



May 1, 2017

Dear Friends of Hillcrest Jewish Center,

Rabbi Fryer Bodzin reminded me of a quote attributed to Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav: *I'kol makom she'ani holech, ani holech l'Eretz Israel*. Translated that means "Wherever I go, I am always only going to the land of Israel."

Ever since the first time I visited Israel when I was 15 years old, I still look forward to each new opportunity to go back, to return home.

As you know, my parents and brother-in-law moved to Israel 15 years ago, and Silvia's parents just joined them a few days ago. Silvia's parents were active in the Zionist youth groups in Argentina and due to life circumstances they couldn't materialize their Aliyah when they were young. As the saying goes: "better late than never!" Silvia's mother and father, in their mid to late 80s, are finally realizing their youthful dream.

I usually go to Israel once or twice a year. In addition to visiting my parents, I usually go to study at Hartman Institute, the Conservative Yeshiva. At times I am invited by one of the many Jewish or even Christian organizations that support Israel.

I live my life that way. In my head and in my heart, I am always looking forward to "the first," the first chance I get to return to Israel.

I am thrilled to share that in addition to my personal lined up future trips, we have lined up a congregation Israel trip.

Hillcrest Jewish Center is joining our friends at ICCJ and Hollis Hills Bayside Jewish Center for a second Joint Congregational Tour, from April 15-25, 2018, again with an optional extension for Eilat and Petra. Rabbi Fryer Bodzin, Rabbi Wise and I have been working on this trip for nearly a year. We have gone back and forth with a tour provider for just the right itinerary to meet multiple sets of needs.

We will actually be in Israel for Yom HaZikaron (Israel's Memorial Day) and Yom HaAtzmaut. Yom HaZikaron is always a powerful day in Israel, as everyone knows someone who has lost someone. But to have the chance to celebrate Israel's 70th birthday in Israel? This only happens once.

The itinerary we worked on is a great opportunity for first timers and veteran travelers to Israel. The weather in April will be a lot nicer than it was in February, which is when we went together in 2014. The itinerary and trip details will be available

soon. If you cannot wait and would like to see the itinerary and trip conditions sooner, please let me know and I will get a copy to you.

Personally, I am really looking forward to learning about how vegetables are able to bloom in the Negev desert when we visit the Salad Trail (and then eat the vegetables after). At Salad Trail, farmers created the ability to thrive in a location known for an inability to grow many plants. People who have been there have been raving about its ingenuity. I am also really looking forward to Shabbat in Jerusalem, seeing Kibbutz Hanaton (the only Masorti kibbutz), staying in nice hotels and going to dinner at Decks on the Sea of Galilee.

Please reach out to me if you are interested or have any questions.

L'shana haba'a b'Yerushalayim.

Next year in Jerusalem (and Tel Aviv, Ashkelon, Zichron Yaakov, Masada, etc.)

Your future travel buddy,

Rabbi Manes Kogan