

Welcome to ic.news – pages 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.

RELATIONSHIPS

Sitting at the crossroads of the Middle East, barely holding Asia and Africa together, Israel was bound to be woven deep into the tapestry of history. As a result, the ancient place that is Israel is home to many different cultures and communities, both old and new. At the center of the country lies Jerusalem, the roots of the tree of religion that branches out not only to Israel, but the rest of the world as well. During our ten days in Israel in June of 2019, we ventured through time as we traveled from Jerusalem to the Negev to the modern hub that is Tel-Aviv, all the while making new friends, memories, and embracing the layers of culture that exist in this small nation. This issue discusses our immersion in Israel’s history, in addition to the relationships we developed with both old and young communities. It is an attempt to share with readers the lasting bonds we created.

Ben Wyant, Editor Cleveland 2020

YOU HAVE TO DIG DEEP

I cannot say that my experiences on the icnext Israel trip have been unexpected, because I knew coming in that this was a “learning experience” not a “tourist experience”; nevertheless, I am extremely happy to report that during our first day full of traditional tourist activities, the highlight was having a chance to walk in the tunnels below the old city of Jerusalem.

We began the day by immersing ourselves in our individual connections to religion at the Western Wall. Then we headed down to the underground tunnels buried deep below the Western Wall to learn the background of the Temple and how it came to look the way it did. First a history lesson: after King David died, Solomon constructed the first Jewish temple, lasting 410 years. However, after multiple tragedies, including the famous story of Purim, this temple was destroyed and the second temple (lasting 420 years) was constructed. The second temple was also destroyed, contributing to why the city of Jerusalem has statistically been attacked, destroyed, and rebuilt the most times of any city.

In the tunnel we saw a series of engaging digital images and a 3-dimensional model featuring the development of the temples over the years. Our tour guide, Moshe from South Africa, asked us to relate the temple to



the Roman colosseum. I was extremely confused, myself never being to Rome and finding it unimaginable to picture the similarities between a place I had never been and one I had seen once. However, as we went through the tunnels with their cold stone walls and heard him speak about the different artifacts found in both places, I began to notice the similarities. The dripping water and low walls only added to the effect. My favorite part, however, was the aqueduct at the end of the long pathway, filled with two lonely goldfish, and surrounded by an impressive amount of history. Seeing the columns and learning that artifacts were stolen from the temple by Roman rulers and taken to the colosseum, as well as other aspects of this rich history, I began to understand the similarities. So I will ask you, reader, the next time you go to a famous landmark, try to immerse yourself in the history and attempt to find the connections that might not be immediately obvious, but that are hidden within the walls.

Alexa Plotkin Israel, 2019

PROOF OF RESIDENCE

It’s commonly known among Jews that we have had a presence in varying sizes going back thousands of years. Extensive archeological work has also been done all over modern Israel which has discovered proof of the Jewish people having maintained ongoing ancient residence in Israel.

While in the underground tunnels of the Kotel we learned that Jerusalem is a “layered” city meaning that it has been rebuilt multiple times. When archeologists dig through Jerusalem’s soil, they find that each of these layers tells a different story of a constantly evolving city. In every one of these layers, there has been evidence found of Jews living in Jerusalem throughout its history. This had been confirmed through things like



pots and coins that contain ancient Hebrew writing. While in the tunnels, we were told of how the Jews of ancient Israel constructed both Temples and how the existence of the Kotel today is the biggest reminder to the world of why the Jewish people have the right to live in the land of Israel.

The Kotel and the ancient stones of the second temple that are buried under it are undeniable pieces of evidence that prove the existence of the Jewish people in Jerusalem. Movements and political events like B.D.S and the P.L.O. make claims that Jewish people have never lived in Israel until the first Aliyah in the late 1800’s. But as the Kotel and all of the Israeli archaeological evidence show, the Jews have been living in Israel for thousands of years, much longer than any anti-Zionist or anti-Semetic organization says. These artifacts prove that Jews have an eternal homeland in the state of Israel and we should never be told otherwise by any other group.

Ezra Galili Israel 2019

SECULARISM AND ORTHODOXY BY DR.GUY BEN PORAT

Hey everyone. This morning we went to Ben Gurion University and met and talked with Dr. Guy Ben Porat. We learned how Amnon was interestingly Guy’s past commander in the army and was used to listening to Amnon. Now we know why he was actually willing to talk to us. He talked about interesting issues within Israel relating to Secular and Orthodox, and Ultra Orthodox, Israelis. Before I talk about these issues, let me give you background on Guy Ben Porat aside from his relationship to Amnon.

Jacob Rudin-Luria Israel, 2019

BLACK AND WHITE

Ibrahim Abu Ahmad, today’s speaker, presented in our opinion the trip’s most unique narrative. Born and raised in Nazareth, Ibrahim spent his early years in a religious Arab family. At the age of 16, he applied to become a foreign exchange student in the US, where he spent two full semesters and

perfected his English. After his time in the United States had come to an end, he flew to Egypt, irrespective of his Israeli passport, and found himself in the midst of the Arab Spring uprising. Poor Arabs started the rebellion as a response to oppressive regimes and horrific standards of living in the North African region. Ibrahim stayed in Egypt illegally for seven months before he was able to fly to Israel. Since revealing his Israeli nationality meant certain trouble, Ibrahim kept it under wraps by posing as a Jordanian.

It was at this point in his narrative that Ibrahim segwayed into the overarching theme. He met a few Egyptian Arabs during his seven month stint, and when he revealed his true nationality, they were astounded. Due to the degradation of Israel and its political schematics by those in the Middle East, the Egyptians thought the country was heavily segregated, and that Jews lived in Israel and Palestinians lived in the West Bank, but never together in the same town. Some Egyptians displayed disbelief of his Israeli citizenship by taking pictures of his Israeli passport. Thus, his theme emerged: while others might try to introduce restrictive labels and pit groups against each other, Israel and the interpersonal connections that it fosters are in no way black and white, but rather a spectrum, determined by different people and their contrasting points of view.

Ibrahim substantiated this claim with plentiful evidence. He gave an example of an Arab gym in Israel, where there were sessions for men and women at different times. During a woman only session, a group of young boys threw bricks in the windows and vandalized the lobby of the gym. The police were called, and arrived FORTY minutes after receiving the call. Ibrahim paused, then asked, “Why do you think it took the police so long to arrive?” Three of us raised our hands. The first answer was “They were busy responding to other calls.” The second, “There may have been a misinterpretation when they called the police.” And the third, “they weren’t seen as a priority.” Any one of our responses on its own would be considered black and white, but all three together symbolized this spectrum that we have attempted to implement for so long. Through this story, Ibrahim communicated the importance of listening openly to different points of view while simultaneously pushing aside negative preconceived notions. Lastly, Ibrahim showed one way that the black and white is fading through the actions of Arab women. Today, Arab women are pursuing educational opportunities, and in some places have higher literacy rates than Arab men. Climbing the economic and social ladder, Arab women are making names for themselves as opposed to their families.

As our only Non Jewish speaker, Ibrahim did a wonderful job of illustrating the dilemmas and issues he and others contend with on a daily basis. His unique viewpoint and

more.teen.news

Saltzman Youth Panel: Shaping Future Leaders of the Community

The Saltzman Youth Panel was established through the Maurice Saltzman Youth Grant Program of the Jewish Federation of Cleveland to educate younger members of our Jewish community about the importance of Jewish communal decision-making, the philanthropic process and responding to Jewish and general community needs.

In the Cleveland Jewish community, it is hard to find someone that you do not know. Through either a friend, a friend’s friend, or even the occasional family friend, it becomes quite evident that our community is tightly knit together. Naturally, as a 2019-2020 participant of the Saltzman Youth Panel, I was expecting to know almost every participant. However, when I walked into our orientation, I was surprised at how many new faces I saw. The Saltzman Youth Panel strives to bring together a hardworking, diverse group of Jewish teens to learn about the importance of philanthropy, complex decision making, and responding to community needs. Generously created by the Maurice Saltzman Youth Grant Program, the Panel is given up to fifty-thousand dollars annually to allocate to various agencies. These organizations are split up into United Way Agencies and Jewish Agencies, with more money allocated toward the Jewish organizations. The money allocated to the

Jewish Agencies is focused on issues specific to the Cleveland Jewish community (helping places like Jewish day schools, synagogues, and shelters pay for various necessities), while money allocated to the United Way Agencies is intended to help around the world. Through seven sessions, the competitively chosen teens are expected to read through grant proposals, listen to speakers, perform exercises attempting to model the complexity of the situation, and, most importantly, passionately deliberate which agencies get full, partial, or no funding.

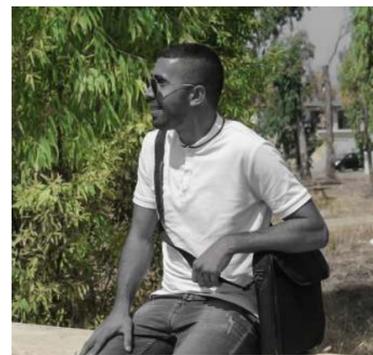
When prompted with the question “What surprised you the most as you learned about the philanthropic process,” 2019-2020 participants of the Saltzman Youth Panel gave a variety of answers. For instance, some participants spoke about the surprise at the intricacy of the philanthropic process: Eliana Goodman spoke about the surprise at the “sheer amount of collaborative process” that the group had to endure in order to decide how to allocate the money. Noah Barrett spoke about the specificity written in the grants, and Rylan Polster mentioned learning the importance of smaller organizations in our economy. In a different perspective, some students chose to write about the moral conflict that is intertwined within the philanthropic process: Tamar Poreh touched on the difficulty of choosing one cause over another and accepting the possibility of not helping everyone and Adina Firestone spoke about the connection between what she learned in the panel about philanthropy and the driving force of our community, love and support. Phrasing it perfectly, she wrote “ To give is to love, and



through the generous amounts of money that individuals give, it really shows their care and support.”

This year, panelists were asked to help fund a variety of expenses, which, before decision making, totalled much higher than the maximum fifty-thousand dollars. Obviously, this was not an easy choice, as one might expect with a group of people who think very differently about the world around them. When debating certain grants the room was quiet after just a few conversations ending in a general agreement, however, for some proposals, the room erupted with passionate pleas from both sides of a discussion. The experience taught teens not only how to be an advocate for themselves and their beliefs but also to be an advocate of our community, hopefully shaping the next generation that will keep the strong will of our current community alive.

Alexa Plotkin Cleveland 2020



in-depth analysis of interpersonal relationships showed this cohort a very personal side of the internal conflicts that pervade this Jewish State, and was the most interesting lecture of our trip.

Sophie Jennings and Spencer Kawalek Israel 2019



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.



Do you have a 3rd - 8th grader at home this summer?

@akiva and the Jewish Education Center are proud to offer 2 opportunities: J2Gether Jr. (3rd-7th grade), and Hebrew Ulpan (5th-8th grade). Both are socially distant, emotionally connected summer programs, designed to give your kids 1:1 and small-group experiential Jewish and Hebrew opportunities. Register today online at www.akivacleveland.org. Look for the Summer 2020 Programs tab.

For more information contact Tina Keller at tkeller@akivacleveland.org or call 216-409-2823.