

# MIFGASH



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**Save the date:**

*The 2nd Conference of Jewish Communities in Latin America will take place from Thursday, November 16 to Sunday, November 19, 2006 in Punta del Este, Uruguay.*

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Union of Jewish Congregations of Latin America and the Caribbean  
Unión Judía de Congregaciones de Latinoamérica y El Caribe

## Closing Panel JDC – 10th Meeting of Latin American Leaders Mar del Plata, Argentina May 13, 2006

By L. Jack Davidson, President U.J.C.L.

You are going to disappear! Make *Aliyah* or go to Mexico!

This was the answer received by two members of the Board of Directors of the small *Comunidad Israelita de El Salvador* when they visited the offices of the *Sojnut* in the years of the Civil War in El Salvador and asked for help in obtaining a Rabbi or a *Sheliach*.

I would like to clarify that these were not two *schnorers* looking for charity, they were two gentlemen of the community who, it is said that at one time were the major contributors “per capita” to Israel, representatives of the Jewish Community of one of the only two countries who had their embassy in Jerusalem. A very important fact politically for Israel inasmuch as by this deed it is recognized and therefore legitimizes *Yerushalayim* as the capital of *Eretz Israel*.

These two gentlemen looked for help so that the Jewish Agency would guide them and find them a teacher, an adviser that in this emergency situation would permit them to maintain the flame of Judaism lit.

You are going to disappear! Make *Aliyah* or go to Mexico!

Twenty-five years later, our small Community still remains active, and is an example of survival and continuity in a world of high risk. The Embassy of El Salvador continues in Jerusalem in spite of the pressures from the huge Palestinian community and thanks to the joint efforts between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Israel and the *Comunidad Israelita de El Salvador*.

In spite of that response that we greatly disliked then, our relationship with Israel, the Embassy, and the Jewish Agency is very fluid and fruitful and is one of the keys to the success of our permanency.

From this perspective I want to share some reflections about the dynamics of the bond between the Diaspora and Israel.

I believe that you would agree with me that the relationships between Israel and the Communities in the Diaspora are not easy. They are complicated-multifaceted.

This is mainly because the needs and the fears, although centered on the same common goal, that is the survival of Judaism, are different.

Israel as a nation is afraid to lose its security, its life; and the Diaspora is afraid to lose its culture, its origins, and its Jewish existence.

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In Israel Judaism is present in daily life, and is not in danger of disappearing as an expression of the values and traditions of our people as is the case in the Diaspora, even though the characteristics of this Judaism could be a motive of reflection on another occasion.

What is in danger in Israel is life; and while there are Communities where Jews fear for their life, I believe that the principal focus here is that in our communities what we fear is assimilation and the loss of Jewish identity of their members and their organizations.

This substantial difference is projected and acquires in each case a distinct perspective. The Jew of the Diaspora looks to Israel as security for his Judaism and for his identity and hopes that Israel would provide it-in a certain way he feels it is rightfully his for the economic and moral support he has given throughout the years, conflicts, and problems.

Nevertheless, the Israeli feels that the Jew of the Diaspora is not a partner of equal value in connection with Israel, he does not commit as he commits and does not take the same risks. In the Diaspora we speak of “our” Israel and pass judgment as though we were part of it. The Israeli does not share this appropriation and even questions our right to give opinions on certain issues.

The relationship is complicated even more by the fact that in this conjuncture all need one another. Israel looks to its friends from around the world for support when there are threats and problems and the Embassies look to the communities and their members to obtain all kinds of support. The Communities at the same time receive assistance from the Embassies to solve problems of anti Semitism and others, without forgetting the principal support that Israel represents for all Jews: their security. In the countries where Israel, for political reasons or budget has withdrawn their embassy, the communities feel abandoned, orphaned, and with less importance and support in the country where they live.

The relationship Israel-Diaspora is the same as relationships in many families:

- each one expects to receive what they believe corresponds to them
- they have different parameters to define what belongs to them and, at the same time
- feel they do not receive the respect and the position they deserve.

As in each family-we are able to say what we want from one another but we mutually defend ourselves against those from the outside.

It is easy to understand the ironic reaction of an Israeli when a Jewish tourist in *Eretz Israel* –moved upon arriving, kisses the ground, feels “among my people”, “finally at home”....But when it comes to actually living there, a life that is often more difficult than the life to which they have become accustomed, and when their security is at risk, and above all, the lives of their children, they prefer to demonstrate their “Zionism” with a check, to assure that if the need arises, and they really need it one day, Israel will be there, ready to receive them. This is the reality for a great many of us, the Jews of the Diaspora.

But it is equally real that without that “check”, without the moral, political, and economic support of the Diaspora and the entities that the Jews in the Diaspora represent and are a part of, the entire great Israeli army would not be sufficient to assure the survival of the State in face of the dangers that they have confronted during the last six decades..

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Where would Israel be without the support of the United States and in the last years of Germany and other countries? This protection is in great part due to the constant work of the Jewish communities in the Diaspora, by interventions of groups with shared ideologies with regard to voting, etc.

What funds would be used for the defense of the country?

On the other hand: What would have happened with the Jews in Entebbe without Israel? Where would our coreligionists of the former Soviet Union be? With what courage would we face the anti-Semitism to which many of us have been exposed if we did not know that there is an Israel behind us that supports and protects us and to where we may go to if need be.

We might speak of education, of how Israel helps with the development of our *Kehilot*, of how Israel is our spiritual center. We may also speak of how the *Gola* should teach Israel to build a framework of religious pluralism as we have done in this encounter; but if we refer to the ultimate essence of the relationship we can affirm that at this moment the Jews of the world are Israel's protection and Israel is the protection for all the Jews of the world.

One depends on the other and their need is mutual...as it is with applause. It is impossible to applaud with one hand-for the sound to come out, we need both. It is a shared effort, between partners that are family, who care for one another and need each other mutually.

In this way, recognizing the centrality of Israel and the legitimacy of community building in the Diaspora, respecting and reconciling the role each one of us plays in this relationship we will succeed in being capable of applauding with all our might and in this case those receiving the ovation will be all the members of the Jewish people.

Thank you very much!

*(The original version of this article can be found in the Spanish Edition of Mifgash)*

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## **The Closing of the Encounter of the Joint in Mar del Plata, Argentina**

*By Rabbi Gustavo Kraselnik*

It was Saturday evening, and luckily the place was full of Argentineans. Only thus were we able to disguise the immense feeling of pride that filled all the members of the UJCL who shared in the 10th Encounter of Leaders of Latin American and Caribbean Institutions and Communities, organized by the Joint in the beautiful city of Mar del Plata, Argentina.

Representatives from Panama (4), El Salvador (6), Guadalajara (4), Costa Rica (1), Honduras (1), and Aruba (1) enjoyed an incredible experience that was attended by 1000 people among youths and adults. These closing hours of the event marked for our little organization the perfect finale of a recognition that should be a source of satisfaction for the entire UJCL family.

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The last of the 7 plenary sessions that formed an intense and inclusive program was dedicated to the relationship between Israel and the Latin American communities of the Diaspora. Three speakers had been designated to reflect on this crucial theme: Arieh Avir, representative of the *Sojnut* (Jewish Agency) for Latin America, Gustavo Perednik, one of the most prestigious intellectuals of Latin American Judaism, and our president, Jack Davidson.

Listening to Jack presenting his views before this multitude of people and beside two such distinguished personalities of the subcontinent, was a sublime moment. A silent *shehecheyanu* was the result of seeing this tremendous recognition of the continuing efforts of the many people who contributed to the development of the UJCL and a deserved reward for Jack.

I had not recovered from the emotion when a little while later Jack was again invited to give a greeting in the name of the UJCL. Before Jack, the representative of CLAM (Latin American Maccabi Federation, an organization of more than 200,000 Jews) addressed us and afterwards the representative of the *Masorti Olami* (worldwide organization of Conservative Judaism grouping more than 1 million Jews). Listening to our organization “rub elbows” with the “heavyweights” of Latin America and worldwide Judaism was another great satisfaction.

If that were not enough, a few moments later 5 outstanding leaders, among them Jack (again) and Jean Claude Kahn were invited for the presentation of a recognition to Alejandro Kladniew

In this succession of “distinguished appearances” (and also during the entire event when Jack, Jean Claude, Milton, and Ricardo were invited to more exclusive encounters with outstanding personalities), the advances that the UJCL is making were evident, being already recognized as one of the most important Jewish organizations in the region. Our participation in the encounter of the Joint marks a new step forward.

On the other hand, we established contact with the communities of La Paz (Bolivia) y Porto Alegre (Brazil), hoping that they adhere to our proposal with enthusiasm.

Friends, the balance is extremely positive. When we are about to celebrate our 10th anniversary of existence, we take pride in the great work we have accomplished both inside and outside of our organization. We are occupying a place in the Jewish world and this requires consistency. From this moment on we also have a responsibility to fulfill and in this sense we should plan our participation in all the international forums to be able to continue growing quantitatively and qualitatively.

*(The original version of this article can be found in the Spanish Edition of Mifgash)*

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## **“Learning to Share”**

*By Rabbi Marcelo Bater*

During the days of May 10-14, the Joint Distribution Committee for Latin America organized an Encounter of Community Leaders from all over the Americas in the city of Mar del Plata, Argentina.

It was very nice for me to be able to reunite with teachers and friends that one has made through rabbinic work these years. And many with whom we shared this encounter are part of the UJCL family, Rabbis and *askanim* (volunteers) who were active participants.

It has been 4 days, 96 hours of immense hustle and bustle, where we ran, literally speaking, from one room to the other to take part in a workshop or plenary that was of our interest. Among all the lectures I had the opportunity to attend, I want to share one, dear *Mifgash* readers, that I believe to be important for all our small communities.

This plenary was titled: “*Why do those who donate, donate?*”

During my years as Rabbi and previously as a student in Rabbinic School, I participated in courses where they taught us how to raise funds for the communities where we would serve as rabbis in the future.

Who did not read at one time (in the course of the subject matter of business and administration or marketing) some book by Peter Drucker trying to explain this topic?

I should confess to you that the title of this plenary was what attracted me at first, since in our small communities and together with the “common” realities of our countries, many hours of our meetings with the Board are spent trying to generate ideas for drawing funds to our community for diverse projects, whether being for the youth, cultural activities, etc.

In this lecture, of a little more than one hour, the attraction was just the opposite. To have the possibility of listening to three people, donors, who told the reason they donate and the pleasure they felt in doing so.

Needless to say that *tzedaka* (charity) is one of the pillars of our *mitzvot*, since it is one of the ways we have to equalize the world, and in turn be able to mend it (*tikkun olam*).

Without going much farther, it is in the Torah, where the book *Devarim* (*Deuteronomy*) 15:7-8 tells us: *When there be in your midst a needy person among your kinsmen, in one of your settlements....do not harden your heart nor close your hand to your needy kinsman. Rather you must open your hand, and lend him enough for what he needs.*

Many of our communities are formed by immigrants, parents, grandparents who had come from Europe escaping the Second World War, some before it began and others as soon as it finished. In few words, our grandparents “created communities out of nothing”. With little they descended from the ships, but with much they had absorbed from infancy they were able to build the communities of which we are part of today.

Perhaps today, those values which served to found our communities are a little forgotten. And for this reason, this message comes to appeal a bit to your memory:

*“Our parents, during a Torah procession, kissed it with their mouths and gave tzedaka with their hands; sadly today, we kiss the Torah with our hands and many times give tzedaka with our mouths”.*

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*Patoach tiftach et yadecha* says the Torah; Open your hand, whichever way you can, being an *askan* (a volunteer), donating to projects, being a *mitpalel* (a congregant) or simply knowing that your community can count on you for whatever it needs.

Let us remember our parents and grandparents when they descended from their ships, that with little made much, and that they bequeathed us a mission for us to continue. We should not let this beautiful opportunity pass.

*(The original version of this article can be found in the Spanish Edition of Mifgash)*

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## **“March For the Living 2006”**

*by Fernando Katz (Youth Representative-Panama)*

“Never Again”. With this motto, I went to March For the Living 2006. With the purpose of visiting the places where our ancestors lived the worst or last moment of their existences I undertook this long, though at the same time short, profound, and harsh journey.

The feelings one has when passing through the places where thousands of Jews were living their saddest hours are many: anger, fury, sadness, and fear, among others. Each one takes possession of a tiny part of our being, thus making the comprehension of all that has happened more difficult. As one passes through and learns more with the help of the guides of the site one realizes just how extensive this massacre was, and in spite of having studied it all my life I never thought of the magnitude that it really had. Also, the doubts, the anger, and the incomprehension keep increasing. One cannot grasp an understanding of the ‘why’ of everything that has occurred nor accomplish finding answers to any possible questions.

Among all of the places I visited on my trip, the one that impressed me most was Majdanek, a camp that if one wished, could be functional tomorrow. When one fully enters the camp and sees how big it is, one cannot believe it. One sees from outside the barracks, the chamber, the chimney of the crematorium, and the house of the SS in charge and imagines all as if seeing one of many movies. But one does not catch on except when entering a chamber or in the crematorium or in the barracks. When we entered the first place on our visit, a gas chamber, a feeling of immensely profound sadness took hold, to which one can respond only by remaining in silence and crying. The trip is tiring; visiting barracks, chambers, and the crematorium ending by the monument. In the end one really comprehends a little how the people there lived. In reality, one attempts to understand but, in my opinion, we will never be able to get near, not even a little to the feeling they had, to what they suffered daily.

In Auschwitz, what is felt upon entering is something completely and purely different. To anyone’s sight it was an old Polish base (something it used to be before becoming a concentration camp) with its bricks in sight in the barracks even though inside the suffering of each Jew was immensely incomprehensible.

The march is an unexpectedly magnificent thing. Something that until today touches me and makes me very happy is the amount of people, youth and adults, who had met for a common cause and, besides, a cause such as this, was something to applaud.

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The commitment that each one has is to remember and not forget what happened so it will not be repeated, as well as tell it from one generation to another and make it a deed as atrocious as it is real.

At a high point, at about the middle of the march of 3 Km. (from Auschwitz to Birkenau) one manages to look back at everyone arriving at the spot where we were all with Israeli flags, jumping, dancing, and singing, and toward the front thousands of people entering Birkenau calming now a little more but equally with this spirit of youth and joy that surrounded us this day for such an anticipated event.

Something curious happened to us that we immediately noticed and all who were there commented: the day of the march, in Krakow, was a horrible, ugly day, cloudy, with very cold weather and at the same time humid, lots of rain, passing and constant. At the moment the march began, the sun suddenly appeared leaving all of the marchers stunned. All remained more than surprised to see that during the course of the march a radiant and strong sun shined.

In my opinion, this trip was without doubt one of the best experiences of my life, in which apart from getting to know all that from early childhood I had only in my imagination, I was able to interact with thousands of Jewish people who thought, believed, and wanted the same as I. People from all over the world united in the march for the same reason. Not to forget what happened is more than a goal, after what ensued in Poland and Israel, I feel that all is as a fact in our time. At least, it depends on us to continue being an act that will always remain alive in future generations...

*(The original version of this article can be found in the Spanish Edition of Mifgash)*

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## **Yom Hashoah in Israel**

*By Débora Baum (Youth Member of B'nei Israel, C. Rica,  
who is currently living in Israel)*

Some time has passed since the Holocaust, and still we must make an effort to remind ourselves that it is actually true, it did happen. There is one special day in which we dedicate ourselves to its memory. We all know the results of this war and face them in our own way. Well, here's an insight of how some of us remember it in Israel.

*"Them, the children of Israel."* In my kibbutz the commemoration started in the morning by playing the siren for a whole minute (which scares me personally every time it rings), when the entire population would stop whatever they were doing, freeze, in our ancestors' honor. Children and grown-ups both know its meaning.

Afterwards, at night, in the cafeteria, hundreds of people gathered around to have a ceremony for those deceased. A list of names was read out loud of those who perished in the Holocaust and, at one time or other, had any connection with any member of the kibbutz.

My limited knowledge of the language isn't an impediment to feel what everyone else around me is feeling. Songs are sung and some words are said. Now we proceed to watch a collection of war tape fragments. How life was then.

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The picture is in black and white. Starving children holding each other, standing in the streets with pleading eyes. *"Where's aba...?"* It's said over and over and over again, as the camera goes from one child's face to another. It's repeated in several languages. *"Come ima, come."* Despair in their voices. Tears flood their faces.

Ghetto's are now seen. Streets filled with misery. Families stuffed in one small apartment. Magen David's stuck to everyone's clothing. Poverty. Death. Epidemics. Big walls to separate animals, monsters, from society. Flies moving in circles around the people sitting on the ground. The music in the background, so sad, melancholic. No other word is said. Just images, real images, real people in such inhumane conditions.

Officers on the entrances. Mocking faces.

Then comes the railroad, the train. People cramped together. Everyone standing, ready for one tiresome journey to only one destination. Concentration camps. Meaning death for many. Anyone causing trouble, one bullet and problem solved. Easy, right?

Two rows, left and right. One lives and one dies. Left or right... to which side would you be sent? Soldiers with guns.

Some people are sent to gas chambers while others are sent to get prepared for this new life. Suitcases left on the floor. Clothes and shoes are taken away and prisoner jumpsuits are given out. Stripes. People sleeping in bunks, wondering who of those around them will still be there tomorrow.

Behind barbed wire you can see starving human beings. All dressed in black and white. Bones protruding from their skin. Pale figures. Their eyes have lost their glow. Hope is gone. No food, just work or death. Wagons filled with mountains made from corpses. A family friend, a family member, a neighbor, or just an acquaintance. Their lifeless bodies are moved in wagons. All of them naked. What awaits them at the end of the road? Fire and ashes.

And in one room, hundreds just stare in perfect silence and awe to what was life some 60 years ago.

Several nationalities, people from all around the world who don't even speak the same language, share the same pain. The same frustration. How could it be real? How could it happen? Who allowed it to happen? But then it has happened before. Let us not forget this persecution. When we forget it, it will happen again. And why?, you might ask. Because we allowed it to happen.

There is a story which I heard from the tour guide who took us around Jerusalem. There once was a family who lived in the middle. Soon someone came and took away the family who lived under them, and they said, "It has nothing to do with us, they're black." Then they took away the family on top and again they said, "It has nothing to do with us, they're Arabs." Then they took away their neighbors, and again they said, "It has nothing to do with us, they're Jews." And then they came to take them away and there was no one left to say anything. They were all killed because other people were not interested in getting involved. Who will save us from such indifference, when brutality abounds in the world?

Where were all the countries in the world who say they fight for human rights? Where were they when their neighbor was taken to be murdered?

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## **Shavuot: its universal aspect**

*By Rabbi Rami Pavolotzky*

It is known that Jewish holidays bring an intrinsic tension as to their personal and universal extent. A classic example is *Shabbat*, the day that is a sign of remembrance of the exodus from Egypt, and at the same time a recollection of the creation of the world.

On *Shavuot* it is easy to find this tension on the agricultural side of the celebration, since while it is the Israeli farmer who prays and is happy for the good harvest that his G-d gives to him, it is clear that the blessing of the land reaches all the peoples of the region.

In relation to the meaning of *Shavuot* as a holiday of the giving of the Torah, apparently we are speaking only of its personal meaning, since the Torah is the inheritance of the people of Israel. Certainly this is how it is considered in a major part of classic Jewish literature. Nevertheless, there also exist sources that depict the universal aspect of the giving of the Torah. The following *midrash* is an example:

*Said Rabbi Abahu: when the Holy Blessed Be He gave the Torah, the birds did not chirp, the fowl did not emit sound, the bulls did not bellow, the Serafim did not say "Blessed, Blessed...", the sea did not tremble and the creatures did not speak, only the world remained in silence, hushed, and you could hear one voice that said "I am the Lord, your G-d" (Shemot Raba 29:9).*

This precious *midrash* shows us the giving of the Torah as a cosmic event, an event in which all the inhabitants of the land were involved, including the celestial angels. Here we see that to an element so indicative of the Jewish people as is the Torah, the sages knew how to find a universal character and thus add another dimension to the holiday. This same pattern we will find in almost all the celebrations of our people.

*(The original version of this article can be found in the Spanish Edition of Mifgash)*

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## Reaffirming Our Faith on *Shavuot*

*By Florencia Gelman*

The holiday of *Shavuot* has largely been related to the idea of beginning and/or reaffirming personal loyalty to Judaism. In many communities in Eastern Europe, it was usual for very young children to enter Hebrew School on *Shavuot*. It was customary to give them sweets, honey, and cakes so that the Torah be sweet on their lips. The Reform Movement introduced the Confirmation Ceremony for youths 13-16 years old. Many Conservative congregations and also Orthodox ones have adopted this ceremony. Other communities have the custom of giving the *Tanach* to the youths of the school on this day. Likewise, in some Hebrew schools in the United States, graduation is celebrated on *Shavuot*.

In Costa Rica we celebrate *Shavuot* with a combination of flavors of Judaism. A group of seven adults who during one year prepared for our *B'nei Mitzvah* ceremony, realized our dream during this holiday. On the eve of *Shavuot*, we began with a morning service where we put on *tefillin* for the first time, thus experiencing one of the commandments of our Torah.

On the first night of *Shavuot* we met in our synagogue which was decorated with fruits, plants, and flowers, where after the prayers we divided into two groups to study Torah. Rabbi Rami Pavolotzky led the discussion in Spanish, reading and comparing how other holidays on the Jewish calendar make reference to specific dates, but this is not the way for *Shavuot*. Additionally, we studied the reason why the holiday of the harvest turned into the commemoration of the receiving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. On the other hand, Phil Gelman led a discussion in English, where they analyzed some special features about *Shavuot*, for example, the reflection of human elements in the Book of Ruth and how the holiday is an extension of Pesach. After the study we enjoyed delicious dairy snacks as part of our tradition.

The *Kabbalat Shabbat* service on the second night of *Shavuot*, was led in Hebrew, Spanish, and English by the *B'nei Mitzvah* group, who with a mixture of pride, happiness, and nervousness gave our best to receive the most special *Shabbat* of our lives. One of our companions urged us with the sermon not to forget our responsibility to preserve the tithe for *tzedakah*. That night we also enjoyed an exquisite and professional choral presentation, delighting us with beautiful melodies. .

During *Shacharit Shabbat* we continued leading the service. It was our day, our event our debut, our opportunity to share with the community the knowledge that Rabbi Daniela Szuster had taught us during the year. The process of preparation and study culminated on this day. Reading from the Torah for the first time, was as if it was given to us again and we received it to make it part of our lives; it was to reaffirm our pact with God. That day we also confirmed our faith and loyalty to Judaism.

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In my *Dvar Tora*, I reflected on the commitment we accepted to preserve our customs , taking the example of Naomi, who in a foreign country succeeded in keeping the tradition, and her life example motivated her daughter-in-law to convert and embrace the Jewish faith for herself. Naomi did not preach Judaism, nor made religious propaganda, nevertheless, her best publicity was her actions. Preserving our customs is key to not falling into oblivion. If our faith is strong and our commitment firm, we will remain as an undeniable force in the world.

*(The original version of this article can be found in the Spanish Edition of Mifgash)*

## **Shavuot**

*By Cheryle Tacher*

His tall, superhuman, powerful figure  
Descended the mountain from heaven  
Carrying the words  
Burned into eternity  
For all to assimilate  
For generations to come  
Why do I believe?  
Why not?  
How do I know?  
I was there.

### **Latin America Seminar:**

#### **TAMAR-HAGSHAMA in Porto Alegre, Brasil**

Between the days, 28-30 of July, 2006, youth from our communities, will be representing the UJCL at the Latin America Seminar: TAMAR-HAGSHAMA in the city of Porto Alegre, Brasil. Tamara Schagas, Youth Representative of Netzer Olami of the WUPJ will be coordinating this encounter. *Behatzlachah* to all the participants!!

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## [Yom Yerushalayim and Yom Haatzmaut in Aruba](#)

On Sunday, May 28, something special happened in Aruba. Government dignitaries, consuls, Jewish Community of Aruba members and many friends gathered at one of the high rise hotels to celebrate the independence of a tiny country. Israel, thousands of miles away but very close to our Jewish hearts and souls.

Aruba is well known for its friendly people and its openness to the many cultures that coexist peacefully on the island. It is therefore no wonder that everyone present shared with us our joy at being able to mark the 58<sup>th</sup>. Yom Haatzmaut as well as Jerusalem Day with song and dance.

This fact did not escape the Ambassador of Israel to Venezuela, Mr. Shlomo Cohen, who was our special guest at the event, organized by the Honorary Consulate of Israel. He expressed his satisfaction and his gratitude for the warm welcome and the possibility to share with his Aruban friends and the Jewish Community this special occasion.

Ambassador Cohen reiterated that Israel stands ready to assist Aruba with technical projects and training of local experts in fields such as irrigation, agriculture, education, etc., and also to promote Israeli tourism to the island.

He expressed his hope that these projects will soon materialize.

The Hon. Consul of Israel, Martha E. Lichtenstein, stressed that life has always been Israel's choice, even under tremendous stress and attack from hostile neighbors, as opposed to the cultures of death now sweeping the region.

She also emphasized the creativity of its people, their extraordinary achievements in the fields of technology and medicine, as well as their successful integration of a multicultural population to the life of the country.

Catherine Provence, a local soprano delighted the audience with Israeli songs and then, a special performance of the Israeli folkdance group Regesh, under the direction of Dany Chaves, transported the guests to Israel on a magic trip, immensely enjoyed by everyone present.

Perhaps the surprise appearance of a group of youth members of our community, budding dancers trained by Dany, was the perfect reminder that we are all united as one people, no matter how big the geographic distance, beating as one Jewish heart that will eventually be heard by the family of Man.

Next Monday, the Hon. Consulate of Israel organized a special show for Aruban school children at the Cultural Center, in which Regesh delighted this very special audience.

They were not simple spectators for, at the end of the show, they learned an Israeli folkdance in record time, this time delighting the Regesh members and all of us with their enthusiasm.

In short, it was a weekend that will be long remembered, and that will motivate us to continue trying to make the ties that bind Aruba and Israel even tighter.

*Martha E. Lichtenstein*  
*June 2006*

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## **The Homecoming**

*By Cheryle Tacher*

It's amazing  
What an hour and a half  
Journey can do  
When your spirit thirsts  
For those with whom  
Your bond forever remains  
Unbroken.

From touchdown  
To a teary farewell  
The warmth  
The welcome  
Overcame my being  
As we became one.

It wasn't the hospitality  
Nor the feeling of being treated  
As royalty  
No, it was the knowledge  
That I was with my people  
A sentiment that distance cannot erase.

From the flower shop  
To welcoming Shabbat  
Dancing on air  
Laughing, sharing  
Greeting old friends  
And meeting the new.

Celebrating the birth of our homeland  
Creating memories  
Reflecting on the past  
Each moment cherished  
Every encounter meaningful and loved  
So it was-the homecoming.

*Editor's Note: Cheryle recently attended the celebration of Yom Haatzmaut and Yom Yerushalaim in Aruba.*

# MIFGASH



## *Jamaica*

*We have the pleasure to announce that Marilyn de Levante, who is a member of the United Congregation of Israelites in Jamaica, has authored a book entitled ISLAND OF THE PEOPLE - A history of the Jews of Jamaica.*

*Pope Benedict was recently presented with a copy of the book that has had excellent reviews.*

*Our readers can find information on Island of the People at [www.jewsofjamaica.com](http://www.jewsofjamaica.com) as well as at the Publishers website: [www.lanrandlepublishers.com](http://www.lanrandlepublishers.com). The book can be ordered on [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)*

*We congratulate Marilyn on this wonderful achievement which will undoubtedly enrich our knowledge of a community with a very rich history.*

