

CANTOR MAISSNER'S SABBATICAL NOTES

Friday, February 24, 2006

Dear Friends,

As we returned to Israel last Friday, February 24th, I realize that all good things must come to an end. The memories and reflections on the vast experiences we lived through will linger in our minds for eternity. Hope and I have become different people, gained knowledge and insight into other worlds and ideas. We realize how much more there is to life than our four corners and isolated world. Our outlook on life has grown and widened as we learned of other cultures, customs, behaviour and fate of other human beings. We have come to respect other people's stories, history and tales, folklores and religions. All of the above only heightened our appreciation of and gratefulness for our portion in life. We learned to count our blessings and realize how fortunate we are in the West to have the lives we lead.

Returning to Israel, even for a few days as we wrap up our relationships with all our friends and family, has been for me personally, another sign of belonging to this country and its people, my birth place and the cradle of my personality. Saying goodbye to many has been more difficult than I ever imagined. I guess I have lived with these dual feelings all my many years outside of Israel, although I always considered it my homeland. I am not alone in emotions, as the poet Yehudah Halevi has so aptly summed it up: there is no other nicer and more profound place for the Jewish people.

Having expressed these feelings I am equally gravitated towards my home, community, children and grandchildren (one and a half), friends and colleagues. I am so looking forward to my work with intense and renewed creative energy. I am eagerly awaiting and anticipating my musical activities of teaching, worshipping and conducting which I have truly missed.

With a clear head and a revitalized spirit, I will see you all very shortly and share my incredible story. Once more, I am grateful for the opportunity granted to Hope and me to experience these four months,

Until my return, I am yours,

Beny