

Strengthening Jewish Identity New Focus of Jewish Agency

By Amy Krakovitz

The Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) has been around as long as Zionism. Growing out of the organizations created at the First Zionist Congress, the original Jewish Agency for Palestine was created in 1921 in order to facilitate Jewish immigration to Palestine. It continued in that mission for years, bringing Holocaust survivors, Jews from the Soviet Union, and the Falash Mura from Ethiopia to Israel.

Even today, those wishing to make aliyah utilize the services of the Jewish Agency.

But the Jewish Agency is much more than that. Director General Alan Hoffman visited Charlotte in September and explained the mission of the Jewish Agency.

"To inspire Jews throughout the world to connect with their people, their heritage and land, and empower them to build a thriving Jewish future and a strong Israel." JAFI accomplishes these goals in several ways through several programs.

1) Forging strong connections to Israel through a sequence of Israel experiences for teens and young adults – from Birthright's short visit to Israel, to Masa's live



Risa Miller, Ira and Stacey Slomka, Alan Hoffman, director general of JAFI, Dusty Hurst, JAFI's local Manager of Community and Donor Relations, and Rachael Levine, JFGC Director of Community Relations and Israel Affairs.

and learn experience from five months to a year.

2) Facilitating aliyah for those who choose to make Israel their home.

3) Engaging young Jews from Israel and around the world in social activism, infusing them with Jewish purpose and connecting them to one another, while addressing the needs of vulnerable populations in Israel.

4) Reconnecting Jews from the former Soviet Union to their Jewish roots from which they were forcibly separated throughout 70 years of communist rule.

5) Rescuing Jews from countries of distress and settling them

in Israel.

6) Serving as first responder to crises in Israel and around the Jewish world.

How are these things evident in Charlotte? Our community schlicha, Mor Greene, and schlichim from past years, were sent to us through our relationship with the Jewish Agency. The summer trips that are taken by our teens that connect them to other teens in Israel, who then come to visit us in Charlotte, is a project of the Jewish Agency. The many

Birthright trips that our youth have been able to make come through JAFI. Those who have made aliyah use the Jewish Agency to facilitate their journey.

Today the Jewish Agency for Israel has a presence in Shalom Park. Dusty Heist, JAFI's Manager of Community and Donor Relations, is here in Charlotte and can be reached at 704-554-2052 or DustyH@jafi.org. Inspire – Connect – Empower. The Jewish Agency for Israel partners with us to create Jewish history. ☆

Hebrew Cemetery Association

By Lorrie Klemons, publicity

Each year the New Year season brings with it a renewal of purpose. As I sat in shul praying during High Holidays services this year, I wondered the same thought that I do every year at this time. What is it that draws so many Jews to the synagogue for the holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur? What is it about these 2 holidays that like a magnet, attracts hundreds of persons to synagogue who would otherwise not be in attendance?

I believe the holiday draws forth the individual's need for a communal sense of purpose. For in being part of a community, one is connected. In being part of a communal service, one finds meaning and significance as a connection to God, The Almighty, is created. In addition to this communal sense of purpose, the holidays promote individual accountability, as each worshiper can't help but think about his/her family, friends, community, country, and world at some point during the hours spent at temple. While the Rabbis lead us through the prayers and the Cantors' melodic tunes draw us into inner reflection, one can't help but be caught up in the moment of piety and spirituality, causing us to reach higher and higher to a greater level of being and purpose.

Hundreds of our fellow Jews

reached a higher level on October 2 when they attended the Hebrew Cemetery's Annual Memorial Day. What draws 300 people to the cemetery on the Sunday morning between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur each year? It is all about being part of a community. Being part of something bigger than oneself. Remembering those that came before us. Reaching higher and higher to a level of being and purpose and to a deeper connection to God.

It's hard to believe that the high holidays are behind us already and that before we know it, the days will be grower darker and colder as the prevailing winter season preys upon us. Brighten that darkness and strengthen the bonds that connect all Jews, both alive or dead, by becoming a member of the Hebrew Cemetery Association of Charlotte today.

For more information about the Steinberger Funeral Assistance Fund which helps to fund burials for the indigent in our community, membership benefits, graves, pre-paid funeral costs, endowments, and/or including the cemetery in your estate planning, contact Cemetery Director, Sandra Goldman at 704-576-1859 or 704-944-6854 or director@hebrewcemetery.org. Visit the cemetery website at www.hebrewcemetery.org or just come visit the cemetery for a personal tour. ☆

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Thanksgiving!**



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CJP is a partnership of Temple Beth El,
Temple Israel and the Levine Jewish Community Center.

