

## ***Goodbye 2011 – Matzuva End-Year Update***

### ***A season of rain, wind and heating but also of Light, Hope and Hanukah, Xmas and a Happy New Year***

The year just flew away and we are now on the threshold of 2012. But firstly, on behalf of all at Matzuva allow me to wish you all Chag Urim Sameach on this 7<sup>th</sup> day of Hanukah, Happy Christmas (wow it's Boxing Day) and a fabulous and successful New Year. A cynic would say..."Well it can't be worse than the last one!" - but let's not hold our breath and hope it won't be!

**Gilad Shalit** after 5.4 years imprisonment in Gaza Gilad. As we wrote last time has he now returned home and is undergoing a process of rehabilitation.

The family hasn't forgotten the support of the kibbutz movement throughout Gilad's captivity and Matzuva has received a glowing message of thanks for everything signed by all members of the family including Gilad remembering the Friday night a busload of Matzuva members spent the evening with the Shalit family in the protest vigil tent outside the prime minister's residence in Jerusalem



### **The renowned "MIFLAT PUB" is in business again**

The Matzuva pub has re-opened again this time under new management and continues to be the local outlet for the younger set of the kibbutz and the community village residents at Matzuva. The main activity is naturally on Friday evenings but other events such as personal parties and special occasions take place there. The new organizers are Ohad Fleiderman and Ori Samoushi and a team of helpers. Besides the alcoholic beverages there is satellite HD TV with coverage of the English, German and Israeli soccer leagues. I personally don't frequent the pub anymore but I might just drop in the spring wearing my Miflat logo vest from many a year ago that is a much tighter fit than it was when I purchased it a few decades ago. Tradition dies hard at Matzuva so I'll probably donate it to the kibbutz archives (next to the hall) as sooner or later I'll be banned from entering the pub due to being overage.

### **2012 BEGINS ON DECEMBER 31 2011 AT MATZUVA**

No it's not fiction it's fact – The New Year Party is being held on 30.12.11 which happens to be a day earlier than the actual New Year's Eve. Why a day earlier? Well the 31<sup>st</sup> is on a Saturday and Sunday in Israel is an ordinary working day. So Friday night is the date to celebrate all night and sleep it off on Saturday! The event is to take place at the now defunct dining room and is only open for Matzuva residents.

### **THE ANNUAL HANUKAH TORCH RACE**

To celebrate this festival of light is traditionally celebrated at Matzuva with a torch race around the kibbutz. This year there will be two courses – one for hyperactive runners and the second for families who will have a shorter distance to run. Both courses this year will include the new community village and end up at the moadon. Participants will eat the last of the traditional jam filled doughnuts and the last candle of Hanukah will be lit.

There are some disturbing trends today of polarization in Israel society especially regarding religious traditions and I and others on our secular kibbutz are determined at least at home to preserve our stand on openness and tolerance

### THE MATZUVA SYNAGOGUE

As I mentioned during the last update finding a happy medium in the Matzuva community for religious observance has become an issue due to the absorption of new kibbutz members and residents of our community villages. A fortnight ago I attended a day seminar at the Kibbutz Movement centre in Tel Aviv on the subject of "A Synagogue on Kibbutz – A Threat or a Challenge". The seminar was attended by representatives from about 40 kibbutzim and there was an exchange of experiences in various kibbutzim that face this issue. Lectures on the subject were delivered by members of the Oranim Educational College followed by a panel of community directors. We split up into small discussion groups and in my group I found representatives from our neighbours Rosh Hanikra and Eilon. Without going into specific details I detected that the same dilemma at Matzuva was more or less the same with some variations at all the other participating kibbutzim.

I bring up this subject as I am personally involved and the inevitable clash between secularism, pluralism, equality of the sexes that we at Matzuva like other kibbutzim uphold as a central pillar of our entity as a kibbutz opposed to the rigidity of orthodoxy. Since then, there have been interviews and articles in the Israeli press and I'm attaching the article that appeared in the Haaretz newspaper in both Hebrew and also in English just over a week ago that illustrates the dilemma:

### SECULARISM versus ORTHODOXY

Below excerpts from an article by Eli Ashkenazi that appeared in the HaAretz Daily News English Edition dated 19.12.2011. It first appeared in Hebrew dated 16.12.2011

#### IN ISRAEL'S PAST BASTIONS OF SECULARISM, RELIGIOUS DEBATES FLARE

***In dozens of kibbutzim across the country members argue over questions such as whether to prohibit women from singing in synagogue.***

Three years ago, when Batya Safian was called up to the Torah at the synagogue of Kibbutz Matzuva, a Katyusha rocket landed on the main lawn of the kibbutz and exploded. "There was a siren outside but inside we continued with the bar mitzvah," she recalled last week. Safian, a social worker who serves as the cantor, seems to be more troubled by the recent controversy within the kibbutz over women singers than she was by the difficulties of the past.

"A meeting was convened, to which I was not invited. Some of the people said they were not willing to hear me chanting at holiday services," Safian related. "I was hurt, but if a woman's voice might affect their concentration during prayer then that's their problem."



Batya and Baruch [Photo: Yaron Kaminski]



Matzuva Synagogue [Photo: Karni Am-Ad]

Karni Am-Ad, a fellow kibbutz member, protested against the demands. In a letter to kibbutz members he wrote: "Matzuva was founded and operated throughout the years as a secular-pluralist group, with no salient ethnic characteristics. As such, it has welcomed into its heart the Other, the stranger. Segregation on the basis of gender will only cause a rift and separatism in other areas in which a consensus had been preserved up to now," Am-Ad wrote.

Yaniv Chen, a kibbutz member who supports worshipping in accordance with Orthodox tradition, says: "It upsets us when a woman is called up and reads from the Torah. We do not want war, or a rift," he says, adding, "We agreed not to have separate seating for men and women [in the synagogue], and now we expect them to compromise on nusah, the worship tradition," Chen said.

The disagreement over worship traditions at Matzuva is just one example of the conflicts that have developed in the past several years at dozens of kibbutzim around the country. In some the issue is which stream or tradition to follow, while at others the dispute is over whether to build a synagogue on the kibbutz and where to put it: at the center of the community, or off the beaten path. Economic issues are also involved: The Religious Services Ministry spends hundreds of thousands of shekels every year to build synagogues in kibbutzim that want it.

At Kibbutz Yifat, as at Matzuva, this year Yom Kippur services were held in two different places.

At Yifat it was the Orthodox worshippers who were given use of the synagogue, on account of their greater numbers due to "reinforcements" in the form of Chabad Hassidim from the neighboring town of Migdal Ha'emek. The other group, which identifies with the Jewish Renewal movement, used another space allocated to them by the kibbutz.

This year Kibbutz Geva held traditional Yom Kippur services, in a departure from the Jewish-secular manner of previous years. One member complained in the kibbutz newsletter about the change, writing, "As a secular society, we view human beings as being in the center. Tchernichovsky wrote, in his poem 'Creed,' 'For still I do believe in man/ And in his spirit, strong and bold,' expressing the secular mood and idea," she wrote.

At Ashdot-Yaakov Ihud, during Simhat Torah a partition in the synagogue divided the men, who danced with the Torah, from the women.

"Kibbutz society championed equality as a value. And here, in honor of the kibbutz movement's centenary, we elected to erect a partition between men and women," wrote kibbutz member Bruria Sharon in the newsletter. "Get ready, the mikveh [ritual purification bath facility] is coming," she added.

At Kibbutz Merhavia, for example, after a three-year battle between some of the members and some residents of a neighborhood built for nonmembers over the location and character of a planned synagogue, a town-hall style meeting voted to build it.

A few members of Kibbutz Palmahim, meanwhile, recently signed a petition against a plan to convert the community's former dining hall into a synagogue.

There was a similar disagreement at Degania Alef about five years ago, when a synagogue was built in the Founders' Courtyard. Lifetime kibbutz member Amalia Ilan was quoted in Haaretz at the time: "A synagogue here counters the entire outlook of the Degania pioneers and the essence of the Second Aliyah," she said.

Around 70 of Israel's 257 kibbutzim that are not explicitly religious have synagogues. Some were built decades ago for the parents of members, the "old folk" as they were once called. Sometimes a small kosher kitchen was built nearby.

Kibbutz Afikim's first synagogue dates from the mid-1940s; a second was built in 1970. Assaf Inbari, who was born and raised on Afikim, wrote about it in his book "Home": "As children, the founders of the kibbutz never visited a synagogue in Odessa, Moscow or Riga, because their parents never told them there was any such thing. They had no problem eating pork in its mother's milk, and even when the jubilee year approached it never dawned on them that the kibbutz needed a synagogue. But the kibbutz got soft," Inbari wrote.

Dr. Moti Zeira, director of Oranim College's HaMidrasha Educational Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Israel, ascribed the current conflict to increased religious observance in Israel and a change in the kibbutz population. He said kibbutzim were influenced by the move toward increasing religious observance that began in the 1980s. "Young kibbutz members who became observant and stayed on kibbutz demanded venues for worship, posing a challenge from within that strikes a sensitive nerve," Zeira said. At the same time, many kibbutzim are absorbing new members, or nonmember residents, who want religious services.

Economic issues are also a factor, he said. "Today there is a vacuum that various Orthodox groups are filling, and for its part the state is happy to spend on building synagogues in kibbutzim. Members must ask themselves about the public sphere of the kibbutz. When we gather together, how is it done, in what

style? Is it organized by someone from outside who excludes women" and tries to teach the children that only Orthodox Judaism is real Judaism," Zeira said.

On Matzuva, at least, a traditional Jewish solution has been found. Baruch Kadmon, a kibbutz member and one of the founders of Matzuva's Conservative/Masorti congregation, explains: "The conflict seems to have been resolved through the decision that there is no choice but to build another synagogue for the new residents, an Orthodox synagogue with a women's section. It's a pity, but we're a pluralistic community and some people wanted a traditional synagogue," Kadmon said.

Note: This last section contains a misquote on the part of the reporter to what I actually said. What was said was "That in my opinion if there was no willingness on the part of the parties to compromise a solution may be to build a second synagogue for orthodox traditionalists". The present synagogue has been affiliated to the Masorti Movement in Israel since its establishment in 1993 and reflects the non-observant character of Matzuva (Baruch)

### **TWO YOUNG YOUTH LEADERS VISIT POLAND – Part 1**

Two young kibbutz reared youth leaders, Orian Kanar and Na'ama Cohen having completed service in the IDF arrived back at Matzuva after being part of a delegation of youth leaders to Poland. Orian and Na'ama had never visited that country in the high school delegations from Israel with the theme being the Holocaust. This particular delegation was to strengthen contacts between Poland and Israel. The organizing body was Spark Pro Organization who feel there is more to Poland than an extermination site. The Poles had identified anger among Israelis towards their country and knew nothing about Poland beyond the Holocaust. The criteria for acceptance for the delegation was to have been a youth leader for at least two years and Orian and Na'ama were part of the pilot delegation representing the local regional council. Orian's grandfather was a partisan during the war and family members died in bombings but not in the death camps. Na'ama said in this interview that "You cannot grow up in Matzuva without the Holocaust being part of you with Holocaust survivors everywhere in the kibbutz consisting of German, Hungarian and Dutch Jews" The two found Poland to be charming and Warsaw amazing. They met with the Polish education minister and visited their foreign office as well as the Israeli ambassador. They also took part in discussion panels with young Polish students. One student related that her grandmother told her that a Jewish child knocked on her door during the Nazi occupation and she refused to take him in as she feared for reprisals against her family and children. The next day the grandmother found the child dead on the doorstep! At first Na'ama was angry and thought she should confront the woman. But on second thoughts, what would she have done herself as a mother. "It's a crazy and cruel conflict that I wouldn't wish on anyone" says Na'ama. She had always viewed the Holocaust through the eyes of the victim but learnt that the Poles, Gypsies and others also suffered and it was just mind boggling!

The two met other Polish citizens including Irena Sendler, a "Righteous Gentile" who smuggled out 2,500 children from the ghetto and buried their documents to ensure that they would know who they are at the end of the war. She died 2 years ago at the age

of 98 and Polish children learn about her and the Holocaust at school. Following their stay in Warsaw they went on to Majdanek one of the Nazi extermination camps. Orian and Na'ama were interviewed for the Matzuva Newsletter in Hebrew by Edna Nathans, the editor.

\* Part 2 of this important interview in the January Update 2012

Until the next update – keep well and be in contact.

Best wishes

Baruch

Matzuva – December 2011



MATZUVA'S 71st YEAR



101 YEARS OF THE KIBBUTZ MOVEMENT