

Israel: Hugging and Wrestling

A People, a Land and their Texts

Movement for Reform Judaism Israel Trip **Thurs May 17th to Monday May 28th 2007**

These are epic times for the Jewish People and the State of Israel. Conventional Wisdom both in Israel and beyond our borders prior to July 2006 was that we were beyond the stage of existential conflicts; that we were here to stay and only the very paranoid amongst us still held on to the belief that we were fighting for our survival.

Things look quite different right now. Could it be that Ahmedinejad is right when he smiles at the interviewer from the CBS network's 60 minutes and claims that Israel is but a fleeting aberration on the scene in the region called the Middle East? Can we begin to understand the implications of that possibility?

Welcome to one of the great dramas of Modern time. For the Jewish people, this is more than an epic of a small country in a hostile neighbourhood trying desperately to both survive physically and to maintain a commitment to certain ethics and values in the toughest of circumstances. It is rather, the story of covenant, exile, return and struggle; of theology, ideology and mythology; of dreams, visions and ultimately the bitter sweet taste of reality. It is our story, from the binding of Isaac on Mount Moriah, to the return to the Land of Israel by the pioneers still gasping from the pain of the Kishinev Pogrom.

In our visit to Israel in 2007 we will explore, both in the harsh light of the Mediterranean as well as in the shadows cast by history, the complicated relationships with the other in Israel, the experiment of taking a 2000 year old culture created in situations of minority status and powerlessness and giving it both majority status and power. We will examine the scars of War.

We will celebrate great achievements and ask difficult questions about the future. We will enjoy the many exquisite natural beauties and the remnants of the many and varied cultures which left their imprints on the landscape. We will marvel at the wonderful and at times impossible, human landscape that is Israel, both the complexity of the Jewish People and the other peoples with whom we share this land

Please join us on a remarkable Jewish Journey to a land we can be proud of.

A Guide to the Perplexed (notes to understanding our intentions):

- Jeremy Leigh and Julian Resnick will be the guides and educators of this Journey and we will be with you throughout
- Please note that we are providing many days with options so you can tailor make the journey to your own needs
- Whenever the *lucida font* is used it indicates some form of ritual such as a service or the shechiyanu on arrival.
- Whenever the CASTELLAR FONT IS USED IT INDICATES ONE OF OUR EARLY MORNING WALKS. THESE WALKS WILL TAKE YOU TO SOME OF THE LOVELY AREAS WHERE WE FIND OURSELVES AND WILL BE WALKS WITHOUT GUIDING.
- Whenever the **Abadi font is used it indicates evening voices. An attempt to give you access to some of the other voices – including difficult voices – in Israel today.**
- We are aware that you could not possibly do everything in the programme and we offer you this incredible richness of options and opportunities knowing you will pace yourself and make the right decisions for yourself.
- Meals not included are those marked with an asterisk. We will help you find a good option if and where you need our help. Our Jewish Journeys tradition is that nobody is left alone for a meal, unless they want some space.
- If you wish to help in the process of making this a special trip with a real community feel to it, we are looking for a small team of people to help us bring people in, facilitate the 'evening voices' sessions, to help run tfillah, help with the Shabbat options and other tasks we may not have thought of. Please let Annie or myself know if you want to be on this team.

Julian Resnick

Thursday May 17th: Transitions

We leave Heathrow airport and within the space of a few hours we find ourselves in a very different reality. This immediately opens up questions of identity, belonging and connections, all major themes on this trip.

15.30 Depart Heathrow **[This is based on the El Al Flight LY316. This is only one of a number of flight options you might choose. All flight arrangements need to be made by you]**

21.30 Arrive (Meet us at 22.00 if you have come on an earlier flight) at Ben Gurion Airport. Travel by coach to Jerusalem

23.30 *Shecheyanu* overlooking the **Old City of Jerusalem**. It is our custom to mark significant beginnings with the Shehechiyanu blessing. We hope that this Journey to Israel will be a significant beginning for all, and anyway, who needs an excuse to have some wonderful Israeli Challah and some good Israeli wine.

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Friday May 18th: Creating a Context.

Entry points into stories are crucial. Where do we begin to tell our story? What are the themes we pick up in our initial encounter with Israel whether this is our first or 15th visit to Israel? We begin in Jerusalem, coming together as a community to celebrate something powerful which binds us together, Shabbat.

07.30 MORNING WALKS 1: MOUNT ZION **[Option of an early morning hour long walk. We will be out for an hour leaving you time to freshen up and eat breakfast]**

08.00 - 10.00 Breakfast at leisure

09.00 *Shacharit*

10.00 Programme begins with a view of Jerusalem with the Jewish Journey Educators. We will create the context and set out the story lines which we will pick up at crucial moments on our Journey.

11.00 'From **Mea Shearim** to McDonalds': The sights, sounds and smells of a modern/Jewish city preparing for Shabbat. We will see how ordinary people in different parts of the city prepare for Shabbat. This will introduce us to the complexity which is Jewish life in Israel.

13.00 Lunch* and free time

17.30 **Yemin Moshe**: Resonances and sights of earlier times as we prepare for Shabbat: Jewish beginnings. We will go to one of the most beautiful viewpoints in Jerusalem and use the site as a text to bring us closer to Shabbat.

18.30 *Kabbalat Shabbat* at **Kol Haneshama**. The Reform Synagogue in the Baka neighbourhood is a dynamic community committed to Social Action, education as well as

carving out a space for Progressive Judaism in a distinctly Orthodox city. It offers a distinctive and exciting Friday night tfilla. [prayer].

20.00 Group dinner. A traditional Friday night dinner with song, study and blessings

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Saturday May 19th: Shabbat *B'Yachad* [together]

What are the possibilities which Shabbat offers us as a community? How do we use this very special day to help create something which sustains us through the busy week? This Shabbat will include all the elements which make Shabbat the special day that it is. Please join in for as much of the Shabbat programme as you wish. [as we have not programmed in Shabbat rest and you might want to do some of that.]

07.00 MORNING WALKS 2: RECHAVIA

09.00 Breakfast including a Torah study option.

11.00 *Shabbat Shacharit* in the **Wohl Rose Garden** outside the Knesset. We have chosen a beautiful spot where we can worship together. **[Be prepared to sit on the lawn]**

12.00 Picnic Lunch in the Garden

13.00 Oneg Shabbat at the **Israel Museum**. We are not having our Oneg on Friday evening, we felt you might need an early night after travelling the day before, and are therefore [adding to your Shabbat pleasure] offer you some time in [a very special museum,] the Israel Museum with its world renowned archaeology pavilion, Jewish ethnographic galleries and its collection of fine art including modern Israeli Art galleries.

16.00 *Seudah Shlishit* [**the third meal of Shabbat. Traditionally a time for story telling or reflection**] The Western Wall Plaza followed by one of three ways of returning to the hotel, by coach, on foot via the Jewish Quarter, on foot via the Shuk (the Arab Market)

19.30 **Evening Voices 1: A questioning Voice: Professor Paul Liptz**

21.00 Dinner*

23.00 *Havdalah*. We will say goodbye to Shabbat and welcome the new week in a dramatic setting which will show off Jerusalem in all her glory.

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Sunday May 20th: Walls, Mountains and Monuments

Jerusalem is a city filled with a powerful physical presence, ancient and modern; natural as well as created by human intervention: created monuments as well as places which have gained sanctity as a result of history. This day will explore the city of Jerusalem and its

We will consider a few from Jerusalem's ancient past, her recent history as well as from today which will help determine her future. **[Please note there are two options for the morning programme. You will be asked to choose one when you register for the trip.]**

Option 1: Second Temple Jerusalem

Jerusalem was at its most glorious when the temple stood, so we are told. Is the story a little more complex than that? What can we learn from this period of our history?

08.30 **Rabbinic Tunnels** at the Western Wall. Adjacent to the Western Wall, we will enter an underground tunnel which will enable us to begin to understand the enormous and wonderful structures which once dominated the Jerusalem skyline, the First and Second Temples.

10.00 **Southern Wall Excavation; Davidson Archaeological Park.** We will continue to develop the theme of the meaning of Jerusalem's past as it became the city of pilgrimage of the Jewish People.

Option 2: The Work of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism

This is the only place in the world where a Reform Movement operates within the context of a Jewish body politic. What are the issues it faces and where does it choose to focus its energies?

08.30 **IMPJ [Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism].** With teachers from the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism we will discover some of the meaning of Progressive Judaism for Israel today; Why a Religious Action Centre is crucial in the Jewish State in 2007; What role the IMPJ is playing in Israeli society.

Option 3: The Institutions of the Democratic Jewish State

We will explore what lies behind this phrase and meet with someone at the heart of the process

08.30 Meeting with a Member of the Knesset to discuss the question of the compatibility of a Jewish and a Democratic State

10.30 The Supreme Court: Visit one of the spectacular architectural achievements in modern Jerusalem which houses the heart of Israel's commitment to Democracy.

12.30 **[options end]** Lunch in the centre of the city*

13.30 Mountains of Memory (**Yad Vashem and Mount Herzl** the National and military cemeteries). **Yad Vashem** the national memorial and museum of the holocaust shares its place on Memorial Mountain with the national cemetery, the military cemetery and the **Herzl museum**. We will visit these to deepen our understanding of what makes Israel and Israelis tick.

18.00 **Wall of Separation.** A controversial but necessary way of acknowledging the ongoing development of Jerusalem's landscape. A difficult choice on this day of monuments, but if we are to understand which public structures are forming both the present and the future in Israel, this would be the most prominent today.

20.00 **Evening Voices 2: Hanna Siniora: A Palestinian Voice**

21.00 Dinner*

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Monday May 21st: The Battle for the Land of Israel.

The Galilee is one of the most beautiful and most diverse parts of Israel. It was also the scene of death and destruction in recent months during the second War in Lebanon. The day will confront both realities. **[Please note there are two options for this day. You will be asked to choose one when you register for the trip.]**

[Our original plan had us enjoying the natural wonders of this area; now we will be painfully aware of the ability that human beings have to devastate and destroy both nature and each other.]

08.00: Leave for the North on the Trans Israel Highway

11.00: 'A perspective on war': The Galilee Panhandle including Kfar Giladi, Avivim and Meron. What happens when there is a war in your neighbourhood? The heroes, the pain, the issues, the damage, the hope as illuminated by the people and the places which just a short while ago were the scenes of such destruction.

Option 1: 'I dreamed a dream'

16.30: **Kinneret**: Where many of the early visionaries of the early state dreamt of a new type of Jewish community and set about creating it. We will visit the **Courtyard of Kinneret, the Cemetery of the Pioneers** and the site of the first kibbutz.

Option 2: Nature Hike

16.00: **Tel Dan**: A gentle hike through one of the most beautiful nature reserves in Israel.

18.30 **[options end]** Return to Tzfat.

19.30 **Evening Voices 3: The Dreamers' voices: Muki Tzur**

21.00 Dinner

Sleep Rimonim Tzfat

Tuesday May 22nd:

We spend a second day in the north focussing on one of three options: the first takes you through the mystical city of Tzfat; the second examines Jewish – Arab relations, and the third explores the work of the Leo Baeck Centre in Haifa.

In the latter part of the day we return to Jerusalem, in the footsteps of pilgrims in ancient days, to celebrate Shavuot. **[Please note there are three options for this day. You will be asked to choose one when you register for the trip.]**

06.00 MORNING WALKS 3: GALILEE DAWN

07.30 *Shacharit*

Option 1: The Mystic and the Orchard

We will spend the morning exploring Tzfat's past as the centre of Jewish mysticism and will 'meet' some of the personalities which made it great

08.30 Morning visit in the Old City of **Tzfat** visiting some of the historic synagogues and telling some of the wonderful stories.

Option 2: Living with the Other

Rabbi Marc Rosenstein is a Reform Rabbi who works in the area of how we live as an ethical Jewish majority with a sizeable Arab minority in our midst. This will be an 'up close' experience.

08.30 **Shorashim Minorities Seminar with Rabbi Marc Rosenstein.** Get to grips with some of the issues facing the Arab population in Israel, a minority within a Jewish majority, in situ.

Option 3: Reform Jewish Community comes to town big time!

See what a community based on Reform values can add to a city when it decides it is more than a school, more than a shul.

08.30 **Leo Baeck Educational Centre Haifa.** One of the most impressive social and educational centres in Israel, this innovative centre is one of the flagships of Reform Judaism in Israel and a model of what community responsibility actually means.

12.00 Options end with lunch in the respective areas

15.30 Arrive in Jerusalem [to rest and prepare for a long night, Erev Shavuot.]

18.00 Dinner

19.00 *Erev Shavuot* services at HUC (The Hebrew Union College is the training seminary for American Reform Rabbis) or Kol Haneshama

21.00 – late Tikkun Leil Shavuot in one of a number of Jerusalem venues offering study in English after whetting your appetite in study with us **[Pardes, HUC, and a number of local synagogues with a large English speaking community base.]**

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Wednesday May 23rd: Shavuot

We continue the Shavuot in Israel experience and throw in a few elements you would not find in Leeds or Manchester, and to be honest, not even in North West London. This will be a Shavuot of Synagogue, Pilgrimage in the Old City of Jerusalem and on Kibbutz, where we will meet a very different interpretation of Shavuot, harking back to its agricultural and pagan roots. **[You will be able to choose the morning option on the day]**

07.00 MORNING WALKS 4: THE JERUSALEM THEATRE AND THE PRESIDENT'S RESIDENCE

Option 1: Shacharit Shavuot

Choose one or more synagogues, or the Kotel if you wish, to explore the many ways of Jewish expression available in Jerusalem.

09.00/10.00 *Shavuot Services* in a number of synagogues in Jerusalem. Take your pick of the many possibilities in Jerusalem including trying a minyan at the Kotel (including for the Women the option of joining Women at the Wall)

Option 2: Rest

Feel free to take this option. You probably deserve it.

09.00 Morning at rest after a long night of study

12.00 **[options end]** Lunch in the hotel

[(or if you are already in the Old City, we will eat in an Arab owned restaurant as the Jewish ones will be closed for Shavuot.)]

13.30 **'Perspectives on Pilgrimage'**: In the Old City, exploring the meaning of pilgrimage for the different cultures that comprise the city.

17.30 Shavuot on Kibbutz. Shavuot is also the Harvest Festival and the kibbutzim have focussed on this aspect creating a unique way of celebrating Shavuot. We will attend the Shavuot celebrations on a kibbutz situated half way between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, Kibbutz Tzora.

19.00 Dinner at the **Kibbutz Tzora Winery**

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Thursday May 24th: Tel Aviv, a different Jewish Reality.

Around 100 years ago a group of newly arrived Jewish immigrants dreamed of a new Jewish city, built from scratch. A city which would reflect the 'New Jew', to be honest, a bit of Europe in the Levant, Herzl's Altneuland. We will look at what this city has become and ask a question crucial for modern Israel: is the culture of Tel Aviv a new Jewish culture or is it a universal, post-modern culture just happening in Hebrew? We will do this via a morning which will focus on the 'Altneuland' taking in some of the sites which tell the story of the Herzlian vision and the attempts to implement it and an afternoon which will look at the 'post-Herzlian', post-modern version of Tel Aviv.

10.30 **Bialik Street** The creation of the new Hebrew culture and the vision of Ahad Ha'am

11.30 **Independence Hall**. The site of the Declaration of Independence

13.00 **Shenkin Street**: W(h)ither Jewish culture? A 10 minute walk from Bialik Street and Independence Hall brings us to an intersection which is geographic, cultural and ideological. We will explore what the 21st century holds for Israel on the cultural level (including time for Lunch*). **[the bus will take your suitcases to the hotel and will be available to ferry you to the hotel at hourly intervals from 14.00 to check in, or you can walk to the hotel which is only 15 minutes walk from Shenkin]**

18.00 Kikar Rabin Where Israel gathers to voice its protests and the site of the assassination of Yitzchak Rabin

19.00 Evening Voices 4: The voice of her Majesty's Government: Reception at the British Embassy hosted by the British Ambassador

20.30 Dinner in Jaffa

Sleep Metropolitan Hotel Tel Aviv

Friday May 25th: Tikkun Olam in Tel Aviv

Tel Aviv is probably the most complex Jewish city in the world. It is trying to define its Jewishness and dealing with the complexities of being a modern city at the same time. This is where Jewish values are supposed to be put to the test, the Jewish State. We will spend the morning in some of the more difficult areas in Tel Aviv and view some of the interventions being offered to the social issues faced. At the end of the morning the group will split and each person or each community will go off to spend Shabbat in their own way. Shabbat Shalom

07.00 MORNING WALKS 5: A WALK (AND PADDLE FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO WET THEIR TOES) ON THE BEACH

09.30 South Tel Aviv to visit some of the projects for intervention in the poorer neighbourhoods of Tel Aviv including the Mechinah Programme of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism, Doctors for Human Rights and the Tikkun Olam in Tel Aviv programme of Bina.

13.30 Leave for Shabbat Options: with family, friends, with your community's partnership community or at rest in Tel Aviv

Sleep Metropolitan Hotel Tel Aviv/Haifa/Jerusalem etc/Friends or Family

Saturday May 26th:

Shabbat Options

22.30 We will meet to reconnect for the final two days of the programme in Tel Aviv. Please join us for *Havdalah* on the Beach.

Sleep Metropolitan Hotel Tel Aviv

Sunday May 27th:

As we approach the end of our time in Israel we will travel south to experience both the issues of today and the deepest memories of our people in the Land of Israel. So much has happened to us as a people over the years. We are no longer who we were when we came out of Egypt so many centuries ago. What have we learned and what do we take with us? **[Please note there are two options for this day. You will be asked to choose one when you register for the trip.]**

Option 1: Land, Security, Peace and Perceptions

So much has happened in Israel in the past few years which challenge previously held truths and conventional wisdom. Check yours against what you see in the field.

08.00 **Kfar Etzion.** We will visit the Etzion Bloc one of the hearts of Jewish settlement of the Land of Israel from the period of the early pioneers. This area was lost in 1948 in the War of Independence and came under Israeli rule again in 1967. This represents most of the 10% of the West Bank which under the plans of the Israeli Government will not become a part of the Palestinian State.

11.30 The **Ministry of Foreign Affairs.** Israel on the world stage. What are the issues Israel faces in the international arena and how are they dealt with?

Option 2: We Dig Israel

Good dirty fun. Spend the morning digging on a real archaeological dig and enjoy the largest National Park in Israel.

08.00 '**Dig for a Day'** leave for **Bet Guvrin**, the largest Nature Reserve in Israel and ancient home to King Herod's antecedents, and the story of **Tel Maresha**. You will dig a little in the coolness of the caves, as Jewish archaeologists do, and take one of two hikes, one easy or one a little challenging (underground in the caves) in the area of the Bet Guvrin Nature reserve. Fun and dirty.

14.00 Check into Novotel Dead sea

14.30 Welcome to the lowest place on earth you can stand and not get your feet wet. Time for a light lunch and a restful afternoon in the Dead Sea, in the mud baths, the fresh water pool or in the sulphur pools.

18.30 Leave for early evening in the **Ein Gedi Botanical Reserve**. The gardens of the kibbutz are botanical gardens known locally as the Garden of Eden. You will understand why when you walk around the gardens on this short botanical tour.

20.30 Final Dinner

Sleep Novotel at the Dead Sea

Monday May 28th:

So how does one say goodbye? Hopefully by saying *Lehitraot*, see you again, soon.

08.00 Conclusions I: Gentle Hike in **Nahal David**.

10.00 Conclusions II: Ein Gedi final circles

11.00 Leave for the Airport with Lunch boxes

14.00 Ben Gurion Airport