

Chai~Lights



January 1 - February 28, 2026 | 12 Tevet 5786 - 11 Adar (1) 5786

Chanukah Revisited — Pages 24-32

Annual Meeting, Election and Luncheon — Page 33

Photo Gallery — Pages 35-44



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Services are every Friday at 7:30pm Names denote service leaders Italicized names are Oneg sponsors				1 JAN	2	3
4 Hebrew Class 12 pm	5	6	7	8	Judy Starr & Gloria Avner <i>Judy & Adam Starr</i>	10
11 KJCC Board Meeting on Zoom 10am Sisterhood Meeting & Installation 12:30pm	12	13	14	15 Cooking Workshop- Egg Rolls 4pm	16 Joe Shabathai <i>Jan Price</i>	17 Shabbat Service 10am Movie Night 7pm <i>Joyce Peckman & Erica Lieberman Garrett David & Pat VanArtsdalen</i>
18	19	20	21	22	23 Rivka & Max Trent <i>David & Pat VanArtsdalen</i>	24
25	26	27	28	29 Sisterhood Book Club at Home of Joyce Peckman 12:30pm	30 Medina Roy <i>Rosemary Ciotti & Dennis Miller, Beth Horowitz</i>	31
1 FEB Sisterhood Meeting & Installation 10am Tu B'shevat Seder & Tree Plantng 12pm	2	3 CONCERT L'il Rev - Ukulele, Blues & Yiddish Troubadour 7pm at KJCC	4	5 Age-Ing & Sage-ing with Lucinda & Oran 3-6pm	6 Members/Advertisers Dinner 6pm Rabbi Efrat Zarren Zohar <i>Arthur Plutzer, Ken Atlas, Michael & Susan Gilson</i>	7 Shabbat Service 10am Zarren-Zohar & Steve Hartz <i>David & Pat VanArtsdalen</i>
8 KJCC Board Meeting 9am General Membership Meeting & Luncheon 11am	9	10	11	12 Age-Ing & Sage-ing with Lucinda & Oran 3-6pm	13 Ken Atlas & Art Itkin <i>Roos-Mary Benowitz</i>	14
15	16	17	18	19 Age-Ing & Sage-ing with Lucinda & Oran 3-6pm	20 Sisterhood Sisterhood	21 Movie Night 7pm
22	23	24	25	26 Hamentaschen Workshop 4pm	27 <i>M'Liss Regent-Cunha M'Liss Regent Cunha</i>	28

2025 - 2026 KJCC OFFICERS & BOARD

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CHAI-LIGHTS is the
bimonthly publication of the
Keys Jewish Community Center
chailights@keysjewishcenter.com

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE Ken Atlas



As I sit here thinking about what to write, I'm reminded of the first time I entered KJCC. Even though it was so long ago, I remember like it was yesterday. Joel Pollack was President, and he and Linda were very welcoming.

Even though I had lived in the Keys a little while, and drove past the building, it took me some time before I actually decided to come for a service. Despite having a pretty religious upbringing and knowing the services pretty well, it still took something more to get me to go.

And I know if I needed that push then there are other Jewish people who live down here who probably need the same. But we have several members who are always out in the community and somehow find new

people and let them know about us. Yes, Randy and Michael, I'm talking about you. But there are others as well. Their efforts as well as our sign, and just people being out in the community have led to more and more people coming and joining. I could not be more proud of our Jewish Community here.

This year marks the second year in which we will be hosting and lighting our menorah at the Murray Nelson Government Center. Thank you to Steve Hartz who has been in constant communication with the county and made this option a reality for us.

I hope to see everyone during the upcoming holiday if not sooner.

We have a latke talk about. ◇

Shabbat Service Leaders

January 2	Daniel Finkelman
January 9	Judy Starr & Gloria Avner
January 16	Joe Shabathai
January 17	Joyce Peckman & Erica Lieberman Garrett
January 23	Rivka & Max Trent
January 30	Medina Roy
February 6	Rabbi Efrat Zarren Zohar
February 7	Rabbi Efrat Zarren-Zohar & Steve Hartz
February 13	Ken Atlas
February 20	Sisterhood Service
February 27	M'li'ss Regent-Cunha

WHAT'S UP AT KJCC

Friday, January 2.	7:30 p.m. Shabbat Service led by Daniel Finkelman
Saturday, Jan. 3	5:30 p.m. Havdalah & Pizza, Home of Linda Pollack RSVP
Sunday, January 4	12:00 p.m. Hebrew Class
Friday, January 9.	7:30 p.m. Shabbat Service led by Judy Starr & Gloria Avner
Sunday, Jan. 11.	10 a.m. KJCC Board Meeting on Zoom 12:30 p.m. Sisterhood Meeting and Installation
Thurs, January 15	4 p.m. Cooking Workshop- Egg Rolls with Jane RSVP
Friday, January 16.	7:30 p.m. Shabbat Service led by Joe Shabathai
Saturday, Jan. 17.	10 a.m. Shabbat Torah Service led by Joyce Peckman & Erica Lieberman Garrett 7 p.m. Movie night
Friday, Jan. 23	7:30 p.m. Shabbat Service led by Rivka & Max Trent
Thursday, Jan 29	12:30 p.m. Sisterhood Book Club at Home of Joyce Peckman
Friday, Jan 30	7:30 p.m. Shabbat Service led by Medina Roy
Sunday, Feb. 1	10 a.m. Sisterhood Meeting 12 p.m. Tu B'shevat Seder & Tree Planting
Tuesday, Feb. 3.	7 p.m. CONCERT: L'il Rev – Ukulele, Blues & Yiddish Troubadour at KJCC
Thurs, Feb. 5	3-6 p.m. Age-Ing & Sage-ing with Lucinda & Oran. RSVP
Friday, Feb. 6	6 p.m. New Members & Advertisers Dinner 7:30 p.m. Shabbat service led by Rabbi Efrat Zarren Zohar
Sat., Feb. 7	10 a.m. Shabbat service led by Rabbi Efrat Zarren-Zohar & Steve Hartz
Sun, Feb. 8	9 a.m. KJCC Board Meeting 11 a.m. General Membership Meeting & Luncheon
Thurs, Feb. 12	3-6 p.m. Age-Ing & Sage-ing with Lucinda & Oran. RSVP
Friday, Feb. 13	7:30 p.m. Shabbat Service led by Ken Atlas & Art Itkin
Thurs, Feb. 19	3-6 p.m. Age-Ing & Sage-ing with Lucinda & Oran. RSVP
Friday, Feb. 20	7:30 p.m. Shabbat Service led by Sisterhood
Sat., Feb. 21	7 p.m. Movie Night
Thurs, Feb. 26	4 p.m. Hamentashen Baking Workshop
Fri., Feb. 27	7:30 p.m. Shabbat Service led by M'Liss Regent-Cunha

NOSH

Hebrew Reading Class

We are looking to start a new beginners' Hebrew reading class in January. This will be for kids and adults. It will probably be held on a weekday afternoon at the home of Joyce Peckman in Key Largo, time and day of week to be determined by those interested in attending. Our Sunday class will continue, and we are so proud of our readers! That class is learning to read the prayers and useful vocabulary, while reviewing the letters and vowels they have mastered. If you are interested in learning more about either class, contact Joyce at 732-447-5225.

Sisterhood Book Club

The ladies meet the last Thursday of each month at 12:30 on Zoom and often at someone's home. On January 29th we will discuss "The Goddess of Warsaw" by Lisa Barra - a thriller that takes place in 1939 Warsaw and 1950's Hollywood, told by the main character in 2005. Contact Linda Polack - lindap4000@ymail.com to be added to the mailing list and get Zoom invitations. That meeting will be held at the home of Joyce Peckman. On February 26th we will discuss "The Girl That Was Left Behind" by Tamar Ohrenstein.

Saturday Torah Services

We are excited to hold monthly Saturday morning Torah services. This is a big deal for our small lay-led shul! The service begins at 10 a.m., is not too long, and hopefully enjoyable and meaningful. Rabbi Richard Agler led the first one in December. January 17th will be led by Erica Lieberman Garret and Joyce Peckman. On February 7th, Rabbi Efrat Zarren Zohar will lead, along with Steve Hartz. On March 28th we will celebrate the bat mitzva of Lily Salomon, and the service will be led by Steve Jacobs.

Note to Artists Among Us

Dear KJCC Artists: please write to me. We have art on our walls from many of our artists, but I know there are more, and that as an artist and member, you would enjoy having your art displayed in the synagogue. Some of you I know, and some I don't. This is a two part request. One: Identify yourself as an artist, sending pictures of your work. Two: please volunteer to help us, fellow artists, figure out how to make this increased exposure happen. Change takes energy, ideas, work. Do we devise a rotation system? Looking forward to seeing and hearing from you.

Death as Homecoming: Life is the Answer—February Class, 2026

Come join us in this meaningful exploration of the nature of our mortality with Lucinda Kurtz, M.A. and Oran Hesterman, Ph.D. How does our finite physical existence effect how we live our life? How does our profound understanding of death determine the path we take in life? Or do we look away and deny our mortality and live as if we are immortal, immune to the challenges of the aging body and sliding mind? Ultimately, we need to embrace each precious moment of our lives and be grateful for this life we have been given.

In this 4-week class, we will explore how we can savor the preciousness of life even more fully by recognizing and claiming our mortality and preparing for a "good" death. Lucinda Kurtz and Oran Hesterman are certified Sage-ing Mentors and are trained to help individuals and groups with this type of inquiry. Through sharing personal stories, discussion, meditation, lecture, dyads, we will take the time to consider important end-of-life issues as well as examine Jewish views of the afterlife. All are welcome. Thursday, February 5, 12, 19, March 5 – 3:00 to 5:00 PM at KJCC.

Cost: \$36. ◇



ONGOING PROJECTS AND MITZVAH PROGRAMS OF KJCC

CEMETERY INFORMATION: If you wish to plan for the very distant future, you can reserve space at the Kendall Mt. Nebo Cemetery in the KJCC section. Call Joyce Peckman, 732-447-5225.

CHAI-LIGHTS MITZVAH: Place a greeting or notice in Chai-Lights. Call Gloria Avner, 305-619-0216, to make your donation.

CHAI-LIGHTS ADVERTISEMENT: Your business ad will appear in every issue of Chai-Lights. Call Linda Pollack, 305-587-7429, or email lindap4000@ymail.com for rates.

GIFT SHOP: We have lovely items for all holidays and for every day enjoyment. If you have a special request, call Susan Gordon, 305-766-3585.

MEDITATION GARDEN: Have you visited our beautiful garden? Contact Shari Carlquist, 305-962-0000 or shari@directflowers.biz to reserve an orchid, bench, brick or tree plaque for posterity.

ONEG SHABBAT/DINNER SPONSOR: An oneg costs only \$72; a dinner is \$360. To schedule your special date with Sisterhood, call Joyce Peckman, 732-447-5225.

CARING KEHILAH/SUNSHINE COMMITTEE: If you know of any member who should receive a get well, congratulations or condolence card from the KJCC, call Loni Ochs, 305-772-2584, or email Dr.LMOCHS@gmail.com or Barbara Knowles, 305-772-0503.

TREE OF LIFE LEAVES, SANCTUARY SEAT PLATES, YARTZETZ MEMORIAL PLAQUES: Send your desired inscription to Linda Pollack at lindap4000@ymail.com.

Call the names listed above for assistance or send your request and check to the KJCC, P.O. Box 1332, Tavernier, FL 33070. Recipients of your gifts will be notified by card and listings will appear in Chai-Lights as well. Honorarium and memorial cards can also be requested. Donations can be earmarked to our various ongoing funds; e.g. Rabbi & Cantor Fund, Holocaust Education Fund, Meditation Garden, Scholarship Fund, Sara Cohen Memorial Tzedukah Fund, Sunshine Fund, or General Fund.

HOW CERTAIN CONTRIBUTIONS TO KJCC CAN INSTANTLY BECOME PERMANENT, LIVING MEMORIALS

Yahrzeit Plaques: KJCC has six special, Israeli-made boards in the sanctuary for yahrzeit memorial plaques. Each plaque is accompanied by its own light, which is switched on for both yahrzeit dates and on Yom Kippur; names are also read aloud in memory from the bimah each yahrzeit and are published annually in our Yizkor Book. The cost for eternal synagogue memory is \$400.

Tree of Life Leaves: We have three beautiful, six-foot Trees of Life – the world's most enduring spiritual metaphor – adorning the wall at the rear of the KJCC sanctuary. For \$75 an individual golden leaf can be engraved with your message of memory or love. An example: "To our grandchildren: May they always be in the presence of the Eternal Light."

Garden Bricks and Benches: \$125 buys a single brick and \$200 a double brick in our magnificent Meditation Garden walkway, engraved with your personal message. Purchase a beautifully engraved Garden Bench for \$1,000, as your ultimate tribute.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO KJCC

We appreciate the thoughtfulness of those who support the Keys Jewish Community Center by remembering and honoring friends and loved ones through generous contributions. When you make a donation, please specify the names to be honored and the recipient fund if one is desired.

JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2026

Yahrzeit

Dr. Gerri & Frank Emkey	Jimmy Gottesman
	Lester Singer,
	Nathan Weisberg
Nancy Cohn.....	David Cohn
Jeff & Cheryl Margulies	Mayra Mayans
Hermine L Taramona.....	Norma Robinson
Mimi & Richard Bentolila.....	Clotilde Bentolila
Michael Krissel	
Marshall & Myra Kaplan	Janet & David Kaplan
Steve & Jan Hartz.....	Skip Rose
Patricia Isenberg.....	Helene Tulsky
Donna Forst	
Pam Friedman	
Joel & Mary Roth.....	Samuel Roth

General Donations

Michael & Zofia Klimpl
Ellen Ecker & Barry Neuman
Robert Cabanas
Judy & Adam Starr
Thomas & Renee Brodie
Steve & Jan Hartz
Yardena Kamely
Jay & Nancy Hershoff in recognition of the great work Ken Atlas, president has done for the KJCC
Dr. Stan & Jenny Margulies
Melissa Katz Fusco

Scholarship

Ronald Hollander

Holocaust Education

Ronald Hollander

Chai Lights

Ronald Hollander

In Honor/Memory of

Library

Ronald Hollander

Fundraiser February 3 Concert

Adam and Judy Starr
Donna Bolton

Tree of Life Leaf

Linda Pollack Martin Schneyer

Security

Judy & Adam Starr
Donna Bolton

- SISTERHOOD DONATIONS -

Onegs

Judy & Adam Starr	In honor of Sisterhood In memory of Lila McKenzie Henry-Starr
Rivka Rizzo Trent	Birthday of Son Ramon
M'Liss Regent-Cunha	Her Upcoming Bat Mitzvah
Richard & Mimi Bentolila.....	Anniversary Mimi & Richard's Birthdays
Jeff & Cheryl Margulies	Anniversary Cheryl's & Jeff's Birthdays
Shari Carlquist.....	In memory of her Mother Gloria
Barnet Coltman	In memory of Robert Coltman
Steve & Jan Hartz.....	50th Anniversary Jan & Steve's Birthdays
Ken Atlas.....	His Birthday KJCC New Board Members
Arthur Plutzer.....	Honoring Linda Pollack
Roos-Mary Benowitz..	In memory of Jerry Benowitz Celebrating Her Birthday
Beth Horowitz.....	Her Birthday KJCC Sisterhood & Fellowship



HAVDALAH SERVICE

Saturday, January 3, 2026

Please join us for Havdalah Service
at the home of
Linda Pollack in Key Largo
5:30 p.m.

We will watch the sunset,
enjoy PIZZA! and conversation,
songs and Havdalah service,
as the stars come out.



Contact Joyce to reserve your spot and coordinate your offering (salad or dessert or just yourself). Please reserve by January 1st so we know how much pizza to order.

joycepeckman@gmail.com ~ 732-447-5225

...CONTRIBUTIONS CONTINUED

Mark Avner.....Celebrating Gloria's Birthday
Mindy & Rich AglerCelebrating Their
49 ½ Year Anniversary
Donna BoltonHer Birthday

Dinner Sponsorship

Michael & Suzanne Gilson..... In honor of
Granddaughter Kate Horowitz's

Graduation from Nursing School
Michael & Lorena Kaufman
Linda PollackChanukah Dinner

General Sisterhood Donation

Susan & Paul Roberts
David & Pat VanArtsdalen
Robert & Michelle Diener

ONEG SPONSORS

January 2 Lucinda Kurtz & Oran Hesterman • Celebrating Lucinda's birthday
January 2Renee & Thomas Bodie • Celebrating Engagement of Isabella & Daniel
January 9Judy & Adam Starr • In Memory of Lila McKenzie Henry Starr
January 16Jan Price • Celebrating Her Birthday
January 17David & Pat VanArtsdalen • Saturday Service
January 23David & Pat VanArtsdalen • Celebrating Pat's Birthday
January 30Rosemary Ciotti & Dennis Miller • Celebrating Rosemary's Birthday
January 30Beth Horowitz • Celebrating Beth's Birthday
February 6Arthur Plutzer • In Honor of Linda Pollack
February 6Ken Atlas • Honoring Members of New Board
February 6Michael & Susan Gilson •Dinner Sponsor
Celebrating Granddaughter Kate Horowitz's Graduation from Nursing School
February 7David & Pat VanArtsdalen • Saturday Service
February 13Roos-Mary Benowitz • In Memory of Jerry Benowitz
February 20Sisterhood
February 27M'liss Regent Cunha • Bat Mitzvah

Leaf on the tree of life:

To Honor
Martin Schneyer
Loving Husband and Father
12/17/2025



KEYS JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

SISTERHOOD COOKING CLASS



AT THE
KJCC
LEARN HOW TO MAKE
EGG ROLLS
WITH JANE

Thursday, January 15, 2026 4:00 pm

RSVP to Susan Gordon at (305) 766-3585 or
susangordon424@yahoo.com to reserve your space.
Please rsvp by January 10th so preparations can be made.

Donation \$25



Happy Birthday!

January

1st.....Justin Wade Gilson
1st.....Laura Goodman
2nd.....Sherrie Willner
3rd.....Lucinda Kurtz
4th.....Howard Gilson
6th.....Stanley Margulies
8th.....Jan Price (Karen) Shiloh
8th.....Matthew Barrett
9th.....Cathy Rakov
11th.....Martin Kaufman
15th.....Charlie Horowitz
15th.....Heather Gilson
15th.....Jamie Goodman
16th.....Brieze Levy
17th.....Neal Rakov
17th.....Suzi-Sarot Feder
19th.....Benjamin Friedman
19th.....Mark Kanarek
19th.....Sandy Seder
24th.....Bev Blitzer
24th.....David Epstein
24th.....Randy Klein-Gross
24th.....Samuel Bressler
26th.....Marshall Kaplan
27th.....Pat VanArtsdalen

27th.....Ronald Hollander
28th.....Arthur Itkin
29th.....Beth Kaminstein
29th.....Judith Tribble

February

1st.....Rosemary Ciotti
1st.....Roy Pollack
2nd.....Jaxson Brandon Lebofsky
2nd.....Max Gordon Trent
3rd.....Beth Horowitz
6th.....Evan Harvey
7th.....Erica Lieberman-Garrett
9th.....Beth Bressler
9th.....Linda Pincus
9th.....Rosemary Barefoot
12th.....Johnny Knowles
12th.....Paul Roberts
13th.....Carol Rose
13th.....David Levi
15th.....Judith Weber
21st.....Lisa Siegel
22nd.....Harry Friedman
23rd.....Sienna Rose Lebofsky
24th.....Muriel Swartz
25th.....M'Liss Regent-Cunha
25th.....Rita Conklin



Happy Anniversary

January
4th

Ronald and Rochelle Hollander 56

Years
56



In Memoriam – January 2026

Talia Agler
by Richard Agler & Mindy Agler

Bernice Bernstein
by Paul & Barbara Bernstein

Ellen Prager
by Paul & Barbara Bernstein

Rose Segal
by Paul & Barbara Bernstein

Laurie Beth
by Alan L. Beth &
Candace J. Stanlake

Annette Bitton
by Michel Bitton

Joshua Daniel Blitzer
by Murray & Bev Blitzer

David Pearlman
by William & Donna Bolton

Irving J. Kulick
by Thomas & Renée Brodie

Yetta Hitzig
by Wes & Rita Conklin

Lester Singer
by Gerri & Frank Emkey

Nathan Weisberg
by Gerri & Frank Emkey

Jimmy Gottesman
by Gerri & Frank Emkey

Robert Epstein
by David Epstein

Sheldon Paul Frankel
by Miriam Frankel &
Nadine Thompson

Louis Hartz
by Steven & Jan Hartz

Ernest Isenberg
by Patricia Isenberg

Bernard Kaminstein
by Beth Kaminstein

Walter Hankin
by Richard & Barbara Knowles

Goldie Schweitzer
by Richard & Barbara Knowles

Mayra Mayens
by Jeff & Cheryl Margulies

John Evans
by Stanley & Jenny Margulies

Daniel Harvey
by Linda Perloff

Mr. Samuel Roth
by Joel & Mary Roth

Lola Rosenberg
by Joni Sages & Robert Dandrea

Joan Kaminsky
by Elaine Schulberg

Nat Gulkis
by Elaine Schulberg

Jerry Lundy
by Elaine Schulberg

Bea Gulkis
by Elaine Schulberg

Paul Kaminsky
by Elaine Schulberg

Joseph Cohen
by Jules & Nettie Seder

Jacob Menahem Shabathai
by Joseph & Katherine Shabathai

Janet Garfinkel
by Betty Small

Steven Garfinkel
by Betty Small

Sally Sussman
by Lei Steinberg

Karen Hayhurst
by Stephen Steinbock
& Rosemary Barefoot

Arthur Lee Willner
by Johanna Willner

Adele Siegel Bayer
by Larry & Dorothy Wolfe



In Memoriam – February 2026

Sue Steinberg
by Richard & Mindy Agler

Beatrice Avner
by Gloria Avner

Lou Roazen
by Sylvia Berman

Sunnie Bernstein
by Paul & Barbara Bernstein

Kitty Nyman
by Alan L. Beth &
Candace J. Stanlake

Ted Nyman
by Alan L. Beth &
Candace J. Stanlake

Judy Strumer Hartman
by Murray & Bev Blitzer

Muriel Blitzer
by Murray & Bev Blitzer

Eve Greenstein
by Barnet O. Coltman

Robert Kinney
by Gerri & Frank Emkey

Herbert Frankel
by Miriam Frankel
& Nadine Thompson

Angela Castillo
by Jane Friedman

Charles Gilson
by Michael & Suzanne Gilson

Rose Gilson
by Michael & Suzanne Gilson

Shirley Oppenheimer
by Oran Hesterman & Lucinda Kurtz

Ida Ratchik
by Susan Horn & Dot Brooking

Fannie Phillips
by Patricia Isenberg

Nella Gross
by Randy Klein-Gross

Joseph Krissel
by Michael Krissel

Joseph Kaufman
by Jeff & Lisa Miller

Belle Plutzer
by Arthur Plutzer

June Chusid
by Arthur Plutzer

Malka Frank
by Linda Pollack

William Pollack
by Linda Pollack

Maria Quesada
by Orlando Quesada

Diane Beitscher
by Carol Rose

Bianka Kirschenbaum
by Medina Roy

Alvina Shutan
by Stuart & Lauren Sax

Sarah Felder
by Stuart & Geri Smith

Hedy Kopecky
by Adam & Judy Starr

Mr. Harry Miller
by Shirley Stein

Ann R. Kapulskey
by Muriel Swartz

Morris I. Estrin
by Claire Tallent

Richard M. Kipperman
by Claire Tallent

Robert H. Kipperman
by Claire Tallent

David C. Willner
by Johanna Willner

Nona Levin Abrams
by Joan P. Wohl

Samuel Wolfe
by Larry & Dorothy Wolfe

Morris Feinberg
by Larry & Dorothy Wolfe

KEYS JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER



Congregation Ohr HaYam

SATURDAY NIGHT AT THE MOVIES

Save the Dates:



Third Saturday of Each Month

Saturday, January 17, 2026

Saturday, February 21, 2026

Saturday, March 21, 2026

Saturday, April 18, 2026

7:00 p.m. at the KJCC

**Light Refreshments will be served
after the movie.**

Movie Titles to be Announced

**RSVP to Shari to let her know you are coming.
shari@directflowers.biz - 305-962-0000**

WORLD JEWISH REPORT

Medina Roy



And the Winner is...

The Genesis Prize, often referred to as the Jewish Nobel, is awarded annually to recognize and celebrate Jewish talent and achievement, honoring individuals for their accomplishments and commitment to Jewish values.

Israeli Actress Gal Gadot has been awarded the 2025 prize for supporting Israel, even as backlash against the country's actions in Gaza caused friction in Hollywood. Since October 7th, 2023, she has been an outspoken advocate for Israelis, especially those murdered or taken hostage by Hamas on that dreadful day. Calling herself a proud Jew and a proud Israeli, Gadot announced that she would dedicate the \$1million award to "organizations who will help Israel heal." According to a statement by the Genesis Prize Foundation, recipients of the prize – first awarded in 2014 – customarily donate the money to causes they choose, which have included advancing women's equality, racial and economic justice, combating antisemitism and efforts to delegitimize the State of Israel.

The Genesis Prize Foundation, located in Israel, is headed by co-founder and CEO Stan Polovets. He praised Gadot's "moral clarity" saying, "The award recognizes her bravery and moral courage – her steadfast defense of Israel at great personal and professional risk, her advocacy for the hostages, her compassion for victims of terror, and her empathy for all innocent victims of this terrible war unleashed by Hamas."

Gadot served two years in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) as part of Israel's compulsory service for both men and women before being cast in the title role of "Wonder Woman," the 2017 superhero film. She has repeatedly used her platform to campaign for the release of the Israeli hostages. A few days after Hamas's horrific attack, she was among the 700 celebrities and entertain-

ment leaders who signed a letter condemning the terrorist organization for "evil and barbaric acts of terrorism." Gadot also helped organize a screening of graphic October 7th footage in Los Angeles in November 2023 that still has not been made available to the public due to the gruesome images seen on the footage.

Last year's Genesis Prize was awarded to Argentina's president Javier Milei for "his steadfast commitment to the State of Israel during one of the most difficult years in the history of the Jewish state."

Gadot is set to play a Holocaust survivor in an upcoming film, "Ruin." (www.jta.org, 11-11-25)

Eurovision 2026

Ireland, Spain, Slovenia, Iceland and the Netherlands announced that they will boycott the upcoming Eurovision Song Contest after a meeting of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) confirmed that Israel will participate. The meeting in Switzerland, which organizes the annual song competition, was called to discuss some members' determination to have Israel ousted from the contest because of the war in Gaza and allegations of voting interference. "A majority of Members agreed that there was no need for a further vote on participation and that the Eurovision song contest 2026 should proceed as planned, with the additional safeguards in place," the EBU said.

"Israel deserves to be represented on every stage around the world, a cause to which I am fully and actively committed," said Israeli President Isaac Herzog. "I am pleased that Israel will once again participate in the Eurovision song contest, and I hope that the competition will remain one that champions culture, music, friendship between nations, and cross-border cultural understanding," he wrote on X.

Russia was banned from Eurovision after its invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Israel, which has won the contest four times since its debut in 1973, has competed for the past two years despite disputes over its participation. (You might remember Israel's representative, Yuval Raphael, finished in second place last year, performing her beautiful, emotional song, "New Day." If you haven't seen it, go to YouTube and type in Yuval Raphael Eurovision 2025. The song is a testament to survival, specifically inspired by Raphael's experience as a survivor of the October 7th Nova music festival massacre.) (www.bbc.com, 12-10-25)

811 Pounds of Potatoes, 402 Challahs!

The world's largest Shabbat dinner, organized by Temple Emanu-El's Streicker Center, was held on November 21st at the Javits Center in New York City. Some 2,800 Jewish New Yorkers participated in "The Big Shabbat" – an official attempt to host the largest Shabbat dinner in history. It consisted of 811 pounds of potatoes, 402 Challahs, 68 chefs, 59 people named David and 27 people named Rachel. It took more than a year of planning and the massive dinner spotlighted dishes created by high-profile Jewish chefs, among them Beejhy Barhany, Jake Cohen, Joan Nathan and Adeena Sussman. There was plenty of entertainment too: Broadway stars Steven Skybell and Shoshana Bean who preformed "Sabbath Prayer" from "Fiddler on the Roof."

The dinner opened with an AI-generated video featuring a variety of humorous, Shabbat-related commentary from late Jewish icons like Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Albert Einstein, Golda Meier and Anne Frank.

Following the traditional Shabbat blessings with a moving candle lighting led by former Hamas-held hostage Omri Miran and his wife Lishay, guests sat down at long tables and dined on a multi-course meal that included salmon, miniature potato kugels, vegetable lasagna and several salads.

At exactly 8:56 p.m., an adjudicator for the Guinness Book Of World Records, Andrew Glass (himself a Jew from Brooklyn) certified that the gathering was, in fact, the largest Shabbat dinner in history, with 2,761 participants. (There actually were more people in attendance, but participants had to be in their seats at the time of the count.) The Jewish a cappella group Six13 got onstage and led Queen's "We Are the Champions" as cheers erupted. New York City had officially

broken the record previously held by Berlin, when it hosted 2,322 participants in 2015. (www.cleelandjewishnews.com, 11-23-25)

Hope for Millions

An Israeli woman in her 70s has regained partial vision after receiving what may be the world's first implant of a 3-D printed biological cornea. In a pioneering surgery performed at Rambam Health Care campus in Haifa, the cornea was bio-printed using human cells and implanted in a patient who had suffered from corneal blindness in one eye. The implant was developed by Israeli biotech company Precise Bio. This represents a major breakthrough in regenerative medicine and could help resolve the global shortage of donor corneas.

There are more than 13 million people around the world who are currently waiting for a corneal transplant because of a critical lack of donor tissue. The new technology allows for the creation of hundreds of implants from just one donor sample. "This transplant is a moment of real hope for millions of people waiting for corneal donations," said Arie Batt, co-founder and CEO of Precise Bio. It's the first time an implant made entirely in a laboratory from human source cells has been successfully used in a human being. This is not only a scientific breakthrough – it's a historic moment."

The printed cornea was produced through a process combining biological materials and human cells to replicate the structure and function of a natural cornea. The technology includes advanced quality control measures and offers improved predictability during surgery. Unlike synthetic or traditional donor implants, the printed cornea is free from contaminants and features a high cell density, which could improve healing outcomes and visual clarity over time. According to Professor David Tzadok, head of ophthalmology at Jerusalem's Shaare Zedek Medical Center and a medical advisor to Precise Bio, the implant was the result of almost a decade of research.

Professor Eitan Livni, head of the cornea unit at Rabin Medical Center – also an advisor to Precise Bio – emphasized the international importance of the innovation. "...It is moving to think that the day is approaching when we will be able to offer blind people worldwide, who have no access to corneal implants, an engineered cornea that does not require processing by a cornea bank and arrives ready for transplantation directly from the dis-

tributing company. This will be nothing short of a revolution and will restore vision to thousands of blind people." (www.jpost.com, 11-20-25)

In Memoriam

-We mourn the devastating loss of life at the Chanukah lighting event in Australia. Fifteen people lost their lives, including a Russian Jewish immigrant couple, Boris, 69 and Sofia Gutman, 61, who attempted to stop the attacker. The youngest to die was Matilda, 10, and the oldest, Alex Kleytman, 87, who was a Holocaust survivor. The attacker was subdued by a bystander, Ahmed al Ahmed, a Muslim man who was shot twice and is recuperating in a hospital. (He's been given \$2.5 million, collected by grateful community donations.) Forty-two people were injured and taken to local hospitals.

Frank Gehry, one of the world's most renowned innovators for his contributions to modernist architecture, including the famed Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, died in early December. He was 96.

Gehry was born Ephraim Owen Goldberg to a Jewish family in Toronto. In 1947, he moved to Los Angeles with his family and went on to graduate from the University of Southern California's School of Architecture in 1954. That same year, he changed his name to Gehry at the behest of his first wife who was worried about antisemitism. (He would later say he would not make that choice again.)

Among Gehry's most acclaimed works which feature his signature, sculptural style is the Bilbao Guggenheim, Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, the Louis Vuitton Foundation in Paris and the DZ Bank building in Berlin.

Gehry often used the motif of a fish based on his memories of his Jewish grandmother's trips to the fishmonger to prepare for Shabbat each week. According to the New York Times, Gehry said, "We'd put it in the bathtub and I'd play with this fish for a day until she killed it and made gefilte fish." (Gehry created two large fish sculptures in the World Trade Center in New York City and on Barcelona's seafront)

Shortly after his bar mitzvah, Gehry started to identify as an atheist. But in 2018, while he was working on ANU-Museum of the Jewish People in Tel Aviv, he said that Judaism had influenced his career. "There's a curiosity built into the [Jewish] culture," he said. "I grew up under that. My grandfather read Talmud to me. That's one of

the Jewish things I hang on to probably...I was brought up with that curiosity..." (ANU is the museum formerly known as Beit Hatfutot, which we visited when those of us at the KJCC made the trip to Israel in 2013 with Rabbi Agler),

Gehry won the prestigious Pritzker Prize, considered one of the top awards in the field of architecture in 1989, and then in 1999, he won the Gold Medal from the American Institute of Architecture. In 2007, he received the Jerusalem Prize for Arts and Letters and in 2016, he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom from then-president Barack Obama. (www.jta.org, 12-5-2025)

We know that we are rapidly losing Holocaust survivors since most remaining survivors are well into their 80s, 90s and beyond. Those who can share the experience are now very limited. According to the Claims Conference, there are only an estimated 200,000 still alive. "There's limited time to hear an authentic voice directly from a survivor," said Greg Schneider, the executive vice president of the Claims Conference. Here are some prominent Holocaust survivors who have recently passed away:

-Michael Smuss, 99, the last known resistance fighter during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, when Jews revolted against their Nazi persecutors in one of the most dramatic episodes of the Holocaust. After the war, Smuss moved to the United States before eventually emigrating to Israel. He took up painting as a way to process his trauma, and his art is currently on display in the permanent collection of the Florida Holocaust Museum located in St. Petersburg.

-Dita Kraus, 96, a childhood survivor of Auschwitz whose story inspired the 2021 bestselling novel "The Librarian of Auschwitz," by Antonio Iturbe. Kraus formed a secret library for the children of Auschwitz.

-Yehuda 'Idek' Friedman, 105, a member of the secret postwar paramilitary group Nakam (the Hebrew word for revenge) that was led by Abba Kovner. The group attempted to kill 6 million Germans in revenge for the Holocaust by poisoning the drinking water. The group's efforts were documented in a 2021 book titled "Nakam: The Holocaust Survivors Who Sought Full-Scale Revenge," by Dina Porat. (This story of the plan to take revenge was screened at the KJCC in the movie "Plan A.") (www.jta.org, 11-13-25)



KJCC SISTERHOOD BOOK CLUB



January 29, 2026 *The Goddess of Warsaw* by Lisa Barr

February 26, 2026 *The Girl that was Left Behind*
by Tamar Ohrenstein



An enthralling tale of a legendary Hollywood screen goddess with a dark secret about her life in the Warsaw Ghetto. When the famous actress is threatened by someone from her past, she must put her skills into play to protect herself, her illustrious career, and those she loves, then and now.



After discovering a photograph hidden in her late mother's cabinet, a young woman travels to Europe in the hopes of uncovering her origins - and the reason she was left behind.

We will always Zoom and usually meet in person as well. An invitation to join the Zoom session will be sent prior to each meeting.

QUESTIONS/INPUT: CONTACT LINDA @ 305-587-7429
LINDAP4000@YMAIL.COM

LAST THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH
LIVE AT 12:00
ZOOM AT 12:30

Let us know if you would like to host a meeting and/or review a book.

*Clock ticks, confetti
Dancing on the edge of air,
Champagne for breakfast!*

SISTERHOOD REPORT

Loni Ochs



We are moving into the new year of 2026 with the joy and light of Hannukah still shining in our hearts. Our holiday started with an unbelievably horrible act of aggression and murder against our people at the Hannukah lighting in Bondi Beach, Australia. This caused a swirling ocean of anxiety and fear for our safety, but instead of hiding our light and love, we got out there in the community and demonstrated our strength, resilience and determination. We stayed true to the values that equip us to shine even in the darkest moments, and we proudly lit our Chanukah candles at the Murray Nelson center with over 80 people in attendance. As Rabbi Agler shared with us on his Saturday morning service, the darkness will not be vanquished in our lifetime...and in his words..."That really sucks!" Yes, it most certainly does, but we have hope!

The Sisterhood had another successful Challah Bake with our Super Jane Friedman sharing her bread baking and braiding expertise with us. Everyone got to nosh yummy challah the next night for the Shabbat Project Dinner, when we celebrated the gift of Shabbat with thousands of other Jews across the country. The second of our cooking classes was with Luz Levine for a delectable Flan dessert. Don't miss the third installment of our cooking class fund raiser with Jane to learn how to cook her famous eggrolls on Thursday January 15th at 4pm at the KJCC. On Sunday February 1st at 12pm, we are holding a tree planting in commemoration of Tu B'Shevat. Come dance around our garden and honor the birthday of the trees. Also upcoming, join us for a Hamantashen

Workshop on February 26th at 4pm at the KJCC.

The Sisterhood Book Club led by Linda Pollack meets every 3rd Thursday of the month, always on zoom and usually in person to nosh & discuss the latest book. December's meeting was canceled due to holiday busyness, but January's selection is *The Goddess of Warsaw*, by Lisa Barr. A legendary Hollywood screen goddess has dark secrets in her past life in the Warsaw ghetto and must defend her present reality from the horrors of her past. Any new members who wish to be added to the book club announcement mailing list, please contact Linda at (305)587-7429 Lindap4000@ymail.com.

Once again, I would like to thank the sponsors that we rely on to support the onegs and dinners throughout the year. To honor a loved one or celebrate a milestone or just because, contact Joyce at joycepeckman@gmail.com or 732-447-5225. Oneg sponsorship is \$72 and dinner sponsorship is \$360. The sisterhood ladies always put together a delicious spread with love for our congregants after Friday services. We are grateful for everyone's continued support in funding challah, wine, coffee, soda, cake, and paper goods.

The Sisterhood is having our monthly meeting on Sunday, January 11th at 12:30pm in person at the KJCC. We will be installing our next slate of officers for the new year. Bring some noshes and your best ideas for our lively round-table discussions.

Chag Sameach! ♦



From the Committee for Israel

Israel Is Where Theory Stops and Reality Begins

by Seth Mandel

A great benefit of visiting Israel, as I am now, is the immediate ability it confers on you to judge the validity of whatever particular narrative is, at that moment, capturing the attention of foreign audiences.

The current anti-Israel narrative on the left is the accusation that the Jewish state is hostile, sometimes violently, toward Christians. By contrast, the emerging anti-Israel talking point among a segment of the conservative movement known as the “woke right” is more specific: There is no theological reason to support Israel, only secular reasons, and therefore “Christian Zionism” is a contradiction or even heresy.

Being in Jerusalem during the Christmas season is clarifying on both.

The two narratives are related: The right-wing version has cropped up because the left-wing version is too easily disproved. Walking through the eternal Jewish capital during the month of December, one is tempted to laugh at the tension that exists outside these borders. Here we can include all three Abrahamic communities, as the Old City serenades visitors and residents with the sounds of Jews davening and the muezzin’s call to prayer and church bells ringing to the tune of worship songs. At this time of year, the only landmark more visible from afar than the Dome of the Rock is arguably the Christmas tree outside the Jerusalem YMCA.

Of course, a Christmas tree doesn’t disprove the existence of conflict. But it is impossible to spend much time in Jerusalem,

especially the Old City, without engaging its various religionists. Daily coexistence is unremarkable. Each individual incident of conflict isn’t falsely cast as the norm here. In Western media, this reality is inverted. In the eyes of the world, there is no crime in Israel, only holy war. When you’re here, you see just how much that microscope distorts the picture of what is, in fact, typical civilian life.

This is why the anti-Zionists on the right are forced to come up with a different excuse to justify their own personal distrust of Israel. I am no Christian theologian, but that’s OK—it turns out the “heresy” argument is a distraction. That, too, is easier to see from here.

One can grant the claim that there is no theological imperative for Christians to support Israel at all, but that is not the same as saying that there is a theological imperative to be hostile to Jewish Israelis.

As the theologian Brian G. Mattson asks, “what has Israel to do with a modern Christian heresy? Has the state of Israel ever embraced or promoted or associated itself with Christian Zionism, other than to accept enthusiastic support wherever it can be found, particularly when in short supply? The modern Jewish state no doubt has its own notions of its origins, essence, and purpose ... and they are unlikely to have been cribbed from modern evangelical Christian sensibilities, making it strange to hold Israel responsible for ideas held by some of its American supporters.”

Again, the theological discussion looks



interesting from the outside. But the discussion the rest of us can more easily weigh in on is the political one, and here is the political reality. The Christian population of Israel is still growing, some years even as a percentage of the total population, and that is not the norm in the rest of the region. But this time of year, the issue tends to focus on one place more than others: Bethlehem.

The answer to why the Christian population is struggling in this historical Christian city is the same, however, regarding the question of Christian struggles in the Palestinian territories. The Christian population of Gaza has plummeted since Hamas's 2007 takeover. The community's population in Bethlehem has deteriorated since the Palestinian Authority took control of the city in 1994.

Hamas's activities both in Gaza and in places like Bethlehem (Hamas exists in the West Bank, as well) have made the Christian population unsafe and also forced into a second-class citizenship status. As Eness

Elias notes, it has become increasingly difficult for Christians to buy land in places under Palestinian control. Elias also recounts a story in which "Sanaa Razi Nashash from Beit Jala described how she went to the police to file a complaint against a Muslim man who assaulted her—only to find the assailant wearing a police uniform."

Chasing Christians out while preventing them from buying property is a pretty airtight strategy to ensure the population only goes one way: down. And it's the prevailing policy in places under Palestinian governance. Others report that the Palestinian Authority "is erasing" Christians from education curricula as Muslim students become the majority in previously Christian schools.

Walk around Israel and instantly understand that is the opposite of the case for Christians governed by the Jewish state. Ideological and theological debates over Zionism (of any flavor) are beside the point here, because it is where theory ends and reality reigns. ◇



KEYS JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER



Congregation Ohr HaYam

Come Celebrate Tu B'Shevat

The New Year of The Trees

In the Mystical Tradition of a Ritual Seder

Sunday, February 1, 2026 ~ 12:00 noon at the KJCC

Join us as Lucinda Kurtz and Oran Hesterman lead us through a community seder ceremony to celebrate the holiday of Tu B'Shevat. In the seder, we drink four cups of different combinations of red and white wine or juice, eat specific fruits representing the mystical four worlds, tell and hear stories, and share music and poetry.



The holiday of Tu B'Shevat, time of the full moon in the month of Shevat, is also called the New Year of the Trees. It is celebrated when the sap begins to rise, a harbinger of Spring's arrival and the bounty to come. Recognizing the mystical connection between humanity and the trees, Kabbalists perceived Tu B'Shevat as a spiritual Rosh Hashanah, a time of new beginnings and redemption for the world when the Tree of Life pours forth its vital energy for the earth's fertility and our own growth and manifestation.

Contact Susan Gordon by January 25th to let her know you are coming.

susangordon424@yahoo.com - (305) 766-3585

**We will enjoy a light soup and salad supper
together following the ceremony.**

Fiddler on the Roof meets Oh Brother Where Art Thou



Voted Wisconsin's best folk singer 2004
-WAMI Board

Inducted into the Traditional Old-Time Country
Music Hall of Fame in 2003 - Missouri Valley, Iowa

1996 National Blues Harmonica Champion at Avoca, Iowa

Lil Rev -- Milwaukee, Wisconsin's
award-winning singer,
multi-instrumentalist &
storyteller will present...

Fiddler on the Roof meets Oh Brother Where Art Thou

Come along on a fascinating Journey back in time as we take a ride with Lil Rev to the Old Country, where we'll sing the songs of our ancestors, hear their stories, laugh at their follies and cry for their struggles. The story will then carry us to the Golden Medina of America, where we arrived with our dreams in hand and a song in our hearts. We'll celebrate those who've come before, the lessons they left us and the courage they've given us to move into the future. Expect to sing, clap, dance and rejoice with Rev as we move from Yiddish Folk Songs, Yiddish Theatre Pieces, Original songs, Humor and Jewish Folklore!

If you love country, blues, folk and Jewish Music, You'll love Lil Rev!

If you loved the folk music of the 50's and 60's you'll love Lil Rev!

If you love Jewish History or want to learn more, you'll love Lil Rev!

KEYS JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER
93095 OVERSEAS HIGHWAY TAVERNIER, FL

DATE - TUESDAY FEBRUARY 3RD, 2026

TIME - 7:00 PM COST - \$25.00

RSVP BY JANUARY 27TH TO SUSAN GORDON

SUSANGORDON424@YAHOO.COM

OR (305) 766-3585

"Watch out for this guy!"
— Joel Egash - OYSONGS.COM

"Listen to this! Lil Rev is great! — Pete Seeger



www.lilrev.com

Eye on the Arts

Jan. 8-10 and 15-18 – “The Odd Couple” at the Marathon Theatre.

For tickets and information go to www.marathontheater.org or call 305-743-0994.

Mon., Jan. 12th 5-7 p.m. FLKCA Concert Season Preview Party

History & Discovery Center at the Islander Resort. Free video preview of the FLKCA series in a social setting. Cash bar. Register at www.floridakeysconcerts.com or 800-324-6982

Sat., Jan. 17th – Art Under the Oaks San Pedro Church, Islamorada 9-4

Arts & Crafts sale, raffles, live music, food trucks, bake sale

Mon & Tuesday, Jan. 19 & 20- FLKCA Concert Series begins at the high schools in Marathon (Mondays) and Islamorada (Tuesdays.) 7:30 p.m.

The first concert will be “Delirium Musicum”, a young Chamber Orchestra playing Baroque to Contemporary music. For tickets and information, go to www.floridakeysconcerts.com.

Thurs, Jan 29- Feb. 7 – The Key Players present: “Monty Python’s Edukational Show” – Murray Nelson Center, MM 102

A collection of hilarious sketches, songs and animation. For tickets and information go to www.thekeyplayers.org

Mon & Tues, Jan. 27 & 28 – FLKCA Concert Series presents “Kouzov Duo” – Cello & piano

Sat., Jan. 31 – Pops in the Park –“ A Symphony of Nations” – 4 p.m. at ICE Amphitheatre, Islamorada

Bring your blankets, kids and pets for an hour of music outdoors.

Tuesday, Feb. 3 – KJCC presents “Lil Rev” – 7 p.m.

Lively songs and stories of the “Old Country” and the USA in English and Yiddish. Sing and dance along with this award –winning multi-instrumentalist and troubadour. Donation \$25. RSVP to Susan Gordon

Mon & Tues, Feb. 9 & 10- FLKCA presents Stella Chen (violin) and Gilles Vonsattel (piano) playing Tchaikovsky, Beethoven & Schumann.

Feb. 18 – March 30 – Art Guild of the Purple Isles Judged Art Show – Dolphin Life Hospital Project Center, Overseas Hwy 82748. 10 a.m.-5.p.m.

Entrance fee will be waived for the show. New location, same great artists (many of whom we know!)

Mon & Tues, Feb. 23 & 24- 7:30 p.m. FLKCA presents Hermitage Piano Trio

Thursday Nights at the American Legion – 6-10 p.m.

Free music under the stars. The first hour is jazz, then dance to whatever the drop-in band wants to play: pop, country and blues...2 Seagate Blvd, Key Largo ♦



Keys Jewish Community Center



ADVERTISERS & NEW MEMBERS DINNER



Friday, February 6, 2026

6:00 p.m.

Once again, we are inviting our Chai-Lights Advertisers to join us for dinner to thank them for their support. We are also extending a special invitation to our newest members. And we are encouraging you, our members, to invite prospective members to join with us also.

Services to follow at 7:30 p.m.



Contact Medina at 305-394-1702 or

hiitsmedee@gmail.com

to reserve your spot and coordinate your covered dish. This will be a non-dairy meal.



Please reserve by February 1st

Hanukkah

Introductory Remarks By Steve Hartz At The Second Annual Murray Nelson Government Center Menorah Lighting

Let us begin with a moment of silence in honor and in grief for those killed and wounded at a Menorah lighting ceremony at Bondi Beach in Sydney Australia, as well as those who were killed and wounded at Brown University in Rhode Island.

May G-d comfort their families and grant speedy and complete healing to those who were wounded.

As heartbroken as we are, we are a resilient people. We shall not allow terrorists to stop our celebration of Hanukkah. And, even a small extra amount of light can dispel a lot of darkness.

Welcome, and thank you for coming to the Second Annual Hannukah Menorah lighting sponsored by the Keys Jewish Community Center, Congregation Ohr HaYam. "Ohr HaYam" means light of the sea. Hannukah celebrates the victory of the Maccabees, a Jewish group, over the Greeks, the recovery of Jerusalem and rededication of the Second Temple in the 2nd century B.C.E. Light is a central theme of Hannukah, since rededication of the Temple required eight days of oil light and oil for only one night was found. Miraculously that oil lasted eight days.

Our congregation is also a bit of a miracle. It has been serving the Jewish community in the Florida Keys for over 45 years and is still going strong and growing. We are unaffiliated, independent, and we welcome congregants from diverse branches of Judaism. We are egalitarian. Women are treated the same way as men in our ritual and congregational life. We welcome people without regard to sexual orientation or their level of prior Jewish experience. We welcome with full membership people with interfaith marriages.

And now, we are the only bricks and mortar synagogue from Cutler Bay to Key West and we are growing. We have all sorts of programs, including not only weekly services but also Hebrew classes and concerts.

Service to our community, Jewish and non-Jewish, is a central aspect of our spiritual practice.

Our members are, or have been, involved with Monroe County in one way or another either working for the County or for its numerous charitable and civic causes.

And the charitable works of the Congregation go beyond the borders of the Conch Republic. For example, our Scholar Emeritus Rabbi Richard Agler and his wife Mindy have been instrumental in developing a girls shelter in Nairobi Kenya, named after their late daughter Talia of blessed memory. This shelter rescues girls who have been abused and trafficked. We and our members support this shelter in a variety of ways.

But none of our synagogue's success over so many years could have happened without the generous support and kindness of the Keys community in which we thrive. I can only mention a few people in the time I have. But it will illustrate the point I am trying to make about the importance of the County to our synagogue.

Commissioner Holly Merrill Raschein is at the top of the list. Without hesitation, she approved our putting up a Hannukah Menorah last year and again this year. She also visited our synagogue to present an Honorary Conch award to our congregant Mickey Frankel as Mickey turned 100 years old. These were historic moments for us. Commissioner Raschein is again with us here today.

Let me also talk about Sheriff Rick Ramsay and Capt. Spenser Bryan, both of whom are here today. Robust security is obviously a very important part of running any religious institution today, especially a synagogue. We have always valued our cordial relationship with the Sheriff's office; and Sheriff Ramsay and Capt. Bryan have been especially helpful in giving us wise counsel with respect to our security needs.

Yesterday, on a Sunday, I sent an e-mail to the Sheriff in light of the heightened risk we were facing as the result of the horrific murders that I mentioned at the beginning. Less than an hour later, the Sheriff responded that he was going to

Revisited



Steve Hartz, after his welcoming address to Monroe Commissioner Holly Merrill Raschein. She and Sheriff Rick Ramsay gave very wonderful supportive talks, letting us know they "have our backs." We are so grateful.

put on extra patrols to keep everyone safe. Today, the Sheriff has driven 100 miles from Key West to be with us and has brought a large contingent of officers to protect us. On behalf of the KJCC and everyone here, I thank you, Sheriff and Captain Bryan for your support.

So many people have helped us with this Hannukah display. Corey Abel, the Commissioner's assistant, was so helpful in coordinating the scheduling and approval of our events.

Leo Morin handles facilities at the Murray Nelson Government Center. Thank you for your dedication, support and advice.

I want to give a shout out to Nestor Torra and Dawn DeBrule of Parks and Beaches for helping us to get through the requisite paperwork and compliance to get a permit to place the Menorah.

Our friends Cari Sanders and Nola Acker at Light Up Key Largo were so generous in coordinating their work with ours.

I want to give a shout out to the Chamber of



Commerce and Suzie Youngberg, its president, without whose early support of this idea of a Menorah at Murray Nelson, the project would not have gone forward!

Finally, thanks to Kevin Dillon, Chris Morley and everyone who installed a permanent underground electric line for our Menorah facilitating its safe use not only for this year but hopefully for many years to come.

These acts of kindness and support of which I have spoken, and many more, might have seemed simple and routine to the people who performed them because they were good people doing their jobs well. But for us, they have meant far more. At a time when Jewish people live in fear and are stalked by violence, the people of Monroe County have stepped up with kindness, respect, and solidarity. Monroe County is truly a great place for Jewish people to live, to raise children, and to grow old!

Happy Hannukah! ◊

Community Menorah Lighting



Thank you, Sheriff Ramsay. You truly honored our Jewish Community tonight with your presence, you extra staff, and your kind words. You make a difference in our lives.



We are so amazed at and grateful for the wholehearted support of our Jewish Community by Our County Government, Bravo.



Commissioner Holly Raschein receives the honor. Of lighting the Shamash on the second night of Chanukah after more than 80 people gathered to sing the blessings with Gloria. It was truly moving.



After Sheriff Ramsay lights the first Candle, Rabbi Richard Agler and his wife Mindy light the last candle for the evening and conclude with a sweet embrace. We are so delighted that the Aglers were here to share this special moment with us.



Inside Murray Nelson Center, we are happily sharing latkes and Chanukah goodies with all who attended the lighting outdoors.





KJCC Hanukkah Dinner & Celebration





KJCC Hanukkah Dinner



KJCC's
Hanukkah
Gift Shop
Display!



& Celebration Continued

Thanks to the generous donations of six of our members, the Chanukah Dinner Raffle was a great success. And the winners were delighted.



Susan Gordon and Shari Carlquist did a great job selling tickets.



Erica was thrilled with her "Lazy Days" Gift Certificates donated by our newest members, Ryan and Samantha Simpson.

In fact, it seemed like all the winners were excited and grateful. Mindy Agler was especially happy with the engraved copper bracelet from Israel, donated by Joyce Peckman.



Mark and Lou are excited about their Stream 2 Sea gift basket with a lionfish mezuzah made by Randy.



Shari couldn't have been happier to win Gloria's painting, "Klezmer Magic."



The rabbi statue donated by Linda Pollack found the perfect home with Jane Friedman.

Hanukkah at Home

Randy & Oshi's
1st night of
Hanukkah!



Susan's
grandson's,
Rhett & Hank,
lighting the
menorah
on the last night
of Hanukkah!



Beautiful
dancers, Max
and Rivka,
celebrate
Chanukah
with
movement at
holiday party



KJCC CONGREGATION OHR HAYAM INVITES YOU TO OUR ANNUAL MEETING AND LUNCHEON

Sunday, February 8, 2026
11:00 A.M.

Hear The State of KJCC
Annual Message & Reports

Vote for our Officers and Directors for 2026.
A list of Nominees will be issued after the
January Board meeting.

*Installation will take place today and
we value your support and input!*

Sisterhood will offer a delicious dairy lunch
immediately following the General Meeting.



Cleaning the Menorah

by Judy Starr

You've warned me to be careful of the water
nearly as hot as the flames
of the nine candles that we lit last night.
So I pour it with care, after boiling,
down the branches and the trunk and the crevices
between where every candle stood.

We watch our fingertips again
as we clear the wax
reshaped by the flames and clinging
to the now-cold chanukiyah
in new forms as random as clouds.

Nine candle-holders to clean
with the point of a re-purposed fruit knife.
When we get to the station
for the central one, its tip intended to light all the others,
working from left to right
we catch the scent -
a brief aftermath.

The lights, the words and songs
belonging to these days
bring to mind the miracles
of one day's oil burning for eight
in the temple, purified,
against all odds, victory granted -
and the voices of small children
now grown and miles away, as offspring may,
and other voices, older, knowing, kind,
since swept into silence.

It seems this celebration passes by more quickly,
this task at shorter intervals each successive year.



Oceana graduated UMiami with a BA double major of Psychology and Global Health. She has applied for Masters and PhD programs in Clinical Psychology and Sexuality Research, throughout Canada for next Fall.

Shabbat Shalom
in snowy Toronto,
Lieberman girls



Loni & Lily go
cruising!





It's the winter Solstice and time for the annual event honoring, blessing and memorializing those who died homeless in our Florida Keys over the course of a year. Sad, and important. As in years past, KJCC/Congregation Ohr HaYam adds a powerful supportive presence. We remember our own departed member Carol Steinbock on this day for bringing this event to our attention, decades ago.



Lily Salomon prepares for her March 27 Bat Mitzvah!



Every year we love welcoming our families who visit every winter.



So good to see Roz, one of our earliest members, enjoying Rivka's service.



Rivka enjoys Jane's Challah after leading a dancing full service on the last Shabbat of 2025.



Gloria's newest great-granddaughter, Sylvia, arrived on December 15th. Daughter to Lacy, your Chai-Lights graphic designer!



Susan with Grandsons

SHABBOS PROJECT DINNER NOVEMBER 14TH





OPEN HOUSE – DECEMBER 25

Following a tradition originated by Carol and Steve Steinbock many years ago, Erica Lieberman Garrett hosted a pot luck Open House for KJCC. It was delicious and delightful. Good food, great conversation, excellent friends and spectacular chocolate bobka. Thank you, Erica, and all who brought beauty and nourishment to this event. We do love our community (and we missed you who were celebrating elsewhere).





CHALLAH BAKE WORKSHOP NOVEMBER 13TH





FLAN WORKSHOP

Workshop
led by Luz
Levine
& Jane
Friedman!



Kaufman boys Sean and Michael, love skiing in Vail. The after warmup looks good too. Lorena, you look gorgeous.



Kaufman family on a cruise before heading to the ski slopes



Shari and Erica celebrated New Year's in snowy Canada with the Lieberman Family.

KEYS JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER



SISTERHOOD

HAMENTASHEN WORKSHOP

Thursday February 26, 2026 4:00 p.m.

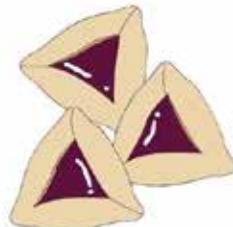
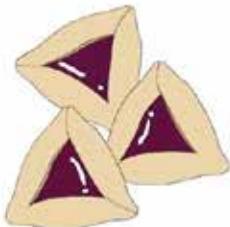
Sisterhood invites all KJCC members, men as well as women, to join in the making of our favorite Purim dessert: Hamentashen!!!

Bring your own wine and cheese and crackers and we will enjoy a happy hour hamentashen bake.

We will publish information prior to the session telling you what supplies you will need to have on hand.

Rsvp to Susan Gordon to let her know you are coming by 2/20 so we can prepare.
(305) 766-3585
susangordon424@yahoo.com

No charge





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MARCH 8, 2026
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DONATION \$36
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LOCATION - KJCC
MM 93.5 OCEANSIDE





EMBRACE THE WARM BODY

by Lucinda Kurtz

Nine candles blaze,
final flare of Chanukah
before descending darkness
ushers in new moon of Tevet.

Ancient anger erupts,
spewing scalding magma.
Pain rippling through time
releases rage that burns,
hatred that scorches,
twisting truth.

Seeking solace and safety,
protection from unhinged outbursts,
we return to center,
wrap arms around soft skin
curl inward, veiled from view,
time of quiet introspection.

Despite discord and delusion,
awareness awakens forgiveness,
provides pathway through
the darkness.

Step by step, we relinquish fear,
embrace the warm body,
once a stranger
now, a radiant face of the Divine.

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Dinner 5:00 - 10:00
Sat. - Sun. 5:00 - 10:00



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An artistic advertisement for Gloria Avner Art. It features a vibrant, abstract painting with swirling colors of yellow, orange, and red. In the foreground, several paintbrushes of different sizes are standing upright in the paint. The text "Gloria Avner Art" is at the top, followed by two Facebook links. Below that, "GLORIA AVNER" is written in a stylized font, with "BATIK PAINTING - CLASSES" and "COMMISSIONS - PET PORTRAITS" underneath. At the bottom, there is an email address and a phone number.

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