

Just seven weeks ago I had a fortuitous meeting with some Israeli educators and civic leaders. From that meeting a Remember Us outreach effort in Israel has developed, and I am writing you from Jerusalem. Thanks to all the introductions from colleagues and friends we have many appointments set up for the two weeks here. Every couple of days I'll report in on our progress.

I arrived on Thursday night and Friday morning had a wonderful symbolic beginning, an event at Kol Haneshema where the first graders received their first Torah workbook. The kids had prepared songs and dances, and the room was full of happy parents.



Each child received his/her book with a hug and a kiss.



KH is a Tali School, that is, it combines both secular and religious education in the same classroom. More about them later.

My wife Cynthia is with me. For several years she handled outreach for Remember Us, and coordinates all arrangements and logistics for the trip. In the afternoon before Shabbat, we spent time shopping for groceries at Machane Yehuda, the open-air market in the middle of Jerusalem.





Friday night we attended Kabbalat Shabbat services at Shira Hadasha, an unusual, modern Orthodox community in which services are lay-led by both men and women, with a beautiful gift for liturgical music and heavenly harmonies.

Saturday was spent resting up from the flight and the busy Friday. At sundown we had coffee on the terrace of the King David Hotel, attended Havdallah at the hotel, and then made our way through the lively Mamila Mall to the Jaffa gate, one of the entrances to the Old City. We walked through the quiet, shuttered streets of the Armenian Quarter to the Kotel. I joined a minyan for Nishmat, and then we walked home to the Rehavia district where we are staying.

Today, Sunday, we made our way back to Kol Haneshama, where the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Coordinator's son had recently participated in Remember Us. She found out about Remember Us through an article on Ynet. We had an invaluable work session with her and the rabbi shaping Remember Us for Israeli participation. Kol Haneshama has enthusiastically adopted Remember Us, and the rabbi will be sharing our program with his colleagues around Israel when the materials have been translated into Hebrew. Together we named the Israel program Zichru Otanu (Remember Us in Hebrew).



On a personal note and unbeknownst to us beforehand, the Rabbi and Gesher have a close mutual friend from the 1970s and he is a close friend of our rabbi in Santa Rosa.

All in all, an auspicious beginning to sharing Remember Us and engaging new communities. Thanks to all of you who helped make it possible, with introductions and special gifts.