



# MEJDI TOURS

**9 Day, 8 Night - Return to the Land of Your Soul:  
A Kabbalistic Journey to Israel  
With Rabbi Rayzel Raphael and Rabbi Sarah Leah Grafstein  
May 4-12, 2016**

Whether this is your first or tenth visit, take a fresh look at an ancient land with this groundbreaking spiritual pilgrimage to Israel. With a unique approach that accesses contemporary issues through personal storytelling and relationship-building, the tour features a diverse array of guides and speakers—Jewish, Christian, and Muslim, conservative, moderate and progressive. Explore the sacred sites of Jerusalem, Tiberias, and Tzfat, and join with Israelis in celebration of Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh, and Yom Ha'Atzmaut (Independence Day) and participate in national commemorations of Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Memorial Day) and Yom HaZikaron (Memorial Day). With time for intensive discussion, spiritual connections, and personal reflection, join us for this once-in-a-lifetime journey that will investigate the complex issues facing Israel, explore prospects for security and peace in the region, and celebrate the hospitality and vibrant cultures of the local communities.

**Day 1, Wednesday, May 4, 2016: Arrival**

- Group transfer from the airport to Neve Ilan.
- Dinner at the hotel followed by an organized Memories@Home event with a Holocaust survivor for Yom Hashoah.

*Hotel: C Hotel Neve Ilan [D]*

**Day 2, Thursday May 5 (Yom Hashoah): Judean Hills**

- Have a leisurely breakfast, consider a spa treatment, use the pool, and/or enjoy the hotel's other amenities.
- Regroup at 10:30 to meet the guide. To commemorate Yom Hashoah, begin with a visit the Scroll of Fire, one of the most beautiful sculptures in Israel, located in what is the single largest memorial to the Holocaust in the world, the Martyrs Forest comprised of six million trees – truly, a living memorial.
- Then visit Tzuba Winery for a tour, tasting, and lunch.
- Next, do a chocolate making workshop and tasting at Galita, Tzuba's Chocolate Farm.
- Spend the late afternoon and evening at Neve Shalom-Wahat al-Salam, an intentional cooperative village of Jewish and Palestinian-Arab citizens of Israel committed to peace. Hear about the diverse religious mosaic of Neve Shalom – Wahat al-Salam, from its Jewish, Muslim and Christian residents, see their binational educational system, and either be led in

a guided meditation or prayer for peace - followed by a silent walk and a silent sitting in the House of Silence and the Pluralistic Spiritual Center.

- Dinner at Neve Shalom-Wahat al-Salam.

*Hotel:* C Hotel Neve Ilan [B, L, D]

### **Day 3, Friday, May 6: Jerusalem**

- Check out early and ascend to Jerusalem.
- Spend the morning touring the Jewish Quarter of the Old City visiting the Burnt House, having time for personal prayer at the Kotel, touring the Western Wall excavations, making your way along the Cardo, the ancient north-south Roman road, and meeting Reuvin Ha Levy.
- Leaving the Old City, volunteer at Carmel Ha'ir by serving lunch in their Open Restaurant in the shuk and have the opportunity to dine with patrons.
- Then sample your way through the Machane Yehuda Market and experience the pre-Shabbat hustle and bustle.
- In the mid-afternoon check in to the hotel and change for Shabbat.
- Return to the Old City to the home of Chaim Dovid. He will lead the group in a spiritual pre-Shabbat music session on his roof.
- Services TBD.
- Shabbat dinner TBD [either together at Beit Shmuel, a Jeff Seidel-like experience in the Old City, something like this.

*Hotel:* Beit Shmuel with upgrade option at one of the hotels within a five minute walk [B, L, D]

### **Day 4, Saturday, May 7: Jerusalem**

- Services. Location TBD.
- Lunch at Beit Shmuel.
- After lunch, visit the Old City starting at the Tower of David. Then visit the Armenian Quarter, learn about the Christian "Stations of the Cross" along the Via Dolorosa and tour the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the Christian Quarter, and weave through the shops and alleyways of the Arab Shuk. We'll stop to offer our own prayers at the little known HaKotel HaKatan (the Small Kotel). Located in the Muslim Quarter and nearly the closest spot to the Holy of Holies, it is continuation of the outer Western Wall of the Second Temple.
- Leaving the Old City, learn about a Jewish-Arab coexistence project in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Abu Tor with our guide Alisa.
- Close Shabbat with Havdallah.
- Enjoy a free evening along Ben Yehuda Street.

*Hotel:* Beit Shmuel with upgrade option [B, L]

### **Day 5, Sunday, May 8: Masada, Dead Sea, Jerusalem**

- Ascend to the top of Herod's mountaintop fortress of Masada [cable car both ways].
- Lunch provided.
- Take a dip in the mineral-rich waters of the Dead Sea.
- Return to Jerusalem to meet husband and wife Yossi Abramowitz and Rabbi Susan Silverman. Yossi is eyeing a second candidacy for the Israeli Presidency and is President and CEO of Energiya Global Capital as well as co-founder of the Arava Power Company. Susan is a Reform rabbi, Women of the Wall activist, and refugee rights activist (and sister of comedienne Sarah Silverman).
- Free evening in Jerusalem [First Station and Emek Rafaim area].

*Hotel:* Beit Shmuel with upgrade option [B, L]

**Day 6, Monday, May 9: Jerusalem and the North**

- Get a very early morning start by checking out of the hotel and participating in a Women of the Wall service at the Kotel [on the bus by 6:30 am].
- Bagel for breakfast after the service.
- Then spend the morning at the “City of David” archaeological site.
- Head north to Tiberias, one of Judaism’s four holy cities, to visit graves of Rambam and Rabbi Akiva, and Rabbi Meir Baal HaNeis tomb.
- Visit the Druze village of Sajur for a [kosher] cooking class for dinner
- After dinner arrive in Tzfat, one of Judaism’s four holy cities, and the center of Kaballah, and check into the hotel.

*Hotel:* Tzfat [B, D]

**Day 7, Tuesday, May 10: Upper Galilee**

- Begin the day in Tzfat with Mordechai Zeller, a teacher at the International Center for Kabbalah. Mordechai will lead the group in a tour of Tzfat. He will introduce the group to David Friedman, one of Tzfat’s best known Kabbalah artists.
- Leaving Tzfat, enter the Golan Heights. In Givaat Yoav, visit the Kol Shofar workshop for crafting all styles of shofar manufacturing. Meet Shimon Keinan, a senior shofar blower well versed in their secrets. He will demonstrate his production process and show how to blast the horn.
- Head to the top of the dormant volcano of Mount Bental for some picturesque views and lunch on your own. This spot served as a strategic lookout for the Israeli army in the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Because of the heavy losses the ground between Mount Bental and Mount Hermon became known as the “Valley of Tears.”
- Then visit Kibbutz Malkiya along the Lebanese border. See their kindergarten’s bomb shelter to get a sense of the dangers in the border region.
- Enjoy spectacular views of the Lebanese border and learn about the geo-political situation.
- Then get a behind the scenes opportunity to meet with young I.D.F. combat soldiers who guard the nearby Lebanese border. Have the opportunity to present a personal gift or letter for one of the soldiers who maybe serving in the area away from his family and home.
- Stop in Meron, home of the tomb of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, the Mishnaic-era sage, rebel against Rome and author of the Zohar. Adjacent to the Rabbi Shimon’s tomb is the burial cave of Rabbi Hillel the Elder, where miraculously pooling water is a source of blessing. The rock-cut Meron synagogue, with doorways facing Jerusalem, dates from the late third century CE.
- Dinner together in Tzfat.

*Hotel:* ~~Hotel:~~ Tzfat [B, D]

**Day 8, Wednesday, May 11 (Yom HaZikaron): Lower Galilee and the Coast**

- Begin the day with an early morning workshop with Yehudit Goldfarb, T'ai Chi master and spiritual philosopher who created the practice of the Otiyot Hayyot, a series of gentle, flowing movements based on the shape of the Hebrew letters.
- Pause at 10 am for the national moment of silence for Yom HaZikaron.
- Check out of the hotel and head to Hannaton. There, meet (Orthodox) Rabbi Dr. Haviva Ner-David who runs Mikveh Shmaya: A Ritual and Educational Mikveh, the only non-Orthodox mikveh in Israel. She has authored several books, most recently Chanah’s Voice: A Rabbi

Struggles with Gender, Commitment, and the Women's Rituals of Baking, Bathing, and Brightening.

- Hannaton hosts a wine distillery that several boutique Galilean wineries use for distilling and bottling their wines. Enjoy a wine tasting with wine from Bat Shlomo's winery with a light meal including some amazing local cheeses and breads.
- Continue south to Tel Aviv.
- After checking into the hotel, join in Tel Aviv's celebration of Yom Ha'Atzmaut (Israeli Independence Day) at the Tel Aviv Performing Arts Center with live performances, dancing, and fireworks in the plaza.
- For the night owls, party late into the night at one of the many lively events happening that evening.

*Hotel:* Tel Aviv [B, L]

### **Day 9, Thursday, May 12: Tel Aviv/Jaffa**

- Check out of the hotel.
- Start off Yom Ha'Atzmaut by exploring Southern Tel Aviv's bohemian Florentin neighborhood with a special guest graffiti guide. The guide will help all ages and all Hebrew (ability/inability) levels decipher the "writing on the walls" – street signs, graffiti and bumper stickers filled with Hebrew gems and insights into contemporary Israeli culture. Stops include hidden alleyways, a nearly century-old synagogue, and gritty workshops, where participants will have the opportunity to interact with locals.
- Watch the Israeli Air Force Flyover around noon while grabbing lunch on your own.
- In the afternoon, the African Refugee Development Center will provide a tour of South Tel Aviv, the hub for African asylum seekers and refugees (mainly Eritrean and Sudanese) in Israel. Learn about the social, political, economic, and legal status of the 40,000+ African migrants currently residing in Israel. Visit refugee-owned businesses, community centers, and NGOs invested in the community. Hear stories of the desperation of migration and witness the resiliency and strength of the asylum seekers.
- Then returning to the focus on Yom Ha'Atzmaut, read and discuss Israel's Declaration of Independence outside of Independence Hall, where David Ben Gurion proclaimed Israel's independence.
- Cap off the day with some pre-dinner desert with a "Best of Israeli Ice Cream Tour." At four to five stops along the route, sample some of the most unique and delicious flavors offered. The tour include some free time at HaTachana, Tel Aviv revitalized old train station transformed into a pedestrian shopping district.
- Before dinner, briefly tour the ancient port city of Old Jaffa.
- Have a farewell dinner at Haj Kahil, a kosher Arab restaurant in Jaffa.
- Group transfer to the airport.

[B, D]