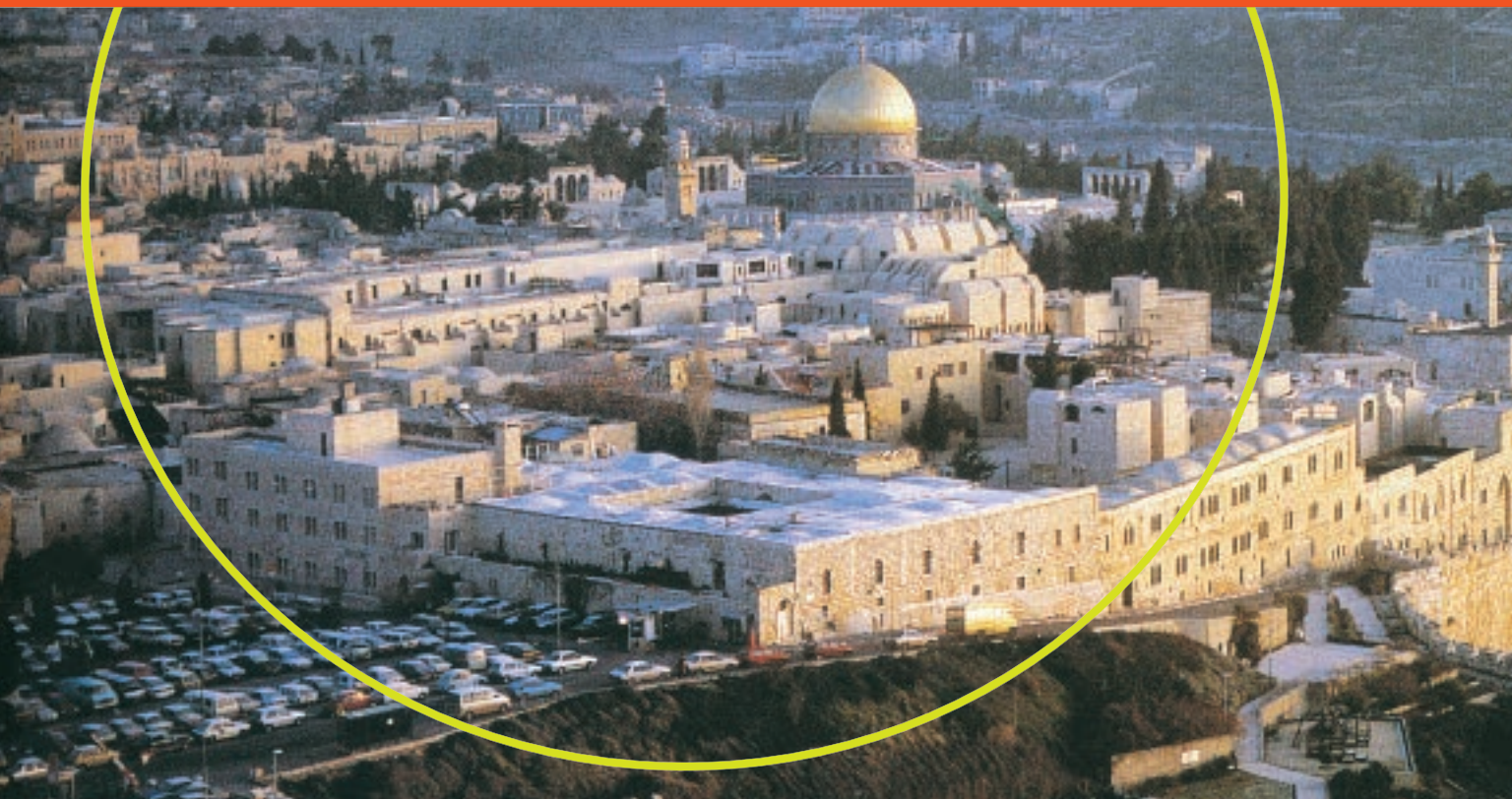


HAMERKAZ

A PUBLICATION OF THE SEPHARDIC EDUCATIONAL CENTER



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SEC MISSION

The SEC is dedicated to strengthening Jewish identity for youth and young adults, and to building a new generation of spiritual and community leaders. From our historic campus in the Old City of Jerusalem to our various diaspora branches, the SEC's philosophy of Classic Sephardic Judaism offers Jews an opportunity to connect with their roots in a warm, friendly and positive environment. At the SEC, tradition meets modernity, and the timeless values of intellect, unity, compassion and tolerance blend to create a meaningful connection to Judaism, Israel and the Jewish people.



MESSAGE FROM THE INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR

RABBI DANIEL BOUSKILA

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

This past June, just a few days before flying to Israel for the summer, I was going through some files and I came across a copy of our SEC Mission Statement. I looked at it carefully, as I was now about to embark on a summer in Israel that would hopefully fulfill the ideas and values expressed in these words. The Hamsa Israel teen group's itinerary was complete, as was the schedule of classes and lectures for the Metivta Rabbinic Seminar. I knew exactly which kids were coming on Hamsa, and which rabbis were coming to study on Metivta. The challenge was to now present our participants – teenagers or rabbis – with programs whose content and spirit matched the SEC's vision of Judaism, as expressed in our Mission Statement. Much like we are encouraged to pray and study Torah with kavanna (focus and concentration), I found myself reading the following words with kavanna:

The SEC is dedicated to strengthening Jewish identity for youth and young adults, and to building a new generation of spiritual and community leaders. From our historic campus in the Old City of Jerusalem to our various diaspora branches, the SEC's philosophy of Classic Sephardic Judaism offers Jews an opportunity to connect with their roots in a warm, friendly and positive environment. At the SEC, tradition meets modernity, and the timeless values of intellect, unity, compassion and tolerance blend to create a meaningful connection to Judaism, Israel and the Jewish people.

Like the Torah, our Mission Statement is the SEC's Torah She-Bikhtav – our written law. It is the document that lays out the core values of our purpose and identity. But the Jewish people have never lived by the book alone. Our Written Torah is brought to life by Torah She'ba'al Peh, our Oral Torah, which is the living expression of all of the laws, values and ideas in the Written Torah. Only when the Torah is lived out do we see its great power and purpose in the world.

Looking back on this beautiful summer, I now understand that our SEC Mission Statement is something much deeper than words on our letterhead. It's about inspiring a new generation of teenagers to love Judaism and Israel. It's about exposing a cadre of Sephardic rabbis to new modes of thinking, and empowering them to take pride in their own Sephardic sages.

As we begin this New Year, I pray that God give us the strength to continue fulfilling our Mission Statement, and may we continue to be blessed with the opportunity to build meaningful Jewish experiences for our young people, our rabbis, and for the community at large.

SUPPORT THE SEC!

HELP BUILD JERUSALEM AND **SECURE** OUR JEWISH FUTURE!

The SEC is a jewel in the heart of Jerusalem. With the near completion of the remodel of our historic Spanish Courtyard building that once housed the historic "Talmud Torah Sefaradi" and "Tiferet Yerushalayim Rabbinical School" (once the most important Sephardic institutions of higher learning in the Old City) and will house our new "Shaarei Uziel" Rabbinical Program this year, guests are marveling at the beautiful deluxe rooms and suites we have with views of the City of David and the hills of Jerusalem. Visitors are saying that there is nowhere like the SEC to spend a Shabbat or celebrate a Bar/Bat Mitzva, just steps from the Kotel. From our Hamsa Teen Participants to our Metivta Program Rabbis from North America, everyone is saying they can't believe the amazing transformation of the Center. Our dining facilities are fantastic, whether in our large dining room or courtyard, and the location is the best you could ask for in the heart of Jerusalem.

Numerous naming, dedication and endowment opportunities are available for you to be a part of during this exciting time in our development. Help us revive and promote the beautiful, inspirational, and tolerant teachings of Classic Sephardic Judaism while providing a first class facility where guests and program participants can stay and study. Support the SEC... help build Jerusalem and SECure our Jewish future.

When the remodel is complete, this building will serve as our main educational wing, with a beautiful new library, a classic Sephardic synagogue, a community social lounge, a Sephardic Exhibit Center, office suites and the already completed guest suites. The building will include all of the modern amenities necessary to run educational programs in the 21st Century, but will retain the warm Mediterranean look and feel of the original historic structure.



SEC CAMPUS



SEC JERUSALEM CAMPUS

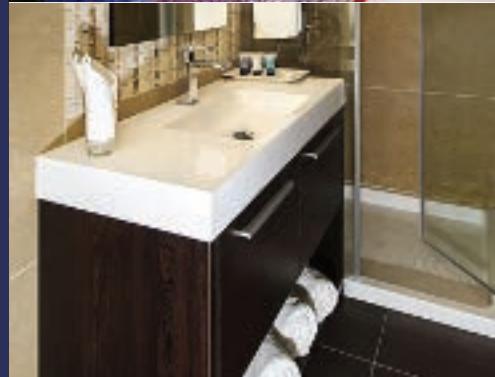
DONOR OPPORTUNITIES & DEDICATIONS

<i>Dormitory Building</i>	<i>\$1,000,000</i>	Available
<i>Courtyard Building</i>	<i>\$1,000,000</i>	Dedicated
<i>Spanish Courtyard</i>	<i>\$600,000</i>	Dedicated
<i>Courtyard Gardens</i>	<i>\$180,000</i>	Available
<i>Sephardic Exhibit Center</i>	<i>\$750,000</i>	Available
<i>Sephardic Library</i>	<i>\$250,000</i>	Dedicated
<i>Sephardic Synagogue</i>	<i>\$360,000</i>	Dedicated
<i>Synagogue Heichal</i>	<i>\$100,000</i>	Dedicated
<i>Community Social Lounge</i>	<i>\$250,000</i>	Available
<i>Multimedia Room</i>	<i>\$250,000</i>	Dedicated
<i>Beit Midrash</i>	<i>\$250,000</i>	Available
<i>Main Reception Lobby</i>	<i>\$180,000</i>	Available
<i>Rishon Le'Zion Historic Lobby</i>	<i>\$180,000</i>	Available
<i>Educator's Offices</i>	<i>\$50,000</i>	Available (2)
<i>Conference Room</i>	<i>\$100,000</i>	Available
<i>New Residence Suites</i>	<i>\$26,000</i>	Available (15)

MEZUZOT

<i>Main Courtyard Mezuzah</i>	<i>\$36,000</i>	Available
<i>Reception Lobby Mezuzah</i>	<i>\$18,000</i>	Available
<i>Residence Room Mezuzot</i>	<i>\$1,800</i>	Available (18)

For more information or to donate contact Rabbi Daniel Bouskila
phone: **323.272.4574** • email: **info@secjerusalem.org**
We will tailor any gift to your wishes.





(l to r): Rabbi Daniel Bouskila, Neil Sheff, honorees: Joelle Rimokh, Yehoram Gaon, Jack Rimokh, Ron Nessim



Ron Nessim and Steve Nessim score big at Silent Auction



Surprise appearance of Israeli co-star of "Kazablan", Efrat Lavie, presents Cinema Sephard Lifetime Achievement Award to Yehoram Gaon



Sephardic Legacy Award recipients, Joelle and Jack Rimokh



(l to r) Rabbi Daniel Bouskila, Gala Chair Rachel Sheff, Neil Sheff, Film Fest Co-founder Sarita Fields



Billboards graced the Los Angeles skyline announcing the Film Fest and Honoree Yehoram Gaon, courtesy of SEC Board Member Isack Fadlon

Opening Gala at **Paramount Studios** Record Sold Out Crowd for Honorees: **Joelle & Jack Rimokh** **Ron Nessim** **Yehoram Gaon**

The 12th LA Sephardic Film Festival, which raises much needed funds for the SEC programs while providing the greater Los Angeles community with a week of films depicting a wide range of Sephardic experiences, was a huge success and the most profitable and attended festival to date. Our honorees, Ron Nessim (Maimonides Leadership Award), Joelle and Jack Rimokh (Sephardic Legacy Award) and Yehoram Gaon (Cinema Sephard Lifetime Achievement Award) were most gracious and inspiring in their acceptance speeches and brought the capacity crowd of over 500 on Opening Night to their feet.

The Gala started off with a beautiful buffet dinner under the stars, silent and live auctions, and a festive mood for all who have come to know what a first class event this always is. In fact, over 100 guests had to be turned away till next time after the Gala sold out. Under the chairmanship of Rachel Sheff and unbelievable committees for Silent Auction, Bake Sale, Tribute Ads, Website, PR and so much more, the Opening Night Gala was elegant and delightful under balmy skies and holiday lit trees as the guests relaxed and mingled.

After a timely and thought provoking film about Israel's Nuclear Program starring Honoree Yehoram Gaon, the festivities concluded with a sumptuous dessert buffet in the gardens. The week of films continued with packed crowds coming to see premieres of films about Sephardic Jews from North Africa, France, Iraq, Rhodes and Bukhara. The closing night film, The Dove Flyer (Mafriach Yonim), the hit Israeli production about the last days of the Iraqi Jewish community, brought lines around the corner. And a post-festival special screening of the film "Gett" was the final crown on this year's event where the honorees were presented with their own special Tribute Books from the Gala.

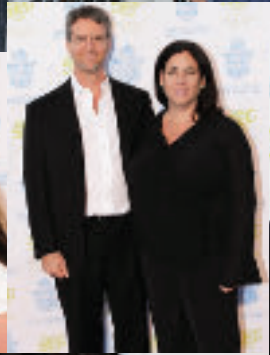
Get ready for our next Sephardic Film Festival coming to L.A. in November 2016. See you at the (Sephardic) Movies!



2014 Los Angeles Sephardic Jewish Film Festival



SEC FILM FESTIVAL







SEC HAMSA TEEN SUMMER

The Ultimate Summer Break Experience!

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE PEOPLE

by: Rabbi Daniel Bouskila

Thanks to some good connections and partnerships we have created, our Hamsa Israel teens are privileged to visit many unique places in Israel. Amongst these unique places are the Air Force Pilots and Navigators graduation ceremony, and an IDF tank base. During these VIP visits that are not open to the general public, our teens get to see and experience many fascinating elements of the Israeli military: F-15 fighter jets, Iron Dome batteries, Apache Helicopters and Merkava Tanks, to name just a few.

But what always impresses our teens more than anything on these visits is the people they meet on the bases – the pilots, the navigators, the tank commanders. To see the pilots fly the planes in dazzling air shows, to hop into a tank and see the commander fire up the engine – that's impressive! When we are introduced to the pilots, our hosts on the Air Force base always say: "We proudly introduce you to Israel's greatest natural resource – people."

I find the above to be a metaphor for the secret behind Hamsa Israel's success. Why was this past summer so successful? Did we have an amazing and unique itinerary? Yes. Were our accommodations at the SEC and throughout Israel comfortable? Absolutely. Did we eat in great restaurants all over Israel? Only the best! But just like our past Hamsa trips, Hamsa's greatest strength was our amazing group of students and our outstanding staff.

I am proud of each and every one of our Hamsa students. You woke up very early every morning for our daily tefillot, you were challenged to climb mountains and hike canyons at a torrid pace, you actively participated in discussion groups about Judaism and Israeli society, you sang and danced with such heart and spirit, observed Shabbat together like a family, and conducted yourselves with respect and dignity wherever we were in Israel. I was proud of you throughout the trip -- you were a dream group!

To our dedicated staff, what can I say? It's a great feeling to have had two SEC Hamsa alumni – Evan Abikzer and Shira Bouskila – as our counselors. Evan's fantastic sense of humor and Shira's talented guitar playing and singing brought so much life and spirit to our group. Each in their own way, they were devoted leaders who cared to give our teens as great an experience as they had when they were Hamsa students. To my wife Peni, the "mother, medic, psychologist, navigator and planner" for our trip, you are simply amazing. Your 24/7 love and devotion throughout this trip was felt by everyone.

Hamsa, like life, is not about the places we visit, but in whose company we do so. Any journey is as good as the people surrounding you. That's why Hamsa was amazing!

READY, SET, HERE WE GO!!!!

Meeting with parents and participants.

LAX Departure



HAMSA ISRAEL TEEN TRIP (ages 15-17)
SUMMER 2016 JUNE 26 – JULY 26

RESERVE YOUR SPACE FOR THE EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME email: info@secjerusalem.org



TESTIMONIALS

Dear SEC,

My name is Shlomit Menashe and this past summer I went on the Hamsa Israel trip. Coming from Seattle, Washington I only knew one other person on the trip and was extremely nervous about going. However, upon meeting the amazing Bouskila family and the awesome kids at the airport, I quickly realized I had nothing to be nervous about at all.

Going to Israel with the SEC was one of the most inspiring and incredible experiences of my life. Throughout my three weeks in Israel I fostered a strong relationship toward Judaism and the State of Israel. The SEC not only provides a basis for strong Sephardic identity, it has helped me in finding my Jewish voice and identity.

Every day I learned more about myself, Judaism and the land of Israel. I can't imagine this summer without the Hamsa Israel trip. Back home in Seattle, I continuously talk about my unforgettable memories from Israel. From swimming in Ein Gedi to praying at the Kotel, I cherished every second of the trip. Thank you so much for helping me have one of the most amazing summers ever.

Thank you so much to Harley and Lela Franco for sponsoring the Seattle SEC Scholarships and giving me the opportunity of a lifetime this summer.

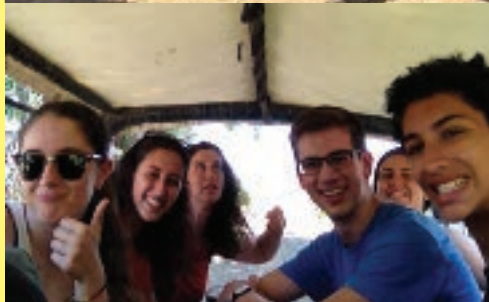
Sincerely,

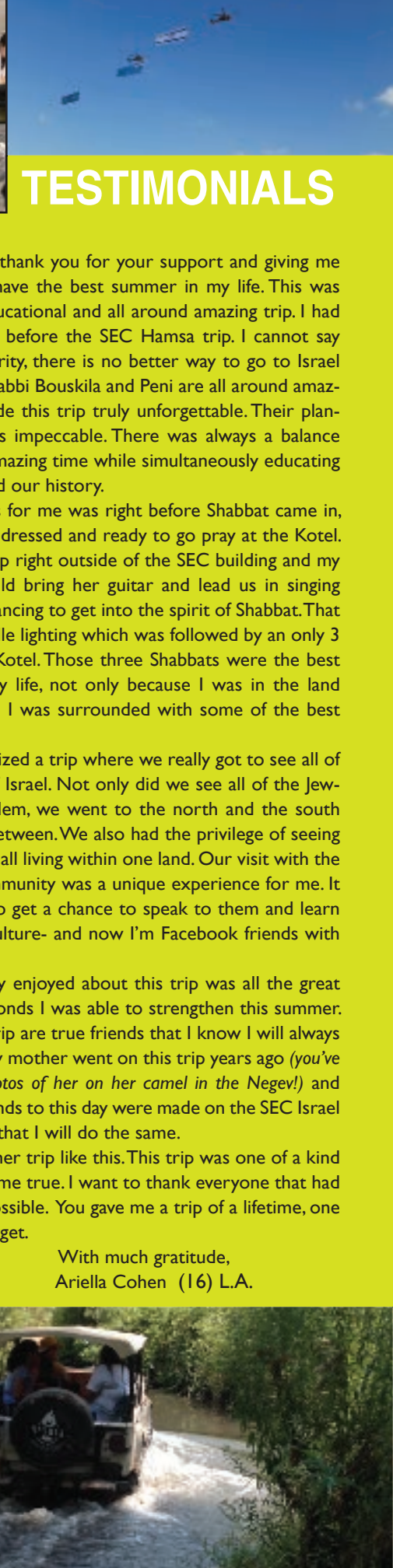
Shlomit Menashe (16) Seattle

Our daughter Shlomit had an unbelievable experience on the SEC Hamsa trip. She came back from the trip with amazing role models in Rabbi and Peni Bouskila and with an enhanced love and appreciation for Judaism and Israel that is hard for us to put into words. We so appreciate the SEC and Rabbi and Peni Bouskila for the opportunity they gave our daughter and we look forward to other chances to connect with the beautiful approach to Judaism and modernity that the Bouskila's and the SEC represent. We really feel Shlomit had one of those experiences that come along very rarely, and we have you, your wife, the SEC and Harley and Lela Franco (scholarship sponsors) to thank for that.

Seattle Parents,

Jacob & Benjamin Menashe





TESTIMONIALS

Dear SEC,

I would like to truly thank you for your support and giving me the opportunity to have the best summer in my life. This was an extremely fun, educational and all around amazing trip. I had never been to Israel before the SEC Hamsa trip. I cannot say this with more sincerity, there is no better way to go to Israel for your first time! Rabbi Bouskila and Peni are all around amazing people! They made this trip truly unforgettable. Their planning for this trip was impeccable. There was always a balance between having an amazing time while simultaneously educating us about our land and our history.

One of the highlights for me was right before Shabbat came in, everybody would be dressed and ready to go pray at the Kotel. We would all meet up right outside of the SEC building and my counselor Shira would bring her guitar and lead us in singing Hebrew songs and dancing to get into the spirit of Shabbat. That was followed by candle lighting which was followed by an only 3 minute walk to the Kotel. Those three Shabbats were the best three Shabbats of my life, not only because I was in the land of Israel but because I was surrounded with some of the best people I know!

Rabbi Bouskila organized a trip where we really got to see all of the different parts of Israel. Not only did we see all of the Jewish quarter in Jerusalem, we went to the north and the south and everywhere in between. We also had the privilege of seeing various communities all living within one land. Our visit with the Jewish Ethiopian community was a unique experience for me. It was so informative to get a chance to speak to them and learn a little about their culture- and now I'm Facebook friends with some of them!

Another thing I really enjoyed about this trip was all the great friends I made and bonds I was able to strengthen this summer. The people on this trip are true friends that I know I will always stay in touch with. My mother went on this trip years ago (*you've probably seen the photos of her on her camel in the Negev!*) and some of her best friends to this day were made on the SEC Israel trip. I have no doubt that I will do the same.

There is really no other trip like this. This trip was one of a kind and truly a dream come true. I want to thank everyone that had a part in making it possible. You gave me a trip of a lifetime, one which I will never forget.

With much gratitude,
Ariella Cohen (16) L.A.





WHY I WANT TO GO TO THE SEC TRIP

by: Miriam Avrahamy

Israel is like a second home to me, although I have only been there a few times. Every time I go to the Holyland, I feel safe and comfortable. People, who have never been to Israel perceive it as a dangerous place full of terrorism since many Arab countries surround it

but to me it is the safest place to be. Every time I go to Israel I have an amazing time with my family, but usually it is a trip to visit the entire family and not tour what the land really has to offer.

My parents met at an SEC event and it changed their lives forever. They have both been involved in the SEC ever since they were young. Now four kids later they are ready to send me, their oldest daughter, on an SEC trip that I know will be a life changing experience.

It would be an amazing opportunity to experience Israel in a different light away from my family. SEC Hamsa Israel program will give me that opportunity. I want to strengthen my relationship with Hashem and I believe that I will be able to do so through this trip. On this trip I want to make new friends and strengthen my relationship with the friends that I already have who are attending this trip. I want this trip to be a learning experience as well as have an amazing summer that I will never forget. I can contribute my positive attitude to the SEC teen Israel trip.

Coincidentally, my mom went on an SEC summer trip similar to this one when she was 16 and goes on and on about how fun it was and how her "Madrich" (counselor) was Rabbi Bouskila, and how cool it is that now 24 years later, it is my turn to experience Israel with the same Madrich that she had.



I went into this trip hoping to create new bonds with new people, and to see Israel in a different way than I had seen it before. This Hamsa trip did exactly that for me. Our small group allowed us to get extremely close and become almost like a family. We saw and experienced so many amazing things, from learning the history of Israel, to having fun through its culture. Staying in the SEC building, right in the center of Jerusalem, was an incredible experience. My favorite part was definitely being walking distance from the Kotel, and spending our Shabbat's there. Overall this trip was an amazing experience for me, I really got to see Israel differently than I had in the past, and I definitely made new friendships that will last forever.

Sarit Ashkenazi (16) L.A.
Photo above: second from left





l to r: Rabbi Abraham Tobal (Mexico), Rabbi Moshe Benzaquen (L.A.), Rabbi Dr. Elie Abadie (N.Y.), Rabbi Benito Garzon (Israel/Spain), Rabbi Haim Amsalem (Israel), Rabbi Ilan Acoca (Vancouver), Rabbi Daniel Bouskila, and Rabbi Moises Chicurel (Mexico)

METIVTA SEPHARDIC RABBINICAL SEMINAR:

For many years, Sephardic rabbis have lacked their own intellectual and spiritual headquarters. They have lacked an institution where they can study the halakhic and philosophical writings of their own sages. They have lacked a forum where they can interact with one another and share the issues and challenges that are unique to their communities. They have lacked a program where they can return to the Beit Midrash for a few weeks during the summer or winter months to recharge their intellectual and spiritual batteries with new knowledge.



This past summer, at the inaugural Metivta Sephardic Rabbinical Seminar, the SEC took major strides in filling all of these voids for the Sephardic world. The Metivta seminar was fully sponsored by the SEC, including accommodations in the SEC's newly remodeled luxury suites, all meals at the SEC, all lectures and workshops in the SEC Beit Midrash, and all trips outside the SEC. Metivta at the SEC gave Sephardic rabbis a "place of their own," where they could study, discuss, debate and dialogue various issues facing the Sephardic world. It gave them a forum where they could express ideas and voice opinions without being treated like second-class citizens. Most importantly, it gave them a chance to return to the Beit Midrash and engage in high-level rabbinic studies, hearing shiurim (lectures) and studying texts with some of Israel's top Sephardic rabbinic figures.

This "by-invitation only" seminar brought together a prestigious group of rabbis from some of the leading Sephardic communities in the world. They included:

Rabbi Elie Abadie – Congregation Edmond J. Safra, New York • Rabbi Ilan Acoca – Sephardic Beth Hamidrash, Vancouver • Rabbi Ron Ami-Meyers, Ezra Bessaro, Seattle • Rabbi Eitan Bendavid – West Side Sephardic Synagogue, New York • Rabbi Moshe Benzaquen – West Coast Torah Center, Los Angeles • Rabbi Benito Garzon – Rabbi Emeritus, SEC Jerusalem • Rabbi Ben Hassan – Sephardic Bikur Holim, Seattle • Rabbi Abraham Tobal – Monte Sinai, Mexico

Also visiting Metivta and participating in some of the lectures were Rabbi Neil Blumofe (Congregation Agudas Achim, Austin), Dr. Aryeh Tepper (Editor of The Sephardi Report), and Rabbi Moises Chicurel (Comunidad Sefardi of Mexico).

METIVTA 2016 AUGUST 8 – 17 FOR MORE INFO email: info@secjerusalem.org

A Unique Experience and Opportunity to Stay in the Old City of Jerusalem at the Beautiful SEC Campus and Share Insights of our Sephardic Religious Heritage with Colleagues from all over the world as well as Commemorate Tisha B'Av at the Western Wall.

The primary focus of Metivta was studying in the SEC's Beit Midrash. Every morning, for 3-4 hours, the Metivta rabbis studied texts around the table with different lecturers. Amongst the topics studied on Metivta were: The Unique Halakhic Worldview of Sephardic Hahamim, The History of Sephardic Halakha, The Philosophy and Thought of Sephardic Sages, Social Justice in the Writings of Sephardic Hahamim, and Sephardic Responses to Modernity. There were also sessions specifically devoted to studying the texts of the following great Sephardic Hahamim: Rav Raphael Berdugo, Rav Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel, Rav Yosef Messas, Rav Eliyahu Benamozegh and Rav Yisrael Moshe Hazan. The primary lecturers for these Beit Midrash sessions were Rabbi Yitshak Chouraqui (Rosh Beit Midrash of Beit Midrash Shaarei Uziel), Rabbi Dr. Moshe Amar (Sephardic Scholar and Author/Editor of over 70 books) and Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Toledano (Sephardic Scholar and Author of over 20 books).

SEC Director Rabbi Bouskila taught a few morning sessions on Rav Uziel, and he also led the daily "Rabbi's Roundtable." His primary focus was keeping the rabbis in dialogue with one another, especially regarding the challenges and opportunities for the future of Sephardic Judaism. "These roundtables gave the rabbis a chance to express their ideas, and together, we came up with some exciting new plans charting out a bold new vision for our Sephardic communities" said Rabbi Bouskila.

In addition to the formal study sessions in the morning, Metivta also offered special workshops and sessions in the afternoons and evenings. These included a workshop on the "Haham Yomi" website/database (taught by Eli Bareket from Memizrach Shemesh), a power point lecture on how current Sephardic prayer books relate to Zionism and the IDF (taught by Rav David Zenou of Beit Midrash Shaarei Uziel), a lecture and power point presentation on Contemporary Medical Issues and Halakha (taught by Rav Binyamin David of Machon Puah), a roundtable discussion on the conversion crisis (led by Rav Haim Amsalem), a study of the educational philosophy of Rav Yosef Messas (taught by Dr. Yehuda Maimaran of KIACH), and the screening of the new film Shir Yedidot (a documentary on the life of Moroccan Paytan Rabbi David Buzaglo).

One of the most fascinating afternoons on Metivta was the workshop led by three women – Dana Shamsian, Pazit Adani and Heftsibah Cohen-Montagu. The co-founders of Tidreshi, a woman's Torah study program that blends text-based Torah study with issues that are unique to the Sephardi/Mizrahi female experience, the three presenters spent close to 4 hours teaching, studying and in dialogue with the Metivta rabbis.



This unique session was a testimony to the advanced level and confidence that modern women have achieved in the field of Torah studies, as well as to the openness of traditional Sephardic rabbis to hearing and discussing new ideas.

Some of Metivta's most special moments took place outside of the Beit Midrash. This included spending Shabbat together at the SEC, and observing Tisha B'Av together just moments from the SEC, at Judaism's holiest site – the Kotel. The Metivta rabbis also had a few field trips, including a trip to the "Sifriyah Sepharadit" bookstore to shop for Sephardic rabbinical books, a special visit to the Ethiopian community of Bat Yam, dinner in the original Shipudei Hatikvah restaurant in the Sephardic neighborhood of Tel Aviv, and a special tour of Hebron led by Rav Yigal Kutai.

Metivta was organized and run by SEC Director Rabbi Daniel Bouskila, who has been dreaming of such a program for years. "When I invited rabbis to come to Metivta, I was confident that the program we were offering was first-rate, but I had no idea what the dynamic would be between the different rabbis" said Rabbi Bouskila. "I am proud to say that these ten days exceeded all of my expectations. The feeling amongst colleagues was fantastic, and I feel this is the beginning of something with vast potential to energize the Sephardic world. I know that we gave rabbis some precious time back in the Beit Midrash, exposed them to many new teachers and texts, and equipped them with lots of inspirational material and ideas to bring back to their communities. I am also thrilled that all Metivta rabbis have kept in touch, exchanging ideas via email. We plan on getting together in the US in the coming year, perhaps to hold a mini-convention, sometime before next summer's Metivta seminar."

Plans for next summer's Metivta at the SEC are already underway, with the dates set for August 8 – August 17, 2016. The SEC looks forward to welcoming back all of the distinguished rabbis who participated this year, along with others who will join in what we believe marks a new era for the Sephardic world.

THE METIVTA EXPERIENCE

by Rabbi Benito Garzon



The Inaugural Metivta Program led by my dear friend Rabbi Daniel Bouskila at the Sephardic Educational Center in Jerusalem was for me a special ground breaking seminar, a wonderful experience and a great success.

During ten days, a group of Sephardic Rabbis from different countries and Israeli sages met for an intense marathon of learning, sharing thoughts and projects with our Sephardic Communities and Sephardic youth in mind.

The Opening Night Program on Monday evening, July the 20th started with a special commemoration of the one-year Hazkara Memorial for Dr. Jose Nessim z"l, the founder and the very heart of the Sephardic Educational Center to which he consecrated a great part of his life and amazing skills. He was a man to be remembered as a role model for all Sephardic and Jewish leaders.

From then on began a set of inspiring sessions devoted to analyzing old texts and their modern meaning, fascinating exchanges about great Sephardic teachers of the past and their contribution in shaping the Sephardic spirit and special approach to inclusive Halacha. We shared new ideas and most importantly created a network of true friendship among the participants which can be the guarantee of future cooperation in launching programs for our communities and young people that will serve to strengthen their connection to Judaism and the land of Israel.

Here is the Crown of all the projects presented during the Seminar: The opening in a few weeks of the Shaarei Uziel Beth Midrash in the premises of the Sephardic Educational Center in Jerusalem. A dream of the late Rishon LeTzion, Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Ben Zion Meir Hai Uziel is becoming a reality thanks to the dedication and efforts of Rabbi Daniel Bouskila and the SEC, together with their partners, Alliance Israelite (Kol Israel Chaverim) and their rabbinical action department, Mimizrach Shemesh, two successful organizations working toward training new leaders and educators inspired by an inclusive Judaism that is able to attract and unite our People.

Thanks to Hashem and to our brothers and sisters who made possible this unforgettable seminar: the SEC Board and its President, the sponsors, Rabbi Bouskila, Israel Shalem and all of the dedicated Friends of the SEC who support its holy endeavors. May HaShem bless them and allow them to enjoy soon the achievements of the new Beth Midrash in the heart of Jerusalem.



I would like to thank very much the SEC for creating METIVTA, where Rabbis of major communities could come and share common concerns as well as to learn together and gather new information of a rapid changing world.

We discovered through the major lectures by top Rabbis and scholars whom Rabbi Bouskila lined up for us, that for the last 400 years, Sephardic Hachamim had major challenges, and with their ingenuity and love of the Jewish people were able to solve major issues facing modernity. and always came up with solutions thinking "out of the box".

I came out of those ten intensive days with a new perspective and very proud of my heritage. Somehow for the last seventy years, Sephardic responsa, have been keeping a low profile, and it is time, so to speak to, "come out of the closet" and tell the Jewish People of Israel and the world that we, the Sephardim and their Hachamim of the past centuries to the advent of the State of Israel, were able to face modernity with a full force and bring to the Jewish People, moderation and love of the other.

I pray that the SEC, with your board under the Rabbinic leadership of Hacham Daniel Bouskila, will again bring that greatness to its former glory that we may say with pride "Israel whom I glorify Myself with".

Thank you again for hosting us, You have a beautiful place to be very proud of. We look forward to cement our group and come back every year, with God's help.

May the memory of its founder, Dr Jose Nessim be of a blessing to all.

With Torah blessings.

Rabbi Moshe Benzaquen
West Coast Torah Center



A NOTE TO ALL THE RABBIS:

I want to thank Rabbi Bouskila and all of you for making this such an amazing seminar. It was a great experience to learn with you, debate, discuss, share, and joke around. I think we really have

something special going on here and I hope we can build off of it moving forward

I look forward to doing this again soon!

Rabbi Eitan Ben-David
West Side Sephardic Synagogue , NY





The Tanna Debei Eliyahau Zuta suggests two paths to learn Torah, through “Dibuk Haverim” (cleaving one to another) and “Pilpul Hatalmid” (the students sharpening each other’s mind).

I had the great merit to experience both paths in the recent Metivta Seminar the SEC organized.

From the moment I got to the Center, I felt a sense of camaraderie between all the participants. This sense of friendship made it easy for us to talk freely, laugh and bond.

The talks were uplifting and inspiring and definitely sharpened our minds and gave us food for thought.

The discussions around the table were refreshing and eye opening and it gave me hope for the future of Sephardim.

There is often a cliché being said that “the rabbi’s job is a lonely job”. There is a lot of truth to this and I would add on that Sephardic rabbis feel even lonelier at times since we find ourselves a minority to our Ashkenazi peers.

This convention proved to me that I am not alone and there are other Rabbanim who are passionate and proud of their Sephardic Judaism.

A special thank you goes to Rabbi Daniel Bouskila who organized the seminar and looked after every small detail to make the first Metivta a success.

My hope and prayer is that this will be a start of something big that will ensure a thriving and promising Sephardic Judaism.

Rabbi Ilan Acoca
Vancouver, Canada



Together with ten Rabbinic colleagues from all over the world I arrived at the SEC old city campus excited to study and learn in a Beit Midrash environment. With Rabbi Bouskila, we talked about how to communicate and transmit the Sephardic world view of Torah and inclusiveness to the next generation when we are surrounded by Western culture and a Jewish world that is mainly Ashkenazic.

Is there truly a unique Sephardic way of life beyond our food, music and language? Is our hashkafa - philosophical world view and our halakhic ingenuity and flexibility to keep everyone within the fold able to be recognized in a time when just identifying as Jewish or practicing Judaism is more important?

In the mornings we studied some of the greatest Sephardic Rabbis of the 19th and early 20th Century. We had the pleasure of hearing from incredible scholars and we were all blown away by the huge breadth of knowledge of Rabbi Chouraqui’s presentations.

Visiting the Ethiopian community in Bat Yam and having a private tour of Hebron were very meaningful. Having the ability to spend ten days in the old city was very special, with the climax being spending Shabbat and Tisha B’Av there. I am thankful for the Torah that I learned, the friendships I made and the experience that I had. I am already looking forward to next year’s program.

Rabbi Ben Hassan
Sephardic Bikur Holim, Seattle

Congratulations to Neil Sheff, Rabbi Bouskila, and the SEC team for establishing this program. And thank you for the invitation. There is no more appropriate commemoration of Dr. Nessim’s life than making a start on this particular aspect of his larger dream.

Rabbi Moshe Shamah
Brooklyn, NY



Far right: Rabbi Abraham Tobal (Mexico)

Tuve la suerte de participar en el seminario rabínico “metivta” de estudio organizado por el SEC que tuvo lugar en Jerusalén en las instalaciones del mismo, para mi fue una experiencia única ya que a través del estudio nos conectamos con nuestras valiosas raíces sefarditas auténticas y que hoy en día están casi perdidas; estudiamos a grandes rabinos sefaradim de doscientos años para atrás a la fecha actual; jajamim que fueron gigantes en su época, pilares que han quedado en el olvido, sin embargo nos dejaron un legado muy valioso que hoy mas que nunca necesitamos rescatar pues entre muchas cosas aprendemos de ellos como abrían sus corazones a toda persona sin distinción de ninguna índole siempre con las brazos extendidos, una sonrisa y palabras de apoyo y aliento, líderes que eran humildes, tolerantes, que transmitían la religión con cariño, con argumentos lógicos los cuales eran convincentes y eso provocaba que el que los siguiera lo hacia a su vez con convicción además ellos tenían conocimientos universales y estudios de ciencia por lo que se les facilitaba la comunicación abierta con la gente secular y así lograban que estos se identificaran mas con la religión.

Si en nuestra época aplicaríamos estas enseñanzas, el mundo judío se vería muy diferente por lo que actualmente cobran la máxima importancia y relevancia eventos como el que organizó el SEC y que difunden ese aprendizaje tan particular de las que fueran nuestras raíces y tradiciones sefardíes originales.

Sirva esto como motivo de introspección en estos días de reflexión y del compromiso que tenemos de dar continuidad a esas sabias enseñanzas para así transmitir las a las generaciones por venir y no permitir que se siga diluyendo una filosofía ejemplar y tan valiosa.

Por ultimo quiero agradecer y felicitar calurosamente a todos los que organizaron trabajaron y se entregaron para hacer de este grandioso proyecto una realidad.

Shana Toba.

Rabbi Abraham Tobal,
Chief Rabbi of Comunidad Monte Sinai, Mexico City

BEIT MIDRASH SHAAREI UZIEL

BY: RABBI DANIEL BOUSKILA

We are pleased to announce that in October 2015, the first class of students will commence their rabbinical studies at the new Beit Midrash Shaarei Uziel program at the SEC in Jerusalem. Together with our dear partners Memizrach Shemesh, the SEC will embark upon the journey of training a new generation of rabbis, educating them in the Classic Sephardic methodology and philosophy. At Shaarei Uziel, our doors will be open to young rabbis who have recently completed their formal rabbinic training, and are interested in taking upon an additional year of studies where their exclusive focus will be classic Sephardic rabbinic texts. In this high level post-ordination program, the rabbis will immerse themselves, full time, in studying the halakhic and philosophic texts and writings of classic Sephardic Sages such as Rav Yosef Messas, Rav Shalom Messas, Rav Benzion Meir Hai Uziel, Rav Haim David Halevy, Rav Avraham Shalem, Rav Ovadia Yosef, and many other classic Sephardic rabbinic scholars. The young rabbis will be taught by a wide range of thinkers, professors, rabbis, lecturers and community activists, all of whom share their passion for Sephardic texts. In addition to their formal studies, the rabbis will take upon writing projects and community service activities. Shaarei Uziel will be an institution devoted to the research, study and promotion of classic Sephardic texts, because we believe that these texts have much to say – on a host of contemporary issues and problems – to the entire Jewish world today, Sephardi and Ashkenazi, Israel and Diaspora.

Shaarei Uziel's name comes from Rav Benzion Meir Hai Uziel, who studied in his youth in the SEC's buildings at Yeshivat Tiferet Yerushalayim, and would eventually rise to become the State of Israel's first Sephardic Chief Rabbi, and one of the most prolific writers and creative rabbinic thinkers of the twentieth century. Because of their depth and traditional/modern outlook, Rav Uziel's brilliant books will form a core component of the Shaarei Uziel curriculum.

The SEC looks forward to the grand opening of Beit Midrash Shaarei Uziel, where, together with our partners Memizrach Shemesh, we will educate a new generation of rabbis in the Classic Sephardic tradition, and – through these new rabbis – spread the positive and unifying message of Classic Sephardic Judaism for the entire Jewish world.



A New Rabbinic Program at the SEC Opening this Fall, 2015!



Meeting at offices of Alliance Israelite (KIAH) in Jerusalem to discuss final details of the joint Rabbinical Program. Seated front row from left: Neil Sheff, SEC Chairman; Ray Mallel, SEC Exec. Board Member; Yehuda Maimran, KIAH CEO, Rabbi Daniel Bouskila, SEC Director. Standing, far left, Eli Bareket, Director, Mimizrach Shemesh, (center) Sam Pinto, Alliance Chairman, (second from right) Rabbi Yitzhak Chouraqui, Head of Bet Midrash.

MERHAV

RABBINICAL PROGRAM & CONFERENCE

ממוזרח שנים
Our Tradition of Secular Representation
from Jewish Tradition to the Modern World



(l to r) Rabbi Daniel Bouskila, former SEC Educators Reuben Shellim and Rabbi Benito Garzon at the Merhav Opening Conference



October 2014- At the Annual Opening Conference of the Merhav Program at the SEC, (l to r), Rabbi Daniel Bouskila, SEC Director, Rabbi Yitzhak Chouraqui, Head of Beit Midrash, former Chief Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron, eulogizes SEC founder Dr. Jose Nessim

MEMORIAL

Dr. Jose A. Nessim

One Year Memorial Service for Dr. Jose A. Nessim (z"l) at the SEC brought visitors and dignitaries from around the world to pay tribute to our founder.



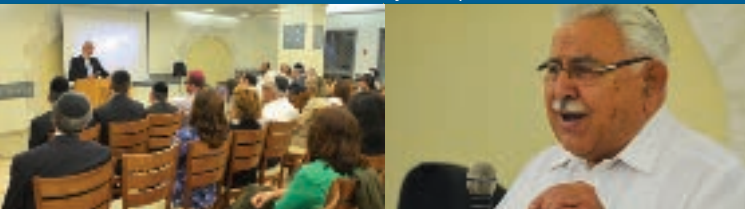
Board Members Ray Mallel & Shlomo Musali

(l to r) R. David Adato (LA), Neil Sheff, Steve Sher



Rabbi Haim Amsalem leads prayers

Board Member and former counselor Janet Levy-Pahima with former counselor "Shoshi"



Rabbi Garzon speaks of Dr. Nessim's vision

Moshe Nissim remembers Dr. Nessim



SPOTLIGHT

on SEC Board Member

RAY MALLEL

35 YEARS OF SEC SPIRIT

Ray Mallel has been passionate about Sephardic life since his childhood in New York and his Ladino roots. He was actively involved in the World Sephardi Federation, fighting for rights of Sephardim in Israel and around the world in the 1970's and later on behalf of the American Sephardi Federation as L.A. President. He also gives his time as a public servant. Governor Jerry Brown has appointed him to numerous state positions, including the Board of Registered Nursing, the State Bar Board of Governors, the Client Security Fund at the State Bar, and the Medical Board of California. He also served as Board Member and President of Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel for many years.

But it is as Executive Board Member of the SEC both in LA and Israel that has attracted the longest communal commitment, over the past 35 years since its founding by Ray's friend and confidant, Dr. Jose Nessim (z"l). From the very inception of the SEC, Ray has been a staunch supporter with his time and money Ray made many trips to Israel and the SEC with Dr. Nessim and has increased his trips in the past years, handling staff issues, building issues and working closely with SEC Jerusalem Manager, Israel Shalem.

Ray was attracted to the vision of the SEC mainly in order to develop the types of Rabbis who return to their Sephardic traditions, heritage and the Jewish way of life our ancestors lived. When Rabbi Bouskila started to envision the framework of a Rabbinical Program that was part of the early vision of Dr. Nessim, Ray was convinced that this was a program that the SEC must place at the forefront of its activities, and he committed to see it become a reality. "We always longed to do this program and if it succeeds at this level we will be able to include a track for Diaspora Rabbis and teach them all the writings of our Sephardic Rabbis." Over the past two years, Ray has attended some of the meetings of the Merhav Rabbinical Program in Israel and saw Israeli Rabbis who were so thankful to learn the writings of long forgotten Sephardic sages whose approaches changed their attitudes and approaches to Jewish thought. He has been actively involved in the creation of the new Shaarei Uziel Program. "This has been very meaningful to me", Mallel said. "It gives me hope that we can have a positive impact on the Jewish world."

Ray has worked with and gotten to know all kinds of Rabbis around the world. He came face to face with anti-Zionist religious leaders when he found himself in Tel Aviv the night Rabin was murdered by a religious fanatic and remembers hearing so-called Rabbis praise the killing of the Prime Minister. "We're hoping to change minds and hearts in the Rabbis that will come to our programs."

The SEC will always be thankful for Ray's commitment to actively and financially support our programs and carry on the vision of Dr. Nessim.

SEC LA Events

SEC HAMSA TEENS LA

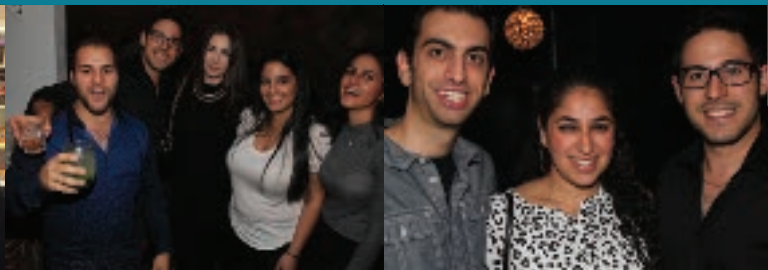


SEC ANNUAL SHAVUOT IN THE DESERT

"We had the most amazing time!!! Friendships that have lasted over 20 years!! Thank you SEC!!!!!!", Karen Cohen



SEC YOUNG PROFESSIONALS LA



LECTURE SERIES LA



HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY PROGRAM LA



PURIM CELEBRATION LA



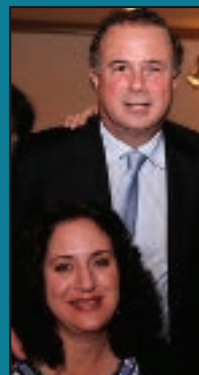
SEATTLE ANNUAL SEC SHABBATON

Sponsored by Lela and Harley Franco, along with Congregation Ezra Bessaroth & Sephardic Bikur Holim.

The Shabbaton speaker was Rabbi Daniel Bouskila who spoke about the religious legacy of Rabbi Meir Uziel, Rishon Letsion of Israel, and his student and Ezra Bessaroth Rabbi, Abraham Shalem. The Shabbaton culminated in a Sunday screening of a film from the SEC Film Festival Archives on the Jews of Rhodes.



Hazan Ike Azose of Ezra Bessaroth and Rabbi Bouskila review an old Sephardic book with Al Maimon of Cong. Bikur Holim. Al has volunteered his time on several trips Jerusalem to help organize the SEC Library, especially the old Ladino books and the library of Rabbi Solomon Mizrahi (z"l)



SEC Alum Lela Sabin Franco and Harley Franco have sponsored the SEC Seattle Shabbaton every year and last year, Harley gave a moving speech during shabbat services and announced that he and Lela were giving 2 Israel Scholarships for the SEC Summer Trip.

ATLANTA

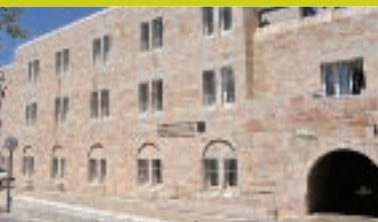
Neil Sheff, SEC Chairman, was the guest of Congregation Or Ve'Shalom in Atlanta, Georgia where he delivered a sermon and spoke about the SEC programs on Shabbat, May 2, 2015. The spiritual leader of Or Ve'Shalom, Rabbi Hayyim Kassorla, has been a longtime supporter of SEC programs and promised to work closer with the SEC to send young adults to the Israel trips.



BOOK YOUR BAR/BAT MITZVA, WEDDING OR SPECIAL OCCASION AT THE SEC IN JERUSALEM

Bring your family to stay in one of our newly remodeled suites on your next trip to Israel.

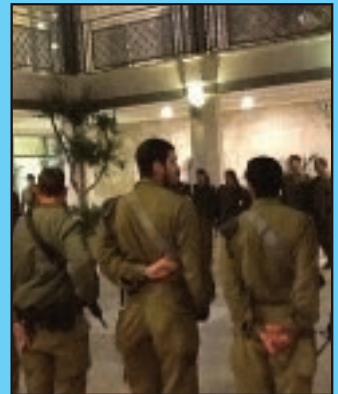
Organize a synagogue or organization trip to Israel with the SEC as your base. Check Out "Sephardic House" on Expedia, Bookings.com and other sites as well as www.SephardicHouse.co.il or contact Israel Shalem at ishalem@netvision.net.il



VISITORS TO SEC ISRAEL



Rabbi Naftali Haleva of Istanbul, Turkey, an alumnus of the SEC program, meets with Neil Sheff and Rabbi Bouskila at the SEC with plans to bring young adults from Turkey to the Center



Yom Ha'atsmaut-Israel Independence Day:
IDF soldiers stage their procession to the Kotel at the SEC Campus



(l to r) Neil and Rachel Sheff with Rabbi Benito and Annie Garzon in Jerusalem



SEC Director Rabbi Bouskila, Hartman Institute Fellow Yossi Klein Halevi and a select group of Muslim leaders from the US, at the Shalom Hartman Institute's Muslim Leadership Initiative (MLI) program this past July in Jerusalem. Rabbi Bouskila delivered a two hour seminar on Sephardic Judaism at MLI, which helped expose this unique cadre of 30 Muslim leaders to Judaism as it was practiced in Arab and Muslim countries. Rabbi Bouskila's presentation included history, philosophy and samples of Sephardic liturgy whose tunes resemble the chants in many mosques. The Muslim leaders were fascinated by the deep cultural history and relationship between the Islamic world and Sephardic Judaism.

SCENES FROM THE HAMSA ISRAEL TRIP

taken by participant Aiden Gindin of Seattle



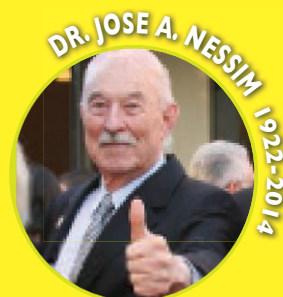
*SEC...making a difference
in the Jewish world*



EDITOR:

This past summer was a milestone in the life of the SEC. I was privileged to be in Jerusalem at the Center for the closing day of the Hamsa Program, the first SEC summer trip in many years after having two winter Hamsa trips. As you can tell from the testimonials written by the participants, parents and Rabbi Bouskila, this was a great way for SEC to come back in a BIG way to our signature summer in Israel trip. I personally interviewed on camera each participant before they left Israel and each one gave effusive praise for the trip, the accommodations at the Center, the food and most importantly the high quality program that was prepared and executed by Rabbi Bouskila, his wife Peni, and counselors Shira Bouskila and Evan Abikzer. The group has already enjoyed a reunion shabbaton at the home of Esther and Yosi Avrahamy and the spirit is still strong. These kids have also promised to be the ambassadors of the SEC in the future and plan to help organize events for their age group.

A few days later we marked the one year anniversary of the passing of our founder, Dr. Jose Nessim(z"l), which fell exactly on the date of our annual "Amuta" (Israel Board) Meeting where we presented our official yearly report, with much excitement and pride in the programs we were unveiling this summer. The official memorial commemoration was a few nights later to coincide with the arrival of the Rabbis to start our Metivta Program, together with other honored guests, who spoke of the vision and action of Dr. Nessim, including Rabbi Benito Garzon (Rabbi Emeritus of the SEC), Rabbi Haim Amsellem (former Knesset Member, author, and past SEC Honoree) and Moshe Nissim (former Justice Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, and longtime Counsel to Dr. Nessim and the SEC). Rabbi Bouskila led the Hashkava prayer and shared thoughts that were certainly going through all of our minds- how proud Doc would be to see this week of events at the SEC and what was still to come.



On the heels of this memorable summer comes the opening of our own Rabbinical Program, Shaarey Uziel, where we will offer certified Rabbis the opportunity to study texts of Sephardic Rabbis of the past generations with the goal of opening their eyes to knowledge that is rarely imparted in the Yeshivas of today's Jewish world. Doc's dream is alive and well; we are continuing his work by making these programs come to life- programs that he always wanted to be at the heart of the SEC. We would never have made it to this point without his vision but also are so thankful for the leadership of Rabbi Bouskila, who is taking Doc's vision to new heights. He has made the SEC an organization that we can all continue to be proud of and know that we are making a difference in the Jewish World, not with words but actions.

I want to thank all the supporters, donors and Board Members who volunteer their time and money to make the SEC such a special family that we all love to belong to. Our staff in LA and Jerusalem work tirelessly from the heart to make our Center beautiful. But our programs require funding and scholarships to allow everyone to participate. For that reason, I urge you to make a serious commitment of financial support to YOUR Center; make it monthly or yearly but don't stand quietly on the sidelines. Dedicate a room in Jerusalem, sponsor a program, or donate to the "Jose Nessim Scholarship Fund". We have so much to be thankful for, and at this time of year we ask God to bless us and our endeavors to make the SEC a light unto the Jewish World.

Happy New Year to you and your loved ones.

Neil J. Sheff, SEC Chairman
(neil@sheffimmigration.com)