

# Reflections on the Levin Jewish Middle School Trip to Israel

By Sandy Hirschman

A tradition at the Barbara and Jerry Levin Jewish Middle School is the triennial class trip to Israel. The dreaming and planning begins just about the first day a student enters the Middle School: "When our class goes to Israel...."

Upon returning to school in May of this past school year, the students reflected on their soul-changing experiences in Israel and the memories now etched deep within them. How profound and remarkably sensitive our young people are. I would like to share with you Bashia Oudmayer's reflections:

"Elisabeth Kubler-Ross once said: 'People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within.'

"On my class's visit to Israel, the spark inside each of us grew into a flame. Though we got our spiritual highs from places as different as we are, I say without a doubt that we all made one special memory that will stand the test of time.

"It could have been at Ein Gedi where every single one of us felt a happiness and carefreeness more pure than any other time in our lives as we splashed beneath the waterfalls. Or it could have been at Masada, when we watched a light-show that depicted the Jewish history that took place in

the very spot we were standing. Or, who knows, perhaps the most special moment for some was when we got sprayed with shaving cream on Yom Ha'atzmaut, or when we were 90 feet away from where the *kodesh hakodeshim* stood, and for a moment there, no one breathed, as if once they exhaled, all the holiness in the air would leave them.

"It could have been any one of these moments that we tell our great-grandchildren about; the memories we made on this trip were as many as the number of times I screamed while camel-riding. (Very many.)

"But for me, as amazing as Ezekiel's tunnel was, and as fun as our bus rides may have been, the thing that stuck with me was when we were at the bullet factory in Israel and our soldier-guide said, 'Run your fingers over this wall. Feel the names.' And we touched the memorial wall of all those who died for Israel, and in a unique kind of way, the wall touched us.

"Our guide told us that there is a poem that was written called 'The Silver Platter.' He said, 'It's about how the world is always saying that Israel was given to the Jews on a silver platter.' He ran his fingers over all the names of the soldiers, like we'd done, most of whom probably weren't even older than 18 when they died. And I understood at that moment why we'd run our fingers over their names, why he wanted us to feel all of this. Engraved on this wall was Israel's ultimate sacrifice. 'They were our silver platter,' he said to us.

"And then we took pictures on the different-colored tanks and we left the place. But the place never left us.

"No wonder the dreaming and planning begins so early."

*If you have any questions about the Barbara and Jerry Levin Jewish Middle School, please contact Sandy Hirschman at 704-366-4558 or shirschman@cjd-school.org. ☆*

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## Charlotte Jewish Day School

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posed a compromise to end the argument peacefully.

The binding of Isaac: The shofar reminds us of the binding of Isaac.

- The children discuss the general concept of how memories affect us. They are asked to write a speech that Avraham might have presented to God to plead for his son's life. They stage a mock trial, with God as judge, with an accusing angel, with defense attorneys for the Jewish People, and with the rest of the class as jury.

Continuity- The shofar as a wake up call:

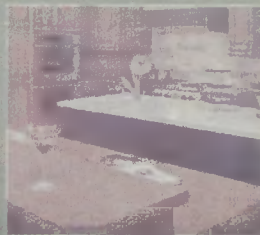
- The passing of mitzvot throughout the ages is compared to a NASA mission. We embark on a virtual mission to send a ship on an 800-year round trip journey to the nearest star. Clearly, the original astronauts would not live long enough to complete the mission. They would have to communicate the mission to their descendants. Now we understand how God sent us on a mission at the giving of the Torah, to be passed on to each generation. While there is always the possibility of veering off the mission, the shofar reminds us to stay the course.

With these lessons in mind, the staff and student body of Charlotte Jewish Day School wish the entire Charlotte Jewish community a sweet year full of opportunities for doing mitzvot. ☆



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