ISRAELI SHOPPING LIST
Rabbi Dan Moskovitz – AUGUST 10, 2018

1. This Saturday evening, *motzi shabbas* I will be leaving for Israel to lead a Temple Sholom Family trip. We will be celebrating 4 B'nai Mitzvah in Jerusalem and touring the country from Tel Aviv to the North and then down to Jerusalem, Masada and the Dead Sea.

2. I'm excited to go, its been 3 years since I was last in Israel. Its been too long. Israel is a fast growing and evolving country and I know that much has changed even in that short time. I am curious to examine what has changed and if those changes have been for the good.

3. Like most people when I take a trip to a foreign country I prepare a shopping list of things I want to acquire while I am there.
    a. While I do have material things on my list, a tallit & tefillin for Judah's Bar Mitzvah next year, something special for Levi and Estee. Something nice for Sharon, A crucifix, from the Church of the Holy Splechter for a patient of a medical doctor friend of mind, who thinks it will bring them comfort, a few other mementos.
    b. What is really on my list of things I hope to acquire is knowledge and insight in to some of the most vexing problems and issues facing the State of Israel and its people,
    c. I thought tonight I would share three items from my shopping list, in a few weeks' time when I return I hope to be able share the knowledge and insight I acquired during my quest:

4. **What is going on at the Western Wall?**
    a. Our Bnai Mitvah will be on the southern steps in the area knows as the Davidson Centre, just south of Robinson's Arch.
        i. Not controlled by the rabbanut
        ii. But you have to walk through both a security and a religiosity check point to get there.
            1. Will I feel recognized as a Jew if I am clearly not orthodox, I long gave up being recognized as a rabbi?
            2. How will the women in our group be treated? Will they be required to wear a 'Jewish berka' even though they will arrive in their own modest dress.
            3. How will the men in our group respond to the pressure from ultra-religious to adopt traditional practices to validate and authenticate their Jewishness.
                a. I always find this interesting, why can an orthodox 'rabbi' who doesn't know you or even approve of your lifestyle get you to lay tefillin and give tzedakah in support of causes that do not support or approve of your practice?
            4. We have been fighting over this wall and its plaza amongst ourselves for nearly as long as we have been fighting over it with the Palestinians who live around it. I am curious to see what happens when the cameras are turned off and Jews are just going about their spiritual practices.

5. **How has the Syrian Civil War and the refuge crisis it ignited changed the response and perception of Israelis, particularly living in the north?**
    a. I know for us here at Temple Sholom our sponsoring of two Syrian-Kurdish families humanized the suffering of those under siege. How has it changed Israeli thinking?
    b. IsraAid and the IDF have been quietly providing life saving medical support to those directly impacted by the violence in the region. I hope to hear some of those stories first hand; from Syrians who fled to safety in the arms of a perceived enemy and from Israelis who provided aide and comfort to those whose government seeks to push them into the sea?

c. What about the influence of foreign powers in this conflict? Russia, the US, Iran – will I see evidence of their support and efforts to manipulate it for their own benefit, perhaps at the expense of innocents on either side of the border?

6. **Last I was in Israel, I noticed how the country has become more and more, middle eastern in culture. This is not the Israel of my youth were Eastern European immigrants held positions of power and authority, shaping the politics, arts and culture.**
    a. What has become of labor Zionists?
    b. How have the many Sephardic influences shaped the culture, flavors, music and daily life of modern Israel.
    c. What is an Israeli? Who is already a vast spectrum of ethnic and cultural identity, but what have all of those immigrants combined to create?
    d. In a world that is assailing the influence of immigrants, Israel is a country that continues to confront them, with open arms and closed minds. In any event I want to discover how it is being remade by them? What lessons can we learn from its policies and practices.

7. There is much more on my shopping list, but those are the big three questions I am hoping to find answers too:
    a. What's going on with religious – pluralistic relations in the public spaces? Do every day Israelis even notice or is it an imported gripe from North American Jews?
    b. How has the Syrian civil war changed attitudes and actions of their two warring neighbors?
    c. How has immigration remade the very definition of what is an Israeli?

8. That's my shopping list, I am not look for a bargain, I am not interested in haggling, I want the truth, the EMES, the real story that you can't learn on Facebook, you have to hear and experience face to face, *panim al panim*.

9. I tell my tour participants every year that my goal is not for them to see Israel through the windows of a tour bus, but through the eyes of the people who live in this remarkably complex land.
    a. It's the only way to truly understand anything, you have to get off your keyboard and touch, feel, listen and experience the life of others through the lens of empathy.
    b. This will not be online shopping, or even window shopping. No to acquire what I am looking for, I am going to have to try it on, see how it fits and feels.
    c. I truly can't wait, and I have left extra room in the suitcase of my mind to bring it all back with me, and I promise to bring home enough to share.