



# HAMERKAZ

FALL 2006 EDITION

PRESENTS A PUBLICATION OF THE SEPHARDIC EDUCATIONAL CENTER

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TO ISRAEL**

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A CENTER FOR ALL JEWS





# Celebrating the SEC

By Dr. Jose A. Nessim  
Founder

The Sephardic Educational Center in Jerusalem (SEC) celebrated its 25th anniversary last year. It is the only such Center in the Jewish world. The SEC campus is composed of three buildings that once served as the headquarters of all the Jews in Ottoman Palestine up until the beginning of the 20th century. Today, the SEC has lodging for up to 250 guests. Over 35,000 young people and adults have visited the SEC in Jerusalem to study and learn over the past 25 years. The SEC is a movement that is open to all Jews.

Young people of high school and university age, as well as young single professionals up to age 36 have visited the SEC since we opened our doors in 1980 to learn more about Jewish-Sephardic culture, philosophy, history, etc. Over the years, the SEC established an international Young Adult Movement that continues to unite the next generation with classes, socials, cultural and religious events. Through these activities which have been organized by mostly volunteers, we have brought thousands back to their religious identity and happily boast hundreds of couples who today are married thanks to the SEC.

The SEC also has an accredited university program in Jerusalem, known as Makor, that can be taken for one or two semesters, and we offer scholarships that cover part of the tuition. This year the SEC will once again offer this program in association with Hebrew University of Jerusalem where specific courses related to Sephardic culture and philosophy will be taught on our campus. It is a unique and exciting program and we encourage all college-aged students to experience it.

Many research projects have been sponsored by the SEC with topics that include the Sephardim in the Holocaust, Women's Role in Judaism and others. We have published Sephardic prayer books and Humashim (bibles) in Spanish and English that have sold thousands throughout Latin America.

There is no question that if the 1.3 million Sephardim living in the Diaspora wish to survive and thrive as Jews and preserve their Sephardic culture they must help us create a World Sephardic Movement to unite and organize all our institutions and organizations. Many Sephardim are no longer connected with anything resembling their own traditions because other Jewish movements offer many more enticing programs, locally, regionally and internationally. Their synagogues are able to share their resources, have national youth programs and camps, sponsor large scale educational and cultural events, and most importantly, attract generous grants from Israel and the Diaspora. We have much to offer and the need is great. Strengthening the Sephardim will strengthen and enrich the entire Jewish people. We just have to wake up and seize this opportunity before it's too late

**THE SEC IS A MOVEMENT  
THAT IS OPEN FOR ALL JEWS.**

# SEC Summer in Israel



After my trip to Israel this summer, I have gained an appreciation for the land and people of Israel that I never felt and never thought I would feel. The SEC trip showed me what Israel truly is like and how important it should be to me.

-Elham Homami, L.A.

Tony Bennett immortalized, "I left my heart in San Francisco". But "I found my heart in Israel". My time in Israel proved to be a time of spiritual and emotional growth, as well as self discovery like I had never before experienced in my life. Don't get me wrong, the trip was an AMAZINGLY FUN time as well. The memories that were made, and the friendships which were formed, are ones that will most certainly last a lifetime. The process of growth, learning, and self discovery did not end when I left Israel either. Each day I am striving to learn more and something new about who I am and how I can use who I am to serve both G-d and people.

- William Dean



WOW, the SEC-Birthright experience was simply magical. For the most part I felt like I was floating on air.

- Gaby Arrobas (Counselor, L.A. trip)

Going to Israel and seeing it, falling in love with it, and with all the people that traveled with me, is an experience I will treasure forever.

- Anton Lebedev, NYC

SEC-Birthright changed me in ways that I never knew were possible. I am a completely different person now and I have very different views on life. I am so appreciative for having experienced Israel the way I did. I truly believe that everyone should go to Israel with SEC once in their lives.

-Melody Homami L.A.

"When I first walked off the plane into Israel I was 'welcomed home.' It was not until I spent my first 10 days of travel that I truly knew what that meant. SEC- Birthright gave me perspective on the importance of my homeland."

-Benjamin Hoffman, Los Angeles



## THE SEC's 25TH ANNIVERSARY

By Shelomo Alfassa,

Excerpted from the International Sephardic Journal,  
Vol 2. No. 1. Spring 2005

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the SEC, I was privileged to spend time with Rabbi Yosef Benarroch and Hayim Azses, both whom are on the staff of the Sephardic Educational Center (SEC) in the Old City of Jerusalem. Rabbi Benarroch was kind enough to give me an extensive private tour of the Old City; I saw it like never before. We had lengthy discussions on the Sephardic history of Jerusalem and the Sephardim in general. Needless to say, he greatly impressed me with his knowledge and passion for the subject. Rabbi Benarroch was born in Tangiers, Morocco, and before relocating to Jerusalem, was the rabbi of the Sephardic synagogue of Vancouver.

I also had the privilege of spending time with Hayim Azses and was fortunate to have a wonderful quiet Shabbat lunch with him and a few friends in the courtyard next to the Yohannan Ben Zakai synagogue (adjacent to the SEC). Hayim was born in Syria, studied in Paris and Istanbul, and





Rabbi Moshe Shamah of Brooklyn,  
long time educator and supporter of SEC programs,  
receives award from Dr. Jose Nessim at the SEC anniversary celebration in Jerusalem

**continued...** today is a well respected Jewish educator. Hayim spent 25 years working for the Jewish Agency, and is a wellspring of knowledge on the history of Israel, Jewish life and Sephardic history. Having Hayim nearby is like having an encyclopedia on Jewish history next to you. He is a charming and special man who is worldly, sophisticated, and has a passion for all things Sephardic.

The 25th anniversary celebration took place in a dining room which sat 250 people. It was a venerable “who’s who” of the Sephardic world. Many well-known personalities had traveled from many different countries and cities to get together for a night of speeches, food and music. Attendants included the former Chief Rabbi of Madrid, rabbis from the Syrian community of New York, and the head of the Council of the Sephardic and Oriental Jews of Jerusalem. People with families from France, Morocco, Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Syria, Iraq and Iran were in attendance. The host was Dr. Jose Nessim, founder of the SEC who had flew in from Los Angeles. Dr. Nessim introduced the guest speakers and the evening’s events in both English and Spanish, as a large assembly of guests had come from Argentina and Mexico. With their executive office in Los Angeles and their Center in Jerusalem, the SEC has branched out to many different cities over the years. Today you can find active SEC programs in Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Montreal, New York and other locations. The SEC has enriched the lives of over 25,000 persons since 1980.



**MARCH 2005 IN JERUSALEM**  
More photos at [SECjerusalem.org](http://SECjerusalem.org)

LOS ANGELES SEPHARDIC JEWISH

# FILM FESTIVAL



## Sarita Fields, A CHAMPION OF THE SEC; A FOUNDER OF THE SEPHARDIC FILM FESTIVAL

by Jack Israel

There is no telling where it all began. Perhaps it was Sarita Fields' interest in community service and her fascination with the youth of the Sephardic Educational Center. It might have been the words from a younger cousin reminding her that she was the mother of two girls, then young teenagers, who could benefit from their association with other young Jewish kids at the SEC or, perhaps, her appreciation of personal involvement with the organization and her elder daughter's trip to Israel with an SEC Summer Program. That trip was special because it was a gift from Sarita's father who had encouraged his granddaughter to visit the Holy Land. Whatever ignited the spark, she only knows that once it began, it has consumed much of her life and she is grateful for the rewards.

More than that, it has led to the popular series of Sephardic Jewish Film Festivals, the Eighth Annual of which will open on Sunday, November 12, 2006 at the Paramount Motion Picture Studios. Again, Sephardic artists, writers, directors and others who contribute to the film industry will be honored with the Cinema Sepharad Award and a new award, The Sephardic Legacy Award. At the same Gala, Sarita Fields, who has been the the chairperson and driving force of all eight festivals as well as many other major SEC events, will receive the very prestigious Maimonides Lifetime Achievement Award.

To the best of her recollection, the idea sprung from a brain-storming conversation she was having with Neil Sheff, formerly the SEC Executive Director prior to becoming a practicing attorney and continuing his affiliation with the SEC as the Founder of its International Youth Movement. After some conversation, Sarita and Neil agreed that the idea of a film festival would indeed be the ticket.

Encouraged by the success of the first Festival, it was then decided to establish the Los Angeles Sephardic Jewish Film Festival as an annual event. The idea of presenting an award with a Sephardic connotation to Sephardim in the film industry came during the planning of the second festival. Since then, many have received a Cinema Sepharad Award and other distinguished tributes for their contributions to the film industry and the SEC.

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8th Annual • Nov. 12, 2006





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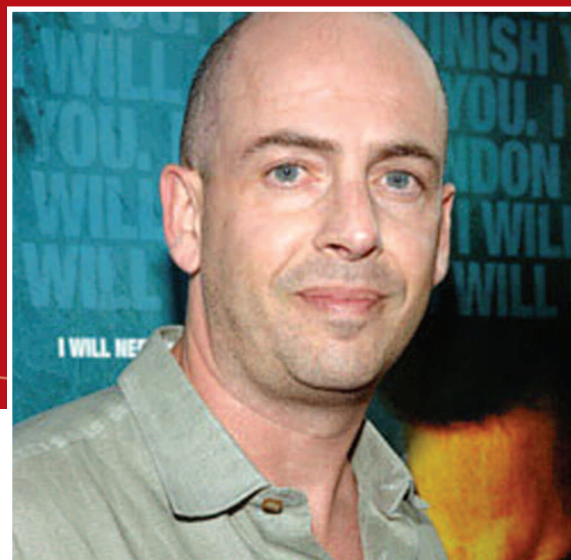
According to Sarita, "I feel that the Sephardic Jewish Film Festival is an outstanding program because it brings together the many faces and ethnic backgrounds of the Sephardic community to share our differences in a venue that is common to us all – the movies".

The beneficiary of the Film Festival is the SEC. What started out many years ago as a group of teenagers is now a large group who enjoy sharing their bar and bat mitzvahs; their weddings, baby namings, brit milas and subsequent life cycle celebrations. And Sarita takes great joy in the fact that she has been invited to attend again and again these SEC lifecycle events. "That's the biggest benefit that I have enjoyed experiencing at the SEC".

There's also no doubt that the SEC is a different organization thanks to her leadership. Congratulations, Sarita!



*Lainie Kazan past Cinema Sepharad Honoree*



## 2006 Cinema Sepharad Honoree

The 2006 Cinema Sepharad Award will be presented at the Gala Opening Night of the 8<sup>th</sup> Los Angeles Sephardic Jewish Film Festival at Paramount Studios Hollywood. This year's honoree is Bob Yari, president and founder of the Yari Film Group (YFG) and head of Bob Yari Productions. Bob is a member of the Persian Sephardic community of Los Angeles.

Mr. Yari produced 2005's Best Picture winner at the Academy Awards, *Crash*. The film was nominated for a total of 6 Oscars, including Best Picture and Best Director, and also won the top prize at the Screen Actors Guild Awards (for its ensemble cast), among other honors. The *Illusionist*, starring Edward Norton, Paul Giamatti and Jessica Biel was produced by Yari and is currently in wide release.



## Carole Basri Sephardic Legacy Award

Sharing honors at the Opening Gala will be Carole Basri of New York, the first recipient of The Sephardic Legacy Award. Carole Basri is the producer of three documentaries about her Iraqi Jewish heritage, the most recent of which, "The Last Jews of Baghdad", will premiere at this year's festival. She is an accomplished attorney in private practice, and has also helped to represent the U.S. State Department in providing legal support for the Sadaam Hussein trials.





*Addes*



*Father Tongue*



*The Last Jews of Baghdad*

## Until Tomorrow Comes

The moving, dramatic and comic story of a week in the life of Lilian, a Moroccan-Jewish beauty salon owner in a small town in the South of Israel who has to cope with the deteriorating mental health of her aging mother, the marital crises of her daughter and an unexpected courtship that threatens her glorious solitude.

## The Ringworm Children

A shocking and moving story of medical experimentation performed on nearly 100,000 minor children of Moroccan immigrants to Israel in the early 1950's and their tragic discovery many years later that they were exposed to dangerous levels of radiation which now accounts for alarmingly high death rates due to brain tumors and disease and has led the survivors to demand that their story be told and uncovered.

# FILM FESTIVAL

*The Jews of Iran*





# NOVEMBER 12-19

## Join Us for the Cultural Event of the Year:

The 2006 Los Angeles  
Sephardic Jewish Film Festival,  
**November 12-19, 2006.**

Opening Gala **Sunday, November 12**  
at Paramount Studios Hollywood.

Screenings at Laemmle's Music Hall Theater  
in Beverly Hills.

### The Jews of Iran

The Jewish community in Iran dates back to 2700 years. The Islamic Revolution of 1979 resulted in the departure of most Jews from the country, but many chose not to leave.

### Father Tongue

A portrait of Jacko (86), father of the director, Rami Kimchi. Jacko, an English teacher, was born in Alexandria, Egypt. The film focuses on his study period at the Sephardic Rabbinical Seminary on the Island of Rhodes (which existed from 1927 to 1939), an institution that constituted the last project of Sephardic Jewry in the Mediterranean region.

### Moshe Safdie- The Power of Architecture

A portrait of the Sephardic architect Moshe Safdie (b. 1938), depicting his early years in Haifa, his move to Montreal at the age of 15, his architectural training at McGill University, and his life-altering trip through the United States as apprentice to architect Louis Kahn-when the ideas embodied in Montreal's Habitat 67 project first began to germinate.

### Live and Become

The magnificent, award-winning epic story of an Ethiopian boy who is airlifted from a Sudanese refugee camp to Israel in 1984 during Operation Moses and comes to be adopted by a Sephardic family in Israel. Although he thrives as an adoptive son of this loving family, he is plagued by two big secrets.

### Addes

A grand synagogue in Jerusalem founded by Syrian Jews gears up for its centennial celebrations, and the congregation is torn apart by controversy.

### The Last Jews of Baghdad

Today, only 22 Jews remain in Iraq from a population of 160,000. It is most shocking considering there has been a Jewish community in Iraq since 586 BCE. Why did the Iraqi Jews leave?

## Torah thoughts from Jerusalem

Rabbi Yosef Benarroch of the SEC in Jerusalem writes the weekly "Torah Thoughts From Jerusalem" which explains the *Perashat Hashavua* (weekly portion of the Torah) in a manner that is inspiring and educational. Thousands of people receive it all over the world each week.

If you would like to receive your copy, just join the SEC mailing list by e-mailing us at: [rabbi@secjerusalem.org](mailto:rabbi@secjerusalem.org). To dedicate an edition of Torah Thoughts in honor or memory of a dear one, just e-mail your dedication at least 2 weeks in advance.

**MAIL YOUR DONATION OF \$52 OR MORE TO  
SEC TORAH THOUGHTS, 10808 SANTA MONICA BLVD., LOS ANGELES, CA 90025  
OR CALL (310) 441-9361.**

# TRAVELS

with the SEC



**SEC participants  
from Mexico  
Argentina, and  
the US**



# Programs in Jerusalem 2006

## Taglit-Birthright Israel

**January 2007**

SEC and taglit-birthright Israel will be taking 80 young adults from all around the United States to Israel this winter. Last summer was a great success. Join us in January for a 10-day trip open to any Jewish young adult who would like to know more about their Jewish heritage and identity. Our highly qualified staff of educators who reside in Jerusalem will share their enthusiasm, passion and knowledge of the Land of Israel, its People and its Torah. We travel the country to experience its beauty and charm, from a desert oasis near the Dead Sea to the lush waterfalls in the Golan. Meet young Israelis and bond with them through tours, hikes, and 'hanging out'. Experience a Shabbat that you will never forget in the Jewish Quarter, near the Western Wall. Participate in thought provoking seminars that include topics such as History, Religion, and Politics including Leadership training. Traveling and touring Israel with the Sephardic Educational Center is the best!

## High School

**June - 3 weeks**

So school is out and you need to get out of town for the summer? Call your friends and head to Israel! This is a great opportunity to build friendships, and tour Israel's beautiful land rich with history and life!

## Young Adult

**July - 12 Day Trip**

Tour Israel with the SEC with all your meals and transportation included. This is a great opportunity to meet Jewish friends and see the land of your people.

## Young Professional

**July/August - 10 Day Trip**

Spend your vacation time with the SEC and you won't regret it! This will be a total tour of Israel packed into 10 exciting days with your peers. You will spend Shabbat in our Center in the Old City of Jerusalem and feel the indisputable spirituality at the Kotel. Enjoy the beaches of Israel and the land's diversity.

## Makor

**Study for a year or semester**

The Makor program aims to strengthen the Jewish commitment and identity of students through education provided by offering various classes in Judaic Studies

and Sephardic learning. Students will be able to participate in Jewish events and activities in the Old City of Jerusalem, travel throughout Israel in conjunction with studying at Hebrew U and obtaining credits. Students will live, eat and learn at the Center. **Scholarships available.**

## Congregation

Travel with your Rabbi and Congregation to Israel. Not only will you tour Israel but you will return home with a stronger bond within your congregation. This bond will make a difference in your family's ties with your synagogue and heritage. Contact us today!

## Family Trip

**May- offered in English & Spanish**

The SEC has given many families a wonderful experience touring Israel. This excursion includes 9 days and 8 nights in Israel. The accommodations are five star hotels and ~~deluxe~~ air conditioned buses. Each bus will have a tour guide to accompany you and give you a wealth of knowledge about the breathtaking sights you will visit, including the Jewish Quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem, Massada, the Dead Sea, Tel Aviv, the Jordan Valley, Safed, Haifa, and the Golan to name a few. The trip will include breakfast and airport transfers.

Traveling and touring Israel with the SEC is an experience you and your family will remember for a lifetime. It will allow you to learn about your heritage, the history of your People, and a fun-filled journey through a land that is truly yours.

## Sephardic Heritage Tour

**May**

Young Adult trip beginning with a tour of Spain and ending in Israel in time to celebrate Yom Ha'atzmaut. This will be an extensive look into our Sephardic Heritage as we tour Spain and visit ancient synagogues and landmarks in this warm beautiful country. We will then fly to Israel on the joyous occasion of the country's celebration of Independence!

## Custom Make Your Trip to Israel!

We at the SEC would like to make your next trip to Israel one you will never forget! We welcome your ideas, suggestions and requests. Whether you would like to travel to Israel with friends, family, or even your congregation, SEC can help to make that happen. We can customize your trip to visit places of your interest. We can also coordinate a bar/bat mitzva your child will always treasure. Call your local SEC office today and make your trip to Israel a reality.

# SEC- Los Angeles

# HIKES

## WITH IKE

How many  
Buildings make up  
the SEC Campus in  
Jerusalem?



## December 3

Exploring the beautiful Santa Monica mountains with Ike Zekaria

**call (310) 441-9361 or email  
us at [Sandy@secjerusalem.org](mailto:Sandy@secjerusalem.org)**

## 2006 Calendar of Events

SEC-LA UPCOMING EVENTS FOR YOUNG ADULTS:

### October 11

"Hooka in the Sukkah" Party

### October 17

"Cow Jumped Over the Moon"

An evening of food and thought at Beverly Hills' newest gourmet kosher hangout

### October 22

Movie Night Under the Stars

### November 10-12

Convention Weekend

With friends from across North America

### November 12-19

SEC's LA Sephardic Jewish Film Festival

### December 3

Hike with Ike

Exploring the beautiful Santa Monica mountains with Ike Zekaria

Check your e-mail for upcoming classes, trips, and other events. For more information and to be added to the SEC e-vite list, contact **Sandy Benchimol** at (310) 441-9361 or [sandy@sec](mailto:sandy@sec)

## SEC- Argentina

Participants at the Annual SEC  
South American Young Adult



Answer:3





**JOIN** the only  
Sephardic Movement  
in the World when you  
join the SEC

**ANNUAL FEES**  
\$52 - for Adults over 18  
\$28 - for Young Adults  
under 18

## Free 10-day trip to Israel SEC in partnership with Birthright

As a partnering organization with Birthright, the SEC offers the gift of a free first-time, **10-day** educational Israel trip for young Jewish adults ages 18-26. Learn more on the Birthright program with the SEC. Visit our **website at [secjerusalem.org](http://secjerusalem.org)**



## SEC- New York





# Pirates of the Mediterranean

**RABBI YOSEF BENARROCH**

SEC - Jerusalem

I remember as a small child always being fascinated with the story of Jonah and the whale. It has just about everything to stir a child's imagination. A man by the name of Jonah embarks on an adventure where he sails on the high seas. The crew throws him overboard when they suspect he is the cause of a violent storm that threatens the ship. Miraculously he is saved when a whale swallows him up and spits him out on shore. Finally he comes to the cosmopolitan city of Ninveh to complete his adventure. It is a city right out of a Pirate movie where we can imagine its taverns filled with drunken sailors. Jonah's mission is to rebuke the inhabitants and convince them to walk a more upright and G-d-fearing path. If we didn't know that we were reading the Bible we could easily think this is a new Hollywood movie with pirates and heroes all taking place on the high seas of the Mediterranean.

In truth it is a powerful Biblical story that is read every year as the Haftarah of the afternoon service of Yom Kippur. The story is anything but a child's story. The question is what message can we learn from it? Why would our Rabbis have chosen it as the "Haftarah" for the holiest day of the year?

At first glance the answer is simple. The story is about an entire city filled with corruption and injustice. In chapter 3, verse 8, we are told that theft and violence was rampant in the city. Yet by the end of the book the entire city repents and is filled with the fear of G-d. All it takes is one speech by Jonah in the city square. In that speech he tells the people that if they do not change their ways the entire city will be destroyed in forty days. As a result of his speech we are told, "The inhabitants of Ninveh believed in G-d and they declared a day of fasting. The adults and children donned sackcloth... They cried out to G-d with great fervor and they repented from their evil ways and from the violence that was in their hands" (Jonah 3:5,8).

From this section it is clear why we read this story on Yom Kippur. It is a story about prayer, fasting and ultimate repentance. More so it is a story about how even the most corrupt idolatrous people can change their ways and follow the ways of G-d. This is without a doubt the primary reason that we read this story on Yom Kippur. Nevertheless I believe there is another reason.

If we analyze the story, and more specifically the mission of Jonah, there is a word that seems to pop up over and over again. On a number of occasions Jonah tries to "run away". When he is commanded by G-d to travel to Ninveh and rebuke its inhabitants Jonah runs away. He boards a ship headed for a city by the name of "Tarshish". Many of the commentaries identify "Tarshish" as a city in Spain. Of all the countries to run away to, why did he choose Spain? Some of the commentaries explain that in those days Spain was about as far away one could get from Israel. Jonah wanted to escape to the most far away place possible.

During the voyage there is a violent storm at sea. Once again he runs away, this time to the bottom of the ship. He knows that he is clearly the reason for the storm, yet he chooses to hide in the ship's basement. Jonah seems to be saying in all of these cases: "Please just leave me alone, I don't want any headaches".

Who could blame him? After all the people of Ninveh were archrivals of the Jewish nation. Our Rabbis tell us that the repentance of its inhabitants could only spell doom for the Jewish nation. This would be the most logical explanation for his behavior.

Perhaps there is another reason. We can well imagine that he was overwhelmed by the mission. Imagine one person is entrusted to turn an entire city of wicked people around overnight. Perhaps Jonah's running away was also because of the magnitude of the task. Maybe what he was saying is "who am I to do this". Perhaps Jonah echoes the words that so many of us echo, "what can little me do to change anything. I just want to live my life in peace and not get involved. Please everybody just leave me alone".

Seen in this way the ultimate message of the story is not the repentance of an entire city, but how one person has the ability to turn an entire city around. The message is about how Jonah, like so many of us, wants nothing more than to run away, but ultimately he must face his challenge straight on and find the inner strength to succeed.

How fitting this theme is on Yom Kippur. It is the holiday that forces us to stop running away. On this day we must look deeply into ourselves and accept the challenge of self-improvement in so many aspects of our lives.

Sometimes life seems too complex. Sometimes the problems around us seem too great to tackle. We have done such a great job in our modern world of "running away". We are masters at hiding. We hide behind our money, we hide behind our vacations, we hide in our homes and neighborhoods, and we hide behind our work. You name it, our society has created so many wonderful mechanisms that allow us to just "get away" and not have to face the challenges of life.

How many of us have uttered the words, "What can I do. It's too big for me"?

Dear friends it is so easy to give up. We all, on some level, suffer the same attitude that compelled Jonah to run away. In fact we are, to a great extent, all a part of Jonah. There are so many things we all know we should be doing but we never get around to doing them. We all have personality traits that we know are not good and need to be worked on but we just run away from doing anything about it. We all have something that we can do to improve our relationships, but we just never get around to it. In our Jewish practice we all have something we know needs improvement but we just escape the challenge. We could all learn a bit more, we could all strengthen our faith in G-d, we could all attend synagogue a bit more, and the list is endless. But we are all like Jonah. We prefer to run away and hide.

Ultimately the message of Jonah is you can't run away. The challenge may seem great but it is within us to tackle it. Hashem has given us the resources and ability to stand up to the challenge. During one day of the year we must take a long, hard look at our families, our communities and ourselves and ask the questions we have evaded all year long. Like Jonah there is no running away, but like Jonah we have the inner strength to succeed.

Maybe this is one of the reasons why we read the Book of Jonah on Yom Kippur. It is as much about one person as it is about an entire city. Indeed what Yom Kippur teaches us is that everything begins with ourselves. If you doubt that all you need to do is look at Jonah.

*My best wishes for a meaningful Yom Kippur.*

**Tizku Leshanim Rabot**

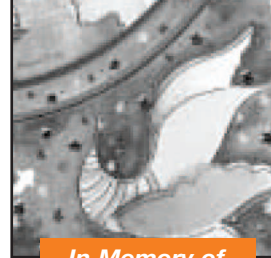




**Mazal Tov**



**Get Well**



**In Memory of**

# Tribute Cards

## **Joe and Freda Nessim**

### ***In Memory of:***

Ike Cohen, Sister of Pauline Romano, Frances Franco

### ***In Honor of:***

Anne Mallel (birthday), Beverly Morhaim (Woman of the Year), Sarita Fields

## **Esther, Clement & Jack Cohen**

### ***In Memory of:***

Shirley Alpern, Frances Franco, Nels Green, Natalie Rudoy, Catherine Miller, Hal Coskey

### ***Get Well to:***

Symore Seider, Jack Gordon, Peggy Scapa, Rabbi Daniel Bouskila, Morrie Angel

## **Sue & Joe Cohen**

### ***In Memory of:***

Shirley Alpern, Soll Berman

### ***Get Well to:***

Peggy Scapa

## **Rose & Joe Benon**

### ***In Memory of:***

Ike Cohen (to Bob Cohen), Ike Cohen (to Josie Benveniste), Ike Cohen (Sue & Joe Cohen), Ike Cohen (Rae Israel), Ike Cohen (Bernice Cohen), Soll Berman, Catherine Miller (to Sue & Joe Cohen), Catherine Miller (to the family), Estelle Meadow

### ***Get Well to:***

Peggy Scapa, Rae Haky

## **Alice & Morrie Angel**

### ***In Memory of:***

Denise Clumeck, Richard Romero, Catherine Miller

### ***Get Well to:***

Peggy Scapa, Joe Remis

## **Rachel & Neil Sheff**

### ***In Memory of:***

Diana Policar, Isaac Ovadia, Jack Jonah

## **Becky Sheff**

### ***In Memory of:***

Sharkey Israel, Denise Clumeck, Estrea Berro

### ***Get Well to:***

Ted Hasson

## **Tillie, Vic and Peggy Scapa**

### ***In Memory of:***

Ike Cohen (Josie Benveniste), Ike Cohen (Sue & Joe Cohen), Ike Cohen (Rae Israel), Ike Cohen (Bernice Cohen), Ike Cohen (Bob & Beverly Cohen), Soll Berman, Richard Romero

### ***Get Well to:***

Rae Haky, Joe Berro, Joe Remis

### ***Mazal Tov to:***

Joe Mayesh (birthday)

## **Rachel & Al Huniu**

### ***In Memory of:***

Ike Cohen, Soll Berman, Catherine Miller

### ***Get Well to:***

Peggy Scapa

## **Rae Cohen & Sally Mann**

### ***In Memory of:***

Estelle Meadow

### ***Get Well to:***

Rae Haky

## **Millie & Joe Remis**

### ***In Memory of:***

Ike Cohen, Frances Franco, Richard Romero

### ***Get Well to:***

Selma Jaffee, Peggy Scapa

## **Shirlee & David Peha**

### ***In Memory of:***

Denise Clumeck, Ike Cohen, Soll Berman

### ***Get Well to:***

Rae Haky, Esther Russo, Joe Remis

## **Josie Benveniste**

### ***In Memory of:***

Richard Romero, Nell Green, Frances Franco, Harry Steinfeld, Soll Berman, Diana Polichar, Catherine Miller

### ***Get Well to:***

Rae Haky, Morrie Soriano, Sylvia Aboulafia, Sunny Alexander, Joe Remis

### ***Mazal Tov:***

Joe Mayesh (birthday), Ron & Dara Benveniste (birth of baby boy)

## **Sarita Fields**

### ***In Memory of:***

Shirley Alpern, Ike Cohen (Bernice Cohen), Ike Cohen (Sue & Joe Cohen), Ike Cohen (Josie Benveniste), Ike Cohen (Bob & Beverly Cohen), Morris Benatar, Catherine Miller

### ***Get Well to:***

Peggy Scapa, David Bensimon, Ralph Amado

## **Rita & Leon Levy**

### ***In Memory of:***

Ike Cohen, Catherine Miller

### ***Get Well to:***

Peggy Scapa, Sarah Schenasi, Anita Goldbaum

## **Rae Wexler**

### ***In Memory of:***

Ike Cohen (Sue & Joe Cohen), Ike Cohen (Josie Benveniste)

### ***Get Well to:***

Joe Berro, Peggy Scapa, Joe Remis

## **Joe & Pat Schenasi**

### ***In Memory of:***

Jean Day, Soll Berman

### ***Get Well to:***

Dana Jeffers

## **Rae & Joe Berro**

### ***In Memory of:***

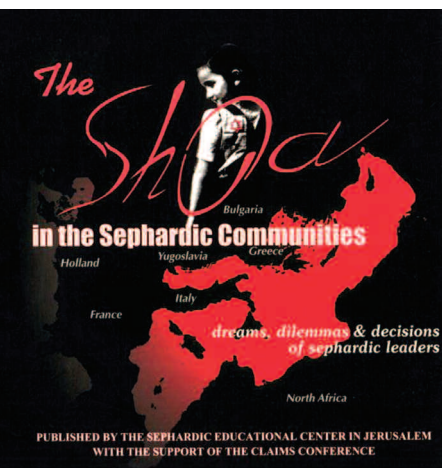
Ike Cohen

## **Ron & Sharon Hasson**

### ***Get Well to:***

Peggy Scapa

*To commemorate any occasion, send your condolence or wish someone a speedy recovery, use the SEC Tribute Cards, a beautiful way to show you care. Call Tribute Chairlady, Shirlee Peha at 310-370-2788 or email [shirleha@aol.com](mailto:shirleha@aol.com)*



Hayim Azses, Editor

# THE SHOAH IN THE Sephardic Communities

*Published by the SEC*

It took years of research and preparation. The staff of the SEC in Jerusalem headed by Hayim Azses, editor of the book, Rabbi Yosef Benarroch and eight students of the Hebrew University spent months interviewing some 40 holocaust survivors from 8 communities (Greece, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Tunisia, Libya, France, Italy and Holland) about their personal and tragic experiences. It is the most comprehensive book on the Holocaust and the Sephardic communities.

Many of the persons interviewed, now between 75 and 90, have miraculously survived after having spent unimaginable episodes in the concentration camps or escaped from the Nazis, hiding with non-Jewish families, or trying to reach the shores of Eretz Israel on illegal ships. Most of them lost all their families. Their stories have been shortened for the book but their full versions are recorded on video.

The team also interviewed historians and experts of the communities studied in the book such as Prof. Dan Segre and Prof. Sergio Della Pergola of Italy, writer Michael Bar Zohar of Bulgaria, Dr Lucien Lazare, Dr Alain Michel and Dr Simcha Epstein of France, Dr Manfred Gerstenfeld, and film maker Willy Lindwer of Holland, and many others.

The book is illustrated with maps and photos taken from the personal albums of the survivors and experts. The next phase is to translate it into French, Spanish and Hebrew along with the production of trigger films for educational purposes.

The Claims Conference generously supported the research and the production of The Shoa in Sephardic Communities and we now hope they will support this second stage. The *Fondation de la Memoire de la Shoa* in France is also considering participating in the translation into French and the production of the educational trigger films. Other sources of financing are still needed for this unique project.

All Sephardic communities and individuals are invited to acquire the book and organize lectures and seminars on the subject. The SEC branches have already organized numerous lectures and interactive seminars on the in Los Angeles, New York and Jerusalem.

The book is available for \$25; contact our Los Angeles office at (310) 441-9361 or [losangeles@secjerusalem.org](mailto:losangeles@secjerusalem.org).

Many Pirates  
were actually  
Ladino-Speaking  
Sephardic Jews  
seeking revenge for  
the Inquisition.  
One such  
"Secret Jewish Pirate"  
was the famous  
Jean Lefitte



# THE SEC JERUSALEM CAMPUS



## THE SEPHARDIC EDUCATIONAL CENTER (SEC) IN JERUSALEM WAS CREATED WITH THREE PRIMARY OBJECTIVES IN MIND:

**1) To educate the youth** of today so that Judaism will have continuity tomorrow; **2) Unite and organize** the Sephardim of the Diaspora so to ensure the survival of our unique heritage and culture among the greater Jewish population in the Diaspora. In doing so, we are helping to maintain the customs and ways of a significant segment of world Jewry. **3) To strengthen Israel** through programming and events at our center. The SEC owns three historic buildings in the

very heart of the most holy one square kilometer of Judaism; it is only meters away from the Kotel. The facility has excellent sleeping, eating and studying amenities. The center accepts Jews of all ages and backgrounds for its educational programs. Programs exist for people speaking many different languages. Make Sephardic history and demonstrate your pride by supporting the only world Sephardic educational and cultural center. Contact us at our executive offices in Los Angeles at (310) 441-9361 or at our Jerusalem Center at 972 2-628-2344. You may also visit us on the Internet at [www.secjerusalem.org](http://www.secjerusalem.org).

## Visiting Israel? Drop by the SEC Center in the Old City of Jerusalem

The SEC is your home away from home, a place where you can have tours organized, activities planned and participate in educational programs. In addition, there is no better place to plan your child's bar/bat mitzvah or other celebration. We are just steps from the Western Wall. Let us know you are coming by emailing **Rabbi Benarroch** before your arrival.

[rabbi@secjerusalem.org](mailto:rabbi@secjerusalem.org)

### The Loss of a Sephardic Leader

As we went to press we learned of the passing of a dear friend of the SEC Family and a great Sephardic leader, Leon Levy of New York, past president of the American Sephardic Federation. We will miss him greatly.



## THANK YOU SAMI ROHR!

Mr. Sami Rohr of Bal Harbour, Florida, recently dedicated the SEC dining room, now known as the Rohr Dining Room. The SEC is grateful for this important gift and encourages you to act now to dedicate space at our Jerusalem campus in honor or memory of loved ones. Contact us for more details at [info@secjerusalem.org](mailto:info@secjerusalem.org) or call (310) 441-9361.



# SEC HOSTING

Evacuees from  
Northern Israel



How do you say  
Happy New Year  
in Ladino?

Visit our New Website at  
[www.secjerusalem.org](http://www.secjerusalem.org)

Answer: Anyada Buena



# An Open Letter **TO OUR SEC FAMILY**

I am turning to all of you in the aftermath of one of the most difficult periods in Israel's history. For over one month the northern part of our country was under a daily barrage of Katyusha missiles. In that time over 1000 missiles exploded in the city of Kiryat Shemona alone. In Israel we faced not only a security problem but a humanitarian crisis as well.

In spite of the war and its complexities Jews in Israel and the Diaspora mobilized in a most exemplary fashion. Residents all over Israel opened their homes and hearts to help their brothers and sisters from the north. Diaspora Jewry mobilized showing that no matter where Jews live we are one People and Israel is the heart of all world Jewry.

During this difficult period world Jewry lived up to the words of our Rabbis who explain that "all of the Jewish People are connected one to another". In that Rabbinic dictum they continue by comparing the Jewish nation to a ship in which one of the cabins is destroyed. Our Rabbis comment, "No one would say one cabin in the ship was destroyed but rather they would say the entire ship was damaged". Indeed the words of our Rabbis were felt this past summer. While homes were destroyed in Israel, world Jewry understood that the homes of all Jews were being destroyed.

Here at the Sephardic Educational Center we opened our doors to the residents of the north. We hosted a week long summer camp for 90 children from northern communities. During the war we hosted dozens of families and residents from the north free of charge. We provided them with housing, food, and activities to free them of the tensions that became a routine part of their lives. We will continue to help as long as the situation requires. During the coming year we are planning to offer dozens of schools in the North three-day trips to Jerusalem where they will be hosted in our center with full room and board and educational activities.

In order for us to continue our work we need your support. Your donations will help us to directly assist families from the north. The war may be over but by no means has life returned to normal. The trauma is still fresh and the economic damage to the residents of the north will be felt for a long time to come. I ask you to open your hearts and donate kindly to the SEC so that we can continue to do our important work. .

The SEC is grateful to all our members who so generously responded in Israel's crisis, and we wish to pay special honor to those who came forward immediately without being asked to assist us in this crisis: Martin Elias Family (NY), Moise and Carol Ann Emquies Family (LA) and the Crosby Family Foundation (LA).

Tax-deductible donations can still be made to the "Sephardic Educational Center". Please earmark donation to "Israel Relief Fund" and mail to our office in Los Angeles at 10808 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, Ca. 90025 or call (310) 441-9361.

With greatest appreciation on behalf of the citizens of Israel,  
Rabbi Yosef Benarroch  
SEC Jerusalem



## WHAT'S IN A NUMBER?

By Neil J. Sheff

# THE EDITOR

The SEC is 26 years old. 26 years since this unique organization was founded; the vision of a unique man, Dr. Jose Nessim, to unite, revive and insure the survival of Sephardim living in the Diaspora who he saw as a link to a glorious past, yet lacking the institutional apparatus to inject their Jewish philosophy and cultural contribution to the greater Jewish world. This ageless tradition was part of Jewish life throughout the Mediterranean and Middle East and followed a "golden path" of moderation, preserving a pure Jewish religious heritage, always coexisting in the world in which they lived without extremist leanings or the need to reform or change their communal observance and practice. In each person's home, how you practiced your faith was between you and G-d. In the synagogue, we adhered to a unifying custom that was joyful and non-judgmental.

In these past 26 years, we who have become a part of Dr. Nessim's vision have tried to strengthen our Sephardic-Jewish identity; not to separate ourselves from other Jews, but to stand side by side and make our contribution to a richer Jewish experience. Many of my friends around the world have caught onto this identity and today the SEC cannot keep track of the thousands who are proud Jews and proud Sephardim today who might have otherwise left their tradition and faith were it not for the vision 26 years ago of a man some thought naïve to think an international Sephardic-created organization could last and make a difference in the Jewish world.

The number 26 has great meaning in Judaism, as do many numbers. But this number is special in that it represents the name of G-d (the Tetragrammaton). The letters "Yod" (10), "Heh" (5), "Vav" (6), "Heh" (5), (YHWH) are the letters we read as Ad-nay, but carry such power that we don't even pronounce them as written. Their value of

26 therefore has special spiritual meaning and strength. The number 26 carries the strength of G-d.

We hope that this special year 26 in the life of the SEC will help us bring more young people closer to G-d and the blessings of G-d upon the SEC to help spread our message of unity, tolerance and commitment to the Jewish world. We hope that you, our fellow Jews, especially those of Sephardic background or those who appreciate the potential contribution to Jewish life that a strong Sephardic movement can make, will join our mission, send their children to our programs in local chapters and in Israel, and volunteer in any way possible.

Here in Los Angeles, we are planning for our 8th Sephardic Jewish Film Festival, which supports the programs of the SEC and, at the same time, brings our stories to the big screen. For 8 such festivals I have been lucky to co-chair the event with one of our most dedicated volunteers, Sarita Fields, and I am so honored to congratulate her on receiving this year's SEC Maimonides Lifetime Achievement Award for all her efforts on behalf of our youth. She is an example to everyone who thinks they're too busy to get involved. Sarita is the one that can get things done and has an amazing track record to prove it. Congratulations, Sarita. Mashalla!

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[www.secjerusalem.org/contact.html](http://www.secjerusalem.org/contact.html)**



A CENTER  
FOR ALL JEWS

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*SEC...making a difference  
in the Jewish world*