

Taking Care of Bees-ness

By Josefa Michaelson, Outreach Coordinator

Sabrina Malach knows her beeswax

Connecting a love of Jewish values learned at Leo Baeck with being both the resident beekeeper at Bela Farm and the Director of Community Outreach with Shores Jewish Environmental programs, alumna Sabrina Malach (1993) gives us the buzz on bees.

Crediting the education she received in a diverse community experience at LB, Sabrina has become a community organizer and beekeeper committed to creating programs that are pluralistic, inclusive and accessible to all. Working alongside Shores's Executive Director (and fellow LB alumna) Risa Allison Cooper, she is committed to the vision to foster a regional Jewish community that is actively committed to environmental sustainability. Working with bees and educating people about their importance is just one aspect of that vision.

"At Leo Baeck, I was given space and freedom to think for myself, which allowed for creative thinking," says Sabrina, adding that it directed her toward environmental studies and eventually beekeeping.

So what IS the buzz on bees?

"Bees are essential to the world and help ensure the reproduction and the survival of most flowering plants and more than 90% food crops that we depend on," says Sabrina. "People have to start thinking of bees every time they eat fruit, vegetables, coffee, chocolate, and realize that they help bring food to their tables."

Does she see a connection between Judaism and bees? "Honey is included in a number of our rituals (e.g. on Rosh Hashanah and newlyweds are supposed to eat challah with honey rather than salt for the first year of their marriage), honey is kosher even though its production is dependent on a non-kosher animal, and ancient Israelites were urban beekeepers. Archaeologists discovered a 3,000 year-old apiary

in the ancient city of Tel Rehov, and the centre of the Magen David is the same hexagonal shape as the honeycomb."

So how can we at LB play our part? "By turning our green spaces into pollinator habitats," suggests Sabrina, "through planting native, organic, pollinator-attracting plants without spraying them with pesticides that are lethal to bees."

Sounds pretty sweet to us. ■

