

SYNAGOGUE TRENDS

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE LEADERSHIP OF ORTHODOX UNION MEMBER SYNAGOGUES

VOLUME 6, SPECIAL ISRAEL EDITION

SPRING 2002 תשס"ב

Creating the Synagogue Trip or Mission to Israel: A Step-by-Step Manual for the Synagogue Tour Leader

There is no time like the present for a synagogue to make a group visit to Israel.

This issue of "Synagogue Trends" is being published while Israel faces a particularly rough time. Tourism is down and all group visits from abroad convey a powerful message of solidarity, while helping the economy. But the enlightening and rejuvenating rewards to the participants of a shul trip to Israel are immense and well worthwhile whatever the political climate in Israel may be. The Israel Ministry of Tourism, with input from the Orthodox Union's Director of Missions Richard Stareshfsky, has compiled this blueprint for synagogues to coordinate an effective, fulfilling trip to Israel - with the hopes that every shul will make such trips a yearly synagogue event.

The synagogue tour leader is usually the rabbi, but that role can also be filled by the president, the head of the Israel Committee, or by another designated lay-leader. The novelty and or relevance of some of the information included herein will vary among communities. The Israel Ministry of Tourism and the OU Department of Israel Missions are confident that there are some helpful ideas offered either in this article or through The Israel Missions

Department to improve the prospects of a shul's first or a shul's one-hundred-and-first trip to Israel.

How do I begin?

Commitment is crucial. Experience shows that it is best not to make your decision conditional on there being a core group. Your statement must be, "I am going to lead a group to Israel, and you are all invited to join me," and NOT "I will go if enough of you agree to join me." (If the leader is not firm in the decision to lead a group to Israel, others will waver.) Once you make a firm decision to go and lead your congregants to Israel, you will find yourself hosting an exciting and fascinating tour.

Who will help me plan my trip?

The Orthodox Union is fortunate to have the services of Richard Stareshfsky, a talented and experienced Mission Coordinator. He will work with you individually to tailor the itinerary to fit the needs and interests of any group, large or small, and open the doors to interviews, meetings, and experiences unavailable to general tourists to Israel. Please call him at (212) 613-8171 or send an E-mail to him at: richard@ou.org. The Israel Ministry of Tourism does not sell trips to Israel. It is a service agency established to facilitate your trip however

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Special Israel Edition

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For more information about OU ONLINE and what it can mean for you and your community, please visit our website

<http://www.ou.org>
or e-mail: membership@ou.org

possible. The Ministry's website, www.goisrael.com, is a rich resource of practical tourist oriented information. El Al Israel Airlines, Continental Airlines and Air Canada all offer direct flights to Israel from a number of North American cities. In addition, some eighteen European carriers fly from the U.S. and Canada to Israel via Europe.

How far in advance should I plan my trip?

If you are just getting started as a tour host, you should allow yourself at least three to six months prior to departure. The more advance time you have, the better. At minimum you need enough time to set a definite departure date and carry out your planning and promotion accordingly. The Orthodox Union offers assistance in this area. It should be noted that, in at least one situation, a synagogue arranged a small "mission" in about two weeks!

How do I coordinate my tour?

The Seymour J. Abrams OU Jerusalem Travel Desk is available to help with all your planning. They will supply you with a superb guide who will accompany you at all times. Your tour guide, with your consultation, will help you set your itinerary, arrange vehicles and personnel for your group travel, and lead you to and through the historic and cultural sites that meet your group's interest. Thanks to the guides' rigorous education combined with intensive experience, you will be free to relax and enjoy the tour with the participants. Representatives will meet your group on arrival. You will have time to teach, lead meaningful and spiritual tefillot, and offer supplemental insights along the way, but you will not have to handle practical administrative details.

What time of year is best to visit Israel?

Any time is great; go when it is best for you. As a congregational group you will probably not be able to be in Israel for Rosh Hashanah or Pesach when the most individuals and families go to Israel. Avoiding these busy times, many synagogues

FROM THE DESK OF

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

Executive Vice President

This is the first opportunity that I have had to address remarks to you, the reader of *Synagogue Trends*, in my new capacity as Executive Vice President of the Orthodox Union. As someone who just left the pulpit of an active synagogue, I have always appreciated *Synagogue Trends* and have used it as well. I hope to contribute regularly to future issues.

I feel strongly that my first words here must be dedicated to *Eretz Yisrael*. Of all the many pressing priorities on the agenda of the American synagogue, our relationship to *Eretz Yisrael* and *Medinat Yisrael* is paramount. This is so always, and is especially so at this time.

For me, the significance of Israel is conveyed by one phrase in the *berachot* after the *haftarah*: "*Ki hee beit chayenu*," literally "It is the home of our life". That one phrase says to me that Zion must be experienced as a matter of life or death. Regrettably, the central role that *Eretz Yisrael* plays in our religious value system is insufficiently emphasized in our shuls and schools. It must be restored to its rightful place within that system!

We must put *aliyah*, living in *Eretz Yisrael*, back in its proper context. It is a major *mitzvah* and a religiously preferable life-choice. Our synagogues must preach that message, and must do everything possible to realistically encourage *aliyah*. For those for whom *aliyah* is, for whatever reason, not an option, frequent visits to Israel are a must, and opportunities to work, vacation, or study there must be encouraged and pursued.

At this time of crisis, in Israel and in the world, our active support of Israel is vital. We must familiarize ourselves with the religious literature on the importance of the land and the state, and we must become thoroughly acquainted with the historical and political issues, so that we can understand what Israel is all about. We must educate our children about Israel, and we must be able to intelligently advocate Israel's cause in the public arena.

Israel is a priority on my agenda for the Orthodox Union. I look to the readers of *Synagogue Trends* for your support, and I respectfully solicit your ideas and suggestions.



take advantage of the lower, off-season rates of November through mid-March. When planning your trip, consider the weather. During the period from November to March, Israel has cool temperatures and (ideally!) some rain. June to August is hot, and the country is virtually rainless from April through October.

How long should my tour group plan to stay in Israel?

To make such a significant journey worthwhile, consider an 11-day trip.

This will give you 8 full days to tour Israel, and you would miss only one Shabbat at your synagogue. Remember that once you have paid the airfare, extra days cost relatively little! Of course, if you wish to have only a "Solidarity Mission" type of program, 7 days may suffice.

What resources are available from the Israel Ministry of Tourism?

Your regional Tourist Office can fur-

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Congregational Programming for Yom HaAztmaut and Yom Yerushalayim

By Rabbi Chaim Wasserman

In the last year of his life, the leading halachic authority, Rav Yosef Eliyahu Henkin, Director of Ezras Torah for nearly half a century, spent



his entire days with a certain young Torah scholar who was retained to be with the aging sage.

In broad ranging conversations the young man inquired as to Rav Henkin's opinion concerning the recitation of *Hallel* on Yom HaAztmaut and Yom Yerushalayim and he answered, "that he felt it ought not be said. When I continued to inquire whether it would be proper to protest against those who do recite *Hallel* with a *brachah* he responded "No!" and explained that this matter cannot be determined decisively because it depends on the particular perspective one has concerning the emergence of the State of Israel as a step in the ultimate final redemption (*Shanah b'Shanah* 5739, p. 408)."

Indeed, there are two versions of Jewish calendars these days - the ones which list three commemorative moments in 20th century Jewish history (Yom HaShoah being the third) and those which don't recognize these days as worthy of communal commemoration. Obviously, I write from the perspective of the former and have no desire to engage in any discussion as to whether these days are worthy inclusions in the annual calendar of *yemei zikaron* - days worthy of commemoration. At the same time, I acknowledge that a major view to the contrary clearly exists within our Torah-true community.

These shared lines are a record of program notes accumulated over the last three decades. During this time, the Young Israel of Passaic-Clifton annually celebrated the rise of a State of Israel and the reunification of Jerusalem as two miraculous

moments for which every feeling Jew prayerfully yearned. At various places throughout this article you will find numbered lists. That is because I present the ideas herein as the information was recorded over the years in a file of program notes.

Preliminaries:

Programs for Yom HaAztmaut and Yom Yerushalayim will be most successful when concern for life in Israel is part of the congregation's mission statement, occupying a central importance, as does any other vital aspect of congregational life.

Accordingly, I present some suggestions for on-going Israel-focused activities, based on the practices of the Young Israel of Passaic-Clifton:

[1] The prayers for the welfare of the State of Israel and for the IDF soldiers are as essential to the services as are any other pages in the *siddur* or *machzor*. We paste these prayers inside the front covers of *siddurim* which in which they do not appear.

[2] We regularly recite appropriate and relevant segments of *Tehillim* at times of triumph (122, 125, 126) and tribulation (120, 121, 83, 84, 85).

[3] Specific pulpit announcements are made whenever a member departs for a visit to Israel and returns from Israel. A man is given an *aliyah* on the Shabbat preceding and following his Israel trip.

[4] In June and/or September we honor those students who will be off for study in Israel or who will spend their summer touring or camping in Israel with an appropriate *kiddush* or *seudah sh'lisheit*. These students play a central role in conducting services throughout that Shabbat.

[5] Letters received from members who went on *aliyah* are either read from the pulpit or distributed to the congregation.

[6] A bronze tablet is displayed at the entrance of the sanctuary listing the names of those families from the

congregation who made *aliyah*, and the year they did so.

[7] Addresses and phone numbers of all members who went on *aliyah* are kept current in the congregation's published membership directory.

[8] A literature bin full of printed information and news on Israel matters is maintained in the entrance to the sanctuary.

[9] When visitors from Israel and representatives of Israel-based organizations are present, they are publicly welcomed, and invited to address the congregation at appropriate times.

[10] The congregation offers on-going rabbinic instruction in matters concerning *Eretz Yisrael* including:

[a] Classes on the *mitzvot hat'luyot*

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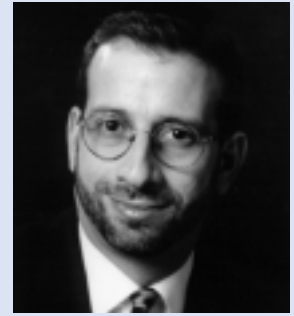
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FROM THE DESK OF

Rabbi Moshe D. Krupka

National Director, OU Department of Community and Synagogue Services



I am proud to present this special edition of Synagogue Trends. As you will see, we have centered all the articles around subjects pertaining to *Medinat Yisrael*. At this critical time, it is more important than ever to maintain a constant awareness of the centrality of Israel to us and to our communities. You will find a number of articles with suggestions for programs in support of Israel. More importantly, you will find information on visiting Israel. Right now, there is possibly no better way to show your support for Israel than to be there. Whether your community runs a solidarity mission, or joins in one of our National OU/RCA solidarity missions, or if you go as individuals and families, the Orthodox Union Israel Missions Department will have valuable advice and information which you will find useful. Call Richard Stareshesky on (212) 613-8171, or email him at richard@ou.org for further details.

As always, your feedback is greatly appreciated, and if you have suggestions or comments for future issues, please be in touch with me at (212) 613-8225, or Rabbi Mayer Waxman at (212) 613-8285, or email waxmanm@ou.org.

ba'aretz which are observed only in Israel;

[b] Sermons throughout the year remembering historical moments in the calendar of modern Zionist history (November 2, 1917, the Balfour Declaration; November 27, 1947, the United Nations Partition vote);

[c] A series of classes on the *halachic* giants who fashioned religious Zionist thought (Rabbis Alkalai and Kalischer, R. Shmuel Mohilever, R. Yitzchok Yaakov Reines, R. Akivah Yosef Schlesinger, R. Avraham Yitzchak haKohen Kook and many others).

Within this environment, Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim are two annually commemorated highlights within a constant focus of attention.

The Season

Of course, Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim always fall within the season of Sefirat haOmer. There are those who claim that any festivities in that time-frame are not in keeping with the mourning practices of this season.

My advice (and rabbinic determination) has always been that Israel's rabbinate was well aware of such matters so that the *simchah* celebration does not violate the Sefirah observances and clearly takes precedence. Moreover, in view of the fact that in Sefirah observance there are

legitimate *halachic* variations as to the number of days and to the exact period of those days within the calendar, *aveilut* can be observed by an added two days of *aveilut* to compensate for the two days of celebration of Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim. (At the risk of generating *halachic* discussion, which I promised at the outset to avoid, I would just note that there is no *halachic* category of 32 days of *aveilut*, only 30 – *shloshim*. This may be in part the basis for what R. Dovid Tzi Hoffman reports the time-honored German custom in Berlin to be, namely: that Sefirah restrictions were observed only in the month of Iyyar for a total of under thirty days³⁰ days. See his *Melamed LeHo'il, Orach Chayyim*, end of 113.) Clearly, each *Morah D'Atrah* must make his own *halachic* determination in this regard.

The Preparatory Celebration

[1] Ideally, a planning committee ought to meet no later than Rosh Chodesh Shevat (12 weeks before Yom HaAtzmaut) to plan, to budget, and to delegate. This will avoid the seasonal crunch-time of Purim and Pesach and will allow for proper planning under ideal circumstances.

[2] The Shabbat before Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim:

[a] I use as an occasion to address

the congregation briefly in *Ivrit* and continue my message in English. For rabbis unable to do so properly, a member for whom *Ivrit* is a native tongue or a guest who can do so should be invited to address the congregation on the occasion.

[b] *Aliyot* are given to those who served in the Israeli army. (At Young Israel of Passaic-Clifton we have been fortunate to have members and second-generation members who served in each of the wars fought by IDF.) If there are no members who served in the IDF, I suggest that such individuals be sought out in the community or nearby area and that they be invited to spend Shabbat with the congregation.

[c] All regular classes are deferred for a full Shabbat program of *Torat Eretz Yisrael*.

[d] Features guest speakers, scholars-in-residence and even local rabbis exchanging pulpits throughout Shabbat to enhance the importance and dignity of the approaching Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim.

[3] Publicity for any preliminary Shabbat programs should appear together with the announcement for Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim programs.

[4] Youth programming during this session is essential. On the Shabbat prior to Yom HaAtzmaut, consider launching age-appropriate essay or

A Message from Consul Rami Levi

Israel Commissioner for Tourism, North America

Before you go: for ideas, sample itineraries, Bar and Bat Mitzvah and touring information, you might want to click on to the Israel Government Ministry of Tourism web site: www.goisrael.com

If you cannot join the OU/RCA Israel Solidarity Mission now being planned for July 21-28, 2002, our talented and highly experienced Israel Missions Director, Richard Stareshefsky, will help tailor an itinerary specifically for you, your family and friends, or synagogue group.

RAMI LEVI
CONSUL
TOURISM COMMISSIONER
FOR NORTH AMERICA
AND MEXICO

GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL
MINISTRY OF TOURISM • NORTH AMERICA

I extend my warmest greetings to you, members of the Orthodox Union, and I want to express a deeply felt thank you for your energetic support of Israel, and of travel to Israel during this difficult and painful time in our history. You have truly demonstrated Ahavat Zion.

By proclaiming Israel travel as your top priority in this troubled year, we applaud your devotion and your unflagging love for Eretz Yisrael.

It is easy to talk about solidarity, but by traveling to Israel to demonstrate your solidarity, you make an extraordinary commitment and impression.

And each and every Israeli is heartened by your dedication.

I send you greetings and a heartfelt toda raba from the Government and the people of Israel.

Most sincerely,



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poster contests on Israel themes. In this manner every congregation, no matter how far removed from New York's Fifth Avenue Salute to Israel Parade they may be, can still celebrate Israel in a most exciting manner:

Community or Congregation?

The rabbinic teaching that *b'rov am hadrat Melech* – with numbers God's honor is enhanced - is clearly a prominent virtue of the Passaic-Clifton community. Over three decades ago I arrived in Passaic to find virtually every congregation had a cantor. To capitalize on this feature all the congregations joined together in rotation to host a cantorial concert as a communal celebration of

Yom HaAtzmaut.

The demography and tastes of generations inevitably change, and the cantorial era went the way of all flesh. Although several local congregations began celebrating Yom HaAtzmaut individually within the confines of their buildings, at Young Israel we had to close the street to make room for the sizeable gathering to dance and feast.

After some years, again with communal changes occurring, one thoughtful Jewish communal professional suggested to several congregations that a joint celebration of Yom HaAtzmaut should again take place. That is what has been happening in Passaic-Clifton in recent years; once

again several hundreds of men, women and youth gather for joint services, as in Israel, and for an evening of festive celebration in honor of the miracles. This celebration is coordinated under joint congregational sponsorship as well as that of NCSY and the local chapter of Religious Zionists of America (Mizrachi).

Clearly, our community senses the impact of *b'rov am hadrat Melech*. Wherever possible, I wholeheartedly recommend a communal celebration – if for no other reason than that it yields more loyal friends for the cause of modern Israel. But I caution the obvious: it will take longer to

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Connect Your Shul to Israel: Three Vital Factors

The *Gemara* highlights the unique connection between Diaspora synagogues and the land of Israel in an interesting way. The Talmud in *Megilah*, (27a) famously comments that in the glorious future, synagogues and study halls in Bavel will be uprooted and transplanted intact to the land of Israel. How is this to be understood? Rav She'ar Yashuv Cohen, the Chief Rabbi of Haifa, once explained that every country maintains embassies and consulates in foreign lands to supervise its affairs and interests abroad. These sites possess an extra-territorial sovereignty, and are considered to be under the jurisdiction not of the host country but of the foreign country.

Rav Cohen drew a parallel to the synagogues of today. He asserted that our shuls are embassies of the land of Israel and are charged with overseeing Israel's affairs, furthering its interests, and safeguarding its welfare. This natural bond – an extension of the land of Israel itself – is what will enable these synagogues to re-connect with the land at the end of days.

In Congregation Bnai Yeshurun of Teaneck, New Jersey, we have successfully completed a number of projects that

strengthen the land and people of Israel, and our bond with them. We always try to have at least one project in the works on behalf of Israel.

These projects are organized and sustained by a generous and devoted membership.

In the last few years, under the auspices of our Men's Club, we have provided *Sifrei Torah* (with due pomp and ceremony) to Yeshivat Shavei Chevron in *Chevron*, to Yeshivat Ateret Cohanim in the former Moslem Quarter of the Old City of *Yerushalayim*, to Yeshivat HaGolan in the Golan Heights, and to the *bet midrash* of Elon Moreh in Samaria. We built and dedicated a children's

playground in Har Brachah, a community overlooking the city of *Shechem*, and a nursery playground in Ir David, in the shadow of the walls of the Old City of *Yerushalayim*. One of our members built a gymnasium, complete with state-of-the-art exercise equipment, for the residents of Chevron.

In addition, we have provided emergency generators, defibrillators, bullet-proof vests and other security equipment to a number of front-line communities through the One Israel Fund. A number of members have spearheaded fund-raising drives through the shul for beleaguered families or communities in Israel with whom they have a personal connection.

Most recently, we provided the residents of the holy city of Chevron with a modern, fully-equipped, armored bus that seats 50 people, to ease their commuting woes and to facilitate the access of tourists to our holy sites.

How does a synagogue achieve all of these projects on behalf of Israel?

The fact that such accomplishments require substantial funds is important to note, but these accomplishments are not achieved

through money alone. We have observed three ingredients which, when mixed together, serve to create successful programs on behalf of Israel:

First, successful projects require

committed members. For a shul's projects to succeed it requires dedicated members who make valuable suggestions, who are willing to commit themselves to the cause, and who solicit assistance and input from others.

Second, efforts must be focused on specific, attainable needs. There are more worthwhile causes than we can possibly satisfy, and if we try to help everyone we wind up helping no one. With this foreknowledge, we choose particular



The armored bus donated by Congregation Bnai Yeshurun.

projects, and set target goals that are within reach.

Once a project has a goal that can reasonably be met, we go all out to assure that it is met. To that end, we keep our membership focused on our goal by publicizing, publicizing and publicizing. We remind congregants of the goal through numerous medias. We make weekly announcements from the pulpit and in several mailings, shul newsletters and e-mails, and we post a graph charting the campaign's progress in the shul lobby. It cannot be emphasized enough that the smallest amount of money (even in the hundreds of dollars) purchases vital security equipment for a Jewish community, so every contribution makes a difference.

Third, the rabbi must take a conscious, public stance on the importance of the shul's projects on behalf of Israel.

The rabbi is instrumental in creating an environment in which the shul is identifiable as an "embassy" of Israel and of the Jewish people. His active role will assure that the shul will do more than just empathize with the plight of our brethren. The rabbi's focusing and acting on the shul's connection to Israel is intrinsically valuable in fostering the *ahavat Yisrael* that is the cornerstone of the successful shul. Through synagogues' enactment of *ahavat Yisrael*, we hasten the day on which our shuls will be relocated on the holy soil of *Eretz Yisrael*.

Rabbi Steven Pruzansky is the spiritual leader of Congregation Bnai Yeshurun in Teaneck, NJ. For further information call him at 201-836-1824, or visit the Bnai Yeshurun website on www.ou.org

The Role of the Synagogue Israel Committee

With attacks and threats to Israel filling the daily headlines of the secular media, it is clear that every synagogue must ask itself "what are we doing for Israel!" To bolster our answer to this question, Beth Sholom Congregation in Potomac, Maryland, has established an Israel Committee. The purpose of this Committee is to heighten our Israel awareness here in the Diaspora, and to spearhead efforts on Israel's behalf.

The first role of the Israel Committee will be to recruit people for Beth Sholom's two shul trips to Israel, scheduled to commence this summer. The purpose of these trips is to show solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Israel. We will not travel with political agendas; our only goal is to show our loved ones that we care – about their welfare, and about the welfare of Israel.

Even prior to the establishment of the Committee, Beth Sholom began the process of planning a community-wide Yom HaZikaron/Yom HaAtzmaut commemoration. The role of coordinating this project-in-progress was transferred into the hands of the Israel Committee. For the tentative program we will begin with *Minchah*, sponsor a memorial service for those that have died in Israel's wars and as a result of terrorism, and we will then daven the special *Ma'ariv* for Yom HaAtzmaut as established by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. After *davening* we will have a communal dinner, in honor of all our synagogue members who have served in the Israel Defense Force.

The Israel Committee will lead our congregation on the charge of letter/e-mail writing campaigns. They will be keeping their eyes on media bias and on the policy – and opinion – statements of our elected officials. Jews are dying. If we can't physically prevent their deaths we can at least do our utmost to convey to the world that we care, that everyone should care, and that Jewish blood is not cheap.

Our Israel Committee is charged

with developing ongoing projects as well. Their first endeavor in this vein will be to establish a monthly speakers breakfast, where we will invite individuals who have a keen sense of the situation in Israel to address our congregation. Although this task may be a bit easier for our community than for most due to our proximity to Washington, the seat of political think-tanks and the home of the Embassy of Israel, there are many people in, around, or passing through every community who can address the different facets of the current situation in Israel.

The Israel Committee will also be publishing materials regarding Israel. Our Israel Committee is in the process of preparing a digest of pertinent articles regarding the current situation in Israel. We feel that educating our community is more than half of the solution. The Committee will cull informative articles regarding

Israel, as well as articles that promote activism. After a careful selection process, they will prepare an e-mail magazine to be sent to those who have expressed interest. Since e-mail is free of charge, this saves the shul significant money, and saves the Committee substantial time – time which can be better spent further expanding concern and understanding regarding Israel.

Every shul must ask itself "what are we doing for Israel." Each synagogue will probably have a different answer. The main point is that the question be asked, and that we do what we can to help.

Minka Goldstein is the Chairperson of the Israel Committee at Beth Sholom Congregation and Talmud Torah in Potomac, MD. For more information on Beth Sholom's Israel Committee or for assistance in starting one in your shul, call (301) 279-7010 or see the Beth Sholom website on www.ou.org



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Channeling the Strength of Community to Raise Funds for Israel

In Middlesex County, NJ a Jewish organization with no building, no stationary, and no membership dues raised over \$100,000 in less than four months for Israel.

The Central Jersey Jewish Political Action Committee (CJJPAC) was formed a little more than a year ago, with the endorsement of the Vaad HaRabbanim of Raritan Valley.

Chairman Dr. Marc Hanfling, an

Edison Cardiologist, and others sought to publicize and coordinate opportunities for the Jewish community to support the State of Israel as it faces terrorism at home and indifference from

the international community. CJJPAC established an e-mail distribution list to keep participants abreast of current events and concerns in Israel. The CJJPAC list-serv has grown to over 300 subscribers and has successfully mobilized its members to write letters to newspapers, engage in political activism, read a variety of news sources, and explore other means of supporting Israel.

In June Dr. Hanfling heard Tzvi Berg, a representative of Hatzalah of Yehudah and Shomron, speak on a Jewish radio station about the dire needs of this life-saving group, whose resources are, sadly, employed far too often. Hatzalah is the first response medical organization that aids victims of terror, and others in emergency situations, in the disputed territories in Israel. Dr. Hanfling knew viscerally that supporting this cause would not only be a worthwhile activity for CJJPAC but would also motivate its members greatly. There are so many important causes to support in Israel. Dr. Hanfling understood that in order to successfully raise funds for the general cause of "Israel," it was necessary to

choose one focal charity at a time to highlight and support.

Some of CJJPAC's success is attributable to the strength and character of the synagogues in the Highland Park/Edison community. One of the strengths of our community is that we have a number of shuls in town and every one gets along well with each other. We cooperate closely on numerous projects, from *bikur*

cholim to the *eruv* to supporting four local *yeshivot*, as well as many other efforts. Organizers knew that CJJPAC could tap in to a strong and unified network for this appeal.

CJJPAC contacted Hatzalah to be better able to convey information regarding Hatzalah's priority needs. CJJPAC then sprang into action. Representatives were recruited from each of the seven Orthodox shuls in the area to highlight CJJPAC and its efforts in their congregations. A letter went out to the entire community. The letter made an impassioned appeal for community members to consider the impact of terrorist acts and contribute to sponsor any of a number of forms of life-saving equipment, such as tanks of oxygen, portable defibrillators, a communications center, and other items.

Videos about Hatzalah were aired at most shuls, notices were placed in weekly shul bulletins, and the shul representatives made follow-up calls. A favorable front-page article in the local weekly Jewish newspaper, the Jewish State, added momentum to the drive.

When the campaign was completed over \$110,000 was raised in Middlesex County, including \$35,000 from an anonymous donor who sponsored the establishment of a communications center. Over one

hundred contributors were mobilized, a remarkable feat considering that the appeal took place near the *Yomim Tovim*, when Jews are inundated with appeals from their shuls and from many other worthy causes.

The campaign also had unintended positive ripple effects. A retiree from the area, now living in Florida, read about the appeal and decided to start a drive in his new shul. A synagogue bookkeeper decided to recommend that Hatzalah be placed on the list of causes to benefit from the annual campaign in her planned retirement community in Monmouth County.

The success of CJJPAC highlights not only the fact that people care about Israel and will contribute to a focused impassioned effort. CJJPAC's success proves that a grass-roots effort in a community built on unity will both be effective, and will serve to bolster that strength of unity.

For more information on CJJPAC or for advice on starting a similar group in your community, please email Dr. Hanfling at Doddad@aol.com.

In order to successfully raise funds for the general cause of "Israel," it is necessary to choose one focal charity at a time to highlight and support.

The Orthodox Union Department of Community and Synagogue Services proudly announces the new **"ISRAEL MISSIONS" DESK**



Call Richard Stareshesky to arrange synagogue or group missions to Israel, or to join the next OU mission to Israel

**Next OU mission to Israel:
July 22-28.**

Congregational Programming for Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim

(continued from page 5)

plan and program when several communal agencies have to be brought together. Start working early, and expand your base of participating agencies as years go on.

The Celebration

[1] Services begin with *Minchah* followed by some brief messages. Brief presentations we have had include:

[a] A *d'var Torah* by one of the youth going to or returning from study in Israel,

[b] A guest speaker from Israel,

[c] A congregant who is in Israel (on aliyah or for a year's study) speaking via telephone to the entire assemblage about his/her feelings as Yom HaAtzmaut is being celebrated.

[2] Timing is a consideration when Yom HaAtzmaut is on a weekday. Since the United States is on daylight-savings time, starting *Ma'ariv* at the regular time means that children who have to be in school the next day might be precluded from participating. Rabbinic determination will be needed to schedule the events and davening times appropriately.

[3] The text of Yom HaAtzmaut *Ma'ariv* as is specified in Israeli editions of the siddur such as *Rinat Yisrael* is made available to all congregants.

[4] *Ma'ariv* is preceded by calling attention to the fact that prior to Yom HaAtzmaut Israel observes Yom HaZikaron, a memorial day for the fallen soldiers. The Information Office of the Israel Consulate issues the grim statistics annually of how many Israelis fell in service to their country, how many have been wounded and disabled throughout the years. The information is available over the internet. I read these statistics as an introduction to the *Kel Malei Rachamim* that is then recited in memory of these fallen soldiers and civilians.

[5] *Ma'ariv* is lead by the congregation's *chazzan* in a *yom tov* mode.



(Any member who is a *chiyyuv* is forewarned that he will not be able to serve as *chazzan* this evening.)

For cantorial guidance and first-time tips, I suggest that you chat with Richard Stareshfsky, *chazzan* of Young Israel of Passaic-Clifton, who also serves as the OU's Director of Israel Missions, (212) 613-8171.

Following *Sh'monah Esrei* the service calls for opening the *Aron haKodesh*. The planning committee meticulously assigns this honor, keeping a record from year to year. Singing of *Shir HaMa'alot* (*Tehillim* 126) to the tune of *Hatikvah* is the finale of *Ma'ariv*.

Immediately after the *tefillot*, singing *Hatikvah* followed by *Ani Ma'amin* brings this *Ma'ariv* to a dynamic crescendo.

[6] Following *Ma'ariv*, a lavish smorgasbord is served and the festivities commence.

As for the menu: it is our experience that not all people (young nor old) can digest falafel. In addition to tons of falafel, babaganoush, chummus, Turkish salad and Israeli salad, plan on also serving American standards such as baked ziti, tuna and egg salad and the like to accommodate those who do not appreciate the taste of authentic Israeli food.

The singing and dancing is all Israeli. The Passaic-Clifton celebrations are immeasurably enhanced by having the live music and voice of one who has dedicated his entire professional life to spreading the message of Israel to our youth. Absent a *Chazzan* Richard Stareshfsky, or other live Jewish music, dancing can be enhanced by a local teen serving as a DJ who is provided with record-

ed songs appropriate for Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim.

[7] Little Israeli flags are available for all children. An additional big favorite of ours is the distribution to all young ones of an artistically designed lapel pin which in Hebrew reads: "I Love Israel" with a heart in the very center. You will want to have plenty of extra buttons for siblings who could not attend the festivities and whose parents will press you for extras. (Available exclusively from David Sky at Sky Books, 1923 Springfield Ave., Maplewood, NJ 07040, (973) 763 4244.)

[8] You may have to start *Shacharit* on a weekday Yom HaAtzmaut or Yom Yerushalayim about 10 minutes early to allow for people to attend a service that is in keeping with the celebration of the

day. We recite *Hallel*, the prayer for the welfare of the State of Israel and the IDF, and at the end of *Shacharit* we say *Tehillim* 126.

Leadership

Successful programming will need the committed leadership of laypersons and of the rabbi. Divergent attitudes being what they are, the final determination of just how each congregation will observe Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim will have to rest in the hands of its rabbinic leadership and within the parameters of propriety that he, the rabbi, will set for his congregation.

A Personal Postscript

Please recall my mentioning at the

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outset that most all of the above information originated as accumulated notes stored in one computerized file and to which I added material each year before and after Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim. There is yet one additional "program note" which resides in still another file - my very own will - in which I ask my own children and grandchildren to strive, whenever possible, to plan family weddings *davka* on Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim and in this way infuse deeper meaning into both the personal *simchah* and the yom tov quality of these days. In my will I wrote:

"And, in those years that there are no weddings to be celebrated, be certain to have a festive meal, in all

its glory, just like a Purim *Seudah*, to celebrate with children, neighbors, friends and distant relatives that the Almighty in His infinite goodness sustained us to be able to reach such a time. Now you will understand why each year I publicly recited *Shehecheyanu* either in shul or at the table. I implore you to do similarly."

Rabbi Chaim Wasserman has served as rabbi of Young Israel of Passaic-Clifton for 32 years. He is founding editor of The Rabbi's Letter, a professional newsletter for rabbis published by the National Council of Young Israel. For more information on the Young Israel of Passaic-Clifton Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim celebrations or assistance with your own programs call (973) 778-7117, e-mail Chaimwass@aol.com, or see their website on www.ou.org



ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 13

the Orthodox Union coordinated a trip to Israel for two hundred students from Yeshiva University and Stern College. These students learned that it is more important now than ever for all Jews to visit Eretz Yisrael.

LET THEM TELL YOU WHY.

Please call fax or e-mail Richard Stareshefsky to arrange for a student "ambassador" to address your congregation or other group about their experience and findings on

Operation Torah Shield II.

No cost involved.

Richard Stareshefsky: phone, (212) 613-8171, fax, (212) 613-0629, e-mail, richard@ou.org

Creating the Synagogue Trip or Mission to Israel:

(continued from page 2)

nish, lots of helpful materials at no cost. Below is a sampling of services available. To request any of them, simply call 888-77-ISRAEL, (774-7723), or explore and order online from www.goisrael.com:

- Maps and travel information on Israel including regional booklets, posters, photo CD's, and videos to borrow. A list of these materials is available on request or online.
- A Visitor's Companion booklet offers practical tips on travel in Israel addressing climate, currency, geography, etc.
- Sample itineraries for groups – Lots of ideas to construct a final itinerary, and your tour operator and the OU Israel Missions Desk will work with you to fine-tune daily details.
- Free brochure shells with color pictures and blank space for you to print your tour's itinerary, details, and booking information.
- A list of travel and tour organizers who have good reputations for

successful tours to Israel.

- An official letter from the regional director of the Israel Ministry of Tourism Office, welcoming you and your tour guests to Israel, to include in your brochure or newsletter to help generate enthusiasm for the trip. (Synagogue groups can obtain a similar letter from the OU as well.)
- Special events, discussions, lectures in Israel such as:
 - Israel, Recent History and Growth
 - The Mideast Peace Process
 - The Rebirth of the Hebrew Language
 - Judaism in Modern Israel
- A tree planting - a simple and charming act that will make each member of your group feel that he or she has had a special part in the greening of the Land of Israel. (Through the Seymour J. Abrams OU/NCSY World Center in Jerusalem, the OU can make arrangements for your group to have a ceremonial tree-planting event in the OU/NCSY Forest near Jerusalem.)

How much will the trip to Israel cost?

Although the range of prices is too wide to pin down, you will find that the price of a group visit to Israel is surprisingly affordable. Group pricing is significantly less expensive than going it alone. Also, tour operators often (the OU's partners always) offer the group leader's trip at reduced or no cost – when a critical mass of participants is met.

Is it really safe to travel in Israel?

In spite of the unrest that has been increasing of late, tourists who have been visiting Israel report feeling safe and at ease while touring and staying in Israel. Ask someone who has been to Israel recently – then see for yourself.

Your group's security and safety is the number one priority of the Orthodox Union, of its tour operators, and of the Government of the State of Israel. *Melavei neshek* – armed guards – and special bullet-proof buses are employed as needed. Itineraries are approved both in advance and daily with Israel security authorities.

How can I promote my tour?

1. Present your tour as an important program of your congregation. Your trip to Israel is an extension of your commitment to Eretz Yisrael, a commitment which can only be deepened by visiting as a group, and an experience which will be remembered for years to come.
2. Make frequent announcements. Announce your departure date soon and often. Tell people when, where, how much, and how to send in their deposits. Remember, don't make your trip conditional by saying you are "thinking about" going or "may" go. Be positive about the trip. Make repeated announcements from the pulpit, on the bulletin board, or in your synagogue bulletin. Notices and press releases to local Jewish Community publications will also help.
3. Invite everyone. Don't try to guess or pre-select the people you think will go. You will probably be surprised by who signs on and sends in a deposit.
4. Distribute brochures. Many tour operators and travel agents will be happy to print a brochure with your photo, invitation to the tour, and itinerary to bolster your efforts. The OU Israel Missions Department will also work with you in this regard.
5. Seek local media coverage. Offer local newspapers, radio and television stations details about your trip, and make yourself available for interviews.
6. Don't forget the individual approach. Person-to-person contact is an extremely effective method of promotion. Many of the people who travel with you will be friends and acquaintances you invited personally.
7. Ask for a commitment. Commitments must be made in the form of a deposit, and full payment will be necessary 45 days

If the organizer is not firm in the decision to lead a group to Israel, others will waver.

before departure (30 days at the absolute latest). Deposits are usually refundable up to 30 days before departure, and in unusual circumstances even later. A cancellation fee will most certainly "kick in" once the plane tickets have been printed. This fee is usually about \$100.00 per ticket.

8. Hold "Israel evenings". These will help create excitement about the trip within your congregation. The Israel Ministry of Tourism Office will provide you with special videos, slides, and literature for your program at no cost. Each participating family can be given a map of Jewish sites or other Ministry of Tourism product of interest. The Israel Missions Department of the OU can also arrange for a speaker to address these events.
9. Make small group presentations. Encourage people who are planning to go, or who have recently returned from Israel, to invite a few friends to their house. Show an Israel video in a relaxed and informal atmosphere to help build the one-to-one relationships you need to encourage additional participation.
10. Announce the name of everyone who signs on. Be enthusiastic about each person who joins your tour group. Announce their names formally from the pulpit, and note them in your bulletin.
11. Widen your circle of prospects. Consider inviting friends from outside your community, especially from a community in which you have previously resided. They may welcome the opportunity to join you. You may even want to invite local community leaders with whom you are closely associated. A listing of your program on the OU website may also attract a few "outsiders" who are looking for a group to join on or around the dates you are offering.
12. Write letters to tour group mem-

bers and prospects. This is a must and if possible, don't send just one letter. Send, instead, three or four - preferably send letters once a month - to keep your guests informed about plans and changes. This will keep up their interest and enthusiasm as the weeks pass between their initial decision and departure. You can include interesting items about sightseeing, travel tips, highlights of Israeli culture and even suggest reading material. E-mails are a great help in this, especially when including "links," web-pages, and positive articles about visiting Israel.

The preceding article offers clear and concise guidelines to leaders of synagogue tours to Israel. The information describes what tour leaders' roles should be from within their community. The planning in Israel is most successfully done by tour operators in Israel such as those available through the Seymour J. Abrams OU Jerusalem Travel Desk. The Orthodox Union's Director of Missions Richard Stareshefsky remains available at (212) 613-8171 to help your congregation every step of the way.

This article is courtesy of the Israel Ministry of Tourism, with help from Janet K. Rodgers of Geoffrey Weill Associates, Inc.

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OU Travel Desk Hotline,
011-972-2-566-7787, ext. 249
e-mail tiyul@israelcenter.co.il



Editor's Message



This special Israel edition of "Synagogue Trends" is being presented in solidarity with Israel. Israel needs our support – through visiting Israel, through financial measures, through political and media pressure, and especially through *tefillah* – as in no time in recent history. This publication provides ideas on how your synagogue and community can provide that help.

Articles include a guide to conducting a synagogue trip to Israel, a definition of the role of a synagogue Israel Committee, and some thoughtful, proven-effective routes a shul or community can take to raise funds on Israel's behalf. This issue also features an article from Rabbi Chaim Wasserman that provides details on how to make an effective Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim celebration. Such celebrations serve to strengthen a community's bonds and commitment to *Eretz Yisrael*.

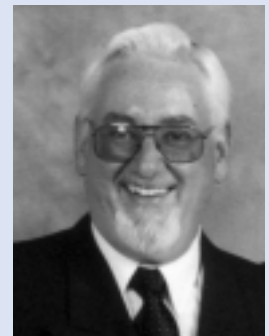
The welfare of Israel is among the top priorities of the Orthodox Union. Two of the eight declarations of "The purpose of the Orthodox Union" in the OU's Constitution make specific reference to this commitment: "To speak with a coordinated voice and to act with the strength of unity on issues confronting the American, Israeli and the world Jewish community, and "To make its contribution to the welfare of American and Israeli society." The Constitution is further rife with directives in which the allegiance to Israel is self-evident.

Through the years the OU has addressed this commitment on numerous fronts. The Seymour J. Abrams Orthodox Union World Jerusalem Center and all its work have long represented a major part of these efforts. More recently, we celebrated the OU's centennial with a convention in Israel. During this recent crisis OU/RCA Israel Solidarity Missions have become renowned forums for synagogues and individuals to express their commitment to Israel. The importance of these missions, magnified by the *matzav* in Israel, has led the OU to appoint a Director of Israel Missions within our Department of Community and Synagogue Services.

Richard Stareshesky is our Director of Israel Missions. He is contributing his lifetime of practical experience and knowledge to the job in his own energetic, imaginative way. Raised in Passaic, New Jersey, Richard started his career working with youngsters as a counselor in Camp Massad in Pennsylvania, where he was also known as "Rafi." Years later he became the Director of the camp, en route earning a BA in sociology and a Masters in Jewish Education at Yeshiva University. For almost 22 years, he served as National Director of Youth and Young Adult Activities for the National Council of Young Israel. During that period he founded and directed a series of youth, singles, and family travel programs, both domestic and in Israel.

The Israel Missions desk's roles are manifold. Mr. Stareshesky will continue to coordinate several OU Solidarity Missions a year. He also serves to assist synagogues, groups, and individuals coordinate trips to Israel. He has insightful ideas for places to go – he has developed a series of Israel programs for adults, teens, singles and families that are built by using pliable modules which include the Jerusalem module, the Golan Heights module, the desert experience, and a specific solidarity module – and has unique contacts providing access to exclusive places and personalities.

As always, we hope you will enjoy the articles in "Synagogue Trends," and utilize the ideas herein. We further urge you to take full advantage of The Israel Missions desk. Give Richard Stareshesky a call at (212) 613-8171, or e-mail him at richard@ou.org. And in these troubling times, may our prayers and efforts on Israel's behalf bring about the desired results.



Richard Stareshesky

Rabbi Mayer Waxman, *Editor*

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