



# MEJDI TOURS

**Life of the Spirit**  
**A 12-Day Spiritual Pilgrimage to Israel**  
**With an Optional 4-Day Extension in Tel Aviv**  
(Including Travel Days)

**Temple Isaiah of Lafayette, CA with Rabbi Judy Shanks and  
Jewish Educator Danny Cohen**  
**May 15-26, 2017**  
(Including Travel days)

*Blessed are those whose strength is in you,  
whose hearts are set on pilgrimage ~ Psalm 84*

Many of you have been on trips to Israel. You are now invited to join Rabbi Shanks, not for another tourist trip, but for a personal journey, a pilgrimage. We'll travel as people on a spiritual path, encountering the diverse places, personages, and possibilities of the Land of Israel and Jewish tradition. Every place we go and person we meet, we will encounter on multiple levels - physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual - letting ourselves be touched and inspired. Taking advantage of the immersive experience and the companionship of the group, we'll use these 10 days to engage core questions and refine our sensitivity to the infinite textures of Jewish life in Israel and in our own homes.

We will walk, sing, laugh, eat, drink, rest, meditate, pray, share, and make space for the full range of emotions and realizations which will come along the way of the sacred paths we trod.

Rabbi Shanks has served Temple Isaiah, Lafayette, CA since 1992 and has shepherded five previous Isaiah pilgrimages to Israel; each group experience in the Holy Land has enabled the creation of deep and lasting relationships between all who participated, and the gathering of memories to last a lifetime. Rabbi Shanks will share leadership on this 2017 trip with an experienced Israeli guide and, unique to this itinerary's spiritual focus, with Jewish educator Danny Cohen. The founding director of Israel's Or HaLev: Center for Jewish Spirituality and Meditation, Danny describes his life "like the Tree of Life, deeply rooted in the Jewish tradition, an aspiration to live in covenant with the Divine and extend branches in many directions: Torah, meditation, conscious communication, spiritual guidance, psychotherapy and humor." Danny received a BA from the University of Pennsylvania and before moving to Israel studied with teachers from multiple disciplines in the U.S., India, Nepal, and Mexico. With three experienced leaders dedicated to making every moment full and meaningful, our pilgrimage is meant to be life-changing - during the trip and far into the future. Join us!

For more information and a detailed itinerary, please contact Rabbi Shanks at the Temple office, [925-283-8575](tel:925-283-8575) or through email at [rabbishanks@gmail.com](mailto:rabbishanks@gmail.com).

**Day 1, Monday, May 15, 2017: Departure Day**

- Depart San Francisco International Airport at 8:00pm on Monday, May 15, 2017 on United Airlines Flight 954

**Day 2, Tuesday, May 16, 2017: Arrival Day**

- Arrive on a group flight into Ben Gurion Airport. Meet your guide, educator, and driver and transfer to Mitzpe Ramon.
- Check into the hotel and get some much-needed sleep.

*Hotel:* Mizpe Ramon

**Day 3, Wednesday, May 17, 2017: Mitzpe Ramon and the Midbar (Wilderness)**

- Begin leisurely in the mid-morning with a welcome, orientation and prayers of gratitude and celebration for being in our Holy Land.
- Explore the desert landscape with a gentle hike of Machtesh (crater) Ramon, followed by lunch.
- Bread-baking workshop with Lasha bakery.
- Explore the meaning of the Midbar (Wilderness) with Danny Cohen while taking in the view from the Machtesh Ramon Visitor Center.
- Following dinner, Danny will guide us in a session of contemplative stargazing -- the desert sky illuminated only by natural lights.

*Hotel:* Mizpe Ramon [B, L, bread baking, D]

**Day 4, Thursday, May 18, 2017: Sde Boker, Beit Guvrin, Bravdo Winery, and the Jerusalem Hills**

- Check out of the hotel and head north.
- Stop in Sde Boker, home and burial ground of Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion, who fulfilled his dream of settling in the desert.
- Enter Beit Guvrin Caves; Danny explores the Jewish metaphors and myths of darkness and the secrets within the earth.
- Then either (TBD):
  - Do underground drama workshop focused on incorporating Jewish text learning into one's life.
  - Participate in an archaeological dig in Beit Guvrin.
- Continue to Karmeit Yosef. Enjoy a wine tasting and tour of Bravdo Winery paired with a discussion of "Secrets of the Wine: Things seen and unseen in Midrash and Kabbalah."
- Group dinner.

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

**Day 5, Friday, May 19, 2017: The Jerusalem Hills and the Burma Road**

- A special guest educator will lead a morning walk along the Serpentine Trail of the Burma Road.
  - The Burma Road was built during the Israeli War of Independence after Arab forces took control of what is now Road 1 (the main Tel Aviv-Jerusalem highway), effectively

cutting off the crucial supply link between the center of Israel and Jerusalem and its Jewish population. With no supplies, David Ben-Gurion was concerned that the population would surrender to the Arab forces, and the city would be lost. The Burma Road was their solution, and over the course of the following weeks, the road's route was cleared and a gravel track constructed which enabled passage to Jerusalem. The story is inspirational, and a real story of triumph and determination.

- o Participants with physical limitations can opt-out of the walk, and participate in alternative activity at your own expense.
- Danny Cohen will teach about a Jewish spiritual approach to farming as we travel along the afternoon route.
- Ascend to Jerusalem.
- Begin at the top of the Mount of Olives to take in the view and be welcomed to the holy city.
- In the afternoon, be part of the pre-Shabbat hustle and bustle of Shuk Machane Yehudah-- buy delicious warm challah, ruggelah and borekahs.
- Check into the hotel and prepare for Shabbat.
- Attend one of three service options with Danny Cohen, Rabbi Judy Shanks, and the guide:
  - o Zion led by Rabbi Tamar Elad-Appelbaum, Vice President of the Masorti Rabbinical Assembly. Her work spans and links tradition and innovation, working toward Jewish spiritual and ethical renaissance. She devotes much of her energy to the renewal of community life in Israel and the struggle for human rights, pluralism, and Jewish religious freedom.
  - o A vibrant Carlebach/neo-Hasidic modern-Orthodox minyan in Nachlaot led by Rabbi Raz Hartman and the ecstatic renewal minyan.
  - o Nava Tehila, in Baka led by Rabbi Ruth Gan-Kagan.
- Return to the hotel to have a Shabbat dinner and joyous singing of niggunim (melodies).

*Hotel: Jerusalem [B, D]*

### **Day 6, Saturday, May 20, 2017: Shabbat in Nachlaot**

- Greet Shabbat morning together in prayer and explore the nature of Shabbat as a spiritual practice and cornerstone in the life of the spirit with Rabbi Shanks.
- Visit Shuk Machane Yehuda to see the art on its shuttered gates. Artists have spray-painted dozens of shutters with bold depictions of fanciful animals, biblical scenes and portraits of pioneering personalities of the past.
- Have Shabbat lunch and lively discussion at the home of Rabbi Yonatan and Shana Neril with our hosts and their neighbor Yiscah Smith.
  - o Rabbi Yonatan Neril, who grew up at Temple Isaiah, is the Founder and Executive Director of the Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development.
  - o Shana Neril is the founder of Maayan Health, a yoga instructor, and massage therapist. Shana's work draws wisdom from a variety of schools of thought including Chinese medicine, raw foods, and Western nutrition.
  - o Yiscah Smith is a transgender woman in her 60s who had previously lived as an ultra-Orthodox Jewish man, with a wife and six children as part of the Chabad Hassidic community in Jerusalem. Yiscah remains an observant Jew and spiritual teacher.
- Enjoy the remainder of the afternoon and evening free to wander the streets of Jerusalem, relax at the hotel, meet up with family or friends, or view the amazing collection of history and art at the Israel Museum.

*Hotel:* Jerusalem [B, L]

**Day 7, Sunday, May 21, 2017: Spirituality in the Old City**

- Start the morning at the Kotel, the Western Wall.
- Ascend to the Temple Mount/Al-Haram al-Sharif, tour the precinct.
- Visit the egalitarian prayer area of the Kotel by Robinson's Arch.
- Tour the Old City's four quarters meeting Brother Olivier from the Abu Gosh Benedictine Monastery, Sufi Sheikh Ihab, and Rabbi Tamar Elad-Appelbaum along the route.
- Have a free evening to shop, dine, explore, and/or relax.

*Hotel:* Jerusalem [B]

**Day 8, Monday, May 22, 2017: Jerusalem, Neve Shalom-Wahat al-Salam, and Tiberias**

- Check out of the hotel.
- Visit the City of David and learn about Biblical King David, archaeology, and the modern politics of this specific site.
- Spend the afternoon 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 participate in guided meditations and prayers for peace in the Pluralistic Spiritual Center.
- Continue to Tiberias, one of Judaism's four holy cities.
- See the graves of Rambam, Rabbi Akiva, and Rabbi Meir Baal HaNeis tomb. Learn about the nature of oral law in Judaism.
- Dinner together.

*Hotel:* Sea of Galilee Area [B, L, D]

**Day 9, Tuesday, May 23, 2017: Ma'ale Gilboa and Tiberias**

- Begin the day with an exploration of water in along the Sea of Galilee.
- Visit graves of early Zionist leaders of the First Aliya buried in the Kinneret Cemetery.
- See the remains of a fifth century synagogue in Beit Alfa complete with a mosaic floor with an unusual mix of imagery from Judaism, astrology and idolatry.
- Conduct a water ceremony and workshop at the fresh water pools and natural springs at the Gan Hashlosha Nature Reserve (Sachne), situated at the foot of Mt. Gilboa.
- Continue Yeshivat Ma'ale Gilboa, located on Kibbutz Ma'ale Gilboa atop Israel's Mount Gilboa. This "Shiluv Yeshiva" is unique in that it combines two years of Torah study with the full three years of army service. Meet with one of the yeshiva's rabbis.
- Drive past the biblical city of Jezreel where according to the Book of Kings, the royal palace of King Ahab and the adjacent vineyard of Naboth were.
- Passing Mount Tabor learn about Deborah the prophetess and how she spearheaded the battle there against Jabin's army led by Sisera as described in the Book of Judges.
- Dinner together.

*Hotel:* Sea of Galilee Area [B, D]

**Day 10, Wednesday, May 24, 2017: Pei'in and Tzfat**

- Travel to Peki'in, a village where Druze, Christian Arabs, and one ancient Jewish family have lived peacefully together for centuries. See a synagogue in the center of town dating back to 1873; according to legend has two walls built from stones taken from the Temple in Jerusalem. Visit Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai's cave where Bar Yohai, according to Jewish legend, hid from the Romans with his son Elazar. A later tradition says that it was here that Bar Yohai wrote the Zohar, the foundation of Kabala. Also see the exterior of the second largest Greek Orthodox church in Israel dating back to 1894.
- Enjoy a traditional Druze lunch in Peki'in.
- Spend the afternoon in Tzfat, one of Judaism's four holy cities. Take a walking tour of Tzfat and spend time with kabbalistic artist and teacher David Friedman.
- Return to the hotel for a workshop with Yehudit Goldfarb.
  - o Yehudit is a former Bay area T'ai Chi master and spiritual philosopher who created the practice of the Otiyot Hayyot. Otiyot Hayyot is a series of gentle, flowing movements based on the shape of the Hebrew letters.

*Hotel:* Sea of Galilee Area [B, L, D]

### **Day 11, Thursday, May 25, 2017: Reflection, Immersion, and Processing at Hanaton**

- Check out of the hotel and travel to Kibbutz Hanaton.
- Learn with Dr. Rabbi James Jacobson-Maisels, Founder and Guiding Teacher of Or HaLev: Center for Jewish Spirituality and Meditation.
  - o Dr. Rabbi Jacobson-Maisels teaches at Haifa University, the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies, Shalem College and in a variety of other settings in Israel and around the world.
- Hanaton is home to a wine distillery that several boutique Galilean wineries use for distilling and bottling their wines. Enjoy a wine tasting with a light lunch hosted by Jacob Ner-David, who has his own boutique label. Jacob runs the winery in parallel to his ongoing professional successes in high-tech start-ups and venture funds and his personal involvement in Jewish-Arab coexistence efforts.
- Meet Jacob's wife, Rabbi Dr. Haviva Ner-David, who runs Mikveh Shmaya at Kibbutz Hanaton. Mikveh Shmaya is a ritual and educational Mikveh, the only non-Orthodox mikveh in Israel. [If individuals want to arrange immersions, they will need to skip the winery portion of the visit to do so.]
- Close the trip with time for processing, sharing, and a look ahead.
- Group transfer to the airport and Tel Aviv for travelers taking advantage of the tour extension.

[B, L]

### **Day 12, Friday, May 26, 2017: Departure**

- Depart Ben Gurion Airport at 12:55am
- Arrive at 6:00am into San Francisco International Airport