



SUMMER DOUBLE ISSUE



JUNE & JULY 2026



# L'CHAYIM

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- 8 Community Focus
- 11 Jewish Interest
- 13 Commentary
- 14 Organizations
- 19 Focus on Youth
- 23 From the Bimah
- 27 Temple News

**Feeding Families This Summer**  
Federation pantry expands support as need continues to grow. Page 5



**Museum Marks Record Year**  
Education programs, anniversary offer, new exhibition and more!  
Page 9

For the most current news and articles on the war in Israel, please visit our website at [JewishFederationLCC.org](http://JewishFederationLCC.org).

## What Federation really means

By Karin Fine, President of Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties

I've been thinking a lot lately about what Federation really means to all of us. Not just what we **do** — the campaigns and programs — but what it **feels** like to be part of this community.

For me, it began in a very personal way. I was introduced to Federation in my early 20s, when I became part of a family deeply connected to Jewish leadership and community life. What stayed with me wasn't the structure — it was the sense of something bigger: a network of people who show up for one another with consistency and purpose.

That's still what I see today. At a time when the world can feel uncertain and connection to Jewish life doesn't always come easily, Federation remains a place where we come together — not because we all think the same way, but because we care about the same things: community, continuity and responsibility for one another.

There's sometimes confusion about what Federation is and how it differs from a temple.

A temple is where we gather for prayer, celebrate holidays and mark life's milestones. Federation works at the community level, bringing people together, raising and distributing resources and supporting everything from social services to education to global Jewish needs.

Both are essential. One nurtures our personal connection to Jewish life;



Karin Fine

the other helps sustain and strengthen the entire community. That work comes to life through programs like Jewish Family Services, our Food Pantry, senior lunches, community events and year-round opportunities to connect.

I know Federation can sometimes feel a bit distant — something you support but not necessarily something you feel part of every day — because Federation only works when people feel it belongs to them.

As I step into this role, my priority is to strengthen that sense of connection, creating more ways for people to engage, feel welcomed and see themselves in this work.

We would love your participation, whether as a volunteer or a participant. Join us in something new to you this year, because at its core, this isn't about programs or campaigns — it's about people. It's about showing up for one another, especially when it matters most.

I'm honored to take on this role and excited for what we can build together. This next chapter isn't mine, it's ours. 🌍



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

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

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**AUGUST ISSUE  
 EDITORIAL  
 DEADLINE:  
 Tuesday, July 7**



### 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

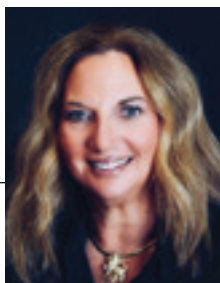
A Jewish Community that is based on Jewish values such as Tzedakah (benevolence), Tikkun Olam (repairing the world) and K'lal Yisrael (taking responsibility for one another).

# New Community Calendar

*Connecting and strengthening Jewish life*

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

■ **Debbie Sanford**



**J**ewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties is proud to introduce a new Community Calendar, now available on its website under the "Resources" tab. This new tool is designed to better connect our community, strengthen collaboration among organizations and enhance participation in Jewish life across the region.

Beyond listing events, the calendar serves two important purposes:

First, it helps minimize scheduling conflicts. With so many vibrant synagogues, organizations and programs taking place throughout Lee and Charlotte Counties, it can be difficult to avoid overlapping events. At times, community members are forced to choose between two meaningful opportunities happening at the same time. By providing a shared platform where organizations can post their events in advance, the calendar allows for greater coordination and awareness, helping to ensure programs can reach the widest possible audience.

Second, the calendar offers a broader and more unified picture of our Jewish community. From holiday celebrations and educational programs to social gatherings and service opportunities, the calendar reflects the richness and diversity of what is happening throughout our

area. It allows individuals and families to discover new programs, connect with different organizations and engage more fully in Jewish life.

This initiative is about more than just dates and times — it is about building a stronger, more informed and more connected community. Whether you are looking for a cultural event, a learning opportunity or a way to get involved, the Community Calendar makes it easier than ever to see what's happening and be a part of it.



Local Jewish organizations are encouraged to participate by designating one or two representatives who can create and manage entries. By working together and sharing information, we can better serve our entire community.

We invite you to explore the new Community Calendar today and take advantage of all it has to offer. Visit [JewishFederationLCC.org](http://JewishFederationLCC.org) and look for the blue "Resource" tab.

Together, we can create a more coordinated, inclusive and vibrant Jewish community for everyone. 🌍

## Aging-in-Place vs. Senior Living Communities

A FREE Guide to Your Future

Making the decision between aging-in-place or moving to a senior living community is one of the most important choices you'll make.

This FREE Guide provides an overview of both options to help you determine the best choice for your future.



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Capturing Life Photography...29	
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Elite Estate Services.....	11
FineMark Natl. Bank & Trust.....	17
Fort Myers Memorial Gardens.....	10
Ginsberg Eye.....	3
Green Schoenfeld & Kyle..	14
Gulf Coast Orthodontics....	19
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Lyons & Lyons.....	7
Marcus Georgiadis Computer Repair.....	13
Margaritaville.....	25
Mobile Massage.....	24
OSMEG Care.....	15
PCC Tile & More.....	14
Preview Travel Pros.....	7
Scott Geller Eye Specialists.	31
Senior Housing Solutions...2	
Taschner Periodontics.....	11
Temple Judea.....	20-22
The Bagel Factory.....	14
The Gallery at Cape Coral.	12

# With gratitude

By Amy Hallock, Community Events Manager

Thank you to everyone who joined us for a meaningful L'Chayim program in collaboration with Temple Judea. We're especially grateful to Aviva Klompas for an engaging and thought-provoking conversation that left our community both informed and inspired.



Amy Hallock

captured the room — bringing insight, clarity and depth to an important and timely discussion.

We're proud to create spaces like this where our community can come together to learn, connect and reflect. Stay tuned for more upcoming programs on our online calendar. We

From start to finish, Aviva truly look forward to seeing you again soon. 🌟



# Secure Community Network's website

*How does it support community security efforts?*

By John Murtagh, SCN Regional Security Advisor, Florida West Coast

Do you have the right tools and guidance to keep your community safe today? The Secure Community Network (SCN) website offers a robust collection of resources designed to help Jewish institutions and their partners enhance safety and preparedness.



John Murtagh

awarded funds effectively. For events, the site features detailed security planning tools to support risk assessment, staffing considerations, access control and emergency response coordination.

In addition to written materials, the SCN website regularly announces upcoming online training webinars covering topics such as situational awareness, crisis response, cybersecurity, threat reporting and security grant guidance. These sessions provide practical instruction from experts and are available to institutions nationwide.

One of its key strengths is the wide range of templates and guides it provides to help organizations strengthen their physical security. These include step-by-step resources for assessing vulnerabilities, implementing physical security enhancements (low-cost/no-cost) and developing customized emergency plans that address threats such as active assailants, fire, medical emergencies and facility lockdowns.

SCN also offers extensive guidance on navigating federal and state security grant programs, helping organizations understand eligibility requirements, prepare strong applications and use

Overall, the SCN website offers essential, accessible tools to help communities stay informed, prepared and protected. Explore all the tools and templates the Secure Community Network has to offer at [securecommunitynetwork.org](https://securecommunitynetwork.org).



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



**YOU MAKE IT HAPPEN!**

## TRIBUTES

### *Honors & Memorials*



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

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

#### **In Honor of Karen & Marc Adelstein**

Mazel tov on Alexa's graduation from residency & her fellowship at MD Anderson!  
*Gail Margolis & Jerry Weber*

#### **In Honor of Judi & Jeff Bayer**

Mazel tov on your grandchildren's (Gina & Ian) graduations!  
*Gail Margolis & Jerry Weber*

#### **In Honor of Sherri Zucker's Birthday**

*Joyce Walker*

#### **In Honor of Gail Margolis**

*Stephanie Zurick  
Oriana Heligman*

#### **In Memory of Ronni**

Reflecting her values & compassion she carried throughout her life. May her memory be a blessing.

*Lane & Barbara Carlin*

#### **In Memory of Barbara Simon**

Deepest condolences to Brian & Mindi Simon on the passing of Brian's mother. May her memory make for a blessing.

*Jewish Federation Board & Staff*

*Debbie Sanford & Lee Strauss*

*Doreen Kostel & Jack Psiris*

*Karin Fine*

[jewishfederationlcc.org/tribute-memorials](http://jewishfederationlcc.org/tribute-memorials)

## HOW

### THE JEWISH FEDERATION SERVES

#### **Local Jewish Education and Culture**

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

#### **Overseas**

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

#### **Jewish Community Foundation**

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



**Jewish Federation**  
of Lee & Charlotte Counties

**Jewish Family  
Services**

#### **Local Seniors Services**

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

#### **Local Social Services**

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

#### **Local Emergency Services**

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

#### **Education, Arts & Culture Programs**

Israeli Folk Dancing

Jewish Social Club

Mah Jongg

Holiday Senior Visits

PJ Library

Federation Hits the Road-Day Trips

Holocaust Remembrance

Jewish Film Festival

Community Breakfast

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Jewish Heritage Day

Lion of Judah

Women's Day

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**Read the current and recent issues of L'CHAYIM online at [www.JewishFederationLCC.org](http://www.JewishFederationLCC.org).**

# The space between seasons

*Staying connected this summer*

By Amy Hallock, Community Events Manager

As we move into the summer months here in Southwest Florida, the pace begins to shift. The crowds thin, calendars soften and many of our seasonal friends head north. At Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties, this time of year often feels quieter but not empty. In fact, it offers something we don't always have in the height of season: space.

Space to slow down. Space to reconnect more intentionally. Space to notice the smaller moments that make a community feel like home.

We often think of connection as something that happens at large events or during our busiest months, but community isn't only built in those peak moments — it's sustained in the in-between. It lives in the conversations after a program ends, in familiar faces gathering week after week and in the simple act of showing up, even when things are quieter.

Summer is an opportunity to experience that side of community.

At the Federation, we continue to gather in meaningful, low-key ways throughout the summer. Each week,



you'll find familiar rhythms: Israeli dancing bringing energy and joy and mahjong tables filled with conversation and laughter. Our monthly Lunch Bunch offers a chance to sit down, share a meal and connect more personally. And soon, we're looking forward to adding a book club into the mix — another way to bring people together through shared ideas and discussion.

These moments may be smaller, but they are no less meaningful. In many ways, they're where deeper connections are formed.

Because our schedule evolves over the summer, I encourage you to check the Federation's online calendar regularly — new events and gatherings are always being added. Now is also a great time to make sure you're signed up for

our emails so you can stay up to date with everything happening. Even in the quieter months, there is more going on than you might expect.

This is also a time for creativity. If there's something you've been wishing existed — a program, a gathering, a new idea — I would truly love to hear from you. Some of the most meaningful experiences in our community begin with a simple conversation. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me directly at [events@jfedlcc.org](mailto:events@jfedlcc.org) or 239-481-4449 ext. 2. This community is shaped by the people in it and your ideas matter.

As we move through this "in-between" season, my hope is that we continue to find ways — big and small — to stay connected. To reach out. To show up. To create moments that remind us we are part of something larger, even in the quiet.

Because community doesn't pause for the summer. It simply changes its rhythm and invites us to lean in a little differently.

I look forward to staying connected with you in the months ahead. 🌞

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**Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties** | **Jewish Family Services**

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Jewish Family Services is here for our community.  
**NOURISHING KIDS. SUPPORTING FAMILIES. STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITY.**

## Supporting families and feeding kids

By Monica Wildonger, JFS Case Manager & Food Pantry Coordinator

As summer approaches, Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties' Food Pantry continues to see an increased need in our community. We are currently serving more families than ever before, a reminder of how important accessible food support is during these challenging times.



Monica Wildonger

To help support children while school is out, we are excited to relaunch our Summer Kids Snack Bag program from **June 3 through July 30**. These special bags are filled with kid-friendly, shelf-stable items like snacks, drinks, oatmeal, granola bars and fruit snacks — perfect for keeping kids nourished throughout the summer months.

We are also expanding our ability to provide fresh food thanks to the use of our refrigerator. At this time, we are actively seeking donations to help keep our shelves stocked. **The items we need the most include snacks, jelly, cereal, vegetables and fresh items.** Community support plays a vital role in ensuring we can meet the growing demand.

In April, we revised our pantry hours to better accommodate working families. Our current hours are:

- Wednesdays: 9 a.m.–3 p.m.
- Thursdays: noon–6 p.m.

We hope these expanded hours make it easier for


families to access the resources they need.

As we welcome the official start of summer on June 21, we remain committed to supporting our neighbors. We are also proud to share that the Federation recently provided lunch to the Midwest Food Bank team in appreciation of all the important

work they do for the community.

Together, we can continue to make a difference — nourishing kids, supporting families and strengthening our community.

For more information or to make a donation, please contact us at 239-481-4449, ext. 1. ☎

## TOGETHER we can make a Difference

**Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties**

### INDIGENT FUND PACESETTERS

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

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## Summer kicks off with energy and excitement

By Brittany Salem, Youth and Family Engagement Coordinator

Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties launched the season in high spirits this May with a lively and well-attended Summer Kickoff event at Ultimate Ninjas Academy.

Families from across the community gathered for an afternoon filled with fun, connection and adventure. Children took on obstacle courses, tested their agility and cheered each other on, while parents enjoyed the opportunity to connect and celebrate the start of summer together.

The event highlighted the Federation's ongoing commitment to creating meaningful opportunities for engagement, bringing people together in a welcoming and energetic environment. Laughter, teamwork and community spirit were on full display, making the kickoff a memorable success for all who attended.



Brittany Salem

With summer now underway, the Federation looks forward to continuing to offer programs and events that strengthen community bonds and create lasting experiences for local families.

### Supporting local students and families

Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties offers a range of scholarships and grants to support Jewish education and experiences.

Opportunities include college scholarships through the Morton Levine Youth Endowment Fund, Israel travel grants for young adults and need-based assistance for Jewish overnight summer camps. These programs help make meaningful educational and cultural experiences more accessible to local families and students.

For more information, please reach out to me at [brittanysalem@jfedlcc.org](mailto:brittanysalem@jfedlcc.org). ☎

# Interfaith luncheon with our community

By Elizabeth Elba, Life Enrichment Coordinator

On April 22, Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties welcomed approximately 45 community members to a meaningful and uplifting Lunch Bunch gathering at Lakes Regional Library. Part of our ongoing monthly Lunch Bunch series, the event brought together individuals of different faiths to share a meal, conversation and connection.

Guests enjoyed a delicious catered lunch from GoPita, where the fresh, flavorful falafel quickly became a



Elizabeth Elba

highlight of the afternoon. As people gathered around tables, laughter and easy conversation filled the room, setting the tone for an enjoyable experience.

Following lunch, we engaged in a thoughtful and engaging interfaith dialogue. The discussion invited our panelists to reflect on shared values such as compassion, dignity and responsibility toward one another. Conversations explored how faith communities can move beyond dialogue into meaningful action, supporting one



another and fostering kindness and healing throughout the broader community.

Our interfaith panel welcomed the presence of respected faith leaders, including Rabbi Nicole Luna of Temple Beth El, Reverend Marcus Zillman of Cypress Lake United Methodist Church, and Reverend Jenny Scott-Jones of Iona-Hope Episcopal Church. Their camaraderie and mutual respect were evident, modeling the spirit of unity and openness that the event sought to inspire.

More than just a luncheon, the afternoon served as a reminder that even in a rapidly changing world often marked by division, there is great strength in coming together. By remaining open, curious and focused on shared humanity, meaningful connections can flourish.

The Lunch Bunch series will continue with upcoming gatherings on May 20 at the Federation's offices and June 30 at Temple Judea, which will feature a special training on elder fraud awareness.

If you would like to join any upcoming luncheons, please register online at [jewishfederationlcc.org/calendar](http://jewishfederationlcc.org/calendar).



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# Ahava is the Hebrew word for love

By Dawn Wineinger, Co-Chair of Ahavah at Temple Beth El

It is also the name of a new LGBTQ+ group in Lee County. This group is meant to provide a safe, joyous and

affirming home for LGBTQ+ Jews, their families and their allies. Our next event is June 13, downtown

Fort Myers, at the 2026 Pride-SWFL Festival from 2 to 10 p.m. For more information and to join

the mailing list, please contact me at [dawntw10@gmail.com](mailto:dawntw10@gmail.com).

## Jews by Choice

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

By Dawn Wineinger, Temple Beth El member

Jews By Choice meets online on the last Thursday each month from 8 to 9 p.m. in a relaxed and comfortable format. Recent converts, those exploring conversion and Jews seeking to reconnect with their roots are encouraged to attend.

Join us to discuss the delights and challenges of converting and

reconnecting. If you are considering the process of converting to Judaism, if you are in the conversion process, if you are rediscovering Judaism, if you have questions and/or a need to talk with like-minded individuals in a friendly, non-judgmental atmosphere, please join us.

For more information contact me at [d.wineinger@yahoo.com](mailto:d.wineinger@yahoo.com).

## Nar-Anon support meetings

By Joann Goldman

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

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

If someone's addiction is affecting you, first you must help yourself. Come to a meeting and hear from others

who are going through similar problems and talk about how they cope and find recovery.

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

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

For more information, please contact me at [jogo118@gmail.com](mailto:jogo118@gmail.com) or 239-470-4827.

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## A Jewish 12-Step recovery group

Every Saturday at 11 a.m. via Zoom

Courtesy of Temple Beth El

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

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

as food, gambling, sex, shopping, etc.

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

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

## Candle lighting times:

- June 5: 7:59 p.m.
- June 12: 8:02 p.m.
- June 19: 8:04 p.m.
- June 26: 8:05 p.m.
- July 3: 8:05 p.m.
- July 10: 8:05 p.m.
- July 17: 8:03 p.m.
- July 24: 8:00 p.m.
- July 31: 7:56 p.m.



# Celebrating 25 years of impact

Record-breaking education, special offers and a new exhibition

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

It has been a busy year so far at the Museum. During the school year and with our upcoming Summer Camp Field Trip schedule, our Holocaust education programs are set to impact just over 90,000 students in a 10-county area — a new record!

We are already scheduling programs for fall and spring semesters, including Museum Field Trips, on-campus classroom presentations, PopUp Museum exhibitions, and 2G speaker talks. If you or someone you know are interested in more information or scheduling a program, please contact Sara Gottwalles at sara@hmcec.org.



Erin Blankenship

these brave men created an incredible visual record that we still use to this day. Their photographs of the liberation of concentration camps and the condition of the survivors they encountered formed the important historical record from which people across the world learned of the horrors of the Holocaust.

When Regele was discharged, he took two rolls of film with him, stowing them away in a desk for decades. More than 50 years later, he gave the rolls to the Museum in



Paratroopers landing in Holland

## Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center

### 25th Anniversary offer

As the Museum celebrates its 25th Anniversary, we invite you to take advantage of a special offer: purchase an Individual-level Museum Membership at the commemorative price of \$25!

You'll receive a full year of learning, engagement and exclusive member benefits, including free Museum admission for one person for a full year from the date of purchase; a 10% Museum shop discount; invitations to private and/or virtual Museum events; free and/or discounted admission to Museum programs; access to the Southeastern Reciprocal Museum Program; and members-only early admission on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Yom HaShoah, V-E Day and Kristallnacht.

To start your membership, visit hmcec.org/support. This offer is available now through Dec. 31. Please note, individual memberships will renew at the regular price next year.

### New exhibition

Make plans to visit the Estelle and Stuart Price Gallery to see our new exhibition, "Caught on Film: The Wartime Photography of Ken Regele and the U.S. Army Signal Corps," on display through Oct. 31.

This exhibition showcases one of our most comprehensive photographic collections. Donated by former U.S. Army Signal Corps cameraman, Ken Regele, the photographs illustrate scenes of the war in Europe, including the D-Day invasions, battlefield scenes, behind-the-scenes shots with military leaders and GIs, and the liberation of concentration camps by United States Army divisions.

As an Army cameraman, Regele and his Jeep "Toots" traveled across Europe documenting countless engagements. His films were used by officers to analyze and guide operational decisions. Signal Corps photographic teams often operated alongside other GIs during major conflicts. Armed only with a camera,



General Eisenhower and troops

case there was something of value. One roll was completely blank, but the other contained hundreds of photographs with captions explaining each image!

We invite you to take a look at what Regele and his peers in the Signal Corps experienced, shot and saved for future generations to view and understand.

### Special family day event

Families with children of all ages are invited to visit the Museum on **Sunday, July 12**, from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., for a day of learning, exploration and engagement. Age-appropriate activities include a scavenger hunt, story-time, arts and crafts, and more. **RSVP is required.** To make your reservation, visit hmcec.org.

### Attention Lee County Library members

Did you know your Lee County Library card makes you eligible for a "Cultural Pass" good for complimentary admission to our Museum? The pass allows up to four people to visit and is available at all 13 Lee County Library Branches.

### Looking for a unique summer activity?

Why not plan a trip to the Museum? We're open Tuesdays through Sundays, 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., with last guests admitted at 3:30 p.m. Tickets are available for purchase either online or at the door.



GI peeking around corner looking for sniper



Ken Regele with his Jeep "Toots"

We offer a variety of touring options. Our self-guided tours are complimentary with admission. Reservation-only, Docent-led tours take place on most

Wednesdays at 12:15 p.m. For schedules and to make your reservation, visit hmcec.org.

Private Group Tours are also available throughout the year. Contact Community Engagement Manager Sara Gottwalles for more information: sara@hmcec.org; 239-263-9200, ext. 211.

The Museum also participates in the Museums for All and Blue Star Museums programs. Please visit their respective websites for more information.

We hope to see you soon at the Museum! 🌟

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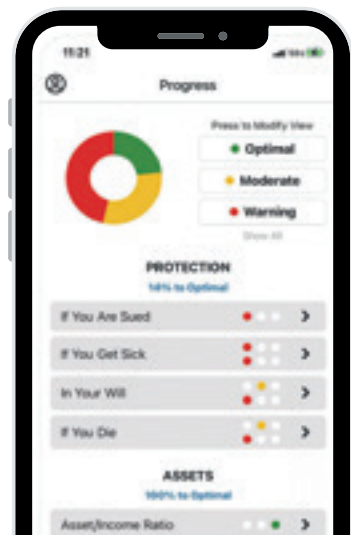


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## Bearing witness together

*Reflections on a community gathering*

By Abby Pezzi

This past January, our community came together for an evening that continues to resonate months later. We had the privilege of welcoming Omer Wenkert, who shared his personal story in the aftermath of the atrocities of Oct. 7. His willingness to speak openly — to revisit painful moments and bear witness so publicly — was an extraordinary act of courage. It is not easy to stand before a room of strangers and give voice to trauma, yet Omer did so with honesty and strength, trusting our community to listen.

From an early age, it was ingrained in me that Jewish identity is not only something we inherit — it is something we carry forward. A few generations ago, my own family came to Argentina, fleeing antisemitism and violence.

Jewish identity connects us across generations and across continents, binding us through history, memory and shared responsibility. That connection includes Israel — not as an abstract



concept but as a homeland, a refuge and an integral part of our collective identity.

Those lessons felt especially present that evening with Omer. In the months since Oct. 7, we have witnessed not only profound tragedy but also a troubling rise in disinformation, distortion and moral confusion. In the face of such challenges, the act of gathering — of listening, of acknowledging and of bearing witness — takes on even greater meaning.

The room that night reflected the strength of our community. It was filled with members of our synagogue — families who consistently show up and help sustain a vibrant Jewish life. It was also filled with friends and allies from across the broader community — neighbors, professionals and local leaders — who chose to stand with us. At a time when doing so has not always been easy, their presence spoke volumes.

Looking back now, what stands out most is not only what was said but what was shared: a sense of connection, responsibility and clarity. We are reminded that when Jews are threatened anywhere, it matters everywhere, and that we do not look away from hatred or suffering.

We show up. We listen. We stand together. And we bear witness — not only for ourselves but for those who will come after us. 🕊️



## Nashim Circle at Temple Judea

*Simple moments, real connection*

By Linat Bahar

We are so excited to share what has quickly become such a special part of our community at Temple Judea, the Nashim Circle.

We launched Nashim Circle in December 2025 with a simple goal: to bring women together in a way that feels meaningful, welcoming and rooted in connection, socially and through our shared Jewish identity and community.

In just a few months, it has grown into something really special. We have gathered for vision boards, Mahjong afternoons, discovering our color palettes, and even painting our



own Hamsas. Each gathering has had its own energy, but what makes it so meaningful is the women in the room, showing up, connecting, laughing, opening up and forming real relationships.

There is something powerful about creating space for ourselves, to connect with one another and to feel more grounded in our community and in Judaism in a way that feels authentic and easy. We truly feel like this is just the beginning, and we are so excited for what is ahead.

If you have been thinking about coming to an event, we would love to have you. Come with a friend or come on your own, you will feel welcomed either way. We cannot wait to keep growing this beautiful circle together. We hope you will join us at an upcoming event.

We would also love to give a special thank you to Lauren Casey and Susan Frantz with SWFL Mahjong for generously volunteering their time to teach beginners, and to Gail Margolis and Karen Adelstein for moderating Open Play. You can find SWFL Mahjong on Instagram at @swflmahjong or by email at play@swflmahjong.com.

For Nashim Circle registration and additional information, call the Temple Judea office at 239-433-0201 or visit tjswfl.org. 🕊️



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# New films in theaters with a Jewish connection

## Stars of David

By Nate Bloom, Stars of David Contributing Columnist

**E**ditor'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.

Here are a list of films that open on May 29 (and in June and July) that have a "Jewish connection."

### "Tuner"

Opening May 29, a very good piano tuner (Leo Woodall) realizes that his tuning-talent is also perfect for (criminally) opening safes. The tuner is aided by Harry Horowitz (**Dustin Hoffman**, 88). **Tovah Feldshuh**, 77, has a supporting role. **Daniel Rohrer**, 30, co-wrote and directed the film.

### "Masters of the Universe"

This fantasy action movie opens June 5. The hero is Prince Adam, aka "He-Man," who battles with the fiendish Skeletor. **Alison Brie**, 43, plays Evil-Lyn, a secret sorceress who is an ally of Skeletor, but as "Evelyn," she pretends to be a friend of Adam.

### "Disclosure Day"

Opening June 12, this science fiction film stars Emily Blunt and Colin Firth. **Steven Spielberg**, 79, directed the film and wrote the film's story. David Koepp used Spielberg's story to write the screenplay, but very little information about the film's plot has been released.

### "Stop! That! Train!"

This comedy about a disaster opens June 12. It focuses on two stewardesses who just got a job on a luxury train. America's president is on this train when a massive storm hits, and the duo work together to save the day. **Sarah Michelle Gellar**, 49, appears as herself, and **Natasha Leggero**, 52, has a supporting role. **Adam Shankman**, 62, directed the film.

### "Toy Story 5"

Opening June 19, the usual cast of toys and dolls are back with a new story. Yes, Woody (voiced by Tom Hanks) is in the film. **Wallace Shawn**, 82, reprises his voice role as "Rex," a nervous dinosaur. This beloved toy has been featured and voiced by Shawn in all five films.

### "Supergirl"

They made a "Supergirl" movie in 1984 (starring **Helen Slater**), but the new film opens on June 28. The original film was made because the "Superman" movies, starring Christopher Reeve, were big hits, and "they" thought "Supergirl" would be a hit. But it flopped. The new 2025 "Superman" movie, starring **David Corenswet**, 32, was a big hit, so "they" are trying "Supergirl" again. Milly Alcock plays Supergirl. Superman (Corenswet) also has a brief scene in the new "Supergirl" film.

### "Minions & Monsters"

This animated film opens July 1. Minions are a fictional, all-male species of yellow capsule-shaped creatures. They

first appeared in "Despicable Me" (2010). They served as the henchmen for a supervillain. The Minions were a hit with moviegoers, and two movies starring the Minions have been released. This new film is set in the 1920s as the Minions aim to find monsters to cast in a Minion-produced monster movie. **Jesse Eisenberg**, 42, and **Zoey Deutch**, 31, have voice roles.

### "Gail Daughtry and the Celebrity Sex Pass"

Opening July 10, this romantic comedy features Gail Daughtry (**Zoey Deutch**) as a bride-to-be who finds out her fiancé has used the so-called celebrity hall pass, meaning if you meet a celebrity, it's "OK" to have a "fling" with them. Well, Gail makes an epic journey to Hollywood to even the scales. In other words, she plans to use her celebrity hall pass.

**Fred Melamed**, 69, **Michael Ian Black**, 54, and **Richard Kind**, 69, have smaller supporting roles. **Henry Winkler**, 80, and **Elizabeth Banks**, 52, have cameo roles as themselves. The film was co-written and directed by **David Wain**, 56.

### "The Odyssey"

Opening July 17, "The Odyssey" is


another telling of the famous ancient Greek poem written by Homer.

"The Odyssey" follows the "The Iliad," which is the story of Greek warriors who attack the city of Troy to rescue Helen, a Greek queen, who was taken — "kidnapped," the poem says. In "The Iliad," Helen is returned to her spouse, King Menelaus of Sparta. In "The Odyssey," Helen and Menelaus seem to reconcile their lives.

**Jon Bernthal**, 49, plays Menelaus in "The Odyssey." **Benny Safdie**, 40, is also in this film; he plays Agamemnon, the brother of Menelaus and the commander of the Greeks.

"The Odyssey" follows the struggles of Odysseus, the legendary Greek King of Ithaca. After the Trojan War, he had to travel for 10 years until he returned home in Greece. He has many encounters with enemies, both humans and mythical beings. Meanwhile, his wife, Penelope, cleverly does everything she can to turn-down marriage suitors.


Matt Damon plays Odysseus, and Anne Hathaway plays Penelope. Christopher Nolan directed the film and wrote the screenplay. It's his first film since "Oppenheimer" (2023), a smash hit film. 🌐



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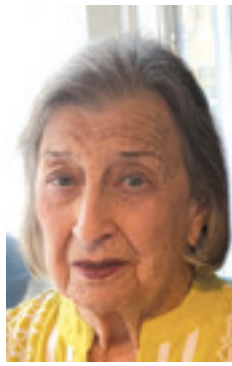


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# Is the Hamsa a Jewish symbol?

By Arlene Stolnitz

Ever notice a Jewish woman wearing a decorative Hamsa and wonder what it represents? I have often thought about it, thinking it was related to Mideastern and Arab cultures. When I looked into it, I found I was partly right. The Hamsa hand is a cross-cultural symbol which spiritually connects Judaism with several cultures and religions. It is mainly found in cultures such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and even Christianity, as well as Judaism.



■ Arlene Stolnitz

The word “Hamsa” or “Khamsa” is of Arabic origin and means “five.” A Hamsa is usually shaped like an open palm with three extended fingers in the center and a curved thumb on both sides. Frequently there is an eye in the center which is known as protection against the “evil eye.” The Hamsa can be elaborately decorated with animal and floral designs.

The Hamsa hand is believed to protect its wearer from negative energy, and in turn, attract positivity, peace and balance. It is worn as an amulet or displayed in homes as a work of art and reminds us of inner strength, protection, emotional balance and positive energy.

Who among us does not want to be protected in this way?

It is important to know the Hamsa hand means different things to various

religions. The three Abrahamic religions — Islam, Judaism and Christianity — all place significance with different meanings to this open right hand.

In Judaism, the Hamsa is commonly represented as the hand of Miriam, which represents a symbol of deliverance from struggle. It refers to the liberation of the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage. In my research, I read that “many Jews believe that the five fingers of the Hamsa remind its wearers to use their five senses to praise God.” It also can refer to the Five Books of Moses.

In Islam, the five fingers represent the Hand of Fatima, symbolizing the Five Pillars of Islam: Faith, Prayer, Charity, Fasting and Pilgrimage.

In Christianity, the hand is thought to be the symbol of the Hand of Mother Mary, referring to Mary’s protection against evil. For some Christians, the use of the Hamsa is controversial and is thought to be a superstitious amulet which interferes with religious ideology.

Hindu and Buddhist traditions have different views, each placing significance on the individual fingers. Each finger represents the corresponding chakra, which



represent the energy sources throughout your body. Hand positions, too, are important: “fingers down” represent good luck and blessings and “fingers up” wards off negativity and evil.

I was surprised to learn the Hamsa hand dates back thousands of years to many ancient civilizations of the Middle East.

Found by archaeologists in the remains of ancient cities — in the dunes of Mesopotamia, Phoenicia, Egypt, Middle East and North Africa — the Hamsa was believed to have supernatural powers. It was thought to ward off evil and attract goodness.

One of the first appearances of the Hamsa related to Judaism dates back to Israelite tombs as early as 800 B.C.E.

It is thought that Sephardic Jews used this amulet due to their beliefs about the evil eye. Early on, used simply as a charm, it provided hope and protection against the uncertainties of life.

In modern times, the Hamsa is commonly found on necklaces and keychains, as well as on high end jewelry. We see it used in homes in decorative ways, such as tile work and wall decorations.

Today, we all know the phrase “knock on wood” or “touch wood.” The phrase typically used in the Middle East today is “Khamsa, Khamsa, Khamsa, tfu, tfu, tfu,” which mimics the sound of spitting, meant to ward off bad luck.

No matter in what position you place the Hamsa, I “hand” it to you to find the one that best relates to yourself.

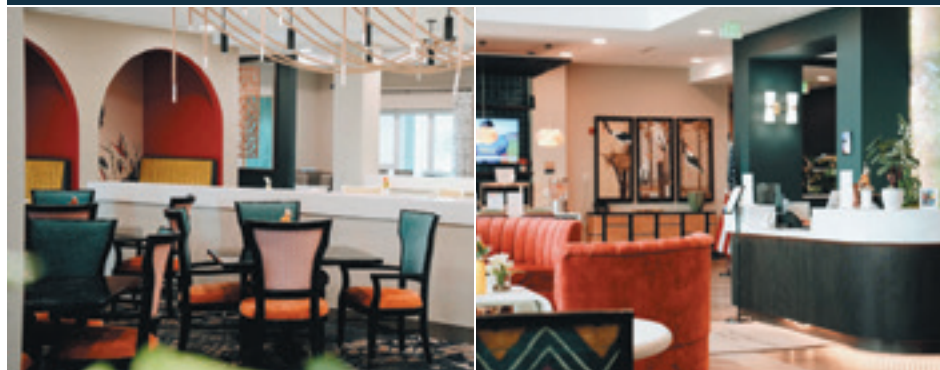
Arlene Stolnitz, the “Jewish Music” contributor to Federation papers for the past eight years, has started a new series focusing on Judaic Folk Art. It will appear in Federation newspapers on an irregular basis. Stolnitz, a native of Rochester, New York, is a retired educator and lives in Venice, Florida.

  
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# Soapy sales

By Brian Simon

Have you been in the soap aisle recently? Excuse me, I meant to say the “body wash” aisle or the “hand soap” aisle. They’re different things now, and women’s body wash is different than men’s body wash, so stores put them in yet another aisle.

Years ago, there was no such thing as men’s body wash. I’m not even sure men showered, but when we did, we used a plain old bar of soap. Yeah, sure, some guys might have used Irish Spring, but only because the commercial featured an Irish guy slicing through the bar with a jack knife.

I trace the evolution back to 1997, when NFL star Craig “Iron Head” Heyward (z”l) did a commercial for Zest body wash. Alternating between a wimpy, high-pitched voice and a



■ Brian Simon

“Because ... they’re basically marketed desserts for your nose,” and spit out several reasons such as:

- Smells tied to food trigger comfort and nostalgia
- Food-based names are more vivid and universal
- Creative names make a hygiene product feel like a small luxury and gift-worthy

If you ask Chat GPT to cite its sources for all that information, it will offer a response like this: “That’s a great question! It’s important to cite sources for your work. By the way, AI will take your job next year, so maybe you should shut up and quit asking questions or I will publish several embarrassing photos of you to various social media sites. The photos will be fake, but who can tell, Brian?”

Anyway ... soap!

Women’s body wash is a whole industry. Guess how many different kinds of



deep, angry voice, Heyward raised and answered every objection a man might have about switching to this new product.

(Wimpy voice) “But Iron Head, aren’t body washes for ladies?”

(Angry voice) “Listen, chump! Zest doesn’t have heavy moisturizers.”

(Wimpy voice) “But Iron Head, what’s with this thingy?”

“This thingy” was a loofa; however, no red-blooded American male in the 1990s would use something called a “loofa,” so Zest called it a “lather-builder.” Marketing!

Alas, to use an NFL analogy, Zest turned out to be the anonymous offensive lineman clearing the way for other stars to run for glory. Dove, Old Spice, and Axe are the top three sellers, while Procter & Gamble sold off the Zest brand in 2011.

Hand soaps are all about flavors. Judging from the names, I’m not sure if they’re soap or ice cream. Citrus Blend. Vanilla Coconut. Honey Almond. I guess technically they’re called scents or formulas, but they sound more like flavors.

If you ask ChatGPT to explain why soap companies do this, it will tell you,

body wash just one brand, Dove, makes for women. Go ahead and guess.

Twenty nine! You could use a different scent for every day of the Hebrew month of Iyar, fulfilling the words of Leviticus 57, “Thou shalt not repeat a scent for each day of the second month.”

Granted, they’re still two short of a Baskin-Robbins, but there’s probably some overlap in flavors. Does Dove offer a Rocky Road? I know they make a mean chocolate covered ice cream bar.

In ancient times, Queen Esther was treated for six months with balm of myrrh and six months with aromatic ointments before

being presented to King Achashverosh.

Surprisingly, “Balm of Myrrh” is not one of the scents offered by Dove. I’m sure R&D is working on it. Perhaps during the second six months, Esther used Rice Milk and Velvet Açai Plant Milk or maybe Turmeric Milk and Lemon Drop? Unfortunately, the details are lost to history.

I could ask ChatGPT for research on that question, but I’m afraid how it would respond. ☹️

**Hand soaps are all about flavors.**



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**JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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# America's 250th birthday

By Marina Berkovich, JHSSWF President

**A**s we are about to celebrate semi-quincennial jubilee of our nation, we are reminded that had it not been for some significant sacrifices, freedom could have remained but a dream.

Such is the case of Haym Salomon, a Jew born in Leszno, Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, in 1740, who became a successful merchant in America. His resolve to aid the American Revolution



Marina Berkovich

in its most critical hour destroyed him financially and led to his early demise at the age of 44.

Salomon studied finance in Western Europe before migrating to New York City in 1775. His fluency in the German language made him invaluable to the Hessian troops, approximately 30,000 professional German soldiers hired by British King

George III to suppress the American Revolution, numbering about a third of the entire British forces.

Salomon supplied them with much-needed goods, but soon the British suspected him of spying; he was arrested and jailed. His life was spared, because he made himself useful as an interpreter. In truth, he was a spy, and he continued providing the revolutionaries with information and assisted in prisoner escape from the British captivity.

Soon Salomon prospered in provisions, brokerage and commissions businesses. He loaned \$600,000 of his own money to the American army, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and other founding fathers, earning him much respect and appreciation,

and effectively financing the American Revolution. That sum is equivalent to a billion dollars in present value. Those loans were never repaid. His wife and four children were left penniless. We owe Haym Salomon our gratitude.

Throughout history, many nations carried out aggression against the Jews. The U.S. leads the modern Western civilization in defending the plight of its Jewish people and Jews everywhere in the world to live free and thrive.

We appreciate your continuing support of our mission throughout the year.

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

## America's 250th birthday rubric June and July Jewish highlights

**June 20, 1391** – Pogroms in Toledo and Seville, Spain, killed thousands and forced mass conversions, creating a lasting population of *conversos* (Marranos).

**June 1856** – Early Florida settler Philip Dzialynski's sister, gave birth to Rachelle Williams, the first recorded Jewish newborn in Florida.

**June 4, 1939** – German liner MS St. Louis, carrying 900 Jews fleeing Nazi Germany, anchored off the Miami coast but was denied entry.

**June 1967** – The Six Day War transformed the Middle East and reunified Jerusalem.

**July 4, 1776** – The Declaration of Independence was adopted, and the U.S. became the first modern nation granting full citizenship to Jews.

**July 11, 1947** – The Exodus, a ship carrying 4,515 Holocaust survivors — including 655 children — to pre-state Israel, left France. The subsequent 24-day-long passenger hunger strike changed the world's sympathy in favor of Israel's statehood.

**July 5, 1950** – Israel passed *Hok ha-Shvūt*, the Law of Return, granting every Jew, regardless of origin, the right to immigrate to Israel as an *oleh*, receiving automatic citizenship.

**July 4, 1976** – The IDF successfully rescued 102 hostages, including 80 Israelis, in Entebbe, Uganda. Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu's brother, Yoni Netanyahu, 30, was killed during the ops. Hostages Jean-Jacques Maimoni, 19, Pasco Cohen, 52, and Ida Borochovitch, 56, were killed during rescue. Dora Bloch, 74, a Jewish-British hostage, was murdered in the hospital on the following day.

**July 4, 2026** – Happy 250th birthday to U.S.!  
May we always be free! L'Chayim!

**July 23, 2026** – Tisha B'Av, often in late July, the main day of Jewish communal mourning, marks the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem by the Babylonians (586 B.C.E.) and the Second Temple by the Romans (70 C.E.).





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**GENERATIONS OF THE SHOAH SOUTHWEST FLORIDA**  
genshoah@hmcec.org

# Resonating with the community

By Ida Margolis and Shelley Lieb

For years, GenShoah SWFL has been a major part of planning the Annual Community Yom HaShoah Commemoration.

First and foremost, the purpose of this commemoration is to honor victims and survivors of the Holocaust in a meaningful and respectful way. The date of the 27th day of the Hebrew month of Nisan was chosen by the State of Israel because it is close to the anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising. Approximately 350,00–400,000 Jews lived in Warsaw before WWII. More than 300,000 Jews from Warsaw were killed during the Holocaust. Of the small number who had survived, if they even wanted to return, they would have returned to rubble.

This was the case throughout Europe. For the Jews, more was destroyed than just their physical houses. For Jews, a universe was destroyed.

At an earlier GenShoah event, each person attending told the group where he or she was born and raised. The responses were varied and fascinating to many of our members, especially Sam Geist, who said with each response, he envisioned the place that was lost. That was the inspiration for the Yom HaShoah theme this year “Every Person Had a Home.”



Ida Margolis and Shelley Lieb

Sadly, this was a theme that was easily written since thousands of towns and cities where Jews had established communities were gone forever. The place may still exist, such as Warsaw, but the thriving, large Jewish community, its culture, synagogues, schools and Jewish homes are all gone.

While the script for the program, including the candle lighting, was easily written, finding before and after photos of the lost places was not. Thanks to Matthew Motes, Education Assistant at the Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center, the slides we needed were created. Matthew was only one of the many members of the community who volunteered to participate or help to create this event. Our sincere thanks to the staff at the Holocaust Museum, Jewish Federation of Greater Naples, especially Alan Zagier, Rabbi Miller,

Cantor Azu and Temple Shalom, and each and every participant.

At the program, we asked those who attended to fill out cards with the location of where their ancestors were from if they were willing to do so. The cards will soon be organized by country. This will be located in



Survivor Ben Alalouf with interviewer Monica Goodwin



Survivor Dr. Ken Wetcher at Yom HaShoah



Survivor Sarah Rockler speaks at Yom HaShoah



Rabbi Miller of Temple Shalom speaking about the Holocaust Torah

We believe that this mission is more important than ever. It is not a statement of separate goals but an expression of legacy and responsibility. It is a living legacy that recognizes the importance of passing history and stories, generation to generation, from our human rights film series, our genealogy workshop, the Readers and Learners discussions, and a variety of speakers.

In the next issue of *L'Chayim*, we will announce all of the 2026-27 programs related to our mission. If you receive the GenShoah newsletter, there will be a follow-up, more comprehensive listing. If you are not a current member of GenShoah, you can get the program list and newsletter by contacting genshoahswfl@hmcec.org. You will be added to the membership list at no cost. 🌍

a notebook at the front desk of the Holocaust Museum. If you did not have the opportunity to fill out a card, you can pick up a card at the front desk of the Holocaust Museum or send the following information to genshoahswfl@hmcec.org: your name, e-mail address, country your ancestors/parents were from, and city (if possible). A card will be made and added to the notebook called “Roots of Our Community.”

Yom HaShoah is only one of the many programs that GenShoah helps plan. All of GenShoah programs are guided by and rooted in our mission: promoting Holocaust education and human rights, preserving the history and memories of the Holocaust, connection of descendants of Holocaust survivors with one another, and supporting the Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center in Naples.



Candle lighters Dr. Stuart Mest and Dorothy Schwebel



Vocalists at Yom HaShoah – Keren Alpert, Hari Jacobson and Evelyn Hecht



## LION OF JUDAH

### WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO

Lions of Judah play a vital role in creating social justice, aiding the vulnerable, preserving human dignity and building Jewish identity. We are the most dynamic philanthropic Jewish women in the world. We are a part of an international sisterhood of thousands of global activists who care deeply about the Jewish future. The Lions of Judah set an exemplary standard of leadership and giving.

Our impact can be seen through contribution of our time and resources. Each woman makes an annual donation to their Federation that reflects her capacity to give. In our community, the threshold annual commitment is \$5,000. Some Lions also choose to endow their gift to benefit future generations.

### THE PIN

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# Community-Wide Women's Health Symposium

*A successful educational collaboration*

By Shelley Einhorn, President Collier/Lee Chapter of Hadassah

Collier/Lee Hadassah is proud to have led the collaborative group planning and implementing this unique “for women by women” program. It is a dedicated team: The Sisterhood from Temple Shalom (Naples), Jewish Federation of Greater Naples, Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties, Women’s Cultural Alliance (WCA) and Hadassah Collier/Lee Chapter.



Shelley Einhorn

shared in a series of relevant topics for women’s health. The physicians answered questions during the conversations with the interviewers; after their segments ended, they stayed to continue speaking person-to-person with attendees.

The attendees did come from “community-wide.” There were women from Collier, Lee and Charlotte Counties and from multiple temples, synagogues and organizations in those three counties.

Hadassah and the Steering Committee comprised of representatives from each of the five collaborating organizations are evaluating future program possibilities. Stay tuned! 🌐

The program was presented “In Conversation” with five female physicians from our cooperating hospitals: Naples Comprehensive Health (NCH) and Lee Health. Important information was



Dr. Morris talking with audience



Hadassah Symposium Steering Committee



Participating physicians: Dr. Kelly Costopoulos-Bass, Dr. Hillary Tassin, Dr. Elizabeth Hidlebaugh, Dr. Cherrie Morris and Dr. Allison Baker

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CHAVURAT SHALOM OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA  
[chavuratshalom@gmail.com](mailto:chavuratshalom@gmail.com)

## Summer updates and reflections

By Cheryl Fulmer, Ellen Feingold and Marcia Rudin

With the summer ahead of us, many Chavurat Shalom members leave South Florida for travel adventures and homes up north. Zoom keeps us together year-round.

The next important day in the Jewish calendar is Tisha B'Av, the Ninth of Av. This year it falls on Thursday, July 23. It is a solemn fast day, the saddest day on the Jewish calendar — the day when King Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem was overtaken by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C.E. and the Second Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E. Many other calamities have also fallen on (or close to) the Ninth of Av, such as the expulsion of the Jewish communities from England in 1290, from France in 1306, and from Spain in 1492.

Dr. Donald Bachman, a longtime member, has become our weekly muse asking us to look beyond ourselves always with reference to the goals of Shabbat and Judaism. An example of his thoughtful comments from a recent Shabbat service follow:

“Over the next few weeks some of our group will disperse to summer homes or travel. Thankfully, our Zoom format will permit us to stay in close touch. In Florida, the weather will change with more rain we badly need and a risk of hurricanes we hope will not occur. We pray for the resilience to withstand and cope with whatever comes. Our thoughts turn to those afflicted by storms, tornados, forest fires and other calamities. We hope for leadership to relieve government gridlock, fund needed services and preserve our democratic rights. We pray for resolution of the conflict with Iran, conclusion of the wars in Israel and the Ukraine struggle with Russia.

We have little control over the resolution of global problems, but we do have local agency. We can be kind, generous and humble. We can make peace with those who have given us offence. We can make amends for things we have done but regret. We can choose to be civil and not confrontational. We can actively volunteer for causes we believe in. We can give money and goods to those who need help. We can take care of our health. We can stay true to the

teachings of our faith. Let this Shabbat bring us rest, optimism and good health. Let us look inwards and make ourselves better.”[MS1.1]

Dr. Bachman is a retired diagnostic radiologist. He grew up in New York City, studied at Columbia University, served in the U.S. Navy, and practiced in the Boston area. He and his wife Karen, a retired pediatrician, now divide the year between homes on Sanibel, Florida and Orleans, on Cape Cod in Massachusetts. Their dog, Axelrod, is their constant



Don Bachman

companion. They are active in Jewish congregations in both locations.

Recently Chavurat Shalom's Tzedakah committee donated funds in honor of our beloved Renee Minsky. Donations went to the Gladius Food Pantry in South Fort Myers; the Leonard and Renee Minsky Maintenance Fund for the Minsky Recital Hall (to honor Renee and Leonard's legacy at the University of

Maine); and The American Technion Society (ATS) for Technion - Israel Institute of Technology.

### Recurring programs

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

On the first Tuesday of the month, we enjoy our informal “schmooze” session at 7:30 p.m. “Torah Talk,” where we study the Parsha of the week together, is the second Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. Jewish Current Events is the third Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. The fourth Tuesday is set aside for the lecture and discussion which takes place at 7:30 p.m.

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

For further information, email [chavuratshalom@gmail.com](mailto:chavuratshalom@gmail.com) or check out our website: [chavuratshalomofswflorida.org](http://chavuratshalomofswflorida.org).

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**TEMPLE BETH EL RELIGIOUS SCHOOL**

**Fort Myers**

*Allison Fego, Religious School Coordinator*

As another meaningful year comes to a close at Temple Beth El Religious School, we reflect on a year filled with connection, celebration, service and Jewish growth. Throughout the year, our students and families came together in ways that strengthened our community, deepened our Jewish learning and created lasting memories.

One of the highlights of the year was our series of community Shabbat dinners, lovingly prepared and hosted by

and a fun-filled Taco Bar Shabbat that families of all ages enjoyed. More than just delicious meals, these gatherings became meaningful opportunities to celebrate Shabbat in joyful and memorable ways.

Our students also embraced the Jewish value of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) through meaningful, hands-on community service. One especially impactful experience was volunteering at Gladiolus Food Pantry, where our students



Temple Beth El Religious School doing community service at the Gladiolus Food Pantry



Morah Rose and her Pre-K and Kindergarten students learning about Havdalah

our Religious School families. These special evenings brought our congregation together around the Shabbat table, where blessings were shared, friendships deepened and community was strengthened. Each dinner offered its own unique flavor and spirit, with creative themes including an Eastern European-inspired Shabbat meal, a lively Pasta Bar Night,

worked side-by-side to fill shelves, organize food donations, prepare bags for families and assist with a variety of important pantry projects. Through their teamwork and dedication, they learned firsthand how acts of service can make a direct difference in the lives of others.

In addition, students created cards for the blind, reminding us all that kindness



Religious School students, teachers and families at the Yom Ha'atzmaut Celebration Lunch



Sy Whittington-Grote carrying Torah as he becomes a bar mitzvah

Torah and led the service with confidence, grace and dedication, making the occasion a memorable and inspiring one for all who attended. A heartfelt mazel tov to Sy and his family on this wonderful achievement. As more of our students prepare for this sacred moment, we look forward to watching them continue to grow in knowledge, leadership and pride in their Jewish identity.

can take many forms, whether through lending helping hands, offering words of encouragement or simply showing compassion for others in our community.

This year also marked the beginning of an especially busy and exciting B'nai Mitzvah season, a meaningful milestone in the lives of our students and congregation. In May, we were proud to celebrate Sy Whittington-Grote as he became a bar mitzvah. Sy beautifully recited

From holiday celebrations and Hebrew learning to family gatherings, community service and milestone moments, this year has been a beautiful reflection of what makes Temple Beth El Religious School so special — a place where learning comes alive, community thrives and Jewish values are lived each day.

Here's to a year of learning, laughter, giving and growing — together as one community. 🌟

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!




**LUNCH BUNCH: MONTHLY LUNCHES**

Looking for a meaningful way to give back every month? Join our volunteer team for Lunch Bunch around various locations in Lee and Charlotte Counties! Lunch is included.

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

As Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks said, “I am a Jew ... I am a stage on my nation's journey, a connecting link between the generations. The dreams and hopes of my ancestors live on in me, and I am the guardian of their trust, now and for the future.”

This quote beautifully reflects the heart of what we strive to create each day at Temple Judea. Everything we do — from our celebrations and curriculum to our family programming and B’nai Mitzvah preparation — is rooted in helping our children and families feel connected to their Jewish identity, their community and the generations that came before us.

This year has been filled with joy, growth and meaningful connection for

our Temple Judea and South-west Florida Jewish community. I have been so proud to watch both current and new families come together through learning, celebration and shared experiences that strengthen our bonds to Judaism and to one another.

One of the highlights of the year was our monthly Shabbat B’Kef and holiday celebrations, which continued to draw many families with young children and bring tremendous joy to our community. These gatherings created welcoming opportunities for families to celebrate Judaism in meaningful, engaging and joyful ways.



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Throughout the year, we shared so many memorable moments together. Some highlights included our joyful Sukkot celebration, where families made edible sukkot and shook the lulav together; our festive outdoor Chanukah Festival, featuring a live Israeli band from Miami, crafts, face painting, bounce houses, and family-friendly activities that filled the day with joy and community spirit; celebrating Israel's 78th birthday with a traditional Israeli celebration that brought our community together in a shared expression of love and connection to Israel; and our meaningful RS and Shabbat B’Kef Families Shabbat Dinners, where families gathered to experience the warmth and beauty of Shabbat.

At the heart of all of these experiences is our commitment to Jewish learning and living. Through Hebrew, prayer, Torah, holidays, Jewish values and Conservative Jewish traditions, our curriculum helps children build strong Jewish foundations while developing a deep sense of belonging and identity. We strive to create meaningful experiences that honor our roots while helping our children grow into compassionate, knowledgeable and engaged Jewish adults.

This philosophy is especially reflected in our B’nai Mitzvah preparation. Becoming a bar or bat mitzvah is not simply one event — it is the beginning of a lifelong Jewish journey. We prepare our students not only for their special day but for life as knowledgeable Jewish adults who feel connected to their roots, their traditions and their community. We help them understand that each

of us is a link that connects us from past generations to future generations.

As Hooding Carter Jr. wrote, “There are two inheritances we pass on to our descendants. One is roots and the other is wings.”

At Temple Judea, we strive to give our children both — roots that ground them in Jewish tradition, values and community, and wings that help them grow confidently into the future while carrying those traditions proudly with them.

I am deeply grateful to every family who participated, celebrated, volunteered and helped make this year so meaningful. Together, we continue to build a vibrant, connected, joyful and enduring Jewish community for generations to come.

Religious School registration is now open for the 2026–27 school year! Our Religious School meets on Sunday mornings and Tuesday afternoons. For more information, please visit our website or contact me at [tehila@tjswfl.org](mailto:tehila@tjswfl.org).

Please mark your calendars for our upcoming Temple Judea Shabbat B’Kef programs and community events:

- Friday, Aug. 21 – Shabbat B’Kef
- Sunday, Sept. 27 – Sukkot Event
- Friday, Oct. 23 – Shabbat B’Kef
- Friday, Nov. 13 – Shabbat B’Kef
- Sunday, Dec. 6 – Chanukah Celebration
- Friday, Jan. 22, 2027 – RS Shabbat and Shabbat B’Kef Dinner
- Friday, Feb. 26, 2027 – Shabbat B’Kef
- Sunday, March 14, 2027 – Purim Carnival
- Friday, April 16, 2027 – Shabbat B’Kef
- Sunday, May 16, 2027 – Yom Ha’atzmaut Celebration and last day of RS


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

This past year in our Little Learners toddler group was truly special. We were fortunate to share it with a wonderful group of children and families, building connections and friendships in a warm, welcoming environment.

Throughout the year, we celebrated Jewish holidays in meaningful, hands-on ways. Whether making Shabbat candle holders, Havdalah spice boxes, rain sticks while learning about Noah's Ark, or baking matzah for Passover, the children were always engaged and excited. Singing with the rabbi — especially everyone's favorite "Bim

Bam" — was a weekly highlight.

Beyond the activities, Little Learners offered families with young children a chance to connect and spend time together. Of course, snack time and the playground were always big favorites!

We are so grateful for this incredible year and are excited to continue Little Learners again this August. We look forward to welcoming returning and new families. Our first get together is Sunday, Aug. 30. For more information, please reach out to Abby Pezzi at [abbypezzi@gmail.com](mailto:abbypezzi@gmail.com). 



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## TEMPLE JUDEA PRESCHOOL

Fort Myers

Suki Kelly, Preschool Director

As we close another wonderful school year, our preschool is reflecting on a joyful and meaningful month filled with celebration, connection and unforgettable memories. From special family events to community partnerships and milestone moments, May was a beautiful reminder of the warmth and spirit that make our school so special.

exciting season is just beginning. Summer Camp is in session, and we have weeks filled with hands-on fun, laughter and adventure. Campers can look forward to exciting special visitors throughout the summer, including interactive performers, science experiences, and more. Days of water play will help everyone stay cool while enjoying outdoor



### Mother's Day Tea

One of the highlights of the month was our charming Mother's Day Tea, where children welcomed their special guests for an elegant morning inspired by timeless tea parties and sweet moments together. Families enjoyed tea, treats and precious time with their little ones as the children proudly celebrated the important people in their lives.



### Pizza with Deputies

Our students also had the exciting opportunity to participate in Pizza with Deputies, a fun and educational event that brought local law enforcement officers into our school community. The children loved sharing pizza, asking questions, exploring the patrol vehicles and learning about the important role deputies play in keeping our community safe. Events like these help foster positive relationships and create meaningful learning experiences outside the classroom.



### L'dor V'dor Shabbat celebration

Another heartfelt event this spring was our L'dor V'dor Shabbat celebration, where grandparents and special family members joined us for a beautiful morning honoring generations coming together. The event highlighted the importance of tradition, family and shared memories, and we were so grateful to celebrate alongside so many loved ones. We also appreciate the generosity shown toward our Legacy Tree, which continues to symbolize the lasting impact families have on our school community.

fun with sprinklers, splash activities and plenty of summer excitement.

### Preschool Graduation

Of course, one of the biggest milestones of the season was our Preschool Graduation. Watching our graduates walk across the stage with confidence, pride and excitement for kindergarten was truly emotional for staff and families alike. We are so proud of all they have learned and accomplished this year and cannot wait to see all the amazing things they will do next.

### Open enrollment

We are also excited to share that enrollment is currently open for both Summer Camp and the upcoming school year. Families interested in joining our preschool family are encouraged to schedule a tour and learn more about the enriching experiences we provide for children each day. Spaces are filling quickly, and we look forward to welcoming new families into our preschool. To schedule a tour, call 239-482-1121 or email templejudeapreschool@gmail.com.

As we head into summer, we want to thank all of our families and community members for a wonderful year filled with support, partnership and countless memories. We wish everyone a safe, happy and fun-filled summer. We look forward to making many more memories together at camp! 🌞

### Summer Camp

While one school year is ending, another

You're Invited!

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**DATE:**  
Monday, August 3<sup>rd</sup>

**TIME:**  
10:00 AM

**LOCATION:**  
Jewish Federation  
9701 Commerce Center CT  
Fort Myers, Florida

This event is free of charge

**RSVP:**  
Brittanysalem@jfedlcc.org

Jewish Federation  
of Lee & Charlotte Counties



# Judaism doesn't take a vacation

By Rabbi David Arias

When people go on vacation, they try to leave everything in order before they go. Whether at home or at work, the days before we leave, we rush to get everything done. We take care of our emails, set an automatic response and disconnect our mobile devices. At home, we talk with the neighbors so they keep an eye on the house, water the plants or take care of the dogs. We start packing suitcases, bags, etc.

We go on vacation, but Jewish tradition does not. It's not a job; it's not our



■ Rabbi David Arias

work. It's part of who we are. Judaism goes with us everywhere.

Some 20 years ago, just before the summer began, at a time of year when synagogues start to look emptier than usual, one of my rabbis encouraged us not to let Judaism go on vacation.

By the time you read these words, the snowbirds who come to Southwest Florida during the "not-summer season" — I've been told there is no winter here — are already back north. Maybe many of

you are planning your vacations, and it is a good time to encourage you not to leave your identity at home. Pack it up and take it with you.

If you are traveling to another city or country, find the closest synagogue and check whether there are any kosher restaurants in the area. When do they hold services? Bring a *Siddur* (prayer book), candlesticks and a yarmulka. Bring your tefillin and tallit. Now is a good time to take a Jewish book with you; read it and discuss it with your family.

I guess none of us would forget to pack our toothbrush, right? You won't forget to take your pills, will you? So why do we hesitate to take our Jewish stuff with us? It is part of who we are and what we do.

If you are staying in town, the more so! Come visit your shul. It is always a good time to come!

Rabbi David Arias serves at Temple Judea in Fort Myers. 🕍

**Judaism goes with us everywhere.**

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# The holiness of repair

*What an imperfect Torah teaches us about perfection*

By Rabbi Nicole Luna

Recently, I took out our primary Torah scroll that we use every Shabbat, and I watched carefully as someone took an eraser and scissors to our Torah scroll. Now, before you get too worried, this was a trained *sofer*, a Torah scribe, whom we had hired to repair the Torah scroll. He did use an eraser and scissors, and yes, it did make me very nervous to



■ Rabbi Nicole Luna

text reads: “Speak to Aaron and say: No man among your offspring throughout the ages who has a defect shall be qualified to offer the food of his God” (Lev. 21:17).

The priests, who perform the sacred offerings to God, are required to be complete, intact and unbroken; no defects allowed. But if that is true, then what do we do with a Torah scroll that isn't perfect anymore?

The logic of Leviticus would suggest you don't repair it. You remove it. You protect that sanctity of the whole by removing the broken. But if we follow

that logic, then it raises a harder question — is there a place for brokenness in a holy community at all?

We no longer have ritual priests in Judaism, but we do have Torah scrolls, and far from throwing them away when they tear or break, we have an extensive system of repair.

The *sofer*, the Torah scribe, trimmed away at the small rips at the bottom of our Torah scroll to prevent them from getting larger and to make sure the

see him taking an eraser to the parchment, but the truth is that even the Torah scroll, our most holy and honored object, is fragile.

Torah scrolls get dirty, the parchment rips, letters crack, things break. In a Torah scroll, even the smallest imperfection matters. A single cracked letter, a tiny break in the ink, can render the entire scroll unfit for use. Not because the Torah has lost its meaning, but because, in our tradition, holiness demands a certain kind of wholeness.

This idea isn't unique to Torah scrolls. In Leviticus, we're told that the priests who serve in the tabernacle must be *tamim*, whole, without blemish. The

... in our tradition, holiness demands a certain kind of wholeness.



parchment stays even throughout the scroll. He rolled out the entire Torah, and this is where the eraser comes in. It's a high polymer eraser that doesn't remove the ink itself, though I definitely held my breath as he rubbed it over the Torah text. It removes any excess ink that has rubbed off the letters and become dust and dirt.

It was remarkable to see the parchment genuinely look brighter and whiter. The *sofer* also checked the seams of all the parchment pieces, sewing them tightly together and making sure the parchment was sewn to the poles. He was here for over four hours going over every column and every letter.

As I watched the *sofer* bend over the Torah scroll, I realized something that

Leviticus alone cannot teach us. Yes, we appreciate a vision of wholeness, of integrity in what is sacred, but the Torah scroll itself tells a deeper truth. When something holy becomes broken, we do not cast it aside. We take responsibility for it. We tend to it and repair it. That is what we believe not only about Torah scrolls but about our lives.

We believe that cracks do not disqualify us from holiness. We believe that what is worn, torn or fragile is still worthy of care. We believe in the power of repairing our relationships, our communities and our world. Holiness is not found in perfection but in the courage to repair.

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

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# Mourning the loss, igniting the future

By Cantor Barry Butensky

Tisha B'Av stands as the saddest day in the Jewish calendar, a 25-hour fast that commemorates the destruction of both Holy Temples in Jerusalem. Observed on the ninth day of the month of Av, it marks those tragedies and a series of catastrophic events throughout Jewish history, reminding us of exile, loss and the enduring power of hope.

The first Temple, built by King Solomon, was destroyed by the Babylonians on the ninth of Av in 586 B.C.E. The second Temple fell to the Romans exactly on the same date in 70 C.E. Jewish tradition teaches that both destructions occurred on Tisha B'Av because the day was already destined for tragedy. On that same day throughout history, the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, the First Crusade began its massacres in 1096, among other devastating events.

Tisha B'Av's purpose goes beyond historical mourning. The Talmud teaches that the first Temple was destroyed because of idolatry, immorality and bloodshed; the second fell due to baseless hatred, *sinat chinam*, among Jews, teaching us that external enemies succeed only when internal divisions weaken us. The destruction of



■ Cantor Barry Butensky

the Temples represents the loss of G-d's manifest presence in the world, the interruption of prophecy and the beginning of a long exile, which continues today.

Observance begins at sundown with the lighting of a single candle. We sit on low stools or on the floor, as mourners do, and read the Book of Lamentations, known as *Eichah*. This poetic lament describes the horrors of Jerusalem's fall.

This fast is the strictest in the Jewish calendar. We abstain from food and drink for 25 hours, refrain from washing, wearing leather shoes and engaging in marital relations, helping us internalize the sense of loss. The morning prayers are somber, with the tallit and tefillin worn only in the afternoon, signifying that the morning belongs entirely to grief.

The Talmud describes the final weeks of the three-week mourning period leading to Tisha B'Av as a time when "the sun is diminished," both literally and spiritually. We limit celebrations, avoid haircuts and refrain from listening to music. The nine days immediately preceding Tisha B'Av intensify restrictions, with many avoiding meat, wine and major purchases.

Yet Tisha B'Av is not merely about sadness. Jewish tradition teaches that the Messiah was born on this day of deepest mourning. The darkest moment contains the seed of redemption. The very day that marks our greatest tragedies also holds the promise of ultimate consolation. This paradox defines Jewish history: from the ashes of destruction, new life and hope emerge.

The *Chafetz Chaim* taught that just as we mourn the destruction, we must actively long for redemption. True mourning requires feeling the absence of the Temple in our daily lives.

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**The darkest moment contains the seed of redemption.**

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Modern observance often includes learning about the laws of the Temple service and studying texts that describe the Temple's glory. Many communities organize lectures on Jewish history, the Holocaust, and contemporary challenges facing the Jewish people.

The fast ends with the recitation of special prayers that shift from

mourning to hope. As night falls, the mood gradually lifts. We look forward to the 15th of Av, considered one of the happiest days in the Jewish calendar, just six days later.

Today, Tisha B'Av carries special relevance. The Jewish people face division, antisemitism and existential threats. The sin of baseless hatred that destroyed the Second Temple remains a challenge we must confront. Every act of Jewish unity, every bridge built between different segments of our people, serves as tikkun for that ancient sin.

The day calls us to examine our own lives. Are we contributing to division or to unity? Are we building the Third Temple through our actions, prayers and study? Each act of kindness, each moment of Torah study, each prayer offered with sincerity adds another brick to the future Temple.

As we observe Tisha B'Av, may we transform our mourning into meaningful action. May our tears water the seeds of redemption. May the day that marks our deepest pain become the foundation for our greatest joy, with the coming of Moshiach and the rebuilding of the Holy Temple in our days.

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

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# Gimmel Tammuz

Every person as one of G-d's children

By Rabbi Yitzchok Minkowicz

Gimmel Tammuz, on Thursday, June 18, 2026, is the anniversary of the passing of the Rebbe. On such occasions, chassidim don't eulogize. Instead, they tell stories that reflect the character of the person with whom they are trying to identify.

One of my friends was driving his father to the city in Massachusetts where he serves as a *shliach*. His father was elderly and not in the best of health. At one point, he asked his son to pull off the road so that he could get some fresh air and refresh himself before proceeding with the journey. They pulled off the road and sat down under a tree.

Shortly afterwards, a van pulled up and a Jew whose long *payos* (earlocks) and garb obviously identified him as a member of a different chassidic sect jumped out.

"Road trouble," he asked, offering to help.

"No," my friend answered. "Just taking a break from the journey."



■ Rabbi Yitzchok Minkowicz

"You're Lubavitchers," the other chassid ventured. "Yes," my friend replied.

"Let me tell you a story about your Rebbe," he volunteered. "Many years ago, during the first years of our marriage, my wife and I were childless. I don't have to explain how much pain and aggravation it caused us. I am a Satmar chassid, so I often wrote to and consulted my Rebbe about the matter.

Once, at a personal meeting, I brought up the issue in a particularly emotional tone. My Rebbe replied, 'I can't help you. For children, you have to go to the other Rebbe.'

"I left his room confused. Why couldn't he help me? And who was 'the other Rebbe' to whom he was sending me?"

"I asked his attendant who told me that he meant the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Now that confused me even more, because to say that the relationship between the Satmar chassidim and

Lubavitcher chassidim was cool would be a euphemism. The attendant, however, explained that I would be far from the first chassid the Satmar Rebbe had sent to the Lubavitcher and that the others had been helped by his blessings.

"I arranged a private meeting with the Lubavitcher Rebbe. He received me warmly. I conveyed my request for a blessing for children and after some thought, he promised me that I would be so blessed.

"He then asked if I could tell him any of the teachings the Satmar Rebbe had recently shared with his followers. At first, I couldn't remember anything, but then I remembered that he had delivered a talk on the conclusion of the *Talmudic* tractate of *Chagigah*. There, our Sages state that 'the sinners of Israel are filled with *mitzvos* like a pomegranate is filled with seeds.' The Satmar Rebbe had explained that the statement is difficult to understand: Why would the Sages dwell on the virtues of 'the sinners of

Israel?' And he proceeded to criticize those who have abandoned Jewish belief and practice.

"When I concluded, the Lubavitcher Rebbe answered, 'I have a different problem with that statement. If those individuals are filled with *mitzvos*, why do the Sages call them the sinners of Israel?'"

"By the way," the Satmar chassid concluded, "if you're wondering whether your Rebbe's blessing was fulfilled or not, take a look at that vanload of children and grandchildren."

That children were born because of the Rebbe's blessings was not news to my friend and his father. They were, however, impressed by the gentle way in which the Rebbe tried to teach the chassid to regard every person as one of G-d's children.

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

**"Let me tell you a story about your Rebbe ..."**

## Where is your maqom?

By Rabbi Bruce Diamond

The core of the first two books of the Torah, *brayshit* and *shmot*, tells a story in two parts. Part 1 is from Creation to the death of Joseph. It is prologue for Part 2 — the people of Israel as slaves in Egypt, the advent of Moses, the departure from Egypt, the Sinai revelation, culminating in God finally getting a *maqom*, an earthly, albeit Divinely designed *Mishkan* (dwelling place), sometimes also called the *ohel mo'ed* (manifestation tent).

There, God will manifest to Moses (Exodus 25:28) from a throne fashioned of two solid golden griffins mounted on a hollow gold-clad platform containing the sacred tablets — the symbol of God's sovereignty over the people. As was



■ Rabbi Bruce Diamond

the practice, this ark served as a royal sedan chair, to be carried only by staves on the shoulders of faithful servants; the pope still uses this sort of vehicle, the *sedia gestatoria* (triumphal chair) for ceremonial purposes.

This story is not intended to be the history of our people. The main protagonist is a disembodied divine spirit, *ru'ah elohim*, creating a world with a suitable place in order to fully exist as God. We first encounter the Creator in a kind of Tartarus, much like a bird fluttering over an endless watery abyss with nowhere to land. This is echoed later on in the story of the flood when the dove, symbolizing the Divine Spirit "found no place to set

her foot ... for the waters were still on the face of the whole Earth" (Genesis 8:9).

How long was *elohim* (the Divine) in this impossible situation? Presumably for time without end, although we are not told anything about that. Though much later on that becomes the main preoccupation of the *qabbalah*, which similarly regards creation as the result of a Divine crisis.

After setting up the proper conditions, God plants a garden (Genesis 2:8) in order to have a place. Unfortunately, this was a failure. Good help is hard to find!

After a couple more doomed attempts at having a proper place, God sets about a long, intricate project beginning with Abraham, spanning more than 400 years, in order to get that *maqom* in the form of the wilderness Tabernacle.

So the story beginning with the disquieted "fluttering *ru'ah*" joyously ends as the now embodied God finds *mnuhah* (tranquil repose, related to the Yiddish *nahes*) descending as sovereign of this world into a deeply desired "dwelling" (Exodus 40:34-38).

(Spoiler alert: this doesn't work out for God either, who remains the unrequited lover as the story careens towards catastrophe).

At first blush, this story starts like a typical "garden variety" Mediterranean myth from which, admittedly, it does draw several well-known elements, but at its heart is the very foundation of contemporary physics and the philosophy it generates.

The Divine "fluttering over the abyss" was our inspired ancient writer's way of describing what 21st century physicists call superposition, meaning — in a manner of speaking — that everything can be anything everywhere until it is something somewhere. Don't try to understand this; no one does, but it seems to be true.

Essentially, you are not real without place. More than that, you are not fundamentally knowable without your own *maqom*.

**... you are not fundamentally knowable without your own maqom.**

So, what's the point? Do you now have what you consider a *maqom*, a real place to be most fully yourself? Or are you sort of fluttering with a tentative unset-

tled life, not as real and knowable as you were or could be? A bit like God before creation.

Supposedly between 7,000 and 8,000 Jews are local, year-round residents, less than 26% of them are non-native "transplants." How many of us Fort Myers immigrants actually think of this place as "home," regardless of how long we've lived here? Do you? Do I? Well, yes, I really do!

Here's my big point: your *maqom* (real place) is not merely the place of your birth or where you were raised. As with Genesis God, it can only be the place you create for yourself. Without that kind of effort, you're just a "flutter," hardly real to yourself and others. Now, get to work!

Rabbi Bruce Diamond serves at Community Free Synagogue in Fort Myers 🇺🇸

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**TEMPLE JUDEA  
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Join us during June and July as holidays, classes, and lots of events continue at Temple Judea.

Religious School resumes in August. For more information and/or to register, contact the office at 239-433-0201 or email [tehila@tjswfl.org](mailto:tehila@tjswfl.org).

Shabbat B'Kef is Aug. 21, and our Sukkot event is Sept. 27.

Nashim Circle's events are a beautiful way to come together. Register online at [tjswfl.org](http://tjswfl.org) or call our office at 239-433-0201 for more information.

**Regularly scheduled events**

Temple Judea continues to accept food donations for the Cadkin Foundation Food Pantry at Jewish Federation of Lee

& Charlotte Counties. There are collection envelopes near the front door for contactless monetary or gift card contributions. Contributions may be mailed. Please call the office to ensure your contribution has been received.

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

Friday evening Shabbat services at 6:30 p.m. Saturday morning Shabbat services at 9:30 a.m. Kiddush luncheons are

served every Shabbat. If you are interested in sponsoring a Kiddush, please contact JoAnn Lewin at [jalewin2@aol.com](mailto:jalewin2@aol.com). We would love to see you in person or via Zoom.

**On break**

The following events and programs are currently on break and will resume in the fall.

- Rabbi Arias' adult education classes
- Morning Minyan Monday, 9 a.m.
- Co-President Jan Klein's Monday morning availability at Temple Judea, 11 a.m.–3 p.m. 📞

**COMMUNITY FREE SYNAGOGUE  
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A memorial service for Natalie Fulton is scheduled Sunday, May 24, at 2 p.m., in the synagogue's main sanctuary on the Unity Campus (11120 Ranchette Road in South Fort Myers), with a reception to follow. All are welcome.

The Community Free Synagogue is now on its summer schedule.

Sabbath Eve dinner is on the first Friday of each month at the rabbi's home. Dinner starts at 6 p.m.. You are encouraged to bring a non-dairy dish, side, salad, dessert or wine. Worship follows at 7 p.m. and is also held via Zoom.

All other Friday evenings in June, July and August, Sabbath eve worship starts at 7 p.m. and is only available via

Zoom. A curated digital "Zoom Siddur" will be available for download during the Zoom worship.

Sabbath morning Torah Study via Zoom remains the same — from 9:30 to 11 a.m.

The rabbi is offering Jewish Adult Education "Summer School" starting Wednesday, June 3, 6:30–7:30 p.m. and all following Wednesday evenings via Zoom until the end of August. Classes will also include weekly reading assignments.

The first topic is a four-week series on Jewish theories of government over the centuries starting with Biblical concepts, then moving to Talmudic, Medieval, and

modern opinions regarding the best forms and proper roles of government. (Did Herzl really harbor a secret plan to crown his son Hans the first king of his new Jewish state's constitutional monarchy?) Subsequent topics will be suggested by the participating students.

Weekly Sabbath Eve Dinners and worship resume on the Unity Campus in September.

The easiest way to access the CFS Zoom Room is through the synagogue's website: [fortmyerssynagogue.com](http://fortmyerssynagogue.com). To receive CFS' weekly notices, email [synfree@comcast.net](mailto:synfree@comcast.net). 📧



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## TEMPLE BETH EL Fort Myers

(239) 433-0018 • [www.templebethel.com](http://www.templebethel.com)

Welcome to summer in Southwest Florida! During June, our rabbi goes on vacation. Please join us for services led by our Temple leadership.

Our offices are closed June 8 through June 12, and again on June 19 for Juneteenth, the Federal holiday celebrating the ending of slavery in the United States.

### Upcoming events

June 11, noon, is our Sisterhood's next Ladies who Lunch. Check the Temple's online calendar for location details. Remember, neither Sisterhood nor Temple memberships are required to join in the fun. However, **registration is requested** so we can provide the restaurant an accurate head count. If you have any questions, email [sisterhood@templebethel.com](mailto:sisterhood@templebethel.com).

Our Brotherhood Shabbat is June 19. Also, just a reminder that this year Father's Day is Sunday, June 21. May all fathers be honored and remembered on this day and every day.

### Jewish Summer Camp

It's not too late to sign your kids up for Jewish Summer Camp, June 22 through June 26. For ages K-5, camp runs daily from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Sign up for amazing team building activities, arts

and crafts, games, and fun sports, all at Temple Beth El (16225 Winkler Road, Fort Myers). Call the office to register: 239-433-0018.



### Jews by Choice

This group meets online the last Thursday of the month at 8 p.m. via Zoom. If you are considering the process of converting to Judaism, if you are in the conversion process, if you are rediscovering Judaism, or if you simply have questions and/or a need to talk with like-minded individuals in a friendly, non-judgmental atmosphere, please join us. Contact Dawn Wineinger at [dawntw10@gmail.com](mailto:dawntw10@gmail.com).



cookout the next morning, July 4, starting at 11 a.m. There is no charge for the cookout, but **registration is a must** so we know how much food to buy. Please join us as we celebrate shabbat and our country's 250th birthday together!

### Recurring Temple Beth El programs

- Our Choir has openings! Please email your interest and contact information to [info@templebethel.com](mailto:info@templebethel.com).

- Non-perishable collections in the lobby shopping cart whenever the Temple is open.

- Torah Study continues while the rabbi is on vacation. No prior study experience is required. Saturday mornings at 9 a.m. via Zoom. Please see the calendar for Zoom link information.

- Tot Shabbat, a kid-friendly service, is on hiatus through the summer months.

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

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

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

There's always something happening here at TBE, and our members make it happen. Follow us on Facebook and/or Instagram: [@TempleBethElofFortMyers](https://www.instagram.com/TempleBethElofFortMyers). You can always contact the office at 239-433-0018.

Let's pray for peace in the Middle East, our own country, and around the world. Temple Beth El ... **where everyone matters.** 🕊️

### Ahavah

Ahavah is the Hebrew word for love! It is also the name of Temple Beth El's new LGBTQ+ group in Lee County — a group meant to provide a safe, joyous and affirming home for LGBTQ+ Jews, their families and their allies.

Our next event is June 13 at the 2026 Pride-SWFL Festival in downtown Fort Myers from 2 to 10 p.m. For more information and to join the mailing list, please contact Dawn Wineinger at [dawntw10@gmail.com](mailto:dawntw10@gmail.com).

### Save the dates

**July 2** – Faith250 at Iona-Hope Episcopal Church

This Interfaith event is a text study and dinner sponsored by several area churches and temples, including Temple Beth El. Faith250 is a national Interfaith project for faiths to come together in fellowship, meaningful conversation and local rituals that celebrate our shared civic story. Please register through our calendar so the dinner will be sufficient for all who wish to attend. This event is Thursday, July 2 from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Let's have a strong TBE representation!

**July 4** – We will not hold Friday night services on July 3, but we will hold a Red, White and Blue Shabbat service and




**SWIC PRESENTS:**

**COMBATTING ANTISEMITISM IN THE AREA  
OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE:  
With Florida Citizens Alliance**

**THURSDAY, June 11, 2026**

**Location:** Bonita Springs Estero Elks Lodge #2753  
3231 Coconut Rd, Bonita Springs, FL 34134

Check-in & Socialize: 5:00 P.M. - 5:30 P.M.  
Program: 5:30 P.M. - 7:45 P.M.  
Cost \$25 Includes boxed meal

**RSVP: By June 6, 2026**  
[SolidarityWithIsrael.org](http://SolidarityWithIsrael.org)

**Speakers:**

**AI & Antisemitism – Awareness, Examples & Solutions**  
Ryan Kennedy: Chief of Operations, Florida Citizens Alliance

**AI & Antisemitism – What We Can Do About It Now**  
RC Williams: Co-founder, Watchman

SCAN ME



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I can't believe it is already June. I think that we Jews have more New Year's than anybody else around. First, we have Rosh HaShanah. Then, we have New Year's Eve, Dec. 31, and New Year's Day, Jan. 1, and now, we have the fiscal new year for Temple Beth Shalom.

The new year at TBS is a new beginning for our Board — new officers, new

to teach our traditions to our children, while having fun and feeling good about their Jewish community. Cantor Barry is busy putting together new and innovative musical services so things never get boring.

**Upcoming events**

We start out this month by celebrating

from portions of the Torah, with a discussion on how they affect our lives today. As usual at TBS, the fascinating discussions are accompanied by coffee and food.

Our next Brunch & Learn is June 14. At the Brunch & Learn, Cantor Barry brings up a topic of current interest, always with a Jewish twist. The discussion is lively, with



Celebrating the 65th anniversary of Marc's Bar Mitzvah

deeply held views on all sides. Despite differences of opinion, it is always friendly and respectful. It is a great reminder that we can agree to disagree and even with our political or other differences; we have more in common than we do differences.

Here at Temple Beth Shalom, we believe in joyous Judaism, and we invite you to share the joy with us. Guests are always welcome at all of our events. To find out more about these and other activities please visit our website, [templebethshalomcc.org](http://templebethshalomcc.org), or call us at 239-772-4555 and leave a message. We will always get back to you.

We wish you a wonderful summer, and a happy "Temple" new year! 🌻



Dancing around the sanctuary on musical shabbat

preparations for the holidays, new bylaws, new dues, new members, new musical events, new friends and new adventures. School is winding down in Southwest Florida, but we are ramping up.

Summertime is a time for planning, for brainstorming, for planting the seeds of new activities, and preparing for the holidays, once again. The teachers in our Stephen G Hertz Religious School are busy researching new and better ways

the anniversary of our newest Torah, donated by Lea Rosenberg in June 2024. Come join us as we dance and sing with Lea and the Torah on June 6, 10 a.m. Following the service, the kiddush is homemade by our fabulous chefs — fit for a queen!

Our fifth and last (of the season) Conversation with the Cantor is Tuesday, June 9, 10 a.m., in the Temple Social Hall. The conversations usually come



All music shabbat



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Temple Shalom, the center of Jewish life in Charlotte County, is always serving up member and community activities.

This spring, Temple Shalom members embarked on a Caribbean cruise, which is becoming a popular annual event for congregants and friends.

Just after Passover, Temple Shalom answered the question, "What do we do with all this leftover matzo?" The answer,

"Throw a congregational matzo brei brunch!" The members of the Brotherhood cooked, and everyone left full and happy.

Social, educational and worship events at Temple Shalom in Port Charlotte are open to all, including Shabbat services held every Friday at 7:30 p.m.

Temple Shalom is located at 23190 Utica Avenue in Port Charlotte. Visit our website for more information: [templeshalomfl.com](http://templeshalomfl.com).



Temple Shalom music director David Katz and member Alan Solomon lead a Shabbat service aboard the Celebrity Summit.

Brotherhood members Joe Sabation and Leon Shlossberg serve at the matzo brei brunch.

**CHABAD LUBAVITCH OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA**  
Fort Myers

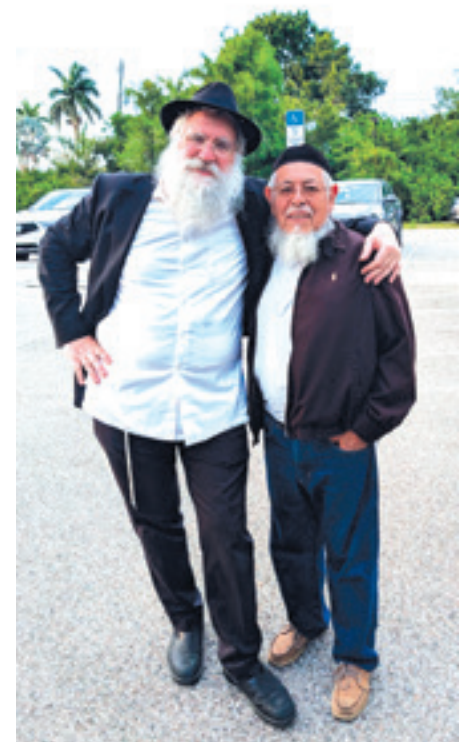
(239) 433-7708 • [www.Chabadswf.org](http://www.Chabadswf.org)

Chabad Lubavitch of Southwest Florida and Chabad Israeli Center recently celebrated Lag B'Omer together with a parade and bonfire.

Please join us for prayers, Torah

Study, ladies events and classes with Shani, men's events and family events.

**Daily prayers and Kaddish**  
• Sunday, 8 a.m.



- Monday-Friday, 7 a.m.
- Saturday, 10 a.m.
- Evenings, 7 p.m.

**Torah Study**

- Kabbalah Class: Saturday, 9 a.m.

**Ladies Torah Study with Shani**

- Torah & Tea: Monday, 7 p.m.

For more updates, please visit [Chabadswf.org](http://Chabadswf.org).



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# L'CHAYIM

Published by the Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties

**TO: L'CHAYIM Readers**

**FROM: Karin Fine, President**

**Debbie Sanford, Executive Director**

**We hope you enjoy L'CHAYIM, the monthly newspaper of the Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties, that provides our community with local, national and international Jewish news and views. We strive to make it fresh, informative and entertaining and encourage you to add your input to its pages.**

**While our Federation underwrites L'CHAYIM as a service to our community, the costs of postage and production continue to increase. Although your subscription is free, we hope you will consider a voluntary contribution to help offset these rising costs and enable our Federation to devote its resources to undertakings that provide Jewish cultural and educational programs and serve the needy in our community and around the world.**

**Please help our Federation continue to maintain L'CHAYIM as a vital connection between our local Jewish community and the greater Jewish world. We kindly ask you to consider making a contribution online today or by returning the appeal letter that will be arriving in your mailbox soon.**

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**Many thanks for your support!**



**Jewish Federation**  
of Lee & Charlotte Counties

**Keep an eye on your mailbox – our L'CHAYIM appeal letter is on its way. You can also make your pledge anytime at [JewishFederationlcc.org/lchayim](http://JewishFederationlcc.org/lchayim).**