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HAPPY NEW YEAR 5770

HAMERKAZ

A PUBLICATION OF THE SEPHARDIC EDUCATIONAL CENTER



SECuring
Our Jewish Future

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MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

By Ronald J. Nessim

There has been significant and exciting changes at the SEC over the past two years. Let me update you on some of them.

In the fall of 2007, we hired Larry Azose as our full-time executive director. Larry has a rich Sephardic background, brings organizational skills to the SEC and is 200% committed to our cause. We are fortunate to have him.

Our executive committee which I am proud to chair has been meeting monthly in Los Angeles. The executive committee has made great progress in revitalizing the SEC and each member has assumed primary responsibility in one or more areas such as finance, Israel programs and our Jewish day school initiative.

It is our intent over the coming months to create Advisory Committees consisting of community leaders in our local chapters. Once the Advisory Committees are established, we will add members from these groups to our various board committees and eventually some members to our Executive Committee as well.

Last summer, the SEC hosted a three-week program, "Hardspice," for 65 American college-age kids in Israel. This fall, the SEC began the one year "Eshel" program, a one year "gap" program (between high school and college) for girls from North America. Last school year, we took the first steps to start a new program to host Jewish day school groups on trips to Israel. Three Jewish Schools from Los Angeles made the SEC a part of their stay in Israel. We are currently expanding this program and partnering with a tour provider to reach out to more schools across the country.

(Continued on page 9) [Message from the Board](#)

Our Founder Dr. Jose A. Nessim



Dear Friends,

Over 40 years ago, I understood that the future of our precious Sephardic heritage was in jeopardy. Not just the Sephardic world was being threatened, but the future of all Jews living in the Diaspora.

After serious thought, I decided that what was necessary to combat this was the establishment of a World Sephardic Educational Center in Jerusalem. The purpose would be to train our future lay and rabbinic leaders in the special moderate, but traditional manner that typifies the Sephardic tradition.

Thirty years ago, we put words into actions. This coming July 2010 will mark the 30th anniversary of the first SEC Summer program. As I reflect back over those many years, I am filled with a sense of awe and pride about all we were able to do, and the many young men and women whose lives were changed through our programs, both in Israel and in the Diaspora. These SEC alumni have matured and grown into today's leaders. They are all over the world, even in your own community.

Prior to the establishment of the SEC, Sephardic communities worldwide were not in touch with each other. Oftentimes they were in the same city, but lacking a central address around which they could all rally. The SEC became that address, thus furthering another part of my dream, to unite the millions of Sephardim living in the Diaspora.

I am pleased that the SEC has matured into a functioning organization with an active Board of Directors and a World Executive Director. While our headquarters are in Los Angeles, it is vital that each Sephardic community unite and form their own SEC affiliate. You and your community will benefit immensely from this association, as we are here to enhance and assist you in making your community stronger and more vibrant.

On behalf of my wife and family, I send you our warmest wishes for a healthy, happy and prosperous New Year. Next Year in Jerusalem at the SEC!

Tiszkü L'shanim Rabot.

SEC MISSION

The **SEC** is dedicated to ensuring Jewish identity and continuity by transmitting our rich Sephardic legacy to all Diaspora Jews, especially our youth.

Focusing on the timeless values of unity, compassion, sensitivity, tolerance and moderation embodied by Sephardic Judaism, we promote strength of family & community, pride of heritage & customs, increased knowledge of Torah & practice of Mitzvot, growth in spirituality, a traditional approach to Halacha, engagement with the modern world & society, and a meaningful connection to Israel, our People & Homeland.

OUR ASPIRATIONS

We are deeply committed to:

Cultivating leadership, both lay and rabbinic, so that our Diaspora communities become more vibrant.

Ensuring that every young Jewish man and woman has the opportunity to visit Israel.

Generating awareness among all Jewish youth, and ultimately future generations, of the beauty of Sephardic Judaism.

Fostering a return of our youth to their spiritual roots and heritage through stimulating programs and events in the Diaspora and Israel.

Creating innovative programs so our young people can meet and forge lifelong bonds of friendship.

Fully utilizing our historic spiritual and educational campus in the heart of Jerusalem's Old City which serves as a beacon illuminating and enhancing our programs.

Maintaining our independence from any particular organized religious movement or political entity, while seeking to partner with other Jewish organizations to spread the model of Sephardic Judaism.

Abiding by Halacha as determined by our contemporary Sephardic sages.

Serving, supporting and enhancing the individual and collective needs of all Jewish communities and institutions so they will grow qualitatively and quantitatively.

Thoughts From Our Participants

Go!!! There's no other trip like it.

- Danna Dahan, 21, Montreal

Best of both worlds: interesting classes and fun activities: Go!!!!

- Ami Ahdoot, 22, Los Angeles

Good trip to enhance your knowledge of Judaism, enjoy a fulfilling summer, and see your homeland.

- Jake Matayev, 23, New York

I would tell a friend considering this trip to just go. I would tell them how much they would gain no matter what level they are on. The programs are incredible, the Rabbis from the program are the most unique and amazing people in the world.

I gained so much knowledge about Judaism, most importantly I gained clarity and I cannot express how grateful I am to the donors to me this happened. Just a small change and impact us on all levels I honestly love you for making this trip happen. I don't think there would be enough people in the world which I could use to express my gratitude to you.

- Sal Harrosh, 21, New York

Keeping Shabbat with 70 amazing people was my greatest source of inspiration. The trip is a must!

- Niloufar Sherf, 22, Los Angeles

I would tell a friend considering this trip that it would be the best thing that they ever did!

- Kobi Muratov





Hardspice (letters in "Sephardic" rearranged)

This past June, 63 young Jewish men and women ranging in age from 18 to 24 from, New York, Montreal, Miami and Los Angeles participated in an immersive Jewish experience, the SEC's HardSpice™ Heritage Trip. Joined by 9 counselors and led by Rabbis Chaim Levy, Dov Harrouche, and SEC Education Director Rabbi Benarroch, the group spent three weeks in Israel. The program featured an action packed itinerary, with classes during the morning and excursions in the afternoon. They explored topics such as:

Self Development, Relationships Personal Growth, Prayer, Philosophy, History, Sephardi Culture and Customs as well as discussions about Israeli politics, religiosity, and Shabbat.

In the words of one participant "I gained so much knowledge about Judaism and most importantly I gained clarity and I cannot express how grateful I am to the donors who made this happen. Just a small change can impact us on all levels. I honestly love you for making this trip. I don't think there would be enough words in the world which I could use to express my gratitude to you."

In the weeks following the trip, these Alumni organized a total of 5 reunions, including 2 lectures in Los Angeles and 3 in New York with a total attendance of 500 people! A reunion shabbaton with Rabbi Levy was also held in NY.

For more information about the SEC HardSpice Program, please visit our website, www.secjerusalem.org and click on programs.

Eshel Womens' Program



SEC announces the opening of the Eshel Womens' Midrasha™, the first post high school learning program in Israel designed specifically for young women of the Sephardic community. The year long study program began on September 2nd with the arrival of 12 young women from New York and Los Angeles.

Eshel (taken from a passage in Genesis), is headed by Miriam Tawil, an experienced educator who has two Masters degrees from Yeshiva University, one in Jewish Education and the other in Jewish Philosophy. Rabbi Yosef Benarroch, SEC Educational Director will be serving as Rabbi of the program.

Eshel's mission is to provide the students with the opportunity to build the foundation of their adult lives by dedicating time toward their personal, spiritual, intellectual and religious growth as they experience life in Israel at the SEC in the holiest square mile of Judaism. Courses include all areas of Tanakh (Bible), Jewish thought, Sephardic halacha and customs, and Sephardic history through classes and tours. The program also offers courses in psychology and modern Israeli history.

The students will be housed in a dedicated wing of the SEC dormitory facility. An experienced madricha (dorm counselor) will live with the students and be available to oversee and help them.

The Eshel Program has been designed to allow the participants to interact with leaders in the Jewish world, with a focus on gaining practical leadership and organizational skills. A core

part of the program is doing "hesed" (acts of kindness) by volunteering in the community and participants will have the opportunity to choose from a wide variety of projects including working with children, the elderly, new immigrants, the disabled, soup kitchens and much more.

Eshel's highly qualified faculty will provide an intense learning experience combining textual study and inspiration to encourage student's spiritual and religious growth. Faculty members will be supplemented by guest speakers comprised of the best and most talented teachers in the world of Jewish education.

Students may earn college credits in accordance with individual school policy. Students will also participate in exciting and motivating extracurricular activities and cooking, dance, yoga and painting.

An integral part of the curriculum is touring the Land of Israel. Shabbatot will be especially enjoyable as students experience Shabbat in the familiar warmth of Sephardic community families in Jerusalem, Efrat, Alon Shevut and Beit Shemesh.

For more information, please visit the Eshel website: www.eshelforthwrite.info or contact Miriam Tawil at smtawil@yahoo.com.



2009 Birthright Reunion



TRAVEL TO ISRAEL FREE!

Take advantage of this once in a lifetime opportunity to see, live, and breathe Israel. Sachlav SEC Taglit-Birthright Israel combine 60% Action, 20% Israeli Culture, and 20% Spiritual for 100% FUN! This ten day trip is filled with educational thought provoking sessions, visits to historic sites, as well as getting to know contemporary Israel and interact with Israelis.

In the words of one Birthright participant: "I learned much more than I thought I would. I also received a love for Israel and my fellow Jews that I have never experienced before."

Open to Jewish individuals 18-26 years old who have never been to Israel on a peer group educational program.

For further information, please visit our website, www.israelforme.com. or www.israelsopenhouse.com



This trip is a gift from Taglit-Birthright Israel





JEWISH SCHOOLS COME TO THE SEC

by Larry Azose

The SEC launches the “Lev Harova”-Jewish Quarter Experience™

The foundation of creating a memorable and meaningful Israel trip lies in Jerusalem. While the city has much to offer, little compares with spending an extended time in the Old City. The sounds and sights of being in this unique setting create an indelible impression on Jews of all ages, especially youth.

Targeted towards Jewish day and high schools that make annual trips to Israel, the SEC Jewish Quarter Experience™ affords Jewish educators and schools an invaluable opportunity for students to truly experience the beauty of the Old City and the holiness of the Kotel. In particular, Shabbat in the Old City, so close to the Kotel is an incredible experience. The program includes accommodations at the SEC Campus, and educational programs by the SEC Educational Staff.

This year, three schools from Los Angeles participated in the program. On April 24th and 25th, the Jacob Pressman Academy 6th Grade class of 50 students and 30 parents and staff spent shabbat at the SEC. See program coordinator Deborah Engel Kollin’s letter on this page. Sinai Akiba from L.A. also visited for a day.

In May, Shalhevet High School spent six days at the Center. The Shalhevet administration loved the idea of the SEC as an educational program in itself, with its historical foundation and proximity to the Kotel. In addition, security was much better than staying in a hotel where students can come and go without supervision. And no hotel offers you the Kotel in your back yard!

May 5, 2009
11 Iyar 5769



Rabbi Benarroch
Israel A. Shalem
1 Batey Machasseh
Jewish Quarter
P.O.Box 14326
Jerusalem, 91142
ISRAEL

Dear Rabbi Benarrouch and Israel,

It is a real honor for me to thank you for a fantastic Shabbat program that you both created for us. The accommodations were lovely, the staff very helpful, the food delicious, and as they say, “Location, location, location!” What more can I say.

The feedback from everyone was that you “were the best”. Rabbi, you engaged our students, parents and staff from the moment you started our tours until Havdallah at the end of Shabbat.

Please reserve the following Shabbat for next year: April 17, 2010. I believe this is a start of a wonderful relationship.

Thank you again for making our Shabbat in Israel special.

Sincerely,

Deborah Engel Kollin
Day School Administrator
Magen Coordinator

Shalhevet High School



Letters

Visitors to SEC



Michelle & Selma Jafee from Los Angeles



The Sassoon Family from Los Angeles



Montreal Federation Mission is a trip of adults who come to Israel to visit and do volunteer work in their sister city of Beer Sheva. A highlight of their trip is a shabbat at the SEC.



Professor Yom Tov Azsis and Sephardic professors visit SEC

Dear Neil:

I have been reading "Torah Thoughts" for quite a few years now, and have often wondered how Rabbi Benarroch comes up with his powerful messages about the Torah and its Mitzvot. SEC and Rabbi Benarroch have contributed immensely towards promoting the knowledge of Torah, and your organization has been successful in spreading "Sephardism" more than any other organization that I have heard of.

I congratulate Dr. Nessim, Rabbi Benarroch, and all the wonderful SEC supporters and especially you who care so much about SEC.

It is a pleasure reading the "Thought" every week.

Regards,

Moussa Shaaya
President, Kahal Joseph Cong.
Los Angeles, CA

** Editor's note: to receive the weekly inspirational "SEC Torah Thoughts from Jerusalem", email rabbiiyb@secjerusalem.org*

SEC Improvements

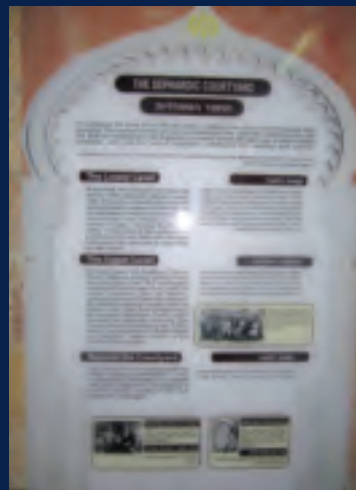
This year we made improvements to the SEC.

Spanish Courtyard

To provide more information to visitors to the historic Spanish courtyard, we translated the SEC Mission statement into Hebrew, Spanish and French. We redesigned the Sephardic Historical timeline display. We created a history of the courtyard. All are displayed around the courtyard.

Sephardic House

We created plaques of the different Sephardic communities and mounted them outside each residence room. These plaques are available for dedications.



Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program



Sponsored by the Estrella Benaim Foundation and Max Benaim of Toronto.

Although the SEC focuses its program activities primarily on young Jews in the Diaspora, last year the SEC embarked on a special Hesed project to provide a unique lifecycle event to underprivileged children in Israel's development towns. Last year, the SEC and various partner organizations brought over 500 young men and women to celebrate their bar and bat mitzvas at Center in Jerusalem. Among them was a special initiative organized by SEC friend Max Benaim and funded by the Estrella Benaim Foundation from Toronto, Canada from Toronto. Accompanying Max were members of the Toronto community who greeted the participants.

The two day program brought 60 underprivileged children from Kiryat Malachi and Ashkelon to Jerusalem to have this heartfelt and unforgettable Jewish experience. Participants were housed and fed at the SEC. The morning of the main event Max surprised the children by bringing all of their parents on a chartered bus to participate in a special bar/bat mitzvah ceremony

at the Kotel, where the boys put on tefillin and stood together under a large tallit for the Torah reading, and the girls got to recite tehillim. This was followed by a tour of the city of David and a festive luncheon with live music and the presentation of gifts from Canada to the children.

All the boys received a pair of tefillin, tallit, and sidurim. The young women received siddurim candlesticks, and jewelry. Everyone received personalized T-shirts and a certificate marketing this special event.

Max, who has been an active volunteer for 42 years stated, "next year I'd like to do 90. This will be an annual event where I will bring on board other Jewish organizations, Sephardic and Ashkenazi. So many people spend \$50,000, \$60,000 or \$70,000 on a bar or bat Mitzvah here, and there are those who can't have anything." The whole experience was magical and added a spiritual component into the lives of these children that will never be forgotten.

For children from Kiryat Shemona in the North of Israel sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg Canada.





MEMBERS OF THE SEC JERUSALEM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING, JUNE '09

Members of the SEC Executive meet in Jerusalem for the annual meeting in the end of June. Pictured left to right: Larry Azose, World Executive Director; Ron Nessim, Board Chairman; Neil Sheff, Board Member; Rabbi Yosef Benarroch, Educational Director; Israel Shalem, SEC-Jm. Director; Freda Nessim, Board Member; Dr. Jose Nessim, Founder and President. Pictured right, Moshe Nissim, Former Justice Minister and Counsel to SEC (left) and Mayor Shmuel Sisso of Kiryat Yam, Israel.

SEC Hesed Program: Making the World a Better Place for Us All

Through a generous grant from Moise and Carol Ann Emquies of Los Angeles, the SEC has established a special fund to help Jews who have been hit hard by the tough economic times we find ourselves in, particularly in Israel. The purpose of the fund is to help those who have lost jobs or are having a hard time finding one get back on their feet by finding them employment or giving them work that will sustain them while they make their way back into the workforce.

One of the candidates we recently helped is Esther (not her real name). She lives in Tiberias and is a single mother of two children, 11 and 13 years old. She had been unemployed for quite some time and through our contacts with the Social Services Dept. of

Tiberias and the Chevra Kadisha in that city, we were able to create a job for her in the Chevra Kadisha doing important work for them that they weren't able to fill due to budget constraints.

The SEC Hesed Fund will pay her \$500 per month and the employer will pay the balance. We will encourage the employer to continue to give her work so that Esther will also see that she is capable of sustaining a job and providing for her children.

Another one of our candidates is a woman by the name of Sarah (not her real name) of Jerusalem. Sarah is a mother of two small children. Her husband is a teacher unable to find work. Sarah has a talent with graphic design and computers. The SEC Hesed fund purchased for her a Website design program (Dreamweaver at \$500). Sarah was able to start a small business from her home and has already designed two websites. Our contribution to Sarah was a win-win because it allowed her to get on her two feet and create a sustainable income.

Message from the Board (Continued from page 2)

We continue to modernize and restore the historical and beautiful SEC campus in the Old City of Jerusalem that we own. We recently modernized the Rishon Le Zion building, which used to be occupied by the Sephardic Chief Rabbi, and which has six beautiful suites. The middle building, also recently renovated, has 24 regular rooms and six suites. It also has a rooftop which has great views of the city and is a great place to take groups and hold outdoor services. Our dining facilities, which include a large dining room and several smaller rooms, are a beautiful location to host youth and adult groups, weddings, bar mitzvah parties or family shabbat dinners. The third building, which will have to be extensively remodeled over the next five years, has one of the few remaining Spanish courtyards in the Old City. It has several rooms on the ground floor, and an additional 15

rooms on the second floor.

Next year, in connection with our annual summer board meeting in Israel, we hope to introduce a program for Sephardic Rabbis, community leaders and others for several days of study on a topic of interest, together with courses for Rabbis that will expand their skills to deal with modern issues confronting our communities today.

The SEC in Jerusalem has a unique promise and potential to ensure the integrity of the Sephardic "brand" of Judaism and to ensure that the contributions of Sephardic Jewry remain part of the rich Jewish fabric. We intend to realize that promise and potential and look forward to your participation.

Tizku Le'shanim Rabot.



Shrine of Rabbi Ya'akov Abuhatzaira in Damanhur, Egypt

Finding Ancient Sephardic Sites Online

Digital Heritage Mapping

Hundreds of Jewish sites from Morocco to Iran are rapidly disappearing, while the generation with first-hand knowledge of these locations is passing on. Diarna, an initiative of Digital Heritage Mapping, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization specializing in virtual documentation of global cultural heritage sites, is harnessing new global image mapping technology to guarantee the memory of these diverse sites is captured and bequeathed to future generations.

Diarna, which means “our homes” in Judeo-Arabic, is dedicated to virtually preserving Near Eastern Jewish heritage sites. From Rhodes’ Juderia to epic sites in the Arabian Peninsula, Diarna brings to life Jewish history through the lens of physical location. Photographs, videos, oral history, and even three-dimensional models offer a unique digital window onto sites and communities vanishing before our eyes.

The project’s website, virtual tours, interactive exhibits, and other popular educational methods will enable the Jewish community – Ashkenazi, Sephardi and Mizrahi - to deepen its appreciation of a vibrant but largely forgotten Jewish history, as well as to explore sites often considered impossible to visit in person (e.g., Baghdad’s only remaining Jewish cemetery is adjacent to the slums of Sadr City, and the bullet-marred Jewish cemetery in Beirut is on the outskirts of the city’s Dahiya neighborhood, a Hizballah stronghold). A new generation of young Jews, who have typically grown-up in an Ashkenazi-centric, post-Shoah environment, will use Diarna to connect to the communities their families or their friends’ families left behind.

For more information or to learn how to get involved, please visit Diarna’s website www.diarna.org

Notable Sephardic Sages

Ben Zion Meir Hai Uziel (born 1880, died 1953)

Ben Zion Meir Hai Uziel was the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of the British Mandate Palestine from 1939 to 1948, and of Israel from 1948 to 1954.

Uziel was born in Jerusalem, where his father, Joseph Raphael, was the av bet din of the Sephardi community of Jerusalem, as well as president of the community council. At the age of twenty he became a yeshivah teacher and also founded a yeshivah called Mahazikei Torah for Sephardi young men. In 1911, he was appointed Hakham Bashi of Jaffa and the district. Immediately upon his arrival in Jaffa he began to work vigorously to raise the status of the Oriental congregations there. In spirit and ideas he was close to the Ashkenazi rabbi of the Jaffa community, A. I. Kook, and their affinity helped to bring about more harmonious relations than previously existed between the two communities.

During World War I he was active as a leader and communal worker. His intercession with the Ottoman government on behalf of persecuted Jews finally led to his exile to Damascus but he was permitted to return to Palestine, arriving in Jerusalem before the entry of the British army. In 1921 he was appointed chief rabbi of Salonika, accepting this office with the consent of the Jaffa-Tel Aviv community for a period of three years. He returned to become chief rabbi of Tel Aviv in 1923, and in 1939 was appointed Chief Rabbi of Palestine. Uziel was a member of the Jewish Assembly of Representatives and the Jewish National Council, as well as being a representative at the meeting which founded the Jewish Agency. He appeared before the Mandatory government as a representative of the Jewish community and on missions on its behalf, and impressed all with his dignity and bearing. He was also founder of the yeshivah Sha’ar Zion in Jerusalem. He contributed extensively to newspapers and periodicals on religious, communal, and national topics as well as Torah novellae and Jewish philosophy.

He was the author of: *Mishpetei Uziel*, *Sha’arei Uziel* (1944-46), consisting of halakhah, general topics, and a selection of his addresses, letters, and other writings; *Mikhmannei Uziel* (1939); *Hegiyonei Uziel* (1953-54), and still other works in manuscript. He made “Love, truth, and peace” the motto of his life. This verse (Zechariah 8:19) hung framed above his desk and was inscribed on his note paper.

Two days before his death he dictated his testament. It said, inter alia, “I have kept in the forefront of my thoughts the following aims: to disseminate Torah among students, to love the Torah and its precepts, Israel and its sanctity; I have emphasized love for every man and woman of Israel and for the Jewish people as a whole, love for the Lord G-d of Israel, the bringing of peace between every man and woman of Israel-in body, in spirit, in speech, in deed, in thought and in meditation, in intent and in act, at home and in the street, in village and in town; to bring genuine peace into the home of the Jew, into the whole assembly of Israel in all its classes and divisions, and between Israel and its Father in Heaven.”





Left to right: Larry Azose, Steve Nessim, Marcia Israel Weingarten, Freda Nessim, Dr. Jose Nessim, Dr. Ichak Adizes, Ron Nessim, Rachel Sheff, Sarita Hasson Fields, Neil Sheff and Ray Mallet

SEC Executives visit Adizes Institute

On Sunday and Monday, August 2nd and 3rd, 2009, all members of the SEC Executive Committee gathered at the Adizes Institute in Carpinteria, CA for a strategic planning retreat. The Adizes Institute (www.adizes.com) is headed by one of the world's foremost authorities in corporate management, Dr. Ichak Adizes, who generously donated of his time, wisdom and knowledge over the two day retreat to assist the SEC in charting its direction for the future. Dr. Adizes was born in Scopce, Macedonia and speaks fluent Ladino. Following WWII, he and his family moved to Israel, and then he continued his studies at Columbia University where he was awarded two Phd's. He is the author of numerous books on management and leadership and has consulted for major companies, CEO's, governments and non-profit performing arts and museums.

The first day was dedicated to understanding, defining and refining the SEC mission. The SEC mission and aspirations were crystallized as follows:

With growing assimilation and globalization, Sephardic Jewish Heritage is endangered. Thus, the mission of the SEC is to educate leaders and youth in Sephardic traditions (including religious prayers and rituals, customs, celebrations, holidays, life cycle events), Philosophy (moderation, tolerance, non-extremism), Lifestyle, & Wisdom with programs based in our Jerusalem Center. The SEC further seeks to activate and nourish (through continuing education, social networking, fundraising, and recruitment of participants for Jerusalem programs) local chapters in Sephardic communities around the world.

The focus of the second day was corporate management, goal setting and budgeting.

The executive committee decided that in the coming year, the focus will be on program and chapter development.

Dr. Adizes summarized the retreat as follows: "We have no choice. We don't want to lose our tradition. We are the last bridge to the Sephardic tradition of old. Families and communities cannot keep it alive on their own."

SEC visits Baba Sale Synagogue *in Los Angeles*





9th SEC Los Angeles Sephardic Jewish Film Festival

It was a Night to Remember

by Neil J. Sheff, Co-Chair

The crowd pleasing Opening Night Gala of our 9th Film Festival at Paramount Studios last November was exceptional, with an incredible Silent Auction of jewelry, artwork, restaurant certificates, amusement park packages, sports and show tickets and more. A fabulous buffet dinner. A red carpet to greet our guests. Dining and socializing under the stars and then, the Main Event.

The Cinema Sepharad Award recipient, Elie Attie, a writer and co-executive producer of the Fox-TV series *House, MD*, previously nominated for six Emmy Awards for his work on *West Wing*, three Writers Guild Awards, and a Humanitas Prize (winning one Emmy for a *West Wing* documentary special) was presented his award by surprise guest, Aaron Sorkin, creator of the hit TV drama, *The West Wing* and lauded in a video that included a special greeting from Vice President Al Gore who thanked Elie for the time he spent as Gore's speech writer.

The Maimonides Leadership Award was presented to SEC friend, supporter and spiritual advisor, Rabbi Daniel Bouskila, who enjoyed the evening in the presence of many friends, congregants and his loving family, including Peni, Shira and Ilan, and his father of blessed memory, Nessim Bouskila.

The Inaugural Student Film Competition, "My Sephardic Experience", was won by "co-producers", Sammy and Max Sheff for their 5 minute short which was screened at the Gala.

We are grateful to our Master of Ceremonies, Lianne Halfon, producer of the Academy Award nominated film, "Juno" and the recent HBO documentary, "Which Way Home", and award presenter, Producer, Director, Actor and Writer, Neal Israel.

The Festival continued for a week of fascinating films on the Sephardic experience at the Majestic Crest Theater in Westwood.

The Festival raised funds to support the programs of the SEC here and in Israel, thanks to my incredible Co-Chair Sarita Hasson Fields and our outstanding committee. Look for our 10th Anniversary Festival in 2010.





Rabbi Baruj Garzon giving a lecture during the convention

La 15ª Convención Latinoamericana de jóvenes del Centro Educativo y la 8ª de Matrimonios fue un éxito total. Durante 4 días y 3 noches los Rabinos Baruj Garzon de España e Isaac Chocron de Buenos Aires nos transmitieron las enseñanzas sagradas de nuestra Torá, compartiendo cenas y almuerzos.

Como así mismo, realizamos charlas médicas a cargo del Dr. Salvador Sarfatti. Este tipo de convenciones se realizan anualmente con el apoyo del Centro Educativo Sefaradi Mundial, al cual agradecemos muchísimo el apoyo permanente.

Creo que tanto las actividades como las convenciones que realiza el CES con tanto éxito y dedicación deberían ser más conocidas por toda la comunidad judía latinoamericana para poder lograr un crecimiento más notorio y bien merecido.

Dr. Salvador Sarfatti
Presidente CES
Sección Latinoamericana

The 15th SEC Latin-American Convention of young adults and the 8th Convention of Young Married Couples was a complete success.

During 4 days and 3 nights, Rabbis Baruj Garzon of Spain and Isaac Chocron of Buenos Aires, Argentina gave us lessons in our holy Torah, sharing dinners and lunches with us. We also included medical "chats" with Dr. Salvador Sarfatti. These conventions take place annually with the support of the SEC International, who we thank for all their continuous support.

I believe that the activities just like the conventions of the SEC which are always conducted with such success and dedication should be recognized more by the Jewish communities of Latin America to enable us to grow and expand as we should.

Dr. Salvador Sarfatti
President SEC
Latin American Section



Vivian Mahlab Kron & Nikolas Kron



By Allie Mamann

Vivian is from Great Neck New York and her husband Nikolas is from Dublin Ireland. Vivian is from an Iraqi Sephardic community and got involved with the SEC for the first time in 1991. She attended several Israel programs; the first one took place in 1986, where Neil Sheff was the madrich. She says "It was a wonderful, unforgettable experience that fostered my love for Israel." Vivian then became increasingly active with the SEC and attended conventions in Mexico and Florida, where she met Jews from all over the world, and made everlasting friendships that carried throughout her life until today. When asked what she got most out of being an active member of the SEC she said "I met my husband who I have been married to for 12 years and my best friend who lives in Great Neck, in addition the SEC introduced me to Judaism and really taught me my roots which I hope to pass on to my children." Vivian met her husband Nikolas at an SEC convention and they now have 4 beautiful children together.

Today she is on the board of the Great Neck Synagogue, and is involved with the yeshiva. She imports Shabbat Warmers from Europe and raises her children. She states, "Not only did the SEC give me a greater Jewish Identity, it gave me a love for Israel, a beautiful family, lifelong friendships and connections with Jews from all over the world. It gave me knowledge and wisdom to pass on about our heritage. I thank Dr. Nessim everyday for all the wonderful things he has done and is doing to bring our Jewish communities together. I only hope for the SEC to bring on the experiences I have had forward to our children, where they can learn and explore Judaism in a special way."

SEC ALUMNI



Natalie (Moreno) & Ron Benudiz

Natalie is from Los Angeles and her family is mixed Egyptian, Turkish and Greek.

She is married to a great guy, Ron, and they have 2 beautiful children, Adam (3) and Rachel (3 months). Natalie is a licensed and certified Physician Assistant and a Physical Therapist, holding Master's Degrees in both fields.

Natalie first connected with the SEC back in 1984 when she participated in the 5-week Israel Trip. She returned as an active participant in the early days of the SEC Youth Movement in Los Angeles and joined the Israel program again the next year.

She then spent 2 months at the SEC in Jerusalem in 1987, working at the shop, and joining the groups on some excursions. She also went on a 2-week program 1993.

When asked what she remembered most about the trips, she replied: "Where do I start? My first trip was what started the ball rolling for my involvement in the SEC. It was my first time away from home for that long and that far, so it took a little adjustment. However, I made some good friends and also found the religious approach to be so much warmer, nicer and more appealing than my prior experiences in orthodox schools. The Sephardic approach also made the experience more personal for me, with my family being of Sephardic background, and the school being so Ashkenazic - not even introducing Sephardic tradition as part of Judaism."

"My second trip was an extension of the first, where I made more friends from around the world - which, by the way, is a fantastic thing to have and I appreciate this more and more even as I grow older and older. I think this gives a person dimension. To have shared that kind of experience together and to have similar backgrounds despite living in such diverse communities created a lasting bond."

(Continued on page 23) **Natalie (Moreno) & Ron Benudiz**

Join The SEC in Reaching Thousands of Young Men and Women



The SEC is the only international Sephardic organization that exists to ensure that our children and their descendants maintain a strong Jewish identity. We are committed to education around the world - in the unique Sephardic way, emphasizing our values of tolerance, compassion, unity and tradition, so that these values will be instilled in our future leaders.

Since its inception in 1980, over 35,000 young Jewish men and women from over 20 countries have attended SEC's exciting programs at our historic campus in the Old City of Jerusalem. As a result of this unique experience, they returned home with strong Jewish identities, determined to become active members of their respective communities. They created lasting friendships with their peers from around the world. Many met their spouses through SEC activities and we count over 500 marriages among SEC Alumni.

As nonprofit organization, the SEC depends on the generosity of our friends and supporters to help us fulfill our mission of educating and inspiring the next generation of Sephardic leaders. Your gift supports the development of educational and social programs for young adults hosted by the SEC in cities in the U.S. and Canada, as well activities at our educational campus in Jerusalem.

In addition to general donations, special program and project patronage and naming opportunities are available. We can help you focus your giving in areas that hold special importance to you, allow you the opportunity to honor family members and perpetuate your family name.

Legacy Bequests

You can secure our future with the stroke of a pen! Include the SEC in your planned giving and estate planning.

To learn about the many ways you can support the SEC, please contact the SEC Office at **(310) 441-9361** or by emailing **info@secjerusalem.org**

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“De Sión saldrá la Torá, y de Jerusalén, la palabra de HaShem”



Rabbi Benito & Annie Garzon

Sin duda, uno de los momentos más solemnes de la celebración de Yom Kippur es, junto al Cal Nidré y la Né'ilá, la lectura del ritual que dirigía antaño el Cohen Gadol, jefe de los Cohanim servidores del Templo de Jerusalén, el día de Kippur, única vez en que estaba autorizado a penetrar en el recinto más sagrado del Bet HaMicdash: El Códesh ha-Codashim.

Al prescribir por primera vez este ritual a Aharon HaCohen, HaShem habla así: “Así entrará Aharón en el Santuario...vestir* la túnica sagrada de lino, se ceñir* una banda de lino y se pondr* un turbante de lino. Son vestiduras sagradas....” (Vayicrá-Levítico 16:3-4).

A propósito de este versículo, el gran sabio medieval Rabbí Shelomó ben Yis'hac, más conocido como Rashí por sus siglas, deduce, apoyándose en el Talmud (Sanhedrín 83ª) que si el Cohen no se ponía todos los atuendos descritos aquí, se exponía a perder la vida.

Pues bien. Cuentan que una vez unos Rabinos muy importantes fueron a quejarse a Rabbí Abraham Yis'hac HaCohen (Kook), Gran Rabino de Israel, hombre conocido por su sabiduría, su sencillez y sobre todo por el amor que prodigaba a cualquier judío sin distinción, también a los más alejados de la Torá y las Mitzvot, como lo eran entonces algunos miembros de los Kibbutzim a los que frecuentemente visitaba el Maestro.

El motivo de la queja de los Rabinos era, precisamente, la estrecha relación que mantenía el buen Rab con judíos no religiosos e incluso con algunos que se declaraban abiertamente ateos.

–“Cómo es posible que Vd., honorable Gran Rabino, otorgue tal reconocimiento como constructores de Erets Israel a hombres y mujeres que violan públicamente los preceptos divinos?”

Con su habitual tono afable pero firme, Rabbí Abraham Yis'hac les contestó, apoyándose en el versículo citado más arriba.

–“Bien sabéis, les dijo, que el lugar más sagrado del Santuario era el Códesh haCodashim donde reposaban las Tablas de la Ley en el Arca Sagrada y al cual sólo podía entrar el Cohen Gadol el día de Kippur, tras una larga preparación espiritual y obligatoriamente vestido con los ropajes sagrados. Sin embargo, prosiguió el Rab, mientras se construía el Santuario, entraban allí libremente los obreros de todas clases. El Talmud (Me'ilá 14ª) lo explica diciendo que si bien los materiales para la construcción procedían de la materia, el hecho de participar en la construcción del Bet -haMicdash, les revestía posteriormente, de un grado muy especial de santidad. Lo mismo ocurre, concluyó, con los constructores de Erets Israel, sean quienes sean. Aunque las personas parezcan seculares e incluso materialistas, y sus labores, profanas, HaShem, en su inmensa misericordia, no ha de tardar en revestirlos de santidad.”

Y eso es lo que modestamente deseo al Presidente, a los dirigentes, educadores, miembros y amigos del Centro Educativo Sefaradí de Jerusalén y a sus familias, que vean revestidos de santidad a tantos y tantos miles de jóvenes que venidos de remotos horizontes, ellos han contribuido a acercar a la Torá y a la vida judía, devolviéndoles en muchos casos, su identidad judía perdida y el legítimo orgullo de pertenecer a la gran familia sefaradí. Sean bendecidos por haber elegido a Sión como faro de su acción salvadora y a Jerusalén como el corazón de donde emana la inspiración que a todos nos une.

Rabbi Baruj Garzon
Madrid, Spain

“For out of Zion comes forth Torah and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem”

Without a doubt, one the most solemn moments in the celebration of Yom Kippur in addition to Kol Nidrei and the Neila, is the description of the ritual that the Kohen Gadol, chief of the priests who served in the temple in Jerusalem, performed on the day of Kippur. It was the only time that he was authorized to enter the holiest area of the Beit HaMikdash- the Kodesh HaKodashim, the holiest of holy's, where the Ark of the Covenant resided.

In describing this ritual for the first time to Aaron the High Priest, Hashem states:

“This is the way Aharon shall enter the sanctuary, wearing a woolen linen tunic, a linen cummerbund and a linen turban on his head. These are the holy vestments”...(Vayikra 16:3-4).

Because of this verse, the grand medieval sage Rabbi Shelomo ben Yitzhak, better known as Rashi, concludes, basing himself on the Talmud (Sanhedrin 83a) that if the Cohen did not wear the proper attire described here he would lose his life.

It is said that once several important rabbis went to complain to Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaCohen (Kook), the first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of the British Mandate for Palestine, renowned for his wisdom, his simplicity, and above all for the love he had for every Jew without distinction, as well as to those far away from the Torah and Mitzvot, like those members of the kibbutz movement who he visited frequently.

The reason for the complaint of this Rabbi was, precisely, the close relationship that the good Rabbi had with nonreligious Jews, including some openly declared atheists.

“How is it possible that you, Hon. Grand Rabbi, give such recognition as builders of the State of Israel to men and women who violate publicly the divine precepts?”

With his usual affable but firm tone, Rabbi Abraham Isaac answered with the verse stated above.

“You know well, he told him that the most sacred sanctuary was the Kodesh HaKodashim, where the tablets of the Law rested in the Holy Ark and where only the High Priest could enter on the day of Yom Kipur after intense spiritual preparation and dressed in the holy and priestly vestments.

Even then, contended the Rabbi, with the construction of the sanctuary, workers of every type were allowed to freely enter. The Talmud (Meila 14a) explains, stating that if the materials for the construction of the sanctuary came from simple matter, the act of participating in the construction of the holy Temple later clothed the worker in a special kind of sanctity. The same thing occurred, he concluded, with the builders of the land of Israel whoever they were. Even if the people appear secular or even materialistic, and their work profane, G-d in his infinite mercy will ultimately clothe them in sanctity.

And this is what I modestly say to the SEC Leadership: The President, the executive committee, educators, members and friends of the Sephardic Educational Center in Jerusalem and their families should see themselves clothed in sanctity for the thousands and thousands of young adults who come from remote locations, you are contributing to return them to the Torah and to Jewish life, returning them in many cases to their lost Jewish identity and their legitimate pride to belong to our great Sephardic family. You should be blessed for having selected “Zion” as the beacon of your work of salvation and Jerusalem as the heart from where inspiration flows to unify us all.

Rabbi Baruj Garzon
Madrid, Spain

Editor's Note: Rabbi Garzon was the Educational Director of the SEC and led its Spanish speaking program since its inception in 1980 until his retirement several years ago. He single-handedly inspired a generation of young people, both Spanish and English speaking, who flocked to attend SEC programs simply to hear his educational workshops and learn from his unique approach to Sephardic-Jewish philosophy. I attribute much of what I know in my approach to Jewish life to the time I spent sitting at the feet of this great and unique communicator. I know thousands around the world share my sentiment.

PASSAGES

The SEC mourns the loss of its friends and supporters. They will all be missed.



Hayim Zohar was a longstanding friend, active member of the SECJ board, and Chair of the SEC Education Committee. Hayim dedicated many hours of his time to advance the cause of education at the SEC and was instrumental in securing funding for various programs

including the One Year Makor Program, and the Shoah in Sephardic Community program. As a former Ambassador to Israel in the United States between 1962-1968, Hayim initiated the "Salute to Israel" Parade in New York. His career in public service spanned six decades and involved work in most of Israel's major institutions — security, education, journalism, foreign affairs, diplomacy, aliyah absorption, government, Jewish Agency and non-profit organizations.



Nissim Bouskila, father of Rabbi Daniel Bouskila, SEC Spiritual Advisor. Born in Marrakesh, Morocco in 1924, Mr. Bouskila was a descendant of a long line of distinguished rabbis who originated in Spain. In 1948, he volunteered to serve in the War of Independence in the newborn State of Israel. He

served in the elite Palmach unit and saw combat during significant campaigns. In Paris, he was an haute couture costumer, and he brought that talent with him to the United States, where, for 30 years, he was the head costumer for Aaron Spelling Television in Los Angeles.



Simon Marciano and his wife and singer Enrico Macias at SEC Gala

Rabbi Simon Marciano,

father of SEC Friends Maurice, Armand, Paul and Georges Marciano passed

away July 22, 2009 in Beverly Hills. He was a friendly presence in the Los Angeles Sephardic community for over 25 years and supporter of the SEC since his arrival here with his gracious wife from France.

Isaac Elias, father of SEC Friend Martin Elias. A successful businessman and real estate developer, Ike Elias was a pillar of New York' Sephardic community and a major donor to SEC programs.



Joe Amega, one of the earliest and most dedicated supporters of the SEC, passed away February 16, 2009 after a long battle with cancer. He created and donated special SEC diamond pins for special friends of the SEC since 1984 and was always supportive of Dr. Nessim and the work of the SEC. He will be sorely missed.



Jo Amar with Singer Enrico Marcias at SEC International Gala 1984

Jo Amar

As a composer, cantor and popular singer, the Moroccan born entertainer Jo Amar paved the way for many of the singers of today's "Mizrahi" music,

with many of Israel's famous pop stars crediting him for creating the genre that is such an integral part of the modern Israeli musical scene. Jo Amar died June 26 in New York at the age of 79 after a long illness. His life was memorialized in a documentary, "Embrace Me", which he personally introduced at the SEC L.A. Sephardic Film Festival in 2002. His daughter, Madeline, is an SEC Alumna and Jo even taught Sephardic Music to the 1985 SEC Israel Program Young Adult participants. He was a dear friend and supporter of the SEC, and performed at the first SEC International Gala at the Century Plaza Hotel in 1984 alongside Enrico Macias.



David Cohen, of Haifa, Israel, was a part of our Israel Board and frequently visited the Center during the remodeling of the dorm building to give his valuable construction advice and support. He was struck by ALS which slowly shut down his body over the past 5 years. He was able in that time to create IrsALS, a foundation to

support the search for a cure to this terrible disease. David died surrounded by family in July.



Leadership 101

RABBI YOSEF BENARROCH
SEC - Jerusalem

This past summer I had the privilege to work with 63 college students from Canada and the United States. They attended the SEC HardSpice three week program, traveling throughout Israel and learning more about their Jewish and Sephardic roots. One of the lectures I gave to the group was a take on the famous Nike commercial that I entitled “Jewish Leadership: Just Do It”. At the conclusion of the session, a young man from Montreal, approached me and told me that my talk gave him a renewed desire to become more active on his campus. I asked him why he wasn’t up until now, to which he responded that in general many Jewish students displayed apathy towards their Jewish identity, and compared to the Arab students on campus, the Jews paled. I told him that I was happy that my talk inspired him and hoped that he would inspire others because apathy was one thing our small nation could not afford. So what was it that he found so inspiring about my talk? This is the gist of what I said, posing a question from the High Holiday liturgy.

After the blasting of the *Shofar* we recite the prayer “*Hayom Harat Olam*”. This prayer speaks about how on *Rosh Hashanah* we celebrate the creation of the world. To be more precise, our Rabbis explain that *Rosh Hashanah* is not the day G-d began creation, but the day when Adam and Eve were created. Therefore, “*Hayom Harat Olam*” is a testimony that *Rosh Hashanah* is the sixth day of creation. The question is why would we remind G-d of such a fateful day? After all the sixth day of creation was a complete disaster, filled with betrayal! On that day Adam and Eve were given one command to keep and on that day they more or less blew it. Why would we choose in the “*Hayom Harat Olam*” prayer to remind G-d about the day when everything went wrong?

The answer gets to the heart of what *Rosh Hashanah* is all about. G-d didn’t want to create a perfect world but one that needed fixing. By eating from the Tree of Knowledge, Adam and Eve created a situation that now required human beings to work in order to bring the world back to its original state of perfection. The day when Adam and Eve were created is all about responsibility. It is about recognizing that we can err but more importantly, about realizing that we are in the world and are responsible to do our part to fix the world.

That is precisely what *Rosh Hashanah* is all about. We begin the New Year by realizing that not everything is perfect, and more importantly, that it is our responsibility to fix the imperfections. That is why we recite the “*Hayom Harat Olam*” prayer, and maybe also the reason why we recite it immediately after the blasting of the *Shofar*. The *Shofar* is a reminder, or as Maimonides says, a wake up call to action.

Responsibility and action are what the SEC is all about. Speaking to that young man from Montreal made me realize the importance of what we do. As a result of this program, we have 63 new ambassadors in Montreal, Los Angeles, and New York. They are ambassadors who will defend Israel on campuses, and encourage other less affiliated young Jews to learn more about their beautiful Jewish heritage.

As the year comes to an end, we can look back with satisfaction on what we have accomplished. Hundreds of young people came through the doors of the SEC. They included college students, high school students from Los Angeles, adults on Federation missions, and underprivileged children in Israel. Each and every one left us just a bit more inspired, but more importantly with a feeling of responsibility.

As we look forward to a new year I am reminded of the words of our Sages. “*Rabbi Tarfon said the work is great and the time to do it is short...it is not in your hands to complete it but you are also not free of responsibility*” (*Ethics of Our Fathers 2:15-16*). Indeed there is so much more to be done. The SEC will continue to do the utmost to inspire and educate young Jews from all over the world. If you know a young man or woman who would benefit from our programs, please don’t hesitate to contact me or the Los Angeles office. At the same time, your support will help us reach young people like the young man from Montreal who we otherwise might not reach. On your next visit to Israel, please come and visit us in Jerusalem. On behalf of the SEC I wish all of you and your families a very happy New Year.

Tizku Leshanim Rabot!

The Executive Director



Over the past year, I have had the privilege to meet and speak with many people: SEC program participants, SEC Alumni, parents, noted educators, donors, community lay leaders and rabbis. Each dialogue has broadened my understanding of the challenges and needs facing us as a People. In particular, I have most enjoyed my conversations with those who are most affected by the SEC, our youth.

How can I describe the feeling when a young woman approaches, tears in her eyes, expressing her gratitude and appreciation for changing her life and awakening her Jewish soul!

How does one convey the impressions that describe a young man who, although being raised in an observant home, felt disconnected from his heritage? After three weeks on the SEC HardSpice program, he felt motivated and reconnected.

How does one adequately communicate the words of an SEC Alumna who credits her experience at the SEC in Jerusalem twenty years ago as “a life changing event”?

These are just a few of the hundreds of remarks and observations. The SEC changed these individuals’ lives forever, consequently impacting not only their immediate future, but the future of generations to come.

A close friend of mine summed up the SEC’s mission in three words: Enhance. Enrich. Expand.

We enhance our communities by creating groups of young men and women who are cognizant of their heritage and Jewish identity. We enrich the lives of our youth, their families and communities by providing exciting programs that engage young men and women and draw them closer to their heritage. We expand our communities by providing these young men and women with the tools to be the next generation of Sephardic and Jewish leaders.

Over the past year, the SEC has made tremendous strides in charting our future course. Thanks to the dedication and vision of our Executive Committee, we are now poised to launch a series of exciting program initiatives which will have a resounding impact on all of our communities.

That’s where your involvement is vital. As we launch our programs for the coming year, we invite you to join us. You and your family will benefit by participating in SEC programs and events, both locally and in Israel. Of course, your financial support is central to our success.

Mounted above my desk are several quotes. My favorite paraphrases a passage in Deuteronomy (30:12,13,14) “ It is not in heaven, neither is it beyond the sea, but it is within easy reach of you”. These words, spoken by Moses to the Jewish nation prior to their entry into the promised land of Israel are eternal in their message.

Our future is attainable, but it lies in our hands. Collectively, we possess the skills, talents and resources necessary to accomplish our goal of securing our Jewish future. Working together, we can enhance, enrich and expand our communities.

Your comments and ideas are most welcome and appreciated. Please feel free to contact me directly at 310.441.9631 ext 207 or by email at lla@secjerusalem.org

I wish you and your families a Happy, Healthy, Peaceful and Prosperous New Year.

Larry Azose

(Continued) Natalie (Moreno) & Ron Benudiz

Natalie also attended several SEC Youth Conventions, the most memorable was the 1st one, in LA in 1988, and then in Mexico City in 1990. The friends she made last to today. "I have met many, many people through the SEC, and great friendships have formed and lasted, and I consider this invaluable in my life."

"Certainly the SEC introduced me to Israel, and the love of the land. And it definitely solidified my Sephardic identity, since my experience as a Jew elsewhere did not include the traditions, language, customs and thinking that my own family held. For my Jewish identity, the SEC helped by putting a positive spin on it. I had a Jewish identity before the SEC, but I was not emotionally attached to it until I got involved with the SEC."

"My SEC wish list for my children:

I want there to be a fun, cool, local hangout where they can easily mingle with friends and meet new quality people with similarities that bond them.

I want them to have the opportunity to meet and befriend Jewish

people around the world, and I want them to experience the common bond that makes us all a family.

I want them to have life-long friendships locally, nationally and internationally, and incredible memories of fun and rich times.

I want them to learn about Judaism and Sephardic tradition by actually living it, with friends surrounding them.

I want them to have sort-of a "club" that they will always belong to, and be proud of.

I want my children to be comfortable with their Jewish and Sephardic identities, and to be able to practice Judaism confidently in any community.

I want my children to understand their roots, and let that ground them.

I want them to learn about Israel (by visiting and touring), and develop and appreciation for it.

I want them to have the chance to be community leaders, or at least get involved with community service at any level.

It's a tall order, but SO important!"

SEC Songbook- One of a Kind

The SEC has completed a 20 year project of the most unique and complete Jewish Songbook, with Hebrew, English Translation and Transliteration of every song, Kiddush, Birkat Hamazon and related blessings. It includes sections of Israeli songs, Sephardic songs, Hassidic songs, and even Ladino songs. It is a must for every home and can be purchased for Bar and Bat Mitzva's or weddings. In order to publish this for sale and distribution, we are soliciting donors to dedicate the book in honor or memory of a loved one. The suggested donation is \$40,000 for sole dedication rights.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT THE
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email the Editor, Neil Sheff neil@sheffimmigration.com



SEC Publications



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The Shoa In the Sephardic Communities

- English **\$25 USD** Item # 106



From the Editor

NEIL J. SHEFF

Before leaving for our annual SEC "Amuta" (Israeli Board of Directors) meeting this summer, I conducted a survey together with our Executive Director, Larry Azose, among several prominent Sephardic Rabbis in the U.S. and abroad. The purpose was to seek consensus on what I suspected was a need for the Sephardic World to have an institute that would enhance and expand the abilities of Sephardic Rabbis to meet the current challenges common to all communities and be able to discuss among themselves and with world class experts different approaches to these issues. A sort of "Sephardic Think Tank" similar to those currently offered in Jerusalem at places like the Hartman Institute, the Pardes Institute or the Shalem Institute, among others.

I had come across Rabbis in the past that either participated in one of these institutes, for lack of something more "close to home", or just went off on their own to think and write over a summer break. But how empowering it would be to bring these Rabbis together to build on the energy and experience each brought with them in order to ultimately improve on the quality of Jewish life in our Sephardic communities.

I was pleasantly surprised that each Rabbi I spoke to was completely supportive of the plan and enthusiastic to participate and lend their suggestions. In addition, they were very receptive to the offer of having "enhancement" courses for Rabbis to improve their skills in areas such as public speaking, writing, budget-making, and creative programming. I myself was getting very excited.

In Israel, we met with the director of the Pardes Institute, Rabbi Daniel Landes, who aroused a sense of urgency among us when he said the SEC had a great untapped potential to lead the Sephardic World by serving as catalyst for religious and lay leaders to discover the wisdom of the Sephardic sages and explore their relevance to today's Jewish World. We all felt like we were on the threshold of a new endeavor that would bring the SEC to new heights and truly strengthen the Sephardic World.

My hope is that by next summer, a group of Sephardic Rabbis will sit together in Jerusalem to inaugurate this program, share their concerns and visions and together do great things for themselves and their communities. We will no doubt need subsidy grants and the support of each congregation to "share" their Rabbi for this unique endeavor. But I believe the investment will be invaluable and our synagogues will be the beneficiaries of the fruits of this program.

Let's do it! Email me with your ideas and questions to neil@sheffimmigration.com.

Tizku Le'shanim Rabot

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