



ISRAEL MATTERS!

Temple Beth Sholom
1809 Whitney Avenue, Hamden, CT 06517-1401



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Thoughts On A Quick Visit To Israel

Imagine if all of your impressions about Israel were formed from reading the *New York Times*. You



would think that Israel is an armed camp whose citizens are on endless alert for the next attack from without or within. You would think that Israelis are a nervous wreck, that their lives are tortuous, and that no sense of normalcy remains. But news is a funny thing: what

gets reported as news are the *extreme* events of the world, not typical day-to-day goings on. Nobody expects to pick up the *New York Times* and read that it was a gorgeous day in Haifa, or that people were flocking the beach in Tel Aviv, or that the King David Hotel in Jerusalem



now features a kosher Grill Room competitive with the best steakhouses in New York.

It is with those thoughts in mind that I want to reflect on a rapid weeklong visit



to Israel over the recent New Year. Israel was hopping! The streets were alive, the shops were full, and the cafés were packed with people-watchers, just like *Emily in Paris* except this was *Ed in Tel Aviv*. The agenda was simple: explore and enjoy. So, on what by Tel Aviv standards was a chilly day (that is, in the mid-60s), what better to “warm up” with than a hot bowl of soup (in both spice and



temperature), and where better to do so than in Tel Aviv’s Yemenite quarter at (get ready Seinfeld fans) the King of Soups? More precisely, that’s Shimon the King of Soups, and if you are not willing to stand in line to wait the 20 minutes needed to get a seat at one of the few tables inside (and as the sign

זהירות מדרגה implies, you better watch your head!), well, too bad – no soup for you!

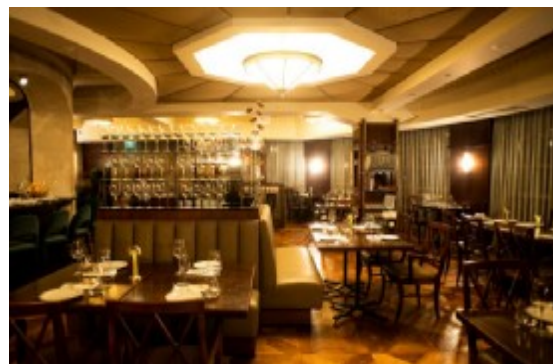
It was worth the wait, and I enjoyed a bubbling bean soup – the famed oxtail broth awaits a return visit.



Another out-of-the-way stop in Tel Aviv – the Levinsky Market in the Florentin district. Distinct from the much better-known Carmel Market, Levinsky shops specialize in spices, nuts, pastries, and other foods that made their way to Israel from Persia, Türkiye and the Balkans. Where else in the world can you find not one, not two, but three shops specializing in *halva* right next to each other? And the reputed best of these, of course is *Kesem HaHalva* – the magic *halva*. And where might all those shopkeepers find a convenient place to pray?

That's easy – at the synagogue of Elijah the Prophet. *Eliahu Hanavi* visits us at our seders every year, but I guess he really likes *halva* too!

So, was it just Tel Aviv that is worth getting excited about? Nope. For natural beauty, Haifa is hard to beat. From the top of Mt. Carmel down to the Mediterranean on the west side, the Haifa port to



the north, and the Jezreel Valley to the east, Haifa is truly one of the prettiest places on

the planet. Visitors from TBS could not be made to feel more at home than with a hotel like this!

And of course, the Bahá'í Temple viewed from the top of Mt. Carmel is just spectacular.

And if all this running around is making you just a little hungry, well, there's always The Grill Room at Jerusalem's King David Hotel. Make no mis-*steak*, an evening here will make you forget everything you read about Israel in the *New York Times*!

