



# Chai Vekayam

## The Neve Shalom Synagogue Chai Members Newsletter

October 2012

### Shana Tova to You and your Family!!

Dear Chai members,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Neve Shalom Synagogue and the Jewish community in Suriname, I wish you and your families a Happy and Healthy New Year!! Your kindness and generosity is highly appreciated by all the members of the community.



The Simchat Torah Hakafot

Many positive things have happened this year and we hope that next year will be even better for our friends in the Jewish community of Suriname. Below are some highlights of 2012, including a letter from **Lilly Duym**, the Community Vice President.

### Chai Membership Update

The year 5772 came to an end in a very positive way. I would like to thank all the Chai members for their enormous financial and moral contribution in the past year. Thanks to your support we were able to complete some very important projects that make us all very proud.

The High Holidays services were very well attended. With the help of **Luki Robles**, our Chazzan **Jack van Niel** and our President **Jules Donk**, we had meaningful services.



The Simchat Torah Hakafot

We strongly benefited from last year's visit of our Chai members **Rose and Eddy Azijnman** from Canada. Eddy ensured that all the Sifrey Torah were neatly covered in white, the Aron Hakodesh was nicely cleaned and that all was ready for the High Holidays. In addition, Eddy and Rose taught some of our members how to bake Challahs, for all holidays. Lovely Rose and Eddy, thanks for the great contribution of your time and skills!



Our modest Sukkah

One of the most challenging projects last year was the fencing and restoring the old Ashkenazi cemetery, where the oldest graves are dating from the year 1716.

As you already know, the place was a centre for drug addicts and used as a dumping ground by some local residents. In July we started a major cleanup that needed the use of heavy equipment. At the same time we started to build a two meter high stone wall at the back of the cemetery and 60 cm of razor wire on top. Later, on November 21 we started with the fencing of the front, put a new iron gate and painted the whole fence. The results are beautiful.



Painting the cemetery front

We thank all our Chai members for their generous contributions. Special thanks go to the **Armand Van Alen** family who provided us with all the building materials such as cement, stones, special sharp sand, gravel and all the materials for the fencing. In addition to a very big discount, they arranged for us a special monthly payment schedule of 500 USD without interest! Without their special help we would have not been able to conclude this important project and allow our ancestors to lay in peace in their graves.



Placing a new Mezuzah at the Synagogue main entrance

Lastly, our office, the mahamad (our small community centre), the mikvah and restrooms inside and out, were all nicely restored and painted. The Synagogue was thoroughly washed and then painted. New mezuzot were placed and hopefully our buildings will stay in good condition for the next 10 years.

Thank you all and lots of Love,

Lilly Duym

## A Very Close Call

Paramaribo, Suriname's Capital city, is also known as the "**wooden city**" because of the prevalence of lovely wooden colonial structures that line its streets. Paramaribo was added to the **UNESCO World Heritage List** in 2002.

Some of the most beautiful buildings in the wooden city are our **Neve Shalom Synagogue** and the **Saint Peter and Paul Cathedral**.

The Cathedral is located in the city center and it is the biggest wooden structure in the Western hemisphere. Initially it was built as a Jewish theatre in 1809 and was owned by the La Parra family. Unfortunately it burned down in 1820. Construction of the cathedral began January 13th 1883. The church's interior is constructed from unpainted Surinamese cedar; its interior is absolutely stunning.



The Saint Peter and Paul Cathedral's Interior

Our biggest fear for these beautiful buildings is a fire. Fires consume these historic buildings so quickly. By the time the fire trucks normally arrive, in most cases there is not much left to be saved.

In early August 2012, a big fire started just opposite our Synagogue. Three historical wooden buildings were consumed as we watched the flames in horror. Luckily nothing happened to our Synagogue, but this close fire is a reminder of how vulnerable these magnificent buildings are.



Watching the fire from the Synagogue

## Visitors in our Community

Unfortunately few Jewish visitors are coming to Suriname. Every visitor brings us lots of joy and a connection with the Jewish world.

In the last couple of months we were blessed with the visit of some very interesting guests:

In early September we had **Rabbi Jacques Cukierkorn** from Kansas U.S.A. Rabbi Cukierkorn who was born in Brazil and is fluent in Spanish and Portuguese, is travelling extensively in small South American Jewish communities and that was his first visit to Suriname. Rabbi Cukierkorn conducted the first Shabbat service in September and we enjoyed very much his service and visit.



The Bracha ve Shalom Synagogue in the Jodensavanne

Our President, **Jules (Shul) Donk**, took Rabbi Cukierkorn and a few other guests to an insightful tour to the Jodensavanne (the Jewish Savannah). (You can read about the history of the Jodensavanne at: <http://www.suriname-jewish-community.com/our-history.html>).

They visited the remaining structure of the Bracha ve Shalom Synagogue (“Blessing and Peace” in Hebrew), built in 1685; the Beit Haim cemetery, which has of its estimated 900 burials, 462 tombstones which have been discovered and cleared from the jungle (with the oldest tombstone dating back to 1683 while the latest is from 1873);



The Beit Haim Cemetery in the Jodensavanne

The nearby Creole cemetery, and the Cassipora



The Creole Cemetery

Creek Cemetery, the oldest known Jewish cemetery in Suriname and in the Western Hemisphere, which lies hidden in the savannah jungle about five kilometers south of the Jodensavanne. 216 tombstones out of an estimate of over 400 burials in the cemetery have been discovered and cleared from that jungle. The oldest tombstone dates back to 1666 while the latest is from 1873.

Also visiting we have **Karin Jones**, an American Peace Corp volunteer who is working as a project implementation specialist (Women’s Business Group) in Suriname for six months (thanks Karin for your beautiful photos from the Jodensavanne) and last but not least our own **Baruch Lionarons**, a Suriname native who immigrated to Israel and lives with his family in Jerusalem but is visiting for few weeks.

Please come to visit us, it will be a lifetime experience!

## Comments

I’d like to thank Lilly Duym, Norma Steinberg and Karin Jones for their contribution to our newsletter.

Please let me know if you have any comments, suggestions or ideas on how to make this newsletter better. Please feel free to contact me at: [jks1111@rogers.com](mailto:jks1111@rogers.com)

As Ever, and wishing you Shana Tova,

Jacob Steinberg