

CBY Does Israel!
A Unique CBY Learning Adventure
Spring 2019

Come with Rabbi Steve and the CBY community (and friends) on an amazing trip to Israel **you will never forget**. Walk on the ancient stones of the Old City in Jerusalem, and the mystical mountain city of Tzefat. Pray with hundreds of people from around the world at the Western Wall. Watch the sun rise over the Dead Sea from the top of Masada. Swim in the Mediterranean from a beach in the modern city of Tel Aviv. Shop in ancient markets. Watch the stars come out in the Negev desert above a huge crater. Listen to the silence.

Meet Arabs and Jews working together for coexistence, and a school for peace in the West Bank. Visit a bi-lingual Arabic-Hebrew elementary school and hear an Arab-Jewish teen youth choir at the YMCA in Jerusalem.

Experience home hospitality in an Israeli-Arab town in the Galilee that Rabbi Steve has visited for decades and meet his “Israeli-Arab family” there. And nearby visit another friend on a vegan moshav who is one of the top Oud players in Israel from an Iraqi Jewish family. Stop by Steve’s Israeli surrogate grandparents who immigrated from South Africa before the State existed and still live in the same apartment in Herziliya where they raised their three children.

Experience music, art and culture brought from all over the world, and created organically in modern Israel. Dig and find pottery from the 1st Century.

Travel in a country where the streets are named after famous Jews throughout history, and where many place names jump right out of the bible.

We will visit sites and meet people of other religions as well. We will visit the Church of the Holy Sepulchre where Jesus is buried, and the Church of the Loaves and Fishes on the Sea of Galilee. We will visit the awesome Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, and the International Centre for the Baha’i Faith in Haifa.

Did you know Israel has seven film schools? That civil Sharia law courts exist there (the only place outside the Muslim world)? That Israel is the only democracy and has the only free press in the region? And the only socialized medicine where everyone has coverage? That there are at least 200 co-existence and social justice NGO’s? That the only gay hot-lines and community centers in the region are there, and that almost 200,000 people come from all over the world to celebrate Gay Pride in Tel Aviv?

Israel is a modern democracy, with many of the advantages and all the flaws. So most importantly, we will engage in deep and challenging conversations with friends and others about all of the above and more.

This trip is designed for “first timers” to Israel and for those looking to reconnect. It is designed to first of all expose us to much we can fall in love with. Then, once the bond has taken, we will also make the relationship more real by learning about and experiencing some of the difficulties and challenges, the flaws of Israel and the reality there. We will meet inspiring people who dedicate their lives to making the dream of Israel with its highest values a reality.

Importantly, the rare experience for American Jews of being in a Jewish majority culture can be life changing, and even shocking. We will create a safe container for our hearts as we listen deeply inside to our internal responses to what we experience, and support each other on our ongoing journey of identity.

We will be traveling with Keshet Educational Tours. <http://www.keshetisrael.co.il>
Their tour guides are native English speakers and graduate level trained educators. Twelve years ago I led a Reconstructionist tour with Keshet that nobody on that trip will ever forget. Neither will you.

Further details are coming soon. The trip will be approx..12 days on the ground, including two Shabbatot, one in Jerusalem and one in Tzefat. We will need a minimum of 15 participants, preferably 20-25 to keep the cost down. All CBY members and their extended families are invited. We will also invite members of other Reconstructionist congregations in the region. Though it is not an “interfaith” trip, non-Jewish members of our families and extended communities are also warmly welcomed to participate.

CBY will provide learning opportunities over the next year to prepare us for this journey of a lifetime, and it will be a part of my visit in May and again in the fall.

If you wish, I highly recommend watching this powerful talk by Rabbi Donniel Hartman of the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem, where he imagines a new paradigm of relationship between Israel and Diaspora.... “from crisis to covenant.” This will provide you with some of the deep theory and values behind our trip.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-v46pM-z3Z8&feature=youtu.be>