

Jewish Heritage Revelation Knows No Time Restrictions

On June 12th, 2013, I celebrated my 27th birthday, and to this point, I have never really understood what being a Jew means. Sure, I had a Bar Mitzvah, I celebrate the holidays, and I identify with being a Jew, but what does it really mean?

I have never been “religious.” yet I don’t have a real reason why. All of this is a large part of why I decided to take on the opportunity of going on Birthright before it was too late. I honestly have no idea what to expect on my trip. This is my first opportunity to travel outside of North America, so one expectation is jet lag. Everything else, however, comes from what I have heard from others.

My girlfriend of nearly three years, Franki, went on the same trip before we dated. and with the same trip organizer, Hibba Israel Heritage Movement. I had the opportunity to join her on the trip, but backed out because of work obligations.

She has been invaluable in telling me what to expect as far as weather, food, activities, etc. But even she, the person who probably knows me better than anyone, can’t predict the feelings I may have when I step off the plane in the homeland of my people.

A few weeks back, I was graciously invited to the Bat Mitzvah of Franki’s cousin. This was actually the first Bar or Bat Mitzvah I was invited to since my own. To be honest, it was much different than I recalled. Having grown up in a reform synagogue, I was, at 13 more interested in my party than the services themselves. I guess I missed the point, but what can be expected from a 13-year-old?

After witnessing this particular Israeli themed Bat Mitzvah, I can say a lot more.

The Bat Mitzvah girl's parents, William and Heidi Daroff, are entrenched in the Jewish community. Unlike most though, their reach goes far beyond their city, state, or even country. This was evident in her speech at the Bat Mizvah.

Never in my life had I heard such a well-spoken young adult. She gave a descriptive journal-like account of her various trips to Israel, and as she spoke I could feel how important it was to her. This only got me more excited for my trip. She went on to explain that this summer she would be bringing cards signed by her guests to Israeli soldiers.

As I signed mine, I wondered, if upon my return I would have such a strong connection to Israel as the Daroffs and many others I met over that weekend. I am still wondering about that. I am the type of person who notices the little things.

From what I hear, it is the little nuances that are inherently Israel that make this trip so special. Perhaps my expectations should be that I will come back not only as a more well-travelled individual, but also as a better Jew.

No matter what happens, I am sure that when I return I will have a new appreciation for the parts of my heritage that I have overlooked for so long. I truly cannot wait for this experience!

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