



Taube Summer 2010 Tour to Poland and Israel

By Tad Taube and Shana Penn

Poland: The Cradle of Jewish Culture and Civilization Rises Again

POLAND IS A DRAMATIC STORY of the rebirth of a brave people rising from the subjugation of German and Soviet totalitarianism to build a free and just democracy. Poland's small but growing Jewish population is the story of a historic people rising from the ashes of the Holocaust to create a viable community and cultural life.

For nearly a decade Taube Philanthropies, through its sister foundation Taube Foundation for Jewish Life and Culture (TFJLC), has been facilitating and promoting the reemergence of Jewish life and culture in the country that for centuries was the epicenter of world Jewry. TFJLC and its partners, including the Koret Foundation, have supported dozens of Jewish institutions, programs and venues that were destroyed by the Nazis or repressed by the Communist government. Every year, the Foundation brings annual leadership delegations to review our work and to engage others in our pursuits. The most recent pil-



In Warsaw, Former President of Poland Aleksander Kwasniewski (left) greets Tad Taube, Chairman of Taube Philanthropies.



Former President of Poland Aleksander Kwasniewski giving an acceptance speech for the Taube 2010 Irena Sendler Memorial award, honoring his work in preserving Jewish heritage and fostering Jewish cultural renewal in Poland.



Janina Zgrzemska, daughter of Irena Sendler, being introduced by Tad Taube at award dinner.



Jewish Historical Institute Research Director Jan Jagielski leads Taube Tour participants on a tour of Jewish Warsaw.



Chief Rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich talks with tour participants at the Nozyk Synagogue in Warsaw.



Center: In Warsaw, the tour group visited the Taube-funded Jewish Genealogy and Family Heritage Center at the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute and were briefed by Yale Reisner, bottom photo, Chief Genealogist.

Tad Taube, top right, at the construction site of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews on the site of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The Museum is well on its way to a scheduled completion date of 2012.



At the residence of the Israeli Ambassador to Poland, left to right: Ambassador Zvi Rav-Ner; Shana Penn, Executive Director, Taube Philanthropies; Tad Taube; Chief Rabbi Michael Schudrich.



In Krakow, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announces a \$15 million Congressional allocation to preserve Auschwitz-Birkenau.

grimage to Warsaw and Krakow took place from June 29-July 4.

With the country in the midst of a suspenseful Presidential election, which followed the tragic deaths of the country’s political leadership on April 10th, it was a relevant time to visit Poland. During the same week, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was hosting an international conference on “Communities of Democracy,” which brought together foreign ministries and Non-Governmental Organizations from twenty countries including a U.S. delegation, led by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Our principal activities included participation in the 20th anniversary celebration of the Jewish Culture Festival in Krakow, the largest festival of its kind in the world, spanning eight days and nights of music, art, theater, dance, lectures, workshops and seminars that explore an array of Jewish themes. Guests from the San Francisco Bay Area included Koret CEO Jeffrey Farber, Alan and Susan Rothenberg, Tom and Kendra Kasten, George Marcus, Stuart Shiff, and Liki and Joe Abrams, among others.

U.S. Secretary of State Clinton, whom we had the honor of meeting at a press conference in Krakow’s new Oskar Schindler Museum, announced a \$15 mil-



Right, the closing night concert of the Jewish Culture Festival in Krakow draws thousands, with dancing in the streets, above, a common sight.





Top, touring Jagiellonian University's Law School in Krakow; center, learning the history of keeping culture alive in the underground cellars of Krakow, as explained by Professor Karen Underhill; bottom, attending a presentation at the Galicia Jewish Museum in Krakow.

lion Congressional allocation toward preservation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Nazi death camps.

At another of our major programs, we participated in the opening of the Jewish Genealogy and Family Heritage Center at the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. The Genealogy Center is both a physical and virtual site where lay and scholarly researchers can access a newly created database and the services of professional staff to guide their research, making use of computer work stations and seminar rooms, and, by the end of 2010, a state-of-the-art interactive website. The Center's primary goal is to assist Jews with Polish roots and Poles with Jewish roots in discovering their family histories. More than 70 percent of world Jewry has its roots in Poland, and the Jewish Historical Institute is the largest repository of information on Polish Jewry. Thus, the Genealogy Center serves as a nexus, bringing information to those who need it, bridging the past and the present, and linking much of world Jewry to Poland, their ancestral home for generations.

A hard-hat tour of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews was arranged by Museum director Jerzy Halbersztadt, who escorted us through the advanced construction site already towering three stories high over the sacred ground of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. When completed in 2012, the Museum will tell the story of Jewish contributions to Western culture and will rank along with the Holocaust Memorial in Washington DC and Yad Vashem in Jerusalem among the world's principal Jewish museums. The Museum is projected to attract one million visitors per year.

The significant capital costs of the Museum have been funded by the Polish government and City of Warsaw, primarily through the early initiative of The Honorable Aleksander Kwasniewski, President of Poland (1995-2005), to whom we presented this year's Irena Sendler Award at a VIP ceremony attended by U.S. Ambassador Lee Feinstein, Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Radoslaw Sikorski, and the daughter of Irena Sendler, Janina Zgrzemska, among others.



At the Jewish Community Center in Krakow, guests learned about its many programs.



Rabbi Tanya Segal performs the opening rituals at a special Shabbat dinner at the Galicia Jewish Museum in Krakow.



Professor Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, leader of the Core Exhibition Team of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, socializing with Dr. James Donahue, President, Graduate Theological Union and Taube Foundation Advisory Board Member.

The main thread running throughout our trip was the realization that a self-sustaining Jewish community was evolving in the democratic republic of Poland. One remarkable facet of the Jewish renaissance is the interaction and participation of Polish government leaders, academics, activists, artists and ordinary people who support a restoration of the culture they recognize was lost in the Holocaust and its aftermath. For example, the Jewish Culture Festival saw thousands of people gathered in a large city square dancing and singing to Klezmer and Yiddish music. The mostly non-Jewish audience was 100 percent Jewish on that night.

Not only are Jews and Jewish culture thriving in Poland, there is a growing movement from people from all sectors of life who are committed to the furtherance and strengthening of the Jewish community. Without any reservations, modern Jewish Poland is thriving. Synagogue membership is increasing. Poles in increasing numbers are discovering their Jewish roots and embracing their new identity. Just days prior to our arrival, the Warsaw Jewish Community proudly reported twelve new religious conversions. The government is investing tens of millions of dollars in the development of Jewish institutions. The highest echelons of political leadership are actively involved and personally invested in the rebirth of Jewish Poland, whether helping to direct funds to Jewish programs or to help restore a synagogue in their hometown.

This is not a numbers game. There will never be millions of Jews again in Poland nor in any European country. But the Jewish contribution to Western culture as a result of 1,000 years of Jewish life in Poland is being advanced continuously in Poland today by Jews and non-Jews. It is not surprising that Poland has become Israel's strongest ally in the European Union and one of its most significant trading partners. Jewish Peoplehood, its historical implications and global impact are the numbers that count today.



Guest and dignitaries gathered in Krakow City Hall to celebrate both the First Anniversary of the Sister Cities Partnership between Krakow and San Francisco and the Fourth of July. From left: Michael Yarne, Economic Development Advisor to San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom; featured music performer Matisyahu; Tad Taube; Elzbieta Lecznarowicz, Deputy Mayor of Krakow.



U.S. Consul General in Krakow Allen Greenberg welcomes Tad Taube back to his city of birth.



World-renowned American reggae musician Matisyahu performs a Fourth of July tribute.



Jeff Farber, CEO, Koret Foundation, and Shana Penn stand behind seated guests Michael Yarne and Tad Taube.



Janusz Makuch, left, Founding Director of the Krakow Jewish Culture Festival, visits with Stuart Shiff, a California Bay Area businessman, center, and Jeff Farber, right.

Israel: Strengthening Ties, Creating Building Blocks for a Better Future

OUR FIRST IMPRESSION on arrival was shaped by the huge and ultra-modern Ben Gurion International Airport; virtually all visitors to Israel will pass through the doors of this gleaming glass and stainless steel architectural marvel.

Our “landing party” consisting of Koret Foundation CEO Jeff Farber and ourselves was quickly and efficiently whisked through the airport to the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem super highway and to our Israel base of operations at the elegant King David Hotel.

Our mission to Israel, similar to our mission to Poland, was to review the progress of the institutions supported by the Koret Foundation and by Taube Philanthropies, but moreover, to measure the present outlook on Israel’s historical and political realities. In fact, as we arrived, Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Obama were meeting in Washington, D.C., to see if the recent tensions between the two nations could be alleviated.

Our initial meetings focused on the exciting developments that are evolving for Koret Israel Economic Development Funds (KIEDF), which was established by the Koret Foundation in 1994 to promote free-market economic activity in Israel by facilitating loans to smaller enterprises and promoting employment and economic growth. To date, KIEDF has facilitated \$230 million in loans to some 8,000 small businesses, supporting more than 40,000 jobs. In recent years, its activities have expanded to include microloans directed to small businesses run by Arabs and cottage trades developed by women as well as ethnic minorities.

A new initiative has recently been launched which creates a partnership with the Overseas Pri-



The modern city of Tel Aviv.



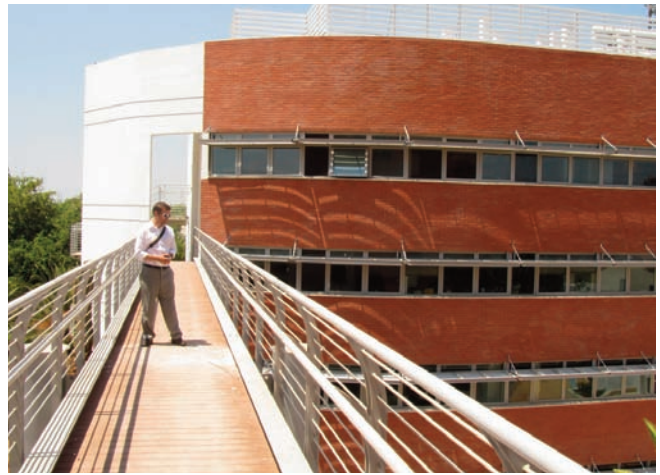
At left, Carl Kaplan, Managing Director of KIEDF, with Eival Gilady, KIEDF Chairman.



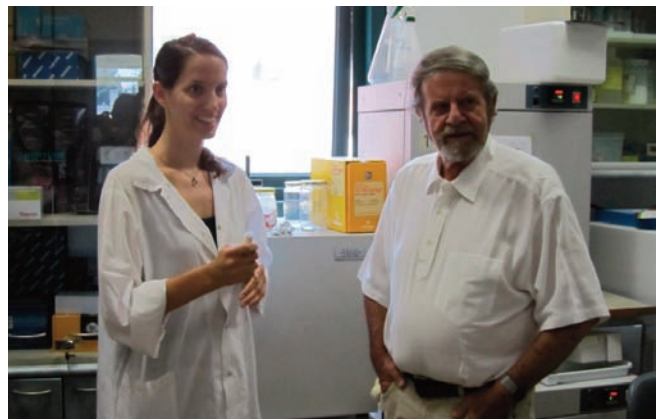
The Old City of Jerusalem.



Left to right: Jeff Farber, CEO, Koret Foundation; Tad Taube, Chairman, Taube Philanthropies; Eugene Kandel, head of the Israel National Economic Council in the office of the Prime Minister; and Eival Gilady, Chairman, KIEDF.



Left to right: Shana Penn, Executive Director, Taube Philanthropies; Dan Meridor, Deputy Prime Minister of Israel, Jeff Farber; Eival Gilady; and Carl Kaplan.



The new research facilities in Rehovot of the Koret School of Veterinary Medicine at Hebrew University.

vate Investment Corporation (OPIC) leading to loan guarantees that could, over time, produce nearly \$1 billion in additional KIEDF financing opportunities.

The KIEDF discussions brought us to Eugene Kandel, head of the National Economic Council in the office of the Prime Minister. Dr. Kandel, who studied at the University of Chicago and the Hoover Institution, stressed the pre-eminence of current and future Israeli technological and sci-

entific pursuits. He expressed the hope that support of Israel by younger Americans would be attracted toward these pursuits.

Throughout our discussions in Israel, there was consistent emphasis on building and magnifying the ties between Israel and the United States, both Jews and non-Jews and particularly among the younger generations.

Security issues, a major focus in Israel, were addressed in depth in a meeting with Dan Meri-



From left to right: Eival Gilady; Tad Taube; Stanley Fisher, Governor of the Bank of Israel; and Jeff Farber.



From left to right: Carl Kaplan; Rick Parasol, California businessman; Sarah Kaplan



Memorial site at Yad Vashem.



Juddson Taube, left, with Eival Gilady.

dor, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intelligence, who also expressed optimism for the outcome of the meeting between Netanyahu and Obama. We also met with Matan Vilnai, Deputy Defense Minister, who spoke with passion about the priorities of national defense and left us with a feeling that Israel is in good hands.

An important initiative of the Koret Foundation has been the founding and support of the Koret School of Veterinary Medicine at Hebrew University. We visited the recently completed site of the magnificent, new research facilities of the Koret School in Rehovot, where we had an opportunity to observe PhD candidates involved in medical research in numerous instances applicable to human diseases as well as animal diseases. In-

deed, many of the graduates of the Koret School of Veterinary Medicine frequently occupy positions in the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, and other related areas and institutions.

We were fortunate to have the opportunity to meet with Shimon Peres, President of Israel. We briefly discussed the recent meeting between Netanyahu and Obama, which President Peres termed as positive for the State of Israel. We had an opportunity to discuss with President Peres the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, of which he serves as Honorary Chairman. The President has been carefully tracking the Museum's progress, including the Polish Government's financial support, which he termed as highly encouraging.



President of Israel Shimon Peres with Tad Taube.



Left to right: Carl Kaplan, Shana Penn, Jeff Farber, President Shimon Peres, Tad Taube, Eival Gilady and Juddson Taube.

The topic that engendered the greatest excitement for President Peres is a new education initiative being implemented in the Israeli Defense Forces. The obligatory national service for Israeli young adults has historically been viewed as years of military training committed without intellectual or economic development. The exciting new plan described by President Peres will in effect create opportunities to pursue undergraduate diplomas while serving in the IDF. President Peres referred to this new initiative as providing both military training camp and academic campus en-

vironments for Israeli young adults.

Tel Aviv served as the venue for our next KIEDF related discussions. With high-rise buildings and construction everywhere, nightmarish traffic, no parking, and a world renowned night life (in which we sadly did not have occasion to participate), Tel Aviv is a modern, cosmopolitan and global capital. While in Tel Aviv, we had an opportunity to meet with Stanley Fisher, Governor of the Bank of Israel, who has been instrumental in helping to facilitate KIEDF's OPIC relationship. Mr. Fisher, a University of Chicago economist, has been credited with much of the success in recent years of the Israeli economy — its low inflation rate, its balanced budget, and its resultant high employment. The Israelis are very proud of their economic success, the strength of their currency, and the remarkable development throughout Israel, which one sees everywhere. In Tel Aviv particularly, the skyline is dotted with construction cranes and new high-rise office and residential towers.

As we write this report on our Boeing 777 flight home, we reflect on our conclusions about Israel and its people. We can summarize this in several words – energetic, determined, unrelenting, and confident while apprehensive. Security is obviously a major concern and is evidenced everywhere. Yet the normalcy of life in the context of security challenges is remarkable.

Tad Taube is a prominent business and civic leader and philanthropist. He serves as President of the Koret Foundation and Chairman of Taube Philanthropies.

Shana Penn is the author of works on modern Polish history and Executive Director of Taube Philanthropies.