

### DAY 3

We began with a review of today's news. The concept of a political conspiracy and each party accusing the other and asking who benefits from each accusation. Things in Israel are sensitive and fragile. The leaders spoke about that the facts are not the only issue here, we need to agree on an enduring understanding in which we can collectively share that can allow us to disagree. The goal is to have a system in place, a process to move forward to work through this specific issue.

Each morning we begin with a class like structure in which to frame the day. Yesterday focused on the connection to "Am, Peoplehood," and today was about relationship to "b'artzanu, in our land." Robbie made a thesis statement that the world is split between "anywheres" and "somewheres." Anywheres-can live anywhere, less connected to a particular place, less connected to a multi generational people. Somewheres-live close to where grew up, connected to family structure.

Minority of the western world has been the anywheres, yet the anywheres have been in charge of policy. The somewheres have been saying recently, enough. He gave Obama as an example of an anywhere. This theology infers that "anywhere people" are broad and assumes "somewhere people" are limited.

When speaking about b'artzanu, and the fact that many people connect to Israel through land we first watched a video about Syrian refugees and their connection to their land. And then we explored the Jewish people. Jewish people have been anywheres over the generations. Connection to the land has not been in our past. Now the somewheres, are Israelis. Many Zionists are somewheres.

So where do you feel most at home. These were some of the answers. The people and culture give me an understanding of Home. Home is not necessarily where you always feel comfortable. That doesn't mean that you can always do what you want. Home is not necessarily a place. House and home different words in English but same in Hebrew. For some the feeling of Home and place are not separate.

A quote about connection to land.  
Chief Seattle (Washington Territory, 1877)

Every part of the country is sacred to my people. Every hillside, every valley, every plain and grove has been hallowed by some fond memory some sad experience of...

The concept the quote brand across to me is that the people, the culture, is connected to this place and it feeds who I am. This is all about Homeland.

These are three ideas about homeland. You could be...  
At home in a strange land  
Is this your homeland  
Do I yearn for return

You can feel at home in your land. You can feel at home in another land. You can not feel at home in your land. You cannot feel at home in another land. I am not from here but I am not totally foreign.

We took these ideas out into the field with a PhD student who is studying Urban Politics. We engaged in a study walking tour of East Jerusalem. We started on the Mount of Olives at the cemetery overlooking Jerusalem. We moved to an area near Hebrew University overlooking the separation barrier and seeing the landscape, the urban planning (or lack there of) of Palestinian communities and Jewish Israelis and Arab Israelis (we learned that those terms are actual not PC anymore). And we concluded at the Mamilla mall. All of these locations were over the green line. We were asked to wrestle with the idea if we felt that the places we stood were part of b'artzanu, in our land.

Marik challenged us to think about the discrepancy of resources, the idea that land and freedom are intertwined. That when there was an occupation and the statement that the philosophy would be that urban demographic planning would keep the Palestinian population to 30% and he feels that is flawed urban planning and destroys the idea of creating infrastructure. That the ramifications of this are the neighborhoods that exist today. In Palestinian neighborhoods there are no power grids etc...to support the growing population and in families the children build on Family apartments and build up, creating now about 50,000 illegal dwelling spaces that do not have infrastructure to support them.

When challenged by a participant about Palestinians destroying infrastructure when Israeli government builds it he responded, that not all Palestinians destroy infrastructure and why does the whole group get punished for the few. We don't do that in Israel. If in an Israeli Community a post office was destroyed the government wouldn't punish the whole Community and not build another post office. It was an interesting point. He felt that by not rebuilding it perpetuates the us vs. them. Some of the issues around the Palestinians accepting infrastructure because accepting it means accepting the occupation and admitting that they have given up hopes for the land.

So how can things change and where is their hope for shared Community. Marik spoke about schools in the territories how their curriculum is different than Israeli curriculum and there is no Hebrew. This automatically places certain people at a disadvantage in higher education and the work force. That is changing. More Palestinians are trying to get in. There is more co existence. Mamilla Mall is an example of this. Arab workers, near Eat Jerusalem, all people shop here. Commerce leading the way of integration. Quick lunch at Mamilla Mall. I couldn't pass up a great cheese toast, grilled cheese!

City of David was a tour of the area that is across the green line but has historical significance. Would we be willing to give back land that is historically significant? The purpose was to hear a different narrative than the morning. The narrative of being tied to the land because of biblical history. Unfortunately, the guide was not an English speaker and was not prepared to give that narrative. After an hour of us all struggling through a challenging experience, our leaders ended the tour early. Thank goodness I was not a part of ending the relationship!!

We journeyed to Robinson's Arch. We spent time there before going to the traditional "Wall." We spoke about the order in which we introduce things has an impact on the content. We reviewed that the Kotel (the wall) as a Synagogue, a national monument, a public space. If a Synagogue it needs a Rabbi and it becomes an ultraorthodox Rabbi. As a result, it will be governed by Halacha (Jewish law). Pre-1948 no mehitza. Jews go and weep. Wailing wall. No access from 1948-1967. All the houses destroyed in that area were destroyed to make an open space for the Kotel plaza. Within months of access to the Wall it became under the auspices of the UltraOrthodox Rabbinate and a mehitza was erected.

We pondered the educational question of talking about the wall and showing the mehitza in our communities. Do we show he all of these national symbols? The challenges as well as the awe.

We studied the Kotel Agreement. The proposal was to convert the Robinson's Arch prayer area from an archeological site to a government-recognized holy place for egalitarian prayer, with a shared entrance to the entire complex, and a suggestion to raise the height of the new prayer space to that of the main Western Wall plaza. Women of the Wall voted in favor of entering into negotiations with the government. This proposal created a rift in the movement. Part of the group didn't want to be in another location than the "Wall" and others felt that the creation of a coalition with progressive movements for the creation of a government recognized space for egalitarian prayer at the Western Wall, where Women of the Wall could continue their women-only services, with a shared entrance for one and all, as important enough to give up their right to pray at the site where it had all started. This split in ideology created a split in Women of the Wall.

We all questioned why secular Israelis weren't concerned with this question about egalitarianism at the Wall. The answer was, secular Israelis feel positively about pluralism, yet do not care about "the Jewish People." Orthodox Israelis feel negatively about pluralism, yet they do care about "the Jewish People." So, when we think about Am Israel (peoplehood)-what do you mean? Should Israelis include Americans in the Am? Who has a vote about issues?

We came back to the hotel and I went to a panel discussion at Hartman. I was only able to get there for a half an hour. It was a panel of Aarons classmates about the impact of the program they are in. I was able to meet one of his Israeli friend's parents. Good to see his Community.

We had a debriefing experience back at the hotel and worked in Hevruta (pairs) to write lesson plans around the Kotel (Wall) through the lens of Lihiyot (to be), Am (peoplehood), Hofshi (freedom), b'artzanu (in our land). Putting learning into practice.

Dinner at the hotel and then text study with Chaya. Her philosophy is that concrete borders stop creativity. Babylonian Talmud was created outside of the land. She asked us to create a new narrative about b'artzanu, in our land. The tabernacle, the Sukkot, Shemita.

The tabernacle-movable. When needed to move on they could. They all contributed to build it. It was in the middle of the people. (Different than the Temple, which was higher than the people). Used it when we were on a journey.

Sukkot-the home defines us. We first put the borders, create private space out of the public space. Defines who we are. All Sukkot need to look similar. (We think we own a home, we hold a conception that we own things-it is an illusion). Sukkot ask us to go out and trust the community. Leave the borders. Sephardic Synagogues are similar to a Sukkah. Look and see each other. The community is important not the land, facing the land. It is Am, the people that are important.

Shemita-our land is who we are. Do the exact opposite of what you are used to. After 6 years, leave land open for a year. Open the gates of your land and let people in. Anyone can take what they can eat. Can't take it and sell it. (Buy and eat what you need). Instinct is to put gates around things. It is an illusion of thinking you have money and things. Open the hands.

This is an alternative narrative. Three elements that their essence is how we practice. We don't own anything, especially land.

How do we deal with "the land." There is an element that the longing is what makes the messiah exist. The most exciting is the longing. Always the potential it could be better. Once you are here, it is a reality. So the longing of a land has potential. Once there, deal with all the work.

Every tradition has a big place or a small place. The big space symbolizes something bigger than the person. The Kotel. The small place is something that symbolizes something specific to you. The bench that you had a first kiss. The Am is excited about the big place. The Am is not excited about the small place. So how do we integrate the connection the commonality of the people with collective land.