



# The Daniel Centers // TLV for Progressive Judaism

Beit Daniel // Kehilat Jaffa // Mishkenot Ruth // Kehilat Halev



## BEIT DANIEL

The Center for Progressive Judaism in Tel Aviv-Jaffa

## MISHKENOT RUTH DANIEL

Kehilat Daniel in Jaffa  
Congregation, Tourism and Seminars Center and Guesthouse in Jaffa

## KEHILAT HALEV

Spiritual Kehila in the Center of Tel Aviv

Friends of the Daniel Centers for Progressive Judaism



**SUMMER 2018**

## Israel @ 70

With the passing of each Independence Day celebration (Yom Ha'atzmaut), I reflect on how far Israel has come. 2018 marks 70 years of the State of Israel – a significant milestone for a country that has faced seemingly insurmountable challenges. Her journey has been remarkable - through the earliest settlements, the destruction of Jewish communities in Europe, the War of Independence in 1948, the numerous wars that followed, and decades of massive waves of immigration that changed the face of the State and her people. We are overjoyed with the achievements of our “Start-Up” Nation - achievements based on the ideals and work ethic of pioneers (halutzim), dreamers and visionaries. In 1969 Israel elected Golda Meir, one of the first female Prime Ministers in the world. In 2018, Esther Hayut was named the third female president of the Supreme Court. At 70 our Israel is a wondrous treasure.

But our work is not yet done. On the horizon are looming threats and an uncertain future: fissures in Israel-Diaspora relations, threats to Israel's fragile democracy, including to the autonomy of the Supreme Court, infringements on religious freedom, increasing distrust between and among ethnic groups, and even increasingly regressive attitudes towards women espoused by a political ultra-Orthodox faction. And we cannot forget our adversaries on our borders seeking our destruction.

As many of our readers know, Israel has been described as a country of four “tribes” - secular, Orthodox, ultra-Orthodox, and Arab. We believe that the barriers between these tribes should be broken. At the same time Reform and progressive Judaism is increasingly

recognized as a genuinely Israeli sector of society, a part of Israel separate from “secular.” A recent article in “The Marker”, a prominent Israeli magazine, recognized this change. It described the work that we do at Beit Daniel - our many lifecycle events and religious services, our conversion program (the largest non-Orthodox program in the country), and our diverse offerings of educational and social programs. Year after year, we reach more people, and more reach out to us. I thank our supporters around the world and confirm my commitment to our shared values. Together we can ensure that the Daniel Centers will continue to be a beacon of hope and a force for pluralism, equality, and democracy in the State of Israel.



Rabbi Meir Azari  
Senior Rabbi

Family  
Smachot for  
Visitors to  
Israel





## Bar and Bat Mitzvot for All

Aaron Jaffe, Holly Ekstrom, Sarah Hatcher and Emily Gould celebrate their bar/bat mitzvahs at the Kotel and at Beit Daniel

With the generous support of the Genesis Prize Foundation and the Jewish Funders Network, the Daniel Centers set out last year to expand our bar and bat mitzvah programming to include more intermarried families. We are one of the very few religious institutions in Israel that welcomes these families into the tent of the Jewish people.

In May, we celebrated the shared bar/bat mitzvah of four adults from the U.S. who participated in a year-long MASA program. Aaron Jaffe, 22, shared his experience with us: "I never had a bar mitzvah at 13. I felt that I was missing something of great importance. After the cere-

mony, I felt that I had fulfilled a long journey confirming my identity as a Jew. Beit Daniel was INCREDIBLE in helping us in our personal journeys. Shimon Smith (Beit Daniel's cantorial soloist) brought us to the egalitarian section of the Kotel in Jerusalem to celebrate that experience with our friends and families."

Holly Ekstrom, 27, said "I converted a year ago and wanted to experience the bat mitzvah ceremony. It was an incredible moment and I am so happy I did it here in Israel. It bonded me to this special place. I will never forget this experience."

Do you want your son or daughter to have a bar/bat mitzvah in Israel? Would you love to have an egalitarian wedding in Israel?

Each year, the Daniel Centers help dozens of couples and families outside Israel to plan a wedding or bar/bat mitzvah in Israel. We provide:

- + A meaningful religious experience with one of our rabbis in the spirit of Reform Judaism
- + Bar/bat mitzvah training through Skype with an English speaking teacher

- + Coordination and guidance to tailor the ceremony to the needs of the couple/family
- + Pre-ceremony meeting in Israel
- + Optional addition of song leader/cantor at the ceremony
- + Locations: Beit Daniel, Mishkenot Ruth Daniel, the Kotel in Jerusalem and elsewhere
- + The experience of a lifetime!

For more information please contact Yael Biniya at Beit Daniel: [office@beit-daniel.org.il](mailto:office@beit-daniel.org.il)

# Inside Shonim B'yahad

Now in its fourth year, Shonim B'yahad is an artistic educational program and competition for middle and secondary school students. The subject matter is accepting "the other" among us. This year we expanded the program to over 20 schools and programs. For the first time, two Jewish day schools from the U.S. participated, a multi-denominational school in Sarasota and a modern Orthodox one in Chicago. The exhibit opened in the Jaffa Port on June 11th, with a keynote address by Ron Huldai, mayor of Tel Aviv-Jaffa, and a longtime supporter of the Daniel Centers. Later it will travel to synagogues in Washington DC, Miami, and elsewhere.

Roni and Hedva Reuven, volunteer coordinators at AKIM, a community center for people with intellectual disabilities in Yavne, reflected on their experience in encouraging a group of young handicapped adults to participate in the program.

## Q: How did you introduce Shonim B'yahad to the group?

A: We opened the discussion by talking about our differences - what brings us together and what separates us. The participants know their relative strengths and skills and what makes them different than others. We discussed how we can express these ideas through art.



## Q: How did the participants receive the message?

A: They understand their challenges very well. They want people to see them and for their voice to be heard. They were excited by the possibility of their artwork being on display for many thousands of people. They are very proud of the artwork that they created.

## Q: Would you participate in next year's project? Is there something that you would change?

A: Absolutely, this is a one-of-a-kind project. I would hope that it expands to other centers and education institutions that work with people with special needs.



Mayor of Tel Aviv-Jaffa, Ron Huldai, and Shilat Avisror from AKIM

# A Call to Action

Tikkun Olam in Tel Aviv-Jaffa gets involved in the crisis of the asylum seekers in Tel Aviv

Hannah Gerson, 22, shares her experience helping asylum seekers:

“As part of the Tikkun Olam in Tel Aviv-Jaffa program, I volunteer at the Eritrean Women’s Community Center whose mission is to support 40,000 asylum seekers from Sudan and Eritrea. On January 1st, 2018 the Israeli government announced that they would soon begin deporting asylum seekers from Israel. The center holds a clinic every Wednesday to help asylum seekers complete Refugee Status Determination (RSD) forms. This is the first step in getting refugee recognition status. Filling out an RSD can save someone from imprisonment or deportation. As of January 1st, there were still 13,000 asylum seekers who needed to complete the form. Every Wednesday, the clinic processes around 14 applications, with the help of eight volunteers. I realized that, if we were going to make any meaningful impact, we needed to move quickly. With the help of

my friend and fellow Tikkun Olam volunteer Steffi, we broadcasted a “call to action” on social media platforms and by word of mouth. We recruited and trained more than 50 volunteers. We set an ambitious target of 100 completed forms in one day. There was an atmosphere of organized chaos people sitting on anything and everything, kids running around unaware of their parent’s uncertain future, and large supplies of donated food and caffeine. We attracted the attention of journalists and a well-known Israeli documentary film maker. On that day we completed over 150 forms. Our call to action created ripple effects, encouraging volunteers to continue with the project for weeks. For me, it was a new year with a difference. We managed to ‘do what was necessary’ to make a difference in the lives of others less privileged than us.”

ADDING UP TIKKUN  
OLAM’S 5 MONTH  
PROGRAM:

158

DAYS OF  
LIVING IN  
TEL AVIV-  
JAFFA

110

HOURS OF  
TOURING

563

HOURS OF  
VOLUNTEERING

338

HOURS OF  
JEWISH  
LEARNING

**IMPACT:  
EXPERIENCE OF  
A LIFETIME!**

Would you or someone you know be interested in taking part in Tikkun Olam Tel Aviv-Jaffa?

Tikkun Olam is a 5 or 10 month immersive program for young adults, run in cooperation by BINA and the Daniel Centers. For more information visit "Tikkun Olam" on our website. [www.beit-daniel.org.il](http://www.beit-daniel.org.il)

Santa Barbara  
Hillel's Fact  
Finder's Trip joins  
Beit Daniel for  
Kabbalat Shabbat,  
April 2018



## Our Friends Around the World

**F**rom places as far away as China, each year the Daniel Centers host hundreds of groups and missions at our centers. Whether you join us for a Kabbalat Shabbat, holiday service, or a compelling discussion

with one of our Rabbis, a stop at the Daniel Centers should be part of any visit to Tel Aviv-Jaffa. If you are interested in organizing a group visit, please contact Erica Goldberg at Beit Daniel: [erica@beit-daniel.org.il](mailto:erica@beit-daniel.org.il)

## Support the Friends of the Daniel Centers

**W**hile over 75% of our budget is self-financed, the Daniel Centers need additional funds to meet our ambitious goals of religious pluralism, multiculturalism and service. You can donate online to Friends of the Daniel Centers, by going to our website. Your donations will be processed through the secure website of Network for Good. Or send a check directly to Friends of the Daniel Centers, 4108 Leland Street, Chevy Chase, MD 20815. Your donation is tax deductible to the extent allowed by the law. If you are interested in establishing a longer term relationship with the Daniel Centers, please contact us at [edit@beit-daniel.org.il](mailto:edit@beit-daniel.org.il)

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