

Under Fire Again

- Dispatch direct from Israel

The morning of Tuesday, July 22, 2014, started lovely enough. We were in the Residence Hotel, overlooking the Mediterranean for the second night. We decided to head down to Tel Aviv so that Kaila could take us through the craft market, as well as the food schouk. After quickly depositing the car in the modern, diverse metropolis of Tel Aviv, we walked through a portion of the city where the streets were closed off and sidewalks devoted to crafts of all kinds. We purchased a silver chai for our son-in-law, some delightful coasters with pictures depicting the Sea of Israel, and a bunch of other knickknacks.

The food schouk is not like any farmer's market I have ever seen. The tables are piled high with figs, pomegranates, nuts, various non-food collectibles. The schouk is a cornucopia of everything from men's underwear that look like the Israel flag, and sometimes the flags of other nations, to junk items that people perhaps think they can get more inexpensively at the market. The craft streets and the food cornucopia are yet another example of the vitality of the Israeli economy and the treasure that the Israeli people are.

From there, it was on to the beach in Tel Aviv. The beach is beautiful, clean, and the sand is hard-packed, easy to walk on, especially for somebody with troubled feet like mine. After spending some time at the beach, we were about to head off but I decided that I could not leave without going to the water. After a quick change, I found myself in the water with my dark sunglasses firmly affixed to my face. What was so great about the water is that it was bathtub temperature, the breakers were consistent, and the ocean floor was level. It was a safe and fun place to jump the waves. Boogie boarding, but especially surfing, is big time on this part of the Mediterranean.

I did not count, however, on the one big wave which docked my expensive prescription graduated sunglasses into the surf. I gave up almost immediately, thinking that I would never find the glasses. I walked to find Kim, only to tell her that that swim probably cost me \$800. They were old sunglasses, and everybody wanted me to get new, more modern ones anyway. Of course I would have kept them as long as they possibly would have held together. Something told me to go back in and walk around in the water again. After all, I had done a good deed a few days earlier in Sfat, helping a lady up many stairs with a stroller and five or six screaming kids. I don't know who was doing more screaming, the mother or the kids. I slowly looked in the water as I walked out into the surf, and there, peering up at me from the floor of the sea, were my sunglasses. I was so excited that I dove on top of them, getting my clean shirt completely drenched. It was worth it, and think of the savings. Somehow I think that helping the old lady up the stairs must have paid off.

I was reminded of a time when my father lost his Mason ring bodysurfing in Long Island. Somehow, he managed to find it when he grabbed some sand in a later act of

playfulness in the sea. He did not give up or get upset; he just kept bodysurfing and, sure enough, came up with the Mason's ring.

From Tel Aviv we were going to go to Herzliya, which is an expensive community above Tel Aviv which has a lovely marina. However, Kaila and I wanted to go down to Ashdod, which is one of Israel's major ports and has been a scene of frequent missile attacks. I have wanted to do this for days. Although we are in Israel spending our time, our money, and giving the nation our daughter as a lone soldier, we just wanted to have dinner in one of the probably empty restaurants in Ashdod and show the bastards in Gaza that we were not about to be intimidated. I don't think Kim was real thrilled about this idea, but nevertheless we went off to Ashdod.

Kaila found a fantastic place for dinner. It was an Indian restaurant. We found out that 15,000 Jews from India, obviously Indian Jews, from both Bombay and Cochin, had settled in Israel. The Jews from India did not come due to persecution. Jews in India and China have been treated relatively well by the Hindus and the Buddhists. In China, there has been a Jewish community Kaifeng, the ancient capitol, since perhaps the first or second exile of the Jews from the Holy Land.