

May 18, 2018

Dear BQLI Region Friends,

As I write this letter, I am on an airplane returning from nine amazing days in Israel! No, I didn't cry when we touched down in Tel Aviv, as I've heard many people do. I took my time connecting with our land, each day living our history in present time. It didn't take long for me to feel a sense of belonging, almost a possessive feeling for the country that every Jewish person ought to experience. With each passing day, each tour of yet another holy site, I learned historical information, recent Israeli history, and current issues and challenges facing the country.

As my love for Israel grew, I found something else happening as well. I became increasingly frustrated and angry. Israel's right to protect its sovereignty is always questioned and judged harshly and inaccurately. Its government has made countless concessions that go unrecognized by the international community. Now, I won't pretend to have become a scholar on Israel but I've learned enough to know that a UNITED Jerusalem is a free Jerusalem. Today, people of every nationality, race, and religion are welcome in the holy city. The opposite would be true if Jerusalem were divided...an eventuality none of us can afford to let happen!

I am so grateful to have had this opportunity to see our deep and meaningful Jewish history brought to life before my eyes. I am so thankful to Rabbi Aliza Goldman, my dear friend and fellow Midway Jewish Center member, for sharing her contagious passion for Israel with me. I couldn't have asked for a better travel companion!

As we welcome Shabbat and then Shavuot, a holiday dedicated to study, I would urge you to check out Standing Together at www.stogether.org or research the important work that Chaim Silberstein is doing at www.keepjerusalem.org to educate, not only tourists, but Israelis in the private and public sectors, including members of the Knesset.

Shabbat Shalom and Chag Shavuot Sameach!

B'Shalom,
Grace