

Chanukah

From the Shavei Tzion Archives

December 2013 Judith Temime

To the delight of residents, a new menorah has been built and installed at the top of the water tower in **Shavei Tzion** for this Chanukah holiday 5774 and the menorah will be illuminated, just as in the past, throughout the holiday. Together, the tower and the menorah represent one of the veteran landmarks of the moshav.



Construction of the water tower. **Shavei Tzion**, 1939.
From the collection of the **Shavei Tzion Archives**

The tower itself was built in 1939, in a single day in order to minimize the danger of faults developing in the structure. Construction of the "Menorah auf dem Wasserturm" was discussed in a meeting of **Shavei Zion's** management committee on November 19, 1939 and the minutes record that **Arnold Behr**--apparently a temporary member who did metal-work here--would build the menorah at no charge to the moshav on condition that the cost of the material, an estimated five Palestinian pounds, would be covered. The whole project depended, though, on the approval of the members' general assembly and it was "understood" that underwriting the cost meant that the members would agree to having their meagre pocket money docked for the purpose. The committee's minutes for December 5, 1939, one day before the first Chanukah candle was lit that year, tell us that **Zev Berlinger** would assume all responsibilities relevant to the "Menorah auf der Brecha" (above the water reservoir), including "the spacing, and so on" meaning, it seems, designing the structure.

It's not clear whether the menorah was completed in time for Chanukah, 1939, but the tower and menorah are featured as a telling landmark in a hand-drawn illustration on the cover of a booklet published here for Passover, 1949. In any case, **Alisa Klapfer** remembers that in the years 1944-45 when she took part in guard duty in the moshav and was stationed atop the tower to observe activity on the Akko-Nahariya road, the menorah was certainly in place. Youngsters in **Shavei Zion**, among them **Alisa, Miriam Klein** and **Esther Alsberg**, learned Morse code and semaphore in order to signal from the tower to other Jewish settlements.

Maoz Azaryahu, a professor of geography at the University of Haifa, writes about historical water towers as icons of Zionism and of Jewish settlement, calling such towers "a significant feature of the Land of Israel landscape". Storing water was, of course, the primary role of the water towers but **Professor Azaryahu** writes that they quickly became "symbolic representations" and he quotes **Azaria Alon** who stated on his radio program, "When you've found a water tower, you've found a Jewish settlement". The professor adds, "a picture of a water tower appeared in a Hebrew course book meant for new immigrants...in which the tower is used to illustrate the

letter 'mem' ". We note that the Hebrew for "water tower" is "migdal mayim" so that both words, in fact, illustrate "mem". **Azaryahu** tells us that "in isolated settlements, the water tower was also used as an observation position and that function invested the tower with an additional symbolic meaning, making the tower a clear expression of the ethos of defense."

Professor Azaryahu writes "The water tower was part of the mental landscape of residents and of the community" and he notes that on Mazeh Street in Tel Aviv, Chanukah 1931, the orchestra of the city fire brigade performed beside the menorah at the top of the tower while schoolchildren gathered at the foot of the tower. **Azaryahu** remarks upon "the association of water towers with local history and with the childhood memories of persons who lived near one..."



"Water Tower in **Shavei Zion**", by **Marlis Glaser**.
Courtesy of the artist.

In 1983, **Menachem (Menko) Berlinger** wrote about Chanukah in the moshav's newsletter *Beineinu (Between Us)*: "It seemed that Antiochus had successfully pursued his policies throughout the entire Hellenistic empire. Even Jews fell victim to his policies and some were won over to Greek culture...but the spiritual annihilation and assimilation were never complete. Had the converts to Hellenism gotten the upper hand, Antiochus' mission to obliterate the name of Israel might have been realized. There's no doubt that the fate of the Jewish people would have been like that of the Ammonites, Moabites and Philistines and of Hiram, Tyre and Sidon—important peoples and enormous empires that disappeared completely from the stage of history and from human discourse. But the Lord, blessed be He, brought forth Mattathias the son of Yochanan, a man of Modi'in, as a leader of men and warrior and Mattathias gathered around himself his five Hasmonean sons and also called up fighters with the cry 'Whoever is for the Lord, rally to me!' They fought under the banner of revolt against the idol-worshipping Greek culture, and they won."

The story is well known, even to our youngest children, who love Chanukah for the sake of its colors, candles, songs, and treats, and for its exciting narrative of courage, victory and redemption.



Kindergartners celebrate Chanukah. **Shavei Zion**, 1958. From left: **Avi Klapfer**, **Michal Baum**, **Ofra Frölich**. Photo courtesy of **Alisa Klapfer**.

In that holiday issue of *Beineinu* in 1983, our kindergarten children explained what they would have done had they been Judah Maccabee. How would they have fought the Greeks? **Dvori Levinger (Yisraeli)** said, "I'd call my daddy." **Estie Fleischer (Glaser)** said, "I'd kick them and they'd fall down, one after the other." **Shuky Temime** planned to build "an underground trap" for the Greeks and **Shimrit Shtern (Barak)** suggested a sort of "lite" warfare. "I'd put them," she said, "in the cow stall".

Also in that same newsletter, **Esther Fröhlich Ya'acobi** recalled childhood Chanukah celebrations here in **Shavei Tzion** in the 1940s. "We felt a holiday atmosphere at home even before the day itself arrived. Mother baked lots of cookies and we children had to help her prepare and decorate them. Of course we had no oven at home, so we had to carry the pans to the bakery so that **Pinchas (Erlanger)** could bake them. The first evening of Chanukah, we waited impatiently for the presents and the sweets which were all arranged in a locked room. After the candle lighting and after we had gotten our gifts, we spent the evening playing games. Those were the happiest hours I remember. The first moshav Chanukah celebration that I recall took place back in the days of the tower and stockade camp. Our teachers, **Zev** and **Margalit (Berlinger)**, prepared a Chanukah play with us: 'The War of the Maccabees against the Greeks'. Every child had a small role to play. We made all the costumes and props ourselves. In later years, when we already had a menorah atop the water tower, everyone gathered there... Our school choir sang Chanukah songs and the grown-ups built comical menorahs. Most of the adults were very involved in creating beautiful celebrations and, indeed, they were beautiful."

In 1982, **Aliza Goren** told *Beineinu* about Chanukah in her childhood home in Zefat, city of sages: "The many preparations for the holiday began with cleaning the house and dedicating a central room, arranged by Mother, to the festivities. That room was locked and Mother kept the key in her pocket. Low stone stools, covered with rugs and cushions, were placed all around the room. Finally, the evening of the holiday arrived! First, Dad or my oldest brother said the blessing over the candles in the shiny copper menorah. Dad played many musical instruments and knew how to make

everyone happy and to entertain us. Two uncles joined Dad, playing on different sorts of drums. Together with them, we children sang Sephardic Chanukah songs we'd learned at home and Ashkenazic songs we'd learned at the 'cheder' where we were sent to round out our Jewish education. At one side of that room dedicated to the holiday, Mother and an aunt had set up two pots on big clay bowls filled with burning charcoal. In one of the pots, there was boiling oil and in the other, the syrup cooked. Sephardic doughnuts are different in both their appearance and their taste. They're no bigger than plums, fried in oil and dipped in sweet syrup. We were given doughnuts as we sang and then all of us children gathered around the hot clay 'ovens' and roasted chestnuts and acorns. Besides the delicious taste, it was wonderfully warm and aromatic, and all of that while outside it was freezing cold! After the refreshments came the moment we all loved so much: getting our gifts! The gifts were modest: marbles or a yo-yo and so on. After the distribution of the gifts, we thanked our parents for the beautiful holiday."

In the Chanukah issue of *Beineinu* for 1978, **Yehudit Sohn**, who was born in Egypt, published the recipe for her famous "Greek doughnuts", called "loukoumades".

20 grams yeast
2 cups water
1 1/2 cups flour
1 egg white
2 tablespoons of sugar

Combine all the ingredients and then set the dough aside for two hours.

Form teaspoon-sized balls of dough and fry them in hot oil.

Sprinkle the doughnuts with a mixture of sugar and cinnamon or drizzle over them 'honey syrup' made of 1 cup of sugar, 1/2 cup of water and a bit of lemon juice, boiled together.

During the Chanukah school vacation in 1980, the children of **Shavei Tzion** were drafted to pick citrus fruit in the orchard, and they reported their experience to **Rivka Olami**, the editor of *Beineinu*. This is what **Tamar Engel Dash** had to say: "At 8:00, all the kids of the moshav met 'up front' (*that is, at the bus stop opposite the post office*

here). We get to the orchard, we set up ladders and we put on satchels and we're off to work! We worked a little and chatted a little. It felt great! The grownups were patient with us. We filled some crates and then we took a break to eat. After that, we walked around a little and then we went back to work. We got back home with a lot of scratches but with a nice feeling." Really, that sounds like optimal training for work in the moshav: you work a little, you break for lunch, you wander around a bit. **Gadi Fleischer**, our proud and dedicated orchard boss, admitted to having had "reservations about the kids being able to do the work" but despite that, he said, "I feel satisfied that the day was a success, from the point of view of both the amount of fruit picked and the diligence of the kids. There were lots of kids of all ages and it was funny to see how the littlest of them had their satchels dragging on the ground. In general, they worked very well. I'm all for this sort of activity with the kids...during future school vacations."

The "Festival of Lights" edition of *Beineinu* in 1984 published a long interview with **Ya'acov (Yaki) Levy**, the son of **Bruno** and **Marcelle Levy**. The interview, under the title "The Day I Was Wounded Was My Lucky Day", had originally been printed in *Our Israel*, an Israeli newspaper published in the U.S. The journalist **Smadar Ya'acobi** wrote, "**Yaki** was wounded in the Yom Kippur War. He was 20 then and nearing the end of his compulsory military service. His injury cost him both of his eyes." She described **Yaki** on the day of the interview: "He's good-looking, confident and easy-going and his speech is composed."

Yaki talked about his injury, saying, "I was an officer in the armored corps. I was wounded in an ambush against our troops in an armored vehicle in Suez City a few hours after the announcement of the cease fire, when what must have been a piece of shrapnel entered my right temple and took both of my eyes." Then, **Yaki** explained to the journalist what he means when he talks about the good luck in his injury. "Yesterday," he told her, "I filled out a lottery ticket using my lucky numbers which include the date of my injury, October 24. I think that was a lucky day for me because

had the shrapnel struck two millimeters from where it did, I'd have been killed. My parents, too, on their first hospital visit told me, "Okay, you're blind, but you're still with us."

Most of the interview was devoted to what **Yaki** had been doing since his injury: his success in earning a B.A. in psychology and his work with I.D.F. disabled soldiers and soldiers' orphaned children. He also talked about the complicated process of getting a seeing-eye dog, a process which then required Israeli blind persons to undergo training in the U.S. and receive their dogs there. **Yaki** described the obstacles to handicapped persons that Israeli society tolerated at that time such as an absence of laws that would have allowed a blind person to enter a restaurant or travel by bus with his dog. The fact that a person could receive a dog only by traveling abroad immediately prevented some people from enjoying the independence that dogs afford the blind and the love with which a dog responds to its master. **Yaki** was interviewed in New York while he was visiting the U.S. as an activist for the same school where he himself trained with his dog. He told the journalist about his love for the city: "Many people ask me 'So, what can you possibly see?' But I 'get' the smells, the sounds, the people, the lifestyle. Besides, I could see until I was 20. Even though I had never traveled abroad before my injury, I remember pictures of New York—the skyscrapers, the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building. So I'm able to make a connection when I'm told 'This is the place.' And sometimes the feeling takes my breath away."

Meanwhile, discrimination against disabled persons in Israel has been largely addressed. Whoever is often in **Nahariya** can see dogs, teachers and blind students from the school at Kibbutz Sasa, all engaged in orientation training on the city streets. Readers who find this interesting and those who are considering doing a mitzvah for Chanukah might want to visit the Internet site explaining the work of the "Israel Center for Guide Dogs for the Blind." **Yaki Levy** himself, today a happy pensioner, has managed his life very well without a dog for many years. He's active now on behalf of the work of the "Central Library for the Blind, the Visually Impaired and the

Handicapped" in Netanya. He has nothing but praise for the Library, which extends its services to many visually impaired persons including both children and adults who use the collection of audio books, and he notes that the Library is welcoming and lenient in registering new clients.

At Chanukah 5735 (1974), in the column "At Our House" in the holiday issue of *Beineinu*, **Rabbi Dr. Aharon Keller**, the community's esteemed, veteran rabbi wrote, "The secret of the victory of the few against the many was told by the prophet Zechariah in the Haftarah for the Shabbat of Chanukah, 'Not by might nor by power but by My spirit saith the Lord of hosts'. We were few against many in the days of the First and Second Temples. We were like an innocent lamb surrounded by seventy wolves in the long Diaspora, among all the nations of the world, and we few were victorious against the many nations that sought our destruction in the four wars of our own generation. But the People of Israel, the smallest of all the nations, cannot survive except by right of our spiritual and moral advantages. The People of Israel need to know that its survival is ensured only by a way of life and discipline that conform to its character and nature. When we maintain the moral plane demanded of our people by the Torah and by the prophets, we will fulfill our purpose in the world 'to be a light unto the nations'."

Throughout those many years when Beit HaMeyassdim, **Shavei Tzion's** old age home, celebrated Chanukah with our good friends from the Christian village of Nes Ammim, **Ants Livni's** wonderful hot wine always opened the reception. The following morning, if there was any wine left at all, the residents of the home enjoyed a second glass while doing handicrafts in the day room. Here is **Ants'** recipe, as it appeared in a 2011 newsletter for residents and their families:

Hot Spiced Wine

1 orange, studded with about 40 cloves
1 bottle of sweet Kiddush wine
brown sugar
1 cinnamon stick
1 liter (quart) water

1. Place the orange and the water in a pot and bring to a boil.
2. Add the cinnamon stick and cook on a low flame for 45-60 minutes.
3. Remove from the heat and add 3/4 of the wine.
4. Add sugar to taste and cool to room temperature.
5. A few minutes before serving, add the rest of the wine and re-heat.



Chanukah at **Beit Hameyasdim**, 2006. From left: **Alberto Socolovsky, David Bayer, Dan Bavli, Ido Gozlan, Rabbi Yehoshua Hellman.**
From the collection of the **Shavei Zion Archives.**