

THE volunteer CONNECTION

Who Actually Volunteers for VFI Service and What Do They Do?

Yes, it's a bold and noble act to join the VFI program and spend 2 or 3 weeks living in an Israeli army barracks during stressful times. Yes, most friends and family think that their volunteer must be naive, idealistic, misguided, or just plain nuts.

In contrast, returning volunteers universally and enthusiastically look back at their extraordinary experience with an attitude of deep respect tinged with awe and veneration. They say any personal sacrifices are greatly outweighed by the personal value they received from their experience. Many endorse the program with pretty strong emotions like, "It's a life-changing adventure without peer."

So who are these ordinary people who volunteer? What special gene pools do they come from? We reviewed the statistics over the past 7 years to find some clues.

- Unmarried volunteers (of all ages) have increased from 46 percent to 57 percent of all volunteers. Among unattached volunteers, 69 percent are single; 17 percent are divorced; and 13 percent are widows or widowers. This dedicated group appears motivated by the common interests of a sophisticated singles crowd. Proudly, there have been several marriages between VFI volunteers.
- Young adult volunteers (17-25 years old) have increased from 9 percent to 22 percent of all volunteers. A portion of this

increase is attributed to the summer International Youth Program. The response from this growing group has consistently been a positive early life learning experience.

- Middle age volunteers (55-65 years old) have displayed a high degree of stability since 2002 and constituting about 26 percent of all volunteers.
- The gender of volunteers has consistently hovered at about 50-50 male-female. This reflects both the resilience of the volunteers to deal with personal sacrifices and the program's ability to provide a gender-neutral satisfactory experience.
- Non-Jewish volunteers (of all ages) have increased from 11 percent to 19 percent. These folks are proven, dedicated, and highly motivated volunteers with high marks for their experience.
- The education level of volunteers, while not measured, appears to be on the high side with numerous advanced degrees of teachers, business people, and other professionals.
- Repeat volunteers constitute about 41 percent of all volunteers and many have completed the program numerous times. This reflects on the durability of the program to keep their interest and enthusiasm.

Dear Friends,

**I join Vade in his
New Year greetings.
Health and energy
brings happiness.**

**Shanah Tovah,
Happy New Year,
Davidi**

(continued on page 3)





VFI National President's Message

Vade's View

We are now in the midst of tough economic times here, in Israel, and throughout the world. VFI has never been more crucial to Israel. Every VFI volunteer takes the place of an Israeli citizen-soldier.

VFI needs to expand its media marketing to enlist greater numbers of volunteers. Please consider a contribution to support our efforts.

Thank you and shalom,
Vade



Editor's Corner – Recruiting Volunteers

This newsletter is a recruiting tool designed to be circulated among your friends and acquaintances. Your assignment is to see they receive it.

Half of our new volunteers recruited by VFI come to us directly via word of mouth.

We are seeking your personal VFI story, which will be read and inspire countless others down through the ages.

Steve Plotkin, Editor

steveplotkin@erols.com, 1340 Brighton Way, Newtown Square, PA 19073, 610.358.5366, Fax 610.361.8896.

Donations Received by VFI

(July 1, 2008 – September 30, 2008)

Jewish National Fund Trees planted for the following:

Contributor

Barbara and Alan Cornblatt
Renee G. Bassell & Family
Sarah Katz, Savta Dina & Uncle Jaimie
Grandma Sara Simon
Sarah Katz, Savta Dina & Uncle Jaimie
Sarah Katz, Savta Dina & Uncle Jaimie
Ms. Maddy Tyree
Grandma Sara Simon

In Memory of

Corey Eric Drake, High School Graduation
Florence & Bert Silver, 50th Anniversary
Jordan Katz
Miss Kari Davis
Moshe Katz
Ms. Temima Neshama Katz
Seena & Morris Pukel
Seth Davis

Contributor

Mark Grunkin
Barbara and Alan Cornblatt

In Honor of

State of Israel
Carley & Megan LaManna,
High School Graduation

Contributor

VFI Board of Directors
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Barbara and Alan Cornblatt
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The Larry Gross Family
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The Larry Gross Family
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In Memory of

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Hilda Must
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Lillian Greenwald
Milton J. Gross
Morton Haber
Ralph LaMonica
Rea Gross
Rose (Raiza) Federbush
Sara Shakerchi
Todd F. Boff
Mother of Mitch Wasson

Specific Donations to Volunteers for Israel®

Contributor

Mr. & Mrs. Mark Glowatz

In Honor of

70th Birthday of Cookie Koblin

Contributor

Maier Weiner

In Memory of

Claude Andrews

You can designate your gift; use the enclosed envelope.

VFI Officers and Board Members for 2009

Officers:

Vade Bolton, National President, VA,
703.860.0504, vadebolton@comcast.net
Larry Feldman, Vice President, MD,
410.486.6876, lf730@aol.com
Marian Sacks, Treasurer, MD,
301.603.9099, mbsacks31@hotmail.com
Ed Kohl, National Coordinator, MI,
248.788.0551, michigan@vfi-usa.org
Beverly Cohen, Recording Secretary, PA,
610.584.0468, bevcohen@comcast.net

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Mila Bensonoff, MA	Barry Stein, PA
Josef Herz, WA	Carol Stein, PA
Ed Koplín, CO	Kay Warren, CA
Jeanne S. Schachter, PA	

Do you know the VFI work program includes?

- FREE accommodations, plus**
- FREE kosher meals every day, plus**
- FREE military work uniforms, plus**
- FREE lectures, possibly guided trips, plus**
- FREE the adventure of a lifetime, plus**
- Earned immense personal satisfaction.**

Whoever said: “*Build a better mouse trap and the world will beat a path to your door*” must have been an engineer. After all, how many better mouse traps can you sell if no one knows about them?

What's this got to do with VFI?

Simple...Sar-El's success depends on volunteers — lots of them. And the only way to get lots of volunteers is to advertise for them — to make people aware of the unique and wonderful opportunities provided in volunteering to work on an Israeli Army base or hospital.

That's where you come in. Your financial support pays for Volunteers for Israel to reach people like yourself. Like a better “mouse trap” we're best at what we do. But only your financial support enables us to get the word out in the media. You see, VFI is Sar-El's marketing arm.

Your financial contribution to VFI enables us to reach people who, like you, might be excited about fulfilling a dream to help Israel in a unique and meaningful way — the Sar-El experience — if only they know about us! VFI was specifically organized to secure volunteers for Sar-El. Without VFI, there would hardly be a Sar-El because there's no budget from Israel for Sar-El to market itself to secure volunteers. That is what VFI does. And your contribution enables VFI to fulfill its mission. We can't do it without your support.

VFI maintains a part-time office to process and support volunteers, and reach out for volunteers through advertising in the mass media and contacts with Hillel and Birthright programs. VFI encourages students on Hillel and Birthright programs to spend days with VFI.

Please consider a gift of \$25, \$50, \$100 or more.

Make your tax-deductible contribution now in the enclosed business reply envelope while you're thinking about it. You'll feel good knowing that you're helping bring the message to potentially new volunteers, the lifeblood of Sar-El.

Grasp our dream. Help share it with others by making your contribution today.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,
Vade Bolton, President

The Situation Room — A New Dangerous Neighborhood Again

Yes, it's time to reassemble the jigsaw puzzle that is the Middle East. The usual threats and uncertainties abound.

- After a two-year campaign, 133 million votes are counted and the U.S. gets a new President with a new leaning on Jan. 20, 2009. The national congressional machinery is also dominated by the same party.
- On February 10, 2009, three weeks later, Israel gets a new Prime Minister and Parliament. Names like Likud, Binyamin Netanyahu and Kadima, Tzipi Livni and others are in the headlines.
- What effect will the new U.S. administration have on the Israel-U.S. “Special Relationship?”
- Meanwhile, Iran is nonstop assembling its first nuclear bomb or warhead while day dreaming to eliminate Israel while pursuing regional domination.
- The price of oil goes up, then rockets further up, then warp speed down, then OPEC reduces production, then...

- The world is facing the painful spectacle of a U.S. led world wide economic downturn.
- The Iraq war is still lurking in the background while Syria continues its meddling in Lebanon, inciting a direct U.S. response.
- The newly-elected government in Jerusalem will need all its energy and resources to confront the problems which the outgoing transitional administration has long avoided.
- The worldwide economic downturn is expected to reflect badly on nonprofit organizations.
- Now is NOT the time to stop seeking and educating our volunteers. We've been through tough times before and we'll get through this one by going back to basics and working together to promote VFI and our volunteer programs.

Can you help VFI in this Downturn? Your annual contribution will assure our continued efforts.

Steve Plotkin

Who Actually Volunteers for VFI Service and What Do They Do? *(continued from front page)*

- About 40 percent of volunteers heard about the program from a friend. Your passing around this newsletter is vital to our success in informing prospective volunteers.

The above volunteers have identified some not so obvious benefits aside from the free kosher mess hall food, free housing, and work uniforms. They have stepped outside their comfort zone, felt the spirit of giving, and individually gained from an extraordinary group experience.

HOW TO EXPLAIN YOUR VFI/SAR-EL EXPERIENCE TO OTHERS

Addressing a group or being interviewed for a local newspaper regarding your VFI/Sar-El experience can be tricky. How can you best project your personal experience? You may start with, "I volunteered for the VFI/Sar-El program that places volunteers on military bases to work in non-combat maintenance and supply roles, and in hospitals and nursing homes. Sar-El is a non-profit organization based in Israel." But there's a lot more you can talk about. For instance:

- Your personal motivation for volunteering.
 - The adventures and highlights on your base, your program, and on the street.
 - Your experience and impressions of Israel, the geography, society and sites.
 - The interesting people you met and with whom you worked.
 - Your personal contribution to the program.
 - The personal benefits you came away with from your volunteer service.
 - Why you feel others might also enjoy the program.
- If you are uncertain about what to write or say, feel free to call VFI.

Dear Friends,

With the holiday season upon us I would like to wish all of you a very happy New Year. We at Sar-El have had a very busy summer, and we are expecting a large delegation of volunteers in October. In addition, we are accepting applications for the winter and urge you to join us as there is much work to be done on our bases in the coming year.

Let me now extend our heartfelt thanks to all of our volunteers for their hard work and extensive contribution during the past year. As always we need and appreciate all of your efforts.

Shana Tova, Happy New Year,
Israel Geva, Executive General Manager

Volunteer Program Schedule for 2008-09

Programs start only on the Sunday and/or Monday shown below. Volunteers can join for 1, 2, 3, or more weeks. Classes in Hebrew for beginners (the Ulpan option) are designated.

2008 SCHEDULE — 26th Anniversary Year

- Dec. 7/8-Dec. 25, 2- or 3-week program, *Ulpan*
- Dec. 28/29-Jan. 15, 2009, 2- or 3-week program, *Ulpan*

2009 SCHEDULE — 27th Anniversary Year

- Jan. 18/19-Feb. 5, 2- or 3-week Program, *Ulpan*
- Feb. 8/9-Feb. 26, 2- or 3-week Program, *Ulpan*
- Feb. 8-Feb. 12, Special 1-week program
- Mar. 1/2-Mar. 19, 2- or 3-week program, *Ulpan*
- Mar. 22/23-Apr. 8, 2- or 3-week program, *Ulpan*
- Apr. 19/20-May 7, 2- or 3-week program, *Ulpan*
- May 10/11-May 28, 2- or 3-week program, *Ulpan*
- May 10-May 14, Special 1-week program
- May 31/June 1-June 18, 2- or 3-week program, *Ulpan*
- June 21/22-July 9, 3-week program, International Youth Group
- June 21/22-July 9, 2- or 3-week program, *Ulpan*

- July 12-July 30, 3-week program, International Youth Group
- July 12/13-July 30, 2- or 3-week program, *Ulpan*
- Aug. 2/3-Aug. 20, 2- or 3-week program, *Ulpan*
- Aug. 23/24-Sept. 10, 2-week program, *Ulpan*
- Sept. 13/14-Oct. 1, 2- or 3-week program, *Ulpan*
- Oct. 11-Oct. 15, Special 1-week program
- Oct. 11/12-Oct. 29, 2- or 3-week program, *Ulpan*
- Nov. 1/2-Nov. 19, 2- or 3-week program, *Ulpan*
- Nov. 22/23-Dec. 10, 2- or 3-week program, *Ulpan*
- Dec. 13/14-Dec. 31, 2- or 3-week program, *Ulpan*

Ulpan Practical Hebrew Class

Classes are taught 2 nights a week by experienced professionals. The one-time fee of \$50 covers up to 3 weeks of classes. Sign up at the time of your volunteer registration.

Please visit our web site at www.vfi-usa.org for frequent special programs.

NEWSBYTE CORNER

Famous VFI Alumni in the News

Congressman Rahm Emanuel, 48, from the Illinois 5th District, has become Pres. Elect Obama's Chief of Staff. An extremely tough and pivotal job.

According to Wikipedia, "During the 1991 Gulf War, Emanuel was a civilian volunteer in Israel, rust-proofing brakes on an army base in northern Israel." It's true. Emanuel, when he was 31 years old participated in the Sar-El/Volunteers for Israel program with the IDF.

Army Fatigues: Author Mark Werner Speaking Tour

Mark Werner, author of *Army Fatigues:*

Joining Israel's Army of International Volunteers, is available to speak to groups. Mark has already spoken to VFI groups in Atlanta and Philadelphia. He discusses his experiences making a contribution to the Israeli Army while stepping out of his comfort zone.

Mark is an attorney in Raleigh, NC, where he lives with his wife Arlene. He is active in UJC and AIPAC and has volunteered with Sar-El during each of the past 7 years. Your group can book an event with Stuart Schnee PR at office2@stuartschnee.com or 713.729.6297.



Shop the VFI Amazon Store and Support VFI

When you shop the VFI Amazon Store, you can get some neat stuff while supporting VFI. The store carries an enticing assortment of travel, Israeli, and other Jewish products. Check it out at www.vfi-usa.org/vfiamazonstore.html

Hillel at the University of Maryland Is Planning a Group Sar-El Trip.

A group of approximately 20 volunteers is being assembled by Hillel at the University of Maryland for a group Sar-El trip. The group will be stationed together on an IDF base, with the opportunity to work directly with base soldiers.

The group is to arrive in Israel on Monday, January 5, 2009, and depart on January 19. For additional information contact Larry Feldman at lf730@aol.com.

Tourism to Israel Continues to Climb

Tourism continues to show a steady increase. As many tourists came to Israel in the first 9 months of 2008 as compared to all of 2007. By year end 2.8 million tourists are expected to visit, a number that exceeds the bicentennial year 2000 when 2.6 million tourists arrived.

The year 2008 may have started with blues in the capital market, but hotels are applauding as tourism broke all records for overnight hotel stays, up more than 25% from last year.

The year 2009 however is another story as the global tourism industry expects to shrink with the global recession and Israel expects a challenging year.

Funding Your Travel to Israel

A creative way to get your airline ticket is to use gift miles donated by a friend who travels a lot. Airlines frequent flyer miles may be gifted by the owner and most airlines also allow purchase of gift miles. So posting your need for a ticket on an organization bulletin board might produce a pleasant surprise.

Sar-El at Nahal Soreq

*We fly to Eretz Israel...
Strangers – all volunteers;
Sar-El troopers
Readying soldiers' combat gear.*

*We hear of death
And heroes bold;
We see the young
Who may never get old.*

*We cry for the fallen
(We so honor them);
And who could hold back tears
At Yad Vashem.?*

*We fall in line
And salute David's Star;
And are glad for the chance
To be where we are.*

*We don't want thanks
(Although many are spoken);
What we feel is a bond,
That cannot be broken.*

*We served with pride
At Nahal Soreq;
We took that step
Beyond writing a check.*

*Some can't explain
Why our hearts do swell—
For a small country we love:
Our beloved Yisrael.*

— Art Greenberg, February 2008,
artg1945@msn.com

The Volunteer Connection is the national quarterly newsletter of Volunteers for Israel® (VFI). Copyright 2008, all rights reserved. ISSN: ISSN 1945-7588. VFI is a nonpolitical, nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation with headquarters at 330 West 42nd Street, Suite 1618, New York, NY 10036. Telephone: 866.514.1948. E-mail: info@vfi-usa.org. Web site: www.vfi-usa.org.

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—Steve Plotkin, Editor, steveplotkin@erols.com

—Barbara Abbott, Copy Editor

—Regina Stinger, Graphic Designer

VFI HAPPENINGS AROUND THE COUNTRY

Atlanta/South Region — On September 12, 13, and 14, Mark Werner, author of *ARMY FATIGUES*, spoke at three Atlanta synagogues. He expressed how he became motivated to support Israel thru the VFI program, which he has done seven times and relates his experiences in his book.

The Atlanta Jewish Community High School now provides our VFI region with office space and computers. No stranger to VFI, the Weber school also sends its senior class to Israel for 3 months including a Gadna and the Sar-El program. For further information and schedule update, please contact Alan Mintz at agmintz@mindspring.com.



Chicago Midwest Region — Can you interview, distribute posters, or follow up with returning volunteers? Do you want to speak about Volunteers for Israel to encourage MORE help for Israel? Keep your experience alive and help us. If you have other ideas to promote VFI, please call Charlotte at 888.246.3037 or e-mail chicago@vfi-usa.org. We are only as good as the help we get!

Great Lakes Region — For further information and schedule update, please contact Ed Kohl at 248.420.3729 or michigan@vfi-usa.org.



Las Vegas News — For further information and schedule update, please contact Fran and Jerry Goldberg at 702.914.6863.

Long Island Region — On August 11, at a gathering of 5,000 friends of Israel in East Meadows, Eric Steinberg, VFI Regional Ambassador, accepted a proclamation and Medal of Service presented to VFI by the Nassau County Executive. For further information and schedule update, please contact Eric Steinberg, Regional Ambassador, at esteinb173@aol.com or 631.588.7438.

Los Angeles Region — Michael Friedman has been engaged part time to promote VFI to a large number of LA Jewish organizations. For further information and schedule update, please contact Carol and Isaac Hananel at 866.345.3352.

Metro New York — The NY VFI office invites you to a special event on Tuesday evening, November 18th. We will begin at 6:30 p.m. with social time for past, current and future volunteers to trade stories, talk shop, ask questions and share base experiences.

Volunteer Hank Wisner of the American Physicians Fellowship will present an informative talk on "Chemical and Biological Warfare and Israel's Response to Them." Hank first went with VFI in the late 80's (he slept in a tent) and has been back many times. As an instructor and active leader in CERT – Community Emergency Response Team, you'll find his talk very enlightening. More schmooze time will follow.

The location is 350 W. 42nd Street (between 8th and 9th Avenue) on the 31st floor. This is not the VFI office. An RSVP is mandatory by November 14th to jbemstein@vfi-usa.org to gain entry to this highly secured facility. We encourage all of you to come and to bring friends and acquaintances who are contemplating possible participation in our future programs. VFI can't help Israel without you. Sharon Stein & Richard Bernstein

The New York office is seeking Volunteers to plan for the 2009 Salute to Israel Day Parade. If we are to march under our own banner separate from the JAFI we need to register by December. If interested in joining the endeavor or have questions concerning the parade please e-mail parade@vfi-usa.org.

For further information and schedule update, please contact VFI at 212.643.4848 or e-mail new-york@vfi-usa.org.

Mid-Atlantic Region — We continue sending a steady number of volunteers to Sar-El; however, we wish to increase that number for 2009. We want to schedule a regional meeting. This is an opportunity for recent volunteers to attend and bring prospects as well as young people who have attended the highly successful International Youth Program. If you are interested in helping plan this activity, and live in Maryland please contact Marian Sacks at (301.603.9099) or mbsacks31@hotmail.com. If you live in Virginia contact Vade Bolton (703.860.0504) or vadebolton@comcast.net.

Philadelphia — Our October meeting had Steve Feldman from ZOA speaking on topics of current interest. He focused on the various peace processes, reviewing the outcomes, and Israel's exposures.

On Wednesday, December 10, Mark Werner, author of *Army Fatigues: Joining Israel's Army of International Volunteers*, the first book about the Sar-El experience, will discuss his motivation for joining the VFI program and sign copies of his book.

Meetings are held at the Klein Branch JCC, Red Lion Rd. and Jamison Ave. in Philadelphia starting at 7:00 p.m. Call Jeanne Schachter at 610.617.4048 for more schedule details.

San Francisco Region — On Sunday, Sept. 21, VFI participated in "To Life! Street Festival" held in Palo Alto. To Life! is a 1-day celebration of Jewish culture and heritage sponsored by the Albert L. Schultz JCC and attracted over 10,000 people. Thanks to volunteers who helped staff our booth. For more information and to help out at future events, call Kay Warren at 510.339.0183 or e-mail ?????

Ambassadors and Regional Directors

— The VFI Ambassador's team is meeting success working with their regional directors interviewing applicants, making presentations, and promoting VFI in their neighborhoods. When you need help with an event, promotional materials, presentation ideas, etc., please contact Ed Kohl, Ambassador Coordinator, at eskohl@comcast.net or 248.788.0551.

"Be daring, be steadfast, be successful."

—David Ben-Gurion



VFI MEMBERSHIP AND ORDER FORM

Join Volunteers for Israel As a Full Member

VFI membership at the Chai level of \$18 includes personalized VFI business cards, a membership card, this newsletter, and other benefits.

- The Double Chai level membership at \$36 also includes a tee shirt.
- The Meir level membership at \$50 also includes VFI luggage tags.
- At the Sharon level of \$100, you also receive a tee shirt.
- The Dayan level is at \$250 and adds a vest to the Chai-level benefits.
- For \$500 and above, the Ben-Gurion level provides you with a duffel bag.

Join our growing VFI community and become a VFI Member now!

Plant a Tree in Israel

Memorialize your life-cycle events with a tree in Israel. Use the coupon below with your check for \$18.00 per tree, your name, and to whom the donation certificates should be sent, and we will take care of the rest.

VFI is your direct link to the Jewish National Fund's (JNF) trees for Israel.

Mail to:

Marian Sacks, VFI Treasurer
13801 Bonsal Lane
Silver Spring, MD 20906
with your donation check payable to "Volunteers for Israel."



VFI MEMBERSHIP			
DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT	TOTAL	
VFI MEMBERSHIP			
Ben-Gurion (\$500 and above)	\$ ___		
Dayan (\$250)	\$250		
Sharon (\$100)	\$100		
Meir (\$50)	\$ 50		
Double Chai (\$36)	\$ 36		
DESCRIPTION		QUANTITY	TOTAL
PLANT TREES IN ISRAEL			
JNF Trees — Include your name and to whom certificates be sent.	\$18		
THE VFI STORE			
VFI Travel Journal (an easy-to-carry 40-page spiral bound travel diary for travelers to Israel. It is filled with helpful information and maps.) NEW SALE PRICE	\$15 \$10		
VFI Army green baseball cap with VFI logo	\$20		
VFI Green fleece vest, sleeveless, with two zipper pockets and black collar	\$50		
VFI Small carry-on bag (duffel) with shoulder straps	\$60		
TOTAL ENCLOSED (All prices include tax and shipping)			\$
E-MAIL		TELEPHONE	
FIRST NAME		LAST NAME	
MAIL ADDRESS			
CITY		STATE	ZIP
<p><i>Please check your desired membership level, order items, and quantities.</i></p> <p><i>VFI Respects Your Privacy and will not share your information with others.</i></p>			

This Picture's Story

While volunteering at an Israel Air Force base, I attempted to purchase some photos of planes and pilots that were displayed on the walls of the base PX. I was told they were decorations and not for sale. My request was overheard by a nearby 12-year-old boy, and he chimed in that he had lots of pictures.

A few minutes later he returned with a box of pictures, but he stopped short and eyed me — a strange looking old geezer in dirty fatigues. "Who are you?" he asked. I told him I was from the United States and I came to work on the base. "You mean the Israel Air Force brings you here from the United States and pays you to work here?" "No, No, I am in a volunteer group called Sar-El. We pay our own airfare and work here without pay to show our support for Israel," I answered.

And now I, in turn, asked the boy "Who are you?" "I am the son of an Air Force officer," he said. "My family lives on the base and my father's work involves taking lots of pictures. These have been okayed by security."

From his many photos, I chose three, but this one really jumped out at me. It has the stark contrast of modern hi-tech Israel, set against the ancient walled city. "How much do you want for the three?" I asked. "No money," he replied. "I want to VOLUNTEER them, like you." And he would not accept the money I offered.



Leon Rechtman

The sage, Hillel, was once asked to explain the Torah while standing on one foot. He said, "What is hateful to yourself, do not do to your fellow man. That is the whole Torah; the rest is just commentary. Go and study it."

THE volunteer CONNECTION

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