

Welcome to ic.news – written by, for, and about Cleveland’s Jewish teens!

In the section titled “ic.news” israel.cleveland.next (icnext) participants reflect on their 10-day Mission to Israel in June 2018. Inspired by knowledge gained from the icnext program, they will talk about Jewish identity, changing political, social, and cultural perspectives of

Israelis, the realities of the Israeli conflict, and more. icnext is a two-year program that educates Cleveland’s Jewish high school students from all denominations in core issues of Israeli society and the geopolitical situation in Israel today. icnext is a project of the Jewish Federation of Cleveland, administered through @akiva.

For information about or to apply for icnext, contact Tina Keller at tkeller@akivacleveland.org.

In “more.teen.news” @akiva presents teen events in the community. From preparing students for the challenges on their future college campus to learning Hebrew and how to advocate for Israel, from theater (testimony, theater.cleveland) to music (HaZamir Cleveland), there are many opportunities for teens to develop strong connections to Israel, and train to be Jewish leaders.

REFLECTIONS ON DIALOGUE

We are icnext - a group of teens dedicated to advocating for, learning about and supporting our Jewish homeland, the state of Israel. During our Israel Mission in June of 2018, we explored Israel through the lens of Languages: Written, Visual, Musical, and Dialogue. Language is usually defined as the method of communicating through speaking or writing, but we learned that language can be displayed through a multitude of ways such as facial expression, body language, and graphic communication. In contemporary society, we see language in every corner of the world, through signs, logos, and graffiti. Life itself is surrounded and enveloped by the language of our actions and the way we think about things. Language isn’t just about talking and writing, it is the foundation for how we live and conduct our lives.

— icnews Team, Cohort 6, Cleveland 2018

THE ROOTS THAT JOIN US

What does living in harmony mean? What would Israelis and Palestinians living in harmony look like? At Roots in Gush Etzion, that’s exactly what’s happening. Israelis and Palestinians are coming together and working in agriculture, attending social events like youth groups and camps, and holding lectures that help the two communities understand each other’s narratives. It’s one thing to hear from someone that Palestinians

were moved out of their homes, but it’s quite another to hear the story from a Palestinian in person. Considering that so many people in these two communities have accepted the conflict, it really made our trip to be able to hear from two speakers, Shaul and Noor. Shaul was born in America and made Aliyah when he was 21. Noor was born in Bethlehem, but his family was from Jordan. Both are passionate about Israeli-Palestinian co-existence. The most impactful thing we learned from Shaul and Noor is that they believe the biggest problem for Palestinians is not Israelis, it is the Israelis’ fear. What we’ve learned throughout this trip is that the main issue in this conflict is the “us versus them” mentality that has been created. All the speakers that have talked about this conflict, especially Shaul and Noor, emphasized that there will be no peace until we respect one another. There is so much fear because neither side truly understands the other. Our job now is bringing awareness back home to Cleveland. The trip may end today, but our job has just begun.

— Josh Isakov and Danny Ecker, Israel 2018

WHEN AN ISRAELI ARAB TAUGHT ME ABOUT AMERICA

Today, we visited Ibrahim Abu Ahmad, an Israeli Arab, in Tura’an. I was eager to hear his Arab perspective on the tension that has plagued Israel. Indeed, Ibrahim did tell us a fantastic story, but I was



most moved by the three times I noticed Ibrahim’s narrative echoed American political issues.

First, Ibrahim recalled a time his school teacher asked the class about their national identity. There were answers of “Israeli,” “Arab,” “Jew,” “Muslim,” “Palestinian,” and all combinations of those labels. Ibrahim himself didn’t know how to answer the question! He compared this with the United States, where if you ask the same question, you mostly hear “American,” “American,” and “American.” In the United States, we have embraced, our identity as a nation of immigrants. We have a unity Israelis only dream of, and lack of unity is a roadblock to solving conflicts between Israel and its neighbors.

Second, Ibrahim lamented that Arabs have an issue with self-victimization. The mentality that “the West wants to destroy us” is too prevalent in the Arab world. Recently, Candace Owens made headlines for claiming that African-Americans have the same problem of self-victimization, and she is seen by many as a right-wing radical spewing plain and even ignorant nonsense. Ibrahim’s comments made sense to me though. How can I believe Ibrahim when I ridiculed Owens just weeks ago? Is Ibrahim as crazy as she is, or does Owens actually have a valid viewpoint? I don’t know how long it will take me to figure out what to believe.

Finally, Ibrahim addressed Islamic extremist terrorist groups. He believes the Arab world needs to be more vocal in denouncing Hamas and ISIS. I remember him saying “all terrorism is terrorism, no matter who it comes from.” In



the United States, we are well aware of Islamic terrorists, but domestic terrorism is not as widely recognized. A man who screams “Allahu Akbar” while detonating a suicide vest is immediately called a terrorist; that is obvious. But what about the quiet white boy who shoots down his peers? He is “mentally ill” and was “excluded” from social settings. No, all terrorism is terrorism.

Ibrahim Abu Ahmad showed me that Israel’s problems are not isolated. No matter where we live, we still have an imperfect society. We all need to work to improve the world we live in, not just now, but for the future.

— Max Feinleib, Israel 2018

BREAKING DABO

Zionism. A blue and white flag. A stream of passionate Hebrew. Contained in the predictable pale skinned body.

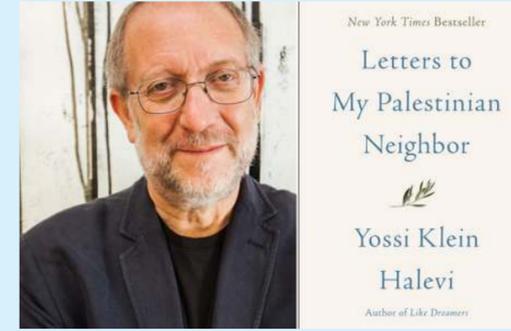
My entire life, I have known about the large Jewish diaspora. It is easy to forget our peoplehood expands as far south of Jerusalem as Ethiopia, but in Israel we spoke to this often forgotten group of our people and learned the story of their Zionism.

When Geuli was eight, she began a

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AN EVENING WITH YOSSEI KLEIN HALEVI

On Wednesday, October 24, Yossi Klein Halevi, co-director, along with Imam Abdullah Antepli, of the Hartman Institute’s Muslim Leadership Initiative in Jerusalem, came to John Carroll University to discuss his new book Letters to My Palestinian Neighbor and some of the most pressing issues facing Israel today. icnext members Jacob Levine, Noah Turoff, and I attended Halevi’s talk because all members of icnext read Letters to My Palestinian Neighbor this past summer before our Israel mission. The book was already vivid on its own, but hearing the author elaborate on his views really made the text come to life. I found that the most engaging part of Halevi’s talk, though, was about his work with the Muslim Leadership Institute (MLI). MLI aims to educate Muslims about Judaism and Zionist claims to the land of Israel to foster acceptance in Muslims for the Jewish narrative about Israel. Based on his lengthy experience working with Muslim colleagues and students, Halevi believes that both sides of the Israel-Palestine conflict need to acknowledge each other’s narrative,



even without accepting that diametrically opposite narrative. Halevi strives in all his work to create a constructive dialogue between Jews and Muslims in Israel. To this end, he plans to publish a sequel to Letters to My Palestinian Neighbor, comprised of letters from Palestinians in response to the book. Halevi’s commitment to reaching out to Muslims showed me the sincerity of his wishes for peace in Israel over his sentiments in support of the full Jewish narrative concerning Israel. People like Yossi Klein Halevi can help lead us to progress towards that elusive compromise to bring seemingly impossible peace to Israel and the Middle East.

— Max Feinleib, Cleveland 2018



NOT LOST IN TRANSLATION

Staying in Beit She’an with a family of six I learned a lot about communicating without using words. The mother spoke English fluently, but I had difficulty communicating verbally with other family members. Most of our “important” conversations consisted of the mother translating for the twin girls my age and myself, as this was an effective way to understand each other more clearly. But over time, the mother grew frustrated and stopped intervening.

However, we soon learned the best ways we could communicate with each other. I figured out what speed to talk at so it was slow enough they could understand me. The twins spoke back to me in sentences of usually four to five key words. After about a day, we had a system which worked for us.

More importantly, we learned the value of alternative forms of communication. Some say actions speak louder than words and in this case it really holds true. A smile, gesture, or laugh was valuable in understanding what the other person was saying. At the end of my stay, I had learned a lot about communication. During Shabbat, I was surrounded by people who spoke only Hebrew, and though I had absolutely no clue what they meant, I was still able to feel part of the conversation. I found it funny what English words the Israelis

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From Israel advocacy, leadership training and college prep for Jewish students to HaZamir Cleveland Choir and original Jewish theatre, @akiva offers Hebrew and so much more! @akiva is a beneficiary agency of the Jewish Federation of Cleveland and a partner agency

of the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland. For more info visit www.akivacleveland.org.



EXHIBITION ON VIEW NOW THROUGH FEBRUARY 1, 2019, AT THE MANDEL JCC



knew and did not know. The twins were easily able to tell me all about why they loved Grey’s Anatomy, and their father could tell me about the Cavs, but it was harder to discuss what animals lived on the Kibbutz. Despite all the verbal struggles, I loved my time in Beit She’an, and it proved that you do not need to speak the same language to truly understand someone.

— Sophie Bravo, Israel 2018

