



THE UNITED JEWISH CONGREGATION OF HONG KONG SHABBAT SHALOM

10– 11 February, 2006

13 Shevat, 5766

Parashat Beshalach
(Exodus 13:17–17:16)

Rabbi Michael Schwartz
Cantorial Soloist Julie Howard

D'var Torah by Rabbi Michael Schwartz

Shalom Chaverim,

Our UJC Jewish education program for children is called *Shorashim*, which means “roots.” Because the image of “roots” powerfully expresses what being connected to our Jewish heritage is all about, it is not surprising that our *Shorashim* program shares its name with many other Jewish institutions and programs. There is even a settlement in Israel called *Shorashim!*

The village of Shorashim in Israel's Lower Galilee was established by mainly North American immigrants in the early 1980's. Soon after the pioneering families moved in, they awoke one morning to a security alert: Several groups of people were advancing up the hill toward them from the neighboring Arab village. They seemed to be carrying weapons over their shoulders, maybe axes and sledgehammers, and they had others things delicately held in their hands – perhaps homemade bombs or Molotov cocktails. Were they coming to commit a *pogrom* in broad daylight?

As their Arab neighbors came closer, the Shorashim families tried to prepare for the worst. Their security volunteers took their defense positions. But then they noticed that the approaching villagers were actually carrying shovels and hoes, and that each one cradled a sapling in their hand.

The two communities greeted one another. “We have come to welcome you as our new neighbors.” said the village sheik. “Today is Tu B'Shevat, your day for planting trees, isn't it? We have come to help you plant these saplings.”

The two communities continue to work together to this very day, jointly running a program for Jewish and Arab teens in the area to meet one another and visit one another's villages. “Makom ba-Galil”, the education center eventually established at Shorashim, also runs a summer day camp for Jews and Arabs and recently instituted a Jewish-Arab youth “circus” that has thrilled audiences throughout the Galilee.

When our own “roots” are strong, we have the confidence and self-assurance to then branch out and share ourselves with others.

Explore your own “shorashim” this Tu B'Shevat:

A children's Tu B'Shevat seder will be held at 9:30 a.m. this Sunday morning in our Shorashim program, followed by the HK community hike departing at 10:00 a.m. from the JCC – ALL are invited!

Don't miss the opportunity to experience the mystical aspect to the holiday at our UJC Tu B'Shevat seder on Sunday night! Or, you can conduct your own seder at home with the “Tu B'Shevat Seder Home Guide”, which you can download at www.ujc.org.hk/shabbat.htm.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Michael

9th February, 2006