

Temple Kol Tikvah Israel Trip, October 2017

Part 1 of 2

Members, friends, and associates of Temple Kol Tikvah of Lake Norman recently came back from an eventful trip to Israel. All had a great time. Tour participants included first-timers as well as seasoned Israel travelers. But, of course, there were many new sites to explore and many experiences to enjoy by all.

Our own Rabbi Michael Shields was our spiritual leader ensuring that we sense the religious and spiritual essence of vis-

iting Israel. We stopped at various points along the way to recite prayers and readings from the Bible and other Jewish sources, as appropriate. Each participant had a copy of the 93-page handbook titled "Temple Kol Tikvah - Israel Trip, Our Israel: Historically, Religiously, and Today," which Rabbi Shields had prepared in advance of our trip.

We had a very busy itinerary, and our guide, Abie, made sure that we didn't miss a beat. We visited many sites that are on a must-visit list in Israel. We climbed and descended the narrow alley ways in ancient Jaffa with its many galleries and Judaica shops; walked in the ancient port city of Caesarea, built by King Herod in honor of the Roman Emperor; visited the art museum in Tel Aviv where Ben Gurion and other Jewish dignitaries signed Israel Declaration of Independence in 1948; walked through The Museum of The Diaspora showing Jewish life and communities all over the world; strolled through the small alley ways of Tzfat, the city where the Kabbalah was studied and practiced in the 15th and 16th centuries; and we meandered through the restored ruins of the city of Beit Shean in the Izrael Valley not far from the Jordanian border. We floated in the Dead Sea, being careful not to splash the salty water lest our eyes itch and burn; visited the Yitzchak Rabin museum telling the story of the Israeli Prime Minister who sought peace and was assassinated by an Israeli zealot; and we enjoyed the magnificent scenery over Machtesh Ramon in the Negev Desert. This is an amazing, world famous crater and unique geological formation caused by erosion over millennia. It is 40 kilometers long and several kilometers wide. We visited the Sde Boker Kibbutz in the Negev where David Ben Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, lived after retiring from the government. At Ramat Negev Research and Development Center, we learned how Israeli scientists combine technology and natural resources to make the desert bloom; we traveled to Akko, steeped in ancient crusader history, and with fairly well preserved citadel and walls. Let's not forget our visit to the chocolate factory in the Galilee, the oil factory, and of course, last but not least, the Golan Heights Winery and its complimentary exquisite wine tasting session; and on and on, so many sites and experiences.

Several of our experiences were very special and are noteworthy. First and foremost, we celebrated, at the Wall, the Bar Mitzvah of our own Kenlee Griffin, a wonderful young man who attends our Kol Tikvah's Religious School. Kenlee recited the traditional Torah reading prayers and expertly chanted the Torah

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Dancing in celebration of Kenlee Griffin's Bar Mitzvah.



The Kotel (Western Wall) in Jerusalem.



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