



Masorti Movement Grows

It would seem that each time we communicate through TRADITIONS, the Masorti Movement, our Conservative Movement in Israel, is dealing with a crisis of one sort or another. Nevertheless, some rather remarkable progress has been made. The infrastructure of the Movement in Israel is stronger than ever and has been recognized in Israel and elsewhere as better organized and fiscally responsible. The willingness of the Ministry of Housing to provide a limited number of prefabricated buildings to the Movement for kehillot (congregations) in cities such as Modi'in is a notable step forward. The "Special Child Bar and Bat Mitzvah Programme" servicing over 300 children a year, the virtual on-line Bet Midrash, the revival of Kibbutz Hanaton, and the 50 well established kehillot across the country speak to our successes with native Israelis. Most importantly, we are recognized ever widely in Israel as the religious

stream with the programmes with no strings attached, programmes with an open and accepting atmosphere offered to every person who wishes to explore his or her Judaism. Whether it be youth activities, support for new immigrants, enrichment for children with special needs or a shiur (religious study) – live or on the Internet, the Masorti Movement provides programming in its uniquely warm and inclusive Jewish atmosphere. And of course, should you travel to Israel and wish to daven in a mixed minyan at the Kotel, through the Movement's efforts, Robinson's Arch at the Kotel is available to you.

However, the challenges we face in Israel persist. You probably know that our dollar has fallen in value to the shekel over the last several months. What this means is that value of the money we send to Israel has diminished by as much as 30% in its buying power in Israel. The current world financial crisis will only further exacerbate the situation. While we had been expecting that the Movement would raise sufficient funds this year to meet its budgetary objectives, our devalued currency along with that of our neighbour to the south has turned optimism into heartache.

Today as in the past, our Movement continues to need your help. Who else can we appeal to if not you our

chaverim, our fellow Conservative Jews to support our Movement, a Movement that will transform Israeli society from secular to religiously aware, from intolerant religiously to religiously tolerant, and from Heredi controlled to pluralistic in nature?

I am respectfully asking you to act now! Make a generous direct contribution in response to this our annual appeal and, if you have not yet joined, please join Mercaz-Canada for 2009.

We, as Conservative Jews by population, ought to have the largest membership at the World Zionist Organization of all the religious streams but instead have the smallest. The larger our membership the more representation we have and the greater likelihood that wonderful Masorti programmes will receive their proportionate share of Jewish Agency funding.

Be a generous and responsible Conservative Jew! Support your Movement, please!

Happy Chanukah!

Ron Hoffman, President
 Canadian Foundation for Masorti Judaism

Kehillat Netzach Israel in Ashkelon

Noam Summer Day Camp 2008

By Terri Davis
Overseas Coordinator

Our annual Summer Camp has just come to an end after three full weeks of activities. Thanks to our many generous donors, we were able to fully sponsor 41 children from Sderot – a city living under fire. Not only did we provide a free, camping experience but also offered special transportation and hot meals every day.

All the children enjoyed a wide range of activities such as Special Excursions, Theatre, Fencing, Music, Sports, Swimming, Nature and Communication in which the children were encouraged to express their feelings through writing or drawing.

The children drew many pictures of Kassam rockets falling, houses being blown up and catching fire - pictures of war and violence.



Samantha Aged 9 wrote: *"Hello, my name is Samantha and I live in Sderot. I am afraid of Kassam rockets especially when*

I am alone at home. I wish they would stop throwing rockets at us and we will live quietly and peacefully in our country."

It was immediately apparent that the Sderot children needed extra care and attention. Their frustration, anger & fear often led to problematic and even violent behaviour. Prior to and during the Summer Camp, our team of group leaders was given workshops to provide them with the tools to understand and cope with such behaviours. Next year we would like to expand this support to include a team of professionals who are trained and certified to work in such situations.

However, despite the difficulties, it was a very successful Summer Camp, some say the "most successful" yet. Hearing the children from Sderot saying "what fun we had . . . it was so great just getting

away from life in Sderot for a while & having fun . . ." and other such expressions, makes it all worthwhile and gives us strength to do more.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program for Special Needs Children



Baruch Ata Adonai .. Notain HaTorah". Kobi, the Bar Mitzvah, repeated the

bracha loudly in a thundering voice, as if he wanted to be sure that despite the fact that he could see neither God nor the audience surrounding him, God was indeed listening to him. At his Bar Mitzvah, Eldar, with the help of his aide, used sign language in order to have the first aliyah of his life. As you see, there is more than one way to have an Aliya LaTorah.

These are small miracles and momentous occasions, needing hard work along with high expectations, excitement, tears of joy mixed with pain and first and foremost a sense of "kedushah" (holiness) and of being close to God. This is the essence of our experiences in the Masorti Movement's Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program for Special Needs Children.

The Masorti Movement, which believes in making Judaism accessible, validates the words of the Sages (Sanhedrin 4): "not one of us is like the other, therefore every person must say: The world was created for my sake...."

Traditions

Newsletter of the Conservative/Masorti Movement in Canada
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The TALI School Rabbis

TALI (Hebrew acronym for "enhanced Jewish studies") is a growing network of 184 Israeli State (secular-public) schools and pre-schools with over 35,000 pupils that have made the connection to Jewish heritage a central educational priority. The TALI Education Fund (administered by the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies) provides the funding and training necessary for TALI schools to provide hundreds of pupils and their families a pluralistic Jewish education. This includes pedagogic counselling, teacher training and leadership development, curricular materials, informal educational activities, and school rabbis.

The TALI School Rabbi Program provides mainly non-observant children, teachers, and parents from the TALI school network with positive ongoing exposure to Jewish values and spiritual expression where it is most needed - in school communities. In 2008 the program operated in 32 TALI schools, reaching over 12,000 pupils, hundreds of teachers, and thousands of parents.

Rabbis are among the main conveyors of Jewish tradition, through teaching and example. Israelis who send their children to the State (secular) school system generally have no meaningful positive contact with Jewish tradition or with rabbis. Yet the connection to their heritage is important to most of them. The TALI

School Rabbis are tolerant and open-minded spiritual educators who relate to the school community in a language and style that is at once inclusive and conducive to a pluralistic worldview and education.



TALI rabbis conduct workshops for pupils on prayer, deepening their experience. They lead holiday celebrations and facilitate school "Bet Midrash" programs for parents and pupils. They conduct teacher workshops. Where possible, the TALI rabbi is also rabbi of a local Masorti congregation. The TALI rabbi both deepens the educational experience of pupils and builds a stronger sense of community around the TALI school.

The school rabbis impact profoundly on thousands of children and parents all over Israel, opening them up to pluralistic Judaism, exposing families to the beauty and depth of a participatory Jewish experience and transforming these experiences into a regular part of their lives.

Photo: Rabbi Oded Mazor leading Rosh Chodesh service at TALI Bayit Vegan, Jerusalem



Masorti Movement In Israel Launches Successful Ad Campaign Promoting Wedding Initiative

In June, the Masorti movement in Israel launched a radio and internet ad campaign in support of the Wedding Initiative. It offers the 20% or more of Israelis who are turned off by the cumbersome and restrictive wedding process through the Orthodox Rabbinate, the option of a Masorti chuppah, that is inclusive, open and in accordance with Jewish tradition. The ad campaign has so far generated over 30,000 hits to the Hebrew wedding website (<http://www.justloopit.com/masorti>) and has received press coverage in the Jerusalem Report, New York Jewish Week, Jewish Telegraph Agency and many major Israeli press outlets.

MERCAZ-CANADA & CANADIAN FOUNDATION FOR MASORTI JUDAISM

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Last Name: _____ First Name: _____ E-mail: _____

Spouse Last Name: _____ First Name: _____ E-mail: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Prov: _____ Postal Code: _____

Synagogue Affiliation: _____ Tel (Day) _____ (Evening) _____

MERCAZ-CANADA 2009 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP @ \$9.00 per adult / \$18.00 per couple \$ _____

CANADIAN FOUNDATION FOR MASORTI JUDAISM DONATION: (tax receiptable) \$ _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ _____

PAID BY VISA MasterCard Cheque (payable to Canadian Foundation for Masorti Judaism) Date: _____

Card # _____ Expiry _____ Signature _____

Join Mercaz-Canada and please give generously to Masorti - the need is great, Todah Rabah!

