

Our Struggle for Land for Our Congregation – Milestones

- **Chanukah 1996** – A core group of families founded our congregation, Kehillat Sulam Ya'akov. These families shared their homes for worship and, after several months moved their services to a shelter in the local Nili Elementary School. It was not long before many new families (young and old) joined the group. The Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism provided a Rabbi one Friday night per month and we did the rest.
- **July 1998** – During their first congregational visit to Israel, Temple Shalom of Succasunna, New Jersey (USA) presented us with our first Sefer Torah. Soon after, because of rapid growth in membership and the broadening number of services provided, we approached the Mayor of Zichron for the first time to request a building lot for construction of our permanent home.
- **January 1999** – Rental of Beit WIZO for Kabbalat Shabbat, Bar/Bat Mitzvahs and holidays. An Ark was placed in the rented hall and we celebrated our first *Hachnassat HaTorah* (Torah dedication). At the same time, a *B'nei Mitzvah* seminar program was established by members of the congregation and, to date, hundreds of youth with their parents have completed this course and celebrated this important life cycle event with us.
- **October 1999** – ARZA representative, Daniel Nadelmann, visited Town Council member Hevroni to discuss Sulam Ya'akov's quest for a building plot. After many delays, the Mayor instructed the Town Engineer to show us several possible lots, but we were not allowed to choose, only to see – a stall tactic to show the Mayor's "concern".
- **April 2001** – A committee from Sulam Ya'akov formally met with Zichron's Mayor Shibovsky and then presented a request to the town council in keeping with the current "rules" for distribution of public lands to religious institutions. The Mayor and Town Council stalled all efforts to advance this request and, in fact, only brought it to a formal discussion more than a year later.
- **June 2002** – We were told that the Government of Israel had created new rules for distribution of lands and that we must start over – submitting all new documentation and backup. We were told that all current applications were being rejected and must be resubmitted (we later learned from the Mayor that only we submitted the new request by the deadline of 12 August).
- **January 2003** – Leaders of Reform Congregation Har HaShem of Boulder, Colorado (USA) attended a meeting with the Mayor to express their concern.
- **September 2003** – The Town Council met and agreed that we deserved a plot of land but did nothing about it.
- **November 2003** – A new Mayor (Eli Abutbul), who strongly claimed to support us during the election campaign, was elected.
- **March 2004** – Visiting once again, leaders of Har HaShem attended a meeting with the new Mayor to express their growing concern. They were assured by Mayor Abutbul that he was pushing the subject through to a successful conclusion. The land "to be allocated" was centrally located and had almost no adjacent neighbors.

- **July 2004** – Based on the opposition of residents of the area (only one of whom lived adjacent to the land) and a “ruling” by the Zichron Town Council stating that there would be too much congestion and not enough parking, approval of our request for the land was removed from the Council’s agenda – with a promise to find us an alternate piece of land. A Town Council unbridled by partisan politics would have weighed the opposition and ruling and found them unjustified. Unfortunately, in Zichron, this was not the case.
- **November 2004** – Another request was made to the Land Committee of the Town Council to allocate us a piece of land.
- **May 2005** – After listening to our position and that of neighbors (some of whom opposed) the Council’s Land Committee recommended that we be given land in one of the newer neighborhoods (and we started to believe that there was light at the end of the tunnel).
- **October 2006** – We learned from the Mayor that he did not have the necessary support to push the land allocation forward and that he was removing it from the agenda. One again, political pressure and a lack of commitment on the part of the Town Council had led to yet another rejection. Once again, we started another public struggle.

Concurrently with our actions, the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism (IMPJ), together with its Center for Religious Pluralism, turned to the Israel Supreme Court with a charge that the Government’s Ministry of Housing was building synagogues only for the Orthodox. As a result, there was land-mark decision: a Ministry of Housing promise to supply four temporary a pre-fab building structures, called *caravillas*, for the movement’s congregations – one for Sulam Ya’akov. The size of the *caravilla* structure is approximately 150 square meters (1500 square feet). This promise was dependent upon receiving assurance from the local government that land would be provided and the infrastructure prepared.

- **May 2007** – The Town Council approved installation of our *caravilla* on land near the Matnas Community Center. The land is located adjacent to the Center for Culture and Music (with ample parking) and near the Sportan sports complex, two elementary schools, and a young neighborhood recently built and another planned for the near future. A suitable, central location.
- **August 2008** – After a decade-long struggle, with many disappointments and frustrations along the way, we are almost home! On August 19 the basic structure was delivered.
- **Today** – Now KSY’s members and friends must shoulder the financial responsibility for remaining infrastructure and equipment costs for our new home. An active fundraising campaign is now underway. If all goes smoothly, it will take approximately several more months to completion (water, electric infrastructures, etc) and we can receive our keys to move in.



We are almost home -- please help us reach our goal!
Contact us at sulam@bezeqint.net or call +972-4-629-3113.



Though not the end of our story (this is a temporary home), we are soon going to realize our dream – a building and new home for Kehillat Sulam Ya’akov. With this important milestone, the potential for our congregation’s development will grow and be strengthened.