

Shalom Temple Sinai Community,

Our third week in Israel is coming to a close and I am so thankful for the beautiful places in this country I have had the opportunity to visit so far.

We spent the first part of the week exploring Tel Aviv, starting with a trip to the beach! The water was clear and very warm. We then toured a bit of Jaffa and learned about its history. We ate lunch at an old market in Jaffa, before making our way to the Palmach Museum. Once there we learned about the history and lifestyle of the Haganah through an interactive program. In the evening we drove north to Kibbutz Nachsholim, where we slept for most of the week, and watched the sunset over the ocean.

Monday morning we were back in a neighborhood outside of Tel Aviv to volunteer at a WIZO childcare center. WIZO stands for Women's International Zionist Organization, and the organization has over one hundred childcare centers across Israel. The centers provide care to families in need of financial support. We played with kids, ages 6 months to 3 years old, and had so much fun. For lunch we went to Sarona market in the middle of Tel Aviv and had lots of delicious food! We then visited the Munitions Factory at Machon Ayalon, where we saw the underground bullet factory that was hidden underneath a kibbutz. The ammunition that was produced played a key role in the War of Independence in 1948.

The next day we drove back in to the southern part of Tel Aviv for an awesome graffiti tour. I felt like we really got to know the culture in that part of the city through street art, food, and music. Next we went to Shuk HaCarmel, a busy market full of beautiful jewelry and art, food stands, and restaurants. That evening we met with a member of the Israeli Gay Youth Organization, and learned about the LGBTQ community in Israel, and the challenges it faces in Israeli society.

Later in the week we drove south to the Gaza Border. At a lookout about 90 meters from the border we talked about Israel's relationship with Gaza and the current situation of people living in Gaza. We drove to a village called Nativ Ha'asara, right next to the Gaza border. We learned about what it is like to live in a place so close to the border, and how it severely impacts every day life. For example, every house has a bomb shelter inside, and many children choose to sleep in it at night.

We finished off our day with Sand Surfing in the desert. It closely resembled snowboarding without bindings, in a straight line down a sand dune. It was pretty awesome! This Shabbat we are resting up at Kibbutz Gvulot for a big week of hiking and exploring ahead.

L'Shalom !

Naomi