

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

In the section titled “ic.news” israel.cleveland.next participants (icnext Cohort 6) reflect on their 10-day Mission to Israel in June, 2018. Inspired by knowledge gained from the icnext program, they write about Jewish identity, political, social and cultural perspectives of Israel,

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 programs 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 opportunities for our teens to form a special community, develop an incredibly strong connection to Israel, and become Jewish leaders.



IMMERSION IS THE BEST FORM OF LEARNING

Detailed descriptions of our exploits with icnext don’t do our Israel Mission (June 2019) justice, no matter how illustrious or well put they may be. The experiences that we had, the connections that we made, and the emotions that we felt, all of these cannot be described in a simple introductory paragraph. The four blogs that follow depict what I believe to be the most important parts of our trip. These four blogs best encapsulate the message I wish to impart, which is that immersion is the best way to experience new cultures and learn from them. The immersive experiences that we took part in helped to augment other parts of our trip, enriching our ideas and understanding.

The four articles that I chose to prove this point are very persuasive in their implementation. In the first two blogs we see the impact that staying with Israeli families for our Mifgash (encounter) had on us, and the takeaways from that experience. Then we learned first hand about Jisr A-Zarka, and how young Arabs live in that neighborhood. Finally, Gabe’s article on the Tel Aviv shuk ties the Issue together. He writes about how we had conversations in both Hebrew and English with the vendors, and learned more about their businesses. These articles express the value in immersion, and its impact on the way we learn.

Spencer Kawalek, Editor, Cleveland 2020

THE EXCELLENT EXPERIENCE OF “SHABBAT IN ISRAEL”

It all started on Thursday afternoon when our group arrived in Beit She’an. Naomi and I would be sharing a very special hostess, Amit Shlomo. Amit and her family treated us with generosity, kind hospitality, and we experienced what it is like to live on a kibbutz. Naomi and I were treated with small welcome gifts waiting for us on our beds and the whole family shared in the excitement as we talked, played games, ate falafel and talked about each other’s lives.

Friday morning we woke up to an amazingly large Israeli breakfast and because it was Friday, neither of Amit’s parents went to work. All the icnext teens and our Israeli host teens spent the day together. We relaxed at The Sachneh, a spring where many families swim and picnic, and later we dispersed to do other activities with our hosts. Naomi, Amit and I visited Nir David, another spring where we swam and met other friends of Amit. In the late afternoon we went back to Amit’s house, and prepared for the Shabbat dinner. It was so heartwarming to see all of the family, friends, and passion that lit up the room for Shabbat! We said the blessings and sang many songs together. The dinner table was filled with bright foods, all of it smelling and tasting wonderful. It was such a treat to try it all.

The next day, we learned that Amit and her family do not drive on Shabbat. So, as Amit’s father walked to synagogue, we pre-

pared lunch. Amnon and his father came to join us. Again, the table was filled with the most unusual and delicious foods. We said the blessings and finished eating later that afternoon. In the evening, we said the prayers for Havdalah and then celebrated the new week by going to our icnext group pool party at one of the host’s houses.

This was all such a wonderful experience for me and I loved everything about the family’s rituals and way of life during Shabbat. I will always remember this very special Shabbat experience.

Sophia Jennings, Israel 2019

MEETING THE ARAB TEENS OF JISR AZ-ZARQA

After a long bus ride from Beit Shean we finally arrived at the Arab community of Jisr az-Zarqa. We pushed our way off of the bus and out into the open air, just a mile from the Mediterranean Sea, where we were welcomed with open arms by a group of Arab teenagers along with their leader named Genevieve. She led the group to a community center where we all sat down and got the chance to meet each other. Going around the room we each said our name and a special talent we have. This was such a great way to learn more about both our icnext friends, and the Arab teens. One fact that really caught my attention was when Genevieve mentioned although Jisr az-Zarqa is one of the poorest Arab communities in Israel, it is the only one on the coast of the Mediterranean. This allows



for an extremely dynamic village with many unique personalities and opportunities.

After we were more comfortable with each other, we all got onto the bus and made the short drive down to the beach where we were given time to play games with the Arab teens and learn more about them. We bombarded them with questions about their everyday lives and their answers gave us a brand new perspective about life in Israel as well about the conflict between Israelis and Arabs. I found it very interesting to see just how “normal” the lives of Arab teens seem and I think the media portrays the Arab communities of Israel much worse than deserved. Honestly, if we weren’t told where we were, it would have been almost impossible to distinguish the Arab teens from our Israeli friends in Beit Shean. As a farewell, Genevieve led all of us to an exceptional viewing point where a vast amount of the Mediterranean Sea could be seen for miles. We then said goodbye to our new friends and went back onto the bus to drive to Kibbutz Shefayim. This was a truly memorable experience!

Avery Steinberg, Israel 2019

THE TEL AVIV SHUK BY GABE WOLF

Today we went to the Tel Aviv shuk, and it was a really great experience. A member of our Cohort got into a fight – a verbal one - with a sunglass hut merchant who thought he could bully our group. He didn’t suspect that a member of our Cohort was



a fluent Hebrew speaker who taught him a lesson with his Hebrew.

One of our usual activities was to go in groups and interview Israelis while we were in the shuk. We would never have been able to know these people had we not done this. We asked them questions and they opened up to us. We took pictures of them doing what they love to do and as you know, a picture is like 1000 words.

When we returned to our hotel, I got to see my grandparents who now live in Raanana, Israel. They brought brownies for me and the Cohort, and we had dinner at the hotel. It was great to see them and get to have a meal together. Today was important not only because I got to see my grandparents but also because the group got to see and hear stories from people we didn’t know before, giving us a deeper connection to Israel!

Gabriel Wolf, Israel 2019

Quarantine with a ShinShin...

Does social distancing have you missing your ShinShin buddies? Sign up today to have weekly 1:1 time to talk Israel/Hebrew/spend time with a ShinShin from the comfort of your home and phone!

Register today to stay connected! Contact Svinokor@akivacleveland.org



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.

more.teen.news

AIPAC Policy Conference 2020 - Today. Tomorrow. Together

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), America’s pro-Israel lobby, held it’s 2020 conference in Washington, D.C., March 1-3, 2020. The conference was attended by approximately 18,000 delegates. Speakers included Americans and Israelis, Republicans and Democrats, among them Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Senate Democratic Leader Charles Schumer, Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo, and Vice President Mike Pence. @akiva organized a delegation of 34 high school seniors and 3 faculty to attend this conference. Tuesday, March 3, conference attendees went to Capitol Hill to lobby on AIPAC’s 3-point legislative agenda:

- Full U.S. security assistance to Israel
- Extending the U.N. arms embargo on Iran
- Standing with Israel against illegitimate assaults from the International Criminal Court

Below are excerpts of speeches written by students to deliver to Ohio’s congressional representatives:

As Israeli Culture Club presidents of our school, we are aware of the conflict that is presented by the actions of the international criminal court or the ICC. We’re asking you to sign this letter stating that America should stand in full force against any biased investigation of Israel which has been pursued by the ICC. The ICC was implemented to deal with serious international crimes in countries without a national justice system. However Israel and America both have robust, independent legal systems that conduct genuine inquiries into alleged violations of the rules of war.

Neither the United States nor Israel fall under the jurisdiction of the ICC. In a time when tensions are high, congress must continue to stand by our ally, Israel, as long as the ongoing discrimination in international forums continues. The actions committed by the ICC have been favoring the Palestinian Authority and show strong bias in their actions, considering that an Israeli official, at any time, could be arrested and harmed for an offense that should be handled by the Israeli justice system. All in all, on behalf of the Cleveland aipac group of 2020 we ask you to support the opposition of the ICC’s efforts to target Israel, urge full US support of Israel against this threat, and oppose efforts that bypass direct negotiation by going to international organizations by signing this letter. Thank you so much and I hope you have a wonderful morning.

- Eden Burg and Rachel Buchinsky

Honorable Representative Fudge, as the descendant of a Holocaust survivor, of the survivors of pogroms, of Jews who came here seeking the freedom and respect that the United States would bring, I thank you for your constant support for the Jewish community and urge it’s continuation. In eighth grade, I wrote a speech addressing my fear of what I will have to face on campus with BDS. A massive part of my college search has been shaped by my fear of attending a campus dominated by the hateful rhetoric used by some leaders of BDS. I thank you on behalf of young Zionists and the Jewish community as a whole for supporting measures to combat BDS and protect the State of Israel.

- Sammi Fremont

Hi my name is Seth Melamed. I run the Lchaim Society, at University School. I would like to thank you congresswoman for your ongoing support for a strong US-Israel relationship. You as well as I know how much larger a threat Iran can become if the UN arms embargo on Iran which expires in October is not renewed. Not only will this pose a threat to the rest of the Middle East including and especially Israel, but this is also dangerous for us here at home. The current embargo has helped to hurt Iran’s military capabilities and divert focus from exploratory programs into advanced weapons as well as keep terrorist groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas from receiving advanced weapons. We along with other pro-Israel members of our community hope that you sign the Engel-McCaul House letter to Secretary Pompeo.

- Seth Melamed



On behalf of the Pro Israel community in our district at large, we would like to thank you for your unwavering support for a strong and bipartisan US-Israel relationship.

Now we would like to focus on the issue at hand. In less than 8 months on October 18, 2020, the UN arms embargo on Iran will expire. AIPAC believes that it is extremely important to extend the Iranian arms embargo for two main reasons.

The first is that we cannot let Iran, the world’s leading state sponsor of terrorism, buy and sell advanced weapons at will. Iran is one of the primary obstacles to peace in the Middle East. They have already proven how aggressive they are without access to arms imports. Not extending this embargo will only empower this regime further.

Secondly extending the arms embargo benefits the US. The lifting of this embargo will greatly benefit Russia and China, at the expense of the US, Israel, and our other allies in the region. Russia and China will be able to sell weapons to Iran without breaking international law. This results in more advanced weapons reaching Iran’s terrorist proxies including Hezbollah, Hamas, and Assad, directly threatening Americans and Israelis.

The United States with our allies must strive for strict enforcement of the embargo, including intercepting Iranian arms shipments. Furthermore the United States must enforce existing sanctions on Iran to incentivize other countries to help prevent spread of advanced weapons to terrorist groups. Because of all of this we ask and encourage you to sign this letter to support extending the Arms embargo on Iran. Thank you.

- Dylan Sussman and Danny Ecker

Hello Congresswoman Fudge. My name is Adam Kahn and I am a senior at University School. On behalf of the large pro Israel community in our district, we would like to thank you for your unwavering support for a strong US-Israel relationship.

As you already know, the ICC (international criminal court) deals with the most serious international crimes: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and more. This judicial system only acts within countries without a national justice system: which does not pertain to Israel or the US. Today, the ICC is overstepping it’s mandate as it has accepted Palestinian requests to investigate Israel and its actions towards the Palestinian people.

The reason I bring up this issue is because the ICC is violating its rules as an international criminal court. It is accepting a request from a group of people who do not have a state and therefore cannot be addressed by the ICC. Furthermore, Israel is not within the ICC and should not be tried as it has its own robust, and independent legal system. Most importantly however, if the ICC takes up this case, it will set back the cause of peace by rewarding Palestinian leaders with a reason to reject direct negotiations with Israel.

On behalf of the Cleveland AIPAC group of 2020 we ask you to sign this letter supporting opposition to the ICC’s efforts to target Israel, urging full US support of Israel against this threat, and opposing efforts that bypass direct negotiation by going to international organizations. Thank you so much and hopefully you can fulfill my birthday wish.

- Adam Kahn

Hi my name is Dovid Ben-Tor, I founded and run the Israel Advocacy club at Fuchs Mizrahi School in Beachwood. I want to start by thanking the congresswoman on behalf of the Pro Israel community in our district for her unwavering support for a strong US-Israel relationship. You have consistently voted in favor of foreign aid for the State of Israel. Israelis, including my own friends and family, are constantly in fear of war and terrorist attacks. Friends of mine in Israel are forced to sleep in bomb shelters and miss school due to constant rocket attacks from Gaza. This is one of the reasons that aid to Israel is so important. As laid out in the 2016 Memorandum of Understanding established under the Obama administration, Israel uses this aid to advance its missile defense systems including the Iron dome and keep both Israeli and American troops safe. Every dollar invested in this state of the art defensive system so needed by Israel is put right back into the American economy creating jobs and opportunity for collaboration. We are symbiotic countries with common values, common interests, and common goals. With this framework in mind, we are once again asking you congresswoman to vote in favor and encourage your colleagues to also vote in favor of this essential aid to our closest ally in the Middle East — the Jewish State of Israel.

- Dovid Ben-Tor