



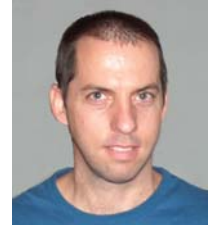
Yahadut Zmaneinu, Moreshet Ha'am

# YOZMA

AN ISRAELI JEWISH INITIATIVE IN MODI'IN



Shevat 5770  
February, 2010



Dear Friends.

My name is Yuval Newman and I am the newly-elected chairperson of YOZMA - The Center for Progressive Judaism in Modiin. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and my vision to you.

I grew up as a secular Israeli with a perception that Judaism was based on a lifestyle that was totally foreign to me. While we in Israel are surrounded by Jewish elements (the Hebrew language, a Jewish calendar, Jewish lifecycle events, Zionism etc.), Jewish identity in Israel is based solely on the Orthodox approach to these elements - despite the fact that the majority of Israelis have serious conflicts with the Orthodox world view.

In retrospect, I understand that my mistaken perception of Judaism - formed in the first years of my life - is what led to my decision to not get married in a Jewish ceremony. Following this decision, my partner Adi, and I decided to look for an "alternative" to the traditional marriage ceremony. That was how we met Rabbi Kinneret Shiryon, who opened a window for us to a Judaism that was relevant to our lives - Reform Judaism. Today I view this first meeting with Rabbi Kinneret as the beginning of the process of removing my "Orthodox-colored glasses". The way I see it - most of Israeli society still views Judaism the way that I did.

My goal is to remove these "Orthodox-colored glasses" from the eyes of the Israeli liberal Jewish society - in Israel and in Modi'in.

I see YOZMA as an organization for social change which aims to create an Israeli society based on the values of justice and morality in the spirit of Progressive Judaism. YOZMA is led by a committed volunteer leadership together with our rabbis and professional staff - all dedicated to YOZMA's goals.

In my position as chairperson, I intend to create a strategy for YOZMA, in which our main goal will be outreach to the greater Modi'in community in an effort to increase their awareness of their Jewish identity. In addition to this outreach, we will continue to foster YOZMA's own communities: the families of YOZMA's education system, our prayer community, the adult *Beit Midrash*, our youth, our social action volunteers, etc. - who together form the human basis for YOZMA's vision.

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**YOZMA - Judaism of Our Time, Heritage of Our People**

Hativat Givaati st. #31 P.O. Box 128 Modiin 71721 Israel  
Tel: +972-8-975-3461, Fax: +972-8-970-3551,

Web: <http://www.yozma.org.il>

Email: [yozma@yozma.org.il](mailto:yozma@yozma.org.il)



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I view the Jews in the Diaspora as our partners on this journey. I see Reform Judaism as Zionism's best ally in helping the State of Israel move forward into the future. Without the ideological infrastructure of the Reform movement, I fear that Israel - the home for all Jews wherever they may be - may lose its Jewish identity. Clear and meaningful support from Reform Jews abroad is critical to the success of the work we here in Israel are doing to build a social framework based on Reform Jewish values.

Together we will succeed in moving Israel forward towards a safer and better future.

Respectfully,

Yuval Newman  
Chairperson

YOZMA – The Center for Progressive Judaism in Modiin, Israel.

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