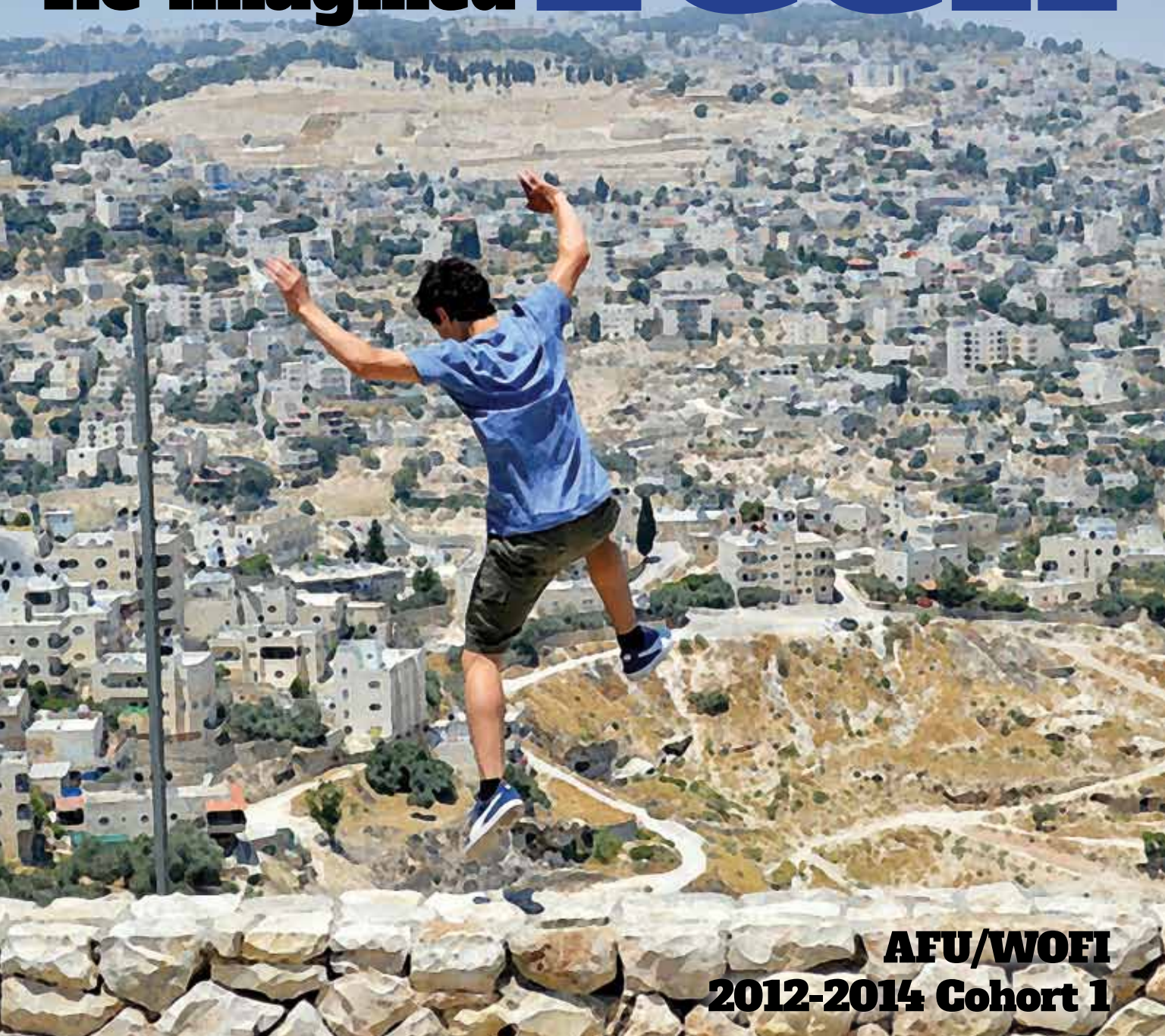


Teen to Teen

**Israel
Re-imagined**



**AFU/WOFI
2012-2014 Cohort 1**

AFU/WOFI is a project of The AVI CHAI Foundation, The Jewish Federation of Cleveland and The Cleveland Jewish News, administered through @Akiva.



On Our Way!

By Josh Raiffe

On June 16, 2013, the AFU/WOFI cohort flew to Israel! After a jam-packed day at the airport, we managed to get away from our parents and go through the lines of security. The first plane ride to Philadelphia went by with no challenge. With a three and a half hour layover in Philly, the AFU/WOFI gang had time to explore the airport and talk to other people. Waiting to board the plane to Israel, I interviewed a fellow passenger, a Christian student minoring in religion at Ohio University. We are full of curiosity about the life of teens in Israel, Jewish and Arab. The opportunity to interview a non-Jew about what brings her to Israel this summer was also valuable.

Who Went This Year

- Ruthy Amkraut..... Laurel School
- Gabriel BaznikSolon High School
- Hannah Borison Beachwood High School
- Jake Browne Shaker Heights High School
- Evan Carlson.....Hudson High School
- Rivka Coleman Fuchs Mizrahi School
- Tyler Crossland.....Lakewood High School
- Joshua Friedman.... Beachwood High School
- Ben Jaffe Fuchs Mizrahi School
- *Lauren Kahn.....Hathaway Brown School
- Lucia Keller Lawrence School
- Hannah Kraus.....Solon High School
- Ori Lindner Shaker Heights High School
- Erick Madis Hudson High School
- Jessie Paley..... Orange High School
- Sarah Pincus Fuchs Mizrahi School
- Joshua Raiffe..... Beachwood High School
- *Eden Saltzman..... Laurel School
- Micah Sattin Shaker Heights High School
- Arielle Shapiro.....Avon Lake High School
- *Sarah ShawShaker Heights High School
- Tal Shutkin Shaker Heights High School
- Nathaniel Starkman .Montessori High School

* Student Editors:

Israeli teens connect with their country's politics

By Hannah Borison

I interviewed Gil Hoffman, raised in Chicago, who is chief political correspondent for the Jerusalem Post. He has been called the "most optimistic man in Israel" by Israel Television, and has been interviewed by many major news stations and major figures around the world.

Q: Do Israeli teenagers follow their parents' political views?

A: Typically, children in Israel are more informed about politics than children in America. For example, the news channel is ranked as the third highest viewed channel in Israel. When kids grow up in Israel, they are encouraged to be involved with politics.

Q: Do people usually stay with the same political party their whole life?

A: In the past, sticking with a political group was like having a "marriage," but now everyone changes their opinions and views if they do not connect or agree with the views of a political party.

Q: Do Israeli teens usually have opposite feelings and views than their parents or other adults?

A: Kids typically have extreme views. If they want to keep all of the land then



they want to keep ALL of the land, and if they want to share with Palestine then they want to share EVERYTHING with Palestine. When they grow up though, they usually settle down and become more moderate. Younger kids today usually side with the right wing around issues of peace and security.

▲ Israeli teens are more informed about politics than American teens, notes Israeli journalist Gil Hoffman.

What is AFU/WOFI?

AFU/WOFI is a unique two-year program that educates a dedicated group of Jewish high school juniors from all denominations in the core issues of Israeli society and the geopolitical situation in Israel today. In addition, students learn, engage and work with a group of Israeli peers from Beit She'an/Emek HaMayanot, Cleveland's partnership region. The first year culminates in a 10 day Israel exploratory mission, giving participants the opportunity to experience the realities of life in Israel.

In the second year, students will be involved in initiating, organizing and galvanizing peer involvement in educational, political or cultural activities designed to build support for the state of Israel. Students will become expert Israel engagers in order to educate others about Israel.

AFU/WOFI is a project of The AVI CHAI Foundation, The Jewish Federation of Cleveland and The Cleveland Jewish News, administered through @Akiva.

AFU/WOFI Staff

Amnon Ophir - Director of Akiva, AFU/WOFI
Tina Keller - Assistant to the Director
Michael Unterberg - Israel educator
Jeffrey Schein - Educator
Cynthia Dettelbach - Journalism instructor

Israel's Negev problems

By Jake Browner

Dr. Guy Ben-Porat, who has a Ph.D. in political science, writes about many different subjects including some of the dilemmas and problems facing Israel. He is especially knowledgeable about the situation in the Negev.

The Negev desert, the largest geographic area of Israel, is quite under-populated while the rest of Israel is overpopulated. This is problematic because it is unproductive to have so much unused land. Many Israelis are encouraging migration into the Negev because there is proof that successful towns can be built, such as Beer Sheva. Many young people growing up in the Negev, however, do not want to stay, as they want to find more opportunity in large cities such as Tel Aviv.

The main population group already inhabiting the Negev is the Bedouins. However, the Bedouins are experiencing many problems themselves, including lack of adequate health care and poor roadway



systems and infrastructure. NGOs (Non Governmental Organizations) are currently working to teach these people how to improve their society without dependency on outside sources.

▲ A Bedouin woman describes the many problems her community faces.



▲ AFU/WOFI Cohort admires a hall at Ben Gurion University.

East-growing Ben Gurion U.

By Eden Saltzman

As high school juniors and seniors, one word keeps ringing in our ears: college. When we were in the Negev, we were led on a tour of Ben Gurion University by our guide, Aya. We bounced from building to lawn to building, learning about the history and culture of the university.

About 20,000 students study at the university, which focuses mainly on science and technology. In fact, the IDF and many global corporations use research from the university's cyber protection program!

Ben Gurion is the youngest and fastest growing university in Israel. Though it is in the desert, clever architectural designs allow for cool conditioning at a low price. The university is central to the identity and growth of the Negev. It was built to help bring people to the Negev area, and it now keeps the region's culture lively and youthful. In addition, 8,000 students volunteer within the community, and all students are active in the surrounding villages.

The goal of Ben Gurion University is to bring as many young people to the Negev as possible, and who knows, perhaps one of us will join this elite body of students.

'Unrecognized' Bedouin villages

By Tal Shatkin

Entering Abu-Tall, an "unrecognized" Bedouin village located in the Negev desert, we were all surprised by what we saw. In sharp contrast to the beautiful draped tents with smiling Bedouins serving us tea that many of us experienced during our 8th grade Israel trips, we saw hundreds of aluminum-sided houses, many of which were in terrible disrepair. Of all ethnic groups recognized as Israeli citizens, Bedouins are in the lowest socio-economic class. We stood beside the only kindergarten inside the village of 15,000. In the distance was the only grade school.

Education is a major issue among Bedouin youth because it is so difficult for many of them to stay in school. Many Bedouin, mostly girls, end their schooling early due to parental pressure to take on traditional roles as wives and mothers. A high school has not yet been built in the village.

Unrecognized villages are ones not created by the Israeli government. They are considered illegal and therefore do not receive the usual governmental benefits such as paved roads, running water, trash disposal and electricity. The village is working hard to improve its conditions, and it is receiving much outside help.



▲ Children in daycare at unrecognized Bedouin village of Abu-Tall.



▲ Selection of Kassam missiles fired from Gaza into border city of S'derot.

Security expert explains complex Gaza Issues

By Ruthie Amkraut

Col. Kobi Marom was a member of the IDF during the 2000 withdrawal from Lebanon. In his military career he has supervised complex and varied combat units. Currently, Marom is in the reserves and is a businessman in the tourism industry. During our tour of the Gaza border, we asked Marom many questions about Israel's security.

Q. How many missiles have been fired into S'derot from the Gaza Strip and why is S'derot targeted so often?

A. Approximately 10,000 missiles have been fired into S'derot because it provides a big target and is only one mile from the border.

Q. How has the situation changed since Israel pulled out of the Gaza Strip in 2005?

A. After the pullout, Palestinians residing in Gaza lost their justification for attacking Israel although they did not stop. After the first missile was fired, Israel did not respond, because they recognized the consequences of attacks in such populated areas as Gaza. This was a big mistake.

Q. What does Israel provide to the residents in Gaza?

A. Israel sends 400 trucks of produce to Gaza every morning and provides constant electricity.

Q. Do Israelis tend to leave the towns near the Gaza Strip?

A. No. People stay because this is their home regardless of the dangers.

Supporting the IDF behind the scenes

By Erick Madis

The Magal program, located on five army bases throughout Israel, trains not the combat soldiers, but the support system that is extremely necessary for the efficiency and operation of the army. It is said that for every combat soldier there are at least three or four support soldiers.

Camp 80 Army Base, which we visited, is known for its Magal program. It was very interesting to see that not everything is focused on combat, but also on the people who are working behind the scenes.

While we were there, we met a commander named Miriam, who decided to leave her home in New York to join the IDF and strengthen her connection to both Israel and her Judaism. Miriam explained that though it is important for people to join the army and fight for Israel, it is of equal importance for people to fight for Israel on a global and political level.



▲ Top: Discovering what Jewish and Arab teens have in common. Above: Israeli Arab girls on the beach of their fishing village following dinner with AFU/WOFI-ites.

Spending the day in an Israeli Arab village

By Lucy Keller

One afternoon we went to Jasn a-Zarka, an Israeli Arab village near Tel Aviv. After a day full of activities, we had dinner on the Mediterranean beach with our new Arab acquaintances. We got to learn about the teens living in the village and it turned out that we had a lot more in common than we (and the media) originally thought. I asked some teens how they felt as Arabs living in Israel; and they said they did not have any problems with it; Israel is their home, after all.

It is important for us, as advocates, to counter what is often presented on the news and spread the word that there are examples of peaceful relationships between the Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel. I hope everyone has the opportunity to enjoy the eye-opening experience of seeing the positive parts of Israel, not just the war-zone it's often portrayed as in the media.



▲ Soldier at Camp 80 army base explains the Magal support program.

Ethiopian exodus and integration

By Rivka Coleman and Sarah Pincus

We went to an Ethiopian museum in Beit She'an where we met Chava, an Ethiopian immigrant who traveled on foot from Sudan to Israel when she was just 9 years old. She told us the museum was called "Germachi" which means pride in one's culture, color, and lifestyle.

When discussing the root of some of the problems within Israeli Ethiopian society today, Chava said one of the main issues is that "there is tension between parents and their children. Since the two generations grew up in different cultures, they see things differently."

Since coffee originated from Ethiopia, Chava handed guests coffee as they walked in. She added that serving coffee is also used in Ethiopian culture to solve conflicts as well as a polite way to ask a



father permission to marry his daughter.

After Chava told us her unbelievable personal story, we heard from Lital, an Ethiopian teen. She was born in Israel, but her parents are from Ethiopia. As a child, she was picked on because of the color of her skin, she admitted. But now she very rarely experiences any discrimination and fully embraces her Israeli and Ethiopian heritages.



▲ Ethiopian woman demonstrates a native dance. Inset, Ethiopian teen.



▲ Overlooking the sometimes volatile Northern border between Israel and Lebanon.

Danger-Filled Northern Border

By Evan Carlson

While it is beautiful, the northern border between Israel and Lebanon has an extensive history of bloodshed. The crumbling remains of Beaufort Castle stood in the distance as a reminder of the 18 years of Israeli occupation from 1982-2000. Residents of the nearby settlements live as narrators of the past violence.

Today, the border is mostly calm. Yet, 70,000 rockets lie hidden inside Lebanon. According to Col. Kobe Marom, our guide for exploration of the northern borders, the young people of Lebanon no longer share the ideals of the terrorist group Hezbollah and are turning in a new direction. Thankfully, the border has been quiet for some time as if only water, not blood, flowed in these lands. It seemed unreal that current war-zones could be so peaceful, so calm, and so quiet.

Seeing Israel, Israelis through our cameras

By Ori Lindner

Excruciating heat. Religious epicenter. Violence and warring. Breathtaking sights and wonderful food. All these words and phrases can describe Israel.

As Americans, we have the natural tendency to believe our media. The goal of this trip was to bring back first-person stories of struggle and triumph, and to expose misconceptions about the Middle East.

We are AFU/WOFI, Ambassadors For Unity/Write On For Israel, Cohort 1. At first sight, a disorganized group of 22 teens and two teachers visiting places, talking to people, listening to experts, and taking “artsy” photographs.

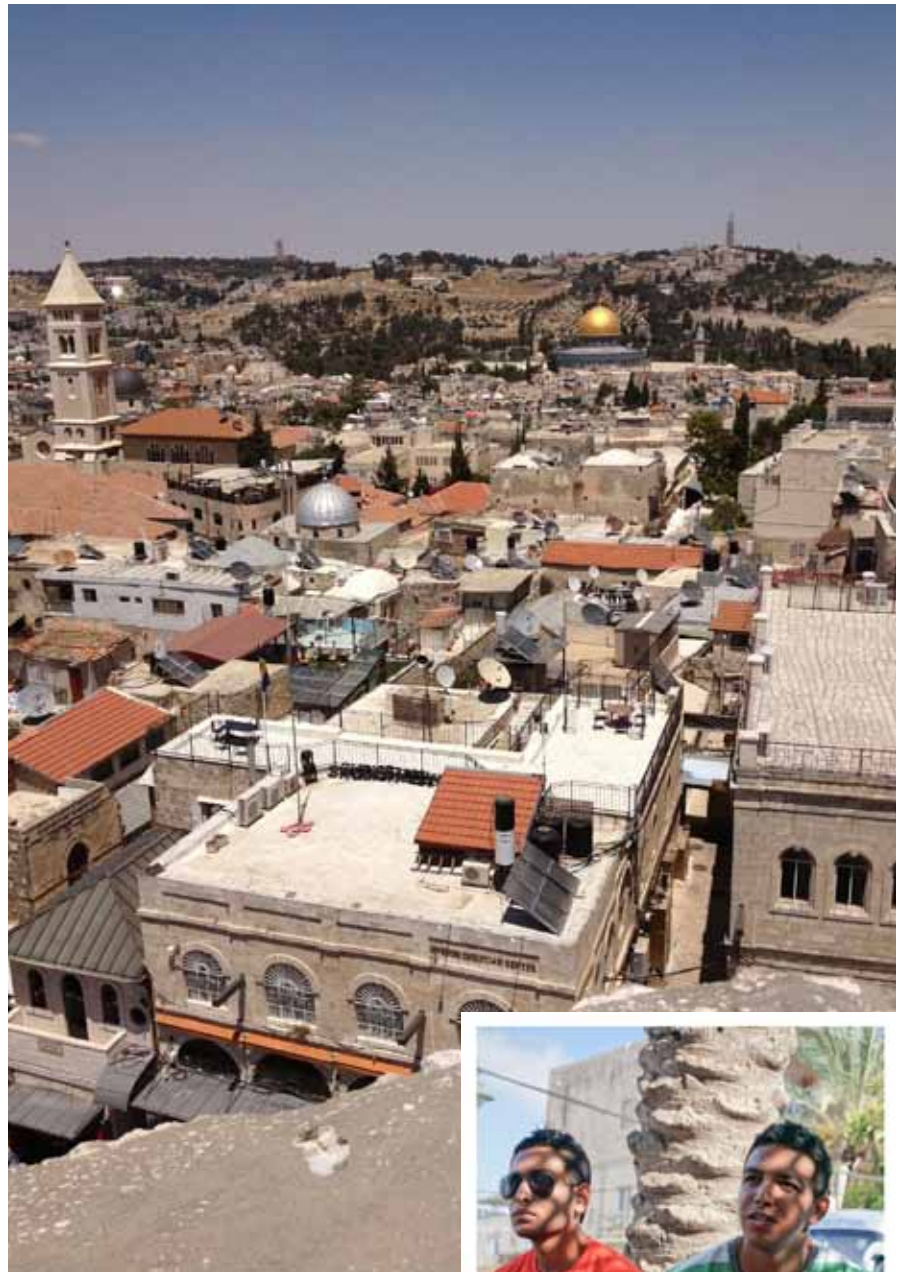
When we began our own photographic instruction here in Cleveland with Eric Leiser, most of us hadn’t a clue what pictures we would be shooting in Israel. However, we evolved – and began to frame “expert” images in our cameras.

The true insanity of the excursion began when our AFU/WOFI group met with our Israeli partners and counterparts: AFU/WOFI 2.0. This was the very same group of Israeli teens who had visited America months prior and caused the same amount of explosive excitement. Reunification brought tears of joy, laughter, and an endless list of things, “you Americans have to try.”

Despite our excitement and desire to enjoy a relaxing vacation, Amnon hounded us to make sure we captured authentic Israeli stories. It turns out those were also our most powerful pictures.

Instead of producing humdrum vacation photos, we used the opportunity to capture the true lives of Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Spending countless hours with our Israeli counterparts, we participated in activities and saw landscapes the average American tourist would easily miss. Using our cameras as metaphorical paintbrushes, we brought



▲ Rooftops of the Old City of Jerusalem. Inset: Muslim youths who experience Israel through a different lens.

back visual stories of Israeli teens, Palestinian communities, unrecognized Bedouin villages, and many religious leaders.

A selection of those images were on view from February through May, 2014 at various Jewish venues throughout Cleveland.

Struggling through Yad V'Shem

By Sarah Shaw

Yad V'Shem is designed to make the visitor struggle. For example, at the entrance to the museum you see a happy, smiling family depicted on the wall. As you move deeper inside you can still see the image, but it gets harder and harder to make out. As you reach the end of the museum it is extremely difficult – even impossible – to see the image. Happiness has given way to struggle as one might expect with an event as horrific as the Holocaust.

The grounds surrounding the museum are filled with memorials. The first building constructed at Yad V'Shem is a simple room with a single memorial grave. On the floor are the names of European cities and villages that were affected (and often decimated) by the Holocaust. These were places most talked about by survivors. The memorial represents a spiritual, rather than a physical, struggle.

After World War II ended, survivors did not have an outlet to tell the world what happened to them. They were only able to talk about their experiences when the Nuremberg Trials began.

The two most distinctive memorials at Yad V'Shem are the cattle car and the



▲ Cattle car used to transport Jews during Holocaust; now at Yad Vashem.

children's memorial. On the wall of the cattle car is a quote from a survivor. It is presented in such a way that the visitor must shift back and forth in order to read it entirely. The testimony portrays the Jews' physical struggle in the cattle car, fighting over water and air, in order to survive.

The designer of the cattle car memorial also designed the children's memorial. The latter is divided into two parts. The exterior has stone pillars of different heights which symbolize the children who were not able to grow to adulthood because of the Holocaust. This is immediately juxtaposed

with the trees nearby which were planted as seedlings and allowed to grow to their maximum height.

In the cave-like second section of the memorial, is a room with pictures of some of the children who perished in the Holocaust. The second chamber contains candles and mirrors. These represent the one and half million children who died in the Holocaust. You cannot tell which are real candles and which are reflections. Perhaps this reflects our inability to clearly see the children who died in the Holocaust as in a hall of mirrors, always distorting our perception.

Leaving our tzedakah tracks

By Josh Raiffe

Before the Israel trip began, AFU/WOFI parents and teens were invited to create a tzedakah fund. We did so and raised over \$350. The hope was that we could leave "tzedakah tracks" in our trip and give to Israel as well as draw from it rich experiences that strengthen our Jewish identity. Amnon and Rabbi Jeffrey Shein also shared with us the tradition of being a "shaliach b'dvar mitzvah": If you go on a trip to Israel doing the noble work of Tzedakah, your chances of a safe return are heightened.

Identifying six choices, reflecting six experiences of the AFU/WOFI group during the trip, the teens voted

on where the money would go. The clear winner was the unrecognized Bedouin village. It will receive \$240 or approximately two-thirds of the money. Three other organizations received \$36 (double Chai) donations from us: the Arab Community Center in Jasar a-Zarka, the refugees of Southern Tel-Aviv, and the Eisha Project promoting breast cancer awareness in Orthodox Jewish women. These donations would not be possible if it had not been for all of the families' generosity.

One of the purposes of the trip was to expose us to often unseen challenges to Israel society. If our Tzedakah choices were any measure, the trip met its goals. Perhaps not



▲ Working with Bedouin children.

coincidentally, three of these four projects are supported either directly or indirectly by the Jewish Federation of Cleveland.



▲ Adding to a Tel-Aviv mural located outside artist Rami Meiri's studio.

Tel Aviv-based street artist

By Micah Sattin

We experienced another side of Israel through the street artist Rami Meiri, whose art can be seen throughout the world. Before he showed us examples of his work, the Tel Aviv-based artist explained how his career started. He knew he was entering a field where it is difficult to earn a living. As an aspiring artist myself, I was intrigued and inspired by his talk.

Meiri paints what his audiences enjoy, he says. One example is his mural in a strip mall. The owner wanted him to create an effect that makes the mall look as if it extends beyond a boring white wall. Meiri's mural does that. The most engaging part is the use of a half bench that is attached to the wall with the other half painted in the mural.

The artist creates murals to fit in, extend, or even subtly distort a scene. He also creates 3D scenes that make viewers convinced the scenes are real and not just painted. He is also very environmentally aware and concerned. "I try to figure out ways to help the environment with my art. I want to make viewers see what I see and feel what I feel. I think now that this can also be a powerful tool in advocating and engaging others in our mission to promote Israel."

Q: What medium do you use?

A: Acrylic

Q: how do you choose where you paint?

A: I find a spot and ask for permission. Occasionally I accept an offer.

Q: Do you feel that your work might not be classic, like Picasso's?

A: The walls I paint will be there for a long time; therefore, my paintings will. Also my street art is viewed by many more viewers than might visit a classical museum.

Q: What is the difference between street art and graffiti?

A: Street art involves getting permission from a proper authority to do the painting.

Religious, secular; church and state in Israeli terms

By Sarah Pincus

Rabbi Michael Unterberg met us in Tel Aviv to talk about Israel as both a Jewish and democratic state. We discussed where Israel fits on the spectrum of possible relationships between religion and government. The United States, with almost total separation of church and state is on one end of the spectrum, while Iran whose religious leaders control the government is on the extreme opposite. Examples of the "state" power exercised by religious parties in Israel include: banning EL AL flights on Shabbat and setting the rules for marriage, divorce, death and kashrut (religious dietary standards).

When Israel was first created, the founding leaders wanted to create a strong, secular Jewish society. When Yigal Amir assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin in 1994, he claimed he did so in the name of religion. This turned many Jews away from any connection they had to Judaism. For others it meant they would have to

find their own non-Orthodox path to Judaism. In reaction, some Jews founded Bina, a secular yeshiva, in 1996 with a focus on learning and social action.

Currently, Bina has 200 students in their Tel Aviv location, 30 in Jerusalem, 40 young Israelis who take a gap year before the army and 10 international students who take a gap year before college. In addition, many secular Israelis attend Bina while serving in the army.

Bina is located in South Tel Aviv, an area populated primarily by migrant workers and refugees from south Sudan, Eritrea and parts of Asia. This neighborhood is poverty stricken and has high crime rates. Serving that neighborhood is considered a fulfillment of tikkun olam (repair of the world). Students at Bina learn about Judaism through the lens of social justice and they implement those teachings into their surrounding neighborhood. Bina students are beginning to lead a revolution of embracing Judaism throughout the secular community in Israel.



Women's struggles; Federation's help

By Edén Saltzman

Hannah Soltz Aharoni, a representative of the Jewish Federation of Cleveland, explained both the struggles of all women in Israel, as well as the role of Federation and the Cleveland Jewish community in improving this situation.

Q: Why do Israeli women seem less independent than Israeli men?

A: One reason relates to the traditions of that woman's culture. In many religions, including Judaism and Islam, the woman tends to stay in the home taking care of every person before herself and ensuring that everything runs smoothly. Meanwhile the husband is the ambassador to the larger work world. Though traditions are important, society needs to change its perspective of the role of women.

Q: What is the life expectancy of women in Israel?

A: The average length is 83.4 years. Though the men's is lower at 79.7, theirs is the 2nd highest rate in the world, whereas the woman's is 9th. This is because the women take care of everyone in the family before themselves. For example, women go for medical check-ups less often than men. Among Israeli minorities (Arabs, Ethiopian and ultra-Orthodox Jews) there is more sickness due to a lack of education about many different aspects of health.

Q: What needs to change with respect to women and health?

A: Three things. First, policy. Medical services need to be more accessible to women throughout Israel, especially in the Bedouin communities. Second, the education of service givers needs to be upgraded. Right now, the medical field approaches diagnosis in a unisex way, leaning toward symptoms men usually have

when contracting a disease. Nurses need to be educated about the symptoms of women versus men in areas such as heart disease. Third, women themselves need to change and become more responsible for themselves. Many women lack higher education and are uninformed about health issues, especially nutrition.

Q: What is the Jewish Federation of Cleveland doing to help?

A: The Federation has a huge role in giving time, money and supplies to many women-oriented organizations in Israel. These are just a few:

1. One in Nine: Helps breast cancer patients. Increases the number of women going for regular mammograms in the ultra-Orthodox community.
2. Community Center Association: Employs women leaders to promote women's health within Jerusalem's ultra-

Orthodox community.

3. Hadasah Tipat Halar: Teaches nurses about women's health (including nutrition and physical activity).

4. Yasmin in the Negev: Promotes the health of Bedouin women.

5. Many groups help disabled Jewish and Arab women deal with issues such as low self-esteem and abuse.

Q: Why has every person who talked to us mentioned the ultra-Orthodox and Arab communities?

A: These two communities are the fastest growing groups in the nation. It is cheaper (and more humane) to educate them and prevent disease than pay their medical bills when they get sick.

When you, as members of the Cleveland Jewish community, donate money to the Federation, you help improve the lives of a countless number of Israeli women, and that is priceless.



▲ Women soldiers describe what it's like to serve in the Israeli army.

His art mirrors his journey

By Arielle Shapiro

We visited the Bet Reuven Art Museum in Tel Aviv. The museum used to be the home of painter Reuven Ruben who was born in Romania and moved to Israel to attend the Bezalel art school in 1912. He completed his first painting in Israel in 1922.

Ruben's general style could be considered "naïve" painting. As time went on, his style changed. His first painting was a self-portrait with Israel in the background. He held paintbrushes in the picture, as if he were in Israel for the sole purpose of working and painting. In a later painting, he is in a room with his wife. The picture

seemed to signify a more settled time in his life. In one of his last paintings he depicted himself painting a dove and olive branch.

Ruben's evolving painting styles seem to symbolize his attitudes toward his work and life. His art has had a huge influence on Israeli culture.

Beit Reuven Art Museum ▶



Shabbat Shalom!

Neve Eytan Edition

By Hannah Kraus

We spent Shabbat with our host families in Beit She'an and Emek Ha-may-yanot, the Valley of Springs. Eden and I stayed with Stav Sela who lives on Kibbutz Neve Ur in the valley.

To start our Shabbat, Stav took us on a tour of her kibbutz. We saw cows, raspberry bushes and goats and even got to jump on hay stacks. Later, we had a delicious Shabbat dinner with Stav's family and some of her family friends from the kibbutz. Her mom made chicken, rice, schnitzel, salad, and so many more yummy Israeli foods. We also had chocolate cake and Romanian rice pudding for dessert along with delectable tea made with herbs from Stav's garden.

After dinner, a couple of Stav's friends came over and we had chocolate fondue we made with Israeli cow chocolate and cut up fresh fruit. Eden and I introduced chocolate covered chips to Stav and her friends. It was a wonderful experience to spend quality time with family and friends in beautiful Israel.



▲ Top: Bonding with some of our new young friends at Emek HaMa'ayanot. Above: Beit She'an host Stav Sela demonstrates dance steps.



Maoz Hayyim Edition

By Tyler Crossland

Ispent Shabbat with my Israeli counterpart, Yonatan, at his kibbutz, Maoz Hayyim. My day started with an Israeli breakfast: salad and toast with butter and various jams. Then Yonatan and I rode bikes, visited the local shops, played basketball, went swimming, and talked with many of his friends who also live on the kibbutz. Playing basketball is one of Yonatan's favorite hobbies, and he showed me how well he played by beating me by

an unmentionable number of points. But it was still a fun, competitive experience.

It was very cool to visit the shops, especially the grocery store, seeing all the Israeli items with their unique designs and Hebrew without vowels that kept me guessing about what the item really was. Going swimming seemed very appropriate as there was an outdoor pool in the kibbutz and the day checked out at 93 degrees Fahrenheit. We also picked up a few water games with the locals.

After a long day, the excitement was not over. Around 9 p.m. our group and some of the Israelis met for a night hike under a full moon. The moon gave us just enough light to enjoy a beautiful night in nature. Walking on land that was once endangered, we had a perfect view of the Jordanian mountains. From the time Israel came into existence in 1948, until 1994, Jordan and Israel were in conflict. Many Jewish settlements in this area suffered because of the constant bombardment coming from these mountains.

Thank goodness Israel and Jordan are no longer in conflict, and that we were able to enjoy this hike with unforgettable views and strong feelings of togetherness and relaxation.



▲ Top: Spelling out Beit She'an with dominos; Bonding with our Israeli counterparts in Beit She'an.

Shared Experiences at Orthodox kibbutz

By Gabriel Baznik

A FU/WOFI-ites and our Israeli counterparts, including my friend Maayan, visited Kibbutz Tirat Zvi located near Beit She'an. We learned about the history of the Orthodox kibbutz and how it has evolved since its inception in 1923.

Among the first things built were enclosed rooms with natural "air conditioning" so that residents would have a way to combat the intense summer heat. Babies were kept cool by being swaddled in damp towels.

On the kibbutz, virtually everything that can be owned by an individual in a more capitalist society is shared instead with the group as a whole. There are a total of ten cars on the kibbutz, but no one owns any of them. Clothing is treated in a similar manner, where everyone cleans whatever they are wearing, and selects clothes from the pile of clean laundry. During the early history of Tirat Zvi, residents earned no salary. Instead, everyone received what they needed to survive.

Until the 1970s, young children here were raised in their own children's buildings, divided according to age. Everyone on the kibbutz took turns

taking care of the children at night. Many children grew up without any psychological issues; however a few did have "horror stories" to tell of their nights spent in the childrens' homes.

Shocking to me was the large amount of fish Tirat Zvi produces today. Due to its location and relatively small supply of water, fish farming was one of the last things that I would have thought this kibbutz would undertake. Yet the kibbutzniks dug many holes in the ground, filled them with water and fish, and have since had a steady supply. The kibbutz also grows dates, olives and bananas.

Even more amazing are the people and their resiliency. Faced in the past with rocket attacks from Jordan, and the fact that they are located close to the borders of both Jordan and Syria, the people of the kibbutzim and Beit She'an still grew and prospered.

The possibility of a rogue terrorist attack or an increase in tensions between Israel and Syria or Jordan adds constant stress to the lives of the youth here. Yet they seem as carefree and happy as we Americans. They know when to work, and when to play, and they enjoy their lives.



Getting to know Gal Katz

By Josh Raiffe

Q. Tell me a little bit about yourself.

A. I'm 18 years old and was born in Tel Aviv, Israel.

Q. What is your current job?

A. I'm a ShinShinit for the Jewish Federation of Cleveland.

Q. What does a ShinShinit do?

A. We go to schools and teach students about Judaism and Israel. We work with the community to spread the greatness of Israel. We work with a lot of Jewish programs that work with Israelis and most importantly, we work with AFU/WOFI!

Q. Are you going to the army after your year in Ohio?

A. Of course! Eventually, I want to be an education director.

Q. What do you mostly want to achieve in your year as ShinShinit?

A. I want to spread knowledge about Israel to kids and adults who would normally not learn or want to learn about Israel. And of course, I want to make a lot of new friends!

Q: what are you going to miss most when you are in Cleveland?

A. My friends and my family in Israel.



▲ Dressing up like the first members of Kibbutz Tirat Zvi.

Volunteer day in Beit She'an

By Arielle Shapiro

At the Matnas (JCC) in Beit She'an, we helped out at an end of the school year party. The goal was to help kids learn fun things to do so they won't get bored over the summer.

We worked in pairs at different stations. Some children mixed, braided and baked challah. Others made jewelry and puppets and crafted objects out of clay and recycled materials. Still others worked on painting a mural. We did this together with our partners from Beit She'an, with whom we spent two days.

Everyone was extremely nice. Even those who don't speak English tried their best to communicate with those of us who don't speak Hebrew and they were more than willing to have their picture taken.



▲ Helping Beit She'an youngsters mix and braid challah.

Meeting our educator on his home grounds

By Ben Jaffe

We met, in person, with Rabbi Michael Unterberg, our Israel educator via Skype. A couple of years ago, the rabbi fulfilled his lifelong dream of making Aliyah. He and his family currently reside in Efrat, which is part of the Gush Etzion bloc in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank). Rabbi Unterberg explained that he chose this community, in part, because of the area's history. Thousands of years ago, David was a shepherd in the fields that surround his home.

Efrat is a Jewish city surrounded by Arab cities. The gas station and supermarket Rabbi Unterberg goes to are patronized by approximately equal numbers of Arabs and Jews and have equal numbers of Jewish and Arab employees. Efrat, which is home to all denominations of Jews, would never be given away in a peace agreement, claims the rabbi, because its large Jewish population is an established geo-political fact.

Q. Why do you love living in Efrat?

A. Besides the religious significance, historically the city was started before the country was officially declared independent. Also, I see how the Arabs and Israelis can get along here and I see hope for future peace.

Q. Give us a personal example of Arab and Israeli cooperation.

A. Once, during a rocket attack, I was in a supermarket. The siren went off and the Arabs who worked there led us to their bomb shelter. Thankfully, no one was harmed by that rocket. On a lighter note, the Jews in the shelter felt the need to daven mincha around 2 p.m. It was a "super cool" moment to daven the afternoon service in such a multi-cultural setting. Evidently the Arab co-residents of the bomb shelter took it all in stride.

Q. What is your favorite place in Israel?

A. Jerusalem. No question. I connect to the holiness of the city.



▲ Rabbi Michael Unterberg describes life in Efrat, an area steeped in Jewish history, surrounded by Arab cities, and where Jews and Arabs get along.

Charting AFU/WOFI fever: it's (happily) contagious

By Edén Saltzman

This is not a closing reflection at all. The AFU/WOFI Cohort 1 journey began in late 2012, and we are far from finished. So, let's redirect from a "reflection" to an "update."

In Israel, as well as in Cleveland, our minds have been filled with the expertise of many speakers and Israeli natives. We have understood the fragile status of the Arab Spring, the historic conflicts between the Israelis and Palestinians, the struggling condition of ancient Bedouin communities, the discrimination against recently immigrated Ethiopian Israelis, and the many important yet overlooked roles of Israeli women. And though we have learned a great deal, which we will implement in our future projects, we've gained something more. Something intangible. Consider the following:

Q: What is AFU/WOFI fever?

A: A contagious condition that affects a person's emotions and actions.

Q: What are the symptoms of AFU/WOFI fever?

A: People diagnosed with AFU/WOFI fever (called AFu/wofi-ites) will display the following symptoms:

Enthusiastic love and excitement for the state of Israel. AFu/wofi-ites will speak of Israel as if it is their home and in their backyard. When people admit they have never been to Israel, AFu/wofi-ites will begin to talk endlessly about how they must go and all the places they must see. They will also convince people to visit Beit She'an, Cleveland's partnership city, though it is not in the average Israeli travel book. A craving for shwarma and falafel that will not be tamed until the next trip to Israel. (Aladdin's just does not cut it anymore.)

Love for their second family in Israel. They will flip through pictures of them and remember how good (and filling) their Mom's meals were. They will attempt to decorate their room as it was in Israel, with personalized air conditioners, Hadag Nahash posters, and a secret stash of bahba for midnight snacking.



▲ AFU/WOFI-ites with Israeli Arab teens in their fishing village.

Motivation to share with others all they have learned. Some may share their knowledge and insights with Ohio congressmen. Others will put together a display of photographs taken in Israel that will be shown to the greater Cleveland community. Still others will share their knowledge of Israeli culture on I-Day as we all enjoy the famously delicious Aroma iced coffee from Israel. Many AFu/wofi-ites will become presidents of their Israeli Culture Clubs, and others will initiate the creation of such a club.

Anxiety attacks over which photo from the trip they will place as their Facebook profile picture.

Smiling in random situations, because they remembered the time they first saw the Kotel, or that wild game of water soccer they totally dominated, or that hug they shared with an adorable kindergartener from the Bedouin village in the Negev.

A lasting connection with their Beit She'an counterparts. They have found new best friends, and don't plan on going a week or two without messaging them over What's App or Facebook. These kids have taught the AFu/wofi-ites values of friendship, of Zionism, and of love.

Q: Where was AFU/WOFI fever caught?

A: During lectures and group discussions. Singing and laughing on the bus. Running up and down the hotel hallways. Sinking their teeth into falafel and shwarma pita pockets. Sipping Aroma iced coffees. Swimming at the Beit She'an springs. Celebrating Shabbat with their Israeli families. Hiking in the middle of the night and peeing their pants because of a scary story told while hiking in the middle of the night. Dancing and singing at a rock concert. Praying at the Kotel. Hugging our Israeli friends hello and goodbye.

Q: Who has AFU/WOFI fever?

A: All 22 of us who signed up for AFU/WOFI. (I believe Amnon and Jeffrey caught some of the fever, too.). These AFu/wofi-ites, now my close friends, are the most amazing, intellectual and imaginative people I know. They are the next advocates, ambassadors, and congressmen supportive of Israel. They are the next musicians, chefs and artists. They are so many things that will make this world, especially Israel, a more peaceful and humane place. But there is one thing that they, we, are not: mere tourists. We are leaders. We are the future. And this trip to Israel has only made our future, and society's future, much, much brighter.

Memorable 2 Years with AFU/WOFI

by Erick J. Madis

The two year, AFU/WOFI (Ambassadors For Unity/Write On For Israel) program is filled with many experiences.

Over the course of seven Sundays, the cohort meets to learn about everything from Israel's history and political situation to Israeli advocacy through speaking, writing and photography. All of this prepares them for their journey to the Jewish state in the summer following their first year.

However the seven Sundays and everything you've just read about in this magazine are not the main goals of this program. Most emphasis is placed on the second year. This is when its participants are asked to take what they've learned and give back to the community. Giving back is such a big part of Judaism and the same is true for this program.

Students sign up for different projects. For example, one group works on the photo exhibit of pictures that everyone took on their trip. Another group organizes iDay, an Israeli cultural event to which the whole community is invited. A third

group is in charge of putting together this magazine. The second year of this program is the most beneficial and important.

Ask anyone who has completed this program if they thought it was an overall memorable and worthwhile experience and they will all give you the same overwhelming YES! AFU/WOFI has been a wonderful experience for all of us and we highly recommend it.

▼ AFU/WOFI-ites serve up pastries and iced coffee from Israel's Cafe Aroma at I-Day.



We're changing our name!

AFUWOFI is now...

israel.cleveland
next
icnext.org



Learn about Israel.
Travel to Israel.
Connect others to Israel.

Want to join us?

... commit to seven Sundays (one per month) in the first year, host an Israeli teen in your home for a week, travel to Israel for a 10-day summer experience, and lead a second year project for your community.

Applications for the next Cohort are now being accepted. Cost for the program is \$1800.00 (financial aid available)

For more information and application please contact:
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