

THE DANIEL CENTERS FOR PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM



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FOR PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM

On the Frontline of Advancing Reform Judaism in Israel



Celebrating Simchat
Torah at Beit Daniel



Made in Jaffa: A Shuk of Jaffan Delights



Embracing the Golden Years at the Daniel
Centers

Beit Daniel

The Center for Progressive Judaism
in Tel Aviv-Jaffa

Mishkenot Ruth Daniel

Congregation, Culture and
Education Center and Guesthouse

Kehilat Halev

Spiritual Kehila in the Center of
Tel Aviv



FROM THE RABBI'S DESK



Dear Friends,

This coming year marks 25 years since we first opened the doors to Beit Daniel, our first center. Much has happened during this past quarter of a century. Two new centers were added to the Daniel Centers, a network of preschools was established throughout the city, thousands of young boys and girls celebrated their Bar and Bat Mitzvoh, thousands of couples were married through our Reform centers and hundreds of students from around the world and within our society benefited from our seminars and lessons.

Yet this is just the beginning.

Israelis are open and excited to Reform and progressive Judaism. This is largely due to the fact that Tel Aviv-Jaffa, the largest metropolis in Israel and the cultural and business hub of this country, is a city that embraces diverse approaches to Judaism. When I joined President Reuben Rivlin at his Residence just a few months ago to participate in a study session on Tisha B'av, I realized that the path I traveled to speak as a proud Reform Rabbi in his presence was paved by individuals like you who have supported our community. Your support and love of the Daniel Centers for Progressive Judaism has enabled us, 25 years on, to reach out to Israelis and to thousands of our supporters and community members around the world, as well as to send out this newsletter and e-messages to so many of you.

To you, I say thank you and promise, on behalf of our staff and community, that we will do our best to strengthen and expand egalitarian Judaism in Israel. I hope that you will be there to support us and to share in the joy of our achievements.

Rabbi Meir Azari
Senior Rabbi, Beit Daniel



Connect with Rabbi Meir Azari
on Facebook

RECOGNITIONS IN OUR COMMUNITY

Gerry Daniel Honored at the 2015 Union for Reform Judaism's (URJ) Biennial in Orlando, Florida

At a dinner for the North American Board of the URJ held on November 3, during the URJ's Biennial, **Gerry Daniel** was honored for his many contributions and commitment to Reform Judaism by URJ President Rabbi Rick Jacobs. Gerry was accompanied on stage by his daughter, Miriam Daniel, also a dedicated and involved supporter of the Daniel Centers.



From left to right: Rabbi Josh Weinberg, President of ARZA, Larry Wolff, Miriam Daniel, Gerry Daniel and Rabbi Meir Azari

Rabbi Mira Raz named in Forbes Magazine as one of Israel's 50 most influential women

Rabbi Mira Raz, who leads the congregation at Mishkenot Ruth Daniel, was recently named in Forbes Magazine as one of Israel's 50 most influential women. This recognition honors Rabbi Raz's impact on Reform Judaism in Israel and her many contributions to Jewish community life in Jaffa. Rabbi Raz is the leader of Congregation Mishkenot Ruth Daniel in Jaffa.

THINGS ARE HAPPENING...

Torah Talks at Beit Daniel

Following Simchat Torah, during which we begin a new cycle of reading and studying from the Torah, we began our latest English-language course, called Torah Talks, at Beit Daniel. In this weekly class, led by **Rabbi Philip Nadel**, we explore the Book of Genesis, using the Torah portions to understand the messages and themes of our tradition, from a modern and progressive lens.

The class is unique because Tel Aviv's English-speaking community spans many nationalities with a wide range of outlooks and opinions. They have connected to the Daniel Centers, through our conversion school, various programs and activities, or simply as new immigrants looking for a Reform community compatible with their lives. We look forward to growing this community and moving on to study art, film, music and culture from a progressive Jewish perspective.

Efrat Rotem, of Kehilat Halev, Receives her Rabbinic Ordination

Efrat Rotem was among five women to receive their Rabbinic Ordination from Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem this past November. The beautiful ceremony, led by Rabbi Professor Yehoyada Amir, was the culminating event of her four years of Rabbinic studies. During the ceremony, Ofira, Efrat's partner, joined her on stage and blessed her. Following the evening in Jerusalem, celebrations were held at Kehilat Ha'lev.



Efrat Rotem blessed by Rabbi Dr. Aaron Penkin, President of Hebrew Union College

Limud at the President of Israel's Residence

This past July, **Rabbi Meir Azari**, the Daniel Center's Senior Rabbi, represented the Reform voice at a historic Torah study session at the President of Israel's residence by leading a brief study session on the meaning of Tisha B'Av. In his press release, President Rivlin stated, "The President's Office is not a place for struggles and wars, but rather a home for discourse and a place that enables the diversity of opinions." The four participants included: Rabbi Azari, Rabbi Benny Lau (orthodox) of Jerusalem's Ramban Community and head of the 929 Torah Study Initiative, Rabbi Chaya Rowen-Baker (Conservative) of the Ramot Tzion community in Jerusalem, and Dr. Motti Zeira, director of HaMidrasha (the Educational Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Israel) at Oranim College.



President Rivlin introduces and welcomes limud panelists

The Challenges for the Reform Movement in Israel

You may read a lot about the political and legal battles of the Reform Movement in Israel but how much do you know about the history of the Movement in Israel, the changing landscape of religious observance, and the search by "secular" Jews in Israel for more meaningful Jewish experiences? Larry Wolff, husband of Miriam Daniel, whose parents helped to create the Daniel Centers, has written an article summarizing these trends. We invite you to read his article at the web site of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism (<http://www.reform.org.il/Eng/About/ProgressiveJudaismInIsrael.asp>)

COMMUNITY AND CULTURE



Rabbi Galia Sadan celebrating Hanukkah at Beit Daniel

Illuminating the Winter at the Daniel Centers

We have embraced the fact that Hanukkah falls during the darkest month of the year by planning a variety of events at our three centers to banish the darkness and illuminate the beauty in our community. At Beit Daniel, we will come together every evening during Hanukkah to light candles, sing, make art and enjoy sufganiyot. At Mishkenot Ruth Daniel, Jews and Arabs will join together to light the candle for the 5th night of Hanukkah in Hebrew and Arabic and continue the evening by studying, singing and celebrating together. Kehilat Halev will be taking a musical approach to the holiday through musical lessons for adults. Further information on additional events can be found on our website: [www.danielcenters.org](#).



Rabbi Mira Raz



Food for sale at Made in Jaffa

Made in Jaffa

A Shuk of local Jaffan delights

On the first Friday of November, close to 2,500 people arrived to Amiad Culture Center in the heart of Jaffa to sample local Jaffan treats and browse through authentic and beautiful hand-made clothing, bags and jewelry. Despite the rainy weather, the positive energy was palpable as local Jaffa vendors sold home-made food and beverages.

During the past months, Beit Daniel has partnered in the establishment of this local market in Jaffa, along with the development arm of the Jaffa Municipality and the Entrepreneurship Incubator at the Academic College in Jaffa. The market was originally planned to be held on the plaza of Mishkenot Ruth Daniel, but because of recent security concerns as well as harsh weather, the location was changed to Amiad Center in old Jaffa. We will evaluate the success of the project and consider relocating the market back to its original location at Mishkenot Ruth Daniel this spring.

Lavi Vanounou, Director of Tourism at Mishkenot Ruth Daniel and manager of local community relations, noted that the market felt as if it had always been there and that it could succeed during any season of the year. Most of the visitors to the market on the first day were local residents committed to giving back to their community.

TIKKUN OLAM IN TEL AVIV-JAFFA

A PERSONAL STORY

Jenna Cohen, a recent graduate from Knox College in Illinois, is a participant in the Tikkun Olam volunteer program for recent college graduates, jointly sponsored by the Daniel Centers and the Bina Center for Jewish Identity and Hebrew Culture.

Where I live in South Tel Aviv, crumbling facades and rundown buildings are just as numerous as the chic bars and modern storefronts that one typically associates with the city. Appearance-wise, it makes sense that Birthright, a program designed to entice young Jews to come to Israel, would skip my neighborhood. South Tel Aviv is poor. Daily life is more of a visible struggle here. There are more beggars on the street, more prematurely weathered hands digging through the trash to find their next meal. There are people in need here—Jews in need—and it's not a pretty or an easy thing to see, but it's something we need to see. After my Birthright experience, I knew there was another side to Israel that I needed to experience in order to truly love and understand Israel, a country that had come to mean so much to me. So, four years after I first set foot on Israeli soil, I'm back as a Tikkun Olam in Tel Aviv-Jaffa participant, working to aid and embrace "The White City" in whatever way I can.

Tikkun Olam in Tel Aviv-Jaffa is both an educational and an experiential program. Participants divide their time between studying Hebrew, Jewish texts, art, and history (among other subjects) at Bina—one of the only secular yeshivas in Israel—and volunteering/ interning for social action and coexistence programs in Tel Aviv-Jaffa. Such programs include (but are not limited to) afterschool tutoring programs for at-risk youth, volunteering at safe houses LGBT teens, and leading integrated acting classes for Jewish, Muslim, Druze, and African teens. It's exhausting work, but each night, my remarkable peers return home smiling with the knowledge that they made a difference for someone that day.

The work I do is a little less hands-on day-to-day. I work as an intern at Latet Israeli Humanitarian Aid, which provides aid to Holocaust survivors and families in need across Israel. I work in Latet's Development and Community Relations Office, where I, and two of my fellow interns, work on English grants, marketing materials, and international outreach. Most days, our work at the Latet office is meaningful but not terribly glamorous. However, last



Tikkun Olam participant Jenna Cohen

month, I had the extraordinary treat of going visiting one of the Holocaust survivors who benefits from Latet's services.

Alex is a wiry gentleman in his 80s with faded Russian military tattoos on his hands and the gruff voice of a man who has smoked 2 packs of cigarettes a day for several decades. Most of the food on his kitchen shelves is canned or boxed—having come from Latet's supplementary food packages and yearly food drives. And his living room doubles as a bedroom in order to make space for the cobbler shop that Alex runs out of his apartment. On the day of my visit, Latet was installing kitchen shelves, a new armoire and safety railings in Alex's home—a service Latet offers to Holocaust survivors who need extra aid and spend a lot of time alone. I was there to photograph the renovations, but all I could see through my camera lens was Alex and the quiet pleasure that filled his eyes each time a new piece was installed in his home. As soon as the kitchen shelf was installed, Alex began piling it with food; when the new armoire was finished, he immediately pulled clothes off the chair that had acted as his dresser and began purposefully placing them inside. When the shower railings were finished, he practiced getting in and out, clearly grateful not to have to use an old plastic strap to steady himself anymore.

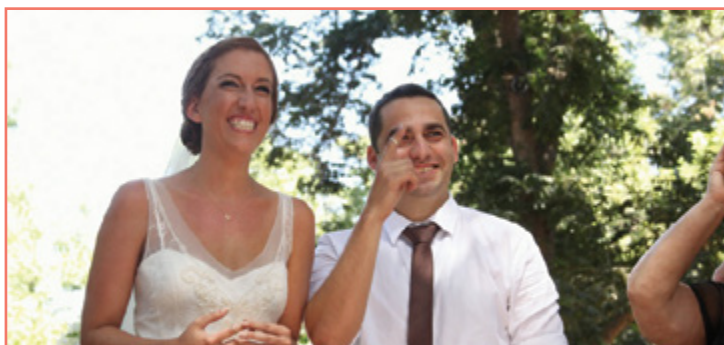
It took several hours to build and install all of the additions to Alex's home, but to me, the entire experience seemed to pass in a matter of minutes. As the handymen hammered and nailed away in the background, Alex gathered us on the couch of his living

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room/ bedroom and told us the story of his life. And while I only understood a fraction of Alex's accented Hebrew, I felt a strong connection to him by the end of the afternoon; I didn't need language to understand his soul. I left that day with a renewed vigor for my work at Latet, having seen with my own eyes the good that hours of work behind a winking computer screen can do. My efforts not only meant something, they brought about positive change that I got to see with my very own eyes.

Working at Latet and meeting people like Alex are experiences that have reshaped (and continue to reshape) my vision of Israel. Before Tikkun Olam in Tel Aviv- Jaffa, I thought I knew Israel. But looking back, I see now that knowledge of Israel was limited to the famous places that one finds on a postcard like the Old City and the Dead Sea. However, after two and a half months of working and living with the people of South Tel Aviv, I have richer experiences to write home about.

I can't believe my good fortune to be a part of this amazing program and the profundity of the experiences I'm having. I have never felt so close to Israel and the Jewish people as I feel right now on Tikkun Olam.



Celebrating Bar/Bat Mitzvahs & Weddings at the Daniel Centers

From Tel Avivans to international visitors, we celebrate hundreds of Bar and Bat Mitzvah and weddings each year within our walls, in the city, and on its beaches. Beit Daniel's distinctive egalitarian and progressive spirit makes the experience one of a kind. Our office is happy to speak with you about hosting your life cycle event and to tell you about the experiences of others. Contact office@beit-daniel.org.il for further information.

FRIENDS & MEMBERS

Support the Friends of the Daniel Centers

While 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 the 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 office@beit-daniel.org.il



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