Celebrate Women’s Philanthropy with Founder of JewBelong, Archie Gottesman

March 31, 7 PM, Sam Lerner Center

You might say that philanthropy will be in the air as the Federation’s Women’s Philanthropy group warmly welcomes community members to its “Spring Philanthropy Night: Celebrating the Power of Women,” Tuesday, March 31, 7 PM, Sam Lerner Center for Cultural Arts. The program will feature Archie Gottesman, Founder of JewBelong, a website making Judaism relevant to the 21st century. Ms. Gottesman will highlight the importance of celebrating the joy of being Jewish, especially with all the challenges facing America’s Jewish community. Through her website, JewBelong, Ms. Gottesman stresses a non-judgmental approach to loving and learning about Judaism in all its multifaceted iterations. The Spring Philanthropy’s theme of celebrating the power of women underscores a fundamental principle that women’s philanthropy is a force for change and good in the community. Through special programs and services, women’s philanthropy helps create a meaningful Jewish life and provides opportunities for leadership and learning for women from all parts of the Greater Charlotte region.

Women’s Philanthropy has had a busy year full of events focusing on different ideas such as: Education, Donor Appreciation, Impact, and finally Campaign. Our Annual Campaign is one fundraising component of our work and we are glad to end our season of events with this fun way to celebrate the power of women’s giving and celebrate the impact we make on our community.

Spring Philanthropy Night will be an important part of the Women’s Philanthropy groups 2020 fundraising campaign, with Jill Halverstam and Lisa Strauss Levinson serving as program co-chairs. A minimum gift of $180 or more to the Jewish Federation’s Annual Campaign is required to attend the event. Tickets are $36 before March 24 and $40 at the door. Visit www.jewishcharlotte.org to purchase your ticket today.

A special shout out to our event hosting committee: Jessica Abram, Cary Bernstein, Eliza Carney, Rochelle Carney, Amy Fine, Jennifer Golynsky, Eden Guboty, Rachel Helton, Gale Osborne, Karen Ransenberg, Heathen Rosenbaum, Roberta Rodgers, Sarah Rose, Karen Spiegler, and Diana Warth.

Light refreshments and wine will be served.

To learn more about women’s philanthropy, contact Ilana Toch, Development Associate, at 704-944-6784 or ilana.toch@jewishcharlotte.org.

On the Same Page: Chapter II: The Girl From Berlin by Ronald Balson

Thursday, April 2 at 7 PM in the Sam Lerner Center for Cultural Arts

The Center for Jewish Education (CJE) is proud to present the second chapter of our annual community wide read initiative: On the Same Page. Chapter II of our community read invites everyone to read The Girl From Berlin written by bestselling author Ron Balson. A powerful historical novel, The Girl From Berlin is also has a riveting mystery of murder, deception, and greed, with chapters alternating between the 1930s' Nazi Germany and 2017 Tuscany. Balson masterfully intertwines the music, the rise of the Nazi party to power during its early years, its effect on Jewish lives, and modern day Italy. It is a story of courage, survival, and hope.

Balson is a Chicago trial attorney, educator, and writer whose previous books include The Trust, Karolina’s Twins, Saving Sophie, and the international bestseller Once We Were Brothers. In anticipation of Balson’s visit, CJE Program Director, Debby Block spoke with the author.

Debby Block: As a professional trial lawyer, what inspired you to write a book?
Ron Balson: I have been involved with professional writing all my life but I always wanted to write fiction. Opportunity knocked several years ago when my law practice necessitated a trip to Poland to do research for a case. Traveling around that country, encountering the remnants and scars of World War II, I was inspired to write a book about an ordinary family in wartime Poland. I believe that sometimes to begin writing fiction, you need something to grab you and wrap its arms around you.

DB: What were the challenges of moving from writing legal briefs and appeals to writing fiction?
RB: Recently, I was on the panel for the American Academy of Appellate Lawyers and Judges. Interestingly, the panel’s topic was “Storytelling in Brief Writing.” The panel drew many parallels between appellate briefs and fiction including: transmitting ideas, motives, and emotions with which everyone can identify, as well as eliminating extraneous information.

DB: How tough was it to get your first book published? Can you tell me about that?
RB: After being inspired in Poland, I dove right into writing my first book, without finding a literary agent or publisher. When Once We Were Brothers was completed, I couldn’t get a publisher interested, so I self-published the book. After a few months, I had sold 125,000 books and then St. Martin’s re-published the book. I have been with St. Martin’s Publishing Press ever since.

DB: Your novels document and educate about history. Have you always been interested in history?
RB: Yes, I majored in History in University. My next book called Eli’s Promise is also historical fiction and is due to be available in September 2020.

RB: Do you need to travel a lot to do background research on your books?
RB: Yes, I always travel to the places I write about. For The Girl From Berlin, I went to Berlin, Rome, and Bologna.

RB: Congratulations on winning Jewish Book Council’s Best Book Club Book last year. With your immense success as an author, do you still practice law?
RB: Yes, I do still practice law in Chicago.

(Continued on page 4)
Federation Kicks off 2020 Annual Campaign at Sold Out Main Event

A record number of more than 700 people attended The Main Event to hear the inspirational words of Mitch Albom as the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte kicked off the 2020 Annual Campaign. Co-chairs Holly and Hal Levinson welcomed everyone with their own impact message about how our Jewish faith guides the work of Federation.

The Road to $5 million begins with you. It is reflective of the needs Federation will to continue to meet as our beneficiary agencies continue to enhance Jewish life locally and around the world. A special thank you to The Leon Levine Foundation for their generous gift of $860,000, of which $50,000 was a match for all increased, recovered and new gifts to encourage attendees at the Main Event to increase their own gifts. This match was well received and gave us a strong start to this year’s campaign.

Federation’s impact influences every area of Jewish life. Join us by making your gift today at www.jewishcharlotte.org or by calling 704-944-6757.

Shabbat Candle Lighting for February 2020

Friday, March 6, 6:05 PM
Friday, March 13, 7:11 PM
Friday, March 20, 7:17 PM
Friday, March 27, 7:23 PM

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the psychological stress, especially among children, many bomb shelters and concrete reinforcements are decorated with bright primary colors, graffiti, and idyllic landscapes. “This brought everything full circle for me,” notes Elina, “capturing life in Israel with all its complexities, struggles and anxiety and yet full of hope and resilience.”

Along the way, Elina had the chance to hear from and engage with a variety of voices and perspectives from the religious, secular, Druze, and other communities in Israel as well as enjoy some delicious local cuisine. The trip culminated with Elina participating in the Federation’s PZG educators exchange with our Hadera-Eiron region.

“For me, the most touching were the candid and authentic conversations with local Israelis,” shares Elina. “One of the most exciting experiences of traveling outside of Israel is being welcomed and hosted by people who at the moment we met were complete strangers and by the end of our time together become part of my life and vice versa. I was deeply moved by the generosity of people, their willingness to open their homes and hearts. I carry their stories with me now and forever. Those I met inspired me and served as a well of knowledge and passion into which I will tap as I work to help our community members and institutions develop meaningful relationships with Israel.”

Partnership2Gether Connecting Charlotte and Israeli Educators

Two Jewish educators from the Greater Charlotte area joined the Federation’s Partnership2Gether Education Delegation to Israel this past December. Julia Schmidt, Education Director of Temple Kol Tikvah Hebrew School, and Allison Winters, Hebrew School teacher at Temple Beth El. Both participated in this week long experience over winter break. The Partnership Educators Exchange has been running for over 17 years, alternating between one year in Israel and the following in the US. It aims to provide educators with the tools and inspiration to take back their classrooms as well as the foundation for shared learning. While in Hadera, American teachers enjoyed home hospitality, an essential ingredient for creating meaningful and lasting relationships. These relationships are at the core of the Partnership work, which provides a strong sense of Jewish peoplehood and a wonderful opportunity for participants to explore their Jewish identity, volunteer, and bond together overseas about issues of shared concern. People of all ages participate in joint programming including young leadership development, cultural immersion, and education. Hadera is a coastal city on the Mediterranean Sea, approximately 28 miles from the major cities of Haifa and Tel Aviv. Through the Hadera-Eiron Southeast Partnership, we connect Charlotteans with Israelis in the Hadera-Eiron region. For close to 20 years, our two communities have been intimately involved in meeting the needs of vulnerable Jews in the Hadera-Eiron region and creating life-changing experiences and build meaningful relationships.

To learn more about our Partnership2Gether contact Elina Kurakin at elina.kurakin@jewishcharlotte.org.
The story of Morris B. Abram, who was born in 1918 and raised in the small southern town of Fitzgerald, GA, to a Jewish family of humble origins. It is the story of a brilliant attorney and inspiring leader who rose to prominence during the 20th Century battling the very issues that continue to challenge us today – legislative apportionment, affirmative action, campus unrest, and international human rights.

David Lowe’s biography of Morris B. Abram skillfully portrays the life of a giant of a man whose story is the story of America. It will enlighten and inspire readers of every generation.

Touched with Fire: Morris B. Abram and the Battle Against Racial and Religious Discrimination, by David E. Lowe, is the first-place winner of the National Jewish Book Council’s 2020 Biography Award. The book is available for check-out at the Center for Jewish Education Levine-Sklut Judaic Library.

Book Club News:
The next CJE Book Club meeting is Wednesday, March 11 at 10:30 AM in Room A111 on Main Street at Shalom Park. We will be discussing An Unorthodox Match by Naomi Ragen. For more information contact sueb.littauer@jewishcharlotte.org.

On the Same Page: Chapter II
(Continued from page 1)

DB: It is really difficult to put your books down. What is the secret of making your stories so compelling?

RB: Well that is my secret sauce and I hesitate to share my secrets.

DB: What are some of your favorite things to do when you are not working/writing?

RB: Aside from golfing, I spend a lot of time with my large family. I have eight children and four grandchildren.

On The Same Page: Chapter II is free and open to the public. RSVP is encouraged at www.jewishcharlotte.org/cje. Copies of The Girl From Berlin are available for purchase at the Levine-Sklut Judaic Library. Light refreshments will be served with book signing following the program.
Youth Visions

When the Student Becomes the Teacher

A Hebrew High Journey

Hebrew High has always been a family. Like any family, students leave the nest and venture to college, year-course, or start their careers. This year we have been lucky enough to have a former student come back home to teach at Hebrew High.

Jordan Bernstein attended Hebrew High from 8th grade through 12th grade. After college and law school, she came back to Charlotte to begin her career. If you ask her if she thought she would teach at Hebrew High, the answer might surprise you.

“At first, I attended Hebrew High because my parents required me to be confirmed. Then, I attended Hebrew High because I enjoyed it. Although I did not realize it at the time, Hebrew High gave me the opportunity to explore unfamiliar topics in a community that I felt comfortable in. I got to be in an environment in which uncertainty was welcomed, but approachable, because it empowered others to speak. Hebrew High made Judaism and more broadly, learning, more accessible to me. And all of it without assigning homework.

“Nine years later, I have graduated from school and am practicing as a lawyer, which is a profession that requires me to explore and learn uncertain topics. So, when offered, I of course jumped at the opportunity to teach a class for an institution that so clearly shaped me. Now, I get to spontaneously introduce unfamiliar topics and learn alongside the students. Frankly, it is quite fun.”

Hebrew High is proud to shape the minds of so many Charlotte Jewish teens. It truly is the Place to Be on Wednesday Nights.

BBYO’s Spring Cultural Convention Coming Soon

BBYO has had some fantastic events and are excited for our Spring Cultural convention coming up soon. Charlotte BBYO just their annual Sweetheart Beau Dance. We brought in 2020 with a roaring 20s themed dance as we crowned our newest Sweethearts and Beaux. From Hank Greenberg AZA, Daniel Oringel, from Ohavim BBG, Joey Effren, from Chai Chaverim BBG, Isis Stamm, and from Mickey Barak Ahervan, Sam Schulman were crowned. We are so proud of all of the teens who were on court. We also honored each of our seniors with poems and were happy to see so many parents support our seniors and courts. A special thank you to our coordinators for the night, Raya Levin, Isis Stamm, Ben Green, Daria Lapidot-Bozou, Anna Warshaw, Joey Effren, Jake Mucatel, and Kyle Lan. These teens worked hard to make the night a huge success. With Sweetheart Beau Dance in the rearview mirror, we are looking forward to Spring Cultural Convention April 3-5 in Charlotte. We are excited to be welcoming teens from across North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia to Charlotte for a weekend of competition, fun, and tradition. We will honor our outgoing state presidents, honor our seniors as they pass on advice to the next generation of BBYO, have chapter competitions where each chapter will show chapter pride with a song and dance and elect our next state leaders. This is also the first convention that 8th graders are invited to attend.

To register for convention go to https://bbyo.org/bbyo-near-you/regions/eastern-region or call 704-944-6734.
Super Soul Party Arrives in Charlotte

By Andrea Gamlin

Three years ago, before Super Bowl weekend, a vlogger in New York City named Meir Kalman-son, saw a homeless man holding a sign that stated “I don’t want anything to eat. I don’t want to drink. All I want is to be seen. I want to talk to somebody.”

“That just hit me in the gut,” Kalman-son told CNN in an interview. He said he bought food and sat down with the man. Meir Kay, as he is known, spoke with the man and decided to throw a Super Bowl watch party for the homeless. “Ultimately, the mission of the Super Bowl party is less about the party,” Kalman-son said. “It is just the stage for human beings to come together, put aside our differences, our struggles or challenges, and connect on a human level to show love, compassion.”

The first party in New York was such a success, that he expanded and is now holding parties in twenty cities across the United States.

This year, Kosher Charlotte, a division of Charlotte Jewish Day School collaborated with Super Soul to bring a Super Bowl watch party to Charlotte. Rabbi Vorst headed the Charlotte team and decided to throw a Super Bowl watch party for the homeless. “That just hit me in the gut,” Rabbi Vorst said.椎-and volunteered Dave Gerrard. They used the van to pick up people at shelters or living in tents. Others were able to walk or drive if they were living in a car. Once the guests arrived, they watched a pre-game show on a big screen, ate dinner, got haircuts, picked out clothing and shoes, and received bags of toiletries and snacks to take. Over thirty men and women took advantage of the opportunities.

Most important, volunteers interacted with the guests throughout the evening. Some of the guests were shy or withdrawn when they first arrived. One women, named Tia, had her hair wrapped in a large hat. And though she deferred at the first request, she eventually capitulated to a haircut.

After Tia’s haircut and style by the Aveda teachers, she smiled and went to the clothing table to find some pants that she could wear to her new job the following morning. She didn’t have a place to wash her clothes, so the clothing she found was helpful. She was excited about her new job in the hospitality industry and was looking forward to moving out of her tent when she saved up enough money.

Guests were of all ages; some guests were married, some were single, some had college degrees, and some hadn’t graduated high school. All had stories to tell and wanted to be heard. Everyone had an opportunity to be treated with respect and honor. Kosher Charlotte’s food nourished guests’ bodies, Aveda teachers’ haircuts gave guests hope, and the camaraderie gave everyone belonging.

Charlotte has an affordable housing problem. We read about the homeless in the newspapers and on social media, and hear about the news and in podcasts. It’s not just about affordable housing, but also about treating people with kindness. After the Super Soul party, homelessness wasn’t just something we read or hear about, but something to act on. With friendship, the world becomes a little bit better for everyone.

“After having visited the guests in their environment, which clearly did not look too comfortable, it was heart-warming to see the change in the men and women, after a hearty meal, a haircut, and just plain old party fun.” – Gale Osborne

“I instantly connected. I had a long meaningful conversation with one of the men. He was wise, kind, and thankful. It was truly a blessing to not only get to know him as an individual but to know that I could meet a total stranger and find so much in common. Initially, before I sat next to him, we probably both thought that we were from different worlds. I am thankful that we were able to give the guests a taste of joy that they deserve as human beings, and that we had the opportunity to get to know some of the guests, all of whom were kind, thoughtful, and ever so thankful for the food, haircuts, clothing, and conversation.” – Jenna Gamlin

Menachem Vorst

“The evening was transformational for the guests and volunteers. Everyone was engaged in conversation and personal human connections were made. Each of our guests had a story to share. They were equally thankful for the food and clothes, but perhaps even more so for the gift of companionship and the opportunity to be treated to a haircut.” – Gale Osborne
The Wedding of Yitzchak and Rivkah at JPS

At JPS we learn all about the Jewish stories in the Torah by truly experiencing them. The JPS students recently learned all about Yitzchak and Rivka. We learned the Rivka married Yitzchak and brought great miracles to their tent. To fully enhance our learning, we actually celebrated their wedding. We had a bride, groom, chuppah, dancing, and a special wedding feast. Everyone had a special job to participate in the wedding. We had chuppah holders, photographers, musicians, and a Rabbi. What a way to experience our learning and Jewish traditions.
A vibrant, intergenerational neighborhood

Israeli dance performers are warming up at the cultural center. Hebrew class is about to begin. People are walking to the Conservative and Reform synagogues to celebrate Shabbat together.

It’s a typical afternoon on the Shalom Park campus in Charlotte. Friends and families of all ages are thriving, connecting and sharing their lives and traditions with each other.

It’s the perfect place for a community unlike any other—a new community for those 62 and older called Generations at Shalom Park.

True Connections ⭐

At every age we are discovering and connecting with who we are and what we can share with others. We cherish our Jewish values more deeply, including the importance of embracing those of different beliefs and backgrounds. A community that models inclusivity and naturally intertwines the wisdom of age with the energy of youth builds the well-being of all.

This is the opportunity we are bringing you, right here in Charlotte. The region’s first and only intergenerational Jewish community intentionally integrates programs and services of some of the area’s most respected not-for-profit organizations. The result will be a Jewish community for those 62 and older unlike any other in the country. This boutique community will include 125 elegant, comfortable residences that are maintenance free, include access to any future healthcare needed, and are centered amid unparalleled lifestyle options on a dynamic, intergenerational campus.

Generations at Shalom Park will offer you the trusted, top-rated care and service of Aldersgate Life Plan Services, along with the exceptional programs, resources and community life of the Shalom Park campus.

Whether you’re an artist, a scholar, a community leader or an entrepreneur, pursuing a life passion or learning something new, you’ll find Generations at Shalom Park brings you a circle of individuals who share your values and traditions. Those who choose this exciting new community will discover true connections—among generations, faiths and backgrounds—that show we never finish growing.

Fitness and wellness membership

Imagine how many more classes, concerts and workouts you’d attend if they were right outside your door.

When you choose a new residence at Generations at Shalom Park, your apartment home will include access to the programs and services on the 54-acre Shalom Park campus with unending opportunities to nurture mind, body and spirit. Here are just a few: • Ceramics studio, art studio and music practice rooms • Performance opportunities and a full cultural arts calendar • Established lifelong learning programs in languages, current events and more • Fitness center with top-of-the line equipment • Numerous classes and professional trainers • Spacious indoor and outdoor pools • Tennis courts

Call to learn more

Generations at Shalom Park
L’dor V’dor, From Generation to Generation.

704-900-1013
GenerationsAtShalomPark.org

Community Welcome Center
Shalom Park D118
Charlotte, NC 28226

Cynthia McCullough, Sales Director
cynthiam@aldersgateccrc.com

Make a fully refundable $100 priority deposit
Become one of the 1st in line to choose an elegant new residence
Only 125 residences will be built

Serving all faiths and beliefs.
Shalom Park Freedom School Recognizes Its 10th Year on Shalom Park on May 7

The Shalom Park Freedom School (SPFS) is celebrating 10 years. When SPFS opened its doors in the summer of 2011 it was the first Jewish-sponsored Freedom School in the nation. The project is a collaboration of eight agencies at Shalom Park: The Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte, Temple Beth El, Temple Israel, Sandra and Leon Levine Jewish Community Center, Jewish Family Services, The Charlotte Jewish Day School, The Levine-Sktut Judiaic Library, and The Foundation of Shalom Park.

Freedom School a six-week literacy and character building summer program designed to help children in our community become self-sufficient by closing literacy achievement gaps. Shalom Park’s scholars are selected from Huntington Farms and Sterling Elementary, the two schools in faith-based partnerships with Temple Israel and Temple Beth El. Summer reading loss is the foremost contributor to the achievement gap for low-income children. Nationally, low-income children typically lose two to three months in reading level every summer, making them less likely to graduate high school as these losses become cumulative. Shalom Park Freedom School has a 90% success rate for preventing summer reading loss, with 65% of children gaining one or more levels of reading comprehension after just one summer.

Please join the Shalom Park Freedom School for a special evening as we commemorate a decade of our community’s unity hosting the Shalom Park Freedom School.

How to Celebrate & Wine Reception
Guest Speaker and Special Performances (TBD)
Thursday, May 7, 7-9 PM

McColl Center is artfully designed for your wedding, reception, dinner, party, and corporate event.

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SYNAGOGUES & CONGREGATIONS
Temple Solel Prepares for Passover

Many cherish the Pesach Hagadah quote coming from the youngest at the table, “why is this night different from all other nights?” because it represents the possible confusion at recognizing how the night of Passover is different from a regular or holiday meal. It focuses our attention on historical topics and even people in our lives to show us how we are never the same after events and bashert relationships. One such example is Jan Rose, our treasurer. The first night she visited us years ago, within Jan’s heart was her cherished Los Gatos, CA congregation, Shir Hadash, with the realization how difficult it was going to be to find another home in the Carolinas as an example for us to embrace each day how what she says and does, or how she helps someone might be creating an Exodus experience for others. It is easy to assume everyone in an airport is relocating for retirement or to be near family comes with a lot of challenges and unknowns. These transitions in our lives can be seen as metaphorical versions of the Exodus.

Jan has probably never known a stranger, because she makes a point to be a friend and engage with other people. She has been a lay leader, lay cantor with a beautiful voice, mentor, and Hebrew tutor. Her career roles bring out a no-nonsense business person who directly provides input and opinions. Jan spent many professional years in management administration and finance and was the controller at The Jewish Federation of Silicon Valley. She is an active resident of the 55+ Community, Carolina Orchards, including being a chairperson and founder of their Shalom Club. In our Exodus experiences as people and as individuals, our roles in community become an important part of history and identity.

All of Jan’s combined experiences and characteristics make her a perfect Airport Chaplain at Charlotte Douglas International Airport, which is a role she recently embraced and loves. Jan decided to do something new and adventurous by expanding her focus and openness to speak and help people from all over the world visiting Charlotte at our airport. She never knows each day how what she says and does, or how she helps someone might be creating an Exodus experience for others. It is easy to assume everyone in an airport is going on vacation or taking a routine business trip. However, there are people traveling to get health treatments, moving to another place, maybe they experienced the loss of a loved one, or they are going to help a family member in need. Jan’s chaplaincy serves as an example for us to embrace that change may be headed towards, especially after 40+ years wandering through life to arrive at what might be one of our most important roles still yet to come.

As a beneficiary agency of the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte, we are pleased to host our second biennial inter-faith youth Seder at Saint (Continued on page 12)
Air Purim
Come Fly the Friendly Skies with Chabad This Purim

Air Purim is the theme for this year’s grand Purim celebration on Tuesday, March 10. Purim is the happiest day on the Jewish calendar and it is celebrated with boundless joy.

Purim guests at the Epstein Chabad Center will be treated to a first-class flight with Chabad of Charlotte. Chabad’s superb staff of flight attendants, cabin crew, and airline personnel will be sure to greet each participant to a great Purim experience, with amusing entertainment for adults and children and opportunities to complete all the mitzvot of Purim.

Once passengers arrive and are seated, a short Purim flight video will allow everyone to be oriented for the flight. Age appropriate in-flight beverages will be provided for the adults and children. The first class gourmet in-flight meal will be provided by Kosher Charlotte Catering Services. The journey will include tasty hamentashen and first class fun for everyone.

Purim is a time for masquerading and dress up, as it celebrates the total transformation that took place in the ancient Persian kingdom when the evil Haman convinced King Achashverosh to annihilate all the Jews in his vast empire that encompassed 127 countries. Fortunately, due to the prayers of Mordechai and the assistance of Queen Esther, a great miracle took place. Haman’s plan backfired and instead of the Jews being victimized, the enemies of Israel were punished.

The Purim celebration begins on Monday, March 9, with the Fast of Esther. Monday night at 7:30 PM, we will congregate at the Epstein Family Chabad Center at 9009 Bryant Farms Road for evening services and the first reading of the Megillah. Tuesday morning, Purim day, we will gather at 6:30 AM for morning services and an early morning Megillah reading at about 7 AM.

The main Purim Day event will begin Tuesday with the Megillah reading at 5:30 PM followed by the “Air Purim” Dinner Celebration at 6:30 PM. Tickets for “Air Purim” are $25 per adult and $15 per child (ages 4-12). For tickets, visit chabadnc.org or call 704-366-3984.

The Purim celebration begins on Monday, March 9, with the Fast of Esther. Monday night at 7:30 PM, we will congregate at the Epstein Family Chabad Center at 9009 Bryant Farms Road for evening services and the first reading of the Megillah. Tuesday morning, Purim day, we will gather at 6:30 AM for morning services and an early morning Megillah reading at about 7 AM.

Tuesday, March 10, 5:30 PM Megillah Reading, 6 PM Dinner and Party
South Charlotte Banquet Center, 9009 Bryant Farms Rd.

BJC Partners - $15 per person/$30 per family
Non-Partners - $20 per person/$40 per family
Children ages 3 and under are welcome free of charge.

For more info or to RSVP contact Rabbi Yisrael and Leah Levin 704-246-8881, info@JewishBallantyne.com, or visit our website www.JewishBallantyne.com.

There will also be a Megillah reading Monday night, March 9, at 7:45 PM at the Ballantyne Jewish Center: 8632 Bryant Farms Rd. Free of charge.

Tuesday, March 10, 5:30 PM Megillah Reading, 6 PM Dinner and Party
South Charlotte Banquet Center, 9009 Bryant Farms Rd.

B JC Partners - $15 per person/$30 per family
Non-Partners - $20 per person/$40 per family
Children ages 3 and under are welcome free of charge.

Taste of Waltonwood

Join us for a first-class dining experience featuring fun and interactive cooking demonstrations and tasting stations that highlight Waltonwood’s culinary program and seasonal spring menu.

RSVP for one or both of the events today!

Wednesday, March 25th
1 - 3 p.m.
Assisted Living & Memory Care
5215 Randolph Road
Charlotte, NC 28211
704-495-6031

Thursday, March 26th
1 - 3 p.m.
Independent Living, Assisted Living & Memory Care
11945 Providence Road
Charlotte, NC 28277
704-246-3055
Temple Kol Ami Welcomes Jewish Musician Joe Buchanan

Temple Kol Ami of Fort Mill, SC, is thrilled to bring musician Joe Buchanan to the greater Charlotte area for an artist-in-residence weekend March 20-21. He will be leading a Friday night Shabbat service along with Charlotte's favorite band The Ruach at 7 PM, as well as performing a concert of his original music on Saturday night, 6:30 PM. All of this takes place at Temple Kol Ami, 1691 SC-160 in Fort Mill and is free to you thanks to the generous support of the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte.

You may be asking yourself just who is Joe Buchanan? A Texas native, Joe Buchanan makes Jewish American music. Grounded in the idea that there is always room at the table, Joe’s music highlights the values, Torah, and history of the Jewish people to deliver stories steeped in the struggle and triumph of the human spirit, all while praising God for the goodness in life.

Raised with one foot in Houston and one in the Texas Hill Country, Joe grew up swinging off ropes on the Frio River and spending time like any kid—trying to figure out what was what.

The biggest question was about God and despite a deep belief in the bimah and proceeded to give it fresh and new.

Day night, Rabbi Schindler made an incredible amount of healing.

On January 31, Mona Liebman and the Jewish Council of Lake Norman brought Rabbi Judith (Judy) Schindler to Congregation Emanuel in Statesville to discuss the timely topic of Antisemitism. Prior to her talk, Rabbi Schindler led the congregation in a Sabbath benediction. While the Church was on hand to provide reminders of the bimah to everyone, Rabbi Schindler led the congregation to the bimah due to his familiarity and knowledge of Antisemitism from a historical Christian perspective.

Before opening the floor for questions and answers, Rabbi Schindler discussed a few perspectives. Before opening the floor for questions and answers, Rabbi Schindler discussed a few ways of combatting Antisemitism. Rabbi Schindler said that we need to find our voices and that we should speak up when we hear things spoken by religious leaders or politicians, and more.

We should repeat back what was said and explain how it is an Antisemitic statement. Educate others around us, and perhaps, most importantly, unite with people of other religions in activities that support our communities. There is nothing better than seeing Jews, Muslims, and Christians united in peace to make this world a better place.

For more information or questions, check our website www.templokolamic.org or e-mail us at yorksynagogue@gmail.com.

Temple Kol Ami Welcomes Jewish Musician Joe Buchanan

Jewish American artist Joe Buchanan to perform at Temple Kol Ami. Photo Cred: Steve Irwin

Temple Kol Ami Welcomes Jewish Musician Joe Buchanan

The Takeaway from Rabbi Judith Schindler’s Discussion on Antisemitism

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Josh Rubin’s Plumbing, LLC

WORK WITH THE LEADERS IN CHARLOTTE REAL ESTATE

Sarah Rose
Steve Lepow
RE/MAX Executive

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Jewish Council of Lake Norman

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Equality, Dignity, Esteem: The Martin Luther King Award Is Presented to Dr. Mark Epstein

Dr. Mark Epstein can often be found at his office taking care of many of Gastonia’s precious pets, but to many in our community he is thought of as a bridge builder. Rather than steel, nuts, and bolts, his tools are compassion, wit, intelligence, and far reaching vision as he builds bridges between diverse groups of multi-cultural, religious, and political interests in Gastonia, the greater Charlotte area and beyond.

Growing up in Atlanta, his parents were charter members of a new synagogue, built upon the pioneering principles of social action, which profoundly informed his worldview. “The Hebrew phrase tikkan olam, ‘repair of the world,’ is a classic Jewish value but something Dr. King displayed with galactic courage, vision and tenacity in the face of the immense power and odds arrayed against him, and the principles of justice he championed,” wrote Epstein in his acceptance speech.

This year, at a ceremony in recognition of his consummate efforts, Epstein, a member of Gastonia’s Temple Emanuel, was recognized as a recipient of the Martin Luther King Award, given by Gaston Together: Community of Excellence. Donna Lockett, its Executive Director, comments, “First and foremost, Mark truly exemplifies the spirit of this award – creating unity across the world, is a classic Jewish value in Gastonia County. This group with members from Temple Emanuel in Gastonia and several other area churches became very active after the events of 9/11. Rafat Hamam, a member of the Islamic Society of Gastonia, speaks of his and Epstein’s relationship the day they met after 9/11. The Dialogue became a Triialogue, where individuals representing all three groups realized they held the keys to become a forum for connecting each other with civility and compassion.

Today that continuing effort is almost 20 years old and still meets monthly. Hamam paused, reflecting on one of Epstein’s favorite original comments. “We may not be able to change the world but we can change the corner of the world we call home.”

Continuing, Hamam states, “I like for people to remember this phrase because it changed my vision of the world … changing our community in the world we live in at home.” Mark brings collaborative value and orchestrates many important things. We need a larger world to accommodate more Mark’s.”

Joan Martin, current Chair of the Triialogue, who has been working with Mark for seven years, adds, “It’s hard to extoll the virtues of Mark Epstein. One of the things he does is teach a class, Judaism 101. One class is equally divided into three sections of one-half hour each, based on Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. A topic is presented in advance so there’s research time. Mark presents to about 60 people with this work. With his teaching to the three groups, he shows them there’s no need to fear people who are so loving, giving, and caring. You are very fortunate to have him.”

Lockett also talks about Epstein’s newest endeavor into bridge building which is his work with the Better Angels. Her story continues. “He is a registered Democrat and went with one of our City Council members who happens to be a registered Republican (although the Gastonia City Council is non-partisan) to Washington, D.C. to get this training to bring back to our community. He has offered this community education/training workshop several times in Gaston County. He also continues to offer presentations to local groups such as Gaston Together’s Gaston Clergy and Citizens Coalition (GC3), the program area that conducts the MLK Unity event. Mark has gone out of his way to try to find ways to bring people and groups together who would normally not do so. Mark gets involved where he sees a need and works diligently to try to build better relationships in Gaston County. With his sense of understanding and communication, he has gone above and beyond with his time and talents in the areas of faith and civic dialogue. He is a wonderful example of the spirit of the Gaston Together MLK Unity Award.”

Council Woman Jennifer Stepp, Epstein’s co-chair for the Better Angels Program, was eager to add her thoughts. “Mark is a dynamic leader who has worked tirelessly to support this program. He continually finds ways to depolarize and unite our community to bring civility and functionality to this community on both a personal and business level. A rare human being indeed.”

Gaston County. This group with members representing all three faiths, “First and foremost, Mark truly exemplifies the spirit of this award – creating unity across the world,” is a classic Jewish value in Gastonia County. This group with members from Temple Emanuel in Gastonia and several other area churches became very active after the events of 9/11. Rafat Hamam, a member of the Islamic Society of Gastonia, speaks of his and Epstein’s relationship the day they met after 9/11. The Dialogue became a Triialogue, where individuals representing all three groups realized they held the keys to become a forum for connecting each other with civility and compassion.

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– Harold S. Kushner, To Life!
By Rabbi Dusty Klass, Temple Beth El

Last week at a conference out of town, surrounded by old friends and colleagues, I was plagued by three small words: “How are you?”

Over and over again the question came. And over and over again, I dodged it.

But halfway through the conference, I misread the intent behind the question and thought the person actually wanted to hear about my life – and I responded, for about three minutes. “Work is this but also this,” I responded, for about three minutes. “How are you?” I took a moment to check in and asked ourselves: “Huh. Good question. How am I?” We might find out all sorts of things about how we are feeling and what our needs are at any given point in the day.

And what if we actually responded when people asked? What if we imagined that whoever was asking truly wanted to know how we were doing? What would happen if we shared a genuine response? How might we interact with each other differently if we linked the question “How are you?” not to mask our feelings and experiences but to share them?

This month, as we celebrate Purim, a holiday all about the masks we wear. We intentionally disguise ourselves, dressing up as that which we are not in recognition and honor of Hadassah aka Esther, a Jewish woman who “passed” as a non-Jew – until she stepped forward in a world in danger. And what’s more – she is uniquely positioned to take action.

When Mordechai first urges Esther to go to the king and plead for the safety of the Jewish people, she can’t imagine it – she knows that to go before the king unnanounced can mean certain death. She is scared for her own safety. But then Mordechai reminds her of who she is. She too is Jewish – her safety is already in danger. And what’s more – she is uniquely positioned to take action. Mordechai offers her a mirror: This is who you are. You are part of a people, and we are all in danger. See your fear, he says. But your fear is not yours alone. What are you going to do about it?

And once Esther sees herself in that mirror, Hadassah unmasked, she is able to reveal her true self to the king, stand up for her people, and alter the decree against them. So, how are you? What is going on in your world? How are you feeling about whatever it is you’re rushing to or from? How are you feeling in general?

This Purim, may we all challenge ourselves to take stock of who we are – who we really are – and then look beyond ourselves. May we ask each other and ourselves: how am I? And where am I most needed in the world?

Chag Purim Sameach.

“Jewish Family Services

You hear the US economy is thriving – the longest economic expansion ever recorded. Unemployment is at a 50-year low, inflation is tame, and the stock market continues to reach record levels. By all accounts, we are living in a Goldilocks economy.

So does that mean we are all good? That financially we are all able to pay our bills? You may be surprised to learn that even during these strong economic times, there are people in our community who are still struggling.

At JFS we offer many services to help people connect, and heal individuals and families in our community. Through our Crisis Response Fund, we are able to support those Jewish families, right here in Charlotte, who are living one paycheck away from disaster.

For many years now, JFS has managed the tzedakah fund, a special fund established by The Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte that allows those who qualify to receive a one-time loan of up to $2,500 as a mortgage payment, rent, or utilities. In the last quarter of 2019, we distributed eight tzedakah grants, about twice what we would normally give. The fund is generally smaller because as a mortgage payment, rent, or utilities, it is unexpected.

For many seniors living on a fixed income, or experiencing a life transition, having someone to lean on who can give you this type of guidance and direction can be a lifeline. Imagine you are a senior who is aging, whose mental or physical health is slowly deteriorating. That decline can lead to isolation or loneliness, which can negatively affect physical and mental health, and contribute to cognitive decline. This is when JFS is at its best – coordinating and planning care to ensure that older adults have the support needed to maintain independence and meet long term care needs.

If you or someone you know is in need of this type of support, JFS can help. Call 704-364-6594.

“JFS Is Here to Help When Those in Our Community Fall on Hard Times

Food Pantry. The pantry is generously supported by donations from community affinity groups and organizations, food drives, Leaves and Fishes, and individuals, donors, like Lynn Edelstein who buys 10 items each week for the pantry, and has for years. Her passion for JFS began many years ago and while she’s not much interested in fanfare surrounding her contributions, JFS has benefitted greatly from her tender heart and passion.

Why is that important? Because when people ask about your overall needs, such as subsidized housing and state assistance programs like Medicaid or food stamps, it’s unlikely one resource does not work we are able to suggest another. One client told us, “If it were not JFS, my babies and I would be homeless.”

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“Temple Bethel

“How Are You?: Unmasking Ourselves at Purim

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Donations to Jewish Family Services in January 2020

IN MEMORY OF: Martin Freiman to Stuart and Sarise Bredbart from Abraham and Amalia Warsenbrot Rhoda Manton to John and Frances Manton; from Ben and Margie Liebstein Carol Gorelick to the family of Carol Gorelick, and Jeff and Barri Gorelick to Scott and Dana Gorelick, David Weiner, and Wendy Weiner from Jo Ann Ball, Suly Chemkin to Matt Luftglass and Meg Goldstein, Arthur Goodman, Stuart and Carolyn Hennes, Elise Menaker, Edwin and Jill Newman from the home of Carolore Gorelick, Roz and Marty Birnbaum, Lauri Moore, David and Marion Kronovet, Alan and Ruth Goldberg, Roz Greenspon and Marty Birnbaum, Buffy Aqueiro and Patrick O’Connor.

Bennett Lyons to Andrew and Courtney Lyons, Jeffrey and Frances Lyons from Jennifer Adams, Ben and Margie Liebstein, Jill Blumberg, Tony Tadddiono and family

Susan Holmes to Leonard and Judy Marco from Paul and Lynn Edelstein

Steven Miller to David and Judy Miller from David and Andrea Garman.

Carl Scheer to Marsha Scheer from Matt Luftglass and Meg Goldstein, Roz Greenspon and Martyw Greenberg, Marty Gromet and Phyllis Schultz, Paula Musler, Michael and Judie Van Gelden

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO: Sandra Levine from Paul and Lyn Edelstein

WISHING YOU: A FULL AND SPEEDY RECOVERY TO: Louis Messual from Paul and Lynn Edelstein

Steve Weinher from Michael and Judie Van Glish

IN HONOR OF: Larry Nameroff to Evelyn Nameroff from Sun City Carolina Lake Community

MAZEL TOV ON: The birth of Robin Reich to Barry and Laura Reich from Marc and Cheri Titelman

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO: Marvin and Anita Shapiro from Edwin and Jill Newman

JFS Monthly Volunteers and Donors

Month of January 2020


Families meeting at least one (1) of the following criteria:

- Extenuating chronic family circumstances (ie: special health concerns, job loss, change in family status, etc.)
- Multiple children attending camps and/or Jewish programs
- Household gross income not to exceed $75,000
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Gloria & Harry Lerner Family Fund: Subsidies are available to families meeting at least one (1) of the following criteria:

- Extenuating chronic family circumstances (ie: special health concerns, job loss, change in family status, etc.)
- Multiple children attending camps and/or Jewish programs
- Household gross income not to exceed $75,000

The exact tools and components that help you to ask R U OK? Park? Campaign continues the commitment made by the agencies that were a part of the original Mental Health Initiative, whose purpose was to ensure that everyone in our community who is struggling with depression, anxiety or other mental health issues feels comfortable asking for help. It is a message that says I care.

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Community News

R U OK Shalom Park?

Get ready Shalom Park, for a new and very different approach to raising awareness about mental health. It’s also in a way, about being our brother’s keeper and while how to be our brother’s keeper is a complicated question, whether to do it of our own volition, or to take the initiative, our brother’s keeper is not that complicated at all.

Discussions about mental health are becoming more and more common, as people open up about their struggles with this often present taboo subject. But there are still so many people who feel embarrassed or that they will be judged so they don’t confide in others about their problems. The R U OK Shalom Park? Campaign is about highlighting the hidden struggles of those people who are going through their own battles, not just on one day, but every day of the year. The aim of a program like this is to arm us all to be our brother’s keeper and to ask “Are you ok?” and to remember that it is up to us, whether or not we may be challenged by life’s ups and downs.

Spearheaded by Jewish Family Services, R U OK Shalom Park? Campaign is a collaboration offered to the community by the Jewish organizations in Charlotte. It is designed to educate us all on how to go about creating safe conversations. Got a funny feeling that someone you know or care about isn’t behaving as they normally would? Perhaps they seem out of sorts, maybe migrated or withdrawn or just not themselves. The R U OK Shalom Park? Campaign will arm you with the tools you need to check in with that person. If they say they are not ok, you’ll be able to show them they are supported and guide them to accessing resources and better manage their load. If they are ok, then that person will know that you are someone who cares enough about them to ask.

Howard Olshansky, Executive Director for JFS, says, “The R U OK Shalom Park? Campaign continues the commitment made by the agencies that were a part of the original Mental Health Initiative, whose purpose was to ensure that everyone in our community who is struggling with depression, anxiety or other mental health issues feels comfortable asking for help. It is a message that says I care.”
Three Local Jewish Organizations Receive Legacy Gifts from Wilson Lewith Family Trust

By Marissa Brooks

Honi the Circle Maker was a wise man and miracle maker who asked questions to aid his understanding. One day he saw a man planting a carob tree and asked him how long it would take to bear fruit. The man answered, “70 years.” Honi then asked the man if he thought that he would live to see the fruit. The man answered, “No” and then explained to Honi that he was doing as his father and his grandfather did before him: planting trees for his descendants, so they would be able to eat the fruit of the carob tree.

Rabbi Dusty Klass, Associate Rabbi, Temple Beth El shared this Talmud tale as an illustration of the value of legacy giving. “The idea is that legacy giving is the financial way of ‘planting trees for future generations.’”

Wilson Lewith (z”l), a former AAA baseball player and successful textile industrialist, was a planter of trees even though he and his beloved wife Margaret Lewith (z”l) did not have any descendants. Their total trust distribution of $2.35 million benefitted many local agencies.

Wilson Lewith was born in Charlotte on October 22, 1914, and graduated from old Central High School in 1933, after which Lewith became a star baseball player on a AAA team. According to his obituary, he was “so active in American Legion Baseball that he was given credit for saving it in the Charlotte area . . . and was inducted into the North Carolina Baseball Hall of Fame in 1970 because of his contributions to the game.”

In 1941, Lewith founded the Wilson Lewith Machinery Corporation, which was once the largest used textile machinery company in the nation. His friend, Norman Levin, Temple Beth El Lifetime President, recalls that Lewith wore the double knits that he manufactured in his factory.

Married to Margaret McDonald Lewith for 44 years until his death in 1998, Lewith adored his wife, and they drove matching Lincolns. The Lewiths supported musical programs and hospital health programs, according to Levin, who added that giving back to Temple Beth El and the community was very much in the forefront of Lewith’s mind.

Adam Bernstein, former Temple Beth El President, wrote that Lewith “kept an extremely low profile yet had a huge impact on the temple and city at large through his generosity and philanthropy (many gifts were anonymous).” He continued, “[Lewith] made the bequest 35+ years ago, without knowing much if anything about planned giving - purely a reflection of his commitment to Temple Beth El, as well as his friendship with Norman Levin.”

Lewith’s obituary highlighted his community involvement: charter member and secretary of Temple Beth El, member of the Amity Club and the West Charlotte Rotary club, board member of Nevins Vocational school, honorary member of the Charlotte Lifesaving association, volunteer with Mecklenburg County’s first volunteer fire department, member of the Navajo Club, whose members were all former athletes and graduates of Central High School.

Marce Silverman, on behalf of the Hebrew Cemetery Association, fondly remembers Wilson Lewith as a generous, successful businessman and prominent member of our Jewish community. “It comes as no surprise to me that his generosity would include a legacy gift to support the organizations that had special meaning [to him]. Our cemetery is the community’s oldest Jewish institution, and the final resting place for Wilson, many of his family members, and the loved ones of so many other community members. We are honored that Wilson recognized the importance of supporting the Hebrew Cemetery Association’s endowment to assist us in sustaining such an important and meaningful place in so many of our lives.”

Howard Olshansky, Executive Director, Jewish Family Services, is grateful for the legacy gift from the Lewith Family estate. “JFS is so pleased that the Lewith family believed in JFS and were committed to investing in our future.

The perpetuity of their gift will contribute to the sustainability of our services.”

According to Evan Wilkoff, President, Temple Beth El, the Lewith Family trust distributed $2.35 million across the following organizations: Temple Beth El, Duke University, Presbyterian Healthcare, Hospice and Palliative Care, Blumenthal Jewish Home, Hebrew Cemetery Association (of Charlotte), Jewish Family Services (of Charlotte), Queens University, Friendship Trays, Holy Angels Foundation, Lake Wylie Lions Community Foundation, the National MS Society, Easter Seals, Shriners Hospital, and the Salvation Army.

Wilson Lewith and Margaret McDonald Lewith were indeed planters of trees.

The Jewish Preschool on Sardis wishes you a

Happy Purim!

celebrate with your family!

hear the Megillah
enjoy a festive meal
give Tzedaka
send gifts of food to a friend

call 704-364-8395 or visit jpskids.org

A project of Chabad of Charlotte

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When I was a young man, I wanted to change the world. I found it was difficult to change the world, so I tried to change my nation. When I found I couldn’t change the nation, I began to focus on my town. I couldn’t change the town and as an older man, I tried to change my family. Now, as an old man, I realize the only thing I can change is myself, and suddenly I realize that if long ago I had changed myself, I could have had an impact on my family. My family and I could have made an impact on our town. Their impact could have changed the nation and I could indeed have changed the world.

Salanter, a 19th Century Lithuanian scholar who started the Mussar movement, recognized that our work of healing our souls (tikkun hanefesh) has an impact on the work of healing our world (tikkun olam). We need balance. The Stan Greenspon Center for Peace and Social Justice at Queens University offers opportunities for us to work on our souls, our minds, and our world.

**Wine and Wisdom March class on Mussar**

Rabbi Judy Schnidler invites you to join her at Selwyn Pub for an exploration of Rabbi Salanter’s Mussar teachings. Mussar, the study of the soul, will help you design your own spiritual curriculum. The practices and methods speak to people from all walks of life; secular, atheist, from Reform to Orthodox, Christian, or Muslim, there is something for you.

Our session on March 18, from 5 to 6:30 PM will focus on gratitude and compassion. Bring a friend, grab a glass of iced tea or wine, and enjoy learning more about Mussar literature and the ways which it can touch and lift our lives. Spaces are limited so sign up today through our website: Selwyn Pub is located at 2801 Selwyn Avenue. To join us for our Brooklyn: Trauma, Resilience, and Faith program on March 5 from 6-7:30 PM at the West Boulevard Public Library (2157 West Boulevard) to explore the ongoing impact of trauma and the interplay between our souls and our city. We’ll also examine resiliency, trauma recovery, the long process of reconstruction, and what people and places can do to facilitate healing of our communities.

**Third Anniversary Program, How a Montana Mom Became a Leader in Fighting Antisemitism**

Tanya Gersch, a Montana real estate agent, spoke with the mother of White Nationalist, Richard Spencer, about selling a commercial building in her town. When Spencer learned his mother contacted a Jewish agent, he started a lie about how Tanya pressured her mother to sell. Andrew Anglin, founder of neo-Nazi website The Daily Stormer, joined Spencer and orchestrated an online harassment campaign. He encouraged online followers to “take action.” Anglin posted Tanya’s personal and professional information and photographs of her family, including a photo of her 12-year-old son photoshopped onto the gates of Auschwitz. To them, Tanya became the enemy and they targeted her relentlessly. This took a heavy toll on Tanya and her family, but she fought back. The Southern Poverty Law Center filed suit in federal court on behalf of Tanya, winning a more than $14 million judgment against Andrew Anglin. Tanya’s ground-breaking case sends a message to those who spread hate: direct threats are acts of terrorism; harassment is not free speech. Tanya never let being a victim define her. Her passion is to share her story to help others.

We invite members of the Jewish and of the broader community to join us in this work of tikkun – of healing ourselves, our city and our world. For more information, and to register for our programs, visit our website, www.stangreensponcenter.org or call 704-688-2760. To learn more about our work, contact us to set up a visit.

**Bal Tashchit and Beyond: Seed Starting Tips**

Humankind’s first mission was to tend a garden. When we observe how a little seed can transform into something beautiful and alive, we cannot help but experience awe and appreciation.

In January, Shalom Green hosted a project for Temple Israel’s Yom Gemilut Hasadim: A Day of Performing Acts of Loving-Kindness. Participants planted seed ed plants for the Shalom Park Community Garden that they will grow at home. Participants will bring their seedlings back to the Community Garden on March 15, between 8:30-9:30 AM or 12 noon – 1 PM for a special Temple Israel Religious School Sirit Planting event. Transplanted seedlings will grow into highly nutritious, hardy vegetables that will be harvested from the Shalom Park Community Garden during the spring for donation to the Jewish Family Services of Greater Charlotte Food Pantry.

This month we challenge you to take action to increase the number of trees or food-producing plants on the planet. You could plant a tree on your property or in your neighborhood or grow something edible in your yard or on your windowsill. It’s very susceptible to drying out.

6. When seedlings are 3” tall they may be transplanted to an outdoor garden or larger container.

Don’t have a garden at home but still want to do your part? Join Shalom Green for our Community Garden Workdays. We will gather to maintain, improve, and enjoy the garden with friends and community members. No registration necessary. All ages and abilities welcome. Join us on Sundays between 9-11 AM.

7. As seedlings continue to grow, be sure to water them as needed; while young, they are

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A Look into Jewish Young Adults in the US – New Demographic Research from Brandeis and Moishe House

As Moishe House continues to grow and evolve, we remain committed to basing our strategy on the evolving needs of young adults. To better hone in on the shifting Jewish young adult (ages 22-32) demographic throughout the United States, we recently worked with the Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University, who is at the forefront of Jewish population studies, to put together a splicing of their comprehensive data.

Key findings include:

* Jewish young adults ages 22 to 32 comprise just over 16% - or about 964,000 - of all Jewish adults in the United States.
* The top U.S. metropolitan areas of New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago are home to about 293,000 Jewish adults ages 22 to 32, or about 30% of all Jewish adults ages 22 to 32 in the United States.
* As a proportion of U.S. adults ages 22 to 32, Jewish young adults in this target age group constitute about 2% of the population, with some areas, like Manhattan, having a rate several times higher than the national proportion.

This is the most complete data set in the United States, where two-thirds of Moishe House’s programming occurs.

In the Charlotte metropolitan area, the proportion of Jewish young adults in this age bracket is slightly higher than the national average. According to this data, young adults in this age bracket constitute about 2% of the population, with some areas, like Manhattan, having a rate several times higher than the national proportion.
PJ Library Presents

ART IN THE PARK
(For ages 4 and up)

SATURDAY, APRIL 4 | 1:30 PM
Squirrel Lake Park
1631 Pleasant Plains Road, Matthews

GET UNPLUGGED AND JOIN US FOR A CREATIVE & RELAXING SHABBAT AFTERNOON IN THE PARK.
Featuring Marisa Zeibert, owner KidzArt
• Nature Bookmark
• Kindness Rocks
• Collaborative Nature Collage
• Snacks & Friends

Free - Registration is required by April 1
Register at www.nextgencharlotte.org

Questions: Debby Block, CJE Program Coordinator | 704.944.6780 or debby.block@jewishcharlotte.org
Hadassah’s Annual Passover Tasting Party

It’s hard to believe that it’s March already. Passover is almost here. Do you know what that means? It’s time for Hadassah’s Annual Passover Tasting Party. This has become a favorite of so many people. Please join Hadassah for our annual lunch, taking place on Friday, March 27 at 11:30 AM.

Everyone’s bubble had that one dish that made the holiday so special. Now it’s time to share the love. Don’t have a family favorite? Try something new. We will compile all the recipes for you to take home so you can impress everyone at your Seder.

Decide what dish you would like to prepare (dairy or parve appetizer, salad, main entrée or dessert). Please make sure your recipe is appropriate for Passover. RSVP and send your recipe as a PDF or Word document to Janice Bernstein 704-900-7294 janicegrpho@gmail.com or Lynda White 704-541-8317 jwassoc@sprynet.com by Tuesday, March 17. Then just prepare your dish, come to Sharon Goretsky’s house, and enjoy. We hope to see you there.

Is it time for your annual mammogram? Have you put off getting your first mammogram? The Novant Mobile Mammography Unit will join Hadassah at Shalom Park on Monday, April 1 from 9-3 PM. Appointments are not required, but are strongly recommended. To reserve a time slot, call 704-384-7226. Screening mammograms are covered under most insurance plans as preventative care. Please bring your insurance card with you, and Novant will file a claim on your behalf. Don’t forget to stop by the Hadassah table at the JCC for some snacks and learn about Hadassah Medical Organization’s latest breakthroughs in breast cancer research and care.

New Demographic Research on Jewish Young Adults in the U.S. from Brandeis and Moishe House

(Continued from page 17)

set, Moishe House estimates that 4,700 Jewish young adults ages 22 to 32 live in the greater Charlotte area—approximately 17% of the total Jewish adult population. Metropolitan areas with similarly sized populations of Jewish young adults include: Pittsburgh, PA (5,400); Minneapolis, MN (4,500); Oakland, CA (4,300); Hartford, CT (4,100); and Dallas, TX (4,000).

Moishe House plans to continue assessing similar data in other locations, as well as to use this information to identify areas for expansion.

To request a copy of the research brief or to learn more about Moishe House’s work en- gaging more than 70,000 unique young adults in Jewish life each year through over 12,000 programs across the globe, we invite you to contact Dave Press, Senior Director of Advancement, at dave.press@moishehouse.org.

Leek and Feta Hamantaschen: A Savory, Cheesy Twist on Your Favorite Purim Treat

By Leanne Shor
(This article originally appeared on The Nosher.)

The inspiration for these flaky, cheesy leek and feta hamantaschen comes from my best friend Danielle’s mother, Hannah. On almost any given visit to Hannah’s kitchen, there was a quiche just going into the oven or just coming out.

She would mix three or four European cheeses, many of which I had never heard of as a college kid, together with caramelized onions and vegetables, farm fresh eggs, and the flakiest pastry. The result was a bit different each time, but there was always a perfect balance of saltiness from the cheese, sweetness from the onions, and richness from the crust that was so much more than just dough.

For these savory hamantaschen, I make a quick all-but-ter pie crust using salted butter and freshly ground black pepper. There is no fancy equipment required, though you could also use a pastry cutter or food processor if you are accustomed to making pie crust.

The two most important things to remember when making pie crust is that all of the ingredients need to be very cold, and to work the dough minimally to ensure the crust is flaky. Then I make the filling by caramelizing leeks in olive oil and adding crumbled feta and cottage cheese. I use a mix of these two cheeses because the cottage cheese really mellows out the sharpness of the feta and creates a very creamy filling.

These leek and feta hamantaschen would be the perfect appetizer or side for any Purim party. I’ve even made them larger using a 4-1/2-inch circle cutter. With a salad or cup of soup, they are easily a very festive light lunch.

Ingredients:
For the pie crust dough:
2 c. all-purpose flour
1 t. kosher salt
1/2 lb. (2 sticks) very cold salted butter, cubed
3 T. olive oil
1/2 t. ground black pepper

For the filling:
2 lg. leeks, washed well, and sliced thinly
3 T. olive oil
2 c. whole milk cottage cheese
1/2 t. ground black pepper
1 egg, beaten for egg wash

Directions:
For the filling:
1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Chop the leeks. Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add the leeks and cook, stirring occasionally, until the leeks are golden brown, about 20 minutes.
3. In a medium bowl, mix the cottage cheese, feta, salt, pepper, and egg. Add the leeks to the cheese mixture and mix well.
4. Preheat the oven to 375°F.
5. To make the dough:
   a. In a medium mixing bowl, combine the flour and salt. Cut the cold butter into the flour mixture with a pastry blender or food processor until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs.
   b. Add the ice water, 1 tablespoon at a time, and mix with a spoon until the dough forms. Form the dough into a ball, wrap in plastic wrap, and chill in the refrigerator for 1 hour.
6. To make the leek and feta filling:
   a. Roll out the dough on a floured surface to a thickness of about 1/4 inch. Cut into circles using a 4-1/2-inch circle cutter.
   b. Place the filling in the center of each circle, leaving a 1/2-inch border around the filling.
   c. Fold the dough over the filling, forming a triangle.
   d. Seal the edges of the dough with a fork.
7. Place the filled pastries on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake in the preheated oven for 20-25 minutes, until the crust is golden brown and the filling is bubbly. Serve warm.

(Continued on page 23)
March 2020

JCHILDCARE.
7 weeks – 7 years old
Children will enjoy a nurturing environment to explore and have fun with crafts and activities, while parents workout.

Mon-Fri AM .............. 8am-1pm
Mon-Thu PM ............ 4pm-7:30pm
Saturday .................. 12pm-3pm
Sunday ................... 8:30am-2pm

Per Hour: M/$4.50  NM/ $5.50

Grades K-5th
A great, supervised space for your elementary age child to have fun and hang out with friends, while you workout!

Sundays, 8:30am-1pm
Location: Check with LJCC Customer Service

M/$2/hour
NM/ $5.50 per hour

Reservations Required! 704-366-5007, or visit LJCC Customer Service.

LJCC Department Directory
Please contact us if you have questions!

Membership
Jodi Finkelstein 704-944-6737
jodi.finkelstein@charlottejcc.org

Early Childhood
Patty Torcellini 704-944-6891
patty.torcellini@charlottejcc.org

K-5th Grade Programs
Mitch Ormand 704-944-6733
mitch.ormand@charlottejcc.org

Adults & Seniors/Oasis
Jill Lipson 704-944-6792
jill.lipson@charlottejcc.org

Wellness & Fitness
Jenny Crow 704-944-6870
jenny.crow@charlottejcc.org

Athletics
Stephanie Garner 704-944-6743
stephanie.garner@charlottejcc.org

Athletics / Aquatics / Swim Team
Joshua Steinberger 704-944-6746
joshua.steinberger@charlottejcc.org

LJCC Tennis / CRUSH
Greg O’Connor 704-944-6748
gregory.oconnor@charlottejcc.org

Cultural Arts
Susan Gundersehre 704-944-6778
susan.gundersehre@charlottejcc.org

JCHILDCARE
Amie Gray 704-944-6726
amie.gray@charlottejcc.org

Social Action
Julie Rizzo 704-944-6730
julie.rizzo@charlottejcc.org

www.charlottejcc.org  •  704-366-5007

Like the popular Netflix show ‘Nailed It’, families work together to compete in 3 kitchen competitions recreating complicated cakes and confectionery in order to win a prize and a ‘Nailed It’ trophy!

Saturday, March 14
7:00-9:00 PM
Gorelick Hall

Family Pricing (Family of 4):
M/$35  NM/ $45  Additional child/ $5

Register at LJCC Customer Service
704-366-5007
Q? michelle.niengo@charlottejcc.org

www.charlottejcc.org/culturalarts
Adults

For The Grandchildren of All Species for All Time
Dr. Steven English will present an informative multi-media presentation about how we have lost half of all of our songbirds and half of all life forms, on our beautiful blue planet, just since the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970. And, what we can do about it.
Monday, March 9 • 1-2pm
FSP Boardroom
Free; just show up!
704-944-6753 or sharrri.benjamin@charlottejcc.org

“Nosh & Know” about Parkinson’s Disease
Join us monthly for a series of topics. We’ll provide refreshments and snacks. March topic: “Speech and Swallowing Challenges in PD Patients” presented by Mary Beth Kerstein, M.S. CCC/SLP, CBIST, Clinical Specialist & Outpatient Speech-Language Pathologist, Carolinas Rehabilitation-Main.
Tuesday, March 17 • 11:30am-12:15pm
Weinberg Senior Center • Free
Must RSVP each month, by the Friday before to 704-944-6792 or jill.lipson@charlottejcc.org
This program is offered in collaboration with Parkinson Association of the Carolinas

Joys of Judaism
Cantor Mary Thomas of Temple Beth El shares her journey of becoming a Jewish Cantor.
Friday, March 20
1-2pm
FSP Boardroom
Free; just show up!
704-944-6753 or sharrri.benjamin@charlottejcc.org

Who’s the Meshuggeneh with the Microphone in my Head?
Learn how to focus on your internal environment, Jobs, families, activities… the list goes on of the stressors in our lives. There always seems to be a crazy person in our heads telling us to go this way and that, all at the same time. Learn how to calm your mind, and cultivate greater presence, patience and an ability to live mindfully. Presented by Mary Thia Powers, E-RYT 500.
Sunday, March 22
10am
Sam Lerner Center for Cultural Arts
Free event, registration required @ 704-366-5007 704-944-6750 or julie.rizzo@charlottejcc.org

Hope as Wide as the Prairie
Author Linda Whitesitt will share excerpts from her book that tells the love story of her Swedish grandparents and their struggle to survive on the Northern Great Plains.
Monday, March 23
1-2pm
Weinberg Senior Center
Free; just show up!
704-944-6753 or sharrri.benjamin@charlottejcc.org

Sleep and Aging, What’s Normal and What’s Not
Dr. Nancy Behrens, of Novant Health Sleep Medicine, will cover how sleep changes as we age, sleep disorders to be aware of, and discuss healthy sleep habits that will help maximize sleep quality.
Friday, March 27
10-11am
FSP Boardroom
Free; just show up!
704-944-6753 or sharrri.benjamin@charlottejcc.org

Oasis Book Club
March’s Book: The Other Einstein, by Marie Benedict
Friday, March 27
1-2pm
FSP Boardroom • Free; just show up!
704-944-6753 or sharrri.benjamin@charlottejcc.org

Tai Chi/Digong
Adults 50+
Improve your strength, balance and flexibility through this gentle form of fitness.
Tuesdays, 11:45am–12:45pm (all levels)
No Tai Chi March 31
Swimmer Family Aerobics Studio
Oasis/M/B/$35 NM/$45 per month
Drop-in fee: M/B/$12 p/class NM/$14 p/class

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SHIIP
Seniors’ Health Insurance Information Program
Free Medicare Counseling Available year round! Please call Senior & Adult Director Jill Lipson at 704-944-6792 for information

Community Garden Work Days 2020
Free!
PLANT, WEED, HARVEST, DIG, WATER, PRUNE, LEARN
Love being in nature, spending time with friends & community members and getting your hands dirty? Join us for our monthly garden work days. We gather to maintain, improve, and enjoy the garden. No registration necessary. All ages and abilities welcome!
Sunday, March 15
9-11am
Shalom Park Community Garden

Oasis Senior Passover Seder
ALL SENIORS WELCOME!
$8
You are invited to join us for a delicious Passover Seder and luncheon led by Rabbi Tracy Klirs and Cantor Elias Roochvarg, with musical accompaniments by Patty Torcellini.
Monday, April 6 • 12-2pm
Gorelick Hall, Levine JCC
Space is Limited – Reserve Early!
Advance Reservations (w/payment) due by Mon, March 30th to Sharrri Benjamin
704-944-6753 • sharrri.benjamin@charlottejcc.org

JCC Charlotte
CFIS
Judah Foundation
Carmel Foundation
Jewish Federations of North America

like us! • facebook.com/levinejcc
Specifically, the law prohibited Purim parties that get out of hand.

According to this mitzvah, each person must send at least two portions of ready-to-eat food to at least one other person during the holiday. The purpose of the commandment is to increase solidarity among the Jewish people, as well as to satisfy the needs of the poor so that they, too, can enjoy a dignified Purim feast.

In reality, the after-Purim reality across Israel, teachers coordinate the exchange of mishloach manot in advance, so that each child can arrive on Purim morning with a nicely wrapped basket of treats and candies. Each child typically is assigned a student randomly and they exchange baskets, or the teacher finds a creative way to keep things anonymous.

“Mishloach manot,” the practice of sending food packages, or the teacher finds a creative way to keep things anonymous, is considered an aspect of the Purim commandment. Much like Purim costumes themselves, the mishlochei manot mishvah has spiraled out of control.

Many of my friends who are now parents are horrified just thinking about how much money they will have to invest in “proper” Purim baskets for school and friends. Turning this initially humble tradition into an extravagant spectacle is not only offensive but harmful.

Instead of increasing friendship or showing concern for the poor, mishlochei manot have turned into a flashy beauty pageant meant to attest to the quality of the sender’s gift, not just to the delight of the receiver.

This was not what Maimonides stressed in the Mishnah Torah when he wrote that “one should rather spend more money on gifts to the poor than on his Purim banquet and presents to his friends.” If one thing is certain, shaming the penurious was never part of the plan.

We need to find ways to ensure this tradition is inclusive and elevating.

This is why many stress giving “matanot la’evyonim,” gifts or donations to at least two poor people, is significantly more important than mishloach manot.

“Haman was even more glorious than the joy of gladdening the hearts of the poor,” Maimonides continues in his Mishneh Torah. “He who gladdens the heart of these unhappy people begins to fulfill the commandment. If I am . . . to revive the spirit of the humble, and to put heart into the crushed” (Isaiah 57:15).

Socrates Scholasticus is not especially reliable as a source for Jewish history, but as the historian Elliot Horowitz has demonstrated in his masterful studies of Purim violence, it didn’t take much to convince Christian audiences that Jews were in fact bent on committing acts of horrific violence. From Imnester, Syria, a group allegedly seized a Christian child, bound him to a cross and scourged him until he died.

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The Romans Tried to Ban Wild Purim Parties in 408 CE—For a Very Good Reason

By Henry Abramson

The biblical passage that literally describes Haman’s “hanging on a tree” (Esther 7:10) was rendered as “crucified” in the ancient works of the Jewish historian Josephus, the early translations of the book of Esther into Greek (Septuagint) and Latin ( Vulgate), and all through the Middle Ages in literary classics like Dante’s “Purgatory.” Artistic representations also depicted Haman on the cross, such as the 15th-century Azor Masters and even by Michelangelo, who painted a muscular Haman on a cross on the Sistine Chapel.

It’s not hard to imagine how public Purim, conducted by an inebriated crowd of Jews, could easily be misinterpreted by Christian observers, especially if the effigy of Haman is bound to a wooden cross. In fact, only a few years after the law in the Theodosian Code was promulgated, a Church historian named Socrates Scholasticus tendeniously described an event that sounded very much like a drunken Purim celebration gone horribly wrong: In Imnester, Syria, a group allegedly seized a Christian child, bound him to a cross and scourged him until he died.

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The blood libels were just that. But because the Christian majority was so quick to feel threatened by Jewish revelry, violent or just intertemperate, it was better for the Jews’ own sake that they tone it down.

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Not everything is fair game for mocking and pushing. True, there’s a big difference between a tiny, relatively powerless community poking fun at the dominant people on one day of the year on the one hand, and the majority population using their position to mock or intimidate a hapless minority on the other.

But I have to give this one to the Romans. The law of 408 wasn’t anti-Purim—it was an anti-poor taste.

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of JTA or its parent company, 70 Faces Media.
Purim: From Exodus to Esther

By Sam Glaser

Purim: From Exodus to Esther

It would make sense to start the Jewish calendar year on Rosh Hashanah, literally the “head of the year,” the anniversary of the creation of humans, but that’s not how it goes in the Bible. Just as we are about to leave Egypt, with great signs and wonders, the first commandment given to the nation is initializing the calendar. Therefore, the Jewish year actually begins with Nisan, the month of Pesach, making the preceding month of Adar the last one of the year. Adar is both a time to celebrate and a season of reckoning.

The secret of Adar is concealed behind the “mask” of Purim. The scroll we read, Megillat Esther, is one of the closing entries in the Jewish biblical canon and interestingly, has no mention of God’s name. We start the year with the Pesach Haggadah and its manifold recitations of gratitude to God for the miracles performed on our behalf. By the end of the Jewish calendar year, God is out of the dialog and it’s all about Mordechai and Queen Esther. What has changed? Over the Jewish year, we transition from an emphasis on God’s revealed hand in our redemption (Exodus) to a focus on the actions of individuals while God operates behind the scenes (Esther). The message: God is always with us, even when God’s presence is hidden. In order to retain our freedom of choice, God is precisely concealed, to the exact degree that we must strive to find God. This spiritual awareness is the engine of our enhanced joy during this special month. Megillat Esther can be translated as “revealing the hidden.” This remarkable tome serves as a lesson plan for perceiving God’s hand behind all events, for all time.

The month of Adar provides us with the opportunity to bask in the emunah (faith) we have crafted over the Jewish calendar year. Every holiday, beginning with our national homecoming (Pesach), receiving the Torah (Shavuot), and then the High Holidays and Sukkot to serve to bolster our perception of this invisible shield of divine love and protection. By Purim, we rejoice in a seemingly “God-less” story, knowing with simple faith that God’s grace is behind all the triumphs and misadventures in our lives. The true goal of Adar is to perceive the good in “bad breaks” – accepting joy and pain without despair.

One of the central tenets of Judaism is that each of us has a crucial role in Tikkun Olam. This is emphasized at the climax of the Purim story: when Queen Esther is given the chance to be the hero by Uncle Mordechai, he warns her, “If you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will come from another place” (Esther 4:14). Thankfully, she saves the day. All of us are faced with this fundamental challenge. We can opt in or relegate ourselves to the sidelines. God will get the job done regardless. I say: let’s go for it.

Purim should be celebrated with heartfelt exuberance. Take advantage of the transformative power of the four special mitzvah opportunities: hear the megillah chanted both night and day, give substantially to the needy, offer our neighbors packages of a few items of food as a token of friendship and eat a hearty meal at the end of the day. For many of us, intoxication gets us to a place where the heart is opened; we can love more readily and tears of joy are not a disaster. For me, personally, after a few l’chaims, my empathy muscle is stronger than the challenge of “God-less” story, knowing with simple faith that God’s grace is behind all the triumphs and misadventures in our lives. The true goal of Adar is to perceive the good in “bad breaks” – accepting joy and pain without despair.

SUNDAY, MARCH 8

LEVINE JCC

Community-Wide

11:00 AM: PJ Library Storytime for Preschoolers
11:30 AM: Food available for sale
12:00 PM: Carnival begins
3:00 PM: Carnival ends
games • inflatables • food • crafts • prizes

Donate non-perishable food items for JFS and receive 1 ticket per item (up to 5 tickets)

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Your generous support allowed members of our community to get educated, feel supported, remain connected and receive help in the areas of mental health, domestic violence, food insecurity, navigating resources, caregiving and aging.

At JFS we work tirelessly toward ensuring that every member of our community will have their physical, social and emotional needs fully met, helping members of our community stabilize and enhance the quality of their lives.
Esther Is the Real Queen of the Art of the Deal

By Rishe Groner

New York (JTA) – To be a Jew in 2019 is to spend a lot of time grappling with the idea of power. Who has it, who wants it, who is losing it and where do I stand in the midst of it all?

Purim epitomizes the toppling of a power structure. A quiet Jewish girl becomes a power-wielding queen, a mighty anti-Semitic politician is hanged and an entire people is saved. Grappling with the idea of power.

In the Book of Esther, power takes all sorts of forms. There’s plenty of traditional power to be found: King Ahasuerus, the villain of the story, rules over 127 provinces with an iron fist and convinces Haman at his side. Queen Vashti, the royal one by the customs of their male part, insistence as the Jewish people were on the rooftops. Having the small victories count.

And then there is Mordechai, a learned Jew in the kingdom lacking any royal connections, who uses his knowledge and smarts to thwart a plot against the king’s life.

While Vashti may embody to many the ideal of the strong feminist woman by saying no and standing up for herself, she isn’t the only powerful woman in the Purim tale. Queen Esther, the story’s heroine, wields a form of power that is often hard to recognize.

Esther’s power, at once demure and mighty, manifests as sacred vulnerability.

Characterized by radical honesty and empathy, sacred vulnerability can only be tapped into by being open, raw and real. Speaking from this place of awareness takes great courage. But it is this mode of infinite power that saved the Persian Jews.

One reading of soft power might see it as manipulative and surreptitious, but in the story of Esther it is truly the saving grace. Esther’s ability to convince the king of the plight of the Jews is done through a series of parties, through careful consideration of his decision-making methods, and through a deep intuitive ability to put herself out there fully in a quiet but influential way, with sacred vulnerability.

When Esther finds out about Haman’s plot against the Jews, we are told by the writer of the Megillah that the queen was deeply disturbed.

In their conversations, Mordechai entreats her to act immediately and do something bold and risky: Visit the king, in his capital offense. When Esther re- minds Mordechai of this, he gets serious:

“If you are silent at this time,” he warns her, “the people will be saved in some other way. But you – your name will be forgotten forever. Who knows – this could be the reason you are here.”

Esther isn’t asked to make a loud statement or display her power in a Vashti-style move. Rather she is asked to find ways to use her raw courage and honest openness to make real change.

In a society that for so long has been dominated by a masculine form of power that involves aggression, coercion and outward displays of dominance, the power of emotional intelligence and persuasive diplomacy has been devalued. Being vulnerable is often ten percent perceived a drawback – in the workplace, in politics and particularly in more traditional Jewish religious contexts. Honesty about one’s challenges are seen as a weakness and a mark against you.

In this world of overt aggression and artfully designed social media posts, we have begun to lose touch of our true essence. But our ability to connect with one another relies on using that collective power to make changes in our society.

Brene Brown, a researcher who has spent years exploring ideas around love, connection and self-esteem, extols the virtues of vulnerability as a way to experience true courage and free oneself of shame.

When I came across her teachings, I had lived most of my life in fear of speaking out about the challenges of being a woman in Judaism. I didn’t want to draw attention to my flaws or leave open a space for people to criticize me, my family, my practice or my work.

I didn’t want to criticize and destroy; I wanted to be productive and shift paradigms. But I couldn’t imagine ever having the strength to step forward and articulate those truths aloud. I never thought I’d have the strength to strip myself to the bone and be seen as weak.

But slowly, I saw the power in that vulnerability. I started on Facebook, commenting on the plight of agunot — Jewish women whose husbands won’t grant them a divorce — in the Orthodox community. Coincidentally, this cause is closely associated with Queen Esther, celebrated one day before Purim as Agunah Awareness Day. I also was honest with my friends about my own struggles in reconciling my Jewish and feminine identities. I shared on Instagram stories on my weekly challenges. I started to teach, even when I felt unqualified. And I tell the stories from my own experience without being ashamed to cry.

Although it’s been years, I still quake in that fear sometimes. But the fear ebbs as I realize that my greatest power is revealed through sacred vulnerability.

There are times that call for the hard power of Vashti and times that call for the soft power of Esther. I stand strong in that power.

While we need visionaries at the front line speaking up, sometimes we forget that our greatest power need not be shouted from the rooftops. Having the small conversations, one at a time, with the most important people, sometimes make the biggest impact.

When Queen Esther was called to save her people, she knew she had nothing to lose. She may have been comfortable in the palace, but that would not have saved her from feeling the pain of her brethren as the Jewish people were on the brink of extinction.

When she did speak out, she insisted on shifting the paradigm to include everyone. Not only would she appear before the king vulnerable and afraid. She would fast for three days and nights, and so would the rest of the Jewish population of Shushan. She would show herself at her physical weakest, knowing that within that sacred vulnerability lay the deepest strength she possessed.

In the first chapter of the Megillah, following Vashti’s banishment, the women of Ahasuerus’ kingdom are all forced to follow the customs of their male partners. Our tradition tells us that this was a perfect setup for the rest of the story.

In today’s world where politicians and religious leaders often silence the experiences of women, I am drawn to the power of Esther. Her vulnerability is the key to her strength.

(Continued on page 27)
AMBASSADOR DENNIS ROSS is counselor and William Davidson Distinguished Fellow at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Prior to returning to the Institute in 2011, he served two years as special assistant to President Obama and National Security Council senior director for the Central Region, and a year as special advisor to Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. For more than twelve years, Ambassador Ross played a leading role in shaping U.S. involvement in the Middle East peace process and dealing directly with the parties in negotiations.
Empowered Feminism Is the Real Hero of the Purim Story

By Emily Ray Baraf

(JTA) — Purim is often filled with boisterous celebrations, drinking and an embrace of the otherwise taboo.

Yet the Book of Esther recounts a traditional story that confines to the most damaging stereotypes about women, especially in its portrayal of queens Esther and Vashti.

In the traditional reading of the Purim story, the revered Queen Esther (her name literally means “hidden”) manages to situate Jewish people through her mild-mannered ways and acceptance of her destiny, in stark contrast with the assertive Queen Vashti, who speaks out at an inopportune moment and ends up suffering because of it.

Each Purim, Queen Vashti earns her brief mention before she is swiftly banished (or killed, depending on the interpreter), but not before being denounced for disobeying the Persian King Ahasuerus. We just know that Vashti was bad, or evil, or wanton or disobedient, but we never really stop to question the exact nature of her disobedience.

Esther — the antithesis of Vashti’s disobedient ways — then sweeps in to save the day.

As much as traditional interpretations vilify Vashti, there’s something empowering about the “evil” queen. Rather than brush over Vashti’s role or revive her simply as “the bad queen,” we should be celebrating her and holding her up as an example of a strong woman, unafraid to assert herself – even in the face of a king.

In truth, Esther and Vashti both embody the most empowering lesson for women: It is only by exercising free will that we will ever truly be free of the patriarchy’s grip, even if that means losing your life or your kingdom.

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To understand Vashti, we need to remember that her disobedience lay in her refusal to dance in the process. Her power was palpable; some commentators say she had agreed to dance previously but rebelled this time due to leprosy. However, all of this is beside the point. At the critical moment in her story, she made a decision and stood by it.

Surely this episode is an example we as women might hope to follow. Even in the face of initial agreement, we always have the right and the power to change our minds and reassess our comfort with a situation. Vashti is the human embodiment of this choice and this power.

This is not to diminish Esther’s role in the Purim story, nor is it to discount the many redeeming aspects of her character. However, Esther becomes heroic in spite of her inborn submissiveness.

Esther certainly finds herself in a tough position. She knows that she has been chosen to replace a queen described as headstrong and disobedient, entering the story as not only a replacement for the former queen but as a rebuke for all that she represented.

In the end, Esther’s obedience and passivity are her saving grace, as they enable her both access and entry that she otherwise would not have had. But it’s not until she is able to subvert these qualities that she is able to truly save the day.

It takes some growth until she learns to wield these qualities. Esther begins the story as an incredibly docile figure, obedient to both the dictates of the king, and in her daily life and actions to Mordechai. It is not until she finds herself stuck between the demands of the two men that Esther ultimately breaks free and finds her strength. To do this, she must reconcile the fact that one does not “go to the king unless called for,” with Mordechai’s directive to go before the king and plead for the Jews.

The truth is, there is no one way to be a strong feminist figure. Just as Vashti’s brashness can be held up as a model for today’s women, so can Esther’s consideration and tact. It is this very conundrum that ends up tying the two women together in ways we don’t often consider. Vashti’s banishment was a direct result of her choice not to appear in front of the king, and Esther’s triumph was that she appeared before the king without being called.

While it can be argued that in pleading the case for the Jews as Mordechai wished, Esther was still following orders, she did it in her own way: She devised a plan, took initiative, asserted her own power and judgment, and ultimately took control of the situation and saved the day.

It’s true that in many ways, Esther is the hero of this story – but she is only heroic once she learns to embrace the bold feminist qualities she once worked so hard to suppress.

In reality, Vashti and Esther are not polar opposites but opposite sides of the same coin. Both inhabit the strength and courage that we as women hope to embody and carry forward, even if the ways in which it manifests and their personal journeys to find it are different.

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of JTA or its parent company, 70 Faces Media.
BIM BAM SHABBAT SERVICE & “KID”DUSH
Friday, March 27, 5:45 p.m.
Join Rabbi Kornsgold and Mr. Caleb on guitar for a great time celebrating Shabbat together! We will follow our Shabbat service with a fun kids craft project and delicious “Kid”dush.

MAHAR “BIG AIR” EVENT
(3rd-5th Grade)
Sunday, March 22, 12:30-3:30 p.m.
Come join your Mahar friends for as we go to Big Air for a fun filled afternoon of jumping, dodge ball, climbing, and more! Bring a packed dairy lunch. Drop-off & Pick-up at TIRS. Cost: $15/TI-Y Members; $20/Non-Members. Register (by 9 p.m. on Wed., March 18) on the TI website calendar event date.

TEMPLE ISRAEL RELIGIOUS SCHOOL
TIRS ALL-SCHOOL SHABBAT SERVICE
Saturday, March 28, 9:30 a.m.
Please join us as Kitah Vav (6th grade) helps lead services in the Morris & Sylvia Speizman Sanctuary. Afterwards, all are welcome to stay for a delicious oneg.

TASTE OF GAN OPEN HOUSE
Sunday, March 29, 9:45 a.m.
We would love for you and your rising Gan (Kindergarten) student to join us for song, play and joyful Jewish learning. For information and/or to RSVP, please contact Melissa Lefko at 704-944-6785 or mlefko@templeisraelnc.org.

MINT MUSEUM VISIT
Sunday, March 22, 3 p.m.
Join us for a docent-guided tour of the fascinating exhibit, “Immersed in Light: Studio Drift at the Mint” at the Mint Museum Uptown. There will be transportation available, by carpools, leaving from Temple Israel’s parking lot at 1:30 p.m. Admission is FREE for Museum members. Non-members will be charged $9 a person. For more information, contact Ruth Goldberg (704) 366-8903.

LUNCH N’ LEARN WITH RABBI HOWARD SIEGEL
Thursday, March 12
Overcoming Life’s Disappointments, 11 a.m.
Power up your lunch hour with an appetizing array of food for thought, and join Rabbi Howard Siegel once a month at Temple Israel for an engaging discussion on one of Harold Kushner’s thought-provoking books, followed by a delicious catered lunch (menu: Quiche and Salad Bar). Registration required. Cost: $10/TI Congregants; $18/Guests. To register, visit templeisraelnc.org.

MORDECHAI ROSENSTEIN
Artist-in-Residence Weekend
MARCH 5-8, 2020
Temple Israel is thrilled to welcome renowned Jewish Artist Mordechai Rosenstein for an Artist-In-Residence weekend. Trained at the Philadelphia College of Art, he was profoundly influenced by Abstract Expressionist professor Franz Kline. By uniting his interest in Judaica and painting, Rosenstein has given a contemporary meaning to the art of Hebrew calligraphy. His artwork will be available for sale.

For information about this exciting weekend, visit templeisraelnc.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS

TEMPLE ISRAEL BOOK CLUB MEETING
Wednesday, March 18, 7 p.m.
This month’s book selection is by National Jewish Book Award winner, Donald Balson and his latest novel, The Girl From Berlin, from his popular Catherine Lockhart and Liam Taggert series. Everyone is welcome to attend the discussion, whether or not you have read the book. For additional information contact Linda Levy (704-366-6362 or levyllie@aol.com).

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On This Spanish Island, Purim Used to Be the Biggest Holiday for Persecuted Jews

By Cnaan Liphshiz

Palma de Mallorca, Spain (JTA) — On this island south of Barcelona, Jews celebrate Purim these days pretty much as they do most anywhere else in Europe.

The story is not unlike the flip of a book of Esther at the small synagogue near the marina, followed by a costume party bringing together former in-laws and long-lost contemporaries of Palma’s Jewish population of several hundred: unaffiliated Israelis, retired British sun lovers who love Sephardic Hebrew cantillation, French businessmen, to name a few.

But only 50 years ago, Purim was the holiest day of the year – comparable to Yom Kippur – for this island’s unique Jewish community.

Persecuted for centuries during the Spanish Inquisition, the forcibly converted Jews of Mallorca were known and featured too many of the holy day’s distinctive customs to be practiced safely.

But Purim was obscure enough to be observed undetected, according to Ben-Avraham, who had served until two years ago as the emissary to Mallorca for the Foundation for the Carolinas, a group that helps those with Jewish ancestry reconnect to Judaism.

In pre-inquisition centuries, a holiday that celebrates the Jews’ triumph over people who conspired to annihilate them in fifth-century B.C. Persia was far less joyous than its carnival-like character today. Jews only began dressing up in Purim in the 16th century. Before that, the holiday’s essence was primarily in the daylong Fast of Esther, which comes immediately after the actual holiday and is meant as a sign of gratitude to God for the survival of Jews in Persia.

The fast aligned comfortably with Lent, a 40-day period in early spring during which Catholics abstained from certain indulgences, including meat. Many Christians would fast on Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, thereby providing an opportunity for chueetas observing the Fast of Esther at around the same time, Ben-Avraham explained.

Some chueetas fasted on Purim as recently as 30 years ago, according to Dolores Forteza Rei, a member of the Memoria de la Chuetas, a conservancy and de la Carrer association that is dedicated to the preservation of chuetas heritage. Her late father, Jose, began fasting on Purim in the 1930s upon his return to the island from the Spanish Civil War.

“He kept fasting on Purim right until he died,” Forteza Rei said.

Chuetas today form a minority of about 15,000, very few of whom regard themselves as Jews. In the past, however, they had a deeper, emotional connection to the story of Purim and particularly to its protagonist Esther.

According to the story, Esther was called upon to enter the harem of the Persian king Ahasuerus and foil his evil adviser’s plan to annihilate the kingdom’s Jews. Hiding her Jewish identity until the story’s climax, Esther was defined as an “amora” already in the 19th century by the Malbim, a rabbinic sage from what is now Ukraine.

“There is the story of Purim and particular ways to her story and character,” said Isba bat Valls, a 60-year-old chuetas who converted to Judaism several years ago. She is now an active member of Mallorca’s tiny Jewish congregation of several dozen people.

For generations, the near-homophones Estelle and Stella were particularly popular first names for chuetas girls as a tribute to the heroine.

Both Toni Pinya, a chuetas who converted back to Judaism and is now a board member of the Jewish Community of Mallorca, and Rabbi Ben-Avraham recall getting beaten up and harassed at school in Palma as late as the 1960s by classmates who called them “Christ killers” and “dirty chuetas.”

Pinya’s parents were married in secret at dawn in the 1950s to avoid a riot because his father was a chuetas, Pinya explained during an interview at the local synagogue.

A small space on the ground floor of a residential building next to a Thai massage parlor, the synagogue boasts a Star of David on its gate and a mezuzah on its front door. Such recognizable features were unthinkable at the three secret synagogues where chuetas had practiced their Judaism discreetly for many years after the Inquisition.

Located at the old center of Palma de Mallorca, the capital of the island of Mallorca, these synagogues no longer exist. One of them, located on a quiet alley so narrow that only small cars can negotiate it, is now a leather shop. Another is a church.

But after the fall of the pro-Catholic dictatorship of Francisco Franco in 1975, anti-chuetas sentiment declined and with it the need for secrecy around the Purim customs. By then, thousands of tourists to Mallorca had transformed the remote island into a European party capital, Forteza Rei said.

“Suddenly we were not the for- eigners anymore. Being chuetas became irrelevant. An anecdote,” she said.

Pinya, a chef who also cooks for the synagogue, is one of dozens of chuetas who converted to Judaism over the past two decades.

Nowadays, “Purim is just a great attraction for unaffiliated Jews, especially the Israeli ones with children,” said Dani Rotstein, a founder of the island’s Limmud conference of Jewish learning.

A New Jersey native who specializes in video productions, Rotstein settled in Mallorca in 2014 and started the Limmud festival there last year.

Still, Purim resonates with Mallorca’s Jews in much deeper ways than elsewhere, he said.

“It’s not surprising, when you think about it,” Rotstein said.

“Many chuetas basically feel that this story is about their own lives.”

Anon

Anonymous (8)

Barry and Mary Ellen Erasky

Ann and Bob Abel

Judy and Stan August

Bill and Shari Golden Price

Amy and Steve Price

Jill and Craig Baick

Gali and John Baron

Sanford and Lois Benjamin

Brian and Glenda Bernhardt

Andrew and Elka Bernstein

Bobbi and Don Bernstein

Caryn and Alan Benjamin

Martin Birnbaum

Barry and Lisa Blau

Jill Blumenthal

Lee and Alan Blumenthal

Philip Blumenthal

Michael and Leandra Borchard

David and Bonnie Borstein

Justin Bregman and

Diana Warth Bregman

Tracy and Larry Brown

Suly and Richard (OBM) Chenkin

Steve and Olivia Cohen

Wendi Williams Cohen (OBM)

Andrea and George Cronson

Andree and Gary Davis

Jill and Michael Dinneman

David and Aileen Epstein

Gary and Donna Lerner

Barry and Gloria Lemer

Harry and Jerry Levin

Ros C Levine

Judi Sutler

Sunny and Richard Libman

Bruce and cloves Libman

Nancy and Sam Bernstein

Martin Birnbaum

Barry and Lisa Blau

Jill Blumenthal

Lee and Alan Blumenthal

Philip Blumenthal

Michael and Leandra Borchard

David and Bonnie Borstein

Justin Bregman and

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Jill and Michael Dinneman

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Barry and Gloria Lemer

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Ros C Levine

Judi Sutler

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Bruce and cloves Libman

Nancy and Sam Bernstein

Martin Birnbaum

By Cnaan Liphshiz
Join PJ Our Way for an afternoon of friendly competition making some yummy matzah creations. Friendship Circle builds friendships in the lives of individuals with special needs who may feel lonely because of a lack of appropriate social opportunities. Our innovative programs foster enduring and meaningful friendships between those with special needs, our “Special Friends”, and typically-developing teens, our “Teen Friends” from our community. This will be a fun and delicious way for PJ Our Way participants (ages 8 ½ - 12) to meet and make new friends with special abilities and their teen friends.

Parents are invited to either drop off their child or wait in a designated parent-only area.

Free - Registration is required by March 19
Register at www.nextgencharlotte.org

Questions: Debby Block, CJE Program Coordinator | 704.944.6780 or debby.block@jewishcharlotte.org
By Shoshana Kordova

Modi’in, Israel (JTA) – If you haven’t been hiding behind a Purim mask for the past few years, you’ve probably noticed that in some neighborhoods at least, the Jewish holiday of Megillah and Merriment has become quite a bit more theme-obsessed than it used to be.

Elaborately themed mishloach manot, or holiday gift baskets, can involve hours of poring through Pinterest and choosing the picture-perfect supplies, not to mention the painstaking effort to put it all together. And they are only the starting point for some families.

Next-level enterprises may involve a Purim poem explaining how everything fits in with the year’s chosen theme and family costumes to match. Take Chabad.org’s sample poem for a cowboy costume and mishloach manot theme that begins, “We cowboys on the range are working hard, / Giddy-up we call to the horses in the yard,” and ends with a comparison between lassos and the rope used to hang Haman.

Even the Purim seudah, the meal held on the afternoon of the holiday, may be subjected to the same theme as the costumes and mishloach manot. Jamie Geller of the “Joy of Kosher” recommends a sports theme in 2017, with tips for the meal such as serving beer, using a tablecloth with your favorite team’s colors and filling large glass vases with “mini sports balls” topped with bowls of snacks.

And all that’s for a meal at home. Each kid may still need additional costumes for school dress-up days that may in turn come with their own themes.

Given how out of control Purim can get, it’s little surprise that some parents dread its onset rather than enjoying the day. I feel a special attachment to Purim because I was married on the holiday (we had a costume wedding in the evening, following a pre-huppah Megillah reading), and it makes me sad to see the fun leached out of it by what have become unrealistic norms in some places.

Some theme devotees may well enjoy the challenge of bringing a new theme to fruition and the opportunity to publicly express their creativity. But the problem is that such an intense focus on achieving a new level of perfection every year contributes to an atmosphere in which people are often made to feel they are about to enter a competition they never signed up for. By the time the actual holiday rolls around, some families experience it as little more than a sugar-filled anticlimax.

It doesn’t have to be this way. Purim is ultimately about communal responsibility and the salvation of the Jewish people, whether it’s celebrated with a lighthearted take or a serious focus on the religious commandments of the day.

In an effort to foster that communal responsibility – the kind shouldered by Queen Esther at the pivotal moment when she realizes that perhaps rescuing her people is the reason she has ascended to the throne – individuals, families, educators and community leaders should consider how they can do their part to encourage a low-key Purim imbued with an atmosphere of genuine well-being and cooperation.

Here are a few suggestions:

Fewer frills: For those who aren’t interested in subscribing to the theme-of-the-year club, this means not only going the toned-down route for costumes, seudah and mishloach manot (we put ours in paper lunch bags decorated by the kids), but also being content with the decision to stay chill and minimize waste. For those who like going all out, this means stopping to consider whether there might be a way to moderate some elements of your approach (in scope or quantity) in a way you can feel good about.

Tzedakah cards: Many charities offer Purim tzedakah cards. You can use these to replace most of your mishloach manot to have on hand for unexpected visitors bearing gift baskets, or to send to relatives or friends to whom you won’t be delivering. Bonus: You can’t get a sugar high off the leftovers (plus you get to actually help people).

Communal mishloach manot: Communities can randomly assign each member/family to deliver mishloach manot to (only!) one or two others each year, (perhaps rescuing her people perhaps), but also be-

A Jewish family prepares for a Purim party, Feb. 28, 2010. (Gershon Elinson/Flash90)

Chag Purim Sameach

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