

Third ALEPH Taglit-Birthright Israel trip a great success!

Thirty-eight incredible souls participated in ALEPH's Third Jewish Renewal Taglit-Birthright trip. The group included artists, dancers, musicians, actors, students, lawyers, aspiring Cantors, Americans, Canadians -- and even one American baker now living in Italy. A few participants were previously connected to ALEPH, but for many this was their first experience of Jewish Renewal. All had life-changing experiences, including trip leaders Sarah Beck-Berman, an alum of the Second ALEPH Birthright trip and an aspiring Cantor herself, and Ilan Glazer, an ALEPH Board member and ALEPH Rabbinic student.

For ten glorious days in August, Sarah, Ilan and Yoni, the group's Israeli guide, shepherded the participants through a chant, drum, shofar and prayer-filled experience of Israel. This non-stop adventure included hikes galore, gorgeous scenery, historical sites, visits to the Golan, Tzfat, Masada, the Dead Sea, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

Highlights included: climbing Masada at sunrise, visiting Golan olive factories and wineries, rafting on the Jordan River, davvening and hearing the shofar each morning in beautiful settings, floating on the Dead Sea, sleeping overnight in a Bedouin tent, riding camels, exploring artists galleries and holy synagogues in Tzfat, seeing Independence Hall in Tel Aviv where David Ben-Gurion declared the State of Israel, visiting Yad Vashem and praying at the Kotel in Jerusalem. The non-stop music at the back of the tour bus continued through the evening at the hotels, including a raucous Hava Nagila jam outside the Bedouin tent.

Shabbat in Jerusalem was exquisite, with a visit to Nava Tehila, Jerusalem's Jewish Renewal community on Friday night, and group-lead services at the hotel in the morning. "The Shabbat experience I had in Israel was one of the most spiritually enriching experiences I have ever had. We sang and danced and soaked up everyone's love and energy," said participant Melissa Meiller.

From Sarah and Ilan to the Israeli soldiers who joined our trip, to Yoni, Ron – the trip medic, and even Apollo, the bus driver, everyone delighted to be on this 10-day nonstop adventure. "I couldn't think of a better way to have traveled to Israel than with the ALEPH Jewish Renewal group," added Melissa. Shmuel Dorr noted, "I was thoroughly impressed with the trip. I am glad to have taken part in the enthusiasm that is the hallmark of a Renewal community." Elise Figa concurred: "Attending this trip has inspired me to seek out Jewish Renewal services in my city. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to experience Israel, and plan to return for both study and visits. My favorite part of the trip was connecting with young people from all walks of life, and joining in a beautiful, spiritual, challenging and growth-inspiring adventure."

ALEPH hopes to lead its next Taglit-Birthright Israel trip with its wonderful partner Israel Outdoors in the spring or summer of 2012. Be on the lookout for information about our next tour! Contact us now to be added to the prospective participants list for this journey you'll never forget!