

L'CHAYIM

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Facilities Coordinator: Steve Shirey

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L'CHAYIM Proofreaders:
Phyllis Sager • Roz Shraiar

Editor: Sharon Hood (239) 591-2709

Design: MarketCrank, Inc.

Advertising: Bryana Garcia
(239) 481-4449 x3

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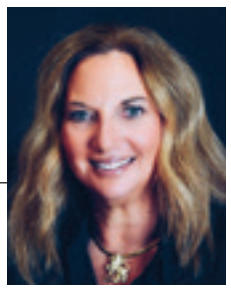
OUR MISSION
To strengthen and enrich the Jewish Community by providing and supporting philanthropic, educational and social service programs locally, in Israel and throughout the world.

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).

A season of connection, community and purpose

FROM THE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

■ **Debbie Sanford**



October always feels like the beginning of something special at Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties. As our seasonal residents begin returning and our community calendar fills, the Federation is busy preparing for what promises to be another active and meaningful season.

While many of our programs and events are still weeks or months away, the work behind the scenes is already well underway. Our staff is planning, coordinating, meeting with community partners, securing sponsorships, working with volunteers and finding new ways to bring people together. There is an incredible amount of preparation that goes into creating the programs and services our community enjoys, and we are excited about what is ahead.

This season, you will see opportunities to connect in so many different ways. From community programs and interfaith gatherings to our Jewish Film Festival, youth and family engagement, educational opportunities, security trainings and special events, our goal remains the same: to strengthen Jewish life and create a community where everyone can find a place to belong.

Designer Bag Bingo

We are also especially excited about our upcoming Designer Bag Bingo, benefiting Jewish Family Services and our Food Pantry. JFS continues to serve individuals and families throughout Lee and Charlotte Counties, regardless of faith or background. The need for food and emergency assistance continues to grow, and this fun community event will help us meet that need while bringing people together for a wonderful cause.

Shuk to the Core

In November, we will also present Shuk to the Core, an Israeli vendor market featuring Israeli artists and vendors here in the United States. Just in time for Hanukkah and holiday shopping, it is a wonderful opportunity to support Israeli artists while celebrating Israeli culture right here in Southwest Florida.

2027 Jewish Film Festival

And, of course, preparations are already underway for our 2027 Jewish Film Festival. This year we are taking a slightly different approach, presenting a smaller, carefully curated selection of powerful films that we hope will entertain, educate, inspire and create conversation. Each film will also be available as a matinee and evening screening, giving twice the opportunity for our community members to attend each film.

Community support

One of the things I am most proud of is the relationships we continue to build throughout our community. We work closely with our synagogues and Jewish organizations, the Secure Community Network, law enforcement, United Way, local nonprofits, businesses, donors, sponsors and so many community leaders who believe in what we do. These partnerships allow us to accomplish far more together than any one organization could accomplish alone.

At a time when the Jewish community continues to face unprecedented challenges, these relationships matter more than ever. We continue to advocate for security funding for Jewish institutions throughout our area, provide security resources and training, and work with our partners to help ensure that Jewish life in Lee and Charlotte Counties remains vibrant, visible and safe.

But perhaps what excites me most about the season ahead is simply the opportunity to be together.

Federation is not just about programs on a calendar. It is about relationships. It is about taking care of one another. It is about showing up when someone needs help, welcoming someone who is new to our community, standing together when our Jewish community needs a voice, and celebrating together whenever we have the opportunity.

Whether you attend an event, volunteer, make a donation, become a sponsor, visit our Food Pantry with a bag of groceries, participate in a security training, see a film, or simply stop by to say hello, **you are part of this Federation and part of this community**.

I look forward to seeing many familiar faces — and hopefully many new ones — in the months ahead. Here's to a season filled with connection, purpose, community and Jewish pride.

Read the current and recent issues of *L'CHAYIM* online at www.JewishFederationLCC.org.

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Partnership, preparedness and community

A High Holiday commitment to safety

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


John Murtagh

As the High Holiday season began, the Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties, our local congregations, Secure Community Network (SCN), and our law enforcement and emergency services partners came together in a community-wide effort to strengthen the safety and security of our Jewish centers of life.

With a persistent threat environment and an ever-changing situation overseas, preparations began well before Rosh Hashanah. Congregational leaders worked closely with Federation and SCN, including the community's SCN Regional Security Advisor, to review physical security measures such as access control, law enforcement presence and threat assessments. Attention was also given to participant management — registration, parking, traffic flow, building access and how we could safely welcome the large number of people gathering at our facilities.

Training was another important part of our preparation. Clergy, leadership, staff, congregants and volunteer usher and greeter teams participated in SCN programs including: The Power of Hello; Countering the Active Threat; Stop the Bleed; and BeAware – Introduction to Situational Awareness.

The Power of Hello was particularly popular with our volunteer usher and greeter teams. I was especially impressed by their enthusiasm and understanding of the important role they play. They are often the first friendly face someone sees when arriving at a synagogue, while also serving as additional sets of eyes and ears helping keep their community safe. Their willingness to step forward and take on this responsibility deserves our recognition and sincere thanks.

The SCN High Holiday webinar series was also well received by congregants and leadership alike. Several community members approached me to share how valuable they found the information and how it helped them better understand the security environment and the role each of us can play in keeping our community safe.

Our law enforcement and emergency services partners were equally important. Increased communication and coordination between our facilities, Federation, SCN, and public-safety partners helped ensure a cohesive approach while reinforcing awareness of the unique sensitivities surrounding Jewish facilities during the High Holidays. These relationships remain a critical part of our communal security effort.

Supporting these local efforts was a much larger security network. Federation leadership, SCN's on-the-ground representation, and the SCN Operations Desk worked together to maintain an intelligence and information-sharing shield around our facilities and the surrounding region. Partnerships with local, state and federal law enforcement further strengthened this layered approach to protecting Jewish centers of life across Lee and Charlotte Counties.

Federation and SCN also worked directly with local facilities to help navigate multiple security grant opportunities and application processes, helping organizations identify priorities and pursue resources for long-term security improvements.

None of this happens without leadership, participation and partnership. The continued support of the Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties has helped build a communal security initiative rooted in preparation, best practices, strong relationships, training and situational awareness.

As we move forward, our goal remains simple: remain vigilant, look out for one another and ensure our Jewish centers of life remain both safe and welcoming.

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

Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties

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

Send an email to debbiesanford@jfedlcc.org.



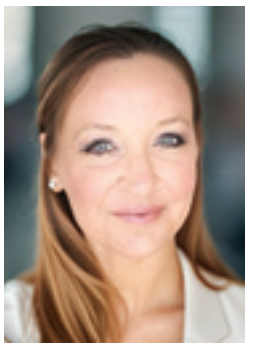




The season is here

Let's connect!

By Amy Hallock, Community Events Manager


Amy Hallock

The season is officially here, and I couldn't be more excited about the new ways we have planned for our community to connect, gather and enjoy meaningful experiences together.

This year, we're creating opportunities that go beyond simply attending an event. Whether you love books, bingo, unique experiences, Israeli culture, or simply meeting new people, there is a place for you at the Federation this season. And we're just getting started!

Before we jump into the fun ahead, October also gives us an important opportunity to come together in remembrance.

Commemoration and remembrance

On Oct. 5, we invite our community to join us at Regal Bell Tower for a special screening of "Safe Room" at 4 p.m. as we commemorate Oct. 7.

This afternoon will provide a meaningful space to remember, reflect and stand together as a community. There are moments when simply being together matters, and we hope you will join us for this important observance.

A new chapter

Calling all readers! Our Federation Book Club officially begins Oct. 15, from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m., at the Federation.

Our first selection is "Daughters of the Sun and Moon" by Lisa See. Each month, from October through May, we'll gather around a new book and enjoy thoughtful conversation, different perspectives and, most importantly, the opportunity to build friendships.



Whether you read every page, listen to the audiobook, or simply love a great discussion, you're welcome at the table.

Designer Bag Bingo

Get ready for an energetic afternoon! On Oct. 25, we're bringing Designer Bag Bingo to The Oasis Outdoor.

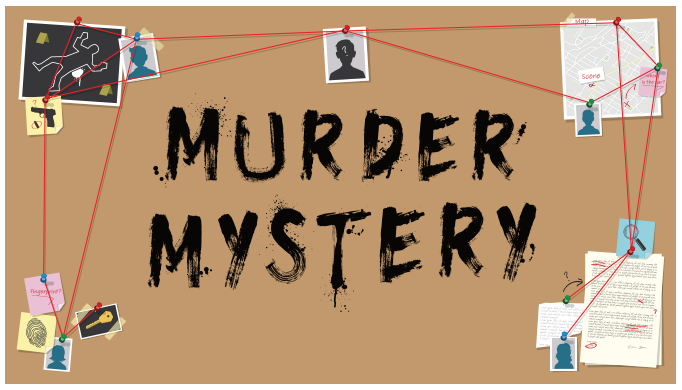
We'll have bingo, beautiful designer bags, plenty of laughs, and a room filled with community spirit all while raising money to support our Food Pantry.

This is exactly the kind of event I love: fun, social and connected to a purpose that makes a difference right here in our community. Bring your friends, bring your competitive spirit, and get ready to yell "bingo!"

JFED Hits the Tracks

On Nov. 4, we're taking community events in a completely different direction — onto the rails!

JFED Hits the Tracks: Murder on the Mind will be an immersive murder mystery dinner experience aboard a three-hour train excursion. Your evening includes a five-course meal, a live murder mystery performance,a three-hour train ride, parking and gratuity.



Come ready to eat, laugh, investigate and see if you can figure out whodunit before the final clue is revealed. It's a fresh way to spend an evening with old friends or meet some new ones along the way.

From Israel to Southwest Florida

One of the experiences I'm especially excited to introduce this season is Shuk to the Core.

On Sunday, Nov. 22, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., we'll welcome a traveling Israeli shuk to Temple Judea.

We're bringing some of the color, energy, creativity and spirit of an Israeli marketplace right here to Southwest Florida. Come explore, shop, connect and experience a little taste of Israel without the airfare. It will be a wonderful opportunity to support Israeli vendors while spending the day together as a community.

This is just the beginning

As our seasonal residents return and calendars begin filling up, I hope you'll make Federation part of your plans.

My goal for this season is simple: more ways to connect. Some connections will happen over a book. Others might happen while trying to solve a murder mystery, shopping at the shuk or sitting next to someone new at bingo.

While the events may bring us into the room, it's the relationships we build once we're there that truly strengthen our community. So grab your calendar, invite a friend and try something new with us this season. I can't wait to see you!

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HOW
THE JEWISH FEDERATION SERVES

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

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

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

Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties | Jewish Family Services

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

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

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

Education, Arts & Culture Programs

Israeli Folk Dancing	Holocaust Remembrance	Lion of Judah
Jewish Social Club	Jewish Film Festival	Women's Day
Mah Jongg	Community Breakfast	TRIBE
Holiday Senior Visits	Major Gifts-Pacesetters	Annual Meeting
PJ Library	Jewish Heritage Day	Men's Division
Federation Hits the Road-Day Trips		P2G Partnership Together

What do you think?

L'CHAYIM *wants to know!*

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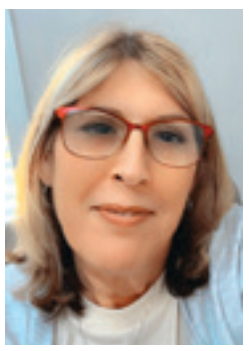
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Help keep our Food Pantry shelves stocked

By Monica Wildonger, JFS Case Manager & Food Pantry Coordinator

Our JFS Food Pantry is experiencing an **unprecedented level of need**. We are seeing a record number of individuals and families coming through our doors, including something we are seeing more and more of: seniors who are struggling to afford enough food.


Monica Wildonger

At the same time, our shelves are running low on many of the basic, shelf-stable foods our clients depend on.

We are asking our local temples and synagogues to consider hosting a food drive for the JFS Food Pantry. It can be as simple as placing a collection box in your congregation or choosing a few specific items for your members to donate.

Our most-needed items right now include:

- Canned vegetables
- Cereal
- Oatmeal
- Jelly
- Pasta
- Pasta sauce

With school back in session, there are even more children and families relying on food assistance. Every child deserves a nutritious breakfast and dinner, and no family should have to choose between putting food on the table and paying their other bills.

Consider a Thanksgiving food drive

As Thanksgiving approaches, we would also love to partner with congregations on a Thanksgiving food drive. Your congregation could collect traditional Thanksgiving staples or create Thanksgiving food baskets for families and seniors in our community.

Whether your temple or synagogue chooses to hold a general food drive, a High Holiday food drive, a Thanksgiving drive, or an ongoing collection, every donation makes a meaningful difference.

We are so grateful for the continued support of our Jewish community. To all of our volunteers, monetary donors and those who regularly bring food to our pantry — **thank you**. Your generosity allows us to be there for our neighbors when they need us most. Together, we can make sure that no child, family or senior in our community goes hungry.

For more information about organizing a food drive or to coordinate a donation, please contact me at Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties.





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we can make a
Difference

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of Lee & Charlotte Counties

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Connecting our community this fall

By Brittany Salem, Youth and Family Engagement Coordinator

As we welcome the fall season and prepare for the upcoming Jewish holidays, we are excited to share some of the wonderful moments, connections and programs that have brought our community together!



Brittany Salem

A sweet start to the New Year

PJ Library families gathered at the farm to celebrate Rosh Hashanah together! Families enjoyed a morning filled with farm fun, holiday activities and meaningful connections while welcoming the Jewish New Year.

It was a wonderful opportunity for families to come together, introduce new families to our community and celebrate the traditions of Rosh Hashanah in a fun and engaging way.

Welcoming our Israeli Teen Delegation

Through Partnership2Gether, our community had the incredible opportunity to welcome a group of Israeli teens from our partner region of Hadera.

Members of our community hosted the Israeli teens in their homes, and we are so grateful for their warmth and hospitality. Their visit provided meaningful opportunities for cultural exchange, friendship and connection between our local community and our friends in Israel. From exploring Southwest Florida to sharing Jewish experiences together, the delegation brought energy and excitement to our community.





One of the highlights was a Family Game Night, where families from our community gathered alongside the Israeli teens for an evening of games, laughter and connection. It was a wonderful reminder that despite the distance between our communities, the bonds we share are strong.

Coming up

PJ Library is getting ready to celebrate Sukkot! Join us for Smoothies in the Sukkah on Sunday, Oct. 4, from 2 to 3:30 p.m., at Temple Beth Shalom in Cape Coral.

Families will have the opportunity to enjoy a fun afternoon together, spend time in the sukkah and celebrate the holiday with friends old and new. All are welcome!

Looking ahead to the holiday season

As we continue through the fall, we are already gearing up for a wonderful holiday season filled with opportunities to gather, celebrate and connect.

Mark your calendars for our Community Menorah Lighting on Thursday, Dec. 6. We will share more details as we get closer to the event. And this is just the beginning!

Additional PJ Library programs and family events are coming in the new year, providing even more opportunities for families to connect with one another and experience Jewish life together.

We look forward to celebrating the holidays with you and continuing to build a vibrant, welcoming community together!







Nar-Anon support meetings

By Joann Goldman

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

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

If someone's addiction is affecting you, first you must help yourself. Come to a meeting and hear from others who are going through similar problems and talk about how they cope and find recovery.

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

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

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



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Funding the synagogue

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

By Rabbi Barbara Aiello

"I just don't know how I feel about this," Ed said as he waved the synagogue pledge card in the vicinity of his wife's face who, in turn, encouraged Ed to calm down.

"It's just a request for money," Georgia said. "Synagogues do it all the time. They start with Rosh HaShanah and ask again around Sukkot and again at Chanukah. How come this year you're so upset?"



■ Rabbi Barbara Aiello

Ed shook his head and reminded Georgia that their retirement pensions weren't that great and each year as costs go up, they are more aware of sticking to a budget. "And anyway, we did all this up north when the kids were in Hebrew school. Now, it's just too much."

The synagogue pledge card that provided the impetus for Ed's consternation was a glossy, well-written "ask" that emphasized special payment plans for singles, young families and those, like Ed and Georgia, who lived on fixed incomes. Regardless, Ed was not impressed and noted that beginning with the charge for High Holy Day tickets and continuing through membership dues and various building fund maintenance requests, supporting the local synagogue seemed overwhelming.

Georgia reluctantly agreed. "I remember years ago when I was a little girl. On Kol Nidre night the shul held an auction. People shouted out their bids and the highest bidders got to make the Torah blessing. They paid for their aliyah. Our family didn't have much money so we couldn't compete. It was so embarrassing."

Ed and Georgia are not alone. In a blog post by Rabbi Dr. Marc Angel, Rabbi Emeritus of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in Manhattan, and founder of Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, the rabbi admits, "Over the years, I have received bitter notes from people who strongly object to synagogues charging high prices for seats during the High Holy Days. They have also expressed displeasure with the high cost of synagogue membership dues."

Addressing "Pay to Pray"

Faced with financial challenges, many synagogues have adopted creative solutions as they tackle the age-old lament, characterized by the offensive moniker, "Pay to Pray."

Some congregations have revived the centuries-old mitzvah, *Ma'aser Kesafim*, as it applies to monetary donations. They note that on Yom Kippur, when it is customary for Jews to fast for 25 hours, congregants can pledge to donate the equivalent amount of money that would have been spent on groceries or restaurant meals to a local food bank and then donate that same amount to the synagogue as well.

But a modest High Holy Day donation does not solve the problem of synagogue dues. That's why many synagogues have adopted the Moses Membership.

"It's simple," says one rabbi who has struggled with finances throughout her 25+ years as spiritual leader of a small congregation with declining membership. The rabbi applied a Torah principle to asking for money by citing Exodus 25:2.

When speaking to the Israelites about building the sanctuary, Moses relayed a message from God: "From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me." And from Exodus 35:5, which states, "Take from among you an offering to the Lord. Whoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it as an offering to the Lord." In other words, give when your heart is moved.

… most synagogues operate with deficits and even voluntary contributions often do not cover costs.

The "Moses Membership" idea is catching on. In an article that originally appeared in The Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles, known simply as the *Jewish Journal*, in 2017, and recently republished, reporter Ben Sales writes, "The number of non-Orthodox synagogues nationwide that have eliminated fixed annual dues has more than doubled in the past two years. Instead of charging a set membership fee, these synagogues are telling congregants to pay what they want — and they're succeeding."

In fact, synagogues who have adopted the "Moses Membership" model join the nearly 1,000 Chabad centers in North America that have operated this way for years.

Rabbi Angel puts it best when he notes that in an ideal world voluntary contributions could eliminate "Pay to Pray." "But we do not live in an ideal world, at least not yet. Synagogues need funds in order to maintain their buildings, to pay their rabbis and synagogue staff, [and] to provide services to members and the community at large." The rabbi emphasizes that most synagogues operate with deficits and even voluntary contributions often do not cover costs.

Like Ed and Georgia, Jewish singles, families and seniors face the dues dilemma. Will a "Moses Membership" or some other type of voluntary model solve the problem? Can synagogues rely on the Jewish community to give when our hearts are moved?

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



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Three new movies and two new TV series

Stars of David

By Nate Bloom, Stars of David Contributing Columnist

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

In October, there are three new movies, and two new TV series, with strong Jewish connections.

"Digger"

This dark satirical comedy film opens in theaters Oct. 2. Here's the premise: Digger Rockwell (played by Tom Cruise) is a wealthy oil tycoon. He is racing to save humanity from a world-destroying disaster.





John Goodman plays the U.S. President and **Michael Stuhlberg**, 58, plays the Vice President.

Alejandro Inarritu, a Mexican, directed the film and co-wrote "Digger" with **Sabina Berman**, 71, a Mexican Jewish woman who has written many Mexican movies. She has also penned acclaimed novels. Her parents were Polish Jews who evaded the Nazis and settled in Mexico.

Sabina's sister-in-law, **Shanik Goodman Berman**, 67, is the top entertainment journalist in Mexico. Her Czech Jewish parents hid during WWII, settling in Mexico after the war.

"Rolling Loud: The Movie"

This comedy also opens Oct. 2. Here's the premise: An overprotective father (Owen Wilson) attempts to bond with his 13-year-old son by sneaking him into the Rolling Loud hip-hop music festival in Miami. **Henry Winkler**, 80, has a smallish supporting role.

The film was directed and written by **Jeremy Garelick**, 50. Garelick has a long record of writing and sometimes directing films and TV series, including hits like "Breaking Up" and "The Hangover."

In 2006, Garelick told a reporter that he had become an observant Jew, and he was about to marry a Jewish woman. They are still married 20 years later, have four children, and are very active in the L.A. Jewish community.

"The Social Reckoning"

This biographical thriller opens Oct. 9. It dramatizes the 2021 Facebook leaks by whistleblower Frances Haugen and journalist Jeff Horwitz, 45. These two dug-out that Meta, formerly Facebook, was willing to expose users, including children, to scams and AI manipulation. As you might know, Meta recently settled "its bad conduct" with states for $18 billion. This year, Horwitz received a Pulitzer Prize for his reporting.

Mikey Madison, 27, plays Haugen. She won the Best Actress Oscar in 2025 for "Anora." **Jeremy Strong**, 47, plays **Mark Zuckerberg**, 42, the Meta head. (Strong's father is Jewish; he's secular). Jeremy Allen White (star in "The Bear") plays Jeff Horwitz.

I haven't yet confirmed Horwitz is Jewish. Probably he is, but Horwitz doesn't talk about his parents, and I haven't found a public record or article stating if he's Jewish or not.

Aaron Sorkin, 65, wrote and directed "The Social Reckoning." He also wrote "The Social Network" (2010) about the early days of Facebook. "The Social Network," overall, praised Zuckerberg.

"Newlyweds"

This comedy/drama series premiers Friday, Oct. 23 at 8:30 p.m. on NBC. Tea Leoni and Tim Daly, who are married in real life, play a "free-spirited woman" and a "buttoned up professor" who marry after a whirlwind courtship. **Jamie Lee Curtis**, 67, liked the series premise so much that she became a producer of the show and she'll appear now-and-again in a guest role.

The series was created by **Gail Lerner**, 75, and her husband, Colin Campbell, also 75. They have a big roster of writing for, and producing, sit-coms. But I was most taken by a 1999 Jewish paper article about their tragedy and how a big Jewish community did what they could to help them. Their 17-year-old daughter and their 14-year-old son were killed by a car driven by a drunk driver; Gail and Colin were injured.

Campbell is not Jewish but was very happy that his children were raised Jewish. He belongs to Lerner's synagogue.

"Wonka's The Golden Ticket"

TV Guide actually got out fangs and took on Netflix, writing about a new Wonka series that premiered on Sept. 23: "Even though it nearly murders and permanently disfigures children, Wonka's Chocolate Factory from "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" is still somehow seen as a world of pure imagination. Now it's a world of IP plundering as Netflix creates a reality competition program centered on the popular book and films. And in an icky move, the show uses the voice of the late **Gene Wilder** (star of 1971's "Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory"), recreated by artificial intelligence, after getting permission from his estate."

My take: Gene Wilder was Jewish (as is **Timothee Chalamet**, the most recent Wonka). I hope that the Wilder estate will give the AI royalties to ovarian cancer charities. That was the disease that killed **Gilda Radnor**, Wilder's wife. Like her husband, she was a great comedian.

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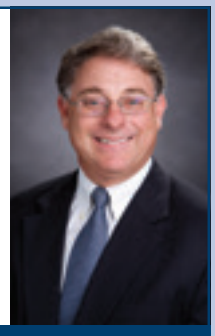
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Searching the world for the Jewish song

By Brian Simon

Abraham Zvi Idelsohn had a monumental challenge. A composer, researcher and music teacher, he had been tapped to summon the musical notes and words that would convey the joy and enthusiasm of Jews in Jerusalem after the British took over the city from Ottoman rule.



■ Brian Simon

General Edmund Allenby's forces captured Jerusalem in December 1917. The previous month, the Balfour Declaration offered British support for the idea of Jewish nation. Now, the Jewish community was planning a concert.

"All eyes turned to Idelsohn," wrote musicologist Eliyahu HaCohen, "in hope that he would provide the ultimate song to express the events and the public emotion."

About Abraham Zvi Idelsohn

Idelsohn was born in Latvia in 1882. He learned to love *zemirot* (Shabbat hymns) and Jewish folk songs from his father, a butcher who was also a prayer leader in their community. Idelsohn was sent to yeshivas in Lithuania and said he felt an "inner call for music" that he would pursue all over the world. At 17, he went to Koenigsberg, Russia to study under Edward Birnbaum. The young man was unimpressed.

"I found him steeped in German music, his voice insignificant, his *chanzanuth* unappealing and not Jewish." He soon left for London but couldn't afford to stay, so he went back home to study under his former teacher. Asked how he could go back to a place that was known to be so hostile to Jews, Idelsohn responded, "I would rather be with my brothers even in a place like Russia than to live in a free country like England and assimilate."

Idelsohn was the guy in the synagogue for whom nothing is Jewish enough. He traveled the world in search "of a place to live a genuine Jewish life and sing the Jewish song." He left Russia to study and work in Germany. After stops at three different cities, he left Germany for South Africa. Then, he left South Africa for Jerusalem.

It was there that Idelsohn found diverse Jewish communities from all over the world and began to collect their traditional songs. He was particularly interested in the Middle Eastern communities from Morocco, Yemen, Persia, Egypt and Iraq. Their music had not been corrupted by European influence and, he believed, was closer to the ancient Hebrew roots.

"The Jewish song is a folk-art created by the people. It has no art-song and individual composers."

"The folk tunes of the Jews in all corners of the world," he wrote, "all derive from a single source and all possess a common foundation."

He called his first volume "The Thesaurus of Hebrew Oriental Melodies." I think it's funny he called it a thesaurus. To me, it suggests a book that shows you all the different ways to sing *Adon Olam*, but no. It was more like a catalog, documenting the folk music of various communities.

A man of many contradictions.

Idelsohn was a European Jewish musician who believed all Ashkenazi Jewish music had been corrupted by the



influence of Europe. He rejected Jewish assimilation but finished his career in Cincinnati and composed Shabbat services for four part choir and organ accompaniment, "according to Reform ritual." And although he celebrated the British victory in WWI, he served in the opposing army in the trenches of Gaza.

Idelsohn was first conscripted into the Turkish army as a hospital clerk and then served as a bandmaster. A bandmaster — a job that I am not making up — was responsible for playing music in the trenches to keep up the spirits of the soldiers while enemy forces were firing machine guns and cannons at them. During the Battles of Gaza in 1917, bandmasters were often asked to put down their instruments and carry the dead and wounded back from the trenches.

After the Turkish army was defeated, Idelsohn was happy to celebrate British victory. He remembered a *nigun*, a wordless song, from a Ukrainian community which had relocated to Jerusalem. He sped up the tempo a little bit and added words inspired by Psalm 118, "Let us rejoice." In Hebrew, *hava nagila*.

The song's lyrics

It's fun to imagine the song if Idelsohn had left it as a *nigun*. "Yi di, Yi di di Di, di, Yi di di Di di …" Come to think of it, how many of us really know the words anyway? I get more than a few of them wrong myself.

There is an unanswerable question about whether Idelsohn alone deserves credit for the lyrics. One of his students, Moshe Nathanson, claimed he suggested the words while working on an assignment. Perhaps the answer lies in one of Idelsohn's deeply held convictions: "The Jewish song is a folk-art created by the people. It has no art-song and individual composers."

So, every time we dance the hora, and we butcher the words — or just "Yi-Dee-Di" our way through it — we are honoring the folk art of our people. And paying unknowing tribute to the guy who traveled the world in search of a genuine Jewish life and the Jewish song.





Holocaust Museum & Janet G. and Harvey D. Cohen Education Center
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The Luncheon

Bringing education, advocacy and inspiration together

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

We are beginning to see our seasonal residents coming back for the winter, and we couldn't be more excited for the upcoming busy season! Part of our plans include our annual Luncheon benefit event. Scheduled this year for Wednesday, Dec. 2, at Vineyards Country Club, The Luncheon helps us raise the vital funds needed to support our free student programs.



■ Erin Blankenship

Last year, The Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center's resources impacted over 90,000 Southwest Florida students. This year, we are on track to impact over 100,000! Funds raised at the Luncheon and Triumph events help us keep those resources, including our field trips, free to every student.

Tessa Veksler

We are thrilled to host Tessa Veksler at The Luncheon this year! Tessa is a public speaker, content creator and Jewish advocate. Originally from the San Francisco Bay Area, she is a 2024 graduate of the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), where she earned her B.A. in Political Science and Communication. Tessa began her higher education journey by spending a year in Israel, where she studied Judaics at Bar-Ilan University while also completing her first year of UCSB coursework.



Tessa Veksler

Living through Operation Guardian of the Walls shaped her passion for Israel advocacy and combating antisemitism, which she carried into her leadership roles at UCSB. She went on to serve in multiple fellowships, including ICC's prestigious Geller Fellowship, and spent three years in student government, culminating in her term as UCSB's Student Body President. In May 2024, she made history as the first Shabbat-observant Associated Students President, representing more than 24,000 students.

In the wake of Oct. 7, after facing targeted harassment and antisemitism, Tessa chose to speak out bravely about her experiences, inspiring Jewish communities nationwide to stand strong against hate.

With millions of people engaging with her Instagram content, Tessa has become a leading Jewish and Zionist voice on social media. Her advocacy has earned her numerous recognitions, including invitations to the White House and the United Nations, UCSB's University Service Award, and a recent feature in the documentary "October 8."



Students at the Holocaust Museum

Today, alongside her work in public relations at Hiltzik Strategies in New York City, Tessa travels nationwide sharing her message of resilience, empowerment, and activism.

Dylan Hacker

Guests will also hear from award-winning teacher Dylan Hacker, who uses materials from the Museum and lessons from the Holocaust in his classroom every day. It will be an opportunity to hear the impact that Holocaust education has on the next generation of students.

If you've never attended The Luncheon, this year is promising to be our best yet.

More than a midday meal, co-chairs Nina Diamond and Marjie Zucker have planned every detail of the event to be an experience that blends connection, elegance and purpose.

Sponsorships are still available and tickets are now on sale on our website: hmcec.org.

THANK YOU

To my friends at the Jewish Federation, the Community Free Synagogue, and all others who have heard me telling (and kvetching) and generally going on about my declining cardiac health for longer than the past year.

During the week of August 3rd I received a new aortic valve and a pacemaker and after I complete a period of cardiac rehabilitation, I should be myself again.

I am deeply grateful to all of you for your kind words of support, for including me in your prayers, and for saying my name for *mesheberach* during services.

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Victor Gold

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"Movies That Matter" kicks off GenShoah programs

By Ida Margolis and Shelley Lieb

"Movies that Matter: The Steve Brazina Memorial Human Rights Film Series" is now in its 9th year. Steve Brazina was known in our area as a film maven (expert). He was a firm believer in the impact of documentary films and steered GenShoah to present thoughtful documentaries to its members and the general public.

In the early days of GenShoah SWFL, Steve served as program chair and previewed a great many films in order to select the best Holocaust-related films to show for the group. He also previewed many films on human rights and social justice topics.



Steve Brazina

In 2018, he and the chair of GenShoah at the time, Ida Margolis, discussed the power of these films and their topics. They researched and found that there was a Human Rights Film Network. They approached a number of individuals in Naples about showcasing such films, and a committee was formed in 2018. The film series was named "Movies that Matter," and it was agreed that the mission would be: To educate, engage and facilitate discussion around human rights' topics through the use of film.

A number of local organizations gave support to the film series, including the Jewish Community Relations Council and Temple Shalom. The films in 2018 included "John Lewis: Get in the Way," "I Am Jane Doe," and "Bending the Arc." It was agreed that a panel of individuals who were knowledgeable in the topic of the film would host a discussion and answer questions after each film.



Ida Margolis and Shelley Leib

The first year, the films were shown at the Paragon Theater. This continued until the COVID-19 pandemic, at which point individuals were sent links to the film and the panel discussion was held via Zoom. Now, the films are shown in the Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center.

Sadly, in 2022, Steve Brazina passed away. Subsequently, the film series was renamed in his memory. All of the films have a connection to the Holocaust and have generated fascinating discussions and motivate viewers to learn more about the issue and do something positive.

For example: Last year, "Free For All: The Public Library" was shown. The follow-up panel included a local retired school librarian and the president of Friends of the Library, an organization that provides programs and extra funds to the Collier County Public Library.

Films for 2026

Through a partnership with our local PBS station, WGCU, "Movies that Matter" (MTM) 2026 is scheduled Oct. 21 and 28, 2 p.m., at the Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center. Sponsorships and donations are welcome, and there is no admission charge. Additional details are outlined below. Submit your RSVP at hmcec.org.

Wednesday, Oct. 21
"Possible Selves: Overcoming the Odds in Foster Care" is an intimate documentary that follows two L.A. teenagers, Alex and Mia, as they navigate the foster care system and struggle to pursue college dreams as their lives are torn between biological and foster families.

Wednesday, Oct. 28
"Black and Jewish America: An Interwoven History," Episode Three: "The Grand Alliance" is part of a series tracing the rich, complex relationship between Black and Jewish Americans. Hosted by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., episode three recalls the 1950s and 60s — from Brown v. Board of Education to Freedom Summer — when Jews were key allies in the Black-led Civil Rights Movement. The film examines how economic differences, domestic race and class realities, and international conflicts began to strain the alliance.



2025 Kristallnacht candle lighters Mark Livstone, Jane Livstone and Skylar Gephart

Save the date: Sunday, Nov. 8
We are excited to share an additional GenShoah program that is coming up soon: the **Annual Kristallnacht Commemoration**. Presented by Catholic-Jewish Dialogue, with GenShoah as co-sponsor, this program involves the diverse members of our community in learning about this significant event of Holocaust history. Join us Sunday, Nov. 8, 2:30 p.m., at St. Williams Church. Submit your RSVP at jewishnaples.org.

About GenShoah SWFL

GenShoah SWFL is proud to be an affinity group of the Museum. Our mission is: promoting Holocaust education and human rights, preserving the history and memories of the Holocaust, connecting descendants of Holocaust survivors with one another, and supporting the HMCEC.

Most 2G programs are open to the general community. Anyone interested in the mission of GenShoah, who would like more information or receive the no cost e-newsletter containing future programs, contact genshoahswfl@hmcec.org.

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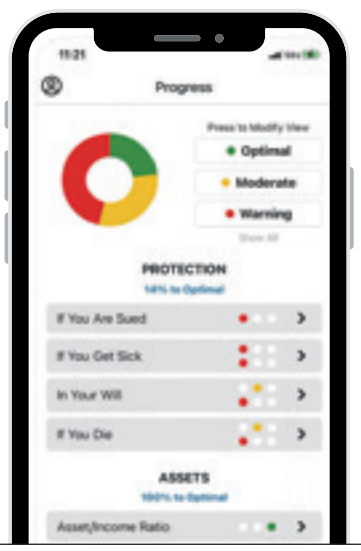


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Candle lighting times:

October 2: 6:54 p.m.
October 9: 6:47 p.m.
October 16: 6:40 p.m.
October 23: 6:34 p.m.
October 30: 6:28 p.m.



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Hadassah responds with action

By Shelley Einhorn, President Collier/Lee Chapter of Hadassah


Shelley Einhorn

As members of Hadassah, we are guided by the values of healing, justice, compassion and *tikkun olam*, repairing the world.

These values are especially important at a time when antisemitism is on the rise in our country and around the world. Antisemitism is more than prejudice against Jews; it is a threat to the principles of respect, dignity and inclusion that strengthen our communities. When hatred targets one group, it affects us all.

For more than a century, Hadassah has responded to challenges not with fear, but with action. We educate, advocate, build bridges and support Israel while promoting health, healing and understanding. Through our hospitals, youth programs, advocacy efforts and community outreach, we demonstrate the Jewish values that have always been at the heart of our organization.

Today, each of us has a role to play. We can speak out against antisemitism, share our stories, educate others and stand proudly as Jewish women and allies. By doing so, we honor Hadassah's mission and help create a world where respect triumphs over hatred and understanding over ignorance.

Together, we can ensure that Hadassah remains not only a force for healing and hope, but also a strong voice against antisemitism wherever it appears.

Looking Ahead

Be sure to mark your calendar for these upcoming programs and events.

Thursday, Oct. 15
Join via Zoom at noon, featuring Joan Elegant, author of "Displaced Persons," a prize winning collection of short stories.

Monday, Nov. 16
Legacy and Laughter – Join us for a presentation by a planned giving and estates speaker, along with a luncheon and delightful magician's show.

Sunday, Dec. 13
Chapter recognition of 2026 donors – The entire chapter is invited to a Naples country club.

Wednesday, Jan. 13, 2027
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New Year's Greetings

L'Shana Tova

Paula & Ira Zlatkin

Happy New Year!

The Gribin Family

Shana Tova

Julia Perry

L'Shana Tova

Gail Margolis & Jerry Weber

Happy New Year!

Claire Goldhagen

Shana Tova

Rabbi Nicole Luna, Joe Bord, Zara & Iris

Happy New Year

Carolyn Gora & Misha

Have a Sweet New Year

Phyllis & Berny Aronson

Shana Tova

Richard & Joan Davis & Family

The Start of the New Year

May the sounds of the shofar signal peace & unity for Israel & good health & contentment in our lives.

Marsha & Mike Kistler

Shana Tova

Stan & Rivanne Freeman & Family

L'Shana Tova

Dr. David & Esta Berger

Happy New Year

Jodi Cohen

Shana Tova

Stephen & Vicki Zellner

Shana Tova

Lisa & Daniel Bendetowicz

Happy New Year!

Howard Parker

The Start of the New

May the sounds of the
signal peace & unity fo
& good health & conte
in our lives.

Karen & Marc Adelstein

Shana Tova

Hal & Pam Arkin & Family

L'Shana Tova

Kleiman Family

Have a Sweet New Year

Judith Satin & Paula Satin-Shein

L'Shana Tova

Sheila & Merlin Marquardt

Have a New

Diane & Rich

L'Shana Tova

Shirley Lockenbach

L'Shana Tova

Anne & David Joffe

Happy New Year!

Bill & Andi Horowitz

Shana Tova

The Olitsky Family

Shana Tova

Anita & Bob Hazard

from Your Community

Shana Tova

Debbie Sanford & Lee Strauss

L'Shana Tova

Marty Freling

Shana Tova

Chuck & Betty Massie & Family

Shana Tova

Jeanette & Bob Burke

Happy New Year!

Robert & Bette Batson

Shana Tova

Helene & Jorge Glocer

The Start of the New Year

May the sounds of the shofar signal peace & unity for Israel & good health & contentment in our lives.

Naomi Bloom

Shana Tova

Lydia Gattanell

L'Shana Tova

Judy & George Litman

Happy New Year!

The Fulmer Family

L'Shana Tova

The Fulmer Family

Happy New Year

Karin Fine



L'Shana Tova

Barbara (Bo) & Marshall Lieberman

Shana Tova

Phyllis & Arthur Ohlstein & Family

L'Shana Tova

Tobi Mackler & Steven Fischer

Sweet Year

hard Sobel

Shana Tova

Linda Sweet & Family

Have a Sweet New Year

Stephen & Deborah Brown

L'Shana Tova

Karol & Steven Karpf

Shana Tova

Doreen Kostel & Jack Psiris



Happy New Year!

Martha & Richard Samuel

Shana Tova

Stephanie Levine

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA (833) 547-7935

History is good for the entire community

By Marina Berkovich, JHSSWF President

During our summer travels to various parts of Africa, my husband and I pondered about the places that had thriving Jewish communities (at one time or another) until they did not.


Marina Berkovich

The Mauritius Jewish community has only 200 members; they are ex-pat Canadians, French and South Africans. More than 25% of South African Jews live in Cape Town, with more than 80% of them stemming from Lithuanian ancestry.

In the increasingly antisemitic anti-Israel atmosphere of our post-Oct. 7 world, it is no longer advisable for South African Jews to wear symbols of religion such as kippah or the Star of David. Then again, the general advisory is that it is mostly on college campuses, which now double as the battlefields of pro-Palestinian aggression; we did not visit those.

In private conversations with several Cape Towners, we were told that Cape Town is now the safest and Johannesburg the least safe city for the South African Jews.

In Walvis Bay, Namibia, there was an abandoned development: Shalom Gardens. From what we gathered, it may have been by Jewish developers. Only about 100 Jews reside in Namibia in the capital city of Windhoek. Cape Verde's Jewish community has dwindled to zero.

Casablanca has two synagogues at the *medina* (market). One of them, the blue door one, was established in 1895. We were able to walk into and light candles with its acting rabbi, Rabbi Haim Pinto, the descendant of the founder. There are only a handful of Jews living in Mellah, the formerly vibrant vast Jewish section. The other synagogue was heavily guarded by Moroccan soldiers who did not speak English and would not let us in.

In the Canary Islands, where numerous conversos were settling after the Alhambra Decree of 1492, the Inquisition had a go in 1504. The synagogue of Las Palmas and Chabad of Tenerife support whatever Jewish community is there; however, being part of Spain, with its extreme pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel tendencies, Jews are not safe there now.

History teaches us many valuable lessons. Preserving local Jewish history has become our mission, because we know that we all live through various adversities in each generation.

Southwest Florida Jewish Pioneers Series

Over the last 10 years, the Jewish Historical Society of Southwest Florida has been engaged in information gathering about the fairly recent, regional Jewish history, along with bringing awareness to the many Jewish individuals and families who helped establish this region and its now thriving Jewish communities.

As part of that project, we have produced nearly 30 short and full-length documentary films in the Southwest Florida Jewish Pioneers Series, shining light on some aspects of local importance.

Local Jewish History Film Festival

October brings the next Annual Local Jewish History Film Festival (LJHFF) with several documentary films about the individuals who helped form and shape the local Jewish community by practicing what they did/do extremely well: leading by example.

On Thursday, Oct. 29, 2 p.m., we begin with "Bill Barnett – Mayor with a Heart," a documentary about Naples' very popular four-time mayor. Not-to-be missed are the opening remarks from Naples' very own unique historian, Dr. Lois Bolin, who will enlighten the audience about the mayors of the past.

Come to explore and learn. Come to share your stories.

Whatever your personal knowledge or involvement with the local Jewish community, we encourage you to attend our events and find out or reinforce the tidbits of local Jewish experience and joint them more cohesively.

We appreciate your continuing support of our mission throughout the year. Sign up for our mailing list at jhsswf.org. Our telephone number is 833-347-7935 (833-JHS-SWFL). Kindly direct all correspondence, including contributions and renewals to: The Jewish Historical Society of Southwest Florida, P.O. Box #10075, Naples, Florida 34101.

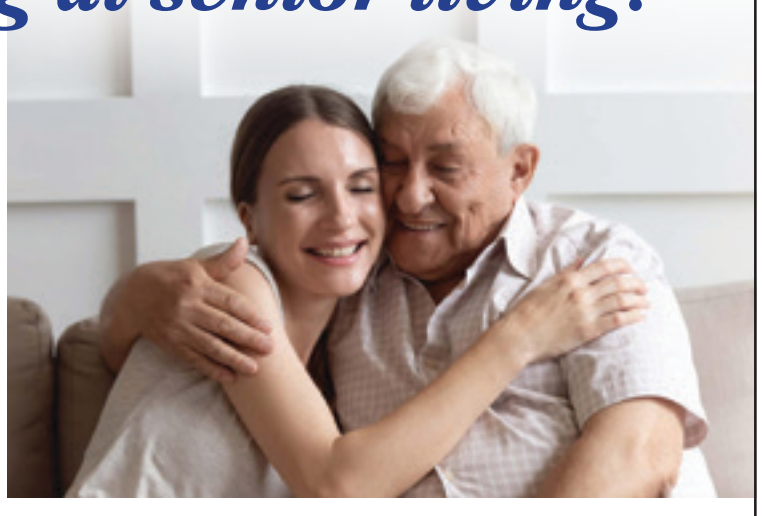
The Jewish Historical Society of Southwest Florida is a section 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Contributions are deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

ADVERTORIAL

"When should we start looking at senior living?"

The answer is rarely tied to one dramatic event. More often, the need develops gradually through small changes that affect safety, health, and quality of life.

The best time to explore senior living is ***before*** a crisis occurs, when there's time to compare options and make thoughtful, informed decisions. Don't wait for a fall, diagnosis, or caregiver emergency. Careful evaluation of senior living options should be considered proactive lifestyle decision, not a last resort.



ARE ANY OF THESE HAPPENING?

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- Bathing
- Housekeeping
- Dressing
- Meal Prep
- Medication management

INCREASING SAFETY CONCERNS
- Getting lost
- Unsafe driving
- Falls
- Leaving the stove or water on

MEMORY LOSS THAT AFFECTS DAILY LIFE
- Unpaid bills
- Poor judgment
- Confusion
- Missed medications / appointments

DECLINING NUTRITION AND PERSONAL CARE
- Weight loss
- Poor grooming
- Poor hygiene
- Spoiled food
- Wearing the same clothing

SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS
- Stopped social activities
- Rarely goes out
- Appears withdrawn or depressed

CAREGIVER BURNOUT
- Physical exhaustion
- Constant worry
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Emotional stress

The goal of senior living is not to take away independence, but rather to preserve it by providing the right level of support, safety, socialization, and peace of mind.

Additionally, seniors who move earlier often enjoy increased socialization, better nutrition, reduced household maintenance, enhanced safety, access to future care if needed, and overall greater peace of mind.

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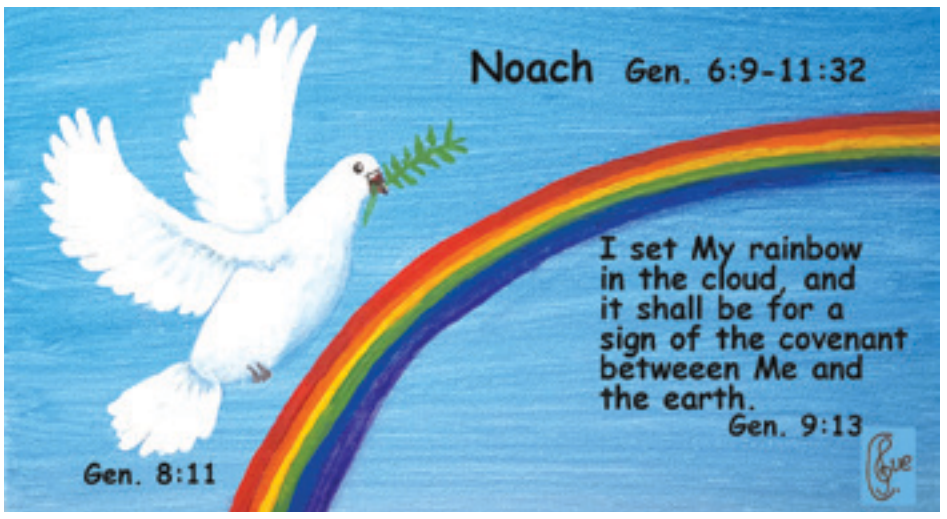
CHAVURAT SHALOM OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA
chavuratshalom@gmail.com

Celebrating Sukkot through Torah and community

By Cheryl Fulmer, Ellen Feingold and Marcia Rudin

When October comes, those of us in Southwest Florida are gently reminded that the weather is changing from the hot, humid days of summer to the more temperate days of what passes here for autumn. And in October, we Jews celebrate the holiday of Sukkot — this year beginning at nightfall on Friday, Sept. 25 and ending at nightfall on Friday, Oct. 2.

During Sukkot, we are commanded to dwell in huts, temporary structures mimicking those our ancestors lived in during their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness before entering the Promised Land.



Credit – Sue Citrenbaum

In modern-day Israel, Sukkot signals the change to the rainy season. (Israel is dependent on the rains that fall typically from October to April.)

This Jewish year, 5787, Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah fall on Oct. 2 through 4. And so, we will restart reading the Torah from the beginning, with the first book, Genesis, and the first parsha, Parshat Beresheit, on Oct. 9. Happy Torah study to everyone!

Because Chavurat Shalom is a lay-led fellowship, our Shabbat Torah portions are chanted via shared screen in our Zoom services, frequently by the grandson of members Michael and Ellen Feingold, followed by brief discussions among those at the service.

Torah discussions

During our season, we often have an hour on Tuesday nights called Torah Talk, which is led by one of our members as we explore that week's portion in more depth. If a Torah Talk is not scheduled via Zoom, a longer discussion is held during the Shabbat service after that portion is chanted.

These procedures mean our members must devote time and thought to their preparations, so those who participate are enriched by reading and studying the Torah portion themselves rather than relying on rabbis or other commentators. We all benefit greatly from this.

Our Shabbat service Torah discussions are enriched by artwork based on that week's portion, presented by our member Sue Citrenbaum. She bases her paintings on the message of that portion.

Shown here is a sample of her work illustrating Genesis 9:13, the Noah story. "I set My rainbow in the cloud and it shall be for a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth" (Genesis 6:9-11:32).

We thank Sue for her wonderful weekly artistic contributions!

Recurring programs

Our chavurah holds Friday night Shabbat services every week throughout the year at 7:30 p.m. Eastern time. 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.

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 or check out our website: chavuratshalomofswflorida.org.

Did you know?

A rainbow is an optical phenomenon caused by refraction, internal reflection and dispersion of light in water droplets resulting in a continuous spectrum of light appearing in the sky. The rainbow takes the form of a multicolored circular arc.

Rainbows caused by sunlight always appear in the section of sky directly opposite the sun.

Although humans perceive a rainbow to be divided into distinct bands of color, black-and-white photographs reveal that rainbows are actually one continuous spectrum of colors shading into each other.

Theodoric of Freiburg, a 14th century German monk, first explained the scientific cause of rainbows in 1304.

"Over the Rainbow," also known as "Somewhere Over the Rainbow," is a ballad written by Harold Arlen with lyrics by Yip Harburg, both Jewish, of course. It was written for the 1939 film, "The Wizard of Oz," and sung by actress Judy Garland.

Many artists have crafted their own version of the song, "Over the Rainbow," but one of the most popular was performed on the ukulele by Hawaiian singer Israel Kamakawio'ole.



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



Shabbat candle lighting on our first Shabbat B'kef of the year



Our Pre-K/K class on their first day of Religious School

What a wonderful beginning to our Religious School year!

Our school continues to grow, and with that growth comes so much energy, excitement and joy. One of my favorite parts of the week is walking through our classrooms and simply listening. I hear Hebrew and prayers being practiced, Jewish songs being sung, games being played, reading, conversations — and lots of laughter.

Learning doesn't always have to be quiet. Sometimes the sound of learning is singing, playing, reading, asking questions and laughing together. It is a joy to hear our building full of those sounds and watching our students build friendships and connections while growing in their Jewish knowledge and identity.

This year, we are also blessed to celebrate several of our students becoming B'nei Mitzvah at Temple Judea. Becoming a bar or bat mitzvah is about much more than preparing for one special day. Our students have been attending services, working with Rabbi Arias on their Torah portions and prayers, and finding meaningful ways to put Jewish values into action through their mitzvah projects.

Mia's Braided Blessings

One of our students, Darbee, has created a beautiful project called Mia's Braided Blessings: Sharing Challah, Kindness and Mia's Love.

Darbee's project honors the memory of her grandmother, Mia, by continuing her legacy of kindness, generosity and love. Darbee is baking and delivering homemade challah to elderly community members, families experiencing hardship and others who could use some extra warmth and connection.

The mitzvah of *Hafrashat Challah* is traditionally a special opportunity to pray for healing, peace and blessings. Darbee is dedicating this mitzvah לעילוי נשמת *l'ilui nishmat* for the elevation of the soul of her grandmother, Leah bat Shmeril (Mia).

Our greater Jewish community can be part of this mitzvah! Please use the QR code included with this article to nominate an individual or family in our area who would appreciate receiving Darbee's homemade challahs.

Wishing and creating merits

On Rosh Hashanah, many of us enjoyed the *rimon*, the pomegranate, and recited: שירבו זכויותינו כרימון *Sheyirbu zechuyoteinu karimon* May our merits be as numerous as the seeds of a pomegranate.

As we begin this new year, may we not only wish for many merits, but create them — through mitzvot, kindness, generosity and caring for one another. May our children continue to learn and grow, and may they inspire all of us to add a few more "seeds" of goodness to our community and our world.

שנה טובה ומתוקה
Shanah Tovah U'Metukah!

Darbee's mitzvah project, Mia's Braided Blessings





TEMPLE JUDEA PRESCHOOL
Fort Myers
Suki Kelly, Preschool Director

Roots & Wings Preschool is off to a wonderful start to the school year! September was filled with excitement, learning and special moments as our children settled into their classrooms and began building new friendships.

The children had a wonderful time learning about Rosh Hashanah, exploring the meaning and traditions of the holiday through songs, stories, hands-on activities and, of course, some yummy holiday foods! It was a beautiful way to welcome the Jewish New Year and begin our year together as a school community.

Our Pre-K children have also started a very special weekly tradition: making challah for our school! Each week, the children have the opportunity to measure ingredients, mix, knead, braid and bake their own challah. This hands-on experience is a wonderful learning opportunity that incorporates math, science, sensory exploration, teamwork and Jewish traditions. We love having our parent volunteers join us each week to help the children with this special activity, and we are so grateful for their support and involvement!

September also marked an especially exciting milestone as we celebrated our first month as Roots & Wings Preschool! While our name is new, our commitment to providing a loving, nurturing and engaging preschool experience remains stronger than ever. We are so grateful to our families and community for embracing our new name and joining us as we continue to grow.

October is going to be another exciting month!

We are thrilled to host our Touch-a-Truck Rebranding Celebration on Oct. 25, from 1 to 3 p.m. This free community event is our way of celebrating Roots & Wings Preschool and welcoming our friends, families, neighbors and community members to our school. Everyone is welcome to attend!

We are also excited to announce that we have limited spots available in our Three's and Pre-K classes. If you or someone you know is looking for a warm and nurturing preschool family, we would love to meet you! Please call or email us to schedule a tour and see what makes Roots & Wings Preschool so special.

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

We are so excited to welcome our families back for another wonderful year of learning and community. We kicked off with a fantastic Welcome Back Breakfast featuring homemade pancakes, waffles with toppings, and plenty of tasty sides to bring everyone together.

Students headed into their classrooms to meet their teachers and classmates, get familiar with routines, responsibilities and classroom expectations, and dive into some fun projects. Then, we gathered in the sanctuary for High Holiday music rehearsal with Cantor Marshall Portnoy. The students learned and practiced many songs they'll be singing during our Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services.

Our first Parent Education Breakfast of the year focused on safety and security, paired with a delicious homemade Israeli breakfast prepared by two of our Religious School parents, including shakshuka and other wonderful Israeli foods. Parents learned about the safety procedures we have put into action, including safety shades, blackout blinds, evacuation routes and drills that will be implemented throughout the year. Rabbi Luna also took our parents on a tour of the building to review exits and safety protocols.



To bring in some holiday sweetness, our students participated in a challah and honey tasting. They sampled different flavored honeys, talked about what they liked and didn't like, and learned more about the meaning behind this sweet High Holiday tradition.

It has been a wonderful and successful beginning to our year, and we are looking forward to continuing the excitement as we prepare for our High Holiday services.

Finally, a big Mazel Tov to Zara Luna Board and Asher Gunzenhauser on becoming B'nai Mitzvah. We wish them and their families continued joy, pride and many blessings!



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Email: tehila@tjswfl.org www.tjswfl.org/religious-school 239-237-2006

After the High Holidays

The holiness of rest

By Cantor Barry Butensky



■ Cantor Barry Butensky

The gates of repentance close, the shofar is silent, and the sukkah is still weeks away. For many of us, the stretch between Yom Kippur and Sukkot is the most neglected season of the Jewish year — a spiritual afterthought, a blank space on the calendar, but it is one of the most important stretches of time we are given.

We arrive at this moment exhausted. The month of Elul was a crescendo of preparation: the daily shofar, the selichot, the soul-searching that intensified with each passing day. Then came Rosh Hashanah, two days of awe and renewal, followed by the Ten Days of Repentance, culminating in Yom Kippur: 25 hours of fasting, prayer and standing before the One who knows us completely. By the time we break the fast, we have spent nearly six weeks in a state of heightened spiritual intensity.

Then, almost immediately, we are told to rest.

The Torah commands it plainly: "Six days you shall work, and on the seventh day you shall rest" (Exodus 20:9-10). Shabbat is not a reward for a job well done. It is the architecture of creation itself. G-d created the world in six days and rested on the seventh — not because G-d was tired, but because rest is the point. The world was not complete until it included cessation. Holiness does not reside only in striving; it resides in stopping.

In the Talmud, the rabbis teach that Shabbat is a taste of the World to Come, when all labor will cease and all will be at peace. They also understood that human beings cannot sustain intensity indefinitely. The soul, like the body, has a breaking point. A bow that is always strung will snap.

This is why the tradition gives us not just Shabbat, but a whole architecture of rest. The festivals are called *Mo'adim*, appointed times, and each one carries its own character of rest. Yom Kippur is the most austere: a fast, a day of affliction, a day when we stand barefoot and stripped of all pretenses. But the very next day, we are commanded to eat.

Holiness does not reside only in striving; it resides in stopping.

The Mishnah in Ta'anit teaches that the day after Yom Kippur is itself a festival, a *Yom Tov*, because the joy of forgiveness must be embodied, not merely felt. We do not go from the holiest day of the year straight back to the grind. We go from the holiest day to a day of eating and drinking, of gratitude and relief.

Then, there is the longer pause that follows. Between Yom Kippur and Sukkot, there is no major festival, no major fast. There is simply time. Time to digest what we have experienced. Time to let the words of the prayers settle into our bones. Time to notice what has changed and what hasn't. The tradition does not rush us from one peak to the next. It gives us a valley, a place to walk slowly, to breathe, to be ordinary again.

This is the holiness of the in-between. We tend to think of holiness as something that happens on the mountaintop, but the rabbis teach that G-d is found in the ordinary as well. The Talmud records a debate about where the Divine Presence dwells, and one of the answers is striking: "In the place where people are." Not in the synagogue alone, not in the study hall alone, but wherever human beings are living their lives.

My blessing for you in these weeks is to not rush to fill the space. Let it be empty for a while. The High Holidays asked you to look inward with fierce honesty. Now the tradition asks you to look outward with gentle curiosity — to re-enter the world not as a penitent, but as a person who has been forgiven and is ready to live.

The shofar has sounded its final blast. The gates have closed, but they have closed behind you, not against you. You are on the other side now. Rest. The sukkah will come soon enough, and with it, the joy of dwelling in the shade of the Divine. But first, breathe.

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

Simchas Torah: Letting go

By Rabbi Yitzchok Minkowicz



■ Rabbi Yitzchok Minkowicz

The happiness of the Sukkos holiday comes to a climax on its last two days: the holidays of Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah. On these days, we rejoice exuberantly, letting all limitations fall away as we hold a Torah scroll in our arms and dance jubilantly.

It's interesting. Many who will not attend a synagogue throughout the year come on Simchas Torah and celebrate. They see nothing hypocritical in taking a participatory role in the rejoicing, even though they previously showed little identification with the Torah.

The key to understanding this phenomenon is the concept that we dance with the Torah while it is closed. Our happiness on Simchas Torah is not a result of our comprehension of its intellectual qualities, but rather because of our bond with its essence, as the *Zohar* teaches, "Israel, the Torah, and the Holy One, blessed be He, are one." This unity comes to the fore on Simchas Torah.

This level of connection surpasses the conceptual framework of any mortal, even the most sophisticated. On the contrary, the way to relate to it is not through intellectual sophistication, but through letting go, through opening oneself up to something higher. On this level, the common person and the scholar are equal. Indeed, perhaps the common person possesses an advantage because he has less inner impediments holding him back from rejoicing fully.

May the joy of Sukkos and Simchas Torah lead to a year of happiness and well-being in all matters, including the greatest happiness, the coming of *Mashiach*.

Our happiness on Simchas Torah is not a result of our comprehension of its intellectual qualities …

Rabbi Yitzchok Minkowicz serves at Chabad Lubavitch of Southwest Florida.

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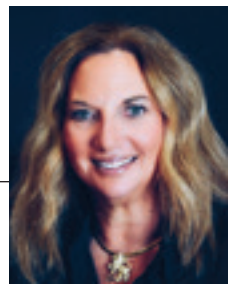
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1736550 BP

The power of showing up

FROM THE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



■ Debbie Sanford

There are moments when simply showing up matters.

Showing up for a friend who is struggling. Showing up at synagogue. Showing up for a community program. Showing up when someone needs help. And sometimes, showing up because standing together sends a message all its own.

As we enter 5787 and move through the High Holiday season, we are reminded of the importance of reflection, renewal and our responsibility to one another. This year, those lessons feel especially meaningful.

October also brings with it the painful anniversary of Oct. 7. We remember the lives that were lost, the families forever changed and the events that deeply affected Jewish communities in Israel and around the world. We also recognize how much has happened since. And how important it remains that we continue to stand together.

Here in Lee and Charlotte Counties, we have seen again and again what happens when a community shows up.

We show up when our neighbors need food from our pantry. We show up when a Jewish institution needs support. We show up to celebrate Israel, commemorate the Holocaust, welcome a new family, attend a community event, learn about security, help someone experiencing hardship or simply remind one another that none of us stands alone.

Community isn't created by a building, a program or an organization. It is created by people.

It is created every time someone says, **"I'm here."**

As we begin this new Jewish year,



perhaps that can be our challenge to one another: **show up.**

Attend something you have never attended before. Support a Jewish organization that matters to you. Introduce yourself to someone new. Volunteer. Check on an older neighbor. Invite someone to join you at an event. Stand beside someone who needs to know they are not alone.

Especially during challenging times, our strength comes from our willingness to be there for one another.

May 5787 bring peace, healing and strength to Israel, to Jewish communities around the world and to all of us here at home.

And may we never underestimate the power of simply showing up.



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Simcha is joy shared

By Rabbi Nicole Luna



■ Rabbi Nicole Luna

In August, my daughter Zara became bat mitzvah, and I have a newfound appreciation for this *simcha*. Becoming a bar or bat mitzvah means reaching the age of responsibility for the commandments, but the commandments are more than a duty to fulfill. *Simchah shel mitzvah*, joy of the commandment, is at the center of Judaism. Rather than viewing the *mitzvot*, our Jewish commitments, as an obligation or a requirement, a *mitzvah* is an opportunity to reach out to God, experience sacred joy and uplift our souls.

When we light Shabbat candles, our souls brighten. When we engage in Torah study, we feel the joy of discovering new aspects of our tradition. When we undergo *teshuva*, repentance, our worries lighten. When we celebrate a Jewish holiday, we rejoice. Becoming a bat mitzvah means access to this joy, looking forward to fulfilling the *mitzvot* and knowing you are doing it out of your own volition, not just because the family is doing it, or because your mom's the rabbi. Becoming a bat mitzvah means experiencing *simchah shel mitzvah*, the joy of commandment, all your own.

Well, not quite all your own. There is another important element to *simcha*, joy, in Judaism. As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks points out, *simcha*, in the Torah, is never about individuals. It is something you share with others.

For the first year of marriage, rules Deuteronomy 24:5, a husband must "stay at home and bring joy to the wife he has married." Bringing first-fruits to the Temple, we read, "You and the Levite and the stranger living among you shall rejoice in all the good things the Eternal your God has given to you and your household (Deut. 26:11)."

The festivals are days of joy, precisely because they are occasions of collective celebration with not only your family, but with the most vulnerable in biblical society: the stranger, the fatherless and the widow. *Simcha* is joy shared. It encompasses a sense of connection to other people or to God.

Celebrating our daughter's bat mitzvah with our congregation was exhilarating. Our joy came not only in reaching this milestone, but in sharing it with our family and friends. The Talmud teaches, "the world is like a wedding feast" or perhaps like a bat mitzvah celebration. Like in a festive meal, we are here in this world to rejoice. To enjoy food and music, dancing and conversation. To appreciate the presence of family and good friends. To express gratitude for our blessings. And like a feast, it does not last forever.

Like in a festive meal, we are here in this world to rejoice.

The Hebrew book that uses the word *simcha* more than any other, even more than all the other instances combined, is *Kohelet*, Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes posits that our lives are filled with uncertainty. There is no authority over the day of death. And so we read, "I know that there is nothing better for people than to rejoice and do good while they live (*Kohelet* 3:12)."

We are here. We are alive. We get to experience God's blessings all around us: the breath that fills our lungs, the gift of another day of life, occasions to celebrate. Of course, we don't know what the future will bring. Being Jewish has never meant living without fear or uncertainty. Yet we have never lost our capacity to rejoice. When we focus on the moment and open ourselves to be present, to dance, to sing, to give thanks, to become part of something larger, there is joy.

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

We will dance again

By Rabbi David Arias



■ Rabbi David Arias

How can we celebrate and mourn at the same time? Is it possible to cry out of sadness, despair and longing while also crying out of happiness, joy and celebration? These questions were raised a year after Oct. 7, 2023.

The horrendous attack we suffered that day happened not only on a Shabbat morning, but also the day of Simḥat Torah. While thousands of Jews around the world were dancing with a Torah, celebrating a festival that only focuses on the joy that brings us to start reading our sacred book, thousands of Jews were murdered, killed and kidnapped into Gaza.

A year later, on the first anniversary of that fatal day, many Jews asked the question: how can we still celebrate the happiness of this holiday, while also remembering the memory of those who were taken from us? How can we dance and rejoice, while we still have brothers and sisters in captivity?

We dance and we remember.

The question was partially solved last year.

A year ago, on the evening of Simḥat Torah, all the remaining hostages who were still alive were finally released from captivity after two years. The bodies of many more were to be released in the following weeks. Our last brother, Ran Gvilli of blessed memory, was finally brought to his eternal rest in January 2026.

But the fact that reality changed doesn't solve the question. In fact, this is not a new question.

As one of my teachers, Rabbi Professor David Golinkin, teaches in a responsa, the day of Simḥat Torah is marked in many places; it is also the day of Moshe's death, the Yahrzeit of Moses! Therefore, in those places, synagogues read poems that mourn the loss and remember our great leader.

Even more, it is customary, mainly in the Ashkenazi congregations, to recite the *Yizkor*, the memorial prayer, during Simḥat Torah. We dance and we remember.

This is because as Jews we hold life and death, suffering and pain, along with joy and happiness. That is life itself; the fact that we can cry out of pain means we can also let our tears fall because of our gratitude and happiness. It is not only possible to do both, it is our duty to do it.

Simḥat Torah also symbolizes the end of a cycle and the beginning of a new one. Every time we finish a cycle and immediately start a new one, there's always a bittersweet feeling. As I usually say, this last holiday is probably the real beginning of the year, because after this, we start our routines all over again.

We will never be the same people after that fatal day, but it is precisely because of our love for our sacred text, to the Torah, to tradition and our community, that we must celebrate life.

This year even more, knowing that there are no more hostages in Gaza! *Baruch Hashem*. We will dance to remember those who also went to dance and found their death instead. We will dance again.

Rabbi David Arias serves at Temple Judea in Fort Myers.

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Jewish Federation
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When I think of the High Holy Days which just passed, I immediately think of the 613 commandments contained in our holy scriptures. I admit I had to go to Google to find the 613 since I do not have a High Holy Days prayer book at home.

I think of these 613 because, for me, the High Holy Days are about introspection; really examining how my year went and what I plan to change in the coming year. I make a resolution on Rosh Hashana for that change. I assume if I cannot keep that resolution for the 10 days of our holiday, then I'm not really that serious about changing my attitudes or behavior.

I also do this on a daily basis. Before I go to sleep each night, I silently say the She'ma, and I name a minimum of five things for which I am grateful. Then, still silently, I examine the day that just went by. Was I kind? Was I honest? Did I follow my moral compass? Did I do anything which — intentionally or unintentionally — hurt another person? If so, do I need to make amends? To me, amends does not mean just apologizing; it means how will I change (amend) my behavior so I don't do the same thing again.



Now, on the High Holy Days, I go through the 613 individually and really contemplate how each one relates to me. It may relate to me directly. Or it may be that because of my actions or inactions, I am part of society that allowed something negative to occur. To paraphrase Dante, the innermost circle of Hell is reserved for those who saw evil and stood by and did nothing.

Here are the commandments which I tend to focus on:

Not to oppress the weak. Have I stood up for those who cannot stand up for themselves? Have I been a voice for the voiceless?

Not to gossip. This can be a hard one for me. It may not be me directly gossiping, but by listening. It can also be me. What I try to remember here is to think of the person to whom the gossip is about standing right there looking at me. Would I say it then?

Not to bear grudges. I am now pretty good with this. I know that bearing a grudge is akin to pouring boiling water on myself and expecting the other person to burn. It hurts me and they might not even know that I am thinking of them. I think of Ted Lasso (the streaming show) saying, "Be like a goldfish; a goldfish forgets everything after three seconds."

Not to worship false idols. For me, this is not a golden calf. This refers to material things. For example: When I was in India, a very poor woman gave me her only bangles (bracelets). They were plastic and poorly made. Nevertheless, they were all she had. Yet, she gave them to me.

Not to insult or harm anybody with words. I try to mean what I say but not say it in a mean way. I never know anyone's whole story. Therefore, I have no right to judge.

Not to lie. It is easy for me to come up with a "little white lie" to get out of doing something I don't want to do. Instead, I am beginning (just beginning) to say no, and to do so in a kind, tactful manner.

These are some of the things I have thought about during the High Holy Days that have just passed. I don't ask for absolution. I ask for guidance to help me be a better person.

Save the date

The holidays are not over yet, we are looking forward to Simchat Torah and the beautiful, joyous service that Cantor Barry leads on Oct. 3 at 6 p.m.

On Oct. 17, we are hosting a dinner honoring Lea Rosenberg and Steve Hertz for their generous support and dedication to Temple Beth Shalom.

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WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO

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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.

Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties

IF YOU WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION ON BECOMING A LION, FEEL FREE TO CONTACT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DEBBIE SANFORD, AT DEBBIESANFORD@JFEDLCC.ORG

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Fort Myers

(239) 433-0201 • www.tjswfl.org

Temple Judea invites you to join us for services, celebrations and classes in October.

Tuesday, Oct. 13
Nashim Circle – Nashim Circle's events are a beautiful way to come together. Register and review additional information online at tjswfl.org or call our office at 239-433-0201 for more details.

Friday, Oct. 16, 6:30 p.m.
Musical Shabbat with Rabbi Arias

Tuesday, Oct. 20, 6:30 p.m.
"Five Books, Five Voices" – Join Rabbi David Arias in a new series of classes exploring Torah through the eyes of our greatest commentators.

Friday, Oct. 23, 5:30 p.m.
Shabbat B'Kef! RSVP through our website at tjswfl.org.

Sunday, Oct. 25, 1-3 p.m.
Touch-a-Truck – A special activity with Roots & Wings Preschool.

Friday, Oct. 30, 2:30 p.m.
Challah-Ween – Roots & Wings Preschool's party and parade.

Friday, Oct. 30, 6:30 p.m.
Shabbat Services and potluck dinner.

Friday, Oct. 2, 5:30 p.m.
Erev Simḥat Torah and Hachnasat Sefer Torah (Inauguration of the new Torah scroll), dancing with the Torah.

Saturday, Oct. 3, 9:30 a.m.
Shaḥarit Simḥat Torah (everyone gets an Aliyah!), dancing with the Torah. Yizkor service at approximately 11:30 am.



Friday, Nov. 6, 6:30 p.m.
Musical Shabbat with Rabbi David Arias

Regularly scheduled events and programs

Temple Judea continues to accept food donations for the Cadkin Foundation Food Pantry at Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties. There are collection envelopes near the front door for contactless monetary or gift card contributions. Contributions may be mailed. Please call the office to ensure your contribution has been received.

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

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

Back from break

Temple Judea Religious School continues Sunday mornings and Tuesday afternoons.

Starting Oct. 12, Monday Minyan and Breakfast is back! Join us Mondays, 9 a.m., at Temple Judea, followed by breakfast at Sunflower Café.

After Nov. 9, President Jan Klein will be available Monday mornings at Temple Judea from 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.



Nashim Circle's Challah Bake

On Friday, Aug. 28, women from the community gathered at Temple Judea for a special Challah Bake hosted by Nashim Circle in preparation for Rosh Hashanah and the Jewish New Year.

The gathering brought women together to take part in the meaningful tradition of making challah. Participants prepared and braided their own loaves while sharing conversation, laughter and a wonderful sense of community.

A special thank you goes to Betty Rubenstein, who generously shared her cherished challah recipe for the event. Her contribution added a personal touch to a morning centered on tradition, connection, and the joy of preparing for the High Holidays together.

Beyond the baking itself, the gathering offered an opportunity to explore the deeper meaning behind challah and the mitzvah of separating a portion of the dough a tradition that has held a special place in Jewish life for generations.

With Rosh Hashanah approaching, the morning was also a time to reflect on renewal, hope and the sweetness of the year ahead. Coming together around the table made those traditions feel especially meaningful, connecting generations of Jewish practice with new friendships and shared experiences today.

The Challah Bake beautifully reflected the spirit of Nashim Circle, Temple Judea's women's group, which brings women together through Jewish traditions, friendship and meaningful community experiences.

Nashim Circle looks forward to continuing to grow this special community and warmly invites women to its next gathering on Tuesday, Oct. 13, 7 p.m., at Temple Judea.



Stay connected all month long at www.JewishFederationLCC.org.

COMMUNITY FREE SYNAGOGUE
Fort Myers

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

The Community Free Synagogue meets on the Unity Campus (11120 Ranchette Road).

Sabbath Eve dinners
Weekly Sabbath Eve dinners at the synagogue begin at 6 p.m. with worship following at 7 p.m.. The meals are free and open to all. Consider bringing a main course, side, salad, fruit bowl or dessert, but no dairy dishes please. Sabbath eve worship is also available via Zoom. Easy open access is available on the CFS website: fortmyerssynagogue.com.

Torah Study
Torah Study with the rabbi continues each Sabbath from 9:30 to 11 a.m. via Zoom.

Adult Education Series
The rabbi's October Adult Education Series starts at 6:30 p.m. each Wednesday via Zoom. The theme is "Who Are We Anyway," which examines our various names over the millennia, starting with "Hebrews" on Oct. 7.

In subsequent weeks, we will learn about Israelite, Judean, and Jew.

The final class is a discussion of why the franks and salamis are called Hebrew National, not Jewish National and the Reform Rabbi Seminary named Hebrew Union and not Jewish Union.

About CFS
Now in its 22nd year, Community Free Synagogue, led by Rabbi Bruce Diamond, D.D., is an open community resource, welcoming all to its events for free without fundraising solicitations. Its purpose is providing a positive, harmonious and God-centered setting for Jewish worship, study and benevolence.

Although CFS leans toward the traditional, it welcomes and includes all who wish to participate in our community's religious life.

To learn more about CFS, visit the website (fortmyerssynagogue.com.) or email synfree@comcast.net.

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For more information or to place an ad in *L'CHAYIM*, call Bryana Garcia at 239.481.4449 x3, email her at Brigarcia@jfedLCC.org, or visit the *L'CHAYIM* page at www.JewishFederationLCC.org.

TEMPLE BETH EL
Fort Myers

(239) 433-0018 • www.templebethel.com

We are excited to share October highlights and upcoming autumn events at Temple Beth El.

Holiday celebrations
Our holiday celebrations begin a little early on Tuesday, Sept. 29, 6:30 p.m., with the Women's Simcha Circle Dinner in the Sukkah. Enjoy pizza, drinks, a fun group activity and an evening of friendship and connection under the stars. The cost is $10 per person and advance registration is required.

On Thursday, Oct. 1, join us at noon for Lunch & Learn in the Sukkah. Enjoy a delicious Mediterranean lunch, learn together and assemble your own *lulav* and *etrog*. Please register online to reserve your spot.

Join us on Friday, Oct. 2, for our Simchat Torah Community Dinner at 5:30 p.m., followed by a festive celebration and service at 6:30 p.m. in the sanctuary. Together, we will complete the reading of the Torah and immediately restart from the beginning with *Bereshit*. Online registration is requested.

On Saturday, Oct. 3, Simchat Torah Yizkor services will take place virtually at 10 a.m. via Zoom.

Youth and family programs
Shalom Sprouts – Designed for babies, toddlers, preschoolers and their parents. Sessions meet on Oct. 4, 11, 18, and 25 at 11 a.m. Please call the office to check space availability.

Tot Shabbat – A kid-friendly service featuring fellowship, pizza, and fun.

Please note the date change due to the High Holidays: This month's gathering is Friday, Oct. 16, 6 p.m. Please RSVP so we can ensure there is enough food for everyone.

B'nai Mitzvah celebrations
Mazel tov to Asher Gonsenhauser and Zara Luna-Bord who became B'nai Mitzvah in September!

In October, we look forward to celebrating Emily Raab, who will be called to the Bimah as a bat mitzvah on Oct. 17, and Joshua Fego, who becomes a bar mitzvah on Oct. 24.

We celebrate these meaningful milestones with all four families and our entire Temple Beth El community.



Asher Gonsenhauser's bar mitzvah



Zara Luna-Bord's bat mitzvah

Social action and community gatherings
Postcard Palooza – Sponsored by our Simcha Circle social action committee, this nonpartisan initiative invites everyone to gather and write postcards encouraging civic participation. Light refreshments will be provided, and no prior experience is needed.

Ladies Who Lunch – Sisterhood's popular monthly outing takes place Wednesday, Oct. 28, at 12:30 p.m. You do not need to be a Temple or Sisterhood member to participate. Please RSVP and join the fun!

Weekend Shabbat Service shift – Please note there will be **no Friday evening service on Oct. 30**. Instead, join us for a Saturday morning Shabbat program on Oct. 31, 10 a.m., followed by lunch.

Recurring Temple programs
Food Pantry donations – Nonperishable food items can be dropped off anytime the building is open.

Torah Study – Every Saturday morning at 9 a.m. via Zoom.

History & Heritage of Our People – Meets Tuesday, Oct. 20 (third Tuesday of the month), at 7 p.m. via Zoom.

Regular Shabbat Services – Open to all every Friday at 7:30 p.m. In-person in the sanctuary, via Zoom, and streaming live on Facebook.

Support and affinity groups
12-Step Recovery Group – Saturdays, 11 a.m., via Zoom. Exploring recovery through Judaic principles using the book, "Twelve Jewish Steps to Recovery" by Rabbi Kerry Olitzky and Stuart Copans, M.D., second edition. Open to anyone recovering from alcohol, drugs, gambling, food, or other addictions, and their allies. To obtain Zoom details, email recovery5780@gmail.com.

Jews by Choice – Meets online the last Thursday of every month from 8 to 9 p.m. Discuss the delights and challenges of converting and reconnecting in a safe, confidential environment. Zoom details are available on the calendar.

Ahavah LGBTQ+ group – Dedicated to bringing joy, color and diversity to our Jewish community. Email dawntw10@gmail.com to join the mailing list for future events.

Save the date
Nov. 1 – Sisterhood Hanukkah Bazaar 2026

Nov. 3 – Election day! Make your voice heard by participating in civic voting. For voting information and regional voter resources, visit the official government voter services portal.

Connect with us
We offer many additional programs, including Current Events, Coffee & Chat, Theology & Life, Francophone & Hispanophone groups, Caring and Visitations, and more.

Follow us on Facebook (@TempleBethElofFortMyers). For questions or to RSVP for events, call the office at 239-433-0018.

Temple Beth El … where everyone matters.



TEMPLE SHALOM
Charlotte Harbor & the Gulf Islands

(941) 625-2116 • www.templeshalomfl.com

Temple Shalom, the center of Jewish life in Charlotte County, celebrated the Days of Awe in fellowship with Jews around the world.

Rabbi Aaron Sataloff led the congregation through Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur worship services, but the season of reflection had already started with a musical Selichot service led by Dr. David Katz, Temple Shalom's music director, one week earlier.

The Selichot music set the mood for asking God for mercy, compassion and readiness as we asked to be inscribed in the Book of Life for another year.

Earlier in the summer, Temple Shalom members and friends gathered for a "Dog Days of Summer" festival, including great food and games like "Pin the Rabbi on the Temple Door."

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

Temple Shalom is located at 23190 Utica Avenue in Port Charlotte. Visit our website for more information: templeshalomfl.com.



Temple members Shelly Pollack, Judi Migdol and Sharon Cooper celebrate "Dog Days"

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CHABAD LUBAVITCH OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA
Fort Myers

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Chabad Lubavitch of Southwest Florida warmly invites the entire community to join us throughout October 2026 / Tishrei 5787 for an inspiring month filled with holiday celebrations, prayer services, Torah Study, Kabbalah, ladies events and classes with Shani, men's events, family programs, Kiddushim, and meaningful Jewish experiences for everyone.

We also want to welcome our new assistant rabbi, Rabbi Eliezer Tewel. Please reach out if you would like Rabbi Eliezer Tewel to visit you at your home or office.

Whether you join us every week or haven't visited in a while, there is always a place for you at Chabad. Come pray, learn, celebrate, connect with friends and experience the warmth of our community.

Shabbat at Chabad

Friday evening

• Welcoming the Shabbat services, 6:30 p.m.

Shabbat morning

• Kabbalah class, 9 a.m.
• Shacharit services (Hodu), 10 a.m.
• Kiddush and community gathering, 12:15 p.m.
• Yizkor Memorial Service, 11 a.m.

Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah

Join us for one of the most joyous weekends of the Jewish year as we conclude the High Holiday season together!

Friday, Oct. 2, Shemini Atzeret

• Evening services, 6:30 p.m., followed by a special Rabbi's Birthday Celebration!



Assistant Rabbi Eliezer Tewel

Saturday, Oct. 3, Shemini Atzeret

• Kabbalah class, 9 a.m.
• Morning prayer services, 10 a.m.
• Evening prayer services, 6:30 p.m., followed by a Grand Simchat Torah Celebration! Come sing, dance and celebrate with the Torah in an atmosphere of true Jewish joy. Bring the entire family!

Sunday, Oct. 4, Simchat Torah

• Morning services and Simchat Torah Celebration, 10 a.m.
• Evening prayer services, 6:30 p.m.



Daily prayers and Kaddish

Join our warm and welcoming daily Minyan.

• Sunday, 8 a.m.
• Monday-Friday, 7 a.m.
• Shabbat, 10 a.m.
• Evening services, 6:30 p.m.

Whether you are saying Kaddish, celebrating a special occasion, observing a Yahrzeit, or simply looking to begin or end your day with prayer and community, your presence makes a difference.

Torah Study

Weekly Kabbalah class

Shabbat morning, 9 a.m. – Explore the deeper dimensions of Torah and discover how the timeless teachings of Kabbalah and Chassidus can bring greater meaning, purpose and inspiration into everyday life.

Ladies Torah and Tea with Shani

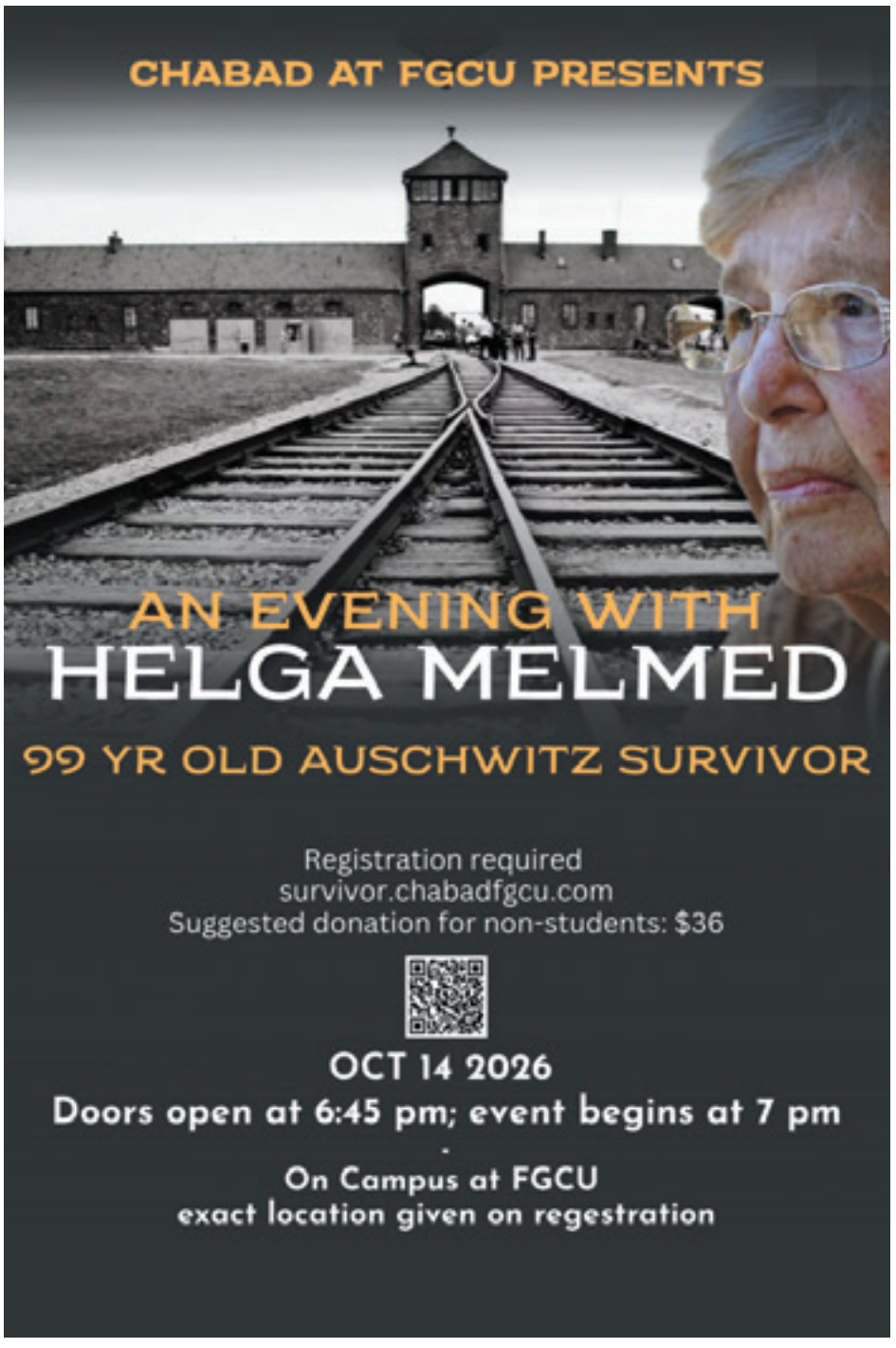
Mondays, 7 p.m. – Ladies are warmly invited to join Shani for an uplifting evening of Torah, meaningful conversation, friendship and, of course, tea!

Something for everyone

Throughout the year, Chabad offers holiday programs, Torah classes, ladies events, men's programs, family events, Shabbat experiences, community celebrations and opportunities to connect with Jewish life.

Come once. Come often. Bring a friend. Bring your family. Everyone is welcome. No membership is required.

Please feel free to join Chabad Lubavitch of Southwest Florida (5620 Winkler Rd., Fort Myers, FL 33919). For schedules, upcoming events and the latest community updates, please visit: Chabadswf.org. We look forward to welcoming you and celebrating together!



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

Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties

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

Send an email to debbiesanford@jfedlcc.org.

SYNAGOGUES & JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS IN LEE & CHARLOTTE COUNTIES

Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties

www.JewishFederationLCC.org

BAT YAM TEMPLE OF THE ISLANDS
REFORM

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

CHABAD OF BONITA SPRINGS/ESTERO
ORTHODOX

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

CHABAD JEWISH CENTER OF CAPE CORAL
ORTHODOX

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

CHABAD OF CHARLOTTE COUNTY
ORTHODOX

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

CHABAD LUBAVITCH OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA
ORTHODOX

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

COMMUNITY FREE SYNAGOGUE
CONTEMPORARY TRADITIONAL

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

CHAVURAT SHALOM OF SWFL
CHAVURA

20031 Sanibel View Circle Unit 202
Fort Myers, FL 33908
Chavuratshalom@gmail.com
Web site:
chavuratshalomofsouthwestflorida.org
Cheryl Fulmer, President
Shabbat services - 7:30 p.m. every Friday
Schmooze - 7:30 p.m. 1st Tuesday
Torah Talk - 7:30 p.m. 2nd Tuesday
Current events - 7:30 p.m. 3rd Tuesday
Speakers - 7:30 p.m. 4th Tuesday

TEMPLE BETH EL
REFORM

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

TEMPLE BETH SHALOM
REFORM

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

TEMPLE JUDEA
CONSERVATIVE

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

TEMPLE SHALOM CHARLOTTE HARBOR AND THE GULF ISLANDS
REFORM

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

SHALOM LIFE CENTER
TRANS DENOMINATIONAL

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

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

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

Jewish Federation
of Lee & Charlotte Counties

COMMUNITY BREAKFAST

Great food. Meaningful conversations.
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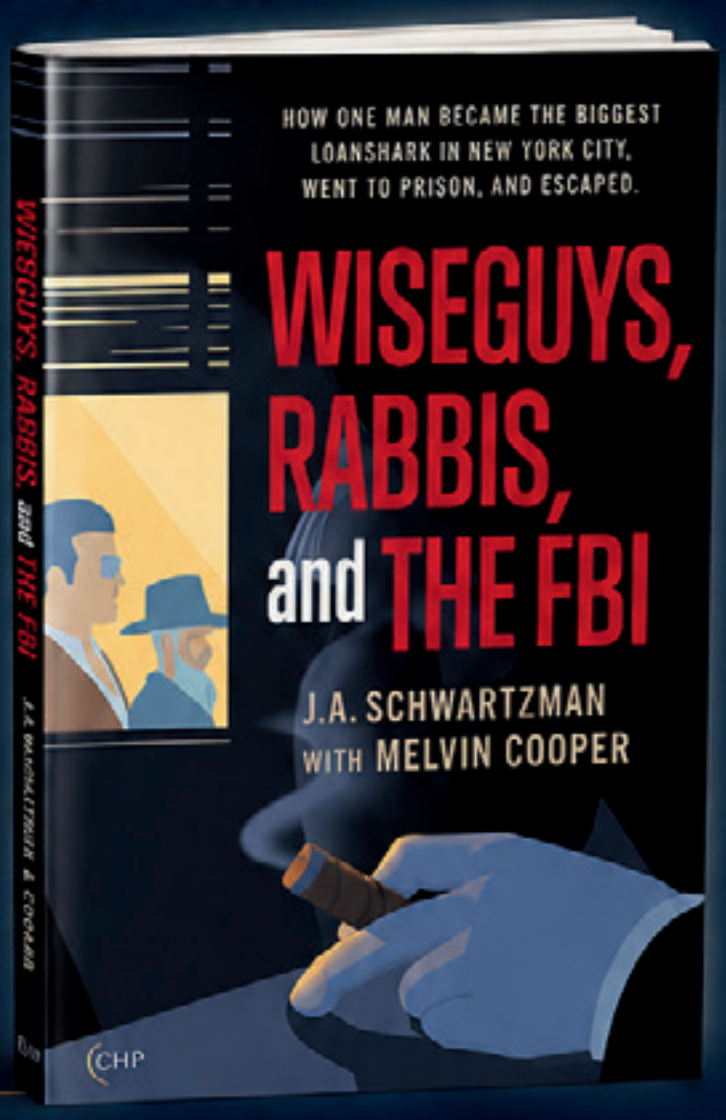
FEATURING SPEAKER

J.A. SCHWARTZMAN

Author of

WISEGUYS, RABBIS, and THE FBI

The incredible true story of how one man's faith, values, and courage changed lives.



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6TH
10:00 AM

DOUBLE TREE BY HILTON
13051 Bell Tower Dr.
Fort Myers, FL 33907

ABOUT J.A. SCHWARTZMAN

J.A. Schwartzman is a copywriter and author whose work has appeared in publications including *Mademoiselle Magazine*, Barbara Probst Solomon's *The Reading Room*, the *New York Press*, and others. Her writing and editing has included non-fiction books, articles for commercial publications, and a screenplay. She brings a sense of humor to all work—even true crime.

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