

Israel, Part XII: Shabbat in Jerusalem

By Amy Krakovitz

The meals we have been served in Israel since day one have never been a disappointment, and the food for Shabbat dinner at Kibbutz Gezer is no exception. Trays piled high with fresh vegetables, grilled meats, steamy, soft breads, and desserts that tempt the tastebuds. The food was all prepared at the Kibbutz, Miri tells us, except for the desserts which were donated by HaUgot Shel Ayah, a local bakery that supports Kibbutz Gezer. There is also wine and wonderful camaraderie.

I stop Rabbi Steve Chester to talk about my connections in Oakland. Does he know my cousin? Why, yes, he does! My cousin and his family are members of Rabbi Chester's congregation. Here I am in Kibbutz Gezer, on the opposite side of the world from my home, but I have made a connection. It's a small (Jewish) world.

It is a beautiful evening, Miri and her husband, David Leachman, are excellent hosts as is everyone at the Kibbutz. But the hour grows late, Benny has

returned from Shabbat dinner at his home, and it's time for us to go back to our hotel.

Two More B'nei Mitzvah

The morning is beautiful. Clear, dry, sunny, not yet too warm; we walk a block or so from our hotel to Hebrew Union College where we will have two more b'nei mitzvah. I am surprised to see several cars on the streets, I expected that Jerusalem's streets would be completely free of vehicles on Shabbat, but there are taxis and some private cars driving around town.

The ceremony and Shabbat morning service take place in the outdoor garden behind Hebrew Union College. The area is shaded with beautiful trees and we face the Temple Mount and the old city which we can see from where we sit. On all sides of us, flowers bloom and the air is filled with gentle fragrances and a light breeze. It's a lovely day.

One small glitch in the upcoming ceremony: the Torah available at Hebrew Union College for our b'nei mitzvah to use is a Sephardic Torah; it does not lay flat as it is

unscrolled, it stands up in an ornate case. It poses a problem only when the students get to the bottom of the page; it's harder to read and they could lose their place when they move from line to line.

But Josh Rappaport and Jake Gilbert are focused and well trained. Rather than stumbling when they get to the difficult area at the bottom of each column, they slow down to ensure that they don't make mistakes. Their Torah readings are impeccable. They are poised and calm and sound magnificent.

The Haftarah is shared with the b'not mitzvah from Thursday, so we have five Haftarah readers. Again it is perfect and it's a joy to see their five shining faces and hear their sweet voices join in together. Our "cups runneth over" with pride at our congregation's youth.

Afterward there is table full of sweets to share, and the b'nei mitzvah (all five of them) get lifted high in their chairs.



The garden at Hebrew Union College-Jerusalem was the site of the two b'nei mitzvah ceremonies.

Of course the day slowly gets warmer. It is a typical Jerusalem summer day when we decide that this afternoon we will do a walking tour of the Old City to see some of things we missed last time we were here a few days ago.

We first go to the Synagogue of the Rambam, the oldest active synagogue in Jerusalem. It has a long and varied history. First built in 1267 by Nahmanides himself, it was closed and reopened many times by the Ottoman governor of the area. In 1948, it was destroyed by the Jordanians, but access to it was regained in 1967, when it was rebuilt and has been used ever since.

We stop at the alcove that tradition says is David's tomb. There is no proof that the sarcophagus in this stone room is actually King David's. In fact, the bible says that David was buried in the City of David, a little bit south of here. But because it is a traditional notion that David is here, and because the burial cloth over the sarcophagus is such a brilliant cobalt blue, I try to take a picture of it.

"No, no, no pictures!" I hear a shrill voice behind me. Several elderly ladies are seated outside the door to the tomb. I assumed they were here praying, but apparently they come here to keep tourists from breaking Shabbat rules by taking pictures on Saturdays. I am disappointed but I wouldn't offend them so I walk away with no evidence of my having been there.

We move on down the street to the ornate, ceremonious Church of the Holy Sepulchre. ☆

Next: The church, the shuk, an interactive map.

JCC's Distinctive Members Celebrate at the Mint

The Mint Museum was the venue this year for the Levine Jewish Community Center's Distinctive Member Event which was held May 24. The evening was a tremendous success with attendees including current Distinctive Circle members, many guests who are considering becoming a part of this philanthropic program, and several Levine JCC Board of Directors.

One of the highlights of the evening was provided by three Levine JCC members who are Docents of the Museum. Meredith Baumstein, Lisa Frick, and Nancy Kipnis graciously volunteered their time to prepare and provide private tours of the museum. The tours proved to be interesting, informative and fun as well. The evening also included wines and hors d'oeuvres served in The Boardroom, which overlooks the stunning Dale Chouilly piece.

Larry Schwartz, President of the Levine JCC, spoke briefly thanking the evening's chairpersons: Alison and Mark Lerner and Jill and Ed Newman. Alison took the opportunity to speak of growing up in Charlotte where her fam-

ily's life revolved around the "J" - even to the extent that the "J" is where she met her husband Mark. Additionally, Alison emphasized how crucial the Levine JCC is to the vibrancy and viability of the entire Jewish Community. Phil Berman, Chief Executive Officer, also shared his thoughts, discussing the importance of the Distinctive Member Circle. He reminded us that we are challenged to support and to provide for those who cannot do so for themselves and that the Distinctive Member program is an avenue allowing for just that.

As one of the many attendees stated, "This was a delightful evening enjoyed by all." It seemed that those in attendance truly understand and are committed to the Levine JCC's mission of Enriching Lives and Building Relationships through Quality Jewish Experiences.

If you would like more information regarding the Levine JCC's Distinctive Member Circle, please contact Karen Maniloff at 704-944-6801 or karen.maniloff@charlottejcc.org. ☆



Distinctive Member attendees enjoyed good food, conversation, and company.



Above: Twice the mitzvah - Meredith Baumstein, Lisa Frick and Nancy Kipnis shared their love of art and the Levine JCC by doing Mint Museum Uptown tours for guests.



Larry Schwartz, Levine JCC Board President, and Philip Berman, Levine JCC CEO, highlighted the philanthropy of the Distinctive Member Circle.

JCC Tributes

LJCC BUTTERFLY PROJECT

In honor of Gwen Orland's birthday from The Abeles Family, Jill Balick, Marissa and Adam Brooks, Roni and Glenn Fishkin, Darcy and Steve Garfinkel, Susan and Eric Kent, Catherine Kendrick, Kim and Adam Levy, Sherri and Barry Leonard, Susan and Steve Meyer, Melissa Raphael, Anne and Mike Sinsheimer, Robin and Michael Stier, Jodi Valenstein

In honor of Judy August from: Jackie, Stacey and David August

In honor of Susie Meier from Merle and Alan Gottheim

In honor of Marvin Callif's birthday from Shellie and Harvey Barer

In honor of Roberta and Ed Bograd from Sera and Marvin Callif

In memory of Alene Strause from Roni and Glenn Fishkin

MINDY ELLEN LEVINE DAY CAMP ENDOWMENT FUND

In honor of Sandra and Leon Levine's anniversary and in honor of Leon Levine's birthday from Lynn and Paul Edelstein

OASIS MEMORIAL FUND FOR SENIOR PROGRAMMING

In honor of Golda Schwartz and the Oasis staff from Marissa and Adam Brooks and family

In memory of Alene Strause from Evelyn Berger

LJCC GENERAL PROGRAM FUND

In memory of Bernard Stein, father of Lynn Cojac from Claudia and Robert Scherzer

Wildacres B'nai Brith Retreat, Little Switzerland, NC, August 15-18

Three kosher meals daily, two-bedded room-private bath in lodge with stunning views of Blue Ridge Mts, three speakers daily.

Linda Gradstein, NPR Israel correspondent 1990-2010, currently AOL News Jerusalem correspondent.

* Turmoil in the Middle East - Effect on Israel

* What's a Nice Jewish Girl Doing in a Dangerous Place Like This?

* Roles of Israeli and Palestinian Women in Making Peace

* Media Bias - Real or Imagined?

Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin, Founder Kol Echad: Making Judaism Matter, trans-denominational adult learning center, Atlanta

* Reconformadox: Does It Still Matter?

* Where Are The Men?

* The Secret War Against Israel

* Outside the Red Tent

Stephen J. Whitfield - Brandeis professor of American Civilization, Southern Jewish Historical Society Distinguished

Scholarship Award 2010.

* Pentagon Papers, Through the Age of Wikileaks - Boundaries of Dissent and 1st Amendment

* Tension or Entwinement: 20th Century Cultural Relations Between Jews and Blacks

* Fiddler on the Roof: Cultural Effect of a Musical

Live Music by **Bandana Klezmer Band**

All inclusive price: \$340 per person, two in a room. \$475. per

