



MERCAZ E-NEWS



October 2011 / Tishrei 5772



שתחדש עלינו שנה טובה ואתוקה

**On behalf of the Executive, Board, and staff of
MERCAZ-Canada**

**We wish you shana tovah umetuka.
May 5772 be a year filled with peace and security
for Israel and all of us.**

Marion Mayman,
President

Rabbi Jennifer Gorman,
Executive Director



Marion Mayman, President [MERCANZ-Canada reports](#)

Shalom Everyone!

The month of Elul, preceding Rosh Hashanah is a time when Jews around the world look back over the last year and ahead towards the next one. We examine our actions asking, "Did I do all I could? Did I speak up where voices needed to be raised?"

Let me tell you briefly about some of our commitments:

First - **advancing religious pluralism** in Israel.

Second - offering **Matching Scholarships** to young people attending Conservative sponsored Israel trips (e.g. USY Pilgrimage, NATIV, Conservative Yeshiva, Ramah Seminar, etc.). This scholarship must be matched or surpassed by their Conservative synagogue.

It has become customary for **MERCAZ-Canada, MERCAZ USA** and **Women's League for Conservative Judaism** to conduct, in coordination with the biennial Women's League Convention, an essay contest for high school students on the topic of Israel and Zionism. The winners are provided with scholarships to subsidize the cost of Conservative Movement sponsored trips to Israel. In honor of Herzl's 150th birthday, the last theme was Theodore Herzl's vision of a Jewish state. We are proud to say that during the past 2 years we have had finalists and semi finalists in this contest.

Third - **encouraging Zionist/Israel programming** in Canadian Conservative synagogues. We have done this and continue to do so.

- In honour of Israel's 60th birthday MERCAZ-Canada organized a special MERCAZ Shabbat in all Canadian Conservative congregations. Rabbis and lay leaders spoke about Israel and also highlighted the work of MERCAZ-Canada as well as the importance of the over 60 Masorti kehillot in Israel.
- HERZL Programming & Exhibit- Last year we encouraged and promoted Herzl programs and exhibits in our congregations across the country. A number of Toronto synagogues, as well as one in Vancouver and one in Ottawa, held events, from music to special Shabbatot. A Herzl poster exhibit was also opened to local Day Schools students from across Canada.
- This year we wrote to all of our congregations to enquire as to how MERCAZ-Canada could co-sponsor Israel related programs. Trudy Sassoon (a member of the MERCAZ-Canada Board from Shaar Shalom, Thornhill, ON) co-ordinated this initiative. She sent e-mails to all Conservative synagogue Israel Affairs and Adult Education Chairs across Canada, with valuable educational links and suggestions from several of the Israel Affairs chairs. We received many positive responses and plan for this to be an ongoing project.
- Israel Advocacy Training Seminar- MERCAZ-Canada is teaming up with MERCAZ USA, the Rabbinical Assembly, Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs, Women's League and USCJ to train volunteers to organize and strengthen ongoing Israel advocacy in their synagogues. A 2-day

Israel Advocacy Training Seminar is being organized to take place Sunday-Monday, December 18-19, 2011. MERCAZ-Canada is represented on the committee by Dr. David Goldberg, as well as Mr. Stan Greenspan, who is participating through FJMC. Both Dr. Goldberg and Mr. Greenspan serve on the MERCAZ-Canada board and are members of Beth David B'nai Israel Beth Am, Toronto. For more information visit our [website](#).

Finally, we are committed to increasing our presence and influence at the **World Zionist Organization (WZO)** and **Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI)** in order to gain recognition and funding for the **Masorti / Conservative Movement** in Israel.

The Conservative Movement, through MERCAZ OLAMI, is a full partner in the WZO and Jewish Agency. Our delegates to the Zionist Congress work to advance our agenda: to shape the nature of Israeli society with the values of religious pluralism and environmental awareness and to gain important resources for the development of institutions of Conservative / Masorti Judaism in Israel and throughout the world, including the Schechter Institute, the Masorti Movement and the Conservative Yeshiva.

In 2010 the World Zionist Congress was held. The Conservative / Masorti Leaders in attendance left with the satisfaction of knowing that we had succeeded in bringing significant benefits for the growth of Conservative / Masorti Judaism in Israel and around the world.

Among the successes we could count:

- The election of the first Conservative / Masorti leader to a top leadership role in the World Zionist Organization, with Dr David Breakstone's election as the Deputy Chairman of WZO.
- Securing recognition of NOAM (our Youth Movement in Israel) including USY as it's North American affiliate, as a full fledged Zionist youth movement able to join the Zionist Youth Forum and be eligible for funding.

Each year in June, between WZO Congresses, the business meeting of the WZO - the Va'ad HaPoel - takes place. This is followed by the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) Board of Governors meetings. During these meetings, our movement leaders were elected to the following positions:

- **Rabbi Vernon Kurtz** (Immediate Past-President of MERCAZ Olami) as a Board member of the Jewish People Policy Institute and as Vice Chairman of the Committee for Russian Speaking Jewry.
- **Alan Silberman** (Chairperson of Masorti Olami) as Vice Chairman of the JAFI Insurance Committee.
- **Dr Steve Wolnek** (President of MERCAZ Olami) as Chairman of the Israel Engagement sub-committee for Israel Advocacy.
- **Dr David Breakstone** as Chairman of the Small Communities Committee.
- **Marion Mayman** (President of MERCAZ-Canada) as a committee member of the JAFI Board of Governors.

These appointments put our movement in a strong position to ensure equal and fair funding as well as to further our Jewish Zionist agenda, increasing our influence on the world scene and in Israel.

In MERCAZ we are proud as Conservative / Masorti Jews to be involved in the political world of the Jewish people because we strongly believe it is a vehicle for change, a vehicle to say we are here and relevant to world wide Judaism and we are represented in the world map of our people.

However, none of this could be achieved without you - our members. The more members MERCAZ-Canada has, the more members MERCAZ Olami has, enabling us to have a positive presence in the WZO and JAFI. To those of you who are already members - Todah rabah. For those of you who are not yet members - we would love to welcome you.

Every voice counts. Have you been counted? 2011 Membership in MERCAZ-Canada is only \$9.00/person or \$18.00/couple. PLEASE JOIN TODAY, online at www.mercaz.ca or by phoning the MERCAZ-Canada office at 1-866-357-3384.

With your help our Movement will continue to flourish and grow.



Marilyn Cohen, Executive director for both MERCAZ-Canada and the Canadian Foundation for Masorti Judaism, retired in May after 13 years of dedicated service. We wish her all the best in the future. Marilyn's expertise and knowledge will not be completely missed as she has graciously agreed to join our MERCAZ-Canada board.

Join us at Beth Tikvah Synagogue, Toronto, Shabbat morning, Rosh Hodesh Heshvan, October 29, 2011 as we honour Marilyn for her outstanding service.

Executive Director Announcement

We are pleased to announce that **Rabbi Jennifer Gorman** has taken over the position of Executive director. Rabbi Gorman has actively been involved with the Conservative Jewish community throughout her life through United Synagogue Youth, Camp Ramah, Women's League, and Schechter Schools. A graduate of Brandeis University, and ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1996, Rabbi Gorman brings a widely varying background, having worked in communities in Canada and the United States. She is a contributor to The Women's Haftarah Commentary, and is featured on a CD-Rom about prayer produced by the Jewish Student Union of the United States Naval Academy.



Shana Tova greeting from Dr. David Breakstone, Vice Chairman, World Zionist Organization

Dear friends,

As we approach the new year, my hope is that we will enter it strengthened by something already gained from the events of this past summer.

Those participating in the demonstrations were not only concerned about having a roof over their heads or putting food on their tables, but also about creating a society rooted in the ethos of looking out for one another, a value repeatedly articulated as being rooted in Jewish sources and the Zionist vision. This was a grass-roots movement not about "me" but about "us." And, for the first time in a long time, the focus was not on the individual but the collective. It was a summer during which a generation notorious for its cynicism opted instead for old-time Zionism.

On the eve of the Palestinian bid for statehood, this embrace of Zionism is especially important. The less control we have over what is happening beyond our borders, the more important our inner strength - a strength dependent on our social fabric no less than on our military prowess. If we do not create a society capable of inspiring the next generation, no one will remain to bear arms in its defense.

As the holidays approach, then, it is time for the World Zionist Organization, and all who believe in its mission, to reaffirm our resolve to make of Israel all that the visionaries of our movement dreamed of, each in his or her own way. It is during this season more than any other that we stand as a single congregation, taking responsibility for the actions of one another even in the privacy of our own prayers. A return to celebration of the collective might be called "retro" in the short history of the Zionist enterprise. In the long history of the Jewish people it is called tradition.

From Rabbi Tzvi Graetz, Executive Director, MERCAZ Olami

Our delegation to the Va'ad HaPoel, June 2011

Last week saw the end of a two-week period of intense meetings, conferences and learning opportunities that took place in Jerusalem. These included the President's Conference, the Va'ad HaPoel of the World Zionist Organization, and the Jewish Agency Assembly and Board of Governors. Our delegation to these events included almost 40 different volunteer leaders from Masorti/Conservative communities in 7 different countries.



Pictured above right are Dr. Stephen Wolnek, Marty Davis, Marion Mayman & Rabbi Tzvi Graetz. For more pictures from this event.

MERCAZ Olami and Masorti Olami welcomed the entire delegation at an opening event on Wednesday, June 22nd, hosted by the Masorti kehillah, **Shevet Achim**, in the Gilo neighborhood of Jerusalem. During the evening, President of the kehillah, **Reuven Stein** gave greetings and **Rabbi Professor David Golinkin**, from the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, gave a presentation of the challenges of Zionism in the Masorti/Conservative Movement, and **Marion Mayman (Canada) and Marty Davis (Israel)** received the very first **MERCAZ Olami Awards** for their dedication to the Zionist agenda in our movement.

On Friday, our delegation attended a joint briefing with our coalition partners, Kadima-Hanoar Hatzioni. During the briefing, the combined delegation of more than 60 people discussed resolutions being



put to the Va'ad HaPoel. Issues brought up in the resolutions were constitutional changes as well the Unity of the Jewish people, the role of the Settlement Division of the WZO and the importance for involvement of young people in the governance of the Zionist movement. The MERCAZ/Masorti delegation brought a resolution to oppose a suggested change to the Israeli ID card which may exclude certain non-Orthodox converts from being registered as Jewish. This resolution passed, and our hope is that the government will honour this so as to prevent upset and disunity among the Jewish people.

Sunday, the second week of meetings began with the Jewish Agency Assembly. Resolutions were passed on issues of The Israeli ID card (as per the Va'ad HaPoel), support for greater environmentally sustainable practice, the release of Gilad Shalit - now captive for more than 5 years, and critical support for Israeli shlichim sent around the world.



The Va'ad HaPoel itself began on Thursday, June 23rd with a reception at the Knesset in the presence of Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu.

Saving Samar: The Last of Israel's Sand Dunes

MERCAZ Olami partners with KKL and the Green Zionist Alliance to protect Israel's natural resources.

Picture a desert and you'll probably envision rolling hills of sand like those traversed by the nomadic caravans of the Sahara. Yet, even though the majority of Israel is desert, almost none of it is like the Sahara except for a small section near the southern tip of Israel in the Arava Valley: the Samar sand dunes.

Originally about five square miles in size, today less than one square mile of the Samar sand dunes remains and now most of the last remaining dunes - and the unique species that live in them - are threatened with destruction.

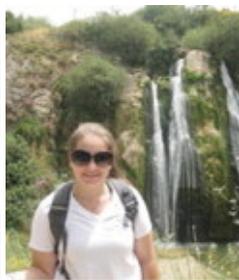
For more information and pictures, click here
<http://www.greenzionism.org/resources/articles/166/>.

אנו פזנ

to our MERCAZ-Canada Matching Scholarship Recipients for 2011:



USY's Eastern Europe/Israel Pilgrimage trip got stuck in traffic on a highway in Europe and took the opportunity to snap a quick group photo. From **Annie Gurvis**



Tanya Werger standing in front of a waterfall near the Lebanon border. To read more about Tanya's trip [click here](#).



Paperclip brought by **Zev Orzy** to Auschwitz to honour the children of Whitwell, Tennessee for their wonderful work on the Paperclips Project. [Click to read about Zev's experiences.](#)



Joshua Seed (right) standing in front of the Majdanek crematorium. To read about Josh's trip [click here](#)



Samantha Roth & Annie Gurvis at K'far Kedem 'Going on Eastern Europe/ Israel pilgrimage [read more . .](#)

- **Annie Gurvis**, Beth Israel, Vancouver *USY Eastern Europe Israel Pilgrimage*
- **Corey Kamen**, Adath Israel, Toronto *Ramah - Israel Seminar*
- **Effi Markovitch**, Beth Israel, Vancouver *USY Israel Pilgrimage/ Poland Seminar*
- **Zev Orzy**, Beth Tzedec, Toronto *Ramah - Israel Seminar*
- **Samantha Roth**, Beth David B'nai Israel Beth Am, Toronto *USY Eastern Europe Israel*
- **Joshua Seed**, Adath Israel, Toronto *USY Eastern Europe Israel Pilgrimage*
- **Adeena Zeldin**, Beth Emeth Bais Yehuda, Toronto *Ramah - Israel Seminar*

Welcome home to **Tanya Werger**, Beth Emeth Bais Yehuda, Toronto 2010 Scholarship Recipient, NATIV 31

To read about some of our recipients' experiences click here to visit our website:

- [Tanya Werger, Nativ 31](#)

- [Josh Seed, USY Eastern Europe/ Israel Pilgrimage](#)
- [Zev Orzy, Ramah - Israel Seminar](#)

Rabbi Adam Cutler

Rabbi Cutler serves as rabbi at Beth Tzedec Congregation in Toronto and was a MERCAZ-Canada Matching Scholarship recipient.



It was raining at JFK when our Lot Polish Airlines flight departed New York City, destined for Warsaw in early July 1999. We were permitted two suitcases each for USY Poland/Israel Pilgrimage, but only one would travel with us within Poland, while the other one sat in storage someone near what was then Warsaw-Okecie Airport, only to meet up with us in Tel-Aviv. The wet bags, held in a warm, dark, poorly ventilated facility, did not fare well. T-shirts, underwear, Shabbat clothes and socks grew orangey green or blackish red with mold. Leviticus in real life. Tza'arat (leprosy) in our clothes. Some apparel was salvageable, much was not. Many Israeli clothiers owe a debt of gratitude to the storm in New York and the

baggage handlers who left our duffels sit out in the rain.

In Poland we saw death, but also learned of 1000 years of pulsating Jewish life. We walked into the crematoria, heads lowered, hearts slowing and I felt the Shekhinah on my shoulders for the first time leading Kabbalat Shabbat as a 17 year old in Cracow. I made friends, from Laguna Hills, CA to Great Neck, NY. I was a Toronto boy from a traditional Conservative shul surrounded and lovingly challenged by Conservative Jews with different understandings of how to express their Judaism. We stood silently together in front of a mountain of ashes and tearfully sang as a group as we touched down at Ben Gurion. The 5 weeks in Israel were a whirlwind. It was my first trip there and I couldn't get enough - 5 weeks: Jerusalem, The North, Jerusalem, The South, Jerusalem. Leaving, I was depressed, not knowing when I would return. Tali Schwartz, one of the madrichot, looked me in the eye and assured me I'd be back soon. She said she knew my type. I had no idea what she was talking about. One year later I moved to Ramat Gan to spend a year at Bar-Ilan University. I made two trips to Israel with Hillel as an undergraduate and spent a year at Machon Schechter in Jerusalem while studying in the Rabbinical School of the Jewish Theological Seminary. There are a couple of shorter trips in there too.

From the ashes of Auschwitz, so the saying goes, was borne the State of Israel. That great Eastern European Jewish culture is gone, damaged beyond repair. We hold onto the shreds as new Jewish life

thrives in North America, Israel and beyond. From the old and damaged came the new, beautiful and thriving. It was a lesson learned well in the summer of 1999.

Thank you Mercaz-Canada for providing me with a scholarship that enabled me to be a proud participant with Group 8 in USY Poland/Israel Pilgrimage, a significant event on my path to the rabbinate.



MERCAZ-Canada wishes USY a hearty Mazel Tov for 60 superb years of vital Jewish youth programming!



Join us at the first MERCAZ Israel Advocacy Seminar!

A joint project of MERCAZ/Conservative Movement in consultation with Advocates for Israel, taking place December 18-19, at the Pearlstone Conference Center, located outside of Baltimore, MD.

Details on our website, <http://www.mercaz.ca/2011advocacyseminar.html>

MERCAZ-Canada is your voice

Your membership really does make a difference.

A strong MERCAZ-Canada helps create a strong MERCAZ Olami- contributing in a very direct way to making sure Israel continues on the path towards becoming a pluralistic Jewish state- one that advances a diversity of initiatives including those that reflect the values of Conservative/Masorti Judaism.





We value all our members, without whom the strength of our voice would be diminished. Thank you for your membership support. If you are not already a member- JOIN NOW!
KEEP OUR VOICE STRONG!

Every Conservative Jew can support religious rights for all Jews in Israel by being an annual dues paying member of MERCAZ-Canada, the Conservative Movement's Zionist Organization. With your membership our voice will continue to be influential in the World Zionist Organization [WZO] and Jewish Agency For Israel [JAFI], where decisions that affect World Jewry are made.

The more members MERCAZ-Canada has, the more members MERCAZ Olami has, enabling us to have a strong, positive presence in the WZO and JAFI.

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With your help our Movement will continue to flourish and grow.

TODAH RABBAH!

Marion Mayman *Rabbi Jennifer Gorman*
President **Executive Director**

MERCAZ-Canada

Marion Mayman, President - Rabbi Jennifer Gorman, Executive Director

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MERCAZ-Canada is the Zionist membership organization of the Conservative Movement and the voice of Conservative Jewry within the Canadian Zionist Federation, World Zionist Organization, the Jewish Agency for Israel, and JNF/KKL.