

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.

more.teen.news

On Friday, January 18, 2019, @akiva led a delegation of 12, 9th grade students to the Club Z Conference in San Francisco. Club Z is a youth movement that fosters a commitment to Israel and Zionism among today’s teens. During the 3-day Conference, participants learned from educators who embrace Zionism, and took a step toward preparing themselves to address the anti-Israel challenges facing their generation. Below are their reflections.



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.

WALLS, BARRIERS, DIVISIONS, AND FENCES

Walls. Barriers. Divisions. Fences. These symbols, both literally and figuratively, are strikingly evident in Israel. Cultural and language barriers separate the Israeli and Arab communities. Divisions within communities, for example, the Ultra Orthodox and Secular Jews, create tension. Israel is surrounded by fences to keep out the hatred of ISIS and Hezbollah. The walls of the Temple, now the Kotel, were built to give the Jews a safe home while walls that construct the bomb shelters in Sderot keep the rockets out. Barriers between Arabs and Israelis arose out of fear of those who are different. However, we must understand that we are all more alike than we are different. Within Lebanon and Syria there are wonderful people who dream of peace. Not all Arabs within or surrounding Israel are terrorists. The Old City is a place cherished by many people around the world. While there are differences within the various sectors of Judaism, they are all rooted in the same core beliefs. Our hope is that by reading our journal entries from our time in Israel, you will better understand the divisions. By doing so, you can help to tear down these barriers and make the world a more loving and inclusive place.

— Sophie Bravo, Editor Cleveland 2019

TOUR OF THE HOLY BASIN WALL

Diversity. One of the most important aspects to have in a country but one of the most hated among people in nations around the world. When I asked Ido, our tour guide, to describe the Kotel in one word, he used the word “dream”. Why he said this was even more interesting. It is everyone’s dream to come to the Western Wall because this is where you are most connected to G-d. It is a life changing experience. This dream is shared by people coming from all different walks of life. It doesn’t matter where you come from, this dream still rains through.

Today was my second time visiting the wall. I have now written a letter and slipped it into the wall twice, and the experience was amazing both times. Nothing else compares to being at the Kotel, knowing you are the closest you can possibly be to the holiest place in the world for Judaism. Jerusalem and the Old City has a deep history rooted in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. All of these religions believe



they have the right to this place and all at some point had full control over Jerusalem and the Old City. This dispute is mostly caused by the Dome of the Rock. All three religions want full control, but the question is who deserves it most and why? People around the world for centuries have been trying to solve this issue. What people don’t realize is that it should not be a question of one religion getting it. This is not how it can be solved because they all have an equal right to it. Many members of these religions have the dream of praying there. so why can’t we do this together? Everyone needs to forget about this “us versus them” mentality and realize that together we can all achieve the dream.

— Danny Ecker, Israel 2018

LEBANESE AND SYRIAN BORDERS WITH SARIT ZEHAVI BARRIER

Our long drive over the winding road took us to the top of mountain. We were officially in the Golan Heights and Major (Res.) Sarit Zehavi would be our tour guide for the day. Major Zehavi has served over 14 years in the Israeli Defense Force military intelligence corps, and she used her personal experiences during her time in Israel to illustrate for our group the Israeli border security crisis. However, what stuck out the most as we traveled along the northern border that day, were the jaw dropping views. The glistening water of the Kineret was beautiful, and in the distance one could see the mountains dividing Israel and Jordan. We traveled from the peaceful Syrian border to what is known as the rather active Lebanese border. Along with the serene views of the large, gorgeous houses and greenery in



the valley, two Hezbollah flags stood out in bright yellow contrast. The flags represent Lebanon’s devout support for Hezbollah and the missiles they launch towards Israel. Even though many of the surrounding countries want the destruction of Israel, we believe that Israel has the capability to overcome anti-Semitism within the Middle East and make peace once and for all.

— Adam Kahn, Josh Isakov, Danny Ecker and Sammi Fremont, Israel 2018

JISR AZ-ZARQA DIVISION

After visiting with an Israeli-Arab in the burning heat earlier in the day, we made our way to Jisr Az-Zarqa, an Arab village on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. As we got off the bus we were greeted by Genevieve, an English teacher at one of the village’s schools, and several of her current

and former Arab students. The students shook our hands warmly and guided us to a place where we would spend time together. Once inside the building, we all formed a circle and introduced ourselves. We said our names, our age, and what we liked to do or a fun fact about ourselves. It was so interesting to hear how much we all had in common with the Arab teens. Many of them enjoyed listening to singers from America that many of us liked as well, and almost everyone had a favorite soccer team.

Sometimes, it seems that Arabs and Jews are so different because of the political conflict but in reality, we have a lot in common despite our difference of religion. After both groups were introduced, we split into groups that were a mixture of Arabs and Americans. Each group had to draw or write on a large piece of paper what we thought of when we heard the words “respect, culture, and

What surprised us at Club Z....

When we arrived at Club Z, we were surprised that this many people have as much of an interest in Zionism and leadership as us. We listened to passionate speakers, heard inspiring stories and learned how to stand for our home. We were surprised at how people’s’ views can be conflicting, despite fighting for the same cause. We learned that there is much hate around the world towards Israel and how to communicate and educate people on the Middle Eastern conflict. All the speakers had completely different views on Zionism and what it meant to them. We did not expect to meet so many teens from all over the country. This conference opened up our views on Zionism, taught us how to communicate to others about our love for Israel, and strengthen our leadership skills.

— Carly Gimbel & Shayna Caruso

One of the speakers at Club Z was Sharna Eshet Kohen. She spoke about Judaism and the concept of whiteness. Sharna Eshet Kohen explained that Judaism is a race within itself. She also said that reform and orthodox Judaism may not exist, but it is their culture that is present today. She had a unique approach when speaking about Israel, and it was a very interesting program to listen too.

— Kobi Einhorn

Kasim Hafeez is Pakistani-born, and is most for founding The Israel Campaign, a pro-Israel advocacy organization. However, his story of getting where he is today was gripping. He was raised believing the only way for a perfect world was the decimation of Israel and all of the Jews. His mind was changed right before leaving for a terrorist camp, after reading Alan Dershowitz’s, The Case For Israel. It was amazing to us to see along with Kasim, the number of diverse supporters of Israel, especially one who had a past hatred for Israel.

— Perry Gelwasser and Ethan Smith

We took a trip all the way from Cleveland, Ohio to San Francisco, California, not knowing what to expect. When we arrived, we were welcomed by the board of Club Z. Club Z is an amazing program that teaches youth the importance of Zionism. We attended several seminars featuring different speakers and heard their perspectives and experiences related to Israel. Along the way, we made friends from all over the country and shared our opinions and backgrounds with each other. By the end of the trip, we were able to understand the different concepts and approaches of interacting with other Jews. The weekend was very memorable, and we really enjoyed sharing this experience with our friends.

— Sela Uher and Abbe Newman

nature.” At first, it was hard to communicate but we ended up bonding through drawing. My group was fascinated when the Arab teens spoke and wrote in Arabic because we thought it was such a smooth and beautiful language. Once every group presented what they had drawn on their poster boards, Genevieve took us down to the Mediterranean beach where many other families from the village were playing. We got a chance to interact with the Arab teens in a more casual setting and observe how the other Arabs of the village interacted with each other. After a too short trip to the beach, we headed to some picnic tables to eat delicious watermelon and grapes. By this point, we were much more comfortable with the Arab teens and were talking with them and having a lot of fun. After we took a group photo and said our goodbyes, we got on the bus and headed to Tel Aviv.

— Kayla Soclof, Israel 2018

AFTER 5 TIMES IN ISRAEL, I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO SEE THE GAZA BORDER FENCE

Approximately 800 meters from Sderot is the Gaza border, dividing Israeli and Palestinian cultures. Sderot is infamously known as the constant recipient of rockets sent by Hamas to injure and traumatize innocent Israeli citizens. Residents have fifteen seconds to find shelter before rockets from



the border touch down in Sderot, so as one can imagine life is very different when living under constant threat.

White concrete walls greeted us in the streets of Sderot. When we left the bus to explore the town, we were greeted with the smell of burnt Israeli fields - remnants left from field fires set by kites sent over the border during Gazian protests. Itzak, our tour

guide, explained the typical lifestyle of a Sderot resident and how visits to bomb shelters can play a significant part in their daily lives.

Once we finished exploring Sderot, we made our way to a hill where we could see Gaza and the wall separating Israelis from Palestinians. We could finally put an image to everything we had learned about Gaza. It was a culmination of all we had studied. After seeing Gaza and being able to apply everything I have learned to this experience,

I wonder if Israelis and Palestinians can ever get along while living in such close proximity. Will Israelis and Palestinians be able to live hand in hand despite their constant hateful and life threatening interactions? One can only hope that we will all live in peace and be able to accept one another even if we have different beliefs.

— Adam Kahn, Israel 2018



Cleveland HS Seniors AIPAC Policy Conference 2019

What: HS school seniors are invited to join @akiva for this trip to AIPAC Policy Conference, the largest gathering of America’s pro-Israel community. Policy Conference attracts more than 18,000 activists, members of Congress, and American and Israeli policymakers.

When: March 24-26, 2019

Where: Walter E. Washington Convention Center, Washington, D.C.

Cost and Registration: \$150.00 (financial aid is available). More information and registration email Tina Keller at tkeller@akivacleveland.org, or call @akiva 216-367-1388.

REGISTER NOW