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Throughout our June 2018 Israel Mission, we took the time to look at Israel through the perspective of languages – the communication that ultimately makes a culture. Dialogue is one of the clearest forms of language, and we had the privilege of seeing dialogue come to life by hearing many people express their differing opinions about the country.

Max Feinleib, Editor
Cleveland, 2019

STARTING WITH SOME PERSPECTIVE BY SOPHIE CAPLIN

“Take everything with a grain of salt.” Zeev Ben Shachar used this phrase repeatedly throughout his empowering lecture. Zeev spoke to our group about how the media portrays dangers and conflicts currently happening in Israel.

Now, what does that sentence mean to me? I think it means it is crucial to look at the entire picture. Zeev showed us small images and told us to guess what the complete picture was. This made us realize that when you focus in on details you might miss the entire picture. He concluded the activity with the cliché phrase (that everyone rolls their eyes at) “a picture is worth 1000 words”. Instead of head shakes from the group everyone agreed the phrase had taken on new meaning. Zeev showed us several videos and pictures of tragedies that happened on Palestinian-held soil and explained to us how people tend to support the underdog. In some cases the Palestinians are the underdogs, although this happens to Israelis as well.

Zeev’s lecture brought home an important lesson on fact versus fiction and taught me to always look at the bigger picture.

VISITING AN ULTRA-ORTHODOX COMMUNITY BY KAYLA SOCLOF

After a full day touring the Old City and Yad Vashem, our group ended with an interesting Q&A session with Rabbi Yehoshua Weinberger. Rabbi Weinberger grew up in Brooklyn, New York in an Ultra-Orthodox community and attended Tels Yeshivah in Ohio before moving to Kiev, Ukraine. He and his wife helped rebuild the Jewish community in Kiev by establishing Jewish camps and schools.

On our way to meet Rabbi Weinberger, we



walked through the narrow streets of a small and beautiful Orthodox neighborhood. It felt very homey and comforting when I first saw it. There were families all over and kids running around on every street. It looked a lot like University Heights on a sunny afternoon.

I was expecting Rabbi Weinberger to talk about life as an Ultra-Orthodox Jew in Israel and how the experience differs from that in America. I wanted him to talk about the Orthodox community’s influence on the government; however, what we heard was very different. He started talking about how Jews are unique and that we are part of an exclusive group of people who have been around so much longer than anyone would have ever expected. He then talked about the “dress code” of their community and how they wear long coats and mostly black or darker colors out of respect for themselves. One of the questions asked was about the differences between Ultra-Orthodox and other denominations (specifically the differences between the Modern Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox). He went on to explain that we all believe in the Torah, but the Ultra-Orthodox are much stricter. While Modern Orthodox Jews “compromise” on Halacha and integrate themselves more with the modern world, Ultra-Orthodox Jews pay more attention to detail with stricter views on Jewish law.

When Rabbi Weinberger was asked about why he was proud to be a Jew, he started off by saying he was proud because he was brainwashed. Brainwashed? Yes, by his parents at a young age, but as he grew, he studied more Torah and traveled, and through his life experiences developed a genuine love for the religion.

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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.

that while Israel obviously needs people to fight for the flag and be politically involved, in order for Israel to incorporate the “Jewish” part of the Jewish democracy, it needs to have people who are willing to be the spiritual leaders as well. Overall, I found that I wanted deeper and more complex answers to the questions asked. He was a very good speaker, but I did not feel like I received a complete view of the role of the Ultra-Orthodox community in Israeli society.

THE TEAPACKS CONCERT BY ELIJAH SAUNT

Tonight we went to an exciting concert and saw the Israelis from our March Mifgash in their homeland. It was fun to be in the reverse role from when they were visiting us in Cleveland—now we were the visitors. Going to a concert by the famous Israeli band Teapacks was so much better after learning some of their music beforehand—in the afternoon before the concert, we did a Hebrew language class based on the lyrics to a few Teapacks songs. Although learning the lyrics was difficult, when the band played the songs, everybody was familiar with the



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

testimony.theater.cleveland has proven to be an impactful program for Cleveland Jewish teens. The program teams 7th-12th grade students with Holocaust survivors. The students document the survivors’ courageous stories and develops those stories into a theatrical production. This year’s performance for the community will be Monday, April 15, 6:30pm, at Cleveland Heights High School. This performance is free and open to the community.

Below are reflections from members of the cast. There is no fee for students to participate in Testimony Theater and no acting experience is necessary. For more information contact tkeller@akivacleveland.org.

Testimony theater has been important to me not only because I have been given the opportunity to tell my great grandmother’s story, but because the community can be educated on the Holocaust. Hopefully, our theatrical retellings of these stories can prevent future events such as the Holocaust, or any genocide of a certain group based on their religion, appearance, or beliefs. Testimony theater teaches the need for tolerance in society.

- Perry Gelwasser

This program has helps tell the stories of those who could not tell them any more and lets people never forget what tragedy happened. It has allowed me to connect to my Jewish identity and taught me life lessons I could not have learned any other way. Testimony theatre has truly impacted my life.

- Nava Berenholz

It helps educate people about the Holocaust and teaches first hand experiences to people in or related to our community. It helps us to remember the tragedy while also embracing the fact that in spite of the worst life could be, we’ll survive.

- Maya Greller



words and would jump around and jam out with each other. Everybody at the concert was far older than us, and we definitely brought down the average age by a lot. When halfway through the concert the audience began to move to the front and jump around, it felt much more like my kind of music scene. It was fun to have that comfortable and enjoyable experience here in Israel. The days of our trip are long and different from a normal tour — this is definitely no vacation. It’s not all fun and games. But hanging out in the evenings, being in Beit She’an and meeting new people is definitely what I’m enjoying the most about this program.

MEETING A PROUD “SETTLER” BY ADAM KAHN

Today in Gush Etzion we met with an Australian immigrant named Ari. We sat in the abundant shade provided by a humongous tree listening to his story. Ari began by sharing the three core reasons he moved to Gush Etzion. First was “Mama Rachel”—a reference to the tomb of Rachel, which is located in Hebron (close to where we were). Ari shared how Rachel’s tomb is an essential piece of Jewish history and that it is important to live near. His second reason was because of the area’s natural barriers. Gush Etzion is built on top of a hill, and gives Israelis a strategic advantage. This is also crucial to protect Israel from rockets sent by Hamas. Lastly, Ari moved to Gush Etzion to experience “true Zionism.” Ari firmly believed it was the Jewish people’s

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This program has helped survivors pass on their stories to others, and from these stories we all become a witness to the tragedy that happened.

- Rena Berkowitz

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.

Testimony Theater has had a big impact on the way I see life, and makes me see how we have it so much easier than the people who survived the Holocaust. They experienced things that they explain because they don’t want this horrific turn of events to be forgotten. Our community was full of Holocaust survivors and sadly, their numbers are slowly decreasing; that is why we have to keep the stories alive.

- Noa Rabkin

Testimony Theater gives a voice to those who lost theirs. We have to remember the victims of the Shoah and retell their stories to be sure this never happens again. Telling the stories from the survivor’s point of view is proof that the Shoah happened, even though some people deny it. We retell the events accurately because many people don’t know what really happened. This program has let me see the Shoah in a new, deeper way. I am honored to be able to be a part of this program.

- Rachel Blumin

Hearing what people have been through really changed the way I see life and the way I live mine. It shows how much life has changed and how some people still haven’t changed. It’s so important to listen to these stories directly from survivors while they are still with us.

- Parker Newman

right to live freely in their country, and if fighting came as a consequence, so be it. Central to Ari’s focus is the belief that Palestinian leadership is unprepared to make peace with Israel. For that reason he feels Israel should continue to fight against the Palestinians and not give in until they learn that Israel is rightfully a Jewish state. In addition, Ari explained that he is unwilling to allow Palestinians to become Israeli citizens

if there ever is a peace agreement because he fears losing our Jewish democratic state. Ari’s stories and ideas appeared very right-wing and conservative (a far cry from the peacebuilding philosophies of many of the other Israelis we have met), and although he wasn’t outright opposed to making peace with the Palestinians, he clearly didn’t see that as possible in the near future.

Testimony theater presents five inspirational stories of determination and survival... documented through interviews with Holocaust Survivors... written and portrayed by teen actors.

“For the dead and the living, we must bear witness.”
- Elie Wiesel

FACING HISTORY AND OURSELVES

MALTZ MUSEUM OF JEWISH HERITAGE

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Monday, April 15, 2019
6:30PM – Play, 7:30PM – Q&A
8:00PM – Reception
Cleveland Heights High School
 Dina Rees Evans Auditorium
 13263 Cedar Road, Cleveland Heights

Free and open to the community.
 Parking available on site and in adjacent commercial district.

For more information, contact lgoodman@jecc.org