

Thursday, May 28<sup>th</sup>-Saturday, May 30<sup>th</sup>

Jerusalem

Written by Zach Wildhorn

These three days began a stretch of some of the most meaningful days of the trip. On Thursday, we went to Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust Museum. We learned about the symbolism of this new building (opened in 2005), and all of the architectural and design components that add additional meaning to what is inside. Learning about the Holocaust in Israel made us truly appreciate the existence of Israel as the Jewish State. We began by learning about the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe in the early 1900s and continued through the war, learning about personal stories, the Nazis, Jews, and all who were involved in the Holocaust. The museum ended with a beautiful view of Jerusalem, demonstrating that the museum does not just focus on the grim aspect of the Holocaust, but draws us toward a feeling of hope and the beauty of our Jewish Nation.

After Yad Vashem, we refocused our energy toward modern day life in Jerusalem as we moved on to Machaneh Yehuda, Jerusalem's market. The market was bustling with people preparing for the onset of Shavuot and Shabbat, and we made our way through the crowd to find lunch and snacks to help us through the next two days.

By the time we got back to our hostel, we could see that Jerusalem was closing down in order to observe Shavuot and Shabbat. We prepared for Shavuot, then participated in services and we ate a nice dairy meal. We then went as a group to a tikkun leil Shavuot, study sessions for the holiday. Some of us returned around midnight, after one session, and others stayed out learning until close to two. Either way, it was a little rough when we were woken at 4am in order to walk as a group to the kotel. It was an amazing sight to walk into the Old City with such an incredible number of Jews streaming in to celebrate together. We did not participate in a service at the area that we think of when we refer to the Western Wall. Rather, we participated in an egalitarian service at the Southern Wall. As expected, once we returned to the hostel, many got their much needed sleep, following a bit of breakfast.

We woke up around 1:30pm, went to lunch, then we gathered our things and went swimming at the Jerusalem Pool. When we returned from the pool, we then prepared for Shabbat. After a short maariv service, we had a very nice dinner, and then joined in song with a school from Seattle and the KSMS 8<sup>th</sup> graders. We sang zemirot, and then sang the birkat together, in a loud and energetic display, that made us all excited to celebrate Shabbat together.

Shabbat morning, we went shul hopping. We went to two Sephardic shuls, followed by the Great Synagogue of Jerusalem, and then to the Conservative Yeshiva. We enjoyed being able to experience all of these different types of synagogues in one morning. We came back for lunch and then a Shabbat nap. After that, we went for a walking tour of the city and a discussion of the holiness of Jerusalem. We then had a lovely dinner, havdallah, and then a presentation about Israel Advocacy by Neil Lazarus. This was an incredibly fulfilling and stimulating seminar that made us think about how we can stand up for Israel, and how we can also respectfully disagree with political decisions.

We ended these three days with a final trip to Ben Yehuda Street before returning to pack and prepare for going to Tel Aviv and the North.