

MASORTI **T**raditions



Why I am Proud to Be A Masorti Jew!

Recently, an e-mail has been circulating entitled "Why I am proud to be a Jew!" Its focus is Israel's behavior in the recent

war and its behavior generally in times of war compared to that of others.

Have you ever asked yourself why we Jews behave differently?

To most of us the answer is obvious but I was reminded of that answer when in shul on Shmini Atzeret. The parsha dealt with the forgiving of debts in the 7th year. Our rabbis explained in the commentary how important it was to a society to redistribute wealth. They pointed out that every society will have its unfortunates and loans made to these individuals were not "business loans". Forgiving them was an act of tzedakah, an obligation that every member of society has to every other member.

Rabbi Abraham Hasson, one of our Masorti Rabbis wrote in his Rosh Hashanah message, that to eradicate evil, to dismantle those political parties that champion social injustice, one simply must give bread to the poor, to invite into one's home the unfortunate and needy, to provide clothing to those in need...and to relinquish debts.

We Jews behave differently because our Torah and our Rabbis teach us to behave differently. It's not simply a humanitarian inclination. It's not modern legislation. It's our divinely inspired Torah.

Israel today is a predominantly secular society, particularly its youngest generation. Its most recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union have come from a godless environment. Those that make Israel's decisions today whether they attend shul regularly or not remember or are influenced by the Torah's teachings. But will the next generation be influenced in the same way?

When Masorti Jews say that Israel must be a Jewish State and not a State for Jews that's what we mean. Israel must be a place that is founded on the precepts of the Laws of Moses or it will become just another place where Jews live. And that is why it is so important

that we support Masorti and help grow the Movement in Israel - grow it amongst the children, and grow it amongst those who will influence Israel's future.

The Masorti Movement in Israel has been very active during and following the war, doing what is right. They have been ably supported in their efforts with funds from North America. Our Movement's focus has been both on repairing the spiritual and psychological damage done to Israelis in the north as well as rescuing children from bomb shelters, supporting Kehilot and providing "free loans" to those whose livelihood has been taken from them by the katyushas.

This edition of Traditions focuses on such activities. Yasher koach to the Movement and yasher koach and todah rabba to all of you who recognize the importance of supporting Masorti with your generosity. By doing so, you support Israel's future in a most meaningful way. Be proud to be a Masorti Jew!

Chag Hanukah Sameach from Heather, myself and our family.

Two Unique Masorti Programmes:



Marom Youth At Prayer

MAROM is the Masorti Movement's organization for students and young adults, providing activities based on religious pluralism, Jewish values and Tikun Olam, on campuses, in Masorti congregations and other locations throughout Israel.

Marom was founded in 1995 by a group of Israeli university students who felt the need for a pluralistic religious framework for young adults within the framework of the Masorti Movement.



Bar/Bat Mitzvah Programme

Masorti Programme for Children with Special Needs Celebrates Ten Years

On May 8, 2006 Moresheet Avraham in Jerusalem was host to a moving and beautiful celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Programme for Children with Special Needs. That morning ten children from the Onn School in Tel Aviv (which serves children with cerebral palsy) received an Aliya la Torah. Following the ceremony, more than 300 guests enjoyed a festive lunch at a restaurant with breathtaking views of Jerusalem.

Because of this Masorti program, in the last decade more than 2,000 young Israelis and their families have experienced the special joy of a bar or bat mitzvah, with each child participating based on his/her abilities.

Traditions

Newsletter of the

Conservative/Masorti Movement in Canada

1000 Finch Ave. W. #508 Toronto, ON M3J 2V5

Tel: 416-667-1717 Fax: 416-667-1881

1-800-419-5666

e-mail: mercaz-masorti@intrr.net

<http://www.masorti.ca>

A Rabbi's Northern Travelogue

We called ourselves the "group of seven." As Conservative Jews from Toronto we were concerned about how the summer conflict between Israel and Hezbollah had affected residents of northern Israel and Masorti congregations and projects there. We travelled on a special mission at the end of October to see the current situation and how Masorti Canada might help. Betty and Lionel Sharpe (Beth Tikvah), Jackie and Norman Kahn, Eileen and Phil Wunch and I (Beth Tzedec) joined with five participants from ARZA (Canadian Reform Zionists) and a larger group from United Israel Appeal Federations Canada for a nine day mission.

We saw scorched mountain tops that once were full of trees. We shared coffee and conversation with people who had been under bombardment for over a month. We spoke with high school students about their anxieties and fears in the aftermath of the fighting. We spent time at strategic sites and in bomb shelters, getting a feel for the situation that affected over a million residents of northern Israel.

In addition to visits to Haifa, Metulla, Kiryat Shmonah and Tel Hai, our "group of seven" were personally escorted by Moshe Cohen, the President of Masorti Israel, to the kehillot/communities of Kiryat Bialik, Karmiel, Kfar Vradim, and Kibbutz Hanaton. We were able to see the general challenges that these communities face and the specific ones that arose because of the war.

Kiryat Bialik serves people from 29 different countries. It has received a significant number of immigrants from South America and the former Soviet Union. The congregation has established a number of programs to assist newcomers in their settlement and adjustment to Israeli life. In addition to prayer and study in a make-shift temporary location, the kehillah operates a resale shop for clothing and household appliances, a free loan fund, a home boarding initiative for youth-at-risk, a tutoring service,

a camping program, an inter-faith dialogue effort with area Christians and Moslems, and a project to support IDF soldiers from the community.

The congregation has partnered with local schools to create eight TAL early childhood programs for Judaic enrichment. The principal of the award-winning elementary school that we visited, Yehudah Wagner, told us, "I saw when working in Kiev that children in Ukraine knew more about Judaism than our children in Kiryat Bialik. I became determined to create Jews for the future of Israel." During the conflict, the congregation provided religious services, counselling and day-trips away from bombardment for hundreds of residents. The municipality sees this community-based congregation as a significant asset for the city. With more resources, it could bring social support and accessible religious life to many hundreds more.

In Karmiel and Kfar Vradim, we met with people associated with the congregations and heard how they had experienced the 34 days of missile attacks and the ways that the kehillah provided emotional, spiritual and social support to residents of the towns – going far beyond the membership of the congregations. At Kibbutz Hanaton, located in a strategic area in the Galilee, we heard how the summer educational initiatives were all lost because of the war and how the loss of income from visiting youth and student

groups affected the operation of the kibbutz.

In all cases we saw that the external repairs and reconstruction were proceeding well, but that the long-term challenges of post-traumatic stress and emotional anxiety were areas that the communities were beginning to address. Throughout our visits, we were reminded of the Talmudic observation: "Those who stand with the community in time of difficulty and pain also will merit to witness its renewed joy." Our support for Masorti communities in Israel can help to heal some of the pain from the bombs, missiles, terror and fear.

Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl



Eileen's Journey

Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl, Eileen and Phil Wunch and Jackie and Norman Kahn from Beth Tzedec and Betty and Lionel Sharpe from Beth Tikvah met with members of four distinct Masorti communities in the Galilee. The "Group of Seven" began the day at Hakrayot in Kiryat Bialik where we met the charismatic Rabbi Mauricio Balter and learned about the membership of the community and the struggles it endured during the summer war. We were introduced to Moshe Cohen, head of Masorti in Israel and were enlightened about the successes and challenges of the Movement. Our next visit was to Kibbutz Hannaton, the only Conservative/Masorti Movement kibbutz in Israel. Situated between two Arab villages and the National Water Carrier, it's location is strategically significant. The Kibbutz was

subjected to daily missile alarms causing members and guests to run to the bomb shelters. Cancelled reservations in the Educational Centre impacted severely on the kibbutz. They are now embarking on an emergency campaign. After lunch, the next visit was in the town of Karmiel where Rabbi Tsvi Landau of Kehilat HaKarem explained how members of the congregation supported each other during the war. We heard from individuals about their own experiences during the summer hostilities. Our final visit of the day was to the home of Rabbi Zvi Berger in Kfar Vradim where we were warmly received and were informed about the circumstances and life events that contributed to this collective support for the Masorti Movement. It was a day of learning, a day of empathy and most of all a day of solidarity and support for the Masorti Movement.

Eileen Wunch