

P2G: Mifgashim and so much more...

A reflection on the P2G Gesher Chai Adult Ambassadors Program

BY REBECCA ASBELL



Rebecca and Ivan with Metula Mayor David Azouly at the site of the Good Fence.

I have recently returned from a trip to Israel. But this trip was unlike other trips to Israel that I have experienced. As a new committee member of the P2G (Partnership Together) Program, I was asked to attend an Ambassadors Program to gain a better understanding of happenings in our P2G Israeli counterpart community in the Northern Galilee Panhandle. Before I begin explaining why this Israel experience was so different, I will begin by explaining why I joined the P2G committee and the developments leading up to this experience.

It was the school year of 2014 – 2015



Rebecca and Ivan planting a tree.

and my eldest child was a participant of the P2G mifgashim: the exchange program between grade 9 students of Edmonton Talmud Torah with those of our sister school, Emek HaChula. For my daughter and the children in her class it was an amazing experience. When I heard that Ivan Steiner, Edmonton's P2G chair, was looking for new members for his committee, I happily offered to join his crew. I knew this was a worthwhile program, and was excited to be a part of it. What I did not know was that the P2G program does so much more than the student exchange programs.

Shortly after joining the committee, we had a meeting, and I was introduced to the spectrum of P2G responsibilities. To become more familiarized with P2G, Ivan asked me to consider attending a P2G Coast to Coast joint steering committee meeting in Vancouver in June, 2015. I agreed. I was welcomed graciously by other members of the P2G Coast to Coast, and by the Israeli leaders. However, there was one complication: I felt lost. I lacked knowledge regarding Jewish Life, the activities and administrative infrastructure of our Israeli partner communities. During this meeting, the concept of the Ambassadors Program

was introduced, discussed and approved.

The Program was geared for new members to P2G with three main goals:

1. Jewish Peoplehood: to develop a local lay leadership that will learn to have an understanding about Jewish life and administrative infrastructure in the partner communities;
2. Leadership: the participating individual should be engaged in their own communities' P2G program;
3. Enduring relationships with Galilee hosts.

I felt confident in my ability to achieve these goals, so I accepted the opportunity and started this adventure on November 15, 2015.

Although this was my seventh journey to the Holy Land, this trip was very different. Previous trips to Israel took me to tourist destinations. On this trip, I was taken to places tourists generally would not visit. I went to places where I was experiencing, learning, and making connections with people and places in the region. I visited sites that have received funding, or have requested support through the efforts of P2G fundraising by our Coast to Coast communities in Canada. It was amazing to see the success stories of projects that were given seed money from our communities and

are still running years later as successful self-sufficient programs. I was taken to sites in the midst of construction and those where there are visions for future development. At each site visit, I was given private tours and explanations of the programs. I was impressed with the visions and missions of each of the programs, and with the ability of the leaders in these regions to work in partnership with one another on community building to enrich the lives of people in the entire region. It became evident that the people living and working in this region want to see it grow and continue to succeed.

Another major difference with this trip was that I was hosted. Having home hospitality was very special. This wonderful family agreed to have a stranger living amongst them for five days. It was amazing what happened in such a short time: we bonded quickly and we had a great week. We talked about so many things, even though my Hebrew is far from fluent, and neither is their English. I continue to communicate with my host family and have no doubt that I will spend time with



Canada-Israel wall at Lev HaEmek.



Talmud Torah Artwork displayed at Lev HaEmek school in Israel.

them on my next journey to Israel. I was invited to dinner in the homes of families from the P2G mifgashim; I had meetings

with local Israeli lay leaders, and was shown gracious hospitality by everyone. Through this experience, I have made connections, and gained a better understanding of peoplehood in our partner communities.

When I visited this region as a tourist, I was amazed by its physical beauty and the calm, quiet nature of it compared to other areas of the country. After completing this journey, I am even more amazed by the beauty of this region because of the people within it.

In summary, this program exceeded my expectations. In order to familiarize new members of P2G and help achieve the main goals of this program, it makes sense to “get our boots on the ground”. I now feel a strong connection to Israel’s Galilee panhandle region. I learned so much about it and met so many people. I feel more confident about participating in upcoming P2G Coast to Coast meetings. I also know that planning future mifgashim will have an even stronger meaning and pleasure for me.

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Asbell

Give Now, Spend Now vs. Give Now, Spend Forever

BY MICHAEL PAULL

When you give to a charity today, they will probably spend 80 – 90 % of your contributions for needs today. The other amount goes towards administration 2%, information and programs 3%, and hopefully a little extra for long term investment. That is the give now, spend now method.

With Edmonton Jewish Community Charitable Foundation (EJCCF), once we receive your donation, invest it, so that your donation will continue to “keep on giving in perpetuity”. It may not seem like a lot of money now, but here are three examples of what the EJCCF can look like in the future.

The Jewish Foundation of Calgary in 2013 had just over \$5 million dollars in its endowment plan. That same year it donated just over \$200 thousand dollars. It gave away 91 grants. And the beauty of this is that next year, and for years to come, this foundation will do the same over and over again.

The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba in 2013 ha \$90 million dollars in its endowment plan. That same year it donated \$2.8 million to different charities. Every year the Jewish Foundation of Manitoba will be donating almost \$3 million dollars. And all of this, without asking anyone for any more money. But it continued

to ask, and two years later they are at \$100,000,000.

In contrast, the Gates Foundation sits currently at a staggering \$3,000,000,000. But they are in a class all by themselves. The purpose of this foundation is to continually give where money is needed. This is the ultimate philosophy of give now and spend forever. I think in this case, the catch phrase should be “To infinity... and beyond”

Well, back here in Edmonton, our catch phrase is “We have to start somewhere, and today is the earliest you can begin”. I know that Edmonton will eventually have a sizeable endowment in place, but it is early days yet. I know that if we just tell our own Jewish population, what we do, the money will follow.

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