

# I ♥ SISTER CITY



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## Sister City Sails into the Future

By Diana van den Boogaard

“No cell phones, no internet, no TV,” said Sister City President Bob White, as he told me about his plans for a 2019 Sister City planning cruise back in the spring of 2018. “We can get away from our families and our lives and really plan what Sister City can do in the next few years.”

.....And so, we did: The last weekend in January most Sister City Board members, some spouses and a few friends embarked on the Royal Caribbean’s Enchantment of the Seas weekend cruise to the Bahamas. Board member Daphne Lacy arranged everything through her company Travel by Ginny. A committee had been working since July to plan our discussions and find ways to squeeze in meetings between embarkation drills, dinners, evening shows and of course, visiting the Bahamas and the Cocoa Cay resort.

We were thrilled that Jordan Miles was able to fly in from Israel to attend the cruise, taking the place of Beit Shemesh’s Meir Malka. Jordan is in his second year working with Bridges for Peace in Jerusalem. He is one of our “Next Generation” members. During our hours of meetings, he offered an important young person’s perspective.

On Friday evening we gathered with a few other families for Shabbat blessings. “We had a unique, phenomenal meeting,” said Ron Shelton, about one of those families - Aaron Weil and his wife and daughter. Aaron is the director of Hillel at UCF, and he invited us to Shabbat services and dinner there. (Note: Six Sister City board members traveled to UCF on March 22 for a wonderful dinner and tour of their two-story modern facility.)

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***“It was amazing how much we were able to get done!”***

**SC Board Member Shelby Shelton, commenting on all that was accomplished during Sister City’s Summit Cruise.**

Pictured below: Sister City’s Next Generation Rep Jordan Miles during onboard planning meeting.



***Board members mix work and play onboard Sister City’s 2019 Summit Cruise on Royal Caribbean’s Enchantment of the Seas.***



SC Next Generation Rep Jordan Miles and SC Board Member Lennie Allen, discuss future plans onboard the Enchantment of the Seas.

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Another benefit of the cruise was getting to know each other better, particularly some of the newer board members. We learned that Lennie Allen from Bridges for Peace tells the best jokes!

During our last meeting, we created a three-year plan with multiple events, initiatives and budgets - everything from trips to Israel to school exchanges to business development projects. Look for more information coming about our plans. Afterwards we gathered in the top lounge for cocktails and shared a feeling of accomplishment.

“I was amazed at how much we were able to get done,” said Shelby Shelton. “It was wonderful!”

## A New Generation: A New Way of Telling Israel’s Story



Mikayla Goetz is one of Sister City’s Next Generation Representatives. Since she was 5-years-old, Mikayla has been involved with efforts to support and bless Israel and the Jewish people. As a young adult with a BFA in Acting, Mikayla founded her own theater company —*Boots on the Ground Theater*— along with some of her talented friends. This group of young people is busy writing and producing a film called ALIYAH about Ukrainian Jews.

ALIYAH is an experimental documentary about Ukrainian Jews who chase a better life despite present day transgressions and a history of persecution in their native country. ALIYAH is based on months of interviews collected by Mikayla Goetz (*Boots on the Ground* founding member) in the winter of 2018. The story follows multiple Jewish Ukrainians as they uncover their identity and relive their people’s tumultuous existence in their native country. Because this is an international story, a portion of the film will be non-verbal and accessible to all people regardless of language. Physical storytelling is essential to the film because it balances an intellectual experience with a purely visceral one. This film is not the first to explore themes of persecution and resiliency. What makes this film conceptually unique and engaging is how it is explored. ALIYAH combines interview-style storytelling with movement and dance and puts the audience in the passenger seat as they navigate through an immersive and unpredictable experience.

**If you are interested in supporting these dedicated young people in this important endeavor, or if you want to watch a proof of concept video, please visit:**

**<https://www.botgtheater.org/current-projects>**



## Exciting Finds in Beit Shemesh

Building a new road is never an easy project, but building a new road in Israel comes with its own unique challenges. “It seems that every time you put a shovel in the ground in Israel, you hit something of archaeological significance,” reports Jordan Miles, our Sister City “Next Generation” Representative who is currently living in Israel for a second year and volunteering for Bridges for Peace. Workers building a new highway to our Sister City of Beit Shemesh have hit a roadblock: they have unwittingly stumbled upon the ancient city of Beit Shemesh hidden under meters of dirt for more than 2700 years. At the Sister City Membership Gala on January 28, Jordan, who has visited this site several times, made a presentation about this exciting archaeological discovery using pictures and aerial video from his own drone-mounted camera.

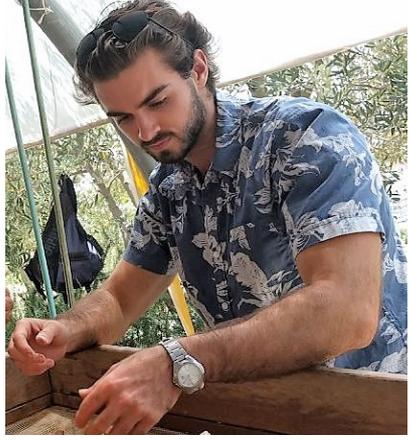
According to archaeologists Ziv Lederman and Shlomo Bunimovitz, “Biblical Beit Shemesh (Beth-Shemesh) is nothing less than a time capsule of the First-Temple-era Kingdom of Judah. The discoveries sprawl out on both sides of the busy road. The town there was a bustling place, featuring dense building and planning, with the purpose of contributing to the wealth and power of the Kingdom of Judah.”

In this apparent ancient industrial zone, archaeologists have found dense public construction, including

- storage rooms and industrial quarters,
- public buildings,
- 15 olive presses from the Hezekiah period, and
- 48 royal seal impressions identified with Hezekiah’s time.



A full house listening to **SC** Next Generation Rep Jordan Miles as he shares about the latest archaeological discoveries in Beit Shemesh.



Jordan Miles at archaeological site.

Based on the finds, Dr. Lederman believes that west of Beit Shemesh were a number of plantations that King Hezekiah established chiefly to produce olive oil.

By Israeli law, one must do a “salvage archeological dig” before building a road to determine whether there are important artifacts there. The discovery of this ancient city now poses a dilemma that may have several possible solutions including building a tunnel underneath the excavations, building a bridge over the excavations, or re-routing the road. Each of these “solutions” comes with its own set of challenges.

Jordan reminded the audience that the value of seeing and learning history with our own eyes and giving our children and their children that opportunity must be weighed against the costs of all alternatives.

While all of these considerations are being made, thousands of Israelis and tourists are flocking to this ancient Biblical site in our sister city.



Exciting discoveries in Beit Shemesh archaeological site

Special note: This presentation was originally planned to be given by our Beit Shemesh friend Meir Malka.. However, when circumstances kept Meir from travelling to the U.S., he so kindly entrusted the presentation into the capable hands of Jordan Miles.

# PICTURE PERFECT!



Cocoa Mayor Jake Williams and **SC** Board Member Diana van den Boogaard enjoy a “meet and greet” for our city officials.

Two generations of **SC** supporters.— our **SC** Next Generation Rep Jordan Miles, and former **SC** President Ron Shelton.



**SC** Board Members Nancy White and Ron and Shelby Shelton onboard Royal Caribbean's Enchantment of the Seas.



**SC** board members listen as UCF Hillel Director Aaron Weil shares about his organization— an unplanned but opportune meeting onboard the ship.

## Celebrating PURIM with Sister City!



(L to R) Great sports, Deborah Miller, Gracie Winger, Bill Stoughton and Susan Smith diving into their roles in our Purim skit.



**SC** board Member Eric Perlman displaying a classic “Haman face.”



**SC** board members Donnie Emenegger and Theresa Miles embrace their hidden identities.



**SC** Board Member Kathy Mardirosian (aka “Frenchie”)



Hats off (or on) to **SC** President Bob White.