



# Indian Jewish Congregation of USA Newsletter

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## Useful Link

[jewsofindia.org](http://jewsofindia.org)

*The official website of the Indian Jewish Congregation of USA. Here you will find useful information about our organization, our heritage, future plans, and more.*

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## President's Message (by Romiel Daniel)

We have just started the month of Elul, which will lead us to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the days of repentance and forgiveness.

What is significant about the month of Elul, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in a nutshell?

The origins of Elul as a month of special Divine grace and mercy go back to the time of Moses, in the year 2448 from creation (1313 BCE)—the first year after the Jewish people went out of Egypt.

Seven weeks after the exodus, the people of Israel received the Torah at Mount Sinai and entered into an eternal covenant with G-d as His chosen people. But just 40 days later, while Moses was still up on the mountain, they violated their special relationship with G-d by worshipping a golden calf. Upon descending from the mountain and witnessing their transgression, Moses smashed the two stone tablets on which G-d had inscribed the Ten Commandments; he then returned to Mount Sinai for a second 40 days to plead with G-d on Israel's behalf.

On the early morning of the 1st of Elul, Moses once again ascended Mount Sinai, taking with him the stone tablets he had hewn, by divine command, for G-d to re-inscribe the Ten Commandments. On the mountain, G-d allowed Moses to "see My back, but not My face" (which Maimonides interprets as a perception of G-d's reality but not His essence)—the closest any human being ever came to knowing G-d—and taught him the secret of His "Thirteen Attributes of Mercy" (Exodus 33:18-34:8).

For the third time, Moses remained on the mountain for 40 days, from the 1st of Elul until the 10th of Tishrei (Yom Kippur), during which time He obtained G-d's whole-hearted forgiveness and reconciliation with the people of Israel. Ever since, the month of Elul serves as the "month of Divine mercy and forgiveness."

The festival of Rosh Hashanah—the name means "Head of the Year"—is observed for two days beginning on Tishrei 1, the first day of the Jewish year. It is the anniversary of the creation of Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, and their first actions toward the realization of mankind's role in G-d's world.

Rosh Hashanah thus emphasizes the special relationship between G-d and humanity: our dependence upon G-d as our creator and sustainer, and G-d's dependence upon us as the ones who make His presence known and felt in His world. Each year on Rosh Hashanah, "all inhabitants of the world pass before G-d like a flock of sheep," and it is decreed in the heavenly court, "who shall live, and who shall die... who shall be impoverished, and who shall be enriched; who shall fall and who shall rise." But this is also the day we proclaim G-d King of the Universe. The Kabbalists teach that the continued existence of the universe is dependant upon the renewal of the divine desire for a world when we

accept G-d's kingship each year on Rosh Hashanah.

The central observance of Rosh Hashanah is the sounding of the shofar, the ram's horn, which represents the trumpet blast of a people's coronation of their king. The cry of the shofar is also a call to repentance; for Rosh Hashanah is also the anniversary of man's first sin and his repentance thereof, and serves as the first of the "Ten Days of Repentance" which culminate in Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Another significance of the shofar is to recall the Binding of Isaac which also occurred on Rosh Hashanah, in which a ram took Isaac's place as an offering to G-d; we evoke Abraham's readiness to sacrifice his son and plead that the merit of his deed should stand by us as we pray for a year of life, health and prosperity. Altogether, the shofar is sounded 100 times in the course of the Rosh Hashanah service.

May all of us have a sweet and happy New Year filled with peace and happiness. Amen.

Romiel Daniel, President.

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## Web-Based Maps of Bene Israel Villages and Cemeteries

Aylon Samson, our webmaster and contributor to our newsletters and events, has recently made public the two maps that he has been working on for the past four months during his free time. The first map, called "-Kar Villages," is based on Shirley Berry Isenberg's book "India's Bene Israel: A Comprehensive Inquiry and Sourcebook." It documents the villages and towns that have been settled by Bene Israel. These villages and towns are the source of the Bene Israel members' last names that end with -kar. Community members that would like to see where their last names originated can easily see the location of the village of origin on the map of India by clicking on the village name. In the cases when one village became source of several name variations, the map provides variations of last names that originated from the same village. For example, the last names Bamnolkar and Bamanolkar can be traced back to the village of Bamanoli.



The "-Kar Villages " map has been viewed by about 500 people so far. It can be found at:

<http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?hl=en&ie=UTF8&msa=0&msid=100727372378910613073.00044c08b13718fffe856&z=10>. For best viewing, the screen containing the map should be maximized. Clicking on the village names on the left side will point out the village location on the map. In addition, clicking on the green arrows on the map itself will specify the village name at that particular location. The map can be zoomed in by dragging the scale slider on the left side of the map up. In addition, clicking the Satellite and Terrain on the top of the map provide additional viewing options.

Few individuals contacted Aylon saying that not all of the villages specified on the map gave root to Bene Israel -kar names, although

Bene Israel members may have lived in some of these villages. This information will be added on the map as appropriate in the coming future.

The second map, titled "Jewish Cemeteries in India," is largely based on Isaac Solomon's eBook. This map not only provides the locations of Indian Jewish cemeteries on the map of India, but also includes pictures and descriptions. "Jewish Cemeteries in India" map can be found at <http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?hl=en&ie=UTF8&msa=0&msid=100727372378910613073.00044c407994de0ae1ce7&ll=18.985153777969955,72.83227443695068>. Those looking to locate their close ones' cemeteries on the map of India will find this map particularly useful. The map has had about 200 views so far, and was commended by Dr. Shalva Weil, who wrote many books and publications about the Jews of India, as well as other members of our community. The complete cemeteries photo album by Isaac Solomon's can be viewed at <http://picasaweb.google.com/Shapurkar>.



So far, the maps have been publicized by Daniel Reuben, who maintains the Bene Israel mailing list, and Bollyland.net, which is an online community for Indian Jews, as well as other individuals who forwarded the maps to interested parties.

Aylon's next project is to plot the various locations relevant to Bene Israel culture and history on the map of India. He would appreciate any input to construct this map, such as factual information, personal stories, memories and photos. All of this would be helpful to create this "virtual tour" of Bene Israel life in India. He's hoping that the personal stories associated with the various locations will make the new map come alive and enable those who view it go back in time and experience the community life. Please send any relevant information to [aylon@jewsofindia.org](mailto:aylon@jewsofindia.org).

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## Lavina Abraham Chewoolkar: Mother of the Year

Lavina Abraham Chewoolkar was honored as the Mother of the year by the Sephardic Jewish Center of Forest Hills, New York. Indeed, this is an honor to all the Bene Israel in the U.S., as we are still among the lesser known Jewish Communities worldwide.

The credit for keeping the Jewish homes in India goes to our women being ritualistic by nature. Traditions get passed on from one generation to another without any text book knowledge. No questions were asked of our elders as to why we followed a certain practice. As it is said, so it is done.

Dr. Carmella Kubersky, daughter of Lavina and George Abraham, paying a tribute to her mother said, "My mother became the unofficial ambassador of the Indian Jews. I grew up like her and my father proudly talks about our families in India, our traditions and customs. I saw my mother build a Jewish home—lighting the candles every Friday night, preparing for Kiddush, following all the holidays for which she would make the special foods.

Carmella shares her mother's values thus: "To her, making sure that my brother and I grew up in American society knowing our Indian Jewish culture was a priority. Our weddings were filled with Sephardic customs from the Henna ceremony through the wedding itself and for the first day of Sheva Berachot when I left my parents home. On that day my family gave us personal gifts to build our Jewish home—silver Kiddush cup, candlesticks, and others.

Lavina is known to welcome guests with a big smile and wide open arms. Passover Seders at their place have to be experienced. This spiritual legacy has been passed on to Carmella as she says that she can entertain many guests at a time without any problem.

Lavina is always kind and forgiving. Throughout her life, she has had a good word for everyone, even those who crossed her—she always found ways to explain someone's behavior, giving them the benefit of the doubt. She understood the importance of forgiving and giving love first.

Lavina is there for anyone seeking help. May it be a good occasion or not so good an occasion, you can always count on her to be there. She believes in staying connected with not only close relations but even distant ones. She talks to them often and visits them whenever she can. Lavina has faith in her Tehilim and in charity whenever anyone is sick. She will visit them in hospital and give them courage by relating personal stories. Carmella says: "I know I can count on her and call her anytime. I need her and she will be there. She will move mountains for me. I hope I can be there for my children the way she is there for me."

Mother of the Year is an honor she deserves a thousand times over. It is an honor she wears with a natural dignity and kindness and belief in the best of everyone.

She always thought of her son-in-law and her daughter-in-law as her own. Lavina and George Abraham are blessed with two children, Akiva and Carmella, and six grandchildren. May they grow from strength to strength and live to celebrate great-grandchildren.

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## Legacies (By Dr. Zimra Israel)

### Memories of the High Holy Days from Years Gone By

Each year as the High Holy Days come along and as we get ready to prepare to attend the Bene Israel Services at the Synagogue on 12<sup>th</sup> street in Manhattan, I am taken down memory lane and thoughts of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services during my childhood and teenage years come gushing by. The Jewish holidays that I spent in Mumbai with my joint family were particularly special and I cherish those days. As far back as I can remember, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services were held in

Bandra, a suburb of Mumbai, in the living room of Dr. E. Moses's (Noreen Daniel's grandfather) son Emmanuel Moses and his wife Hannah, who graciously let the suburban Mumbai Jewish community into their home. It was probably then that a group of Hebrew readers residing in the Mumbai suburbs, including my uncle, Issachar Samuel and my father, David Samuel came together and conducted High Holy Day services. This seems so very familiar! Over thirty years later, here I am in New York City with my husband Raymond Israel and a group of Bene Israels getting together and doing the same thing. Although members of the Bene Israel community from Mumbai, Pune, Ahmedabad and other Indian cities that have migrated to the U.S. via Israel or directly, and other local American Jewry participate in our New York Bene Israel services, the atmosphere is a sheer resemblance of the Bandra Jewish Congregation. Observant, yet practical, that's what I would sum us up as.

Just as we follow a tradition here in New York, the men sat on one side while the women on the other. My dad and uncle, the Pugavkar brothers as they were known in the community, were at the center of activity. I always had a front seat with my friend Shirley, my cousins Margaret, Dorothy and Aunt Naomi were in the rows behind. My mother Diana was usually with my brothers Joseph and Judah in the back. I could read a little Hebrew and Naomi aunty would help me follow but mostly I had the major Selichot melodies memorized. Later, when my brothers went to boarding school in Mt. Abu, they were always missed during these days.

Rosh Hashanah was important with halwa (sweet made from wheat and coconut milk) making being the main activity of each household. Every family had a special recipe that was a bit different from the other and one could sense some sort of an unofficial halwa competition with each one exhibiting their best culinary skills. We shared this special sweet with the family, friends and neighbors both Jewish and non-Jewish. In fact, almost 30 years later, my friends in Mumbai and I were reminiscing about the halwa and insisted on a demonstration from my mother resulting in a memorable halva-making party during my last visit. This is not a trivial undertaking with about 3 hours of constant stirring the pot, the need for several hands being an essential component of its success.

Erev and Yom Kippur, the most important days of the Jewish calendar were taken very seriously at our observant home. Puris (sweet puffs) were made by the bucketful and distributed to friends and relatives. Everyone wore white. I remember my grandma only left the house for Kippur services. These prayers and tunes are instilled into me and I would give anything to continue hearing these melodies year after year. Thanks to Romiel Daniel, David Galsurkar, Moshe Samson and others for making this possible in New York.

While the elders in the community fasted right through the end of Yom Kippur, as kids we fasted only for half the day. Soon after asking pardon we went over to my friend Shirley's house next door where we sat down on the floor and relished dal, rice and potato vegetable sent by their Brahmin Hindu friends from across their home. This was a real treat for us.

The Bandra Jewish Congregation was unique; everyone just met each other four to five times a year for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, but there was a feeling of closeness that is still present among those of us who grew up attending services there. There were patterns that were set up and you almost knew when someone would arrive and where each one would sit. Although every recitation or activity was bid upon to generate income for the congregation, the same person almost always chanted selected prayer portions each year. I remember the Arbith Selichot or Yishpokh being often recited by my uncle Issachar, Kol Nidre chanted by my father (Diamond) and the Nehilah chanted together and aloud by the Pugavkar brothers Issachar (my uncle) and Diamond (my father). Interestingly, my brothers Judah and Joseph read it together at the Kurla synagogue whenever possible, almost continuing a tradition. The Satamkars, Moses and Aaron Abraham and their extended families were integral members of the congregation; they kept the place alive by their responsive chants and along with their family members read most of the Aliyahs. Several younger congregants carried the Sefer Torah. Efrie Malekar was the official sermon giver and John Solomon the Secretary who would later make sure that everyone paid up before the High Holy days of the following year. I also remember our own Romiel Daniel reading the Yishpokh.

So each year as I meet Noreen and Romiel Daniel for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur Services in New York, vivid memories of services at the Bandra Jewish Congregation will keep coming. This legacy I would like to share with everyone and particularly with generations of Bene Israel that did not and will not have an opportunity to experience what I have.

P.S. Due to lack of space, further memories of the Bandra Prayer Hall article will appear in a future newsletter.

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## The Parel Bene Israel Prayer Hall

This prayer group was started in early 1930 by Hazzan Judah Shalom Penkar with the help of the brothers, Mordechai and Nathaniel Aaron Mazgaonkar, as well as Isaac Dandekar, in a small room in a building near Hindmata Cinema. When it was obvious that the place would be too small to accommodate the growing congregation, Mr. Shalom Abraham Chewoolkar graciously offered his apartment which was on the top floor of the building, conveniently located on Elphinstone Road, Parel.

On the first day of Selichoth on August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1930 which coincided with the 2<sup>nd</sup> of Elul 5690, the Prayer Hall at Parel started to function. Two large rooms were used, one for the men and the other for the women with a windowed wall in between. Mr. J. Cherry, an engineer in the local transport system, donated some tramcar benches to the Prayer Hall.

Mr. Shalom Abraham Chewoolkar was elected President and Mr. Jacob Ghosalkar was elected the Secretary/ Treasurer. The community flourished as many families moved to Kings Circle, Dadar, Shivaji Park and Mahim areas. Donations of more Sifrei Torah were received. Mr. David Shapurkar donated a beautiful Aron Hakodesh to house this treasure. Those who had mastery over the Hebrew language and who were familiar with the sequence of prayers and rituals for different festivals volunteered their services. The Bhastekar family was involved in the day-to-day maintenance of the Prayer Hall and lighting of the oil lamps. There was always a minyan for daily services. As there was no paid Hazzan, anyone who wished, got a chance to say the prayers. The most popular volunteer Hazzan was Mr. Shalom Isaac Kasookar who had a range of melodies for popular songs. His stamina and resounding melodies of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur prayers are a legend.

The shofar was blown so well by Mr. Daniel Satamkar that the glass "hundies" appeared to tremble. Most of the Parasha was read in his own style by Mr. Dancy Mazgaonkar, who taught his style and tunes to many of the younger members. Mr. Moses Rajpurkar conducted a Hebrew class for beginners and Bar Mitzvah students twice a week. The prayer hall also loaned big cooking utensils, crockery and cutlery to the members.

As the congregation grew, it became more and more cohesive. The joys and pains of any single family were deeply felt by every community member. Helping each other in every way became a byword of this congregation. A strong youth group emerged that was involved in various volunteer activities.

With the dramatic change that occurred in Israel after the Six Day War, an impetus was given to many congregants along with their brethren elsewhere in Mumbai and the surrounding villages to migrate to Israel and to other countries for a higher education and better prospects. Thus, the community started dwindling. By 1974, it became almost impossible to have a minyan even on Shabbat. In 1978, it was reluctantly decided to close the Prayer Hall.

Some of the Sifrei Torah were sent to Israel through the Jewish Agency. One silver Sefer Torah was given to Tifereth Israel Synagogue in Mumbai. Sifrei Haphtarah and all relevant records were handed over to Etz Hayim synagogue in Mumbai. All the furniture, utensils etc. were given to the Thane Synagogue. The monies were donated to Nirashrit fund for needy Bene Israel, and also to The Conference Education Fund for helping Bene Israel students.

In May 1978, the saga of this vibrant Bene Israel community in Parel, Mumbai after almost 48 years came to an end.

Some of the leading Hebrew readers of the Parel congregation made use of their talents even after the prayer hall stopped functioning. Mr. Shalom Isaac Kasookar became a Hazzan at the Magen Hassidim Synagogue in Mumbai and then in Ramle, Israel. Mr. Samuel Mendrekar became a Hazzan in Kiryat Gat, Israel. Moses Rajpurkar became a Hazzan in Yavneh, Israel. Shalom Abraham Chewoolkar who became a Hazzan of a community in Lod, helped out for some years with Congregation BINA in Toronto, Canada. Victor Abraham Chewoolkar and their sister Hannah Ezekiel Navgaonkar are still in Toronto and actively involved with the Bene Israel activities. George Abraham Chewoolkar resides in New York. He not only is active in the Bene Israel community in New York, but he makes it a point to

go to Toronto to participate in the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services for Congregation BINA, Toronto.

Freddy Abraham Chewoolkar lived in New Jersey and was active in the Jewish Community till he retired and moved to Israel.

It is so important to continue the religious practices from back home in whichever part of the world Hashem wants us to be. This is spiritual legacy we have inherited from our ancestors. It is our duty to pass it on to the next generation as far as we can.

About the author: Mr. Bension Abraham Chewoolkar is the son of Mr. Shalom Abraham Chewoolkar (Master) residing in Be'er Sheva, Israel. Large part of this valuable early history until the late forties was collected by him from information given by the older members of the Parel Congregation.

Article written by Bension Abraham Chewoolkar, Beersheva, Israel

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## Recipes from Noreen's Kitchen

### Apple Pulav

Every Jewish home, observant or not, makes sure to have sweetened apple to start their New Year. I thought of incorporating apples in the main course of our New Year Banquet.

#### Ingredients:

250 grams Basmati (long grain) rice  
3 tablespoons margarine  
350 grams sugar  
2 cinnamon Sticks  
5-7 cloves  
4-5 cardamoms  
2 dried bay leaves  
25 grams cashews, washed and broken into pieces  
10 grams almonds, soaked, skinned, and cut  
50 grams golden raisins, washed  
1 pinch saffron strands, soaked in ¼ cup water  
3 apples  
¼ teaspoon salt

#### Preparation:

Wash and drain the rice in a pot 2 to 3 hours before cooking. Heat a non-stick utensil on a medium flame and add the margarine. When it is hot, add cloves, cinnamon, cardamom and bay leaves. When they are slightly brown, add the washed rice and stir for 2-3 minutes. Add cashews, almonds, raisins and salt. Mix gently. Add water, which should be twice the quantity of rice. Cook until the rice is ready. When the rice is slightly cool, remove and spread it on to a big flat dish.

Peel the apples, remove the core and cut into 8 pieces each. Take 3 cups of water in a utensil and add the apple pieces. Cover it with a lid and steam for about 5 minutes. Drain them on a big strainer.

In another big non-stick pot, add the sugar and 3 cups of water, and heat it on a medium flame. Stir until the sugar is dissolved and the mixture is sticky. Add saffron and apple pieces. Mix and remove the pieces after a minute, when they start looking glazed. The sugar mixture should still be left in the big pot. Add rice from the plate into the sticky sugar solution and stir slightly. Rice will look as if it has extra water but it will set well as it cools. Add the cooked apple pieces to the rice while the rice is warm and serve with a spicy potato and peas vegetable or a meat curry.

Let us welcome the New Year with this delicious and sweet Apple Pulav.

## Baked Fish with Eggs

Fish is an essential dish of every traditional Jewish home for the Rosh Hashanah banquet. It depicts fertility in the family. It is customary to bake a fish with its head intact after cleaning it from the inside, implying that we should always be at the head of everything. This traditional recipe was used by my mother-in-law.

### Ingredients:

1 pound cod, pomfret, or tilapia filet  
4 extra large eggs  
4 tablespoons margarine  
4 big pink onions  
¼ teaspoon pepper powder  
1 teaspoon turmeric powder  
1 teaspoon sugar  
1 tablespoon lime juice  
3 green chilies  
1 ½ inch piece of ginger  
5 garlic cloves  
¼ cup coriander leaves  
¼ cup mint leaves  
Salt to taste

### Preparation:

Clean and cut the fish into large pieces. (For special occasions, leave it with the head.) Wash the fish pieces and rub with turmeric and pepper powders. Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Mince the onions, green chilies, ginger, and garlic. Beat the eggs. Dissolve the sugar in lime juice.

Heat the margarine in a non-stuck pan on a medium flame. When hot, fry the fish lightly on both sides. Remove from pan. In the same margarine, fry the onions until golden brown. Add the green chilies, ginger, garlic, coriander, mint, and a little salt and fry lightly. Remove from pan.

Take a flat baking dish and spread out half the fried onion mixture.

Arrange the fried pieces of fish on top. Spread the remaining onions on it and sprinkle with the sugared lime juice. Then spread the beaten eggs and cover the dish with foil.

Bake the fish for half an hour in the preheated oven. When eggs are yellowish brown, the dish is ready. Sprinkle with pepper powder and serve hot with warm bread rolls.

May your family increase in the coming year.

For more recipes please visit our online forum at: <http://www.jewsofindia.org/forums>

Click on the "Recipes" category.

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## Ohel Avraham Synagogue Opens in Dimona

After much effort and lots of work invested in the construction of the Ohel Avraham synagogue in Dimona, it opened its doors to the community on Sunday, August 31, 2008. Israel's Chief Sephardi Rabbi, Shlomo Amar, was in attendance. Additionally, other dignitaries such as Dimona's Rabbi and his deputies were in attendance. Also in attendance was Deputy Mayor Ofer Talker, who is one of the community representatives and initiators of the building of the synagogue. Ofer Talker is the first and only Indian deputy mayor in Israel. At 4 p.m., a parade with the Sifrei Torah from the old synagogue to the new one took place, followed by the dedication ceremony in the presence of the Chief Rabbi. Mincha prayers, Malida ceremony, and Mitzvah Meal took place after the dedication ceremony.

According to Nissim Moses, this is the 55<sup>th</sup> Bene Israel synagogue in Israel.



Photo courtesy of PhotoArmon. Translated from Hebrew by Aylon Samson

## Indians Celebrate Independence Day in Israel

More than seven hundred Indians from across the country turned up for the Independence day celebration in Israel.

India's ambassador to Israel Arun Kumar Singh hoisted the tri-color flag during the event which was also accompanied by a cultural program.

Malayalam songs in praise of India were sung by a women's group of Cochini Jews, and the Bollywood performance of Namaste France group enchanted the audience during the event.

The president of Central Organization of Indian Jews in Israel, Noah Massil, said that the large gathering "shows how much the Indian community loves and respects its country of origin where there is no sign of anti-Semitism."

The Indian Jewish community in Israel has been organizing a series of cultural programs across the country to celebrate 60 years of India's and Israel's independence and 15 years of diplomatic relations between them.

Source: <http://international.zeenews.com/inner1.asp?aid=202472&sid=HEL>

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## Indians Launch Political Party to Contest Municipal Elections in Israel

Indian Jews who have migrated to Israel over the years are for the first time attempting to try their luck at the hustings.

They have launched a political party, Shivtei Israel (Yachad), in the southern Israeli city of Be'er Sheva to contest the forthcoming municipal elections. They aim to win votes by focusing on issues related to the community, including a demand for a proper cricket ground for its youngsters.

"Indian presence in local politics has been minimal with me alone in the municipal council for the last five years. I have been pushing for such an initiative as we have the adequate strength to be heard on our own," Abraham Nagaonkar, who heads the party list, told PTI. "The community has shown a great deal of enthusiasm for the idea," he said.

More than 5,000 Indians have registered as party members, out of a total of about 10,000, in the city amid efforts by party leaders to muster support of other fringe groups comprising Moroccans, Tunisians and Ethiopian Jews.

"Our focus will be to push for better educational facilities in our area, getting more scholarships to promising students, open museums to preserve Indian cultural heritage," Nagaonkar said.

"People in the community have been complaining about poor maintenance of our synagogues, youngsters have been complaining about lack of employment, the teenagers about lack of cultural and sports facilities, including a cricket field from where they were recently ousted. If we manage a good presence in the municipality, we can achieve most of these goals," he said.

Source: Hindustan Times

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## India, Israel Explore New Partnerships in Culture and Education

India and Israel are exploring new partnerships in culture and education to consolidate bilateral ties.

An India-Israel Colloquium 'Preserving Cultural Identities in Today's World' on Wednesday probed the intellectual synergy between the two nations in the context of the historical relationship between the two countries.

"Israel and India are similar in many ways. Education has always been a priority both with the Jews and Indians. We are trying to create institutional links between institutes of higher learning in Israel and in India," Eli Belotsercovsky, deputy chief of mission, Embassy of Israel, told sources.

Belotsercovsky said a delegation of vice-chancellors of Indian universities visited Israel July and interfaced with their counterparts in the country.

"We will soon establish a chair of Israeli and Jewish studies in one of the universities in India. We are looking at Delhi since it is the seat of education," he said.

Israel has seven universities of which three have faculties of Indology. "In some, we teach Indian languages like Hindi, Telugu and Malayalam. We cannot teach other languages because we don't have teachers," the envoy explained.

Israelis, he said, identify with Indians, in three areas.

People who have been to India carry memories of its rich culture and colors back home. Every year, nearly 40,000 Israelis visit India.

Others know India from Bollywood movies which, he said, are very popular in Israel.

"Israeli cable television offers Zee TV as an Indian option which telecasts Hindi movies, including classics. A number of students from Israel come to India to study arts, culture and philosophy and vice-versa," Belotsercovsky said.

Israel is seeking to cooperate with India in education, tourism, spirituality and culture. "Like most educated Indians, Jews also believe that education is the most valuable asset that one can carry from

one place to another in case circumstances force them to migrate. The outlook has its origin in history and the birth of the Jewish nation," the envoy explained.

Two other areas include spirituality and tourism. "There is tremendous amount of interest in Israel towards India, which is considered a major spiritual centre. We are planning to boost tourism and bring more cultural performances from Israel to India," he said.

Addressing the colloquium, Ashok Vajpeyi, chairman of the Lalit Kala Akademi, quoted Jewish poet Yehuda Amichai saying the Jews were not a historical people, but a geological race, who have grown along with their land.

Indians too, Vajpeyi said, were not a historical people but a race that has grown over the centuries and with the progress of civilizations.

Putting the India-Israel ties in historical perspective, professor Himanshu Prabha Ray of Jawaharlal Nehru University traced the roots to the Ganizah Papers, old Jewish trade and religious accounts written in Hebrew, Arabic and Aramaic, which were stored in a synagogue in Fustat in the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

"It delves into Indo-Jewish trade links in context of Beniju, the trader from Tripoli who traded in spices and silks and his slave Bama, an Indian from the Carnatic coast," she said. Novelist Amitav Ghosh had interpreted the Ganizah Papers in his 1992 novel, "In An Antique Land."

The colloquium was addressed by Ashok Vajpeyi, Himanshu Prabha Ray, Benjamin Kedar, chairperson of the Israeli antiquity, and Aliza Shenhar, former rector of the University of Haifa, among others.

Source: India News

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## It's Indi-yeah for Israel

The concept is international, the venue is India and the contestants are Israelis!

But the production house which is looking for reality TV contestants from amongst the Israeli diaspora living in India finds it absolutely normal.

Tmira Yardeni, producer of the show, explains, "The show is like some of the reality shows on the Indian telly. So many of our youngsters come to India to live here, to explore the country."

It is big now and it is only fair to show it in Israel." But why India? "The reason is simple—India is the main goal for young Israelis nowadays. They want to come here to find out what's what and they go on their discovery trips around," Tmira adds. Do Israelis follow Indian TV? "Not really," comes Tmira's honest answer and she adds, "We just got to know that there is something like an Indian Idol on the telly here. However, there may be many reality shows in Israel, this is the first one to have India as a vital part of it. And we have a reason. We want to show what's hot with the Israeli youth now—India!"

The Israelis in various parts of India are busy auditioning these days. Ask the production team how they got hold of all these Israelis in India and they smile. "Social networking! We sent two people here to publicize and create an appropriate atmosphere and then came down here with the judges of the show," explains Tmira. And what is the show about?

"It's about singing. The one who sings best wins. We're looking for representatives of Israeli youth and we are open to finding them either here or back in Israel," says Gal Uchovsky, one of the judges on the show. Another judge Uargol adds, "It's a youthful show and we want to show all that youngsters are known for—courage, loads of attitude and life!"

How is the experience of shooting here in India? "People here are so lovable. Now that I have come to India, I realize why everybody back in Israel talks about India all the time. It is a beautiful place," says Michal Limor, a part of the production team. And what exactly do they find fascinating here? "Colors, food, people, rickshaws. And the fact that we are in India-yeah!" adds Limor.

Source: The Times of India

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## Living in an Indian Movie

Karin Shankar from Ashdod won the Indian beauty contest in Israel. The contest, reminiscent of an Indian movie, was held at community center Deevana in Ashdod. It started at 8 p.m. and continued with dance and other performances into the night. The new beauty queen was crowned at 1 a.m. Unfortunately, some drama took place behind the scenes. Cursing, swearing and threats were all present because one of the contestants that didn't advance to the finals felt she should have won.

Karin appears second from the left in the photograph below.



Yahalomit Basthikar received the first runner up title, Eden Yehuda received the second runner up title. Karin Charikar won the Miss Gracefulness title, Sanhav Avraham won Miss Photogenic and Meitar Charikar received the title of audience's favorite title.

**Source:** <http://www.mynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3588769,00.html>  
Translated from Hebrew by Aylon Samson

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## The Trophy is Ours!

In the beginning of September, a senior league soccer tournament was held in memory of Shlomo Maliankar. The tournament took place in Ofakim. Teams were present from Be'er Ya'akov, Dimona, Ofakim and others. This tournament takes place every year and players aged 33 and above participate. Most of the participants are from the Bene Israel community.

When one talks about soccer and Indians in Israel, you cannot go without mentioning Ofer Talkar. He is one of the biggest soccer players that came out of Ashdod and a part of the Bene Israel community. He managed to play in the biggest teams in Israel and even played in the Israeli national team. Whoever expected to see Talkar at the tournament got a fitting substitute, Oren Talkar, the brother of Ofer Talkar, who also played on the Ashdod senior team. Talkar, who stood out in the tournament, scored the first goal 15 minutes into the final game against the team from Be'er Ya'akov. Seventy minutes into the game, Be'er Ya'akov managed to tie the score from a penalty kick. The game ended in a tie and went into decision from penalty kicks from 11 meters (approximately 36 feet). The game then ended with the score of 4:2 in favor of the team from Ashdod, which took first place. Moments before the team returned home, the team captain nostalgically reminded to everyone about the team's previous win, many years ago. "This win is a completion of a full circle, because Ashdod's seniors won the same title 25 years ago at the same place, but as Ashdod's young team."



**Source:** <http://www.local.co.il/ashdod/6259/articles.htm>  
Translated from Hebrew by Aylon Samson

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## Upcoming Events

### High Holydays

The Indian Jewish Community will be conducting the High Holyday Services for the fourteenth consecutive year in 2008 as per the Bene Israel liturgy. The services will take place at the Village Temple, located at 33 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street (between Broadway and University Place).

The schedule is as follows:

Rosh Hashanah Eve                      Monday, September 29<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 p.m.  
Rosh Hashanah Day                      Tuesday, September 30<sup>th</sup>, at 8:00 a.m.

Yom Kippur Eve (Kol Nidre)              Wednesday, October 8<sup>th</sup>, at 6:00 p.m.  
Yom Kippur Day                              Thursday, October 9<sup>th</sup>, at 7:30 a.m.

Any person wishing to participate in the reading for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services may please contact the following:

Romiel Daniel	(718) 897-8718
David Galsurkar	(347) 713-6963
Moses Samson	(718) 969-8543
Sam Daniel	(212) 873-4261
Leslie Jacob	(718) 726-6136

The services are free. However expenses are incurred for the rent of the synagogue, and for the snacks provided on Rosh Hashanah and at the end of the Yom Kippur. Donations are welcome.

We are also planning to have a Memorial Service on Yom Kippur Day at approximately 2:30 p.m., where loved ones who have passed away are remembered. Please contact Romiel Daniel if you would like to give Hashkboth.

### Simchat Torah

The Simchat Torah celebration will take place on October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2008 from 4:00 p.m. onwards with prayer, singing, and dancing with the Torah. The celebration will take place at the Village Temple, located at 33 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street (between Broadway and University Place). Let the children and grandchildren come with you so that we have them entertained. They will also get a flavor of what the Bene Israel Simchat Torah celebration is all about. Enjoy delicious Indian vegetarian food and snacks as well as American snacks whilst we relishing the season of gladness.

The charge is \$15.00 per adult and \$7.00 for children below the age of 11 years. We will have surprise gifts for all children. Feel free to invite your friends and other interested individuals to join us on this occasion.

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## Announcements



Mazal tov to Eliab and Karissa Erulkar on the occasion of their marriage on June 29<sup>th</sup> 2008 in Nashville, Tennessee and on the occasion of renewing their marriage vows in the Bene Israel tradition on August 16<sup>th</sup> 2008 at Tiffin, Ohio.

Also mazal tov to Dr. Solomon and Dr. (Mrs.) Ruth Erulkar on the occasion of their son Eliab's wedding.



Mazal tov Aylon Samson and Evelina Khukhashvili on the occasion of their engagement on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. 2008 in New York.

Also mazal tov to Mr. Benjamin and Mrs. Mozel Samson, and Mr. Roman and Mrs. Leah Khukhashvili on the occasion of their son's and daughter's engagement.

Mazal tov to Daniel Moses and his wife Lilac on the birth of their son Har El. The boy was born on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2008 in Vancouver, Canada.

Also mazal tov to Nissim Moses on the birth of his grandson.

Mazal tov to Sarah Mapgaonkar and Salil Joshi on the birth of their son Neil on August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2008 in New Jersey.

Mazal tov to Mr. Ezra and Mrs. Ruby Mapgaonkar on becoming grandparents.

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## Rachel Gadkar: Gone but Not Forgotten

Rachel Gadkar was born in a village called Sakar near Alibag, in the Raigad district of Maharashtra. She grew up and was educated at a village called Akshi, and studied in a high school in Alibag.

After getting married to Mr. Abraham Joseph Gadkar, she continued her education and completed her Master of Arts and Bachelor of Education degrees.

Rachel Gadkar started her career as a teacher in the Ely Kadoorie School and retired from the same school. After spending most of her time with children, she wrote articles on subjects related to children. She wrote 50 one-act plays on different topics for women and children. All the one-act plays have been enacted onstage, with many of them winning awards from "Kumar Kala Kendra" and from "Little Theater." Some of the plays have also been broadcast on radio and screened on television.

She was the editor of the well known quarterly magazine of the Bene Israel community called "Shaili". A collection of her short stories called "Anubund" was been published by "Grandthali" publications. Her book "Bharatvasi Bene Israel," published in 2001, offers a lot of interesting and comprehensive information.

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## Obituaries

Dr. (Mrs.) Hannah Samson, wife of late General Jonathan Samson, passed away on August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008 at Dadar, Mumbai.

Condolences to their son Mr. Samuel Samson of San Francisco and daughter Mrs. Ruth Schmidt of North Carolina.

Mrs. Rachel Gadkar, Editor of the Marathi magazine "Shaili," passed away on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008 in Thane, Mumbai.

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## Submissions to the Newsletter

We would like all our members to send us articles of interest, birthdates or birth months, wedding anniversaries and any other information of interest to the community. Submissions are subject to editing for clarity and style. Please send newsletter submissions to [tapluna@jewsofindia.org](mailto:tapluna@jewsofindia.org) or [aylon@jewsofindia.org](mailto:aylon@jewsofindia.org).

To be included in our electronic mailing list, please send us a request to: [comments@jewsofindia.org](mailto:comments@jewsofindia.org)