



Chai Vekayam

The Neve Shalom Synagogue Chai Members Newsletter

April 2022

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 **Chag Sameach, a Happy and kosher Passover!!**

Preparing for Passover

Like last year, with the supply chain problems everywhere, we decided not to take chances with missing shipments because of ongoing delays in the ports. We used air freight to deliver the Matzot and sea shipment for the Kosher wine as we still had a few bottles of wine from last year's order. Ordering in advance and with the wonderful cooperation from our broker in Miami, we are so glad to inform that both shipments managed to arrive on time. By splitting the shipment we ensured that we will have our Passover products on time and in the most cost effective way.

As a result of the removal of the COVID-19 social gathering restrictions, this year we plan to have our community Seder with all our families and friends!

Since September 2020, the Surinamese dollar lost 66% of its value against the US dollar. As we buy our Matzot and Kosher wine in Miami, our cost increased by over

180% (from 7.4 to 20.73 SRD to buy 1 USD)!!

We are so grateful for the financial support of our Chai members. With your support we are able to buy our products. (The community is paying the air and sea transportation that is the major component of the cost).



The Matzot boxes have arrived from the airport on time

Rosh Hashanah (September 6 –8, 2021) and Yom Kippur (September 15 – 16, 2021)

During the High Holidays, the COVID-19 restrictions on public gathering forced us to limit the participation of family and friends in our services. The nightly curfew in the city of Paramaribo also made the situation complicated. We had to make the necessary adjustments and thanks to the pre planning of our Vice President Lilly Duym and the Board of Directors, we managed to have meaningful services. Special thanks to our Chazan (Cantor) Shul Donk and Jacques Reeder who led the services. We hope that next year, with COVID-19 more under control, we will be able to return to our traditional full time services with full attendance and our local friends and foreign guests.

As always, before Yom Kippur, the members gathered in the cemeteries to clean the graves and say prayers at the graves of their loved ones. It is such a beautiful tradition and we are so happy about how beautiful, well maintained and clean our cemeteries are. This is the time to thank Lilly again for her never ending energy, dedication and love to ensure that they are in such a great shape!



Cleaning the graves of loved ones before
Yom Kippur

Sukkot (September 20 – 27, 2021)

As always, we built the community Sukkah in front of the synagogue. Just like last year, because of the nightly curfew imposed on Paramaribo between 8pm to 5 am, the seating in the Sukkah was during daytime in order to make sure members could drive back home on time. Also, we had to limit the number of people sitting in the Sukkah so the social distancing rules were kept. We are so pleased that by following the rules, no one in the community got sick and we managed to enjoy each other's company in our beautifully decorated Sukkah.



The Sukkah on our Synagogue grounds

Hanukkah (November 28 – December 6, 2021)

Each family lit their own Menorah in the Mahamad (our community hall). The place was full of light during the dark days of shutdowns.



Lighting the Hanukkah candles in the Mahamad (our small community hall on the synagogue grounds)



Sukkot gave the Community an opportunity to meet and Socialize in the Sukkah after weeks of lockdown



Purim (March 16 – 17, 2022)

Purim is always an enjoyable time in the community. This year we focused on a fun event for the children.

The party included Purim stories told by Joan Duym, dinner and Karaoke and dancing with Caribbean flavour. It was a wonderful experience for all!!



Joan Duym telling Purim stories to the kids



Eva is taking a quiet dinner break during the Purim Festival



Isabel and Alexander are dressed like the Doctors in the Hospital during COVID-19 and Popia is dressed like Queen Ester

Israel's New Ambassador to Suriname Visited Our Community

After few years with no Israeli Ambassador to Suriname, we were honoured to host the new Israeli ambassador Mr. Itai Bar Dov, who is based at the Israeli Embassy in Panama. Mr. Bar Dov presented his credentials to the Surinamese President Mr. Chan Santokhi on Wednesday February 10th, 2022.

The night before, the community welcomed Ambassador Bar Dov and Ms Sharon Farhi, (the Director of Caribbean Affairs at the Israeli Embassy in Panama) to a dinner in a Paramaribo restaurant, attended by our community leadership and members.



Ambassador Itai Bar Dov receives a book about the History of the Suriname Jewish community

On Wednesday, after meeting with the President of Suriname, Ambassador Bar Dov and Ms Farhi arrived at our Neve Shalom synagogue compound. Their visit started by laying a wreath in front of the Holocaust Memorial Monument to the 104 Surinamese Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust.



From Right to Left: Jules Donk, President of our community, Ms Lilly Duym, VP of our community, Ambassador Itay Bar Dov and Director Sharon Farhi

After lunch meeting with representatives of the community, a presentation on the current archaeological research taking place at the Jodensavanne (see article below) was given by Mr. Samson and Ms Ganesh, two archaeological researchers who are part of the research team.

Thereafter, Ms Lilly Duym guided a tour in the synagogue and the premises.

For us, a small and isolated Jewish community, maintaining a good relationship with the state of Israel is so important. We had a wonderful relationship with the previous Israeli Ambassador, Moti Amihai Bivas. We are looking forward to a very close relationship with Ambassador Bar Dov and his team!



Ambassador Itai Bar Dov touring our Synagogue with our Vice President Ms Lilly Duym

The Visit of the New Surinamese Ambassador to Israel

Last week we were honoured to host the new Surinamese Ambassador to Israel, Mr. Stevanus Noordzee. Until now, Suriname had only an Honorary Consul in Israel. For such a small country, posting a full time Ambassador to Israel demonstrates the deep relationship that both countries have developed in the last few years!

Ambassador Nordzee was guided through the synagogue and grounds by our Vice President Ms Lilly Duym and our Treasurer and Board of Directors member, Mr. Jacques Reeder. We wish Ambassador Noordzee the best of luck in his new assignment!!



Ambassador Noordzee visiting the Holocaust Memorial monument with Ms Duym and Mr. Reeder



Ambassador Noordzee visiting our beautiful Neve Shalom synagogue

The Community Projects

New Funeral Home Roofs

Unfortunately the roofs of the Funeral Homes in both the active Sephardic and Ashkenazi cemeteries deteriorated over the years with many big holes as a result of rust. The rooms were flooded during the rainy season and made it very difficult to perform the Taharah - washing the body of the dead before burial takes place.

As you can see in the photos, we replaced the roofs and repainted the funeral homes and they look very respectable again.



Before....



...and after the roof replacements

Fixing the Cemeteries' Fences

As a result of attempted vandalism and weather related deterioration, sections of the cemeteries' fences had to be restored and repainted. This is a very expensive job as it had to be done in our three cemeteries: The Old Ashkenazi cemetery and the two active cemeteries: the Sephardic and Ashkenazi ones. This is an issue we have talked about in previous newsletters.

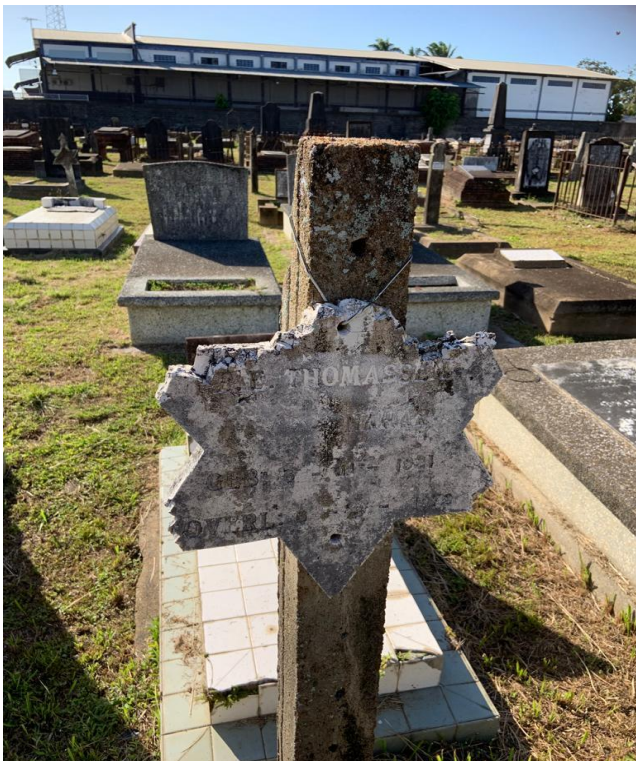


The clean-up of the cemetery fence before painting

The Cemeteries project

Our project is slowly moving forward. It was difficult to have workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, plus escalating costs of labour and aluminium combined with the torrential rain and floods during the rainy season in Suriname are forces that are out of our control. We were blessed to have Sherida Moniz who came for a holiday from the Netherlands and helped Lilly Duym with the work at the cemeteries every day. Thank you so much Sherida!

In the photos you can see an example of the broken and unreadable tomb stone of E.E. Thomassen-Nahar z"l whose family is no longer living in Suriname. We replaced it with a simple marker indicating the name, date of birth and date of death. True to our commitment that **every grave will have a name!**



The Broken and unreadable tombstone



Sherida Moniz Right and Lilly Duym Left placing the new marker of E.E. Thomassen-Nahar z"l 1921 – 1972

Unfortunately we incurred very high costs fixing deteriorating roofs and fences in our three cemeteries in Paramaribo.

Due to these higher costs we would be grateful if you could donate to help us cover some of the costs. Any donation will be welcome with much appreciation.

If you wish to help, please contact me at: surjewicom@gmail.com or dingoson3@gmail.com

Thank you so much for your generosity!

An Update on the Archeological Digging in the Jewish Savannah Jodensavanne

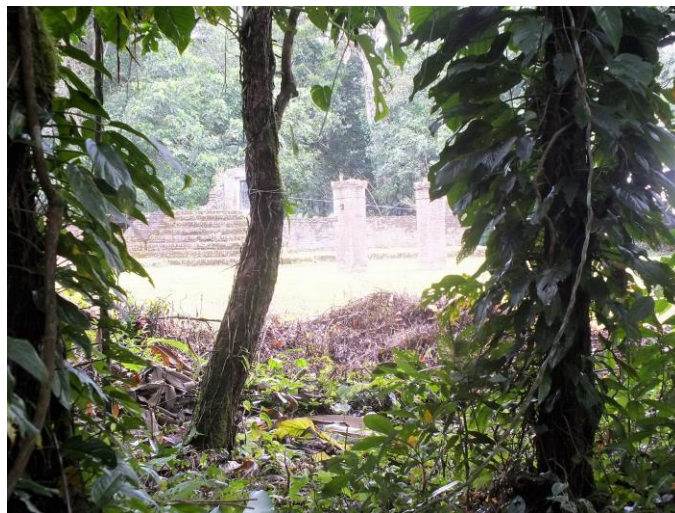
The archaeological work on the foundation of Huis de Meza (House of Meza in Dutch) is almost completed. They are waiting for some dry weather to fill the rest of the foundation with white savannah sand to make it more visible to the public.



Archaeologists are currently analysing the artefacts and writing a report on the excavation.



In the meantime, the archaeologists have started preparations for excavation of another brick foundation, of a house with a kitchen behind it. Both are hidden in the jungle. The foundation of the house is about 24 meters from Huis de Meza. Just like Huis de Meza, this house was destroyed by the big fire in September 1832 that reduced all the wooden buildings in the Jodensavanne to ashes. Only the synagogue, which was partly built with bricks, survived.



The ruins of the Bracha vs Shalom Synagogue as seen from the location of the House with a kitchen.

Marinus Don Visbeen Z”L

On November 28, 2021, our friend and Board of Directors member Marinus Arthur Visbeen Z”l passed away at the age of 79.

Don as we all knew him, was a Podiatrist and an avid historian researching the history of the Jews in Suriname. He published a book about this subject a couple of years ago.

He was a true gentleman and will be missed by all.



Marinus Visbeen z"l 13/8/1942 – 28/11/202

Final Comments

I'd like to thank Joan Duym, Lilly Duym and Stephen Fokké from the Jodensavanne Foundation Stichting Jodensavanne for their photos;

To Lilly Duym for her on-going support, to the Chai members for their donations and to Norma Hutchison-Steinberg for her editing of this newsletter. **Chag Same'ach!!**

Please feel free to contact me at:
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Jacob Steinberg