

Shalom Temple Sinai Community,

My name is Naomi Diamond, and I am a rising senior at Champlain Valley Union High School. I am currently traveling around Israel with a program called Biluim Israel, and will be sharing about my trip each week for the next month.

Our first week in Israel has been amazing, spending our time exploring the Galilee and the Golan Heights. We started out by touring the city of Tzefat, and met with a local artist who taught us about Kabbalah. We learned about the meaning of letters and numbers in the artist's work as a way to represent connections between elements of Judaism. His work at first appeared simple, but contained many hidden meanings linking back to Kabbalah and the universe. We then toured a traditional Sephardic synagogue, and learnt about the resettlement of Spanish Jews in Israel. We roamed around the mystical city for a while, exploring a small Shuk, and getting ourselves some good falafel.

The following day we spent hiking in the Golan Heights and swimming in natural pools. We then drove to an Israeli bunker on Mount Bental, very close to the Syrian border. Once there, we discussed the Six-Day War and the role of Eli Cohen, an Israeli spy in Syria. Additionally, we talked about the effects of the war for both Syria and Israel, the changes to the land, and the current relations between Syria and Israel.

The last three days we have been hiking and camping across Mount Meron and neighboring valleys. The weather was scorching, but the beautiful views were worth it. At night we enjoyed cooking homemade meals together and chilling by the campfire. In total we covered almost 40 kilometers in the past three days. After hiking off the mountains this morning, we drove to the city of Nahariya to relax at the ocean.

We finished off the week back up in the mountains, celebrating Shabbat and eating delicious food at Kibbutz Moran.

L'Shalom!
Naomi