

# MERCAZ-Canada Pesach Newsletter

Wishing you a Hag kasher v'sameach!

Pesach 5772

March/April 2012

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### **MERCAZ Continues to Grow Israeli Advocacy**

In December, MERCAZ USA, along with MERCAZ-Canada and other Conservative organizations held it's first Israel Advocacy Seminar with the goal of training leaders who will take these skills back to their congregations to train others and create pro-advocacy committees in our congregations. The feedback has been amazingly positive, and we hope there will be many more opportunities in the future for this type of programming.

The next seminar will be Sunday-Monday, April 22-23, 2013 in Arlington Heights, IL in the Greater Chicago area. for more information go to <http://www.mercaz.ca> and click programmes.

The anticipated cost of the two day seminar is \$136, with a \$36 discount for members of MERCAZ-Canada or MERCAZ USA. This covers one night of accommodations in double occupancy and 4 meals, beginning with lunch on Sunday. Participation in this Israel Advocacy Seminar is limited to 50 trainees.

### **Quick Links...**

<http://mercaz.ca>

People often ask, "What is MERCAZ-Canada and why should I join?"

The World Zionist Organization (WZO) budgets about \$2 million a year for religious services in the Diaspora. The worldwide Masorti/Conservative Movement collectively receives a third of that. In 2012 the Masorti/Conservative Movement in Israel received a further \$1.7 million, helping to support the Masorti Movement in Israel. This includes Masorti kehillot (communities and synagogues), rabbis, the Noam youth movement, Schechter Institute, which trains rabbis, provides teachers for the TALM schools and educational activities with olim, as well as the Fuchsberg Center, which promotes Jewish Masorti culture in Jerusalem.

Conservative/Masorti Jews around the world profit directly from our presence in the world Zionist Organization and Jewish Agency. Benefits are accrued as a direct result of the size of our MERCAZ delegation.

**Your membership in MERCAZ-Canada, combined with others around the world, ensures funding for Masorti/Conservative synagogues and programs throughout Israel and the world from the World Jewish Organization and Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI)**

<http://www.mercaz.ca/signup.html>

(Join Now!)

<http://www.cjnews.com/node/89241>

(Rabbi Leads Knesset's First Egalitarian Meeting)

Join Our Mailing List!

### **Rabbi Leads Knesset's First Egalitarian Minyan**

I had the good fortune of participating in the Masorti Leadership Mission in January. While in Israel, our group made headlines around the world by holding the first egalitarian minyan at the Knesset. You can read more about that at <http://www.cjnews.com/node/89241>. It was an amazing experience, and I hope it makes a difference. But beyond the headlines, my trip had much more depth. Prior to joining the group I had the opportunity to meet with the staff at MERCAZ Olami, including Executive Director, Rabbi Tzvi Graetz, and Projects & Communications Manager, Marcus Frieze. We spent time talking and learning from each other about the challenges to Masorti/Conservative Judaism in Israel and in Canada. I also experienced first-hand the reality of prayer and the importance of our place on the JNF board, praying for rain as I said Shacharit and hearing the water levels in the Knesset reported every hour with the news headlines.

While in Israel our missions do more than make headlines, they make a difference. We prayed at and spoke with members of kehillot from Beer Sheva to Tel Aviv, some well-established, some just beginning, all vibrant and making their mark, bringing Masorti values and practice to the so-called secular Israeli public. We visited an absorption center, Canada House, where our Noam members help mostly Ethiopian olim to adjust to Israeli society. The Noam program is praised as one of the top in the country. We

MAKE A DIFFERENCE THROUGH YOUR MEMBERSHIP~

- ✧ Ensure allocations to Masorti institutions in Israel- advancing religious pluralism in Israel
- ✧ Secure the annual allocation to Masorti Olami- promoting Masorti/Conservative Judaism throughout the world
- ✧ Offer matching scholarships to young people attending Conservative sponsored trips to Israel
- ✧ Strengthen representation in the decision making bodies of the Jewish Agency, Keren Kayemeth Le'Yisrael (JNF), Keren Hayesod and World Zionist Organization
- ✧ Maintain and develop funding for NOAM, the Masorti youth organization, and MAROM, our young adult Zionist movement in Israel around the world
- ✧ Facilitate activities intended to promote Aliyah among Conservative/Masorti Jews
- ✧ Guarantee that shlichim for our youth movements are sent around the world

**YOUR DUES MAKE THE DIFFERENCE!**

*Our voice as a movement, through MERCAZ Olami, is made greater by our membership, raising the number of delegates we have at the WZO annual meetings and the World Jewish Congress.*

**Join Now! Go to [www.mercaz.ca/signup.html](http://www.mercaz.ca/signup.html)**

**A Personal Miracle-  
Reuven Stamov is  
Ordained as the  
Newest Masorti**

spent an afternoon at Kibbutz Hannaton, which is experiencing a rebirth, and has recently been accepted as a mechina (preparatory) leadership program for Tzahal by the IDF, and we met with leaders in Israeli government. We provide support and opportunity for our Masorti community in Israel, and return home energized and informed.

None of this could happen without your support. Your membership, along with Conservative/Masorti Jews around the world, make our voice strong enough to be heard in the towns, the cities, and the Knesset. Together we make a difference in Israel and around the world.

Thank you for your support.

May you go from strength to strength,  
Rabbi Jennifer Gorman,  
Executive Director, MERCAZ-Canada



Rabbi Gorman leading Mincha in the beit kneset of the Knesset after meeting with MKs and Ministers on the Masorti Leadership Mission January 2012.

## Israel trips

Looking for a trip to Israel? So are we! MERCAZ-Canada often gets requests from individuals wanting to join a trip to Israel. Please let us know if your congregation is running a trip.

## Rabbi and First Ukrainian Rabbi



On February 3, Reuven Stamov was ordained as the 82nd graduate of the Schechter Rabbinical Seminary for Masorti Rabbis in Jerusalem. In his d'var torah, Rabbi Stamov told assembled guests that completing his rabbinic studies was a personal miracle. He is a graduate of the Schorsch Fellowship, a program operated by Masorti Olami [connected to MERCAZ Olami] to support rabbinic students who commit to working in a developing Masorti community in Europe for several years after ordination.

Reuven Stamov was born in Simferopol in the Crimean region of Ukraine in 1974 to a secular Jewish family. He always knew he was Jewish, but during the period of Soviet regime practicing Judaism was forbidden. As the Soviet period came to an end, unlike many other Ukrainian families, the Stamovs decided to remain in Ukraine, and Reuven became involved in Jewish communal educational activities. Throughout the 90's his commitment to Judaism, the Jewish community, and Jewish/Zionist education grew.

Rabbi Stamov says his natural passion for Jewish life and his eventual move to Israel in 2003 led him to a natural conclusion that studying to become a Masorti rabbi was his destiny. He knew that the studies would enable him to deepen his knowledge and familiarity with Jewish texts and affirm his commitment to Masorti Judaism.

Throughout his studies, he worked with Midreshet Yerushalayim and in partnership with Masorti Olami, travelling to Ukraine several times each year to run seminars, summer camp, a successful conversion program, and many other projects which helped develop the foundations for a vibrant Masorti Movement in Ukraine. Rabbi Stamov met his wife, Lena, on one of these trips, and the couple now have 2 daughters.

The next Masorti Leadership Mission to Israel is scheduled for Monday, December 3 - Thursday, December 6, 2012. Land price about \$1000. Space is limited! Contact Rabbi Jennifer Gorman, [jgorman@masorti.ca](mailto:jgorman@masorti.ca) or 1-866-357-3384, for more information.



The Barnea Absorption Centre with one of its residents.

The Barnea Absorption Centre, funded by the Jewish Agency, is home to Canada House and the site of a special shnat sherut (year of service) staffed by Masorti NOAM members (shinshinim).

**NOAM & the shnat sherut program receive an allocation secured by MERCAZ membership in Canada and around the world.**

The NOAM shinshinim live at the absorption centre, working with mostly Ethiopian children and teens to help them and their families adjust to Israeli society. These NOAM shinshinim live with the new olim as their neighbours, learning together, helping the children and teens with school work and adjustment to Israeli society. They also offer their time working with teens and

Rabbi Stamov acknowledged that many people have helped him on his Jewish journey of great time and distance. He said in his d'var torah, "It is no coincidence that this week's parsha comes from the book of Shemot (Names) because the list of those who have helped, supported, and inspired me contains so many names." Referring again to his personal miracle of completing his rabbinic studies, Rabbi Stamov said, "Now I have to create another miracle in Ukraine, bringing people there closer to their religion, to keeping mitzvot, and to God."

Ha'aretz newspaper stated, "Stamov is a Cinderella story of the Conservative world," one that took courage, commitment, and significant dedication. Rabbi Reuven and Lena Stamov, along with their daughters now make Kiev their new home, working together to develop a stable and strong Masorti community in Kiev and other parts of the country. The pasuk (verse) Rabbi Stamov chose for his ordination is "Ki miTzion teitzei Torah, from Zion shall come Torah." This reference is made even more pertinent as the Stamovs move to Ukraine to bring Torah and the love of Judaism to the community.

(Adapted from Masorti Olami)

### **MERCAZ Canada/USA & Women's League for Conservative Judaism Biennial Essay Contest**

**TIME IS RUNNING OUT! Entries must be post-marked by April 16.**

Awards: Five scholarships in the amounts of \$1000, \$600, \$400, and \$250 (2x)

Eligibility: This year's theme is "MAKING THE DESERT BLOOM"

David Ben-Gurion spoke of "making the desert bloom." Researchers and companies in Israel have taken this message to heart, making Israel a leader in "green" technology.

Essay Format: Choose one green technology breakthrough developed in Israel that you

learning with Rabbi Gustavo Surazski, at Netzach Israel, the Masorti kehilla in Ashkelon.

**Your membership also works to ensure funding to Tnuva Masorti, the Masorti Movement, helping to fund our kehillot, rabbinic training, and rabbis' salaries in Israel.**

The NOAM shinshinim program is one of the most successful absorption centre programs in Israel, and there is hope for placement of NOAM shinshinim in other absorption centres across the country.

**Your membership makes the difference!**



A few of the NOAM shinshinim at the Absorption Centre take a break to speak with participants from the January 2012 Masorti Leadership Mission

These NOAM members provide a year of service, shnat sherut, before entering Tzahal. Participants in the program live in two apartments at the absorption centre, serving Israel and Masorti while learning important leadership and life skills. By choosing to serve in this special program, these shinshinim also solidify their connection to Masorti/Conservative Judaism, building and educating the next generation of Masorti/Conservative leaders.

Programs like these would not be possible without our membership from MERCAZ-Canada.

deem to be significant. Answer the following two parts:

Part One: Give a short description of the technology you chose. Considering Israel's history, society, and physical geography explain why you believe this breakthrough is important to Israel and its significance to the world.

Part Two: Imagine David Ben-Gurion visiting Israel today. Write an interview with him discussing your chosen technology in relation to his vision.

For full rules and essay question go to <http://www.mercaz.ca/2012EssayContest.html>.

In addition to the biennial essay contest, MERCAZ-Canada runs a matching scholarship program for youth attending Conservative Movement programs, such as Ramah Seminar, USY Pilgrimage, Nativ, or studying at TRY or the Conservative Yeshiva. Go to [www.mercaz.ca](http://www.mercaz.ca) for an application and additional information.

## Membership Matters

**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 past membership support. If you're not a member, we've miss you, and ask that you renew your support now.

**Keep our voice strong!**

**Together we keep the  
Masorti/Conservative voice strong!**

Come see how your membership makes the difference.

Join the December 2012 Masorti Leadership mission, December 3 - 6, 2012.

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

**Volunteer & Study in Israel**

A new program, co-sponsored by the Conservative Yeshiva of United Synagogue and Skilled Volunteers for Israel, comprises a half-day of study at the Yeshiva and a half-day of volunteering with an Israeli non-profit in Jerusalem. The program is open to students and adults of all learning levels and religious backgrounds, including professionals and retirees who want to enrich their knowledge and contribute their expertise and skills to Israeli society. In addition to morning or afternoon study, each participant chooses a volunteer position in one of four tracks: Education, Environment, Caring for the Community, or Organizational Development. Our staff will match volunteers and non-profits based on each participant's interests, skills, professional experience, and availability.

The program will run for two sessions:  
July 1-19, 2012 and July 22-August 9, 2012.

Participants may sign up for one or both sessions. For more information or to register, visit  
<http://www.conservativeyeshiva.org/volunteer-study-summer-program>.

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 be continue to be influential in the WZO and JAFI, where decisions that affect World Jewry are made.

Every voice counts. Have you been counted? 2012 Membership in MERCAZ-Canada is only \$14.00, \$25.00 for a couple, and \$9 for students age 18-25.

If you are a member- Thank you! If not, renew today, online at [www.mercaz.ca](http://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.

Hag kasher v'sameach; wishing you a happy and healthy Pesach!

*Marion & Rabbi Jennifer*

Marion Mayman  
President

Rabbi Jennifer Gorman  
Executive Director

**MERCAZ-Canada ~ Your Voice in Israel**

## Keep Our Voice Strong!

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Join Now-  
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