



BOARDING PASS

**A life changing
adventure *from the*
NORTH SHORE TO ISRAEL**

GATE	BOARDING TIME	SEAT
12	10:30 AM	3F

DEPARTURE: Boston | BOS
 ARRIVAL: Israel | TLV
 FLIGHT: PJL17
 DATE: 2017
 REF NO: 0012008

**COMMUNITY
CONNECTION**



NORTH SHORE REGION
Massachusetts

CYNTHIA MANN
Program Officer, PJ Library

THIS PAST FALL, sukkah kits were delivered to more than 50 PJ Library families on the North Shore of Massachusetts in a project called PJ Library Sukkat Shalom. After assembling their sukkahs, more than 200 people ate and celebrated the holiday festivities inside them and invited other families, friends and neighbors to enjoy the experience.

The families who participated also went to a workshop before the harvest festival to learn about it and to receive their own lulav and etrog, the branches and symbolic fruit used in the holiday's signature and child-friendly waving ritual.

For one PJ Library parent, the project provided "the opportunity to build positive Jewish memories for our children and to live

Jewishly in real time." It was also free of cost, thanks to the Lappin Foundation, based in Salem, MA. Robert Lappin, the foundation's president, was thrilled by the depth and reach of the initiative. "It wasn't a one-off program," he noted, "and, each day of the holiday, the total number of people 'doing Jewish' grew exponentially."

Removing barriers so families can have meaningful and joyful Jewish experiences helps advance the mission of Lappin and his foundation, whose tag line is "enhancing Jewish identity across generations." This mission drives the foundation in its partnership with the Harold Grinspoon Foundation to serve more than 600 children through PJ Library. The North Shore was also one of the very first pilot communities for the tween set's PJ Our Way, which is going strong.

The foundation long has been lowering barriers for what Lappin believes is another fundamental Jewish experience—spending time in Israel. Every summer for more than 40 years, area teens have had the opportunity to go on partially or fully (since 1996) subsidized trips designed to strengthen their Jewish identity and build life-long relationships. Once a novel idea, Birthright Israel used it as one of its models.

For Lappin, Israel is a core part of Jewish identity because "that's where our story began" and now, the opportunity to go is being extended to PJ Library parents. The first-ever such trip is planned for 30 people this spring. Heavily subsidized by the Lappin Foundation, the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, and others, the trip is being marketed as "a life-changing adventure

“Parents read the PJ books about Israel to their kids but often haven’t been there,” she said. “We thought, how incredible would it be to provide an authentic Israel experience to parents so they can share it firsthand with their children? It will help them answer questions about why Israel matters. It will give each family their own Israel story and will cement links in the chain of Jewish tradition.”



Lynette Simons with her husband, Joe, and their four PJ Library-subscribing children

designed to educate, empower, and inspire PJ Library parents of all faiths to teach their children about Israel and to build connections” between PJ Library families and Israel.

Deposits for the \$1,500 trip started coming in soon after word got out this fall, despite the complicated arrangements that many parents will have to make for child care. Lynette Simons, who has four PJ Library-subscribing children, including a 9-month-old, was one of them. Her enthusiasm drove her to sign up right away, even before she had thought through plans for child care. Simons converted to Judaism when she married her Jewish husband in 2011. Since then, she said, she has wondered about Israel but been afraid to visit because of troubling news reports from the region. Then she heard her friends talking about the PJ trip at her synagogue. “They were excited and thought I should go,” she recalled. “And I started thinking that there

may not be an opportunity for me to do this again for a long time. How could I not?!” Simons said her children are “a little jealous, especially my 7-year-old who is preparing to take a pretend trip to Israel at school” (Hebrew School at Congregation Shirat Hayam in Swampscott). Her own personal goals are to feel more connected to and inspired about being Jewish.

Debbie Coltin, the Lappin Foundation’s executive director, has no doubt Simons’ goals will be realized. “Parents read the PJ Library books about Israel to their kids but often haven’t been there,” she said. “We thought, how incredible would it be to provide an authentic Israel experience to parents so they can share it firsthand with their children? It will help them answer questions about why Israel matters. It will give each family their own Israel story and will cement links in the chain of Jewish tradition.”

In addition to seeing the country’s signature sights and spending informal time with Israeli families, the trip will feature PJ Library books and focus on how to raise children to love being Jewish as well as how to talk about Israel with family and friends. At the same time, family members back home can “accompany” their traveler with a child-friendly wall map of Israel and through blog updates during the trip that reflects what’s happening in real-time. Plans also call for several social and educational meetings before and after the trip in an effort to build close relationships between families and a stronger sense of community.

As for the organizers, they are transparent about their objective. “Whether they are Jewish or part of a family raising Jewish children, we want parents to fall in love with Israel and share that with everyone they love back home,” said Coltin.