

Wildfire in Israel – 42 Candles

By Mor Green, Community Shlichah

*“A mountain green throughout the year
I dream and hope
To breath your winds like it used to be
To lie in your shadow-Carmel”
(a Hebrew song by Yoram Tahar-Lev)*

On the second candle of Hanukkah a tragedy happened in Israel. A wildfire started Thursday morning, December 2, on Mount Carmel and due to strong winds it spread quickly through nearby areas. The fire broke out near the Druze village of Usfiya and threatened a northern town and prison. It lasted four days and it's considered to be the worst wildfire in the nation's history. Forty-three people lost their lives and over 17,000 people were evacuated from their homes. Four million trees were destroyed, and many homes engulfed in the fire.

Forty-one of the 43 people who were killed were Prison Service cadets that were on their way to rescue inmates at a prison in the fire zone. They were killed when their bus was hit by a fallen tree. Some guards were burned alive inside the bus, while others died as they tried to flee.

A few hours after the fire started Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu



Mor Green

asked for foreign countries' help to fight the fire. At least 14 nations, including the Palestinian Authority and Turkey, responded to the plea for aid. Thirty planes from around the world worked alongside Israeli fighting teams and emergency crews in a concerted effort to stop the fire.

As an Israeli, it is difficult to hear about the tragedy in your

country without having the option to help. Most of my friends in Israel joined the teams up north and volunteered to help and stop the fire. Being as small country as it is, Israelis showed solidarity as much as possible and many people joined the effort to stop the fire. Sixteen-year-old Elad Riven lost his life while volunteering in battle against Carmel hills fire.

On the first day of the fire, I posted a video from youtube on my facebook wall that showed the damage from the fire and told the story of the 40 cadets who got killed. The video had the most horrible comments as “burn jews” and “die Zionists.” Unfortunately, it wasn't a surprise to read anti-Semitic comments. Human life is a sacred thing and it doesn't matter if you are Jewish, Muslim or Christian. I was happy to hear about the support that we received from the 14 other nations that only

thought about saving lives and put their differences aside.

JAFI-the Jewish Agency for Israel responded to the fire and its damage by opening camps on for kids in danger zone, locating 500-1000 shelter beds if needed for displaced families and offer-

ing support to victim families. Initial figures estimate the overall damage caused by the fire at \$450 million.

I am wishing you all a peaceful month and I hope we are facing better times. ☆



The burned out bus where the tragedy took place.

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SYNAGOGUES & CONGREGATIONS

Who is Temple Or Olam's Rabbi?

Back in 2003, six families got together to form the first Jewish community of Cabarrus County. Who knew that havurah would eventually become Temple Or Olam? Certainly, Barbara Thiede would not have predicted what would happen. Nevertheless, she has continued to grow along with the congregation that she helped found.

So who is our rabbi? Dr. Barbara Thiede holds a doctorate in history. She teaches in UNC Charlotte's Religious Studies Department where she provides courses on Tanakh, Judaism, the Holocaust, the history of anti-Semitism, and the role of women in Ancient Near-Eastern societies. She has published scholarly work in two languages, written children's plays and an outdoor drama, and she has worked as a peace activist. She is also a volunteer chaplain at Northeast Medical.

In 2006, Barbara was accepted into the ALEPH (Alliance for Jewish Renewal) Rabbinic Program, and this January 9 marks her ordination as rabbi. In addition, in 2012 she will receive her ordination as a spiritual direc-



Dr. Barbara Thiede

But what kind of leader is she? Well, she loves to sing, and she brings her love of music to every service she leads. She encourages the children to participate as much as possible, and she seems, at times, to always be surrounded by them. She makes our services participatory and accessible, particularly for those who have not had much congregational experience in their lives. She wants the face of Judaism to be a welcoming one, especially for interfaith families. Ginger Jensen, who has been a part of the congregation almost from the beginning, has this to say: “Barbara is a leader who



offers an amazing balance of touching people's hearts and minds. She has the scholarship to teach us history and theology, and the empathy to make us all feel part of a big family.”

Ultimately, it doesn't seem that we could ask for more.

Temple Or Olam serves University City, Harrisburg, and Cabarrus County, and is an independent congregation where almost-Rabbi Dr. Barbara Thiede leads two Shabbat services each month. For information on our services, please visit our website, www.or-olam.org and subscribe to our mailing list. You can also email us at info@or-olam.org, or call 704-720-7577. ☆

The guy's from Brooklyn.
He knows what he's doing.
You'll be happy.
'Nuff said.



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