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Planting for the Future

By Heidi Rotberg, President,
Charlotte Chapter of Hadassah

We are all uniquely aware of how fragile life is and the enormous responsibility we have to safeguard our lives as well as preserve the environment around us. While we may view ecology and the protection of our environment as a modern, progressive idea, we know that the Jewish tradition has always focused on ecological concerns.

Our Torah is a love story between the Jewish people and the land of Israel. Many of the metaphors and analogies reference the plants, the desert, the abundant forests, and the breathtaking natural landscape. The sages understood that the integrity of the land had to be continually protected. They created the shmi-

tah, a seven-year planting cycle that allowed the land to replenish itself; they also taught us a regard for trees and vegetation even during times of war. Today, we have seen the tremendous devastation of the forests in northern Israel from the terrible fires during the recent war and the loss of flora and fauna which help balance nature.

This month, we celebrate Tu B'Shevat, the birthday of the trees, and we are again reminded of our bond to the land. When the modern Zionist movement came into being, one of the first acts of the Zionist Congress was to establish a Jewish National Fund in order to purchase land, reclaim it and return it to its natural beauty.

Hadassah became, and continues to be, the largest contributor to and supporter of JNF. Even our name is rooted in the soil of Israel, for the *hadassah* is the myrtle which grows abundantly throughout Israel.

Now we are challenged once again to help re-grow the forests and bring new life to the land. It is through your generous contributions, by honoring Israel with the purchase of tree certificates, that northern Israel will blossom again for future generations. It is each person's individual efforts in re-cultivating the burnt forests that we can reestablish the harmony of nature.

May our celebration of Tu B'Shevat be a reflection of our deep roots of Jewish tradition and may we continue to witness the flowering of the land. ✧



Charlotte Torah Center

Monthly Meetings for Women-Esther: The Merit of Things Hidden

Each month venture into a rarely discussed chapters of Torah to meet those influential female

personalities who set into play many societal norms we live by today. Hear penetrating insights on issues that continue plaguing us, such as the connection between a violent society and the exploitation of women, and how the life-choices made today will affect future generations. Also probe into other important concerns that society endlessly grapples with.

Queen Esther lived a double life - as a Persian queen and as redeemer of the Jewish people. Her ability to hide her personal background - while secretly remaining true to Torah and Judaism in the palace - contributed to her success.



The Megillah, which recounts Esther's story, was written in order to give future Jewish generations the strength and guidelines to cope with the darkness of exile. Let us explore the various aspects of "hiding," as a tool Esther inherits from her ancestors and as legacy we have inherited from her for today.

When: Thursday, February 15.
Where: Levine/Sklut Judaic Library and Resource Center, Shalom Park. Time: 10 AM. ✧



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*deceased

Hadassah Health Program

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and wellness program development; health risk assessments and screenings; proprietary software to implement, manage and track disease management; printed and electronic wellness educational tools; on-site corporate wellness programming, and much more. For additional information, visit www.wellnesscoalition.com.

Hadassah is a volunteer women's organization committed to world health care—such as cancer screening, state-of-the-art trauma care, early detection of cardiovascular disease, smoking cessation, and promotion of physical fitness—among many other activities. ✧