



MEJDI TOURS



TEMPLE
BETH SHALOM
MELROSE MASSACHUSETTS

Temple Beth Shalom's 2024 Trip to Israel

Group Leader: Rabbi Jessica Lowenthal

Dates: February 18-27, 2024

Itinerary

Day 0: Travel - Saturday, February 17

Depart Boston for Tel Aviv.

Overnight: in flight

Day 1: Arrival - Sunday, February 18

[Guide, Bus]

- Afternoon/evening arrival and travel to accommodations (short touring options available to those arriving earlier in day or night before)
- Orientation and group dinner

Overnight: Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam Guest House [D]

Day 2: Welcome to Israel, a Crossroads - Monday, February 19

[Guide, Bus]

- *Park Mini Israel* - Begin your visit with a bird's eye view over the entire Land of Israel... in scale model form. Chart the course ahead, and consider how so much adventure can be stored on such a modest strip of Middle Eastern terrain.
- *Tel Gezer* - Scale the peak of an ancient Tel, standing atop layers of civilization built one on top of the other over millennia. Gaze out over the coastal plain

towards the Mediterranean, considering our small place within a remarkable breadth of history.

- *Hasmonean Cave* - Remember the Hanukkah story? Journey into the nearby Ben Shemen forest, the largest “green lung” in central Israel, and visit the “Tomb of the Maccabees,” a case study in casting powerful narrative.
- *Intro to “Shared Society”* - After lunch on your own in Ramla, continue to Lod/al-Lydd for a walk through remnants of a once intact Old Town square. Meet a local civil society leader to discuss the challenging processes of urban revitalization and opportunities for Jewish-Arab cooperation in a city with a storied past.
- Return to your village accommodations for dinner, and warm welcome from a resident of this unique planned Israeli-Palestinian community “Oasis of Peace”

Overnight: Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam Guest House [B, D]

Day 3: The Road North - Tuesday, February 20 **[Guide, Bus]**

- *Caesarea* - Discover the world of Roman antiquity beneath Israel’s coastline. The infrastructure of Herod’s provincial port continues to impress some 2,000 years after its construction.
- *Yemen Orde* - In the Carmel forest, meet the leadership and residents of a remarkable village serving several hundred at-risk youth. Learn about the institution’s founding in 1953 and its unique educational methodology.
- *Akko** - Find lunch on your own in the Old Town of Akko, one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. Head into the Hospitaller fortress and through underground tunnels to learn about Crusaders in the Holy Land and their legacy.
- On your way east, stop in the village of Beit Jann for a *Druze hospitality* dinner and conversation with a longtime member of the Parents Circle - Bereaved Families Forum organization. Learn about Druze culture and the community’s unique minority status within Israel.

** or Haifa, possibly including Leo Baeck Education Center for lunch and/or visits to Bahai Gardens and German Colony/Wadi Nisnas*

Overnight: Nof Ginosar [B, D]

Day 4: Galilee & Golan - Wednesday, February 21 **[Guide, Bus]**

- *Tzfat* - Imagine the city abuzz at the end of a busy week, and bring to mind the words of Shlomo HaLevi Alkabetz, 16th century author of *L'cha Dodi*. Walk winding alleyways, stand under the arches of synagogues centuries old, and step into galleries of artworks inspired by the Jewish mystical tradition.
- *Banias* - Head into the Golan Heights, taking in spectacular views as you approach the foot of Mt. Hermon. Enjoy a brief hike in the Hermon Stream Nature Reserve, passing remnants of a Temple built by Greek Hellenists and an overlook to the Banias waterfall.
- *Mt. Bental* - Welcome to the top of a mountain on a disputed border in the Middle East. Gazing east into Syria and over the "Valley of Tears" below, recall tales of heroism from Israel's wars and discuss the region's tenuous geo-politics. Descend into a decommissioned bunker that reinforces a stark reality of conflict.
- Wrap up the day with a *chocolate workshop* in the village of Ein Zivan. This fun-for-the-family opportunity includes learning about the production process, designing your own sweets, and taking a box to enjoy after dinner at your accommodations.

Overnight: Nof Ginosar [B, D]

Day 5: Site of Refuge, Ascent to Jerusalem - Thursday, February 22 **[Guide, Bus]**

- *Pioneering Spirit* - Depart early, stopping to visit the modest gravesite of an Israeli giant, "first lady of Israeli poetry and song" Naomi Shemer. Recall her most famous works, noticing the themes that inspired the many Zionist pioneers laid to rest in this Kinneret Cemetery and beyond.
- *River Jordan* - Take the highway south, discussing Israeli-Jordanian relations across the nearby border, and environmental challenges impacting the Jordan River and Dead Sea. That this road through the West Bank is nearly indistinguishable from those in "pre-1967 Israel" belies a difficult reality for Palestinians villagers of the Jordan Valley region.
- *Herod's Fortress* - After lunch on-the-go, ride the cable car to the top of Masada. Explore the extensive excavations of this vacation spot turned refuge for Jewish rebels following the fall of the Second Temple and consider how

their story figures in Israel's national mythology. How might your community respond if pushed to the brink?

- Stop for a brief dip in the *Dead Sea* (weather permitting), and begin your ascent through the Judean desert towards Jerusalem. Reach the Mt. of Olives (time permitting) for a first glimpse of the Old City, then enjoy a group dinner at a [cultural center](#) bridging across this united/divided city.

Overnight: Montefiore Hotel [B, L, D]

Day 6: Jerusalem, Jewish Israeli Capital - Friday, February 23 [Guide, Bus]

- *Jewish Quarter* - Notice evidence of Jerusalem's contested past dotting the stone walls of the Old City as you enter through the Zion Gate. Make your way past the Hurva Synagogue, the Roman Cardo beneath your feet, and onto the Western Wall plaza, reflecting on the enduring connection of the Jewish people to an "eternal capital."
- *Tragedy & Memory* - Pay tribute to those lost in the Shoah with a visit to Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust museum and memorial. Remember this most painful moment in history and reflect as a group on the "Never Again" imperative.
- Enjoy time to relax in the afternoon and prepare for Shabbat; choose from a few different options for *Kabbalat Shabbat* services and gather again for dinner as a group

Overnight: Montefiore Hotel [B, L, D]

Day 7: Palestinian Jerusalem & Beyond - Saturday, February 24 [2 Guides, Bus]

- *Torah Talk* - Open the day with sacred texts touching on themes of attentive listening and respect for a diversity of perspectives.
- *Seam Line* - Head to Salah a-Din Street in downtown East Jerusalem to browse the Educational Bookshop. Hear from management about Palestinian life in the city, and initiatives to promote local literary culture.
- *West Bank, Ezion Bloc* - Driving south towards Bethlehem and its surroundings, hear from your two guides - one Palestinian, one Jewish Israeli - about competing claims to a region of great significance in both Jewish and Christian traditions. See the disjointed infrastructure of occupied, or disputed

territory, up close and review events leading to the complex lived reality here. Discuss the politics of painted murals along the separation/security barrier before visits to Manger Square and the Church of Nativity.

- Meet a representative from an organization working to advance equality between Israelis and Palestinians, before free time for dinner on your own in Jerusalem

Overnight: Montefiore Hotel [B, L]

Day 8: Shared Stories, Conflicting Aspirations - Sunday, February 25 [2 Guides, Bus]

- *Holy Mountain* - Return to the Old City early, ascending as a group to the Temple Mount / Noble Sanctuary. Remember Jewish Temples of previous millennia and come to understand Islamic attachment to *Al Aqsa*. Stroll the vast plaza surrounding the Dome of the Rock, calling attention to underlying national and political sensitivities that make this remarkably tranquil site so volatile.
- *Markets* - Browse the marketplaces of the Old City's four quarters before heading west again to Mahane Yehuda. Build an appetite with light tastes from the market's diverse Jewish cuisines, then take time to find lunch on your own.
- *The Castel* - For a fitting farewell to Jerusalem and your Palestinian guide, head to an impressive lookout where Jewish and Arab forces fought to control the road to Jerusalem in 1948. Draw on this historic battleground to reflect with your guides on the possibilities and limits of shared memory and a common future.
- *High school in Israel* - Stop at nearby Kibbutz Tzuba, where Rabbi Jessica's Israel journey began in the spring of 2003. What about the landscape and learning stand out in retrospect? What has changed and what remains the same?
- Arrive to Tel Aviv in the evening for dinner at your accommodations.

Overnight: Dan Panorama, Tel Aviv [B, D]

Day 9: Ancient Port to Modern Metropolis - Monday, February 26 [Guide, Bus]

- *Timepiece* - Taking in seaside views from the Jaffa Old Town, learn how this ancient port evolved into a modern metropolis. See one of the seven limestone clock towers dating to Ottoman Palestine and track the growing lore of the Jaffa orange from 19th century Templar export to the subject of contemporary art.
- *White City, Hebrew City* - Walk past the Hassan Bek mosque and through *HaTahana*, terminal for the old Jaffa-Jerusalem railway turned urban hangout. Tour Neve Tzedek*, exploring the birth of Tel Aviv, and arrive at the Carmel Market to find lunch on your own. Later, stroll up Bialik street to learn about eminent figures of Cultural Zionism and reach Meir Park, home to a prominent city funded gay community center.
- *Devotion and sacrifice* - The Palmach Museum engages visitors not through documents or displays but through the personal narratives of those who took up arms to defend what soon became the State of Israel. What inspired those recruits' dedication to the cause, and what commitments do we hold sacred today?
- Explore the evening in Tel Aviv and find dinner on your own.

Overnight: Dan Panorama, Tel Aviv [B]

Day 10: Tel Aviv, Beyond the Beach - Tuesday, February 27 [Guide, Bus]

- *Many shades of Jewish* - Travel just outside of largely secular Tel Aviv to Bnei Brak, Israel's largest city of *Haredi* Orthodox Jewish residents. Meet a local resident to learn about the community's faith and practice, and explore tensions between doing business within a cosmopolitan urban center and maintaining strict religious norms. Return to Tel Aviv to hear the story of Israel's Ethiopian Jews and enjoy their community's hospitality for lunch.
- *Graffiti* - Get up to date on Israeli politics and trends through a tour of the graffiti art sprayed across the walls of the Florentine neighborhood. Absorb the high energy of densely developed South Tel Aviv and discuss its challenges.
- *Looking forward and back* - Visit Rabin Square, site of a memorial to the slain Israeli Prime Minister and mass demonstrations for peace in the decades since his passing. Recap what we've learned about the past and present, and take time for reflection on your own journey in Israel.

- Enjoy a festive closing dinner and [homemade ice cream](#) (*pending availability*) before reaching the airport for your departing flights. *Post-stays and individual airport transfers available upon request.*

Overnight: N/A [B, L, D]