In honor of Shavuot, a student at the J Center for Early Learning holds two challahs representing the Ten Commandments. Shavuot celebrates the early summer’s grain harvest and the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai seven weeks after the exodus from Egypt.
On April 22, four hundred El Paso and Las Cruces community members came together to celebrate Israel’s 70 years of independence. We thank Scott and Bonny Stevens for working with community leaders in organizing this exceptional event.

The connection between our El Paso community and Israel’s started well before Israel became a state. We have documented evidence in the Federation offices of pledges and payments going back to 1917. Our local Jewish Community continuously backed the Jewish people in the land of Israel for over a century.

Through 1917 to today, the population of Jews has increased over 100 fold, from 60,000 to over six million. The Jews in North America played an essential role in the creation and development of the Jewish homeland into an advanced, modern, and powerful state.

I was born in Israel to eastern European immigrants who arrived there after the Holocaust. My first recollection as a young child is sleeping with shoes and running to shelter upon the sound of sirens during the six-day war. I also remember well the Yom Kippur war in 1973. I served in the IDF for six years, including service during the Lebanon war in 1982.

I am proud of and cherish the strong bond between the El Paso-Las Cruces Jewish community and Israel. As a community, we take pride in Israel’s accomplishments. We will continue to back Israel, to assist our Jewish People in the diaspora, and to enhance our local community. The Federation has a campaign that grew to $560,000 last year. As part of the campaign, in April, the Federation held a fun women’s bus tour to the Pink Store in Palomas, Mexico.

To enhance our local programming, we are revisiting the local granting process in looking for improved ways of serving our community. If you wish to help by providing us with input, please contact the chair Ophra Layser-Whalen, oleyser@gmail.com. On May 6, Robin Krasne is organizing a Comedy Night for teens. On June 6, we have our Annual Meeting where the Board of Directors under the presidency of Janet Wechter will be installed. We will also recognize community volunteers. We hope to see you there!

We are delighted that Camp Shamayin, which restarted under the Federation last year for two weeks, will expand to eight weeks, June 4 to July 27. This year it will operate at Temple Mount Sinai under the management of J Center for Early Learning. This coming June will be Camp Kadima’s 31st year. Camp Kadima is a three-week long summer camp for individuals with special needs. Applications for the Bea Weisz Memorial Scholarship are being accepted until May 15, 2018, to provide funds to one or more worthy Jewish college students to enable them to pursue their studies. To apply for the Bea Weisz Scholarship, please visit the Federation’s website, jewishelpaso.org.

Thank you for your support,

Elitan Lavi, President
Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso
JCF Awards Impact Grant to JFED for Leadership Training

The Jewish Community Foundation has awarded the JFED of Greater El Paso an Impact Grant for leadership training which includes sending two community members on the Jewish Federation of North America’s annual FRD Mission. The 2 (two) people committed to JFED’s mission and support of the 2018 and 2019 Annual Campaign will join incoming campaign chair, Leslie Beckoff and President, Janet Wechter on this unique mission to Berlin and Budapest to learn about Federations’ impact and our work around the world. See the details and if interested in the mission, please call Sue Bendalin at 915.842.9554.

2018 FRD Leadership Mission: Berlin & Budapest
13 July 2018 to 19 July 2018

Berlin and Budapest are home to some of the most vibrant and complex Jewish communities in the world. With their profound histories and unique cultures, these two European cities serve as examples of strength, renewal, and energy. Travel with us as we look back in time — in order to move forward. Witness the influence that our partner agencies have on the lives of Jews throughout Europe, and experience the impact of both history and Federation.

The mission will take place July 13 – 19, 2018. Participants will need to arrive in Berlin ready to begin the program by 12:30 pm local time on Friday, July 13th (departing the US on July 12th). The program will end late in the evening on Wednesday, July 18th. Participants will then fly home from Budapest on Thursday, July 19th.
We’re getting ready for camp: Are you?

Calling all campers ages 1-11 for a summer of fun! Camp Shamayim will be held this year at the J Center for Early Learning, 4408 N. Stanton Street, from June 4 through July 27. Belinda Saylor, the J’s director of operations, will be our new camp director. We can’t wait, and we hope you’re excited, too!

The theme of the summer day camp is “Passport to Adventure.” Each week has a specific focus, such as “Air Travel,” “Time Travel,” and “Around the World.” The children will engage in activities surrounding each week’s theme and will take coordinating field trips as well. For each unit, there will be science experiments, art projects, sports, swimming, and other camp activities. The camp will be such fun that children will not even realize that they’re learning as well.

May 9 breakfast with El Paso native

Russell Robinson, Jewish National Fund CEO

Russell F. Robinson, CEO of the Jewish National Fund for more than 20 years, returns home to El Paso in May for a special celebration of Israel’s 70th birthday! The community is invited to meet him at a complimentary breakfast at 8:00 a.m., Wednesday, May 9, at Congregation B’nai Zion at 805 Cherry Hill Lane.

As many local families know, Robinson, the son of Ruth and Dick, grew up in El Paso and graduated from Coronado High School in 1974. He returned to El Paso after graduating from UT-Austin with a business degree in 1978. After working here for a while, he sold his business and began his long career within Jewish organizations by serving as our Jewish Community Center director. After working for the United Jewish Appeal for seven years, Robinson was hired in 1997 as the youngest Jewish National Fund CEO in the organization’s history since it was founded in New York City in 1901.

While there is no charge for the breakfast and Robinson’s talk, reservations are required and can be made online at jnf.org/elpasobreakfast. For information on how to get involved with the Jewish National Fund in El Paso, please contact Reagan Weil at rweil@jnf.org or 512.410.1438.

**Committee seeks grants process feedback**

Hello, El Paso and Las Cruces community! Thank you for your support of the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso. I hope you have enjoyed some of the great programming that has come from the JFed as well as the great programming from the many organizations that have received grants from the JFed. Quality programs enhance our community and the Federation is continuously looking for ways to better serve our community and improve the granting process.

I am heading a committee that is looking at our whole allocations process—from the forms that grantees fill out, to the review process for both grantees and evaluators, to the allocation of funds. With the help of the committee members—Julian Gonzalez Herrel, Wendy Lanski, Eitan Lavi, John Moye, and Scott Stevens—we created two short surveys. One is for those who have been grantees in the past five years and the other is for those who have been evaluators in the past 5 years. Some of these surveys have already been sent to recipients and answered—so thank you for that! We hope to use these data to continue to improve our whole granting process.

Finding exactly who fits the “grantee/evaluator in the past 5 years” criteria has been challenging, so if we missed you, please email me and let me know that you would like a link to the grantee and/or evaluator survey. Moreover, if you have not been a grantee or evaluator in the past five years but would like to submit written comments about the granting process, I am happy to deliver your comments to our allocations review committee. I can be reached at: oleyser@gmail.com Thank you again for all your support.

*Ophra Leyser-Whalen*  
Grants Process Chair  
Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso

**May 9 breakfast with El Paso native**

Russell Robinson, Jewish National Fund CEO

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IT’S ALWAYS SOMETHING...THAT’S WHY THERE’S FEDERATION
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

My name is Kyle Goldfarb and I will be graduating from El Paso High School on June 4. This fall I will be attending the University of Texas at Austin, following in the footsteps of my siblings and the rest of the Goldfarb family. Throughout my high school career, I competed in basketball, and I am graduating with a Seal of Biliteracy through the Dual Language Program. With the tools that I learned on and off the basketball court, along with my bilingualism, I hope to make a positive influence on the 40 acres.

Leah Olivia Levy, a Coronado graduating senior, will attend the Young Judaea Year Course, gap year program in Israel beginning the fall of 2018. In addition to being a talented artist, Leah is interested in the field of psychology and will be taking relevant classes during the Jerusalem Academic Semester and will then apply her knowledge, as a volunteer, in either a Tel Aviv hospital or a service organization, for at least a semester. Leah plans to return to UT Austin in the fall of 2019 to pursue a degree in Clinical Psychology. Leah is the daughter of Elizabeth and Jim Levy and granddaughter of Eleanor Goodman.

Ethan Katz will be graduating from Coronado High School on June 6. He received an Academic Letter Jacket his sophomore and junior year. Ethan was a four-year varsity tennis player and captain of the team his senior year. He was actively involved at Coronado and served as Junior and Senior Class President, co-executive producer for Coronado Televisión, and National Honor Society member. His proud family includes his parents Ruth and Jeff Katz, his siblings Jordan, Naomi, and Sabrina, and his grandparents, Sue and Charles Zaltz and Ellen and Richard Katz. Ethan will be attending Vanderbilt University in the fall with hopes of pursuing a career in medicine.

Sydney Yarden Reiter, daughter of Dennis and Anai Reiter, sister to Erin and Ethan Reiter, daughter to Beverly and Morris Reiter, will graduate from Coronado High School in June. She has spent several summers at Camp Ramah Darom in Clayton, Georgia. She is most proud of his time volunteering for the Red Lion’s Project where he helped soldiers returning from Afghanistan. He will be attending DePaul University in Chicago where he will be majoring in game design and development. David is the son of Joani and Bryan Schonberg, the brother of Matthew, and the grandson of Ruth Edlich.

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Stuart Kahn. Jacob will be attending The Red McCombs School of Business at UT Austin and we are very excited to see what the future holds for him.

Jacob Zenner will be graduating from Coronado High School with high honors. He was a four-year member and percussionist in the Coronado Marching, Jazz, and Symphonic bands, was very involved in his school’s journalism organizations, and was also a member of student and service organizations such as National Honor Society, KeyClub, and the class executive committee. The Coronado faculty and staff recently named him as the All-Coronado Boy. His proud parents are Elisa Kahn and David Zenner, and his grandparents are Frances and Stuart Kahn. Jacob will be attending The Red McCombs School of Business at UT Austin and we are very excited to see what the future holds for him.

Leah Zachary Goldstein is excited to be graduating from Coronado High School and journeying to University of Colorado at Boulder. It is a natural calling for him to move to the mountains and attend college where he can also enjoy his outdoor hobbies. He will be pursuing a major in political science with a minor in business. He has spent much of his extra-curricular time during high school debating and training with National Hispanic Institute, CHS Debate Team and Boulderiaon Teen Court (note to mention his parents and teachers) and is very interested in continuing a pre-law education. Also, his life and vibrant participation as a camper-to-counselor at Camp Hess Kramer played a significant role in his Jewish identity and he sees having a large population of Jewish students as an attractive attribute of CU Boulder. As Elan ventures northward and opens his horizons, he will be pursuing a career in medicine.

Daniel Goodman. Elizabeth and Jim Levy and David, Jacob, Elan and Sydney Yarden Reiter, daughter of Dennis and Anai Reiter, sister to Erin and Ethan Reiter, daughter to Beverly and Morris Reiter, will graduate from Coronado High School in June. She has spent several summers at Camp Ramah Darom in Clayton, Georgia. She is most proud of his time volunteering for the Red Lion’s Project where he helped soldiers returning from Afghanistan. He will be attending DePaul University in Chicago where he will be majoring in game design and development. David is the son of Joani and Bryan Schonberg, the brother of Matthew, and the grandson of Ruth Edlich.

May 2018 | 5

915-842-9554 | www.jewishelpaso.org
Women’s Campaign Road Trip to The Pink Store

The JFed Women’s Campaign Road Trip to The Pink Store in Palomas, Mexico, was a great success on April 11, with 25 women of all ages and one wonderful comedian from New Jersey, Robin Fox. The group of women – all of whom have given a minimum $360 gift to the 2018 campaign – enjoyed laughter, lunch, and shopping during their fun outing.

The event started in front of Congregation B’nai Zion with fruit, croissants, orange juice, Mimosa, and homemade lemon bars and banana-chocolate bread baked by Ellyce Kimmelman. Rabbi Stephen Leon blessed the field trip group while a news photographer from a local station filmed the get-together.

Before the chartered bus crossed the New Mexico line, Robin Fox, a well-known comedian in the national Jewish community, was keeping us laughing with jokes and fond stories of her growing up, her family, her friends and community. As Jewish women, we could identify with so much of what she described. It was fun to laugh together at her funny observations of women in relatable situations and stages of life; the hour-and-a-half bus ride went by very quickly.

After we ordered lunch and enjoyed The Pink Store’s famous margaritas, a mariachi band entertained us and the laughs continued. Shopping came next and then The Pink Store’s wonderful owner, Ivonne Romero, helped ensure that everyone and their packages made it back to the border crossing, thanks to the store’s golf carts.

It was a memorable day and a great chance to catch up with friends and make new ones.

Cindy Graff Cohen
Editor, The Jewish Voice
In March, three teachers from the J Center for Early Learning attended the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance (NAREA) winter conference in Seattle, WA. Teachers Desiree Ainsa, pre-kindergarten; Iveth Escobedo, three-year-olds; and Cecilia Valencia, kindergarten, were privileged to attend the sold-out conference, entitled “Constructing a Culture of Shared Values for Children and Childhood: Honoring diversity, differences, and democracy.”

The teachers learned about the history of Reggio Emilia itself, a province in Italy that completely reworked its educational system following World War II. The region achieved such success that their educational practices sparked a movement worldwide. Many top preschools, including the one at Google headquarters (and the J!), consider themselves to be Reggio Emilia inspired. These schools honor differences by allowing every student to learn in his or her own way. Reggio Emilia-inspired schools are democratic, in that the teacher and children work together toward a common goal. The teacher is not a “sage on a stage,” but it rather a “guide on the side,” gently encouraging children to learn and explore. “Children are natural explorers,” explained Ms. Iveth upon her return, “and are acutely sensitive to the pleasure of surprise.”

In Seattle, the teachers visited top-notch Reggio Emilia-inspired childcare centers. They walked through classrooms, talked with teachers, and took dozens of pictures. Back in El Paso, they used what had inspired them to rearrange their classrooms, incorporate new materials, and develop new teaching techniques. They also presented what they had learned to a group of other teachers, administrators, and board members. Each teacher was so grateful for the opportunity she had to attend this conference.

Caren Szanton
Director of Curriculum
The J Center for Early Learning

At the NAREA Conference, left to right: Iveth Escobedo; Paola Capraro, director of Preschools and Infant-Toddler Centers in Reggio Emilia; Ivana Soncini, psychologist for Preschools and Infant-Toddler Centers in Reggio Emilia; Desiree Ainsa, and Cecilia Valencia
EPJA commemorates Jewish holidays

The El Paso Jewish Academy commemorated Yom Hashoah with a gathering in the library of all the teachers, staff, and students as well as Rabbi Stephen Leon of Congregation B’nai Zion. We stood in silence as we listened to the two minutes of sirens sounding across Israel. The upper grade students sang Ani Maamin, a song expressing hope in the face of adversity. Elizabeth Montes read inspirational stories of Holocaust survivors. After the students’ songs and prayers, Rabbi Leon concluded with a special chant. Later that day, we had a guest speaker from the Holocaust Museum addressing all the students. The EPJA students in grades 4-8 sang at the Israel Memorial Day celebration at Fort Bliss on April 18. Rabbi Zeidman was the guest speaker. The EPJA followed the celebration of Yom Hazikaron with that of Israel Independence Day on April 19. We enjoyed the festivities and an Israeli lunch for the students and staff. On April 22, the EPJA participated in the Yom Ha’Atzmaut celebration at Temple Mount Sinai. Students wrote poems expressing their love of Israel for the annual contest sponsored by the Jewish Federation.

Accepting applications for Fall 2018 semester

The Beatrice L. Weisz Memorial Scholarship Fund was established in July of 2001. It was the wish of Ms. Weisz that proceeds from the fund would be given to one or more needy and worthy Jewish college students to enable them to pursue their studies. The amount available for distribution is $6,584 for the upcoming school year. Applications are available online at www.jewishelpaso.org and must be received on or before Tuesday, May 15th, 2018, for distribution by August 1, 2018.

Proud parents Daniel and Vanessa Sonnen are happy to announce the birth of their son, David Samuel Sonnen. David arrived at 10:51am on Tuesday, March 13, 2018 at Hospitals of Providence Memorial campus. He weighed 6 lbs, 5 ounces and measured 18.5 inches in length. His pet siblings are Tucker the boxer and Ozzie the toy poodle. Paternal grandparents are Jon and Arlene Sonnen of El Paso and maternal grandparents are Charles and Susie Lustig of Dallas.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Lara Downes back in El Paso

World-renowned pianist Lara Downes returns to El Paso in May with several El Paso Pro-Musica concerts co-sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso. Her parents - a Jewish Russian mother and a Jamaican father - influenced her music career as did great composers including Leonard Bernstein. She will be performing from her latest CD, “For Lenny,” a tribute to Bernstein during the 100th anniversary of his birth, as well as one of her CDs recorded with award-winning cellist Zuill Bailey, artistic director of El Paso Pro-Musica. Downes will perform in El Paso at 7:30 p.m., Wednesday, May 9, at UTEP’s Fox Fine Arts Recital Hall and in Las Cruces at 7:30 p.m., Thursday, May 10 at NMSU’s Akinson Recital Hall. And will be a special guest at the annual El Paso Pro-Musica Guild Soiree on Saturday, May 12. The Concert is generously sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso and co-sponsors from the congregation.

Author Alden Solovy at Temple Beth-El

Temple Beth-El of Las Cruces invites the community to a special Scholar-in-Residence program with writer, poet, and liturgist Alden Solovy at 7:30 p.m., on Tuesday, May 1. Alden will lead a workshop called “Discover Your Personal Prayer” to help participants write prayers that express their unique hopes and desires in their own words. Writing coach and author of more than 600 pieces of new liturgy, Solovy challenges the boundaries between poetry, meditation, personal growth and prayer. This program is supported by a grant from the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso and co-sponsors from the congregation.

Hadassah celebrates Israel’s 70th

At 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 15, Hadassah will celebrate Israel’s milestone anniversary. Invitations will be mailed. For information, contact Debbie Cohen at 249-6505 or debcoh@aol.com.

Vegetarian Society brings Dr. Brooke Goldner

The nonprofit Vegetarian Society of El Paso invites the Jewish community to its 25th anniversary celebration vegan Mexican buffet dinner at the Holiday Inn on Sunland Park at 6:00 p.m., Saturday, May 5. Dr. Brooke Goldner, best-selling author and psychiatrist, will be the keynote speaker. Reservations and payment are required in advance: Visit vsep.org and click on “events” and “pay online”.

Bike and learn about Camp Shamayim

Join the J Center for Early Learning staff at Madeline Park on Saturday, May 26, to find out more about the exciting Camp Shamayim activities planned for kids aged one to eleven. Bring your bikes for the camp’s “Bicycles in The Park” afternoon starting at 2:00 p.m. Decorate your bicycle, take a ride around the park, and learn more about Camp Shamayim. The park is located in Kern Place area at E. Baltimore Drive.

Share your simchas with our Jewish Community!

Graduations • Weddings • Births

Email one photograph and brief paragraph by Monday, May 14, for the June issue to thevoice@jfedelpaso.org

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**Jewish Folk Festival**

Cindie Shorri, Eve Palanker, Casey Rosenberg and Kaila Brown stood ready to serve a variety of baked goods at “Bubbe’s Bakery” at the Temple Beth-El Las Cruces Jewish Folk Festival on April 15.

Community members were invited to join the Mesilla Valley International Folk Dancers at the Temple Beth-El Jewish Food and Folk Festival on April 15.

**Seder at Legacy**

The Legacy at Cimarron hosted a Passover Seder on April 4. Nearly 50 residents, family members and friends attended. Rabbi Ben Zeldman from Temple Mount Sinai officiated.

**JEWISH NATIONAL FUND BREAKFAST FOR ISRAEL**

Beyond the Trees “The Future is Beautiful: JNF’s Work in Israel Today”

Featuring Guest Speaker

RUSSELL F. ROBINSON
JNF Chief Executive Officer

Wednesday, May 9, 2018
8:00 - 9:00 am Program, Registration begins at 7:30 am

RSVP by April 30 jnf.org/elpasobreakfast

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CHAIRS Tanny Berg and Nora Gonzalez

No cost to attend Dietary laws observed

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For information on how you can start your own fund with us, please contact Robert Shiloff at 584-3942.