

UJA Mission to Israel

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at Project Renewal in Tiberias proved that children are the same the world over. They are noisy and gregarious, and they want love, attention and recognition whether they are in Israel or the United States. Yigal Barkan who immigrated to Israel from New York with his wife and five children has so much energy and love for Project Renewal. Spirit!

Dark rain clouds hung overhead and a cold wind blew down from the forbidding hills of Golan Heights as we approached the Army Unit to view tank maneuvers—live shells—practice targets. The explosions were deafening. This was one tank; one can only imagine a hill filled with tanks, ours and the enemies, and shells exploding all around. "Bombs bursting in air!" Chilling! The soldiers were so young; boyish faces covered with peach fuzz. There, but for the grace of God, goes one of my four sons. There were four men in the tank, and all can fill the positions of the others. Believe me, they hit EVERY target. The tank was designed by General Tal, and interestingly, is called Merkeva which, in Hebrew, means chariot. The Romans never would have believed it. As we trudged through the deep ruts made by the tanks in the muddy field, I recalled Alex saying that at the end of the day, the tank crew washes the tank and readies it for the next day before food and sleep. After all, the Syrian border is only three and one-half miles away. Spirit!

Rain clouds were with us on

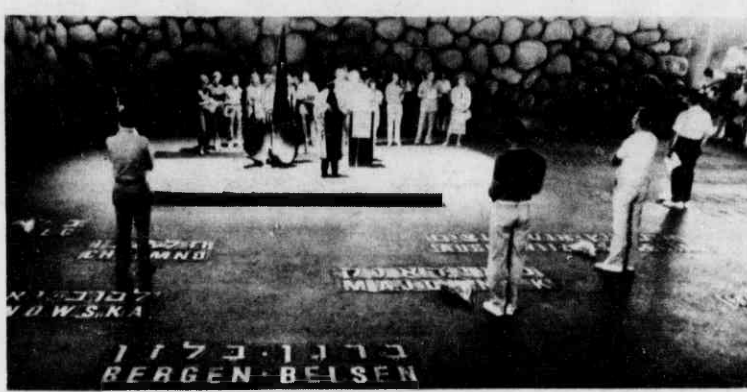


The town of Safed, where "Ascend Institute is headquartered.

—UJA Photo
the drive to Safed, the artists' colony. Winding streets and alleyways led us to many galleries with fantastic artists and paintings.

Across the Jordan, more a stream than a river, but thrilling to see, and through the Jordan Rift Valley, we finally ascended the Judean Hills on our drive to Jerusalem. On the way, excavation is "fitting" the battle in Jericho as did Joshua. It was thrilling to get the first glimpse of the towers of the golden city, Jerusalem, in the distance, and to pass Bedouin tents on the hillsides at the same moment. The tent flaps were up to catch the warmth of the morning sun, and the goats grazed on the sparse tufts of grass. Alex said it is the wish of every Jew in the world to one day celebrate Shehecheyanu atop Mount Scopus and attend Shabbat at the Western Wall. I have had this privilege.

The first "free" time in six



Holocaust Remembered: a memorial service at Yad Vashem.

UJA Press Photo



Avi Manos, native-born Israeli, works in Havat Ha Noar, a Youth Aliyah Village.

days made possible viewing the Dead Sea Scrolls at the Israel Museum, and a walking tour of the Old City which included residential areas, the Citadel, Arab Market, Christian and Armenian neighborhoods, the Via Dolorosa, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, sections of the Prado, the main street from Roman times which had been excavated. A panorama of sights, sounds and smells filled the Arab Market. It was teeming with people being pulled into the shops by merchants selling brass, silver, paintings, ceramics, leather goods, spices, candies, and even t-shirts emblazoned with Coca Cola in Hebrew.

A tour of the Museum and Art Gallery at the Holocaust Memorial, Yad Vashem, was a very touching experience, as was the special Yizkor Service in the Hall of Remembrance. Several members of our bus group participated in the service by laying sprays of flowers on the names of con-

centration camps engraved on the floor tiles. I wear my Remembrance pin proudly. Hitler did not realize that his documentation of the attempted annihilation of the Jews would provide an historical account for the whole world.

At Mount Herzl, the military cemetery, generals are buried next to privates, all with the same simple white headstones. "No pictures, please," requested Alex, and all of us understood why.

Our last day was spent driving through the desert and along the Dead Sea to Masada. What a thrill as its nine hundred foot height appeared against the clear blue sky. Several of our group elected to climb the heroic stronghold, made it intact, and reported that it was not too difficult. The less adventurous of us took the cable car up which provided a spectacular view of the Dead Sea desert. The ruins from Herod's time teased the imagination: swimming pool, ceramic tile baths - REALLY! Just the logistics of transporting the building materials those thousands of years ago, boggles the mind. One lonely pomegranate was growing against a stone wall. Was this a left-over from the days of the zealots?

One cannot visit the Dead Sea without floating on it — in it — whatever. Just don't swallow it! Beautiful resort hotels are on the shores of the Sea. People were worshipping the sun, just as in any warm climate, and the men especially were enjoying the fact that the beaches are topless. Spirit!

It was sad to be leaving on the tenth day; so many pictures, so many memories. We from the South laughingly nicknamed falafel the Jewish hushpuppies. One of our group rode a camel in Jericho. The acres of date palms, bananas, vegetables and flowers, even the vineyards growing by the grace of the drip method, are etched in my memory. Dark-eyed boys in Jerusalem were selling forty postcards for one dollar. After buying forty "different" cards on two occasions from the same boy, I told him that if I bought anymore, I'd go into the business and give him some competition. With a big smile and a "Thanks, dear lady", he was gone.

The singing was so joyous, as was the dancing. We were marvelously entertained by Orot Haschuna, a group of very talented young people from underprivileged backgrounds. Spirit! Being with three hundred people from all over the United States, some of whom have become good friends, was a wonderful experience. However, the thrill of seeing Israel, touching on the history of the land, meeting the people who have overcome such adversity with spirit, that was the real experience. Sometimes when I am sitting quietly with the warm North Carolina sun on my face, I close my eyes, think of those nine marvelous days in Israel, and I can almost hear Alex's step as he boards the bus, and booms, "Boker Tov!" "Boker Tov, Alex, and thank you!"

Almost 1000 Went to Israel on UJA Missions Early This year

The United Jewish Appeal's Missions Department has taken almost 1,000 Jewish community leaders to Israel on 20 customized trips in the first three months of 1987. The participants, caucusing at the end of each Mission, raised \$2.4 million to support humanitarian programs and social services for Jews at home, in Israel and in 33 countries around the world. Based on UJA statistics, each participant on a UJA Mission increased his/her gift by a card-for-card average of 114 percent.

While the itineraries vary depending on the nature of the constituency, Mission participants have taken part in a wide variety of activities. They included: welcoming the Sabbath at the Western Wall in Jerusalem; meeting Israelis from all walks of life; spending an afternoon with kibbutz families as guests; ascending Masada at dawn; greeting Ethiopian immigrants at a Jewish Agency Absorption Center supported by UJA/Federation Campaigns; visiting historic sites, chatting with soldiers at an army base during lunch and meeting Project Renewal residents who explained how they have rebuilt their neighborhoods and their lives. Contributors who have been personally involved in Campaigns see with their own eyes what their support has

accomplished.

Federations which have had community and special group missions to Israel in the first quarter of this year included Atlanta, Boston (Physicians), Chicago (Physicians, Mature Singles), Cleveland (Leadership), MetroWest N.J. (Young Leadership), New York City (Women's Division, Wall Street, Westchester Country Club), Phoenix, and Pittsburgh (Future Leaders, Next Generation).

There were also UJA national Missions geared to specialized constituencies where participants came from all sections of the United States. These included Allocations, Geshet, Rabbinic Cabinet, Winter Singles and Young Leadership.

National Missions Chairman Victor Gelb of Cleveland hailed the substantial increase in 1987 UJA Missions. "Our trips," said Gelb, "are especially designed to provide a unique adventure to the land and people of Israel so that donors can see what their gifts have achieved. Going behind the scenes, and meeting the people who have shaped and shared Israel's history, creates

an exciting experience that will always be remembered. I am extremely proud of what has been accomplished in the last three months and I look forward to achieving new heights in UJA Missions to Israel in 1987."

Additional information on UJA Missions to Israel may be obtained by calling Alan Isaacs at 212-818-9100.

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