

Landscapes of Home: Colors of the Galilee in November

By local photographer, Linda Passon-McNally

My inspiration for the photographs in this exhibit came from two visits to Israel. The first trip occurred in 1968, shortly after the 6 Day War, where I was a volunteer for three months at Kibbutz Shaar Hagolan which is located two miles south of the Sea of Galilee. During that time, I lived and worked on this thriving agricultural kibbutz and fully participated in the life there.



The second trip occurred in November 2019 when I visited Rehovot, Minneapolis' partner city, as a participant in the P2G (Partnership 2Gether) Re-Art Exhibit. Thanks to that program, I was afforded the chance to return to Israel and spend time again at my treasured kibbutz home. I reconnected with old friends Era Arieli and Itzik Hinitz, plus Era's daughters who were ages 3, 5, and 7 when I lived there in 1968. An added bonus was seeing Gali Hefetz Dror, a former St. Paul JCC shaliach who also lives at Shaar Hagolan with her husband and three adorable children. What a reunion!



It was so gratifying to view the agricultural development and beauty of the landscape of the greater Jordan Valley, especially after my first visit there 51 years ago. I was treated to a driving adventure provided by my guide, Amir (a former Israeli army officer and expert driver), and we explored the northern hills and valleys, showing the diversity and ingenuity of the settlers and farmers. While traveling along high roads near the Syrian border, I photographed views of the fertile lands below to amplify an understanding of the vulnerability of the land along the border, with its beautifully patterned fields, irrigation systems, and housing developments. It is very clear why the security of this area is pertinent in Israel's landscape.

Our last stop of the day was to visit Agamon Lake and bird sanctuary in the Hula Valley which is in the Syrian African rift. This land is in northern Israel very near the Lebanon and Syrian borders, with the Jordan River running near its eastern edge. Over this area, twice a year, no less than 500 million birds from 390 different species fly in to rest and feed when they migrate from Europe to Africa. On the video screen, I include a few short clips for you, the viewer, to enjoy the sights of what I saw there.

A huge todah rabah goes to my family, friends, and organizations involved in making this exhibit become a reality.