



# Great Lakes & Rivers Region

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## The Conservative Movement: Our Connection to Eretz Yisrael



**The Schechter Institute  
of Jewish Studies**



**Masorti  
Movement  
(Israel)**



## The Masorti Movement in Israel

MASORTI, meaning traditional, is the Hebrew name for Conservative Judaism in Israel. The Masorti Movement, founded in 1979, is the umbrella organization of Masorti *kehillot* (congregations), which foster the practice of traditional Judaism among Israeli men and women while embracing modernity. In promoting the combined values of Conservative Judaism, religious tolerance and Zionism, the Movement strives to nurture a healthy, pluralistic, spiritual and ethical foundation for Israeli society.

Approximately 50,000 Israelis are members and affiliates of our *kehillot* and national programs, which engage some 125,000 Israelis each year. More than sixty percent of the Masorti community are native-born Israelis or come from lands in which English is not their native tongue.

The Masorti Movement in Israel comprises some 50 *kehillot* and *havurot*, the Religious Affairs Bureau, a kibbutz, a moshav, the NOAM youth movement, IDF Garinim (Masorti groups in the army), the Marom students and young adults organization, programs for children with special needs, regional and local educational learning centers for adults as well as pre-school programs. We are currently developing programs in the fields of family education, and leadership and community development. This is in addition to our ongoing synagogue services, events and social activities.

Legal advocacy is one of the central roles of the Movement, which represents the religious rights of Masorti and Conservative Judaism before the Israeli establishment, including government ministries, the Supreme Court and municipalities.

The Movement is deeply involved in the absorption of new *olim* (immigrants) from Latin America, as well as from countries of the Former Soviet Union. Masorti's inclusive and pluralistic approach is attractive to many *olim*, who might otherwise take little or no interest in Judaism. A number of Masorti *kehillot* operate special programs for *olim*, as well as programming for the integration of *olim* run by NOAM and Marom.

The Masorti Foundation for Conservative Judaism in Israel supports the work of the Masorti Movement, raising funds to enable the Movement to further its activities in Israel. The Foundation also serves as the Movement's voice to American media, public officials and Jewish leadership.



## Mercaz USA

MERCAZ USA is the Zionist Organization of the Conservative Movement, representing Conservative Judaism within the World Zionist Organization, the Jewish Agency for Israel, the American Zionist Movement and the Jewish National Fund. As the voice of the American Conservative Movement, MERCAZ works to increase the impact and influence of Conservative/Masorti Judaism on Israeli society and acts as a force for supporting religious pluralism and securing religious stream funding for the Masorti Movement programs in Israel and throughout the world.

MERCAZ USA works in cooperation with all the other arms of Conservative Movement, including the Jewish Theological Seminary, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, the Rabbinical Assembly, Women's League for Conservative Judaism, Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs, the Foundation for Masorti Judaism in Israel and the World Council of Conservative/Masorti Synagogues.

MERCAZ is affiliated with The American Zionist Movement. Your affiliation with MERCAZ implies acceptance of the **Jerusalem Program**, which defines the aims of Zionism as follows:

- The unity of the Jewish People and the centrality of Israel in Jewish Life
- The ingathering of the Jewish People in its historic homeland, Eretz Israel, through Aliyah from all countries
- The strengthening of the State of Israel which is based on the prophetic vision of justice and peace
- The preservation of the identity of the Jewish People through the fostering of Jewish and Hebrew education and of Jewish spiritual and cultural values
- The protection of Jewish rights everywhere.



## **The Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies (Machon Schechter)**

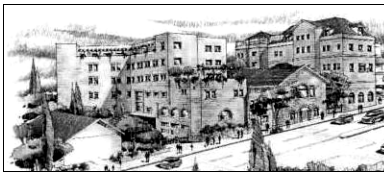
The Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, with its Graduate School of Advanced Jewish Studies, Rabbinical School, TALI Education Fund and *Midreshet Yerushalayim* programs, is one of Israel's leading academic centers for modern Jewish learning. Established in 1984, the Institute is located near the Israeli Museum, Knesset and Israeli Supreme Court.

The Schechter Institute boasts a diverse student body, coming from observant, traditional and secular backgrounds. The Institute confers an interdisciplinary Masters Degree in Jewish Studies with concentrations in Bible, Talmud and Halakhah, Midrash, Jewish History, Jewish Thought, Women's and Gender Studies, Jewish Education, Informal Education, Teaching of Jewish Studies in the Public Schools, Land of Israel Studies, and Family and Community Studies. A new M.A. program in Judaism and the Arts was introduced last year.

Applied Research Institutes of the Schechter Institute include the Center for Women in Jewish Law, whose mandate is to formulate alternative opinions to those of the Orthodox rabbinic courts, especially in cases of women refused divorce; the Institute of Applied Halakhah, whose aim is to produce a corpus of halakhic literature which Jews throughout the world can use as a guide for practice; and the recently established Center for Judaism and the Arts, which seeks to uncover the interface between aesthetics and Judaism.

The Schechter Institute is responsible for the TALI Education Fund which supports a network of more than 100 schools and kindergartens throughout Israel. The Institute also operates *Midreshet Yerushalayim*, which provides educational programs for Jewish communities in Eastern Europe and the FSU, as well as programs for new immigrants in Israel.

The Jewish Agency for Israel is a major supporter of the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies.



## **The United Synagogue in Israel**

The core of United Synagogue's commitment to Israel is **The Shirely and Jacob Fuchsberg Jerusalem Center**. Located on the corner of Keren Hayesod and Agron Streets in the heart of downtown Jerusalem, the Fuchsberg Jerusalem Center offers members of United Synagogue a vast array of programs and services. However, its primary mission is

**education.** The new **Youth and Education Center** with a beautiful dining room, classrooms, sleeping accommodations and state of the art meeting facilities is scheduled for completion in the summer of 2004.

The jewel of the Center's educational program is the Conservative Yeshiva. Study at the Conservative Yeshiva focuses on traditional texts such as Tanach (Bible), Talmud and Midrash, and on Jewish philosophy and prayer. Learning is conducted in the traditional yeshiva method of *hevruta*, an age-old method of Jewish text study in which two students learn a text together.

Since students at the Conservative Yeshiva come from a diversity of backgrounds, they are encouraged to custom-make programs of study to suit their individual needs. Extra help is always available in order to allow each student to get the most out of his or her learning experience. A variety of choices of learning programs – one year, summer, advanced and pre-college – allows students to find the program that best fits their needs.

The Fuchsberg Jerusalem Center also serves as headquarters for **United Synagogue Youth programs in Israel**: USY Israel Pilgrimage, USY High, Halutzim and Advisors Training. **NATIV**, USY's college leadership program in Israel, is a nine-month program for High School graduates which combines academic studies at the Hebrew University with experience on a kibbutz and development towns. A Conservative Yeshiva option is also available.

The Center also arranges **Bar and Bat Mitzvah Ceremonies** for your son, daughter, grandchild, relatives and friends – all reflecting pluralism that defines the Conservative Movement. Planning an educational tour or synagogue seminar to Israel? We offer advice and guidance in tour planning and building intense learning experiences. Whether you're traveling with a USCJ regional delegation, a congregational group, or on your own, let us make your visit more meaningful.

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