

The Charlotte JEWISH news

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Highlights of My Recent Israeli Visit – Part 2

By Cantor Elias Roochvarg

Cousin Hillel took me to Sde Boker, the home of David Ben Gurion after he retired from being (Israel's first) Prime Minister. Nearby is a campus of the University of Beersheva, now called Ben Gurion University, at which one of their areas of study is Desert Studies. Makes sense! We are surrounded by Midbar Tzin, the Wilderness of Tzin, where the Children of Israel wandered on their way to the Promised Land. Ben Gurion went in the opposite direction: He lived most of his life in the Promised Land, but retired to the Wilderness - by choice; he was fascinated by the desert and the challenges it posed.

One of the most recognizable things about him was his hair (not unlike Larry of the Three Stooges), so below is a photo of him getting it "trimmed" ... by the same guy (the caption tells us) who shears the sheep.

There is also an iconic photo of him standing on his head at the beach. I did not see that photo, but saw an interesting variation; he is standing on his head at the beach, but with a cell phone in his hand. And his trunks say Speedo. Two great anachronisms.

Each of the four walls of his study is lined, almost floor to ceiling, with books. They used to say of him that some politicians take bribes, other accept expensive gifts of travel, etc. You want to please Ben Gurion? Give him a good book.

A few miles away from his hut



Ben Gurion's famous haircut by the sheep-shearer.

is his and his wife's final resting place, in the middle of a plateau in the desert with a magnificent view all around. Hillel says B-G had excellent taste in choosing that spot, for its natural beauty.

Back to the Army Base

After our first weekend, we had been told to meet in front of the Tel Aviv station at 8:45. We were all there by 8:50, and the bus left promptly ... at 9:40. Welcome to Israel!

On Monday, April 8, at flag raising there were several onlookers whom I had not seen before. Maybe they were just joining us. It was explained to us that there is an Israeli organization which finds people with special needs to volunteer on army bases. It was also explained that the Israeli army has been gradually including adults on the Autism spectrum, not as volunteers, but actu-

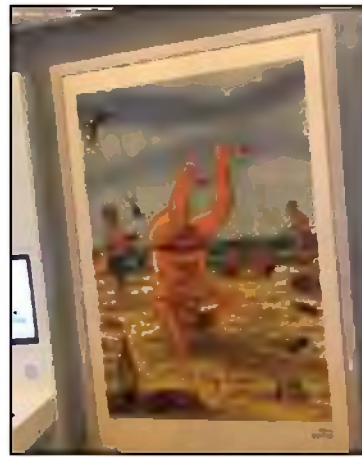
ally as soldiers. As the father of a special needs adult that makes me very proud. Our Madricha said that in so many places special needs folks are ignored and excluded, but no longer in Israel. Way to go, Israel!

One day I was given a different task than usual: painting some of the industrial shelving. Not having done this sort of painting since summer camp, I forgot that industrial paint is not water soluble, so when we finished, I walked back to the barracks, and discovered that soap - even when applied vigorously - removes almost none of the paint. Oh well, it's been a learning experience ... and not just about Israel

That night's evening activity, in preparation for a trip we will be making to Remembrance Hall on Mt. Herzl, was a talk about love and loss: the sacrifices so many families here have made



Ben Gurion's office.

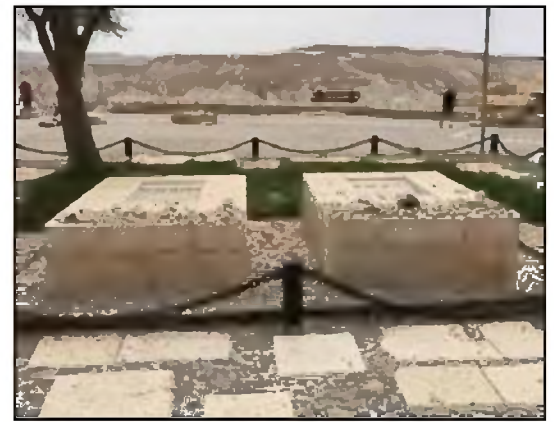


An iconic photo "turned on its head."

and continue to make for the state. We were taught about one of the thousands of young Israeli victims, a 23-year old soldier (the same age as two of my own children) on guard duty named Hadas Malka, an instructor in the training program, who was fatally stabbed two years ago while fend-

ing off a terrorist. She was from an observant family and was slain on a Friday afternoon. A knock on her parents' door the next day forever shattered their Sabbath peace. A friend of the victim composed a song in her memory, which our Madricha played a recording of. There wasn't a dry eye in the room.

We were taught about Yom HaZaikaron, the day before Israel Independence Day, when a siren sounds, at which, if you are driving - even on the highway - you get out of your car and remain at silent attention till the siren stops. And of course whatever you are doing, you stop and contemplate the sacrifices this country has made to survive. I already knew about Yom HaZikaron because I have participated in its observance in Charlotte. I think that among the thousands of graves in the military cemetery, the average age is 18 or 19. A whole generation lost! ☆



The resting place of David Ben-Gurion and his wife.



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SAVE THE DATE – OCTOBER 6, 10:30 AM
Hebrew Cemetery Annual Memorial Service