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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.**

In "more.teen.news" @akiva presents teen events in the community. From preparing students for the challenges on their future college campus, learning Hebrew and how to advocate for Israel, to original Jewish theater (testimony. theater.cleveland) @akiva offers opportunities for teens to develop strong connections to Israel, and train to be Jewish leaders.



## HOLY. RELIGIOUS. QUIET.

When thinking about Israeli culture, these can be words that describe the first thoughts that come to the minds of many who have yet to visit. There were many kids in that group among our Cohort, and their expectations for experiencing Israeli culture on their first trip were pretty low (possibly due to Amnon's repeated assertion that we were not tourists, and this was not a tour). The first few days did not help these beliefs. We met some interesting people and did some cool things, but after 5 days of that it started to seem like all anyone in the country knew how to do was talk (again, not helped by Amnon's existence). Eventually, though, the undeniable culture of Israel began to shine through. From the art, to music, to the theatre, to the city life in general, Israel seemingly became fun overnight. This is how Cohort 7 reacted in real time to the revelation of the culture that makes Israel.

*Zach Segar, Editor, Cleveland 2020*

## AUTUMN LEAVES

I fall asleep at 3 a.m. with Autumn Leaves in my ears. Jazz music helps me relax and after an awkward first day in Beit She'an, Chet Baker's Autumn Leaves is what I need. Waking up the next day to a sunny Israeli morning I get ready for lots of swimming in one of Beit She'an springs.

The whole American cohort and the Israelis hosting us pack tightly onto the bus and head down to the spring. One by one we jumped off of the bus and got into the water. This was a great icebreaker for Tal, my host, and I. We grab a snack of watermelon from the watermelon man and then head back to Tal's kibbutz. Tal tells us he is going to take Rylan (also staying with Tal)

and I to his friend's house after we napped. I was excited because he told me the day before that his friend is a jazz musician like me. Sometimes on the trip I felt like a chameleon, blending into the groups interests, but this could be my chance to talk with someone who shares my love for jazz.

I'm ecstatic on the way to his house, and I enter, melodic in hand. After an episode of Brooklyn 99 and a chat in broken English he invites me to his room. There he has a piano and his custom bass. He asks me if I know any songs and I reply with Autumn Leaves, an American standard. We play Autumn Leaves, me on his piano and him on the bass. I was shocked at how well he played. It was like playing with a professional. After playing a few more songs we talk about bands we listen to, bands we're in, how we practice, how much more we should be practicing. I realized that the conversation wasn't in broken English anymore. We might not speak the same language but music is universal.

*Michah Goldfarb, Israel 2019*

## CROSSING LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Gotta say, I was skeptical of a play in a foreign language with subtitles, but the Israelis know how to get the job done- and do it well! The play, named "Returning," was performed at the Cameri Theater in Tel Aviv. It was extremely interesting and engaging, and almost immediately the language barrier became nonexistent. It began with a creepy undertone: the projection of a man's face assuming the entirety of the stage. Within a police station, the main character, Noa, a woman about 30, sits silently as she is questioned about her living situation. The police explain that social services has taken all five of her children, and she will not be able to return to her current home because of police suspicion



of neglect and incest within the household.

Through a series of flashbacks, it becomes clear that an old man seduced her into following a "righteous path," in the process becoming like a father figure. She abandoned her family and future. Back to the present, as she begins to form long lost relationships with her family, she loosens up on tight restrictions she previously held on both herself and her children, emphasizing the difficulty of the 16 years spent with "father." In overcoming these difficulties, the story ends up at the police station, where Noa now fears for her 16 year old daughter. Luckily, all but one of her children are given back to her and she returns to her parents house, unwillingly. However, tensions arise when it becomes clear that although her mother and sister have always welcomed her back home, despite her gruesome past, her father was not as accepting.

In overcoming commonalities of respect and spiritual goodness "father" taught her, she agrees to help lock him away forever with the use of a recording device. In saving her daughter, and sanctifying herself, she is able to feel a sense of freedom that she has not had in many years. However, the most moving part of the play by far would have to be the end. After the bowing for the cast, all dressed in white at this point, a woman wearing regular colorful clothes walks on. In Hebrew, it is explained that this is a true story, and the woman standing before us is the mother the story depicts. All in all, it became extremely clear that a language barrier is nonexistent when the story being told is as captivating as this was; truly a unique experience!

*Alexa Plotkin, Israel 2019*

## SCAVENGER HUNT IN TEL AVIV

Tonight we went to Tel Aviv to do an evening scavenger hunt. We met up with a few of the shinshinim – both old and new – who came along for the ride. We were split into groups, me being on the green team, with icnext members Laine, Ariel, Spencer, Eli, Micah, and Avigail our shinshinit. We were given headbands and a packet of instructions. We were supposed to go around the city and take pictures of monuments and bonus stuff. The green team decided to go for the bonus pictures because they were worth more points than monuments. After running around for a few hours



taking pictures, we finally arrived at the finish line ten minutes early. We decided as a group to be done, although we still had time, because we were tired. Two teams arrived late and had points deducted. In the end, my team won by one thousand points! As a prize, they gave us chocolate. It wasn't very good, but to make up for that, Amnon got us popsicles.

My feet hurt right now. I thought it was really fun to work as a team and get to know Avigail and my teammates better. I really enjoyed running around the streets of Tel Aviv at night especially to see the interesting people we talked to in order to complete some tasks. Before I wrap up, I am going to tell a quick story. My group needed to get a street artist, and someone to stand on their head for twenty seconds in the middle of the street. We came across this very nice dancer in the middle of the street. We asked him for help and explained what we were doing and he was very helpful with everything. It was funny because he wanted us to dance with him but we had to continue. Anyways, that concludes my last blog. Hope you enjoyed it!

*Naomi Reizes, Israel 2019*

## more.teen.news

December 6-8, 2019, @akiva led a delegation of 15 high school juniors and seniors to the Teen Israel Leadership Institute, offered by Center for Israel Education in partnership with the Emory University Institute for the Study of Modern Israel in Atlanta. During the 3-day Conference, participants learned from university educators who embrace Israel, and took another step toward preparing themselves to address the anti-Israel challenges facing their generation. Students studied with a program staff of 8 different presenters, including Dr. Kenneth Stein, professor of Middle Eastern History, Political Science and Israel Studies at Emory Univ. since 1977. Below are comments from participants:

**During the Emory Conference, the thing that had the greatest impact on me was seeing for real how people talk about Israel on a college campus. You hear on the news all the time that there are problems with BDS and antisemitism, but when you hear and see it with your own eyes at a college campus, it gives you a completely different perspective.**

*- Danny Ecker*

**Emory taught me why it is so important to continue to learn about and preserve the history of Israel. We learned history and culture through both fun activities and in-depth educational programs.**

*- Isaiah Jacob*



**I would definitely recommend this program to others. It was a great way to continue to learn about some of the deeper issues surrounding Israel, as well as a good way to make new friends who also care about Israel.**

*- Zach Mangel*

**In the two days I was at Emory University I was taught a lot. I continued to learn how to become a leader and educate my peers about what's going on in Israel. And I even had the unique experience of studying Israeli poets and poetry with Israel specialist Eli Sperling.**

*- Eli Rosner*



## THE LAST NIGHT

Last night was the last true Israeli Experience on our trip. We made the journey from our hotel in Tel Aviv all the way to Jerusalem, and once we got there we met with our friends from Beit Shean. Together, we walked for about 15 minutes until we reached a delicious restaurant where we had dinner together. At the restaurant were given an endless supply of Israeli food such as pita, hummus, chips, meat, and salads. The food was very good and we all enjoyed it along with the fabulous company of our friends.

After we were finished eating, and after days of anticipation, it was time to go to the Idan Raichel concert! We arrived at The Sultan Pool Arena – a magnificent outdoor theatre. We were all given tickets and headed up to our amazing seats, (definitely not as far away from the stage as possible or anything) were we were all able to lounge back and enjoy the music even though most of the Americans didn't understand a single thing Idan Raichel was saying.

After some time, a large part of the group decided to head down the stairs to a more open area where we could dance around and pretend like we knew the music.



Everybody had a great time jumping around and going absolutely crazy together. The shinshinim – who would be coming to Cleveland in August – came down to dance with us as well which was very fun.

Finally, at the very end of the concert, the 1 song we actually knew was played. Amnon showed us the song at a seminar a few months back and since then it has transformed into one of Israel's biggest hits. I truly believe that the concert was able to give us all a different taste of Israeli society as well as a memory that will be lasting!

*Avery Steinberg, Israel 2019*



**REGISTER NOW**



*From Israel Advocacy, Leadership Training and College Prep for Jewish Students, to original Jewish Theater, @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.*

## Cleveland HS Seniors AIPAC Policy Conference 2020

**What:** HS seniors are invited to join @akiva for this trip to AIPAC Policy Conference 2020, 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 1-3, 2020

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

**Cost and Registration:** \$200.00 (financial aid is available). More information and registration email Tina Keller at tkeller@akivacleveland.org, or call @akiva 216-367-1388.

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