



Greater Miami Jewish Federation

MIAMI-YERUCHAM PARTNERSHIP

In June 2006, leadership from the Greater Miami Jewish Federation and the town of Yerucham, Israel, agreed to establish a long-term, mutually beneficial partnership. Yerucham is an oasis in the heart of the Negev Desert and is central to Israel's national plan to develop the Negev Region.

The mission of the Miami-Yerucham Partnership is to build meaningful relationships that will strengthen both communities, while fostering in individuals a love of Judaism, Israel and the Jewish people. The Partnership encourages people-to-people relationships, as well as connections and shared values between Miami and Yerucham. It also promotes supportive initiatives, connecting resources and expertise to achieve sustained spiritual, social, cultural and economic growth for both communities.

Partnership Leadership: Bobbie Higer, Steering Committee Chair, Miami; Ouri Liberti, Steering Committee Chair, Yerucham; Raquel Scheck, Israel & Overseas Committee Chair, Greater Miami Jewish Federation

YERUCHAM FACTS

Size and Location: Yerucham is a 13-square-mile community in Israel's Ramat HaNegev region, approximately 20 miles southeast of Beer Sheva.

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

Population: Approximately 9,400 people make their home in Yerucham. Of these residents, 40 percent are age 19 and younger; half came from North Africa; 24 percent originate from the former Soviet Union; and 12 percent are from India.

Leadership: Mayor is Amram Mitzna, a distinguished IDF general (retired), former Mayor of Haifa and former head of the Labor Party. In the three years since Mr. Mitzna was appointed Mayor, there has been a renewal in Yerucham and a focus toward improving quality of life for residents and laying the foundation for a solid future.

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 and 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 in Yerucham are local and regional industries where approximately 1,170 people are employed. These businesses include:

- **Ackerstein Industries**, a manufacturer of concrete pavers
- **Brand Industries**, a manufacturer of steel containers and construction materials
- **Careline/Agis**, a cosmetics and pharmaceutical company
- **Cunial Antonio Israel Ltd.**, a manufacturer of clay shingles
- **Negev Ceramics**, a manufacturer of ceramic tiles
- **Phoenicia Glassworks**, a manufacturer of wine and drinking glasses
- **Tempo Industries**, a manufacturer of plastic bottles
- **Total T.K. Ltd.**, an electronic assembly plant

Tourism: Yerucham is blessed with many wonderful natural and manmade sites of interest for residents and visitors:

- **Yerucham Lake Park**, a nearly 50-acre park with the second-largest lake in Israel, and a second, smaller lake. More than 200 species of birds can be found around the lake.
- **Large Crater**, a beautiful geological erosion land form, just east of Yerucham

- **Yerucham Fortress**, an ancient archeological site containing remnants of large Nabotean and Byzantine settlements, including terraced structures with unique porticos. The terraces testify to the existence of an agricultural settlement that served as a way-station along the ancient Spice Road. The Fortress overlooks Lake Yerucham on the road south toward Kibbutz Sde Boker.
- **Na'ama Farm**, which features herds of goats, a petting corner, olive trees and much more
- **Cycling routes**, including a 34-kilometer bicycle route around Yerucham and the lake

Miami-Yerucham Partnership Programs: The following programs receive assistance from or are key initiatives through the Miami-Yerucham Partnership:

- **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 and Jewish experiences for the cooks and their guests alike. A cookbook of recipes has recently been published.
- **Tzvi Group (Young People of Yerucham)** supports and initiates cultural, community and social enterprises for those ages 20 to 35. Participants are involved in social and creative endeavors which challenge and attract students from all over to settle in Yerucham.
- **Machsan 52** enables teen programming to take place in a “hip,” renovated warehouse where the youth of Yerucham can come and spend time creatively, receive enrichment programs, speak with experienced youth counselors, and participate in special events.
- Three youth movements – **Bnei Akiva**, **Tzofim (scouts)**, **Noar Oved** – instill a sense of pride, leadership, involvement in the community, as well as a stronger identity.
- **Warm Home for Girls** and **Warm Home for Boys** are separate facilities providing warm meals, enrichment programs and assistance with homework for at-risk youth.
- **School twinning** pairs Jewish Day Schools in Miami and schools in Yerucham, enabling students to correspond with one another and work on joint projects.

Unique Organizations in Yerucham:

- **Atid Bamidbar**, a non-profit organization that focuses on bridging cultural and social divides through open participation and the study of contemporary issues. Located in Yeroham but serving the entire Negev region, *Atid Bamidbar* works to empower the local community, connects diverse Negev communities around Jewish and Israeli culture, and promotes communal, cultural, educational and tourism initiatives.
- **Ayalim Student Village** is a settlement in the Negev that is comprised of young Israeli university students. The program aims to have a positive impact on Jewish community in the peripheral regions of Israel by offering young adults an exceptional opportunity to explore living in these areas before they are ready to make life-changing commitments.
- **Beyahad** is an outreach center staffed by young women from National Service. *Beyahad* organizes events for underserved youth and adults, offers seminars and guided tours, runs a youth hostel and more.
- **Golden Age Home** is a senior daycare center that meets the needs of seniors by providing paramedical treatments, group activities, lectures, morning and midday meals, and more.

**For more information about the Miami-Yerucham Partnership, contact Dahlia Bendavid,
Greater Miami Jewish Federation Director of Israel and Overseas,
at dbendavid@gmjf.org or 786.866.8445.**

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The Mission of the Greater Miami Jewish Federation is to mobilize human and financial resources to care for those in need, strengthen Jewish life and advance the unity, values and shared purpose of the Jewish people in Miami, in Israel and around the world.