

November 18, 2015

Shalom Parent(s) of Beth El 7th, 8th & 9th Graders,

I'll never forget the first time I went to the Western Wall in the summer of my freshman year of college. I was in Israel for the first time with a group of college friends. The entire trip I basically held my breath in anticipation of what it would be like to enter the Old City for the first time. I remember seeing the Wall, touching it, praying in front of it, looking up top to see the Dome of the Rock, and then walking away to join my group being debriefed in the nearby archeological park.

Once back together, the group went around the circle and shared our feelings about what it meant to be there. When it was my turn, I started to speak, and then without any warning I burst into tears. I started to think about my wonderful Grandma Fagel who had passed away a few years before. We were very close and she would often tell me that one day we would go to Israel together. She had died before we ever had the opportunity to go together, and at that moment, I realized that I was there for both of us. That was the precise moment that I decided I wanted to be a Cantor. From that moment on, Israel has had a profound influence on my life and how I live as a Jew in this world.

Of course, not everyone who goes to Israel will decide to become a Rabbi or Cantor - but everyone who goes to Israel, will have the opportunity to experience Judaism in a way that will affect the rest of their life.

It is because of all of these reasons, and more, that I am deeply honored and excited to be leading this year's trip to Israel.

Every trip to Israel is special, but there is something deeply unique and sacred about being able to go with your synagogue community, whether it is your first time in Israel, or your twentieth.

I hope you'll consider joining us in Israel this summer. Along with members of your synagogue community, you will have the opportunity to explore the miracle of the State of Israel and most importantly, you'll learn how you are an integral part of its story.

Together, we will sing the songs of Judaism in the land that inspired them; we will eat the flavors of our holy land across the State (trust me...I know where all the great food is!), and we will make Judaism come alive, in a way that only a trip to Israel can do.

Give yourself, or someone in your family the gift that you will spend the rest of your life being grateful for. Give the gift of Israel.

I look forward to seeing you at the airport! Below is important information about registration, logistics, finances, and security.

Who is eligible for the trip and financial assistance?

Beth El Religious School Students who are currently in the 7th, 8th or 9th grades are eligible to participate to participate in trip and receive financial assistance in the form of a grant from Beth El's Ina Lerner Israel Fund and various fundraising activities.

Relatives of current 7th, 8th or 9th students, including adults and relatives who are in 7th, 8th or 9th may also participate. Non- member students are not eligible to receive any funds from Beth El unless they have fully participated in the fund raising activities. Non-members are not eligible to receive any funds from the Ina Lerner Israel Fund.

Maximum Cost – Not Including Airfare

Single Room - \$3467

Double Room (per person) -\$2724

Triple Room (per person) -\$2760 (estimate)

The final cost depends on how many people participate in the trip and other factors Details are in the attachments.

Airfare

Airline ticket bought by early 2016 will be approximately \$1600 per person. Additional information will be provided to you when as we get closer to purchasing tickets.

Minimum Number of Participants for the Trip

We need a minimum **22 participants**. If we do not reach our minimum number by **December 13, 2015** you will receive a full refund of your deposit.

Deposit

A deposit for \$300 per person participating in the trip is due by **December 13, 2015**. This deposit is **nonrefundable** if we reach the minimum required number to proceed with the trip

Registration

If you plan to participate in the trip, please send your check made out to Beth El Hebrew Congregation for \$300 per person. Please fill out this form:

<http://tinyurl.com/2016teentrip>

Security

We understand that as parents you are concerned about the security situation in Israel. For our Israel teen trip in 2014, we received this informative letter from our travel agent.

Please know that the safety of all of our program participants during their visit to Israel is our top priority.

All travel programs are approved daily by the "situation monitoring room" which is a body administered by the Israel Ministry of Education. This body coordinates between the Israel Defense Forces or I.D.F., the Israeli Police and other security authorities.

The situation monitoring room operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and provides us with guidelines as to where it is safe to travel and what routes are safest for our travelers.

We will not hesitate to change a well-planned out itinerary, which we have worked on for months at a moment's notice, and we will not place travelers in harm's way.

Should any unforeseen security event occur our action plan will include the following:

- Participants will be brought to a safe zone accompanied by our staff immediately.
- If evacuation is deemed necessary, the participants will be placed on flights to Europe/USA.
- If for extreme security reasons, Israel's airspace is closed thus cancelling any inbound and outbound flights, we will immediately arrange for transfers for the participants to Jordan.

Fundraising

In order to ease the financial burden for the parents, we are organizing fund raising activities to help defray some of cost of the trip for the teens. For the fundraising to be successful, we need your help.

Our main fundraising source is the Ina Lerner fund that awards each Beth El teen \$250. Each the teen is required to raise a matching \$250. For the 2014 Israel trip, each teen received \$1200 which included funds from the Ina Lerner fund and the fund raising activities.

Brotherhood Contributions

To help the teens reach their fundraising goal, we also collaborate with Brotherhood. Teens (parent participation is encouraged) need to volunteer for three Brotherhood events in order to receive funds.

Opportunities to Volunteer for Brotherhood Events:

Dec 5 - Luncheon for Josephine Phillips

Mar 19, 2016 - Luncheon for Ethan James

April 30, 2016 - Luncheon for Joey Mesirow

May 8, 2016 - (Sunday) Mother's Day Brunch

May 21, 2015 – Luncheon for Ethan Brodie

Fund Raising Events:

April 2, 2016 - Trivia night and wine tasting

TBD - Car wash

Please direct questions to Nava Ezra Clark (navaezra@hotmail.com) or Barry Smith (bsmith@bethelhebrew.org). Information will also be posted shortly on the Beth El website.

Beth El looks forward to your participation in the Beth El Israel Teen Trip – 2016.

Sincerely,

Cantor Jason Kaufman

Attachments: Draft Itinerary and Proposal