

15th Annual Women's Spring Lecture Thursday, March 14, 6:15 PM at Temple Beth El

Guest Speaker: Rabbi Sherre Hirsch
Author of *We Plan, God Laughs: What to Do When Life Hits You Over the Head* and widely known as the "relationship rabbi," Sherre Hirsch is the spiritual life consultant and lecturer for the Canyon Ranch Companies in Arizona and Massa-

chusetts.
Tickets: \$40 for Dinner, Lecture and Dessert; \$18 for Lecture and Dessert Only
Minimum Donation: \$50 to the Annual Campaign
Event Co-Chairs: Randi Lan and Stacey Schanzlin

For more information or to purchase tickets, visit www.jewishcharlotte.org.

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Rabbi Sherre Hirsch

SYNAGOGUES & CONGREGATIONS

Diverse Backgrounds Lead to United Group

By Carrie Rabinowitz

They came from all walks of life and included women originally from Russia, Mexico, and South Africa, but 18 women from Charlotte traveled to Israel for 10 days as a united group.

Eighteen women, all mothers who are raising their children Jewish, some with toddlers, some with college kids, some brought up observant, others raised Christian, traveled to Israel December 2-12, with the Charlotte Torah Center's trip sponsored by the Jewish Women's Renaissance Project (JWRP). All 18 followed the same schedule but each had her own agenda.

Nikki Sacks, the mother of two preschoolers and a managing partner at ICR financial consulting, studied in Israel during college, and her initial interest in the trip was just as a means to return there.

"The first time we got together as a group, I looked around at many unfamiliar faces and couldn't imagine what it would be like to spend 10 days with these ladies," she said of the group's initial gathering in August. "We had our Judaism and we all had kids, but other than that, we were a diverse group of women. After 10 days of touring, laughing, crying, learning, dancing, and singing, I am proud to call every one of these women my friend."

Beyond the friendships, the depth of what she learned will be a lasting benefit to her family. "I feel I got to know Israel, its importance and the importance of Judaism in our lives on a much



deeper level," Sacks said.

The trip, a partnership between JWRP and the Charlotte Torah Center (CTC), was a highly subsidized action packed journey to Israel designed for women who have children at home younger than 18. The TAG (Transform and Grow) trip is designed to inspire a renaissance of positive values that transforms the participating women, their families, and their communities.

Mindy McShane, a mother of three and a teacher at the Charlotte Jewish Preschool, now lights Shabbat candles, takes a weekly Jewish history class, and is more loving to her family. All, she says, as a result of the trip.

"The biggest thing may be that even if everything seems exactly the same, I'm more Jewishly aware and constantly thinking about how to be better and how to be more Jewish," McShane said. "I'm also in love with Israel. Before I was a supporter but I am even more so now. I could see myself or my children living there someday. But if that never happens, it must remain an option for future generations and we must fight against negative propaganda and anti-Semitism."

Debby Weiss, an account manager for Briteverify, worried about

leaving her children, ages 1-½, 4-½ and 6, a fear common to most of the women. She came back thankful that her husband, Evan, was so supportive of her journey.

"It was a life-changing, incredible experience," Weiss said. "I try to talk about God more at home and although we did Shabbat, it now has more meaning. This will continue to occur every Friday night. I really love being Jewish, and I still have so much to learn."

Sara Oppenheim, who coordinated the trip, leads the CTC along with her husband, Chanoch. The Center serves as a community resource for traditional Jewish education at all levels for people of all backgrounds. Through group classes, one-on-one study, special seminars and explanatory learning worship services, the Center fosters life-long study, appreciation for Judaism and pride in one's heritage.

"I feel truly blessed to have the opportunity to visit Israel through Sara's efforts and the partnership of the CTC and JWRP," said Natalie Osman, a mother of two and former state tennis champion of NC. "I converted to Judaism last year, and I feel a real connection having visited the homeland to explore the roots and culture that define this beautiful religion. I feel a warmth in my heart that my personal journey is only just beginning. The trip to Israel is life changing and I hope that all Jewish moms have a chance for the same unforgettable experience."

Sara is currently accepting applications for the next trip, scheduled June 16-26, 2013. For more

information, contact her at 980-355-2354 or via e-mail at sara@charlottetorahcenter.com.

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Approximate cost. Price will be based on number of participants.

For more information, contact Rachael Levine at rachael.levine@jewishcharlotte.org or 704.944.6757

*includes \$500 Federation subsidy

The Failed Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process: Valuable Lessons Learned

With Dr. Gershon Baskin,
Wednesday, February 6, at 7:30 PM at Temple Beth El

Dr. Gershon Baskin, an expert in the Israeli Palestinian peace process, will bring to Charlotte his unique first-hand experiences and his analysis of the negotiations over the years.

Dr. Baskin is the founder of the Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI) and served as director from 1988 to 2011. A scholar and activist, Dr. Baskin has devoted his career to exploring ways to bring about a peaceful settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He has advised two Israeli Prime Ministers and has considerable first-hand

experience in grappling with the many difficult and seemingly insurmountable issues that have hampered efforts to negotiate an end to the conflict. Among his various activities, Dr. Baskin played a pivotal role in the secret talks between Israel and Hamas that resulted in the release of Gilad Shalit.

This program is free and open to the public. It promises to offer a new and enlightened perspective on this conflict that tears at the hearts of so many of us. The lecture is sponsored by Temple Beth El and UNC Charlotte's Department of Global, International and Area Studies in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.



Dr. Gershon Baskin

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