

Sunday, May 24th

Written by Amy Gartner

So, we started our morning with another breakfast of vegetables and eggs. After breakfast, we fitted ourselves with helmets and bikes to prepare for a journey to a bird watching area near the Jordanian border. I followed the group in the truck, and due to a lack of bikes, Rabbi Seltzer and Ms. Fink were forced to stay behind. The guide stopped us on several occasions to teach us more about the kibbutz and the migration of various birds. He explained that when the birds migrate from Europe to Africa, they do not cross the Mediterranean, but rather they pass through Israel.

After the bike ride, we returned to Kibbutz Ketura, where we ended up by chance meeting Amir Peretz (former head of the Labor Party & former Defense Minister) who was at the Kibbutz for a meeting with some of the members about a new project they're starting. After a quick photo-op, we had some free time to unwind from the bike ride, and were then off to lunch.

We spent most of our afternoon on the bus, driving north to the Bedouin tent where we will be spending the night. Along the way, we stopped at a look out where we saw more of the desert, and the Dead Sea.

When we arrived at the Bedouin tent, we were greeted by a fleet of camels. In partners, we chose our camels, and had a ride around the area. Then, we were brought to the hospitality tent, where we were greeted by two Bedouin gentlemen who taught us about their culture, and served us tea, coffee, and fresh pita. We danced and sang while listening to the music they played for us, and enjoyed this Bedouin tradition.

We were then shown the way to the tent where we would be spending the night. We debriefed about kibbutz life, and got into a heated but friendly debate about the positive and negative aspects of living on a kibbutz. We were served a wonderful Bedouin dinner, where it was not only okay, but actually expected that we eat with our hands while sitting on the floor! Everyone really enjoyed the food, and the sweet tea that followed.

We then gathered together and just hung out in the tent, talking about the week, reiterating the amusing stories that have already brought us closer together on the trip, and looking at the pictures that we've taken thus far. Our Madricha, Lina, then split us into two teams for a few games around the campfire. Following the games, we roasted marshmallows, hung out at the fire (medura), and attempted to sing songs, though we mostly sang a lot of choruses over and over.

We're looking forward to our climb up Masada tomorrow morning, and eventually making our way to Jerusalem tomorrow evening!