

Sabbatical Greetings from Jerusalem #3

Well, Pesach is almost over. Tonight we will light Yom Tov candles and tomorrow evening we will light Shabbat candles. Remember, Pesach is only 7 days in Israel. However, we can't start eating chametz until Saturday night when Shabbat is over since no one can buy back the chametz on Yom Tov and certainly not on Shabbat. So it will be post-Pesach without chametz.

To tell you the truth, I don't really miss chametz when at home and, even more, I don't miss it in Jerusalem. It's almost as if everything is kosher for Passover here. The McDonalds on Ben Yehuda Street is kosher for Passover for those who eat kitniyot (legumes, rice, corn, etc.). The Waffle Factory is kosher for Passover for all, as are numerous pizza places. Here are the rabbinic supervision certificates for a few.



Of course, Jerusalem has so much more than other parts of the country. A dear childhood friend visited from Karmiel and was excited to find Cornflakes that were kosher for Passover. He happens to be Sephardic so it is normal for him. Gerri and I have been eating like the Sephardic while in Israel for years and last year we changed over in America as well. That's how I ended up with a kosher for Passover falafel yesterday. (BTW, I sent my friend home with most of the box of Cornflakes after I took out a cup or 2 for my world famous lentil roast tonight.



We are running into so many friends, acquaintances & colleagues but extra special was seeing Mara & Yosef Moshe for seder in Maalei Adumim & then Rabbi Allan & Robin Meyerowitz during Chol HaMoed.

Mara is a Rockland native from JCC Spring Valley. She worked as the musical director at Camp Ramah in the Berkshires for 2 decades. We spent Seder with them 6 years ago as well and always try to see them anytime we are in Jerusalem. The Seder was magical and lasted well into the early hours of morning. Now, I'm not one who aspires to run a long Seder but we just got

carried away in discussion and, of course, stories. (You would expect me to have unlimited stories to share.)

The Meyerowitz family also has a Rockland connection. Rabbi Allan came to West Clarkstown Jewish Center as their rabbi in 1980 and stayed for a number of years. Our friendship goes back to our junior year of college as part of the 1-year study program at Hebrew University. We also shared several summers at Camp Ramah. But what is most important about the family is that Robin helped “set me up” with Gerri back in 1989 (‘nough said!). The 2 of them are Philly girls and went to the same Religious School and studied while in High School at Gratz College together.

The Meyerowitz family became Orthodox awhile ago and live in the Boston area where he serves as a Hospital Chaplain and she is the founding director of the Maimonides School’s Early Childhood Center in Brookline. Two of their daughters, who I haven’t seen since they were kids, are married, living in Israel and both have 5 children. Gerri & I, therefore, had an experience that we normally wouldn’t have had when we was invited to a Pesach barbeque in Betar Illit, an extremely Orthodox community. My kippah was not like any other kippah in that community and in Israel, the type of kippah one wears too often defines one’s political and religious outlook. Therefore, we were, in many ways, in a foreign country but one that was welcoming and filled with warmth.

I often preach that we have to be careful about labeling one another: from ultra secular Jews to ultra Orthodox Jews. There are wonderful, caring, compassionate people in all groups. We can’t define communities with a wide brush. Yes, each group includes people who aren’t always properly behaved, but the average “citizen” is usually as wonderful as the people we love. Part of our Passover obligation is to free ourselves from our own narrow-mindedness and prejudices. Interacting with all types of Jews helps us appreciate who they really are. That’s why we invite the Traveling Chasidim to NHC every Sukkot. It is also why Rabbi Aryeh Royde, a Belz Hasidic rabbi, filled in for my NHC Monday lunchtime class for 1 session while I was away. He received rave reviews.



Last year I started offering hints on Facebook for counting the Omer between Passover and Shavuot. I started it up yesterday by posting the following for last night’s hint (#5). Please follow along during the upcoming weeks. There’s a spiritual dimension to counting the days from Passover to Shavuot that is hard to describe in words. Maybe you can describe your own spiritual uplift after taking on this commandment for the next 6 weeks.

I will be listing my hints a bit later on FB for the next 3 days. I hope you enjoy. Once again, may all of our prayers, personal, communal and universal reach the heights of heaven and may we all continue to work towards an even great redemption for all.

Chag Sameach & Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Paul & Gerri Kurland

