

MIFGASH

An encounter with one another

Published by the Union of Jewish Congregations of Latin America and the Caribbean



Number 25

Editorial Committee

Martha Lichtenstein

Rabbi Pablo Berman

CONTENT

Editorial	
When the sapling becomes atree 2
<i>By Martha Lichtenstein</i>	
Tu Bishvat in Israel 3
<i>By Rabbi Alona Lisitsa</i>	
The media: from intermediaries to judges 6
<i>By Roxana Webb</i>	
Why do we teach the Shoah? 7
<i>By Abraham Zylberman</i>	
Celebrating the achievements of MASHAV in El Salvador 10
<i>By Dina Campos</i>	
Let's use diplomacy, not public protests 11
<i>By Dina Siegel Vann</i>	
The UJCL communities tell us about their Chanukah 2007 celebration 13

MIFGASH

An encounter with one another

Published by the Union of Jewish Congregations of Latin America and the Caribbean



EDITORIAL

When the Sapling becomes a Tree



On Tu biSh'vat we celebrate the New Year of the trees. From biblical times we are reminded that planting a tree is an all - important task, and later on the Sages tell us that we should finish it first before we welcome the Messiah should he arrive in the meantime.

Two years ago, at the suggestion of Jack Davidson, then UJCL President, we planted a sapling that we later called Mifgash, because it was a place of Encounter for all of us who are privileged to belong to this unique organization.

Today the 25th. issue of Mifgash sees the light. The sapling has become a “giving tree” ¹that welcomes us to read under its shade, to learn more about the challenge and the multiple approaches to the practice of our Judaism while respecting the Other's viewpoint.

It is our hope that in these issues we have informed our readers with articles from a variety of sources and from representatives of leading Jewish organizations. However, YOUR contributions are most valued. They give us a sense of what is happening in our communities, your achievements being a source of inspiration, your concerns shared by us all.

There is something amazing about our tree: in only two years its shade extends through parts of Latin America and the Caribbean and its roots grow deeper every day. Let your congregation be one of its valued fruits!

Martha E. Lichtenstein
Co-Editor Mifgash

(Footnotes)

¹ The Giving Tree is the name of a book by Shel Silverstein

**The UJCL Communications Department wishes the United Congregation
of Israelites in Jamaica much success with this Encounter.
We are all looking forward to meeting our friends once again,
learning and enjoying every minute of it.**

MIFGASH

An encounter with one another

Published by the Union of Jewish Congregations of Latin America and the Caribbean



Tu Bishvat in Israel

Tu beShvat (the 15th of Shvat) is a holiday without *halahkot*, without laws or rulings. And precisely because of that it is so popular with the secular population of Israel.

The 15th of Shvat is mentioned for the first time in the *Mishnah*. There is no mention of the day in the *Tanach*. Therefore, we could suggest that this tradition is a late one compared to other festivals.

Moreover, the first *mishnah* in the first chapter of the tractate Rosh haShanah states the 15th of Shvat as a day marking the taxation year for the trees' fruits. The fruits that have ripened before that day will be subject to that year's taxation, and if they have ripened after the 15th of Shvat, they will be part of next year taxation. As such, it is difficult to imagine the day was a holiday. People never like paying taxes, neither then, nor nowadays.

Since then, the date of the 15th of Shvat is mentioned several times in the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds, but not as a holiday or a festive day, rather as a conventional time mark for taxation.

After the Second Temple destruction, when the vast majority of Jews were living in the Diaspora, the 15th of Shvat became a day of expression of longing and nostalgia for Eretz Israel. The tradition of eating fruits that grow in Israel is due to these early medieval times. Dry fruits brought from Israel were considered the most precious for the 15th of Shvat.

The Kabbalists of Safed in the 17th century encountered the challenge of redefining the day. Living in the Land of Israel, they did not need a special day to express their nostalgia or to recall their connection to Israel. They had already been living there, enjoying the Biblical views and tasting daily the fruits of the Holy Land. The Safed Kabbalists designed a special ceremony, "*tikkun*" for the Tu beShvat eve. Using as their model the Passover *Haggadah*, they created a collection of texts, biblical verses, Mishnaic and Talmudic quotations, *Midrashim*, and citations from the *Zohar*, all of them praising the Land of Israel and its fruit.

The night of longing for Israel has become the night of learning about its nature and agriculture. Like at the Passover Seder, during *Tikkun Tu beShvat*, the kabbalists drank four glasses of wine, and blessed over the different types of fruits, each of them representing a different understanding of the world according to the Lurianic Kabbalah. The main accent switched from the expression of the nostalgic feeling to the learning (*limud*) and exploration of the Land through the texts written about Israel.

As Zionism gained its attraction over the Jews with new power, and the new immigrants from Europe started settling over the land, the ideology of Hebrew work, especially Hebrew agriculture, as returning to the national roots, became the prevailing one. The land that Hebrew pioneers had found was ruined and had been deserted for years; therefore, it was clear that planting new trees was vital. The first

MIFGASH

An encounter with one another

Published by the Union of Jewish Congregations of Latin America and the Caribbean



occasion of massive tree planting on Tu beShvat is recorded to have taken place at the *moshav* Yasod Maale, in the Galilee, in 1884. But the official connection between this day and tree planting was written for the first time in the manifest at the teachers' conference that established the teachers' trade union in Zihron Yaakov, in 1908. Teachers and pre-school educators took responsibility for encouragement, care and development of the young generation, and of the Land of Israel as well. They decided that every Tu beShvat, they would plant new trees with their students.

The new Zionist generation of Israel did not view itself "as just sitting and reading nice poems"; they felt that a practical commandment (*mitzvah*) of planting trees in Eretz Israel would be the best match for their understanding and practice on Tu beShvat. Digging the land and planting a tree, watching its growth was symbolic of growing new roots in their ancient homeland.

As time passed, there was no land left for the schoolchildren planting missions, and the tradition became less exciting: the young kids would plant flowers in the kindergarten yards, and schoolchildren – in their schools' backyards. Tu beShvat became a children's festival.

During the last decade Tu beShvat has acquired a new content in Israel: religious people of all denominations and secular Israelis alike have turned to the ecological and nature preserving aspects of Jewish tradition on this day. The kabbalist *tikkun* has made its comeback while the accent has been shifted to our responsibility before God, the Creator, and before next generations for nature preservation.

In modern Israel Tu beShvat became a day of awareness of the ecological imbalance that humanity has caused, and a day of searching and discussing of possible solutions.

The Bible and other Jewish traditional sources provide a wide range of directions and commandments that could guide modern Jews in meaningful and relevant ways to care for the land our God has given us. In the words of God to the first man, Adam, in the Midrash: "There is no one to repair the damage if you cause one".

This year is the seventh year, *shnat shmitah*, in Israel. Even on Tu beShvat, the New Year of trees, we cannot plant anything or perform any agricultural work. The celebrations of Tu beShvat this year would stress one of the most important ideas of the seventh year and Jews' relationship with the Holy Land: "Because the Land is mine, said the Lord". We are called to stop any agricultural activity in order to remind ourselves, that even though we live in Eretz Israel, the land that our God has promised to our Patriarchs, and we have established an independent Jewish state where we can work on our land, the land, as anything in this world, is God's Creation and therefore, is in God's possession. Our Lord, who is merciful and kind, has given us the privilege of having a land that is not like any other, but once in every seven years we have to remind ourselves of that.

MIFGASH

An encounter with one another

Published by the Union of Jewish Congregations of Latin America and the Caribbean



Even though most of Israelis, nowadays, do not work in the field of agriculture, every year we plant trees and feel this wonderful feeling of “partial ownership” with the Creator. This year, the year of *shmitah*, brings us, Israelis, closer to our brethren in the Diaspora: we cannot plant or work our land in any way; we are reminded of the temporal aspect of our existence on the Land of Israel, and of Israel as people, not just the land or state. Together with other Jews all over the world we will read and study texts about our mutual love to the Land of Israel, no matter where we live, and about our responsibility before our God for the creation the Lord bestowed in our hands.

“To own” means being in charge, being responsible. This year Tu beShvat could teach us to express our love of Israel in new ways. Just like in each generation the people of Israel had to fill this date with new, relevant meaning according to their changing situation and place of settlement, today, in Israel or abroad, Jews are called upon to redefine their Tu beShvat in a unique manner that is meaningful to them and reflects their situation. In this way they will be preserving the main idea behind Tu beShvat: to be connected to the Land of Israel.

Rabbi Alona Lisitsa¹
Jerusalem, January 2008

2. *Rabbi Alona Lisitsa, who was born in Kiev, Ukraine, is currently teaching at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Jerusalem. She made alyah in 1991 and is currently pursuing a doctorate at Tel Aviv University, Hebrew Culture Dept., Ancient and Talmudic Halakhah.*

1 *Rabbi Lisitsa graduated from Hebrew University in 2000. (MA in English linguistics) and was ordained at HUC-JIR in 2004. She coordinates HUC programs at FSU.*

Rabbi Lisitsa was a visiting Rabbi at the Jewish Community of Aruba during Sept. 2007.

MIFGASH

An encounter with one another

Published by the Union of Jewish Congregations of Latin America and the Caribbean



The Media: from Intermediaries to Judges

The media, in theory, plays the role of an intermediary between an event and the population, who is a secondary protagonist of the facts. The role of the communications media is not to be the judges of the facts, as it happens with the Middle East conflict. In reality the media manipulates and distributes information at the whim of those who lead the big or small information networks. A topic that globalization has allowed us to follow closely in Latin America is the situation in the Middle East. The relationship between Israelis and Palestinians is constantly being staged.

The media treats very superficially and vainly a conflict that has been existent for years and is difficult to understand unless one reads and gets some clarification about the stereotypes concerning Israelis. In other words, the American networks deal with the tension by blaming the Israeli government for the situation that is being lived in the Palestinian territories, especially in Gaza.

With the arrival of the terrorist militia Hamas to government, with an appointed Prime Minister, the international community and therefore the media criticized the electoral process that brought them to power. However, after they were de-legitimized by the Palestinian National Authority, life in the Strip became chaotic due to the clashes between Fatah and Hamas. But, at which moment did the Government of Ehud Olmert bring about the crisis in those territories?

This is just one example of how the media approaches the situation in the Middle East: not so impartially. Therefore the challenge falls on those of us who are responsible for publicizing a situation in which there are victims and killers on both sides. We must emphasize the work of many journalists who strive to publicize the crisis and the human dramas that are experienced in both territories and both positions, for nothing is an absolute truth and everything, as a “whole” has not been said yet.

As opinion shapers with an enormous power to influence the public we must moderate our interpretation of the facts with reliable data and images that reflect reality, without prejudice nor stereotypes. The challenge lies precisely in a careful investigation first and being brave in our defense of freedom of the press. This freedom should never be restricted, but also never used to falsely accuse certain protagonists in a conflict.

Roxana Carolina Webb D.
International News Editor
Teleprensa, Channel 33
El Salvador

MIFGASH

An encounter with one another

Published by the Union of Jewish Congregations of Latin America and the Caribbean



We thank Prof. Zylberman for his valuable contribution to our commemoration of Holocaust Remembrance Day. On January 27, 1945, Auschwitz was liberated.
The Editors

Why do we teach the Shoah?

The genocide perpetrated against the Jewish people by Nazi Germany was the biggest calamity that the Jewish people suffered during the course of their existence, considering the number of its victims. One third was exterminated and many more were wounded, physically as well as spiritually. However, it is not the number of victims what determines the peculiar character of the Shoah. This is defined, above all, by the intention of Nazi Germany to murder all the Jews of the world for the mere fact of being Jews, according to a perfectly elaborated and organized plan, which had already begun to be put into practice. Danger threatened every Jew in Europe and the rest of the world. Only Germany's defeat prevented the plan to be fulfilled in all its designs.

Along the course of history there were many attempts to exterminate the Jewish people, but none was as successful as the perpetrators hoped. All of them were incorporated to the memory of the people, memory without which they would not have survived. This is the first reason why the Shoah must be taught: this fact has been incorporated into the collective memory of the Jewish people and has become a model of remembrance that, therefore, must transcend them. It must transcend in the face of the many questions that may be raised in relation to its historic causality, to the place that the Jewish people had in relation to other peoples, to individual and collective behaviors, of ethics, faith and many more. These questions can be extended to similar behavior that happened in other peoples and under similar or different historic conditions.

Because life is memory, and in the words of Luis Buñuel "... a life without memory would not be a life. Our memory is our coherence, our reason, our action, our feeling. Without it we are nothing. Memory, indispensable and magnificent, is also fragile and vulnerable. It won't only be threatened by oblivion, its old enemy, but also by the false memories that invade it day by day...". Not to forget, to remember, is the mandate that the six million Jews that were exterminated left us as a legacy, so that this aberrant fact will never happen again.

When we ask "how could this be possible?", we find another reason to teach the Shoah. In Germany, before the ascent of Nazism, there was poverty and unemployment. Hitler, using the anti-Semitic prejudices that had originated several centuries ago, blames the Jews, an absolute minority in German society, for this situation, converting them, as in the Middle Ages, in scapegoats. Hitler clearly declares that democracy will be abolished and that the Jews will be deprived of their rights. In 1932 one third of the German population votes for the Nazi party, that thus becomes the biggest one and is able to form a government.

Millions of citizens put Hitler in a position of power with the hope of getting out of their misery. They did not care about the fate of their Jewish fellow countrymen. One third of the German population was indifferent to what would happen in their country, and it did not happen out of lack of knowledge. One

MIFGASH

An encounter with one another

Published by the Union of Jewish Congregations of Latin America and the Caribbean



third was ready to sacrifice their rights, their freedom, for an eventual future well-being. We can thus wonder if material well-being transcends individual freedom, the rights and responsibilities of citizens, the protection of the other, to create with him bonds of solidarity and help.

We must teach the Shoah because; through this teaching we can fight against discrimination, against intolerance, against the rejection of the other who is different from me, against the persecution of the one who is different. We can fight for the particularity of the other, restoring the biblical teachings "... love thy neighbor as thyself..." and "don't do unto others what you don't want to be done to you".

The mandate of not differentiating and the prohibition of difference is the basis of every fascism. A fascist world vision is always at its base the denial of what is different. There is no right to individuality, we must all be the same and think the same. Any fascist concept implies discrimination and persecution. Therefore the demand for the other to be the same as me is absolutely impossible. To teach the Shoah is also to teach us to fight fascism of any color or tendency.

We must teach the Shoah because through its study we are teaching man to fight against racism. Racism was the basis for the hatred of Jews in Nazi Germany. In Nazi theory the nation was not a society of a variety of origins united by their way of life. A society like that was nothing but a coarse conglomerate.

The Nazis exalted the *Volk* or *ethnos*. This was a people of pure racial origins, mystically united in a primitive community of blood and land, which did not acknowledge artificial borders. In the name of this racial purity they committed the most aberrant crimes against humanity, from medical and genetic experiments and the killing of those who were mentally different to the enslaving exploitation of those considered inferior, and culminating with the cold, premeditated and organized murder of those defined as subhuman.

We must teach the Shoah because, in spite of the discrimination, of the persecutions, of racism, of intolerance, of generalized indifference, there were instances of solidarity with the persecuted, with the humiliated. There were ordinary people who helped a child, a family, who fed them, gave them clothing, hid them, helped them cross a border, and procured forged documents for them. These instances of solidarity, although insufficient and opposite to the generalized behavior, must also be rescued. As the Talmud says "...he who saves a life, is as though he had saved mankind..."

Most of this help was given selflessly, risking their lives and that of their families, in the fulfillment of a moral obligation as human beings. The moral attitude only comes to life when we reject and fight against all inconsistent ideas and formulations, all preconceived opinions, all damnable judgments, all forms of intolerance.

We must not teach the Shoah as insane behavior, a phenomenon without preceding history and no continuation. It does not have an explanation; even more, it is forbidden to find an explanation because to explain is to understand, and the attempt to understand is in the field of the justification of the phenomenon

MIFGASH

An encounter with one another

Published by the Union of Jewish Congregations of Latin America and the Caribbean



that is being investigated. Nazism, in the 1933-1945 historical period, was not a sudden deviation in the course of German history either, like a train that derails due to an unforeseen breakdown, as people pretended to explain. The deviation did not exist, the train was not derailed. Quite the contrary, it went forth and destroyed everything in its path until it was stopped.

Nazism, as it was known until 1945, is dead. It was not simply the work of one man and it is absurd to refer to it as if Hitler would have personally directed the deportation trains, recruited the slave workers, tortured the suspects, and poured the Zyklon B crystals in the Auschwitz gas chambers. Nazism was a corruption and degradation of the human spirit and the Germans are not the only subjects in this danger. Wherever they went they found active collaborators.

The essence of Nazism is latent in every country or institution where men retain arbitrary power, where individuals are imprisoned without previous trial or the police mistreat the people they arrest, where racial prejudice persists and some men believe themselves to be superior to others because of race or color. Nowadays there are still some people who look for scapegoats or a group to blame for everything that is wrong. Even today prejudices exist, acting as barriers between men to keep them apart. It is necessary to fight them as soon as the first outbreaks show up. This is the great teaching of the Shoah. If in 1932 the voters would have been aware of it, today the name Adolf Hitler would not tell us anything... Nazism will survive and will tend to reemerge if mankind forgets all of this and averts its eyes, as many Germans did in the 30's and 40's. Edmund Burke, in the eighteenth century, clearly affirmed the responsibility of man when he said: "For evil to increase, it is enough for good people to do nothing to prevent it".

Elie Wiesel, a survivor of the concentration camps and Nobel Peace Prize winner wrote:

"...Merciful God, do not push me to that abyss where all life, all hope and all light are covered by obscurity. God of truth, remember that, without memory, truth becomes a lie, since it only takes the mask of truth. Remember that, thanks to memory Man is able to return to the sources of his longing for Your presence.

Remember, God of history, that You created Man to remember. You have brought me to the world. You have protected me in times of danger and death to be a witness: well, what kind of witness would I be without my memory? You are aware, God, that I do not want to forget You. I do not want to forget anything. Neither the dead nor the living. Neither the voices nor the silences. I do not want to forget those moments of plenitude that have enriched my existence, nor the times of abandonment that have filled me with despair.

Even if You, God, would forget me, I refuse to forget You..."

Prof. Abraham Zylberman

History Professor at the UBA (Universidad de Buenos Aires)

Jewish History Professor at the Zalman Shazar Teacher's Institute (Bs. As.) , at the ORT Technical School and at its Technology Institute

Specialized courses on Holocaust Studies at the International School for Holocaust Study at Yad VaShem (Jerusalem) and at the Holocaust Museum (Houston, Texas)

Director of the cycle: Movies and History at the Museum of the Shoa (Bs.As.)

MIFGASH

An encounter with one another

Published by the Union of Jewish Congregations of Latin America and the Caribbean



Celebrating the Achievements of MASHAV in El Salvador

The main characteristic that remained engraved in my memory after my trip in the year 2000 was the sharing and now that Israel turns 60, a period in which it shared its teachings for development coupled with its constant actions to reach peace, is admiration.

Israel overcame many difficulties, accomplished independence, freedom, and equality among the peoples, with a fortitude extracted from its history. In spite of being a young State, Israel is outstanding for its social dynamics, politics, educational and scientific progress. All of this has enabled it to share, giving its cooperation and help with a pacifying encouragement towards great development. Another facet that greatly called my attention was its human resources capabilities when tackling research and innovation projects. They have thus overcome the scarcity of natural resources and the small size of the country, which can be compared to ours in extension. Even with these challenges they have greatly strengthened their economy, achieving a high standard of living.

Thanks to this human potential, we, the Salvadorans, have benefited from much technical cooperation in agriculture, cattle, rural tourism, water resources, health and education. This knowledge is being multiplied in each field where it is applied by the more than 2000 ex -scholarship holders who are being able to reach the goals of the millennium.

We are one of the world countries that has been more favored by the scholarships granted by the Institute for International Cooperation (MASHAV), and has received greater support in health, education, rural tourism, hydrological resources, cooperativism, agriculture, stock breeding and others. These seeds planted have promoted the development and strengthening of our human capital. By the same token we have gotten much cooperation from experts who often arrive to our country to share their knowledge.

This year Israel celebrates its 60th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, MASHAV marks its golden 50th anniversary, El Salvador celebrates 60 years of full diplomatic relations with the State of Israel, and we, as the Shalom Association of ex-Scholarship Holders and Special Guests will mark 30 years of receiving all this historic, cultural, educational and scientific wealth that binds us together.

To the people of Israel and to MASHAV, *Todah Rabah!*

A special note of thanks to the Ambassador of the State of Israel, (lic.) Mattanya Cohen, Rabbi Pablo Berman, who has been a key factor in the development of our activities, and Eng. Ricardo Freund, who has supported us so generously, and many, many more who in one way or another have supported and encouraged us, including the Government and the Postal Office for the issue of a special commemorative stamp for the 60th.anniversary of the Independence of the State of Israel.

MIFGASH

An encounter with one another

Published by the Union of Jewish Congregations of Latin America and the Caribbean



Our activities are social, cultural and educational. The work of the Board of Directors corresponds with our Statutes, which are based mainly in strengthening the ties of friendship between both nations.

What is our commitment as ex-scholarship holders? It is to transmit our knowledge to our brothers, who have not had the chance of training and studying in Israel. Thanks to all for believing in our work, and ratifying this belief with your support!

Dina Campos
President
Shalom Association of ex-Scholarship Holders and Special Guests

Let's use Diplomacy, not Public Protests

The dangerous antics of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, his alliance with Iran, his open hostility toward the United States and a number of anti-Semitic incidents have generated widespread concern about the fate of the small Jewish community in this oil-rich South American nation.

How best can we in the American Jewish community be helpful, while ever mindful of the local community's interests? The situation is extremely delicate. American Jews cannot presume to know better than the Venezuelan Jewish leadership what they face on a daily basis and how best to respond.

Shouting and screaming from the safety of the United States may feel good to some, but the goal of the exercise is not to satisfy their needs; rather, it's to ensure the safety and well-being of thousands of Venezuelan Jews who have repeatedly said that such behavior is likely to exacerbate the situation.

In my role at the American Jewish Committee (AJC), I have visited Caracas four times in the past three years, most recently in November 2007. The AJC regularly hosts the leaders of Confederación de Asociaciones Israelitas de Venezuela (CAIV), the Jewish community's umbrella organization, one of AJC's international partners, while we remain in almost daily contact.

Support for Venezuelan Jews

Venezuela Jewry's heightened sense of vulnerability has resulted above all from two outrageous police assaults, in 2004 and 2007, on Hebraica, the Caracas complex housing the Jewish community center and school, as well as incendiary anti-Semitic reports in major media.

MIFGASH

An encounter with one another

Published by the Union of Jewish Congregations of Latin America and the Caribbean



Venezuelan Jews are well aware that they enjoy strong support not only from mainstream American Jewish organizations, but also from the U.S. government and important neighbors in South America, notably Argentine President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. Last year, then then First Lady Kirchner addressed the 40th anniversary of the CAIV in Caracas. Her words of support were unmistakably clear. Attended by diplomats from many nations, as well as U.S. and Latin American Jewish leaders, the gathering sent a strong message to the Chávez government.

The best assistance American Jews can provide, apart from helping sustain Jewish life in Venezuela and across Latin America, is to support efforts to strengthen the democratic and pluralistic characteristics of these societies. In December, more than 30 leaders of 14 Latin American Jewish communities, including Venezuela, gathered in Miami for a three-day AJC advocacy workshop that touched on these very issues. Chávez's ascension to power came amid pervasive socio-economic gaps and corruption. Many in decision-making positions in the U.S. government have rightly, if belatedly, concluded that public confrontation with his regime should be avoided when possible. Thus, without changing its fundamental attitude, Washington has recently used quieter diplomacy and even partial engagement with a major supplier of oil to the United States — another reminder of the consequences of our nation's dependence on oil from hostile sources.

Pressure U.S. government

So, while remaining in close contact with the CAIV and urging the Venezuelan administration to respect the constitutional rights of the Jewish community, we should continue to convey our concerns to the State Department, Congress and the Organization of American States, as well as those friendly governments in the region who view with concern any assaults against Jews. Chávez may or may not care what the United States and American Jewish groups think, but he can't easily dismiss the concerns of key countries in his region and others important to his regime.

Also, Americans should focus on pressing the U.S. government to support stepped-up efforts to reduce endemic poverty and inequality in our hemisphere. That is a longer-term antidote to Chávez and populist leaders like him who feed off the wide gaps in Latin American societies. Strikingly, more and more Latin American Jewish communities recognize the need to join these efforts if the future is to hold promise for everyone.

Meanwhile, the Venezuelan Jewish community is not alone. Support has come from many quarters. That support and solidarity must be sustained. We seek to ensure that it will.

Dina Siegel Vann

Director of AJC's Latino and Latin American Institute in Washington, D.C.

MIFGASH

An encounter with one another

Published by the Union of Jewish Congregations of Latin America and the Caribbean



The UJCL Communities tell us about their Chanukah 2007 celebration



Chanukkah at the Hebrew Community of Guadalajara

This year we celebrated Chanukkah sharing many diverse activities. On one of the evenings we organized a night of games that was attended by members and friends. We also held a family contest of huge *Sevivonim* during which the winning family received an important prize.

For those who wish to see pictures of the different models of *Sevivonim* that were presented we invite them to visit this web page: <http://kolhakehila.blogspot.com/2007/12/concurso-de-sevivonim.html>.

Within the framework of WIZO the ladies of the community got together for the traditional Chanukkah exchange of gifts while, on the last night of the festivity all our families got together to light different *Chanukkiot* models. Taking the centrality of the symbol of light as a starting point, we took advantage of that occasion to deepen our commitment to Tzedakah, or Social Justice, and we raised some funds to be utilized to cover internal needs as well as to strengthen our participation as citizens here in Guadalajara.

Lastly, we would like to wish you and all the UJCL friends a Gregorian year that will be prosperous, full of blessings and light. May we continue to build networks of connection and joint action, with the strengthening of the brotherly ties that bind us as Great Community of Latin American and Caribbean Communities, which we are and will continue to be.

With blessings,
Rabbi Joshua Kullock

Chanukkah at Kol Shearith Israel, Panama

It was 5:30 PM on Sunday, December 9. We were all anxious waiting for the activity to start. Some had thought it might be a newscast, others knew it was the second edition of the Mattitiah prize awards, during which, like in the previous year prizes would be given in recognition of the work done by the Noar Panama *madrichim* during 2007. They also knew that it was Chanukkah and that we would be lighting the candles together but, what absolutely nobody knew was that there would be guests as important as the comedian Borat or that we would be watching live the play that we had been looking forward to, with high ranking actors such as the members of the *kvutzah* *Chalutzim*, or that they would be able to enjoy such striking choreography as the one danced by the children of the *kvutzot* *Pilim* (elephants) or *Zeevim* (wolves).

MIFGASH

An encounter with one another

Published by the Union of Jewish Congregations of Latin America and the Caribbean



In the end everything started on time. Notinoar, name of the news bulletin which would be the connecting line for the party with anchors Rachel Baitel and Leonardo Grinspan , started to announce all the most important news items that happened during the year in Noar Panama. Amongst them, the social events presented by Paula Bastón. Steven Malca presented the sports news like, for instance, the Soccer Championship that was played in 2007.

Still to come was the arrival of the long expected Borat, played by the humorous Noar madrich Daniel Mordok who, excellent in his role, interviewed another Noar madrich, Nathan Bern . Nathan, with his characteristic sense of humor, would answer the well- known character's questions.

We had already remembered activities that took place during the year as, for instance, *machaneh* La Iguana, that was a tremendous success and some anecdotes from 2007 at Noar, until the moment came to light the candles. Rabbi Kraselnik lit them, together with all the children, and then the party went on.

The only thing missing was the traditional award of the Mattitiahu Prizes to the *madrichim* of the youth movement, according to the voting of the families, done via e-mail. Thus we recognized the work of the *madrichim* and of all those who collaborated with the Youth Movement.

It was time to end this successful Chanukkah party and Closing of the 2007 Noar activities so, with a big smile, joy and optimism we bade farewell to 2007 in our movement with this great party that fulfilled the expectations of everyone.

By Leo Grinspan



MIFGASH

An encounter with one another

Published by the Union of Jewish Congregations of Latin America and the Caribbean



Chanukkah Festival at the Jewish Community of El Salvador

We started our celebration with the Havdalah ceremony, in which all joined, to bid farewell to the Shabbat. Afterwards we had a star studded presentation of the children with Hannukah Parpar, a beautiful play in Black Light. We had the invaluable assistance of our Madrichot, and the voice in off and percussion of the artist Naara Salomon. Immediately following we enjoyed the wonderful choreographies of our dancers, led by Ariella, also in Black Light.

With Aaron's band we sang the Hanukkah songs, in keyboards, bass and battery, a real treat.

The lighting of the fifth candle illuminated the community, to the applause of the parents, upon seeing the performance of their children and grandchildren. Of course, pizza, sufganiot and the gifts for the children could not be absent.

We closed with an auction of a beautiful painting donated by family Melgar, for which we got \$1018 for Tikkun Olam projects and the help that our Kehilah offers to different educational institutions in the country.

We leave you with some images of this unforgettable evening.

Rabbi Pablo Berman

