



Masorti Foundation for Conservative Judaism in Israel

Gloria Bieler Earl Greinetz
Masorti Foundation Co-chairs

David H. Lissy
Executive Director & Chief Executive Officer

Yizhar Hess Named to Head Masorti Movement in Israel



The Masorti Foundation is delighted to welcome Yizhar Hess as the new Executive Director and CEO of the Masorti Movement in Israel.

Yizhar Hess comes to Masorti with a broad range of experience in Jewish communal service. In his most recent position as director of partnerships for The Jewish Agency, he forged links between the city of Beit Shemesh and the rural area of Yehuda Plains and the Jewish communities of Washington, D.C. and South Africa; and between the city of Modi'in and the Jewish community of Rochester, NY. Both were undertakings of Partnership 2000.

Earlier, he served as The Jewish Agency's community shaliach to Tucson, AZ and director of the Israel Center of the Jewish Federation of Southern Arizona. As a 10th generation Jerusalemite and secular Jew, Yizhar has said that the first prayer service he could connect with came when he attended a bat mitzvah at a Conservative synagogue in Tucson. There he found a non-Orthodox, but traditional, egalitarian religious community he and his family could relate to.

After his return from Tucson, Hess says he critically analyzed Israeli reality and concluded that "Orthodoxy has failed greatly and Secularism cannot stand the test of time." With reference to the impact on him of the writings of Abraham Joshua Heschel, Yizhar describes himself today as a "wondering" Jew, where "wondering is the ability to understand that doubting in itself is something amazing that cannot necessarily be explained through rationality."

Prior to his time in Tucson, Yizhar served as vice CEO of Shorashim/Roots in Jerusalem and vice CEO of the Festival for Jewish Studies in Kfar Bloom. He also had professional experience in advertising and journalism.

Honorably discharged as a lieutenant in the Israel Defense Forces, Hess was commander of the IDF's Hasbara Unit at the Jerusalem Education Center. He graduated with distinction in 1987 from the Officers Training Program and the Educational Officers Course, later serving at the Military Academy for Officer Education. Following Army service, Hess earned his bachelor's in political science and Hebrew literature from Hebrew University and did graduate work there in Hebrew literature. A member of the Israeli Bar, his law degree is from The Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliyah. ❖

When You Are Traveling Outside the United States...

To find a Masorti congregation in Israel, log on to www.masorti.org.
To find a Masorti congregation

elsewhere in the world, log on to www.masortiworld.org.

Future of Masorti Focus of Jerusalem Gathering

Giving tangible evidence of the growing visibility of the Masorti Movement in Israel, in April, nearly 150 lay and rabbinic leaders met for two days in Jerusalem for a groundbreaking series of meetings and seminars. The theme of the gathering was described in three words: Listen, Inspire and Empower.

An inspirational keynote address was delivered by Prof. Eliezer Schweid, an Israel Prize laureate who teaches at Hebrew University. He underscored the necessity of Masorti kehillot for the vitality of religious life in Israel and he challenged those present to remain steadfast in building communities focused on families, synagogue life and Jewish study.

Masorti rabbis spoke about innovative models of worship, programming and community



Masorti Rabbi Tamar Elad Appelbaum addresses the conference

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Masorti Outreach Program to IDF 'Lone Soldiers'

One of the more unusual aspects of life in the Israel Defense Forces is that those young men and women who serve are frequently able to return home for Shabbat when the family gathers around the dinner table for a home-cooked meal. It is a time for soldiers to reconnect with parents, siblings and friends and to take care of routine errands and chores, like doing laundry. It is also a "given" that, whenever possible, IDF soldiers spend holidays and festivals with family, joining in communal celebrations.

But there are some in the IDF who have made aliyah as adolescents or young adults, entering the country through the Jewish Agency, without their parents or the benefit of any family support. Committed to Israeli life and culture, they have no close relatives to welcome them home on weekend and longer leaves from base. They are known as "lone soldiers," and they serve throughout the branches of the IDF, bravely defending Israel.

Enter Joan Kedem, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, who has lived in Israel for 46 years. Thanks to Joan's zeal and untiring efforts as volunteer coordinator, the Outreach Project of her Masorti kehila in Jerusalem now

embraces more than 300 young men and women living in Jerusalem and vicinity without benefit of family support.

They all have Joan's home phone number and know they are welcome to get in touch anytime. But, even if they don't find her, she reaches out to them, with invitations to spend Shabbat in a Masorti kehila or to celebrate a festival.

And come they do, for the company of friends, as well as for the distributions of generous gifts she organizes around each holiday. Packages include traditional holiday food treats, warm clothing, bed linen, blankets and duvet covers, heaters or fans (depending on the season), personal care items and coupons to redeem for free merchandise at Supersol, an Israeli supermarket chain.

After they complete their army service, many have remained connected to the program, finding it an invaluable source of emotional, spiritual and financial support. Loans and grants have been arranged for those who have applied for help with educational and other expenses.

Their continuing involvement with a Masorti kehila will undoubtedly strengthen the Masorti Movement, as they deepen their roots and begin to raise new families in Israel. ❖

NYC Event Launches Young Leadership Cohort



Gloria Bieler, center, and Rabbi Gerald Skolnik, to her left, converse with young leaders in New York this spring.

A lively gathering in Manhattan in March was the beginning of what it is expected will be a new group of young professionals dedicated to supporting

the growth of religious pluralism in Israel through the Masorti Foundation. Ranging in age from mid-twenties to early thirties, the group met in a private

residence with Rabbi Gerald Skolnik, a long-time board member and spiritual leader of Forest Hills Jewish Center in Queens, who shared his reasons for maintaining his passionate support of Masorti. Foundation Co-chair Gloria Bieler described the vibrancy of the movement today, reflected in the diversity of Masorti kehillot throughout Israel. Also present, David Lissy, the Foundation's Executive Director and CEO, talked about the important role young adults can play in securing the future of Masorti Judaism, responding to the increasing desire in Israel for communities that provide social connections and educational programming along with opportunities for worship in a traditional, egalitarian context. ❖

Masorti Takes Special Pride in High School Olympics' Gold-Medal Winner



As the sole representative of Israel in the competitive international High School Olympics in Astrophysics that took place earlier this year in Greece, Roslana Glazman is an Israeli success story. The Gold Medal she brought home was merely the icing on the cake.

What makes Roslana's victory even sweeter for Shearim Netanya, a Masorti program that works with Russian olim, is that this bright young woman is one of their own, a model of what Shearim Netanya has achieved through its outreach program. Roslana herself, modest as can be, credits her discipline and command of English to her teachers from Shearim Netanya.

When she first made aliyah with her widowed mother, Roslana attended Shearim Netanya's nursery/kindergarten class for children of single parents. After her mother died of cancer a few years later, Roslana's elderly grandmother, the only one left to care for her, made sure the little girl continued in Shearim Netanya's after-school enrichment activities that included English lessons. As she grew up, Roslana was invited to do dramatic readings for Masorti's annual Yom HaShoah program in Netanya. Each year, this event, which has attracted city-wide attention, focuses on a different aspect of the Holocaust and is offered in both English and Russian.

With great pride, Shearim Netanya honored Roslana at Kabbalat Shabbat upon her return from Greece and she received an aliyah at Bet Israel, the Masorti kehila in Netanya, where congregants joined her in reciting the Sheheheyanu.

Roslana has been accepted into a special army program which will allow her to continue to develop her remarkable talents. We wish her well. ❖

Future of Movement Focus of Jerusalem Gathering

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service and how they have reached out to make an impact on people's daily lives. Other sessions dealt with practical skills for growing kehillot and for fundraising.

As a reflection both of the breadth of the movement and of the need for people to work together, perhaps one of the nicest images to emerge from the meeting was that of a leading rabbi who spoke of the movement not just being a big umbrella but of the obligation of each one to make sure everyone else stayed dry. ❖



Conference participants in discussion group

A Message from Masorti Foundation Executive Director & CEO David Lissy



As I write this message, I have just returned from the Rabbinical Assembly Convention which featured an evening program devoted to Israel. Among the

hundreds of rabbis in attendance, I was gratified by the warm openness to Masorti that I found and by an increasing awareness of both the achievements of the movement in Israel and the need for rabbis to take the lead in generating support for Masorti.

Our colleagues in the movement in Israel have taken a significant positive step with the recent hiring of strong professional management. In this newsletter you can read about Yizhar Hess, the new CEO and Executive Director. He is already making an impact. In that regard, nearly 150 people gathered recently for two days of meetings in Jerusalem focused on Masorti's future growth. This group represented nationwide lay and rabbinic leadership from the kehillot along with the national leadership of the movement. Reports from the meeting indicate it was exceedingly productive, with participants exhibiting great enthusiasm.

Read also in this newsletter about the Kotel HaMasorti at the southern end of the Western Wall. With legal battles regarding the site at least for now behind us, we can concentrate on the close to 300 egalitarian minyanim a year that are held here, with most arranged for visiting groups from the United States. If your synagogue has extra siddurim it can contribute

(cont'd. on page 4)



Sixty-four 8th-graders from Solomon Schechter Day School of Bergen County in New Milford, NJ traveling through Israel for two weeks in April made a stop in Kfar Saba to participate in a b'nai mitzvah ceremony for six youngsters from the Mesilot School. The event was organized by the Masorti Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program for Children with Special Needs, a national initiative that provides formal Jewish education and the opportunity to celebrate this important simcha with Jewish community. Pictured top: SSSD student and Israeli counselor help Idit don tefillin; Bottom: SSSD student leyns Torah for Michael's aliyah as teachers look on.

Message from David Lissy

(cont'd. from page 3)

for use here, please let us know.

With progress to report, what remain our challenges? Let me identify two major ones. First, if we are to grow in the communities actively seeking new Masorti kehillot, we will need a fund established to pay for the first years for rabbis or community coordinators who will get things started. Second, we have a number of kehillot poised to expand facilities or move into a permanent home. We will need to help bring these dreams to reality.

There still are plenty of problems to address and overcome, but it is nice to be able to write a message which speaks of positive things. ❖

A Message from Masorti Foundation Co-chair



Gloria Bieler

I am often asked to explain my passion for the Masorti Movement. My response is that it is both simple and complex. Simple because I have an instinctive and wholehearted commitment to a movement that is open, egalitarian and pluralistic, a movement that values tradition while welcoming changes within a halachic framework. It fosters a Judaism that is vital because it brings people together to build community, centered not simply on ritual and worship but also on shared social, educational and spiritual experiences. And I believe that our brothers and sisters in Israel should have the same freedom to choose how to be Jewish that we here in the United States take for granted.

The more complicated answer reflects my pride in what Masorti has achieved. We now boast kehillot throughout Israel, led by rabbis who are vibrant, dynamic spiritual leaders. They serve not just their congregants, but have also become role models and resources for a broader public by teaching, inspiring community-based social service projects and finding novel approaches to instill Jewish identity in sabras and olim alike.

Then there are the Masorti programs I so admire and the dedicated coordinators who organize them: Bat/Bat Mitzvah Program for Children with Special Needs, which last year marked its 10th anniversary; Outreach Project for IDF Lone Soldiers, providing comfort and connection to more than 300 young men and women in Israel without family support; NOAM and Marom, Masorti's programs for youth and young adults; the Ramah/NOAM Summer Camp; Women's Study Days; and efforts to assert the movement's legal rights.

Much remains to be done. Masorti needs your support to grow and flourish. Please join me in this sacred task. ❖

Egalitarian Services at the Western Wall Kotel HaMasorti

Thanks to the efforts of the Masorti Movement in Israel, groups wishing to celebrate a simcha in egalitarian worship in the Robinson's Arch area at the southern end of the Western Wall can make advance arrangements to do so, free of charge. Recently, the Masorti Movement and the Government of Israel reached a settlement that resolved a long dispute involving threatened charges for those wishing to enter this archeological area for t'fillot.

Synagogue groups and missions can experience the special beauty of early

morning prayer or Kabbalat Shabbat at the Kotel, with siddurim and Torah scrolls provided by the Masorti Movement.

The Masorti Movement encourages Jews everywhere to enhance the meaning of their life cycle events by taking advantage of the opportunity to hold them in Israel. We are especially proud of the Movement's commitment of time and resources to support groups from outside Israel who wish to utilize the Robinson's Arch location. Eliav Rodman is the Masorti coordinator for Robinson's Arch. A student at Hebrew

Profile: Rabbi Elisha Wolfin, Kehilat Ve-Ahavta, Zichron Yaakov



Rabbi Elisha Wolfin

to counsel bereaved families as a reserve officer in the IDF.

Another is his openness to diverse ideas and to other cultural traditions. After completing his own undergraduate studies in Islam, Arabic and Middle Eastern studies at Haifa University, these instincts, along with his love of Zionism, motivated him to take a job as shaliach at the Hillel serving San Francisco State College and UC-Berkeley.

Formative years spent on Kibbutz Kfar Hanasi in the Upper Galilee, similar in climate and topography to the California

Bay Area, made Elisha's transition a smooth one. But, with his growing love of traditional, but egalitarian and pluralistic Jewish practice, which he discovered on visits to Conservative synagogues as part of his professional responsibilities at Hillel, he left to begin rabbinical school at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles. The pull of home precipitated a transfer to the Schechter Institute in Jerusalem, where Elisha earned his master's in Judaic studies. He was ordained in 2001.

Elisha's inventive and creative spirit soon attracted a following. Together with eight families, in 2003 he founded Kehilat Ve-Ahavta, which today numbers at least 150 active families, both native-born and olim. Community service programs he has organized, such as food distribution to local needy families and Ve-Ahavta Lilmod, a tutoring club for neighborhood youngsters fully staffed by trained volunteers, reflect Kehilat Ve'Ahavta's vision and Elisha's hands-on approach to spiritual leadership that inspires and engages all who meet him.

Elisha's strong sense of spirituality. At the time non-observant, he gravitated to the healing arts. Trained as a group facilitator, he worked extensively in the field of spiritual counseling and continues

Drawing on his experience in healing, Elisha this year set up HaMerkaz, a chaplaincy center to assist the terminally ill and their families cope with issues of separation, grief and loss. With workshops and classes in Jewish texts, the center receives funding from Masorti supporters as well as unaffiliated philanthropists. Kehilat Ve'Ahavta will soon initiate an absorption program for new olim, Ve'Ahavta's latest project to make sure Israel's recent arrivals make meaningful connections to Jewish community. ❖

University, Eliav is an alumnus of Masorti's NOAM youth movement. He has also served on the staffs of Camp Ramah in New England and Ramah programs in Israel.

Advance reservations for use of the site are required. Groups with reservations can use the siddurim on hand: 40 volumes of Sim Shalom and 40 volumes of the all-Hebrew Va'ani Tefilati siddurim, as well as a Torah scroll and table. There are currently three Torah scrolls available, often all in use at once with multiple events occurring simultaneously.

Tours of the Davidson Center archeological site in which the Robinson's Arch area is located may be arranged for after the completion of shacharit, but do require payment of the customary tourist entry fee.

Donations to the Masorti Foundation to help maintain the site and provide for scheduling as a free public service to the Jewish people are gratefully accepted. Funds are also needed to purchase additional siddurim to accommodate demand, particularly during the busy vacation months. Individuals or entire congregations may want to consider the

donation of siddurim, new or gently used, in honor or in memory of loved ones.



Tefillot at Kotel HaMasorti

To make a reservation at Robinson's Arch, please email Eliav Rodman at kotel@masorti.org.

Masorti Foundation for Conservative Judaism in Israel

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212.870.2216
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