



JTS Mission Participants praying the Morning Service on a Tel Aviv beach shortly after their arrival in Israel (Photo Courtesy of Jason A. Miller)

JTS Students Receive an Experience of a Lifetime

Mission to Israel: January 8 – 13, 2003

The JTS community recently welcomed back more than one hundred of its students who had traveled to Israel on a solidarity mission, under the auspices of the Israel Ministry of Tourism. Proud of their commitment to the Jewish State, Chancellor Ismar Schorsch praised the participants on the eve of their departure. The Chancellor also noted, in a letter, the community's extensive involvement in sending the future religious, educational, communal, academic and lay leadership of the Conservative Movement on the mission. "We wanted to give everyone at JTS an opportunity to feel a part of this important endeavor...Soliciting voluntary contributions was one way we could enable those not going on the mission to do what they can to reinforce JTS's strong connection to our land and people."

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-Chancellor Ismar Schorsch

During their visit, the students created quite a stir among Israelis they encountered. They moved en mass in customized bright blue tee-shirts that read: "For the sake of Zion I will not be silent, for the sake of Jerusalem I will not be still." (Isaiah 62:1) The group was unable to go more than a few steps without attracting notice. Many Israelis volunteered stories of the struggles and challenges of living in a country under constant threat of terrorism and were told repeatedly of the devastating effects of the intifada by a number of the victims themselves.

In the few short days the students spent there, they learned an invaluable lesson that's sure to endure: that the best way to love and appreciate Israel is through a personal connection to her land and people. In the upcoming weeks, the students will assume their new role as official "Tourism Ambassadors" for the Israel Ministry of Tourism and will be sharing their feelings and insights with their fellow American Jews in communities across the United States.

