



# Masorti Foundation for Conservative Judaism in Israel

Gloria Bieler      Earl Greinetz  
Masorti Foundation Co-chairs

David H. Lissy  
Executive Director & Chief Executive Officer

## Former Haredi Wedding Singer Shares Bimah with Masorti Woman Rabbi at Crowded Yom Haatzmaut Festivities



Crowd on the balcony of Masorti movement's Jerusalem offices davens with Rabbi Tamar Elad-Appelbaum and Meni Philip.

Earlier in life, Meni Philip was known throughout Israel for his stirring performances at ultra-Orthodox weddings. Who could imagine that one day this famous former haredi would lead a Masorti-style public prayer service, davening with a woman rabbi, no less, before a crowd of more than 300 worshippers?

But perhaps in keeping with the miracle of the birth of the State of Israel itself, that day did dawn. On Thursday evening, May 7th, Meni stood side-by-side with Rabbi Tamar Elad-Appelbaum on the balcony of the Masorti movement offices in Jerusalem, both serving as schlichai-tzibur, prayer leaders, for the men, women and children of all ages gathered to celebrate Yom Haatzmaut, Israel's Independence Day.

During the festive ma'ariv service, Meni chanted Hallel, psalms of praise, his first time ever for Yom Haatzmaut, later remarking that it was one of the most meaningful spiritual experiences of his life. The service also included instrumental music performances, singing of contemporary Israeli songs and poetry readings by NOAM youth. *(continued on page 2)*



Meni Philip, left, and Rabbi Tamar Elad-Appelbaum, right, lead davening.

## Masorti Kehillot Heed Mitzvah to 'Go Green'

Did you know that it takes 500 years for just one plastic bag to decompose, and that 14 million plastic bags are used every day in Israel?

Adopting the slogan "No Plastic is Fantastic," Kehillat Hod v'Hadar in Kfar Saba, launched an Eco-Judaism project in January. With the blessing of the mayor and local officials, once a month, on busy Friday mornings, the kehilla sets up an information booth in the local mall, manned by kehilla volunteers. Shoppers are handed a fact sheet in Hebrew, English and Russian describing the benefits of switching from plastic to recyclable cloth bags, which are available at the booth.

According to David Marcus, Hod v'Hadar's co-chair of fundraising and special projects, congregants of all ages are enthusiastically joining in the effort. One youngster, for instance, helped design the booth's poster as part of his bar mitzvah project. Others participated in decorating cloth bags for distributing misloach manot to needy families on Purim. Plans are also afoot for a lecture series to highlight the connection between Jewish tradition and environmental protection.

David Marcus also reports his kehilla intends to become much more environmentally conscious and will use *(continued on page 3)*

## Former Haredi Wedding Singer Shares Bimah with Masorti Woman Rabbi at Crowded Yom Haatzmaut Festivities (cont'd. from page 1)

Tefilla for Yom Haatzmaut was preceded by a more somber ritual for the conclusion of Yom Hazikaron, Memorial Day, which was marked by remembrances of Israel's fallen. Each person rose to state the name of someone he or she knew, beginning with Rabbi Elad-Appelbaum who called out the name of her brother, Nadav Elad, a fallen soldier. When others heard a name they knew, they also stood, and by the end of the evening, all were standing. ❖

## A Message from Masorti Foundation Executive Director & CEO David Lissy



If you want a treat, I urge you to go to [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and enter "Masorti" in the search field. You will then have an opportunity to view an English version of a short film about the movement made in connection with the 30th anniversary celebration in December, about which I reported in our last newsletter. The film conveys a vibrancy difficult to describe in words.

As with each of our past newsletters, this one is full of stories that express the energy and diversity of Masorti in Israel.

Eighth-generation sabras along with new olim, concern for the environment and the celebration of Yom Haatzmaut. All of this is Masorti.

I am proud to report that, with your help, over the last three years, funding for the movement in Israel, while still way too low, has increased by about 50 percent. That reflects a combination of increased donor support and careful control of expenses. Our efforts have been recognized by Charity Navigator, which now gives us its top four-star rating. Unfortunately, during this same period, the value of the dollar to the shekel has fallen by more than 20 percent, so much of our increase has "disappeared." There is nothing we can do about that, but I hope you will keep it in mind when you make your next gift.

Enjoy the summer, and if you are planning to be in Israel, visit a Masorti kehilla and also please remember to conserve water during your time there. ❖



Top: Masorti chair Dr. Irit Zmora, left, and foundation co-chair Gloria Bieler affix mezuzah to entry at the movement's new offices in Jerusalem during April 9th hanukat-habayit, the traditional ceremony to sanctify a new home. Bottom: The women recite the appropriate blessings as Masorti staffers look on.

## Irit Zmora Returns to Chair Masorti Movement



Some people may accept the saying "You can never go home again." But Dr. Irit Zmora isn't one of them. Dr. Zmora, who was first elected to chair the Masorti movement in 2002 and served until 2005, was re-elected to the post at the movement's conference in December. During her first tenure, she ably and devotedly led the movement through a period of financial crisis, setting it on a course whose success is evident today.

Dr. Irit Zmora

National service to the Masorti movement was a natural segue for this leading public health economist who has been an active leader in Kehillat Eshel Avraham, the Masorti kehilla in Beersheva, almost from the day she and her husband, Ehud, joined in 1971 when their oldest son, Oded, was preparing for bar mitzvah. Dr. Zmora also became acquainted with the Conservative movement during time spent in the city of Rochester in upstate New York.

Born and raised in Haifa, Dr. Zmora completed her bachelor's degree in economics at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem; a master's in industry and management and doctorate in health economics at Ben Gurion University of the Negev in Beersheva; and an MBA at the University of Rochester. Now retired from the field, she and Ehud have three grown children and four grandchildren. ❖

## Meet the New Faces at Masorti Movement Headquarters

We are pleased to feature below two more of the dynamic Masorti staff in Israel. They reflect both the quality and the diversity of the movement.



**Shmuel Dovrat**  
*Director of Public Relations*

Shmuel hails from the northern city of Tzfat, where his family has lived for eight generations. He holds a bachelor's in political science and public communication from Bar Ilan University, where he is now completing a master's in conflict management and negotiation. A certified mediator and a graduate of the Jewish Agency's course in professional Jewish education, Shmuel previously served as assistant to the spokesman of Yad Sarah, an organization that provides assistance to disabled and elderly citizens. He also has been director of "Perach," a tutoring project in Rosh Ha'ayin; and worked as spokesman and lobbyist for Mavoy Satum, which assists agunot, women whose husbands have refused them a get, Jewish bill of divorce. Shmuel and his wife spent the year 2004-05 in the Paris suburb of Créteil, as shlichim, emissaries, for the Jewish Agency.



**Tzipi Senderov**  
*Director of Marketing and Communications*

Born in Jerusalem in 1974 to a family that has made the city its home for 500 years, Tzipi earned her bachelor's in history and multidisciplinary studies and a master's in journalism and communications from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In 2004, Tzipi completed a certificate in editing from the Beit Berl College Textual Studies Program. During the past decade, she has held various positions at the Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History; the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; and Alma College in Tel Aviv. She also worked at the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya, where she was responsible for outreach to the foreign press, for introducing visiting missions to the work of the IDC and for managing the IDC web site. Her most recent job was as spokesperson for the Abraham Fund Initiatives, where she managed all public and media relations. Fluent in Hebrew and English, Tzipi can also converse in French and Spanish. ❖

### Masorti Kehillot Heed Mitzvah to 'Go Green' (cont'd. from page 1)

recyclable plates, cups and garbage bags at simchas and other communal functions.

Tiferet Shalom in the Ramat Aviv neighborhood in Tel Aviv is another kehilla working to reduce the carbon footprint. Rabbi David Lazar used the fact that the year 5768 is a shmita year – every seven years, according to the Torah, land is supposed to lie fallow – to focus the community's attention on contemporary ways to preserve the environment. Tiferet Shalom's bnai mitzvah class designed a logo and slogan for printing on cloth bags the kehilla offered for sale in time for Purim. Congregants were encouraged to use these, instead of disposable plastic bags, for mishloach manot, which Lazar urged should include a compact florescent light bulb among the snacks. A few weeks later, the kehilla held a workshop on composting,



Batya, David and Meir are among the Hod v'Hadar members who volunteer monthly at the Kfar Saba mall to urge shoppers to switch from plastic to cloth bags.

demonstrating how even families living in apartment buildings can turn their organic food waste into fertilizer. Ecological tips are offered each week in the kehilla's announcements, and beginning on Shavuot, there will be regular learning sessions held on Judaism and urban ecology. Tiferet Shalom is also developing joint programs with Eitz Bair (A Tree in

the City), a local group dedicated to developing urban ecology.

As Hod v'Hadar's Marcus noted, Masorti kehillot "are working on an issue that affects the life and welfare of every citizen in Israel. Through this 'green' outreach effort, we are making Masorti Judaism more relevant and accessible to the average Israeli man, woman and child." ❖

## HALOM: A Dream Come True for Youngsters in Kfar Vradim



*HALOM youngsters on a trip to the supermarket to purchase food and other items for needy local families.*

Thanks to the efforts of one determined mother in Kfar Vradim, not far from the border with Lebanon, the Masorti community now has a thriving after-school program of Judaic enrichment. Two groups of children (1st-2nd-grades and 3rd-5th-grades) currently attend HALOM, which means 'dream' in Hebrew and is an acronym for havaya, experience; limud, learning; and masoret, tradition.

The program of informal Jewish education was the brainchild of Galit Haim, a mother of five.

"Today in Israel, many parents wish to raise knowledgeable and proud Jewish children, but the present educational alternatives do not satisfy their needs," Galit explained. "These parents are not at all interested in the Orthodox school system, but believe that the public secular schools do not sufficiently expose students to the beauty and richness of Jewish values and tradition."

Starting four years ago with just four excited, curious 1st-graders, HaMinyan HaMishpachti HaMasorti launched HALOM. The program was designed with an experiential,

participatory curriculum focused on the Jewish calendar and festivals, reinforcing and expanding what the children learned in school. Every year since, as a new grade has been added and siblings and friends of current students join the program, the curriculum has been broadened.

Classes meet on Friday afternoons in a relaxed, informal setting that provides a natural segue to Kabbalat Shabbat, which the children celebrate sitting together around a big table. Each child is encouraged to give tzedaka and talk about masim tovim, the good deeds they performed during the past week.

Gimilut Hasidim, acts of loving-kindness, in the form of social action projects, is an integral facet of HALOM. For the past two years, prior to Chanukah, HALOM children have organized a toy drive. The toys collected were distributed to young patients at the Western Galilee Hospital in Nahariya and to students who attend a local special education school. The weekly tzedaka collection culminates in an annual group excursion to the supermarket for the children to purchase food and other household staples for needy families in the community.

HALOM's impact naturally extends to the families of participants, with special family holiday programming throughout the year.

With plans for continued growth next year, HALOM will offer programming to three distinct age groups. First and 2nd-graders will study the Jewish calendar and holidays; 3rd and 4th-graders will concentrate on the weekly Torah portion and Jewish values; and 5th and 6th-graders will advance to a study of Jewish ethics through a basic introduction to the Mishnah.

Galit Haim notes that one measure of success is that several children even decided to give up their weekly Scouts meeting for a HALOM event. ❖

### **Briarcliff Manor's Salute to Israel@60 Benefits Masorti Foundation**

Israel's 60th birthday gave Cong. Sons of Israel in Briarcliff Manor, NY a good excuse to party - and donate a portion of the funds raised by the celebration to the Masorti Foundation.

"This year, especially, we want to give money to Israel and to build up our own movement in Israel," said Rabbi Steven Kane, spiritual leader of the congregation.

On Sunday, May 4th, the morning was devoted to a zimriah, songfest, for the preschool and religious school students. That evening, the Israeli rock 'n roll

band, "Schlock Rock," entertained guests at an hors d'oeuvres/dessert reception that also featured Israeli dancing and a raffle grand prize of a trip for two to Israel.

Cong. Sons of Israel has a long history of support for Israel, noted Rabbi Kane. He led a congregational mission in the fall of 2006, as well as a CSI family trip with more than 30 families this past winter, during which the groups visited with Masorti communities and made personal connections. "I hope that other Conservative synagogues in

the United States can be inspired by our commitment to Masorti and make a similar effort. Our help is truly needed and appreciated," said Rabbi Kane.

Rabbi Kane is just one of many rabbis who have made support for Masorti a priority. Some do so through their synagogue programs and others through their federation. One group of rabbis, the Southeast chapter of the Rabbinical Assembly in Florida, demonstrated support with a five-year pledge to the Masorti Foundation. ❖

## Profile: Rabbi Hagit Sabag, Educational Coordinator, Kehillat Eshel Avraham, Beersheva



*Rabbi Hagit Sabag*

Hagit Sabag has long been determined to make a difference in the lives of those who are disadvantaged and disenfranchised – and to do so in keeping with her deep love of traditional Jewish life and practice. So it's not surprising that she found a spiritual home and a calling in the Masorti movement.

Born and raised in an Orthodox Moroccan family in northern Israel, Hagit attended a state religious high school. Following the army, she entered Bar Ilan University to study criminology and informal education. But the timing – the day after Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassination – proved critical. Profoundly affected, Hagit became a student activist, inviting guest speakers and organizing activities to increase political awareness at Bar Ilan. She also worked as a tutor and coordinator for a group that paired college students with underprivileged children.

These and other experiences paved the way for Hagit's exposure to Masorti. With her bachelor's degree completed, she began teaching *bnai mitzvah* preparation and family education workshops in TALI public schools, which, while not affiliated with the Masorti movement, do integrate a Masorti-style Judaic studies curriculum with general studies. Hagit then moved to a position at Melitz, a center for Zionist education, coordinating activities for primary and secondary students throughout Israel and conducting teacher training, with a special focus on increasing educational opportunities for impoverished youth.

In 1999, Hagit began studying for a master's in Bible and Talmud at the Schechter Institute. Within a year, she had decided to become a rabbi and was ordained in 2005. During summers between school terms, Hagit worked as a camp leader and educational advisor at Ramah camps in Ukraine. In 2002, Hagit was named a RIKMA Fellow, joining a special group of young religious leaders who combine social action with educational enrichment to build unique spiritual communities.

With the support of RIKMA, Hagit established *batei midrash* (study centers) in the TALI schools in Ashkelon and Yavneh, both cities with large immigrant populations and tough economic conditions. In each location, she developed an educational model new to Israel, welcoming teachers, parents and youngsters to learn together. Offering a curriculum geared to varying levels of Jewish and general literacy, the program gradually increases exposure to Jewish texts and traditions.

Now, as the new educational coordinator of Kehillat Eshel Avraham, the Masorti kehilla in Beersheva, Hagit has even bigger plans as she works to build a Masorti presence.

Hagit and her husband, Eitan, recently welcomed twins, Ayelet Hashachar and Yehonatan. ❖

## *Lisa Lissak Joins Masorti Foundation Board*

"Masorti is vital for Israel's future," declares Lisa Lissak. "If we don't support the growth of Masorti, Israel will become a country with a majority of Israelis who have no knowledge about being Jewish. Today, when young Israelis finish their army service they are going in droves to India in search of spirituality. They do not relate to Orthodox Judaism and are unaware that there are other ways to be Jewish. We must do everything we can to offer them a tolerant and relevant religious alternative."

Lissak, who clearly wears her passion for Masorti on her sleeve, recently joined the board of the Masorti Foundation. She believes in "building living bridges." This past February, Lissak joined Caldwell, NJ's Cong. Agudath Israel's Masorti mission to Israel, traveling from one Masorti community to another. "On every stop," Lissak marveled, "we discovered people we knew, and realized that we are indeed one extended family."

Lissak grew up in a Conservative-affiliated home in Union, NJ, but her connection to Israel was cemented by a year of post-graduate work at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. She and her husband, Robin, and their two teenage daughters, Rachel and Ilana, make frequent trips to Israel to see family and an ever-growing network of friends.

In addition to serving on the Masorti board, Lissak volunteers extensively at Agudath Israel and the MetroWest Federation.

### ***When You Are Traveling Outside the United States...***

To find a Masorti congregation in Israel, log on to [www.masorti.org](http://www.masorti.org).

To find a Masorti congregation elsewhere in the world, log on to [www.masorteworld.org](http://www.masorteworld.org).



NYC Benefit Concert Draws Crowd: Supporters of Masorti gathered at the Jewish Theological Seminary on Sunday, March 9th to hear works by Mozart, Shostakovich and Schubert, performed by the Simon Quartet. The Benefit Concert, chaired by Laila Levitas and Richard Weinstock, was followed by a cocktail reception.

## Masorti Foundation for Conservative Judaism in Israel

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475 Riverside Drive, Suite 832  
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212.870.2216  
877.287.7414 (toll free)

[www.masorti.org](http://www.masorti.org)  
[info@masorti.org](mailto:info@masorti.org)



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