



Shirat HaYam – Carmel Congregation Newsletter

January 2011 | Adar I 5771

התנועה
ליהדות
מתקדמת



Dear members, friends and supporters,

We had an event filled month in January, with holidays, excursions and tree planting. Please enjoy reading about what we did.

Seder Tu BeShvat

On the evening of Tu BeShvat, Rabbi Ilana Baird led the congregation in a special seder for Tu BeShvat. We ate the fruits of the Land of Israel like dates, figs and prunes, citrus fruit, almonds and nuts, and raisins. We also drank four cups of different mixtures of white and red wine. This beautiful ceremony originated in 16th century Safed, and was formulated by the Kabbalist rabbis who lived there. Ilana prepared the seder with special readings and songs. We also had a special guest, Raphael Feinberg from JNF in Russia, who presented his work in the fund.



Tu BeShvat Tree Planting

The day after the Tu BeShvat seder, we travelled to the new Massad Forest, near the Golani Junction. The Massad Forest is being planted by the JNF, and we went there as a group to help plant Jerusalem pines and Carob trees, both native species to the land. It was a moving experience to plant a new forest, so soon after the fire which took

away from us much of the Carmel Forest. Rabbi Ilana Baird led us in a short prayer for planting trees. She told us that it is written as a mitzvah in the Torah that when one makes aliyah to Israel, one should plant a tree there. For many, it was the first time they planted tree in Israel, and enjoying the feeling of being physically connected to our homeland and fulfilling the mitzvah. Congregant Nahum Shubayev gave us a tour of the eucalyptus grove on the shore of Lake Kinneret, made famous by Naomi Shemer's song *Hurshat Haecalyptus*. Afterwards, we ate lunch and toured Kibbutz Dganya Alef, Israel's first kibbutz.



Safed and Mount Meron



Safed has mystical beauty. It is a "mystical" because Safed is considered the cradle of Jewish mysticism - Kabbalah. Early on the Friday, we all started with a good cup of coffee. When we arrived at Mount Meron, our guide explained at the ruins of an ancient synagogue that according to legend, the entrance arch in the synagogue will be

destroyed only when the Messiah comes. Then we saw the graves of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his son.

The mystical ancient synagogues of Safed made the biggest impression, especially the Ari Synagogue, where Rabbi Isaac ben Solomon Luria worshiped, the founder of the Lurianic School of Kabbalah in the 16th century. The synagogue was built in unimaginable beauty; the wood carvings and paintings are stunning! Near that synagogue we sang *Lecha Dodi*, led by Rabbi Ilana Baird and Cantor Emilia Mendelsohn. The finale of the tour was the famous *Kadosh Machlevah* cheese factory where we were able to taste and buy cheese, halva and ice cream, to the delight of the kids.



The excursion and the weather were mystically beautiful – in the middle of Israel's cold and rainy season.

There are more trips planned. In March, we will join *Tikkun Carmel*, two days of activities in the North dedicated to restoring forests on the Carmel. In April we will visit Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

Kabbalat Shabbat with Special Guest

Rabbi Gilad Kariv, head of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism, was a special guest for us at our Kabbalat Shabbat. In spite of a cold and



rainy evening, congregants and their children came to services



filled the room. We celebrated Shabbat in prayer and song. Rabbi Ilana Baird gave a sermon on the miracle of the Exodus from Egypt, and

emphasized the miracle of creating a congregation in Haifa for Russian speaking Jews who made their own exodus from the Former Soviet Union to Israel. Ya'akov Cohen led us with his beautiful guitar playing and original songs.

Thank You

We extend a special thanks to JNF of Russia and Raphael Feinberg for sponsoring the bus we took for the Tu BeShvat tree planting. Thank you to Nahum Shubayev, Alexandrina Prevezentzev and Ya'akov Cohen for volunteering their time and talents for the congregation. Thank you to the members of the board for the time and energy they volunteer to make the congregation work. Thank you to Hava Yoel of Shatil for her advice and help in creating our congregation's vision and strategy plan.

Thanks to everyone who wrote letters about their connection to the congregation, which can be read on the web site. Members are still welcome to write more, in Russian or Hebrew.

Thank you to everyone that supports our congregation. If you are interested in contributing to our permanent location fund, please contact info@shirathayamcarmel.org.il or call +972-54-950-8316.

With blessings and wishes for a joyful month of Adar,
Shirat HaYam – Carmel Congregation

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