

Community News

Part 3: Jerusalem at Night

By Amy Krakovitz

Just before dinner on our first evening in Jerusalem, we gather in a meeting room in our hotel, the Dan Panorama. There are the original 18 of us who have traveled together since Monday in Charlotte, our tour guide, Doron, and the rest of our group, people who have come to Israel earlier than we did. Joel Blady and Shelley Pawlyk arrived a few days earlier, spending some time with Joel's family in Tel Aviv and getting a personalized tour of the Weizmann Institute. The Label family, David and Stacey, their children Lindsay, Lauren, and Jake, and David's parents, Joyce and Stan, have already visited Tel Aviv and the Galilee.

Doron gathers us together and asks each of us what brought us here. When my turn comes, I try to explain how long I have loved Israel but never had the opportunity to come. I describe my walk in the streets of Jerusalem that afternoon. "Everything looked familiar to me," I tell the group. "I've never been here before but I feel like I never left." As we leave the room and walk over to the hotel's restaurant for dinner, Doron stops me.

"You belong here," he says. When I start to explain, that yes, I feel very comfortable, he says, "No ... you should be

living here."

We have a free evening ahead of us but have heard that there is a light show in the Old City tonight. Judy offers to escort us as she knows the way to the Old City. When we come upon the plaza at the Jaffa Gate, we see thin green lights topped by pink neon, "My Public Garden," the first installation of many we will see. The Old City is strung with lights in four colors: green, yellow, orange, and red. Following the string of lights brings the observer through different series of light installations or demonstrations. We start at The Orange Trail, but quickly cut over to The Blue Trail as our ultimate destination is the Western Wall.

On the blue trail, we see film projections on the walls. The artists play off the architecture that exists. In one film, a window is replicated and a scene of a family sitting down to dinner can be

viewed. In another film, the artist uses a high gable to project children waving at passers-by. In still another, a woman can be seen inside her home walking a baby to sleep.

In Hurva Square, a film tells the life story of Jews in Jerusalem and their hope for redemption. The backdrop is the wall of the Hurva Synagogue, where waterfalls suddenly pour down from ledges, and the sun bursts from the roseate window in the top.

Around the corner we come to the Cardo, where demonstrations using light are taking place. A glass blower, glass sculptors, and other artists and designers display their wares. As I walk down the stairs to Cardo level, I run my hand along the top of the stone railing along the staircase. The rough tops of the stone walls are smoothed to a polished flatness by thousands of years of hands rubbing them down. I get a flash and a warm feeling; surely some of my own ancestors have touched this very banister, these very stones and walked along this very Cardo.

From there, the Rabbi leads us to a most magnificent sight: the Western Wall at night. The light is dim, yet the Wall seems to project its own soft glow.



The Kotel at night.

This is a major moment for me, I am going to the Wall for the first time.

It seems that maybe only 20% of the space at the Wall is reserved for women. It's hard to find a spot near the stones. I manage to reach over people's heads and tuck in all the notes that have been given to me by family and friends. I touch the stones one more time and mumble my own shehecheyanu. But I don't experience the spiritual tsunami that I had been anticipating. It's too crowded and stuffy. Some of the women are talking on their cell phones. I'm distracted and

tired. But it is a beautiful sight to see.

We return back along The Orange Trail again. The architecture of the city's walls serve again as a welcome palate for more light sculptures. Three bright men scale the wall. A miniature cityscape sprouts from the ancient ruins.

It's been one amazing day, but I haven't slept more than two hours and I need to get some rest before tomorrow.

For more information on The Jerusalem Festival of Light, go to www.lightin-jerusalem.org.il. ☆

Next: The Western Wall excavations, the Davidson Center, the City of David and Hezekiah's tunnel.



"My Public Garden"



Wall projection of window and view of family dinnertime.



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— Elise Kosofsky

Join us for our Parent Open House

For parents of rising JK and Kindergartners
Wednesday, October 27, 9:30-11:30am
Thursday, October 28, 11:30am-1:30pm

& Preschoolers' Visitation

Friday, October 29, 1:15pm

Questions? Call 704-366-4558

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Pictured are Elise (President of The Jewish Preschool on Sardis) & Jaime Kosofsky with their daughters, Emily (CJDS JK), Abby (CJDS 1st grade) and Molly (Jewish Preschool on Sardis).

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