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Welcome to ic.news – pages written by, for, and about Cleveland's Jewish teens!

In the section titled "ic.news" israel.cleveland.next (icnext) participants reflect on their 10-day Mission to Israel in June, 2017, and comment on current issues of interest. They are creating an ongoing source of news about the community, Jewish teens and Israel, inspired by knowledge gained from the icnext program. They will talk about Jewish identity, changing political, social, and

cultural perspectives of Jews and Israelis, the realities of the Israeli conflict, and more. There will be photos that document their 10-day Israel Mission, and those that document current events, whether in Jewish Cleveland or Israel. icnext is a two-year program that educates Cleveland's Jewish high school students from all denominations in core issues of Israeli society and the geopolitical situation in Israel today. icnext is a project of the Jewish Federation of Cleveland, administered through @akiva.

For information about or to apply for

icnext, contact Tina Keller at tkeller@akiva-cleveland.org.

In "more.teen.news" @akiva presents different teen programs in the community. From preparing students for the challenges on their future college campus, to learning Hebrew and how to advocate for Israel; from theater (testimony.theater.cleveland) to music (HaZamir Cleveland), there are so many opportunities for our teens to form a special community. Most importantly, @akiva fosters an incredibly strong connection to Israel, and trains teens to be Jewish leaders.

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A Question of Religion

What defines a Jewish State? Is it governed by Jewish law? If so, how

much? What is life like for members of other religions? How do we maintain our Judaism while also upholding our free and democratic values?

Our Cohort has found that none of these questions are easy to answer. There are many perspectives and nuances that must be understood before

beginning to formulate an informed opinion. During our time in Israel, we began to investigate these questions.

In Jerusalem, we examined the ties of three very different religions to the city. We learned about the controversies surrounding religious and secular marriage from Guy Ben-Porat. And we

experienced what Jewish life was like in the holy land by spending a Shabbat in Beit Shean. Through all of these experiences, we've come to more fully understand some of these questions.

Ethan Geis (Cleveland, 2018)



The Old City and the Three Religions

Do Jews have a right to Jerusalem? This question is at the center of the conflict between Jews and Arabs. Jews always pray towards Jerusalem, regardless of where we are in the world. We do this as our history tells us that the holiest site in Judaism was King Solomon's temple, the Beit Hamikdash, located atop the temple mount. Sadly for us this holds no weight with those who oppose a Jewish state.

A tour of the old city would take us to the holiest sites of the three monotheistic religions to explore proof of our right to the land. We observed the coming of Christianity and the written history of the Muslims. It was on a Thursday that Jesus and his apostles consumed the last supper, which was really a Pesach Seder. This isn't the only time we see Christian events coincide with Jewish holidays. Jesus's apostles received a miracle from the sky on Shavuot, similar to the Jewish tradition of receiving the Torah on Shavuot. Muslims also believe the land is theirs. Before the 20th century all Muslim historians agreed that the Al-Aqsa mosque was built atop the old temple. Most notably the ancient Muslim writer, El Hariri, made

reference to this. It wasn't until Israel was established that some felt threatened and refused to acknowledge the truth about the Temple mount. This morning's tour was the first time I was truly able to understand all sides of the conflict. I have a new understanding of the Jewish narrative now, better than ever before.

David Gold (Israel, 2017)

Learning with Guy Ben-Porat

This educational session was focused on the topic of "Church and State". In the United States we have a separation of "Church and State". Religion is not allowed to have an impact on any government matters in order to not exclude people based on religious beliefs. In Israel this distinction is nonexistent. Israel is a Jewish State; Judaism governs the laws and regulations carried out by the state. The first problem with this is that only Orthodox Judaism is considered Judaism in the eyes of Israeli government. Reform, Conservative and Secular Jews cannot be legally married by their own Rabbis, therefore there is great reason to allow civil marriage to be recognized, so



that people can marry the people they wish and be accepted by the country that they live in. This idea brings about a larger dispute. The separation of the Judaism and its rules, and democracy. For example there used to be very few stores that were open in the Sabbath. Nowadays, they are much more common. Does the state have the right to not allow people to shop on the Jewish day of rest, or is the sense of democracy and freedom more important? I think the idea of a Jewish State is important, but a country that wants to survive, and more importantly to thrive in this modern world cannot expect to suppress people's freedom to live the way they want in the name of its own religious beliefs. Israel made the decision to offer citizenship to anyone that has a Jewish grandfather. But still retains one of its limits – these people are not automatically recognized as Jewish in the eyes of the state. Being Jewish opens up many opportunities in Israel such as education, employment, and treatment from police. Similar to the treatment of women and African-Americans in the United States, people that are not viewed as Jewish by the government are at an inherent disadvantage in society. This level of

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AIPAC Policy Conference 2018 – "Choose to Lead"

American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) Policy Conference is a pro-Israel annual gathering held in Washington D.C. where politicians and prominent leaders discuss why they support Israel. The moment we set foot in the Washington Convention Center it reminded us of an airport filled with different people from a variety of backgrounds, ages and upbringings, coming together to support something that we are deeply passionate about: Israel. The "breakout" panel that stood out to us was called "Proud and Pro-Israel: LGBTQ Equality in the U.S. and Israel- Where Are We, and Where Do We Need to Go?" One speaker, Captain Ofer Erez, is CEO of Jerusalem Open House for Pride and Tolerance and the first, and only, transgender officer in the Israeli Defence Force (IDF). We asked the panel if schools in Israel are teaching people about the LGBTQ+ community. Captain Erez was the first to answer, giving a lot of information about how this is expressed in Israel. We even got to take a picture with him, which made our day! This conference was an incredible experience, and we are grateful for the opportunity. We both plan to use what we learned from this conference to further support Israel in any way that we can.

Julia Schwartz and Maya Duplik (Cleveland, 2018)

AIPAC is not just an Israel and American conference that takes place in Washington DC. It is a place to find your voice and that encourages all. An aspect of AIPAC that was intriguing was hearing diversity of perspectives; throughout the trip, there were times when I very strongly disagreed with a speaker or a participant in one of my sessions. I first let myself be perplexed and a little angry. After a few moments, I would think, "This is a new perspective and there is validity to it. Now you need to educate yourself further on this topic." During AIPAC when there wasn't someone right beside me to answer my many questions, I carried a journal with me. By the end of the trip, almost 25 pages had been filled with my thoughts and experiences. The diversity of AIPAC was phenomenal. Jews and Christians and handicapped and politicians and Arabs and African Americans and Caucasians and Israelis and more— everywhere, all in support of Israel. One of the most amazing takeaways from AIPAC was having the opportunity to lobby. Thanking the staff of Senator Portman for support of anti-BDS sentiment is unforgettable. Having had that experience, I now have even more confidence to continue to use my voice on subjects that I feel strongly about.

Zoe Felber (Cleveland, 2018)

inequality is unacceptable and needs to be changed. But also necessary, is the change of the Jewish elitism that seems ever present in Israel. With the separation of religion and government in Israel, opportunities of peace and better understanding between the different beliefs and cultures will emerge.

Galen Silver, (Israel, 2017)

Shabbat on the Moshav

Shabbat on the Moshav was truly a day of rest. In Beit Shean, I experienced an atmosphere of Shabbat much different than in Cleveland. Life moves around you even if you stop. But on the moshav it seemed that much of the day the whole community was asleep. At times, while I sat and read a book along



A plethora of different backgrounds concentrated in one place at one time to discuss the future of U.S - Israel Relations surrounding topics from technological advancements, like Cyber Security, to the future of the Middle East with Iran's nuclear proliferation. One topic, several friends and I attended, discussed current LGBT rights in the United States, Israel, and the Middle Eastern Region. I realized that Israel is the only country in that area that promotes LGBT rights and does not discriminate against LGBT persons. Growing up in traditional Jewish home, I aspired to be Orthodox. Nearly half of my family had been killed by the Nazis. In an AIPAC "breakout session" I heard Israeli Defense Force Captain Ofer Erez speak about his experiences as a Jew in the LGBT community. This justified my personal decisions to come out and stand up for Israel. I grew a deeper appreciation of Israel. This is where I found my voice.

On the bus ride back from Washington D.C. I asked a fellow AIPAC student, from a religious background, about his biggest fear with the LGBT community. We bonded over Judaism and Israel, despite coming from different backgrounds. I highly recommend students to attend AIPAC in the future and talk with different types of people. You may learn something new about yourself that you never knew before.

Daniel Jacobson (Cleveland, 2018)

with the family of the girl I stayed with, Raz, the only sounds I could hear were birds chirping and pages turning. On Friday evening everyone helped to bring in Shabbat. Raz's brother set up timers on all the air conditioning units so they would go on and off periodically, her mother made dinner, and her sister set the Shabbat table. I felt like I was watching them perform a well-rehearsed routine. Her father and brother then went to the synagogue while the girls stayed home (not my usual custom), and we ate dinner once they returned. Her father led the prayers prior to the meal and once again everything was systematic in a way. Her father did the kiddish, took a sip and passed the kiddish cup to Raz's mom, who then passed it to her sister, then to her brother, then to Raz and

finally to me. We then ate a full and delicious Kurdish meal. The next day her father and brother went to synagogue in the morning, and when they returned we sat down for another wonderful meal together. The afternoon was filled with complete nothingness... a true day of rest. So we rested and in the afternoon she took me on a tour of the moshav. Walking through the Moshav, we saw everyone was sitting on their porches with their families enjoying Shabbat. When we got back to her house we sat and joined her family doing that same thing, and watched the Shabbat end.

Noa Marcus (Israel, 2017)

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From Israel advocacy, leadership training and college prep for Jewish students to HaZamir Cleveland Choir and original Jewish theatre, @akiva offers Hebrew and so much more! @akiva is a beneficiary agency of the Jewish Federation of Cleveland and a partner agency of the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland.

For more info visit www.akivacleveland.org.

