

KIVUNIM SAMPLE TRAVEL ITINERERIES (Turkey, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Spain, Morocco, Czech Republic, Hungary, Germany, India, Portugal, Azerbaijan '16 only)

The KIVUNIM Curriculum is fully integrated with our extensive travel program totaling approximately 10 weeks of the academic year to include at least 10-12 different countries and approximately 75 cities. Our visits are rooted in our classroom study and our classroom study is informed and enhanced by our fieldwork. We visit some of the greatest National Museums, archaeological and historical sites, and places of natural beauty in the world while exploring local language, art, music, dance and cuisine. While our special interest is on the Jewish experience in each of these countries, we only fully understand and appreciate it within its local context. As you will see evident below, our travels and study are "open" and expansive.

We meet with local journalists, artists, religious leaders, politicians, educators, etc., in immersing our students in KIVUNIM's goal of "building world consciousness." Academic reviews of our program have acknowledged that the total number of contact hours provided by KIVUNIM is almost 3 times those for a typical humanities course on an American college campus.

Our local itineraries follow the same pattern each year. You will find below a sample for 2014-5 which will differ only slightly with that for the current (or any other) year. (Hopefully we learn from experience and improve from year to year but we do not redesign on an annual basis.)

Turkey, Bulgaria & Greece:

Istanbul is one of the most beautiful and glorious cities in the world. But aside from beauty, its location, bridging two continents - and its linking of the worlds of Judaism, Christianity and Islam in overlapping ways is both unique and astounding. Istanbul is a perfect choice to open KIVUNIM's amazing encounter with the world. Yes, over the year we will see churches replaced by mosques and returned to being churches in Spain. We will see Synagogues preserved by non-Jews in almost every country we visit. But where else in the history of the Jewish People, including WWII-reluctant America, were Jews actively recruited, wooed, invited in as in Turkey? This same Ottoman Empire that we understand today in all its final corruptness was also the protector and savior of our people...and not for a few years, but for centuries!

How ironic that the same religion, Islam, that is identified today by so many with deep anti-Jewish sentiment, was this generative force in the historic encounter of Jews and Ottomans beginning in 1492/93. What will we make of the Hanukkah in the Jewish Museum of Istanbul designed with a minaret? What of the tallit we will see embroidered with the star and crescent of the Sultan? What of the Synagogues with their Reading Platforms shaped like the bow of a ship to remind them of how the Sultan sent out his ships to rescue them by the sea on their way from Spanish expulsion? We are often told that those who fail to learn the lessons of history will be doomed to repeat them. But what if those lessons are

learned and the conclusions are positive and we would only wish that we could repeat them? What then? Is there wisdom to be gleaned from this city, this culture and these people?

And how is it that Turkey had diplomatic relations with Israel, almost from the beginning of the establishment of the Jewish State? How is it that they held joint military maneuvers since the early 1950's? How is it that the Israeli Air Force had fly-overs in celebration of Turkish Independence Day? Once again, where are we? Even after the terrible tragedy of the "Flotilla Incident" it was Turkey that sent a water tanker plane almost immediately to fight the forest fires in the Carmel region near Haifa, Israel in December 2010.

So to travel to Istanbul is not only to feast our eyes...it is to anticipate all that is to come this year in what will be a working attempt at putting some of the pieces of our giant worldwide puzzle together in an image of what can be...and of course with that picture in mind...to determine what we must do.

SATURDAY NIGHT November 15, 2014

8:30 PM: We depart Beit Shmuel for the airport for our Turkish Airlines flight # 791 departing Tel Aviv at 1 AM and arriving in Istanbul at 3:10 AM.

Upon arrival we will be met by our Turkish specialist guides, Nur Kalpaklioglu and Toplum Biner, who are very accessible and looking to help make this week as meaningful and powerful for you as possible. Talk to them, ask them questions, challenge them and yourselves.

SUNDAY November 16, 2014

We will board our buses and make our way, with a stop to see a beautiful overlook of the city at sunrise, to the Republika Apartments Hotel Ortakoy. We will check-in and go right to sleep for a few additional hours of rest before starting out at lunchtime. Then we'll dive right in to ancient Byzantium, beginning at the Hippodrome that was built by the Romans in approximately 200 CE. It was originally used for chariot racing and other public events, and the stadium surrounding the track held over 100,000 people. The Hippodrome was the center of life in Byzantine Constantinople for over 1,000 years and of Ottoman life in Istanbul for over 400 years. It was also the center of numerous political and civil battles, some brutal. The bloodiest brawl occurred in 532 CE when two rival chariot racing teams ignited a riot that resulted in most of the city being burned. The revolt ended when an army of Justinian's mercenaries massacred about 30,000 people who were trapped in the Hippodrome.

Very little of the Hippodrome survives today, and the area is now a large park adjacent to the famous Blue Mosque. The floor of the Hippodrome lies buried under 16 feet of soil and the track is now a paved road. Emperor Constantine once lined the Hippodrome with large columns, but only three survive in the park. Some of the rest were taken by the Crusaders, and can be found in European locations outside of Istanbul such as Venice. The oldest remaining column is called the Egyptian Obelisk, which was built in Egypt in 1500 BCE, and once stood in Luxor before Constantine brought it to his city. IMAGINE THAT?! Experts believe the beautifully carved column is only about 1/3 its original height, the rest having been broken while it was being shipped to Constantinople.

Next to the Egyptian Obelisk is the spiral Serpentine Column, dating back to 479 BCE. It was brought to Istanbul from Delphi, and originally consisted of three intertwined serpents supporting a large cauldron. The cauldron and snakes' heads were broken off the column in the 18th century. The third remaining column stands over 100 feet high and is called the Column of Constantine Porphyrogenitus. Not much is known about this unadorned column other than that it was once covered in bronze before being looted by the Crusaders. From the Hippodrome we will make our short way to The Blue Mosque that was commissioned by Sultan Ahmet I in the early 1600's. It has a classic Ottoman design. He charged Mehmet Aga, the imperial architect, with building a mosque that would rival the nearby Aya Sofya (also called Hagia Sophia or the Church of the Divine Wisdom) built by the Christian Justinian a thousand years before. Most visitors to Istanbul today believe that Aga met his charge, that the Mosque is magnificent. But the mosque caused quite a sensation in the 17th century among the more pious Muslims. They thought the six minarets were somewhat sacrilegious, because until that time, only the Great Mosque in Mecca had that many. In addition to the six minarets surrounding the mosque, the exterior of the Blue Mosque is highlighted by a series of domes that are designed to bring the visitors' eyes towards the heavens. The whole view is really quite awesome. How did such buildings get built without computers and modern engineering? How did they know it would stand?

The design of the Sultan Ahmed Mosque is the culmination of two centuries of both Ottoman mosque and Byzantine church development. It incorporates some Byzantine elements from the neighboring Hagia Sophia with traditional Islamic architecture and is considered to be the last great mosque of the classical period. The architect ably synthesized the ideas of his master Sinan, aiming for overwhelming size, majesty and splendor, but some say the interior lacks his creative thinking.

From here we will walk the short distance through the beautiful park to Ayasofya (St. Sophia Museum) one of the most impressive and important buildings ever constructed. Its wide, flat dome was a daring engineering feat in the 6th century, and architects still marvel at the building's many innovations. Called Hagia Sophia in Greek (The Church of the Divine Wisdom), Sancta Sophia in Latin, Ayasofya in Turkish, it was built on the site of Byzantium's acropolis by Emperor Justinian (527-65 CE) in 537 CE. Ayasofya was the greatest church in Christendom. It was built to surpass the gigantic Church of St Polyeuctos erected by Julia Anitzia, scion of the line of Theodosian emperors. Julia meant her church, a "recreation" of the Temple of Jerusalem, to symbolize her wealth, power and legitimate claim to the throne of Byzantium. Justinian had to out-build her to establish his own legitimacy—and he did.

His church remained the largest church ever built until St Peter's Basilica was constructed in Rome a thousand years later. (Julia's church, by the way, was destroyed by an earthquake. You can see a few sad remains of it near the traffic under/overpass between the Istanbul City Hall and Aqueduct of Valens. Being the world's most impressive building, it's no wonder that Mehmet the Conqueror proclaimed it a mosque soon after his conquest of the city from the Byzantines in

1453. It served as Istanbul's most revered mosque until 1935 when Kamal Atatürk, (the father of modern Turkey) recognizing its world-historical significance, had it proclaimed a museum, as it is now. Although most of the building is still a museum, a room on the east side was opened in 2007 as a prayer-place and the call to prayer is proclaimed from the minaret above it. Finally we will make our way to the Underground Cistern which is thought to have been built after the Nika revolt in 532 CE. It was known as the Basilica Cistern during the Roman period, as there was a Stoa Basilica above the pre-existing one at the time. After the conquest of the city by the Ottoman Turks, it was forgotten and nobody knew that it existed. Re-discovered in 1545, it was used to water the gardens of Topkapi Palace. Today it has a rather eerie and mystical ambiance. We'll have dinner out in the neighborhood of our hotel.

MONDAY November 17, 2014

We depart at 9:00. Today we will begin with a lens on the Jewish community of Istanbul. We will visit two of the major Synagogues of the city, each representing a historic presence in this land. While we think of Istanbul as being a Sephardic community and appreciate its origins in the Sultan's rescue of the exiled Jews of Spain, it also attracted Jews for central Europe of Ashkenazi background.

The Ashkenazi Synagogue was founded by Austrian Jews in 1900 and is located near the Galata Tower in the Karakov neighborhood of Beyoglu. What is striking is the impact of local culture on imported tradition. The architecture and design represents a seeming synthesis of the two.

10:30 AM: From here we will make our way to the truly amazing Ahrida Synagogue, the oldest of Istanbul's 16 synagogues in use today, dating from the early 15th century. An important and fascinating feature of the Ahrida is its Teva (Bima) which is in the shape of the prow of a ship. The tradition says that it symbolizes either Noah's Ark (many believe it landed in present-day Turkey) or more likely, the Ottoman ships which transported the Sephardim from Spain to Turkey. There is no other place in the world where the bima has taken on the representative shape of historic events like here in Turkey.

12:00 PM: We will have a picnic lunch in the park near Ahrida.

1:30 PM: We will make our way to the amazing Topkapi Palace. When Sultan Mehmed II captured Constantinople in 1453, he found the palaces of the Byzantine Emperors in such ruins as to be uninhabitable. He chose a large area on the broad peak of the Third Hill as the site of his first imperial residence. He constructed a great complex of buildings and gardens here and they came to be known as "Eski Saray" which means "The Old Palace". A few years later, he decided to have his palace on the north side of the First Hill that had been the acropolis of ancient Byzantium. He constructed a massive wall surrounding the area along the Sea of Marmara to the Golden Horn. This took place during the period 1459-65 after the Sultan left the former palace to the women of his father's harem.

The Harem in Topkapi Palace in its present state dates back to the reign of Murat III (1574-95), Mehmed IV (1648-87) and Osman III (1754-57). Topkapi Palace was more than just the private residence of the Sultan and his court. It was the seat of the supreme executive and judiciary council, the Divan and the training

school, the Palace School. In the First Courtyard, there was a hospital, bakery, arsenal, a state mint, a part of the treasury and the Outer Service. It was open to the public. The Second Courtyard was open to people who had business with the council. The Third Courtyard was reserved for the Sultan's household and palace children. The Fourth Courtyard was exclusively reserved for the Sultan's use. Suleymaniye Mosque is the heart of the complex commissioned by Suleyman the Magnificent who also commissioned the maintenance of the Dome of the Rock and Solomon's Pools in Jerusalem and of course built the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem.

Topkapi Palace continued to be the Sultan's principal residence for four centuries until in 1853, Sultan Abdul Mecid I moved into the new palace of Dolmabahce on the Bosphorus, very near to where we are staying. The old palace was used as house for the women of the departed sultans and their servants until the Harem was officially disbanded in 1909. In 1924, Topkapi Palace was converted to a museum by the order of President of the Turkish Republic Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. The final step was the opening of the Harem to the public in 1960. We'll end our day at the Grand Bazaar, one of the largest and oldest covered markets in the world, with 61 covered streets and over 3,000 shops that attract between 250,000 and 400,000 visitors daily. It's "shopping", but within the context of a very ancient practice... this is the certainly the conceptual origin of the modern shopping mall. Have fun. We'll have dinner out at then meet back at Republika for a film and some reflection before heading off to sleep.

TUESDAY November 18, 2014

8:30 AM: We depart for a visit to the Ulus Jewish Day School, attended by the majority of the Jewish children of Istanbul. It is such a treat to come here each year and witness this thriving, impressive institution. Karen Sarhon will meet us here to begin the day with some finishing video touches to her outstanding lectures in Jerusalem last month, and then we will meet the school's director, some of their students, tour the wonderful campus and have a great kosher lunch in their cafeteria. The story of this school and its achievements is truly impressive!

2:00 PM: We have our annual appointment with the Chief Rabbi of Turkey, Isak Haleva. A truly remarkable man, he will be the first of many encounters with Sephardic Rabbis with broad smiling faces and charming and visibly open personalities. Rabbi Haleva is particularly excited when KIVUNIM visits each year, particularly after the grandson of one of his most active community members attended KIVUNIM several years ago. Known as the Haham Bashi, Rabbi Haleva will provide one of the most memorable encounters with Jewish community leaders we will have all year, and we will have many.

3:30: PM Now we move to the Jewish Museum of Istanbul, with a collection that joins those we will see in Athens, Saloniki, Sofia, Casablanca, Berlin, Prague, and Budapest...simple mostly unsophisticated collections that contain artifacts that speak volumes of life as lived all over the world. Here you will see the pride with which Turkish Jews remember those who served in the armies of the Turkish nation; the unique forms and styles of Judaica fashioned in a Muslim land; the enormous business success of generations of Turkish Jews...and on

and on. Think about the role of museums like this in preserving the past and informing the future. Are they “dead” or “alive?”

5:30: PM We'll have some time for some window or real shopping on Istaklal Street giving you a flavor of modern, rather westernized Istanbul. This is a city of contrasts that somehow manage to live, side-by-side, with only periodic eruptions of tension. Feels like Fifth or Madison Avenues in a way...but what's the difference...aside from the obvious!

6:30 PM: We will make our way to the old-age home for dinner and an opportunity to sing for some of the elders. This annual visit of KIVUNIM always brings a positive and encouraging spirit to these grand and great-grandparents who are reaching the end of their lives in the security of the Turkish Jewish community's caring institution.

10:00 PM: Back to the hotel for a good night's sleep. WEDNESDAY November 19, 2014

4:00 AM: Wakeup for our 5:15 departure for our 7:30 AM flight to Izmir. We have taken this early morning flight to maximize our daylight hours in the city of Izmir which will give us sufficient time to see the myriad of unparalleled sites that surround it.

8:30 AM: We will head first to one of the most spectacular archaeological sites in the whole world. Turkey was of course the home to the ancient Greek and Roman Empires, and while we think of it in oriental terms and certainly with Islam, it was in ancient times a fertile, physically beautiful and therefore an economically attractive province in which to live and work. Hence the ancient city of Ephesus! Ephesus (Ancient Greek Ἔφεσος, Ephesos; Turkish Efes) was an ancient Greek city, and later a major Roman city located on the west coast of Asia Minor, near the presentday city of Selçuk, Izmir Province, Turkey. It was one of the twelve cities of the Ionian League during the Classical Greek era. In the Roman period, it was for many years the second largest city of the Roman Empire; ranking behind Rome, the empire's capital. Ephesus had a population of more than 250,000 in the 1st century BCE, which also made it the second largest city in the world. Amazingly, we can walk the main street as if it was populated yesterday...and you will feel it come alive. The city was famed for the Temple of Artemis (completed around 550 BCE), one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The temple was destroyed in 401 CE by a mob led by St. John Chrysostom. Emperor Constantine I rebuilt much of the city and erected new public baths. The town was again partially destroyed by an earthquake in 614 CE. The city's importance as a commercial center declined as the harbor was slowly silted up by the Cayster River.

Standing or sitting in the back row of the amphitheatre cannot help but continue to humble us. These magnificent structures from ancient times actually do speak, inanimate though they are. Close your mouth and eyes and just listen!

We will buy lunch in the Seljuk market, from the web of small vendors of every cheese, vegetable, fruit, bread, drink etc you could imagine. Remember, fruits and vegetables in Turkey are world famous!

Then this afternoon we will be on our way to Sardis, a great and unexpected treat. Suffice it to say that Sardis is an ancient Jewish Community Center with a

Synagogue that will knock your socks off by its sheer size alone; a swimming pool, track, and amazing library. Sardis makes us understand that these ancient Jewish communities were spread throughout the Mediterranean and that they developed huge, powerful and impressive Jewish life wherever they resided. When we return to Izmir we will freshen up and then join Laliga, the Jewish youth group of Izmir in their youth center. We will have a kosher dinner with them and then a short program during which we can learn about their lives and their challenges.

THURSDAY November 20, 2014

This morning there will be time for visits to several truly beautiful synagogues, one within the shadow of the birthplace of the infamous False Messiah, Shabbatai Zvi whose story of immense charisma created possibly the most challenging internal moment in all of Jewish history. Much still comes from his impact, from Hasidism on the one hand (in some historians' analyses) to a secret religion alleged to have been the spiritual home of Ataturk himself, Donmehism. Then, after lunch out in the suk we will make our way back to the airport for our flight back to Istanbul and our hotel for a very special program followed by dinner out to end our Turkish visit.

Tonight, after a unique Sephardic dinner of all kinds of treats described to us by Karen Sarhon, we will have the privilege of meeting with Mustafa Akyol is a Turkish political commentator and author based in Istanbul. He is a regular opinion writer for various publications, including The International New York Times. Akyol was born in Ankara in 1972 and had his early education there. He completed his masters thesis on the Kurdish question at the History Department of Borposous University. Since 2002, he has been a regular commentator in the Turkish media. He also appears regularly on Turkish TV, on a variety of political discussion shows. He has been featured in popular TV shows such as Fareed Zakaria's GPS on CNN and Hardtalk on the BBC. His talk at TED, Faith Versus Tradition in Islam, has been widely acclaimed. His latest book, Islam Without Extremes: A Muslim Case For Liberty, which was defined by the Financial Times as "a forthright and elegant Muslim defence of freedom," was published in July 2011. Mustafa will speak broadly about contemporary issues in Turkey and in the Islamic world.

8:30 PM: We will be visited by a few Turkish Jewish students. This will provide an opportunity to ask the personal questions on all of our minds. Is it possible to continue to live as Jews in Turkey under the present tension between Israel and their country. Is there a Jewish future here? Will they leave and never return or do they intend to maintain the lives of their families here in Turkey in their own personal futures? Hard questions for sure.

Since we have an early flight to Sofia in the morning, we need to make tonight a relatively early one as well.

FRIDAY November 21, 2014

5:30AM: Departure for our flight on Turkish Airlines # 1027 departing Istanbul at 7:50: AM and arriving Sofia at 9:10 AM. We will proceed to probably the most elegant hotel of our year, The Grand Hotel Sofia. In truth it's a bit too much for a student group like us, but we always have to place security considerations first

and Bulgaria does not offer a wide choice of middle level hotels with high level security...hence a treat! We have a full day today and no time to make up for that early wake-up, so sleep on the bus, on the plane, in the waiting room, and last night hopefully!

Bulgaria has an amazing story of course. An ally of Germany during the Second World War, one would expect that its Jewish community of approximately 48,000 would have faced the massive destruction of most of European Jewry. But we discover that no Bulgarian Jews were deported to concentration camps during the war and that the population of Bulgarian Jewry actually increased during those horrible years! An amazing story awaits us!

An amazing story that changes with the wind, as when the Communists took over and religion was effectively outlawed, 45,000 of the then almost 50,000 made aliyah to Israel and the small remaining community struggled to keep some semblance of Jewish life and identity going in the face of overwhelming odds.

As you will see over this long weekend, they did it, and did it in spades. Did it uniquely, did it in ways that actually challenge our assumptions about continuity.

11:00 AM: We'll drop our bags at the hotel (check-in unlikely at this early hour and head off to the Bet Shalom JCC for a general briefing about Jewish life in Bulgaria, Sofia in particular. Then we'll have a Pizza lunch and meet with the madrihim (counselors) of Yom Sababa, the Jewish educational program of the Sofia Jewish community for its younger children. The kids who come each week to Sababa are divided into 4 groups, depending upon their age - from 1st to 4th grade, 6-10 year olds. The program starts at 2:15 and we will be their "teachers/madrihim" between 2:15 and 3:00 PM. We will prepare will still in Turkey and can teach songs, dances, tell stories/midrashim, play games from our own childhood and basically use the time to inform them about something meaningful in the Jewish tradition, history, Israel-related, etc. We need to begin by an interesting way to introduce ourselves.

After our session, the Yom Sababa program will have a "peula", an activity with their madrihim on the following topics: 1 grade – Menorah; 2 grade - Kain and Havel; 3 grade - Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur; 4 grade – friendship. We will continue with our groups and can think of things to add to their experience in Part II as well.

The key thing to understand about this experience is that this IS the Jewish educational program for almost all of the Jewish children in Sofia, therefore in Bulgaria. Their "teachers" are your age and even younger. The teachers went through the same program and know whatever they know from Wikipedia and attending seminars and 1-2 week summer experiences at Sarvas...KIVUNIM has been trying to help them raise the level of content and training, but it is a slow and challenging process, being so far away.

This is the first time KIVUNIM has accepted their annual request to spend a Shabbat with them and see what they do. Hopefully, some of you will come back to Sofia after college as a JDC-KIVUNIM Intern and really turn the place upside down.

3:45 PM: We will go back to the hotel, check-in, and get ready for Shabbat, returning to the Great Synagogue at 6 PM for Kabbalat Shabbat. We will meet in

the lobby at 5:20.

7:30 PM: Shabbat dinner with madrihim in Bet Am JCC. As we have already experienced in different places on our journey, our presence can be profound. We are many and we are young and these two factors are rare in the diminishing communities that we visit. Tonight will probably be far more than we will see or even initially understand.

SHABBAT/SATURDAY November 22, 2014

9:00 AM: Departure for Synagogue where services will start at 9:30, ending at

11:30 AM: We will join the Rabbi and the congregation for Kiddush and then make our way to Shabbat lunch at the Beit Am JCC.

Shabbat afternoon will allow times for some walking tours of Sofia for some and naps for others...

3:30 PM: Session with Director of JDC Bulgaria, Julia Dandolova at JDC headquarters across from the Synagogue followed by a meeting and sing along with the local senior choir, "Allegro" ...boy will they be pleased and surprised when you start singing! We will then have havdalah and then will view the documentary film, the Optimists, containing the remarkable story of Bulgarian Jewry and their neighbors during WWII. The Bulgarian leadership teens will join us and then, after a brief discussion will take you out for dinner and some evening fun. Teens from local Jewish youth groups, Hashomer Hatzair, BBYO, and the community madrihim and other local teens from the community have been invited to join us.

9:00 PM: Some can stay in the local youth club in the JCC and others go out in Sofia with local students. An opportunity either way to get to know more about the way of life of local Jewish kids and the local community.

SUNDAY November 23, 2014

7:30 AM Breakfast

8:00 AM Departure for Plovdiv

10:30 AM: Meeting in the Plovdiv synagogue, visit to the monument to the Saving of the Bulgarian Jews – Svetlozar Kalev

11:30 AM: Meeting with the elderly members of the Plovdiv community at their JCC - speaking about their first hand experience during the Holocaust period.

12:30 PM: Lunch at the JCC – pizza

1:30 PM: Departure for Bachkovo Monastery, burial site of the heroic priests of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.

4:00 PM: Return to Plovdiv. Free time with students from Plovdiv and dinner out in Plovdiv.

7:00 PM: Departure for Sofia and night out in Sofia.

MONDAY November 24, 2014

8:00 AM Breakfast 9:00 AM Visit to the Lauder School, meeting with the teachers, students and attending classes

12:00 PM :Picnic Lunch and free time

2:00 PM: Meeting at the hotel, packing the bus for short ride to the train station to await our train to Thessaloniki.

3:30 PM: Train departure...the ride is scheduled to be approximately 6 hours plus time at the border for passport control. We will likely arrive at 10:30 PM.

10:30 PM: Upon arrival in Thessaloniki we will be met by our Greek Tour assistant, Yannis Illiadis who has worked with KIVUNIM during our Greek stays for each of the past 7 years. We will take a short ride to the City Center Hotel.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2014

9:00 AM: Breakfast. This year we are adding a new dimension to our experience in historic Saloniki, working with a local Jewish "guide" for the first time, Hella Matalon. Thessaloniki (known in the Jewish world as Salonika or Saloniki) is known in Greek Jewish tradition as the "Mother of Israel," the Jerusalem of Greece.

To introduce the story of the city of Thessaloniki is to bring forward a very BIG story. Alexandrian Jews who arrived in 140 BCE were among the first Jews to settle in Salonika. After the splitting up of the Roman Empire in 395 CE, Salonika became the second most important town after Constantinople in the Byzantine Empire. The Byzantine emperors in their efforts to "Christianize" their subjects were hostile to the Jews of Salonika. In spite of the hardships they suffered during the Byzantine period, they were successful merchants, engaging especially in the silk trade. The oldest Synagogues of Salonika, "Etz ha-Chayim" and "Etz ha-Da'at", which existed until the beginning of the 20th century, dates back to the Byzantine period. During the second half of the 14th century Salonika attracted Jews from all over the world; the first immigrants were Hungarian Jews who arrived in 1376. In 1430, Salonika was occupied by the Turks. At approximately the same time waves of Jewish immigrants started to arrive. In 1470, Bavarian Jews arrived in Salonika and formed the Ashkenazi community. During the 15th and 16th centuries many Jewish exiles from the great expulsions from Spain, Portugal, Italy, Sicily, and France, and refugees from North Africa, settled in Salonika. Once in Salonika, they founded separate synagogues and named them for their native countries. Marranos who were expelled from Portugal arrived in Salonika. In 1514, the Rabbis of Salonika issued a special Haskamah regarding the Marranos as Jews as far as marriage and divorce were concerned. It is estimated that by 1553 there were 20,000 Jews in Salonika. The Jewish immigrants maintained their relations with their coreligionists and colleagues in their countries of origin and therefore had a relative advantage in international trade. The Jews of Salonika also engaged in crafts. The organization of Jewish life in Salonika was quite unique. There were about 30 independent congregations, who sometimes associated themselves as a voluntary body that took care of the common interests of the congregations. The Takkanot (Jewish legal rulings) issued by this body were to be accepted by every congregation. The heads of each community were called Parnasim, Memunim, Nivrarim and Anshei Ma'amad, and were elected by all the members of each congregation. A committee elected by the Parnasim of each congregation decided what proportion of taxes each congregation had to pay to the Turkish authorities.

During the 16th century there were many important rabbis whose influence spread beyond Salonika and even beyond the Ottoman Empire. Among them was Isaac Adarbi, the author of "Divrei Rivot and Divrei Shalom", Moses

Almosnino, and Samuel Di Medina ("Rashdam"). Salonika was also renowned as a center of Kabbalah. In addition to the rabbinical schools in Salonika in the 16th century, there was a Bet Midrash for secular studies where medicine, natural sciences, astronomy, and other subjects were taught.

In the beginning of the 17th century the town suffered from the plague and from fires. By the middle of the century, about 30,000 Jews lived in Salonika, which represented half of the total population of the town. The end of the century was marked by a deterioration of commercial activities that resulted from the decline of the Ottoman Empire. However, Salonika remained a center of religious studies and Halakhah (Jewish law). The famous halakhic authority, Rabbi Chayim Shabbetai (d. 1647), author of the "Torat Ha-chayyim", lived in the town during the first half of the 17th century; other important religious authorities included Aaron Cohen Perachyah, the author of "Parach Matteh Aharon", and David Conforte, author of "Kore Ha-dorot".

The most influential event for the Jewish community in the 17th century was the appearance of the false messiah Shabbetai Tzvi in 1657. In the beginning he was very warmly accepted, but when he declared that he was the true messiah, he was expelled by the most important Rabbis of the town. Later he converted to Islam, and 13 years after his death, in 1683, a group of believers - some 300 Jewish families - also converted to Islam. This sect was called the Doenmeh (in Turkish "Apostates") and their religious center was in Salonika, from which they spread to Constantinople and other places.

In 1680, the 30 congregations merged into one Community, with a supreme Council composed of three Rabbis and seven dignitaries. Another important step was the reorganization of all the rabbinical courts into three bodies. The Batei Din were famous for their justice and integrity and many Muslims and Greeks preferred to settle the disputes they had with Jews in these courts instead of using the Turkish Courts.

In 1720-30 Portuguese Marranos, called "Francos", emigrated to Salonika. Most of them were well-educated and among them were merchants and bankers. In the beginning, they refused to pay taxes to the Jewish community. Towards the second half of the 19th century, European culture and technology had reached also Salonika. In 1873, the "Alliance Israelite Universelle" established a School in the city, and additional schools along western standards were also built.

In 1886, the Bank of Salonika was founded. As a result of this Westernization, Liberalism became paramount among the Jews of Salonika. The "Chevrat Kadimah" for the spreading of the Hebrew language was founded in 1899, and Isaac Epstein was brought to Salonika to teach Hebrew. In 1887, the Rabbinical Triumvirate was dismissed and Jacob Kovo was appointed to the post of Chakham Bashi (Chief Rabbi). In 1900, there were approximately 80,000 Jews in Salonika (out of a total population of 173,000).

In 1908, when the young Turks rose against the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II, many Jews joined their forces. One of the first actions of the young Turks when they rose to power was the mobilization of all non-Muslims into the Turkish Army. As a result, many young Jews left Salonika and emigrated to the United States.

At the same time the first Zionist organizations, Agudath Bnei Zion and Maccabi, appeared in Salonika.

The young Turks' revolution marked a new "Golden" era for the Jews of Salonika. Jews were represented in every profession. When the Greek army entered the town in 1912, King George declared that Jews and all other minorities were to have the same rights as the Greek population. In 1917, a great fire destroyed most of the town, leaving some 50,000 Jews homeless. In 1922, a law was enacted which forced all the inhabitants of Salonika to refrain from working on Sundays, thus causing another wave of emigration. Some Jews went to Palestine, while most emigrated to Paris where they founded an important community. In 1935, there were nearly 60,000 Jews in Salonika. On the eve of World War II, 55,250 Jews lived in Salonika. The local Jewish community, before the Holocaust, was the largest community in Greece, and Thessalonica was considered "The metropolis of Israel, the city of Justice, the mother of Israel same as Jerusalem itself (ir veem leyisrael), according to the words of the poet Samuel Usques. The port of Thessalonica used to be closed on Shabbat! Before World War II, there were 56,000 Jews living in Thessalonica, but only 1,950 survived the Holocaust. Today, the Jewish community has less than 800 members.

10:00 AM: We begin with a Visit to the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki. A) The Simon Marks Photographic Exhibit "Thessalonica, Sephardic Metropolis", collection assembled through the efforts of the late Myriam Novitch of the Kibbutz Bet Lohamei HaGettaot, incorporating details of the history of the Jews and their fields of activity up to the time of the Holocaust.

B) "Memorias", the Bar Ilan University exhibit of religious and folklore material. It comprises artifacts and memorabilia that belonged to Jews who emigrated to Israel when it was still under the British Mandate. C) The permanent collection of the Museum, (which is still in the course of being studied, documented and exhibited).

During the day we will visit the Monastirli Synagogue, built in 1927-28 by Jews originating from Monastir (former Yugoslavia) and was officially dedicated by the Chief Rabbi of Thessalonica, Chaim Raphael Habib on 27 Elul 5687 (1927). It was saved during the war after being requisitioned by the Red Cross. In June 1978 the earthquake that shook the city caused extensive damage to the building and its services were suspended until the delicate task of its restoration was completed, with funds provided by the Greek Government that considered it as one of the historical monuments of Thessalonica. (KIVUNIM students were amongst the very first visitors to the beautifully restored Synagogue in 2007).

We will visit the Yad Lezikaron Synagogue, opened in 1984, and dedicated to the memory of the victims of the Holocaust. It was built on the site of the small "Bourla" (Bourla is the name of the man who built the original synagogue on this side in memory of his son who had drowned at sea.) The Synagogue has been reconstructed in a modern office building in the center of the Market area of Thessalonica still known as the Modiano Market after the wealthy Jewish family that originally owned it. The Yad Lezikaron Synagogue was rebuilt out of the furniture of two Synagogues that were destroyed during the war. The ark is from

the former Keila Sarfati Synagogue (French Congregation) and the Bema is from the former Baron Hirsch Synagogue. The prayer house (Kaal de la Plaza) has been operating since 1921 to meet the religious needs of the numerous Jews who worked in the nearby market place.

We will visit the Holocaust Memorial, unveiled in 1997, to coincide with the municipality being designated as the Cultural Capital of Europe. On January 27, 2007, the Memorial was moved to Plateia Eleftherias, to the historical square in the middle of the city where the persecutions of the Jewish population of Thessalonica started in July 1942. We will go to the Old train station to get a first hand sense of where the deportations took place

1:00 PM: We'll have a kosher lunch in the Jewish Community building, where KIVUNIM has spent many Shabbatot over the past 9 years. We'll walk the Modiano Market, see the Yahudi Hamam and finally see several of the Villas of famous Jewish families at the turn of the 20th century. Along the way hella will share her personal story and that of her survivor parents with us.

7:00: PM Dinner out in this very beautiful city and then hopefully another good night's sleep.

WEDNESDAY November 26, 2014

7:00 AM: Breakfast and load bus

8:00 AM : Early morning departure for Meteora

10:00 AM: We arrive at the city of Kalambaka and then we'll turn our bus towards the heavens and begin the amazing climb to The Metéora (meaning "suspended rocks", "suspended in the air" or "in the heavens above"), one of the largest and most important complexes of monasteries in Greece. They are built on spectacular natural sandstone rock pillars in central Greece. The Metéora is home to six monasteries and is included on the UNESCO World Heritage List. It is unknown when Metéora was established, as early as the 11th century AD hermit monks were believed to be living among the caves and cutouts in the rocks. By the late 11th or early 12th century a rudimentary monastic state had formed and was centered around the church of Theotokos (mother of God), which still stands today. The hermit monks, seeking a retreat from the expanding Turkish occupation, found the inaccessible rock pillars of Meteora to be an ideal refuge. Although more than 20 monasteries were built, beginning in the 14th century, only six remain today. All of the churches are classic examples of Greek Orthodox design...filled with Icons and images and resembling in many ways the Russian Orthodox tradition that it shares.

In the 1920's, steps were cut into the rock, making the complex accessible via a bridge from the nearby plateau. Of the six monasteries now inhabited, five are male, one female. Each monastery has fewer than 10 inhabitants. The Agia Triada (Greek: Αγία Τριάδα, "Holy Trinity") monastery was used in the final scenes of the James Bond film, For Your Eyes Only. We will be visiting the Varlaam Monastery. Several years ago, our guide here in Meteora, an expert on the Greek Orthodox religion pulled me aside and told me, in Hebrew that she was Jewish and had actually studied at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The only Jew within 200 miles, she has become deeply attached to KIVUNIM's

annual visit and hopes that her daughter will someday join us when she finishes high school!

1:30 PM: Spanikopita, spinach pie lunch and then continuing drive through the gorgeous Greek mountains and countryside to Delphi, home of the Oracle.

7:00 PM: Arrival and settling in at the Hotel Leto Delphi...dinner out. 8:30 PM: Group reflection

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 27, 2014

8:00 AM Breakfast

9:00 AM We are blessed here in Delphi with one of the finest and most engaging guides and teachers that KIVUNIM has worked with anywhere in the world, Penny Kolomvotsou. She's got a lot to work with here, but she does it magnificently. We have also filled the small hotel that she owns and runs together with her husband Peter, and our visit every year is always very special for us and for her.

Here we are about one hundred miles northwest of Athens at this ancient site of the pan-hellenic sanctuary of Delphi. The complex of buildings, which includes the Temple of Apollo where sat the famous oracle, The sacred Corycian Cave, and the Castalian Spring, is nestled in the forested slopes and rocky crags on the south side of the sacred mountain (cf. Mountains and the Sacred) called Parnassus. The site had been sacred since at least the Bronze Age. According to legend, the shrine was originally guarded by the she-dragon Pytho. She was killed by Apollo who then took over the oracle. In antiquity, Delphi was regarded as the centre of the world.

The Temple of Apollo: The visible ruins belong to the last temple, dated to the 4th century BCE, which was peripteral (an Architectural adjective: (of a building) having a single row of pillars on all sides in the style of the temples of ancient Greece. ORIGIN early 19th cent.: from Greek peripteron (from peri- 'around' + pteron 'wing') + -al) in Doric order. It was erected on the remains of an earlier temple, dated to the 6th century BCE. Inside was the adyton, which was a restricted area within the cella of a Greek or Roman temple. Its name meant "inaccessible" or "do not enter". The adyton was frequently a small area at the farthest end of the cella from the entrance: at Delphi it measured just nine by twelve feet. The adyton would often house the cult image of the god, the centre of the Delphic oracle and seat of Pythia (the priestess of Apollo at Delphi in ancient Greece). The monument was partly restored from 1938-1941.

The Castalian Spring: The sacred spring of Delphi lies in the ravine of the Phaedriades. The preserved remains of two monumental fountains that received the water from the spring date to the Archaic period (750-480 BCE) and the Roman era (approximately 150 BCE to the beginning of the Middle Ages). The later one is cut in the rock and has niches cut high in the cliff, which probably held the offerings to the Nymph Castalia.

Understanding ancient Greece is about experiencing the power of the highs and lows of geography, and the powerful metaphors and symbolism they represent and contain within them. The mountains here at Delphi and of course the Sea all around the country are the source or myth, legend, and truth. No doubt, Jewish

life has been influenced by this as seen in books like Jonah, where the Sea really takes over for the protagonist of the story. Consider this question of the influence of geography, of physical surroundings, on the way that different people think and feel and act. You saw this in the desert culture of the Bedouin...here it is again.

12:00 PM: Picnic lunch

1:30 PM: Departure for Chalkida. It's a long but quite beautiful ride to Chalkida, the capital of the Island of Evia where we will spend the night...tomorrow morning you will see and understand why. Although you will be tempted to allow yourself to fall asleep on this ride, you are urged not to do so. Why? Because what you will see outside our windows will give you a clue to the worldview of the people who have made their homes here. On the one hand, the sea is almost everywhere, and Greeks have lived and worked along its shores forever. On the other are the mountains that have been the sites and seats of their religious/spiritual life. Our speeding bus is but a faster means of taking in the countryside than the horse or donkey of pre-modern times, but the impact of allowing your eyes to take in our surroundings and for your brain to process them into the stew of ideas and historical events and personalities that we have studied over the past several weeks can be very great indeed. Consider!

5:30 PM: We arrive at the Hotel Paliria in Chalkida for dinner out and early to bed!

FRIDAY, EREV SHABBAT, November 28, 2014

8:30 AM:

8:00 - 9:00 AM: Breakfast. Bags need to be on the bus by 9:00.

Chalkida, is the capital of the island of Evia. The Jews of Chalkida belong to the Romaniote community. (The Romaniotes are a Jewish population who have lived in the territory of today's Greece and neighboring areas with large Greek populations for more than 2,000 years. Their language is Greek and they derive their name from the old name for the Greek people, Rhomaioi. Large communities were located in Thebes, Ioannina, Chalcis, Corfu, Arta, Corinth and on the islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Rhodes and Cyprus, among others. The Romaniotes are historically distinct from the Sephardim, who settled in Greece after the 1492 expulsion of the Jews from Spain.) Chalkida's may not have been the first community to be established on Greek soil, but it is the oldest and probably the only one in Europe to continuously inhabit the same town for more than 20 centuries.

The community's historic synagogue was rebuilt in 1846 at the spot of the previous one, which was destroyed by fire. The community's cemetery has been in use for centuries. In the beginning of WW II, the first Greek officer to die in battle at the Greek- Italian front was one of the Chalkida Jewish community's own, Mordechai Frizis. Of the community's 327 members only 22 perished in the Holocaust, as the rest were hidden and assisted by their Christian neighbors. The town Metropolitite (the local head of the Greek Orthodox Church) hid all the holy items of the Synagogue in his church. Today the community, although disappearing, is still active and fully integrated in the financial and social life of the town.

We will meet with the former president of the community and then go with him to visit the oldest Jewish cemetery in Greece that contains tombstones of great scholars and rabbis dating back to the Ottoman period (15th century). In its courtyard lies a monument dedicated to Colonel Frizis and a Holocaust memorial with a tribute and statue of the Greek Orthodox Church's Metropolitan Bishop Grigorios. What you may ask is a statue of a Christian Cleric doing on the grounds of a Jewish cemetery? This is the story we will uncover...a remarkable contrast to what we heard and commemorated in Thessaloniki!

Finally, you may find it interesting to check out this United Nations site that reviews the Holocaust Memorial program of January 29, 2009 in which KIVUNIM's own Ben Perlstein was a guest speaker at the UN!

http://www.un.org/dpi/ngosection/spring09/briefings/29jan09_Summary.asp

12:00 PM: We'll have our picnic lunch by the sea and then head off for Athens.

3:00 PM: We arrive at the Fresh Hotel, check-in and get ourselves ready for Shabbat here in Athens.

Athens is one of the oldest cities in the world with a recorded history of at least 3,000 years. Today, the Greek capital is Europe's 8th largest city, a bustling and cosmopolitan metropolis with an urban population of 3.3 million and a metropolitan population of about 3.8 million people. The Athens metropolitan area is the center of economic, financial, industrial, political and cultural life in Greece. One cannot come to Greece today and ignore the continuing challenging if not devastating economic situation in this hopeful country. These are tough times and frankly, a group of 60 that arrives for a week is good news for everyone who provides services to us.

Ancient Athens was a powerful city-state. Among the most creative periods in human history are those in which humanity organized itself in small independent centers (city-states). Modern Europe owes much of its civilization to two such periods -- the small Greek city-states, and the city-states of Renaissance Italy. However, these small creative groupings usually survived for only short periods of time because they lacked the size and strength to defend themselves against the onslaught of larger social entities. In addition, the success of small regional units coexisting as disunited parts of a loose geographical and cultural unity, as in Italy or Hellas (Greece), acted as a barrier to the creation of larger national units with greater staying power. Thus, they inevitably gave way to larger organizations of society, the empire and eventually the nation-state.

A center for the arts, learning and philosophy, home of Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum, Athens was also the birthplace of Socrates, Pericles, Sophocles and many other prominent philosophers, politicians and writers of the ancient world. As you may know, it is widely referred to as the cradle of Western Civilization and the birthplace of Democracy, largely due to the impact of its cultural and political achievements during the 5th and 4th centuries BC on the rest of the then known European Continent.

6:30 PM: Kabbalat Shabbat services with the Athens Jewish community at the Beth Shalom Synagogue. "Growing up in Athens, Gabriel Negrin revered his grandfather and the elders in the Greek capital's Jewish community, who chanted prayers in distinctive Greek melodies. 'Some little boys looked up to

Superman or Batman,' he said. 'For me, it's always been old Jewish men. They were my heroes.' When Negrin was a little boy, his love for Jewish customs and his tendency to mimic the older pious men earned him the nickname Ravinakos, Greek for "little rabbi." Now 27, that 'little rabbi' is Greece's chief rabbi, officiating at Beth Shalom, the largest functioning synagogue in Greece's largest Jewish community. Rabbi Negrin will speak with us after services and join us for Shabbat dinner

7:30PM: Shabbat Dinner at the Athens Chabad Gostijo Restaurant.

SATURDAY/SHABBAT NOVEMBER 30, 2014

9:00 AM: Breakfast from 8:00-9:00 AM. Shabbat tefillot services in the Beth Shalom Synagogue. Meet in the lobby at 9:00 AM.

12:30 PM: Shabbat Lunch with Rabbi Mendel Hendel at the Chabad Restaurant and then a free afternoon to sleep, walk, talk, enjoy the spirit and wonderful air of Athens.

5:30 PM: Group Meeting to begin to discuss almost final reactions to Greece, to this first big trip of the year, to the relationship between academic study and field experience, and to the whole process of learning as we have been doing so intensely. What better to discuss in Greece than the questions that directed Socrates so many centuries ago right on these very streets that we are walking?!

7:00 PM: Following Havdalah we will have a dinner and night out... Get a flavor of the nightlife of Athens and come back early enough to get a real good night of sleep...there is much to do here! A good place to wander (only in groups of at least 3) is the Plaka district, where there are cafes, restaurants, and shops. A very good review of the whole area is available at

<http://www.athensguide.com/plaka.html> OR the Psiri neighborhood which is the old leather district that has been designated the next 'cool' area of Athens.

Workshops and warehouses are moving out and their spaces are being taken over by restaurants, clubs, cafes and bars. In the evening Psiri is alive with people out for good food and conversation. In the day it is a working-class area that gives no hint of what it is like at night. Here there are many small Greek traditional Taverna with entertainment consisting of a small orchestra with Bouzouki Guitar and a singer performing the famous songs(Rebetika). Rebetika were the songs of the Greek underground, sung by the so-called rebetes, unconventional people who lived outside the social order. They first appeared after the Greek War of Independence of 1821.

The songs, often compared to genres like American blues, are full of grief, passion, romance, and bitterness. They are generally melancholic songs telling of the misfortunes of simple ordinary men and women. Many early rebetic songs were about drugs, especially hashish which led Rebetiko to be criminalized after the dictatorship of Ioannis Metaxas in 1936. Not until 1947, when Manos Hadjidakis introduced Rebetika to the upper classes, were these songs accepted as a music style. Damianakos Stathis noted that the rebetic songs of the first period were mostly the singing expression of lumpenproletariat. A lot of the rebetika songs are for dancing, zeibekiko and chasapiko being very common but they also include tsifteteli, karsilamas and other dance styles. In the Tavernas

there is a variety of typical Greek Hors d'oeuvres, soft drinks, beers, Greek wines.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2014

9:00 AM: Breakfast, checkout and storage of bags.

10:00 AM: We will make our way to the Jewish Museum of Athens. If Marcel Yoel , the former editor of the Athens Jewish Newspaper is in town, he will introduce the wonderful Museum of Greek Jewry located not far from the hotel. The Museum's Director, Zanet Batinou will give us her knowledgeable introduction to the Museum's very special collection. Here we will see costumes, photographs, all kinds of Judaica, documents, and a whole array of both glorious and painful history. A Museum like this is hard on the mind. What to look at seriously and what to pass by, where to focus and where to float...these are important decisions. Try to take in as much as you can...focus on some things and really learn about them and take from them as much as possible. Most of all remember that everything we see here was made by a Greek Jew, used in the life of a Greek Jewish family, and now remains as the sole means to enter and appreciate that world of an amazing Jewish community of 1000's of years duration.

11:00 AM: Now we really begin our encounter with the city of Athens. There is probably no site from the ancient world more significant to the modern world than Athens, the center of the ancient Greek universe. Here highly advanced concepts of democracy emerged in the midst of a world that would continue to be ruled by autocrats for another 2000+ years. Here the grand architectural style that continues to signify "class" and sophistication, grandeur and greatness, civic pride and governmental stability was imagined and created. Here science instructed both the process of government and the development of society. Most of all, from the modern point of view, here rational thought and philosophy became the intellectual tool with which to understand much of the world's ways and realities....

Often the Jewish view of ancient Greece is colored by the memory of the Maccabees and the confrontation between Judaism and the imposed idolatry of the Greeks in the Hadrianic persecutions. But when Alexander the Great conquered the Middle East, he was greeted by the Jewish people as a liberator, and to this day, Alexander, Sasha, is one of the most popular Jewish names all over the world. An immediate affinity developed between Jews and Greek culture, and Greek names quickly entered the Jewish social order. Beyond names however, we have a large collection of Greek words in the Hebrew lexicon, demonstrating the strong cultural attraction felt by Jews to Greek civilization. There was an allure to the sophisticated culture of the Greeks, and we have significant evidence of the impact of Greek art and sculpture upon the Jewish people. Synagogues were decorated in Greek style and burial sarcophagi reflect the acceptance of these influences even by the great Rabbis of the period. And of course the word Synagogue itself...is Greek!

We will start with the magnificent Acropolis, where we will see the architectural masterpiece of the Golden Age of Athens (5th century B.C.E.) Here we will visit the Propylaea, Temple of Athena Nike, Parthenon, Erechtheion and the

surrounding area. This magnificent building, constructed obviously without computers or other pieces of modern technology is humbling. We assume and probably understand the influence of literature (e.g., the Torah, Plato's Republic, etc) on the mindset of the ancient world. But architecture is often unrecognized for the enormous impact it has had on the minds and hearts of people from ancient times to the present. Is the Parthenon a political achievement or an artistic one? Is it theological or economic statement? Why build on hills? And what is the psychological impact of looking up?

We will come down from the top, the Acropolis, have a sandwich lunch (with usual options for those who don't eat sandwiches!) and then head to the truly extraordinary Acropolis Museum, recently opened in 2009. Here a museum built not merely as a repository of the ancient world, but as a campus, as a 3-dimensional experiential theatre where one can enter the universe of the ancient world and truly build an understanding and appreciation of their worldview...it's not just the artifacts, it's not just statues, it's not just art in all of its dimensions...it is a comprehensive entre into a culture that contains multiple elements upon which we still rely in our literature, our historical perspective - our most basic intellectual rootedness. After a few hours with our magnificent guides in this space...in this world...we will finally be ready to go "home" and start all over to prepare to enter yet another whole universe on our next trip.

We'll have a little time for shopping and dinner out and then we will make our way at 6:00 PM to Eleftherios Venizelos Airport and begin our journey back to Tel Aviv on Turkish Airlines Flt # 1844 to Istanbul departing Athens at 9:40 PM and arriving Istanbul at 11:05 PM connecting to Turkish Airlines flt # 792 departing Istanbul at 12:45 AM December 1 and arriving Tel Aviv at 2:55 AM.

Italy (Sicily) and Spain

These next two weeks contain within them several of the most remarkable chapters in Jewish history equally unknown as so much else we will learn about and experience this year. It is a tale of ups and downs and ups again. It is a tale of amazing cultural integration coupled with unique particularism.

In 1492, when Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand ordered the Jews expelled from Spain, it is estimated that its 300,000 Jewish residents represented 1/2 of the entire population of the Jewish world. When the process was over, 1/3 had fled (with most welcomed with open arms by the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire), 1/3 had converted to Christianity (most secretly remaining Jewish for several generations - some to the present day), and 1/3 would ultimately be burned at the stake by the forces of the Inquisition for lapsing back into Judaic practices. Many fled to Portugal where their initial treatment was better. Some of these refugees made their way to Amsterdam and from there to central Europe as far away as Lithuania (maybe farther). (Many seemingly Ashkenazi Jews, like the many generations in my family, actually have their roots in Spain and Portugal and are as much Sephardic as they are Ashkenazic Jews!)

When KIVUNIM visited Portugal a few years ago we went to Belmonte in the northern part of the country and attended a beautiful new Synagogue where the following statement hangs in its entry hall, the first Synagogue in this part of the country in at least 500 years. It reads in Portuguese and in Hebrew, here

beautifully and sensitively rendered in English by Rabbi Dov Lerea, former Director of KIVUNIM (2010-2013):

The thread of continuity was never severed from this place. Here, in the village of Belmonte, in this very house and the houses adjacent, lies the heart of the Jewish quarter. Full, robust Jewish lives have thrived here since antiquity. In the wake of royal edicts and decrees, the Jews of this village, like other Jews throughout Spain and Portugal, were forced to denounce their faith – while safeguarding their Jewishness in the safety of their homes. Nevertheless, here, the flame was never extinguished... Here, in the homes of the village, the Jews kept the sacred commandments of Judaism, and throughout these five hundred years, transmitted our tradition orally from generation to generation. They did this clandestinely, keeping Shabbat in their hearts, while appearing in public worship with their neighbors on Sundays.

They were coerced into leading double-lives... They were careful not to falter in-between the stumbling blocks of Jewish and Christian customs, lest they fall into the hands of the Inquisition and its underground. They recited the blessings over hallah and wine, mumbling to themselves silently, in the dark, during Christian prayers, while guarding their Jewishness in the interiority of their souls. Here the Jewish soul did not walk into oblivion... Here the Jewish soul remains eternally. For from the midst of the past, shall the future arise, and from the dark mist of medieval days shall the future emerge into the light of this Synagogue and spiritual center.

These powerful words convey the enormous surprise, powerful and elegant in its majesty that sits right below the surface this week in Spain. It's not only what we see and who we meet, it's the presence of a 500 year old secret that will surround us wherever we turn. What possessed these people to remain loyal in the face of such overwhelming opposition. How did they manage to transmit belief and practice over hundreds of years without Rabbis or teachers or schools or Synagogues? How is that possible?

For many years I resisted taking KIVUNIM's teacher program to Spain. Many would suggest it and I would say back: "But there are no Jews there..." And the way we left...with such brutality...I just kept shoving it to the bottom of the list. But when we began our student program I made the decision to go. And over the last nine years I have realized the enormous error of my ways. In fact, my own personal insight came, interestingly enough, in Turkey. We were having dinner in the Old Age Home in Istanbul and one of our students was speaking to a resident...in Spanish...but the resident was speaking back...in Ladino. It was essentially the same language, 500 years apart. At that moment I gained an understanding that had eluded me. What does it mean for a people who have been thrown out of a country to continue to speak the language of that country... not for one generation or two but for 500 years?

You cannot explain this with a passing comment. This can only be explained by a very intense and continuing tie to the language (and culture) of their ancestors...and it is not Hebrew we are speaking of. Ladino is simply Spanish written in Hebrew letters. It is the language of a vast expansive and rich culture, but also that of the Inquisition, expulsion, and of forced conversions. And

remember, their ancestors continue to call themselves Sepharadim, SPANISH Jews! When we travel from city to city, we will encounter the physical space of this magic universe of Spanish Jewry. But it will actually be in the spiritual space that we will be looking for an answer to the mystery. As in other parts of the world, the Jewish story is sometimes most powerfully revealed by the ghosts, by the spirits that reside in these places and speak to us through music, art, story, costume, architecture, literature, etc.

But in Spain and Portugal, the ghosts are coming back to life! Several years ago we met a young Spanish man, Jaime Casas in the Marrakech Synagogue.

KIVUNIM's encounter with Haim is an amazing tale. When we first met he was visiting Morocco doing research. I would learn then that he was raised Catholic and had recently discovered that his childhood fascination with Judaism was likely due to the fact that his ancestors were forced converts in the time of the Inquisition, so-called "New Christians." His encounter with KIVUNIM students opened up a thought that became a reality that moved him first to conversion a few years ago back to Judaism.

Today, after some lengthy discussions, Jaime is now Haim and is completing his second year of Rabbinical School in London and will return to Spain in two more years as the first Spanish-born Rabbi in over 500 years! We will meet him in Cordoba...in a world re-emerging from centuries of invisibility and darkness! Our trip to Spain is also a journey into the so-called Golden Age of Spanish Jewry, when Moslem rule gave Jews a noble and notable co-existence with the majority culture. This cannot be taken lightly given our contemporary conviction that no other religion can co-exist with Islam. The creativity of this period of mutuality and interaction is palpable. ! We are here to learn from it and to be able to develop the tools to take back with us an increasingly expansive view of life and Judaism. Spain and the Jewish experience it gave birth to, is probably unparalleled in all Diaspora Jewish experience. (Remember the true meaning of "Adieu!" that we learned in Sofia! Enjoy!) I share with you here a quote from Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel. I would like to suggest it as the frame within which to seek to understand and interpret our next 2 weeks...

"The riches of a soul are stored up in its memory. This is the test of character – not whether a man follows the daily fashion, but whether the past is alive in his present. When we want to understand ourselves, to find out what is most precious in our lives, we search our memory. Memory is the soul's witness.... Only those who are spiritually imitators, only people who are afraid to be grateful and too weak to be loyal, have nothing but the present moment. To a noble person it is a holy joy to remember, an over-whelming thrill to be grateful; while to a person whose character is neither rich nor strong, gratitude is a most painful sensation. The secret of wisdom is never to get lost in a momentary mood or passion, never to forget friendship because of a momentary grievance, never to lose sight of the lasting values because of a transitory episode. The things that sweep through our daily life should be valued according to whether or not they enrich the inner cistern. That only is valuable in our experience that is worth remembering. Remembrance is the touchstone of all actions.

Memory is a source of faith. To have faith is to remember. Jewish faith is a recollection of that which happened to Israel in the past. The events in which the spirit of God became a reality stand before our eyes painted in colors that never fade. Much of what the Bible demands can be comprised in one world: Remember. Jews have not preserved the ancient monuments; they have retained the ancient moments.”

Sunday March 15, 2015

3:40 PM: Depart from Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport on Alitalia Airlines flt # 807 and arriving at Rome's Fiumicino Airport at 6:30 PM. There we connect to Alitalia Flt # 1795 departing Rome at 7:45 PM and arriving in Palermo, Sicily at 8:55 PM. We have come to Palermo to experience an “other.” Rabbi Pinhas Puntarello, whom we have all come to love and appreciate in just a few hours of encounter is an Orthodox Rabbi with a very unorthodox background. Born and raised a Catholic in Naples, Italy, his love afraid with Judaism began around age 13 and led him to Rabbinical studies in Paris, Milan and Jerusalem. KIVUNIM met him in our very first year, in the late spring of 2007 when we arrived in Naples for Shabbat and met the young Chief Rabbi. He captured our imaginations and our hearts then as he continues to do as our Jerusalem neighbor now.

So when Pinhas said that he was working in Sicily with “returning” Jews and that he had found there an amazing array of historic Jews sites...we said...let's go and see for ourselves...and here we are. It's only a day that we will be here, arriving late at night and leaving Tuesday morning. But Monday will be filled with the footsteps and the images of a Jewish community that faded under the weight of the Inquisition. Faded, but not gone as his current work allows families with secret stories to return to the Judaism of their ancestors dating back hundreds and hundreds of years. We will spend Monday exploring the evidence, talking with people in the midst of exploration of their Jewish roots and engaged in the ongoing question of where history stops and reality takes over. Where is the border between past and present...and how does that border determine the character of the future.

We are staying at IBIS STYLES HOTEL PALERMO, Via Francesco Crispi, 230 - 90139 Palermo P.IVA 06265710829.

MONDAY, March 16, 2015 8:00 AM: Breakfast

9:00 AM: Departure on our full day walking tour with a wonderful market based picnic lunch in the middle. 7:00 PM Dinner at a wonderful vegetarian restaurant under the Rabbinic supervision of Rabbi Pinhas!

8:00 PM: Time to enjoy the nightlife of Palermo and its people.

TUESDAY, March 17, 2015

9:00 AM: Late breakfast, checkout and loading the bus

10:30 AM: Departure for the airport. We depart from Palermo on Alitalia Airlines flt # 1796 leaving at 12:20 PM and arriving in Rome at 1:30 PM. There we connect to Alitalia Flt # 60 departing at 2:20 PM and arriving at Madrid's Barajas Airport at 4:55 PM.

We will go through passport control and customs and make our way to the hotel shuttle to the AXOR FERIA Airport Hotel, Calle Campezo 4 Madrid Tlf.: 913 121

960. After check-in you we will distribute dinner money and you can take a quick metro from the airport into the city center and go out to dinner.

WEDNESDAY, March 18, 2015

7:30 AM: Breakfast, checkout and loading our bus.

8:50 AM: Departure for the Prado and meeting KIVUNIM's own Angeles Garcia for our visit to the Prado, one of the truly great museums of the world. Home to many of the masterpieces of 17th century painter extraordinaire, Diego Valasquez, the Prado contains one of the finest collections in the world, and will provide an opportunity to see and appreciate the power of the visual arts within Spanish tradition and culture. You might legitimately wonder if the power of the visual, not characteristically part of Jewish culture until modern times, was sublimated in the imagery of the mystical tradition that emerged here in Spain. Or you might wonder at how text illumination, often done by non-Jewish artists for Jewish patrons and Jewish texts became a means of Jewish identification with the very rich tradition of artistic creation that must have surrounded them everywhere they went and looked.

1:00 - 2:00 PM: We will have a picnic lunch in the park near the Museum and then off to Toledo.

3:15 PM: Arrival in Toledo where we will drop our bags at the Hotel Eurostar Address: Pseo.San Eugenio,sn Tel: 925282373 and then meet Carmen Catalá Ena and her colleagues for our visit to the Old City of Toledo. Ahead of us is a late afternoon tour of one of the truly glorious cities of Spain. Toledo, is known as the "city of the three cultures" because Christians, Muslims and Jews lived together here for centuries. Behind its walls Toledo preserves an artistic and cultural legacy in the form of palaces, fortresses, churches, mosques and synagogues. This great diversity of artistic styles makes the old quarter of the capital of La Mancha a real open-air museum, which has led to it being declared a World Heritage Site.

The Sephardim Museum has five rooms that display aspects of the history, religion, customs and manners of Spain's Jewish past. It is not a sophisticated presentation of Judaism, prepared as it was by well-intentioned but knowledge-limited local curators. It may give you a sense of the same limitation that often presents us with things new to us, in other places...hopefully encouraging you to always seek greater depth than you can get from a short visit to a local collection, anywhere in the world.

HISTORY OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE (ROOM I) introduces the visitor to the historic, geographic and cultural context of the origins of the Jewish people in the Ancient Near East.

THE JEWS IN THE IBERIAN PENINSULA (ROOMS II & III) include the first testimonies from the material culture of the Jewish presence in Spain: their arrival on the Iberian Peninsula, life in Roman and Visigoth times, developments during Al-Andalus and under the Christian Kings in the 13th to 15th centuries, the forced conversions of the Jews, The Inquisition and the expulsion of the Jews in 1492.

In the Northern patio, in a kind of necropolis, there is an exhibition of Jewish burial headstones from all over Spain. In the East patio are the archaeological

remains of what were perhaps the public baths (mikvaot) of the old Jewish quarter of Toledo and part of the old hehal (Torah Ark wall) of the synagogue THE SEPHARDIM (ROOM V: WOMEN'S GALLERY) The place name Sefarad appears in the Bible in verse 19 of the only chapter of Obadiah. Whatever the meaning in the Biblical text, in the Hebrew language since the Middle Ages, and later in other cultured languages, it has been used to mean Spain or the Iberian Peninsula in General, and Jewish Spain in particular. The term sefardi in the Spanish language (as defined in the dictionary of the Royal Academy) means "Jew native to Spain." The term Sephardim is also quite often used to describe Jews of the medieval Sefarad, according to the meaning of the word sefardi in the Hebrew language.

JUDAISM AS A WAY OF LIFE (ROOM V: WOMEN'S GALLERY). Part of the original plasterwork decoration has been preserved in this space, there are also various display cases related to the daily life (birth, education, principal festivals, death, etc.) of the Sephardim. It is interesting to notice how a Jewish Museum conceived and built by non-Jews primarily for non-Jews understands and conveys the essence of Judaism. It is probably not exactly the way we would do so.

And then the famous "El Transito Synagogue," famous for its rich stucco decoration, which bears comparison with the Alhambra palaces in Granada that we will see tomorrow. It was founded as a Synagogue by Samuel ha-Levi Abulafia, Treasurer to Peter of Castille, in about 1356. His family had served the Castilian kings for several generations and included kabbalists and Torah scholars such as Meir and Todros Abulafia, and another Todros Abulafia who was one of the last poets to write in the Arab-influenced style favored by Jewish poets in twelfth and thirteenth-century Spain. King Peter probably gave his assent to the building of the synagogue to compensate the Jews of Toledo for destruction that had occurred in 1348, during anti-Jewish riots that accompanied the arrival of the Black Death in Toledo. The founder eventually fell out of favor with the king and was executed in 1360. The synagogue was converted to a church after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492.

From there we will then go to several of the major sites of the city of Toledo, including its magnificent Cathedral. Toledo is one of the most beautiful and charming cities in Spain and you are sure to capture a sense of what it must have been like to be a citizen of this city in medieval times, whether Jew, Christian or Moslem.

But most important, here in Toledo a truly amazing thing happened. The great works of what we call western civilization were resurrected from the Dark Ages, when books were burned and culture sent underground. Alphonso X, the Christian King of the re-conquest was uncharacteristically an intellectual. From the beginning of his reign, Alfonso employed Jewish, Christian and Muslim scholars at his court, primarily for the purpose of translating books from Arabic into Castilian, which had the effect of fixing the forms of Spanish itself. What is little known is that these teams primarily translated from Arabic to Hebrew and then from Hebrew into Latin...requiring scholars of the three religions to work

cooperatively with each other. His inner circle, included Jewish and Christian courtiers.

Some of the intellectual work of these scholars centered on astronomy and astrology. The early period of Alfonso's reign saw the translation of selected works of magic (Lapidario, Picatrix, Libro de las formas et las ymagenes) all translated by a Jewish scholar. These were all highly ornate manuscripts (only the Lapidario survives in its entirety) containing what was believed to be secret knowledge on the magical properties of stones and talismans (charms).

From these origins in Toledo are kernels of big things waiting to be realized, 800 years after they were begun. What's your role?

6:30 PM: Dinner out.

THURSDAY March 19, 2015:

7:00 AM: Breakfast, checkout, load the bus.

8:00 AM: departure for Granada and the Alhambra, one of the greatest examples of Islamic Architecture in the world. We will have a lunch break along the way.

This is La Mancha territory, the world of Don Quixote!

We expect to arrive around 200 PM, check-in to our Hotel Alixares, Paseo de la Sabica, Granada, which is within walking distance of the Alhambra. We are meeting our guides at the entrance at 3:00 PM and are privileged again to have the services of Berthus de Boer and his colleagues for this unique and truly extraordinary visit.

Granada is a very historically significant city and our time here will prove very important to fully understand the power of the mix of cultures living in the same place at the same time. On a hill overlooking Granada, the Alhambra—a sprawling palace-citadel that comprised royal residential quarters, court complexes flanked by official chambers, a bath, and a mosque—was begun in the thirteenth century by Ibn al-Ahmar, founder of the Nasriddynasty, and was continued by his successors in the fourteenth century. Its most celebrated portions—a series of courtyards surrounded by rooms—present a varied repertoire of Moorish arched, columnar and domical forms. The romantic imagination of centuries of visitors has been captivated by the special combination of the slender columnar arcades, fountains, and light-reflecting water basins found in those courtyards—the Lion Court in particular; this combination is understood from inscriptions to be a physical realization of descriptions of Paradise in Islamic poetry.

Beginning in Istanbul and Athens In November, we have seen the almost eternal power of architecture to capture the human imagination and sustain it over centuries and millennia. Now having seen the Parthenon, Delphi's Oracle, Meteora's monasteries, and soon to see the Hassan II Mosque, The Dohany Synagogue, and the Taj Mahal (to name but a few) ... here we see the grandest expression of Moorish Architecture in the world. At every turn of a corner we have shapes and vistas that are simply captivating...enjoy it. (Maybe there is a clue here as to why so many Synagogues have been built in Moorish style containing all of the elements that make the Alhambra so special. Oh, you didn't know that the Park Avenue Synagogue, Bnai Jeshurun Synagogue (BJ) and Central Synagogue - three in Manhattan alone - are designed this way...Mosques

disguised as Synagogues? After spending the day in the Alhambra we will finally be challenged in understanding the cultural biases of our times that do not comport with the genius and beauty of the Islamic world we will see here, and will see Friday and Shabbat in Cordoba and of course next week in Morocco.

7:00 PM: Dinner out in Granada

FRIDAY March 20, 2015

8:30 AM: Breakfast, checkout and loading the bus

9:30 AM: Departure for Cordoba, the pinnacle of Moslem Spain, where we will check-in to the NH Collection Amistad Cordoba Hotel, Plaza de Maimónides, 3.. 14004, Cordoba, Spain Tel.: +34 95 7420335.

1:15 PM: We will meet our guides and split into two groups, for our opening tour of the Mesquita. Originally built as a church, after the Muslim conquest the Mesquita was confiscated for use as a mosque and greatly expanded until it became the second-largest mosque in the world. It is regarded as perhaps the most accomplished monument of the Umayyad dynasty of Cordoba. After the Spanish Reconquista, it was returned to its original use as a church. Today it houses the main church of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Cordoba in Spain. Cordoba was also the home of one of the greatest and most unique figures of Medieval (and maybe all of) Jewish history, Hasdai Ibn Shaprut (915-975) and an impressive list of other noted figures of Jewish history. Hasdai was an impressive Jewish scholar and statesman. He was born in Jaen, Spain, about the year 915. His father, Isaac ben Ezra, was a man of great learning and wealth. Under his care the young Hasdai studied the Talmud, and later also the Hebrew, Arabic and Latin languages, in all of which he became very proficient. Hasdai displayed a special interest in medicine and became a famous physician. His great scholarship, and especially his fame as a physician, attracted the attention of Caliph Abarrahman III, in Cordova.

The Caliph appointed Hasdai as his court physician. When the Caliph became more closely acquainted with his Jewish physician, and saw that he was also a man gifted with great organizing ability and statesmanship, he appointed Hasdai to be Inspector General of Customs and his Chief Diplomatic Adviser. In this capacity, Hasdai continued to serve under the Caliph as well as under his successor, Hakam II, who took over the Caliphate several years later. Hasdai rendered great service to his land by establishing good diplomatic and commercial relations between the Arab Caliphate and the Christian kingdoms, as far as Byzantium. Foreign diplomats, who had occasion to meet Hasdai, thought very highly of him and praised him to their courts. Emperor Romanus II of Byzantium sent Hasdai a medical textbook written in Greek, which Hasdai, with the aid of other scholars, translated into Arabic.

Owing to his great wealth, wisdom, and high rank, Hasdai was in a position to offer great help to his Jewish brethren. He was the Nasi (head) of all the Jews of Spain, and did all he could to improve their economic and cultural position. A great Talmudist himself, Hasdai built schools and academies to spread the knowledge of the Torah, and invited Talmud scholars of renown to teach there, supporting both the schools and the scholars from his own means. Hasdai also supported the great Babylonian academies in Sura and Pumbeditha, and kept up

a regular correspondence with the Gaonim (leading Talmudic authorities) in Babylon and North Africa, (notably Kairwan). Hasdai surrounded himself with many famous Hebrew scholars and poets such as Menachem ben Saruk, and Dunash ben Labrat. Menachem ben Saruk, the famous Hebrew Grammarian, was in charge of Hasdai's Hebrew correspondence.

Thus, under Hasdai's influence and with his support, Hebrew poetry and scholarship began to flourish in Spain, marking the beginning of the Golden Age, which produced such outstanding philosophers and poets as Rabbi Yehuda Halevi, Ibn Ezra, Ibn Gabirol, Maimonides, Nachmanides, and others.

It was during the life of this great Jewish leader, that the famous Gaon Rabbi Moshe ben Enoch one of the "four captives," reached the shores of Spain. There is a legend of the four Gaonim from Babylon, who were taken prisoner by pirates on the Mediterranean Sea and subsequently held for ransom to be paid by the extraordinary Jewish scholars, physicians, lawyers, diplomats and businessmen many of whom possessed a thorough and refined knowledge of both Judaism and of the Hebrew language. These famous Jewish scholars were quickly redeemed, and they set up Jewish centers of learning in their new places of refuge. Thus, when the famous Babylonian academies, were eventually destroyed, the Torah had already established itself in four new centers. When Rabbi Moshe ben Enoch was brought to Cordova, he was redeemed by the local Jewish community. Discovering that the refugee was the famous Gaon, Moshe ben Enoch, Hasdai set him up as head of a great Talmudic academy in Cordova. To foster Jewish Talmudic studies, Hasdai procured manuscripts of the Talmud from the Babylonian academies, and gave them to the students of the Cordova academy for study. For many years, Spain was one of the leading Torah centers in the world. Here Yehudah Halevi lived and wrote poetry, both religious and secular. Here the Hebrew language reached a zenith only comparable to modern times in Israel, and probably far superior in language quality and originality to anything we produce today.

A very interesting historical document was left by Hasdai in the form of his correspondence with the Jewish King of the Khazars. For hundreds of years, the Khazars were a mighty people who lived on the Steppes between the Don and Volga Rivers. Their realm stretched westward as far as Kiev. The kings of the Khazars were powerful rulers who intermarried with the families of the Byzantine and Arab monarchies. It is not clear when the Khazars decided to give up their former religion and accept Judaism as their faith. The Khazar Jewish kingdom captured the imagination of the Jewish people of those days.

Hasdai was eager to learn more about them, for he had only scant reports of the Khazar kingdom which he received through diplomatic channels. Hasdai decided to make personal contact with them. In those days distance made it very difficult to make or maintain contact with remote countries, and being that the Khazar kingdom was at the easternmost end of Europe, it seemed almost an impossible task.

However Hasdai was a man of determination. He addressed an affectionate letter in Hebrew to Joseph, the King of the Khazars, and sent it to him with a special emissary, Isaac ben Nathan. When Isaac reached Constantinople, he

was detained by the Byzantine authorities, who feared a direct alliance between Spain and the Khazars. On the pretext that the roads were not safe, Hasdai's emissary did not obtain the facilities to continue his journey to the capital of the Khazars. Hasdai was not discouraged. He sent another emissary, Isaac ben Eliezer, but this time by way of Hungary and Russia.

Aided by the Jews of those countries, Hasdai's second emissary made his way to Itil, and delivered Hasdai's warm greetings to Joseph. King Joseph of the Khazars replied in Hebrew, answering all of Hasdai's questions concerning the history of the Khazars and their acceptance of Judaism. King Joseph told him how his ancestor, Bulan, decided to give up his heathen beliefs in order to accept one of the three leading faiths, Judaism, Christianity, or Islam. King Bulan then arranged for theologians of each of the three faiths to participate in a debate in his presence, in which each of them was to prove why his faith was the true one. When the debate was over, Bulan was convinced that the Jewish faith was the true faith; and he, together with his entire family, and four thousand Khazar nobles, formally accepted Judaism. Gradually, the majority of the Khazars followed the example of their king, and accepted the Jewish faith.

Unfortunately, about the time that Hasdai's letter reached King Joseph, dark clouds appeared on the horizon of the Khazar kingdom. The Russian and Byzantine rulers combined to destroy the Jewish kingdom of the Khazars, and about 15 years later, Sviatoslav of Russia defeated the Khazars and devastated their land, including their capital of Itil. Nevertheless, the Khazars continued to play an important part in that section of the world for another century. Thereafter, their fortunes waned altogether, until their fate became unknown. The exchange of letters between Hasdai and King Joseph of the Khazars throws much light on the history of the Khazar kingdom that might have otherwise remained quite obscure.

Hasdai died in Cordova at the age of about sixty, sadly mourned by all Jews, and by all those non-Jewish friends who were privileged to know him.

When you walk through these streets this Shabbat, carry these stories and the images they provoke with you. Yehudah Halevi, Maimonides, a community of Jews speaking and writing in Arabic; a Jewish world comparable only to our own world in its freedom of creative expression and religious life, and on and on. In these moments, our presence in these places returns continuity in the face of the discontinuity that history delivered to Spanish Jewry.

While in Cordoba we visit a wonderful institution, the Casa de Sepharad, where Haim Casa served as program director for several years. This amazing private museum is the result of a love affair with Spanish Jewish history by a wonderful Catholic couple Rosanna and Sebastian who have made their lifetime collection available to the public. They have artifacts, music, dance, jewelry and even a Synagogue, dedicated by Jacki Kadosh (whom you will meet next Shabbat!, the President of the Jewish community of Marrakech) in memory of his father, Henri Kadosh. Living here in Cordoba for Shabbat, you will be delighted by the winding streets and alleyways of this charming old city, not far from the entrance to the Mesquita, the Mosque become Church of Cordoba much like the Hai Sophia

Church become Mosque we saw in Istanbul. If only inter- religious relationships could be as accommodating of each other as these magnificent buildings! Here in the birthplace of Maimonides, the greatest Jewish philosopher (and one of the greatest thinkers of all humanity) of all time we will seek to answer the many questions that emerge in visiting Spain. What really was going on here? Why the richness of Jewish civilization? Why the advancement of Hebrew language? Why the climate of creative thought and imagination? How do the cultures in which we live affect our bodies and our souls? What feeds the brain? What stops its growth? What lessons from all of this are relevant today and in particular tomorrow? !

4:00 PM: We'll make our way back to our hotel and get ready for Shabbat.

6:30 PM: We walk into Casa De Sepharad for Kabbalat Shabbat. Again history surrounds us and invades our consciousness. Just across the street is the Synagogue where we believe Maimonides himself prayed. Along these streets, New Christians likely prayed in silence, closing their windows to make certain that no one heard their voices. Tonight and tomorrow, when we sing and chant we will certainly awaken those "ghosts" and remind them of what once was theirs, and today is slowly but surely returning.

This is the fifth Shabbat KIVUNIM has spent here in Cordova. Our Shabbat Services are the first egalitarian services in the history of Spanish Jewry, and the amongst the first 15 of any kind in the past 500 years! It's not often that something we do in our lifetimes goes into the record books. This is one of those times!

8:00 PM: There is not a kosher restaurant in Cordova, so this Shabbat will be vegetarian! The Restaurante Los Patios has generously accommodated all of our special requests and prepared a wonderful meal for tonight and lunch tomorrow after services.

9:30 PM: Some will return to the hotel and get to sleep or just chill...but all may wish to walk the streets...it is so special and charming...just take a map and an hotel card...as you will inevitably get lost!

SHABBAT March 21, 2015

9:00 AM: Breakfast

9:45 AM: Walking departure for Casa de Sepharad Synagogue where we will conduct the entire service in this quite remarkable historical setting!

12:30 PM: Shabbat Lunch at the Restaurante Los Patios. And then you are free until we meet back at the hotel for a group reflection and then Havdalah.

6:00 PM: Group meeting at hotel

8:00 PM: Ladino culture session at Casa de Sepharad followed by Havdalah followed by FLAMENICO!

10:00 PM: Your night in this wonderful town.

SUNDAY March 22, 2015

6:15 AM: Breakfast

7:00 AM: Depart to sharply to catch the 12 noon ferry.

11:00 AM: Arrival at the pier, passport control for leaving Spain, loading luggage on the ferry, etc. The ferry takes us across the Straights of Gibraltar, across the Mediterranean Sea to the northern most city in Morocco, Tangiers. Tangiers,

famed for its portrayal in the Humphrey Bogart classic, Casablanca, was always an international city filled with intrigue. Standing on deck watching Europe fade into the background and Africa rise up in the distance is an amazing experience; for most of us, once in a lifetime! This ride across the sea is a ride of centuries, a ride of civilizations, a ride of cultures, races, languages, and just about everything else that makes up the human condition, the human reality.

The coming 10 days will be monumental for us all. Not only are we entering a Muslim world as Jews, we are entering the Orient as westerners. Differences will surround us at every moment. And yet most KIVUNIM students report feeling most comfortable when we travel in Morocco. Morocco offers an image of promise; a hope for a different reality than we feel most days.

Morocco

SUNDAY, March 22, 2015

1:30 PM: Arrival at Tangier Med port. Load the buses and off we go. We will be met by our Moroccan Guide, Raphael David Elmaleh, a very special guy, who returned to his birthplace in Morocco 18 or so years ago with the goal of creating a permanent record of the Moroccan Jews. His work and his many discoveries are moving and fascinating. His personality is very special and you will love being with him. Morocco is one of those places that still has romance and exoticism written all over it...and you will be sure to feel it from the moment we arrive. Whatever you are expecting, it will be very different and far more than you can imagine.

Here the story of a Jewish community that traces its history back to Roman times and maybe earlier. Later joined by exiled Jews from Spain following their expulsion in 1492, the Jewish community of Morocco came to number close to

300,000 in the first part of the 20th century, close to 1% of the population of the entire country (Jews are less than 2% of the population of the United States).

Tangier is a fascinating place, but it is not our starting point. We will ride for a few hours and find ourselves in the Blue City, Chefchaouen, an otherworldly escape nestled in Morocco's Rif Mountains. The city is bathed in a unique and distinctive palette of blue and white buildings and was founded in 1471 by Moulay Ali Ben Moussa Ben Rached El Alami and served as a Moorish fortress for Muslim exiles from Spain. Over the centuries, the city grew and welcomed Jews and Christian converts alike. Chefchaouen's powder-blue buildings mirror the cloudless Moroccan sky - but religious rather than stylistic reasons are behind the design choice. Jewish teachings suggest that by dyeing thread with tekhelet (an ancient natural dye) and weaving it into prayer shawls, people would be reminded of God's power. The memory of this tradition lives on in the regularly repainted blue buildings.

Today, Chefchaouen is a rich cultural tapestry of Berber tribes-people, Muslims and Jews, along with descendants of the Moorish exiles from Spain who lived there in the 1400s. Berber tribes-people can be seen wearing distinctive cotton clothing paired with woven hats that are decorated with brightly colored threads. Tucked away in Africa's northernmost mountain range, the Rif Mountains, there are valleys, gorges and picturesque peaks in abundance where arid landscapes meet trickling mountain streams.

Quaint and colorful, Chefchaouen's medina (old city) is like stepping into another world. We only stop for a brief look, but we could spend a week here if not more. Our final destination today, still many hours away, is Fez.

Fez was founded in the 9th century, is home to the oldest university in the world and reached its height in the 13th–14th centuries under the Marinids, when it replaced Marrakech as the capital of the kingdom. The urban fabric and the principal monuments in the medina, the old city – *madrassas*, *fondouks*, palaces, residences, mosques and fountains - date from this period. Although the political capital of Morocco was transferred to Rabat in 1912, Fez has retained its status as the country's cultural and spiritual center.

To see Morocco requires demanding bus rides. There is no way around it. Use this time to really concentrate on what is outside the window. A poor country with village life pretty much the same as it has been for 1000's of years. Until the 1960's emigration to Israel, the majority of Morocco's Jews lived exactly this same life in simple adobe villages.

6:00 PM: We'll have dinner along the way to Fez

10:00 PM: We will have a quick check-in to Barceló Fès Medina Hotel, 53 Avenue Hassan II | 30000 Fez, No Teléfono: +212 53 594 8800.

MONDAY March 23, 2015 8:30 AM: Breakfast

9:15 AM: Morning visit to the Medina of Fez, that preserves, in an ancient part comprising numerous monumental buildings, the memory of the capital founded by the Idrisid dynasty between 789 and 808 A.D. Under the dynasty of the Almohads (12th and 13th centuries), the original town (Fez el-bali) already grew to its present-day size. Under the Merinids (13th to 15th centuries), a new town (Fez Jedid) was founded (in 1276) to the west of the ancient one (Fez El-Bali). It contains the royal palace, the army headquarters, fortifications and residential areas. At that time, the two entities of the Medina of Fez evolve in symbiosis forming one of the largest Islamic metropolis's representing a great variety of architectural forms and urban landscapes. They include a considerable number of religious, civil and military monuments that brought about a multi-cultural society.

This architecture is characterized by construction techniques and decoration developed over a period of more than ten centuries, and where local knowledge and skills are interwoven with diverse outside inspiration (Andalousian, Oriental and African). The Medina of Fez is considered as one of the most extensive and best conserved historic towns of the

Arab-Muslim world. The unpaved urban space conserves the majority of its original functions and attribute. It not only represents an outstanding architectural, archaeological and urban heritage, but also transmits a life style, skills and a culture that persist and are renewed despite the diverse effects of the evolving modern societies.

The Medina of Fez bears a living witness to a flourishing city of the eastern Mediterranean having exercised considerable influence mainly from the 12th to the 15th centuries, on the development of architecture, monumental arts and town-planning, notably in North Africa, Andalusia and in Sub-Saharan Africa. Fez Jedid (the new town), was inspired from the earlier town-planning model of

Marrakech. The Medina of Fez constitutes an outstanding example of a medieval town created during the very first centuries of Islamisation of Morocco and presenting an original type of human settlement and traditional occupation of the land representative of Moroccan urban culture over a long historical period (from the 9th to the beginning of the 20th centuries). The ancient fragmented district of the medina with its high density of monuments of religious, civil and military character, are outstanding examples of this culture and the resulting interaction with the diverse strata of the population that have influenced the wide variety of architectural forms and urban landscapes.

While visiting the Medina, we will see (and smell!) the world famous dying vats of the city's leather trades. Think back to the vats we saw at the top of Masada...these are them!

In the 14th century a Jewish quarter, the Mellah, was joined to the newly founded city. The urban fabric and the principal monuments in the Medina date from this period. Fez is at once an astonishing city-museum and one of the largest Islamic metropolises in which the various demographic strata have determined the greatest variety of architectural forms and urban landscapes.

12:00 PM: We'll take a lunch break and then continue our exploration of the Medina including the remarkable Jewish history which is here. Every description of Morocco in guidebook after guidebook brings the image and smell of spice and smoke, mint and tea leaves, souks filled with every object one could imagine...and some beyond. The Mellah, the Jewish Quarter, is an integral part of the medinah even today, when few Jews continue to live in any section of Fez. There are many historic Synagogues including the world heritage Slat al-Fassiyyine (Prayer of the Fesians) synagogue. In 2013, Morocco held a ceremony on to celebrate the completion of renovations to this ancient site. The ceremony included Morocco's Islamist prime minister, Abdelilah Benkirane. The restoration of the ancient synagogue in Fez, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is part of a larger effort by Morocco to pay homage to its long and illustrious Jewish past. The country's new constitution, adopted in 2011 amid the Arab Spring recognized Morocco's Jewish heritage. "As is enshrined in the Kingdom's new Constitution, the Hebrew heritage is indeed one of the time-honored components of our national identity," read King Mohammed VI's message to the inauguration ceremony and the King added that he wishes for the restoration of all synagogues in Moroccan cities so that they can "serve as places of worship...and as forums for cultural dialogue."

Although the Jews were required to live in these walled areas until the late 19th century or early 20th century, they did not develop the negative connotation of the European "ghetto" and an address in the mellah was not considered a disadvantage. They contained large homes and their prime location, typically near the king's palace, was considered to be for the Jews' benefit as it meant greater protection.

Fez was also the short-term but significant home of Maimonides. A Berber dynasty, the Almohads conquered his birthplace and home, Cordoba in 1148, and abolished the Dhimmi status (i.e., state protection of life and wealth for non-Muslim minorities) in some of their territories. The loss of this protected status

threatened the Jewish and Christian communities with Conversion to Islam, Exile, or death (now where did the Inquisitional Authorities ever get such an idea?). Many Jews were forced to convert, but due to suspicion by the authorities of fake conversions, the new converts had to wear identifying clothing that set them apart and made them subject to public scrutiny.

Maimonides's family, along with most other Jews, chose exile. Some say, though, that it is likely that Maimonides feigned a conversion to Islam before escaping. For the next ten years, Maimonides moved about in southern Spain, eventually settling in Fez. While in Fez, he composed his acclaimed commentary on the Mishnah in the years 1166–1168. Written in Arabic, it is one of the most significant Jewish books ever written. It was said that “from Moses to Moses there was none like Moses” referring of course to his full name, Moses Ben Maimon.

Following this stay in Morocco, together with two sons, he moved to the Land of Israel, before settling in Fustat, Egypt around 1168. We will visit his house in the middle of the Medinah.

Fez is also famed for its ceramic tiles and we will pay a visit to a ceramics factory to get a first hand view of the entire classical process.

5:00 PM: We head back to the hotel to relax a bit and catch up before heading out to dinner at the Jewish Community Center for a kosher meat meal! For the first time in a week (for the veggie's of course a first of many Moroccan Vegetarian couscous meals...gluten-free, they will take good care of you too!

7:00 PM: Dinner 9:00 PM Group meeting at the hotel

TUESDAY March 24, 2015

7:00 AM: Breakfast

8:00 AM: Departure for Al-Akhawayn University, Ifrane. Today is a long and beautiful drive taking us eventually to the edge of the Sahara Desert in Merzouga where we will climb the dunes for sunrise tomorrow morning. But today is in front of us and en route south we are stopping to meet some of the members of the Moadon Mimouna of the Mimouna Foundation at Al- Akhawayn University where KIVUNIM co-sponsored the first Holocaust Conference in the Arab world in 2011. We'll have a short tour of this beautiful (English language-based) campus and then talk with the current Mimouna students before continuing our journey south through the ranges of the Atlas mountains. We'll stop near Midelt for lunch and then arrive in Errashadiya in the later afternoon.

Errashadiya was once home to a Jewish community of thousands. What were Jews doing here you may ask, so very far from the coast, from urban centers, from other Jews? But of course we are on an ancient trade route and Jews were amongst the greatest traders of the ancient world. They came to Morocco at the time of the second Temple, in the second century BC. Throughout Morocco they settled in small villages, pre-dating Islam by 6-800 years! Everywhere we go we will find remnants of the Jewish quarter, the mellah, along with synagogues and schools, once brimming with Jews; today completely empty.

Here in Errashadiya is a wonderful synagogue here that we first found in terrible disrepair, due to a roof collapse in 2006. For two years KIVUNIM students helped

to clean it and finally, with the generosity of some Heschel School families the building was restored. KIVUNIM students came two years ago to paint and put the finishing touches on and here we are. We will make a small contribution to the effort and then continue on our way to Erfoud, the gateway to the great Sahara desert. The road through the Ziz Valley to Erfoud descends from the plateau where the oasis of Tafilalet is found. The road passes between the sheer sides of the valley and winds through several villages. It underscores the difference of the lush valley to the surrounding rocky desert. In Erfoud where we will switch to 4 wheel drive vehicles for the final hour into the desert. Our hotel, Kasbah Timbouktu, Erg Chebbi Desert, Hassilabied, Merzouga 250, is very beautiful and quite unique...and we need all the sleep we can get as we have a very early wake-up so as to arrive on the dunes (some of which rise 50, that's right 50 stories high).

9:00 PM: A late but very tasty dinner at the Kasbah!

WEDNESDAY March 25, 2015

5:00 AM: Sunrise at the Oasis! No! Actually on rolling dunes that you have seen in movies, and presenting a reality of natural beauty and majesty that even your most imaginative dreams could not prepare you for. The vastness of it all...the mountains of sand that can take an hour to climb...the rising sun at daybreak...our bodies may be tired, but our spirits will be very wide awake! For those who wish to capture this spiritual moment in a traditional form, we will have a minyan at the top of the dunes. (Bring Talit, Tefillin and/or siddur in your backpack if you wish to participate.)

7:30 AM: We will return to the hotel for breakfast and a wonderful shower and then some time to catch some more sleep, walk the dunes, enjoy the beauty of the Hotel.

9:30 AM: Departure. The ride through the Moroccan Sahara countryside is fertile ground for creative thinking and dreaming. Imagine our Moroccan cousins traveling this very route in pursuit of trade...walking with donkeys carrying cloth and salted foods and other items needed for the sustenance of daily life in this region. Even today, thousands of years after these early caravan days, the traveling souk remains a feature of Moroccan country life...and its origins are purely Jewish. With virtually no Jews left in this region of the country, the traveling souks STILL do not have any Saturday events...they are Shomrei Shabbat (Sabbath Observers)! The souk is in one central town on Sunday and another every day of the week through Thursday. But not on Friday and not on Saturday. Amazing to watch them pack up and take to the road with gigantic loads atop big trucks only to be unloaded the next day and again and again.

12:00 PM: Arrival in Tinghir where Kamal Hachkar has arranged for us to meet an old friend of his who will walk us through the market and share with us some of the sites that are now so familiar because of his film. There is a chance that his father will be home and will welcome us as well...but we shall see!

3:00 PM: We're aiming for tea and orange juice in the Todra Gorge, amongst the most dramatic sights you can see in Morocco. The cut through the mountain gives at some points only a 10-meter wide passage beneath 300- meter tall walls. Sun only accesses the bottom of the gorge, where an ice-cold river flushes

through, in the morning. Later in the night the gorge gets its own climate, and while evenings can be damp and warm in the nearest village, they easily get to be freezing here. We came through the Ziz Valley once part of a caravan route that took travelers from the desert near Merzouga to the Mediterranean Sea. The Valley itself is a welcome relief from the desert brown. Palm trees and dates grow in abundance. Men tending fields and donkeys carrying goods from one village to another are common sights. Up the river are the ruins of an old fortress or ksar. Women can be seen doing their laundry in the shade of apricot trees growing around the lake.

6:00 PM: Tonight's stay begins our experience of the small villages of the Atlas mountains, starting outside of Quarzazat in the ancient site of Ait Bin Hadou, located in the foothills on the southern slopes of the High Atlas in the Province of Ouarzazat, it is the most famous ksar in the Ounila Valley. The Ksar of Aït-Ben-Haddou is a striking example of southern Moroccan architecture.

The ksar is a mainly collective grouping of dwellings. Inside the defensive walls which are reinforced by angle towers and pierced with a baffle gate, houses crowd together - some modest, others resembling small urban castles with their high angle towers and upper sections decorated with motifs in clay brick - but there are also buildings and community areas. It is an extraordinary ensemble of buildings offering a complete panorama of pre-Saharan earthen construction techniques. The oldest constructions do not appear to be earlier than the 17th century, although their structure and technique were propagated from a very early period in the valleys of southern Morocco. The site was also one of the many trading posts on the commercial route linking ancient Sudan to Marrakesh by the Dra Valley and the Tizi-n'Telouet Pass.

Architecturally, the living quarters form a compact grouping, closed and suspended. The community areas of the ksar include a mosque, a public square, grain threshing areas outside the ramparts, a fortification and a loft at the top of the village, an caravanserai, two cemeteries (Muslim and Jewish) and the Sanctuary of the Saint Sidi Ali or Amer. The Ksar of Ait- Ben-Haddou is a perfect synthesis of earthen architecture of the pre-Saharan regions of Morocco.

For the first time this year we are staying in a simple hotel at Ait Bin Hadou so that tomorrow morning you will be the first KIVUNIM group to really have time to explore the Ksar...it's a special treat. (You may also recognize this site from several movies that have been shot here. This whole area is used by film production companies from all over the world, who use the long hot and dry season and the fabulous desert landscapes to shoot the many movies being set in the desert sands.)

7:00 PM: Dinner at the Hotel.

8:00 PM: Group reflection

THURSDAY March 26, 2015

9:00 AM: Breakfast 1

10:00 AM: Exploration of the Ksar, Ait Bin Hadou, World Heritage Site

12:00 PM: Picnic Lunch

1:00 PM: Departure for Scenic Ride up the Atlas Mountains new road from Ait Bin Hadou to Telouet.

2:30 PM: Arrival at Chez Ahmed. Telouet is the home of The Kasbah of the Glaouis and one of the most important sights of yesterday's Morocco. Although not ancient, the Palace built here is an amazing site with an accompanying extraordinary story. It begins during the hard winter of 1893, when Sultan Moulay Hassan was stranded here. He, and his army of 3,000 were well taken care of by the two brothers Glaoui, Madani and T'Hami. In return for their services, they were given political power over all of Morocco south of the High Atlas Mountains. In the years that followed the Glaoui brothers strengthened their position, and when the French came some 20 years later, they started to cooperate with them as well. By the end of the French colonial period, the Glaouis were almost as strong in power as the sultan himself. This dramatic story ends with a French connection that led to intrigue, disloyalty to the Moroccan King, and ultimately a total downfall. The Palace, once a spectacular residence with almost exact replicas of the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, is today mostly in ruin. As eternal punishment to the family, the government will not even allow it to be rehabilitated and restored (but they were not beheaded or jailed). Much of the magnificent detail work has been stripped away over the years by thieves. But there are still several royal rooms completely in tact. It is truly something very special to see. We are spending the night in this small town, where the local Auberges (Inns) will be our homes. We have arranged a vegetarian dinner and local fare. Here you will have time to explore the Kasbah and really get a flavor of what Morocco was, including the Morocco of a huge percentage of those 14 million+ Jews who lived in the villages and small towns of this country up until 1960. Last year I discovered that a close friend of Kamal's from Boston via Paris, a woman teaching at Harvard, was the granddaughter of the former Rabbi of Telouet! Next year she promises to come with her mother and join us on this very special experience in this little village where her mother was born and raised. This afternoon we have arranged for KIVUNIM to participate in a major project of the High Atlas Foundation, a joint Muslim-Jewish group seeking to increase the economic viability of the Atlas Mountain communities and their inhabitants. We are joining a massive operation of planting fruit trees that will increase the fruit exports from this entire region with just a few years. In addition, some of us will visit the local school and spend some time with children studying English. Every connection we make in these mountains lasts a lifetime, as you will see. So few outsiders come here that KIVUNIM's annual visit means a great deal and we are received with a unique and special warmth. Dinner will be followed by a program of local tribal dancing, and you will see and feel the powerful influence of Black African slaves brought here by the Sultan over the centuries. This will be our most basic accommodation on this trip, but a very special experience. This will truly be a night you will never forget. Situated here in the High Atlas Mountains, the basic life of the Moroccan village will greet you and then never leave you. The air, the sky, the stars above the sometimes even still snow-capped mountains...what more could there be?

FRIDAY March 27, 2015

7:30 AM Breakfast. Have a little tea and locally baked bread with honey or jam and then go outside and take a walk...just listen to the life as lived...children

crying, playing, laughing, dancing...older kids getting ready for school, animals to be fed and cared for, goats to be milked, fires to be flamed, tea to be brewed...the most basics of life all around us.

9:00 AM: Visit to the Glaui Palace...walking tour of the mellah and village.

11:00 AM: Departure for the main road and then onwards to Marrakech. We now begin our exciting (get out your motion sickness meds) climb to the top of the High Atlas Mountains! There may even be snow at the top and if we are lucky no weather delays. The views from the winding roadway are amazing! We will spend the day on the road, making our way up the Atlas Mountains through scenery so breathtaking that you will find it as difficult as I to describe to family and friends. We will rise to and pass through the Tizi N Test pass, one of the highest points in the High Atlas Mountains. We will be at 6-8000 ft above sea level and the Atlas has heights that are the second highest in all of Africa, rising almost 12,000 ft.

1:00 PM: Lunch in Marrakech. 2:30 PM Visit to the Mellah of Marrakech. Our afternoon will be filled with the historic Jewish presence in this amazing city. The winding alleys of the Mellah, the Jewish quarter are still evident. The Jewish cemetery with the special burial place set aside by the Mayor to honor Henri Kadosh, the former President of the Marrakech Jewish community and the Quartermaster of the King's army. The kosher butcher still functioning right in the middle of the massive Arab marketplace. The "other" of the city's synagogues. The Old Age home, the former school. Even Jewish merchants will greet us in the medinah! The integration is truly amazing.

4:00 PM: Check-in at Atlas Medina Hotel

6:00 PM: Meet in the lobby for walk to Beth-El Synagogue for Kabbalat Shabbat and meeting with Marrakech Jewish Community President, Jackie Kadosh (who donated the Torah in memory of his father, Henri, that we read from in the small Synagogue in Cordoba last Shabbat!)

8:00 PM: Shabbat Dinner in the home of Itzhak Ohayon (yes all 60 of us...and what a meal!)...and he loves to sing!

9:30 PM: A leisurely walk back to our hotel. SHABBAT March 28, 2015

7-9:00 AM: Breakfast Early and slightly later timed departures for Synagogue to be announced Friday night.

8:30-11:30 AM: Shabbat Morning Services at Marrakech Synagogue.

11:30 AM: Congregational Kiddush following services and then traditional Shabbat Lunch at Ohayon's. Did you know there is a Moroccan version of the Eastern European specialty, Chulent...wait till you taste!

Shabbat afternoon can be at your leisure, or can be culturally enriching by a visit with Jamal to the Koutoubia Mosque and the Musee de Marrakech. Remember, when do you plan to be in Marrakech again...and when were you here last? Plan accordingly.

1:00 PM: Free afternoon for swimming, walking, sleeping, talking, sleeping, talking

6:00 PM: Group discussion with members of The Mimouna Foundation. Mimouna Clubs existed on 8-10 campuses across Morocco to allow Moroccan Muslim students a setting and opportunity to study Moroccan Judaism and Moroccan Jewish history and culture. Founded by El Mehdi Boudra (whom you will meet),

Mimouna was created by Muslim students for Muslim students. Together with them KIVUNIM co-sponsored the first Holocaust Conference in the Arab world (2011) and the first Israel Seminar for Arab Students (2012). The Marrakech students will host us later tonight in the nightlife of this great city.

7:25 PM: Shabbat Ends board bus for home of Jamal Benkirane and Havdalah and home cooked vegetarian Pastia dinner including henna decorating. Jamal hosted KIVUNIM for a Hanukkah dinner in his home in 2006, the first time that he and his very traditional Muslim family had ever witnessed a Hanukkah Candle lighting service. Jamal's wife prepares for us a magnificent vegetarian meal of traditional Moroccan delicacies including a range of cakes and cookies for which you must leave room...hard as it will be. Friendships build over the past 10 years of student and teacher programs will be apparent in the family's warm and sincere welcome and hospitality.

Havdalah to end Shabbat will be recited here followed by dinner. Don't take this small act for-granted...holding what constitutes a Jewish prayer service in a traditional Muslim home is not a small matter or done lightly. It is a symbol of the enormous potential in this country for creating a model for the seemingly illusive Muslim-Jewish coexistence that is so desperately needed.

Following dinner we must see the famous grand square of the city, Djamaa El Fna, where your eyes and ears will fill with a world of mystery and intrigue. The snake charmer whose Sufi music forces his snake to stand at attention! The drummers, the henna decorators, the acrobats, the monkey men, the endless booths of items to buy and even to eat. Musicians, dancers, fortune tellers, cooks, tooth-pullers, hair weavers, minstrels, and every other element of your imagination fill the space throughout the night and day.

The later night is yours, in groups.

SUNDAY March 29, 2015 8:00 AM: Breakfast

9:00 AM: Departure for the Medinah of Marrakech, the souks of international fame. From one of the student guide books: "Bustling, labyrinthine and shrouded in shadows, the souks of Marrakech offer the city's most fascinating sights. Whether to shop or simply to explore, they are a must for any visitor. Covering over a square kilometer, the souks enclose a variety of trades and individual sections. Although these can initially appear baffling to the visitor, the layout is in fact relatively simple.

At the Northern end of the souks, best accessed from the Ben Youssef Mosque, are the active workshops of various trades. See blacksmiths hammering out wrought-iron work (to be sold in up-scale garden stores for many times their local value), smell the pungent aroma of the leather workshops and watch the *babouche* makers sewing the stuff into slippers. Workshops blend into stalls as you walk further south and emerge at the Rahba Kedima, a square notable for its bizarre offerings of animals (dead or alive) and strange potions for spells.

Souk Smarine, the main artery, is the place to browse and barter. Stalls offer everything from highly desirable jewels to wooden camels and kaftans. A pair of *babouche* slippers make an excellent souvenir. Snack on succulent olives or amazing pastries. Guidebooks warn of hassle from pestering guides and vendors when entering the souks. In reality, it is possible to shop relatively undisturbed,

other than by the crowds at various junctions. During our visit we will see the amazing carpets and leathers of Marrakech. Colors galore of all natural dyes and antique rugs with amazing histories, including several created by weavers of several former Jewish Berber villages from around the country.

During our visit we will spend a few moments with the Herbal Medicine Man of Marrakech, a many generations healer who will demonstrate and offer for sale some of the wonderful natural remedies of this area of the world.

12:00 PM: We'll have a Pizza lunch and some delicious local ice cream before continuing to the Ketubia Mosque, and, if open for visitors, a climb to the top of its Minaret providing a beautiful view of the entire city and the magnificent Atlas Mountains surrounding us. The following amazing story was published yesterday in the London Telegraph Travel section:

"Winston Churchill believed that 'Marrakesh is simply the nicest place on Earth to spend an afternoon', which explains why not even his demanding schedule as Britain's wartime leader could dissuade him from experiencing the charms of Morocco's inspirational city.

His most memorable afternoon there was during a crucial phase of the Second World War, when he took time out from a vital summit with the American President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, to visit his cherished retreat in the old imperial city.

Churchill began his love affair with Marrakesh during the 'wilderness years' of the Thirties when, frustrated by the Baldwin government's refusal to give him a cabinet position, he spent the winter of 1935-36 on a painting holiday in Morocco. He was particularly attracted to a city he called the "Paris of the Sahara" because of the striking contrast between the city's arid desert location and the backdrop of the imposing Atlas Mountains that surrounded Marrakesh, which inspired him to paint some of his finest water colors.

Thus when, in 1943, Churchill arrived in Casablanca for a summit with Roosevelt and the Allied chiefs of staff to plot the future course of the military campaign to defeat Nazi Germany, the British prime minister insisted that the two leaders take a break from their deliberations to spend a few days in Marrakesh.

'You cannot come all the way to North Africa without seeing Marrakesh,' Churchill told a skeptical Roosevelt, who wanted to return immediately to the United States to concentrate on running the war effort. 'Let us spend two days there,' Churchill persisted. 'I must be with you when you see the sun set on the Atlas Mountains.'

And so, on January 23 1943, the two wartime leaders left Casablanca for the five-hour drive to Marrakesh, stopping on the way for a picnic lunch. On arrival, the party made their way to the Villa Taylor, a spacious property owned by a wealthy New York family situated in the Ville Nouvelle district on the outskirts of the old city walls, which was the main residential area for wealthy French colonialists (today it is in the city's Gueliz district).

The villa, which is located a five-minute walk from the Jardin Majorelle, the popular tourist attraction created by the French designer Yves Saint Laurent, has its own tower, from where Churchill liked to paint the spectacular sunsets for which the city is renowned.

On arrival at the villa, Churchill insisted that Roosevelt accompany him to the top of the tower to see the panoramic view of Marrakesh, and to witness for himself that magical moment during a Moroccan sunset when the final, dying rays of the sun catch the snow-capped peaks of the Atlas Mountains as the muezzin sounds the evening call to prayer.

At Churchill's insistence, two of his staff made a chair of their arms to carry the wheelchair-bound Roosevelt up the winding stairs to the roof of the tower to watch the spectacle. As Celia Sandys, Churchill's granddaughter, has recounted in her book, *Travels with Winston Churchill*, Roosevelt was clearly taken by the moment. Reclining on a divan, Roosevelt remarked to Churchill: 'I feel like a sultan: you may kiss my hand, my dear.' In his diary, Churchill's doctor recorded: 'We stood gazing at the purple hills, where the light was changing every minute.' Churchill himself murmured: 'It's the most lovely spot in the world.'

Refreshed, Roosevelt left Marrakesh the following morning, while Churchill opted to stay one day longer to do some painting. During the afternoon he painted a view of the Atlas Mountains, which was the only picture he painted during the war.

'Here in these spacious palm groves rising from the desert,' Churchill wrote, 'the traveller can be sure of perennial sunshine, of every comfort and diversion, and can contemplate with ceaseless satisfaction the stately and snow-clad panoramas of the Atlas Mountains.'

Abderrazak ben Chaabane, one of Morocco's leading botanists, who helped Yves Saint Laurent design the Jardins Majorelle has said: "I have always felt that a part of Churchill's soul will forever remain in Marrakesh. This is where Churchill came to relax and rest and rebuilt his strength for all the challenges he faced.'

4:00 PM: We'll return to our hotel, have time to freshen up, have a group reflection session, and then head out for an evening on the town...dinner out!

MONDAY March 30, 2015

8:00 AM: Breakfast, checkout and loading the buses.

9:00 AM: Departure to the Southwest for Arazane and Taroudant. Of Taroudant: "The landscape is full of mountains and it is very beautiful and sunny in January.

I can sit under the trees in the garden and write, with the roses and the carnations already in flower. And often there is a spicy, hot smell which is very intoxicating. Please don't go...because I like it so much I don't want too many English visitors coming to spoil it!" (The Guardian)

The ride to Taroudant is one of the most striking of this trip, with vast expanses of land empty of all life. When we arrive in Taroudant you will begin to understand the choice. With its majestic gold, pink and orange tinted circuit of high walls, Taroudant is half citadel and half oasis. It is a town of great charm and grace.

The ruddy, clay houses, minarets and groves of oranges and pomegranates seem to drowse beneath the gaze of the frosted High Atlas to the north and the Anti-Atlas to the south. The walls, the souks and the stark backdrop of the High Atlas are the town's main attractions. The souks are not large but they are varied; there is a strong tradition of local craft and much of the work here is of outstanding quality.

But before reaching Taroudant, we will stop in a little timeless village called Arazane, where the real reason we came this far south is located. Arazane is the site of a famous 700+ year old synagogue discovered and then restored by Rafi, but cared for for 45 years by Harim, a local Berber Muslim man, now 65 years old, who held the key in trust for all those years, fulfilling his promise to the Rabbi when the Jews left the village in 1960, that he would give the key to any Jew who came asking for the Synagogue.

In past years, after meeting this remarkable man who preserved a Synagogue for almost five decades for the “possibility” that a Jew might return...our students have often asked if they had just met a saint. A man who did not take anything of the vacant property for his own use, which he surely could have done? A man who preserved in his memory the chants and songs of Arazane’s Jews only to finally share them with us, virtually the only Jews to ever come here. This adobe Synagogue and Mikveh (ritual bath) has been preserved by KIVUNIM in recent years, and our 100’s of former students have erected a plaque in Harim’s honor that hangs on the wall inside.

After visiting the Synagogue and meeting Harim we will have lunch and tea in his home and enjoy a remarkable experience of local hospitality.

3:00 PM: Departure from Arazane for the short ride to Taroudant, one of the Imperial cities of Morocco. We’ll check into the Hotel Palais Salaam a beautiful former governor’s palace (mainly 19th Century with parts dating back to the 16th Century) which has an outstanding location built into the town walls of Taroudant, with sun terraces, lovely mature gardens and courtyards, two pools (one heated in winter).

4:00 PM: We’re off to the medina and the small but very charming and more accessible souk.

7:00 PM: Dinner

8:00 PM: Group meeting

TUESDAY March 31, 2015

7:30 AM: Breakfast, checkout and loading the bus

8:30 AM: Departure for Casablanca...a long but beautiful ride north with a great picnic lunch along the way.

2:00 PM: On arrival in Casablanca we will visit one of the six Jewish day schools serving the 3000+ remaining Jews of Casablanca and see some of the wonderful children of this community; they are a special delight. We will have time to speak with Jacquy and Natalie Sebag, the school’s directors, about the work they are doing and the challenges that they face. How does one maintain both a Moroccan and Jewish identity? What is the impact of state curriculum expectations upon their work? Why have these families remained when almost all of the 300,000 emigrated? Is there a future?

4:00 PM: Check-in at GOLDEN TULIP FARAH CASABLANCA Hotel

6:00 PM: Dinner at one of the Jewish Clubs...tonight, for the meat eaters, kosher lamb tagine, one of the all-time great dishes of Moroccan cuisine. 8:00 PM early night to sleep in preparation for our important visit tomorrow morning.

WEDNESDAY, March 31, 2015

7:00 AM: Early breakfast

8:00 AM: Departure for Rabat, Morocco's capital city. We have been invited, as in each year in the past, to have the truly unique privilege of entering the intimate tomb of King Mohammed V and his son, King Hassan II to conduct a Jewish memorial service with the chanting, in Hebrew, of the Jewish Memorial Prayer, *El Maleh Rahamim*. Several students will be asked to represent us all in laying wreaths at the two tombs. Here, at the end of our powerful visit to Morocco, we, as a Jewish group, are invited into the most sacred site in the country. We remember the actions of Mohammed V in truly saving the lives of his Jewish subjects during the Second World War. But most of all, in this special visit, this special privilege, we are able to call upon the spirit of that courage and that sense of humanity and breathe it in. We can take from this holy space a vision of the courage and the wisdom needed to bring about a healing in the terribly violent and discordant world in which we live. 12:00 PM Lunch

1:00 PM: Return to Casablanca for our visit to the Hassan II Mosque, built for the 60th birthday of former Moroccan King Hassan II. It is the largest religious monument in the world after Mecca. It has space for 25,000 worshippers inside and another 80,000 outside. The 210-meter minaret is the tallest in the world and is visible day and night for miles around.

Although Hassan II Mosque was designed by a French architect, it is Moroccan through and through. All of the granite, plaster, marble, wood, and other materials used in its construction were taken from around Morocco (The sole exceptions are the white granite columns and the glass chandeliers.) Six thousand traditional Moroccan artisans worked for five years to turn these raw materials into abundant and incredibly beautiful mosaics, stone and marble floors and columns, sculpted plaster moldings, and carved and painted wood ceilings. The mosque also includes a number of modern touches: it was built to withstand earthquakes and has a heated floor, electric doors, a sliding roof, and lasers which shine at night from the top of the minaret toward Mecca. Some have questioned the expenditure of so much money in a very poor country, but one must consider the 1000's of people put to productive work as a result of this "public works project." The Mosque gave another generation of disappearing artisans and craftsmen a new lease on their creative and productive lives. Things are not always as simple or straightforward as they might seem!

3:00 PM: We'll make our way to The Museum of Moroccan Jewry, the only Jewish Museum in the Arab world today. It is, in many ways, the result of the work of one man, our guide to Kivunim's Moroccan journey, Raphy Elmaleh. Here we will see a presentation of the history of the Jews of Morocco, tracing their history back to Roman times and maybe earlier. The museum conveys their vast influence upon Morocco and Morocco (Berber, Arab, Islamic) upon them. We will be greeted by the Museum's Director, Zhor Rahihil, a museum educator who once studied with our own Tobi Kahn and is employed by the Government to Direct this museum. Zhor, an expert on Moroccan Jewry, is Muslim.

5:00 PM: We will have a visit to several of the community synagogues. There are 7 synagogues on one street near the Jewish Day school we visited yesterday and they each have services 3 times each day. Some are simple, some are elegant, but all represent this extraordinary culture that has thrived here in the

Moslem world. How is this possible? In entering the Jewish universe of Morocco you begin to see the irony and contrast to our stereotypical view of the Arab world.

6:00 PM: Dinner at another of the 4 Jewish Clubs in Casablanca (all with kosher restaurants- there is more kosher food available to us in Morocco than anywhere else on our year-long travels outside of Israel!) We will have some guests tonight to help us leave Morocco with even more complex thoughts than we already have.

8:30 PM: Back at the hotel we will have a final reflection session and then some time to say goodbye for two weeks, to get some sleep (a few are leaving in the wee hours of the morning), and to pack up and get ready to leave tomorrow.

THURSDAY, April 2, 2015

Departures for flights to New York, Frankfurt, Madrid, Paris, Rome and Tel Aviv throughout the day...safe flying everyone!

A final thought (and direct connection to our sojourns in Spain and Turkey): Morocco was the home to one of the greatest Jewish scholars and philosophers of all time, The Rambam, Moses Maimonides. While he did not travel the modern highways we have traveled, Maimonides lived just north of us in the city of Fes, his first adopted home, and in Spain we will visit the house where he actually lived. He was born in Cordova on the 10th of March 1135, the eve of Passover. His early years were spent in his native town, which had then just passed the zenith of its glory. The Arab rulers had fostered the development of science, art, medicine, philosophy, literature and learning. All these influences played their part in the education of Maimonides, whose father, besides training him in all branches of Hebrew and Jewish scholarship, implanted in him a sound knowledge of these secular studies as well.

In 1148 Cordova was taken from the last Fatimite caliph by the victorious Almohades, who had spread over Spain from North Africa. These militant revivalists strove to re-establish Islam in what they considered its primitive simplicity. They laid great stress on the unity of God, and tolerated neither schism within the faith nor dissent without. The position of the Spanish Jews became intolerable, and Maimonides, after ten years of hard-ships, wanderings and escapes, decided to take his family out of the country. He settled in Fez. The years that Maimonides spent there (1160-65) were memorable for his friendship with Abdul Arab Ibn Muisha—a Moslem poet and theologian—and for the commencement of his literary activity. His energies were diverted towards stimulating the religious feelings of his brethren and combating assimilation. In consequence he became alarmed for his own safety, and in 1165 he left for Egypt, where he settled after a passing visit to the Holy Land. Cordova taught him the humanities; Fez humanity.

Yes, Morocco is a very special place...right up into the years of our own times. The following words of King Mohammed VI convey the depth of understanding and attachment that exists between the Muslim and Jewish citizens of this historic land. The words of the King are a gigantic lesson for the whole world. They set a high standard for enhancing one's own humanity by compassion and understanding of the "other."

May these powerful days in Sicily, Spain and in particular Morocco infuse your Passover holidays with deeper meaning and greater challenge. The question of freedom remains as poignant and often illusive today as is told in the story of the Exodus from Egypt. Memory and engagement with memory has been and remains a key element in helping us pave a path to a better future. Where we have been will help tell us where we have to go and how to get there.

Berlin, Prague and Budapest

The post-Holocaust Jew cannot simply de-plane in Germany and be there as if in any other place. Whatever we may each think about the proper way to respond to post-war Germany it is simply not possible for our psyche to remain aloof to what happened here. Some of us are grandchildren of “survivors.” All of us are somehow distant relatives, even if we actually had none involved. For here in Germany the world turned itself into something it had not even imagined in the few 1000’s of years of human experience as we know it. Some people react to Germany by refusing to come here. Others by refusing to buy German products, or speak German, or listen to Wagner and other German music. Still others say the war is over, 2 generations and even 3 have arisen from the ashes and the young modern German is no different than us. There is no right way. And this is the toughest trip of the year by far!

KIVUNIM comes to Germany to understand the human capacity for evil; the immense capacity for evil so extreme that in its path millions and millions of men women and children could have been put to death as a governmental policy...while the voters, the people seem to have looked the other way. So this is our purpose this week...to try to understand what might happen if we were sitting at Wannsee; if we were the neighbors of Track 17 and the Grunewald Station...what if. Are we sure we would behave differently?

How do we insure that something like this will never happen again? And is this a Jewish question or a human question?

While here we will live in a zone of conflict. Seeing the hints at the Holocaust story all over the city while at the same time enjoying and experiencing a vibrant alive dynamic modern culture. A really hip place! Music, art, dance, architecture...your job, your opportunity, is to try to sort it out and come to some answers...but in the end...there are no answers...there are just endless questions.

Sunday, April 26, 2015

We depart Tel Aviv at 6:20 AM on El Al flight 2371 and arrive at Berlin’s Schonefeld Airport at 9:50 AM

After arriving in Berlin and meeting David Mendelsohn and our local guide, Amos at the airport, we’ll set out for two important historical sites.

We will visit the House of the Wannsee Conference, the location at the center of the very powerful film you saw last week, Conspiracy. We will also visit the memorial at Platform 17 in the Grunewald Train Station. Simple, elegant and deeply troubling!

Here In Grunwald we face the question about ourselves. What would we have done. The authorities are rounding up our neighbors, and we can see the process with our own eyes. But what do we do? What do we do? It’s easy to

blame all Germans of that period...they should have stood up, resisted, protested, something...anything. But what would we have done? What is the underlying basis we would need within ourselves to stand up for what is right...often at the risk of our own lives?

Somehow, after something so heavy we will have lunch before returning to the city center and checking in at our hotel: The Meininger Hotel Alexanderplatz.

4:30 PM: We'll visit some neighborhoods in Berlin, Prenzlauer Berg and its border with the Mitte district, stressing the tension between the historical element and hip contemporary Berlin.

We'll have an early night to sleep. But on the agenda for tonight's thinking might go something like this: Many Jews used to (and probably still do) think it immoral to purchase German goods and certainly to travel to Germany...boycott if you will. Is KIVUNIM's coming here right or wrong?

MONDAY, April 27:

An Introduction to Berlin

We're going to use public transportation this week to give ourselves the chance to see and feel more of the life of this city. We'll set on a walking tour to understand Berlin's general history. On our tour we'll see Brandenburg Gate, the Unter den Linden Avenue, the Reichstag, the place where Hitler's Bunker once stood, and the Berlin Wall, among other sites.

In the afternoon we'll explore the Topography of Terror Museum, a very powerful and quite unique place. It will become clearer and clearer that Germany has chosen to confront its horrid past and not ignore or run away from it.

We'll stop for a picnic lunch in one of Berlin's parks and then take a boat ride on the River Spree...followed by some free time and meeting back at the hotel at 6:00 PM for a group reflection session (we need a lot of these here) before dinner out.

Berlin wears its complex history on its sleeve. The buildings tell a story of a country brought to its knees at the end of World War I and responsive to the dark side of nationalism that ultimately brought to power the most inhuman regime to ever rule on earth. Then as if overnight, they become the world's heroes in facing head-on the growing post-war aggressiveness of the Soviet Union. Less than 20 years after the liberation of concentration camps in which Germans turned other human beings into ash, President John Kennedy stood before masses of German citizens, many carrying the secret guilt of having been participants in that mass murder...and he said "Ich Bin Ein Berliner, I am a Berliner!" Today's walk through history raises many questions....

TUESDAY, April 28, 2015

Jewish Identity, Haskalah and Zionism

Our walking tour today will take us to the area of Berlin where many Jews lived, the famous Courtyards Area in the so-called 'Jewish Quarter' and explore the various ways in which Jews and their acquaintances dealt with the Nazi regime. We will see instances of resistance and places where Jews hid from the Nazis, and hear about Righteous Gentiles who risked their lives to help Jews - and about Jewish collaborators, who helped the Nazis find those who were in hiding. The tour will lead to a discussion about the choices and dilemmas encountered

by German Jews under Nazi rule. We will see the great Synagogue on
Orienstrasse, left almost totally destroyed after the war but still hinting at its
immense greatness and beauty from before.

The area is today a lively gallery area and a trendy spot for boutiques - we will
see again this tension between past and present, during our independent
exploration of the gallery district, which is also abundant with street art.

After picnic lunch and some free time, we'll visit the Deutsches Historisches
Museum (German Historical Museum).

Yesterday and now today raise questions about the influence of culture upon
sub-culture or "other" culture. How does the modern Jew become the modern
Jew? Why is there a very different Jewish life and thought in Germany than in
Morocco or Greece or Turkey during the same period? What does the word
"renaissance" mean? What does "enlightenment" mean? It's an intense
term...was everything that preceded it unenlightened? Did the Haskalah (the
Jewish Enlightenment) terminology mimic something else or was it a unique
breed of its own? Does enlightenment = assimilation? Does it mean conversion
or inevitably lead to it? Does it open doors to the majority culture if the Jew
becomes "enlightened" about his or her own stuff? Does the Haskalah include
art, music, (there was a sudden burst of great Jewish musicians, composers,
artists (yes, there were!)...or is it only referring to a different approach to Judaism
and the study of Judaism. Finally why is this so BIG a topic in Germany and not
so if we were in Russia, Lithuania, the Ukraine (well maybe Odessa!), or North
Africa or the Middle East.

Again, we'll return to the hotel for a group meeting and then dinner out.

WEDNESDAY April 29, 2015

Migration and Identity in Modern Germany - Welcome to Kreuzberg!

Our tour today will take us to the hip neighborhood of Kreuzberg. We'll learn
more about the meaning of Street Art. We'll explore diversity - Berlin-style - and
see mosques, synagogues and anarchist headquarters within close proximity of
each other. We'll learn more about identity issues in Germany's new "immigration
society".

We'll have lunch out today and then re-meet at Berlin's Jewish Museum, where
an extraordinary architecture serves as a backdrop to exciting exhibits relating to
the history of Jews in Germany. The tour will reveal the meanings and intentions
behind this amazing structure and emphasize the connections between the
exhibits to the development of Jewish identity and to the sites visited earlier in
the week.

Germany provided the fertile soil for the development of almost all of the
expressions of modern Judaism: Reform, Conservative and Modern Orthodox.
That alone should raises some questions in our mind. German culture enhanced
the Jewish experience of modernity producing such contrasting realms of thought
as Psychoanalysis on the one hand and Communism (Marxism) on the
other...and much much more. What was in the drinking water here?

Here in Kreuzberg we confront a small piece of changing Europe. The Turkish-
German phenomenon. Who is "authentically" German and who is not? When does
a German become a German? What was the Jewish experience prior to the war?

Was the army a leveling and/or unifying factor...common service? In a so-called global world, is ethnicity or national identity any longer relevant? And if so, should it be? Should all borders be open, and if not, on what basis should they be closed? Is Israel's right of return for Jews but not for Arabs morally or strategically defensible? Does this place Israel on a par with the nations of the world or set it apart? Does it matter? What should countries like Israel, the US, or Germany do about refugees? By the way, why are there refugees? Must there always be refugees?

Group meeting followed by dinner out.

THURSDAY April 30, 2015

Last Day in Berlin and at night, the Walpurgisnacht (Witches' Night)

We will visit the Weissensee Jewish Cemetery, the largest Jewish cemetery in Europe with its story being a reflection of the history of Jews in Central Europe. From there we will see the off-beat, quaint, nearby neighborhood of Weissensee, including the lake, after which the neighborhood is named. The day will allow us time to fill in unfinished pieces from the past 4 days...we will see one of the great museums of antiquities (mostly stolen from the Orient).

In the evening to see one of the major events - for example at Kulturbrauerei - for the Walpurgisnacht (from 5 pm). Although, beware! Walpurgisnacht, the night before May Day, is known as the Witches' Night, when the witches convene and play tricks on the innocent!

And then we come back to the hotel to begin our transition to Prague with the showing of the film, "The Power of Good" telling the December 1938 story of Nicholas Winton, a 29-year-old London stockbroker, who was about to leave for a skiing holiday in Switzerland, when he received a phone call from his friend Martin Blake asking him to cancel his holiday and immediately come to Prague: *"I have a most interesting assignment and I need your help. Don't bother bringing your skis."* When Winton arrived, he was asked to help in the camps, in which thousands of refugees were living in appalling conditions. The rest of this remarkable story will be told in the film, and leaving it as mystery will reward you in the end.

FRIDAY May 1, 2015

7:00 AM: Depart early in order to reach Prague by 1 PM.

Prague

What shall KIVUNIM see in Central Europe? Gas chambers, concentration camps? Our image of Eastern Europe is so sanctified but also burdened with the Holocaust. It is hard to image life in its big cities as being more middle class, more sophisticated, more diverse than anything we can find in our North American lives at home. We have chosen to focus on two of the extraordinary communities of the great Central European Jewish past. We will not ignore the Holocaust; it is impossible and immoral to do so. But we will seek to transport ourselves back into a truly glorious time and to understand what went into the "drinking water" here in these ancient lands. We will see a very different culture than we have witnessed in Morocco or will soon see in India for sure. Even quite different than a southern neighbor in Greece.

In Central Europe you may again experience ghosts. You may find yourself seeing Jews who are not there. Should be there, but are not there. One wonders what we would have seen here if the Holocaust had never happened. The world, and certainly the Jewish world would be a very different place. We have been to places that were untouched (at least physically) by the Holocaust. But here it is everywhere because of all the ghosts. Human ghosts, book ghosts, building ghosts. What reconstruction shall we make from this experience?

One of the most glorious cities in Europe, Prague presents a fascinating series of questions for Jewish history. The experience is, as was the case across Christian Europe, always up and down. There were great moments and extraordinarily difficult ones. Prague is home of the Maharal, the creator of the great Golem of Prague. This giant robot made of clay had the breathe of life breathed into him by Rabbi Lowe, the Maharal, and the Golem protected the Jews of the Jewish Quarter from violence and persecution. Should we dismiss this fantastic story without even a moment of consideration of what such a belief represented? "I lift up my eyes to the mountains, from where will help come?" says the Psalmist. We say things like this in moments of stress and tension, we pray "from the depths" of our souls in tough times. The Golem was a physical manifestation of those prayers...and it appears that people believed in its power...or something like that....

And on the other hand, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries Prague unleashed in its Jewish resident a level of cultural creativity rarely seen on the world stage. There were artists, and musicians, and composers and theatre directors, and actors, and stage designers. And on Monday, when we visit Terezin and the Nazi show-camp Theresienstadt we will see where all of this remarkable creativity ended up.

Throughout Europe and of course in Prague the Nazis looted all Jewish owned possessions, both general and Jewish art. In 1942, the communities were instructed to send the contents of their synagogues to the Jewish Museum in Prague, and, with a few exceptions, the Torah Scrolls, gold and silver and ritual textiles were sent to Prague, along with thousands of books. Artifacts were shipped to the museum from all the Jewish communities and synagogues of Bohemia and Moravia.

The inventory of the Prague Jewish Museum expanded by fourteen times as a result, and a large number of Jews were put to work by the Germans to sort, catalogue and put into storage all the items that had come from over one hundred congregations in Bohemia and Moravia. It needed over forty warehouses, many of them deserted Prague synagogues, to store all these treasures.

Whatever the intention of the Nazis in collecting of this material, they did not destroy it as they did to most Synagogues themselves leaving us with the tragic reality of artifacts instead of people. The collection demonstrates this powerful artistic drive with the Czech Jews and how it was used to embellish and enhance the quality of Jewish life and expression throughout the country. This still warehoused collection, know as "The Precious Legacy" remains mostly hidden

from public view. It is still a challenging chapter in the history of Central European Jewry.

We will arrive at our hotel, the Barcelo Praha, between 1 and 1:30. We'll have until 3 PM to settle in, take a nice shower and get dressed for Shabbat...because, at 3 PM we will meet Rabbi David Bernstein in the lobby and hear a general instruction to the Synagogue history of Prague before heading to the Old Town and the Jewish Museum. There we will spend a few hours exploring and understanding the richness and variety of Jewish expression here in Prague...and more. You know, Czechoslovakia, as it was know was liberated from the Germans by the Soviets and fell under Soviet rule after WWII. In the immediate post-war period, the Soviets looked to Zionism and the emerging Jewish state, led as it was by Socialists like David Ben Gurion, as a likely thorn in the side of colonial Great Britain and a possible bastion of communism in the Middle East.

Not only did the Soviet Union vote in the United Nations in favor of partition, but they recognized the State of Israel almost immediately. But most significant, they allowed their surrogate nation, Czechoslovakia to sell arms to the infant Israeli State when almost all of the rest of the world, including the United States, refused to do so. The immediate post-war Czech government was enthusiastic in its support of Zionism. But not for long, and by the early 50's those Jewish Zionist leaders were brought up on charges in show-trials that left the then tiny Jewish community shattered and bewildered.

The Synagogues of Prague are quite spectacular: The Altnoyschul- oldest operating synagogue in the world. Among other things we will explore the question of women and prayer in the synagogue. From what period did women pray in the synagogue?

Maisel Synagogue: the story of Mordechai Maisel; David Gans; Avigdor Karah; the story of Jewish printing in the 16th century; the origin of the Magen David; Jewish art related to Torah...

The Pinkas Synagogue: brief history of the Horowitz family and the memorial to Holocaust victims. The drawings of the children of Terezin – what do they convey?

The Old Jewish Cemetery - we will visit the tombs of Gans; Maisel; the Maharal, Baroness Handie Bassevi von Treuenburg; others. At the adjacent building of the Chevra Kadisha (the Jewish Burial Society) we will discuss recent research of Jewish burial and mortuary customs based on findings in Prague, and the light it casts on our understanding of Jewish traditions.

Everything we see here in the Museums, in the Synagogues, on the streets of the Jewish quarter is part of the story...part of the nuance of belonging and being rejected, of identifying and then wondering who am I, of loyalty and treachery. In the beauty of this city lies a cauldron of mixed ingredients never quite making it to the level of a delicious aromatic stew...some of what is here is magnificent and some of it...?

We will complete our Synagogue tour this afternoon at the very beautiful Spanish Synagogue where there is a weekly Conservative Movement minyan with mixed seating. Following Kabbalat Shabbat we will make our way to the Shelanu

Kosher Restaurant, run by the local Chabad Rabbi and his wife, Dina much like Rabbi and Mrs. Mendel Hendel in Athens! We will have a wonderful Shabbat Dinner and then make our way back to our hotel.

Shabbat May 2, 2015

Those who want the experience of the full traditional service will get up early and go with David into the Jewish Quarter. Others get up a little later and attend one of the various services that David will have described last night. We will all meet for lunch at 1 PM at Shelanu.

Following Shabbat lunch we will have a basic walking tour with David and he will continue with those who want more. The afternoon is yours to explore and stroll and feel the beauty and majesty of this city.

We meet back at the hotel for a group meeting at 630. Following Havdalah, we have invited a few young Czech Jews to join us and both give you time to ask them about real life here for them today and enjoy some of their favorite night spots. Late dinner out.

SUNDAY, May 3, 2015

We will take a walking tour devoted to a general introduction to Prague as a city representing European and Christian Civilization and also a capital with 1000 years of a specific Czech history. This will serve as background for us to understand the special and ambivalent situation of Jews whose presence accompanies the entire history of the city. As we walk through the town, we will encounter cultural symbols of medieval and modern European civilization - Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque. We will learn about the interrelationship of Church, Crown and Nobility as well as the influence of foreign powers.

We will begin by taking the tram to the Strachov observation point and visit Castle Hill.. As we look at the striking view of the city, we will get a general introduction to Prague's topography and historical evolution.

We will then visit the unique Strachov Library, first established in the 12th century. Proceed through Czernin Palace and Loretto shrine to visit the famous Hradcany(Prague castle) and the St. Vitus Cathedral and the palace gardens. Exactly at 12 the daily ritual of the "changing of the guard" takes place. With fancy uniforms, trumpets and drums, this military parade is always fascinating. A troupe of local street musicians performs on location. For a few coins they will oblige us playing Smetana's Vltava so we will know whence originates the music of Hatikvah.

Lunch break at Canzone Pizzeria in the Mala Strana, the Lesser Town beneath the castle.

In the afternoon we will walk through Karl's Bridge to the Old Town and visit the Old Town Square including the famous medieval City Hall Tower and the astronomical clock. Tour of the Old City various architectural periods; Romanesque: Gothic: Renaissance: Baroque: and Art Nouveau. Different styles, techniques and considerations of urban construction will be explained. Emphasis will be placed on examining the interrelationship between the arts and architecture on one hand, and contemporary theological and ideological concepts on the other.

The Lobkowitz Palace at Prague Castle, is one of the most significant cultural sites in the Czech Republic and the only privately owned building in the Prague Castle complex. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Built in the second half of the 16th century by the Czech nobleman Jaroslav of Pernštejn (1528-1569). It was his sister-in-law, Maria Maximiliana Manrique de Lara y Mendoza, who brought the celebrated Infant Jesus of Prague statue from her homeland of Spain to the Palace, where it became well-known for its miraculous healing powers. The statue was later given by Vratislav and Maria Maximiliana's daughter, Polyxena (1566-1642), to the Church of Our Lady Victorious in Prague, where it remains on display and attracts thousands of visitors each year. A copy of the Infant Jesus of Prague is on permanent display in the Lobkowitz Palace Museum.

The Palace came into the Lobkowitz family through the marriage of Polyxena to Zdeněk Vojtěch, 1st Prince Lobkowitz (1568-1628). In the centuries following that marriage, the Palace witnessed some of Bohemia's most significant historical events. In 1618, the famous Defenestration of Prague took place when Protestant rebels threw the Catholic Imperial Ministers from the windows of the Royal Palace at Prague Castle! Surviving the fall, they took refuge in Lobkowitz Palace, where they were protected from further assault by Polyxena, 1st Princess Lobkowitz.

Following the defeat of the Protestant faction at the Battle of White Mountain in 1620, the Catholic Lobkowitz family consolidated its influence and power base for the next three centuries. Lobkowitz Palace took on a more formal, imperial role and functioned as the Prague residence when the family needed to be present at the seat of Bohemian power for political and ceremonial purposes. With the exception of the sixty-three years (1939-2002) during which the property was confiscated and held by Nazi and later Communist powers, the Palace has belonged to the Lobkowitz family. From the Palace we will make our way to the

Strahov Library. A great monastery was built here in the 12th century as religious devotion led the religious leadership to found more training and inspirational institutions within central Europe. Unlike the monasteries we visited in Meteora, these "religious" were engaged with the world in many ways.

In 1670 Jeroným Hrněš, a philosopher and theologian became the abbot of Strahov. His greatest work, which has survived to the present day, is the building of the new library, so-called Theological Hall completed in 1679. It was built for the books coming from the **southern Moravian** Louka Convent (abolished in 1784). In 1779 Václav Mayer occupied the abbot's throne and was the last to carry out great building activities. His most outstanding work was the building of the new library in Classical style.

Today it is called the Philosophical Hall. It brought the extensive building activity at Strahov Monastery to an end and the following generations of abbots devoted their attention merely to minor architectural repairs, all under the influence of contemporary fashion, and to maintenance of the area as a whole. The monastery survived in this way until 1950, when it was taken over by the communist regime and the "religious" were interned and placed in civil employment with very few of them being able to work in the clerical

administration as priests of the diocese. The monastery was subjected to thorough archeological research and transformed into the "Memorial of National Literature." In the course of the said archeological research the long since forgotten Romanesque form of the monastery was revealed and reconstructed in a sensitive way.

There are magnificent gardens throughout the city and we will have the pleasure of walking through at least one. Gardens of this kind rarely exist in the United States, except in the realm of private property. But here access, even if for a fee, allows us to enter a world of nature, yet humanly planned beauty that is unique. We will visit the great cathedral and wander the beautiful alleyways, the grand plazas, and take in the endless people, languages, costumes, music, merchants that fill the central streets of the Old Town. Here you will feel and be captivated by the grandeur of Prague.

You can go back to the hotel to freshen up or stay out for dinner and beyond, but we have a full and important day tomorrow so curfew will not be too late.

MONDAY May 4, 2015

Terezin

As we experienced in Berlin, here in the dark and long shadow cast by Nazi Germany we can never escape its horrors. But here outside of Prague where its Jewish citizens were brought to an insidious Nazi Concentration camp, the horror is not what you think. Here the Nazi's created a pretend camp to show how humanely the Jews and other inmates were being treated. They invite the International Red Cross to visit and inspect. It was an evil and most cynical act...and in many ways it succeeded.

We will spend the day in Theresienstadt. We will walk the streets and stand in the dormitories and even sing prayers in the makeshift cave that served as a synagogue. Here too we will see a film unlike any you have ever seen. The Defiant Requiem will tell you a story that took place right here, and the story is almost impossible to believe. It is a story of bravery, of imagination, of conviction. And it will bring this place to life in a very special way.

We will have the opportunity today to study with Martina Stolbova, who was one of the producers of the Nicholas Winton film we saw on Thursday night. In addition, she has been a guide here at Theresienstadt for many years.

This will be a full day...don't allow distractions to lead you astray...focus on what is here. There are lessons about the human condition and the human will that need to be internalized and allowed to become a part of each and every one of us. Our humanity can only be made stronger by this day...IF we stay focused.

We will have a picnic lunch here in Theresienstadt and following the day's program, make our way back to Prague for a final discussion and dinner out.

TUESDAY May 5, 2015

Checkout and load the buses and then off to the local Lauder School where we will be able to see the functioning of Jewish education in this rather small Jewish community. Then on the buses and off for our drive south to Budapest. The bus ride to Budapest is long and we will arrive at the Leonardo Hotel at about late dinner time.

It is important to note that of all the countries in Central and Eastern Europe, Hungary was the only one that remained with a sizeable Jewish community after the Holocaust. Compared to Poland, The Czech Republic, Slovakia, Lithuania and even Romania, each with communities of a few thousand, the Jewish community of Hungary counts between eighty and a hundred thousand people, clearly a critical mass that could secure Jewish presence for a long time to come. Like the places we have visited in the past days, we shall deal with the specific history and the special identity of Hungarian Jews. Due to their significant number, we shall delve deeper into their present communal life, institutions, and get a glimpse of their efforts to preserve Judaism and Jewish life.

WEDNESDAY, May 6, 2015

We will start this morning with a spectacular bus tour that will take us to both parts of the city- Buda, on one side of the Danube River, and Pest, on the other side. The tour will take us to Gellert Hill, then to the Royal Palace, Fisherman's Bastion and over the Chain Bridge through Andrassy Boulevard to Heroes Square, and then the Parliament building. As we tour we will get an idea why Budapest at the turn of the 20th century was called Judapest. The role of Jews (yes, some had become converts to Christianity) in the development, and building of the city was overwhelming.

We visit the magnificent Dohany Synagogue, the largest in Europe. This is a Neolog or Reform synagogue. The Chief Cantor will explain local customs and may indulge us with some of his favorite musical pieces. The Jewish Museum is in the adjacent building. It is on the site where Theodor Herzl used to live. Herzl was born in Budapest, ironically, one of the most assimilated Jewish centers and therefore least likely to espouse Zionism. The museum has a very important section on the Holocaust in Hungary. Actually, Budapest has several important Holocaust memorials. From our point of view, the focus is not so much the history itself as its impact on Jewish identity today.

1:00 PM: Lunch will be in Balint House, the local JCC.

From there we go to Balint Jewish Community Center in the downtown to meet some members of the community and learn more about the social activities offered to the members. We will meet here with representatives of the JDC, Jewish Agency and the local Kehila and see how they cooperate, or rival each other, in efforts to benefit the Jewish community. One of our goals, as in all the places we visit, will be to understand the image and the actual presence of "World Jewry" in the perception of local Jews.

Jews are very prominent in Hungarian cultural life: music, theater, cinema but especially as writers (e.g. Nobel laureate Imre Kertesz) and media. Is there a "Jewish syndrome" - how can it be explained? How do these celebrities contend with their Jewish identity in their professional creative work? Do they encounter anti-Semitism?

Israelis are extremely active in financial investments in Budapest especially in real estate and development. How is this entrepreneurship explained? Do they maintain any contact with the local Jewish community? How are they viewed by local Jews?

What are Israel's relations with Hungary? What are Israel's relations with the Jewish community and Israel's official attitude towards revival of Jewish life in Hungary?

7:30 PM: Dinner Out

8:30 PM: After dinner visit Serely Pub, a new Jewish pub which has become the Jewish Social center of Budapest. There are different social and educational programs there practically every night.

THURSDAY, May 7, 2015

Contemporary Jewish Life in Budapest

In the morning we will visit the Yavneh Lauder School, then meet with its charismatic principle Dr. Anna Sessler who will unfold her vision of cultivating a new Jewish persona living in contemporary Eastern Europe. We will visit the memorial to Raul Wallenberg.

12:20 PM: Lunch out

3:00 PM: We will go to the new Holocaust Documentation Center to see a unique memorial to the Jews transported to Auschwitz. A recent memorial was erected on the banks of the Danube. This memorial reminds us of the crimes committed by the local Hungarian Fascists against the Jews and is therefore quite controversial in Budapest.

6:00 PM: We will have final dinner out and then meet the buses at 8 PM for the ride to airport to catch our flight back to Israel.

India

WEDNESDAY May 27, 2015

Departure from Tel Aviv on El Al Airlines flt # 71 departing at 9.20 P.M. and arriving in Mumbai, India's Chatrapati Shivaji Airport at 7.55 A.M. Thursday (5/28)

THURSDAY May 28, 2015

For the most exciting beginning to our experience of India, we will meet our program designers and guides, Ralph and Yael Jhirad. They have been active members of the remaining Indian community all of their lives and have been with KIVUNIM since our first trip in 2007. Their older son Nathaniel assisted with our program for several visits and last year, as you now know, Avniel was a KIVUNIM student!

After baggage claim and passport control we will make our way to our buses for our drive to Alibaug, the city along the Indian Ocean where the whole story of Indian Jewry begins. We'll have a stop for a late breakfast along the way. India is the one country where we must resist trying to tie ourselves to time, other than the need to meet flights or trains on time. Time here has an eternal feel. It goes beyond the watch or clock and what you do and when you do it carries us into other realms of self-awareness and consciousness. Look out the windows as we drive past. The cows are everywhere in the small towns and villages. Is it pagan worship that drives this devotion to an animal? There is in India a recognition that the cow that provides so much sustenance for humankind in the milk it gives us must be cared for, and certainly not slaughtered and eaten. Our teacher has called India: "The Consecration of Tolerance." Can this be a derivative of the unwillingness to kill animals for food? We are in a mostly, and

once exclusively, vegetarian culture. What are its implications for a whole society?

We will see groups of people walking along the roads, accompanying special saintly people, as we drive along the simple roadways throughout the country. Some of these religious gurus walk naked, completely removing themselves from the cares and concerns and protections of this world and focused entirely upon something somewhere else, something beyond. What is in the air in India that makes this so powerfully a spiritual place? Does the countryside look different? Do the people look different (not in color on the surface, but in color on the inside)?

Along the route to Alibaug, several hours south of Mumbai, there are small Jewish communities. We will stop in Pen to see the beautifully restored Synagogue in this small city. We will stop for lunch along the way.

Reaching Alibaug, we have come to where legend states the Jews first landed in India at the time of the Maccabees. Here the origins of the Bene Yisrael community. Here to this day, an old Hindu man who cares for an unused and empty Synagogue with a religious devotion of his own.

We will visit various sights in Alibaug-Konkan and receive a thorough introduction to the Bene Yisrael Jewish Community . Here in the countryside are many great plantations, a few still owned and run by the Jewish families who once populated this area in the 1000's. The villages of Mandawa, Awas, Jhirad, Navgaon, Thal villages all have Jewish families who bear their names...like our own Ralphy Jhirad! When Jews left Israel 2,200 years ago, during the time of the Antiochus persecutions, they head for India by ship, sailing across the Indian Ocean and were shipwrecked off the coast of Bombay. The survivors came ashore, kept the faith, lived in interior villages and were unknown to the Jewish World for 2,000 years. In India, they were known as the "Bene Yisrael" or "The Oil pressers who observe the Sabbath day-Shanwar Teli"

We will visit the original landing site at Navgaon, see the historic monument, visit simple Bene Yisrael villages and meet the remaining Bene Israel Jews. We will visit several unusual synagogues in Alibaug, as well. Alibaug is a place you will never forget and will serve as quite an introduction to India...not the big bustling city of Mumbai, but the deep private world of the Indian plantation.

We will make our way back to Mumbai, check-in at the TAJ President Hotel and have dinner, poolside later Thursday night. (Security concerns do dictate the types of hotels that we can use on our travels. In India the contrast between where we stay and the realities of poverty unlike anything any of us have ever seen can be very jarring. We are not seeking to indulge ourselves. But keeping to our high security standards, requires us to stay in higher level facilities.)

FRIDAY May 29, 2015

We will have an early breakfast, and have a full day to seek some sense of this modern city of Mumbai. A full day for appreciating this most contemporary of Indian cities and the place where Jewish life has flourished and been most "present" in India. We will visit the major sights: the Gateway to India (a remarkable landmark build with a donation of the Jewish Sassoon family), the Sassoon library and several of the community Synagogues. After lunch we will

have a unique treat, spending some time at the home of Mahatma Gandhi now a charming little museum. We will see some original footage of Gandhi which is a special experience.

We will explore the many historic sites of Mumbai, as well as its cultural riches. Museums, monuments, city streets, people's homes, wealth and poverty, computer technology and ancient commerce...and see how these and much more coexist with each other as the old and new India fight out their claims to the future. Who will be victorious and how they will achieve this remains unclear. Of course Mumbai is also known for its slums, and the massive amount of human distress that never escapes you. We will meet with some representatives of the Gabriel Project.

Gabriel Project Mumbai (GPM) cares for vulnerable children living in the slums of India by providing hunger relief, literacy support, hygiene education and other programs that help promote health and well-being to the children. GPM's international participants come to India and work with local volunteers and partner NGO's to help break the cycle of poverty and hunger by volunteering in food distribution and literacy programs among the children of the Mumbai slums. GPM engages with women's empowerment groups in the slums, supporting women's business and financial development to create a win-win model for social change in the slums of Mumbai.

Mumbai is home to 22 million people, and over 70% live in slums, many which have limited access to electricity, clean water, food, and basic education. Children's schooling is often put off as parents struggle to balance the immediate needs for family survival over the need of a child to grow, develop, and study. The mission of Gabriel Project Mumbai is to create a center of food distribution and literacy for the children of the Mumbai slums that is run by young Jewish adult volunteers on a semester-long program of learning and working in Mumbai. The program is in collaboration with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), the world's largest Jewish humanitarian aid organization, and award-winning local NGO REAP that runs classes for children ages 4-12 in the Mumbai slums. Young adults on the program assist women from the slums in cooking and delivering daily warm meals for schoolchildren, thus creating powerful incentives for parents to send their children to learn rather than to work in the streets. Volunteers also deliver basic literacy through informal education and by interacting with the children, teaching them English through fun games, interesting classes and immersion. This extremely meaningful and life transforming work has a strong study component where participants learn about responsible volunteering, global poverty and international development, along with Indian culture, the history of Jews in India and Jewish ethics of social justice and *Tikkun Olam*.

It is a vision for helping to enable change in the lives of children in Mumbai's slums, while educating young Jewish adults about the challenges faced by so many and fostering the powerful ethos of care.

GPM was founded in 2012 by former hi-tech executive Jacob Sztokman turned social entrepreneur. On a visit to Mumbai in 2011 while working for an internet security firm, Jacob toured the city's slums and was deeply moved to work on the

issues of poverty and illiteracy among the children of India. Troubled by what he saw and motivated to help make a difference, Jacob met with grassroots Indian NGOs who provided research, experience and expertise, and instilled in him the belief that change is possible. Together they developed a model for combining long-term and short-term solutions by bringing international volunteers to work on food distribution and literacy. This model became the foundation of GPM. In June 2012, as Jacob left hi-tech behind for good, GPM opened its first 8-week volunteer program in India, with three volunteers providing nutrition and literacy for 500 children every day. By the end of the school year, GPM had grown to 35 volunteers per year providing daily hot nutritious meals for 750 children. In June 2014, GPM is providing nutrition and literacy for 1000 children, with the help of 40 volunteers per year.

A first day in Mumbai is one of painful contrast; poverty in numbers of people previously unimaginable to us surrounded by growing wealth and abundance. How to reconcile these two contrasts, or can we?

We will arrive back at the hotel by 4 PM giving us plenty of time to prepare for Shabbat and to use this time to think about what we have and will be seeing this trip. Shabbat can always serve as a meditative thoughtful time; these two weeks maybe even more so.

6:30 PM: We will meet in the lobby and make our way to the Knesset Eliyahu Synagogue for services. Here the synagogue has a middle eastern flavor, founded as it was the grandson of David Sassoon, the famous Baghdadi Jew who came to India in the early 19th century and created an unparalleled business success for himself, his family, and even the extended Jewish community. Today the Synagogue is a joint effort of Bene Yisrael and Baghdadi Jews.

Candlelighting is at 6:57 PM. Following services we will have Shabbat Dinner with some members of the local community. And after dinner we will take a leisurely and cooler walk back to our hotel.

SHABBAT May 30, 2015

7:30 AM: Breakfast

9:00 AM: We will make our way back to Knesset Eliyahu for Shabbat services followed by lunch. On our walk back to the hotel we will stop at the monumental Sassoon Library, one of the great and deeply appreciated Jewish gifts to the City of Mumbai.

1:00 PM: The David Sassoon Library houses one of the oldest functioning Library and Reading rooms in use in Mumbai. Members of all age groups visit it as it is conveniently located in the Fort Area in an old business district in the city of Mumbai. The Library has been listed as a Grade heritage structure within the Fort). A group of young mechanics and foremen of the Royal Mint and Government Dockyard established a museum and library for mechanical models and architectural design, in 1847, which led to the creation of the Sassoon Library. In 1863, Sir David Sassoon, a leading banker of Mumbai, contributed Rs.60,000/- to the government to build a Mechanic's Institute, now called the David Sassoon Library. This Venetian Gothic styled structure, completed in 1870, forms part of an important ensemble of buildings, that are crucial for the image of the Fort Area. The library today still boasts of growing membership. It houses a

large collection of very rare old books. The reading room is frequented often by working students due to its convenient location in the heart of the business district. In 1996, on the occasion of its 150 Anniversary, an extensive fund-raising campaign was undertaken for the first major restoration efforts carried out to the Library.

2:30-6:30 PM: Free time 6:00 PM: Group meeting

7:30 PM: Havdalah

8:00 PM: Dinner and program on "Old Bombay" at the CCI, the Cricket Club of India on Marine Drive.

SUNDAY May 31, 2015

5:45 AM: Breakfast and checkout

6:30 AM: Departure for the airport and our flight to Varanasi. We fly on Air India flt 695 departing Mumbai at 8:35 AM and arriving in Varanasi at 10:45 AM.

Varanasi airport has a sign that reads: "Welcome to the Holy City of Varanasi (in British times called Benaris.) We will check into our Hotel RIVANTAS and then have lunch and a little rest and gather in the cooler later afternoon to meet our hosts here in this amazing city. Our teacher for 7 years was Tarun Bashu known by the honorific, DadaJi, a magnificent man who passed away last year shortly before our arrival. In the summer of 2008 he came to Israel for the first time as KIVUNIM's guest. This wonderful man came into KIVUNIM's life through the world famous photographer, Frederic Brenner (whose major new exhibition you just visited with Tobi Kahn in Tel Aviv last week). Frederic urged KIVUNIM to go to India in the first place and actually accompanied us on our first year's trip here. Bashu was Frederick's teacher when he came here for the first time decades ago, While we do not have Bashu, we have his wonderful son and his legacy. Listen up and take in all of his teachings ...after being in Varanasi rarely is person ever the same.

Picturesquely situated on the crescent shaped left bank of the holy River Ganges, Varanasi, one of the ancient seats of learning in India, is said to be a compound of the names of two streams, the Varuna and the Assi, which still flow in the north and south of the city respectively. Varanasi is probably one of the most ancient living cities in India and one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world, dating back thousands of years and being contemporaneous with Sumer.

The culture of Varanasi is deeply associated with the river Ganga (the Ganges) and its religious importance. The city has been a cultural and religious center in northern India for thousands of years. Varanasi has its own style of classical Hindustani music, and has produced prominent musicians, philosophers, poets, and writers in Indian history, including Kabir, Munshi Premchand, Jaishankar Prasad, Pandit Ravi Shankar, and Ustad Bismillah Khan. The city has its own dialect of Hindi.

Varanasi is also the home of Banaras Hindu University. From time immemorial it has been a great religious center for Hindus and one of their most sacred places of pilgrimage, being visited by millions of people every year. To every visitor Varanasi offers a breathtaking experience. We will enjoy the evening AARTI at the GHATS, or ceremonial stairs, lining the west bank of Ganges river running

through the city. Worshippers use the ghats for ceremonial bathing. While some of the ghats are new, many are hundreds of years old.

Aarti is a Hindu ritual, in which light from wicks soaked in ghee (purified butter) or camphor is offered to one or more deities. It is said to have descended from the Vedic concept of fire rituals, or *homa*. The word may also refer to the traditional Hindu devotional song that is sung during the ritual. Aarti is performed and sung to develop the highest love for God. "Aa" means "towards", and "rati" means "the highest love for God" in Sanskrit.

Aarti is generally performed twice or three times daily, and usually at the end of a puja or bhajan session. It is performed during almost all Hindu ceremonies and occasions. It involves the circulating of an 'Arati plate' around a person or idol and is generally accompanied by the singing of songs in praise of that deity or person (many versions exist). In doing so, the plate itself is supposed to acquire the power of the deity. The priest circulates the plate to all those present. They cup their down-turned hands over the flame and then raise their palms to their forehead - the purificatory blessing, passed from the deity's image to the flame, has now been passed to the devotee.

The Arati plate is generally made of metal, usually silver, bronze or copper. On it must sit a lamp made of kneaded flour, mud or metal, filled with oil or ghee. A cotton wick is put into the oil and then lit, or camphor is burned instead. The plate also contains flowers, incense and Akshata. (Akshata consists of uncooked rice mixed with turmeric. It is used both as an offering to the deity and is used as a way of receiving blessings. It is also used to bless the bride and groom during weddings. Akshata is also sprinkled during other auspicious ceremonies.

Symbolically, Akshata represents prosperity, fertility and bounty. When Akshata is offered to a deity, it is believed to be the finest offering that a devotee can make. Akshata is believed to be equal to offering clothes, jewelry, food, or any other offering. Akshata is usually thrown over the head of the devotees during pujas and during functions like marriage and other auspicious events.)

The purpose of performing Arati is to ward off evil effects and the negative influence of the 'evil eye'. Arati is hence performed on people of high social or economic status; small children during various ceremonies; on people who are going on or are coming back from a long journey; on a bride and bridegroom when they enter their house for the first time; at harvest; on anything else of importance. It is also performed on newly acquired property, or before an important task.

It is believed that the idol of a deity too is susceptible to the evil eye, and needs regular Arati, with the singing of special Arati songs. These songs laud the glory of the deities and describe the benefits that one might gain by praying to them. Aarti is also a common name for Hindu girls. In most temples in India, Arati is performed at least twice a day, after the ceremonial Puja, which is the time when the largest number of devotees congregate.

We will receive a commentary on the proceedings and meanings of the chants during the Aarti of the river.

Mark Twain, who visited the city, wrote "Benaras (alternative name of the city) is older than history, older than tradition, even older than legend and looks twice as old as all of them put together."

Each night, families bring their honored departed to the shore of Mother Ganges for the Hindu cremation ceremony. For Jews, the idea of cremation has only one connotation and it is hard to imagine it otherwise. But for the Hindu, this ceremony of turning the body quickly back to dust from which it came is powerful and quite beautiful. It will require some suspension of our own beliefs in order to come closer to the Indian, but only you can determine the range of your own feelings. We will go out on the river tonight and see the burnings and then return early morning for the conclusion, the spreading, the return of those holy ashes onto the river, the so-called Mother Ganges.

We will go to dinner in one of Varanasi's interesting restaurants and get a good night's sleep because we will up for the sunrise on the Ganges.

MONDAY June 1, 2016

In order to experience the power of this city and the deep devotion to the Ganges, we must get up quite early and make our way to the riverbank. In the early dawn hour at the Daswamedh Ghat we will take a boat ride on the sacred river Ganges to see the cremation Ghats and witness the living traditions of one of the world's oldest and most important religions. (We start at 5 AM. for the best experience...For you to appreciate this remarkable city, we'll be on the River Ganges before the sun rises. Boarding a boat with our Hindu teachers and proceeding to the middle of the river, where at sunrise the sight unfolds before you. Thousands of faithful come daily to the banks to bathe and pray while in the background, temples and palaces rise in tiers from the water's edge. We will then return for a walk through the cobblestone streets along the banks of "Ganga". As shops are opening, the place now becomes a beehive of activity as the faithful are coming and going. We will visit the Kashi Vishwanath Temple while returning to the hotel.

Now we'll go to breakfast and get a little rest. Before lunch, gather for a session of Indian Yoga and then some Hindu chanting with one of KIVUNIM's most spiritual teachers, the Brahmin, Hindu dedicated priest, Shastri. We will hear of his daily routine of teaching, chanting and extremely modest living and then share chants between our Torah, Haftarah and even some niggunim...and his remarkable 1000's of years old renderings from the Vedas of Hindu tradition. This session is always a KIVUNIM favorite.

We'll have lunch and then head out for Sarnath - 5 miles out of Varanasi: Here The Great Buddha enhanced the sanctity of Varanasi by choosing the environs of the city to preach his first sermon after attaining enlightenment. Later, Ashoka, the great Mauryan Emperor erected magnificent stupas and other buildings along with his mighty stone pillar, Dharmarajika Stupa. The 110 ft. tall Damekh Stupa marks the place where Buddha preached his first sermon. Sarnath has been a premier centre for Buddhism ever since. To stand under the tree where the Buddha received enlightenment is a remarkable once-in-a-lifetime experience. The Buddha lived at the time of the Prophet Isaiah. They shared many thoughts in common, most central being the need to concern oneself with the suffering of

the less fortunate of our brothers and sisters. Why do certain people have visions? Why do some of those visions have the power to captivate 1000's of others? How do such visions enter into the consciousness of people far removed from their source, often half way around the world? Who has never heard of Siddhartha or the Buddha? Why are some words spoken so much more powerful than others? Is it linked to the personality and character of the writer or speaker?

5:00 PM: We'll return to the hotel for a refreshing swim and some rest. 7:30 PM: Dinner and a program of Indian culture.

TUESDAY June 2 , 2015

7:30 AM Breakfast and checkout and then return to Varanasi Airport for our Indigo Airlines flight 6E175 to Delhi, departing at 10:45 AM and arriving in Delhi at 12:20 PM. We will have a sandwich lunch on board. Upon arrival in Delhi we will begin our afternoon journey to Agra, home of the Taj Mahal. On the one hand, another several hours long drive. On the other hand, an opportunity to see the varied aspects of simple village and farm life that will fill our windows and hopefully enter our minds as we move through the Indian countryside.

5:00 PM: Arrival in Agra and check-in to our hotel. We'll have dinner and then a group meeting. We want to get a good night's sleep and leave early for the Taj Mahal, one of the 7 wonders of the world and amongst the most beautiful structures we will have seen all year!

WEDNESDAY June 3, 2015

7:30 AM: Breakfast and checkout and then the TAJ. A little needs to be said about this architectural wonder that is always the sole raison-de-etre for every tourist's visit to Agra and/or to India itself. Built by Shah Jahan, the Taj is a white marble memorial to his beautiful wife Mumtaz Mahal. This monument took 22 years to be completed and was designed and planned by Persian architect Ustad Isa. Apart from its stunning design balance and perfect symmetry, the Taj is also noted particularly for its elegant domes, intricately carved screens and some of the best inlay work ever seen. But what is this? A Mosque venerated as a national symbol by Hindus? Can religious sites change hands and still be holy? Or can they be re-imagined in the minds of new owners? Does this suggest any parallels to churches we saw in Spain or Mosques we saw in Turkey? And let us not forget the whole architecture question we have explored all year. Why is that these buildings, hundreds and sometimes thousands of years old, speak to us emotionally, aesthetically and certainly intellectually?

We will then move to the Agra Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage site . The fort is also known as Lal Qila, Fort Rouge and Red Fort of Agra and is about 2.5 km northwest of the Taj Mahal. The fort can be more accurately be described as a walled palatial city. It is the most important fort in India. The great Mughals Babur, Humayun, Akbar, Jehangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb lived here, and the country was governed from here. It contained the largest state treasury and mint. It was visited by foreign ambassadors, travelers, and the highest dignitaries.

After lunch we continue our journey to Jaipur. Our journey is to one of the most gorgeous cities in India, the capital of Rajasthan and a city with buildings too magnificent for words. The intricate designs and the use of color makes the city a

very special place for appreciating the ancient traditions that fill this country. India you will remember is the source of the ancient spice trade and those smells that hit you around every corner once were the center of the world's commerce. Take them in, even if they set you off for an initial moment. India is a country of the senses and you want to allow as much as possible to come in (but only bottled water!)

Jaipur, also popularly known as the *Pink City*, is the capital of Rajasthan state and is the former capital of the princely state of Jaipur. Founded in 1727 by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II, the ruler of Amber, the city today has a population of more than 5 million residents. His Highness Sawai Bhawani Singh Bahadur (born 1931) is the current titular Maharaja of Jaipur. The city is remarkable among pre-modern Indian cities for the width and regularity of its streets that are laid out into six sectors separated by broad streets 111 ft (34 m) wide. The urban quarters are further divided by networks of streets laid out on a grid. Five quarters wrap around the east, south, and west sides of a central palace quarter, with a sixth quarter immediately to the east. The Palace quarter encloses a sprawling palace complex (the Hawa Mahal, or palace of winds), formal gardens, and a small lake. Nahargarh Fort crowns the hill in the northwest corner of the old city. Another noteworthy building is Sawai Jai Singh's observatory, Jantar Mantar.

Jaipur is considered by many urbanists to be one of the best planned cities in the world. In an era when most of the rajputs were busy fighting with each other, Jaipur's kings diplomatically broadened their control sphere maintaining good relations with the Mughals. The city was planned according to Indian Vastu Shastra (Vedic or Pauranic Planning for the comfort and prosperity of the citizens). The directions of each street and market are east to West and North to South. The Eastern gate is called Suraj (Sun) Pol, while the Western gate is called Chand (Moon) Pol. There are only three gates facing East, West, and North including the Northern gate (known as Zorawar Singh gate) which faces toward the ancestral capital of Amber, while many gates face South.

Although the present city has expanded from outside of its walls, the original planning was within the walls. The gates used to be closed at sunset and opened at sunrise. Almost all Northern Indian towns of that period presented a chaotic picture of narrow twisting lanes, a confusion of run-down forts, temples, palaces, and temporary shacks that bore no resemblance at all to the principles set out in Hindu architectural manuals which call for strict geometric planning. Thus, for Sawai Jai Singh II and the Bengali Guru Vidyadhar (who was a 'Shaspati' - Hindu Priest Architect), the founding of Jaipur was also a ritual and a special opportunity to plan a whole town according to the principles of Hindu architectural theory.

The town of Jaipur is built in the form of an eight-part Mandala known as the 'Pithapada'. Nine signifies the nine planets of the ancient astrological zodiac. It is also known that Sawai Jai Singh II was a great astronomer and a town planner, and hence the 'Pithapada'. Also, the commercial shops are designed in multiples of nine (27), having one cross street for a planet.

We return to our hotel where we will have a later dinner and a group meeting.

THURSDAY June 4, 2015

7:30 AM: Breakfast

8:30 AM: We leave for our visit to the Palace which we will reach by Elephants, 2 on each elephant! Following visits to the Palace, the Amber Fort and Jantar Mantar, an equinoctial sundial consisting of a gigantic triangular gnomon with the hypotenuse parallel to the Earth's axis. On either side of the gnomon is a quadrant of a circle, parallel to the plane of the equator. The instrument is intended to measure the time of day, correct to half a second and declination of the [Sun](#) and the other heavenly bodies. There are four Jantar Mantar monuments in India, of which the largest is [our today in Jaipur](#) which features many instruments along with the world's largest stone sundial.

We'll have lunch and time for a refreshing early afternoon, hottest time of the day swim and then some wonderful time in the markets of Jaipur where you won't be able to decide what to buy as final KIVUNIM souvenirs and gifts. Fabrics, tablecloths, saris, linen clothing, decorative scarved wooden figures, etc etc.

7:30 PM: Dinner

FRIDAY June 5, 2015 6:00 AM: Breakfast

6:45 AM: We make our way to the Jaipur airport for our Indigo flight # 6E238 to Ahmedabad departing at 8:15 AM and arriving at 9:20 AM.

10:30 AM: Check-in to the The CAMA Hotel, Khanpur Road, Ahmedabad where we will be staying for 2 nights. Ahmedabad is the largest city and former capital of [Gujarat](#). It is the administrative headquarters of the Ahmedabad district and has a population of more than 7.2 million and is the fifth largest city in India.

Ahmedabad is located on the banks of the Sabarmati River.

Ahmedabad has emerged as an important economic and industrial hub in India. It is the second largest producer of cotton in India, and its stock exchange is the country's second oldest. Cricket is a popular sport in Ahmedabad, which houses the 54,000-seat Sardar Patel Stadium. The effects of liberalisation of the Indian economy have energised the city's economy towards activities such as commerce, communication and construction. Ahmedabad's increasing population has resulted in an increase in the construction and housing industries. In 2010, it was ranked third in Forbes's list of fastest growing cities of the decade. In 2012, The Times of India chose Ahmedabad as the best city to live in in India.

During the Mughal reign, Ahmedabad became one of the Empire's thriving centres of trade, mainly in textiles, which were exported as far as [Europe](#). The Mughal ruler Shahjahan spent the prime of his life in the city, sponsoring the construction of the Moti Shahi Mahal in Shahibaug. Ahmedabad remained the provincial headquarters of the Mughals until 1758, when they surrendered the city to the [Marathas](#).

During the period of Maratha Empire governance, the city became the center of a conflict between two Maratha clans; the Peshwa of Poona and the Gaekwad of

Baroda: In 1780, during the First Anglo-Maratha War, a British force stormed and captured Ahmedabad, but it was handed back to the Marathas at the end of the war. The British East India Company took over the city in 1818 during the Third Anglo-Maratha. A military cantonment was established in 1824 and a municipal

government in 1858. Incorporated into the Bombay Presidency during British rule, Ahmedabad became one of the most important cities in the Gujarat region. In 1864, a railway link between Ahmedabad and Mumbai (then Bombay) was established, enabling traffic and trade between northern and southern India via the city. Over time, the city established itself as the home of a developing textile industry, which earned it the nickname "Manchester of the East".

By 1960, Ahmedabad had become a metropolis with a population of slightly under half a million people, with classical and colonial European-style buildings lining the city's thoroughfares. It was chosen as the capital of Gujarat state after the partition of the State of Bombay on 1 May 1960. During this period, a large number of educational and research institutions were founded in the city, making it a centre for higher education, science and technology. Ahmedabad's economic base became more diverse with the establishment of heavy and chemical industry during the same period. Many countries sought to emulate India's economic planning strategy and one of them, South Korea, copied the city's second "Five-Year Plan" and the World Financial Center in Seoul is designed and modeled after Ahmedabad.

However, our choosing Ahmedabad for this last Shabbat together is because this city has one of the largest Jewish communities in India.

This afternoon we will begin our tour of Ahmedabad with one of the most unique Jewish contributions to India and probably in the whole world. The Nehru Zoological Park was established by Reuben David in 1951. (Reuben David, as his name suggests, was a Jewish man with an unbelievable interest in and communicative ability with animals, including the fiercest tigers. He was a hunter turned veterinarian. It is said that he went daily into their cages and always came out alive. We will meet with his daughter, Esther David, later Shabbat afternoon.

The zoo is spread over 21 acres. It was rated the best zoo in [Asia](#) in 1974.¹ They have 450 mammals, 2,000 birds, and 140 reptiles with a treasure of wild animals like tigers, lions, python, anaconda, snakes, elephant, albinos (white), the rhesus monkey and peacock, spotted deer, white blackbuck, chinkara, elephants, emu, jungle babbler, bush-quail and common palm civet. Kankaria Zoo has records in breeding of rare species such as pythons, crocodiles, bearcats and wild asses. Reuben David was awarded Padma Shri, the fourth highest civilian award in India in 1974 for his work in the creation of the Zoo.

4:00 PM: We will go back to the hotel to prepare for our Shabbat experience with the Jewish community of Ahmedabad.

7:00 PM: Candlelighting and Kabbalat Shabbat at the Magen Abraham Synagogue, built in 1934 using donations from members of the Bene Yisrael Jewish community throughout Gujarat state. Members travel from great distances for the High Holidays to be here. The synagogue is built in the Art deco style with marble chequered floors and a large ark. The furniture consists of movable pews arranged around a central Bimah. The Ark contains multiple Torahs of many sizes and in hard cases. The women's balcony is unusual (as compared to other synagogues in India) in that it is not supported by pillars. The Synagogue is located within the old fort and stands across the street from a Parsee Fire Temple.

We will have Shabbat Dinner with the community. SHABBAT, June 6, 2015

8:00 AM: Breakfast

9:00 AM Walk to Synagogue for Shabbat services followed by lunch with members of the community.

1:30 PM: Return to the hotel for free afternoon 5:30 PM: Group meeting

6:30 PM: Dinner followed by Havdalah

8:00 PM: Meeting with author Esther David. Esther was born in 1945 and is a Jewish-Indian author, an artist and a sculptor. She was born into a Bene Yisrael family here in Ahmedabad. She won Sahitya Akademi Award in 2010 for *The Book of Rachel*. Her father, Reuben David, was a hunter-turned-veterinarian, who founded the Kamala Nehru Zoological Garden and Balvatika near Kankaria lake in Ahmedabad. Her mother, Sarah, was a school teacher.

After her schooling in Ahmedabad, she joined Haharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, as a student of Fine Arts and Art History. There she met Sankho Chaudhary, a sculptor, who taught her sculpture and Art History. After her graduation she returned to Ahmedabad and started her career as a professor in art history and art appreciation. She taught at the Sheth C.N. Fien Art, CEPT University and NIFT

She started writing about art and became the Times of India art critic, a national English daily. Later she became a columnist for Femina, a women's magazine, the "Times of India" and other leading national dailies. She is an advisory editor of Eve Times, Ahmedabad. She has written several books and edited and contributed in other books as well. Her books are related to Bene Israel Jews in [Ahmedabad](#).

The Hadassah-Brandeis Institute featured *Shalom India Housing Society* in the Hasassah-Brandeis 2010–2011 calendar, which highlights 12 Jewish women authors across the world whose "writing illuminates a particular city". The title of the calendar was *Jewish Women Writers and the Cities that Influence Them*.

We are honored to have this special time with Esther again this year! SUNDAY, June 7, 2015

8:00 AM: Breakfast

9:00 AM: We will spend this morning at the Ghandi Ashram established on his return from South Africa, in the Kochrab area of Ahmedabad on 25 May 1915. The Ashram was then shifted on 17 June 1917 to a piece of open land on the banks of the river Sabarmati. The reasons for this shift included: he wanted to do some experiments in living e.g., farming, animal husbandry, cow breeding, Khadi and related constructive activities, for which he was in search of this kind of barren land; mythologically, it was the ashram site of Dadhichi Rishi who had donated his bones for a righteous war; it is between a jail and a crematorium as he believed that a satyagrahi has to invariably go to either place. The Sabarmati Ashram (also known as Harijan Ashram) was home to Mohandas Gandhi from 1917 until 1930 and served as one of the main centers of the Indian freedom struggle. Originally called the Satyagraha Ashram, reflecting the movement toward passive resistance launched by the Mahatma, the Ashram became home to the ideology that set India free. Sabarmati Ashram named for the river on which it sits, was created with a dual mission. To serve as an institution that

would carry on a search for truth and a platform to bring together a group of workers committed to non-violence who would help secure freedom for India. By conceiving such a vision Gandhi and his followers hoped to foster a new social construct of truth and non-violence that would help to revolutionize the existing pattern of life. While at the Ashram, Gandhi formed a school that focused on manual labor, agriculture, and literacy to advance his efforts for self-sufficiency. It was also from here on the 12 March 1930 that Gandhi launched the famous Dandi March, 241 miles from the Ashram (with 78 companions) in protest of the British Salt Law, which taxed Indian salt in an effort to promote sales of British salt in India.

This mass awakening filled the British jails with 60,000 freedom fighters. Later the government seized their property, and Gandhi, in sympathy with them, responded by asking the Government to forfeit the Ashram. The Government, however, did not oblige. He had by now already decided on 22 July 1933 to disband the Ashram, which later became a deserted place after the detention of many freedom fighters, and then some local citizens decided to preserve it. On 12 March 1930 he vowed that he would not return to the Ashram until India won independence. Although this was won on 15 August 1947, when India was declared a free nation, Gandhi was assassinated in January 1948 and never returned.

Over the years, the Ashram became home to the ideology that set India free. It aided countless other nations and people in their own battles against oppressive forces. Today, the Ashram serves as a source of inspiration and guidance, and stands as a monument to Gandhi's life mission and a testimony to others who have fought a similar struggle.

12:00 PM: Lunch and afternoon heat break

2:30 PM: We resume our visit with time in the afternoon with the local Jewish community's school. Here we will have the opportunity to work with some of the children and bring some of our experiences through music and art and dance to them and receive from them to enhance our own. In the concluding days of our vast travels this year, it requires a moment to realize that we are deep within India, far removed from the centers of Jewish life, with people who certainly don't like us equally attached to the same classical language, the same prayerbook (mostly), the same holidays cycle (they have a few unique observances for sure!) the same dietary laws...the same pattern we have seen again and again that the Jewish people settled across the globe and absorbed from their surroundings everything they could without jeopardizing their own identity. And then the worked, in the case of Indian for thousands of years, preserving and protecting their Jewish selves within their broader consciousness as Indians. Reflect upon it...it is not something to take for granted. Jewish life in India is, as Shlva told us, a beneficiary of India's Consecration of Tolerance.

Ralphy has some special things planned for us tonight. MONDAY, June 8, 2015

8:00-9:00 AM: Breakfast and checkout. We will make our way to Ahmedabad Airport for our flight back to Mumbai on Vistara Airlines flt # 940 departing Ahmedabad at 12:15 PM and arriving in Mumbai at 1:25 PM.

We will have lunch on arrival in Mumbai and then use the afternoon for some final special opportunities here in Mumbai for understanding the Indian worldview, the Indian reality, and the Indian future. When you consider that almost 25% of the world's population lives in this one country, you can understand why our consciousness of India MUST rise. You are now part of a minority or minorities of Americans who have ever been here. It places a burden on our shoulders.

We will have dinner in Mumbai and then make our way to the Mumbai airport at 7:00 PM for our return flight to Tel Aviv.

TUESDAY June 9, 2015

4:15 AM: Arrival. From the airport we report to where we started, at Midrashat Sde Boker in the middle of the Negev Desert.

The next few days will give us an opportunity to draw our year to a close, and to begin to open a new chapter. Somewhere in here we have a special treat with David Broza who will give us a private concert and some musical inspiration for the complicated transition back to our homes and schools for next year.

Portugal

As you will soon see it is fascinating to come to Portugal, a country where Jewish life has been invisible for 500 years. We will witness the remarkable transformation of the secret to the revealed, the hidden to the open and the power of making the unknown...known. Of course there have always been hints. In New York City, the oldest congregation is that of Shearith Israel Synagogue ("the remnant of Israel") known to most as "The Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue." Yet if Jews know anything about Jewish history, they immediately think of Spanish Jewry, of the Inquisition and ultimately of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. About Portugal you hear almost nothing. This trip will open a new chapter!

Most Jewish families in North America trace their roots to Eastern Europe, commonly called "Russia" although many came from places that had languages, cultures and religions that were not Russian. But we have fewer Jews from Spanish (Sephardic) background. They are the minority. Historically this is probably a highly inaccurate assessment. In the middle ages Spanish Jewry may very well have approached half of the total of Jews in the whole world. I recently discovered a family tree of my mother's paternal grandfather, Solomon Rosenfield, a Rumanian Jew. The tree begins with a Rabbi Benjamin Ashkenazi in the 1500's. Ashkenazi of course means "German" and he lived in a small German town. But this classic "German" Jew, even holding the name Ashkenazi actually was born in Portugal. There are many more stories than we realize like this one.

So first, a little history: The first archeological evidence of the presence of Jews in Portugal dates back to the fifth century, in a tombstone unearthed in Mertola, with a menorah on it. From the beginning of the monarchy up to the XV century there were tolerant kingdoms in which the Jewish communities prospered as well as others in which conditions were less tolerant, where numerous restrictive measures were taken, such as the prohibition of access to public positions, the use of distinguishing items of clothing or obligatory curfews.

Jews probably established themselves in Tras-os-Montes after 1187, because of the benefits offered to them by the *foral* (a document establishing legal rights and administrative procedures) of King D. Sancho I. During the more tolerant reigns Jewish communities spread throughout Portugal. A highlight occurred during the late 15th century reign of King D. Joao II, who put at his service Jewish doctors, mathematicians and cosmographers who played a fundamental role in the Portuguese Discoveries. In 1492 the Decree of Expulsion was issued in Spain. It prompted a massive emigration to Portugal , estimated to be above a hundred thousand people. There followed a rapid expansion of local commercial activities such as tanning, shoe making, iron mongering and later the silk industry. At this time there is evidence of the existence of a synagogue within the walls of the castle of Braganca, capital of the district. This indicates the importance that the local Jewish community had during this period (Jacob, 1997). But in December 1496 the Portuguese King also signed a decree of expulsion. However this resolution was modified in May 1497 by means of a forced conversion in which about twenty thousand Jews from all of the country, who were preparing themselves to depart in exile, were baptized against their will. This attempt at a political solution through “integration” did not have the desired effect. Tensions and hostilities between conversos (forcibly converted Jews) and old-Christians became more and more accentuated, and the phenomenon of crypto-Judaism emerged. In May 1536 a papal bull was issued, which established the Inquisition in Portugal in order to seek out this false converts and eliminate the threat they were perceived to represent to the Church. In 1582-83, the Inquisition arrived in the Province of Tras-os-Montes reaching a peak of activity in 1599. Accusations and imprisonments followed and the list of names of individuals charged with Judaism grew day by day. (The original documents of the Portuguese Inquisition are in the Rare Book Room of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in NYC.) An example of these grim times is found in the village of Carcao, where among 150 families, 130 people were arrested for reverting to Judaism, many of whom perished in the fires of the Inquisition (burned at the stake).

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the inquisitorial process was intensified and as a consequence, there was a significant exodus to other countries, particularly from the manufacturing and mercantile elite, which then were flourishing in this region. At the end of the fifteenth century, there were approximately 134 Jewish communities throughout Portugal with a population estimated at 100 thousand, which was 10% of the total population of the country. The exact number of those who emigrated is not known, however it is believed that by 1631 the Jewish population was reduced to 10,000. Initially, in the mid-sixteenth century, many of them set themselves up in Amsterdam, London, Hamburg, and some French and Italian cities. After that, some of them went to the new Portuguese colonies in Africa, India and Brazil and then from the cities of Northern Europe to the New World, Curacao, Paramaribo, and the U.S. The major Diaspora of crypto-Jews actually begins in the fifteenth century and continued up until the eighteenth century, at which point the Pombaline discrimination law came into effect and the official persecution of the Inquisition ended. It is not until the 19th century that the

Jewish communities' re-emergence really began. In 1927 the Jewish community was founded in Braganca, and in June 1928, the Synagogue "Shaaré Pideon", was inaugurated 431 years after the previous one. During the Salazar Dictatorship period, from the year 1934 on, the community of Braganca gradually disintegrated. The descendants of this extinct community have remained dispersed through the district area, still claiming Jewish identity although most of them have been assimilated into the local culture and even in some cases into the dominant religion.

Batalha, home of the Mosteiro Santa Maria da Vitória, more commonly known as the Batalha Monastery, part of the Dominican order. It is one of the best and original examples of late Gothic architecture in Portugal, intermingled with the Manueline style or Portuguese late Gothic, is the sumptuous, composite Portuguese style of architectural ornamentation of the first decades of the 16th century, incorporating maritime elements and representations of the discoveries brought from the voyages of Vasco da Gama and Pedro Alvares Cabral. This decorative style is characterized by virtuoso complex ornamentation in portals, windows, columns and arcades. Several elements appear regularly in these intricately carved stoneworks:

- elements used on ships: the armillary sphere (a navigational instrument and the personal emblem of Manuel I and also symbol of the cosmos), spheres, anchors, anchor chains, ropes and cables.
- elements from the sea, such as shells, pearls and strings of seaweed.
- botanical motifs such as laurel branches, oak leaves, acorns, poppy capsules, corncobs, thistles.
- symbols of Christianity such as the cross of the Order of Christ (former Templar knights), the military order that played a prominent role and helped finance the first voyages of discovery. The cross of this order decorated the sails of the Portuguese ships.
- elements from newly discovered lands (such as the tracery in the *Claustro Real* in the Monastery of Batalha, suggesting Islamic filigree work, influenced by buildings in India- Vasco da Gama lived and died in Cochin- where there was a large Jewish community)
- columns carved like twisted strands of rope
- semicircular arches (instead of Gothic pointed arches) of doors and windows, sometimes consisting of three or more convex curves
- multiple pillars
- eight-sided capitals
- lack of symmetry
- conical pinnacles
- bevelled crenellations
- ornate portals with niches or canopies.

This style of ornamentation marks the transition from Late Gothic to Renaissance. The construction of churches and monasteries in Manueline was largely financed by proceeds of the lucrative spice trade with Africa and India and has become a symbol of national pride in Portugal.

MONDAY November 23, 2015

7:30 AM Breakfast and loading the bus.

8:30 AM We begin here in Lisbon, the capital and largest city in Portugal, overlooking the Atlantic Ocean and the mouth of the Tagus river. It is the city of the palaces covered by the azulejos (the characteristic painted tiles) and of the winding alleys crossed by trams. Today we will see the Lisbon colonized by many civilizations along the centuries: Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Moors and finally the Portuguese after 1147. We will visit St. George Castle, including its surrounding quarter and Alfama, Lisbon's oldest quarter. Conquered from the Moors in 1147 by Dom Afonso Henriques, the first King of Portugal, the Castle of Sao Jorge stands proudly at the top of one of the city's seven hills.

With a magnificent view over the city, it was the site chosen as the home of the Portuguese court during the first two centuries of the kingdom's existence.

The Alfama quarter grew south-eastwards from the Castle, spreading down the hillside to the river and is the first new section to be built by the Christians at the end of the 12th century. With its many narrow streets, it is reminiscent of the labyrinthine residential quarters built by the Moors. It is well worth walking around this quarter, where large numbers of Jews settled in the 15th century, many of them fleeing from Spain, after their expulsion by Ferdinand and Isabella. In this area, you will still find even today the Rua da Judiaria and close by, at No. 8 Beco das Barrelas, the site which tradition holds to be that of the ancient synagogue.

Close to Alfama we will visit the Judiaria (Jewish Quarter) of Lisbon with its narrow streets and small houses where the Jewish population used to live. In the central area of the city we will also find the sad conclusion of Jewish presence in Commerce Square, where thousands of Jews were baptized against their own will in the late 15th century. We have arranged a special visit to the Lisbon Synagogue. At the end of the 20th century, several groups of Jews from Gibraltar formed a community and constructed the Shaare Tikva (Gates of Hope) Synagogue. This building, the work of the Portuguese architect Ventura Terra, is located at No. 59 Rua Alexandre Herculano, in the center of the city. We will hear its history from the Congregation's President.

A short distance away is the Baixa, traditionally the financial and commercial center of the city, whose parallel streets run into the vast Praça do Comércio, the former Terreiro do Paço, where Dom Manuel I (who reigned from 1495 to 1521) built the royal palace. In this square, flanked by the river on one of its sides, is a beautiful statue of Dom José I on horseback. This part of the city was partially destroyed by a violent earthquake on November 1, 1755. From its ruins was to rise up the area known as the Baixa Pombalina, so called because its reconstruction was carried out under the auspices of the Prime Minister of Dom José I, Marquês de Pombal. By ordering these new streets of sober monumentality to be laid out at right angles to one another in the form of a grid, he changed the face of Lisbon. When the Jews were expelled from Portugal in 1496, there were two important Jewish quarters in this area: the Judiaria Grande

(Large Jewish quarter) close to the present-day church of Sao Nicolau, in the street of the same name, and the Judiaria Pequena (Small Jewish quarter) created during the reign of Dom Dinis (1279-1325), in the place where the Bank of Portugal stands today, in a street parallel to the Praça do Comércio.

To the east, on Rua da Alfandega, is the Igreja da Conceição Velha, a church which some historians consider to have been built on an old synagogue and is itself remarkable for its richly carved Manueline doorway. A little further ahead is the Casa dos Bicos, one of the most interesting architectural curiosities remaining from the time of the Explorers, with its original facade of diamond-shaped stones. There are yet other urban and monumental areas in the city that are linked to the history of the Jews in Portugal: the Praça Dom Pedro better known as Rossio, where the Court of the Inquisition was held in the Palácio dos Estaus, at the site where the National Theatre Dona Maria national theatre now stands.

Close to the river, in Belém, the point of departure of the great fleets of ships which made the golden age of exploration possible, is the Tower of Belem, (classified by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site), built to defend the river, between 1515 and 1521, and is one of the most gracious and elegant examples of the Manueline style of architecture. The Mosteiro dos Jerónimos (also classified as a World Heritage Site) is another masterpiece from the Manueline period. Amongst the rich collection of statues carved into the southern portal is one depicting Moses. Several museums of great interest also add to the attractions of this area: the Museu dos Coches (Coach Museum) has a unique collection of 16th to 20th century coaches and horse-drawn carriages with an emphasis on those from the Baroque period; the Naval Museum (Museu de Marinha) with a number of exhibits that are connected with the Portuguese Explorations, some of which owe their existence to the work of Jewish scientists (such as the astrolabes that were perfected at that time by a Jew); the Archaeological museum (Museu Nacional de Arqueologia); and also the Belém Cultural Centre, an example of modern architecture, with its remarkable program of exhibitions and concerts. Of course we will not have time for everything mentioned above...this visit to Portugal, as all of KIVUNIM's trips this year is meant to light a fire within you to travel and increasingly take in the greatness that the world holds out to us. Don't get frustrated, this is only the beginning. Finally please note that Lisbon is the city of the Fado, (*Portuguese* for destiny or fate) a musical genre which can be traced to the 1820s in Portugal, but probably has much earlier origins. In popular belief, Fado is a form of music characterized by mournful tunes and lyrics, often about the sea or the life of the poor. However, in reality Fado is simply a form of song which can be about anything, but must follow a certain structure. The music is usually linked to the Portuguese word *saudade* which symbolizes the feeling of loss (a permanent, irreparable loss and its consequent life-long hurt). Fado is dramatic, a fabulous art form and conveys a deep sense of the culture and brooding spirit that is found here in Portugal. We'll play some on the bus.

We'll have a picnic lunch today and continue our Lisbon experience until about 2 PM when we will begin our drive north to Belmonte, the city of "The Lost Marranos."

6:00 PM Check-in to our Hotel Belsol and then to dinner and a meeting in the beautiful Synagogue of Belmonte with some members of the community (relatives all of those you saw in the film) and their Rabbi. As you know, throughout most of the Middle Ages, Jews on the Iberian Peninsula enjoyed freedom, wealth and power. Yet the Spanish and Portuguese inquisitions in the late 15th century changed all this. Those Jews who weren't expelled were forced to convert to Catholicism, or were killed.

But in the small village of Belmonte, the Jewish community decided to risk persecution and even death and continued to practice their religion... in secret. For centuries, these so-called *Marranos* (a preferred term is Anusim, those forced to do so, i.e., be converted) led a clandestine existence.

Living among Christians, the Crypto-Jews in this mountainous Central Portugal town (close to the Spanish border) protected themselves by giving the appearance of following the Christian religion. Prayers and traditions were practiced at home under maximum secrecy behind closed doors and windows. The Anusim also abandoned circumcision, since any circumcised man would be highly suspicious. Writing in Hebrew was given up, as were most traditional Jewish rituals. Crypto-Jews even took up Christian names and went to church to mislead their neighbors.

Today, relations between Christians and Anusim are good. But that deep-seated fear of the outside world is still present reflected in the traditions surrounding secrecy handed down from generation to generation, which has given the Crypto-Jews their strength and their secret character. This clandestine existence even impacted the Marranos' diets as they prepared *Alheira*, the heavily seasoned sausages that are still very popular throughout many parts of Portugal. By adapting their Kosher cooking, the Marranos gave the impression that they ate pork. In fact, though, the recipe involved rabbit and chicken, says resident Antonia. "Everything is mixed and in the end, it looks like if it was pig meat," Antonia says. "That's how we make Alheira."

The secret belief of Belmonte's Jews was not uncovered until the early 20th century. The Polish-Jewish mining engineer Samuel Schwartz discovered the Marranos in 1917 and subsequently published a book about his experiences. Frederic Brenner's film was taken 30-35 years ago when the Jews of Belmonte were still relatively secret. It took decades for the community in Belmonte's Jewish quarter, with its maze of ancient alleyways and buildings, to openly live out their belief. The synagogue, built by wealthy Jewish donors from Morocco and North America, wasn't opened until 1996.

Belmonte's Jewish community was the only Iberian Jewish community to survive the Inquisition. Their rich Sephardic tradition of Crypto-Judaism is considered unique in Europe. Today, the Jews of Belmonte claim to profess Orthodox Judaism. But research into Crypto-Jewish life remains extremely difficult for outsiders. Faced with a wall of silence and distrust, even Jews are subject to close scrutiny before they are introduced into the privacy of local families.

It's estimated that maybe 100 Marranos still live in Belmonte. But only very few are willing to speak -- and with the numbers dwindling rapidly, this is not likely to change in the future. Of course the times of inquisition are over, but the fear remains. Many horrible things happened to the Jews over the past few centuries. In Belmonte, there was always mistrust. The fear of persecution remained deep. But with the end of the Salazar dictatorship in the mid-1970s, the Marranos slowly opened up, yet even though the Crypto-Jews are progressively reintegrating into the wider Jewish religion, some are today still following secret rituals. In the past, the Crypto-Jews survived within the Catholic world and today, this secret Jewish religion still exists within Judaism. But either way, it's a hidden religion. Belmonte's Jews still celebrate the Pesah Holiday secretly, as well as prayers and other ceremonies.

8:00 PM We will have a vegetarian dinner in a lovely local restaurant. Believe it or not, as we arrive a kosher hotel has opened to accommodate the growing number of Israeli tourists. And we intended to be their first guests, kosher dinner and all! But alas, there is a big event with the Mayor and City Hall taking place tonight and we were squeezed out! Can you imagine...maybe Prime Minister Netanyahu is coming? Or maybe the Portuguese have come to love kosher cooking!

TUESDAY November 24, 2015

7:30 AM Breakfast and loading the bus.

8:30 AM Departure for the Jewish Museum of Belmonte, one of the most unique, if not the most unique Jewish Museums in the world. Here we will be introduced to the story of Portuguese Army Captain Arthur Carlos Bartos Basto who in the 1930s was accused and convicted by Antonio de Oliveira Salazar's dictatorship and stripped of his military rank and status. Salazar's dictatorship promoted Catholic conservatism and nationalism and Barro Basto ran right into them making powerful enemies for his efforts to establish a Jewish community made up of descendants of Anusim – Jews who had been forced to renounce their faith to escape religious persecution during the 16th-century Portuguese Inquisition and after. As he convinced growing numbers that their past was Jewish, many sought conversion including of course circumcision. Barros Basto was accused of sexually abusing the men he circumcised, and in 1937 was dishonorably discharged from the army, where he had served with distinction. Even today, years after his death in 1961, the Jewish community together with other progressive forces in Portugal seek to redress this grievance by a full reinstatement of Barros Basto to his highest achieved rank with all honors.

The Museum contains some remarkable documents from this amazing man's life and quest. BEN-ROSH is a biography of Barros Basto, a republican of crypto-Jewish ancestry, who distinguished himself and was highly decorated in the service of his country during World War I. After his return from the war, he established a Jewish community in Oporto in 1923. After the discovery of crypto-Jewish descendants in the Tras-os-Montes (Cape Verde) and Beiras regions, Barros Basto initiated a proselytizing movement with the aim of bringing back to Judaism the whole remnant flock of those who, while they lost some of the

essential content of Judaism, remained Jewish in spirit, despite the inexorable repression of the Inquisition.

It was the "Obra do Resgate", a movement of redemption, that excited Jewish communities all over the world and triggered a strong chain of support, headed by the Portuguese Marranos Committee, created by the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation of London. The "Estado Novo", the Salazar dictatorship and the anti-Semitism that was rampant in Europe during the '30s, fruitlessly attempted to denigrate the movement. All their efforts to do so were in the range of nuisance value resulting in delays and hindrances, but they could not destroy it; not even when, in the name of the army's honor (and in a lawsuit without honor), they succeeded in the subduing of the soldier, the man, but not the "apostle of the marranos."

His dreams and his deeds were indestructible, as attested by the "Mekor Haim" (Source of Life) Synagogue, courageously inaugurated in 1938 in Oporto that we will see tomorrow. Barros Basto was separated from active army service, defamed, accused of being a Communist, yet he carried on with his lifelong mission and took an active part in the rescue of his brethren in faith who fled from the Nazis. He made the Oporto community a shelter for the refugees, some of whom have been redeemed, have started a new life, and are still there to testify. The author of this biography, Dr. Elvira de Azevedo Mea was born in Oporto, graduated in the Arts Faculty of the city's university and attained her doctorate in Modern and Contemporary History. She presently holds the position of associate professor in the same university. Her historical research work has been mainly on the subjects of Judaism, New-Christians and the Inquisition, in their social, cultural and psychological contexts. Dr. Mea has authored more than 30 papers that have been published in Portugal and abroad.

Here in this Museum we will see a remarkable newsletter, called Halapid, the Torch. In the United States today there are very few Jewish publications with Hebrew names, and of them none that publish solely with that Hebrew name and in Hebrew letters. Here was a man with an enormous mission who created a newsletter to teach Anshim about their past and started with Hebrew and the first thing they would see. This would be a radical approach even today, long after the days of the 1930's when Hebrew was just

beginning its rebirth. Encountering a personality like that of Barros Basto is an experience, and a challenging one at that. Where did the passion come from? What does it mean when a community arises from the dead after hundreds of years? We are here in Portugal for a very short time. But believe me when I say to you that Portugal will be within us for a very long time.

We will then make our way to the nearby town of Trancoso. Here in the 15th century there was a large Jewish community that contributed much to the development of commerce. This period has left its mark in the architecture of the houses with two doors (a wide one for the shop entrance and a narrow one leading to the living quarters) and in the Casa do Gato Negro, or House of the Black Cat, (in the Largo Luís de Albuquerque), one of the town's most emblematic buildings identified as being the former Synagogue and home of the

Rabbi. In Trancoso we will meet KIVUNIM's friend, Jose Levy Domingos, a local artisan, historian and journalist.

More than five centuries after Portugal's Jews were compelled to convert to Catholicism, Jose brought a Torah back to Trancoso to inaugurate the village's new Jewish cultural and religious center. The facility, that we will visit (and that KIVUNIM inaugurated several years ago on a Shabbat we spent here, is named the Isaac Cardoso Center for Jewish Interpretation, named after a 17th-century Trancoso-born physician and philosopher who came from a family of B'nai Anusim (Marranos). Cardoso later moved to Spain with his family and then fled to Venice to escape the Inquisition, where he and his brother Miguel publicly embraced Judaism.

Cardoso went on to publish a number of important works on philosophy, medicine and theology, including a daring treatise in 1679 titled *The Excellence of the Hebrews*, which defended Judaism and the Jewish people from various medieval stereotypes such as ritual murder accusations and the blood libel. The initiative for the center came from Trancoso's mayor, Julio Sarmiento, who invested more than \$1.5 million in erecting the modern structure, which will include an exhibition about the Jewish history of Portugal and the renewal of Jewish life in the region in recent years.

At Sarmiento's insistence, the building also contains a new synagogue, *Beit Mayim Hayim*, "the House of Living Waters," and near the entrance to the synagogue is a memorial wall filled with the names of B'nai Anusim who were tried and punished by the Inquisition for secretly practicing Judaism, including some who were publicly burned at the stake in the 18th century, nearly three centuries after their ancestors had been dragged to the baptismal font. Located in the Guarda district in Portugal's northeastern interior, the charming village of Trancoso was home to a flourishing Jewish community prior to the expulsion and forced conversion of Portugal's Jews in 1497.

Jose Levy Domingos, has spent decades lovingly recording and preserving the town's Jewish past and has discovered well over one hundred stone etchings and other physical traces of that bygone era in Trancoso's old Jewish quarter, some of which are poignant and emotive.

On typical Jewish homes, for example, the windows were laid out in a decidedly asymmetrical fashion, at varying heights and lengths, creating a sense of architectural imperfection and inadequacy. Domingos explains that this was done intentionally because the Jews wanted to underline that only the Temple which once stood in Jerusalem embodied perfection.

Many of the medieval homes have crosses engraved adjacent to the entrance as an ostensible statement of piety. Fearful of running afoul of the watchful eyes of the inquisition, Trancoso's B'nai Anusim also engaged in this practice, albeit with a twist. Domingos points out that at the bottom of the etching, they added what appear to be three prongs, as if holding up the cross. But to Jewish eyes, it is clear what their real intention was as the three spokes clearly form an inverted "*Shin*," the Hebrew letter that is often used to denote one of the Divine names and mark a mezuzah. This was how Trancoso's hidden Jews sought to cling to

their heritage, subtly indicating that they had not forgotten, nor abandoned, the faith of their forefathers.

Jose has been urging me to encourage KIVUNIM alumni to come to this region in the summertime and develop a Jewish camp for children of Anusim. It is the only way they can learn of their roots! The government has provided him was campgrounds and I have begin conversations with the Sarvas leadership...all we will need are some KIVU volunteers...are you up for it??

We'll have lunch in Trancoso and then head north west to Oporto, Portugal's second largest city. Oporto sits on the hills on the northern bank of the Douro River. It is considered as one of Portugal's chief economic centers. The internationally famed Porto wine (what we call PORT), got its name from the city because it was originally shipped from its ports. In spite of Porto being Portugal's second largest city, it still possesses the charms and quaintness of a traditional small town. The shopping street Santa Catarina, the San Bento train station with its famous Portuguese tiles (azulejos), the Bulhão Market, the Stock Exchange Palace and the St Francis Church and of course the most known avenue of Porto, the Aliados Avenue with the City Hall. The historical centre is considered a World Heritage site by UNESCO. After a short panoramic tour of Porto, we will start walking down the Judiaria (Jewry) of Porto discovering the secret past of the Jewish community of this city that will be completed after a visit to the Synagogue of Porto (with our meeting at 5PM with the President of the Jewish Community in Porto city, Dr. Ferrao Philip). This is the Synagogue that Bartos Basto built in the anticipation of 100's of Anusim returning to Judaism in his lifetime. To have successfully raised the funds to build this building with no evidence of a community of interest to speak of is an indication of the power of this man's personality! Quite amazing.

Then we will make our way to the Ribeira, the Waterfront, the most characteristic neighborhood of Porto where the old houses with their colorful façades still remind us of the poor fishermen and sailors that once lived there. By the way, here at the Taylor's wine cellar (www.taylor.pt) they make a Kosher Port Wine, the only one made in the World! We will also visit the Library Lello and Irmao, considered by many as one of the best bookstores in the world. Some of the "Harry Potter" movie scenes were shot here.

We will have dinner out along the waterfront and then check-in to Hotel Da Bolsa, Rua Ferreira Borges, 101, Porto.

WEDNESDAY November 25, 2015

7:30 AM Breakfast and loading the bus

8:30 AM Departure for what we did not complete in Porto Yesterday and then to begin our return to the Lisbon area for our flight later this afternoon to Istanbul en route to Thessaloniki, Greece.

10:00 AM Our first stop will be in the city of the students: Coimbra. With one of oldest universities in Europe, Coimbra has stood out as a centre of knowledge and Portuguese culture for the past seven centuries. A visit to the old University founded in 1290 (still functioning of course) will give you a general perspective of the teaching system in Portugal as well as an insightful approach to the influence that the Jewish population had in the Portuguese educational system.

The University of Coimbra founded as Studium Generale in Lisbon in 1290 by King Dinis I and relocated several times to Coimbra, and finally to the premises of the Coimbra Royal Palace in 1537. Since then, the city life has revolved around the state-run university, and for many decades, several colleges (*colégios*) were created to provide an alternative to the official form of teaching and established by the religious orders in the city, which were later gradually discontinued through the times with the secularization of teaching in Portugal. Built in the 18th century, the Joanina Library (*Biblioteca Joanina*), a Baroque library, is another notable landmark of the ancient university. The Baroque University Tower (*Torre da Universidade*), from the school of the German architect Ludovice and built between 1728 and 1733, is the city's "ex-libris," a Latin phrase, meaning literally, "from the books" and often used to indicate ownership of a book, as in "from the books of..." or *from the library of...* In 1772, the Prime Minister of King Jose I, undertook a deep reform of the University, where the study of the sciences assumed vast importance. The collections of scientific instruments and material acquired since then are nowadays gathered in the Science Museum of the University of Coimbra, and constitute one of the most important historical science collections in Europe. After our visit to the University, we will head directly for Lisbon airport for our Turkish Airlines flight #1760 departing Lisbon at 4:15 PM and arriving Istanbul at 11:05 PM (clocks move one hour later on arrival, back to Israel time). We'll have our sandwich/salad lunch at the airport.

Azerbaijan

KIVUNIM goes to Azerbaijan December 4-9, 2016

Sunday December 4, 2016

6:00 AM Breakfast and loading the bus for the short trip to the airport.

7:00 AM Leave for the Sofia airport for our flight to Istanbul connecting to Baku on Turkish Airlines Flight # 1028 departing Sofia at 10:05 AM and arriving Istanbul at 12:35 PM connecting To Turkish Airlines flight # 334 departing Istanbul at 4:05 PM and arriving Baku's Heydar Aliyev International Airport at 8:00 PM.

Like most of you I had never heard of Azerbaijan before first traveling there in 1971. My wife (then girlfriend) and I had been recruited by the Israeli government to travel to the Soviet Union in order to make contact with and bring Jewish and Israeli materials to Soviet Jews. We had never heard of Baku and knew absolutely nothing about it. We were sent to Moscow, Baku and Tashkent with 2 of the three being pretty far off the beaten path. To explain the reason for our "mission" you need to remember that in 1967, at the end of the Six Days War the Soviet Union broke off all ties with Israel effectively eliminating the most effective means then in existence for keeping Jewish life in the country alive. Azerbaijan was one of the Soviet Socialist Republics. The Baku that you will encounter will bear no resemblance to the city of 45 years ago. There was one tourist hotel, a few taxis on the streets (no private cars except for high government officials) and a very basic lifestyle.

Yet after spending a week in Moscow, Baku was something very different. We immediately felt "at home." The architecture was so very middle eastern (today, with all of the modern development this will be seen primarily in the old sections of town and in Kuba where you will be in a few days). And quite amazingly, all of the police presence and overt tension that surrounded the Archipova Synagogue in Moscow was

completely absent in Baku. Granted there were no Jews to meet under the age of 70, but we did not feel an oppressive presence of the Soviet Union in the Synagogue or in the city of Baku. We loved the simple beauty of the city as it sits on the shore of the Caspian Sea. We were, as you are today, very far from any place that was familiar. Here we were, for the first time in our young lives (we were 21 and 25) in the world of an “other.” And this was the first “Muslim” country we had ever visited.

When Turkey came off our travel schedule for security reasons, I pondered for weeks over where to go to gain some kind of comparable experience for KIVUNIM. But in truth in selecting Azerbaijan I had no idea the rightness of the choice and the depth of what the experience would offer. This country has a history of Muslim-Jewish coexistence that appears to be comparable only to that of Morocco. You will meet with government and religious officials who will provide you with the details, but I am quite confident that you will find these coming 4 days to offer a different vision from the one we all hold.

These days in Azerbaijan will be a good place to reflect on several of the questions many of you raised in Greece. As Americans many of us have minimal experience with and understanding of nationalism, pride in country. Yet here, after decades under repressive Soviet rule that remove almost all traces of their ethnic and certainly religious identity, Azerbaijan is likely to convey a strong spirit of nationalism, something many Americans have little experience with. Use your strong questioning spirit to respectfully get to the bottom of issues that concern you and use this opportunity to open some very new and different doors.

Azerbaijan is also intimately linked with the history of Zoroastrianism, one of the oldest religions in the world. Even the name Azerbaijan derives from old Persian words meaning “protected by fire.” There are continuous burning gas fields surrounding Baku and of course this created a powerful motivation for the worship of fire. Azerbaijan was known as the land of fire and burning hillsides. Given the fact that we are going to India in February, it is quite remarkable that here in the vicinity of Baku, original Zoroastrian Fire Temples became Hindu Temple for several hundred years when Baku was a major trading center for Indian merchants. The global village may seem from the media like a modern concept, yet history proves that it is as old as the human imagination. Our short memory may rob us of valuable knowledge and insight from times long ago when people seem to have found ways to be with difference in ways that the modern world has not. In any case, explore!

8:00 PM Arrival in Baku and after clearing passport control, visa inspection and customs we will make our way to the [Central Park Hotel](#), Suleyman Rahimov 165 AZ 1014 Baku, Azerbaijan tele:(+994 12) 594-42-35 or (+994 12) 594-42-38. We’ll have a brief meeting to review plans for the next few days and then be on our way to sleep to get enough rest for the final important leg of this incredible first journey of KIVUNIM 2016-17.

Monday December 5, 2016

8:00 - 9:30 AM Breakfast at the hotel

10:00 Departure by bus for a day of experiencing the City of Baku.

We’ll begin at the Highland Park and Martyrs alley where we will begin to understand the history of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic- the ADR. Here we will pay our respects at the graves “of Jewish, Azerbaijani and Russian soldiers and civilians who perished during the struggle for the independence and sovereignty of Azerbaijan.”

Please note the way in which the country perceives the categories...Jewish is a parallel to Azerbaijani not subsumed within. On this question, by the way, there is no “winning.”

The Soviet Union refused to distinguish between its citizens of different religions and was seen as denegrating the Jewish role. Here you may feel in this language the “otherness” of the Jewish citizens.

11:00 AM We will come down the mountain to the “inner city” the old city of Baku. We’ll see the 15th century Shirvanshah’s Palace (Azerbaijan being Persian for much of its history) with its royal chambers, the enigmatic 9th century Maiden Tower full of mysteries and centuries-old secrets, and walk the old narrow Bakuvian streets each of which contains stories of its own.

1:00 PM Picnic Lunch

2:00-4:00 PM Presentation at the Center for Multiculturalism created under the Administration of President Ilham Heydar Oghlu Aliyev, the fourth and current President of Azerbaijan, in office since 2003. He also functions as the Chairman of the New Azerbaijan Party and the head of the National Olympic Committee.

4:00-5:30 PM We’ll make our way onto Baku Boulevard (the (Caspian) seaside park) where the National Carpet Museum is located. **The Azerbaijan Carpet Museum is the treasury of Azerbaijan National Culture.** Established for researching, maintaining and displaying carpets and carpet items, as well as applied art works, the Museum has the largest collection of Azerbaijan carpets in the world, of different weaving techniques and materials. The artistry of Azerbaijani carpets is known and respected across the world.

6:00 PM We’ll conclude the day with a short boat ride on Baku Bay during which we can observe the city’s skyline and enjoy the fresh Caspian air. (weather/wind permitting).

7:00 PM We’ll return to the hotel and then have dinner out at any of the several restaurants close to the hotel and then return at 9:30 for a group meeting.

Tuesday December 6, 2016

8:00 - 09:00 AM Breakfast at the hotel

9:00 AM Departure for the town of Guba (pronounced Kuba or Quba) Due to its good location close to the capital Baku- 168 km) and rich infrastructure, the Guba region is one of the favorite tourist destinations in the country. It has very special physical beauty forests, rivers, the Tangaalti gorge where the river carries Velvelichai stormy waters, and the famous Afurdzhi waterfall. The district has a unique mountain village Khinalig, located at an altitude of 2500 m. above sea level. The population of the village is a separate ethnographic group, with its own language.

But we have come to this remote spot on the map of the world for a very special reason. Here in Guba, there is a famous village, **Krasnaya Sloboda**, which is home to one of the largest communities of Mountain Jews in the world. Have you ever heard of Mountain Jews before? The following article from Tablet Magazine (online) is just fascinating:

“Russia’s great expanse stretches south from the Arctic for many thousands of miles until it comes to a halt at the long spine of the Greater Caucasus Mountains. The republics on the northern side of the Caucasus, including turbulent Dagestan and Chechnya, still belong to Russia. Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia, on the southern side of the mountains, gained their independence when the Soviet Union collapsed in the early 1990s. The high slopes are home to shepherds and the descendants of clans who have long lived there. Lower down, where sleepy towns look up from valleys to the snowy peaks, bigger communities try to scratch out a living.

In one of these towns—Oguz, Azerbaijan, a several hour drive from Baku, the country’s oil-booming capital on the western shore of the Caspian Sea—**live up to 80 Mountain**

Jews among a population of more than 6,000. The history of the Mountain Jews, who live mainly in Azerbaijan and the Russian republic of Dagestan is, according to members of the community, rooted about 2,500 years ago in their exodus from the Land of Israel, their gradual passage through Persia (where they picked up the Farsibased language they still speak), and their eventual settlement in the Caucasus mountains.

Sitting in the dark-stone building that houses Baku's Mountain Jew's synagogue, Semyon Ikhilov, the Mountain Jews' national leader, shakes off the idea that his people might be descended from indigenous Caucasian mountain dwellers who converted to Judaism (the Khazar theory). "We're real Jews who came out of Israel," Ikhilov said, explaining that they acquired the moniker "Mountain Jews" because they settled in the peaks. "We were not mountain people." And according to a recent genetic study led by researchers in Israel and Estonia, Mountain Jews share a common origin in the Levantine region of the Near East with other Diaspora Jewish communities.

While once there were as many as 40,000 Jews in Azerbaijan, today there are between 8,000 and 25,000. The estimate varies widely in part because many of them live in Israel or Russia but still retain Azeri passports. Among those who remain in Oguz, many seem to practice a Judaism guided by the spirit of the religion rather than by the letter of its law. They live in a country where more than 90 percent of the population is Muslim, and the demanding rhythm of working on the Soviet-era kolkhoz, or collective farm, coupled with the atheism of the Soviet Union, may all have, over time, muted the zeal of the Jews of Oguz.

Yet push a bit further and an attachment to Judaism emerges. "Last night we lit the Shabbat candles," says 30-year-old Gunai Iusupova, sitting in the airy dining room of her wooden-balconied Caucasian house. "We said a bracha and ate salted bread. I served up food prepared fresh for Shabbat." The garden outside was bright with pale pink and deep red summer roses. "And that's not just us, that's all the Jews here in Oguz," she adds, explaining that although they may not observe all the rules of Shabbat precisely, Friday night dinner is sacrosanct.

Standing in the hot sun outside one of the town's two synagogues, Temur Natalinov, 54, who maintains both houses of worship, explained that he opens them every Shabbat. The men leave quickly, he said, but the women often linger. Arranged marriages are not uncommon here, Racim Hananayev, 50, the leader of Oguz's Jews, told me, even for those who leave the town. Hananayev's wife, Dilbar, served a breakfast of egg, salty cheese, fresh bread, and thick homemade strawberry preserve. She offered met, a bitter, uniquely Caucasian condiment made from the green cherry plum.

Nowhere is the mix of Azeri and Jewish cultures more fascinating than in Krasnaya Sloboda, which sits across a river from Guba, famous throughout the Caucasus for its woven rugs. Just beyond the two settlements looms an imposing mountain, white and icy even in summer.

The two towns seem similar enough, though Krasnaya Sloboda looks more prosperous, full of houses with freshly painted brickwork, new windows, and new iron and lattice roofs mixed in among a few dilapidated wooden homes. But the difference is more than surface deep. Krasnaya Sloboda is inhabited almost exclusively by Mountain Jews, between 2,000 and 5,000 of them, according to various estimates. In the mid-18th century the khan of Guba, Hussein, established Yevraiskaya Sloboda, literally "Jewish settlement," as a place for Jews to live safe from attack. His son and successor, Feteli, so the story goes, decreed that if anyone came to attack the town, the Jews should

light fires and he would see them from across the river and send help to defend the inhabitants.

The town, which was renamed “Krasnaya,” or “red,” in honor of the Soviet Red Army, has seen its population dwindle from its Communist-era height of 18,000. Some emigrants have gone to Israel, others to Moscow, where many are successful businessmen—hence the prosperous appearance of some buildings here—and where a few have become multi-millionaires, with their reputations becoming legendary back home. According to one Jewish local I spoke with, one of these titans “holds half of Moscow in his hands.”

Those that stay while away the hot days of summer in an outdoor *chaikhana*, a typical Azeri teahouse, sucking on sugar cubes soaked in tea. Nearby, under the shade of chestnut trees, old men play nard, a traditional board game. Iunus Davidov, a Jewish 19-year-old, explains that there was no work in the town and that in winter there is hardly a soul to be seen there. “It is hard,” he says. “And in winter it is so cold, it can fall to minus 35 degrees, and sometimes there is no gas or electricity.”

Nonetheless, Krasnaya Sloboda has three schools and two synagogues, with a third being beautifully

restored, and in the summer nearly all the émigrés return to spend some time in their hometown, Davidov said. “There is always a minyan, indeed we always have at least 50 people at prayer time,” says Boris Simanduyev, a community leader. “There has always been a rabbi from Krasnaya Sloboda, and there always will be.” On entering the town’s main synagogue, which is covered wall-to-wall in overlapping oriental rugs, we had to remove our shoes, as is the custom here. Rugs also cover the floor of the cool central room in the Yevdaev family home, where 32-year-old Sara Yevdaeva gathered leaves to stuff with meat to make dolma, food for relatives who were due to arrive from Moscow and Baku for the first anniversary of Sara’s mother-in-law’s death. Sara explains one of the customs of her community. “Whether it is here or in Moscow or elsewhere, Mountain Jews don’t allow their wives to work outside the home,” she says.

The hardships of winter make year-round life in the town impossible for Sara to imagine, but Moscow, where she lives for most of the year, has its difficulties too. The rise of extreme nationalism in Russia means Sara, who like many Mountain Jews looks much like any other person from the Caucasus, has experienced the racist abuse frequently leveled at people from Russia’s southern borderlands and beyond. **The Mountain Jews all concur that, unlike in Russia, in Azerbaijan they have never experienced any prejudice.**

This is all the more surprising, perhaps, in a country where international observers have documented increasing restrictions on freedom of expression and where dissent is often quashed. The current president, Ilham Aliyev, took over from his late father, Heydar, in 2003. Posters of both Aliyevs, in action and thoughtful repose, are everywhere. In 2009 the government amended the constitution to tighten controls on religious groups, making all unregistered religious activity illegal. Those who received their religious education abroad, for example, are banned from leading religious activities.

The Azerbaijan State Committee for Work with Religious Associations, though, argues that the changes in the law on religion strengthen tolerance in the country. The committee’s press office explains that some religious leaders educated abroad had come under the influence of radicals who aimed to destroy Azerbaijan’s “tolerant atmosphere,” and the minister in charge of such matters has previously linked the 2009

moves on religion with combating Islamic fundamentalism—the threat of Wahhabism and of Islamic violence in the North Caucasus spilling over into Azerbaijan. Critics, however, suggest that the authorities are using the threat of fundamentalism to tighten the screws on religious communities and restrict free speech. Evidently, the government perceives no threat from Azerbaijan’s Jewish communities, nor from Israel, with which it has a developing relationship. Shimon Peres’ 2009 trip to Baku was the most recent and highest-level visit by an Israeli dignitary, a move that angered Iran. Azerbaijan—which is locked in an unresolved territorial conflict with neighboring Armenia—buys arms from Israel, and there is an Israeli embassy in Baku. This relationship is doubtless appreciated by Azerbaijan’s Jews, who are courted by the authorities with official greetings on Rosh Hashanah and Pesach and visits to synagogue openings.

According to Alexander Murinson, an expert on Azerbaijan’s Jews and Azeri-Israeli relations, Azeri respect for the Jews is genuine and deeply rooted—in part stemming from the fact that in Soviet times, Jews, especially Ashkenazim, were well represented among the Azeri intellectual elite. Those Jews who stayed, he said, still have some leverage, with the Mountain Jews wielding power due to the strength of their trading clans.

There is also a more calculated political element to the relationship. In the early days of Azeri independence the authorities deliberately reached out to the Jewish communities, realizing that they could be a magnet for the organized Jewish community in the United States, with its impressive lobbying power, said Murinson. And for a government sometimes accused of intolerance, its relationship with the Jewish minority seems to be put on display, not least by Jewish leaders, two of whom insisted to me that President Aliyev had repeatedly described the Mountain Jews as his brothers. Many foreign dignitaries visiting Azerbaijan find that Krasnaya Sloboda is on their itinerary, as what Murinson called a “showcase.” The state, by email, disagreed: The visits are not for show, a spokesman explained, but to meet its own high standards of tolerance.”

This article helps to begin building an understanding of the complex relationship of the Jewish minority both here in Azerbaijan and in most other countries of the world, including the United States and ironically including Israel itself. Use these days to gain some general sense of what minority status is really all about and how it functions, positive and negative for Jews and other minorities.

We will stop for a picnic lunch along the way.

12:30 PM We’ll arrive in Guba and make our way to Krasnaya Sloboda, the Jewish Settlement in the Guba district and the only entirely Jewish town outside of Israel. It is the primary settlement of Azerbaijan’s population of Mountain/Highland Jews. We’ll visit the local Synagogues: the Red Settlement “Gilaki” synagogue and Red Settlement “Six-dome” synagogue, both designed in eastern style dating back to the 18-19th centuries.

2:00-5:00 PM We will meet the local Jewish community in Krasnaya Sloboda, including a meeting with the Chairman of the community, visit the local Yeshiva and municipal school, and visit the ancient Jewish cemetery dating Back to the 17th century. **5:00-**

6:00 PM - On the way Back to Baku we will visit the Azerbaijan Genocide Memorial, dedicated to the tragic events of the 30th of March 1918 when the local Muslim and Jewish population were massacred by Imperial Russian troops.

8:00 PM We will arrive back in Baku for dinner out.

This day is likely to provide one of the most unique Jewish experiences of a lifetime!

Wednesday December 7, 2016

8:30 - 9:30 AM Breakfast at the hotel

10:00 AM We will depart the hotel and make our way to the local Jewish school where we will have the opportunity to meet with teachers and students

12 -1:00 PM - The Museum of the History of Religion and Tolerance

1:00 PM Picnic Lunch by the sea

2 - 4:00 PM Private meeting with the Vice President of Azerbaijan

4 – 7 PM We will now visit the new three-story Jewish Synagogue, and the European (Ashkenazi) and Georgian Synagogues. We will meet the local Rabbis followed by an introduction to the Christian community in Baku and finally a visit to the Bibi-Heybat Mosque, the main sanctuary for Shia Muslims, the majority population of the country. We will conclude the day with an Interview with a local Imam.

I found this article about the Bibi-Heybat Mosque to be very informative:

“You can’t miss Bibi-Heybat mosque as you head south past the lower tip of Baku bay; its two minarets dominate the headland. The location was no casual choice for this prominent shrine; it has long been revered as a sanctuary. When Islam spread to Azerbaijan, popular holy places were assimilated and given Arabic and Muslim names. Despite its relatively small size, the original mosque was one of the main sights of old Baku; it blended perfectly with its surroundings and also somehow took on different identities from different angles. You can see this from old photographs. A look at the chronology of the complex’s construction and modification gives us an idea of how Bibi-Heybat developed.

The first mosque was built by Hokuma Khanim. Fleeing with her servant Heybat from persecution by the Arab Caliphate, she arrived at this ancient sacred spot on the Caspian’s rocky coast, in Shikhov village, and later erected the small mosque which was to become her final resting place.

Bibi (aunt) was the respectful term by which Heybat addressed her mistress and so the name was given to the mosque that Hokuma Khanim had built. When Heybat died and was buried, as he had requested, at the feet of his ‘aunt’ in the same mosque, his name was also added. Since then the mountain, the village and the mosque have all been called Bibi-Heybat.

Historians have established that the present complex is the result of six stages of building, each stage marked by the addition of a new construction. Besides the main group of buildings, the northern and southern gates, the mausoleums, underground wells, pools and various administrative premises and utility rooms have been included into the Bibi-Heybat religious and memorial complex.

The main buildings were not constructed to a unified plan: they were erected by various architects between the 13th and early 20th centuries. First to be built were the old mosque and minaret. There was a small stone inscribed with the architect’s name on the mosque’s southern facade: The work of Mahmud Ibn Saad.

The minaret’s construction had all the traits of the Shirvan school of architecture and is important to the study of similar buildings on Absheron. It was 22 metres high, with an adjoining burial vault-mausoleum and the mosque on the northern side. The inscription on it was translated by the German orientalist, Dorn; it said that it was erected in 1619 by Sheikh Sherif Ben Sheikh Abid, who had died the day following its completion and was entombed there, too.

The tomb was constructed under a central dome. This fluted dome stood on a dodecahedral drum which, in turn, rested upon four arches and was covered by mirrored glass. During the last restoration in 1911 these mirrored pieces were removed. Lancet arches decorated the dome’s eaves.

As well as the tomb in the centre of the hall, there were two others under the western vault. It seems that the facades of the burial vault were given an additional layer of stone in 1911. The incorporation of the burial vault into the mosque necessitated the closure of the entrance and two windows on the northern side, not needed in a burial vault.

The mosque's architecture and layout identifies it as being one of the neighbourhood mosques common in medieval Baku. It was square in design and was noted for the lancet arch in the middle of the wall, above ground level. The rim of the mihrab (niche indicating the direction to Mecca) was decorated with stalactites and carved ornaments. There was a small window above the mihrab. There was a niche between the doorways leading to an arcade. The mosque was connected to the later construction through a lancet arch in the north wall. The mosque floor was paved with green-glazed brick flags.

The completion of the main group of buildings with the construction of the new mosque changed completely the architectural and spatial composition of the whole complex. The name of the architect, Haji Najaf of Baku, the date of construction Hegira 1330 (AD 1911) and the name of the benefactor who provided the means, Alesker Aga Dadashzadeh, were inscribed above a supporting arch. The text was in three couplets of Persian verse and executed in magnificent calligraphy.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the mosque/burial vault was used for general worship. People of various conditions, especially those suffering from illness, dervishes, wanderers and the disabled thronged there.

The eminent artist Alibek Huseyn-zadeh painted a picture, Bibi-Heybat Mosque, which was coveted by the English consul. However, Haji Zeynalabdin Tagiyev tripled the consul's bid in order not to keep the picture in the country. It is held now in the Rustam Mustafayev State Museum of Art. It was as if the famous benefactor had a presentiment that the mosque's life would be cut short – with the arrival of the Bolsheviks.

Unfortunately, this was the case. The Soviet authorities declared all religions to be the opium of the people and so began the persecution and extermination of clergy and the destruction of temples of all traditional religions.

Demolishing the mosque. 1936

The magazine *Sharq Gapisi* (door to the East), published from 1923 in Baku, was the first mass, antireligious publication. The struggle against religion in society, the right of Azerbaijani women to education, and the emancipation and rights of Eastern women were reflected in its pages. The many cartoons published, alongside periodic jabs at illiteracy and infringements of women's rights, aimed particular swipes at religious fanaticism and superstition.

Culture, as well as people, suffered under the repression of the 1930s. Along with the intelligentsia, a cultural heritage, including its traditions of tolerance and leniency developed over centuries, was destroyed. The first years of Soviet power, years of militant atheism, had a most pernicious effect on religious buildings.

The satirical magazine *Allahsiz* (Atheist) was published from 1931 to 1933 in Baku, following the closure of the *Molla Nasreddin* magazine. It did not, however, achieve the popularity of its predecessor and never rose to the same level.

The magazine was the organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and served Soviet ideology. It mainly contained political posters, satirical drawings and cartoons. It also published many pictures by artists and cartoonists on religious and political themes.

At that time many mosques and churches were destroyed or turned into warehouses. During this tragic period, remarkable temples like the Orthodox cathedral of Alexander Nevsky, the Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary and the Bibi-Heybat mosque disappeared from Baku.

At first Ruhullah Akhundov was entrusted with the demolition of Bibi-Heybat's unique mosque. This was a deliberate move as Ruhullah Akhundov was from a spiritual environment. However, he proved to be too busy with affairs of state to carry out the mission. So the task was given to a party member in a lesser position who was willing to implement any order that came 'from above'.

The director of the Azerbaijan Museum of History of the day, Movsum Sanan-zadeh managed by some miracle to rescue the remains and tombstone of Fatali khan Gubinsky just before the demolition.

Memories of that awful time are simply terrifying: the person supervising the demolition of the mosque, by order of party leader Mir Jafar Baghirov, was subsequently himself subjected to repression. One count in his indictment was the demolition of a historical monument.

Thus the Bibi-Heybat religious and memorial complex was blown up in the last days of September 1936. Many of its buildings fell after the first explosion. The minaret, the pride of Bibi-Heybat, turned out to be the most durable and tumbled only after the third blast.

When Azerbaijan regained its independence, most of the Islamic religious constructions which had survived were transferred to believers and the building of new mosques began. Many mosques have been restored and constructed in recent years. Just in Baku, along with those restored, the Shahidler (martyr's) mosque, the Abu-Bakr mosque, the Bibi-Heybat mosque and many others newly built – more than 1,200 – began to function. There are now about 700 mosques in daily use.”

Written by: Rustam Alasgarov

8:00 PM Dinner out followed by a 9:30 Group meeting. **Thursday, December 8, 2016**

8 - 9:00 AM Breakfast at the hotel

9:00 AM Departure for the Gobustan Rock Art Cultural Landscape covers three areas of a plateau of rocky boulders rising out of the semi-desert of central Azerbaijan, with an outstanding collection of more than 6,000 rock engravings bearing testimony to 40,000 years of rock art. The site also features the remains of inhabited caves, settlements and burials, all reflecting an intensive human use by the inhabitants of the area during the wet period that followed the last Ice Age, from the Upper Paleolithic to the Middle Ages. The site, which covers an area of 537 ha, is part of the larger protected Gobustan Reservation.

Gobustan has outstanding universal value for the quality and density of its rock art engravings, for the substantial evidence the collection of rock art images presents for hunting, fauna, flora and lifestyles in pre-historic times and for the cultural continuity between prehistoric and mediaeval times that the site reflects. The rock engravings are an exceptional testimony to a way of life that has disappeared in the way they represent so graphically activities connected with hunting and fishing at a time when the climate and vegetation of the area were warmer and wetter than today.

How's that for a connection to Orientation Professor David Mendelsohn?

12:00 PM Picnic lunch

1 -2:00 PM Visit the fire Temple of the ancient Zoroastrians

3 - 4:00 PM Meeting with the President and Vice President of the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy

5 - 6:00 PM Meeting the minister for religious affairs and heads of local religious communities.

7:00 PM - Visit the Yanardag Burning Mountain. In the 13th century, when Marco Polo visited the then-Persian city of Baku, he mentioned numerous mysterious flames that could be found all over the region at various places of the Abşeron Peninsula. These fires gave Azerbaijan the moniker “Land of Fire.” Even five centuries after Marco Polo, French writer Alexandre Dumas witnessed natural flames in a mysterious fire Temple.

One can easily understand how these natural flames must have amazed and terrified people in history, and it doesn't come as a surprise that the natural fires of Azerbaijan are considered to have played a crucial part in the creation of Zoroastrianism — a mystical faith, centered around ceremonial fire cults, which appeared in the region around 2,000 years ago.

The natural flames of Azerbaijan can be attributed to its enormous gas reserves. When exploitation of these reserves began, most of the natural fires burned out, due to a reduction in underground pressure. Of the natural fires that burn today in Azerbaijan, Yanar Dağ is arguably the most impressive. **A 10m long wall of fire, that never extinguishes, is burning continuously alongside the edge of the hill**, which naturally is at its most spectacular at night, when tourists and locals alike view the fire from a nearby teahouse. Local lore states that it was a shepherd that accidentally ignited the fire in the 1950s by tossing a cigarette, and that it has burnt ever since. **8:00 PM** Final dinner in Baku kosher restaurant.

Friday, December 9, 2016

1:45 AM Departure for Baku International Airport for check-in to Turkish Air flight # 339 departing Baku at 4:45 AM and arriving in Istanbul at 6:55 AM connecting to Turkish Air flight # 794 departing at 10:20 AM and arriving (home!) in Tel Aviv at 11:35 AM. Start thinking about all you have taken in over these past almost three weeks on the road and get ready for some intense work between now and vacation on Dec 23!