

BROWARD JEWISH NEWS

Parkland congregation celebrates Israel while remembering MSD tragedy

By Sergio Carmona

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Lori Charnow shows her glass art ware during IsraelFest Mimouna 2019 at Congregation Kol Tikvah in Parkland. (Marta Mikulan Martin/Correspondent)

Congregation Kol Tikvah in Parkland celebrated Israel with various activities when it hosted IsraelFest Mimouna 2019.

A *mimouna* is a Moroccan ritual which is widely popular in Israel and celebrated the day after Passover as it marks the return to eating *hametz*

(leavened food forbidden to eat on Passover). The event at Kol Tikvah, which took place on April 28, the day after Passover, featured family friendly Israel activities for the congregation's religious school and early childhood center families, an assembly in the sanctuary for a remembrance of Israel's fallen soldiers, a *shuk* (marketplace) with Israeli vendors, an Israeli Beit Cafe with singer Rhonda Virgin performing Israeli songs as well as Turkish coffee and Middle Eastern delicacies, presentations on the history of Moroccan Jewry and the history of Israeli innovations, belly dancing and more.

The event, which was put together by the congregation's Association of Reform Zionists of America/Israel Committee, was a celebration of Israel's 70th birthday, which took place on April 2018. However, the milestone 70th anniversary of Israel's independence took place a couple of months after the shooting tragedy at nearby Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland that left 17 people dead.

"In Parkland, we didn't have the ability in any way shape or form to put together a program to fittingly express our love and appreciation for the State of Israel in the shadow of what happened on Feb. 14 of last year," said Rabbi Bradd Boxman, the congregation's spiritual leader. "It was the ARZA

Committee that said we shouldn't let the whole year go by without trying to honor Israel, so before she turns 71, we wanted to do a tribute to Israel. It was for her 70th, but right before her 71st."

Ilana Miller, a volunteer at the congregation, said regarding this event taking place 14 and a half months after the school shooting, "This is a way for us to find joy in life while not forgetting what happened as it's always with us."

"It's a way for us to embrace joy and happiness to celebrate Israel's 70 years of success."

Boxman noted that the event's reception was positive.

"The response that we got from everybody was that they loved it, and that they thought it was interactive and experiential."

Hedy Sussman, a co-chair for the ARZA/ Israel Committee, said regarding what she feels stood out at the event.

"There was the participation, the feeling of camaraderie, the fact that we were able to show Israel's accomplishments over the years and celebrating Israel's 70th birthday."

Boxman said the goal of this event was to get all aspects of the congregation involved in honoring Israel.

"We wanted to not just get our Israel committee involved, but also our men's club, sisterhood, youth group, religious school, early childhood center, adult committee. We wanted to get everyone to take a part in celebrating Israel."

Visit koltkivah.net or call 954-346-7878 for more information on the congregation.