

DAY 6

Shabbat Shalom!

We only had evening programming today. So although the weather was awful, cold and rainy, everyone in Israel is thrilled in Israel that there is rain! I went to a fabulous yoga studio in the heart of Tel Aviv. It was Ashtanga style. It was a class taught in English and all young Tel Avivians. They have a daily Mysore (individual Ashtanga class everyday but Shabbat). So, I went to a traditional Hatha led class. It seems that most studios here are renovated floors of apartment buildings within residential areas. It was fun to be doing what other natives in Tel Aviv do in Shabbat. Aaron went for a run on the promenade.

We met and had lunch in a great neighborhood Neve Tzedek. A hip area near the Tachana (renovated train station). That area is fabulous outdoor area with shops, outdoor entertainment, restaurants and art exhibits. Everything was pretty dreary today, but good to see that area as well.

We walked to Yaffo and looked for the Shuk area, but due to the weather everything that is usually outside was pretty much closed. Yaffo is an active Arab community and restaurants and stores were all open. We walked back along the promenade and the water was rough, not a lot of people out, a big difference from December when the weather was beautiful and people were on the beach and surfing.

Shabbat ended and Aaron left to return to Jerusalem. It was so great to be able to see him. The people from my program came together to end Shabbat with Havdalah. The group had broken up into three sections prior to the trip to organize different parts of the celebration of Shabbat. My group worked on Havdalah. One of the members bought these sweet containers and we bought at the market 5 different spices and asked everyone to add their own spices to their container and have that represent their experience in Israel. We broke up and spoke in small groups and spoke about our spices.

Sachlab: Talk about a sweet person you met on this trip or a sweet moment you shared with another participant, and how it will inform your teaching.

Bay Leaves: Talk about which of the 4HQs flavors are missing from your curriculum and how you hope to add them in.

Zaatar: Share a trick you use for handling a “spicy” student or parent.

Star Anise: Who was the “star” of your Israel education? Tell the group about an Israel educator who changed you.

Orange: Peel away a layer of your own life — tell your group a meaningful fact about yourself that hasn’t come up yet.

BONUS: If you took a little piece of ארצינו, what is something that grounds you?

We had Havdalah as a group, had dinner and walked to Cafe Bialik where we went to a public performance of Shirim b' Ashdodit. Sami Shalom Shitreet wrote the poems and the book was titled, Poems in Ashdodish. They were then put to music. The theme of all the work is the experience of Mizrahim in Israel. In general, they are easterners that incorporates people from vastly different countries and classes but sharing roots in the world of Islam and similar experiences after their arrival in Israel. Today these Jews and their descendants can be said to make up 50% of Israel's total Jewish population.

Before the concert we explored the history of Mizrahim. In the 1940's there were a million Jews living throughout the Middle East. Life in Middle Eastern countries for the Jews worsened over time. Their arrival in Israel was generally unhappy. Most refugees who flooded the state after its founding were not treated gently. Jews from Arab countries were placed at the bottom of the list. There were immense cultural gaps. Ethnic lines are fading, but still present. But still Mizrahi Jews 29% of managerial positions requiring a university degree as opposed to 54% for Jews of European descent.

When it comes to the religious life of the country the Western idea that one is either religious or secular, a distinction that never existed in Jewish communities of the East. There Jews lived within the flexibility of "tradition."

The poetry and music were about name changes, assimilation of music, how some Mizrahim integrate and leave their childhood behind to get ahead. There was a sense of anger, resilience and typical immigrant and racial issues.

We walked in the tundra to the hotel. Off to sleep!