IN THE WAKE OF CHARLOTTESVILLE

By BEN SALES

JTA news service

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114 just converted to Judaism in Nicaragua

By JOSEFIN DOLSTEN

JTA news service

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In July, community members answered questions before a bet din, or religious court, of three Orthodox rabbis from Israel and the United States and immersed in a newly built mikvah in Managua, the Central American capital. Male converts underwent circumcisions or symbolic circumcisions if already circumcised.

Three days after the conversions conducted at the Managua home of a community leader, 22 couples wed according to Jewish tradition in a Managua social hall rented for the occasion.

FEDERATION ADDS FAMILY FUN TO #GIVINGTUESDAY

The Tampa JCCs & Federation added family fun to #GivingTuesday as part of its Annual Campaign to raise funds. "This year's campaign is turning it into a day or fun-filled family activities with the theme of "Get Yer Tzedakah On!" 

#GivingTuesday is a global day of giving back for the greater good and this year will happen on Tuesday, Nov. 28.

"When you give you are making a real impact in the lives of others. It adds meaning to your life when you know you are joining others in tikkun olam – repairing the world," said Alissa Fischel, chief development officer of the Tampa JCCs & Federation.

“We are dreaming big this year. We hope to raise $200,000 on #GivingTuesday with the support of our volunteers and generous donors.”

Folks can “Get Your Tzedakah On" by #GivingTuesday by answering the call on that day or making a gift online at www.jewishstampa.com.

An even better way is to join in on the fun at the Bryan Family JCC, where folks can make calls asking for the community’s support, do crafts, sing, act, snack and enjoy the day.

Sign up now for available two-hour shifts for the whole family at jewishstampa.com/givingtuesday

People can also get social by joining in and follow the conversation using #GivingTuesday for posts to encourage friends to get involved. Hashtags to use include: #GivingTuesday, #JFedcares, #Tampa and #Givingshub.

Nicaraguan men who converted to Judaism waiting for their brides prior to a Jewish wedding for 22 couples.

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Nicaraguan men who converted to Judaism waiting for their brides prior to a Jewish wedding for 22 couples.
Netanyahu calls body searches of female worshippers at Wall ‘unacceptable’

JERUSALEM (JTA) – Body searches of female worshippers at the entrance to the Western Wall are “unacceptable,” Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said.

Netanyahu asked Minister of Public Security Gilad Erdan to look into accusations that at least four female rabbinical students were subjected to body searches while attempting to enter the Western Wall Plaza, the Prime Minister’s Office said in a statement.

On Wednesday, Aug. 23, the students from the Reform movement’s Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, including two Americans, were asked to lift their skirts and shirts for security before being allowed to enter the Western Wall plaza, where an egalitarian prayer service was being held. The four said they were questioned and pulled aside into a private room.

The women were among a group of 15 rabbinical, cantorial and Jewish education students from North America and Australia who joined about 200 men and women in an egalitarian service held that morning on the plaza behind the men’s and women’s sections. The egalitarian service took place following the monthly rosh chodesh service of the Women of the Wall group.

The Israeli Religious Action Center of the Reform movement said it planned to submit formal complaints about the body searches on the students.

Erdan said that if a complaint is filed, it will be “thoroughly checked.”

Netanyahu and Erdan “agreed that if this indeed took place as described, it is unacceptable and will be addressed in accordance with the law and the instructions of the court,” the statement said.

Western Wall security did not say what they were looking for, according to the Israeli Religious Action Center. Western Wall officials in the past have detained women and searched for Torah scrolls and other religious items they consider inappropriate for women to bring to the wall.

In January, Israel’s High Court of Justice ruled that women are not to be subjected to intense body searches at the Western Wall.

Leaders of the Reform movement said in a statement that they sent a letter to Netanyahu calling on the prime minister to “issue a swift and clear denunciation” of what they called the “degrading” searches.

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The Tampa JCC’s has launched a new swim program at Cohn Campus pool in partnership with the Brooke Bennett Swim Academy. From her beginnings with a swim club in Brandon, Bennett rose to become one of America’s most elite swimmers. At 16, she won her first Olympic gold medal in the 100-meter freestyle at the 1996 Atlanta Games. In Sydney in 2000, she won two more gold medals, one in the 400-meter freestyle and another in the 400-meter relay. Now, she is pursuing her passion to teach children how to swim and be water safe. On the Cohn campus, swim lessons will be offered for children seven months of age to adults. In addition to the academy programs, a free water babies class is available for families with children from 3-6 months old. Lessons are also offered as part of the enrichment offerings for preschool families.

“For the partnership with the Brooke Bennett Swim Academy will take our swim program to a new level,” said Pam Cotner, executive director of youth programs and leisure sports at the JCC on the Cohn campus. The aim of the Brooke Bennett Swim Academy is to make every child water safe and to provide a love for swimming.

The campus is located at 13069 Community Campus Drive, off Gunn Highway in the Citrus Park area. For more information, call (727) 510-8122.
B'nai Mitzvah

For many years, synagogues have employed a very public tactic to balance their budgets: B’ni Mitvzah. We have always been assured that we will have decreased membership for B’nai Mitzvah. In the year that I have been here, I have come to realize that this is no longer true. For the first time in my career, I believe that we will have an ornate celebration for their 13th birthday. In fact, I have spoken on this issue at conferences and in interviews. I believe deeply that it cuts to one of the major issues that the Jewish people face each day. The lesson that we have learned is that we are no longer looking to our synagogues and make them the central idea in our synagogues. We will continue to create a community of Jewish children. To be perfectly clear, I am not saying that Jewish children should not be a focal point of our communities. I do insist on saying that they should not be the focal point. We need to continue to work to make our communities places where Jews are the focal points no matter what age they are.

For generations we have heard from Jews that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah day will simply fall into place. This has been a forgone conclusion for far too long. I love to ask the naive and contrarian question: why wouldn’t we have two B’nai Mitzvah experiences? Synagogues cannot be the home that people find. For generations we have heard from Jews that they will join a synagogue when they have kids. This is no longer true. We have always been assured that we will have an ornate celebration for their 13th birthday. This was not always a budgetary issue as it original to have an ornate celebration for their 13th birthday. It’s time to move beyond B’nai Mitzvah.

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are individuals from outside Israel who join the Israeli Defense Forces but have no family there. For more information, call the temple office.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah class: On Thursday, Sept. 14 the Brotherhood’s Annual Kickoff Party will be held at the shul and Steve Salzer. There is no charge to attend.

For more details, including time and address for the Salzers, contact the temple office.

Hebrew for adults: Learn to read Hebrew by attending "A Taste of Hebrew" taught by Cantor Kassimzar. This 20-lesson course is designed for English-speaking adults who are primarily interested in learning how to read Hebrew prayers and blessings. It is a refresher course for adults who know some Hebrew and is appropriate for those with no Hebrew skills. It is from 6-7 p.m. on most Wednesdays beginning Oct. 11 and running through March 21. The course textbook is available for purchase for $13. This class is a prerequisite for an Adult Bar/Bat Mitzvah class.

Hebrew: for adults who know some Hebrew and want to learn further; classes on Thursdays: study of the weekly Torah portion at 11 a.m., led by Rabbi Emeritus Sherry Shenefelt; also, an informal group of folks making crafts and sharing their skills.

Cong. Beth Am Selichot dinner: This year for Selichot on Saturday, Sept. 16, the congregation is encouraging people to gather for dinner at local restaurants for some community conversation. The idea is to get people who might not usually spend time together, but have something in common—a location, a favorite restaurant—to get to know one another. Services and dinner will follow at the synagogue.

To become a "captain" for one of the diners or to find out more information, contact Kathy Bromberg at kbrombergem@gmail.com. Reverse Taschlich: September’s Year of Mizvot event is a High Holy Day activity, organized by Hillels of the Suncoast, for a "reverse taschlich." Instead of casting our sins into the water, volunteers will clean a local waterway of litter and pollution. This event is on the afternoon of Sunday, Sept. 24.

For more information or to RSVP, contact Katie Habgood at katie@yellen.com.

Crafts and a movie: The Beth Am Craft Klatch and Film Society will meet on Sunday, Sept. 10 from 12:30 - 2:30 p.m. This is an informal group of folks making crafts and sharing their skills. Following the Craft Klatch, the Film Society will show the 1947 Gregory Peck movie, Gentlemen’s Agreement, about anti-Semitism in the U.S. For more information call the synagogue office.

Cong. Mekor Shalom Color and connect: An adult coloring get together will take place on Wednesday, Sept. 13 at 11 a.m. at Cong. Beth Am. This is for coloring, connecting, coffee, and calm. Bring a coloring book or use pages already provided. Coloring supplies will be available.

Teddy Bear Shabbat: On Friday, Sept. 15 at 6 p.m., Teddy bear owners of all ages are invited to celebrate Shabbat in a “beary” joyful way. This service will include some prayers for a traditional Friday night service, so there will be one service that evening. There will be an oneg Shabbat right after the service with Teddy Bear friendly snacks.

Cong. Bais Menacham Chabad: A well-known kabbalat is: Enrich the soul and mind with a touch of kabbalah. Learn practical spiritualities for everyday life. Classes are held on Wednesdays, 6:15 - 7 p.m.

For High Holiday Service Schedules, See Page 13

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Parents across the country will soon be sending their precious children off to their freshman year of college. I remember those days and I remember my concerns. It just so happens that amidst my reminiscing, I begin reading a book recommended by my brother-in-law, who travels frequently to Poland for business. Irena’s Children by Tilar J. Mazzeo, documenting and highlighting Irena Sendler’s story of the courageous feats of daring she performed as a public health specialist with access to the Warsaw ghetto during WWII. Termed the female Oscar Schindler, a non-Jew, with the help of the resistance, smuggled thousands of children past the Nazis – to safe houses, orphanages and convents.

On the eve of my sons leaving for college, I worried incessantly that the meal plans would not offer what my kids could handle a full and demanding 17-18 hour course load. I argued for less, to spare them undue stress and ease their fears of “flunking out.” Parents living in the ghetto hoped to spare their kids stress – only through the black market at exorbitant prices. And great risk. “Their last parting message to their kids was not a diploma, but survival and to somehow be able to wear the Star of David for identification. No option dressing. Authorities warned that severe punishment – including death by shooting – was in store for Jews who did not wear the badge. So even with keeping things “in perspective,” what can we do when:

• Calls come about difficult transitions.
• Calls come about a disappointingly low test grade.

Parents routinely ask college counselors if their children will be safe on campus. I argued for less, to spare them mandating 17-18 hour course load. “I can promise you nothing but that I will risk my life every day trying.” Babies were tranquillized and stored in toolboxes under bricks in a flatbread truck leaving the ghetto, bound for a “safe” house. Older children who were too semitic looking had their hair dyed blonde, re-clothed and instructed to shed their past and internalize the information on the falsified documents they were handed.

The delegation led by Kushner, who is President Donald Trump’s son-in-law, includes special Middle East peace envoy Jason Greenblatt, the deputy national security adviser for strategy, Dina Powell; and the ambassador to Israel, David Friedman. “We have a lot of things to talk about: how to advance peace, stability and security in our region – prosperity, too. And I think all of them are within our reach,” Netanyah told Kushner.

Kushner visits Middle East in bid to restart peace talks

JERUSALEM (JTA) – Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahuh met in Jerusalem with White House adviser Jared Kushner and a delegation of American diplomats trying to restart peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians.

The meeting Thursday, Aug. 24, is part of a visit to the region by the U.S. diplomats. Kushner and the group were meeting that evening with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah.

The delegation led by Kushner, who is President Donald Trump’s son-in-law, includes special Middle East peace envoy Jason Greenblatt, the deputy national security adviser for strategy, Dina Powell; and the ambassador to Israel, David Friedman.

“We have a lot of things to talk about: how to advance peace, stability and security in our region – prosperity, too. And I think all of them are within our reach,” Netanyahuh told Kushner.

Kushner responded that “We really appreciate the commitment of the prime minister and his team to engaging very thoughtfully and respectfully the way that the president has asked them to do so.”

Abbas told a delegation of Israeli lawyers and law students earlier in the week, referring to the U.S. leadership, “I don’t even know how they are dealing with us because his entire administration is in chaos.”

He told the lawmakers he does not expect any breakthroughs.

“I have a lot of things to talk about: how much they believe and are committed to a two-state solution and a halt to construction in the settlements,” Abbas said. “I have pleaded with them to say the same thing to Netanyahuh, but they refrained. They said they would consider it but then they didn’t get back to me.”

Kushner visits Middle East in bid to restart peace talks
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The majority, including Centeno, are inspired by Hasidism and follow a local leader named Akiva Simja Fernandez, who converted to Judaism in 2012 with the help of Kulanu. Fernandez follows some Jewish customs that he learned from the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, which does not have a presence in Managua but caters to Israeli tourists in the beach town of San Juan del Sur.

Fernandez and many of his followers — some of whom claim Jewish ancestry — wear black velvet kippahs and wide-brimmed black hats, and sing and dance to Hasidic music during celebrations. A second group with 38 members of one extended family heeds Moshe Omar Cohen-Henriquez, who traces his ancestry to Jews from Curacao who were forced to convert to Christianity. The group adheres to Sephardic customs and has access to a mikvah, or ritual bath, and a new mikvah is in the works.

The dietary restrictions didn’t seem to be a problem for Centeno, who was getting ready to cook for Shabbat, when he would be hosting 78 community members. “I haven’t eaten meat, some of them for years. They eat vegetarian and fish.”

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Kuluna, a New York-based non-profit group that supports communities around the world seeking to learn about Judaism, had facilitated the conversions. “There was a great amount of trepidation in their faces and anxiousness because it was so important to them, and when they emerged from the mikvah the glow on their faces was amazing,” said belit din member Rabbi Mark Kunis, who was ordained at Yeshiva University’s Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary and works at the Shaarai Shomayim synagogue in Atlanta. “It’s inspiring; the excitement that it engendered was phenomenal.” At least half the candidates claimed Jewish ancestry, and most had been studying Judaism for at least five years – with some pursuing Judaism almost their entire lives, Kunis told JTA. All the candidates except one family were accepted for conversion, and one of the belit din rabbis served as a Spanish translator, since most of the candidates could not communicate in English, he said.

“I feel at home,” Even Centeno, 21, told JTA of having officially become Jewish. “This was for me like a dream.” Centeno is among the converts who trace their ancestry to Sephardic Jews forced to convert to Christianity during the Inquisition. Centeno, who converted along with his parents and sister, said he was aware of his family’s Jewish ancestry since he was a young child and started learning about Judaism at the age of 11.

American Stage in St. Petersburg The winner will be chosen from those correctly answering the following: Who played Goliath with a slingshot?

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American Muslims seeking better mosque security find help from Jews

By BEN SALES  
JTA news service

NEW YORK – With Islamicphobic hate crimes on the rise, Muslim leaders are working harder to secure their mosques and institutions. Some are turning to Jewish experts for assistance.

A few Jewish organizations have partnered with local and national Muslim groups to advise them on best security practices and advocate jointly for stronger hate crime legislation. Cooperation between the two communities, which was growing late last year, is turning toward the particulars of staying safe in a nervous climate — how to prevent attacks and handle hate crimes.

“When people start to feel unsafe in Sabbath or Sunday or Friday services, that can make for a very complicated and challenging set of circumstances,” said Paul Goldenberg, director of the Secure Community Network, which advises Jewish groups and institutions on security and has worked with Muslim, Sikh and Christian institutions on composing security plans. “Extremist groups have come to realize our houses of worship are an Achilles’ heel.”

Goldenberg has worked with Muslim groups for years, coaching them on everything from forming relationships with local law enforcement to receiving grants from the Department of Homeland Security to making sure staff know what to do in the event of an attack or threat.

The ADL and American Jewish Committee have also worked with Muslim leaders and institutions on reporting, preventing, responding to and prosecuting hate crimes.

Muslims and Jews appear to have good reason to be vigilant. The Anti-Defamation League reported a 34 percent increase in anti-Semitic incidents in 2016 versus 2015. Islamicphobic attacks went up 67 percent from 2014 to 2015, according to the latest FBI statistics, and the number of anti-Muslim hate groups has nearly tripled in the past year, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Both communities have suffered high-profile hate incidents recently. A Minnesota mosque was bombed in early August, and the white supremacist rally in Charlottesville targeted Jews with neo-Nazi slogans.

Some Jewish institutions began forming security plans following the 9/11 attacks in 2001, and SCN was founded three years later. Jewish institutions nationwide have beefed up security, including some that hired guards or restricted entry to their buildings.

Muslims now hope to do the same for their mosques and facilities.

Salam Al-Marayati, president of the Muslim Public Affairs Council, has been consulting with Goldenberg on security since 2011. This year, Goldenberg provided the Los Angeles-based council with a plan to secure area mosques, including best practices on coordinating with law enforcement and procedures to follow during an emergency.

“All of that was unknown to the community, and with the help of Paul it became known,” said Al-Marayati, regarding security procedures.

The ADL’s regional offices also provide local mosques with consulting similar to SCN’s — how to build relationships with law enforcement, how to monitor who enters and exits buildings, and the best ways to spread information about a threat or attack.

Elise Jarvis, who heads the ADL’s community security efforts, said one of the best ways to improve security would be for Muslim communities to increase reporting of hate crimes to police. Jews currently suffer the most hate crimes of any religious group in the U.S., according to the FBI, but Jarvis said Muslims may avoid reporting hate crimes due to a lack of trust in law enforcement. Al-Marayati said many Muslims resent “being treated as suspects.”
Menorah Manor hosts annual dinner to honor new Founder's Association members

The annual Founders Association dinner, which was held at the Marion and Bernard L. Samson Nursing Center on Wednesday, August 9th.

Two new Founders were honored: The Menorah Manor Guild and KFLP Group - the Linsky/Rosenblatt Family.

In addition to a major financial commitment, Founders are also committed to providing leadership and to taking an active role in future planning. The beautiful and delicious meal was prepared and served by Menorah Manor’s very talented Dining Services staff.

Menorah Manor is proud to honor its new Founders Association members. Mazel tov and thank you for being such important partners in Menorah Manor’s mission of providing the best possible care in a warm, homelike, Jewish environment.

IN THE WAKE OF CHARLOTTESVILLE

In rare non-Israel statement, AIPAC rebukes Trump

WASHINGTON (JTA) – In a rare statement unrelated to Israel in the Middle East, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee implicitly rebuked President Donald Trump for drawing an equivalence between the sides in the Charlotte-ville clash.

“AIPAC shares the outrage and deep concern of our fellow Americans about the inexcusable violence and sickening displays of racism and anti-Semitism in Charlotte-ville,” the prominent Israel lobbying group said in a statement posted on Twitter.

“The vile hatred expressed by neo-Nazis, the KKK and white supremacists must be categorically and unambiguously rejected. We urge all elected officials to reject moral equivalence and oppose those who promote hate and those who oppose it. There must be no quarter for bigotry in our country.”

AIPAC joins the virtual gamut of Jewish groups – encompassing all religious streams – that have issued similar statements.

AIPAC rarely makes pronouncements on issues not related to Israel and almost never issues statements that at least do not tangentially relate to the Middle East.

ADL: 1000% surge in online donations

NEW YORK (JTA) – The Anti-Defamation League received 10 times as much money as usual from online donations in response to the white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, VA.

The group, which combats anti-Semitism and bigotry, reported a 1000 percent increase in online donations during the week beginning Aug. 13, one day after the Charlottesville rally. The ADL said it received six times as many individual donations as during an average week this year, mostly from first-time donors.

In the aftermath of the rally, the ADL has seen its profile skyrocket. It received $1 million donations from Apple and 21st Century Fox CEO James Murdoch. JP Morgan Chase also announced that it would donate $500,000 to the group. JP Morgan and Apple also pledged to match donations to the ADL and other nonprofits from employees.

AFMDA cancels gala at Mar-a-Lago Club

(JTA) – Nine charities have canceled planned galas at President Donald Trump’s Mar-a-Lago Club in Palm Beach, including the American Friends of Magen David Adom.

AFMDA, the U.S. fundraising arm of the Israeli Red Cross organization, announced the cancellation of its 2018 benefit in a statement provided to the Washington Post, citing the “apolitical” nature of the humanitarian aid organization.

Some of the groups cited Trump’s response to the far-right rally in Charlottesville, VA, as the reason for canceling. In other cases, groups said the venue was detracting from the message of their events.

The club makes $100,000 to $275,000 on such events, the Washington Post reported.
Many of the points echo a plan of action that the ADL called on the White House to adopt shortly after the white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Va., and President Donald Trump’s response, which the ADL and many others have slammed.

“The events in Charlottesville once again showed us we have much work to do to bring Americans together,” said Jonathan Greenblatt, the ADL’s national director on a conference call with reporters. “We know that hate is on the rise. ADL can’t wait any longer.”

Some of the mayors also portrayed the tragedy as a response in part to the president’s suggestion of white supremacists and those who oppose them. Steve Adler, the Jewish mayor of Austin, Texas, who has volunteered for the ADL in the past, said during the call that “mayors don’t need a teleprompter to say Nazis are bad.”

“There’s a clear lack of a moral compass,” Mayor Shane Benis of Gresham, Oregon, a city of 100,000 east of Portland, said on the call. “This shouldn’t be a surprise to anyone, how he has continued to divide us since the election. It is clearly, in my view, an absence of any sort of moral leadership from the president.”

But mayors were divided on a couple of contentious issues, including the removal of Confederate monuments from cities and how to strike a balance between protecting civil liberties while guarding against incitement and threats to public safety.

Tom Cochran, CEO of the mayors’ conference, said policy on how to deal with Confederate memorials should be left up to individual cities.

“This discussion is not about monuments,” he said. “This conversation is about coming to a better understanding of all acts of hate wherever they occur, and making sure we protect public safety while making sure that the right to free speech will always be protected.”

JEWISH PRESS OF TAMPA • PAGE 11

Trump adviser Gary Cohn reportedly considered quitting after Charlottesville (JTA) – Gary Cohn, a prominent Jewish member of President Donald Trump’s administration, considered resigning over Trump’s response to a far-right rally in Charlottesville, Va., New York Times reported.

Cohn, the top economic adviser for Trump, drafted a letter of resignation, according to the report, which cited two unnamed people familiar with the draft.

In an interview with the Financial Times, Cohn said the White House “can and must do better” in consistently condemning hate groups. His remarks came nearly two weeks after a far-right rally in Charlottesville, Va., turned deadly when an alleged white supremacist rammed a crowd of counter-protesters with a car, killing and injuring at least 19.

Cohn said in the interview that he had not want to leave his job as director of the National Economic Council.

“The president has called to voice my distress over the events of the last two days,” Cohn said.

After the Charlottesville rally, Trump said that both far-right marchers who gathered in the southern Virginia city and counter-protesters shared the blame for the violence that ensued. Trump later condemned the Ku Klux Klan, racists and neo-Nazis amid criticism that he failed to single out the far-rightists immediately afterward, but a day later said there were “very fine people on both sides.”

Cohn was standing with other officials behind Trump in the lobby of Trump Tower in New York City on Aug. 15 when the president made his latter remarks to reporters. The presidential briefing was called to announce a new proposal for infrastructure spending.

“Citizens standing up for equality and freedom can never be equated with white supremacists, neo-Nazis and the KKK,” Cohn said in the Financial Times interview. “I believe this administration can and must do better in consistently and unequivocally condemning these groups, and do every thing we can to heal the deep divisions that exist in our communities.”

Cohn added: “As a Jewish American, I will not allow neo-Nazis ranting ‘Jews will not replace us’ to cause this Jew to leave his job.”

He also told the Financial Times he spoke privately with Trump about these issues.

“Mr. Trump still has not replaced us’ to cause this Jew to leave his job. He is also standing with other officials behind President Donald Trump, director of the National Economic Council, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao; and Nick Mulvey, director of the Office of Management and Budget.

AUGUST  25 - SEPTEMBER 7, 2017

President Donald Trump speaking to the media at Trump Tower in New York City, Aug. 15. Looking on, from left, are Gary Cohn, director of the National Economic Council; Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao; and Nick Mulvey, director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Photo by Drew Angerer/Getty Images
PARK
• Continued from Front Page
and the tireless efforts of Maureen Cohan, Sharon Stein, Ted Kempton of Hardeeman Kempton, Will Womack of Tampa Bay Landscaping, Paul De-shon, Bong Kim and others, for making the park a reality,” Fischel said.

The day’s festivities will feature family-friendly activities such as the Great Rosh Hashanah Train Ride and a PJ Library story, Engineer Art and the Rosh Hashanah Train. In addition, there will be hobby craft stations and a bounce house.

For more information about the park ribbon cutting, contact Alissa Fischel at (813) 769-4725 or alissa.fischel@jewish tampac.com. To learn more about the other activities, contact Brandy Gold at (813) 769-4725 or brandy.gold@jewish tampac.com.

GIVING
• Continued from Front Page
About #GivingTuesday

 Held on the Tuesday following Thanksgiving and the widely recognized shopping events Black Friday and Cyber Monday, #GivingTuesday kicks off the charitable season, when many people focus on their end-of-the-year giving.

This event was created in 2012 by the 92nd Street Y in New York and has become a global movement by harnessing the power of social media to inspire and transform how people think, talk and participate in the giving season. It harnesses the collective power of nonprofits, civic organizations and businesses as well as families and individuals to encourage and amplify small acts of kindness.

For more information, or for those interested in lending a helping hand on #GivingTuesday, contact Michelle Gallagher at (813) 739-1687 or michelle.gallagher@jewish tampac.com.
## High Holiday Service Schedules

**Yom Kippur**
- **Kol Nidre**: 7 p.m.
- **Friday, Sept. 29**: Shofar sounding, 11:30 a.m.
- **Morning service**: 10 a.m.

**Rosh Hashanah**
- **Erev Rosh Hashanah**: Morning service, 9:30 a.m.
- **Yizkor**: 1 p.m.
- **Morning service**: 9:30 a.m.
- **Yom Kippur**: Kol Nidre, 7 p.m.
- **Friday, Sept. 29**: Shofar, 11:30 a.m. (approx.)
- **Morning service**: 9:30 a.m.
- **First Day**: Shofar, 11:30 a.m. (approx.)
- **Morning service**: 9 a.m.
- **Second Day**: Shofar, 11:30 a.m. (approx.)
- **Morning service**: 10 a.m.

**Tashlich**
- **Friday, Sept. 29**: Tashlich following morning service
- **Friday, Sept. 22**: Tashlich, 1 p.m.

**Break-the-Fast**
- **Friday, Sept. 29**: Kol Nidre, First service, 6 p.m.
- **Kol Nidre**: 6:45 p.m.
- **Friday, Sept. 29**: Kol Nidre, Second service, 8:30 p.m.
- **Friday, Sept. 29**: Kol Nidre, First service, 6 p.m.
- **Friday, Sept. 29**: Kol Nidre, Second service, 8:30 p.m.
- **Saturday, Sept. 30**: Kol Nidre, Second service, 8:30 p.m.
- **Friday, Sept. 29**: Kol Nidre, Second service, 8:30 p.m.
- **Sunday, Sept. 24**: Kol Nidre, First service, 6 p.m.
- **Sunday, Sept. 24**: Kol Nidre, Second service, 8:30 p.m.

## Addresses

- **Young Israel of Tampa**
  - 1578 Bloomingdale Ave. Valrico
  - (813) 571-1800

- **Chabad Lubavitch of Tampa Bay**
  - 14900 Westchase Blvd, Tampa
  - (813) 963-2137

- **Erev Rosh Hashanah**
  - Morning service, 10 a.m.
  - Kol Nidre, 6 p.m.

- **Chabad Chai of South Tampa**
  - 2511 W. Swann Ave. #201, Tampa
  - (813) 681-6547

- **Cong. Kol Ali**
  - 3919 Mooran Rd, Tampa
  - (813) 571-1800

- **Cong. Rodeph Shalom**
  - 7758 Bayshore Blvd. Tampa
  - (813) 837-1911

- **Cong. Shaarai Zedek**
  - 1300 W. Swann Ave., Tampa
  - (813) 876-2377

- **Cong. B'nai Emmunah**
  - 57 Road St., Tampa
  - (813) 221-2400

- **Cong. Beth Shalom**
  - 708 Bryan Rd., Brandon
  - (813) 681-6547

- **Cong. Beth Am**
  - 8300 W. Fletcher Ave,
  - (813) 571-1800

- **Cong. Kol Ami**
  - 2511 W. Swann Ave. #201, Tampa
  - (813) 963-2317

- **Cong. Shaarai Zedek**
  - 1300 W. Swann Ave., Tampa
  - (813) 876-2377

- **Chabad Jewish Centre**
  - 2729 Griffin Rd., Lakeland
  - (813) 571-1800

- **Rosh Hashanah - 1st Day**
  - Morning service, 10 a.m.

- **rOsH haShaNaH – 2Nd DaY**
  - Morning service, 8:30 a.m.

- **Yom Kippur**
  - Morning service, 10 a.m.

- **Break-the-Fast**
  - Saturday, Sept. 30

## Additional Information

- **High Holiday information**
  - Related holiday
  - Received as of press time.

## Contact Information

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The Tampa JCCs’ Culture Café Presents:

A Beginner’s Guide to Loving Jazz
Craft Beer, Cheese & Jazz!

A multi-media exploration of Jazz told from the fans’ perspective.

This four-part series will explore the mystifying and daunting music known as Jazz, as we follow the career of Miles Davis.

7:00 – 8:30 PM
August 15 – Miles Davis and his First Great Quintet
September 12 – Miles Davis and Kind of Blue
October 17 – Miles Davis and his Second Great Quintet
November 14 – Miles Davis Goes Electric

Cost per session: $10 Members/$15 Non-members

For more information, contact Pnina Levermore at 813.291.2253 or pnina.levermore@jewishtampa.com
Jewish camp provides fun atmosphere for special needs kids

By JACOB McMANAMON

Jewish Press

Many in the Jewish community have heard of popular Jewish camps like Camp Coleman or Camp Ramah, but it’s a good bet most have not heard of a special needs program called Kids of Courage (KOC).

It is an innovative, volunteer-based Jewish organization, dedicated to improving the lives of children and young adults with serious medical diagnoses.

Kids of Courage was founded in 2008 and its mission is to change the way people look at illness, and to open up a world of support, hope and opportunity for every sick child and family, no matter how serious the diagnosis.

One local Jewish young man, Avi Davidson of Tampa, has found all that at the camp, which he began attending in 2011, two years after a major accident left him with severe injuries.

Davidson was climbing a power pole near his house to take a photograph of the sunset when he accidentally touched the electrical wire. He was shocked badly and fell to the ground, suffering severe burns. He had his arm amputated and was left partially paralyzed.

“I joined KOC after having suffered the serious accident in 2009 at the age of 16,” said Davidson.

“My mother and father looked continuously for a program I would be able to still attend after my body and mind healed more; they found it and it was a perfect fit.”

This summer, Davidson participated in an 8-day trip with Kids of Courage to a camp in Virginia. Campers came from across the U.S. and as far away as Israel and Brazil.

“We [take] 130 sick children and young adults with all their required medical supervision and life support equipment they need to a medically supervised camp that children with debilitating illnesses look forward to all year long,” said Kids of Courage coordinator Esther Cohen. “This camp gives them an opportunity to relax and recuperate from the physically and emotionally exhausting lifestyles they lead and gives them the needed strength for the rest of the year.”

Kids of Courage also assists families year-round with things like medical referrals and even weekend retreats, where the camp can offer a welcome change of pace for caregivers as well as participants.

There is no charge for any of the services.

“Summertime camp is just one of many Kids of Courage programs that Davidson has taken part in, adding that there are multiple experiences at Kids of Courage that he enjoys.

“As a camper in a ‘mentoring’ position, I do love every trip, gaining new experiences and traveling to new places,” said Davidson. “To me, campers being able to experience things they would not have imagined in their wildest dreams is what I love most.”

Jewish camp provides fun atmosphere for special needs kids

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“..."
A session of bridge lessons from or improve their game can take want to learn how to play bridge All registrations should be for more information on programs Levermore for the Bryan Glazer Family JCC at Community Campus Drive, or at the Maureen & Douglas Cohn JCC rochelletsr@gmail.com.

Music event:

New stars will be born. Legends will return. On September 26, Wrestling Returns … Memories will be made. A docent-led tour of the Tampa Bay History Museum will be held for members of both JCCs on Wednesday, Sept. 6 from noon to 3 p.m. The tour is free for members and $8 for guests. RSVP is required.

Yiddish nostalgia: Join Ruth Weston and other Yiddish enthusiasts on the fourth Thursday of the month from 12:45-1:45 p.m. at the Cohn Campus to share favor- ite expressions and reminiscences.

Medicare seminar: A program to help seniors develop strategies to reduce the fear of failing and increase activity levels will be offered at the Glazer JCC led by Judy London, a licensed healthcare agent and gerontologist, on Thursdays, Sept. 7 through Nov. 2 from 1-3 p.m. This is free for members and $15 for guests.

Memorir writing: Learn to write your life story during classes from Mondays on Sept. 11 through Oct. 16 from 2 - 3:30 p.m. at the Glazer JCC. The cost is $50 for members and $65 for guests.

Crochet lessons: Learn cro-chet with Judy Balber in a series of four classes on the Cohn campus on Mondays, Sept. 4 through Sept. 25 from 10:30 a.m. to noon. Bring yarn, crochet hooks and any pattern you want. Cost is $25 for members and $30 for non-members with pro-rated options available.

Dominoes lessons: Learn the basics of the game of dominoes and hone your skills in free classes at the Cohn campus on Wednesdays from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Lessons at the Glazer JCC will be on Wednesdays, Sept. 6 through Oct. 25 from 11 a.m. to 12:20 p.m. Either class is free for members and $5 for guests.

New schmooze: A discus- sion group, led by Pat Renfro, who explores “hot button” issues, is held at both JCCs. Upcoming News Schmooze sessions at the Glazer JCC are Tuesdays from 7:30-8 p.m.

The group at the Cohn campus meets the second and fourth Friday from 10:30a.m. to noon. The group will talk about the EPA and Homeland Security on Sept. 8. There is no charge to attend.

Mah jong: Folks can play at both JCCs.

At the Cohn campus there will be sessions every Tuesday and Thurs- day from 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.

At the Glazer JCC, drop-in ses- sions are offered on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:30-3:30 p.m. This is free for members and $5 for non-members. Novices and experienced players are welcome.

There are also classes on Sun- days from Sept. 17 through Oct. 8 from 4 to 5:30 p.m. The cost is $65 for members and $70 for guests, with advanced registration required.

Ballroom dancing: Learn graceful, elegant and romantic dances at ongoing sessions at the Glazer JCC on Mondays, Sept. 11 through Dec. 18 from 10-11 a.m. The cost is $15 for single members, $50 for couple members, $40 for single non-members and $50 for couples who are non-members.

All that jazz: Enjoy craftbeer, jazz and more at Vinik Public Culture Café: A Beginner’s Guide to Loving Jazz” a multi-media exploration of the musical genre. The event will be on Miles Davis’ career.

The first session was earlier this month and the remaining sessions are from 7-8:30 p.m. Tuesdays, Sept. 12, Miles Davis and Kind of Blue; Oct. 10, Miles Davis and This Second Great Quintet; and Nov. 14, Miles Davis Goes Electric. Cost is $10 for members and $15 for non-members.

Hadasah Annual meeting: The North Pinellas Chapter of Hadasah will hold its annual meeting and luncheon on Monday, Sept. 11 at 11:30 a.m. at Temple Ahavat Sholom, 1575 Curtiss Road, Palm Harbor. This is open for all life and annual paid-up members, associates and prospective members. Cost is $5, collected at the door. Reservations are required. To RSVP, call Doris Harding at (727) 434-1140.

Genealogical Society Holocaust data resource- es: The next meeting of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Tampa Bay will be hosted by and held at the Florida Holocaust Museum, 55 Fifth St. St. Petersburg, on Sunday, Sept. 10.

Registration is at 1:30 p.m. and the program starts at 2 p.m. Urszula Szczepinska, curator of education and director of research at the museum, will discuss online resources that have the most up- dated information and demonstrate how to use archival databases for information about victims of the Holocaust.

An optional docent-led tour of the museum, free for museum and society members and $9 for non- members, will take place following the program. Advanced registration for the tour is requested. RSVP to Sally Israel, (727) 343-1652.

Job-Links Career counseling: Tampa Bay Job-Links offers free motivational Monday Morning Links sessions from 9:30 - 11 a.m. at the Jack Roth Center for Career Development at TampaBayJob-Links, 4100 W. Kennedy Blvd., Tampa, on Monday, Sept. 11, the topic is “Dos and don’ts from a recruiter’s perspective.” Monday Morning Links is supported by the Vinik Family Foundation.

There are also career loss workshops to aid with job-search skills On Thursday, Sept. 7 from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The class will cover 5 steps to successfully negotiate a job offer.

The program is free for Job-Links program participants; $15 for guests.

A special four-part series, “Switching Gears: A Roadmap for Career Transition” will conclude on Sept. 13 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Glazer JCC. Cost is $15 per session; free for full-program participants. Registrations are required for all programs To RSVP, call (813) 344-0209, email RSVP@TBHL.org, or visit www.TBHL.org.
SECTION B

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PHOTOGRAPHERS
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Honeymoon Productions ........................................ 3B

Sister and brother, Eliana and Gil Bloom, share their B’nai Mitzvah on the shores of Tampa Bay

Twin sisters Peyton, left, and Landry Feldman, participate in the kiddush and hamotzi with Rabbi Gary Klein at Temple Ahavat Shalom

Cousins Rehna Halprin of St. Petersburg, left, and Abrianna Lalle of Weston, on the bima together at Temple Beth-El in St. Petersburg
Celebrate by booking your special event at Holiday Inn St. Petersburg North - Clearwater. We are located minutes from top wedding and event venues, as well as the gulf beaches. Complimentary 24-hour shuttle service is offered within 5 miles, to/from St. Pete-Clearwater International Airport, and to/from Tampa International Airport. Our venue also offers a full bar, plated or buffet dining options, plus table linens and audio/visual equipment rentals. Special group accommodations rates for you and your guests are also available.

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HOLIDAY INN ST. PETERSBURG NORTH-CLEARWATER
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CLEARWATER FL 33762
www.theclearwaterhotel.com

We have completed our 2017 renovations in both the sleeping rooms and Ballroom.
outdoors, and not at the temple. But she
not be on board with a B’nai Mitzvah
that Rabbi Richard Birnholz would
special day.

fretted, as both kids loved their shared
friends, the parents worried that Eliana
began attending Bar and Bat Mitzvahs of
However, as the twins grew older and
twins was made when the kids were 11.

a camp-style B’nai Mitzvah for the
counselor each summer.

also where Diana Bloom serves as head
by a bonfire and other good times. It is

camp counselor, prayer sessions
coming to love the outdoor activities,
other Jewish kids, making friends and
Georgia. It is where the twins, since
Appalachian Mountain foothills in north

One of the touches that added meaning to the
Bloom twins’ B’nai Mitzvah was that they
led the outdoor service under a chuppah that
has a 20-year family history and like each member of
their family, has strong ties to Camp Coleman.
It was the same chuppah that was used for Gil’s bris and Eliana’s
baby naming ceremony.

The twin’s dad Aaron’s ties to Camp Coleman began when
he attended the camp as a child. Then in 1992
he served on the camp staff and was re-hired to return
for the summer of 1993 when he met Diana earlier
that year.

“We met at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati,
A Reform seminary. We were both just in college and
there was a conference there to talk about Jewish social
action issues. My synagogue [in New York] sent me
with the rustick atmosphere,
was finding a DJ. She wanted one
most difficult aspect of the planning
wanted.

Planning the details
It was only after she found the venue,

A rustic look, to make folks feel like they were at a summer
camp, was the goal when it
came to decorating the grounds for the
Bloom twins’ B’nai Mitzvah. A table was decorated
with “Bunking area” and “Registration area” signs to resemble what summer campers
would see at Camp Coleman. A “Camp EG” logo was also used at many spots on the

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at twins’ simcha

The venue also offered plenty of open

space for a bonfire, camp style games,
a beachside B’nai Mitzvah service, picnic
tables and rock climbing wall. With the
addition of some camp-style signs and
woody decorations, the place captured
the summer camp atmosphere they
wanted.

After finding the venue, the next
difficult aspect of the planning was finding a DJ. She wanted one
comfortable with the rustic atmosphere,

Planning the details
It was only after she found the venue, DJ and photographer that she said the
realized she still needed to hire an event
planner, who, she said, was helpful with
travel logistics and the event details.
The Blooms did not send out paper
CAMP STYLE continued on NEXT PAGE

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—— BOB FRYER

Jewish Press
August 25, 2017
Page 3B

PAGE 3B August 25, 2017
Bar/Bat Mitzvah Planning Calendar

1-4 years in advance
- Begin to meet educational requirements.
- Set date and begin gathering information to decide format.
- 9 to 12 months in advance
- Determine budget.
- Plan tentative guest list.
- Select theme, decorations.
- Select and reserve site for main reception.
- Interview and contract with professionals including party planner, caterer, photographer, florist and entertainment.
- Meet with synagogue staff to discuss bar/bat mitzvah policies.

6 to 9 months in advance
- Reserve facilities for such functions as Shabbat eve dinner and Sunday brunch.
- Select and order invitations; thank you notes.
- Select caterer for oneg and kiddush.
- Reserve hotel accommodations for out-of-town guests, especially if your event is “in season.”
- Complete guest list and collect addresses.

4 to 6 months in advance
- Send “Save The Date” cards.
- Order any imprinted items, like yarmulkes, napkins.
- Recontact caterer, restaurant or hotel with approximate number of guests.
- Make menu selections.
- Make a list of clothing needs.
- Order flowers/decorations for synagogue, reception.

2 to 3 months in advance
- Help with child’s speech.
- Purchase religious items such as yarmulke and tallit.
- Finalize bakery order such as challah for kiddush and bar/bat mitzvah cake.

6-8 weeks in advance
- Mail and address invitations. You may want to send to out-of-towners earlier.
- Send announcement to the synagogue bulletin.

4 weeks in advance
- Finalize hotel reservations and plan hospitality baskets for out-of-town guests.
- Determine transportation arrangements as needed.

2 weeks in advance
- Draw up seating plan.
- Make place cards.

Final week
- Have final consultation with caterer, florist, photographer, entertainment and confirm schedules.
- Confirm head count/floor plan with caterer.
- Deliver items, i.e. yarmulke and programs to synagogue.
- Deliver hospitality baskets to the hotel.
- Rehearsal at the synagogue.
- Relax and enjoy!

CAMP STYLE
- continued FROM PAGE 3

Photographs by Brian Winer

Elana’s Bat Mitzvah cake was designed as a s’more and Gil’s featured a kayaker paddling down a stream.

Waterwayside services
Their path eventually led to a Shabbat service by the water. With dolphins surfing in the bay waters behind them, friends of the Blooms, all current or former educators and counselors at Camp Coleman, led the service. A dinner on the lawn, as well as s’mores cooked over a bonfire, followed.

Most local friends came only for the Saturday events, but on Friday night there was a “Shabbat walk” where all invitees present dressed in Spanish. The website had information about airports, shuttles from the airport to the resort, the schedule of events, how to RSVP, a section on what to wear and a spot to leave t-shirt size information so the right size shirts would be on hand for kids and adults at a tie-dying activity.

Many of the out of town guests were either friends that Diana and Aaron or the twins had made at the camp and traveled here from south Florida, Georgia, Maryland, New York, New Jersey and even Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Most local friends came only for the Shabbat events, but on Friday night there was a “Shabbat walk” where all invitees present dressed in Spanish. A small group began the stroll and sang as Healy Slakman – songleader at Camp Coleman and a senior at Eckerd College - strummed a guitar. The procession swelled as they stopped along the way as songleaders, and songleaders, and friends also doing readings.” Diana said. The twins read from the Torah, chanted the Haftarah, led most of the service and they offered a d’var Torah, a personal interpretation of the weekly Torah portion. Immediately following the service, a party on the grounds began.

The twins each had their own cake reflecting their individual tastes: Elana’s was shaped like a s’more and Gil’s depicted a kayak going down a mountain stream. Sleeping bags were used as sign-in boards and the grounds had signs posted to various places at the resort, similar to the signs used at Camp Coleman.

The party food was casual, just like the event, featuring hamburgers and hot dogs, and, for dessert, ice cream. The hotdogs were kosher and veggie options were offered too, so those who keep kosher could do so.

The party ended before sunset and the local invitees went home, but for the out-of-town guests at the resort, there was a wine and pizza party by the pool Saturday evening and an indoor brunch the next morning before folks flew out. “Everyone we spoke to said it was so special and memorable,” Diana said. “They felt like it was very warm and they really understood our intent as to what we chose; they enjoyed the services and music and could feel our kids’ personalities coming through. They enjoyed the spirit and atmosphere. It was very humbling.”

Bar or Bat Mitzvah
- Planning Calendar

The Date
- 6-8 weeks in advance
- 4 weeks in advance
- 2 weeks in advance
- Final week
- 4 to 6 months
- 2 to 3 months
- 1-4 years
- 6 to 9 months
- 9 to 12 months

Bar/Bat Mitzvah
- Planning Calendar

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Why we went to Israel for my son’s Bar Mitzvah instead of having big party

By JORDANA HORN
Kveller via JTA

When my oldest son became a Bar Mitzvah, we had a congregational kiddush luncheon in his honor, and a small party for him and his friends that evening. Instead of having the grand blowout party that seems to be the general expectation in my New Jersey suburb, we opted to go to Israel instead. It was the best decision I possibly could have made for these reasons (and others):

1. Visiting Israel is not just any trip. Sure, we could have gone to Paris or Pumba Cana, or to see penguins in Antarctica, for that matter. But the trip to see the Jewish state is a special one, and I wanted to send my son the implicit message: “You have just pledged yourself as a full member of the people of Israel. We happen to live in an era in which Jews not only live in, but also govern, Israel. You, my son, are part of this history. The lives of the people who live here are intrinsically intertwined with yours; the history that happened here is your history. Let’s go see your world.”

2. You get to focus on the mitzvah rather than the bar. When you take your kid to Israel, you don’t have to stress about the alcohol per head at your event. Instead, you get to think about the good deed you are doing by taking your child somewhere truly important. While I would love to impress my friends and neighbors with a 16-year-old, etc. I am more interested in the memories and the memories that matter. But the trip to see the Jewish state is a special one, and I wanted to send my son the implicit message: “You have just pledged yourself as a full member of the people of Israel. We happen to live in an era in which Jews not only live in, but also govern, Israel. You, my son, are part of this history. The lives of the people who live here are intrinsically intertwined with yours; the history that happened here is your history. Let’s go see your world.”

3. The math works in your favor. For the complete cost of a lavish four-hour, 200-plus person party, you can have a weeklong vacation in one of the most fascinating places in the world. The photos you will take on your iPhone or your family in front of the Western Wall will be more precious to you than the profession-alro taken photos of your guests with cocktails in hand. The stronger sense of self and history that comes from this trip is of course, priceless.

4. Israel is delicious. Whatever caterer you may find cannot equal the pleasure of Israel’s food. Whether at a Bar Mitzvah, you will want to let the community know by announcing it in the Jewish Press. Forms should be available at all synagogue offices. Forms may also be filled out online. Click the submit button to find the form on either the www.jewishpress.com or www.jewishpresspinellas.com. To have a form sent to you, contact the Jewish Press at jewishpressinfo@aol.com or call (727) 535-4400. Black and white or color photographs are acceptable (no color copies or digital prints). The photo may mailed or e-mailed to jewishpress@aol.com as a JPG or TIF. Photos should be clear headshots and if emailed must be high resolution. There is a $5 charge to cover the cost of reproducing the photo. The completed form should be sent approximately a month in advance. The Jewish Press prints the announcement one to two weeks before the celebration, if possible. All information is published at the discretion of the Jewish Press.

Mail to the Jewish Press, PO Box 6970, Clearwater, FL 33758 or email jewishpressinfo@aol.com.

Get your Bar/Bat Mitzvah noticed in the Jewish Press

As the time nears for your child’s Bar/Bat Mitzvah, you will want to let the community know by announcing it in the Jewish Press. Forms should be available at all synagogue offices. Forms may also be filled out online. Click the submit button to find the form on either the www.jewishpress.com or www.jewishpresspinellas.com. To have a form sent to you, contact the Jewish Press at jewishpressinfo@aol.com or call (727) 535-4400. Black and white or color photographs are acceptable (no color copies or digital prints). The photo may mailed or e-mailed to jewishpress@aol.com as a JPG or TIF. Photos should be clear headshots and if emailed must be high resolution. There is a $5 charge to cover the cost of reproducing the photo. The completed form should be sent approximately a month in advance.

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A bar mitzvah at the Western Wall in Jerusalem.

Kveller is a thriving community of women and parents who converse online to share, celebrate and commiserate their experiences of raising kids through a Jewish lens. Visit Kveller.com. This story is reprinted by permission of Kveller.com. The original can be found at http://www.kveller.com/why-we-went-to-israel-for-my-sons-bar-mitzvah-instead-of-having-a-big-party/
By DEBORAH FINEBLUM

When the time came to plan her older son’s Bar Mitzvah nine years ago, Stacie Bartfeld freely admits she knew it was coming up.

“But I work and didn’t have the time to start from scratch,” she says. “And when it comes to putting together a Bar Mitzvah, I didn’t have a clue.”

So when she heard about Bar/Bat Mitzvah planning pros who can take the sting out of what can be a stressful experience, the San Diego mom was sold. But alas, her husband, Neil, was resistant to the idea — so much so that, the first time she spoke with event planner Sherrill Kinsler Gilford, it was from the privacy of her walk-in closet, where she was certain not to be overheard.

Bartfeld says the benefits of consulting with Gilford were impressive, including helping with such basics as the food, décor, prizes and music, for their roughly 200 guests. “And I knew that, no matter what came up in advance or even on the day of, she would intercede,” she says.

As Bar/Bat Mitzvah festivities around the country trend towards more elaborate and complicated undertakings, the event planner recalled the weight off parents’ shoulders.

“They can also acquaint parents with the latest trends. Among them, according to Terri Bergman with Bergman Events, is one toward unassigned seating and shorter parties, as well as ‘environments’ rather than the more traditional concept of themes. ‘We’ve even recreated [New York’s] Central Park,’ says Bergman, who cheerfully admits to “being known for stepping out of the box a little.”

“With many of her clients spending anywhere from $20,000 to $150,000 on their children’s Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, Bergman has learned to be flexible. One memorable event coincided with the great Northeastern U.S. blizzard of 2001. Her clients were insistent on holding their Bar/Bat Mitzvah parties regardless of the snow piling up all around them. The upshot was that many young guests from a different canceled Bar Mitzvah came to her clients’ party. Bergman approached the local Ham-mer dealership to rent their tank-like vehicle to pick up stranded vendors and band members, the planner recalls.

“As against all odds, the show went on,” Bergman says. “Yes, it’s a luxury, but it also takes many vendors and all the other details off the stress. The rabbis say there is a time to recoup is some of your sanity and that is also very valuable.”

For Weiss, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah experience is all about transitions and transformations. “They prac-
tice and work on this for months, and they go from being a child to a young adult who can get up in front of everyone and read from the Torah and speak from the heart,” she says.

“They’re communicating and participating and that demands a new a maturity,” Weiss adds.

Perhaps the highest praise for having a planner came from Neil Bartfeld, who went from skeptic to believer in a few short months. He cornered the planner, Gilford, at his first son’s Bar Mitzvah to secure a promise to direct their younger son’s celebration three years later.

“What changed my mind? I could see how easy things were made for us, with her taking care of vendors and all the other details,” he says nine years later. “All we had to do was concentrate on enjoying ourselves. So it was a no-brainer to book her for the second one, too.”

Even if their connections with vendors don’t serve to recoup the entire cost of a planner’s services, the father notes that “what you do recoup is some of your sanity and that is also very valuable.”

French Jews celebrate a bar mitzvah in Paris.

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Twins connect to Israel through mitzvah project

When Natalie Feldman began planning the B’nai Mitzvah with her twin daughters, Peyton and Landry, she knew she wanted them to do something special for their mitzvah project. It was important for Feldman that the girls worked on a project that was helpful to Israel. She and her fiancé, Dr. Douglas Weiland, wanted the girls to do something that tied them to the Jewish homeland.

“I wanted to do something locally and something in Israel,” said Feldman. “Partly because I wanted the girls to have connectivity to Israel when they go one day. Israel is a place on a map and a place we talk about, but they don’t really know what it’s about. I wanted them to have something they already know and identify Israel with.”

After doing an Internet search and researching the company to make sure they were legitimate, Feldman found their Israeli cause in Kishorit, an agency that provides services for special needs individuals. The Feldman twins recognized all their guests table-by-table.

Instead of a traditional candle lighting, the Feldman twins recognized all their guests table-by-table. Speaking here is Peyton Feldman.

Wine from Israel Kishorit Vineyard. Kishorit, a non-profit that assists special needs individuals, received a $2,500 donation from the Feldman B’nai Mitzvah.

Capturing ‘spirit of the community’ infuses B’nai Mitzvah planning

By THAIS LEON-MILLER

Natalie Feldman, who grew up Christian, converted to Judaism not long after the loss of her brother in 1983. Feldman said that she didn’t convert for marriage; she converted on her own because she was drawn to the religion.

“I converted because I bought in,” she said. “Judaism to me was the most poetic. All the symbolism is life-based. I was just so brought to how ‘human’ Judaism is.”

Feldman was unable to Bat Mitzvah her oldest daughter, Sinclair, due to poor timing in her personal life and living in a place without a day school or strong Jewish presence.

So when it was time for her twin daughters to come of age, she committed to making it a genuine and important experience for the family, especially since they didn’t have a strong familial background in Judaism. As Feldman put it, there were no “bubbles and zaydas” around to help foster the spirit of the community.

The girls took private Hebrew lessons at Temple Ahavat Shalom in Palm Harbor each week for over a year to prepare.

Both girls attended Safety Harbor Middle School and Feldman said she was a little nervous about how many of their non-Jewish school friends would show up to the service. To her and the girls’ surprise, not only did a lot of their fellow students come, a lot of their teachers did as well.

Thinking about guests also motivated the family to come up with creative ideas.

“The candle lighting presented this really bizarre conundrum of singling out people to come up when everyone there is a beloved guest,” said Feldman. “I found the solution to that on the Internet, which I love. You actually put the candle on the table and you go from table-to-table and speak to the people at the table. The girls went around the room and spoke to each group.”

Feldman was fearful while describing seeing her girls working hard to get the words just right and staying dedicated to the idea of tikun olam — repairing the world — throughout the entire B’nai Mitzvah process.

“They are very different, and they like being different, but they collaborated a lot,” said Feldman, before saying how proud she was of them.

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The Temple Ahavat Shalom social hall is decorated for the Feldman’s colorful B’nai Mitzvah.

Glowing bars and cotton candy “cocktails” — a popular trend for teens at Bar and Bat Mitzvos.
By JAMIE SHAPIRO
Jewish Press

If you could do over it again, what would you like to rewind and play again from your Bar/Bat Mitzvah? Is the horror of chanting your Torah portion still haunting you? Do you wish you’d chosen a different theme? Would you rewrite your speech, mostly composed by your mom?

This is what ReBar, a branch of the Reboot creative network, has been asking since it founded the program in 2013.

The answers, when it is asked of Jews in their 20s and 30s, open a dialogue for considering and sharing reflections about family, community, belonging and Jewish inheritance and practice, said Tanya Schevitz, national communications and San Francisco program manager for ReBoot.

“Going back for a fresh take on the bar or bat mitzvah – that time of transition a decade or two earlier – translates to the creation of go-forward paths of Jewish discovery and meaning,” Schevitz said.

Online at www.rebarproject.org there are stories and photos of Bar/Bat Mitzvahs past and even DIY kits, offering ideas on how to reBar solo, in a small group or as a community event. ReBar has hosted several story-telling shows in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Chicago where people performed their Bar/Bat Mitzvah stories in front of a live audience.

One performer was illustrator Lisa Brown, who performed with her husband, Daniel Handler, better known by his pen name, Lemony Snicket. The two went through her Bat Mitzvah album channeling how her grandmother would have perceived the event, with Handler acting as her grandmother.

ReBar has also set up booths, where people answered the questions on a poster, and they put up a reBar photo booth, that allowed people to reflect on what was important to them at 13 and what is important to them now, at events.

While the target audience for the ReBoot project is for young adults, the project has engaged adults of all ages.

“We want our audience to reflect on their 13-year-old-selves and commit to engaging with their community now and in the future,” Schevitz said. “I feel that ReBar is a powerful project.”

Lessons my son learned during his Bar Mitzvah year

By RANDI MAZZELLA
Kveller.com

My son is in the 7th grade, which means he is in the middle of his Bar Mitzvah year. It has been an exciting and busy time for him.

In addition to preparing for and having his own Bar Mitzvah, he has been fortunate to be invited to celebrate at the bar and bat mitzvahs of many of his friends.

Of course, he has had a lot of fun attending all the great parties. But beyond that, this year has allowed him to learn valuable life lessons including:

The satisfaction of accomplishing a goal: Many of us take for granted that our children are going to become Bar/Bat Miztvahs because we know so many children that have already accomplished this goal. But it is still pretty awesome! Our kids learn a foreign language and then speak (and sing) in this language in front of a large audience. My son had doubts when he started this process and voiced concerns over embarrassing himself publicly. But he had nothing to be worried about. With a lot of hard work and the support of a great tutor, he was able to confidently lead the temple service and beautifully read from the Torah. My husband and I were incredibly proud of him, and even more importantly, he was really proud of himself.

Prayers and Blessings: My son has spent more time at Temple Bnai Jeshurun in Short Hills NJ, the past few months than he did in the last 13 years combined. My son has been there almost weekly for his friends’ Saturday services as well as a few Friday nights. He also went weekly for his own Bar Mitzvah lessons and studied Torah at home daily. While Hebrew school certainly teaches kids the basics, my son will learn more this year because he is submerged in prayers and blessings on a regular basis. This should make him much more comfortable in temple and willing to participate.

Wearing dress clothes: Prior to this year, my son’s idea of “dressed up” was wearing his athletic pants that did not have a hole in the knee. It has been a treat for me to see him get all dressed up, and even he has started to embrace his more formal attire. Trying to figure out what to wear to special occasions can be a challenge even for grown ups. The b’nai mitzvah year has given my son the chance to learn the difference between “cocktail attire,” “club attire” and “smart casual” preferred. Dressing up sets the tone for behaving a certain way, which leads us to the next lesson.

Manners: The year has been a great opportunity for me to teach my son about manners. We have discussed at length how to be a good guest. When you get an invite, RSVP on time. If you accept an invitation, show up. If you have to arrive at the service late, walk in quietly. In services, pay attention. Don’t talk or play on your phone. Congratulate the b’nai Mitzvah and let them know they did a great job. Be an active party guest – dance, eat, and engage with friends (again, stay off the phone). When you arrive or leave, if you can, thank the host for inviting you. And after your own Bar Mitzvah, send timely, handwritten thank you notes.

Supporting friends: On the Friday night of my own son’s Bar Mitzvah service, a handful of his close friends came to support him. Seeing them in the audience made my son smile. His friends gave up their Friday night, put on dress clothes, and sat in temple for over an hour just because he wanted them to visit. The next day I was pleasantly surprised by the number of kids who attended the service – especially since the party wasn’t until the evening and a lot of them missed other events (like sports) to be there. Friendships at this age can change, but throughout the weekend, my son felt truly supported by his friends. It is a feeling he wants to pass on as he attends other Bar and Bat Mitzvahs.

This story originally appeared on the www.kveller.com website and is reprinted with permission. To view the original, go to http://www.kveller.com/5-important-lessons/my-son-learned-during-his-bar-mitzvah-year/
Cousins bridge distance divide to celebrate together

Nothing — not even a 230-mile, four-hour car ride — could keep cousins and best friends, Rehna Halprin and Abrianna Lalle, apart for their Bat Mitzvah. “The girls basically decided that they were going to do this together and share it, and then they left the adults to handle the logistics,” said Abrianna’s mom, Debbie Halprin.

Debbie and her two girls live in Weston, although her roots are in St. Petersburg where Rehna and her parents, Natalya and Mike Halprin, still reside. The girls dreamed up plans via frequent text messages, FaceTime calls and during summers at Camp Shalom near Orlando.

It was actually nothing new for the families. Almost 40 years ago, Michael and Debbie fondly recall their sister’s shared her Bat Mitzvah with a cousin. It also made sense for their large shared family members to come for one big celebration instead of asking them — especially the out-of-towners — to make the trip to Florida twice in a matter of months.

But while it sounded like a great idea, there were complications, particularly when it came to discrepancies in the girls’ Hebrew training.

Rehna had been attending Hebrew school regularly in preparation for her bat mitzvah, but Abrianna, who was used to attending a Chabad center in South Florida, had little to no Hebrew training.

In the months leading up to the big day, Abrianna worked diligently to teach herself Hebrew. With very little outside help, she used some online resources to help her perfect her pronunciation.

When it came time for the ceremony at Temple Beth-El in St. Petersburg, both girls performed admirably, mom Debbie said.

On the big day, friends and family members gathered to support the cousins, including a very special guest, Rehna’s grandmother from Russia. Unfortunately, Rehna’s grandfather from Russia declined to attend, not fully understanding the significance of a Bat Mitzvah. It was a decision he later regretted upon seeing photos of the ceremony and party, according to the family.

As a tribute to mom Natalya’s Russian heritage and her family visiting from Russia, Rabbi Michael Torep incorporated prayer in Russian into the service.

It was a lovely thing for the rabbi to do this for us,” Debbie said.

Following the formal B’nai Mitzvah service on Shabbat morning, attended by close friends and family members, there was a luncheon in the temple social hall. Later that night, 200 guests attended the B’nai Mitzvah celebration at a rented mansion in St. Petersburg.

“I was actively planning the party for only about a month and a half before,” Natalya said.

“But we had been brainstorming for well over a year,” she added.

Originally from Russia and wanting to incorporate her heritage into the big event, Natalya won the girls’ OK for a Russian winter wonderland theme.

Shopping for the September event began as far back as nine months before the B’nort Mitzvah.

“I would just go to the stores during the Christmas season and buy anything that looked like it would fit,” she said.

This advanced shopping proved to come in handy when the hired decorators discovered it much harder to acquire the winter décor during the summer than they anticipated.

To create the wintry scene, Natalya put up “Christmas” trees, big and small, laced with decorative icicles and lights. Giant icebergs shaped from Styrofoam were left to float in the mansion’s pool, with dry ice adding an ethereal effect.

Natalya also commissioned an ice bar for the event, dispensing shots of vodka to the of-age guests.

“What could be more Russian than an ice bar and vodka?” Natalya joked.

A selection of caviar added more Russian flavor to the party.

To keep both adults and children entertained, Natalya came up with the idea to separate the two groups; having a kids’ party on the mansion’s second floor, and a more laid back adult party on the back patio.

“We basically had two different parties in the same place,” said Mike.

The two groups did come together briefly for the cousins’ unique and non-traditional candle lighting.

For the candle lighting the Halprins handed out 200 electronic candles to guests.

“The candles were cool because they turn on when they come in contact with water,” Mike said.

With their 200 guests gathered around the mansion’s patio, Rehna and Abrianna thanked everyone in attendance before giving their own warmer-activated candle into the pool.

“It was incredible,” Mike said. “All those candles lighting up at once.”

“I’m really proud of how the party came together,” Natalya said.

While both the Halprins will admit that planning a bat mitzvah for not one, but two, teenage girls had its stressful moments, both agreed all the planning was worth it and created memories for the two cousins that will last a lifetime.

Party proves COOL idea

By JAMIE SHAPIRO

Jewish Press

On a sweltering September Saturday during Labor Day weekend 2016, two cousins — Rehna Halprin and Abrianna Lalle — shared their Bat Mitzvah, celebrating afterward among the snowflakes, icicles, shimmering white trees, and icebergs floating on the water.

While the girls shared the big day, for the most part, the planning was not. Since Abrianna and mom Debbie Halprin live 230 miles south in Weston, and the service was at Temple Beth-El in St. Petersburg, and the party was at a rented mansion in Tampa, Rehna’s parents, Natalya and Mike Halprin, were responsible for getting all together.

“We basically did the logistics,” said Rehna’s dad, Mike.

But while the Halprins will admit that planning a bat mitzvah for not one, but two, teenage girls had its stressful moments, both agreed all the planning was worth it and created memories for the two cousins that will last a lifetime.

The e-vites also allowed much more customizing, according to the Halprins.

“You could add pictures and change the colors” depending on what the girls ‘wanted and who was receiving the invitation, explained Rehna’s dad, Mike.

Once the responses were received, it made it easy to send reminders, directions and other invites to specific guests for the Shabbat eve dinner and Sunday brunch.
A beautiful Bat Mitzvah for a girl with Down Syndrome

BY MENACHEM POSNER
Chabad.org/news

There was barely a dry eye in the room. Standing in the sanctuary before a close-knit group of friends and family who had come from all over the country, Heather Wilde carefully lit a single Shabbat candle and said the appropriate Hebrew blessing. Uncovering her eyes, she smiled at those around her and said, “Good Shabbos.”

A student at the Chabad Hebrew School of the Arts in Peabody, MA, it was only natural that the 12-year-old would celebrate her Bat Mitzvah in a way that was meaningful and personal. The question was just how.

“Heather is a very sweet and positive young woman,” said Razel Schusterman, who co-directs Chabad of Peabody Jewish Center in the northern Boston suburbs with her husband, Rabbi Nechemia Schusterman. “She also has Down Syndrome, which means that she has not been able to master Hebrew reading or deliver a long speech, but I tell the parents of our students – all students, regardless of their abilities – that this is a ceremony that has to be appropriate for the young person.”

Working together with Heather’s mother, Brenda Wilde, she set a goal for the young girl: to memorize and recite the Shema, and to light a candle and say the accompanying blessing.

Months of regular learning sessions paid off when Heather proudly did just that, late on the afternoon of Friday, June 23.

With his guitar balanced on one robed knee, the rabbi, already dressed in his Shabbos! “Exceeded Our Expectations”

Heather Wilde, who has Down Syndrome, covers her eyes for the blessing over the Shabbat candle.

As Shabbat drew near, the women and girls who were present lit candles that had been artfully arranged to spell out “Shabbat.”

Evening services were followed by a full-course dinner.

The next day, at the Kiddush reception that followed morning services, the Bat mitzvah girl recited the Hamotzi blessing over the bread.

“Heather was very pleased with herself,” said Wilde. “When she was practicing, I was worried like any mother. But she exceeded our expectations, and I found that as satisfying as when her brother had his Bar Mitzvah three years ago.”

“It was a beautiful ceremony,” said Raizel Schusterman, who hopes that Heather’s Bat Mitzvah will encourage other families to think creatively about this milestone for their children with special needs. “Like Heather herself, it was sweet, intimate, loving and full of joy.”

Exceeding all expectations, the Bat Mitzvah girl recited the Hamotzi blessing over the Shabbat candle.
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