

PLP TRIPS 2017

Last week we looked at the USA trip: this week we present a report on the trip to Israel.

ISRAEL PLP TRIP 2017

Goal: To inspire the students with our culture, expose them to the real beauty of Judaism, and give them a broad exposure to a number of outstanding Jewish personalities and educational institutions. Conditional to sponsorship is ongoing attendance at the weekly learning program run by PLP leader Rabbi Myron Sacher.

Trip Led by Rabbi Yoni Fisher and Dr Jeremy Goldin.

Assisted in Israel by Yissochor and Miri Dewick.



ISRAEL

Since launching jInternship in Australia in 2014 and sending 22 students that year to Israel, Rabbi Yoni Fisher has sent a number of students to Israel each year. This year the program took a new spin as Rabbi Fisher built a customised Australian program and networked with students in four states to launch the first Australia-wide university student Israel trip to incorporate learning and touring, where some 17 students from all around Australia participated in a two-week heavily sponsored, specifically-designed educational and fun visit to Israel. In addition, we sent two students on the jInternship program, where they gain unique internships with Israeli companies, as well as study.

On the Sunday before the trip, a get-together and BBQ was held at the home of Dr Lanzer. Some of the students coming on the trip - from as far as Sydney, Brisbane, and Perth, were present too.



In Israel, the students stayed in a brand-new penthouse apartment, occupying the whole top floor of one of the tallest buildings in Jerusalem, and enjoyed a heated jet spa pool on the roof. The private pool - with stunning panoramic views of most of Jerusalem plus a great sound system - was greatly appreciated.



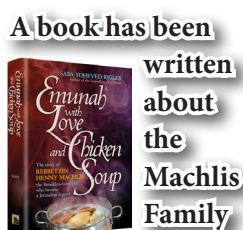
FRIDAY NIGHT

We started by Davening at the *kosel* - the students joined a lively minyan which ended in dancing which they really enjoyed. They also spent time slowly walking around alone or in pairs just breathing in the atmosphere. Many hadn't prayed in years, and even though they were at first sceptical of

the religious environment, even the most distant were touched in a deep and meaningful way. One said, "his life changed when he touched the wall"

In the words of one of the participants;

"Our experience last night at the Kosel was very moving; for some it was their first time ever being there and the singing and dancing was very touching and emotional. Even students who do not usually engage in prayer or are even doubtful about G-d said that they felt that the experience a moving one."



A book has been written about the Machlis Family

We then had an amazing dinner with Rabbi Machlis [who has an open house for Shabbos meals] whose open house, open heart and warmth were unmistakeable, and it was an experience the likes of which we had never seen before. Some hundred people of all different types and stripes came for the meal. Even more incredible was the environment; Talks were given in English and Hebrew and everyone was invited to speak.."

For future trips and for the schedule
weekly university student talks
Email plp@kollel.com.au



JACK LANZER
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At the pre-trip BBQ



Sunrise from the apartment



A taste of Kosher



A rooftop group photo



With Ukraine Chief Rabbi Bleich

Later that night, some students (in jeans and t-shirts) went to the Belzer Rebbe's Tish (one boy described how they pushed him to the front and the Rebbe put his hands on his head and gave him a blessing and some orange, and was asked where he was from. He felt "so special") The boys were given large oranges from the Rebbe that they shared with the group the next day.

SHABBOS DAY



Rav Dovid Nussbaum, Mashgiach at the Torah Ohr Yeshiva (the yeshiva of Rabbi Chaim Pimnchas Scheinberg Zt"l) spoke at the apartment, where a delicious Shabbos lunch was served.

The students were taken by his warmth and sweet personality. He spoke about how Hashem created every creature exactly how it needs to be. He also mentioned how each limb and organ is so perfect and the slightest disruption can have life altering-effects. As such we must thank Hashem for every little thing. One of the students said:



Rabbi Nussbaum

The speech Rabbi Nussbaum gave on Shabbos very much resonated with me. He spoke about gratitude for what we have, how we don't realise how lucky we are for everyday things such as sight and hearing and the ability to move even our wrists. I hope Rabbi Nussbaum knows how much his shabbos discussion truly meant to me."



INSTITUTIONS

The group attended a full-day Discovery program at Aish HaTorah in the Old City, overlooking the Kosel.

Rabbi Fisher's thoughts at the end of the day in Aish:

What an unbelievable full day packed with first class speakers

Many students had serious questions troubling them, such as

"Why can't I just be a good person without G-d"

"Who says Judaism is right? Everyone thinks they are right..."

One student told us "I'm an atheist". Yet, after a day at the Aish Discovery seminar, he could no longer say that with any conviction...

This program was mind-blowing. It answered so many questions and, at the very least, made some people uncomfortable with their preconceived notions, and forced them to rethink things they had always believed in.

One Rabbi jokingly concluded, "who says your parents are your parents - based on the evidence we have shown, you can be more certain that the Torah was given from Hashem to Moshe to the Jews, than that your mother is your mother!"

In the Foreign Ministry



The students visited the offices of the government's Foreign Ministry and heard talks from the Head of Political Research and from the former Israeli ambassador to Australia, Ambassador



Rabbi R Sait,
the Director of Israel Trips for the Wolfson / Olami Foundation

FEATURED SPEAKERS

spoke on the uniqueness of Jerusalem and the Kosel.

He pointed out that all blessing to the world comes via Jerusalem, and if the gentiles would appreciate that, not only wouldn't they destroy it, they would run to rebuild the temple.

He commented that he was very impressed with the quality of the students.

*An informal talk with one of Ohr Somach's Dayanim **Rabbi Yonasson Wiener** started in the apartment and then included a walk-and-talk about life as they strolled through the streets of Meah She'arim.*

For most, it was their first time in a deeply religious environment, and speaking with and seeking advice from such a Talmud Chochom. Dayan Wiener is originally from Australia and studied in Yeshiva and Mt Scopus so they had plenty in common.

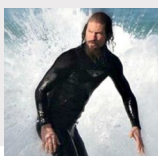


Rav Gav Freidman was hilarious and very compelling in pointing out the 7 Wonders of Jewish history. The talk on Codes was provocative and unique.

The students were so happy - as was Rav Gav - that he agreed to come back for the students' finale dinner, where he gave an enthusiastic final speech.



Dr Gerald Schroeder so effortlessly reconciled the age of the universe and other scientific discoveries, with the Torah's approach. The students were dumbfounded. Many will not be able to tell you every detail and equation he said, but **all** were impressed with his gentle demeanour and brilliance.



Rabbi Yom Tov Glaser entered the apartment and blew the students away. They couldn't

Yuval Rotem.

Whilst in Israel, the current Israeli ambassador to Australia, Shmuel Ben Shmuel also sent a video message to the student group expressing how happy he is with the work of the Kollel and that the students have chosen to visit and study their heritage in Israel!



The boys attended Yeshivas Ohr Somayach a few times. Rabbi Shlomo Weiner had the kids raising eyebrows and asking lots of questions, while Rabbi Breiweitz expounded on the incredibly detailed halachic parameters surrounding artificial insemination, IVF treatment, and surrogate mothers. Following Rav Breiweitz, Rabbi Wiener then took the first page of the Ramchal's classic work *Derech Hashem* to explain the rationale behind the fundamental principle of One G-d. On another occasion Rabbi Breiweitz gave a shiur (with only three minutes to prepare!) on the age-old question of "Why the Righteous Suffer and Wicked Prosper" He undauntedly fielded questions from the students in a warm way and answered them head-on. Some students said he was the best speaker they have heard.

It was highly beneficial to be on the Yeshiva campus and to experience first-hand the enthusiasm of a Yeshiva and Kollel. Simon, one of the students, had this to say "The Rabbi was scared of nothing I could ask, he didn't blink or baulk at the challenging questions we threw at him. He did not change the topic or tell us stories; he gave us sound and solid answers to each question."

While the boys were held enthralled at Ohr Somayach, the girls were treated to another morning of lectures at Neve, one of which was given by world-renowned Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller. They thoroughly enjoyed their learning. Rabbi Avrohom Edelstein (the Education Director of Neve College for Women) also spoke to them at the Neve Seminary.

OTHER PROGRAMS

The final speaker at the Aish Discovery program was an odd-looking American with foot-long curled payos and traditional chassidishe garb. Yet he didn't seem to be the run-of-the-mill...

Indeed, Rabbi Yom Tov Glaser told the students that he used to be a "tree hugging radical environmentalist who didn't want to have children in order to save the Earth's resources (he now he has eight). He was born in Hollywood, California and began surfing at a young age. As the son of a surfwear manufacturer, Yom Tov grew up traveling around the world on surf-travel expeditions. On the days when the waves were small, little Yom Tov took to the hills and became a hard-core mountain biker, another sport that he actively pursues until today. A lover of music, Rabbi Glaser has been playing professionally for over three decades. In England, he's known as the "Jewish Bob Marley". He told us wherever he travels to give inspiring talks, he also leaves himself a day to surf and he loves beer.

You could have heard the chins hit the floor.

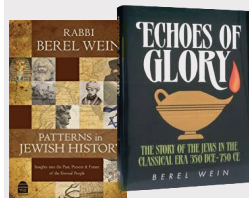
Rabbi Fisher offered him tickets on the spot for a speaking and surfing trip to Australia, and invited him for a private session with the group in the apartment. He arrived one evening for pizza and beer along with a custom guitar. He held the students

believe that someone with his payos and clothing would surf, play music, press fresh juice daily and love trees. He was so good we begged him to come to our apartment for an encore late in the week, which he did. He even brought his children for a swim on the roof!



Celebrated speaker and author Mrs Gila Manolson (*The Magic Touch, Head*

before Heart) came to speak in the apartment to the group about relationships between men and women. Mrs Manolson's talk was down-to-earth but extremely confronting for all the students who were challenged to rethink their secular dating-game ideas with the Torah's perspective. This was incredibly difficult for them to accept, but Mrs Manolson shared frightening statistics of secular divorce versus the frum community. She also spoke about the different gender roles and how the Torah stimulates real growth and development of *menschlichkeit* by ensuring that male and female roles are distinct.



What a treat to hear from world-famous historian Rabbi Beryl Wein. Few are better positioned to appreciate and explain the miraculous survival of the Jewish history. After his talk, he conducted a question-and-answer session which brought forth interesting aspects of Rav Wein's own history and background.





Kumzitz with Rabbi Glaser

spellbound as they realised, despite his looks, he was very, very, familiar with their lifestyle and could completely relate to them. The laid-back atmosphere was great, the students were pitching all sorts of questions from asking about his wife and kids to how he surfs with payos. Then, after playing guitar and singing with the students he started addressing bigger questions troubling them. The evening was a great success.

A huge highlight was a Kumzitz with music by Rabbi Feiglin - ex-Aussie leader of a music band. He turned off the lights and makes everyone close their eyes. Around the candlelit room, they sat singing and listening to stories.

INFORMAL EDUCATION

Both Rabbi Fisher and Dr Goldin constantly gave the students the Torah explanation and approach to so many ideas. Dr Goldin, who has just published a book with Feldheim about the wonders of the world, and seeing Hashem in every aspect of life, was a true inspiration. His love and understanding of nature was greatly appreciated. Dr Goldin spoke about his own path in returning to Torah-true Judaism through the Kollel Rabbis.

TRIPS

➤ Yad Vashem, as expected was emotional, and was followed by further discussion on the survival of the Jews.

The students enjoyed a Kosher burger restaurant nearby and other kosher restaurants. For many, it was their first taste of kosher.

➤ *"Walking trip through nearby Meah She'arim: a young mother stopped us and asked for help schlepping groceries. We carried boxes of vegetables and grape juice up two flights to a dilapidated apartment with numerous children bouncing around their father inside. Both parents grateful. The students had never seen anything like it"*



Outside Mir Yeshiva



➤ Went to see Mir Yeshiva; Yoni explained it has some 5000-7000 students and is the biggest in Israel, and possibly the world.

➤ The group headed across town to the headquarters of Yad Eliezer where they spent time packing food boxes for poor and needy families.

➤ A trip to the Ir David excavation tunnels,

reinforcing the Jewish connection to Jerusalem/ Beis Hamikdash.

➤ The group left early Sunday morning on a full-day tour along the Dead Sea. Many of the kids had heard much about Masada and so the first stop was to climb Masada. Before climbing, Dr Goldin put Masada into historical and religious perspective, explaining that although the mountain was inhabited by a sect of militant Jews that were not loyal to the Torah sages, nevertheless when facing the prospect of defilement by the Roman army when defeat was imminent, they willingly took their own lives al Kiddush Hashem.

A cable car ride down the mountain helped cure aching calves! The next stop was Ein Gedi, a wildlife reserve set into the mountains along the Dead Sea. The group listened to Dr Goldin (who is a veterinary surgeon) speak again about nature and the wonders of Hashem. Since Gadlus HaBorei is his passion, he spent much time during the Israel trip having inspirational discussions on 'life, the universe and everything' with the students. The last stop towards the late afternoon was a swimming spot on the Dead Sea where the boys got chance to float on the salty surface...



The Grand Finale was a 5-star banquet in the VIP room of Café Rimon with Aish Hatorah talent Rav Gav Freidman. He ended the program on such a high.

His critical point to them all was: 'act NOW on your inspiration'. All the students had a new perspective about the Jewish religion, religious people, and acquired a thirst to learn more about their heritage. One of the students said that, above all, he had a new perspective of himself - and went to the market and bought 3 kippot for the first time. Till today he hasn't removed it!



For future trips and for the schedule weekly university student talks
Email plp@kollel.com.au or call
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