

Subject: TES Israel Trip Travelogue, Days 10-11

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

Days 10-11

Day 10

(NOTE: According to Josephus, the siege of Masada by troops of the Roman Empire at the end of the First Jewish-Roman War ended in 73-74 CE with the mass suicide of 960 people, the rebels and their families hiding there.)

We started out our day ascending Masada- half of us climbed and the other half rode the cable car. Once we were united on top, the story was related to us of the famous tragic struggle here.

Paul Albertson shares: "I observed it from a few perspectives - historical (Herod the Great), military strategy (security & defense), and religious (zealots' desire to preserve the "last spark"). I was particularly moved by what I imagined was a horrific discussion among the zealots, as they agreed upon their suicide pact as the Romans undeniably advanced."

Harvey Meier writes: "Masada,, Peaceful, quiet, exhilarating, inspirational... even though it was a place of tragedy, it was full of life. I was really moved by the bat mitzvah celebration that was being held which was a celebration of life ... I even asked my daughter to suggest her son come there for a bar mitzvah."

Rabbi Jackie adds: "In one of the small rooms atop Masada a sofer (Torah scribe) had made an office and was writing a Torah scroll which had been specifically commissioned to be written atop Masada. He was very friendly and spoke with some of us, especially Sasha, and even gave Bari a paper with her and Steve's names... written in Hebrew, of course!

We then went to the Dead Sea Spa where we had the options to float in the sea, cover ourselves with mud, soak in the spa mineral water pools or just watch the fun. This (as always) was a super fun and relaxing experience!

Evening program with Eliyah McLean from Abrahamic Reunion/Jerusalem Peacemakers. He is an Orthodox Jew who has co-led and co-organized (with Muslim and Christian leaders) monthly initiatives especially in Jerusalem where for several years he gathered a group to encircle Jerusalem and give it a hug! He also leads tours to Hebron!"

From Miriam Schiffman: "Our meeting with Eliahu McLean (who describes himself as from a hippy background with no religious observance until he went to a friend's bar mitzvah!) was very interesting because his approach as a peacemaker was not political but embracing of Israelis of all backgrounds and religions, including the many denominations of Jews here. He discussed the concept of "The tyranny of certitude," coined by David Hartmann, referring to the trap of those on each side of the conflict who are mentally stuck as a victim. It's hard to make connections between such different groups and people but he's doing it, working beyond the political radar.

When someone asked what we could do about this struggle from our home in the United States, he suggested we concentrated on working amongst our own diverse groups, i.e, between African Americans and First Nation people, and whites, etc, and also work with Jews on college campuses. In other words he reminds us that we, too, have a lot of this kind of work to do on our own problems. We are all sharing our countries and we all have to work together.

The last time I was here in Israel I felt I had no say here, but now I see my role differently."

Marty Towbin adds some thoughts:

- "It is interesting how he lives in a predominantly Arab town and finds likeminded people on the Palestinian side to work with -this helps us to erase our own stereotypes.
- (Eliyahu teaches us that) our "tikkun olam" (healing of the world) starts with one on one interactions; it's especially important and hopeful to work with someone outside of our community
- We don't have to move to Gaza to do this work. We need to find the "Other" people to connect with who live among us upon whom we would probably otherwise impose stereotypes.

Masada



Nidal, our bus driver



Floating in the Dead Sea



Day 11

Waterfalls and Wildlife/the Top Archeological find of the 20th Century /and Planting our Gratitude and Hopes (before we head home)
(from Jewish Virtual Library) "Located on the Dead Sea's western shore, Ein Gedi National Park ("spring of the goat") is a desert oasis with waterfalls, pools of water and two large streams. It is a hiker's paradise with beautiful foliage, exotic birds and a range of wildlife, including rabbits, deer, ibex and leopards (we didn't see any leopards, but we saw many groups of hyraxes!)... It was 3,000 years ago here that David hid from King Saul. When David surprised the King and spared his life

after finding him unarmed, Saul said David would succeed him on the throne."
Some of us dunked in the waterfall here...chilling but irresistible!

Bill in the waterfall



From here we toured the inspirational archeological site at Qumran, uncovered by a Bedouin shepherd looking for his flock in 1947 (at the same time the State of Israel was being proclaimed!). This was the hiding site of the Dead Sea Scrolls of the sect known as the Essenes from the days of the Second Temple. The site presented us with many learning options...a video, a museum, as well as many of the actual archeological digs. There are 12 known major caves and thousands of fragments found here that collectively became the oldest known copy of the Hebrew Scriptures (except for the Book of Esther!), thereby verifying their authenticity back 2000 years ago.

In the evening we went to Neot Kedumim the amazing biblical nature reserve (the size of Central Park!) gifted to the dedicated Reuveni family on behalf of the country by David Ben-Gurion. After touring and hearing their story and seeing much of the miraculous work done there, we each were invited to plant a tree.

Some thoughts by Dan Sternberg:

" I woke up this morning thinking of the little tree I planted during our last day of the trip--a little delicate being that can thrive and grow, no matter what the weather or the environment. I felt like I would like to return to Israel a number of years from now to see how the tree had grown."

Dan also suggested (as did many others) that we (make some time) to reunite, and perhaps to share what we have brought home and put into our daily lives.... the "takeaways" that have evolved into "giving back". ...I am integrating the experience, as I'm sure I'll be doing for a while."

"May all hatred, anger, fear, and grief be removed from all human hearts throughout all time." Prayer at the Wailing Wall- D. Sternberg

FYI: (with God's help) we hope to do our next tour in the winter of 2019 or spring of 2020, so save your shekels!...and call Kathy at the Temple office to let us know if you want to be on our contact list and what dates most interest you!

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