

# Israel — An Unforgettable Experience

by Barbara Huberman

(Ed. note: The writer has taken excerpts from her journal on her recent trip to Israel with Rabbi Krantzer's group. She is the wife of Jeffrey Huberman and mother of Marc and Amy who had their Bar and Bat Mitzvah at Masada.)

8 a.m., June 22, 1981, Masada, Israel

100° — brilliant blue sky with a haze over the Dead Sea that makes Jordan seem farther than it really is — five kids in their "best" tennis shorts, a UNC baseball hat on one, shiny new yamalka on another. Parents dressed in an assortment of tropical clothes that are already soaking wet with perspiration from the sun climbing high over the mountains. Two hawks are circling overhead which sporadically touch down on the rocks to see what is happening.

Does this sound like a Bar or Bat Mitzvah?

On June 10, our group of 19 from Charlotte assembled at Kennedy Airport and began our journey to Israel. For the next two weeks we would share some unforgettable experiences and memories.

Our guide and Mercedes bus picked us up at Ben Gurion Airport and became our home and security base as we saw the new, the contemporary and the ancient; visited kibbutz and ruins; learned about the Druids and the Hassidim; and took us to Masada, the culmination of our trip.

The five children, David and Daniel Bernstein, Marc and Amy Huberman, and Leslie Kaplan, had completed the traditional training with Sam Wallace and Rabbi Krantzer and had spent the night before reviewing their speeches. The State of Israel had prepared their certificates and sent gifts; each boy received a tallit and the girls were presented olive wood candlesticks. We parents had hauled cookies, wine and gifts up on the cable car and the Rabbi had prayerbooks and a small Torah he carried all the way from Charlotte.

The synagogue ruins atop Masada were exactly as I had envisioned it from books but I was unprepared for the emotional impact of what being in this place and witnessing the Bar and Bat Mitzvahs would have on all of us. Not a dry eye among us as the Rabbi opened the service with a prayer.

Cameras clicked, tourists peeked over the walls in awe, and we felt privileged to be a part of Jewish life that had been celebrated for centuries in this special place. The presence of the Zealots — the strength, determination and commitment brought us closer to each other as we prayed together. Our "family" surrounded us: Dan and Faye Green, Dave and Lila Mann, Helen Krantzer, Jeannette and Lee Sachs (friends of the Greens from Florida) and Leslie, Dave and Dan's little sister. Their love and affection for our children had grown strong from traveling together these past two weeks.

The sun climbed higher, the temperature was now 110°, but the Torah is uncovered and each child stepped forward to read his and her portion. They read so well — much better than in any practice session. Though we know we will remember, Jeff records with his small dictaphone each of the children as they read their Torah portion and give their speech.

I think I can speak for Bobbie and Don (Bernstein), Sis Kaplan and Jeff when I say there has never been a moment when I've been so proud or loved our children more. Here in this holy place on Masada, our children have chosen to express their Jewish heritage and celebrate their Bar/Bat Mitzvahs. They have given us a day we will never forget. We sense their impending maturity,



their growing sense of self-confidence, their energy and excitement about their future. As their ancestors before them, they respect and believe in themselves and their experiences in Israel have brought them closer to being adults.

The final prayer in a circle closes our service and jubilation rings out over the hills as the children cheer and are bombarded with the hard candy. Masada lives!

### Holocaust Survivors

Everywhere — we were together — the plane over and back — the hotels, restaurants, historical sites. Their presence and conversations will never be forgotten. That we were a part of their "Gathering" was such a marvelous experience.

### The Good Fence

At the northern Lebanese border, the Israelis allow Lebanese supporters, many of whom are Christians, to come through "the Good Fence" for water and medical care. In the midst of turmoil and war, there is compassion.

### Tree Planting at Golani Forest

All of us were amazed and awed with the "blooming Garden of Eden" that Israel has accomplished in arid wasteland. We each planted tiny cedar trees and across the valley we saw giant cedars planted years ago by other pilgrims.

### Walking into Jerusalem

Our bus stopped as we approached the walled city and we descended together, on foot, to enter the city. The Jewish cemetery on our left, desecrated by the bombs of war — the Mt. of Olives on our right — the Golden Gate of the Wall ahead, sealed, waiting for the Messiah, to open and allow passage into Jerusalem.

### Swimming in the Dead Sea

Our bodies covered in black mud, we were supposed to let it bake on and bake out the impurities in our body, but the heat was unbearable and we ran for the water to cool off. Alas, the water must be 100° or more in the sea and the shower and we struggle into sticky clothes and head quickly for the air-conditioned bus.

### Bus 10 in Tel Aviv

Trying to act like "locals" we hopped a bus to Old Jaffa for dinner and went way past our stop. As we approached two young soldiers and haltingly tried to explain that we were lost, they laughed and in good English (they were immigrants from Bobbie's hometown in Illinois) got us back to Old Jaffa.

### The Arab Market

Learning the art of bargaining seemed a snap for the kids. Marc was the proud owner of a sheepskin vest for \$10 (asking price: \$25), complete with odor from Israel.

Dan and Dave bought Arab headresses for \$4 and Amy and Leslie bought them from the same man, same place, one hour later for \$2. Amy is priceless and beautiful and the Arabs recognized this. I stubbornly refused five, then 10, then 15 camels for her. However, this handsome Arab continued to pursue us until we were firm that she was not for sale.

### The Western Wall

We went to the Wall several times but sunset on Shabbat was special and moving for all of us. The Wall was crowded with men and women praying separated by a fence (such a shame that the barrier exists). We clapped and sang and the Yeshivaites came dancing into the plaza.

The night before this plaza had been filled with thousands of Holocaust survivors who had come together for their "final gathering." Their spirit is everywhere and our spirits are renewed as we share a part of their lost moments together.

"All religions must be tolerated...for...every man must get to Heaven his own way."

— Frederick The Great

"We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another,"

— Swift

## Academy Director

(Continued from Page 1)

band Marc, an engineer and full-time faculty member at Central Piedmont, and her son Ilan, a rising 3rd grader at the Hebrew Academy. Mrs. Weinglass was the main organizer of the Havura in Charlotte and has been its head during the past three years. The Weinglasses are members of Temple Israel and the Jewish Community Center.

Bob Bernhardt also announces the appointment of Mitchell and Arnel Greenberg as secular teachers in the Academy. Mitch Greenberg will be responsible for the science, mathematics and physical education at the Academy, while Arnel will teach social studies and language arts. Both Mitch and Arnel were awarded B.S. degrees from SUNY-New Paltz and Mitch also holds an M.S. in Elementary Education from SUNY-Brockport. Upon being asked their thoughts about teaching at the Academy Mitch and Arnel said,

"We are enthusiastic and eager to assume our positions as teachers at the Academy. It opens a whole new world for us. Our goal is to build and assist each child to achieve his or her potential."

The Greenbergs will be replacing Nancy Goodman, who will be attending graduate school in the Boston area, and Lani Levine, who is currently undecided about her future plans. Both Nancy and Lani were excellent teachers and will be missed. Coming back from last year are Shoshana Ravivi and Cookie Pollock.



Mitchell and Arnel Greenberg

## Contributions To The Hebrew Academy

In honor of Amy Bernhardt's Bat Mitzvah:

Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Hannes  
Thank you to all who helped in the kitchen to make the Academy Dinner a success:

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