

## DAY 2

Kibbutz and Camp meals remind me of one another (not the kibbutz we most recently stayed at with the congregation, but the one I just stayed at). It is pouring rain here, I know that Israel needs it, but it is challenging to travel around.

Robbie, educator from Makom, led us in an exploration of different gateways into connecting to the Jewish peoplehood. The triangle of covenantal, communitarian and cosmopolitan represent aspects that drive us to Judaism. Covenantal is being driven to connect with the Jewish people through a sense of the divine. Communitarian is driven by my sense of family, tribe and Community. Cosmopolitan is a concept of bringing justice and Tikkun Olam to the world. He asked us to challenge ourselves about how the language of religion gets in the way of talking about peoplehood. The Zionist assumption is that we are a people that has a religion. For many American Jews, religion is what builds the community and peoplehood. The triangle of the 3 C's is not always stable. We were asked where we felt we stood in the triangle and where our community stood and how far they were from each other. A statement that struck me was that if I found myself in the communitarian corner than the cosmopolitan person would think I was racist and if I was in the cosmopolitan corner than the communitarian would think I didn't care about my people. This is where the balance of the triangle tends to teeter. That is the challenge.

The key questions that I came away with for our community are...

1. Through which gateway do you (we) connect to the Jewish people.
2. What is the place of Israel in each gateway.
3. How do you (we) wrestle with diaspora Judaism, the dynamics between diaspora Jews and sabras, and is there collective responsibility.

We left for a massive community project that is through a soccer club, Hapoel Beer Sheva. Started at the old stadium that is dilapidated. The feeling was that the old stadium represented Beer Sheva as if it were a 3rd world country. So when teams came to play them in the past it was as if they were the joke of the league. They couldn't attract players and the team was not successful. It was as if the stadium and the team were a snap shot of what people felt life was like in Beer Sheva. Beer Sheva is in the Negev and is a different city than Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. It is a diverse city with Arabs and Bedouin populations living alongside the Jews. It has been a poorer city. However, 10 years ago Alona Barkat was looking for a social project to invest in and felt that buying the team would have ramifications far outside the game. The city and the team have risen together. Tech companies moved in, the university expanded and there has been major social and educational change as a result of a sense of pride in their team that is now the two year reigning soccer champions of Israel.

We visited the new stadium which is just two years old and is state of the art. The Director of Education met with us and outlined the three large shifts. They moved as a professional team into the first division, the owner saw the team as a platform for elevating the Negev and their logo embodied both, "the pride of the Negev." It is the best premier sports club in the region which is geographically 2/3 of Israel but only 10% of the population. The owner felt that she had to pay a "Beer Sheva tax" to lure players to the Negev. She would pay double what the other players on other teams made, however the stipulation was that they not only had to play for Beer

Sheva, they had to live there too. This was transformative. The philosophy was that you had to live in the community for the Community to feel that the player was part of “them.”

But they are more than a sports club, they do Community work to empower the residents. All the residents. They have the largest number of Arabs on their team aside from the all Arab teams. They use soccer as a non-formal educational tool. They have 700 kids in their youth clubs. The philosophy is that if you play, the club will try and help you develop as a person. They instituted a learning center, an educational consultant to liaison between the school and the club (many parents had to be convinced that it was important for their kid to be educated and not just play soccer), and they instituted academic and behavioral guidelines for all the youth players. For kids who didn't make the youth clubs the club offered grants to students who would help tutor other local students in need. So two more segments of the Community was now being supported by the soccer club. Playing together with a diverse group of people set a model for tolerance for the whole community. The unspoken challenge is once again, where and how is this work being done for the girls/women of the community. How can this team help to be a change agent in regard to gender equality.

We quickly got on the bus and journeyed to a solar panel field. Most are down south and on kibbutzim land. We met Rabbi Julian Sinclair, who made Aliyah years ago and realized that he wanted to explore work outside of Jewish Education and found himself working in Solar Energy. However, the first interaction we had when exploring the idea of solar energy was to study text.

Rabbi Hanan from Tzipori said in the name of Rabbi Samuel bar Nachman. Because of 4 things the Holy one blessed be he...decided that the land (of Israel) would Only drink from above (and not from rivers): because of strong, in order to disperse bad vapors, so that the high up people and the lowly should drink alike and so that all would turn their eyes to heaven. (Talmud Yerushalmi, ta'anit)

This text was trying to explain why the land of Israel does not have natural resources. Strong, if you as a country or a people hold all the natural resources, you have all the power. Bad vapors, introduces the idea of sustainability. High and low, Rich and poor, drink alike, egalitarianism. Eyes toward heaven, everyone is dependent and that continues to humble people.

So, by harvesting energy and resources instead of taking what is easily there and creating a negative power dynamic, it helps to create a connection to the source of life. With that caveat we entered the fields of panels and electrical boxes. What an amazing sight!

We ate lunch at a gas station, I gave my veggie schnitzel they packed for me (I don't eat faux meat) to a soldier and went and bought a greasy amazing gas stop falafel!! We did think it was ironic that after the solar panels we ate at a gas station.

On the journey up North to Jerusalem we were asked to listen to a podcast that Makom made about Chaya and her relationship with Synagogue and State, as a prelude for our evening walk.

We checked in to the King Solomon and packed the umbrellas they bought for us and went with Chaya walking the struggle for pluralism in Jerusalem. We actually walked from location to

location as Chaya told us story after story of the activism that occurred over the years. We began at City Cinema and near the Knesset. There is a difference between public and private land and the religious authority over what gets built on this land and what the stipulations for observance are. City Cinema was built on government land and the rabbinate did not want the Mayer to allow them to open if they showed movies on Shabbat. Chaya and other activists fought this stipulation but in the end they lost and the City Cinema is closed on Shabbat. The next stop was Gan Sacher. The park that Aaron runs in often. She spoke about the look of Jerusalem's Central Park in Shabbat as a mixing of the diversity of Jerusalem. That you could witness a Haredi Family picnicking next to an Arab Family and an Eritrean running in the park while a secular kid skateboards, is what makes Jerusalem, Jerusalem. They are not interacting but they are coexisting. Through the Nahahalot neighborhood Chaya spoke of the image of the bridge as she entered the central part of the city and how this represented for her leaving her parents home and being able to take a deep breath and be herself. The dance studio was our next stop. We heard the stories of picketing and requiring girls of age 10 to cover their bodies and their hair for any performance. That there is a constant challenge for autonomy over modesty issues. About women not being able to be in advertisements around the city. About grass roots change. Stories of advocacy on egged buses that required if the rider was female they had to get on in the back and if male the front. Secular women supported the religious women on how to make change. But only when a coalition existed could change be made and could positions listen.

We explored how to keep Synagogue and state together but who and what the Synagogue (rabbinate 🇮🇱) is could and should change. How and when and who you advocate with and for are essential Questions.

We stopped in at a community center to observe the art exhibit and learn about their collective art Community and how they are tittering on being kicked out because of controversial lectures like, Breaking the silence. Ex IDF officers that do tours in the occupied territories and talk about their own moral and theological issues before, during and after their service in the IDF. This is very challenging to hear for many and the community center was told that resources would be withheld if they allowed the speakers. They did allow them and they are being brought to court next month.

We had dinner at a hummus restaurant that has private kashrut certification. This is a new and alternative kosher certification program that empowers the people to oversee themselves without paying huge fees to the chief rabbinate. A covenantal trust between the Community and the business establishment. The food was excellent and the idea of taking the bold step to defy the rabbinate. All of that in one bite!!

We returned to debrief and write about key moments and teaching moments and gateways and hatikvah Questions.