

Subject: TES Israel Trip Travelogue, Days 7-9

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December 21, 2017

**Special Announcement**  
from Temple Emek Shalom  
541-488-2909

TES Israel Trip Travelogue from Rabbi Jackie Brodsky, December 9-22, 2017, with segments from other trip members, plus photos

### **Days 7-9**

#### **Day 7**

"We left the heights and antiquity of Jerusalem to venture into the stark quiet and dramatic beauty of the desert. Suddenly we found ourselves in a biblical landscape as we passed Bedouin communities and majestic date groves, amidst rocks and sand and silence. The mystique was suddenly broken as we were stopped by a demonstration and roadblock of 3000 workers recently laid off by Teva Pharmaceutical Company. It seemed to go on forever but it was only 20 minutes. We arrived at the tomb of Ben Gurion (and his wife, Paula) the beloved head of the pre-state government and first Prime Minister of Israel. He was also the great visionary and motivator for the development of the Negev and the concept of the State of Israel as the refuge for Jews from all over the world - he even foretold the

ingathering of the great masses from the Soviet Union. The actual place of his burial gives those of us paying tribute an extraordinary view of the Tzin wilderness, with ibex skipping around. Ben Gurion knew that groups such as ours (as well as thousands of Israeli families on Hanukkah break) would visit his grave, see this view, and perhaps be inspired to start their own kibbutz in the desert.

We stopped again to take in the view of the breathtaking Machteysh Ramon. It looks like a massive crater, though as our guide Bill reminded us many times, "It's not a crater; it's a machteysh!" - meaning a mountain which has collapsed. This is a unique geological phenomenon that one can only find in Israel.

Our destination today was Kibbutz Ketura, Bill's home kibbutz and the beloved site of past Emek Shalom trips. We spent the next 24 hours hiking up to the giant Hanukkiah on top of the mountain behind the kibbutz, meditating on rooftops, learning about the kibbutz through meeting members and hearing their stories, and eating a wonderful barbecue dinner outside."

## **Day 8**

"One of my favorite activities was the morning hike at Kibbutz Ketura, we hiked to the very top of the mountain. A group of us started off after breakfast (thankfully they had a fabulous cappuccino machine that got me started off on the right foot).

All set with sunscreen, a hat, my hiking shoes and water, up we went! It was a bit daunting to look to the very top, but I was excited to get my heart rate up and experience nature - a very different type of nature than I am used to. I have never seen such an expansive desert. It wasn't just a hike as our surroundings were so unique and foreign to anything I have ever hiked. I counted a total of 3 trees (these trees just need water once a year to survive). It was a new beautiful.

Of course, Bill (our wonderful guide), entertained us with stories.... We saw the hut that was built in between the mountains by the teenagers when they needed a place to escape the Kibbutz. They bring mattresses, a stove etc. their version of running away from home! At the very top is the menorah (huge barrels that light up the night sky), that the kids of the kibbutz light every night. Yes, the children climb up and back down at dusk each night to light for the community.

After an hour we reached the top. Rocks are carefully arranged to spell names and sayings. We can see two other kibbutzs as well. The expansive orchard of date trees line the border with Jordan. It was very peaceful.

I learned the desert is where you are supposed to read the Torah. The desert is open and anyone can join. It is peaceful with no distractions.

Open, empty and ready to receive." -Karen Kreimeier

After this we went to Eilat where we enjoyed some free time including lunch along the boardwalk. We even had time to go for a super-pleasant boat ride on the Red Sea where we drank Goldstar, listened to U2, and gazed out at four countries at

once: Israel, Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. The weather has been amazing everywhere we've gone - in Eilat it was in the low 80s and some of us swam in the Red Sea."

On the hike



Cruising the Red Sea



Day 9

"First stop: Neot Smadar kibbutz and winery- which was so much more!...an artist collective, an intentional and experimental living community, a winery, and place where experimental building techniques have been created and implemented into the most amazing structures!

*From Sasha Borenstein:* "On Sunday morning we made our way to a neighboring kibbutz, Ne'ot Smadar. This kibbutz was founded by a group of people who hold the principles of intentional, thoughtful living and strong group communication and consensus building as a central part of their everyday life. Our hostess, Shulie, explained how the community created their art studios together that are ecologically and esthetically original and inventive. She also told us how the community supports each individual in learning to problem solve and live together. She spoke about how when she has to work through a thorny problem, she asks several kibbutz members to listen to her thoughts, reflect their ideas back to her and then sifts through that input overnight to draw her own conclusions and take action. What a fine example of living Mussar. "

How could we not stop at Carolyn Mandell's former hometown Omer as we made our way back north? She shared with us the background about the town and its highlights and her favorite places there. At the Magen Abraham Conservative synagogue which was Carolyn and Gerry's beloved spiritual home for many years, we were met by both the outgoing and incoming rabbis as well as several leaders of the community. BTW their new rabbi is a young woman who was born in Israel and got her inspiration for becoming a rabbi when she worked as an intern in the community. We learned about their many active outreach programs for day care for children, for disabled, and for bar and bat mitzvahs. We also toured their bomb shelter, a stark reminder of life anywhere within firing distance of the Gaza border in Israel.

We then headed for our last hotel on this wonderful tour, the idyllic Erin Geri Kibbutz Hotel on the Dead Sea where we had a lovely dinner and rested up for our day tomorrow,"

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