



GREAT LAKES & RIVERS REGION

Israel Affairs Committee
Jack Roth, Chair

For Placement in Synagogue Bulletins

A Glance at Conservative Judaism in Israel

As Conservative Jews in America, many of us are unaware of the existence of Conservative Judaism in Israel. Along with the Masorti (translated Traditional) Movement for Conservative Judaism in Israel, the congregational arm of the Movement, there are also several Conservative institutions of which we can be quite proud. They include the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism's Fuchsberg Jerusalem Center for Conservative Judaism, including the Conservative Yeshiva, as well as the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, Israel's equivalent of the Jewish Theological Seminary. Our presence in Israel is an important factor supporting the growing momentum toward Jewish pluralism throughout Israel.

Following the Six Day war in 1967, a number of young men and women, many graduates of The Jewish Theological Seminary and former Ramah campers, sought to bring the inclusive Conservative Movement to secular Israelis who do not relate to Orthodox doctrine. For nearly 40 years, The Masorti Movement has steadily endured with little financial support. Today there are more than 35,000 Israelis belonging to 55 congregations throughout the country. The Masorti Movement annually touches the lives of over 100,000 Israelis through its day care, language training and employment assistance programs. Additionally, The Masorti Movement supports NOAM youth groups and the NOAM/Ramah summer camp as well as an Israel Defense Force unit consisting entirely of NOAM young adults.

The Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem supports the need for Conservative rabbis and educators in Israel. With an enrollment of more than 500 students for the 2002/2003 academic year, the Schechter Institute boasts a diverse student body, coming from observant, traditional and secular backgrounds. Its unique approach to Jewish studies puts traditional learning into a modern and relevant context.

As Americans, we are committed to the success of The Fuchsberg Center, located in the heart of Jerusalem, that welcomes us to pray, learn and experience the miracle of modern Israel. Whether you choose to live at The Fuchsberg Center for a few days or just stay for a meal or a class, you'll be glad you did. Its construction continues as it meets the needs of its American visitors. Rabbi Jim Lebeau's dynamic leadership as Director of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism's Israel office and The Fuchsberg Center gives us another good reason to travel to Israel this year.

The center also houses the Conservative Yeshiva, founded 1995 to meet the need for serious learning in a co-educational and open-minded environment. Since then the Conservative Yeshiva has grown from 5 students to over 50 students. It has moved into its own building and has established a reputation for a learned and supportive faculty, highly motivated students, in depth learning, and a welcoming community.

We encourage you to join with us to help make Conservative Judaism in Israel a reality. In the words of Masorti president Rabbi Ehud Bandel, quoting Pirkei Avot: *lo alecha haemlakha ligmor, velo ata ben horin lehibbatel mimena*, "You are not obliged to finish the task, neither are you free to neglect it..."