

*Dearest Friends of BINA,*

Operation Cast Lead, the general elections in Israel and the US, the global financial crisis... we continue with our work as we constantly adapt to our changing reality - doubling next year's Mechina (pre-army program), launching a new educational initiative in the schools in Rishon L' Tzion, planning a pluralistic Mimouna in South Tel-Aviv, developing our summer program for Rabbinical students - to name just a few examples of the vast activity going on at BINA.

We are preparing for the celebratory launch of a new book (Babylon publishing) edited by historian, author and BINA educator Muki Tzur and architect Sharon Rotbard (author of "White City, Black City") on the untold - yet fascinating - stories of the South Tel-Aviv neighborhood of Shapira. The book presents a compilation of stories told by the neighborhood's early residents, collected by BINA volunteers over the course of the years BINA has been active in the neighborhood. This very high quality book will honor the neighborhood, its residents and their fascinating stories, on the occasion of Tel-Aviv's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Preliminary copies can be purchased through [binatak@tkz.co.il](mailto:binatak@tkz.co.il) .

BINA staff members Tal Shaked, Director of the Secular Yeshiva, and Noga Brenner Samia, Director of Programming, will be travelling to Los Angeles and San Francisco later this month. They look forward to connecting with all our friends on the West Coast. If you are in that area and are able to meet with them there, please send them an email to [fundtak@zahav.net.il](mailto:fundtak@zahav.net.il) - we would love to hear from you.

Eran Baruch,  
BINA

*March 2009.*  
*Adar 5769*

## BINA UPDATES:

### ● Volunteering with children in South Tel-Aviv

Ironi Hey high school is located in affluent North Tel-Aviv and draws its pupils from all over the city, including the Southern neighborhoods. The goal is integration and equal educational opportunities, however the reality is that the pupils from the underserved neighborhoods of South Tel-Aviv are far behind their North Tel-Aviv peers in academic achievements. Alexa from the Tikkun Olam Tel-Aviv program tells of her volunteer experience there:

*"When I arrived at Ironi Hey High School in northern Tel Aviv, I was met by another American woman, who was once inspired, as I am, to take on the challenge of bringing underprivileged students up to the level of their more fortunate peers. As I nervously waited for the bell to ring, signifying the start of my first class, she filled me in on her years of disappointment, failure, and overall cynicism toward the pupils she was hired to enliven. Of my six seniors, she warned that their test scores were all so far below average that there was little hope they would even pass my course, that their attendance was sporadic at best, and that their interest in English as a subject was nonexistent. She stated offhandedly that they would never receive decent jobs in the army or gain admittance to university anyway, and that simply a fifty percent attendance rate at each class meeting would make my work a success. To my pleasant surprise, all of my students arrived for the first day, and the second, and the third. I got to know them; we spoke about things that they wanted to speak about, that they were passionate about and that concerned them, the only rule being that it must be in English. They began to bring their own ideas of ways to practice, their own games, and their own drive, and we developed a mutual respect, admiration, and trust. Six months later, it is an anomaly if even one is absent. Moreover, I not only still work with my six original students, but I have tutored and mentored many of their friends. Their test scores are all above average, in their oral exam interviews each stated that English was their favorite subject in school, and all of them have a goal of what they want to eventually study in university. By caring about them, believing in them, and giving them confidence in themselves, their education experience has transformed into something inspiring for us all."*

---Alexa, Tikkun Olam Tel-Aviv participant



## ● Tu B'Shvat 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of the Secular Yeshiva



Tu B'shvat has special significance for BINA, as it is not only a birthday for the trees, but it is also the birthday of the Secular Yeshiva. This year we marked the Yeshiva's third anniversary, which has become not only a place of study for us, but a place for communal gatherings and for celebrating shabbatot and holidays. Before the Seder, all of the 100 or-so participants went outside to plant three fruit trees together in the back yard of the Yeshiva: one was planted by the Tikkun Olam international group to symbolize the connection between the Land of Israel and the People of Israel; one by the Garin Nahal group, whose emphasis is on social action, to symbolize deepening of roots in the community, and a third was planted by the Mechina (pre-army) program to symbolize deepening of study and intellectual enrichment. Yuli Tamir, Israel's Minister of Education, joined us for the event, as she has done every Tu b'Shvat since the Yeshiva's inception. She blessed the Yeshiva and BINA's work and shared with us a poem by Shimborska. Author, historian and BINA teacher Muki Tzur, led the Seder, peppering the evening with funny - and at times poignant - stories of the Halutzim (early pioneers) and their love of Eretz Yisrael. BINA educator, Dov Elboim, shared insights from the world of the Kabbalists in Tzefat, originators of the Tu b'Shvat Seder tradition, and Ari Elon led us in a brief study session from the Babylonian Talmud, Masechet Brachot. The celebration took us from the inception of Tu b'shvat in the time of the Mishna to its environmental, ecological significance today; from Israel to exile and back again, all the way to South Tel-Aviv. Happy Birthday!

---Dan Herman, past participant Tikkun Olam Tel-Aviv

## ● Tel-Aviv Mayor visits the Secular Yeshiva

On January 15<sup>th</sup>, 19 of Tevet, the Mayor of Tel-Aviv, Ron Huldai, paid a visit to the Secular Yeshiva, where he met with staff and students from each of BINA's programs. He told the story of the establishment of Gymnasia Herzliya in 1904, the first Hebrew High School in Israel, of which he was principal for five years until being elected mayor in 1998. Muki Tzur led us in a discussion of a poem by songwriter and playwright Aaron Ashman - Song of the Wanderer (Shirat Hanoded). Ashman was also the founder of the Bialik School in South Tel-Aviv, where many BINA program participants volunteer today. Student shared their experiences studying at the Yeshiva and volunteering in South Tel-Aviv.

*"I deeply appreciate all that is being done here, I think it is very important and I will do everything I can to support the Secular Yeshiva - its facility and its programs."*

--- Ron Huldai, mayor of Tel-Aviv



We invite you all to include a visit to the Secular Yeshiva the next time you are in Tel-Aviv.

Kol Tuv & Happy Purim!

Noga Brenner Samia and the BINA team

*To make a donation in support of BINA, please visit the [online giving section](#) of our website.*

Send us an email to [fundtak@zahav.net.il](mailto:fundtak@zahav.net.il)

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For a complete list, visit [www.bina.org.il](http://www.bina.org.il)

BINA is sponsored by the Kibbutz Movement and operates out of the registered Israeli non-profit - "Merchavim Hevra Lechinuch Vetarbut".