

## Sabbatical Greetings from Jerusalem #1

As Gerri and I prepare for our 1<sup>st</sup> Shabbat in Jerusalem this year, we are filled with enormous gratitude towards NHC for allowing us this special time away.

We arrived 3 days ago and have adapted to the time change. Then again, we lost an hour of sleep this morning as Israel made its annual change to daylight savings time.

When one comes to live here for the month as opposed to travel, the first things that one must do is shop for food and get to know the neighborhood. There is a decent supermarket down the street; about a 5-minute walk. That gave us our basics but didn't give us the opportunity to "look around." So we did something quite foolish, we walked to the shuk, Machane Yehudah, for more shopping; foolish because we were jet-lagged. The 30-minute walk took us much longer especially since we took the hilly route rather than the flatter one. But, oy did we sleep well on Tuesday night, with no fear of any coming snowstorm.

Wednesday morning I headed out to the Conservative Yeshiva where I reconnected to friends I made while studying there 6 years ago. The Yeshivah is truly a special place. It has a spectrum of people from all over and different ages. For example, it is one of the USY Nativ options for the young men and women who are in a gap year before college. Others come after college and before graduate school. They have also included many senior citizens over the years who never had the opportunity to study our Holy texts in such a deep way.

To quote their website, the Yeshivah "...offers Jews of all backgrounds the skills for studying Jewish texts in a supportive Jewish community. We are a vibrant, open-minded, fully egalitarian community of committed Jews who learn, practice and grow together. Learning is lishma (for its own sake) without exams or papers. Learning in Judaism is a lifelong process, and the learning of traditional Jewish texts requires skills of language and methodology. Our goal is to give students the ability and the desire to continue Jewish learning and practice throughout their lives."

The Conservative Yeshivah is a great way for me (or anyone) to run into people. A former Reuben Gittelman Day School student of mine, Matt Nelson, came running up when he spotted me. He even asked me a question about a Talmudic piece we studied almost a decade ago. Matt made aliyah and has finished his army service. The yeshivah is a wonderful



transitional year for him as he explores his future options.

The Yeshiva is connected to the Fuchsberg Center for Conservative Judaism; a special place that American Conservative Jews visit when in Jerusalem to get a strong connection to home. <http://www.uscj.org.il> The classic question, "Where are you from?" is often heard in the halls. And the game of Jewish Geography begins, over and over again.

On Thursday we took a well-rested walk back to the shuk with one important goal in mind; to purchase loaves of bread for a potluck Israeli wedding that we attended this morning. The wedding was quite unique. On a special website set up by the bride and groom, people sign up for different things that they would bring. The rabbi, Rabbi Ben Mernick, was a former Ramah Berkshires camper whose father, Mitch, is my partner-in-crime for my camp radio show, "Kibitzing with Kurland."



The parents of the groom are our dear friends; Mara & Moshe. We will be with them for the seder next Shabbat. They were thrilled how well it worked out timing wise so that we could attend. Mara is originally a Spring Valley girl. Her parents flew in from Florida along with her sister, Donna Cash who lives in New City. The Chuppah was overlooking such a gorgeous view of Nes Harim and the enthusiasm of the guest was electrifying.



And now we're getting closer to candle lighting time for Shabbat. We wish you all a Shabbat Shalom and stand with the youth for tomorrow's rallies. May our prayers in Jerusalem and your prayers tomorrow at NHC open the gates of heaven and so that we can all work for a more perfect world.

Rabbi Paul & Gerri Kurland