

קול ארצה

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There's More Than
One Way To Be Jewish

The Israel Reform Movement and its National Responsibility

The Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism and its member congregations were very active throughout the summer of 2006, and continue to be active in order to help those citizens whose lives were affected by the tragedy of the war with Hizbullah. Following is a list of some of the activities undertaken by the IMPJ:

- The IMPJ opened the doors of their summer camp facilities to house over two hundred families, and helped to establish day camps and clubhouses in many northern congregations.
- Rabbi Ilana Neshet of Tel Aviv's Beit Daniel officiated at the collective wedding ceremony of ten displaced couples from the north.
- Kehilat Yoma, located in the city of Modi'in, delivered donations of food, toiletries, and gifts to families in bomb shelters in Tzfat, Akko, Naharia, and Haifa.
- Kibbutz Yahel opened its bed and breakfast to low income northerners seeking refuge from the shelling.
- The IRAC found housing for hundreds of people with special needs. It also organized a rabbinic counselling and social workers hotline for people working on the front lines and for those with nowhere else to turn.
- The Leo Baeck Centre in Haifa ran twelve social service centres that saw more than 250 people daily, and also converted its parking garage and bomb shelter into an underground playground for children who were unable to play outdoors.

These efforts were felt throughout Israel and as a result, many people were made aware of the IMPJ for the first time. ARZA Canada extends a *kol hakavod* to our fellow movement in Israel.

With files from Cheryl Englander and Rabbi Elliot Kleinman

“This certificate signifies the appreciation and gratitude for the blessed activity of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism over the course of the combat in the north during the summer of 5767, July-August 2006


For their true obligation to social values, for their volunteer spirit that knows no limits, for revealing national responsibility and readiness to rally in a time of crisis and for ceaseless days and nights of action for the sake of northern residents.

Ehud Olmert, Prime Minister of Israel”

ARZA - ארצה קנדה

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ARZA Canada's future in



2007

www.arzacanada.org / 2007

We have dedicated ourselves to making 2007 a year of growth, both in membership and in services offered. ARZA Canada has identified a number of areas for development, and we are happy to share our progress with our members and the community. Visit our website now to see how we're working to make our vision of Israel and Zionism a reality.

The Umm al-Fahm Art Gallery:
a vision transformed into reality
in northern Israel by a joint
Palestinian - Jewish initiative.



A Work of Art in Northern Israel

By Rivanne Sandler

Our large bus works hard to manoeuvre its way through the winding narrow streets dotted with potholes. We are participants in the July 2006 ARZA Canada Study Trip, and we are in Umm al-Fahm, Israel. First stop is lunch in a private home, an experiment for projected in-home hospitality for ARZA Canada tourists. Our second stop, a visit to the Umm al-Fahm Art Gallery.

Our local guide, dreaming of the day when tourists will battle the economic malaise of Umm al-Fahm, complains bitterly about narrow streets unfit for modern traffic. Umm al-Fahm is one of the three largest Arab cities in Israel, with a population of some 40,000 and rising. It is located in the north of Israel, on the Green Line, near the separation fence with the West Bank. White stone minarets dominate the skyline. Life in Umm al-Fahm is not without its troubles, political and economic. The unemployment rate is among the highest in the country - thirteen percent are unemployed, more than twice the national average. As yet, it has no industrial zone. The city is religiously conservative. Few women go out without the Muslim veil. But there is a desire to open up to the world outside, to Israelis and to anyone interested in visiting this out of the ordinary place.

The Umm al-Fahm Art Gallery is an enlightened project in a city that has had its share of political conflicts. The gallery operates under the patronage of an association that includes intellectual and cultural figures from the Wadi Ara area. Ten years old, the gallery was founded by Said Abu Shakra, a former superintendent in the Israeli Police Force. Director Abu Shakra is from a well-known Israeli Arab family of artists and studied art at the Avni Academy in Tel Aviv and the Ramat HaSharon College.

One of the Gallery's primary objectives is Jewish-Palestinian art collaboration. Jewish and Arab artists often exhibit together in up to six exhibits a year. The art is modern and contemporary. Regarding the issue of figurative art in a traditional Muslim environment, the Gallery is careful not to show nudity and not to strain its good relations with the city's religious officials, nurtured over the years. Israeli and Arab artists meet in the gallery and their works meet face to face too. An exhibition entitled "Fasatin-Slamot," which means dresses in Arabic and Hebrew, featured the work of Jewish and Muslim female artists. Additional collaborations included a joint Jewish/Arab ceramics and calligraphy exhibit in 2006.

If you wish it, will they come?

We came, and we wandered around the small but attractive gallery, looking at art, not identity. The day we were there, works by Arab artists decorated the walls. Their art conveyed a unique awareness, not hesitating to depict a melancholy atmosphere, a charged event, cherished cultural objects from the past, and the love of their homeland, from an Arab perspective. We purchased catalogues of recent exhibitions, as an introduction to the artistic expression of others and as a tribute to the gallery's vision. As we left, we overheard talk of a future exhibit of Chagall at the gallery.

Learn more at www.umelfahmgallery.org

Vision and Reality

By Said Abu Shakra,
Gallery Founder and Director

The idea of establishing a museum was born into a vast and anguished void, a devastating lack of professional staff, of resources and of infrastructure. Out of a sense of awareness and responsibility for the future, the gallery started to operate, aiming to chart a new path. The means are meager and the road is long and difficult. With only the existing means we have embarked on several different activities. Artists, curators and other professionals from different countries and different cultures have been invited to take part in this joint collaboration. The gallery has become an important social and cultural meeting place. The creative workshops, seminars, gallery talks, symposiums, large number of art exhibitions and unique display spaces have turned it into a central place in the local and international culture scene.

The gallery is on its way to becoming the first Arab museum of modern art. This museum will be an inviting place, capable of embracing and enriching, bridging gaps and connecting different cultures, all this in the heart of a troubled, war weary, region. It will raise a generation steadfastly true to its culture and to its identity, a generation able to take responsibility for its life and its future. A generation of proud and deep-rooted youth, committed to pursuing peace and reclaiming the wilderness.

The gallery is considered an especially important link to the local community. It has already mapped out future initiatives designed to enhance and enrich the local community: Art classes for Arab women, art therapy for at risk and physically challenged youngsters, and classes in theatre, dance, and music.



On Air in Umm El-Fahm
Ceramic by Shlomit Bauman



Significant Zionist Presence at NFTY Convention and URJ Youth Workers Conference, courtesy of ARZA and ARZA Canada

NFTY Convention, held in Philadelphia from February 26-22, is the second largest event in the Reform Movement (the URJ Biennial is the largest). Close to 1,200 teens, 100 college students, 200 paying youth educators, clergy and lay leaders, and the full staff of the Youth Division attended this event and exposed themselves to the future direction of our youth movement.

A significant portion of the program is designed to connect participants to NFTY's annual study theme: "P'kichut Eineinu L'Tziyonut: Opening Our Eyes to Zionism." ARZA and ARZA Canada had a significant presence at the event through programming led by staff members, including leading a number of the twenty Israel related workshops. These dealt with such subjects as Israel Advocacy, Meeting Israelis, and a forum on Reform Jewish identity and Israel with ARZA Executive Director Rabbi Andrew Davids and Anat Hoffman of the Israel Religious Action Center. Representing ARZA Canada at NFTY Convention was our campus shlichah, Rachel Kaplan, and Programme Associate Jesse Paikin. The culmination and highlight of the Israel experience at the convention was a concert from the popular Israeli hip-hop band, *Hadag Nachash*.

Reform Zionism is high on the agenda of NFTY and ARZA Canada will continue to work with our Movement's youth leadership in their effort to keep members connected to Israel in a meaningful way.

Read more at www.nfty.org/convention



Fellows at the WZO Young Zionist Leaders conference in Miami Beach in 2005

ARZA-KESHER Fellows engage students and support Reform Zionism on campus

KESHER, as the heart of Reform Jewish life at universities, is also the Zionist Reform movement on campus. The ARZA-KESHER Fellowship is a unique opportunity for Reform students on campus to take part in high-level Reform Zionist training and programming. The Fellowship promotes peace through open discussion, education, and pluralism.

On campus, Fellows facilitate dialogue about Reform Zionism in a pluralistic setting, lead Israel programming in partnership with Hillel, participate in ongoing education and advocacy training through conferences, group conference calls, lively discussions and online learning, and promote long-term and short-term travel to Israel for Reform students.

For more information, or to join the Fellowship, contact us on your campus!

York University
Jesse Paikin ~ jpaikin@yorku.ca

University of Toronto
Elayna Femes ~ efemes@utoronto.ca

University of Western Ontario
Steve Buchalter ~ sbuchalt@uwo.ca

KESHER/Hillel Shlichah for Toronto
Rachel Kaplan ~ rkaplan@hilleltoronto.org

Learn more at www.keshernet.com/israel/arza

Netzer Olami: Zionizing the Reform Youth of the World

Netzer stands for Noar Tzioni Reformi (meaning 'Reform Zionist Youth') and is the International Reform Zionist youth movement, home to thousands of young people in a range of countries spread over four continents. Netzer Olami (meaning 'Worldwide Netzer') is based in Jerusalem and is the central, headquarters for all of Netzer's snifim (branches) around the world. Netzer currently has snifim in the following countries: Britain (RSY-Netzer and LJY-Netzer), Holland, Australia, Argentina, Spain, Russia, Belarus, Germany, South Africa, Ukraine, Baltic Countries, Netzer Israel (Noar Telem), and North America (NFTY).

As a youth movement, Netzer believes in youth empowerment and in young people running things for themselves. A central feature of the snifim is that young people organize and run the activities themselves, as well as taking responsibility for the major decisions affecting the movement. Each year in Israel there is an International Veida (Conference) where policy for the whole movement is set by the young people who constitute its leadership.

As a youth movement, Netzer also believes in a particular ideology, that is Reform Zionism, and in taking an activist stance, striving to bring about the practical realization of that ideology in our world.

More at www.nfty.org/netzer

Hear our Voice!

Download our podcast today! Search for us on iTunes, or on our website.

קול ארצה
The Voice of the Land

podcast
from arza canada

NEWS BRIEF **חדשות****No 'Yakir Yerushalayim' for Reform rabbi**

By Etgar Lefkowitz, Jerusalem Post

The Jerusalem Municipality has stalled attempts to include the name of a prominent Reform rabbi on a list of candidates for the prestigious city award, "Yakir Yerushalayim." Attempts to nominate Rabbi Asher Hirsch have fallen on deaf ears in the haredi-run city hall.

Last month, Deputy Jerusalem Mayor Shlomo Atias of the Shas Party said that a member of the Reform movement will not get the award. However, non-Orthodox officials voiced the hope that the nomination would go through this year.

The annual city award is allotted to city residents for contribution to the cultural and educational life of Jerusalem and the Diaspora. Hirsch, 80, served as the president of The World Union for Progressive Judaism, and moved the headquarters of the organization to Jerusalem.

Conversion Reform Demanded

By Amiram Barkat, Ha'aretz

A network of multi-denominational study centers for those seeking to convert to Judaism - run jointly by the Orthodox, Conservative and Reform movements - has decided to stop referring candidates to Israeli conversion courts until the conversion process is reformed.

The institute is demanding the conversion courts adopt an approach that is both halakhic and Zionist, and exempt the prospective converts from demands like placing their children in religious schools, which do not take into account the "national need" to convert some 350,000 people from the FSU who now live in Israel and are not recognized as Jews.

Reform leader seeks sympathetic president

By Sheera Claire Frenkel, Jerusalem Post

Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the URJ, came to Israel worried and is leaving worried. The Reform movement has several concerns that remain unaddressed, he said, especially the upcoming election of a new president.

During his visit, Yoffie met with the declared candidates for the presidency. He said his visit with Likud MK Reuven Rivlin was not congenial. "We need a president who is not just prepared to acknowledge rabbis from all the major streams as rabbis," he said. "We need a president who is willing to visit institutions from all the major streams of Judaism.

Join ARZA Canada for our 4th Annual Israel Study Trip

at the Jerusalem Campus of
Hebrew Union College
Jewish Institute of Religion

**"Hineini: Personal Responsibility in Jewish Tradition and Israeli Society"**

Through text study (both in the classroom and in the field), dialogue, personal meetings, and field trips, we will examine the issue of personal and communal responsibility, from both an historical and modern perspective. Led by Joan Garson and Rabbi Sharon Sobel, with HUC-JIR professors and scholars (in English), including Dr Amira Meir, Dr. David Mendlesohn, Rabbi Moshe Silberstein, and others!

- See Jerusalem as a living laboratory
- Meet with leaders of the Israeli Reform movement
- Engage with politicians and activists
- Take part in a private session at the Supreme Court
- Experience the beauty of Shabbat in Jerusalem
- Pre-trip lecture series to help prepare for Israel
- Optional pre-trip visits to Nitzana/Lov Eliav (a peace village on the Egyptian border) and the new Palmach Museum in Tel Aviv

Tuition: \$950 USD (tax receipt for full amount provided)
Includes tuition, study materials, bus fees, class trips, tour guides, museum entrance fees, six lunches, and four dinners

Hotel: Eldan - [Double occupancy: \$250 USD for entire stay]

[Single occupancy: \$500 USD for entire stay]

Participants are responsible for making their own travel arrangements to and from Israel.

Subsidies are available, contact Rabbi Sharon Sobel in confidence.

For more information, contact 416.630.0375
ssobel@urj.org or cenglander@urj.org

For more information, or to register for the study trip, fill out the form below and return it to ARZA Canada, or visit us online

Name(s): _____

E-mail address: _____

Home phone: _____ Work phone: _____

Address: _____

I am interested in the following:

Israel Study trip, July 6 - July 13

Optional visits to Reform communities outside of Jerusalem

FAX BACK TO ARZA CANADA at 416.630.5089. We will contact you with more information.

Ten Reasons The Left Hates Israel: Five Good, Five Bad

By Bradley Burston, Haaretz

A few thoughts engendered by the controversy over Alvin H. Rosenfeld's article "'Progressive' Jewish Thought and the New Anti-Semitism." Five of the following are reasonable. Five are not.

This is a reflection, if nothing else, of the duality of leftist criticism of Israel. There are leftists whose critiques are clear-eyed, factually valid, morally on point. And then there are those for whom Israel represents a blood-boiling factory of evil, an entity whose very existence is an affront, an abomination. Those who are convinced, and seek to convince the world, that the Jewish state should cease to exist.

Here are five good reasons:

1. Because Israel's policies are frequently marked by gratuitous humiliation of and disdain for the Palestinians.

2. Because Israelis can live with this.

If the policies hinted at in 1. above are associated with a status quo which Israelis find tolerably calm and Palestinians find unbearable, even lethal, Israel's leaders often view this as a viable and even optimal outcome.

3. Because Israel, in practice, values settlements more than it values social justice.

The right will tell you that there is no contradiction between settlements and social justice. Which would be true if there were no Palestinians, and if the Palestinians did not view the land occupied by settlements as theirs, historically, legally, and morally. And which would be true if the same consideration offered settlers in fixing the route of the West Bank fence were applied to Palestinians, that is, were farmers not cut off from their fields, pupils from their schools, and close relatives from one another.

The right will tell you that the settlements are no obstacle to peace. But that same right will also argue that the settlements are the only real bulwark between the Palestinians and an independent Palestine.

4. Because Israel, even in withdrawing from Gaza, has left it to die.

It is not lost on leftists that many Israelis reap a distinct satisfaction from the Palestinians' inability to help themselves, govern themselves, save themselves. Leftists may note that Israel has done everything in its power to convince the world to deny much-needed aid to a democratically elected government, and that Israel has not acted as a neighbor whose primary concern is an eventual peace.

5. Because of the propensity of Israel's leaders to demonstrate arrogance, claim a monopoly on the moral high ground, set non-negotiable demands to which Palestinian politicians cannot agree, then condemn Palestinians for intransigence.

Here are five bad reasons:

1. The Palestinian cause is inherently progressive.

As currently constituted, Palestinian governance is marked by institutional graft, widespread human rights violations, curbs on press freedoms, tribalism, blood feuds, murders of women on the basis of contentions of preservation of family honor, and celebration of the targeting and killing of non-combatants as a legitimate form of resistance to occupation.

2. Israel remains the sole root cause of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the reason it remains unresolved.

As root causes go, both sides have demonstrated profound intransigence, both sides have violated agreements with abandon, both sides suffer from extremists whose power to destroy a peace process far outweighs their proportion of the population.

In addition, the contention that Israel is solely responsible suggests that the solution of the Mideast conflict is the dissolution of Israel. This brings us to:

3. Israel is a Jewish state.

For a vocal minority of leftists, this fact alone - coupled with the following two arguments - is enough to call into serious question Israel's right to exist. This argument, which holds that the formally Jewish nature of the state enshrines an unconscionable level of racism, dovetails with:

4. Israel is an apartheid state.

See Occupation: It's horrid, but it's not apartheid

5. Israel's actions are comparable to those of Nazi Germany.

This contention may be the genuine litmus test for anti-Semitism on the left. In the end, the compulsion to accuse Israel of genocide, while turning a blind eye to wholesale slaughter in Darfur and elsewhere, tends to say a great deal more about the accuser than the accused.

kol arza ~ קול ארצה

the official newsletter of ARZA Canada

We welcome article submissions, letters, and opinion pieces. Submissions may be edited for space, style, and clarity.

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ARZA Canada is the Zionist arm of the Canadian Reform Movement, serving over 6,000 members. We are an affiliate of the Union for Reform Judaism and a member of ARZENU and the Canadian Zionist Federation. Our mandate is to connect with Reform communities throughout Canada, foster connections with and strengthen our ties to the Reform Movement in Israel, and work to realize the vision of Reform Zionism.

At ARZA Canada, we're committed to building relationships between Reform Jews in Canada and in Israel, and with committed Reform Zionists around the world. To this end, we engage in a wide range of programmes and initiatives designed to strengthen our ties with the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism and deepen our connection with Canada's broader Jewish community.

Learn more at our website, www.arzacanada.org