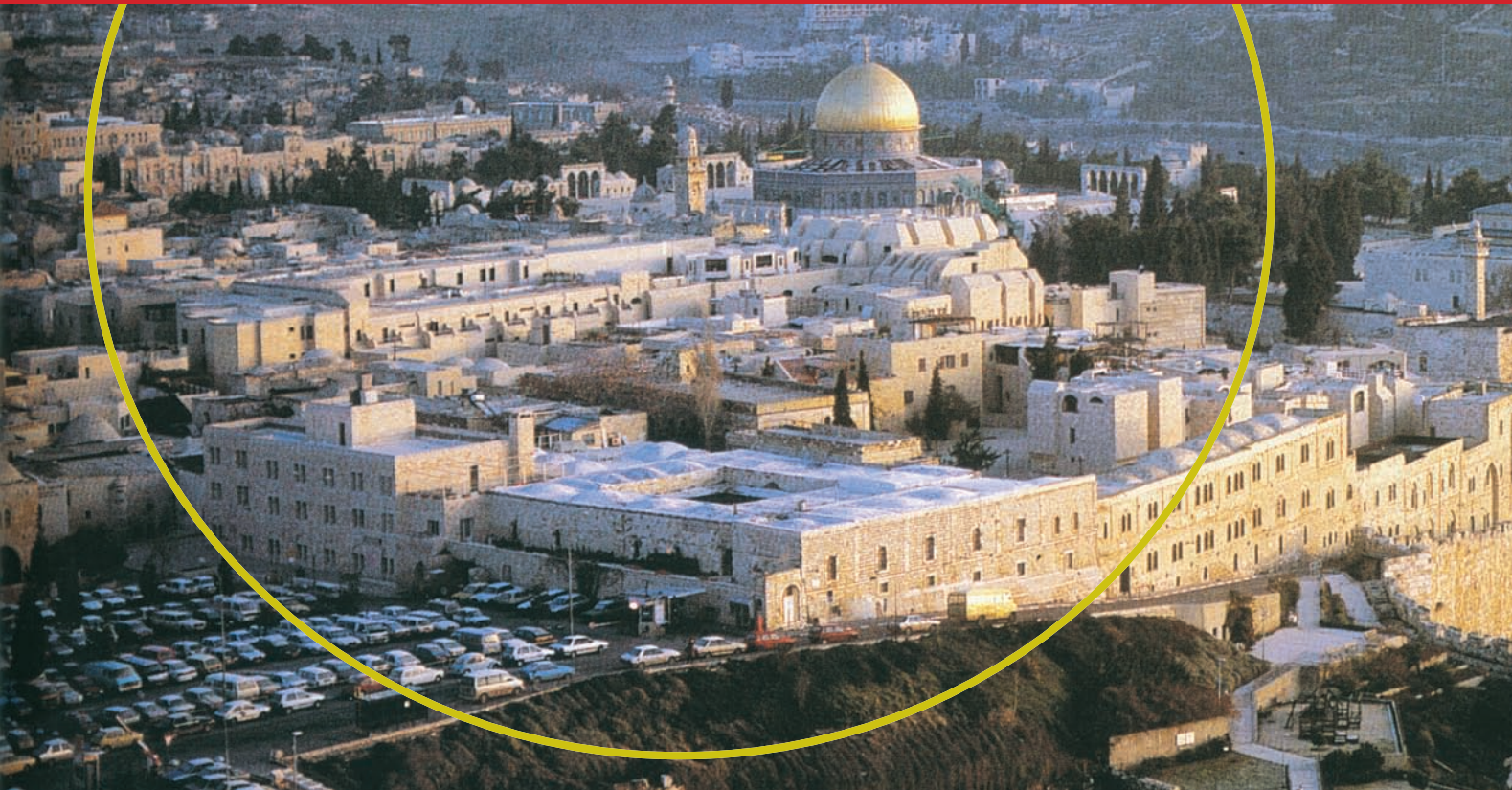


Fall 2011 Edition  
Happy New Year 5772

# HAMERKAZ

A PUBLICATION OF THE SEPHARDIC EDUCATIONAL CENTER





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# From the Chairman

Ronald J. Nessim

Shanah Tova and Tizku l'Shanim Rabot. It is an appropriate time of the year to reflect on the exciting state of affairs of the SEC.

The greatest strengths of the SEC include our traditional/modern philosophy of Classical Sephardic Judaism, our beautiful campus in the heart of the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, and our dedicated professional and lay leadership that carry out our programs and mission.

Rabbi Daniel Bouskila, who was with us on a part time basis last year, is now with us full time as our "Director" and senior professional. He brings a lot of passion, energy, vision and intellect to the SEC and we look forward to a long association with him.

Just as we have been building up our professional staff, it is clear that we now need to build up our lay leadership and volunteers. We have been operating over the past four years with an effective, highly dedicated, but small Executive Committee. As our programming expands, so, too, does our need to expand our board. We will soon send out invitations for a larger Advisory Board, and will also create committees in various areas. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact our office here in Los Angeles. We are proud to be housed in the beautiful Jewish Federation building, making it a professional and pleasant place to hold board meetings, as well as for you to come in and volunteer.

Our number one programmatic priority is the launch of our new gap year program in Israel – Makor - for post-High School students. Scheduled to open in September 2012, Makor is a Zionist, co-ed program based on our SEC campus in the Old City of Jerusalem, that creatively combines traditional Beit Midrash text learning with Jewish thought, contemporary Jewish issues, serious social action, meaningful leadership training, and a variety of Israeli experiences that foster deep bonds with the people, culture and land of Israel. Rabbi Bouskila spent this past summer in Israel planning the entire program, including hiring a dynamic, young educator -- Rabbi Avraham Weitz -- to head the program in Israel. Makor will be a Klal Yisrael program open to Jews of all backgrounds – Sephardi and Ashkenazi – bringing them together for a year of unique experiences based at our SEC campus, and throughout Israel. Rabbis Bouskila and Weitz will begin a national recruiting trip for Makor's Fall 2012 class right after Sukkot.

In July 2010, we had a highly successful Sephardic Summer Institute in Israel that focused on the Classical Sephardic philosophy, which has so much to offer to the greater Jewish world. This coming winter we will be hosting a Shabbaton Institute featuring Professor Zvi Zohar from Bar Ilan University in Israel, one of the leading scholars in the Classical Sephardi model.

Under Rabbi Bouskila's leadership, we are also beginning "Keshet" (Connection) -- a High School age group that will feature educational and social programming. Our Young Professionals group, chaired by Denah Angel and Eliana Rome, continues to host a wide variety of spiritual, intellectual and social programs that help create strong bonds between our young people. We had a successful Shavuot program in Palm Springs for young families (planned by Neil and Rachel Sheff), and our young families group will be planning many more exciting and meaningful programs this year. If you are interested in any of these programs, please contact Sharon in our Los Angeles office.

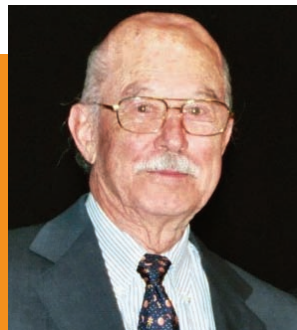
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## SEC MISSION

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.

## MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER



Dear Friends,

Many years ago when the SEC was founded I developed a logo. The stylized hand, which I view as the hand of G-d, was extended to his children in blessing. Consisting of five columns representing the five books of Moses, the center column represents the centrality of the Torah, flanked by the branches representing the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects of man. Each works independently, but in concert with the others to achieve the proper balance in life so well defined by the Sephardic model.

Freda joins me in thanking our hard working and dedicated board, wishing them and all of you Shana Tova-Tizku Le'shanim Rabot.

Dr. Jose A. Nessim

*(continued from page 2)*

We continue to have exploratory talks with Memizrach Shemesh, Israel's leading Sephardic center for Jewish-social leadership, to establish a rabbinical school that will train rabbis in the Classical Sephardic tradition.

In Jerusalem, we are about to begin an extensive remodel of our Courtyard building, one of the three buildings that make up our beautiful and historic Jerusalem campus. The remodel will allow us to better house the Makor program, and will include a new library/Beit Midrash, new classrooms, and new updated dormitory rooms. We are also building new, hotel-quality suites for our guests who wish to spend Shabbat or holidays at the SEC. I thank the many major donors whose generosity has helped make this project a reality.

When in Israel, please consider the SEC your home. If you have a special event in Israel, there is no better place to host it than our beautiful dining rooms, meeting rooms and hotel quality rooms in the heart of the Jewish Quarter. Spend Shabbat just a few minutes from the Kotel, and enjoy our beautiful accommodations and delicious cuisine. If you are interested, please contact our LA office, and they will put you in touch with Israel Shalem, the Director of our Jerusalem Campus.

I would like to thank my parents, Dr. Jose and Freda Nessim, for their vision in having created the SEC, and for their continued devotion, hard work and advice. I also thank our dedicated Executive Committee members for all of their hard work, all of our generous donors for their philanthropy, and our professional staff in Los Angeles and in Israel. It is a pleasure and honor being associated with all of you.

I wish everyone a wonderful New Year, and may this year bring much blessing to the SEC and its rich array of programs.

*Ron Nessim  
Board Chair*

# Remodeling to begin on Historic “Courtyard” Building of the SEC Campus

By Sarita Hasson Fields,  
Exec. Board Member



I traveled to Jerusalem this past summer with Freda and “Doc” for a week to review our plan to renovate our SEC Campus. We were joined by Board Member Ray Mallel, Rabbi Bouskila, and Israel Shalem, SEC-Jerusalem Manager as we met with the architect to finalize the plans.

The “Spanish Courtyard” building, which is one of the last buildings of the Jewish Quarter to have a traditional Spanish Courtyard, is our oldest building. The rooms surrounding the courtyard are being remodeled as classrooms and multi-purpose rooms. We will be remodeling

the entire second floor of guest rooms and each room will have its own private bath. We are also creating a multi-purpose lounge on the upper courtyard level.

One of the most significant changes we are making is changing the main “entrance” to our Center. The entrance is going to be far more visible and visitors will enter directly into our lobby/registration area. These renovations will enhance the accommodations for our Makor Program, which is scheduled to commence in September 2012.



There was a lot to learn about these three historical buildings. Ray Mallel, with his vast knowledge of what has transpired during the history of the SEC, was able to share the vision for developing our campus. Along with Ray, Israel Shalem was involved in overseeing our previous remodel of the middle “Dorm Building” and will now be in charge of this grand undertaking.

We were a great team! Rabbi Bouskila’s knowledge of teaching and traveling with students, Israel Shalem’s savvy dealing on construction matters, Ray Mallel’s continued involvement with our building renovation plans, and most of all, Doc and Freda, our founders, with their hands-on experience and knowledge from the days of renting the buildings, to the purchase of the buildings, and now, this enormous and exciting transformation.

A Building Campaign fundraising project is underway, with many naming opportunities. You will be hearing more about this project in the near future. For more information, contact Rabbi Bouskila at our SEC office in Los Angeles.

On a personal note, I must say, it was an extraordinary experience for me to be traveling with Doc and Freda, staying at the Center and experiencing Jerusalem from the inside. The cafes, the restaurants, the Mamilla Mall, the Western Wall, the bookstore, the Shuk, all within walking distance from our Center. We all stayed at the Center, experienced a magical Shabbat with friends and family, dined outside in the Old City and just had a fun and productive trip.

Next year we will once again visit Jerusalem, “si quiere el dio”(G-d willing)...







WE ARE PLEASED AND EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE THE OPENING OF

# MAKOR תיפוד

Your year in Israel... Straight from the source

## The Unique Makor Experience

Makor's curriculum and philosophy is comprised of five core elements that form the ongoing program throughout the year:

- Beit Midrash (Study of Classic Jewish Texts)
- Machshava U'Ma'aseh (Jewish Thought & Contemporary Issues)
- Manhigut v'Arvut Chevratit (Leadership & Social Action)
- Tarbut Yisrael (Israeli Culture)
- Yediat Ha'aretz (Experiencing Israel)

## Program features:

- Beautiful on-campus housing at the SEC in Jerusalem
- All meals (delicious, hotel quality cuisine)
- Daily Tefillah, featuring pre-Tefillah reflections & spiritually uplifting tunes
- Daily Beit Midrash/ Chavrutah Learning & Shiur
- Choice of Tanach (Bible), Gemara (Talmud) or Mechina (Entry Level) Tracks for Beit Midrash/Shiur
- Daily Hebrew Language through Israeli News Websites
- Afternoon Workshops in Jewish Thought (G-d, Prayer, Personal Growth, Ethics)
- Afternoon Workshops in Contemporary Issues (Who Is A Jew?, Religious-Secular Relations, Anti-Semitism, Anti-Israel Bias, Arab-Israeli Conflict, Israel's Economic & Social Challenges)
- Weekly Leadership Training Seminars
- Weekly Full Day of Social Action/Volunteering
- Weekly Israeli Culture night (film, music, the arts)
- Weekly Mifgash (Encounter) with Israeli peers
- Weekly Sports & Fitness
- Bi-weekly outings & excursions
- Monthly Makor on-campus Shabbat in Old City of Jerusalem
- Monthly Makor off-campus Shabbat in various communities around Israel
- Two Free Shabbatot per month (family hospitality available)
- Full observance & celebration of Yom Ha-Shoah, Yom Ha-Zikaron Yom Ha'atzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim
- One Week Travel in Northern Israel
- One Week Travel in Southern Israel
- One Week of Gadna (pre-army experience)

## Our Sec Jerusalem Campus

Makor is based at the SEC's very own campus at the epicenter of the Jewish world – the Old City of Jerusalem. Our beautiful facility features spacious, up-to-date dormitory rooms, a fully-staffed kitchen and dining hall serving three delicious meals a day, a Beit Midrash and library, classrooms, lecture halls, a student activity lounge and laundry facilities.

Just a few minutes from Judaism's holiest site – the Kotel – our campus is also in the heart of the Jewish Quarter's many restaurants, stores, banks and synagogues, making it a very convenient place to live. When it's time to "go out," our campus is a mere ten-minute walk from Jerusalem's modern Mamilla pedestrian mall, where students can enjoy the many cafes, bookstores and specialty shops.

After initial renovations a few years ago, the SEC is currently remodeling and updating our facilities, and Makor's students will have the privilege of studying and living in a fully modern campus housed in an inspirational, historic setting.

## A New One-Year Program in Israel for Post-High School Students.

Scheduled to open in September 2012, Makor is a Zionist, co-ed program in the Old City of Jerusalem that creatively combines traditional Beit Midrash text learning with Jewish thought, contemporary Jewish issues, serious social action, meaningful leadership training, and a variety of Israeli experiences that foster deep bonds with the people, culture and land of Israel.

Makor is uniquely modeled after the new, cutting-edge Israeli programs – the "*mechinot*" – where many high caliber Israeli students spend a year before their army service immersed in Jewish studies, personal exploration, social awareness and community service.

As such, Makor is more than just a "gap year program"; it's a year-long journey that students experience together, challenging them to grow and mature as individuals, and as a group.

Geared to highly motivated young men and women from a traditional Jewish background, Makor's study program is centered on classic Jewish texts, and distinguishes itself in promoting an open-minded intellectual and spiritual atmosphere, where questions are encouraged, and where young men and women have equal access to traditional learning.

## Makor's goals are:

- To create a love of learning classic Jewish texts, an open inquiry into Jewish thought, and a lifelong relationship with Jewish studies
- To develop a strong Jewish identity, and a positive feeling about living a religious/spiritual Jewish lifestyle
- To build knowledge and awareness of contemporary Jewish issues, develop leadership skills, and empower young people to take leadership positions on their college campuses and in their communities
- To inspire students towards a lifelong commitment to social action and responsibility for the Jewish people
- To develop a knowledge and love of Zionism, the Land of Israel, the State of Israel and Israeli Society and Culture, and to encourage students to take leadership roles as advocates for Israel

We invite students who seek a year in Israel rich in traditional learning, and enriched by a diversity of experiences, challenges and opportunities of a lifetime.

For more information, e-mail us at [sec@makorjerusalem.org](mailto:sec@makorjerusalem.org), or call the SEC office at (323) 272-4574  
Stay tuned as we soon go live on the web at [www.makorjerusalem.org](http://www.makorjerusalem.org)



## Rabbi Avraham Weitz

### Makor Head of Program

"Engagement in Israel, with the land and with the people, in all its complexity, beauty, and yes, also rough edges; Israel, in all its colors, enables me to most genuinely explore and discover who

I am and what my purpose is here."

Rabbi Weitz traces his passion for Israel and love of Jewish education back to his first time in Israel, while spending his junior year abroad in Jerusalem. A year which was darkened by incessant bus bombings and the assassination of the Israeli Prime Minister, it was a year that would profoundly impact him and set him out on a journey to discover his connection to Judaism and Eretz Yisrael. He began his career at the Jewish Federations of North America. During that time, he visited tens of college campuses, engaging and inspiring hundreds of Jewish students, connecting them to Israel and their heritage.

Rabbi Weitz' eclectic experience in formal and informal Jewish education has enabled him to teach and learn from high school and university students, young professionals, and Jews who survived the Holocaust and fought in Israel's War of Independence. Most recently, he served as the campus rabbi and education director for an Israel gap year program. Emphasizing the importance of personal authenticity – being true to one's self – his goal is a Judaism and Zionism that are alive and relevant.

Avraham received his Rabbinic Ordination at Yeshivat HaMivtar in Efrat, from Rav Yehoshua Reich and Rav Zalman Nechemiah Goldberg. He holds a BA degree from Miami University (OH) in political science and is finishing a Masters and professional training in psychotherapy, with a focus on family counseling. He currently serves in the Golani Brigade as a reservist.

Rabbi Weitz will be visiting the U.S. schools, synagogues and communities on a recruitment tour after Sukkot.



*Dr. Zvi Zohar teaches texts on the Sephardic approach to conversion*



*Jonah Mandel, Jerusalem Post Religious Affairs Correspondent*



*Zvi Zohar, Naty Saidoff, Rabbi Brown, Rabbi Amsellem, Rabbi Bouskila, Honey Kessler Amado, Debbie Saidoff, Myra Clark-Siegel (from Project Interchange; wife of incoming Israeli Consul General in LA, David Siegel)*

## SEC Jerusalem Presents Seminar on Conversion featuring Knesset Member R. Haim Amsellem

In keeping with the SEC's mission of teaching and spreading "Classic Sephardic Judaism" to the larger Jewish world, the SEC held a one day seminar at our Jerusalem campus in the Old City this past summer. Titled "Classic Sephardic Judaism Confronts Modern Day Issues," the seminar focused on the Sephardic halakhic approach to the on-going conversion crisis in Israel and the Jewish world, and featured Sephardic Studies scholar Dr. Zvi Zohar, Member of Knesset and author of recent conversion study, Rabbi Haim Amsellem and Jerusalem Post Religious Affairs Correspondent Jonah Mandel. Organized by SEC Director Rabbi Daniel Bouskila, the seminar was born out of a series of classes Rabbi Bouskila taught in Los Angeles to leaders and activists from the American Jewish Committee.

The lead scholar for the day was Dr. Zvi Zohar, a professor at Bar Ilan University, and a Senior Fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem. Recognized as an international expert and authority on Sephardic Rabbinical Responsa from the 19th and 20th century, Dr. Zohar's fascinating session took the participants through various Sephardic rabbinical texts from the modern period, that all reflect a serious halakhic approach that is much more moderate than the current hard line approach taken by many establishment rabbis.

The participants were then treated to a special lunch, featuring the tasty Sephardic cuisine of the SEC, and the wisdom and courageous remarks of Member of Knesset Rabbi Haim Amsellem (who also participated in last year's SEC Institute). Rabbi Amsellem spoke with passion about his unique halakhic positions on conversion, which are articulated in his ground breaking monumental book titled "Zera Yisrael." In this book, Rabbi Amsellem outlines a detailed halakhic process for conversion that would help solve

the conversion crisis in today's Jewish world. Based on over 200 Sephardic and Ashkenazi rabbinical responsa, "Zera Yisrael" -- if accepted -- would make serious strides in addressing the "Who Is A Jew" problem in the Jewish world. Rabbi Amsellem also spoke about his belief that Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox) members of Israeli society must participate in Israeli society by serving in the IDF or doing National Service, and joining the work force.

Rabbi Amsellem's talk was followed by an outstanding overview and analysis of "Sephardim in Israeli Politics," by Jerusalem Post Religious Affairs Correspondent Jonah Mandel.

The seminar was wrapped up by SEC Director Rabbi Daniel Bouskila, who explained the SEC's plans for making "Classic Sephardic Judaism" a major voice in the Jewish world.

The one day seminar packed in a lot, much like the SEC is packing in a lot. We have big plans at the SEC, plans that will help transform the Jewish world, bringing a much needed voice of "tradition, modernity and moderation" into the Jewish world. In the words of the SEC's founder, Dr. Jose Nessim, the SEC is "A Center for All Jews," and our programs are being designed to reach out to Jews of all backgrounds who find the SEC's type of Judaism appealing. We are proud to have welcomed the AJC's leaders for the day, and we thank Rabbi Randy Brown for arranging to bring his lay leaders to the SEC. We also thank Israel Shalem, our SEC General Manager in Jerusalem, and the entire SEC Jerusalem staff, for helping to make the day so smooth, efficient and pleasant.

We encourage you to support the SEC, for doing so will help make the Jewish world a better place -- for all Jews. To support our many initiatives, please consider your donation to the SEC Today. We need your support.



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# 2010 Los Angeles Sephardic Jewish Film Festival

*A Night to Remember*



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5



(1) Actress Emanuele Chriqui & French actor and star of Opening Night Film, *Coco*, Gad Elmaleh • (2) Producer Michael Benaroya • (3) Master of Ceremonies, Award Winning Movie, T.V. and Stage Actor, Alfred Molina • (4) Presentation by Col. Shlomo Musali of I.D.F. to the Nessim's as sons Ron and Steve look on • (5) Ron Nessim presents a beautiful Jerusalem Mezuza and the establishment of the Nessim Scholarship Fund to Dr. Jose and Freda Nessim

**Mark Your Calendars: 11th Los Angeles Sephardic Jewish Film Festival, November 11, 2012**





(1) Rabbi Daniel Bouskila, Israel Consul General Jacob Dayan, Actor and M.C. for the Evening, Alfred Molina • (2) Rebekah Sheff (l) and Joelle Nessim: Future SEC Stars • (3) Co-Chairs, Sarita Hasson Fields and Neil Sheff • (4) Aaron and Nancy Cohen • (5) Winners of the Raffle Trip to Israel! Lela and Harley Franco of Seattle with proud SEC mom Sarina Sabin (6) SEC Girls' Night Out • (7) (l-r) Jeannine Sefton, Clement Cohen, Esther Cohen, Dr. Nessim, Herb Nadel • (8) Co-Chair Sarita Fields with SEC Young Professionals Chairs Elianna Rome and Denah Angel • (9) "Stars Walk the Red Carpet" • (10) Rabbi and Mrs. Jay Levy; Asher Levy • (11) Shira Bouskila sings Hatikva • (12) Bob Cohen (l) and Morrie Angel • (13) (l-r) Yosi and Esther Avrahamy; Sharon and Alan Gomperts • (14) (l-r) Ruby and Joe Samuels; Florence Shamash • (15) Proud grandparents of honoree, Jack and Becky Benaroya (Seattle) flanked by Esther and Clement Cohen • (16) Cinema Sepharad Award Recipient Michael Benaroya (r) with Family from Seattle • (17) (l-r) Ronnie Goury, Vivian Mahlab Kron, Molly Jalali, Patrick and Gloria Chriqui • (18) Student Film Competition Winner- Noah Mintz' film & Competition Sponsors-Diana and Edward Sabin



## SEC Young Families

SEC Families from Los Angeles shared an inspiring, fun and first class Shavuot Retreat at the Westin Mission Hills Resort in Palm Springs. Classes were led by Rabbi Daniel Bouskila, SEC Director while kids ran, played, danced, swam, and had a super time together. There was a midnight cheesecake carnival and a delicious moonlight dinner complete with smores for the kids!



## SEC Young Professionals Group

SEC Young Professional Group provides lively and exciting venues for discussing the latest issues confronting young Jewish adults, ages 23 to 35. Check our Facebook Page for upcoming events, lectures and parties. Email us for more info:

**Elianna Rome-** [erome123@gmail.com](mailto:erome123@gmail.com)

**Denah Angel-** [denahangel@gmail.com](mailto:denahangel@gmail.com)





# Miracles Come Cloaked in Mystery They Happen Every Day

Story by Jack Israel

Every day of our lives, miracles do happen; most of the time we are not even aware of them. By coincidence or accident or maybe G-d's hand, events occur that change the course of our lives. We may not know why or even, at the time, recognize their happening; we only know that, as we reflect, we are happy because it turned out so well.

Such was the case as related to me by Nir and Tere Weinblut, an "SEC Couple" who met in 1992 at a celebration in LA marking the Bar Mitzva celebration of the SEC. Tere was an SEC-Jerusalem alumna who came to LA to visit her SEC friends and just to have a nice time. According to her, "little did I know that that magical trip would change our lives forever."

Nir is the product of mixed-marriage: an Ashkenazic father and a Turkish Sephardic mother. He thanks G-d that his mother's side found a way to cook itself into his Ashkenazic heart and food has always been an important interest for him; he is the owner and master chef (with his mother, Nitza) of La Gondola Restaurant, a classy kosher restaurant and catering service on Wilshire Boulevard in Beverly Hills only minutes away from then SEC offices in the Jewish Federation building.

A happily married husband of eighteen years with four beautiful children, he confesses, without reservation, that he owes it all to the SEC. He did not plan it that way; getting married then was far away in his future plans. It took little time before his friends from the SEC zeroed in on this prospective member, inviting Nir to join them for an upcoming Shabbaton weekend celebrating the Bar Mitzvah year of the SEC. After countless excuses, he agreed and there he met Tere Salame, a young girl who was active in the Mexico City Chapter of the SEC. After ignoring her most of the weekend, he said "the bomb hit me when we went to the Sunday night banquet at the Century Plaza Hotel and I saw how beautiful she was...I said that's it".

Tere said, "The first time I noticed Nir, it was on Shabbat morning right after the prayers and when I saw him I just knew I was looking at my future husband." It was love at first sight. But Tere was from Mexico City and that might pose problems.

Long distance calls to Mexico City were frequent and expensive, so Nir decided to get to really know her in person. His trip to Tere's home and his visit with her large and friendly family convinced him that she was, indeed, the one. Nir remembered, "Tere and her brother picked me up, they

took me home and we had a big lunch with everyone, I mean everyone! All the family, aunts, uncles, kids, and all their housekeepers were there. Don't forget, I didn't speak much Spanish at the time (just a few words of my mother's Ladino). I just smiled and smiled for 5 hours; it was so hard to smile so long, I would go to the bathroom to rest my face muscles!"

During a school break, Tere revisited Los Angeles and they were together constantly. "On one rainy night at the restaurant we sat at the bar and it just came up", Nir said. He asked her to marry him. "After about one hour of Tere just laughing she said yes", but informed him that her mother would insist that he must return to her home to ask her parents for her hand. He did!

He still laughs at himself because he had not yet learned that he was supposed to ask for a dowry (according to the Syrian Jewish custom). But, he's not complaining; he got what he went after and more. As he pointed out, "I did get everything. I got the most amazing woman and her incredible family. I could not be any happier." Repeating himself, he continued, "She is the most amazing wife and mother. She is also my best friend."

If it were not for the SEC and its proximity to his restaurant, none of this would have happened. Did some mysterious hand guide him to that location? What could have convinced him to spend that particular weekend with the SEC? Who can know what fate would have had in store for him had he waited for the next SEC event? As it turned out, he has a loving wife of 18 years and four children, all of whom he is very proud. Tere recounted, "We got married August 22, 1993, and we just celebrated our 18th wedding anniversary. We have four wonderful kids: Jacob, Tani, Michelle and Daniel that fill our lives with blessings, smiles and love."

"When they created the SEC," Nir said, "this is exactly what Dr. Nessim and Freda wanted, over and over again, to see happen. And, it has. Thanks to their love and devotion for the SEC, this miracle has happened to me and to many others just like me. And thank G-d, they have been able to see a second generation come to this world. As a bonus, we have made a great bunch of true friends who have always been there for us."

The Weinblut Family



## Torah on Tuesdays

Rabbi Daniel Bouskila gave a series of weekly classes in L.A. during the past spring





## Keshet - High School Group

High School kids need a place to meet, learn about their roots and make good friends. "KESHER"-the new SEC High School group will revive this important group that was once the foundation of the SEC and for those who become active participants, you will be able to join Rabbi Bouskila on a teen mission to the AIPAC conference in Washington, D.C. For more info. or to add the name of your high school teen, contact the SEC office at [info@secjerusalem.org](mailto:info@secjerusalem.org)

## SEC SOUTH AMERICA

### Punta del Este, Uruguay Young Adult Shabbaton:

August 19-22, 2011

There were 80 participants,  
ages 26 to 40 from Argentina and Uruguay.



## Jimena

In 2009, JIMENA: Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa launched its Visual History and Website Program in order to document and preserve the testimonies of Mizrahi and Sephardi Jews displaced from Arab countries in the last 60 years. The program serves as a dynamic and sustainable educational resource, available for public viewing on country-specific websites that focus on Jewish life and exodus from North Africa and the Middle East. Currently JIMENA is seeking to expand the program by developing a Los Angeles Oral History committee that will recruit and collect testimonies there.

Contact for more info.: [sarahlevin@jimena.org](mailto:sarahlevin@jimena.org) (415) 626-5062  
[<http://jimenaexperience.org/iraq/about-jimena/personal-stories/>]





## “BEING A SHOFAR”

MESSAGE FROM  
RABBI DANIEL BOUSKILA,  
SEC DIRECTOR

Imagine what it's like being a Shofar. In one of his most creative and inspirational messages, Rabbi Uziel - Israel's first Sephardic Chief Rabbi – charged the Jewish people with a purpose-driven mission:

“Awaken, you sleepers, from your tragic sleep. Let us come together as one family and gather around the lofty ideas and ideals of Judaism. Let us, with our bodies and souls, be the Shofar that awakens us, and awakens the world.”

In his deeply symbolic and highly motivational words, Rabbi Uziel inspires each and every one of us to begin the New Year by not only hearing the sound of the Shofar, but also listening to its message and internalizing it. If the Shofar truly penetrates our bodies and souls, then, indeed, it becomes a part of us, to the point when our own words, actions and deeds can serve as a Shofar of sorts for our fellow Jews, and for the world at large.

What is the message of the Shofar? Rabbi Uziel's words were actually inspired by Maimonides, who said that the Shofar's message is to wake us up from our apathy, and to take action towards improving ourselves and the societies that we live in.

Do we want to see a better Jewish community? Are we bothered by the quality of Jewish education? Are synagogue services often boring, too

formal, and un-inspirational to our youth? Does our youth's lack of Jewish identity and connection to Israel concern us?

“Being a Shofar” means that you don't sit back and complain about all of this; instead, you sound the clarion call, and through your words and deeds, you inspire others to rally around you in your quest to make a difference.

I am proud to work for the SEC, an organization that has been a Shofar from its very inception. When Dr. Jose and Freda Nessim created the SEC, and established its headquarters in the Old City of Jerusalem, they were – in Rabbi Uziel's words – the “Shofars” of the Sephardic community. Together with others, they led the call to change the face of the Jewish world, by awakening the Sephardic world and bringing to the surface an inspirational Sephardic Judaism that went on to inspire thousands of young Sephardim and Ashkenazim from all over the world.

Today, the SEC continues to be a Shofar, proudly calling upon our young people to join us for a host of unique programs, both here and in our beautiful center in Jerusalem. Like the Shofar, the SEC sounds many different notes – Makor (our new one-year program in Israel), Keshet (our new High School group), Classes for the Masses (our Young Professionals gatherings) and our diverse host of educational, cultural and social activities.

In the spirit of the Shofar, I invite you to join us - your SEC family - in “being a Shofar” and making a difference in the Jewish world.

My warm blessings for health, happiness and prosperity.

Shanah Tovah and Tizku L'Shanim Rabot.

## 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 Jerusa-

lem. 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 develop-

ment 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 (323) 272-4574 or by emailing [info@secjerusalem.org](mailto:info@secjerusalem.org)

All contributions are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law. **Thank you for your generosity!**

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Contact us to order at (323) 272-4574 [info@secjerusalem.org](mailto:info@secjerusalem.org)

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Members of Kahal Joseph Cong. Raised funds to purchase SEC siddurim (prayer books) and humashim (bibles) for the small Jewish community in the Dominican Republic led by Rabbi Yehonatan Elazar.



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We would like to thank our major six figure-plus donors, who have given generously and anonymously...may they be blessed for their invaluable support

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



### From the Editor:

Dear Readers:

As you can see from the articles and photos on the previous pages, the SEC is entering a new and exciting phase of its development. With the vision and leadership of Rabbi Daniel Bouskila, once a counselor at the SEC, we are ready to embark on one of the most ambitious series of programs the SEC has ever engaged in. Our One-Year “Makor” program will be unique among all post high school programs in Israel by being a traditional program, steeped in the philosophy of our Sephardic sages, combining the study of our religious texts, training in leadership skills, participating in Israeli life and helping those less fortunate, all while living in the heart of the Jewish world at the SEC Campus in Jerusalem. High School students and parents alike are saying that there’s nothing like it being offered today. Educators are flocking to participate. Religious leaders and scholars are saying that finally a moderate, traditional program will bridge the gap of extremes that threatens the fiber of Jewish life. Wow! But we will need volunteers to make it a success.

Along with Makor, we are planning to bring back our most successful programs for High School youth in our local communities. Make sure to sign up your kids today so we can reach out to them. Only volunteers can make it happen.

The SEC is made up primarily of volunteers like you and me. Our success of the past 30 years has come from the hard work of volunteers. Our Young Professionals group is led by volunteers as is our Young Families group. Our Board is also made up of a small group of dedicated volunteers and we plan to include all those who hope to make a positive difference in our communities in our Advisory Board this fall. When you share your time and money, there is a certain satisfaction that you will feel and, in the words of our founder, Dr. Nessim, definite blessings from G-d will shine down upon you.

The SEC has done so much with dedicated volunteers and we must always say THANK YOU to all who have been a part of the story to date. Read the story of Nir and Tere Weinblut and realize that there are hundreds of other similar love stories that we know of and that we don’t, whose lives were changed forever by the SEC. When many of us now get together as we did on Shavuot there is such satisfaction to know that our children are now making the bonds that will keep together the next generation of leaders.

So as we enter a new year, and we pray for success, health and peace, let’s also make the commitment to volunteer to do something this year to create or support an SEC program and share the blessings we have received from our parents and grandparents to insure that our amazing heritage will remain alive and relevant to our children and theirs. Look at the example of our founder, Dr. Jose Nessim, to see what one person can do with determination and vision. You, too, can and must make the difference for today and tomorrow. We need you. Happy New Year-Tizku Le’shanim Rabot.

Neil J. Sheff  
Editor