

For Immediate Release

CONTACT(S): Rabbi Rona Shapiro, Congregation B'nai Jacob, 203-389-2111, rabbishapiro@bnaijacob.org or Deb Gaudette, debweb0312@sbcglobal.net

On, Sunday, June 5, the Jewish community will host **IsraelFest New Haven** on the JCC Campus in Woodbridge from 2-6pm. From 2-4pm there will be an Israeli carnival featuring food, educational booths, dancing, games and much more. The festival will feature a concert at 4pm with Yemen Blues, an extraordinary Israeli fusion band combining Middle Eastern and jazz influences. IsraelFest is free and open to the community.

IsraelFest, a collaboration of Greater New Haven synagogues and the Jewish Federation, also known as Keshet, unites the broader community in celebration of the anniversary of Israel's Independence. Rabbi Rona Shapiro of Congregation B'nai Jacob said that she "recalls wonderful Israel celebrations with her family in Cleveland, OH" and said she "looks forward to creating a special experience in New Haven."

IsraelFest will take place on Yom Yerushalayim, the day commemorating the reunification of Jerusalem in 1967. Different synagogues are preparing booths representing different cities in Israel – there will be a camel or donkey rides, a shuk (market) in which to purchase Israeli gift items and a Western Wall children can build, an archaeological dig, candle-making, TED talks, exhibits on Israeli technology, a participatory mural, henna and face-painting, Israeli dancing, and of course, delicious Israeli food. Many synagogues and individual donors are contributing to make this a fantastic day and to establish a new tradition in the Greater New Haven area.

Ravid Kahalani, the lead singer of Yemen Blues, says, "For me, [music] is stronger than the biggest army in the world and more powerful than the smartest politician ever." Yemen Blues is known for fusing Yemeni, African and jazz sounds with other international influences, such as funk and mambo. The band includes musicians from Uruguay, Israel and the United States; the lyrics are often in Arabic. Kahalani, a skinny 35-year old, with long dreadlocks, who never stops moving, is well-known internationally as a singer with the Idan Raichel Project. Time Out Chicago writes, "Quite simply, Yemen Blues is one of the most exciting bands in world music right now."

Shapiro says, "We are looking to have a great day, to celebrating everything wonderful about the modern state of Israel, and to strengthening our community's connection to Israel and to one another. We hope this day is the first of many IsraelFests to come."

The JCC is located at 360 Amity Road in Woodbridge. Admission is free and open to the community. There will be a charge for food and some activities. IsraelFest will be held rain or shine.