

the CAS Chanukah Party

What a wonderful evening! The CAS Chanukah party was held Sunday night, December 18th, at the home of Gloria and Len Friedman: the location also known as the Applegate Inn in Lee. There were delicious latkes plus lots of vegetarian dishes and some amazing handmade chocolates for dessert. Two couples, new to the congregation, joined the group and met the crowd. Those who brought menorahs gave us a little background of why each was special to them. Gloria and Len have a huge collection and gave us a short tour with anecdotes about a few of their menorahs. The evening was low key, warm and welcoming. The CAS community sends a sincere thank you to Len and Gloria for once again hosting a very special party.

Sandra Flannery

the passing of Isadore (Ike) Cassuto

We are sad to note the passing on December 21 of Ike Cassuto (1924-2016), husband of former member Tobby (Thalia). Ike was a generous supporter of the synagogue, especially for special events such as Kristallnacht and Ghetto Tango. If we needed something, we just had to ask.

Ike served our country during World War II. Born in the Bronx of Sephardic parents, he was a navigator for B-17 bombers and was shot down once in Europe. Ike enlisted in the Air Force in 1943 after attending CCNY. Upon his return to the U.S. he went to law school and became a tax attorney. Ike was very interested in civil rights and the arts. He will be missed by all of us who were lucky enough to know this warm, lovely man.

a letter about the fires in Haifa

CAS Board member Sandra Flannery has been in touch with her college roommate who has lived in Haifa since 1972. She wanted to see how she, her family and the city is doing with the fires now almost out. She wrote Sandra the attached letter:

Dear Folks,

Our masorti synagogue Congregation Moriah in Haifa burned badly. The Moriah nursery school was destroyed. Fortunately, the children attending the Moriah nursery school were evacuated well before the fires did the damage. The entire area around Horev (the location) was at risk--nursery schools, homes for the aged, the mall, homes. The area is heavily wooded and as there has been no rain, it's all essentially tinderwood.

The synagogue rebuilding will take place at the same site. The major damage was to the second floor of the building, where the nursery school is located, but the structure is basically sound.

Members came to begin the clean-up Thursday night even as the fires were still raging in other nearby locations. The Torahs were removed, and returned later when the area was declared safe by the fire fighters. Services resumed last Friday at Kabbalat Shabbat.

I just spoke with the chair of the synagogue Peter Lawton who said "business is as usual" and that all help is very much appreciated. If you choose to send donations to the Masorti Foundation's Phoenix Project, please earmark them for Moriah Synagogue in Haifa.

Of course, government funding priority goes to rebuilding the almost 600 homes that were destroyed and are uninhabitable.

The fires were begun by arsonists and spread by the winds.

Haifa is built on wadis that were covered with tinder-wood trees and brush (now destroyed). Much wildlife was killed. The homes are built on and in these wadis. Weather conditions were perfect for major fire spread.

Help came from Greece (the yellow fire-fighting planes that I fell immediately in love with), Turkey, UK, Russia, the PA, Egypt and the USA, among others. Everyone in Haifa continually expresses gratitude for this unquestioning assistance from near and far.

Local neighborhoods and community centers have been over-loaded with donations of clothing, household supplies and food for the almost 600 families affected by loss of homes.

My husband Yitzchak and I drove through the city Saturday and met with Haifa Mayor Yona Yahav (who was doing the same). He and I have known each other for years. I complimented him on the good and difficult job the municipality is doing in this crisis. He said that unfortunately, he has too much experience with crises.

All of us stood with tears in our eyes. We are still in the back-flash of previous trauma. But life goes on. Cleanup and repair is happening quickly. Trauma centers have been set up in the neighborhoods to deal with specific issues.

There were miracles. One was in the Romema neighborhood. Two underground central gas suppliers did not explode, even though the ground around them was completely scorched. If they had exploded, the building they supplied as well as the nursery school and elementary school across the narrow road would have been completely destroyed.

The children in the Moriah Synagogue nursery school (operated by my dear friend Shalom) have been moved to another location nearby. Shalom and his dedicated staff worked throughout the weekend so that those three-year-olds who attended the Moriah nursery could begin the week on Sunday with their teachers in a familiar routine, even though in a different location.

Two of our grandchildren are graduates of the Shalom's nursery schools and two are currently enrolled.

I rushed to pick up 3 year old Gilad and one year old Noga at noontime last Thursday, as the fires spread throughout the city. What I found in the nursery school was an atmosphere of calm conveyed by all of the teachers.

The children had been fed a hot lunch and were changed and ready for nap time when the order came to evacuate. The teachers had explained to the children that the day would be shorter because there was so much smoke in the air. Gilad explained to me that he was not afraid of the smoke. I agreed with him saying that of course Sammy the Fireman and his friends from the nearby fire station were busy putting out the fires. Gilad agreed with a smile, basically excited that I was picking them up and that we were going to have time together.

I managed to use side roads to avoid the major traffic caused by about 70,000 people trying to evacuate a city with no traffic lights (the power was cut off due to the fires). Most people were collecting their children and elders before evacuating.

Yitzchak and I stayed in Haifa to keep an eye on our neighborhood which is surrounded by a nature preserve. We were ready to leave at a moment's notice, but fortunately did not have to do so. The neighborhood above us had some fires and those lovely Greek water-carrying planes flew over us to dump water on them.

The police and fire fighters called for evacuation of neighborhoods in order to ensure easy access for fire-fighting equipment. The city sent in buses to evacuate schools and homes for the aged in affected areas. Those folks who had no available friends/relatives with whom to stay were housed at hotels. All the hotels in Haifa opened their doors.

Unlike previous fires in the Carmel Park in 1989 and 2010, this destruction had one target--Haifa's citizens.

We appreciate your continued support and encouragement.

Sending all blessings,

Betsy Lewis Yizraeli

DONATE TO PROJECT PHOENIX

Congregation Moriah, in Haifa, the oldest Masorti/Conservative synagogue in Israel, was especially hard hit. The second floor, roof and siddurim were destroyed. Please help restore this kehillah.

Masorti Foundation for Conservative Judaism in Israel

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Our Exciting New Online Newsletter/Website ***Reprinted from the December 2016 Newsletter***

After much consideration and the recommendation of an ad hoc communications committee, the CAS Board of Directors has decided to transform our existing, printed newsletter into a combined newsletter/website online presentation.

Vivian Scheinmann and Marcy Ross have served brilliantly as editors of the CAS newsletter for many years, but they can no longer serve in these roles. Marcy now lives in the Boston area, and both she and Vivian have commitments that make it impossible to devote the time necessary to publish the newsletter. (Vivian has, however, graciously offered to help with some editing of online material.) In addition to many great features we can offer online, we will be saving the synagogue a good number of design, printing, and mailing expenses.

We already have a wonderful website that was designed and organized by Andi Goodman. It includes most of the topics and categories that were featured in our printed newsletter. These include a listing of our services and events, CAS contact information and general information about the synagogue, Barbara's monthly column, donations and Yahrzeit listings, special activity announcements, membership information, articles (such as Milchidika with Marty) and many additional sections and links that the printed newsletter doesn't, or in some instances, can't provide. There are other, new areas we hope to add in the coming months, including ads with links to our sponsors, a marketplace button, and the ability to actually donate (or pay membership fees) using a credit card. As we continue to build the website, we can even add video and music capabilities, if these seem desirable.

For those of you who would rather read hard copy materials, it's easy enough for you to print out whatever newsletter sections you would like to have on a printed page, and you will be able to choose what you print out. For instance, someone might like to read the featured articles in print form or print the schedule of events, but have no interest in printing out the Yahrzeit listing or the list of donations. Andi is already working on ways to make this process more direct and even easier.

We will continue to update newsletter items each month, and we will announce each month's new edition through our current weekly email blast, indicating that the month's articles have been published and providing a direct link to the newsletter website. Arthur Hillman will be helping Andi with certain website sections, and other CAS members might also want to be responsible for a specific section or sections. Please contact Andi or Arthur if you are interested working on this new CAS endeavor.

We aim to hit the ground running, with our first online newsletter/website edition in January. Please make sure we have your current email address so we can send you our weekly email blast and notification when the monthly newsletter is online. If you don't already receive our Sunday emails, please send your email information to Andi at ahavathsholomgb@gmail.com. Also, if any of you are having difficulty navigating the website during this transition period, please contact Andi or Arthur (arthurhillman@adelphia.net) for help.

Editors' note from Vivian Scheinmann and Marcy Ross: Our deepest thanks to Bob Mechling who has done such an amazing job in designing our newsletter for so many years and to Mike Dion and the crew at Appalachian Mountain Press for their excellent work in printing it.