



# Trip to Israel and Palestine

April 20 - May 3

Peter and Beth Ornstein



## Overview

During our visit we enjoyed the opportunity to meet many of our current grantees and reconnect with past grantees and other partners.

We also met with a number of individuals and organizations to explore possibilities for creating a low-tech water solutions project that would involve Israeli Bedouins and potentially create connections with the Navajo Nation.

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## Saturday, April 22

# Rainwater Harvesting, Jerusalem

Amir Yecheili is a Jerusalem based inventor/engineer/educator and advocate for rainwater catching. He developed a container that is easy to flush sediments (prevent microbial buildup), and has installed his system in multiple schools and locations in Israel, West Bank, Africa, and on the Navajo Nation. He installed the system used in a school that SIPP supported in the past through a mini-grant . We toured three schools in West Jerusalem where the system has been installed.



## Sunday, April 23, Jerusalem Friends

Richard Laster is a professor of environmental law at Hebrew University and manages a nonprofit that works on water-related projects, including waste treatment in the Kidron Basin. Amir Yehielli has installed rainwater harvesting systems in coordination with Richard, but had never met him in-person until this meeting..

Richard brought us up to date on the Kidron project. It seems that the Israeli component (solid separation, piping) is well underway. He did not think that the Palestinian Authority's component had made any progress. He also discussed the need for well rehabilitation for Abdallah, his Bedouin colleague who lives in an encampment east of the the Mar Saba Monastery.



That evening we reconnected with former SIPP liaisons Avner Goren and Lisa Talesnick for dinner. We discussed the needs of one of our mini-grantees for assistance in Ramallah. Lisa offered to reach out to her contacts. Many of our partners know Lisa and/or Avner.



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## Monday, April 24

# Orchard of the Children of Abraham, Jaffa

We met Ora and Ihab Balha who founded this impressive multicultural preschool and kindergarten with 150 students in a farm/garden setting in the midst of Jaffa. Most furniture and toys are made from recycled materials. The school is expanding to 1st and 2nd grade this fall. The school is open to receive tours from groups. <https://www.bismilla.org/>





# Monday, April 24

## Eastern Mediterranean International School

We met with Sustainability Coordinator Lindsey Zemler and several students, including two Green Ambassadors we sponsored last year. Sally (Palestinian) was in 11th grade and is mentoring younger students. She is still focused on providing environmental leadership. Olena (Ukrainian) was planning to do environmental research this summer in Eilat, and attend Princeton University this fall in electrical and computer engineering. We enjoyed visiting the Green Village. <https://em-is.org/academics/curriculum/green-up>





## Monday, April 24

### AJEEC-NISPED

We met with Ariel Dloomy and Jesica Scheimberg of AJEEC-NISPED and discussed possible collaboration on a water project they are launching in the Hebron watershed. Working with other organizations, including the Greenland Society (Akram Amro), they will map all of the sources of pollution in the basin and develop a master plan for addressing water pollution mitigation and treatment. We discussed the water catching system that Amir Yechieli and WRAP are using, and AJEEC is interested in possible application of that for their work in Africa (East Cameroon). [https://ajeec-nisped.org.il/?page\\_id=17021&lang=en](https://ajeec-nisped.org.il/?page_id=17021&lang=en)

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## Tuesday, April 25

# Sinsila Center, East Jerusalem

We met with Tareq Nassar, an architectural engineer who co-founded the Sinsila Center at its main location in the East Jerusalem library. There is a second center located in Abu Tor. The Center hosts numerous workshops including workshops on urban agriculture/hydroponics and beekeeping. The beekeeping activities have also become a source of income for area residents as they are able to sell the byproducts of beekeeping - honey and wax products (candles, cosmetics). The center advocates for use of alternative energy sources. Sinsila is open to receiving tour groups (a source of income for the Center) and we are hoping to connect them to some of our other partners.





**Thursday, April 27**

## **Center for Freedom & Justice, Beit Ummar**



Beth and Peter traveled with Bruce Shafer and Bruce's son Zane to Beit Ummar to visit the Center for Freedom and Justice, a SIPP mini-grantee. We met with Moshe, Khalid, and Bessan, viewed their main facility/community center, and learned about the goals and aspirations of CFJ. They have a new outdoor swimming pool (rare in Palestine), plans for a new kindergarten (with Italian funding), and actively promote youth and adult education (environmental, arts, etc - including Hebrew and an attitude of the need to get along with the Israelis). We discussed their SIPP-supported composting project.



## Thursday, April 27

### Hebron

Akram showed us the site for the new Environmental Education Center (EEC). The EEC will be built adjacent to a new therapeutic health clinic that is under construction. It is located in an area of new/recent construction. Once the clinic is completed, the EEC will be built, and will be designed as a natural extension of the clinic. Akram's vision is that the clinic and EEC will encourage community participation in these types of projects.



## April 28 - May 1 Ramat HaNegev

Jared White, the outgoing Ramat HaNegev outreach coordinator, connected us with a visiting delegation from the the Jewish National Fund and helped coordinate our meeting with Yoni Sharir, the Ramat HaNegev Bedouin outreach coordinator..





## Sunday, April 30

### Ramat HaNegev, Abdeh



Amir drove from Jerusalem to join us for our meetings on Sunday and Monday. Yoni Sharir, the Ramat-HaNegev Bedouin Outreach Coordinator, showed us the ongoing work in the local Bedouin Community of Abdeh, which is undergoing significant (but slow) development. The community has a general store, public school (through 8th grade), and a staffed health clinic. It is the location of the SIPP sponsored Desert Eyes and Wheels-of-Change programs and uses a Home Biogas bio-digester that SIPP encouraged. Future plans include construction of a daycare facility and consolidation of other Bedouin families into the community. Yoni was very receptive to the possibility of creating a demonstration rainwater catching system at the school.



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## Sunday, April 30

### Jonathan Laronne - BGU (Beer Sheva)

Jonathan Laronne is a professor in hydrology at BGU in Beer Sheva. We were connected to Professor Laronne through Malcolm Siegel (Water Resources Action Project). We spoke at about the potential for collaborating on a rainwater catching project with the Bedouin. Amir will follow up with Professor Laronne.





אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב  
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev



מכון צוקרברג לחקר המים  
Zuckerberg Institute for Water Research

قطرة في الصحراء  
טיפה במדבר

A Water Drop in the Desert

Exposing pupils from the Beduin society to academic/scientific research



# Monday, May 1

## Ben Gurion University, Sde Boker



We met with Dr. Amit Gross (Director of Ben Gurion University's Zuckerberg Institute for Water Research) about collaboration opportunities with respect to the local Bedouin community. Amit told us about their ongoing "A Water Drop in the Desert" program. The program involves BGU graduate students who work with students from two Bedouin high schools to conduct water related research. While funding is secured for the next few years, Amit is seeking additional support for the longer term. We spoke about enlarging the scope of the program to integrate rainwater harvesting into the program. Such a program could be implemented in the Spring of 2024.

Amit also provided an update on the work of the graduate student pair we helped. Reut completed her PhD and developed a "cool poop" fuel/filter. Nibal had interrupted her studies due to the Covid pandemic but is interested in resuming her studies.

Schools  
experimenting  
greenhouse



## Monday, May 1

# Atid Alfora School, Arava Institute



We visited the Atid Alfora school in a Bedouin unrecognized village outside of Arad. Clive Lipchin of the Arava Institute and Fareed Mahameed told us about the school, including lack of infrastructure (including reliable electricity) and the potential for polio due to untreated sewage. The school serves approximately 3000 students. Clive showcased an Arava devised compact sewage treatment system that has been working at the school for apx 6 mos. Clive is looking for support to bring on additional and larger units at the school.



## Wednesday, May 3 David/Doud Farm



Sharon Avraham gave us a tour of the David/Doud Farm in the Triangle Area (concentration of Palestinian communities in north-central Israel). The farm is where SIPP's mini-grant Reviving Biara was relocated from Jaffa to conduct permaculture workshops for local Arab and Jewish residents. The Farm is an artist colony and has housing, conferencing, and workshop facilities. Most of the programming at the Farm is geared towards young adults. Some programs, such as dances, attract multicultural participation.

