

UPF Israel: Interfaith Sukkat Shalom Unites Voices for Peace in Israel

Hod Ben-Zvi
September 21, 2026



Jerusalem, Israel – The Har-El Congregation in central Jerusalem hosted the fourth annual "Sukkat Shalom" (Tabernacle of Peace) interfaith gathering on September 29, 2026. Organized in close collaboration with UPF-Israel, the event brought together individuals from various faiths to share their visions for harmony and discuss ongoing projects aimed at promoting a culture of peace. This year's gathering was specially dedicated to marking the United Nations International Day of Peace, observed earlier in the month on September 21.



The event was organized and moderated by **Mrs. Talia Ben Dor**, who welcomed the diverse attendees with warm opening remarks. Following her introduction, **Cantor Evan Cohen** led the audience in uplifting communal singing, setting a harmonious and unified tone for the evening.

The first featured speaker, **Mr. Yaakov Noff**, chairman of the Har-El Congregation, provided a comprehensive historical overview of the festival of Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles). He elaborated on the ancient tradition of extending hospitality to pilgrims arriving in Jerusalem during the era of the Temple, while also highlighting the intimate historical and spiritual connection between Judaism and Christianity.

Following him, **Mr. Hod Ben Zvi**, chairman of UPF-Israel, shared inspiring reflections from the recent "Soccer for Peace" project, a joint initiative with UPF-San Marino held in late August. The initiative

brought 18 Jewish and Arab youths to the Republic of San Marino for a series of friendly soccer matches. Mr. Ben Zvi noted that this successful endeavor has brought renewed hope to the children and their families, demonstrating that even in an era of intense regional conflicts, actionable trust-building steps can be taken toward a better future.



Prof. Shelly Elkayam then took the floor, sharing the profound impact that UPF founders Rev. Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han have had on her life's work. As a young peace activist championing women's empowerment, she recalled how she found their guidance to focus on the family as the "school of love

and peace" to be a tremendous and groundbreaking concept.

The program continued with **Mr. Sefi Fischler**, director of public affairs for the Church of Scientology in Israel, who shared fond childhood memories of growing up in Jerusalem and discussed his extensive, ongoing efforts in the field of interfaith understanding. The gathering was further elevated by a moving prayer composed of biblical verses, beautifully delivered by **Rabbi Ada Zavidov**.



Addressing the complex realities of peacebuilding, **Prof. Eldad Pardo** spoke on the deep necessity of studying the difficult questions that arise when working toward interfaith and intercultural reconciliation. He emphasized that only genuine education and a true understanding of the "other" can bring about meaningful change in the relationships between different groups.

The roster of speakers also included a prominent Catholic priest, the president of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) Israel, a representative from the Religious Freedom Data Center, and other distinguished guests who shared their insights.

The inspiring gathering concluded in the joyful spirit of the holiday, as participants joined together in song and enjoyed festive refreshments, further deepening the bonds of friendship and mutual respect forged throughout the evening.