufganiyot (Israeli doughnuts) were delicious. It was quite the party!

We recall Isaac Bashevis Singer's story, "The Power of Light," — the lighting of a menorah in the Warsaw ghetto, "That glimmer of light, surrounded by so many shadows, seemed to say without words: Evil has not yet taken complete dominion. A spark of hope is still left."

As someone said, "Hannukah is about joy and miracles" and another, "security is not only the uniforms you see guarding us, it also comes from the open arms of the people gathered here."

All of us were nourished by celebrating a festival of lights in this dark time and knowing Jews all around the

world were doing the same. Hannukah is nothing if not adaptable. Bat Yam enjoyed a surfeit of lighting candles, beginning with shabbat on the second night of Hannukah when congregants brought their (in some cases, self-made) menorahs, all of which brightened the table in Friendship Hall.

The Hannukah season ended with a special shabbat, entitled A Taste of Bat Yam, when a sample of recipes selected from our new cookbook, "Cooking with Bat Yam Temple of the Islands," was prepared for the congregation and friends. Long tables groaned with delicious food, soon consumed by the enthusiastic crowd. Replete, we sat back to enjoy our shabbat service, highlighted by Rabbi Emeritus Stephen Fuchs and Rabbi Sunny Schnitzer, blessing Gary and Beth Weiss, who are moving to Asheville, North Carolina. We shall miss them; our loss is Asheville's gain.

Update: On the morning of Dec. 28, 2023, multiple Jewish organizations
continued on page 28



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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



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TEMPLE JUDEA
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Join us in February at Temple Judea for our Trivia Night Gala, Feb. 25 at 5:30 p.m. Heavy hors d'oeuvres, wine, desserts, silent auction and raffle, and lots of fun! Open to the community, reservation required: \$36 to Feb. 12, \$50 Feb. 13 to Feb. 19. Contact Debbie Brown at Smbrown15@comcast.net, Rena Essrog at rfessrog@msn.com or Jane Bernstein at jane.bernstein@gmail.com for details.

Rabbi Marc Sack's introduction to Judaism class continues. This class is a must for anyone interested in conversion to Judaism but is open to all who have an interest in learning. Please call the office with questions.

Temple Judea Religious School continues Sundays 9:30 a.m.-noon and Tuesdays 4:30-6 p.m. Tot Shabbat will

be Friday, Feb. 9 at 5 p.m. with music and Shabbat stories with Morah Abbie, including challah and juice.

Hazak continues its meet and lunch at Lakes Park on Thursday, Feb. 9. Contact Fran Chernow at francesca10@gmail.com or 607-423-1078 for details and other events.

Chaverot joins with Hazak and members from both will lead Shabbat services on Feb. 17. Please contact Lynn Talone at lalnonefm@comcast.net to choose your participation. Chaverot continues to look for event ideas of all kinds. Please email Rivkah Katz at rsk5041@comcast.net with suggestions.

Temple Judea continues to accept food donations to the Cadkin Foundation Food Pantry at Jewish Federation. Collection envelopes are near

the front door for contactless monetary or gift contributions. Contributions may also 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., preceded by wine and cheese at 6:15.

- Saturday morning Shabbat services at 9:30 a.m. Kiddush luncheons served every Shabbat. To sponsor, contact JoAnn Lewin.

- Morning minyan every Monday at 9 a.m., followed by breakfast and Jewish current events with Rabbi Sack at First Watch, 13211 McGregor Blvd., Fort Myers.

- Every Monday, Temple President Jan Klein will be at Temple Judea from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. to meet, listen and discuss ideas, suggestions and concerns.

We would love to see you in person or on Zoom. 🌐

bat yam...continued from page 27

in Florida, including Bat Yam Temple of the Islands, received a bomb threat via email. While the email was clearly seen as a hoax, "a swatting incident," the support and laser beam concern shown by Sanibel Police; the Lee County Sheriff's Office; Sanibel mayor Richard Johnson; city officials; and SUCC's Senior Pastor, Rev. Dr. Mark Boyea, once again reassured us that the safety of our community is a top priority for them. Plans to hold our Shabbat Service this week and in future weeks remains in place as scheduled. The Sanibel Police have promised us extra security out of an abundance of caution and to ensure everyone is comfortable in their ability to worship freely.

On Dec. 29, our last Shabbat of 2023, we enjoyed a more than usual

number of congregants and the Zoom screen, too, was full. The mayor, who stayed for the entire service and the Oneg shabbat afterwards, spoke in his capacity of mayor, friend and neighbor. He described how we are all "Landsman," despite practicing different religions or being affiliated with different political groups and cultures. The Sanibel community is defined by the Sanibel Plan. It is and shall remain a small-town community whose members choose to live in harmony with one another and with nature, creating a human settlement distinguished by its diversity, beauty, uniqueness, character and stewardship. He emphasized how the community stands beside Bat Yam Temple of the Islands. 🌐

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TEMPLE BETH EL
Fort Myers

(239) 433-0018 • www.templebethel.com

Happy Leap Year! What will you be doing Feb. 29? Our new administration is in place and Feb. 11, Super Bowl Sunday, our leadership lineup will hold a retreat to plan out our next two years and continue the mission of Temple Beth El. We are ever grateful to those who have stepped up and taken on this responsibility for all our benefit. Thank you!

Upcoming programs

Our brand-new Mazel Tots program Sunday school for the little ones, is on Sundays at 10 a.m. If you need info, please call the office at 239-433-0018.

On Feb. 5, Gerald Ziedenberg continues his captivating history series: "Modern Jewish History." The remaining six installments are all via Zoom, Mondays at 7:30 p.m. Thank you, Gerry!

Sisterhood has an active calendar with a membership dinner Feb. 8, and the next Ladies who Lunch will be Feb. 15 at 12:30 p.m. Watch your emails or call the office for the location. Join in the fun and food. Remember, Sisterhood or Temple membership is not required. However, a reservation is.

Men's Club will hold its Comedy Night on Feb. 25. The invite and registration will be by email. If you are not getting our emails, please contact the office. You don't need to be a member to stay connected.

A Men's Club save the date: Please join us March 3 for the final Musicology lecture and lunch with Dr Tom Cimarusti, PhD/FGCU. He will speak on Gershwin, the composer and musician. This event has a pre-registration and menu choice — please check your email.

We have a new choir director! Please welcome Steve Bradley who brings a wealth of musical knowledge, choir directing experience and is an accomplished pianist. Have a nice voice? Our choir has openings. Email your contact information to info@templebethel.com.

Recurring programs

- Drop off nonperishable items in the lobby shopping cart whenever the temple is open.

- Come to Torah Study led by Rabbi Luna! No prior study experience is required. Saturday mornings at 9 a.m. via Zoom.

- Our Israel Committee works to ensure that Israel-related issues remain a central and vital part of synagogue life and a vital component of our identity as American Jews. Meeting: first Wednesday of every month at 7 p.m. via Zoom.

- Book Club selections: Feb. 7 – "Flowers in the Blood" by Gay Courter; March 6 – "We are the Lucky Ones" by Georgia Hunter

- Tot Shabbat, a kid-friendly service, is Feb. 2 and March 1 at 6 p.m.

Bring your kids, bring your grand-kids ... come for the fellowship, the fun and the pizza. Please RSVP to 239-433-0018.

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

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

- New year, new opportunity for recovery. Our 12-Step Recovery Group meets at 11 a.m. every Saturday via Zoom. We are a fellowship of people seeking a path to recovery via Judaic spiritual principles and the Twelve

Steps, using the book Twelve Jewish Steps to Recovery, by Oltzky and Copans, second edition.

There's always something happening here at TBE, and our members make it happen: Current Events, Coffee & Chat, Theology & Life, Francophone & Hispanophone, Environmental Group, Solo Travelers, Caring and Visitations, and more. Follow us on Facebook and/or Instagram: @TempleBethElFortMyers. You can always contact the office at 239-433-0018. Let's pray for peace in the world in this brand new 2024.

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

SHALOM LIFE CENTER
Fort Myers

(239) 218-3433 • www.shalomlifecenter.org

Shalom Life Center is Southwest Florida's premier warm and welcoming home for contemporary Jewish life with a passionate commitment to Israel, community and spiritual growth where everyone is always welcome to be a part of a spiritual community, a warm and welcoming Shalom Life Center family!

Every Saturday morning at 10 a.m., SLC offers an interactive and participatory Torah study, led by Rabbi Lawrence Dermer, with a focus on the relevance of our timeless traditions and bringing the ancient wisdom of Torah into our daily lives.

SLC offers individualized learning and spiritual guidance including

bar/bat mitzvah preparation as well as special needs bar/bat mitzvah preparation. SLC also offers weekly Torah study, Café Kabbalah, Book Club, and so much more. If you'd like to learn more, please send us an email or give us a call.

SLC also offers many other opportunities to enhance your Jewish life and learning, and further your involvement in community service while making friends in a warm and welcoming community.

Let your spirit soar at Shalom Life Center where community is family and prayer is always inspirational, meaningful and musical. For more information, visit www.shalomlifecenter.org.

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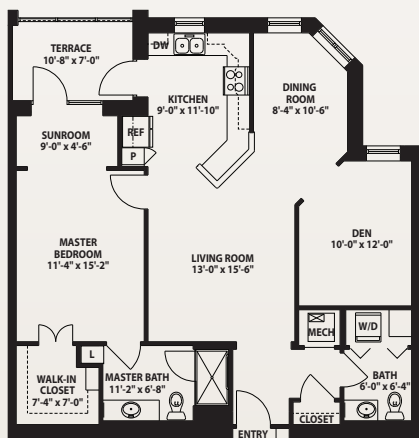
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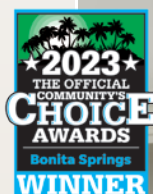
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COMMUNITY FREE SYNAGOGUE Fort Myers

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

We are deeply saddened by the loss of Joel Aron and Bob Bernson, two wonderful men who have been with us since our beginnings 20 years ago, and before. Both lived long, interesting and productive lives, but there is never a good time to lose those for whom you care and respect. Heartfelt condolences are extended to their families as we pray that they find comfort in our midst and among those who have shared from the same bitter cup.

Our sincerest sympathies are extended to Nina Treyvas and her family at the passing of her beloved mother, Bella Gleyzer, a native of Odessa who made new life among us.

We are sincerely grateful to Lee County Sheriff Carmine Marceno and his deputies for keeping an eye on us when we gather and on the Rabbi's home throughout the week. While we have not experienced any trouble at all, it is good to know that law enforcement cares about our security, especially in these most uncertain times. And hats off to Florida Governor Ronald Dion DeSantis for placing Florida's 33 county sheriffs on alert in the face of the fear of increasing anti-Jewish activities and for signing HB 269, criminalizing bias motivated offenses against Florida's religious minorities.

Now in its 20th year, The Community Free Synagogue meets on the

Unity Campus, 11120 Ranchette Road in south Fort Myers. Shabbat Eve begins each week at 6:30 p.m. with a Shabbat meal, followed by worship at 7:30 p.m. with a social hour at its conclusion. If you plan to attend dinner, consider bringing a nondairy dish, side dish, salad, a bottle of wine or dessert. The rabbi makes the hallah each week and Coordinator Natalie Fulton prepares the soup. There is no charge for the meal, but we do collect a tip for Lucy who sets and cleans up for us.

Our worship generally follows a traditional format; however, the Torah is often read and the rabbi gives a short talk each week. The service is highly participatory, egalitarian and upbeat.

The rabbi teaches Torah via Zoom every Shabbat morning starting at 9:30 a.m. Logon information is on the synagogue's website, www.fortmyerssynagogue.com. If you do not operate a computer, the rabbi will arrange to have you join him at his home as he teaches and leads the Torah discussion.

Everything is always free and memberships are not for sale. There are no fundraising solicitations. The synagogue is an "intentional community" designed to create a peaceful, stable and harmonious setting for our prayer and study under the rabbi's guidance. So far, so good, after two decades! 🌍

TEMPLE BETH SHALOM Cape Coral

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

We are a month into the new year and things didn't quite start out the way we expected. Our big fundraiser had to be postponed. Of course, we were very disappointed, but sometimes adversity leads to innovation. Like most congregations, dues don't cover all the expenses and we had to start rethinking how to raise money. A group of us got together to brainstorm and some very exciting new ideas surfaced. While I cannot say more about them until we have more details, I can say that we are once again brimming with enthusiasm and anticipation.

Cantor Butensky has brought a lot of experience and great ideas with him. Friday night services are always just slightly different, meaningful and never boring. His Saturday morning Torah service/study has been so successful that we are considering having them twice a month instead of just once. We are now planning to start holding congregational Shabbat dinners on the Friday evenings before the Saturday services. The second Friday of each month, we have a children's service starting at 6 p.m. followed by pizza for everyone and a traditional shabbat service at 7:30 p.m.

One of our most popular activities is a monthly Brunch & Learn where

we have a potluck brunch and discuss some topic of current interest chosen by the Cantor and not revealed until that morning. Last month, we discussed antisemitism on campus. Discussions are lively, nonconfrontational and sometimes surprising. TBS has some great cooks, and the brunch is always delicious.

Coming up this month, we will have a Super Bowl party in our social hall with the football game on the big screen and board games for those who don't want to watch. The Jewish Federation is also part of our schedule this month. We will be going as a group to see Gene Wilder followed by dinner, and on Feb. 22, we will again go as a group to see "Farewell, Mr. Haffmann."

Temple Beth Shalom is the only reform synagogue in Cape Coral. We always welcome guests to all our services and activities. Please feel free to join us at services or any of our activities. You can get our calendar of events at our website, www.templebethshalomcc.org, by emailing us at office@templebethshalomcc.org or calling 239-772-4555.

Join us as a guest, leave as a friend and return as part of our family. 🌍



Jewish Family Services
A division of the Jewish Federation
of Lee & Charlotte Counties
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- Cape Coral
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CONTACT US

239-481-4449 ext. 2
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CHAVURAT SHALOM OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA
chavuratshalom@gmail.com

Join us in February

By Cheryl Fulmer, Ellen Feingold and Marcia Rudin

This year, 5784 in the Hebrew calendar, is a Jewish leap year. There are two months of Adar. Why two months of Adar, you might ask? It's one of the marvels of the Hebrew calendar, which is based on the lunar cycle. In order to keep the lunar year in sync with the seasons, we add a 13th month now and again and that makes it a Jewish leap year. This month, Rosh Chodesh Adar I falls on Saturday Feb. 10 followed by Adar II on March 11. What this means to Jews is that in exactly two and one-half lunar months from Adar I, we will celebrate Passover. Get ready!

Chavurat Shalom members took a break from our programs at the end of December, then greeted the secular new year 2024 with a full January roster, all conducted via Zoom.

Shabbat Services continue every Friday night throughout the year at 7:30 p.m. Services are led by Chavurat Shalom members, with readings, singing and Torah reading and commentary. Hatikvah, the Israeli national anthem, is included in services as a connection to Israel. The weekly services are coordinated by Drs. Ellen Feingold and Kathy Zoss and include volunteer participants.

January's programs

On Saturday, Jan. 6, we enjoyed our monthly Torah Talk led by Ellen Feingold. On Tuesday, Jan. 9, Rabbi James Rudin answered members' questions about the Hebrew Bible and all other things Jewish. Then, on Saturdays, Jan. 13, 20 and 27, we benefited from our Len Minsky current events. On Jan. 16, we held our Chavurat Shalom Annual Meeting, with all members invited to suggest programs we can offer and how we can improve our fellowship group. On Tuesday, Jan. 23, we were educated by a lecture by Don Arbell on the "The Israel-Hamas War: Global and Regional Implications" and on Tuesday, Jan. 30, Rabbi James Rudin spoke about "The Life and Times of Commodore Uriah P. Levy, First American Jewish Naval Hero and Savior of Monticello."

Full roster of February programs

We invite you to join us in February for these events:

- Tuesday, Feb. 6, 7:30 p.m. – Informal "Schmooze" hosted by Marcia Rudin

- Tuesday, Feb. 13, 7:30 p.m. – "Ask the Doctors" – Chavurat Shalom member physicians Mark Peppercorn (gastroenterologist), Marge

Peppercorn (pediatrician), Don Bachman (radiologist), Karen Back (pediatrician), Ellen Feingold (pediatrician), Sheila Kempler (psychologist) and Hy Kempler (psychologist) will answer members' medical questions.

- Tuesday, Feb. 20, 7:30 p.m. – Board meeting – All members are invited.

- Tuesday, Feb. 27, 7:30 p.m. – Guest speaker Jonathan Engler's topic will be "My Voyage to a Personal Understanding of the 'Other' – Israel, Israelis Sephardic Majority and How I Feel this is Essential to Understanding What is Happening in the Country Today."

All Chavurat Shalom activities will be held over Zoom until further notice. All times are Eastern Standard Time. Everyone is welcome to attend. To join these events, send an email request to chavuratshalom@gmail.com to receive the Zoom link. For more information, visit our website, www.chavuratshalomofsouthwestflorida.org, or email chavuratshalom@gmail.com.

The Israel/Hamas war

Responding to the continuing Israel/Hamas war, Chavurat Shalom's Tzedakah committee has granted funds to Friends of Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), America-Israel Democracy (AID) Coalition and Brothers and Sisters for Israel, both organizations dedicated to helping displaced Israelis. At the start of the war, funds were donated to American Friends of Magen David Adom, American Friends of Soroka Medical Center located in Beersheva and Friends of Israel Defense Forces (IDF). As the war continues, the committee will direct available Tzedakah funds where needed. We thank Tzedakah Fund Committee Chair Ellen Feingold and her committee members Evelyn Clark, Ying Przybyszewski, Sharon Berry, Shirley Frank, Cheryl Fulmer, Myra Klahr, Peggy Siegel and Becky Kon for their recommendations.





Most importantly, we thank those of you who have answered our request for funds to be allocated by the Tzedakah committee to help Israelis harmed by the invasion of Israel by Hamas on Oct. 7. 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 20031 Sanibel View Circle, Unit 202, Ft. Myers, FL 33908 (temporary address due to Hurricane Ian).

Am Yisroel Chai! 



WHAT IS A WOMEN'S GIVING CIRCLE?

The Women's Giving Circle empowers women as funders, decision makers and agents of change. Members contribute \$360 and have an equal vote where funds are distributed.

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-  Achieve greater impact as a circle
-  Meet new people & enjoy the company of other like-minded women of all ages in our community

TO JOIN & FOR MORE INFORMATION

contact Debbie Sanford at 239.481.4449 ext. 6
debbiesanford@jfedlcc.org



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Stay connected all month long at
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Community Relations Council
Lee & Charlotte



CRC Mission Statement:

The mission of the CRC of Lee & Charlotte is to proactively advocate for and ensure the rights, interests, and values of our Jewish community.

We Advocate. Educate. Act.

For more information or to join, contact
Debbie Sanford at 239.481.4449 ext. 6
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**JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA**
(239) 566-1771

“In the Jewish Mood”

By Marina Berkovich, president

Music has been an inextricable part of Jewish people for millennia. While the authorship of “Song of Songs” has been debated for centuries, there’s no dispute about Jewish prayer delivery through songs. From religious to secular, the music of Jewish prayers had made its way to religions and cultures outside the Jewish purview. Over time, as formal music education became organized and valued, particularly after the period of enlightenment in 1800s and 1900s Europe, more and more Jewish men and women became educated and were able to break into the previously off-limits music circles — usually, at a price of converting out of Judaism.

Jakob Ludwig Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, better known as Felix Mendelssohn, whose last name tells a tale of his origins, was a German composer, pianist, organist and conductor of the early Romantic Period. He was baptized Lutheran at the age of 7. And that is, most likely, why his works, “The Wedding March” especially, became so popular. Had he remained openly Jewish, his music would have been played only for trusted company. His parents, Abraham and Lea Mendelssohn, raised their children in the intellectual environment and provided them the best possible education. Felix’s sister, Fanny, was the most gifted. She became a pianist and composer. It was improper for a woman to pursue that, so she married and never became a professional musician.

Michael Mendelsohn (with only one ‘s’) will be featured in the SWFL Jewish Pioneers series’ new film, “A Midsummer Dream,” due out this spring. Born into an Ashkenazi family in the U.K., Michael grew up with a strong musical inclination, and spent his life between doing something else for a living (hint: watch film) and playing just for the love of music. Michael’s piano

and double bass playing has Jewish soul. He and his wife, Jacqui, a daughter of a well-known British bandleader, share their year between Leeds, England and Naples, Florida for the past quarter century. Hear Mike and his musician friends most Sundays at Gran du Café.

Alexander Goldstein was born in Moscow, USSR to a Bolshoi Orchestra musician, who had survived the 1937 purges. Being overtly Jewish was no longer permitted by then; his tale-telling last name carried both musical talent and the inevitable persecution by anti-Semites. Goldstein was able to compose for film and receive full credit. He wasn’t allowed to be credited on government propaganda radio and TV. After immigrating to the U.S., he continues to compose music that is performed worldwide. He is, perhaps, the first and only Jewish composer actively working in Naples.

Join us for the evening of Goldstein’s music compositions, including the world premiere of “Chat” and Naples premiere of “Introspective Trio.” “In the Jewish Mood,” Goldstein’s popular composition, will be performed by violinist Daniela Shtereva, artistic director of Arts Planet Naples, this concert’s sponsor. The Jewish Historical Society of SWFL is proud to join in this historic performance, featuring other Naples Philharmonic musicians and acclaimed guests from Eastman Conservatory of Music.

Concert and reception begin at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 10 at the Nina Iser Jewish Cultural Center.

Your generosity helps us in our research, future films and presentations. Donate online, by mail or contact us at office@jhsswf.org. Sign up for a membership to receive announcements, reminders and news. To sponsor Goldstein’s new composition recording, please reach out to us directly. We

continued on page 33

MAHJONG

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Tikkun Olam

By Diane Schwartz, President's Council for Collier/Lee Chapter

Hadassah's history is deeply intertwined with the development of the state of Israel. Many of you know the story. Hadassah's founder, Henrietta Szold, founded the organization in 1912 and sent two nurses overseas to bring basic health care to immigrants and people living on the ground in the Middle East.

Hadassah built the foundation of what has become the Israeli health system. It also founded schools for nursing, physicians, dentists, public health graduate programs, youth villages, and more.

Today, Hadassah's impact is worldwide, enhancing people's health through outstanding medical care and cutting-edge research at its two Hadassah Medical Organization (HMO) hospitals in Jerusalem. Mt. Scopus came first in 1936 and the Ein Karem campus followed in 1962.

Across its two campuses, HMO has over 1,300 beds, 31 operating theaters and nine special intensive care units, treating over one million patients a year, regardless of race, religion or nationality.

Hadassah Hospital Ein Karem has a rich history and a special status of global recognition. Ein Kerem shares a large campus with the Hebrew University-Hadassah School of Medicine, with scientists collaborating from both institutions. In the 29-story inpatient Sarah Wetsman Davidson Hospital Tower, the underground state-of-the-art surgical suites are sheltered deep in the Jerusalem hillside and fortified against conventional, biological and chemical warfare.



Diane Schwartz

Hadassah Hospital Mt. Scopus is 14 miles from Ein Kerem on panoramic Mount Scopus. It serves both as a top-tier community medical center and addresses special needs of the Greater Jerusalem area. Families rely on the pediatric chronic disease center, a hospice and the Rady

Mother and Child Center for women giving birth. The region's rehabilitation center is now being expanded and improved, offering care and comprehensive cutting-edge robotics to soldiers and civilians, stroke and terror survivors, along with a new shock trauma center. The very busy adult and pediatric emergency rooms are being improved.

"Hadassah Medical Organization has been named a world leader in oncology and cardiology. HMO is also recognized for its innovative use of smart technologies in the magazine's 2024 rankings of the world's best specialized hospitals. This is the fourth year in a row that the Israeli hospital system has been included in the list of the world's top hospitals for cardiology and the third year in a row it has been

among the top hospitals for oncology," according to *Newsweek*.

Newsweek also named Hadassah as a leader in the use of "smart" technologies, such as digital imaging, artificial intelligence, robotics and telemedicine. These rankings put Hadassah in the company of such leading American medical institutions as the Mayo Clinic, the Cleveland Clinic, New York City's Mount Sinai Hospital and The Johns Hopkins Hospital, in addition to top hospitals around the world. Hadassah Hospitals have over 50 research partners around the world, such as the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, Mayo Clinic, National Cancer Institute and the Weizmann Institute of Science/Israel.

Our hospitals are a global force for improved research and health care.

Among HMO supporters are volunteers from around the world in Hadassah International, who have formed local groups and proudly affiliate with Hadassah's care and standards for innovation. Hadassah International has members representing Israel, France, the United Kingdom, Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Argentina, Chile, Mexico and Brazil.

Hadassah is Tikkun Olam; healing the world through health care.

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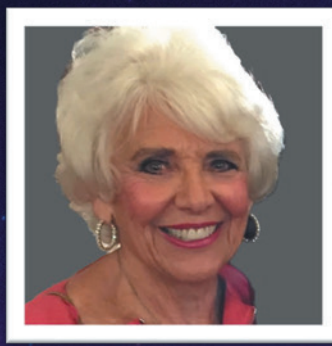
can be reached at The Jewish Historical Society of Southwest Florida, 8805 Tamiami Trail North, Suite # 255, Naples FL 34108, 833-547-7935 (833-JHS-SWFL) www.jhsswf.org, office@jhsswf.org.

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

Collier/Lee Hadassah Inspiring Women 2024 Honorees



Gayle Dorio
Professional Designer
Community Leader



Ellaine Rosen
Educator Extraordinaire
Community Leader



Sunny Lubner
Philanthropist
Community Leader

Hadassah is proud to recognize and honor women whose leadership skills, dedication, experience, generosity, and time make a difference in their organizations, businesses, our communities and the quality of our lives.

Join us to celebrate their accomplishments!

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Sunday, March 3, 2024, at 11:00AM

Audubon Country Club
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Naples, Florida

For information contact: collierleehadassah@gmail.com

GENERATIONS OF THE SHOAH SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

genshoah@hmcec.org

GenShoah SWFL “The origin story”

By Shelley Lieb and Ida Margolis

You may have wondered how GenShoah SWFL came to be. Here's the origin story in two parts.

Part I – Sandy Levine

Sandy Levine was asked to start a group for the children of survivors soon after she came to Naples. This is her story, as told to Shelley Lieb.



Sandy Levine and Yvonne Holtzman

Levine grew up in New Jersey where her mother had family, but she was born in a DP camp in Germany in 1947. Both her parents are survivors from Poland. They fled to Russia where her father was drafted into the Russian army but was given an office job because he was educated.

Her parents didn't share much about their Holocaust experience and she rarely talked about it with them.

She knew bits and pieces and avoided finding out more until accessibility of information on the internet became a way to discover whatever part of her history she was ready for.

Levine moved to Florida with her husband, Stewart (z"l), in 1983. She was a teacher in New Jersey, but she and Stewart started a promotional marketing business in Boca Raton. She also actively worked in real estate sales.

In the early 2000s, Sandy heard about a Holocaust bulletin board on the internet — All Generations founded by Serena Wolrich. Maybe because it was anonymous. Maybe because it was in small doses and usually read with tears, she started to follow the postings of Holocaust survivors and their children. It was the first time she allowed herself to read about the Holocaust and its aftermath.

She read a posting from a woman, Nancy Dershaw, who had just moved to Boca. Dershaw was part of a large group of 2nd-generation Holocaust survivors in Philly and she wanted to start one in Boca. With Levine's support and involvement, Dershaw started what has become a very large and effective group of 2nd- and 3rd-generation survivors on the East Coast.



Ida Margolis, Jeff Margolis and Shelley Lieb

In 2008, Sandy and Stewart left Boca and came to Naples. While looking for other Jewish residents, they found the Holocaust Museum in Naples. Godfrey Levy (z"l), the then director of the Museum, recruited Sandy to start a 2G group. At the beginning, it was mainly an opportunity for 2Gs and some survivors to share their family story. Eventually, Sandy knew it needed to go the next step in terms of programming with speakers, etc. Then Ida Margolis, with lots of prior experience with Holocaust survivors, joined the group and Sandy asked Margolis to take over.

Part II – Ida Margolis

Margolis' experience in New Jersey with her family and the Holocaust was a counterpoint to Sandy's. Her mother was willing to speak about her Holocaust experiences. Despite having painful memories of her unbearable existence in concentration camps, Janet Moskowitz wrote a memoir, then took her story to high school and college students.

Before coming to Naples, Margolis worked as a social studies supervisor for a local school district. She also taught U.S. history and served on committees in New Jersey that were working on one of the earliest and most comprehensive Holocaust curriculums. She also worked as an adjunct

instructor for Stockton University and Rowan University and participated in programs at the Holocaust Resource Center at Stockton.

Margolis attended 2G meetings in NYC and befriended a man who became the connection to Sandy. When the Margolis' decided to spend part of their time in Naples in 2010, he suggested that they look up Sandy, who invited her to a Hadassah meeting and eventually to a GenShoah meeting. Margolis participated and made what proved to be successful program suggestions. Margolis agreed to take over the leadership of GenShoah SWFL when Sandy asked.

About GenShoah SWFL

GenShoah SWFL is a group for children and descendants of Holocaust survivors and anyone interested in the mission of GenShoah SWFL. There aren't any dues or forms to fill out. To receive our newsletter and program announcements, just send an email to genshoahswfl@hmcec.org or liebrog@gmail.com. If you would like to volunteer to help with future programs, please let us know that, too!

We do encourage membership at the Museum, as we are an affinity organization with them. If you are not already a member of the Museum, please consider joining or making a donation. 🌟

Jewish Federation of Lee and Charlotte Counties Holocaust Education and Programs Department

The Jewish Federation of Lee and Charlotte Counties is creating a Holocaust Education department in response to growing antisemitism and a need for education and remembrance. The new department will sponsor outreach programs in the schools and community as well as host speaking, author and film events. We are also in the process of creating a remembrance wall that will highlight local loved ones lost in the Shoah. For naming and other donor opportunities, or to share stories, please contact JFED Holocaust Education Director Ella Naylor at 239-281-7874 or via email at jfedholocaustdirector@gmail.com



High School Students: Earn CAS Credits!

The Jewish Federation of Lee and Charlotte Counties is interested in hearing from teenagers in high school who might like to earn CAS credits through various work in the Jewish community.

If you are interested, please send the following information to debbiesanford@jfedlcc.org:

Name
Address
Phone #
Age/Grade/School
Preferred volunteer hours (e.g. 2 - 5PM, Sundays)



BAT YAM TEMPLE OF THE ISLANDS REFORM

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

CHABAD OF BONITA SPRINGS/ESTERO ORTHODOX

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

CHABAD JEWISH CENTER OF CAPE CORAL ORTHODOX

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

CHABAD OF CHARLOTTE COUNTY ORTHODOX

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

CHABAD LUBAVITCH OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA ORTHODOX

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

SYNAGOGUES & JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS IN LEE & CHARLOTTE COUNTIES



Jewish Federation
of Lee & Charlotte Counties

www.JewishFederationLCC.org

COMMUNITY FREE SYNAGOGUE CONTEMPORARY TRADITIONAL

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

SHALOM LIFE CENTER TRANS DENOMINATIONAL

19691 Cypress View Drive
Fort Myers, FL 33967
Rabbi Lawrence Dermer
Phone: 239-218-3433
E-mail: info@shalomlifecenter.org
Web site: www.shalomlifecenter.org
Shabbat Evening Services
7:30 p.m. (Oct-Apr)
7:00 p.m. (May-Sept)
Saturday Torah & Kabbalah Study
10:00 a.m.

TEMPLE BETH EL REFORM

16225 Winkler Road, Fort Myers, FL 33908
Rabbi Nicole Luna
E-mail: rabbiluna@templebethel.com
Learning Tree Preschool Director: Amy Amon
Email: learningtreefortmyers@gmail.com
President: Reina Schlager
Email: tbeboard@templebethel.com
Phone: 239-433-0018 • Fax: 239-433-3235
Office Manager: Karen Kagan
Email: manager@templebethel.com
Web site: templebethel.com
Shabbat services: 7:30 p.m. Friday
Torah study 9:00 a.m. Saturday
Religious & Hebrew School:
9:30 a.m.- Noon Sunday
Judaica Gift Gallery
Affiliated: Union for Reform Judaism;

TEMPLE BETH SHALOM REFORM

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

CHAVURAT SHALOM OF SWFL CHAVURA

20031 Sanibel View Circle unit 202
Fort Myers, FL 33908
Chavuratshalom@gmail.com
www.chavuratshalomofsouthwestflorida.org
Cheryl Fulmer, President
Shabbat services - 7:30 p.m. Friday
Jewish current events - Saturday morning
Speakers series - Tuesday evening

TEMPLE JUDEA CONSERVATIVE

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

TEMPLE SHALOM CHARLOTTE HARBOR AND THE GULF ISLANDS REFORM

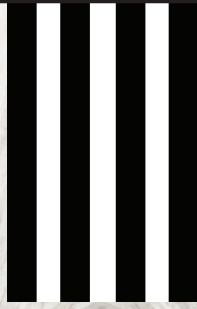
23190 Utica Ave., P.O. Box 494675
Port Charlotte, FL 33949-4675
Rabbi Solomon Agin
President: Judith Migdol
Phone: 941-625-2116
E-mail: shalom06@netzero.com
Web site: templeshalomfl
Beginning Hebrew:
Tuesday 4:15 - 5:15 p.m.
Advanced Hebrew:
Thursday 4:15 - 5:15 p.m.
Organizations: Sisterhood
Affiliated: Union for Reform Judaism

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

- AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee): Jacki Waksman - 954-653-9053
- AJC (American Jewish Committee): Brian Lipton - 941-365-4955
- Anti-Defamation League: 561-988-2900
- B'Nai B'rith International: 941-302-4500
- Chabad Jewish Student Life at FGCU Rabbi Mendel Gordon - 347-452-0489 mendelgordon@gmail.com
- Chevra Kadisha: Taryn Sasser
- Generations of the Shoah SWFL: 263-9200
- Hadassah - Collier/Lee Chapter: Joyce Toub - 518-330-1559
- Hadassah-Sharon Chapter (Charlotte County): Odette Port - 941-505-1409
- Hazak 55+ Chapter: Joyce Rosinger - 239-437-1566
- Israel Bonds: Regional Headquarters: 800-622-8017
- Jewish Community Services: 239-481-4449
- Jewish National Fund: Joshua Mellits, Director, Western Florida 941-462-1330 ext. 865
Memorial Tree Planting in Israel 1-800-542-8733
- Jewish War Veterans: Post 400: Commander Harvey Charter - 239-246-3151
- Mikvah Bashka of Southwest Florida: Nechamie Minkowicz - 239-822-2784

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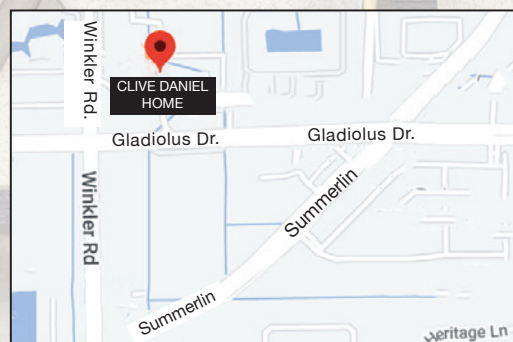
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