

Land of Grapevines

| Moshe Miller

In preparation for the Seder night, where the mitzvah of recounting the Exodus from Egypt revolves around the Four Cups of wine, Zman traveled to the largest and most historic winery in Eretz Yisrael to rediscover the land's 120-year legacy of commercial wine production in modern times, as well as its connection to the worlds of the past and the future



It was a beautiful, bright day in Zichron Ya'acov, a coastal town located at the southern end of the Carmel mountain range of *Eretz Yisrael*, about 18 miles south of Haifa. Escorted by a gentle sea breeze, we were greeted at the gate of Carmel Winery by Adam S. Montefiore. Montefiore, sometimes

called "the ambassador of Israeli wine," is Carmel's wine director and a pioneer in promoting Israeli wines within Israel and throughout the world.

The centerpiece of Zichron Ya'acov is a large winery owned by Carmel. There is another large Carmel winery in Rishon

LeZion, linked with Zichron Ya'acov by a common history. Carmel also operates two smaller, newer boutique wineries located close to the production vineyards.

Carmel is the largest wine producer in Israel, roughly twice as big as Barkan, which is number two. The tremendous scope of

the operations we saw on that perfect day at Zichron Ya'acov impressed us, but that was not the most fascinating aspect of the winery. Instead, it was the sense of living history, where old and new are seamlessly integrated, that imbued a mystique into the air. Mr. Montefiore, a man with a historical

pedigree himself (more on that later), led us on a journey of the senses and of the imagination as we toured Zichron Ya'acov's over-120-year-old winery buildings and wine cellars, exploring the actual birthplace of winemaking in *Eretz Yisrael* in modern times.

Wine figures prominently on *Pesach*, especially in the customs and rituals of the Seder night. In fact, a primary way to honor the *mitzvos* of *Kiddush* and the Four Cups is to choose high-quality wine. In the *Shulchan Aruch* (OC 472), the *Rema* says that even though red wine is preferable for the Seder, if the available white wine is of higher quality, then that is what should be used. The *Shulchan Aruch* also says that non-*mevushal* wine is preferred since it is of higher quality. The *Mishnah Berurah* points out that if the available *mevushal* wine is of higher quality, choose that one.

Whatever your choice of wine (or grape juice!) this *Pesach*, **Zman** invites you on a journey of discovery to the vineyards and wine vats of *Eretz Yisrael* that will enhance your appreciation of this timeless monarch of beverages. *Chag kasher v'sameach*, and next year in *Yerushalayim*!

The Baron and the First Olim

Adam Montefiore, who made aliyah from England as an adult, is a prominent figure in the world of kosher wines. After working at the Golan Heights winery in the 1990s, he became Carmel's "wine development director" about 12 years ago. He has been in the wine industry for over 30 years and writes a weekly column about wine for the *Jerusalem Post*.

Montefiore was a fitting person to introduce us to the winemaking history of Zichron Ya'acov. The wine industry here was started by Baron Edmond de Rothschild, a scion of one of the wealthiest and most famous philanthropic families of all time. And Adam Montefiore is a descendant of the nephew, and heir, of Sir Moses Montefiore—another celebrated Jew



Carmel's Wine Development Director Adam S. Montefiore welcomes *Zman* to the winery.

of the 19th century who also supported the Old Yishuv in *Eretz Yisrael*, as well as Jews around the world.

"Moshe Montefiore didn't have children," Montefiore explained. "He had 10 nephews, and his favorite nephew became his heir. This was Joseph Sebag-Montefiore, the son of Montefiore's sister, and he is my great-great-grandfather. Incidentally, Moshe Montefiore was also a brother-in-law of Nathan Mayer Rothschild [they married sisters -ed.], who was Baron Edmond's uncle."

Both Rothschild and Montefiore eagerly funded settlements in *Eretz Yisrael* and helped the small but growing Jewish community there.

Adam Montefiore told us of Zichron Ya'acov's humble beginnings:

The first settlement here was called Givat Zamarin. The immigrants came in 1882 from Romania. They were religious; they came here as idealists if you like—they were on a dream. They didn't know how to work agriculturally.

The first things you plant to feed your family when you come to a new country are wheat and potatoes. But we know from Tanach and other sources that wheat grows in the south of Eretz Yisrael, and potatoes are not from the area, so these crops didn't grow. This is a very stony area with lots of limestone.



תנו כבוד לתורה

JOIN GEDOLEI YISROEL, CHASHUVA RABBANIM, MAGGIDEI SHIUR & DIRSHU PARTICIPANTS IN CELEBRATING THE SIYUM OF MISHNAH BERURAH CHELEK ALEPH OF THE SECOND CYCLE OF DAF HAYOMI B'HALACHA.

כ"ד ניסן תשע"ו / MONDAY, MAY 2, 2016
 OHEL RIVKA HALL / 181 PENNINGTON AVENUE, PASSAIC, NJ
 RECEPTION: 7:45 PM / DINNER & PROGRAM: 8:15 PM

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