



Inside Brit Tzedek

BRIT TZEDEK V' SHALOM

JEWISH ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE & PEACE

NATIONAL ADVOCACY DAYS

Brit Tzedek goes to Washington

Brit Tzedek v' Shalom,

The Jewish Alliance for Justice and Peace, is a national organization of American Jews deeply committed to Israel's well-being through the achievement of a negotiated settlement to the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We are guided by the mitzvah, or obligation, to pursue peace and justice that is rooted in both secular and religious Jewish traditions. We believe the vast majority of Israelis and Palestinians long for an enduring peace and that security for Israel can only be achieved through the establishment of an economically and politically viable Palestinian state, necessitating an end to Israel's occupation of land acquired during the 1967 war and an end to Palestinian terrorism.

Sixty Brit Tzedek v' Shalom activists from all around the nation gathered in Washington, D.C. for our first National Advocacy Days on June 27-28, 2005. We were received warmly and respectfully, as a force to be reckoned with. Briefings were held on day one with a wide range of experienced advocates and policy makers. There was a shared feeling that despite significant challenges, the present moment represents a new window of opportunity for peace and progress in the Middle East.



The New York Delegation L to R: Frank Bamberger, Alison Koles (Leg. Asst. for Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-NY)), Robert Schloss, Marie Parham, Alison Pepper (Brit Tzedek Board member), Harry Jellinek, Albert Rosenblatt, Talia Peleg, Jack Alexander.

A consensus quickly emerged regarding a visible and effective advocacy campaign: 1) delegates need to visit the Hill regularly; 2) elected officials should

be visited in their home districts as often as possible; 3) members should speak in public or write letters on issues that concern us; and 4) we need to thank and publicly praise public officials when they stand with us. Many of the speakers remarked that our identity as a national Jewish organization is extremely important — especially since we can mobilize potential voters.

Senate and House offices were visited on day two and administration officials met with us in generally promising meetings. The leaders and staff members we met with often expressed great interest in our message. They were grateful to hear from a moderate Jewish peace group at a time when far-right and far-left advocates have been so vocal. Many also took notice of our large nationwide constituency and our rapid growth over a three-year period.

We take from our Advocacy Days the clear understanding that Brit Tzedek's message is one for which many American decision makers have been waiting. Congress is not a monolith and neither are the two parties. In the past, members have been inundated with aggressive policies many know are not quite right. We in the peace camp must find new and better ways to reach those on both sides of the aisle who want to see peace and justice in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There is presently greater openness in Congress and the Administration alike. We must exploit this openness aggressively and get across the fact that ours is, in fact, the mainstream position. ★

IN THIS ISSUE:

- National Advocacy Days, 1
- Activists Report, 1
- President's Letter, 2
- Let Brit Tzedek Grow, 2
- Our Grassroots Base, 2
- Chapter News, 3
- Executive Director Message, 3
- Tour Schedule 2005, 3
- Contribute, 4

ACTIVISTS SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES

"It was really thrilling to sit in the office of my Senator and have a staff member assure our delegation that we have a friend on our issues with the Senator." –Bloomington Chapter Chair Sue Swartz who met with Kim Savit, Senior Professional Staff Member for Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN), Chair of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

"Price agrees with us on every substantial issue pertaining to the Middle East. He will be a good friend to us when important legislation is at stake." – Board member Rabbi John Friedman who met with Rep. David Price (D-NC)

"It was rejuvenating to be able to meet with elected officials and advocate for issues that are so important to us, and which receive far too little attention. Further, it was wonderful to be surrounded by people who felt similarly, both within Brit Tzedek and among Washington insiders. Many elected officials were sympathetic to our position, caring for the well-being of Israel, but believing that Israel's well-being is best assured through a just peace between Israel and the Palestinians." – Rhode Island Chapter Co-chair, Daniel Orenstein, who met with Senator Lincoln Chafee (R-RI)



Dear Friends of Brit Tzedek,

After 38 years, no longer do Israelis live illegally on Palestinian land in Gaza. With the assistance of the “Quartet” (the US, the UN, the European Union and Russia), the pullout proceeded for the most part in an orderly manner, though of course the violence of the “Hill Youth” will preoccupy our thoughts for some time to come. The physical occupation of Gaza is at an end.

Without doubt we have turned a corner, thanks to the determination of the one man who could make it happen, Ariel Sharon, and the unexpected active cooperation proffered by the only other man who could make it happen, George Bush.

Brit Tzedek has had a small part in creating this new opportunity for peace. We have provided support to members of Congress who stood up against blind majority backing for Israeli government decisions and who have opposed support for the Palestinian Authority, right or

“After 38 years...The physical occupation of Gaza is at an end.”

wrong. We’ve given significant support to the administration as it actively re-engaged in the conflict, and this has been critical, for the backing of the American Jewish community is necessary to enable the administration and Congress to assist Israelis and Palestinians as they move forward toward peace.

With the gift of your time, financial support, or both, we will be able to make a much greater difference in the months ahead.

For the immediate future, the two sides, with Quartet assistance, will haggle over the seaport, the airport, water rights, and ease of passage in and out of Gaza. This may take months. At the same time, leaders on both sides are engaged in electioneering.

And, as all this is happening, Israel continues to establish ‘facts on the ground’ in the West Bank — expanded settlements, continued rapid construction of the security barrier around Jerusalem and Ariel, and internal expansion in East Jerusalem.

The stakes are very high. Either two sovereign nations co-existing side-by-side, or continued violence leading to unknown ends, will emerge.

Perhaps in the months ahead the outlines will already be clear.

**B■SHALOM,
MARCIA FREEDMAN**

President, Brit Tzedek v■Shalom



Let Brit Tzedek Grow

Brit Tzedek has had three terrific years, marked by unprecedented growth to a network of more than 30,000 supporters nationwide. Now we need to continue to grow—stronger, bolder, bigger, more influential and more confident in our ability to make a difference.



We need to grow our strength and influence among public policy makers, in Congress and the Administration alike. On a grass roots level, greater numbers of our people need to meet with Senators, Representatives and their staff on a more frequent basis. In particular, we must speak on an organized and regular basis with Jewish Congress people, members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and other potential allies to our cause. Each of us in concert with working teams of Brit Tzedek activists can find our ways of being heard.

Our goal is to strengthen our voice and communicate more confidently with the Administration. Our action alerts and petitions go to the White House on continuing basis; we must use every possible channel to let our policymakers know that standing with Israel means standing for peace. The President and his government — most notably Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice — have made clear that movement toward a viable, independent Palestinian state alongside Israel is the goal of the present U.S. government. We intend to exploit this opportunity to its fullest.

We must continue to grow our numbers of supporters. Brit Tzedek is striving to become a central voice for U.S. Jews, the majority of whom we already know believe in a negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli- Palestinian conflict. This can be done in many ways, starting with simply reaching out to friends, families, co-workers or neighbors on a one-to-one basis or in small groups — sharing our viewpoint, encouraging action and listening to concerns.

We have gotten exposure in local papers on a more consistent basis — members are writing op/eds and letters to the editor, media attention is being drawn by activities such as speaking tours and community mediation. We aim to expand these efforts, get our voices heard on radio and TV talk shows as well, such that our message becomes an integral part of the public debate, and Brit Tzedek becomes a go-to organization for information and commentary.

Finally, all of us need to grow to see ourselves personally as activists. Each of us, from those who speak to one or two friends, to those who sign petitions, to those who lead and organize chapters or go to Washington DC, each one of us is a Jewish activist for peace. It is the actions of each one of us individually that will and can make a difference. ★ **Diane Balsler**, *Chief Executive Officer*

MOVING FORWARD WITH OUR GRASSROOTS BASE

Grassroots organizing is central to Brit Tzedek’s work. We need a base of tens of thousands of people committed to our goals in order to change US policy. In Washington, DC our elected officials repeatedly reminded us of the central importance of organizing people in their districts.

As Brit Tzedek Chapter Coordinator, **Carinne Luck** acts as the liaison between the more than 30 local chapters and the national organization, helping us in our aim to balance a nationwide reach with an authentic grassroots structure.

With the assistance of Carinne and other members of our support staff, local Brit Tzedek chapters have held well over 200 meetings and educational events over the past year. The events have included national speaking tours, Listening Projects, home district advocacy meetings, and Jewish community outreach projects.

Because Carinne is in regular contact with all our chapter leaders, she serves as an essential two-way conduit for information, not only providing assistance but also receiving vital feedback on petitions, campaign messages, and the overall direction of the organization. One of the things that appeals to her most, in fact, is Brit Tzedek’s grassroots nature. “We encourage our volunteers to do the talking,” she says.

This year, we’ve seen thousands and thousands of volunteers getting the word out, changing minds, and acting as agents for peace. It’s hard work, and we’ve been lucky to have Carinne right there with us, helping us to achieve our goals — but as she herself points out, it’s really the volunteers who deserve the lion’s share of the credit. ★

There are now 31 Brit Tzedek chapters around the country with the newest chapter formed in Rhode Island this summer. In a coordinated nationwide effort, 20 Brit Tzedek chapters met with the home district offices of over 30 U.S. Senators and Representatives in the first bi-annual Home District Advocacy Initiative. The elected officials and their staff representatives were on the whole very responsive to Brit Tzedek's "Pro-Israel! Pro-Peace! Progress!" message, with many expressing interest in building a long-term relationship with chapter representatives. More than 60 activists participated in the training series. Brit Tzedek chapters gained extensive media attention through many op-eds, letters to the editor, and interviews of local leadership.

New York City Chapter Launches Young Adults Program
Following a successful meeting at this year's national conference, a group of post-college members of the NYC chapter launched the Young Adults program, with monthly discussions, happy hours and attendance at cultural events.

Boston Chapter Invited to Sit on the JCRC
The Boston chapter became the first Brit Tzedek chapter invited to the Jewish Community Relations Council. Chapter co-chair Beth Wasserman is on the JCRC's board and CEO Diane Balsler sits on the Israeli Roundtable Forum.

Austin Chapter Makes Splash
The Austin chapter became a real presence in the Jewish community, hosting well-attended events with former MK Naomi Chazan, a weekly teach-in at Austin's largest reform synagogue, and helping Austin become the largest US host city of the Voices for Peace teleconference.

Daniel Levy and Rafi Dajani Tour Midwest
Geneva Campaign Policy Director Daniel Levy and American Task Force for Palestine, Executive Director Rafi Dajani visited four chapters in five cities, Madison, Milwaukee, Chicago, Ann Arbor and Detroit to discuss "Where do we go from Gaza?" The tour was co-sponsored by the Union of Progressive Zionists, and received national and local media attention.

MESSAGE FROM ALIZA BECKER

Executive Director, Brit Tzedek v'Shalom



Following the Gaza-disengagement there is heated debate within Israel (especially with upcoming elections) and among Diaspora Jews about the future of Israeli-Palestinian relations. The withdrawal has changed the terms of debate in ways that we cannot truly begin to predict. There will be those who believe that Israel has done all it can. There are others, especially we in Brit Tzedek, who believe that Gaza must be the first step, not the last, towards a negotiated two-state solution.

Given our message of support for just such a solution, Brit Tzedek must take a strong position in shaping the debate. We need to encourage dialogue and discussion within the American Jewish community, in all venues: synagogues, Jewish federations, college campuses, town hall meetings, the Jewish media and the general media. We need to make the discussion of the future of peace efforts central to the discussion of Israel's future. We need to be an outspoken voice for positions such as:

- ★ "Gaza First" cannot be allowed to become "Gaza Last"
- ★ Settlement growth must be frozen, in keeping with the U.S.-sponsored Road Map to Peace to which Israel is committed
- ★ Further withdrawal from West Bank settlements is vital
- ★ Intensive efforts must be made to move both partners back to the negotiating table

Given the role the U.S. government plays in Israel, and the importance Israel has for Jews worldwide, this discussion must take center stage among American Jewry. There was a time not long ago when many of us may have felt hesitant to state our views, believing perhaps that there was no one to listen. If that was ever true, however, it certainly isn't true today. We can make it happen.

FEATURED SPEAKERS ■ FALL 2005

Brit Tzedek Sponsored Tours

Jeff Albert, PhD, is CEO and Co-Founder of the Aquaya Institute, a nonprofit dedicated to research, testing, and promotion of water resource innovations in the developing world. Jeff worked with the Israeli Water Commission from 1998-2001. Since 1997, he's been involved in a variety of Israeli-Palestinian water and environmental projects. Jeff, a Brit Tzedek Board Member will speak on the role of water and geography in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

San Francisco Bay Area, CA October 26 Seattle and Olympia, WA December TBD

Diane Balsler, new CEO of Brit Tzedek, was Executive Director of the Women's State-Wide Legislative Network and Alliance, founding and building the largest network representing women on public policy issues in Massachusetts. She will speak on "What American Jews can do to work towards peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."

Detroit, MI November 7 Ann Arbor, East Lansing and Kalamazoo, MI Date TBD

Yossi Beilin, head of Israel's Yachad party, formed to unite and reinvigorate the peace camp. He served in the Knesset for 11 years and held ministerial positions in three governments. In 2001, Mr. Beilin, Yasser Abed Rabbo and a team of Israelis and Palestinians successfully negotiated the Geneva Accord, a draft final status agreement. Co-architect of the Geneva Accord and former member of Knesset, Mr. Beilin will speak on the current political situation.

New York City October 23 Co-sponsored with Congregation B'nai Jeshurun

Breaking the Silence is an organization of former combat soldiers dedicated to highlighting the occupation's harmful impact on both Palestinians and Israelis. Avichay Sharon and Noam Chayut, former combat soldiers from the Israeli organization Breaking the Silence will speak and show photos from their service highlighting the harmful repercussions of the occupation on Israelis and Palestinians.

Madison, WI October 20 Chicago, IL October 23 Portland, OR October 26 Olympia, WA October 27 Seattle, WA October 30

Chaim Yavin, "the Walter Cronkite of Israeli TV," wrote, directed, produced and filmed a documentary on the impact of the occupation on Israeli politics and society. "Since 1967, we have been brutal conquerors, occupiers, suppressing another people," he says. "We have all created a situation that is horrific. It is enormous and complex and we all have a responsibility to find a solution that puts an end to the suffering of everyone." Yavin, Israeli journalist, film-maker and news anchor, will speak about his critically acclaimed five-part documentary, *Yoman Masa* (In the Land of the Settlers.)

New York City October 28 Co-sponsored with *Americans for Peace Now* and *Workmen's Circle*

For more information email chapter@btvshalom.org or visit www.btvshalom.org/director/tours_index.shtml.

Recent Speaker Tour

Marcia Freedman, President of Brit Tzedek v'Shalom, was one of the founders of the feminist movement in Israel. She was elected to the Knesset, serving from 1973-1977. She also was active in the Israeli peace movement, and helped to pioneer a network of services for women. Freedman is the author of, *Exile in the Promised Land*. Marcia spoke in Durham-Chapel Hill, NC and Atlanta, GA on *Beyond Gaza: The Role of American Jews*.

Jennifer Miller, daughter of U.S. State Department negotiator Aaron Miller, recently released her first book, *Inheriting the Holy Land*, about her perspective on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a young adult and alumni of Seeds of Peace. She addressed these issues last month in Washington DC.

CONTRIBUTE

Your tax-deductible membership contribution to Brit Tzedek v'Shalom will strengthen the voice of the American Jewish community in its call for a negotiated, two-state resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Help us continue to do our work in communities across the United States.

Make a donation now.

Make a secure donation online at www.btvshalom.org or send a check, payable to "Brit Tzedek," and mail to:

Brit Tzedek v'Shalom
11 East Adams Street
Suite 707
Chicago, Illinois 60603

שנה טובה לך ולמשפחתך מברית צדק ושלום

Happy New Year to you and your family
from Brit Tzedek v'Shalom

Look for info on upcoming 2006 Regional Conferences in Chicago, San Francisco, and Washington DC!

Brit Tzedek v'Shalom is funded in part by:

- ★ Ford Foundation/New Israel Fund ★ Nathan Cummings Foundation
- ★ Samuel Rubin Foundation ★ Obermayer Foundation
- ★ The Funding Exchange ★ Foundation for Middle East Peace

Editor: Alison Pepper
Contributors:
Carinne Luck, Emily Hauser
Designer: Lindsey Payne

This newsletter can be mailed from September 2005-January 2006
Return Service Requested



Brit Tzedek v'Shalom, the Jewish Alliance for Justice and Peace

11 East Adams, Suite 707
Chicago, IL 60603
(312) 341-1205
Fax: (312) 341-1206
info@btvshalom.org
www.btvshalom.org

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
CHICAGO, IL
PERMIT NO. 433