



# Masorti Foundation for Conservative Judaism in Israel

Rabbi Alan Silverstein  
Masorti Foundation Chair

David H. Lissy  
Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer

Inside this issue:



## LEADERSHIP MISSION --- EDUCATION IN BOTH DIRECTIONS

The Masorti Foundation's most recent leadership mission to Israel during the first week of December covered so much territory that the summary to follow hardly does it justice.

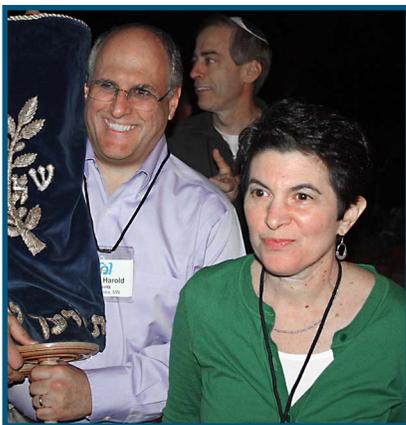
of NOAM, the Masorti youth group, along with Mechina members from Hannaton, had provided programming near shelters for children unable to go to school.

In addition to learning about the impact of the war, mission participants heard from NOAM's professional leadership about growth goals for NOAM. (See

expressed the hope for even more joint programming.

The Beersheva stop included something unrelated to the immediate local community. Representatives of Rujum, the first Israeli winery to operate with Masorti rather than Orthodox supervision, brought samples for a tasting—which was welcome even though the hour was early.

In Omer, the mission saw a well established



Rabbi Harold Kravitz and his wife Cindy in Pardes Hanna



Rabbi Gerald Skolnik, President of the RA, standing, with Chief Justice Asher Grunis



Ron Dermer, Advisor to the Prime Minister



Rabbi Shai Piron, seated, addressing the mission

The twenty-five participants included both rabbis and lay leaders. Because of the just concluded war in Gaza, the Rabbinical Assembly formally joined the Masorti mission so that it also became one of solidarity.

Fittingly, the trip started early Monday morning in the south, with the first stop in Ashkelon. There, after shacharit and breakfast, the mission met with Rabbi Gustavo Surazski and leaders of the Masorti kehilla. They heard what it was like to live with school cancelled and the threat of sirens and rockets at any time. They also learned how Masorti kehillot supported local needs, and how in Ashkelon leaders

page 4 for profile of Amit Stern, NOAM's new director.) Fewer than half of all NOAM participants come from families directly affiliated with a Masorti kehilla, so NOAM activities are a way of introducing even more Israelis to the Masorti message.

In Beersheva, in an indication of how Masorti is beginning to make its mark on Israeli society, Mayor Ruvik Danilovich spoke not only of the role of the Masorti kehilla but of Beersheva's need for more kehillot that promote tolerance. The mayor said that the Masorti kehilla "enhances Beersheva," and

kehilla with strong roots in the general community. Even though there are Orthodox congregations in town, it is Masorti which conducts services at a local senior citizen center. The kehilla's summer day camp, for which it charges a fee, attracts more than 100 children even though the local Chabad day camp is free.

Each Masorti leadership mission tries to include one non-Masorti experience. It will be hard to top this one as mission participants went to Nevatim Air Force Base, were briefed by an Air Force pilot and then stood close enough to planes taking off to literally feel

the experience.

Monday night, with Masorti leaders from around the country present, Rabbi Tamar Elad Appelbaum delivered an inspiring keynote opening in which she spoke of Israel's need for an accessible Judaism that is both modern and meaningful.

Tuesday's events emphasized Masorti's role in the larger community. It included meetings with Ron Dermer, the top advisor to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu; Cabinet Secretary Tzvi Hauser; and the new Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Asher Grunis. The group also met with Stas Misezhnikov, Minister of Tourism. Just moments before the meeting, the Minister had learned he was being dropped from the Yisrael Beteinu list for the new elections. Whether he would otherwise have said this we will not know, but he spoke quite strongly about the importance of a new governing coalition which did not include the ultra-Orthodox.

A most interesting additional stop was a visit to the SodaStream factory near Maale Adumim across what is known as the Green Line. Daniel Birnbaum, CEO of SodaStream, has been a Masorti supporter. SodaStream has become increasingly known in the US, and recently advertised on the Super Bowl. With facilities around the world, the factory near Maale Adumim employs more than 1,000, 73% of whom are Arab, and who are paid at Israeli wage levels. With boycott campaigns, it might make business sense for the company to close this factory, yet doing so would mean Palestinians losing the best paying jobs they are likely to get. A further indication that no decisions in this area are easy.

Wednesday saw visits to several Masorti kehillot as well as a continuation of the meetings with political leaders. The group met Nachman Shai of the Labor Party and Rabbi Shai Piron, number two on Yair Lapid's Yesh Atid list, and now a new member of Knesset. Rabbi Piron, an Orthodox rabbi, said that whether the modern Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox like it or not, there

are other streams of Judaism. He said he hoped to convince religious Jews that the current rules of the State of Israel that ignore the non-Orthodox are bad for Judaism.

In Rehovot, the group met with Rabbi Lior Sinai who spoke of his efforts at developing programs for children and of responding to the interests of parents.

The mission learned how, in



Raanana, with the encouragement of Masorti leadership, two kehillot have merged and are now thriving. The mayor of Raanana, Nahum Hofree, met with the group. The municipality has been very supportive and has allocated land for a new Masorti location.

The high point of the day was a stop at the brand new kehilla at Pardes Hanna where the mission delivered a sefer Torah and joined with the community in a Hachnasat HaTorah celebration. The Torah, a gift from Congregation Adath Jeshurun in Minnetonka, Minnesota was personally delivered by Rabbi Harold Kravitz. Rabbi Elisha Wolfen, the dynamic leader of the nearby Masorti kehilla in Zichron Yaacov led the spirited singing and dancing.

The final day began just south of the Lebanon border, in Kfar Vradim. There, Mayor Sivan Yechieli, although someone who considers himself secular, was the single most important and effective force behind the construction of the beautiful new synagogue building for the Masorti kehilla. Mayor Yechieli also spoke of the challenges of leading a community far from the center of the country. Any who have met him would

share the wish we had more leaders like Sivan Yechieli.

Kibbutz Hannaton, the last official stop before a closing dinner, was particularly meaningful for mission members, several of whom could trace Hannaton's development, and ups and downs, over a period of 30 years or more.

Not that many years ago, Kibbutz Hannaton was down to six families

with a Masorti connection. Today, that number has risen to 40, with more on the way. Even more exciting is the Mechina program, now in its first year, at the Educational Center adjacent to the kibbutz. The Mechina program is an IDF approved one year deferral of military service while participants study Jewish texts and Jewish history and perform community service. While there are about three dozen such programs in the country, this is the first with Masorti sponsorship and leadership.

Twenty-one students are enrolled in the Mechina, almost all of whom have no prior Masorti background. Under current government rules, by its third year of operation, the Hannaton Mechina should be eligible for substantial government support.

Masorti movement chair, Emily Levy Shochat and her husband, Jack, once again hosted mission participants and Masorti leaders at a closing dinner at their home in Kfar Saba.

Over the last few years, it is clear these leadership missions have been a key factor in stimulating interest in and support for the work of the Masorti Foundation in promoting the cause of Masorti in Israel.

## Meet Rabbi Yonatan Sadoff – Kehillat Magen Avraham, Omer

**W**hen life moves in overlapping circles, the results can be especially enjoyable. That is surely the case for Rabbi Yonatan Sadoff, the new spiritual leader of the Masorti kehilla in Omer. A native of the Minneapolis area who went to rabbinical school in Israel, he planned on living in Israel but found himself returning to the U.S. to serve as assistant rabbi in the very community where he grew up. That community, Adath Jeshurun in Minnetonka, has a longstanding partnership with the Masorti community in Omer. So, Yonatan Sadoff has now been able to meld the many facets of his life into this new experience.

Although he had an earlier successful career as video director and editor, Yonatan felt that he was missing a spiritual element he craved. Studies at the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem allowed him to pursue a deep level of Jewish learning. At first, he thought he would use his knowledge to produce a children's television program with Jewish content. However, during his subsequent time as a rabbinical student at the Schechter

Institute in Jerusalem, he spent four years at Michigan State University as a seasonal Hillel Rabbi, helping the Hillel set up its annual programming, and conducting High Holiday services. It was these experiences that made him realize that pulpit and community work was his calling.

Rabbi Sadoff has written that "what distinguishes Masorti is its sense of obligation to tradition and mitzvot out of love and a desire for connection - not fear and punishment." He adds: "Our mission in Israel is to bring commitment to Judaism through the need and desire for connection and meaning."

The kehilla in Omer is a wonderful place to visit, and not just for those wishing to escape a Minnesota winter. Rabbi Sadoff will be delighted to welcome visitors, from Minnesota or elsewhere.



## Rabbi Dubi Haiun Elected as President of Rabbinical Assembly of Israel

**R**abbi Dubi Haiun of Kehillat Moriah in Haifa will serve as President of the Rabbinical Assembly of Israel for the next year. One of eight children of Tunisian olim, Dubi Haiun is from a family whose home combined religious tradition with openness to the broader world.

"I was always very involved in Judaism, but there was just something missing that I couldn't put my finger on," says Rabbi Haiun of his odyssey that led to becoming a Masorti rabbi. During his years as a kibbutznik, Rabbi Haiun was the editor of the kibbutz movement magazine, Shdemot. He became involved in the secular humanistic Judaism movement, but realized he was looking for a path that would allow him to be proud of his Sephardi heritage and where he could combine the "talking with the doing" that he had rejected as a teenager.

Rabbi Haiun initially studied for ordination privately with an Orthodox rabbi and then moved to the Schechter Rabbinical Seminary. He is "at home" with the traditional aspects of Masorti that are similar to his Sephardi home. In his own words: "I combine east and west in my private life and at Kehillat Moriah. This is the first time that a native Israeli from a North African background has been chosen to lead a body that is identified with North America. As president of the Rabbinical Assembly in Israel, I believe we are leading a movement that recognizes the differences and beauty of Israel's different ethnicities, that realizes that in Judaism there are different opinions, that has room for both conservatives and liberals...yet values what we have in common rather than focusing on our differences."

## Masorti Foundation for Conservative Judaism in Israel

### Officers

Rabbi Alan Silverstein, *Chair*  
 Temma Kingsley, *Vice Chair*  
 Toni Bickart, *Secretary*  
 Richard R. Kahn, *Treasurer*  
 Gloria Bieler & Earl Greinetz,  
*Honorary Chairs*

### Board of Directors

Barbara Berci  
 Rabbi Elliot Dorff  
 H. Lee Gladstein  
 Roslyn Goldstine  
 Robert Goodman  
 Rabbi Leslie Gordon  
 Rosalind Fuchsberg Kaufman  
 Rabbi Paul Kerbel  
 William Lipsey  
 Golda Mendelsohn  
 Peter A. Miller  
 Heidi Schneider  
 David Simon

Rabbi Gerald Skolnik  
 Rabbi Robert Slosberg  
 Rabbi Gordon Tucker  
 Lawrence Wiener  
 Rabbi Jeffrey Wohlberg  
 Judy Yudof  
 Edward Zinbarg

### Chair Emeritus

Herschel Blumberg

### Rabbinic Cabinet

Rabbi Robert Slosberg, *Chair*  
 Rabbi Neil Sandler, *Vice Chair*  
 Rabbi Aaron Brusso  
 Rabbi Amy Wallk Katz  
 Rabbi Adam Kligfeld  
 Rabbi Jay Kornsgold  
 Rabbi Harold Kravitz  
 Rabbi Daniel Liben  
 Rabbi Ethan Linden  
 Rabbi Jonathan Lubliner  
 Rabbi Micah Peltz  
 Rabbi Michael Safra  
 Rabbi Jeremy Wiederhorn

## American Rabbinical Students Connect with Israel

American rabbinical students have been accustomed to spending a year of their studies in Israel. All too often, however, this wonderful experience did not include a meaningful relationship with Masorti kehillot. This is changing, with benefits flowing in both directions.

Students from the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies and the Jewish Theological Seminary are now being given the opportunity to develop a relationship with an Israeli kehilla. This year, six students from the Ziegler program and nine from JTS are working with one of twelve partner Israeli kehillot and are being encouraged to take upon themselves specific roles within the kehilla. Students are required to participate in kehilla activities at least five times a year, joining the kehilla for Shabbat and holidays, as well as

participating in a variety of community activities.

Students have been assigned to communities from Hannaton in the north to Beersheva in the south, with as many as possible being assigned to kehillot outside of Jerusalem. The goal is to help the students create a relationship with a specific community, with the hope those relationships will be maintained for years.

Each kehilla has assigned a specific person to be responsible for introducing students to the community and its activities.

Ron Goldberg, a student from Ziegler who recently spent a weekend in Beersheva at Kehilat Eshel Avraham, shared the following: "The community and the Rabbi were very welcoming. Rabbi Mauricio Balter and I bonded around soccer.

I am looking forward to teaching a Thursday evening adult study group. Rabbi Mauricio is an incredible teacher. He took me to an unveiling, and on the way, he quizzed me about what the role of the rabbi is during this ceremony. I talked all about the logistics, but he reminded me that the primary role of the rabbi is to comfort the family."

In Pardes Hanna, as one of Masorti's new kehillot, Judith Hanania, Chairperson of Darchei Noam shared the following: "Since we are a very new kehilla, and without the services of a rabbi, the presence of a rabbinical student at our services is a great boon to us, one might even say 'vital' to our possibility for growth and continuation."

Masorti is delighted to be able to work with the JTS and Ziegler programs.

## Meet Amit Stern, Director of NOAM

The NOAM youth movement is one of Masorti's crown jewels, so it is especially significant that we welcome its new director, Amit Stern.

As a product of the Israel Scouts and a former staff member for them, Amit has experience with Israel's largest youth movement. He understands what it takes to make a youth movement succeed.

After his IDF service, Amit obtained two degrees: a law degree from Hebrew University, and an education degree and teaching certificate in history and bible studies from Kibbutzim College. For the last two years, before assuming his position as Director of NOAM, Amit worked as a lawyer for Yedid, an Israel non-profit that empowers Israelis to become self-sufficient and civically engaged members of society by promoting social and economic justice. Growing up in a secular household in Bnai Brak, Amit had negative feelings towards Judaism, which he perceived as closed and not welcoming. He felt very much distanced from Jewish life even



though the older generation in his family was observant. His father is an 8th generation Israeli from Safed, and many of his distant relatives were rabbis. Once he left Bnai Brak, Amit said he was exposed to different streams and different opinions about religious observance on a regular basis. He met new people who talked about Judaism in a language that was not solely related to Orthodox observance and he participated in groups with people of varying levels of observance that met weekly to study and explore Judasim.

Amit thinks of NOAM not only as a youth movement, but also very much an activist movement whose members are involved in current events and who do not hesitate to take action and become involved in what is going on around them. He especially likes NOAM's family feeling, with young Israelis from all

over the country very connected to one another.

Over the next few years, Amit says his challenge will be to see the numbers of NOAM participants grow in order to influence more youth, and also to see NOAM become officially recognized by government bodies (higher membership numbers are essential for making this happen).

### IRA Charitable Contributions

The American Taxpayer Reform Act of 2012 renews the ability of IRA owners age 70 ½ and older to make qualified charitable distributions of up to \$100,000 in 2013.

Please think of the Masorti Foundation as you take advantage of this option in your tax and gift planning.

## FOUR NOAM GRADUATES BRING “THIS AMERICAN LIFE” TO ISRAELI RADIO

**S**ipur Israeli, or “Israel Story,” the Israeli version of NPR’s “This American Life,” had its first national radio airing on Galei Tzahal, the Army radio station, during Hanukah 2012.

“This American Life” is a weekly public radio show in the US broadcast on more than 500 stations to about 1.7 million listeners.

“Israel Story” is the brainchild of four 29-year-old NOAM graduates who became friends through NOAM activities. The four: Mishy Harman and Shai Satran, both from Jerusalem; Roei Gilron, from Beersheva; and Yochai Maital, from Haifa, were all extremely active NOAM participants, taking upon themselves a variety of leadership positions, from camp counselors to the youth chairperson of NOAM.



After completing their military service, Mishy and Roei both chose to attend college in the US. Roei, who attended Brandeis and studied neuroscience, started listening to “This American Life” while still in college. Mishy, who holds a BA from Harvard University in history and a MA from the University of Cambridge in archaeology, became a fan of the show during a three-month long road trip across the US, listening to podcasts of the program Roei had downloaded for him.

The two had a history of working together in NOAM, as well as later when they established a successful social network website start-up. This past year, they both returned to Israel, determined to pursue their doctoral degrees at Israeli universities.

“What makes ‘This American Life’ so successful,” says Mishy, “are the talented journalists and writers. It’s the radio equivalent of The New Yorker. After my road trip, it was clear to me, and to Roei as well, that this would be our next project.”

Mishy and Roei had not stayed in close touch with Shai and Yochai (who had meanwhile served together for eight years in the IDF), but quickly renewed their friendship when they ran into the two at an event in Tel Aviv. No sooner did they discuss their idea, than their old friends were on board.

“Israel Story” started as a podcast production - an idea that has taken off in the US, but is not yet common in Israel. The team was very lucky to be able to meet with “This American Life” producer, Nancy Updike, who was living in Tel Aviv and was willing to answer even their most basic questions. “Remember,” says Mishy, “none of us had any broadcasting or journalism experience of any kind.”

To date, the team has produced four shows on different themes, as well as almost weekly live evening events called “Balcony Stories” which combine several prepared stories with stories told by the audience. These events have helped create a community around the show.

“Much to our surprise the program really took off, with thousands of people downloading the podcasts,” says Mishy. “Our dream was to get on national radio, but this is not something we ever thought would happen. However, we were given the opportunity to pitch our idea to Galei Tzahal (an IDF station which usually has no external shows) and they loved it. It was shocking! The first four episodes were aired during Hanukah and this summer the entire first season will be aired on Friday afternoons.”

Maybe not the usual Masorti success story, but certainly a further indication that NOAM graduates and Masorti members are making a mark on Israeli society.

For more information, you can visit [www.israelstory.org](http://www.israelstory.org) or their Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/sipurisraeli>

## The Masorti Foundation Welcomes Two New Board Members

**B**arbara Berci is founder and chair of BSC Management in Los Angeles. She currently serves as chair of the Masorti Los Angeles Council. Barbara is also on the leadership council of SOVA (the Jewish Family Service Food Pantry) and on the Southern California Jewish Leadership Council. She works enthusiastically for Masorti because: “All of us care about the survival and flourishing of the State of Israel. We must ask ourselves what kind of Israel do we support and how do we work to make it a democratic, pluralistic country where our children and grandchildren would be comfortable to visit or live.”

Rabbi Robert B. Slosberg is the rabbi at Congregation Adath Jeshurun, in Louisville, Kentucky, which he has served since his ordination in 1981. He is the new Chair of the Masorti Foundation Rabbinic Cabinet and continues to serve on the Board of the National Council of Synagogues. He is a past Chair of the Board of Overseers of the Albert A. List College of Jewish Studies.

For Both Barbara Berci and Rabbi Bob Slosberg, it was their participation in a Masorti leadership mission to Israel that ignited their interest in the work of the Foundation.



**Masorti Foundation for Conservative Judaism in Israel**  
475 Riverside Drive, Suite 832 New York, NY 10115-0122

## Not Only Has Ground Been Broken in Herzliya...



In July 2012, we shared with you Kehillat Torat Hayyim's ongoing difficulties in attaining permits to build on the land they were granted by the Herzliya municipality. We are pleased to share with you that the foundation has been poured, the walls are going up, and the roof will soon be in place.