



PARTNERSHIP
2GETHER
YERUCHAM
MIAMI



Greater Miami Jewish Federation

MIAMI/YERUCHAM PARTNERSHIP

The Mission of the Miami/Yerucham Partnership is to leverage social, human and financial capital to inspire community engagement and development. Through investments and relationships, education, culture and community-building initiatives, we will foster a deepened commitment to Israel and the Jewish people, enriching the quality of life in our community.

Since 2007, the Jewish community of Miami has enjoyed a partnership with Yerucham, a Negev desert city with warm, wonderful people and a magnificent natural landscape. Yerucham is in the heart of the Negev desert and is central to Israel's national plan to develop the Negev region.

The Chairs of the Partnership are Stanley Weinstein in Miami and Dr. Revital Levi-Hevroni in Yerucham.

YERUCHAM FACTS

Size and location: 13-square-mile community in Israel's Ramat HaNegev region, approximately 20 miles southeast of Be'ersheva.

Origins: Founded in 1951 as a transit camp for new immigrants from Eastern Europe, and later from Morocco. In the 1990s, Yerucham absorbed hundreds of immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

Population:

- Approximately 10,000 people make their home in Yerucham
- 40% are age 19 and younger
- 50% come from North Africa
- 24% of the residents originate from the former Soviet Union
- 12% are from India
- 10% of the population is Haredi (ultra-Orthodox)

Leadership: Mayor Michael Biton was born and raised in Yerucham. Michael was the Director of Partnerships and Strategic Planning at the United Israel Appeal Federations Canada from 2005 to 2009, and the Regional Director for Be'ersheva with The Jewish Agency for Israel. He also served as the director of the local *matnas* (community center), worked as Director of Partnership 2000 and as the Israeli representative of the Canadian Jewish community.

Education: Many resources are invested in the development of formal education in Yerucham. The educational system includes dozens of preschools and daycare centers, five elementary schools, and a high school affiliated with the ORT network. A *Hesder yeshiva*, a post-high school Jewish studies program for men who are serving in the IDF, was founded over a decade ago, attracts students from all over the country and also has a special leadership program for Ethiopian young men. Another example of ways the community is meeting the needs of its residents: The *Kama* High School for Religious Girls has a curriculum that emphasizes math and science.

Employment: The main sources of employment are local and regional industries where approximately 1,170 people work. The local industry includes:

- Perrigo, cosmetics and pharmaceutical company
- Negev Ceramics, ceramic tile manufacturer
- Phoenicia Glassworks, wine and drinking glass manufacturer
- Ackerstein Industries, concrete paver manufacturer
- Brand Industries, steel container and construction manufacturer
- Phoenicia Industries, plastic bottle manufacturer
- Total T.K. Ltd., electronics assemblers
- Cunial Antonio Israel Ltd, clay shingles manufacturers

Tourism: Yerucham is blessed with wonderful tourist sites:

- Yerucham Lake Park – Almost 50 acres with a natural lake. It is the second largest lake in Israel. More than 200 species of birds can be found around the lake.
- Yerucham Crater – Beautiful geological erosion landformation east of Yerucham
- Yerucham Fortress – Ancient archeological site
- Na'ama Farm – Offers visitors an opportunity to see herds of goats, enjoy a petting corner, and harvest olives
- Cycling routes – Includes a 34km bicycle route around Yerucham and the lake.

Programs: Some of the programs the Greater Miami Jewish Federation has been involved with and supported during the partnership:

- *Atid Bamidbar* – A nonprofit organization that focuses on bridging cultural and social divides through open participation and the study of current issues using contemporary and traditional writing, as well as ancient texts sources
- *Ayalim Student Village* – Pre-army service year for students who volunteer in various areas including schools, childcare facilities, family centers and cultural activities
- *Cooks of Yerucham* – Empowers women from various ethnic groups who have low incomes – or none at all – by enabling them to host groups of visitors for meals at their homes, thereby increasing their income, preserving their ethnic traditions, developing tourism and providing enriching human Jewish experiences for the cooks and their guests alike
- *Diller Teen Fellows* – Partner with Miami's Center for the Advancement of Jewish Education (CAJE) on this international leadership program for Jewish teens. The year-long program is limited to 20 teens from Miami and 20 teens from Yerucham and includes skill-building, social justice activities, and a joint project in both Miami and Yerucham. Throughout the year, Diller Teens in North America and Israel participate in educational workshops and weekend retreats, and create and implement social service projects. Highlights also include a three-week Seminar in Israel, the Diller Teen International Leadership Congress, and a 10-day peer exchange in North America, during which North American communities host their Israel counterparts. The program develops future generations of leaders who will be dedicated to the Jewish people, Israel and community service
- *Iris Yerucham Hotel* – The Federation provided a loan to enable the building of the hotel
- *Looking Ahead Program* – Accompanies 30 at-risk young adults upon joining the IDF and until their release (and their transition to the organization's adult programs) to prevent their dropping out of army service and to empower them throughout their military service
- *Machsán 52* – A renovated warehouse where programming takes place and where the youth of Yerucham spend time creatively, receive enrichment programs, speak with experienced youth counselors, and participate in special events. The facility houses a recording studio, a drama group, a break-dance and hip-hop group, a radio group and a robotics team, as well as Café 52 – an income-generating café run by young adults that helps them develop a business mindset and sense of personal responsibility

- *Robotics Team* – Exposes young people to the fields of science and technology and encourages them to pursue these professions in the future, as well as fostering excellence, competitiveness and quality, and also bolstering their self-confidence and self-image
- *Shinshinim Young Emissary Program* –Brings two post-high school/pre-army 18-year-old Israelis who have been carefully screened and trained by The Jewish Agency for Israel to Miami. They serve as cultural emissaries and informal educators to Jewish day schools, afternoon and Sunday religious schools, youth groups and community organizations
- *Skilled Young Adults Program* – Workshops and job placement program for 45 young adults, 20-35 years old, usually with up to 12 years of schooling, unemployed or underemployed (i.e., employed in temporary jobs or jobs that offer no long-term employment horizon) and/or young adults at social risk in one or more of the following areas: low grasp of basic skills, lack of sources of income to achieve basic existential needs, lack of a vocational certificate or employment skills, lack of family support in financial or emotional terms
- *T'zvi-Tzeirim BeYerucham (Young People of Yerucham)* – Supports and initiates cultural, community and social enterprises for those ages 20-35. The participants are involved in social and creative endeavors that challenge and attract students from all over to settle in Yerucham
- *Volunteer Program* – Offered in partnership with Skilled Volunteers for Israel. For two weeks, volunteers lend their time and talents to local businesses and nonprofit organizations. In addition, they teach conversational English to Israeli adults for two or three evenings a week. Volunteer projects involve tasks such as writing, marketing, photography, social media and fundraising
- *Warm Home for Girls* – Provides a warm meal, enrichment programs, and assistance with homework for at-risk girls
- *Warm Home for Boys* – Provides therapeutic, group and social activities for at-risk boys. Empowers them and gives them ways to cope with the various challenges of adolescence
- *School Twinning* – Pairs Jewish day schools in Miami and schools in Yerucham, where the students correspond and work on joint projects
- *Yerucham Food Cooperative* – Enables low-income families to purchase food at reduced rates, saving 20%-40% off their monthly food bill. Families are referred by social service agencies and pay a nominal fee to join. About 200 families are members. Each family member must volunteer two hours monthly for the operation of the store
- *Youth Movements* – *Bnei Akiva*, *Tzofim* (scouts) and *Noar Oved* instill a sense of pride, leadership, involvement in the community and a stronger identity. These programs engage 300 children ages 10-18
- *Youth Futures in Yerucham* – A program of The Jewish Agency for Israel that improves the lives of 93 at-risk youth and their families. Struggling children and young teens in Yerucham, at risk of failing school, dropping out, or withdrawing from their family and community life, are referred to Youth Futures. With the help of mentors, they gain critical access to personal enrichment opportunities, close gaps in their personal achievement, and benefit from an empowering relationship with a positive adult role model in their lives

Articles and Links:

- *Jerusalem Post* Article, September 17, 2015 [“Between the Crater and the Lake Under the Stars”](#)
- October opinion article in *Ha'aretz* about Mayor Michael Biton and Yerucham
- Yediot Achronot Article, Shabbat Supplement, June 2015 [“Yerucham – An Awakening City”](#)
- JewishMiami.org [information](#) about Yerucham
- YouTube [video](#) about the Cohen Brothers and their liquor and wine factory in Yerucham
- [Article](#) on the Jewish Community Centers Association website highlights the strong relationship with the Matnas in Yerucham and the Michael-Ann Russell JCC
- *Jerusalem Post* Article, July 5, 2012, [“Yeroham Teen Wins 2nd in International Inventor Competition”](#)
- JewishMiami.org articles:
 - [Article](#) about the Robotics team
 - [Article](#) about the Robotics Team in Miami
 - [Article](#) about Partnership mission
 - [Q&A with Mayor Michael Biton](#)