

Exploring Israel

Becca Powers

Hello Park Synagogue, my name is Becca Powers, and I am an incoming third year studying Psychology and Business at The Ohio State University. I am currently abroad in Israel writing to you from a quaint little coffee shop in the Levinsky Market in Tel Aviv; sipping a concoction of soda and fermented fruits that reminds me of glorified kombucha. I am incredibly delighted to be in Israel, surrounded by amazing food, rich culture, and a whole state celebrating and preserving the safety of Jewish people. Over the next couple paragraphs, I am going to take you on a journey about my travels here, and how I managed to get to the amazing Jewish state of Israel.

Last semester at The Ohio State University (And yes, we have managed to trademark “The”, so I will continue to flaunt it), I faced many difficulties as a Jewish leader on campus. As the Israel Coalition on Campus (ICC) Fellow, Vice President of Marketing for TAMID, Vice President for Buckeyes for Israel (BFI), and Director of Community Relations within the Undergraduate Student Government (USG); it was both my job and personal goal to keep the Boycott Divest & Sanctions (BDS) movement from passing in our Undergraduate Student Government. BDS is a movement that aims to divest in Israeli companies, and is harmful to Israelis and Palestinians alike. There are atrocities on both sides of the conflict, but BDS targets only the Israeli side while mitigating accountability from the Palestinian side. I was just beginning my leadership journey in USG, and was extremely thankful that I did; as it was the personal connections from USG as well as the support from the Jewish community at OSU that enabled me to methodically and proudly advocate for Jewish students on campus. Although it was one of the most brutal months of my life, this experience brought me new insights into multiple ethnic/religious/political perspectives, intuition surrounding my own leadership style, and a plethora of life long friendships. Fortunately, after countless hours of organizing, speaking, and conferring; I am more than happy to say that we were able to stop the bill from officially passing through the General Assembly. Needless to say, being in a state surrounded by Jewish people where I feel safe has been refreshing.

A couple weeks ago I finished a Birthright trip to Israel, and traveled for a week in the country before starting an internship via Onward with Powerlinx, an up and coming B2B matchmaking platform. Birthright was everything I had hoped for and more. Ohio State brought almost five buses of students to travel the country, and it's safe to say that we covered a lot of ground. We hiked the windy paths of Masada, enjoyed the beaches and nightlife of Tel Aviv, reflected at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, floated in the salty Dead Sea, and explored the multiple ethnic narratives including Bedouin, Ethiopian, Druze, Yemenite, and Israeli natives who live in Israel. We also ate amazing food including rugelach, that I believe to be sent from heaven, in addition to delicious Yemenite flatbread smothered in spices, and shawarma— a fan favorite. I was also able to meet new people and form friendships that I will always remember. The only thing that was missing was finding my Jewish husband— but hey, I'm here for another month, so cross your fingers! After being on my own for about a month, I am beginning to feel like I am getting acclimated to the Israeli society. There are many cultural differences—people here are bold, tell you exactly what's on their mind, and have a giant amount of chutzpah. This is greatly transferable to business culture as well—start up companies are extremely popular, and multiplying. I am working as the Associate Business Developer/Consultant at Powerlinx, a platform that connects businesses and producers. Meir Shachar, CEO, always pushes me and my fellow interns to learn by doing and to think out of the box. Fortunately for Park Synagogue, he would like to offer twenty clergy members a free upgrade to Powerlinx plus for five months as a token of his appreciation for my work this summer. Do not hesitate to reach out if you are interested, as this deal will expire at the end of August. All in all, I will definitely take all of these lessons and skills that Meir has taught me in the start-up world with me through my emerging business career.

In conclusion, life here is rich with culture, religion, innovation, and hope. As the incoming President of Buckeyes for Israel, Senior Director of Operations within USG, TAMID VP of Marketing, and StandWithUs Enarson Fellow—I feel motivated and inspired to fight for this country that I feel such a strong connection with. Am Yisrael Chai!