

This week, we have visited Be'it Lehiot (House of Being), a small park and conference center that has been instrumental in bringing children and survivors together from throughout Israel. The walls of Be'it Lehiot are covered with the few reminders and mementos that the survivors were able to bring from their past lives - mostly photos of brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles that were lost. There is a sweater in a showcase that a survivor knitted when she was hiding and which she was able to retrieve decades later on a visit to Europe with her children. In the garden, a small sculpture group of small bronzes includes a small boy sitting on the ground, his face staring down, being watched intently by his younger brother. Next to him and to his side, there is a girl of eight or nine carrying a small sack of her possessions. As I was being shown this sculpture, I could see a crowd of children of these same ages came running down the stairs of the apartment building across the street, jumping and playing. Nothing could be more evocative of the triumph of the Jewish spirit than this tableau of past and future. Be'it Lehiot is the inspired vision of one woman, who brought her ideas for a community center to the city manager of Holon, who shared her vision.

We toured Yad LaYeled, the Children's Museum at the Ghetto Fighter's Museum, and met with the staff about joint projects. One of its main exhibits is an area dedicated to Dr. Janus Korczak, a philosopher and teacher who dedicated nearly thirty years to running an orphanage where he taught that children should be respected according to their own needs, rather than shaped according to the needs of adults. Korczak, his orphanage staff and the children of the orphanage died at Treblinka. The children's museum at Yad LaYeled pledges to carry on Korczak's legacy.



A Roman aqueduct borders the Children's Museum. June 26, 2010

We are currently in Tel Aviv, staying nearby some of the most beautiful beaches in Israel. Tel Aviv is a bustling metropolis that is active late into the evening. The young

and old can be found at street cafes in the evening, enjoying good conversation and reprieve from the one-hundred-plus temperatures of the day.



Beach at sunset, Tel Aviv June 30, 2010

In the past week, we have had three meetings with significant agencies. First, in one of our most successful meetings to date, we visited with a member of Israel's Ministry of Education. He wants to incorporate Remember Us into the curriculum for the entire country. This will be a long process. But if it is successful, it will bring the Remember US concept to seventh-graders across Israel.



Education Ministry, Petach Tiqwa June 27, 2010



Education Ministry staff that will be working on Remember Us, with Gesher, June 27, 2010, Petach Tiqwa

Second, we met with several agency heads of the Municipality of Holon, a large suburb of Tel Aviv. In Holon, there are nearly 2,500 b'nai mitzvahs per year. The community is also home to more than 3,000 survivors. As a way of honoring their survivors and carrying out the legacy of memory, the Municipality of Holon wants to adopt Remember Us for their children.

Finally, we visited the Israel Association of Community Centers. Its director of their Jewish Identity Program works to bring Holocaust understanding to the Sephardic and Ethiopian communities who have it less in their national histories. The community center is another venue that supports Jewish lifestyle, life cycle and annual events for secular families. They will be adding Remember Us to their Bar Mitzvah program.